

Highlands County Fire Rescue

HCFR – On the line or threading the needle...

Leaning forward, always ready

ISSUE 2 – December 2018

mbashoor@hcbcc.org



“TORNADO” OF ACTIVITY

A tremendous amount of planning and functional activity continues to ramp up in anticipation of the January 2019 hiring of our first 24/7 firefighting resources.

RESOURCES – Currently, fire and rescue staff is surveying all 19 facilities where we have assets to identify, gather, and catalog excess and surplus equipment and protective gear.



Rented warehouse space has been cleaned out, to provide a starting point for the surplus effort

and a distribution point for both paid and volunteer members. Once the Fire Rescue HQ space is built out on Kenilworth Boulevard, the leased space will no longer be needed.

HIRING – Interviews for Deputy Chief, Battalion Chief, Lieutenants, and 56-hour firefighters are in process. Selections for the Chief officers will be made first, to establish the overhead control necessary for when the 24/7 staff is hired in January. Thirteen positions will be filled between now and January, with additional hiring anticipated in April of 2019. With the anticipation that many of the positions will be filled from internal candidates, there will also be numerous positions that will be filled with other applicants.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT STAKEHOLDERS

On December 11, 2018, Highlands County Emergency Manager LaTosha Reiss held the first “Emergency Management Stakeholders” meeting.



These meetings will allow for better communications, interoperability and understanding of expectations. Additionally, a regular quarterly approach to the meetings will help identify gaps in system plans, helping avert last minute issues similar to those identified during the Hurricane Irma after-action review.

VETERANS TRIBUTE AMBULANCE

Highlands County EMS Manager Dustin Fitch & Road & Bridge mechanic Charles (Bubba) Benton recently traveled to the Ohio Horton ambulance plant to conduct a final inspection and take delivery of the latest replacement ambulance to our fleet. Fitch has been working with Denise Williams at Highlands County Veterans Services to develop this personalized veteran tribute unit, “Medic 17-1”.

The 2018 unit proudly displays the seals of each branch of the United States military along with a shadow soldier image.



HCFR Newsletter, Issue 2 – Page 2

ESO SOFTWARE TO FILL FIRE REPORTING GAP

One of the overarching problems identified during the original Fitch-study, was the inability of the contractor to obtain and analyze accurate data from each of the ten fire companies. There were three different and distinct reporting formats being used by the ten districts. The information was only available to the individual fire districts, which prohibited the vendor (or County management) from being able to easily or readily identify and analyze the data.

After presenting all three systems to the wider audience of all users for feedback, Highlands County Fire Rescue will be maximizing the existing contract that Highlands County EMS currently has with ESO Solutions. The new fire reporting modules will fill the information reporting gap identified during the original fire assessment study. The new software, which will also allow for a simplified Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) incident number system, will be ready for use by January 1, 2019. Volunteer Chiefs, departments and paid staff will be provided training as soon as possible, ensuring that the migration of all companies to the new reporting system is complete by March 1, 2019.

AUTOMATIC VEHICLE LOCATOR FOR RESPONSE

Highlands County Fire Rescue is working closely with the Sheriffs Office Dispatch Center to enable the “Automatic Vehicle Locator” (AVL) system. While the system is currently capable of choosing and routing equipment by the closest available unit, the GIS street layer and map in the CAD must be reconfigured for AVL to work properly. In the meantime, we will continue to dispatch based upon the original “first due” concepts, which dispatch ‘companies’ instead of specific stations and units.

“MUTUAL AIDE” FOR HCFR

“Mutual Aide” in the fire and EMS service relates to adjoining fire districts having agreements in place to provide assistance. The assistance may be “automatic”, “as needed”, or “when available”. “Automatic” refers to a situation where there are fully integrated dispatch protocols and policies and the Dispatch center automatically includes adjoining districts for any dispatch as indicated by protocol. “As needed” is fairly self-explanatory, meaning the dispatch center has to ask the adjoining district to respond. “When available” is typical on military installations and within municipalities.

All Highlands County stations run in an “automatic mutual aide” posture, while the Avon Park and Sebring municipal departments are a cross between “as needed” and “when available”. Director Bashoor is working with both Fire Departments to identify ways to improve our level of response.

COLDER WEATHER REQUIRES DUE DILIGENCE

As holidays and winter temperatures befall us, a few basic winter tips bear repeating:

- Clean furnace filters/systems annually
- NEVER plug heaters (or AC units) into extension cords. Use a wall plug.
- Install smoke alarms on each level
- Keep natural Christmas trees watered
- Throw away old light sets – use LED
- PLEASE don’t leave cooking unattended

NOTE FROM CHIEF BASHOOR:

In our next issue, we will introduce new staff and share our new fire station design concept. Happy holidays – please say an extra prayer for our firefighters, EMT’s, paramedics, law enforcement, dispatchers, hospital and emergency management folks working over this holiday season!