



Although 2013 was known as the Hurricane Sandy recovery year, the City made strides to recover and rebuild. The Perth Amboy Fire Department also saw 2013 as a year of rebuilding, restructuring and renewal. There was growth in personnel, apparatus, equipment and operations. The department is much more efficient in delivering the services it is called to provide. In 2013 the department responded to more calls for assistance than last year even with the more than 300 calls that came in directly from Hurricane Sandy. . The department is continually striving to remain one of the most progressive fire and emergency services agencies in the area. Although there is no exact dollar amount, the fire department has saved the taxpayers from millions of dollars in property loss directly due to its operational capabilities.

Given the 2013 budget, the department has been working to grow while remaining within its financial limits. Injuries along with overtime have been drastically reduced. For the third consecutive year, the department has reduced the total amount of overtime from the previous year. The department has managed to cut over 2,000 hours of overtime from the previous year and *more than 5,000 hours* from 2010.



*Row House Fire on West Side Ave (L)  
Church Fire on Jacques St. (R)*

**Career Division:**

The Fire Department saw the retirement of its two most senior members: Chief David Volk and Battalion Chief Brian Cleary who was the Administrative Officer. Battalion Chief Brian Cleary retired April 1<sup>st</sup> and Chief David Volk retired on July 1<sup>st</sup> both retiring with more than 26 years in the Career Division with many more years in the volunteer ranks. To fill the vacancies created with these retirements, Battalion Chief Abraham Pitre was promoted to Chief of Department and Captain Edward Mullen was promoted to Battalion Chief as the Administrative Officer. 2013 also saw the promotion of John Breyta and John Rezes to Battalion Chief, assigned as Shift Commanders. Firefighters Raymond Estrada and Brian Lopazanski were promoted to Captain as truck officers.

The department was also fortunate to hire four replacement firefighters during 2013. Firefighters James Garrison and Frank Rezes were added to the department ranks in February and Firefighters Brian Bonilla and Philip Sulikowski were hired in September. All four completed 300 hours of academy and in-house training. Firefighters Garrison and Rezes were sworn in to their new positions by Mayor Diaz during a May 28<sup>th</sup> City Hall ceremony with Firefighters Bonilla and Sulikowski to be sworn in December 5<sup>th</sup>.



The department's Marine unit continues to provide the only year round water based fire & rescue services available in the immediate area. Marine 5 has made several water based rescues from vessels in distress in the area waterways and provided initial search and rescue services at various incidents during the year. Members continue with on-going operational training and

maintenance to maintain its year round ready to respond status. Marine 5 made approximately 40 emergency responses during 2013 to a variety of water based emergencies throughout the area. Also during the peak boating season the boat is staffed twice a week to conduct training and also providing a safety presence in the water.

The unit has also been requested to assist or stand by at various events along the local waterways during the year including:

- ❖ *Macy's Fireworks Display*
- ❖ *Highland Park Fireworks Display*
- ❖ *Woodbridge Fireworks Display*
- ❖ *Carteret Memorial Day Ceremony*
- ❖ *Super Bowl XLVIII Readiness Drill*



**Volunteer Division:**

In 2013 the Volunteer Division has seen an increase in membership due to active recruitment. A total of 10 new members joined the ranks and after completion of training the number of certified members will reach 33. As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2013 the volunteer response procedures were modified in order to increase safety and accountability. The members now respond to Fire Headquarters where they assemble as a crew, and respond in a department vehicle ensuring each member has a portable radio, air pack and tools. This also allows the volunteer members to keep their structural firefighting gear in Fire Headquarters instead of their personal vehicles minimizing the amount of contaminants they come in contact with.

The Volunteer Division has continued to maintain their training participation as well as day to day department activities. Members completed a total of 1372 man-hours of training throughout the year which has increased from 1265 last year.

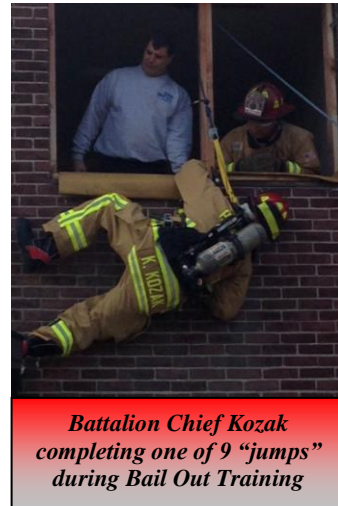
Members also continue to actively participate in the In-Station duty program. This program allows members to spend 4 hours blocks of “on duty” time in the firehouse to respond with the initial response apparatus to alarms, providing for additional manpower on initial arriving apparatus at an emergency incident. The In-Station Duty Program also serves to foster a cohesive working relationship between members of the Career and Volunteer Divisions. Members have spent more than 2,500 man-hours participating in this activity during the year.



*Members of the Volunteer Division participating in Live Fire Training at the Middlesex County Fire Academy*

**Department Training:** The department saw a continued increase in both In-Service and outside agency training during the year. A total of 6,690 hours of in-house training was completed by members of the department (5,618 Career/1,372 Volunteer) in annual required training topics including Hazardous Materials, Right-to-Know, Bloodborne Pathogens, and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus/Fit Testing. In addition a wide variety of firematic topics were covered including:

- \* Coaching Emergency Vehicle Operations
- \* Water Supply & Hose Line Advancement
- \* Ventilation
- \* Search & Rescue
- \* Thermal Imaging Camera Operations
- \* Bail Out Training
- \* Water Rescue
- \* Flammable Gas Fires Operations
- \* Ladder Rescue Operations
- \* National Incident Management System
- \* Accountability Training
- \* Mayday Training
- \* Firefighter Rescue



*Battalion Chief Kozak completing one of 9 "jumps" during Bail Out Training*



*Firefighters Garrison and Rezes rappelling at the Middlesex Fire Academy*

Department members also continue to take advantage of various training opportunities offered through outside agencies. Members completed a total of 53 courses of instruction offered by 15 outside agencies throughout the country. Members completed a total of 2,624 hours of training offered through outside training agencies. In many cases, members are able to bring the education back to share with other members of the department through in-service training.

The department also continues to maintain a good working relationship with various local industries throughout the city. Members once again spent a week of training at the Buckeye facility. In addition, industrial site training was conducted at Morton Salt, Ashland Corporation, Next Era Energy, Red Oak and Gerdaul Ameristeel. The department is working with the Sabert Corporation which is also located in



*Confined Space Training at Morton Salt*

Sayreville to conduct additional training for the department. This annual training allows members to not only interact with staff of the facility; this facility familiarization provides valuable information to department members in case of an actual emergency incident within the facility.

### **National Fire Incident Reporting Data:**



From January 1<sup>st</sup> through November 30<sup>th</sup> the fire department responded to a total of 2,564 incidents in 2013, an average of 7 responses per day. This represents the highest number of incidents over the previous four years.

Utilizing data and definitions compiled by the National Fire Incident Reporting System, a

department response to a “*Fire*” incident includes any response generated by the fire department to an open flame in need of extinguishment.

In 2013, the department responded to 218 fires, compared to 231 in 2012. In addition, a “*Building Fire*” is classified as any fire within a building with the exception of confined fires involving cooking with no extension from the cooking container, a fire confined to a chimney or flue, incinerator or trash compactor or fuel/oil burner with no flame extension outside of the heating unit. So far this year there has been a total of 45 building fires, compared to 47 fires in 2012 and 30 fires in 2011. Of the 45 building fires a total of 16 were multiple alarm incidents of two alarms or greater.

The department also continues to see an increase in the amount of service orientated type calls for assistance to the public, ranging from lock outs and residents trapped in elevators to flooded basements and animal rescues. The department responded to 2,346 calls for non-fire or EMS assistance by members of the public during 2013.

### **Public Fire Education:**

Throughout the country there is a recognized fire prevention week. However in the City of Perth Amboy the entire month October is utilized for fire prevention. Through Fire House tours and school visits, the department was again able to provide fire prevention safety education to more than 6,500 children within the city. Department members conducted daily Firehouse tours and school visits during the month of October and continue fire prevention education throughout of the year.

The department has also been represented at Career Day programs that were conducted at McGinnis, Shull, Peterson, Wilentz, Ceres and Flynn Schools as well as the High School during the course of the year.

The department also continues to expand programs and training provided to various groups and agencies throughout the city including:



*Firefighter Michael Perez reading to school children*

- \* Catholic Charities
- \* Puerto Rican Association for Human Development
- \* Perth Amboy Seniors Organization
- \* Market Square Seniors
- \* Perth Amboy Board of Education

The Perth Amboy Fire Department held its 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Open House at Fire Headquarters in October. Attendance has increased tremendously as this year we had over 400 members of the community attend the event. Members of both the Career and Volunteer Division made this event highly successful.

A variety of fire prevention and fire service activities were available including the Fire Safety House from the Middlesex County Fire Academy, fire rescue demonstrations by members of the department and an endurance course, where Firefighters assisted members of the public to complete. In addition, raffles, prizes and refreshments were also provided. The interest from the public insures that the open house will be an annual event for years to come.

The Fire Department continuously provides free smoke detectors to residents along with going to the homes and installing the detectors free of charge.



*Members of Battalion 2 perform an extrication demonstration at the Fire Prevention Open House*

**Current and Future Projects:**

The Department was able outfit the entire department with new firefighter protective equipment in 2011 and 2012. With the new hires and volunteers the department has continued to purchase the turn out gear in order to ensure all certified members have the appropriate safety equipment. With the influx of new volunteers a Capital Improvement request was submitted to purchase more turn out gear that is needed for the new volunteers that have just completed training.

In March 2013, the department placed in service a new fire engine, the first fire engine purchased by the department since 1999. The department has just finished specifications and placed the order for an additional Fire Engine which will arrive in 2014 these two purchases along with the aggressive schedule will insure that the department never again faces the dilemma it faced three years ago when the physical condition of the department fleet of apparatus made it a challenge to provide a full complement of viable apparatus.



Also in 2013, the department has purchased through Capital Improvement 2013 a new Incident Command vehicle and a new volunteer response vehicle. The new volunteer response vehicle with custom compartments will allow the volunteers to respond together as a team with a complement of equipment including air packs, flashlights and radios. This will make it safer and easier to keep accountability as they respond as a team.

Looking forward in future Capital improvement projects through 2016, the department has identified the need to replace a Ladder Truck and a Rescue Truck to further ensure the firefighting and rescue capabilities of the department. This will ensure the most effective and efficient service for the residents of the City of Perth Amboy

In March the department has a serious injury at a fire. The department looked at the current policies in place; we modified procedures and also put in place new procedures in order to ensure the accountability and safety of members operating at the scene of emergencies. Some changes that have been made include a new notification program for the Volunteer Division; this program will also be phased in for the Career Division. The program is a web based program which allow members to notify the department that they are responding to an incident regardless if they are respond to a scene or to the firehouse. This response information can be pulled up by all members along with the dispatch center. Policies including accountability, mayday, Rapid Intervention Crews have all been either created or modified for increased safety. The Mutual Aid response policies were revised in order make Firefighter operations much safer; including having a true dedicated Rapid Intervention Team at all fires.

The department also replaced the microphones attached to the portable radios due to the fact that once getting wet at fires the microphones were rendered useless and it was endangering the firefighters, as they were unable to communicate with others. All department portable radios have a submersible rated microphone specifically designed for firefighter operations. This was a major step to ensure firefighter safety.

The largest challenge of the Fire Department – like all municipal departments, during not only 2013 but moving forward into the future is the need to address the ability to adequately operate on a daily basis with limited resources. The Fire Department continues to maintain fiscal responsibility in day-to-day operations, as well as continuously searching for additional funding resources. Some of the funding sources and strategies include the following:

- ❖ Grants & Financial Assistance. During the past year, the department has submitted several federal grant requests totaling \$1 Million for personnel as well as various equipment needs.
- ❖ Local Industry. Historically local industries within the city have provided the department with various advanced rescue equipment. These equipment donations have enabled the department to provide various levels of technical rescue without placing a burden on the overall department budget. The department continues to foster a close working relationship with our industrial neighbors and is hopeful for the continued assistance they provide.
- ❖ Neighboring Industries. As previously mentioned, with the department being one of the only emergency response agencies in Middlesex County to provide immediate technical rescue response, the department continues to contract our rescue services to industries outside of the municipal borders. Currently the department receives \$50,000 annually for this work. The department is hopeful in expanding this service in the future.
- ❖ Continued Member Cooperation. The members of the department continuously go above and beyond when dealing with building and equipment maintenance and repair. During the past year alone, work performed by members of the department conservatively saved thousands. This continued cooperation and pride in the department will enable the scarce financial resources to continue to be spent on items that are absolutely necessities.



**Conclusion:**

In conclusion, the Perth Amboy Fire Department will continue to protect the lives and property of the residents of the City of Perth Amboy and to all those that call for help. The Department will be trained, ready and equipped to provide fire protection and rescue services at any given moment when an emergency occurs. The Department will remain financially responsible to ensure that the taxpayers are getting the most effective and efficient services available. With our mission statement, the Perth Amboy Fire Department will be always vigilant, planning for the future.



**PERTH AMBOY  
FIRE DEPARTMENT**



**"Always vigilant · planning for the future."**