

Report of the FIRE & RESCUE DEPARTMENT

2011 brought changes in Fire Department communications and dispatching. In February, Wellfleet joined with 4 towns as part of a regional consortium that was awarded a federal grant of over \$354,000 to build an interoperable radio system. These radios will provide back-up emergency communications during severe weather or other disruptions to our normal radio system. The grant also funded radios for other key Town departments so we can operate on a common emergency channel with direct communication between departments when necessary.

In October, voters agreed to fund moving 9-1-1 call taking and fire and emergency medical dispatching to the Barnstable County communications center. This move will greatly enhance public safety, with emergency call-taking and fire/EMS dispatching handled by specialized operators focused only on one task. Wellfleet's communications personnel will continue handling police dispatching and business calls, as well as other public service functions. This move has long been advocated by the Fire Department, and we look forward to more efficient and effective dispatching when this move is completed in early 2012.

Call department member Jesse Cappello graduated from the Barnstable County Fire Academy as Firefighter I and II. Lt. White and Firefighter Willis were trained as Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support Instructors. Other Department members took a variety of fire and EMS training courses throughout the year.

Capt. Ferreira has spent many hours providing the documentation required to lower the Town's insurance (ISO) rating. At this writing, we are waiting for ISO to re-classify those areas of town served by the municipal water system. We expect a more favorable rating, which should save home and business owners on their fire insurance premiums.

Though Tropical Storm Irene was less severe than forecast, it still left many parts of Town without power and water for days. The Fire Department responded by providing an emergency water supply for both potable and non-potable water. Our automated information phone line was activated and fielded over 300 calls in a three day period, providing information on power, water and other storm recovery topics.

The Department put on a first-responder course in the fall, as part of a continuing effort to recruit new call members. While the course was well-received, it's uncertain that we'll get any new members from the participants. The realities of Wellfleet's economy and demographics are a serious impediment to recruiting and retaining part-time members, as there are few people willing or able to give the time that the call department demands. As one of our call members put it: "It's a part-time job, but a full-time responsibility." The Department believes strongly that the Town's voters should be given the chance to decide on whether or not to hire more full-time personnel to maintain the level of emergency response that we expect from this Department, especially for daytime responses, which account for the majority of our calls. We can continue for at least a few years to use our call members to supplement the full-time staff for evening and overnight calls, but it's unrealistic to expect working men and women to be able to leave their primary employment to answer calls during normal working hours.

The Department continues to enjoy and appreciate the support of Wellfleet's residents and visitors. We recognize and honor the high level of dedication and professionalism our personnel bring to their jobs, and we thank their families for the sacrifices they make. Lastly, my gratitude goes to the Town and our Department for the honor and privilege of continuing to lead them in service to Wellfleet.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Silverman
Fire Chief