

West Dover Fire Department
Officer's Meeting
June 23, 2014

Officers Present: Rich Werner, Mickey Kersten, Gary Carruthers, Mike Hescok
Also present: recording secretary Jeannette Eckert
Also in attendance: Steve Otis of the State Police Arson Investigation Unit

The meeting was called to order at 5:05pm

Arson investigation session by Steve Otis

- Up to Fire Officer to determine cause and origin—when that cannot be determined contact a State Police fire investigator, there is always one on call state wide
- Don't hesitate to call no matter what the time
- Difficult to investigate anything in the dark, but will come out first thing the next morning
- If arson is suspected:
 - FD personnel should try to stay at the scene
 - Or contact local PD and/or State Police to secure the scene
 - Would need a search warrant to get back on the property if it is not secured or if owner denies access
- Tell owners you don't know the cause and origin so you are bringing in an investigator to determine
- Best investigative tool is to be able to gauge a person's reaction to the word "arson"
- Try to lock a person into a statement at the scene
- Some points to consider when determining cause:
 - Statements by the owners—are they consistent with what the fire crew witnessed
 - Strange burn patterns throughout the house that are not connected
 - Multiple points of origin
 - *Accidental* fires are still covered by home owners insurance
 - Multiple condominiums units—consider big dollar insurance costs

Information to gather prior to a call:

- Why do you feel you can't determine the cause or origin?
- If you're not 100% sure—or have a weird feeling about it, it doesn't look right....
- Are you aware if property is in Bankruptcy? Or Foreclosure?
- Scene examinations & interviews are very important
- If there is a fatality, whether Firefighter or Occupant, **notification is required**
 - If there is a body, investigators would come out immediately
 - Leave scene alone after a body is found—protect it as evidence while still putting out the fire
 - Treated as an evidentiary scene

Scene preservation:

- Not saying not to put the fire out
 - By all means, put the fire out!
 - But realize that opening a hose full may damage/destroy the scene
- If a firefighter is injured, call. Even if fire is not suspicious

Report writing:

- Who was in charge at the scene
- Document what you have seen
- Fire officer's reports are used in the investigation
- Brief statement is almost better
- Refresh your memory; good to record owner's statements
- Who called 911? Who was the first responder? Which local PD was there?
- Easy to determine its arson but hard to get a conviction

Suspicious car fires:

- Local PD is not a fire investigator; call State Police if you are not getting a response locally
- Local PD would be responsible for any charges being brought
- Attempt to tow and secure the car at the FD—evidence in investigation—must have cause to do so
- Isn't the scene of a car fire part of the investigation?
 - Depends on the situation—can you take pictures prior to removing from the scene?

Division of Fire Safety personnel:

- State Police investigator would come with them to a scene
- Residential or commercial—they know building codes, wiring, have experience as firefighters
- They do civil investigations. State Police do the criminal investigations.

Drills, Trainings, Meetings:

- Vermont State Firefighter's Association Conference is the same weekend as Blueberry Parade in July
- Red Cross shelter coordinator training on September 4th
- Solar panel home on Negus Rd—rec'd letter regarding shut off details--need to review with John Snow.....

Guy Rouelle's airport training referred to at the last meeting:

- Unfortunately the live burn training happened 10 days ago
- His offer stands to send a firefighter from each town, up to 2 people, next year
- Will be sure to give us plenty of notice and help in any way
- Perhaps we could come to Rutland for some training

Upcoming drills:

- July 2nd—tanker shuttle
- July 9th --rescue up at Mt Snow
- July 16th—Bill Shea
 - Coming to officers meeting on the 14th

Staff:

- Reviewed budget numbers
- Reviewed salary increases
- Fire Rescue magazine—June issue--some good articles:
 - *Stoned Cold Serious*
 - *Standpipe versus the Engine*
 - *Big fire, Big water*
- Considering purchasing 2 Keurig coffee makers for the station

Equipment/Gear:

- Pack trackers—monitor on air packs when someone is in too long—Mike will investigate
 - Rich provided phone numbers of two places in Massachusetts
- Missing suction hose? Larry is checking on this
- Tarps, jumbo ball valve, 2 fire extinguisher brackets coming in this week

Upcoming Events/FYI:

- Ride for Heroes—Motorcycle ride at Brattleboro Retreat on August 16
- Fire Prevention for 2014: “Working smoke alarms save lives, test yours every month”
- \$250 donation check from Mount Snow to the Association
- Dorset Theater Festival:
 - “Giving back” program for free tickets to 2014 summer shows
 - Offering to providers of community service such as Police, EMS, Firefighters, Military etc.
 - Brochure with details is available at firehouse
- No grills to be operated on decks of multi-family units per State regulations—must be 10 feet away from the building

Officer's Updates:

- Mike: Discuss new radio on Engine One??
 - Biggest problem is all the headsets on it
 - Call Mutual Aid—remove all radio headsets- puts more strain on it
- Mickey: Discussed firefighters driving capabilities; moving some up to driving with an officer

The meeting was adjourned at 7:00pm

❖ **Next meeting on July 14 at 5pm**

Respectfully submitted by Jeannette Eckert, Recording Secretary