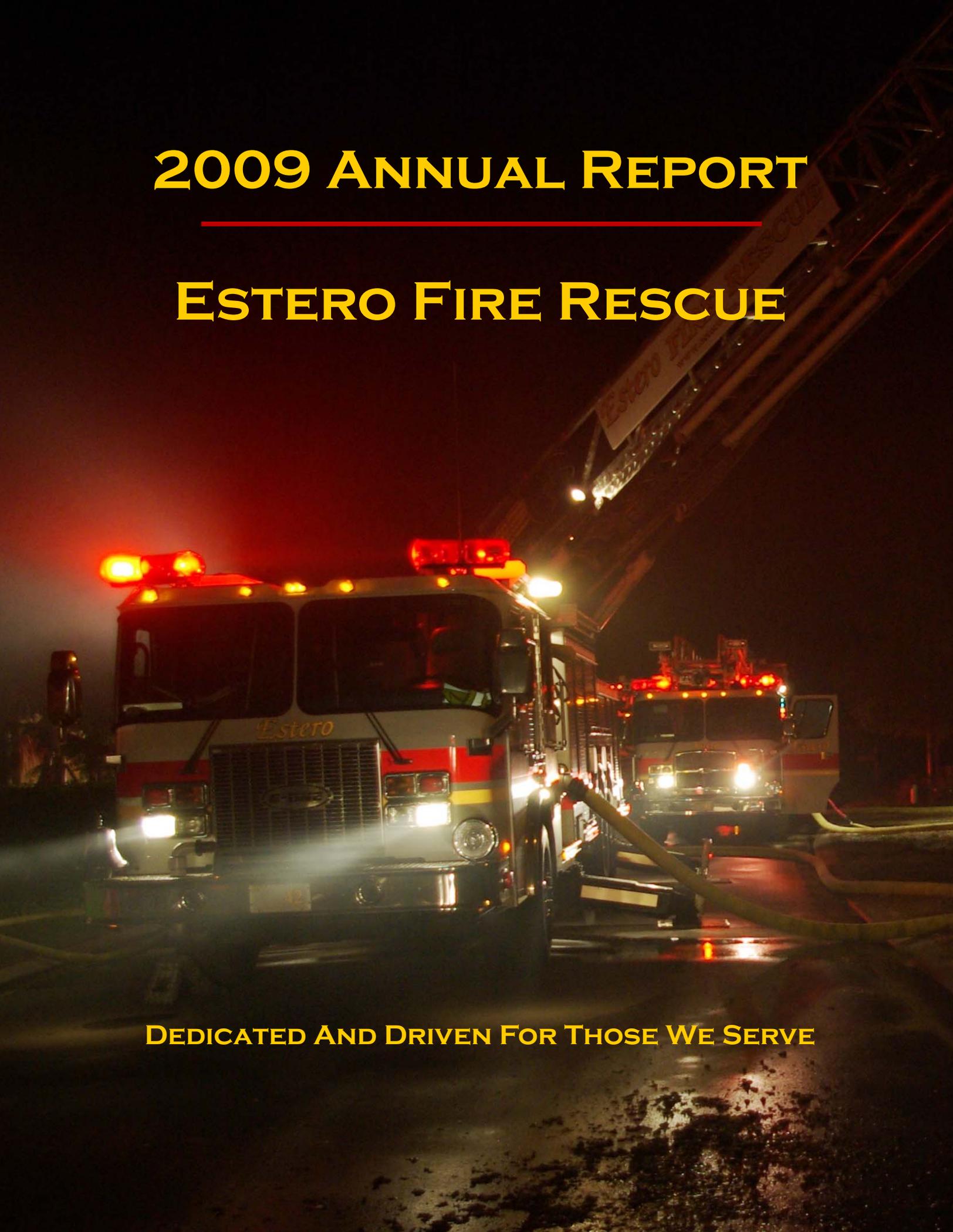


2009 ANNUAL REPORT

ESTERO FIRE RESCUE



DEDICATED AND DRIVEN FOR THOSE WE SERVE

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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 members of Estero Fire Rescue, I'm pleased to present the District's Annual Report for 2009.

Over the past year, we have all watched the effects of the economic down turn take a toll on local revenues, and subsequently, our emergency services budgets. The Estero Fire District Board of Fire Commissioners and the staff of Estero Fire Rescue made tough decisions to insure job stability and continue to fund the essential needs of the Community's fire and EMS services.



As a team, we have sought innovative ways to defy the hardship we are dealt and work alongside our Community and Commissioners to maintain our core services and mission critical programs. We, as a skilled, diverse, and professional team, will face this challenge head on and together.

I would like to thank the Commissioners and employees of Estero Fire Rescue for their continued support over the past year and look forward to working with all, as we move through 2010.

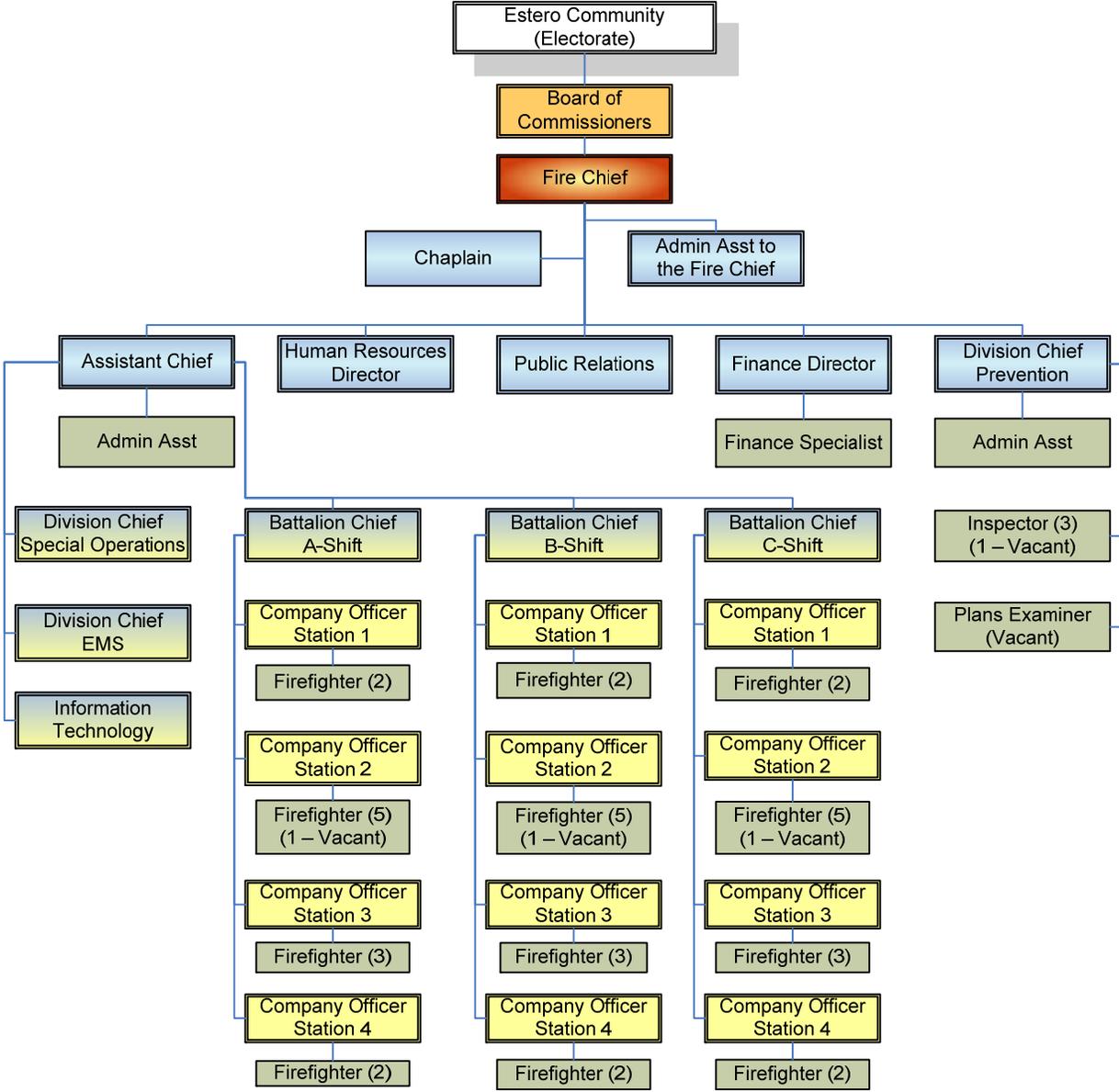
We value our partnership with the Community. As we strive to make the Estero Community safe, we realize our success will ultimately depend upon the relationships we have built – and continue to build – with our neighbors. We always welcome your input and ask for your support. In all of our efforts, we are guided by our values of “Pride, Dedication, Professionalism, and Service.”

At Estero Fire Rescue the safety and well-being of our employees and citizens are our top priority. We take great pride in all of our public safety accomplishments.

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 appointed to fill a seat mid-term due to the resignation, retirement or death 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

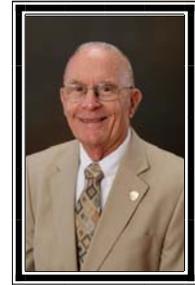


COMMISSIONER DICK SCHWEERS

CHAIRPERSON, SEAT 4

The years are beginning to fly by, and as I begin my thirteenth year with Estero Fire Rescue, each passing year seems more eventful than the previous one.

Chief Vanderbrook has been faced with many challenges since becoming Chief a year and a half ago. I am pleased to report that he has met all the challenges head on and with a positive attitude! He has spoken at several Community gatherings throughout the year to keep the residents apprised of what Estero Fire Rescue is doing.



The financial situation continues in a state of flux and there does not seem to be a light at the end of the tunnel, as yet. The projection for 2010 is not encouraging at this time.

We received many complaints from residents regarding our estimated millage rate this past year but were able to settle on something that pleased most. I would not dare venture a guess at this time as to what's in store for next year. We are hopefully anticipating that many of our residents will be joining us at our Budget Workshops in 2010. The staff, both administration and operations, are currently at bare bones and there is no plan to do any additional hiring.

On a sad note, Commissioner Sam Levy passed away in October and Commissioner Barbara Akins resigned from the Board in September. Both of these fine Commissioners will be missed and our prayers are with them. We truly appreciate their contributions and the years of dedicated service they brought to Estero Fire Rescue and the Community! We are a better organization thanks to their efforts!

Sean James was selected by the Board to replace Barbara Akins at the October Board Meeting and Bruce Philp was selected to replace Sam Levy at the November Board Meeting. Both new Commissioners bring a wealth of managerial and financial background and experience to the Board. Commissioner James and Commissioner Philp have both displayed considerable enthusiasm as they meet the employees and learn about the many facets of their duties and responsibilities. We are extremely pleased to have both of these fine gentlemen join the Estero Fire Rescue Board of Fire Commissioners!

And lastly, our emergency traffic signal finally went into full operation on November 23, 2009! This allows our crews to enter US41 safer and to respond to all types of emergencies sooner, as these calls are where every second counts.

COMMISSIONER GAYLE SASSANO

SEAT 1



While every year at Estero Fire Rescue is exciting, this past year has been especially so. We said good-bye to old friends and welcomed new friends to our fire service family. Drastic cuts in revenue created difficult budget decisions. However, ALL of the wonderful employees stepped up to the plate and made sacrifices for the good of the organization. I couldn't be more proud of everyone if they were all my own children!

The Estero residents, the District, and the Estero Board of Fire Commissioners face some tough decisions in the coming months. Housing slowdowns, the economy, and more state-local budget cutbacks will 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 everyone.

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

COMMISSIONER FRANK MESSANA

SEAT 2

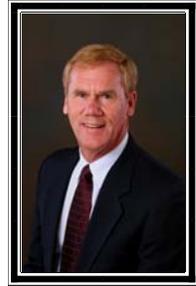


First, I would like to thank the residents of Estero for their tremendous support for their fire department during these tough economic times. I have been honored to be your elected representative to the Estero Board of Fire Commissioners. 2010 will continue to be a challenging year for all of us in Southwest Florida. As you may know, governments are facing the same budget crunches that we are all facing in our own homes and businesses. Governments will be forced to live within a budget just like you and I do at home. At Estero Fire Rescue, we have the challenge of providing a quality emergency response service level that the residents, visitors, and business owners deserve and expect. During FY 2010, Estero Fire Rescue will face even greater challenges due to declining property values and the 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 BRUCE PHILP

SECRETARY-TREASURER, SEAT 3

I would first like to extend my appreciation to the other Commissioners for my recent appointment to the Estero Board of Fire Commissioners. On behalf of all of the residents of Estero, I look forward to working with the Board, Chief Vanderbrook and his well organized staff and to be directly involved in the decisions that affect the quality of fire and rescue services in this Community.



Over the past couple of years we have witnessed a major deterioration of the economy and an unprecedented erosion of the market value of southwest Florida real estate, with both conditions putting a significant strain on operating budgets for all public services in the region.

2009 was again a period of coordinating cooperative service agreements with neighboring districts and continuing to implement other administrative cost containment programs in order to stay within the reduced operating budget. Despite the current economic climate, retention of our highly skilled and dedicated employees remain a priority as well as providing the on-going training necessary to maintain the high level of professional services on which Estero Fire Rescue rests its reputation.

Estero Fire Rescue is a relatively young fire department and is not in the same financial position many other older districts are who have accumulated reserves to absorb economic down-cycles. While other fire districts were forced to draw on their financial reserves and lay off employees to meet their operating budgets for 2010, Chief Vanderbrook and his staff managed to develop a budget that did not require utilizing any of the very limited reserves the organization has been able to accumulate. A goal is to develop a reserve plan to keep Estero Fire Rescue in a position that minimizes the negative financial and organizational impact of a down-turn on the Estero Community and the organization.

2010 will bring new challenges and opportunities. The Tri-Data three-district consolidation report has been released and will be analyzed thoroughly to determine if the timing or the process of consolidation makes functional and financial sense at this time or any time in the future. Also, given the considerable size of the annual budget that it occupies, negotiated compensation and benefit arrangements must be fair to both the employees as well as the Community and remain reasonable in the relevant market.

Again, I look forward to being a part of this very dynamic and enthusiastic organization.

COMMISSIONER SEAN JAMES

VICE-CHAIR, SEAT 5



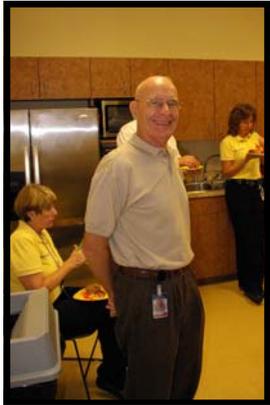
In October 2009, I was honored to have been appointed to fill the vacancy on the Estero Board of Fire Commissioners which resulted from the resignation of Commissioner Barbara Akins.

These are turbulent times. We have emerged from an extended period of explosive growth which has evolved into a time of severe contraction resulting in declining tax revenues and impact fees. Many economic forecasts predict that this trend will continue for at least the next two budget years. As such, Estero Fire Rescue will have to deal with the reality of declining revenues while striving to maintain the organizational capability and level of service which has been developed over the past ten years. These conditions demand a different management approach and I am pleased at the cooperative effort being made with Bonita Springs and San Carlos Park to develop areas of cooperation that can maintain or improve service while containing cost.

The findings and recommendations of an independent study, designed to assess the feasibility of consolidating these three fire districts, was provided to the commissioners of each district. While I disagree with some of the recommendations in the report, I continue to believe that this is a goal worth pursuing, provided that it can financially benefit the citizens of each of the three districts without detracting from the high level of service which they currently experience and have come to expect. However, it is a complex process that has to be meticulously planned, methodically executed, and fully supported by the management, employees and residents of all three districts.

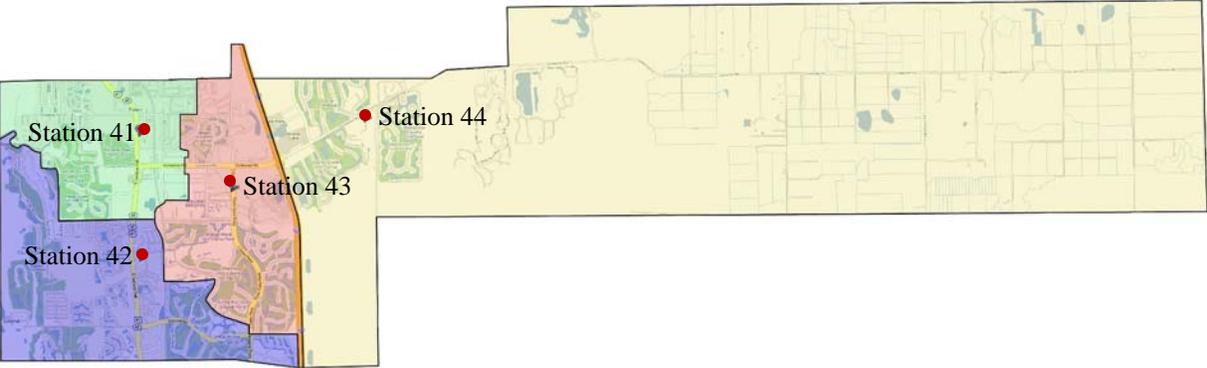
In the interim, I encourage and support the continuation of the process of cooperation between the three districts that has already produced some significant improvements in service at contained cost levels.

COMMISSIONERS' APPRECIATION BRUNCH FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL

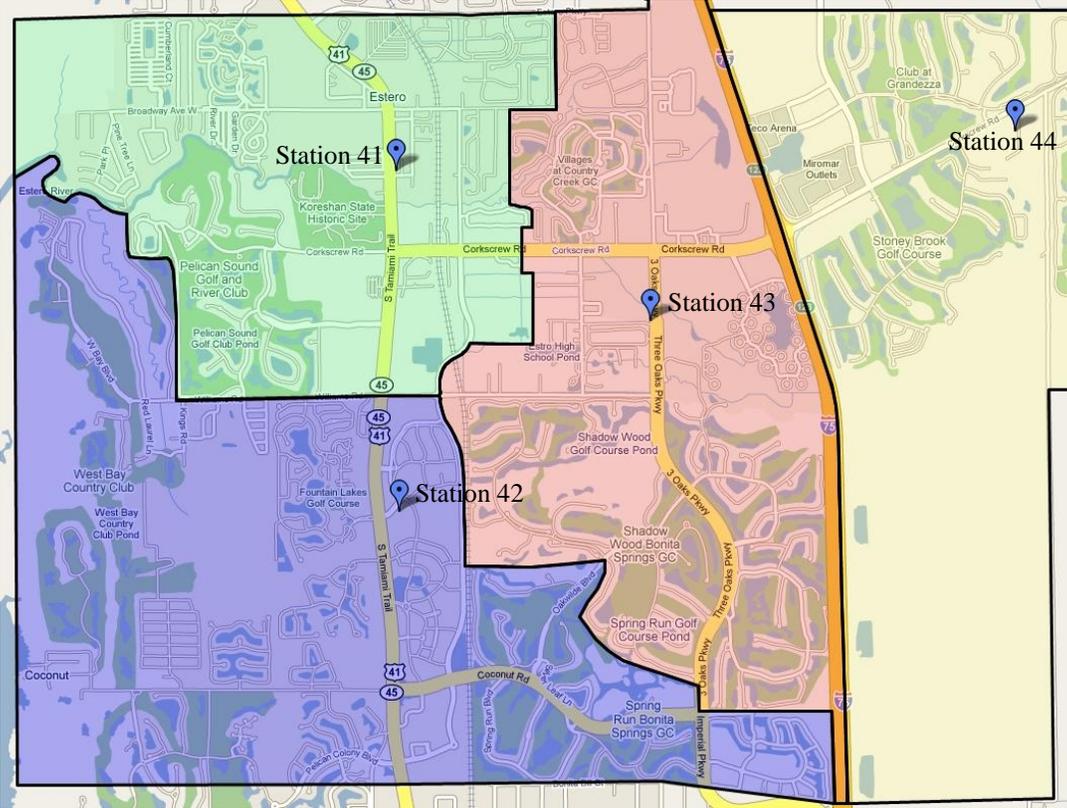


THE DISTRICT

In 1976, the State of Florida divided Lee County into official Fire Districts, including the Estero Fire Rescue District, encompassing 56 square miles of Southern Lee County extending from Estero Bay to Collier County. This map shows the area the Estero Fire Rescue District is responsible for serving.



The map below shows the more densely populated areas and the station locations which serve them.



Both maps are accessible on our web site www.esterofire.org

STATION 41—8631 COUNTY ROAD



Station 41 is known as the George Horne Station, after Estero’s first fire chief. It became operational in August of 2002, and is located at the corner of US 41 and County Road, about 1/2 mile south of the original Estero fire station. Station 41 serves the northwest portion of the District, including the historic sections of Estero and the Koreshan State Historical Site. Station 41 houses 1 Lieutenant, 1 Engineer and 1 Firefighter/Paramedic per shift. Marine 40, Air-40 and Brush 41 are not staffed and require personnel from Ladder 41 in order to be placed into service.

Ladder 41 is an ALS (Advanced Life Support) vehicle, and it can hoist a water line 75’ in the air. The truck carries 500 gallons of water and can pump 1,250 gallons per minute when attached to a hydrant. The nozzle at the top of the ladder can be remote controlled from the ground and deliver up to 1,000 gallons per minute. This vehicle is called a ‘quint’ because the aerial ladder adds a fifth capability to the 4 found on a regular pumper.



75’ Aerial (Ladder 41)



Marine 40



Light-Duty Brush/Utility (Brush 41)



Air & Light Trailer (Air-40)

STATION 42—SWEETWATER RANCH



Station 42 is located on Sweetwater Ranch Blvd., a fairly new road that leads into the Rapallo Development and Coconut Point, directly across from the entrance to Fountain Lakes on US 41. Station 42 serves the densely populated southwest portion of the District, including the Coconut Point Mall. While identical to the other stations on the inside, its outside appearance matches the architecture of the surrounding development. Station 42 became operational in the fall of 2005. Due to the large call volume for Station 42 more

personnel are housed at this station, which includes 1 Lieutenant, 1 Engineer and 3 Firefighter/Paramedics per shift. Truck 42 is placed into service with a Lieutenant, Engineer and 1 Firefighter/Paramedic while Rescue 42 is placed into service with 2 Firefighter/Paramedics.

In 2007, Estero Fire Rescue purchased a rescue unit that is utilized for medical calls instead of an engine company. This reduces mileage and wear and tear on our engine company, therefore reducing vehicle maintenance and fuel costs.



Rescue 42

This 2002 E-One, 95' platform is the flagship of Estero Fire Rescue's fleet of emergency response vehicles. It has all of the capabilities of Estero Fire Rescue's other ALS engines, plus it carries heavy equipment for Southwest Florida's Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR), also known as Florida's Task Force Six. The platform can hold up to 500 pounds while delivering a stream of water and hours of breathable air. A maximum of 750 pounds can be lifted by the platform if it is not flowing water, and can be positioned in any direction including straight up or straight out to the side.



95' Aerial (Truck 42)

STATION 43—21510 THREE OAKS PARKWAY



Known as the Three Oaks Station, Station 43 became operational in March of 2002. It is located about 1/4 mile south of Corkscrew Road. Station 43 covers portions of the Brooks, Estero High School and much of the area near and just west of I-75. At the present time, Station 43 is also host to a Lee County Ambulance (Medic 21). Station 43 houses 1 Battalion Chief, 1 Lieutenant, 1 Engineer and 1 Firefighter/Paramedic per shift. Brush 43 requires personnel from Engine 43 or another Station in order to be placed into service.

This full Class A firefighting truck is a 2002 E-One pumper, holding 750 gallons of water and is capable of pumping 1,500 gallons of water per minute when hooked to a hydrant. This is an Advanced Life Support (ALS) vehicle, carrying a paramedic and the best life support equipment this side of a hospital. This engine, along with a nearly identical engine 44, make up the backbone of Estero Fire Rescue's fleet of life saving vehicles.



Pumper (Engine 43)



Shift Commander (Battalion 40)



Light-Duty Brush (Brush 43)

STATION 44-21300 FIREHOUSE LANE



Known as the Stoneybrook Station, Station 44 was completed in March of 2003. It is located immediately north of Pinewoods Elementary School. Its close proximity to the school provides the opportunity for the crews at Station 44 to be very active with children’s fire and safety education. Station 44 serves the District east of I-75. Station 44 houses 1 Lieutenant, 1 Engineer and 1 Firefighter/Paramedic per shift. Brush 44 and Tender 44 require personnel from Engine 44 or another Station in order to be placed into service.

This truck is also a 2002 E-One pumper and has the same capabilities as Engine 43. Estero Fire Rescue’s truck numbering corresponds with their location. The first number (4) is the designation for the Estero Fire District. The second number is the number of the fire station where the vehicle generally resides when not on emergency calls.



Pumper (Engine 44)



Brush 44



The 3,000 gallon Kenworth tender is a vital piece of equipment for firefighters and a great addition to the arsenal for Estero Fire Rescue. This is most notable in areas where there are limited water resources. Tender 44 carries a 600 gallon per minute pump and a folding tank that will allow the vehicle to offload its water supply into a holding tank while it goes to refill. This holding tank can then be used by engines to draw water for fire suppression. The tender allows Estero Fire Rescue to defend property outside of 1,000 feet from a hydrant. Property insurance may be reduced because of this vehicle.



3,000 Gallon Tender (Tender 44)

OPERATIONS

MARK C. WAHLIG, ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF



During the year it is easy to become overwhelmed with the amount of outstanding work and projects that must be completed. Every day another issue arises that, of course, needs immediate attention overshadowing earlier priorities. Rarely is one situation rectified before another one surfaces. And yet, in the end we look back and can see so many accomplishments.

Nothing seemed to last as long as the consolidation study entered into by Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park. Many of Estero Fire Rescue's employees provided a great deal of information, comments, suggestions and time. While the final report may not have lived up to the expectation, the process provided us with something even bigger. Now more than ever these three districts, with diverse backgrounds and demographics, are working together in ways that mimic one large district.

The most obvious and direct benefit to the Community came in the form of closest-unit-response which all three districts now participate in. Many other districts are now looking at the model we have created. Additionally, the three districts have come together with cooperative training, operational consistency, and their management teams meet regularly to continue improvements to the system.

Estero Fire Rescue's switch to MSA air packs can also be contributed to the consolidation study as well as our commitment to the health and safety of our firefighters. It can be a daunting task to change a District wide piece of equipment as important as SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus), but Estero Fire Rescue's operational employees were eager to bring this equipment in-house and were very effective in implementing the equipment with as little complications as possible.

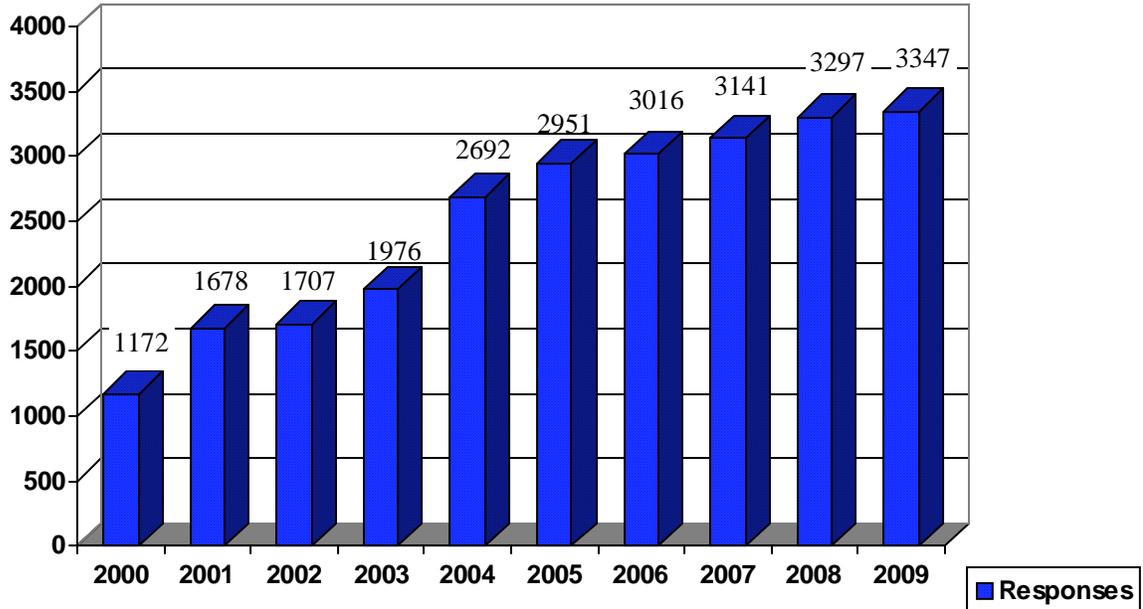
This past year we entered into a pilot program with Lee County EMS along with San Carlos Park and Bonita Springs. This program called MPDS (Medical Priority Dispatch System) allows 911 call takers to implement a series of questions targeted at identifying the patient's medical priority. If a patient's needs are considered to be minor then the response can be reduced to a single unit or the response can be reduced to non-emergency. This utilizes emergency equipment and personnel more efficiently and reduces the risk for commuters and emergency responders.

In 2009, Estero Fire Rescue was successful in receiving a grant to purchase a marine unit to provide services to our commercial and recreational boaters. In accepting the grant, Estero Fire Rescue has entered into MERT (Marine Emergency Response Team) to provide water rescue and fire suppression off-shore as well.

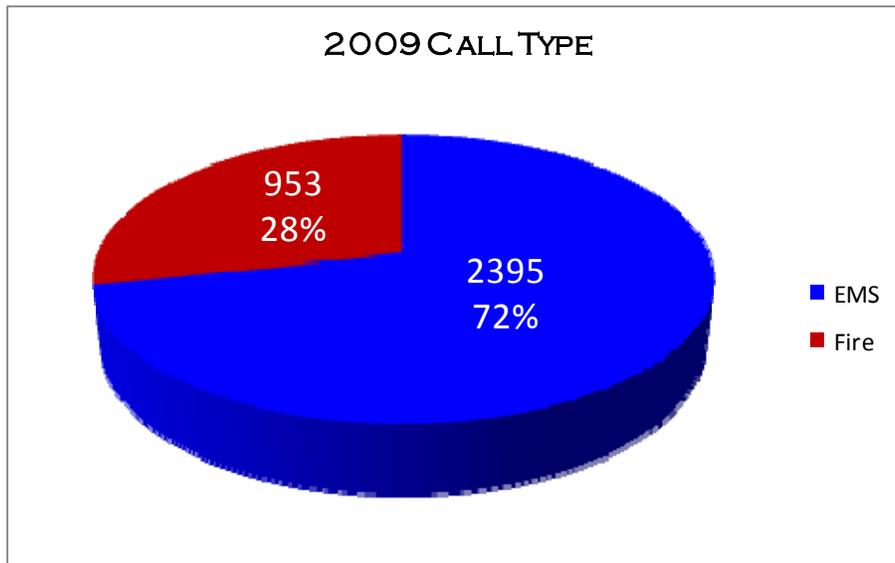
This year reminded us again that we must be prepared for the unexpected. The outbreak of the H1N1 virus threatened our Community and our work force. Estero Fire Rescue immediately vaccinated our employees to keep them on the job and then assisted with vaccination of the high-risk communities. This became a working exercise that provided critical experience for future outbreaks. Estero Fire Rescue's employees willingly face the threat of sickness and disease routinely and they responded to the H1N1 outbreak no differently.

As the national economy begins its cyclical upturn, local governments, such as Estero Fire Rescue, must continue to practice strict fiduciary responsibility. By continuing our conservative financial management we are better prepared to weather future fluctuations. Our primary goal is to provide the Community with a public safety service that serves the Community efficiently and economically.

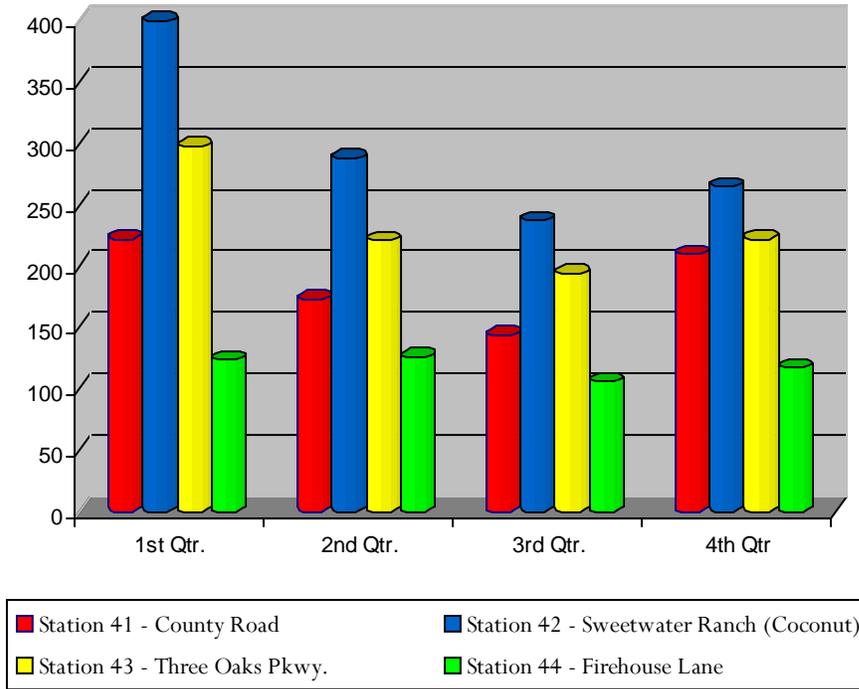
CALL VOLUME FOR LAST 10 YEARS



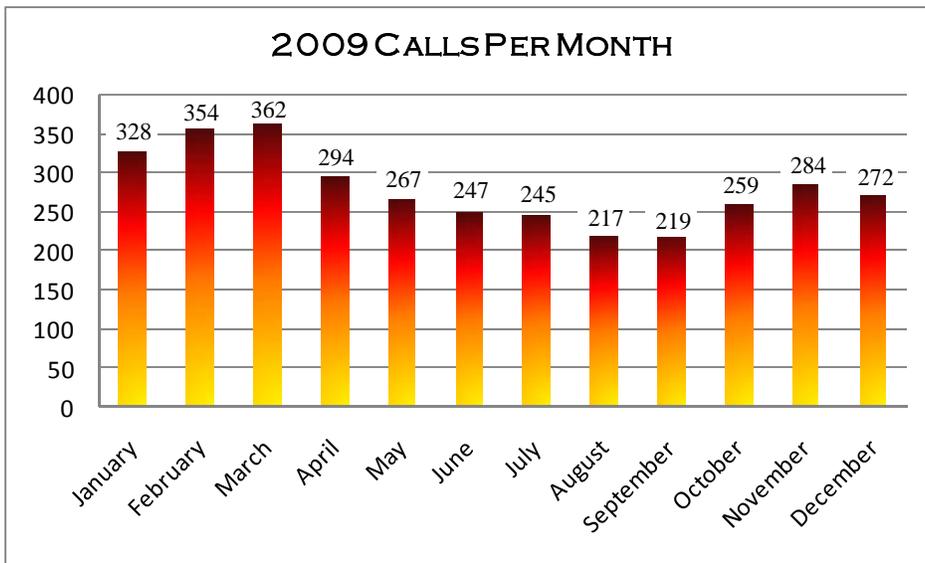
As the Estero Community has grown over the past ten years so has the increase for service.

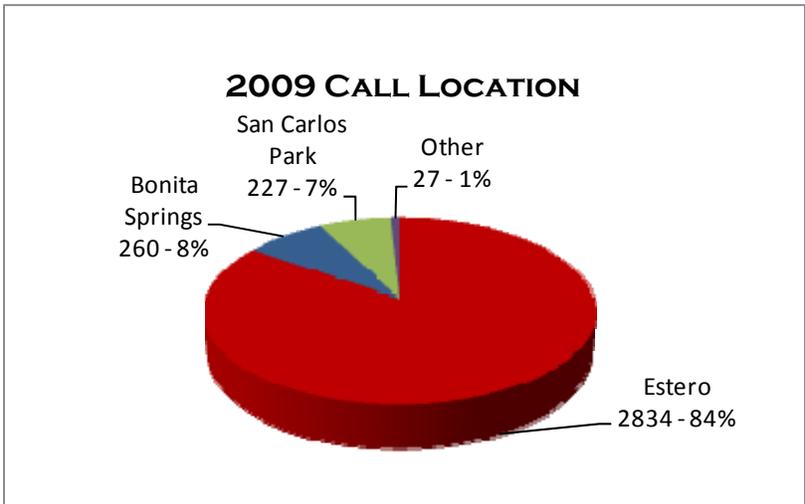
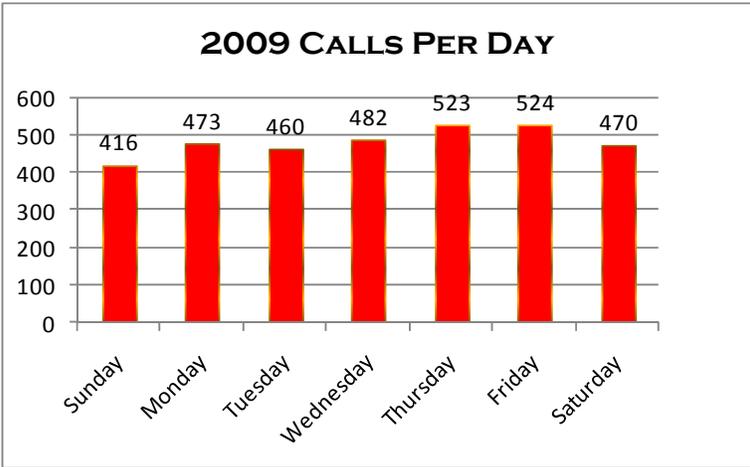
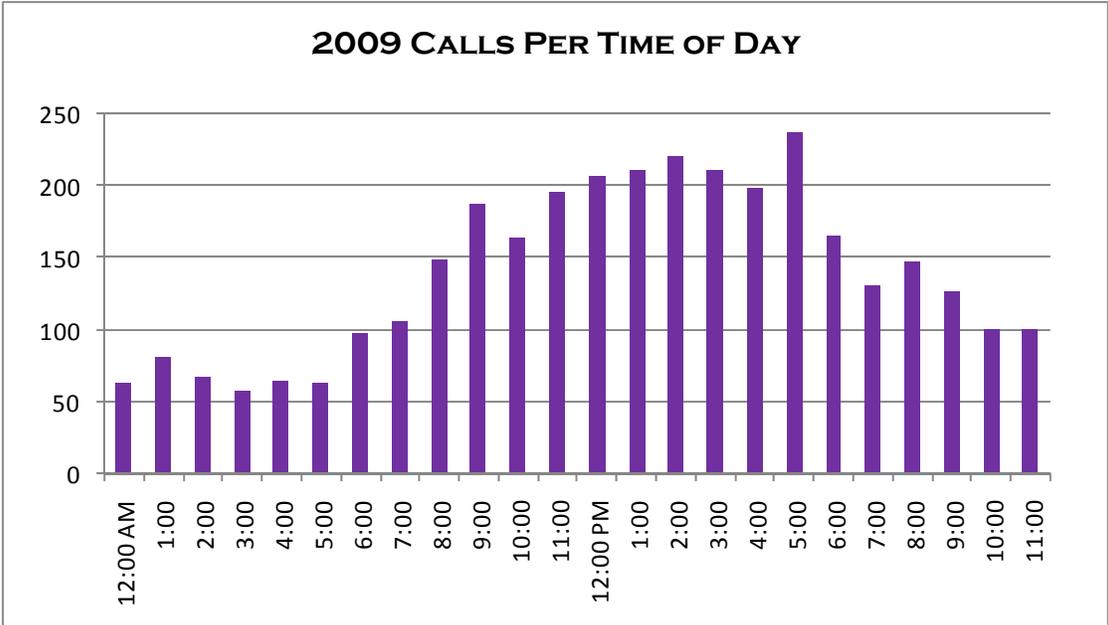


2009 MONTHLY CALLS PER SHIFT / STATION



2009 CALLS PER MONTH





SPECIAL OPERATIONS

EDWIN M. DWYER, DIVISION CHIEF



The Special Operations Division Chief of Estero Fire Rescue reports directly to the Assistant Fire Chief and is part of the Operations Team. 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.

MARINE UNIT

The Marine Unit is coordinated by Lieutenant Glen Brownlee. In 2009 Lt. Brownlee, on behalf of Estero Fire Rescue, applied for a competitive Grant to enhance our services in the water areas of our District. Estero Fire Rescue was successful and received the Grant award. With this Grant, Estero Fire Rescue acquired a 22' rescue boat. During the months of November and December the rescue boat was acquired, outfitted with its motor, top and trailer and equipped to provide rescue services. The training of our personnel is scheduled for the first quarter of 2010. Estero Fire Rescue is a member of the Lee County Marine Emergency Response Team (MERT), which is a cooperative mutual aid system providing emergency response and assistance to citizens and visitors on the water in Lee County.



EMS BIKE TEAM UNIT

The EMS Bike Unit is coordinated by Engineer Gregory Escarra. The EMS Bike Team had a tremendous year. Engineer Escarra and Lieutenant Scott LaBree attended an Instructor Trainer Course sponsored by the International Police Mountain Bike Association and became EMS Bike Team Instructors. After returning from the training they used the new skills to provide refresher training to the current members. The instructors, along with instructors from Lee County EMS, hosted an EMS Bike Course in November. The class



was well attended with one firefighter attending from as far away as Jacksonville, Florida. Four members from Estero Fire Rescue successfully passed the course bringing our Team Membership to 13. During the year, the EMS Bike Team provided service at 12 events.





HAZARDOUS MATERIAL TEAM

In 2003, Estero Fire Rescue started its own Hazardous Material Operational Team to respond and mitigate hazardous material incidents that may harm the visitors, citizens and the environment of Estero.

In early 2009, Battalion Chief Dale Reisen was appointed as the Hazardous Material Coordinator for Estero Fire Rescue to help re-establish a functional working hazardous material team. All operational employees have been trained to the hazardous material operational level and some of our personnel have obtained the level of hazardous material technician. Our Chief Officers have trained and received the Incident Command System training for hazardous material responses.

With the new year upon us, we are looking at organized structure training on hazardous material emergency and to increase the training hours for our hazardous material team members.

In October 2009, members of Estero Fire Rescue attended a three day class on Weapons of Mass Destruction Hazards Material Decon Training. The class, sponsored by the City of Fort Myers Fire Department Hazardous Material Team, was provided by a company hired by U.S. Homeland Security.

Team members learned the different types of hazardous materials that could be used by terrorists and how to decontaminate a large population of people in a mass casualty incident.



Emergency responders training on decontamination procedures.

URBAN SEARCH AND RESCUE (USAR) UNIT

Estero Fire Rescue remains one of the founding and continuous members of the USAR Team. Estero Fire Rescue has ten members on the USAR Team. Also known as Florida Task Force 6, the USAR Team is also a State of Florida asset that may be deployed in natural and manmade disasters. Estero Fire Rescue's



Chief Vanderbrook is a member of the Board of Directors that oversees this Team. Due to a very inactive Hurricane Season, the task force was not deployed in 2009. However, there are always local responses to augment area agencies with specialized rescue capabilities. The team must continue to train in at least eight areas of specialty rescue to maintain competency along with regularly scheduled meetings, maintenance and readiness check of their apparatus and equipment.

EMS

TODD COULTER, DIVISION CHIEF



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

Estero Fire Rescue responded to 2,395 EMS calls in 2009, which accounted for 72% of total incidents for the year. Cardiac, general illness and traumatic injuries are the leading types of EMS calls encountered throughout each year.

As of December 2009, Estero Fire Rescue was staffed with 30 licensed paramedics which includes 17 Firefighters/Engineers, 8 Lieutenants, 2 Battalion Chiefs, 2 Division Chiefs, and 1 Assistant Chief.

EMS training was a priority again this year, with each firefighter required to complete a minimum of 60 hours of EMS training. This monthly training includes EMS training videos, EMS lectures, patient scenarios, and protocol competency assessments. In addition to the monthly training, Paramedics were also recertified in Advanced Cardiac Life Support during 2009. Target Safety online EMS training was implemented during 2009, giving firefighters another resource to complete their continuing education requirements. One of the highlights of the year was 3 days of training with the EMLRC's (Emergency Medicine Learning & Resource Center) Mobile Simulation Lab. This 45-foot motor coach is designed with a complete ambulance bay and emergency room inside to train firefighters in real life bio-terrorism scenarios.

During 2009, the most notable improvement to our EMS Division was the addition of continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) devices on all of our apparatus. CPAP in the field has been shown to greatly improve chronic and acute respiratory patients. The patients who have had CPAP administered in the field are likely to stay in the hospital fewer days and the complications usually associated with severe respiratory diseases are greatly reduced.



FIRE INVESTIGATIONS

DALE I. REISEN, BATTALION CHIEF - FIRE INVESTIGATIVE UNIT



Since the Fire Investigative Unit for Estero Fire Rescue began in 1999, on average we conduct 15 official fire investigations every year. This past year we conducted 12 origin and cause fire investigations that were requested due to suspicious activity or large fire loss.

Why do some fire departments in Lee County conduct their own fire investigations when the State has its own State Fire Investigator? Florida Statutes and a federal law, "Emergency Doctorate" give the rights to fire departments to investigate the origin and cause to any fire, smoke or explosion that may occur in ones jurisdiction. With our department having their own fire investigator, the District has a faster response which means less time for crews to remain on scene. The local investigator knows trends and related problems within the District. By having our own investigator, incendiary fire cases will be worked continuously with most evidence being handled internally. It also brings a better working relationship between the state investigators and the local departments who continue to work together on cases; which means two investigators are better than one on a criminal case. Estero's Fire Investigative Unit has been selected by the Florida Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association to be a test site for the new State Juvenile Firesetters Data Base System which will track state juvenile firesetters.

4 - Accidental Structure Fires	2 - Incendiary Vehicle Fires
2 - Accidental Wildland Fires	2 - Incendiary Wildland Fires
1 - Accidental Vehicle Fire	1 - Undetermined Structure Fire

The first commercial structure fire of the year was at McDonalds in the Grande Oaks Shopping Center. The fire started in the kitchen area when fryer oil got too hot and caught on fire. Fire damage was contained to the kitchen area; the business was closed for two weeks.

The District's first arson case of 2009 was in April when the woods were set fire at the corner of Sandy Lane and Corkscrew Road. Two juveniles were caught and admitted setting the fire; they were required to complete the Lee County Juvenile Firesetters Program. Also in April, a vehicle found at Corkscrew Road just west of Carter Road was set on fire in the middle of the night. The vehicle was reported stolen and lab tests revealed that gasoline was poured on the vehicle and set on fire.

A second vehicle arson was found in December on Corkscrew Road east of Six L's Farm Road. Fire behavior patterns and evidence taken at the scene showed that gasoline was used again to start the fire. The State crime lab confirmed our findings. Both of these criminal cases are still open with no suspects.

Three of the accidental structure fires were the result of electrical problems. One of the electrical problems was due to an extra electrical cord being rapped together too tight, reducing the electrical current. Another residential structure fire was due to a poor electrical connection that failed and the third was the electrical transformer at Miromar Mall which was hit by a vehicle. This fire back fed into one of the mall buildings causing a small explosion within the electrical room and an estimated \$150,000 dollars in damage.



Miromar Mall

PUBLIC EDUCATION & PUBLIC RELATIONS

SUSAN LINDENMUTH, PUBLIC RELATIONS MANAGER



PUBLIC RELATIONS

The Public Relations Division hosts a diverse area within Estero Fire Rescue, consisting of public relations, public information and education. Public Relations acts as the liaison to the residents and Community for the fire department. 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 with contacts for insurance, housing and emergency contacts. Additionally, this department schedules the multitudes of public appearances and events attended by the department.



PUBLIC INFORMATION

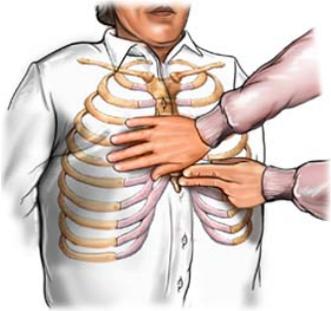


Public Information is committed to releasing comprehensive and accurate information in a timely manner, coordinating media coverage on breaking news incidents and events and releasing details about the department's mission, goals and accomplishments through prudent, persistent and precise release of 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 or important public service announcements. The

division also oversees the department's website, keeping data accurate and up to date.

CARDIO PULMONARY RESUSCITATION (CPR)

Heart disease has long been one of the most prolific killers of Americans, crossing the boundaries of race, age and social status. Estero Fire Rescue has been on the forefront of battle by responding to many medical calls, often cardiac related. Estero Fire Rescue has also been a leader in the prevention of heart disease in its education programs by partnering with the American Heart Association to deliver training to the public in the event of a medical emergency. As a Training Center for the American Heart Association, Estero Fire Rescue manages over 100 CPR instructors in 6 Training Sites throughout the county. These sites offer public training in CPR, First Aid, Blood borne Pathogens and Automatic External Defibrillators.



In 2009, Estero Fire Rescue took on three new training sites and 40 instructors from other fire districts after financial constraints caused their prior Training Center to reduce staff. Current training sites include the Lee County Sheriff's Department, Reisen Commercial Safety and Staff Development, Iona McGregor Fire District, Rescue Resources, Bayshore Fire District and Bonita Springs Fire District. Through its numerous programs, the Estero Fire Rescue Training Center has trained over 2,500 people in lifesaving skills throughout the county in 2009 alone.

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. This is the role of Public Education ~ to provide residents with the knowledge to reduce injuries, death and property loss due to fire and unintentional injuries. An educated citizen is our most important asset. Each year, data is analyzed at the national, state and local levels to determine the latest trends in fire and injury prevention. This information is used to create, update and redirect programs to meet the needs of the Community.

Each member of Estero Fire Rescue has 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 the businesses safe.



Working closely with the Operations Division, 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:

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

Estero Fire Rescue's Dalmatian Ember meets with members of the public and acts as a goodwill ambassador for the department. With her gentle nature she is a favorite of children and parents and has a positive effect on fire safety lessons taught as she interacts with participants.



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.

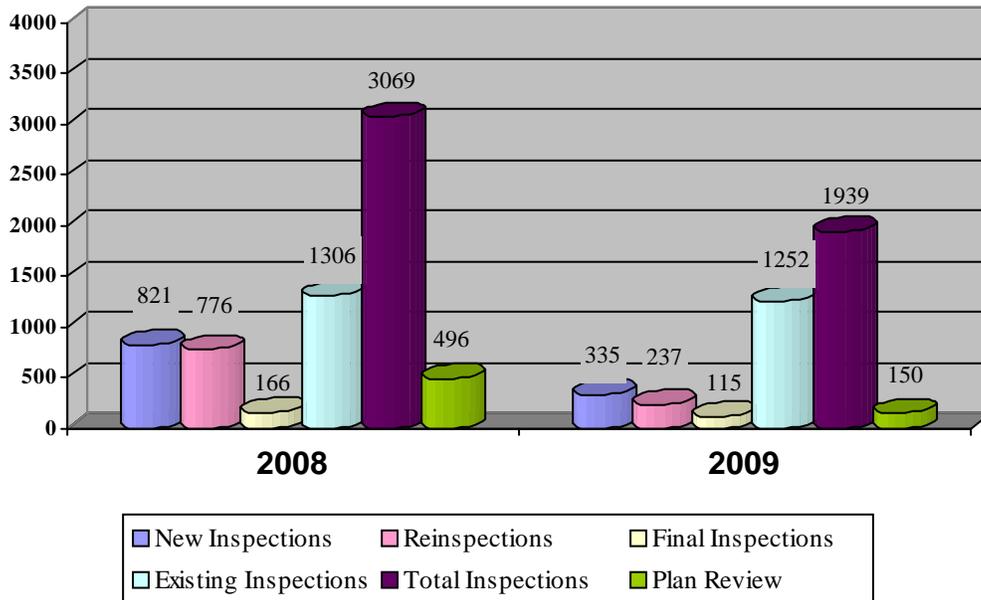
The primary goal of the Division is to ensure the safety and well being of our residents, visitors and firefighters through inspections of new construction and routine inspections of commercial and multi-family residential properties. These services are provided with courtesy and respect for our customers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

- Completed first year of Company Inspections; over 1,000 inspections conducted
- Began program to mark all fire department connections in the District for faster response
- Began program to color code all fire hydrants in the District which allows responders to know immediately the amount of water available at a hydrant

Inspections & Plan Review



Estero Fire Rescue and Bonita Springs Fire Rescue entered into an Interlocal Agreement dated December 10, 2008 wherein Bonita Springs Fire Rescue agreed to provide plan review services for Estero Fire Rescue. The plan review number for 2009 above reflects the plans reviewed by Bonita Springs Fire Rescue.

FINANCE

APRIL L. WHITE, FINANCE DIRECTOR



ESTERO FIRE RESCUE HIGHLIGHTS

- At close of fiscal year 2009 Estero Fire Rescue's assets exceeded its liabilities, resulting in net assets of \$15,140,385 on a government-wide basis.
- Total net assets increased \$2,811,569 or 22.8 percent, in comparison to the prior year.
- The increase to net assets is a positive indicator of financial performance improvement. The unrestricted balance of \$9,559,953 can be used to meet ongoing obligations of the District and fund amounts designated by the Board.
- Total revenues increased \$569,568, or 4.5 percent, in comparison to the prior year.
- Total expenses increased \$233,075, or 2.3 percent, in comparison to the prior year. This is primarily due to an increase in depreciation for the first full year of the new Administrative Complex and an increase in interest charges related to the new debt issued in 2007.

The following is a condensed summary of net assets for the primary government for fiscal years 2009 and 2008:

Summary of Net Assets

	2009	2008
Assets:		
Current and other assets	\$ 11,232,691	\$ 8,946,281
Capital Assets	12,204,871	12,664,455
Total Assets	\$ 23,437,562	\$ 21,610,736
 Liabilities:		
Current liabilities	\$ 518,710	\$ 725,564
Non-current Liabilities	7,778,467	8,556,356
Total Liabilities	8,297,177	9,281,920
 Net Assets:		
Invested in capital assets, net		
of related debt	5,066,691	4,659,915
Restricted	513,741	739,811
Unrestricted	9,559,953	6,929,090
Total Net Assets	15,140,385	12,328,816
Total Liabilities And Net Assets	\$ 23,437,562	\$ 21,610,736

Current and other assets represent 47.9 percent of total assets. Current assets are comprised of unrestricted cash and investments of \$10,524,473, restricted cash of \$497,108 and other assets of \$211,110. The unrestricted cash and investments represent amounts that are available for spending at the District's discretion. Restricted cash is comprised of the remaining proceeds from the notes and will be used to complete the construction of the new administration building. Additionally, restricted cash includes impact fees restricted for debt repayment and the debt reserve required by the notes.

The investment in capital assets are comprised of land and improvements, buildings, vehicles, and equipment, net of accumulated depreciation and the outstanding related debt used to acquire the assets. The Restricted Net Assets is comprised of \$466,856 for repayment of debt and \$46,885 represents unspent proceeds to finance the completion of the new administration building.

The following schedule reports the revenues, expenses, and changes in net assets for Estero Fire Rescue for the current fiscal years 2009 and 2008:

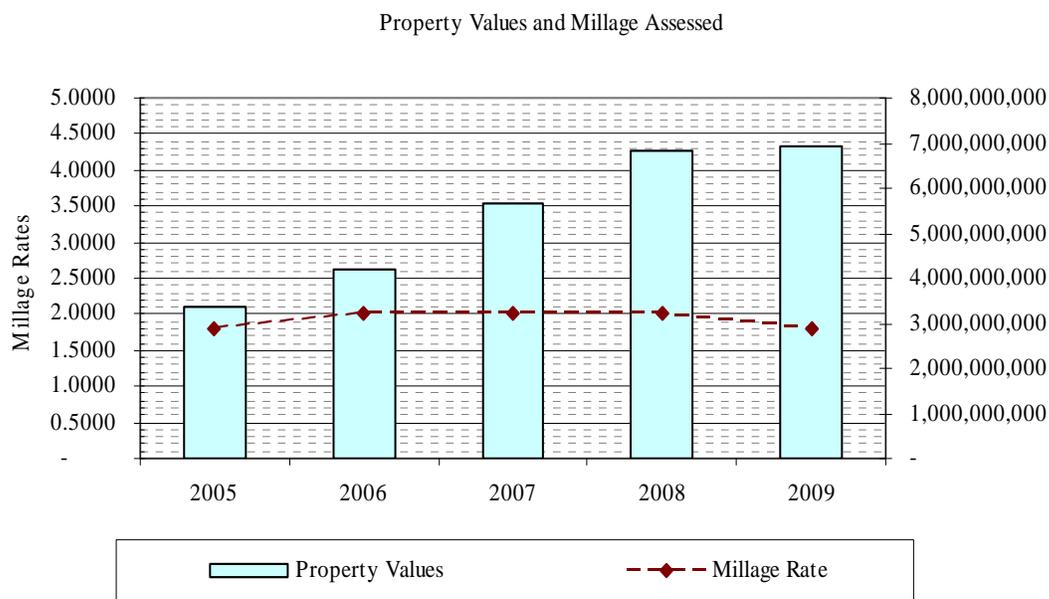
Summary of Revenues, Expenses and Changes in Net Assets

	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
Revenues:		
General Revenues		
Ad Valorem taxes	\$ 12,917,919	\$ 11,948,391
Interest	108,806	265,780
Gain (loss) on sale of capital assets	(36,357)	(103,849)
Other revenues	33,640	61,125
Program Revenues		
Federal grants	-	54,190
State Shared	20,564	21,554
Charges for services	72,654	91,823
Impact fees	17,440	115,426
Total Revenues	<u>13,134,666</u>	<u>12,454,440</u>
Expenses:		
Public Safety - Fire and Rescue Services	<u>10,323,097</u>	<u>10,090,022</u>
Increase in net assets	2,811,569	2,364,418
Net Assets - Beginning of the year	<u>12,328,816</u>	<u>9,964,398</u>
Net Assets - End of the year	<u>\$ 15,140,385</u>	<u>\$ 12,328,816</u>

ADDITIONAL FINANCIAL OVERVIEW

The taxable property value increased 1.5 percent between 2008 and 2009 and the District's millage rate was increased from 1.78 to 1.90 respectively, resulting in an increase in Ad Valorem revenue of \$969,528 or 8.1 percent in comparison to the prior year. The District's millage rate increased due to tax reform legislation but continues to be one of the lowest fire district millage rates in the region. Property values have increased by approximately \$3,582,682,940 or 106 percent in the past five years.

The following schedule compares the change in property value and growth in millage rates for the past five years:



Impact fee receipts decreased \$97,986, or 84.9 percent, in comparison to the prior year. The decrease is due to a significant decline in new construction within the District’s boundaries. Additionally, Estero Fire Rescue had to refund \$30,119 of impact fees collected in the previous year to the County due to cancelled permits. This compounded with an anticipated decrease in Ad Valorem revenue due to tax reform and the additional debt incurred for an administration facility will continue to create considerable challenges when budgeting for the future.

BUDGETARY HIGHLIGHTS

Estero Fire Rescue adopts an annual budget for its General Fund as required by Florida Statute. Budget transfers are made from time to time in the General Fund to manage unanticipated costs as they relate to originally estimated amounts. The General Fund difference between the final budgeted expenditures and actual expenditures represents a favorable variance of \$1,766,122 or 14 percent. This variance is significantly due to a reduction in healthcare costs and also the methodology of budgeting for those healthcare costs at an estimated maximum cost exposure which is the most practical way of budgeting for a self-funded healthcare program. In 2009, Estero Fire Rescue transitioned to a traditional fixed fee premium healthcare program.

DEBT ADMINISTRATION

At September 30, 2009, Estero Fire Rescue had \$7,138,180 of outstanding debt for notes payable. Total long-term liabilities of \$7,778,467 which includes notes payable and compensated absences decreased \$777,889 or 9.0 percent in comparison to the prior year. The following is a schedule of the District's outstanding notes payable as of September 30, 2009 and 2008:

	Outstanding Debt	
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
Renewal C (2002A)	\$ 3,611,280	\$ 4,017,825
Renewal B (2002B)	855,321	1,166,715
Series 2007A	<u>2,671,579</u>	<u>2,820,000</u>
Total	<u>\$ 7,138,180</u>	<u>\$ 8,004,540</u>

The General Fund is currently responsible for payment of the debt. Impact Fees designated for debt will be used for debt as they become available.

CAPITAL ASSETS

Non-depreciable capital assets include land and improvements. Depreciable assets include buildings, vehicles and equipment.

The following is a schedule of Estero Fire Rescue's capital assets as of September 30, 2009 and 2008:

	Capital Assets	
	<u>2009</u>	<u>2008</u>
CAPITAL ASSETS		
Land	\$ 1,941,090	\$ 1,941,090
Construction in progress	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
Total Capital Assets not depreciated	<u>1,941,090</u>	<u>1,941,090</u>
Buildings and Improvements	9,298,880	9,232,298
Vehicles	4,303,727	4,420,463
Equipment	<u>451,138</u>	<u>420,524</u>
Total Capital Assets being depreciated	<u>14,053,745</u>	<u>14,073,285</u>
ACCUMULATED DEPRECIATION		
Buildings and Improvements	(1,114,725)	(810,415)
Vehicles	(2,420,812)	(2,335,406)
Equipment	<u>(254,427)</u>	<u>(204,099)</u>
Total Accumulated Depreciation	<u>(3,789,964)</u>	<u>(3,349,920)</u>
Total Capital Assets being depreciated, net	<u>10,263,781</u>	<u>10,723,365</u>
CAPITAL ASSETS, NET	<u>\$ 12,204,871</u>	<u>\$ 12,664,455</u>

Noteworthy capital asset activity that took place in fiscal year 2009 was as follows:

- Purchased a trailer for the Explorers for the amount of \$4,067.
- Purchased additional items needed for the Administrative Complex in the amount of \$68,921. The significant items purchased were for technology to complete the training center and the security system in the Administrative Complex.
- Incurred costs of \$26,000 for technology and communication which included 8 replacement computers, and one server.
- Incurred costs of \$4,399 to purchase a cabinet to increase the equipment carried on an administration vehicle.
- Incurred a cost of \$2,624 to replace 2 ice machines
- Purchased 2 pieces of exercise equipment for the fitness program in the amount of \$8,496.
- Purchased 32 new air packs and 2 RIT packs for a total cost of \$186,203
- Incurred costs of \$36,061 for emergency rescue and training equipment including 5 AED's, 2 extrication tools, an apparatus nozzle, and 3 gas detectors.

ECONOMIC FACTORS AND CURRENT YEAR'S BUDGET RATES

The following were factors considered when the current year's budget (2009-2010) was prepared:

- Property values decreased by \$1,198,499,348 or 17.2 percent to \$5,744,942,059. Estero Fire Rescue is anticipating property values to continue to decline.
- Estero Fire Rescue did not budget for any new positions and did not fill eight existing positions due to the uncertainty of the economy, and future legislation.
- Estero Fire Rescue budgeted decrease of approximately \$975K in personal services is significantly due to a negotiated pay freeze per the bargaining unit contract. Additionally, a decrease in the budget was recognized due to lower workers compensation insurance cost and transitioning from a self-insured program to a traditional premium health insurance plan.
- Estero Fire Rescue anticipates increasing reserves by approximately \$2.3M in an effort to maintain current services with an anticipated decrease in future revenues and budgeting for the General Fund to pay debt service due to the decline of impact fees which historically funded debt repayment.
- The millage rate was increased from 1.90 to 2.0 for the 2010 budget year. This was necessary to maintain minimum requirements for financial ratios in the District's debt covenants.
- Management has continued to reduce spending over the last 2 years and believes this will enable management to propose a potential tax decrease without diminishing the current service level when preparing the 2011 budget.
- Estero Fire Rescue has already increased the services to the Community by adding a marine vessel to assure adequate response to the increase demand of water rescue incidents. The vessel was purchased with a 50/50 grant from the West Coast Inland Navigation District administered by the Lee County Natural Resources Division.

The following schedule of Estero Fire Rescue's Revenues, Expenditures and Changes in Fund Balance as of September 30, 2008, 2009 and 2010:

**ESTERO FIRE RESCUE
STATEMENT OF REVENUES, EXPENDITURES AND CHANGES
IN FUND BALANCE (NON-GAAP BUDGETARY BASIS)
GENERAL FUND
Year Ended September 30, 2010**

	2008	2009	2010
REVENUES	Audited	Unaudited	Budgeted
Ad Valorem taxes	\$ 11,948,391	\$ 12,917,919	\$ 10,915,390
Charges for services	91,823	72,654	62,000
Other	563,575	180,450	157,003
TOTAL REVENUES	12,603,789	13,171,023	11,134,393
EXPENDITURES			
Personal services:			
Salaries and wages	5,199,916	5,221,626	5,382,528
Overtime	257,179	273,943	239,900
FICA taxes	403,484	412,275	430,116
Retirement contributions	804,907	866,222	956,296
Life, health, workers comp. insurance	1,044,010	1,139,874	1,009,739
Subtotal - Personal services	7,709,496	7,913,940	8,018,579
Operating expenditures:			
Property appraiser and tax collector fees	311,102	329,528	348,492
Professional services	102,195	106,808	111,975
Accounting and auditing	25,000	27,640	25,000
Travel	31,458	34,231	46,125
Communications and freight services	57,753	57,257	89,956
Utility services	56,973	75,345	78,785
Insurance	95,621	111,933	103,743
Repair and maintenance services	331,343	295,496	347,358
Operating supplies	263,232	211,345	252,661
Books, memberships, and training	77,580	79,855	159,153
Other	39,872	49,469	48,458
Contributions to Other Governments	9,500	40,946	140,115
Subtotal - Operating expenditures	1,401,629	1,419,853	1,751,821
Capital outlay	5,148,161	339,751	142,700
Debt Service	916,451	1,156,969	1,150,959
TOTAL EXPENDITURES	15,175,737	10,830,513	11,064,059
EXCESS OF REVENUES OVER EXPENDITURES	(2,571,948)	2,340,510	70,334
OTHER FINANCING SOURCES (USES)			
Gain (loss) on sale of capital assets	25,929	12,402	-
Refund of prior year revenue	-	(32,464)	-
Loan Proceeds	2,770,000	-	-
NET CHANGE IN FUND BALANCE	223,981	2,320,448	70,334
FUND BALANCE - BEGINNING	8,169,552	8,393,533	9,535,576
Ending FB Reserved for Debt-Restricted	624,002	466,856	435,000
Ending FB Designated for Debt-Unrestricted	1,893,205	1,285,000	1,285,000
Ending FB Designated for Cpl Imprv Prg-Restricted	115,809	46,885	-
Ending FB Designated for Cpl Imprv Prg-Unrestricted	630,133	250,000	1,715,246
Ending FB Designated for Operating Reserve	2,661,071	4,376,691	4,610,024
Ending FB Designated for Health Insurance	350,000	450,000	450,000
Ending FB Designated for Retirement	-	500,000	1,000,000
Ending FB Undesignated	2,119,313	3,338,549	110,640
FUND BALANCE - ENDING	\$ 8,393,533	\$ 10,713,981	\$ 9,605,910

THE SAFETY FUND

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 following an emergency.

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 to a natural or man made emergency.

The Safety Fund operates solely on the generous donations and contributions from individuals and communities within Estero. The contributors recognize the need and value of the Safety Fund and are committed to its success. In September, Wildcat Run hosted a 'Giving Back to the Community' golf outing for Estero Fire Rescue and the Lee County Sheriff's Office. Wildcat Run generously donated \$1,500 to the Safety Fund and it is through donations such as this, that provide the means for Estero Fire Rescue to give back to the Community.

GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

WILDCAT RUN



SEPTEMBER 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 policies, processes, insurance and benefits
- Research, study and formal classes 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 benefit management
- Development of policies and procedures
- Compensation administration, retirement and benefits management
- Coordination with outside agencies and legal counsel on complaints/lawsuits
- Development of policies and procedures
- Labor Relations
- Employee recruitment, selection and orientation
- Employee development and training
- Supervisory counseling
- Return to Work Program
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Workers compensation

In our ever-changing world, the need for human resources has never been greater. As with the very business environment in which it operates, human resources continues to evolve. The environment facing human resources is getting more complex and diverse as we work to respond to economic uncertainty, and an ever broader range of people issues.

Fiscal year 2009 has been one of the most challenging, yet satisfying years during my tenure at Estero Fire Rescue. Challenging, because we are living through the worst economic crisis since the Great Depression. I attribute our capability of keeping the organization on an even keel in this challenging fiscal environment to our ability to plan and take advantage of opportunities.

Fiscal year 2009 has also been a satisfying period on many levels. Our anticipation of the looming crisis, along with prudent decision-making, helped us to avoid some of the more radical actions taken by similar organizations in order to balance their budgets. For example, we have avoided significant staffing cutbacks, and retained valuable benefits. The bargaining unit played an important part in this effort by agreeing to freeze wages for the first six months of the fiscal year. The cohesiveness of management and labor will be even more vital in the coming years.

Our employee health insurance programs were sent out to bid this year. The Health Insurance Committee received proposals from several different providers and recommended to renew with our current carrier for medical insurance at a renewal increase of 8.4%. Through competitive marketing and negotiation, we were able to lower the renewal increase to 4.7%. In 2008, the dental and vision plans were negotiated with a 3 year rate guarantee and therefore, these plans renewed at a 0% increase in premium.

The EAP program was also sent out for bid this year and a proposal was accepted with a new carrier at a 65% decrease in the past rate. The new proposal also included additional benefits such as on-site training for employees. There is a high utilization of our EAP Program, due in part to the current economy, which reinforces human resources commitment to continue this worthwhile program.

Workers compensation continues to be an area of focus. Human resources negotiated a two year rate guarantee for fees. With the implementation of the Safety Committee and on-going training, our experience modification decreased from 1.25 to 1.17 which reflected in a 27% decrease in premiums to the District.

Esterio Fire Rescue maintains fully insured property and liability insurance to protect its facilities, equipment and operations. Human resources is responsible for the processes associated with obtaining appropriate insurance coverage. Changes to our deductibles and in the classification of vehicles together with surplus vehicles provided a decrease in our Property and Liability Insurance.

The area of human resources is continually evolving and becoming more multifaceted. Legislative changes will be playing an important role in dictating human resource related priorities. With the changing demographics and dynamics of our workforce comes the need for human resources to be proactive. It is expected that these issues will drive human resource activities over the next several years.

Accordingly, over the next year, human resources will continue to assess and improve our internal systems and processes and priority will be given to changes in policy and documentation to meet our ongoing objectives of attracting, retaining and motivating staff, developing and enhancing employees' skill sets, and monitoring costs associated with running programs that contribute to these successes.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

LUANN DELO, INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ADMINISTRATOR



As the year closes, we are well settled in our new Administrative Complex. I am proud and thankful for the state of the technology we have at Estero Fire Rescue today.

From offices in temporary trailers and apartment buildings, to a permanent building with a strong, secure communication network, Estero Fire Rescue continues to focus on information technology growth to meet the technological needs of the District and set the foundation for our future needs.

Our planning and preparing has rewarded us with a stable, secure computer and telephone network. Our “computer retirement program” has granted us the opportunity to purchase new computers, and rotate our “more mature or outdated” computers to other areas of the District.

We are dedicated to the:

1. Efficient management of the network infrastructure.
2. Helping to solve any computer issues.
3. Exploring more ways to utilize the computer network at the most cost-effective means.

Major accomplishments in 2009, include the emergent replacement of our email server that became inoperable suddenly and without warning. Although our internal communications were hampered for a few days, we were able to replace the server expeditiously thanks to our corporate partner’s immediate assistance. In 2010, we will be working to implement a backup system to prevent future interruptions of service.

In the process of replacing the email server, we took the opportunity to update some of our backbone software to keep the system modern and useful for our users. This included the upgrade to Windows 2008 Server, Exchange Server 2007 and Office 2007. In addition, some of our newer machines that were brought in with Microsoft Vista, will be updated to Windows 7 to address stability issues in the new year.

From dial tone to desktop – it is vital that our citizens and employees trust that our technology is stable, protected, and reliable. A special thank you to the Board of Fire Commissioners for their continued support to keep up with the technology needs for the District and the employees of Estero Fire Rescue.



Server Room

COMMUNITY EMERGENCY RESPONSE TEAM

The Federal Emergency Management Agency, using a model created by the Los Angeles City Fire Department, began promoting nationwide use of the Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) concept in 1994. Since then, CERT's have been established in hundreds of communities.



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.

If a disastrous event overwhelms or delays the community's professional response, 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 help arrives. CERT skills also apply to daily emergencies.

In 2009, CERT members around the county were called upon by Lee County Emergency Management and the Lee County Health Department to assist in the mass inoculation of Lee County's residents against the H1N1 Virus. Estero Fire Rescue's CERT members answered the call, volunteering over 100 hours over a four week period.

Estero Fire Rescue CERT members also assisted the Southwest Florida International Airport with a large scale mass casualty drill. Simulating an airliner crash, SW Airport included members of surrounding departments, law enforcement, media, health and local government for the event. CERT members from Estero Fire Rescue acted as victims to allow rescuers the valuable training needed should a real crash take place.



MEDICAL RESERVE CORP

Beginning in 2009, Estero Fire Rescue CERT teams began to work and train with a new volunteer group. The Medical Reserve Corp (MRC) is a nationally recognized volunteer organization of healthcare professionals that supplement existing emergency and public health resources. A local MRC chapter based in The Brooks began early in 2009 and members from both Estero Fire Rescue CERT and the MRC quickly discovered that working together could strengthen both organizations and benefit the Community greatly.

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 Estero Fire Rescue Explorer program has had another successful year of training and competitions. The Post currently has 16 Explorers and is continually recruiting new members from Estero High School and surrounding high schools. The highlights of 2009 include:



- **Winterfest Competition in Gatlinburg, TN:**
 - 1st Place out of 41 teams in Advanced Medical Competition
 - 1st Place out of 30 teams in the Firefighter Job Knowledge Competition
- **Hardee County Firematics Competition:**
 - 3rd Place in Barrel Push Competition
 - Sportsmanship Award
- **Broward County Firematics Competition**
 - 1st Place in Bucket Brigade Competition
 - 2nd Place in Barrel Push Competition
 - 3rd Place Overall
- **Philadelphia Summer Trip**
 - Tour and ride-along program with Cherry Hill Fire Department
 - Visit with Philadelphia Fire Department, Fire Museum, and Fire Boat
 - Tour of the Mutter Museum (human medical anomalies)
 - Historical Tour of Philadelphia (Independence Hall, Liberty Bell, etc.)
 - Visit to Valley Forge
 - Visit to Hershey Fire Department and Hershey Chocolate World



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

- 4 Estero Fire Rescue Explorers graduated from Fort Myers Fire Academy
- 3 Explorers completed the EMT Program at Edison College
- 1 Explorer was hired as a firefighter by the Department of Forestry
- Logged over 100 hours of EMS and fire training
- Staffed First Aid tents and participated in numerous Community events, such as the 4th of July Celebration at Miromar and Celebrate Estero

The Florida Fire Chiefs Association has agreed to allow the statewide annual Fire Explorer/Cadet Summer Conference 2010 to be held at Estero High School. Estero Fire Rescue will host the event with 225 Explorers expected to attend. 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 YEAR AT A GLANCE...

JANUARY

MVC 01.12.09



A passing motorist called 9-1-1 to report a vehicle in a ditch along Alico Road late at night. It is unknown exactly how long the vehicle had been there before he came along. On arrival, Engine 44 found the vehicle upright in the ditch, although it was very apparent that it had rolled over. There was also a large amount of damage to the passenger side of the vehicle. The driver was airlifted to the hospital.

WINK-TV HUNGER WALK

Estero Fire Rescue joined WINK-TV and approximately 400 participants in the first annual 'WINK News Feeds Families Hunger Walk' at Miromar Outlets. More than \$50,000 was donated at the walk. With that money, the Harry Chapin Food Bank purchased \$250,000 worth of food for the needy.



FEBRUARY

CELEBRATE ESTERO CHILI COOK OFF



Estero Fire Rescue held its annual Chili Cook off at Celebrate Estero located at Miromar Outlets. Residents from all over came to sample concoctions from Lee County's Bravest. As usual, a good time was had by all.

THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

FEBRUARY (CONTINUED)

MVC COCONUT ROAD & SPRING RUN



A serious morning accident on Coconut Road had traffic tied up for over an hour. A small car lost control on a curve, sending it sideways into a tree. The driver was entangled in the vehicle when the driver's tire was pushed into the passenger compartment. The dashboard also hampered rescue efforts making it difficult for firefighters to get to the driver.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

MARCH

READ ACROSS AMERICA

Estero Fire Rescue participates in the national “Read Across America Day” at Pinewoods Elementary School. Firefighters and all employees are encouraged to read out loud to young students. This annual event is designed to promote reading and to celebrate the birthday of a favorite author, Dr. Seuss.



ST. PATRICK’S DAY

Employees of Estero Fire Rescue giving the shirts off their backs—literally! Fire departments from across the county joined Estero Fire Rescue in their annual ‘St. Patrick’s Day Fundraiser’. Lt. Grant Schwalbe and Firefighter Jason Richards began the annual St. Patrick’s Day T-shirt Fundraiser event in 2005. Proceeds from the fundraiser are donated annually to local firefighter families in need, raising over \$20,000 thus far. The fundraiser event went a bit further in 2009, with fire departments across the county coming together to wear their St. Patrick’s Day t-shirts while on duty on March 17 in support of their fallen brothers and sisters. T-shirts may be purchased by the public by contacting our administrative office in February each year.

TRAINING COCONUT POINT MALL



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

APRIL

FIRST ANNUAL VALOR 5K AND TRAIL RUN

Estero Fire Rescue has long been a supporter of the community and those in need and 2009 was no exception. This year saw the combined efforts between Estero Fire Rescue, FGCU and San Carlos Park Fire Department for the 'Valor 5K and Trail Run' with proceeds benefitting the Lee County Emergency Works Charitable Fund. Over 320 runners and walkers joined members of Estero Fire Rescue on the inaugural run.



JUVENILE FIRESETTER

Two female juveniles started a brush fire on Sandy Lane, burning across approximately 8 acres of land and coming dangerously close to homes. After trying to extinguish the fire themselves, the girls quickly called 9-1-1 once they realized it was out of control. The girls were put through the Lee County Juvenile Firesetter Program, designed to deal with the symptoms of juvenile firesetting as an alternative to arrest and incarceration into a juvenile facility.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

MAY

BRUSH FIRE

A brushfire off 6L's Farm Road caused area homeowners concern in the late afternoon. Reports of ATV riders in the area with fireworks prompted an investigation by Battalion Chief Reisen for arson. The fire was quickly brought under control and residents were returned to their homes.



FIREFIGHTER OLYMPICS

Estero Firefighters made the District proud by participating in the Florida Firefighter Olympics. Teams entered hockey, fishing and softball and brought home multiple awards.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

JUNE

BRUSH FIRE 6-L'S



A second fire in the area of 6L's Farm Road in the eastern portion of the District once again had crews battling a brushfire blaze. This time a controlled burn got outside of the containment area and ignited the surrounding brush.



With the help of the Florida Division of Forestry, the fire was quickly brought under control.

PINEWOODS



ELEMENTARY



KICKBALL



Ester Fire Rescue Firefighters get a KICK out of their job and participated in the annual Pinewoods Kickball Game with the firefighters helping the teachers defend their title against the 5th grade class. Although no one really kept score, everyone was a winner and had a great time.

VEHICLE ROLLOVER BURGUNDY FARMS

A vehicle roll over on Burgundy Farms Road couldn't have come at a worse time. Just as units arrived on scene and began to assess the patient, the skies opened up for a summer rain storm. To make the situation more difficult, Med Star had to be called in to fly the driver due to the nature of the injuries.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

JULY

BRUSH FIRE 6-L'S



6L's Farm Road was once again the place to be when a brush fire broke out close to home in the rural area. Firefighters quickly responded to the blaze and had it under control very quickly. The fire was believed to have started by a lightning strike.



FOURTH OF JULY



Estero Fire Rescue joined members of the historic society in celebrating the 4th at the site of two historic Estero buildings, a 1904 school house and an early 20th century home. The buildings were moved from Highlands Avenue to their new home at the Estero Community Park.



AUGUST

SWF PROJECT BACKPACK



Estero Firefighters helped kids get back to school on the right track by participating in the SWF Project Backpack. Backpacks are donated to needy children and contain all the necessary supplies to start the first day of school. Kids got an



up close look at Engine 41 and spent the afternoon with the crew.



SOUTHWEST REGIONAL HOSPITAL LARGE AREA SEARCH

To further their training Estero Fire Rescue firefighters participated in a large area search drill, joining other fire agencies. At the now abandoned SW Regional Hospital on Winkler Avenue, firefighters crawled in total darkness, honing their searching skills to include large open areas with multiple obstacles.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

SEPTEMBER

STRUCTURE FIRE—STONEYBROOK



A Stoneybrook family had a loud surprise when an afternoon storm caused a lightning strike to their home. Arriving units found a large hole in the roof where the lightning entered the attic and started the insulation and surrounding structure on fire. Crews quickly extinguished the blaze and contained the damage to a single room.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

OCTOBER

H1N1 VACCINATIONS

As the H1N1 Virus made headlines, Estero Fire Rescue personnel were busy getting their vaccinations against the virus. Division Chief Coulter administered injections to staff. Estero Fire Rescue staff and CERT members also assisted the Lee County Health Department and Lee County Emergency Management in the operation of H1N1 clinics around the county to administer the vaccine to the Community. Over 100 hours of volunteer time was donated to make the event a success.



I-75 FATAL MVC



A single vehicle accident caused I-75 drivers to take it a little slower. The driver left the roadway traveling down the grass median before striking the support column of the Estero Parkway flyover. Upon impact, the vehicle engine compartment ignited and Estero Fire Rescue firefighters found the vehicle in flames on arrival. The driver was pronounced dead at the scene.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

NOVEMBER

AUTISM SPEAKS

One in 100 children are diagnosed with autism and research into new treatments are desperately needed. Organizations like Autism Speaks hold an annual 'Walk Now for Autism' to raise money and awareness of this condition. Estero Fire Rescue joins in each year to meet with children and families and discuss the special needs of these children.



CAR FIRE

An electrical malfunction caused a car to burst into flames at Coconut Point Mall. Crews quickly extinguished the flames and assisted the owner.



IPMBA CLASS

Several Estero Fire Rescue firefighters took part in a 40 hour bicycle training course offered by the International Police Mountain Bike Association. This training teaches maneuverability and balance in heavy crowds while carrying saddlebags full of medical supplies. The Estero Fire Rescue EMS Bike Team is utilized at a number of large functions when a large full size engine cannot maneuver easily.



THE YEAR AT A GLANCE...

DECEMBER

FILL-A-FIRE TRUCK

Members of Estero Fire Rescue assist numerous charities throughout the year and the 2009 financial crisis of the state meant more families were facing tough times this year, especially during the holiday season. The Fill-a-Fire Truck Toy Drive collected hundreds of unwrapped gifts for children in the Estero District. Thanks to the generosity of the residents of Estero, we



filled toy requests for 22 families and 56 children, ranging in age



The generosity was so great, that we made additional donations of toys, books and games to Our Mother's Home, a loving home for young teen foster mothers and their babies, as well as to the Lee County Araba Shriner's to help them fill their holiday orders.



MIROMAR MALL FIRE



FIRE WIVES CLUB (FWC) FAMILY DAY



AWARDS, RECOGNITION & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

LIFE SAVING AWARDS

Battalion Chief Dale Reisen
Engineer Thad Stevens
Firefighter-Paramedic Jerry Krohnfeldt
Firefighter-Paramedic Matthew Larlham
Firefighter-EMT Adam Rambo
Lee County EMS Medic Carlos Materano
Lee County EMS Medic Adrien Rochon



Pictured from L-R: Commissioner Messana, Firefighter Rambo, Firefighter Larlham, Commissioner Levy, Lee County EMS Medic Materano, Commissioner Sassano, Firefighter Krohnfeldt, Commissioner Akins, Lee County EMS Medic Rochon, Engineer Horton, Commissioner Schweers and Chief Vanderbrook (Battalion Chief Reisen and Engineer Stevens are not pictured)



Pictured from L-R: Firefighter Skelton, Firefighter Hedengren, Engineer Smith, Lieutenant Lentz and Assistant Chief Wahlig

Lieutenant Thomas Lentz
Engineer Schyler Smith
Firefighter-Paramedic Lena Hedengren
Firefighter-EMT Clint Skelton

EMPLOYEE OF THE QUARTER



Administrative Assistant Maria Ramos, pictured with Chief Vanderbrook

IT Administrator LuAnn Delo



Firefighter Mark Diaz, pictured with Assistant Chief Wahlig

AWARDS, RECOGNITION & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

PROMOTIONS



Chuck Collins was promoted from Lieutenant to Battalion Chief in February 2009. Battalion Chief Collins began his career with Estero Fire Rescue in April 2000. Pictured with Chief Vanderbrook.

Dan Hardman was promoted from Firefighter to Lieutenant in February 2009. Lieutenant Hardman began his career with Estero Fire Rescue in March 2006. Pictured with Chief Vanderbrook.



Tom Lentz was promoted from Engineer to Lieutenant in July 2009. Lieutenant Lentz began his career with Estero Fire Rescue in February 2005. Pictured with Assistant Chief Wahlig.

John McDougall was promoted from Firefighter to Engineer in November 2009. Engineer McDougall began his career with Estero Fire Rescue in January 2003. Pictured with Chief Vanderbrook.



ACCOMPLISHMENTS



HR Director Linda Conway received her Bachelors Degree. HR Director Conway began her employment with Estero Fire Rescue in April 1998. Pictured with Chief Vanderbrook.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

Fire Crew of the Year

Lieutenant Glen Brownlee
Lieutenant Grant Schwalbe
Engineer Michael Maradona
Engineer Jason Richards
Firefighter William Kinkel
Firefighter David Russell

EMS Crew of the Year

Division Chief Phillip Green
Battalion Chief Dale Reisen
Firefighter Eliel Blanco
Firefighter Christopher Martin



Rising Star

Firefighter Mark Diaz

Firefighter of the Year

Engineer Terrence Lindgren



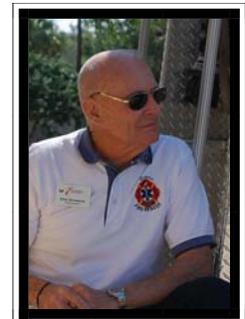
Employee of the Year

Lieutenant Grant Schwalbe



Chief's Award

Lieutenant David Ott
Commissioner Dick Schweers



THE ESTERO FIRE RESCUE FAMILY



Sean James
Commissioner
New Commissioner



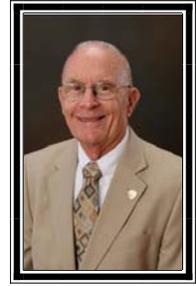
Frank Messana
Commissioner
1 year of service



Bruce Philp
Commissioner
New Commissioner



Gayle Sassano
Commissioner
12 years of service



Dick Schweers
Commissioner
12 years of service



Brent Althouse
Lieutenant
24 years of service



Eliel Blanco
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Jeff Brann
Lieutenant
7 years of service



James Brown
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Glen Brownlee
Lieutenant
20 years of service



Henry Burke
Fire Inspector
10 years of service



Aubrey Chasser
Firefighter—EMT
4 years of service



Charles Collins
Battalion Chief
9 years of service



Linda Conway
Human Resources Director
11 years of service



Todd Coulter
Division Chief EMS
6 years of service



Timi Custer
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



LuAnn Delo
IT Administrator
9 years of service



Mark Diaz
Firefighter—EMT
1 year of service



Edwin Dwyer
Division Chief
Special Operations
9 years of service



Ember
1 year of service



Gregory Escarra
Engineer
4 years of service



Ryan Evanson
Engineer
3 years of service



Jason Fiora
Firefighter—EMT
3 years of service



Anthony Fite
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Frederick Gonzalez
Firefighter—Paramedic
6 years of service



Dennis Goodlad
Firefighter—Paramedic
6 years of service



Phillip Green
Division Chief
Prevention
5 years of service



Shaun Hagan
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Daniel Hardman
Lieutenant
3 years of service



Steve Harris
Lieutenant
8 years of service



Lena Hedengren
Firefighter—Paramedic
6 years of service



Anthony Horton
Engineer
5 years of service



Jeannine Horton
Battalion Chief
6 years of service



William Kinkel
Firefighter—EMT
1 year of service



Jerry Krohnfeldt
Firefighter—Paramedic
7 years of service



Scott LaBree
Lieutenant
7 years of service



Matthew Larlham
Firefighter—Paramedic
4 years of service



Thomas Lentz
Lieutenant
4 years of service



Susan Lindenmuth
Public Relations Manager
5 years of service



Terrence Lindgren
Engineer
4 years of service



Johnny Manning
Fire Inspector
8 years of service



Guillermo Maradona
Firefighter—Paramedic
3 years of service



Michael Maradona
Engineer
4 years of service



Christopher Martin
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Patrick McCafferty
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



David McDougall
Engineer
6 years of service



Roberto Medina
Lieutenant
7 years of service



David Murray
Engineer
8 years of service



Laura Occhipinti
Engineer
4 years of service



David Ott
Lieutenant
24 years of service



Matthew Pagnutti
Engineer
3 years of service



Kim Poli
AA to Fire Chief
4 years of service



Thomas Poole
Lieutenant
9 years of service



Adam Rambo
Firefighter—EMT
1 year of service



Maria Ramos
AA to Prevention
4 years of service



Dale Reisen
Battalion Chief
10 years of service



Jason Richards
Engineer
7 years of service



Felicia Rodriguez
Lieutenant
9 years of service



David Russell
Firefighter—Paramedic
4 years of service



Grant Schwalbe
Lieutenant
6 years of service



Shane Sells
Firefighter—EMT
20 years of service



Clint Skelton
Firefighter—EMT
2 years of service



Schyler Smith
Engineer
4 years of service



Thad Stevens
Engineer
9 years of service



Jean Strobel
Finance Specialist
7 years of service



Scott Vanderbrook
Chief
11 years of service



Mark Wahlig
Assistant Chief
11 years of service



Judy West
Admin. Specialist—Operations
9 years of service

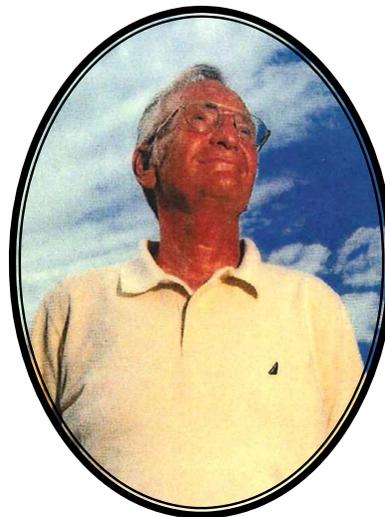


Jarred Whelan
Firefighter—Paramedic
4 years of service



April White
Finance Director
6 years of service

IN MEMORY OF ONE OF OUR OWN



Samuel E. "Sam" Levy
January 1937—October 2009
Fire Commissioner—5 years of service

Fire mergers could help budget woes

With sliding revenues leading to budget crunching at every level of government, there's an urgent need for potential cost-saving measures. And now that economic pressures have resulted in a full-blown crisis, public officials in Lee County should be more open to the idea of merging fire departments.

The News-Press has advocated some degree of fire district consolidation since our extensive 2006 investigation indicated that enormous savings could be realized, perhaps upwards of \$50 million.

Progress has been slower than desired, but that could be in the process of changing, considering the grim financial outlook.

Commissioners for fire districts in Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park agreed last year to study the possible effects of combining their agencies, with the intention being improved services and reduced costs.

This week, it was encouraging to see those departments inch closer to becoming one. Bonita Springs fire commissioners appointed city officials and residents to a focus group which will gauge public interest in consolidation. The group will disseminate information to the public during a series of meetings.

The consolidation study that was agreed upon last year is expected to be completed this summer, and will incorporate the focus group's findings. A potential merger would take a few years to materialize, resulting in one large district covering 180 square miles and 110,000 people.

There's no sense in consolidating if the total cost equals or exceeds the expense of three separate departments, a concern raised by a Bonita taxpayers group. But many fire districts have already acknowledged the existence of waste and duplication; they've consolidated some purchasing and other activities.

A full-fledged merger of select districts would result in one payroll. One budget and one annual audit. One bill for maintenance, training and facilities. Surely there are savings to be realized without compromising fire and rescue service.

Countywide consolidation is unlikely, and perhaps too unwieldy, anyway. But the prospects are promising for bordering districts that can merge. Bonita Springs, Estero and San Carlos Park continue to show wisdom by exploring the option further.

IN THE NEWS

Estero Fire Rescue gets OK for signal

Estero Fire Rescue has been issued a permit from the Florida Department of Transportation to install an emergency traffic signal outside its Coconut Point station at U.S. 41 and Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard.

The signal will flash yellow for traffic on U.S. 41, and firefighters will be able to make the light red for U.S. 41 traffic and green for Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard so they can exit the station to respond to emergencies.

"I'm really counting on it being in this fall," said fire board chairman Dick Schweers. "Many of the calls out of there are southbound. They could be down Coconut Road or somewhere west of 41, and time is of the essence. Seconds count."

Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard leads to the Rapallo community developed by Oakbrook Properties to the north. Oakbrook is responsible for that intersection.

The fire district will pay half of the estimated \$250,000 to \$280,000 cost for the emergency signal and Oakbrook the other half.

The mast-arm signal will be built to withstand hurricanes and be easily converted to a full working signal when traffic at the intersection warrants it.

Once it becomes a working signal, Oakbrook will pay back the fire district, and the Fountain Lakes community on the west side of U.S. 41, which will benefit from a full signal, will also pitch in.

Schweers said a signal should also make it easier for residents of Marsh Landing, located south of Fountain Lakes, to make U-turns out of their community to head north while traffic is stopped on U.S. 41.

*** THE NI

NEW CHICK-FIL-A



SPECIAL TO THE NEWS-PRESS

The Estero Chamber of Commerce attended the ribbon cutting at the new Chick-Fil-A in Estero. Back row, from left: Estero fire Chief Scott Vanderbrook, Chick-Fil-A's "Eat Mor Chikn" Cow, Chick-Fil-A corporate representative Jaye File. Front row, from left: Estero Chamber members Ro and Veronica Antonazzi, secretary Nikole Richardson, vice president Debi Montenieri, chairwoman and CEO Meg Judge, Chick-Fil-A associate Krista Yurchak, general manager Frank Yurchak and marketing director Sherri Knafo.

Estero Fire Rescue OPEN HOUSE

Photos Special to The News-Press

Estero Fire Rescue hosted an open house March 21 at its new administration building and Station 3 located at 21500 Three Oaks Parkway.

See more photos on A8



Guests line up for hot dogs and the district's award-winning chili.



Chief Scott Vanderbrook, who cooked hot dogs, is joined by Fire Commissioner Gayle Sassano.



The district's new mascot, Ember, greets guests.



Chili dogs prepared by firefighters and other goodies were served.



Fire Commissioner Dick Schweers listens attentively.

Fire districts cope with cuts

BY DON RUANE
druane@news-press.com

The Lehigh Acres fire district is dealing with a 46.9 percent property value decline there, in part, by laying off as many as 30 firefighters.

But at least five other fire districts in Lee County hit with big property value declines are avoiding layoffs.

San Carlos Park's district lost 29.76 percent of its value, but there are no plans to reduce staff, said spokeswoman Alexis Rothring.

"We are working on our budget and are looking at any item that can be cut," Rothring said.

The Estero Fire and Rescue district won't fill five administrative positions vacated in the past year, said

spokeswoman Susan Lindenmuth. The district lost 20.3 percent of its property value. The job responsibilities were redistributed among the staff.

"At this time, there are no plans to add any new positions, therefore retaining the savings that we saw with these vacancies," Lindenmuth said.

In Bonita Springs, where the fire and rescue district lost 19.24 percent of its value, the fire board tried to limit the impact by reducing the staff in 2008. The board also approved operational changes so the district could continue to provide adequate life-safety services with a leaner work force, spokeswoman Debbi Redfield said. No additional

reductions are expected, Redfield said.

In Cape Coral, which is an incorporated city, firefighters agreed in May to a wage freeze to save the city about \$350,000 next year.

No layoffs are contemplated in the Cape, city spokeswoman Connie Barron said. Values there dropped 33.4 percent.

Some smaller districts also are avoiding layoffs.

None are planned for either North Fort Myers or the Matlacha-Pine Island districts. Values dropped 23.8 percent in North Fort Myers and 13.4 percent for Matlacha-Pine Island.

— Staff writers Mark S. Krzos and Denes Husty III contributed to this story.

Our firefighters deserve their pay

One can't help but notice the amount of headlines and prints over the last couple of weeks in both Lee and Collier counties regarding firefighters' salaries and pensions. It seems to me that most of the forum participants are firefighters defending their jobs with a few "bloggers" out there that would rather see their firemen on fire instead of them putting them out or running medical calls.

I can't help but to discuss these issues with my wife. Do we really live in a community that people openly bash their public servants? This is grossly inappropriate. These men and women didn't get into their professions because of pay, that I can guarantee.

It just fell in their lucky laps and who would bark up a storm if you were in their shoes? I do not think there is a single firefighter that didn't have a second or third job to supplement their pay because notoriously they didn't make that much.

I am a fireman, and I have two second jobs as a Registered Nurse on my off days, and this degree came from FGCU. I staff a local emergency room, the other in a walk-in urgent care center for when their nurses call out sick! How am I stealing jobs from the public? When R.N.s call out, I try to fill in as much as I humanly can without missing out on raising and enjoying my children.

There are many reasons why the work firefighters, paramedics and police officers do is considered of high risk. That is why they get compensated appropriately. Eighty-five percent of the people reading this would most likely fail a firefighters' hiring scenario based on their medical standing and physical agility challenges.

SHANE FROST
Bonita Springs

FIRE SERVICE TAXES: SAFETY WON'T BE COMPROMISED



AMANDA INSCORE/THE NEWS PRESS

Lt. Matt Seneca, right, and firefighter/EMT Eric Gergenti check equipment at the South Trail Fire Station. Fire districts throughout Lee County are preparing for the effect of an expected drop in property values.

Districts expect to tighten belts

BY RYAN HIRAKI
hiraki@news-press.com

The preliminary 30 percent drop in property values expected to be announced Friday has Lee County fire officials considering a hold on equipment purchases, hiring freezes, overtime cuts and partnerships with other districts to maintain response times and ensure residents' safety.

Anything less is not an option, fire officials say, even for the fire districts taking a wait-and-see approach to the preliminary property value estimates. Property Appraiser Ken Wilkinson expects to release Friday.

"We're at a critical point where we have to do something," said Lehigh Acres Chief

"We're at a critical point where we have to do something."

— Don Adams, Lehigh Acres chief

Don Adams, whose community could see a 50 percent drop in property values.

There are 18 independent fire districts in the county, each with a board of commissioners that can levy taxes on residents.

Fort Myers and Cape Coral are the only cities with fire departments, and their funding is part of the overall budgets for those communities.

See FIRE DISTRICT A3

Planning fire district budgets

These are this year's budgets for the 18 independent fire districts. The tax rate these districts apply to property values determines the amount of taxpayer money those districts collect.

Numbers in millions of dollars

FIRE DISTRICT	BUDGET
Bonita Springs	\$32.1
Lehigh Acres	\$26.9
Fort Myers Beach	\$18
South Trail	\$14.4
Iona-McGregor	\$16.8
Estero	\$13.3
San Carlos	\$14.7
North Fort Myers	\$11.8
Matlacha-Pine Island	\$9.5
Tice	\$3.3
Sanibel	\$4.8
Fort Myers Shores	\$3.4
Boca Grande	\$2.3
Bayshore	\$2.2
Captiva	\$0.94
Alva	\$1.2
Upper Captiva	\$0.6
Useppa	\$0.23

Kayakers hang on to tree while waiting on rescuers

Posted: Dec 28, 2009 5:00 PM EST
Updated: Dec 28, 2009 5:00 PM EST

Posted by Sarah Harlan - email

FLORIDA (NBC) - A weekend camping trip turned into a six-hour ordeal for a pair of college students in Florida.

The two students were kayaking on the Estero River in southwest Florida Sunday.

They were supposed to go camping on a small island but ended up holding onto a tree after getting lost.

The two Edison State College students hung on for more than six hours as rescue crews tried to locate them.

Luckily, rescue crews from the Coast Guard, Estero Fire and Rescue, and even a neighbor helped the guys to safety.

"About dark time we were still out there trying to find our way to the mouth of the river there and no luck so we just pulled ourselves on to a mangrove, held on for awhile and he got in touch with the Coast Guard," kayaker Joshua Young said.

The two college buddies are in excellent condition after their ordeal but they said they won't be kayaking for awhile or anytime soon.



ESTERO Fire station gets own traffic signal

A new traffic signal on U.S. 41 will be activated Monday.

The signal is at the corner of U.S. 41 and Sweetwater Ranch Boulevard.

The new signal, adjacent to Estero Fire Rescue's station No. 42, will

allow Estero Fire Rescue firefighters to stop traffic for emergency vehicles.

Ned Dewhirst of Oakbrook Properties, co-developer of Coconut Point, and Fire Commissioner Dick Schweers partnered up several years ago when the increase of traffic in the area became a safety issue for firefighters responding from Sta-

tion No. 42 as well as drivers on the highly traveled road.

With the help of several Estero community members and Lee County Commissioner Ray Judah, their efforts have been realized.

The signal will flash yellow until it's designated to become a fully-operation signal by the Florida Department of Transportation.

Fire damages two stores at Miromar Outlets in Estero, causes \$150,000 damage

By Naples Daily News staff report

Saturday, December 26, 2009

ESTERO — One of the biggest shopping days of the year went up in smoke for two retailers at Miromar Outlets in Estero on Saturday.

A fire that began in an electrical box outside building Y, one of the southernmost at the outlet mall, torched the wiring throughout that building, Estero Fire and Rescue Battalion Chief Dale Reisen said.

"It first came in as an electrical box on fire near Neiman Marcus," Reisen said. "We went to a full structure fire because one of our engines got on scene and it was one of these main green electrical boxes, and it was fully on fire."

Because that box sends electricity throughout the building, it also sent the fire throughout the wiring system, causing smoke damage and a small explosion in an electrical room. That explosion, referred to as a hydrogen gas explosion, was caused by burning insulation, Reisen said.

Reisen said two stores were evacuated, Godiva Chocolatier and Le Gourmet Chef, but the rest of the suites in Building Y are vacant. The building's sprinkler system helped extinguish the fire, Reisen said, but not before it could cause an estimated \$150,000 damage.

No injuries were reported in the fire, which was called in at 3:23 p.m., and cleared at about 6:15 p.m. Saturday.

The outlet mall is home to roughly 140 retailers, but its open air design means the mall is made up of about 20 buildings connected by walkways.

WHERE TO FIND US



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Estero, Florida 33928
239.390.8000
239.390.8020 (Fax)
www.esterofire.org



Special thanks to the Estero Fire Rescue personnel who contributed to the 2009 Annual Report.
Annual Report Coordinator—Kim Poli, Administrative Assistant to the Fire Chief



“Dedicated And Driven For Those We Serve”