

# **2008 ANNUAL REPORT**

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## **ESTERO FIRE RESCUE**

**DEDICATED AND DRIVEN FOR THOSE WE SERVE**

## MISSION STATEMENT

**“Dedicated And Driven For Those We Serve”  
Through Aggressive Life Safety, Proactive Fire Prevention,  
Public Education and Community Involvement**

## LEADING THE WAY

**A MESSAGE FROM CHIEF SCOTT A. VANDERBROOK**



On behalf of the men and women of Estero Fire Rescue, I would like to present the 2008 Annual Report. I am honored to have served the Estero community for the past 10 years, and it is a privilege to now serve as your Fire Chief. It has been, and will continue to be, a pleasure to work with the dedicated men and women of the Estero Fire Rescue family. Our Mission Statement “Dedicated and Driven for those we Serve” reflects the attitude and commitment of our employees to the Estero community.

The 2008 Annual Report provides an overview of the significant accomplishments that have been achieved during the year. Some long time endeavors have come to fruition, and new programs have begun to take shape. After working out of temporary facilities for 10 years, we now have an Administrative Complex that identifies Estero Fire Rescue and provides a centralized location for the day-to-day or the behind the scenes operations to occur. The new facility also provides a permanent meeting place for the monthly meetings for the Board of Fire Commissioners as well as a location for employee training, CPR training, CERT training, etc.

We have worked closely with our neighboring fire districts to consolidate operational and prevention activities that provide a higher level of service and protection for both our employees and the community. Estero Fire Rescue, San Carlos Park Fire Department and Bonita Springs Fire Control & Rescue District have embarked on a merger/consolidation study which will look at future possibilities of providing some type of combined services to the residents and visitors of the three districts.

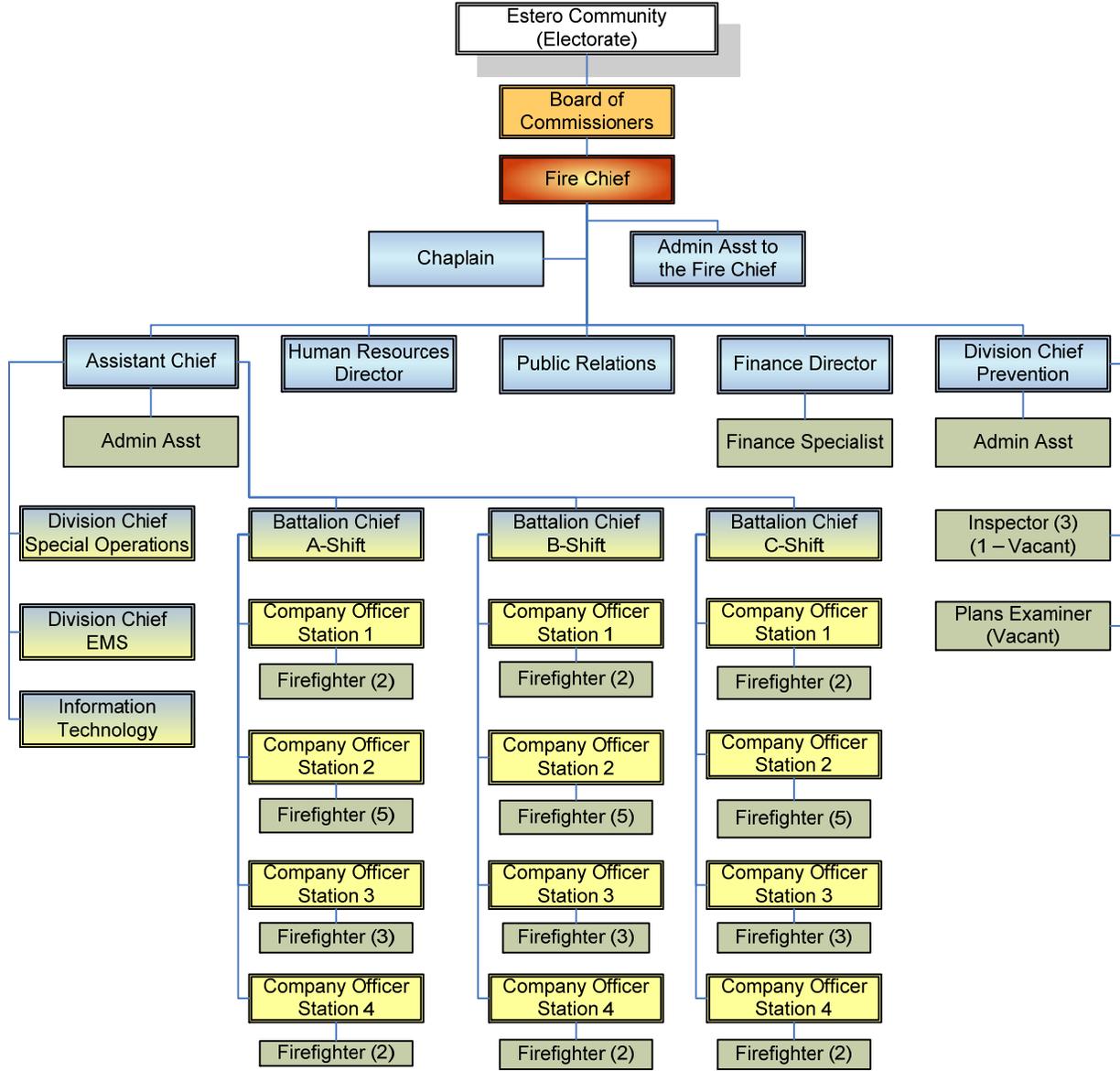
In 2008, Estero Fire Rescue saw the impact of the reduction of property values and the passing of Amendment 1. We saw the need to reduce the budget and freeze hiring for additional staff. During the year, vacated positions were not filled in order to reduce the amount of personnel costs and we have transitioned through retirements, promotions and probationary hires while continuing to provide the best in customer service to the community.

As I look back over the past year, I am encouraged by the support from the Estero community and the dedication of the Commissioners and employees of Estero Fire Rescue. As I look forward to 2009, I know we will face many challenges, but I am certain that Estero Fire Rescue will endure and continue to serve the Estero community professionally, with passion, integrity and devotion to excellence.

# THE ROLE OF THE COMMISSIONERS

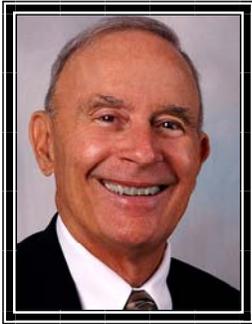
The Commissioners of Estero Fire Rescue are the only public officials elected exclusively by the voters of Estero. Commissioners generally serve four year terms unless they are elected to fill a seat mid-term due to the resignation or retirement of another commissioner. Only citizens residing in the Estero Fire District are eligible to be a member of the Board. The Board’s primary function is to oversee Estero Fire Rescue for the citizens of the Estero Fire District. While they do not involve themselves in the day-to-day operations, they do set policy, hire the Fire Chief, provide direction, set the taxing rate, sign all checks issued by the District and generally ensure the citizens of Estero their fire rescue service is running efficiently.

# ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW



## COMMISSIONER DICK SCHWEERS

### CHAIRMAN, SEAT 4



Another eventful year has gone by with many changes to highlight in this end of the year report.

As I begin my twelfth year on the Board with our third new Chief during my tenure it is with pride that I look over the past year. Former Chief Jeff Lindsey resigned his position effective July 31, 2008. Chief Lindsey has moved to a Professor's position in EMS at George Washington University in Washington D.C.

After acting as Interim Fire Chief, Scott Vanderbrook was officially promoted to permanent Fire Chief for Estero Fire Rescue on September 10, 2008 and has already displayed excellent managerial skills in the short period he has been on the job.

At long last we finally have our new administration building. The plans had been in the works for several years due to revising and finally settling on what would be most feasible for the needs of Estero Fire Rescue. In early July 2008 the staff employees moved in and are thrilled to be in one location. Staff employees had been spread out in various modulars in Estero. The administration modular was on its last legs; it was too small and a good wind could have blown it over. We had to leave our other temporary offices due to the owners plans to tear down and then develop that particular property. Morale for all employees took a huge upward turn due to this new building which offers excellent working and class room conditions heretofore not available.

As we all know the financial climate continues to deteriorate and Estero Fire Rescue has put a hold on additional new hires in addition to not replacing some staff personnel who have left. We are at bare bones insofar as manpower is concerned but still capable of meeting the emergency needs of the Estero community! The Board voted to set our millage rate at the rollback rate of 1.9037 as provided by the TRIM process. It should be noted Estero Fire Rescue's millage rate has never been above 2.00.

Several meetings were held throughout the year with Bonita Springs Fire District and San Carlos Park Fire District to discuss a possible consolidation of the three districts. A consultant, System Planning Corporation, TriData Division, was hired to prepare a recommendation of the feasibility of a complete merger or functional consolidation. We will see the results of their study in 2009. Functional consolidation is already occurring as the three districts have merged some activities which leads to potentially faster service and ultimately less cost to our residents.

Incumbent Commissioner Bob Morris lost his bid for re-election and Frank Messana officially joined the Board at the December 9, 2008 meeting. As we welcome Frank to the Board, we wish Bob the very best in his future endeavors.

Lastly, after three years of diligent efforts, it appears that we will see the emergency traffic signal for Station 42 at Coconut Point put in operation in 2009.

Wishing all a happy and safe year and thank you for your ongoing support for your Estero Fire Rescue!

**COMMISSIONER GAYLE SASSANO**

**SECRETARY, SEAT 1**



While every year at Estero Fire Rescue is exciting, this past year has been especially so. We said good-bye to some old friends and welcomed new friends to our fire service family. Getting our administrative building constructed has been a long awaited dream for myself and others. It's a building that all of Estero can be proud of, as they can be proud of the hard working staff throughout the District. We've come a long way from the lime green, one station pole-barn type building we had 11 years ago.

I was especially pleased to welcome our new Chief. While new to us as a chief, Chief Vanderbrook was no stranger to Estero Fire Rescue. His love and dedication for the fire service and Estero is always visible. His enthusiasm is contagious to all around him. I know that he, all of the employees at Estero Fire Rescue and the Board will lead Estero Fire Rescue into a safe and bright future for the Estero community.

Estero residents, the District, and the Board of Fire Commissioners face some tough decisions in the coming months. Housing slowdowns, the economy, state and local budget cutbacks will all have an effect on our District. But anyone who knows the history of Estero Fire Rescue will know that we have overcome greater challenges, as we will these new challenges. We have risen from the ashes before and will continue to provide the best service around for all of our residents.

God bless all our dedicated employees who continue to serve the people of Estero, and all who pass through our beautiful neighborhood.

**COMMISSIONER FRANK MESSANA**

**SEAT 2**



First, I would like to thank the residents of Estero for their tremendous support during the 2008 election cycle. I am humbled and honored to be your elected representative to the Estero Board of Fire Commissioners. 2009 will be a challenging year for all of us in Southwest Florida. As you may know, governments are facing the same budget crunches that we are all facing in our own personal lives and businesses. Governments will be forced to live within a smaller budget just like you and I do at home. At Estero Fire Rescue, we have the challenge of providing a quality emergency response service that the residents, visitors, and business owners deserve and expect. During FY 2009, Estero Fire Rescue will face even greater challenges due to declining property values and the sizeable decline of impact fee

revenues. Estero Fire Rescue is dedicated to providing an effective, professional, and efficient 911 emergency response. Rest assured, Estero Fire Rescue is prepared to overcome these challenges and will continue to be there when the alarm sounds.

## COMMISSIONER SAM LEVY

VICE CHAIRMAN, SEAT 3



I have served as a Commissioner for Estero Fire Rescue since July 2004. In that time I have seen the growth of Estero along with the many achievements of Estero Fire Rescue. It takes “teamwork” to accomplish the mission and be successful...that is what this organization has provided to the Estero community.

Until November 4, 2008 I was just another observer reading the reports and conducting the business I was elected to do as your Commissioner. On November 4th I had a coronary event...the 911 call was made and the professionals of Estero Fire Rescue arrived at my home. They entered my home prepared to do what was necessary to provide Advanced Life Support. Because of the professional care that I received from Estero Fire Rescue, Lee County EMS and Lee Memorial Health System, I have been able to return to my normal activities.

I want all the residents of Estero (part-time and visitors as well) to know you have a team of professional dedicated men and women to assist you in case you need us...we are just a 911 call away.

## COMMISSIONER BARBARA AKINS

TREASURER, SEAT 5



Confidence and trust in our service by the residents can only be achieved by quality performance and a high level of service. Estero Fire Rescue is a very energetic group of predominantly young professionals who have committed to our goals and objectives to always be a number one fire department. To offer a premier service to our residents, a commitment to training is paramount and every employee of Estero Fire Rescue maintains a strong belief in that commitment. It is a pleasure to serve the citizens of Estero as a Commissioner and to work with all of the professionals at Estero Fire Rescue.

“Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experience of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, ambition inspired, and success achieved.”

*Helen Keller, 1880-1968*

## OPERATIONS

### MARK C. WAHLIG, ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF



2008 proved to be a rough economical year for our residents, visitors and business owners with financial conditions not seen since the Great Depression over seventy-five years ago. These times are determined to burden even the most financial savvy, and Estero Fire Rescue is no exception.

While our economy suffers, the demand on public safety has increased. Estero Fire Rescue, like many other public safety agencies, has had to find ways to meet the increase in “calls for service” during a time in which inflation is increasing and funding is suffering. Our most challenging goal during these difficult times is to maintain the high quality of care our residents have become accustomed to.

In 2008, Estero Fire Rescue saw an increase in emergency services of 5% over 2007. In comparison, the previous year increase was 4%. Many factors contribute to the increased demand including some continued growth, crime, personal healthcare cost, foreclosed or abandoned homes and a decrease in social economics to list a few.

The good news is that we continue to find new ways to improve our level of service to the community. This year we cooperatively agreed to a “First Response” agreement with our neighboring fire departments, San Carlos Park Fire Department and Bonita Springs Fire Rescue. By doing so we can ensure that the closest Advanced Life Support and/or fire apparatus are responding to your emergency regardless of jurisdictional boundaries, thus saving critical time.

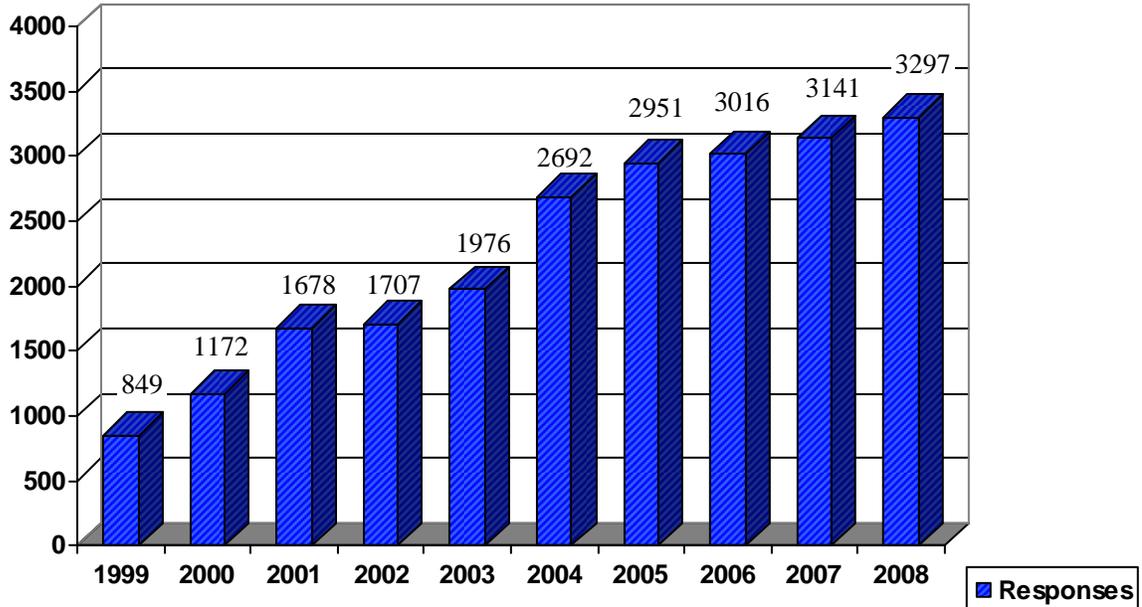
In addition, this automatic support from our neighbors means we will not need to purchase additional equipment to handle a smaller percentage of incidents. Without cooperative agreements such as this, Estero Fire Rescue would have to staff and equip additional apparatus to provide services during peak times. In return, Estero Fire Rescue supplies its resources to assist our neighboring departments in their time of need.

2008 was also a year of personal growth and challenge for many of our employees. After the dust settled from promotional assessments, we found ourselves with 12 new Engineers and two new Battalion Chiefs. As the year came to a close, several more employees were feverishly testing for an additional Battalion Chief position and an open Lieutenant position. Joining the Estero Fire Rescue family were three new firefighters that were brought on board to fill positions that became vacant through promotions.

Every year that passes our average tenure of experience increases. As a relatively young organization, we rely on the few senior members to pass on their knowledge to their peers. In addition, we have fostered a learning environment by encouraging our employees to continue their education to benefit the community through personal and professional development.

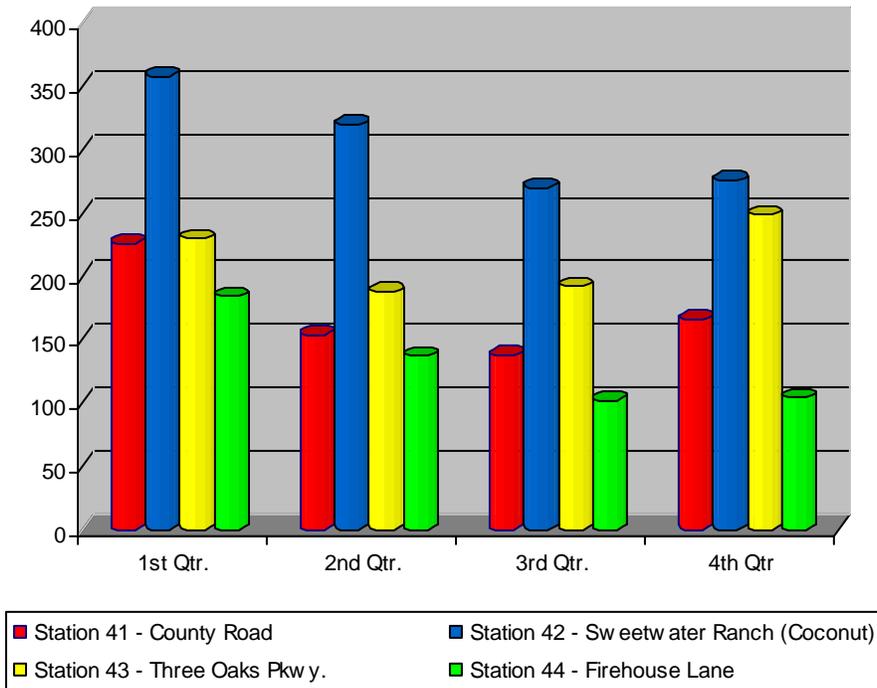
If 2008 is any indication, 2009 will breeze by us quickly and ferociously. Much uncertainty awaits us, but whatever challenges come forward I am confident that the living backbone of Estero Fire Rescue, its employees, will collectively work through them and continue to represent us as a class A service.

### CALL VOLUME FOR LAST 10 YEARS



As the Estero Community has grown over the past ten years so has the increase for service.

### Monthly Calls Per Station



The chart to the right reflects the overall call volume for 2008. We saw a 5% increase in total calls over last year.

**CHART 1**

2008 Incident Response Data - Total Calls = 3297  
1/1/2008 - 12/31/2008

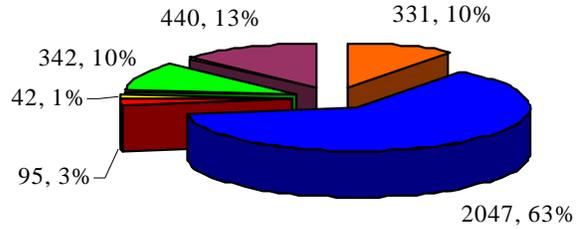
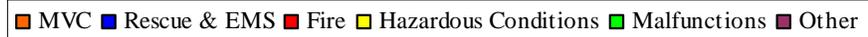
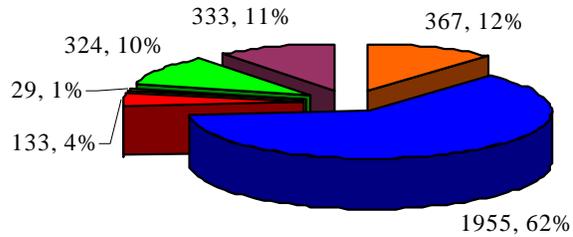


Chart 2 indicates total call volume for 2007. It reveals a 4% increase in call volume from 2006. The chart shows motor vehicle crashes (MVC) as a separate category for 2007.

**CHART 2**

2007 Incident Response Data - Total Calls = 3141  
1/1/2007 - 12/31/2007





**Question:** How do you put out a fire?

**Answer:** Take away the HEAT, FUEL, OXYGEN ... or the CHIEF.

# EMS

**TODD COULTER, DIVISION CHIEF**



Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is supervised by Division Chief Coulter and under the medical direction of Dr. Michelle Nathan, M.D. Estero Fire Rescue is proud to be a part of a medical system that operates with countywide protocols that advocate aggressive pre-hospital medical treatment and procedures.

Estero Fire Rescue responded to 2378 EMS calls including motor vehicle crashes (MVC), which accounted for 76% of total incidents for the year. Cardiac, general illness, and traumatic injuries are the leading types of EMS calls encountered throughout the year.

As of December 31, 2008, Estero Fire Rescue was staffed with 33 licensed paramedics which includes 20 Firefighters, 8 Lieutenants, 2 Battalion Chiefs, 2 Division Chiefs, and 1 Assistant Chief.

EMS training was a priority, members of Estero Fire Rescue completed 3,802 hours of EMS training during the year. Monthly training included EMS training videos, EMS lectures, patient scenarios, and skills assessments. In addition to the monthly training, firefighters were also recertified in CPR, Pediatric Advanced Life Support, and Advanced Cardiac Life Support.

## STATION 41 – 8631 COUNTY ROAD



Ladder 41



Brush 41



Air & Light Trailer

# FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

## DALE I. REISEN, BATTALION CHIEF - FIRE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT



In addition to Chief Reisen’s regular duties, he heads up the Estero Fire Investigative Unit which responded to and conducted 15 official fire investigations in 2008. Ten cases were closed because the fire was listed as accidental. Three cases were listed as incendiary (arson) and are still open criminal investigations. Two incendiary fire cases were solved with the apprehension of juveniles and one incendiary fire to a structure was solved with an adult male charged with the arson.

Two homes had approximately \$2.3 million dollars in damage (\$2 million to one home; \$300,000 to the second) resulting in total destruction to both structures, contents and two vehicles. In one home, the fire started in the attic due to an electrical problem. In the second home, a large quantity of combustible fuels within the structure and a delay in promptly notifying 911 resulted in the total loss.

Juveniles started two incendiary wildland fires and all juveniles were referred to the County Juvenile Firesetters Network. The brush fires did not cause any damage to any structures despite one being within an established neighborhood and the other directly behind a subdivision.

- 15 official fire investigations:
  - 4 accidental structure fires
  - 2 incendiary structure fires
  - 2 accidental wildland fires
  - 3 incendiary wildland fires
  - 4 accidental vehicle fires

The Fire Investigative Unit of Estero Fire Rescue works with the State Fire Marshal’s Office, the Department of Agriculture Law Enforcement and the Lee County Fire-Arson Task Force to solve the crimes of arson to make Estero a safer community.

# STATION 42—SWEETWATER RANCH



Tower 42



Rescue 42

# SPECIAL OPERATIONS

**EDWIN M. DWYER, DIVISION CHIEF**



The Special Operation Division of Estero Fire Rescue is part of the Operations Team and reports to the Assistant Fire Chief. Special Operations is responsible for various areas that are mission critical to the Operations Team. These items include the coordination of Training, Emergency Management, Urban Search and Rescue, Domestic Security, Specialty Rescue which encompasses rope rescue, confined space, trench rescue and hazardous materials and the repair and preventative maintenance for vehicles, apparatus, equipment and facilities that are owned by Estero Fire Rescue.

During 2008, with the assistance of all employees Estero Fire Rescue personnel participated in 16,851 hours of training which is 306 hours per operational person.

Emergency management is a function Estero Fire Rescue provides for the community to focus the preparation, response, damage assessment and recovery for disasters such as a hurricane. Estero Fire Rescue is part of the South Geographic Division, a division established by Lee County Emergency Management for improved coordination and communications in the time of disasters. In preparation for Hurricane Fay, we assisted the community in storm preparation, prepared our facilities and assisted in the staffing of our Command Center.

Following the storm, assisted by our Community Emergency Response Team (CERT), a damage assessment of the District was conducted and the findings forwarded to Lee County Emergency Management. At the request of Lee County, our CERT members assisted in the opening and running of a Red Cross shelter at the Estero Community Park.

## STATION 43—21510 THREE OAKS PARKWAY



Engine 43



Battalion 40



Brush 43

## URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (USAR)

### SOUTHWEST FLORIDA USAR/FLORIDA TASK FORCE 6

In addition to his regular duties as Division Chief, Chief Dwyer organizes and coordinates the representatives from Estero Fire Rescue who serve on the Southwest Florida USAR Team. Estero Fire Rescue is a founding member of the Southwest Florida Urban Search and Rescue Team together with seven other agencies in Lee County. Florida Task Force 6, as it is known, has the ability to respond quickly and provide personnel with specialty skills and equipment to local emergencies. Additionally, when requested by the State of Florida, the Task Force provides emergency response following a natural disaster as part of the State's Preparedness Plan. Our participating members and their peers from other agencies perform a monthly apparatus and equipment maintenance drill and leadership meeting to ensure their ability to respond. During 2008 FL-TF6 conducted an operational readiness exercise and was requested to aid in the response and recovery during Hurricane Gustav in Louisiana. Specific training and certifications and/or skills include:

- Swift water rescue
- Confined space rescue
- Rope rescue (low and high angle)
- Trench rescue
- Structural collapse
- Disaster paramedicine

## STATION 44—21300 FIREHOUSE LANE



Engine 44



Brush 44



Tanker 44

# PUBLIC EDUCATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

**SUSAN LINDENMUTH, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER**



One of the most diverse areas of Estero Fire Rescue is the Public Relations Division. The division includes all public education and training as well as public relations, communications, photography, videography and emergency volunteer coordination. The Public Relations Manager also acts as the PIO (Public Information Officer), the liaison to the media for Estero Fire Rescue.

## PUBLIC EDUCATION

The best way to handle an emergency is to prevent it from happening. When that is not possible, knowing what to do in the event of an emergency can make all the difference. Our role is to provide residents with the knowledge to reduce injuries, death and property loss due to fire and unintentional injuries. An educated citizen is one of our most important assets. Each year, data is analyzed at the national, state and local levels to determine the latest trends in fire and injury prevention. Public Education uses this information to create, update and redirect programs to meet the needs of the community.

Members of Estero Fire Rescue have an active role in the education of our residents in fire and life safety education. Public Education provides a large number of safety and education programs to the community in either small or large groups. Educational programs that focus on the needs of various businesses and community groups are scheduled throughout the year to help promote a team approach to keeping the community and its businesses safe.

Working closely with Operations, Public Education provides an all-hazards approach to mitigation and life safety and helps Estero Fire Rescue provide information and training to Estero's diverse population. Many of these services are designed to reduce the need for emergency response. Some of these services include:



- DUI Safety Programs

- Residential Fire Safety Surveys
- Community Event Assistance
- Child Car Seat Installation
- CERT Training (Community Emergency Response Team)
- Fire Extinguisher Training
- Fire Truck Demonstrations
- Life Safety and Prevention Lectures
- Free Smoke Alarm Program
- CPR, First Aid and AED Training

## PUBLIC RELATIONS/INFORMATION

Public Relations acts as the liaison to the residents and community for Estero Fire Rescue. This relationship within the community allows the department to keep up to date on the needs of its residents while promoting goodwill. During times of emergency, the liaison helps victims by providing assistance or by providing contact information for insurance, housing and other needed contacts. Additionally, Public Relations schedules a multitude of public appearances and events attended by Estero Fire Rescue.



New to Public Relations this year is Ember, a female Dalmatian. Ember joined the department in November, 2008 and immediately made a big impact. She has visited schools, community events and has participated in the Coconut Point Mall Holiday Parade. Ember will be trained to perform acts that will help the fire department educate the public on fire and life safety issues, such as checking the batteries in smoke alarms and crawling low under smoke. Additionally, she will act as an ambassador for Estero Fire Rescue and will bring a sense of tradition.

The Public Information Office is committed to releasing comprehensive and accurate information in a timely manner, coordinating media coverage on breaking news incidents and events and releasing details about Estero Fire Rescue's mission, goals and accomplishments through prudent, persistent and precise release of information. By working closely with local and state media organizations, the Public Information Office is able to

inform the public of emergency events as well as any upcoming training classes and important public service announcements.

“So often, communities and the media only recognize the men and women of the fire service when they respond to fires and other emergencies.

One of the greatest accomplishments of America's fire service goes mostly unnoticed by the citizens of this nation.

That accomplishment is those fires that are prevented.

A fire that never starts can never harm or take the lives of Americans, or firefighters.”

R. David Paulison  
US Fire Administrator (2001)





# LIFE SAFETY & PREVENTION

PHILLIP GREEN, DIVISION CHIEF



The Life Safety & Prevention Division is led by a Division Chief and staffed by two Fire Safety Inspectors and an Administrative Assistant.

The primary goal of the Division is to ensure the safety and well being of our residents, visitors and firefighters through inspections of new construction and routine inspections of commercial and multi-family residential properties. These services are provided with courtesy and respect for our customers while striving for code enforcement.

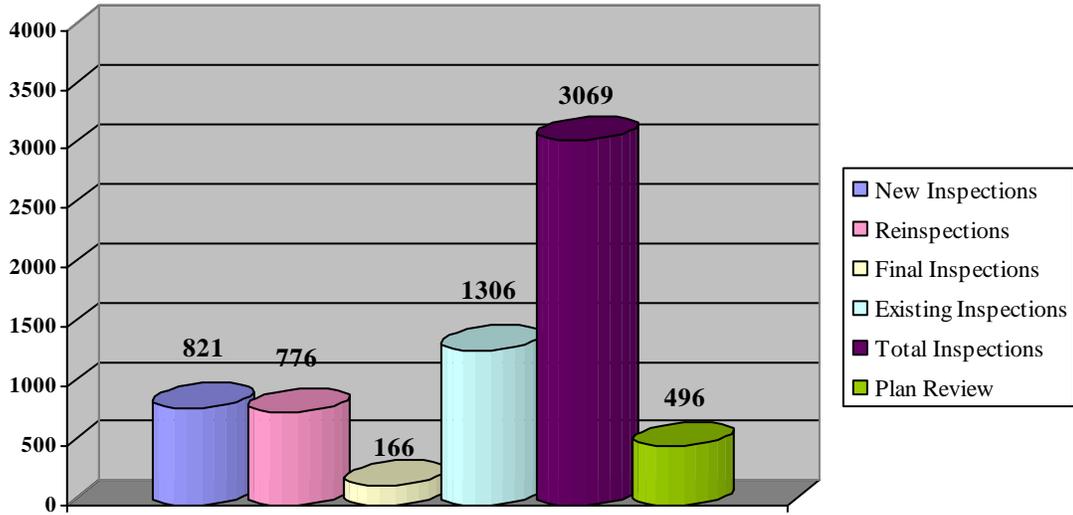
The prevention of emergencies is the key goal to the approach of this Division. Throughout the year this Division has taken a proactive approach to life safety issues. This proactive approach helps Estero Fire Rescue operate at an efficient level. Its goal is to help reduce the cost of providing fire protection services.

In addition to the core responsibilities of the Life Safety & Prevention Division, other accomplishments for the year include:

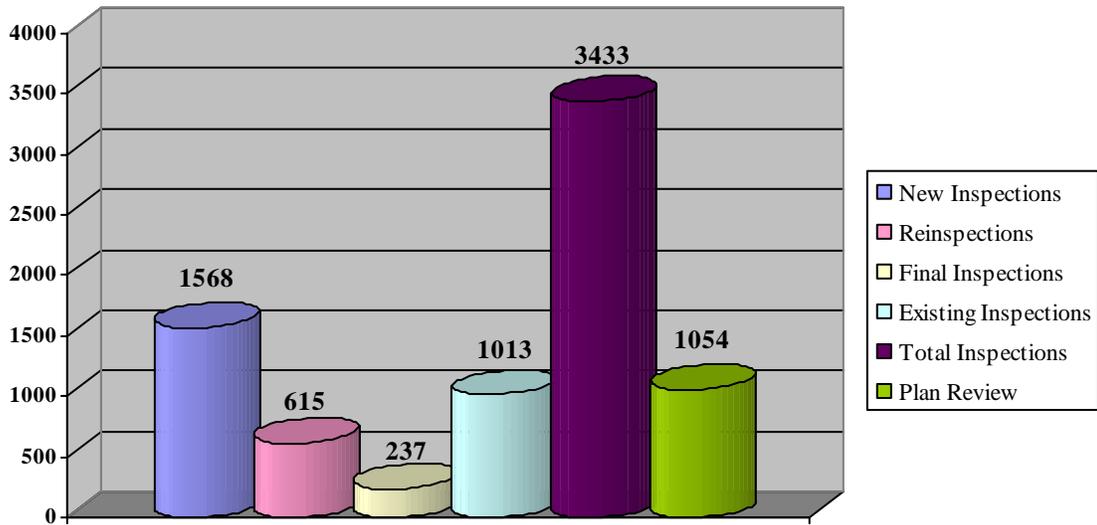
- Updated all Division Standard Operating Guidelines
- Implemented the Mobile Field Inspection Program
- Upgraded computer hardware for more effective time use
- Implemented the Company Inspection Program
- Implemented the Night Time Exit Check Program
- Purchased a fire extinguisher training system for more effective training
- Adopted a new nuisance alarm policy and procedure
- Established a co-operative effort with Bonita Springs Fire Rescue to review building plans



### 2008 Inspections & Plan Review



### 2007 Inspections & Plan Review



# FINANCE

APRIL L. WHITE, FINANCE DIRECTOR



## FINANCIAL HIGHLIGHTS

In fiscal year 2008, October 1, 2007 through September 30, 2008, Estero Fire Rescue continued to improve reserve balances in order to continue to provide core services in the future. Estero Fire Rescue exceeded its operating reserve goal of \$6,097,000 by approximately \$780,000 for an approximate anticipated fund balance of \$6,877,000. The excess in fund balance was significantly due to management deferring expenditures until the full economic impact of the tax reform legislation is understood. Workers compensation insurance decreased by approximately \$175,000 from the prior year and health insurance decreased by approximately \$280,000. These reductions are significantly due to fewer claims and educating employees on safety in the workplace and the rising cost of healthcare.

## NEW CAPITAL RESOURCES

In 2008 Estero Fire Rescue completed its Administrative Complex for an approximate project total of \$5.3MM and within the budget parameters approved by the Board. The building is the first administration facility owned by Estero Fire Rescue. It was built with a loan collateralized with impact fees. The facility provides a central location for all administration staff and management. Centralizing administration staff allows for processes to be streamlined, while avoiding duplication of certain tasks that was sometimes necessary due to multiple locations of staff. Having a central location has allowed staff to develop a strong “problem solving” philosophy and implement changes expeditiously and effectively. The project took approximately 7 years to complete due to several stumbling blocks such as easement issues, financing, and increased construction costs. The timing of the building’s completion was a compliment to the market down turn and the need to minimize staffing.

Estero Fire Rescue also replaced an administration vehicle and purchased a trailer for an approximate total of \$35,000. The administration fleet has historically fallen short of timely replacement, but as management continues to strive to make prudent decisions during an era of tax reform, declining property values, rising cost of fuel and global economic crisis, management’s philosophy and practice continues to be “essential costs” for a quality core service of public safety.



Estero Fire Rescue Administrative Complex dedicated on October 4, 2008

Chart 1 reflects the continuing positive trend towards fiscal health with 25% of the budget targeted for reserves. Personnel continues to be the largest piece of the pie.

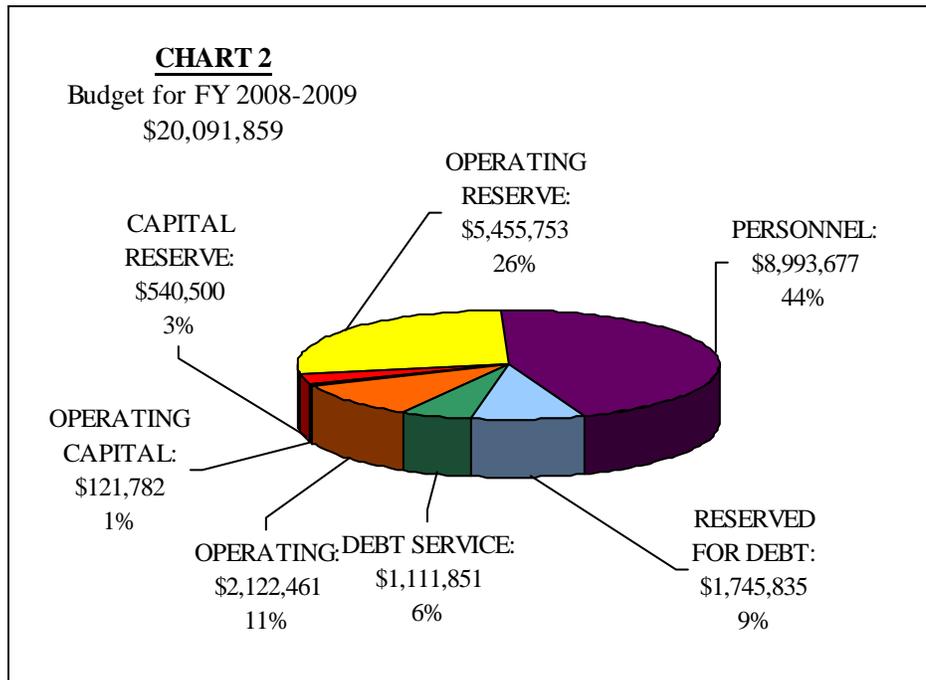
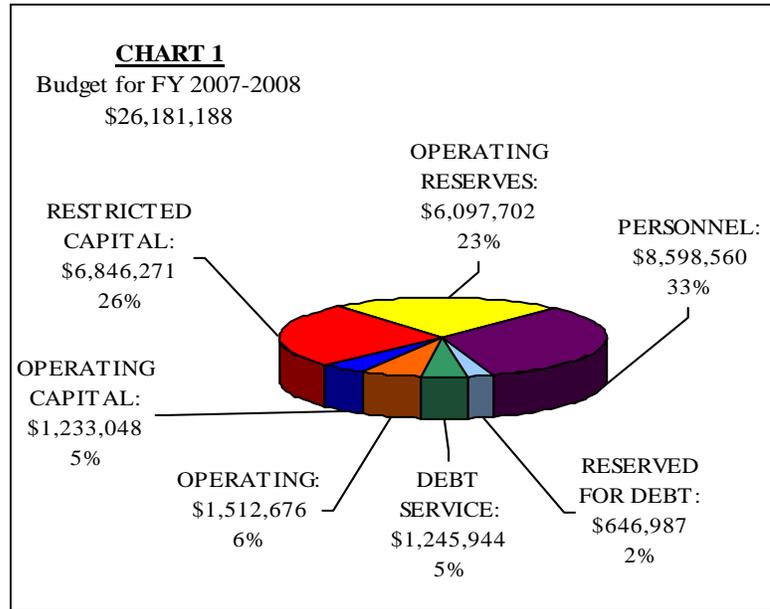


Chart 2 reflects strong fiscal health with 39% of the budget targeted for reserves. Current reserves will provide stability in future years while economic trends demand the development of lean attitudes and operational processes, starting with a reduction in staff in 2008 and a consolidation feasibility study to be completed in 2009.

# HUMAN RESOURCES

LINDA L. CONWAY, HUMAN RESOURCES DIRECTOR



The Human Resources Director serves on the Executive Management Team and is responsible for managing all phases of human resource activity that includes providing consistent leadership, guidance, and support in all aspects of human resource management and labor relations. Essential to all components of Estero Fire Rescue, some of the responsibilities of the Human Resources Director include:

- Assisting employees with questions on policies, processes, insurance and benefits
- Employment and compliance to regulatory concerns including research, study and formal classes which are necessary in order to keep current with the many employment laws that impact employees (FLSA, FMLA, ADA, COBRA, Workers comp, USERRA and others)
- Retirement and benefits management
- Coordination with outside agencies and legal counsel on complaints/lawsuits
- Development of policies and procedures
- Labor Relations including contract negotiations
- Assist directors and supervisors with employment related issues, including hiring, termination, discipline, and other personnel related matters
- Employee health and wellness
- Employee recruitment, selection and orientation
- Employee development and training in HR related issues
- Supervisory counseling
- Return To Work Program
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

As the Division enters its second year at Estero Fire Rescue, we find ourselves focusing on strategies that will streamline the Human Resources functions and developing programs to foster training and learning opportunities to provide our employees with the tools they need to be effective and efficient while serving the residents of our community.

In the wake of the increasing workload and diminishing resources, Human Resources is pleased to announce that during 2008 we experienced success in reducing our workers compensation premium. This was accomplished by educating our employees on safety in the workplace resulting in fewer claims being filed. Our health insurance premium was significantly reduced by \$280,000 as a direct result of the efforts of the Health Insurance Committee. The Committee was established in 2008 and consisted of members from all areas of Estero Fire Rescue who strived to educate our employees on the rising costs of health care and successfully secured a new health insurance package for our employees.

As part of our efforts to encourage health and wellness in our employees, Estero Fire Rescue sponsored an Intern from FGCU who trained our personnel in the proper use of our fitness equipment and assisted employees in the development of personalized physical fitness programs. In October, the Tobacco Free Work Place policy was implemented which prohibits smoking and the use of tobacco products on or in any District property or at any public education event and prohibits the use of tobacco in personal vehicles while transporting persons on official District business. The cultivation of our Return To Work Program and the new EAP Program are just two of the vital programs set into motion to assist our employees. Many new challenges and opportunities will undoubtedly impact what services HR needs to deliver to support our employees in the coming years.

The Human Resources Director maintains the library of Estero Fire Rescue which contains leadership, motivational and educational materials together with training videos and access to benefit documentation. Employees are encouraged to visit the library and check out these valuable resource materials.

As always, we recognize that our employees are our most important resource and Human Resources will continue to ensure their fair and equitable treatment and the recognition of their contribution to the Estero community.

## INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

**LUANN DELO, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADMINISTRATOR**



2008 proved to be a challenging yet very successful and exciting year for Estero Fire Rescue's Information Technology Division. Information Technology has a vision to operate with state of the art cutting edge technology that will best meet the needs of Estero Fire Rescue and allow us to meet the needs of the Estero community. Our responsibility is to maintain a strong, secure communications network infrastructure. Our community relies on us to accurately collect, archive and utilize this information.

Through careful planning and budgeting, Estero Fire Rescue has started to develop a state of the art information and communication infrastructure, which provides the foundation for the future technology needs for Estero Fire Rescue and the District. As we grew from one fire station to four remote fire stations and now the Administrative Complex, maintaining our recordkeeping, payroll and communication infrastructure was imperative. During the construction of the Administrative Complex, our staff worked from mobile offices in temporary trailers, vehicles and fire stations. Communication was made available via cell phones and temporary virtual private networks for data access, financial data processing and payroll. All of this was done to maintain the integrity of Estero Fire Rescue during a time of a much needed capital improvement.

In 2008 we established a secure permanent central location for which the District's data is stored. We added an additional network server and automated tape system to handle the increase in data and to serve as a backup. Estero Fire Rescue now has a complete intra-facility telecommunication system that provides increased efficiencies for employees to conduct their business.



## EXPLORER POST 1964

In addition to his regular duties, Division Chief Coulter serves as the Lead Advisor for the Estero Fire Rescue Explorer Program. The Explorer Program has had another successful year of training and competitions. The Post, also led by Associate Advisors Engineer Laura Occhipinti and Firefighter Clint Skelton, currently has 17 Explorers and is continually recruiting new members from Estero High School and surrounding high schools. 2008 highlights include:



- **Winterfest Competition in Gatlinburg, TN:**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place out of 46 teams in Communications Competition
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place out of 30 in the Advisor's Rapid Dress Drill
- **Hardee County Firematics Competition:**
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Running Hose Event
- **Broward County Firematics Competition**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> Place in Rapid Dress competition
  - 3<sup>rd</sup> Place in Hose Rolling Event
- **St. Petersburg Firematics Competition**
- **Rendezvous Weekend at Camp Miles, Punta Gorda, FL**
  - Overnight camping with team building events
- **Texas Summer Trip**
  - Tour and ride-along program with Houston Fire Department
  - Team building at Cortez Dude Ranch in Bandera, Texas
  - Tour of San Antonio and history of Texas
  - Tour of Disaster City training facility in Bryan, Texas
  - Tour of Bush Presidential Library

The benefits of the program have become more apparent this year with the following accomplishments:

- 3 Estero Fire Rescue Explorers graduated from Fort Myers Fire Academy
- \$825.00 scholarship presented to Lt. Cory Heller for Fire Academy
- Assisted Bonita Springs Fire Rescue to develop their Explorer Program
- Competed with City of Fort Myers in several events and assisted them in developing a competition team.
- Logged over 100 hours of EMS and fire training
- Staffed First Aid tents and participated in numerous community events, such as the 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration at Miromar and Celebrate Estero

The Estero Fire Rescue Explorer Program continues to grow and the success of the program is demonstrated by the accomplishments of the youth involved.

# THE SAFETY FUND

The Estero Community Safety, Education and Emergency Fund exists to:

- Provide education and distribution of emergency and safety supplies to residents and visitors
- Promote safety and health initiative through education
- Provide additional comfort and necessary services to those who require the assistance of Estero Fire Rescue due a natural or man made emergency



The Board for the Safety Fund consists of three Estero Fire Rescue employees and two individuals from the Estero community which have been selected by the employees from Estero Fire Rescue who serve on the Board.

As a valued community partner, Estero Fire Rescue is uniquely qualified and prepared to recognize and address the immediate needs of victims and their families.

The Safety Fund operates solely on the generous donations and contributions from various individuals and communities within the Estero community. These contributors recognize the need and value of the Safety Fund and are committed to its success.

The Safety Fund raised over \$3,100 during 2008. These funds go to support many short and long term service projects within the Estero community. Among these are the acquisition of car seats, bike helmets, expansion of the Citizens Emergency Response Team (CERT) and other safety equipment. The Safety Fund also provides funding for the Explorers Program.





# COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept was created in 1994 by the Los Angeles City Fire Department. CERT training promotes a partnering effort between emergency services and the people they serve. The goal is for emergency personnel to train members of neighborhoods, community organizations, or workplaces in basic response skills. CERT members are then integrated into the emergency response capability for their area. In addition to her duties as Public Relations Manager, Ms. Lindenmuth coordinates and provides training for new CERT members and works closely with the Team during a disastrous event.



If a disastrous event overwhelms or delays the community's first responders, CERT members can assist others by applying the basic response and organizational skills they learned during the training. These skills can help save and sustain lives following a disaster until first responders arrive. CERT skills also apply to daily emergencies.

To date, Estero Fire Rescue has trained eight CERT teams throughout the district and has 90 current members. In 2008, Estero CERT members activated emergency shelters in Estero for Bonita Springs residents when a large brushfire threatened their community. They again answered the call and assisted Red Cross in operating the Estero shelter for approximately two months after Tropical Storm Fay caused the evacuation of over 400 residents from the Manna Christian RV Park in Bonita Springs due to massive flooding.

At the conclusion of the CERT training, the new CERT members participate in a drill of an emergency or disastrous event. The drill enforces the training and skills that were taught and will enable the new members to carry out their duties and responsibilities should they be needed during a disastrous event. Estero Fire Rescue personnel are on hand during the drill to observe and assist the new members, as well as participate in their role as first responders.





## ABOVE AND BEYOND

### Employee of the Year

Scott A. Vanderbrook

### Fire Crew of the Year

Ronald DuBock, Diego Carmona, Timi Custer, Charles Collins, Shane Sells  
Laura Occhipinti, Michael Maradona, Aubrey Chasser, Lawrence Nisbet  
Grant Schwalbe, Anthony Horton, James Brown, David Ott, Dale Reisen  
Scott Vanderbrook, Fred Gonzalez, Rick Patrick, Eliel Blanco

### EMS Crew of the Year

Jerry Krohnfeldt, Matt Larlham, Adam Rambo, Thad Stevens

### Firefighter of the Year

Chuck Collins

### Rising Star

John McDougall

### Chief's Award

Linda Conway

## ACCOMPLISHMENTS

### Promotions

Scott Vanderbrook to Chief  
Mark Wahlig to Assistant Chief  
Linda Conway to Human Resources Director  
Phillip Green to Division Chief of Prevention  
Jeannine Horton to Battalion Chief  
Firefighter Larlham became a paramedic

### *Engineer Promotions:*

Gregory Escarra  
Ryan Evanson  
Daniel Hardman  
Anthony Horton  
Terrence Lindgren  
Michael Maradona

David Murray  
Laura Occhipinti  
Matthew Pagnutti  
Jason Richards  
Schyler Smith  
Thad Stevens

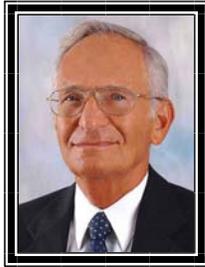
### Highlights

Rescue 42 placed in service  
Air/Light Trailer placed in service  
Moved into Administrative Complex  
HR Director Linda Conway received A.S. Degree in HR Management  
Chief Scott Vanderbrook received A.S. Degree in Fire Science  
Lieutenant Chuck Collins received B.S. Degree  
Lieutenant Grant Schwalbe received B.S. Degree

# THE ESTERO FIRE RESCUE FAMILY



Barbara Akins  
Commissioner  
4 years of service



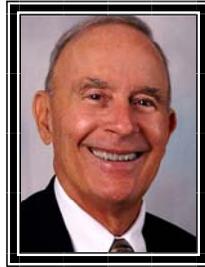
Sam Levy  
Commissioner  
4 years of service



Frank Messana  
Commissioner  
New Commissioner



Gayle Sassano  
Commissioner  
11 years of service



Dick Schweers  
Commissioner  
11 years of service



Brent Althouse  
Lieutenant  
23 years of service



Eliel Blanco  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Jeff Brann  
Lieutenant  
6 years of service



James Brown  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Glen Brownlee  
Lieutenant  
19 years of service



Henry Burke  
Fire Inspector  
9 years of service



Diego Carmona  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
3 years of service



Aubrey Chasser  
Firefighter—EMT  
3 years of service



Charles Collins  
Lieutenant  
8 years of service



Linda Conway  
Human Resources Director  
10 years of service



Todd Coulter  
Division Chief of EMS  
5 years of service



Timi Custer  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



LuAnn Delo  
IT Administrator  
8 years of service



Mark Diaz  
Firefighter—EMT  
New Employee



Ronald DuBock  
Lieutenant  
4 years of service



Edwin Dwyer  
Division Chief of  
Special Operations  
8 years of service



Ember  
New Employee



Gregory Escarra  
Engineer  
3 years of service



Ryan Evanson  
Engineer  
2 years of service



Jason Fiora  
Firefighter—EMT  
2 years of service



Anthony Fite  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Frederick Gonzalez  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
5 years of service



Dennis Goodlad  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
5 years of service



Phillip Green  
Division Chief of  
Prevention  
4 years of service



Shaun Hagan  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Daniel Hardman  
Engineer  
2 years of service



Steve Harris  
Lieutenant  
7 years of service



Lena Hedengren  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
5 years of service



Anthony Horton  
Engineer  
4 years of service



Jeannine Horton  
Battalion Chief  
5 years of service



William Kinkel  
Firefighter—EMT  
New Employee



Jerry Krohnfeldt  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
6 years of service



Scott LaBree  
Lieutenant  
6 years of service



Matthew Larlham  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
3 years of service



Thomas Lentz  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
3 years of service



Susan Lindenmuth  
Public Relations Manager  
4 years of service



Terrence Lindgren  
Engineer  
3 years of service



Johnny Manning  
Fire Inspector  
7 years of service



Guillermo Maradona  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
2 years of service



Michael Maradona  
Engineer  
3 years of service



Christopher Martin  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Patrick McCafferty  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



David McDougall  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
5 years of service



Roberto Medina  
Lieutenant  
6 years of service



David Murray  
Engineer  
7 years of service



Laura Occhipinti  
Engineer  
3 years of service



David Ott  
Lieutenant  
23 years of service



Matthew Pagnutti  
Engineer  
2 years of service



Kim Poli  
AA to Fire Chief  
3 years of service



Thomas Poole  
Lieutenant  
8 years of service



Adam Rambo  
Firefighter—EMT  
New Employee



Maria Ramos  
AA to Prevention  
3 years of service



Dale Reisen  
Battalion Chief  
9 years of service



Jason Richards  
Engineer  
6 years of service



Felicia Rodriguez  
Lieutenant  
8 years of service



David Russell  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
3 years of service



Grant Schwalbe  
Lieutenant  
5 years of service



Shane Sells  
Firefighter—EMT  
19 years of service



Clint Skelton  
Firefighter—EMT  
1 year of service



Schyler Smith  
Engineer  
3 years of service



Thad Stevens  
Engineer  
8 years of service



Jean Strobel  
Finance Specialist  
6 years of service



Scott Vanderbrook  
Chief  
10 years of service



Mark Wahlig  
Assistant Chief  
10 years of service



Judy West  
Admin. Specialist—Operations  
8 years of service



Jarred Whelan  
Firefighter—Paramedic  
3 years of service



April White  
Finance Director  
5 years of service

“Family isn’t about whose blood you have. It’s about who you care about.”  
*Trey Parker and Matt Stone*



## WHERE TO FIND US



Administrative Complex  
21500 Three Oaks Parkway  
Estero, Florida 33928  
239.390.8000  
239.390.8020 (Fax)  
[www.esterofire.org](http://www.esterofire.org)

“Look not mournfully into the past. It comes not back again. Wisely improve the present. It is thine.  
Go forth to meet the shadowy future, without fear.”

*Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, 1807-1882*

“Live neither in the past nor in the future, but let each day’s work absorb your entire energies,  
and satisfy your widest ambition.”

*Sir William Osler, 1849-1919*

Special thanks to the Estero Fire Rescue personnel who contributed to the 2008 Annual Report.  
Annual Report Coordinator—Kim Poli, Administrative Assistant to the Fire Chief



**“Dedicated And Driven For Those We Serve”**