



*Calendar Year*

# 2012 Year-End Review

Austin Fire Department Accomplishments

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**Fire Chief Rhoda Mae Kerr**

**Executive Team:**

Assistant Chief /Chief of Staff Harry Evans  
Assistant Chief Ken Crooks  
Assistant Chief Doug Fowler  
Assistant Chief Matt Orta  
Assistant Chief Richard Davis  
Assistant Director Dr. Ronnelle Paulsen  
Assistant Director Jim Linardos  
Division Chief Mike Frick  
Division Chief Dawn Clopton  
Division Chief David Bailey  
Division Chief Tom Dodds  
Division Chief Brian Tanzola  
Public Info. & Marketing Manager Michelle DeCrane

## Fire Department Budget

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For FY13, our budget was approved for \$137.7M, which is an increase of \$800K from our FY12 budget. The budget increase will allow us to improve service delivery to both the citizens of Austin and Department personnel. The additional funds will allow us to increase our Firefighter positions by 36 and our civilian support positions by eight. Our new staff totals for FY13 will be 1,119 firefighters and 78 civilians.

## Strategic Ventures/Enhance Regional Response

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### **AUTOMATIC AID / REGIONAL TRAINING**

Beginning May 2012, the Austin Fire Department (AFD) began hosting ongoing automatic aid meetings every two weeks. Participants include chief officer representatives of every Emergency Service District (ESD) that participates in an Automatic Aid Agreement with AFD. The group has developed guidelines for staffing, certification levels, equipment, response, and training. These discussions have created a single agreement, rather than individual ones, that provides consistent results throughout the coalition, resulting in more consistent, effective, and safe emergency response. This agreement is a model for other districts and outlines the requirements to participate. AFD also worked closely with Austin Community College (ACC) to offer continuing education (CE) to several of our regional partners. In 2012, AFD was able to add ESDs 10, 11, and 12 to our ACC Blackboard training program. We now provide continuing education to every ESD in Travis County (except 1 and 5). In Spring 2013, we have 1,371 Fire personnel currently enrolled in CE.

### **CIRCUIT OF THE AMERICAS (COTA) AND FORMULA 1 RACE**

The Circuit of the Americas (COTA) Formula 1 race was held November 15-17, 2012. The racetrack was located in Travis County ESD11's jurisdiction during the race, but was annexed into the City of Austin Full Purpose on December 10, 2012.

AFD, along with several other public safety offices, prepared extensively for the inaugural race event. Since the property originally resided outside our jurisdiction, AFD met with ESD11 prior to the race to develop recommendations for addressing potential service delivery shortcomings within the area. Additional resources, dispatching changes, and staffing were all discussed, and several enhancements were implemented Friday through Sunday of race week to ensure service delivery wasn't impacted. The majority of the incidents during race weekend were medical in nature, which is typical of normal incident patterns. There were no major fire events around the track or in ESD11's territory. All of the pre-event planning and additional resources contributed to a successful, safe weekend.

### **URBAN SHIELD**

The Austin Fire Department participated in the Austin Area Urban Shield exercise. Urban Shield is a nationally recognized program intended to bring the components of the National Response Plan to life in an urban setting. An Incident Command structure managed 12 simultaneously operating scenarios spread over a large geographic area encompassing Travis, Williamson, and Hays counties. AFD personnel directly participated in the year-long planning and preparation process, hosted the Urban Search and Rescue (USAR) scenario, and assisted in running the



Chemical, Biologic, Radioactive, Nuclear, and Environmental (CBRNE) and SWAT HazMat scenarios during the exercise. Personnel from 20 AFD HazMat teams and Operations companies participated in the CBRNE scenario while working along with members of the other three regional HazMat Teams, and multiple other response and treatment agencies. Six AFD teams competed in the USAR scenario, which was a four-evolution competition. The most significant lasting benefit is that two major permanent structural collapse training props were constructed at a regional training facility for the exercise with Homeland Security Grant funds; those props remain available today for additional training.

### **STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE TEAM CREATION**

AFD fully stood up a Regional Type IV Structural Collapse Team consisting of 14 Structural Collapse Level I and II certified personnel per shift, six Structural Collapse Incident Command certified personnel, and more than \$150,000 in Homeland Security Grant funded equipment.

## **Wildfire Planning and Mitigation**

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### **ESTABLISHMENT OF WILDFIRE MITIGATION MANAGEMENT DIVISION**

The Austin Fire Department embarked on establishing a Wildfire Mitigation Division in 2012. Prior to this Division, elements of wildfire mitigation were shared assignments, with little corporate knowledge or cooperation. During the 2011 Labor Day fires in Texas, many agencies were pondering changes in collective planning processes to mitigate future threats. The Austin Public Safety Commission and many others rallied around the concept of an AFD Wildfire Division. Phase one (three full-time positions that would provide oversight on a regional basis) was approved for FY13. This year, the focus is on developing the wildfire team, providing key support for a City/County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP), beginning small-scale wildfire fuels modification projects, providing assistance in the adoption of codes and ordinances, and coordinating major wildfire responses.

### **READY, SET, GO! PROGRAM**

The Ready, Set, Go! program is a national program established in concert with the USDA Forest Service and the International Association of Fire Chiefs, illustrating to homeowners how to better prepare and evacuate during a major wildfire. In fall 2011, the City of Austin's Wildfire Taskforce merged with Travis County's Wildfire Taskforce and jointly decided to employ the Ready, Set, Go! program as a City/County initiative. Adding local photos and language, AFD was instrumental in assuring the program was launched to the public, including working with Austin Homeland Security/Emergency Management and Travis County Emergency Management to provide handouts/brochures, media involvement, and website information. This data is key for communities to understand the risks associated with living in the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).

### **NWCG S130/190 WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING TRAINING PROGRAM**



In August 2012, the Austin Fire Department became the largest fire department in the state of Texas, and possibly the United States, to have 100 percent of Operations firefighters certified to the NWCG Basic Wildland firefighter level. The in-service AFD s130/190 training program began in January and was completed by mid-August, training 934 AFD firefighters in a 40-hour class, which resulted in a total of 37,360 training hours. We added an additional eight wildfire classes totaling 21,244 training hours.

For 2012, AFD provided a total of 58,604 training hours related to wildfire training. This training ensures that AFD firefighters are able to effectively and safely operate on a wildfire incident. Additionally, the

certification ensures seamless communication and operations with all state and federal agencies that may respond to Central Texas to assist on large incidents. The Texas Forest Service has acknowledged that AFD is the pioneer in the state for achieving such an enormous goal.

### **TEXAS INTRASTATE MUTUAL AID SYSTEM (TIFMAS) TRUCK GRANT**

In August 2012, the Austin Fire Department received the first TIFMAS Type 3 brush truck in the state of Texas. This unit was awarded through a highly competitive state grant program administered by the Texas Forest Service. TIFMAS provides an all-hazard emergency response to large incidents anywhere within the state. Only two of the brush trucks awarded thus far have been the fully equipped “Heavy” Type 3 brush trucks. The brush truck may be used for incidents within the City of Austin as well as for statewide responses. AFD was awarded the Type 3 brush truck based on our steadfast commitment of wildland firefighting training to National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards and our continued support through TIFMAS responses across Texas.

## **Improvement of Service Delivery**

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### **SAFER GRANT**

In 2012, the Austin Fire Department was the recipient of the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant, a highly competitive Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant established to help fire departments increase the number of trained, “front-line” firefighters available in their communities. This \$5.1 million grant will allow us to hire 36 firefighters and pay their salaries for two years. With this addition, AFD will complete our four-person staffing plan, which began with a City Council Resolution in January 2008, more than five years ahead of schedule.

### **GRADUATED TWO CADET CLASSES**

After a multi-year delay, two cadet classes graduated from a 28-week academy. This placed 79 new firefighters in the field.



### **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

AFD continued to emphasize professional development by providing the following classes: Wildland Firefighting, Pump Trouble Shooting, Medical Continuing Education, HazMat, and several others. AFD personnel completed more than 90,000 continuing education hours during the last year.

## **Improved Firefighter Safety**

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### **WELLNESS COMPREHENSIVE STUDY**

In a Labor/Management collaboration, AFD and the Austin Firefighters’ Association/Local 975 arranged for an external audit of our award-winning Wellness/Fitness program. A team comprised of representatives from the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) spent four days auditing the processes of the program and comparing it to the national IAFF/IAFC Wellness Fitness Initiative (WFI). When they issued the official report, in addition to validating the effectiveness of the Wellness/Fitness program, they also stated, “Not only is AFD operating within the spirit and intent of the WFI, but in many cases, creating that spirit and intent.”

## **24/7 SAFETY BACKFILL**

On January 1, 2012, a 24/7 safety officer response was instituted using the Safety Chief, along with a backfill strategy, to guarantee a consistent safety response to incidents and firefighter injuries. This program successfully staffed the initiative without interruption and did not incur any added time expense.

## **FITNESS EXPERTS ADDED TO ACADEMY STAFF**

In partnership with the AFD Wellness/Fitness program, the staff exercise physiologists started oversight of the physical training portion of the cadet academy, balancing the workout routines against the Academy's firefighter training program. This helps reduce injuries while maintaining high-quality training.



## **FIREFIGHTER REHABILITATION PROJECT**

AFD and the Office of the Medical Director conducted a study to determine optimal rehabilitation procedures to maximize the safety and effectiveness of the firefighter work force. The study utilized cadet and incumbent firefighters in a controlled training setting. The results will be used to implement rehabilitation policy for large-scale events and extreme weather conditions.

## **FIREFIGHTER ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY TRAINING (PILOT IN BATTALION 5B)**

In 2012, Operations personnel in Battalion 5B led a disorientation study to investigate the ability of firefighters to function in zero-visibility environments. This study was prompted by a "close call" in which a firefighter became disoriented inside a structure fire. Assisted by personnel from the Texas School for the Blind, and AFD's psychologist and statistician, personnel that received training and practiced the learned techniques exhibited improved capabilities in performing in limited visibility situations as compared to personnel that did not receive the training. Preparations are currently in place to expand this training to all AFD Operations personnel in 2013.

## **Facilities Improvements**

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### **LOCKER ROOM PROJECT - PHASE IV COMPLETION**

Phase IV of the AFD Locker Room project was completed in 2012. The scope of Phase IV construction included adding locker rooms/bathrooms to Stations 17, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33.

### **STATION 16 REMODEL**

Fire Station 16, built in 1957, was remodeled in 2012. The remodel included work to the kitchen, restroom, ceiling, and doors, along with a fresh coat of paint throughout the interior.

### **HVAC REPLACEMENTS**

Twelve AFD stations received new HVAC systems. The new HVAC systems were purchased by Austin Energy using funds from the Federal stimulus package.

## External Department Recognition

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### **PATRIOT AWARD**

In October, the Austin Fire Department was awarded the Patriot Award through the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR) for our outstanding support of AFD personnel who are active in the National Guard. The ESGR is a Department of Defense organization that seeks to promote a culture in which all United States employers support and value the military service of their employees.

### **FIRE RESCUE INTERNATIONAL (FRI) CONFERENCE PRESENTATION**

The Austin Fire Department was recognized at the highest national level when we made two presentations at the annual Fire Rescue International Conference in Denver. One presentation highlighted our ground-breaking Business Intelligence application, Qlikview, and the second was a study of the historic wildfire season of 2011. Both presentations were well attended and received excellent remarks, and AFD has been asked to return and present again in 2013.

## Improved Customer Service

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### **IMPROVEMENT OF PLANS REVIEW PROCESS**

AFD Engineering Services performs many functions within the City's development process, including a number of technical engineering and drafting support functions. In 2012, the improvement of the plans review process was accomplished by hiring three new employees. The hiring of these additional engineers has allowed the process to experience a 10 percent drop in its current inventory of plans to be reviewed. In addition, checklists were created to better serve the business community by improving the efficiency of the review process. A process of verifying submittals and plans meeting minimum requirements before they are accepted for full review was incorporated. This process is intended to prevent/reduce delays otherwise caused by finding deficiency items later in the review process, which can sometimes be as long as two to three weeks after submission of any given fire alarm project.

### **2012 FLU SHOT CAMPAIGN**

AFD delivered more than 4,800 shots to COA employees and dependents at a cost of \$7.47 per shot. This led to a total savings of \$18,000 over the cost of a private contractor. The annual flu shot program is a cost-effective exercise in pandemic response that is being studied by other organizations to help them plan for pandemic emergencies.

## Community Outreach

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### **SMOKE ALARM CANVASSING INITIATIVE**

In 2012, the Community Outreach section instituted and managed various neighborhood-canvassing initiatives. Following a major and/or tragic event, AFD and its partners dispatch personnel to go door-to-door and install smoke alarms wherever they are needed. This has created opportunities to interact with the public that we serve and more importantly, install an early warning device (smoke alarm) in conjunction with a home hazard assessment. This program has allowed AFD to educate residents about smoke alarm safety and maintenance.





The following are 2012 neighborhood initiatives:

- Wagon Bend Trail: 129 smoke alarms installed
- Chico Street: 82 smoke alarms installed
- East 14th Street: 40 smoke alarms installed
- Oak Motte Ln.: 40 smoke alarms installed

### **COMMUNITY OUTREACH AND BLUE SANTA PARTNERSHIP (SMOKE ALARM INITIATIVE)**

For the 2012 holiday season, AFD's Community Outreach section collaborated with Austin Police Department's Operation Blue Santa to provide 3,600 smoke alarm vouchers for Austin's families. These free smoke alarm vouchers were put in Blue Santa baskets that were delivered to Central Texas families. In addition, 500 more vouchers were given out during the Chuy's "Children Giving to Children" parade on December 1, 2012.



## **Recruiting and Hiring**

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### **CANDIDATE MENTORING PROGRAM**

A pilot program to mentor Fire Cadet candidates was instituted on January 4, 2012. The year-long program was initially opened to anyone with an interest in a firefighting career with AFD, but was narrowed down as the hiring process progressed. This allowed for more focused attention on the candidates remaining after each elimination step. Of the 84 individuals that participated at some point during the year, 16 successfully entered the cadet training academy.

### **RECRUITING AND HIRING PROCESS**

In preparation to begin accepting applications in April 2012, the AFD Recruiting Division launched an all-out blitz attack to focus our efforts on improving the diversity of the department. Our extensive work paid off, with nearly 60 percent of the more than 4,800 applications submitted being from a targeted demographic (33 percent Hispanic, 14.5 percent African-American, and 11.4 percent female). In May, approximately 2,600 of those applicants participated in the written entrance exam. Like the previous process, this year's process consisted of two parts, the written test and the structured oral interview. Applicants who scored among the top 1,500 on the written exam were then invited to participate in the interviews which were held in July. The culmination of this mass effort was the hiring of 50 new cadets for Class #115, which began November 19, 2012.

### **CANDIDATE PHYSICAL ABILITY TEST (CPAT) REVALIDATION**

The IAFF partnered with AFD and the University of Texas to conduct a comprehensive revalidation of the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT). The results will be used to support this test, which is used by fire departments nationwide as part of their hiring processes.