



Cheltenham Township Fire Marshal

2008 Fire Marshal's Report

2008 Fire Department and Fire Marshal's Office Summary

2008 Fire Department Responses

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During 2008, the Five Cheltenham Township Fire Companies responded to 1056 calls for emergencies within the Township . These responses were for a myriad of types and range from the more routine such as dumpster fires, fire alarm activations and natural gas leaks to the less routine but highest risk responses for vehicle fires, persons trapped in vehicle wreckage and building fires. This total does not include 95 automatic requests for service by Departments outside the township borders.

As has been the trend in Cheltenham , automatic fire

alarms and Carbon Monoxide alarms generate the largest volume of responses. Fully 50% of the volume is for CO and Fire Alarms. (Read the article inside for more information on Fire Alarms)

There were 130 responses for fires inside structures. These responses were for problems ranging from heater malfunctions, electrical wiring problems, stove fires to houses heavily involved in fire. Losses from structural fires for the year were well over 1 million dollars. Even a small fire can produce large amounts of smoke and soot that can cost tens of

thousands of dollars to clean up.

The remaining calls for service included the following:

-Electric utility equipment: 77 responses.

-Natural gas line ruptures: 35 responses.

-Natural gas leaks inside structures: 19 responses.

-Vehicle fires: 34 responses.

-Field and Brush fires: 29 responses.

-Trash & Dumpster fires: 20 responses.

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Firefighters arrived and were met with a well involved house fire in an early morning fire. Fortunately no occupants were inside the house. the fire was kept from spreading to other nearby homes.

Significant Losses at a Glance

The majority of the causes of fires that resulted in significant losses unfortunately followed the national trend. The largest cause by far is cooking related. Other causes include combustibles too close to heat sources, candles, smoking materials, juveniles and incendiary. These losses resulted in losses estimated as over 1.3 million dollars for the year.

The following are a brief summary of significant incidents:

1/21 Elkins Ave– Dwelling fire in the living room caused by candles.

1-21 4TH Ave– Dwelling fire in kitchen from cooking.

1-28 Brookdale Road– Dwelling fire in kitchen from cooking.

2-1 Massey Way– Apartment fire in bedroom. Accidental.

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Enforcement of the Fire Prevention Code

While most people do not think about how fire safe they are when the shop at a mall or eat in a restaurant or go home to their midrise apartment, it is the Fire Marshal's duty to do just that.

This is accomplished by fire prevention code inspections. Inspections are performed to ensure that buildings adhere to and maintain required exits, suppression systems, proper storage arrangements, maintain their detection and suppression systems and a myriad of other code requirements.

The idea is to keep the fire from happening...and if for some reason there is an igni-

tion, to keep injuries and losses to a minimum.

especially true of places where people congregate, where people reside, (especially in large numbers, such as dormitories, apartment complexes and mid rise buildings), and at locations where people may not have the ability to help themselves if a fire occurred.

In 2008 Fire Prevention Code Inspections were performed at many of the following types of facilities:

- Mid and Hirise apartment complexes.
- Multi Occupancy Dwellings, (buildings converted to 3 or more apartments)

- Schools.
- Nursing and extended care facilities.
- Hospitals and outpatient clinics.
- Places of assembly, (restaurants, clubs, entertainment and catering facilities, etc.)
- Retail establishments, (especially those with very large sales areas or where shops are densely located)
- Businesses that use potentially hazardous materials or processes.
- Multi use buildings, (multiple businesses, mixed business and residential, etc.)

While unattended cooking is the leading cause of accidental fires, smoke detectors have significantly reduced the losses from cooking fires by alerting the occupants before there is an actual ignition.

Permits and the Fire Marshal's Office

Fire protection system construction permits and storage tank installation and removal permits are issued by the Fire Marshal. Permits are issued after plans are

reviewed to ensure their compliance with local as well as statewide requirements. Any systems or tanks require ongoing inspections as they are installed and acceptance testing once completed. Below are a few examples of the types of permits and systems applied for:

-Wyngate Townhomes: Each townhome is built with a state of the art residential sprinkler system. To date over 40 units are equipped.

Arcadia University: Retrofit a new sprinkler system in an existing dormitory that houses over 100 residents as part of an ongoing program to provide sprinklers in all existing dormitories.

-Ancilliae Assumpta Academy: Installed a new system as required for a classroom expansion and also provided retrofit coverage in existing areas for protection of students and their school.

Moss Rehabilitation: Provide retrofit installation to facility.

-Lynnewood Gardens Apartments: Remove over 20 underground storage tanks and ensure all sites are free of any contamination.

-More Shopping Center: Install five commercial cooking appliance suppression systems in new food court.

-Chili's Restaurant: Install new sprinkler system and fire alarm system.



Each home in the new Wyngate development is equipped with a residential sprinkler system

Significant Losses (continued from page 1)

2-9 Brookview Pl- Apartment fire in kitchen from cooking.

3-10 Butcher St- Dwelling fire in living room caused from open flame.

3-15 Arboretum Rd- Dwelling fire in a utility room from household chemicals mixing.

3-30 Cheltenham Ave- Restaurant fire occurred in commercial cooking equipment.

7-18 Richards Rd- Dwelling fire in utility room dryer.

* 7-23 Penrose Ave-

Apartment Building fire caused by a lightening strike damaged 4 units.

* 7-23 S. John Russell Ci- Apartment Building fire also caused by a lightening strike damaged 4 units.

*(Both of the above apartment fires caused significant damage and occurred during violent thunderstorms that traveled across the County)

8-31 4TH Ave- Dwelling fire resulted in a total loss. Cause is still under investigation.

8-31 S. Keswick Ave- Apart-

ment fire caused by cooking spread to a second unit.

9-20 Elkins Ave-Dwelling fire in an office caused severe damage to the entire house.

11-25 Lenape Ave- Dwelling fire in a laundry room extended through the attic and caused severe damage to the house.

12-12 Coventry Ave- Apartment fire in a bedroom caused accidentally.

12-31 Rowland Ave- Dwelling fire confined to a bedroom.



Fire company crews advance on a well involved vehicle fire. These are one of the many types of calls responded to annually

Responses (continued from page 1)

-Fuel spills and hazardous materials incidents: 13 responses.

-Assist the Police, EMS, other agencies: 19 responses.

-Rescue Responses: 38 responses. (The majority of rescues are for persons entrapped in vehicles after crashes and removal of people from stuck elevators but

also include persons caught in machinery or under trees as well as other situations)

The list above include what the majority of responses were for. There are

Historically, the number one contributing factor in home fires that caused injuries and death was a lack of advanced warning from working smoke detectors.

Fire and Carbon Monoxide Alarms: The Good and Bad

Fire and Carbon Monoxide alarms are one of the best assets a homeowner or business owner can have for protecting their lives and property from fire. But responding to these alarms can be a huge burden on responders.

In Cheltenham Township there were more than five hundred responses for fire alarms last year.

The good in this is that one third of these alarms were caused by smoke or carbon monoxide. This includes over 100 alarms last year caused by cooking mishaps.

So the alarms indeed did their intended jobs. And next to sprinklers, working and maintained alarms are your best protection against fire.

Now the bad news. Over half of the alarms were for no valid reason. That's over 200 responses by the fire companies. And most times no cause is found at all. Many of these 'unfounded' alarms can be attributed to a lack of regular maintenance manufacturers require.

More bad alarm news: A large amount of remaining

responses were due to contractors working who set off the alarm. While this sounds innocent, when it happens almost 75 times a year, it's a problem.

Back to the good: Based on the number of alarm systems installed within the Municipality most are maintained and do not cause any unnecessary responses. So please service your system as well as put it on hold whenever contractors are working. Not only will you save an unnecessary response but may also save yourself from receiving a fine.

Cheltenham Township Fire Marshal

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Dwellings and apartments are the most likely place for a fire to occur. Have at least one detector on each floor where you live and test them regularly.

The township has five volunteer fire companies that provide emergency response to the residents and workers.

Company 1: Glenside Fire Company No. 1

Company 2: LaMott Fire Company

Company 3: Elkins Park Fire Company

Company 4: Cheltenham Hook & Ladder

Company 5: Ogontz Fire Company

If you are interested in volunteering and making a commitment to the fire and rescue service, you can contact the fire marshal's Office for more information.

Fire Prevention Activities

While most of the public equates October with fire prevention month, prevention and community outreach programs are presented year round.

And programs are not just for schools. Programs are presented to township groups and businesses on subjects ranging from senior fire safety, safe evacuation during a fire to proper reactions to fires in the workplace.

The following activities list a few of the many Fire Prevention activities presented to educate and bring awareness to the residents and workers of Cheltenham Township.

2008 Fire Expo at Bishop McDevitt High School: A display and demonstration of area emergency services equipment and capabilities.

Presentation BVM: Fire pre-

vention presentation to pre-school and kindergarten through 4TH grade school students.

classes.

Elkins Park Middle School: Fire drill for the students which included the Cheltenham and Elkins Park Fire Companies.

Wyncote Elementary School: Fire prevention presentation.

Cheltenham Elementary: Fire prevention presentation to kindergarten through 4TH grade school students.

Federated Learning: Staff training on responding to fire situations

Cheltenham Fire Company open House at the Fire Training Center: Fire prevention presentation, fire-fighting demonstration, ve-

hicle extrication demonstration and hands on fire prevention activities for the public.

Ancillae Assumpta Academy: Fire prevention presentation to pre-school and kindergarten classes.

Parkview: Presentation to residents on safe evacuation and fire prevention.

Elkins Park Middle School: Fire prevention presentation to 5TH grade students.

All Hallows Church: Fire prevention presentation to the preschool.

Glenside Elementary School: Fire prevention presentation.

Keneseth Israel: Fire prevention presentation and display for the preschool

Cedarbrook Middle School: Fire prevention and the science of fire.



Keep fires from ever happening. Prevention programs, especially to the young, are integral to ensuring these children know just how to do so.