

THE RESPONDER

— Dedicated to Our Community, Our Profession and Each Other —

WINTER 2015



IN THIS EDITION

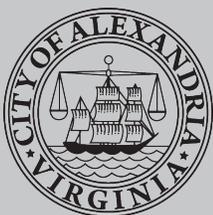
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Alexandria Fire Department

900 Second Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.746.5200

www.alexandriava.gov/Fire

This newsletter is written
and compiled by the
Alexandria Fire Department's
Community Services Unit



Ivy Hill Memorial Service and Wreath Laying



Photos: First Row, Left: Deputy Chief Andrews, Asst. Chief Bonnette, Fire Chief Dubé & Asst. Chief Thomas; Middle: AFD Members; Right: Mayor Euille giving the Mayor's welcome; Second Row, Left: Roll Call of the Fallen; Middle: Fire Chief Dubé doing welcome & introductions; Right: Presentation of Colors by AFD Ceremonial Unit; Third Row, Left: Retired AFD Members; Middle: Lt. Silverwood; Right: Deputy U.S. Fire Administrator Gaines giving keynote address; Fourth Row, Left: Retired AFD Employee Callie Terrell singing the National Anthem; Middle: Sheriff Lawhorne, DEC Director, JoAnne Munroe, Fire Chief Dubé & Police Chief Cook; Right: President of the Alexandria Volunteer Fire Department, Thomas Y. "Jay" Johnson, Jr.

The Alexandria Fire Department observed National Fire Prevention Week on Friday, October 10, with a Memorial Service and Wreath Laying. The solemn ceremony is held each year at Ivy Hill Cemetery to honor those who have died in the line of duty and to mark the passing of those members of the Department who died during the preceding 12 months.

Community Engagement

AFD Hosts Annual Open House

By: Shawn Gore

Every year during the week of October 9, fire departments across the country observe "Fire Prevention Week." Fire and rescue officials remind citizens to test smoke alarms, prepare and practice family escape plans and teach kids pertinent fire and life safety messages like "Stop, drop and roll" and "Stay low and go."

The Alexandria Fire Department participated in this week by opening its doors to the public with the annual Open House event on Saturday, October 11. Visitors had a first-hand look at how the Department operates. Attendees met city firefighters and paramedics while learning about fire and life safety and prevention. AFD employees at each of the nine stations got creative with demonstrations, performances, and tours that provided visitors with basic knowledge of the roles and requirements of firefighters and paramedics. The open house event also included opportunities for children to extinguish a pretend fire with a real fire hose, tour apparatus, learn how to call 911, and more.



FF Quante giving fire hose lessons.



Cpt. Cook, FF Smith, FF Daniels & FF Harrison share a candid moment after a school visit.



FF Cephers & FF Kuny doing a school visit.



Medic Wynn & Medic Honaker showing students a medic unit.

National Fire Prevention Month

By: Shawn Gore

In observance of 2014's fire safety campaign, city firefighters and paramedics discussed fire safety and prevention with fourth grade students in Alexandria elementary schools' throughout the entire month of October.

The Alexandria Fire Department and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) want to remind local residents that "Smoke Alarms Save Lives: Test Yours Every Month." According to the NFPA, working smoke alarms cut in half the risk of dying in home fires and this directive has been selected as the focal point of this year's campaign. Fire Prevention Month reminds all of the serious fire hazards present in all communities, homes and workplace and teaches how to prevent them from starting.

The curriculum focused on firefighter job duties, smoke alarms, home escape planning, 911 calls, and the common types of fires.

Bringing Holiday Cheer to Area Children

By: Hilary Gates

For almost twenty years now, Captain Thurston McClain has been providing holiday joy to area families in need. Along with the Black Fire Service Professionals of Alexandria (BFSPA), McClain's efforts ensure that hundreds of children each year receive gifts and toys during the holiday season. This year was no exception.

"It's my signature move," McClain said.

During the afternoon of December 20, 2014, the BFSPA hosted the event at the Hilton at Mark Center. The Hilton donates lunch for the kids and Clyde's restaurant provides refreshments for the volunteers. The event was well-attended this year, as it has been in the past.

EMS Supervisor Lisa Simba and Firefighter Kaandra Wilson played a key role in organizing the participants, as did Firefighter Greg Baylor and Captain Greg Cook. Lieutenant C.J. Jackson played the role of Santa.

Wilson said that she especially enjoys rewarding deserving individuals.

"We want to focus it on children who are absolutely in need of toys and those who are doing very well in school, being good role models for younger children in their community," she said.

The event's success also rests on consistently participating benefactors from around the city. Several children were given the major prize of a bicycle, donated once again by Christian Myers of the VeloCity Bicycle Cooperative on Mt. Vernon Avenue.

McClain is very thankful for their participation.

"I haven't met a better person than Chris," he said.

Other longtime participants and donors in the BFSPA event include community standouts Alexandria Mayor William Euille, City Councilwoman Del Pepper, and local businessman Jack Taylor. McClain said that every year, he can expect a call from Euille asking, "What time's the party?"

Even though McClain is planning on retiring in April, the future of this philanthropic event is not in jeopardy.

"We hang our hat on it, and we bring people together," McClain said. "I'm going to keep it going."



FF Daniels and Santa at the BPSPA Children's Christmas Celebration.

Toy Drive Continues Year After Year

By: Hilary Gates

While Firefighter Mike Chandler coordinates the annual Alexandria Firefighters Children's Holiday Toy Drive, he fervently insists that the real work and the biggest praise should be saved for those who take time to donate every year.

"All I have to do is steer the toys in the right direction," said Chandler. "The major players' generosity is what keeps this going year after year."

Since 1999, Chandler has gathered toys and monetary donations to distribute to a variety of recipients during the holiday season. The first recipient this year, as has often been the case, was a needy family from an Alexandria shelter, to whom Chandler donated a full Thanksgiving meal. Closer to the winter holidays, he and Medic Chip Myers, who plays Santa year after year, visit the shelter to donate a large amount of toys to the children who live there. Local organizations ALIVE! and The Campagna Center were also recipients of these donors' generosity.

This year, a few AFD medics suggested to Chandler that a local military family might benefit from some holiday cheer.

"It had been a difficult year for them," he said. So they brought some Christmas greetings to the family's home by taking the fire engine and its crew to visit the family's home.

The Toy Drive has always been an event to look forward to for INOVA Alexandria Hospital. One of the most important fixtures is Santa, played by Myers with what Chandler calls "his usual jovial self." On December 19, Santa and his crew gave blankets to the parents of hospitalized neonates and also encountered several children throughout their travels in the hospital. These children all received toys.

Myers said he gets a lot of pleasure from seeing the children's reactions.

"These kids, who essentially have very little, receive gifts and they finally have hope for

something," he said.



AFD members at the Alexandria Firefighters Children's Holiday Toy Drive.

AFD New Fire Boat Dedication

By: Cameron Hall

On Saturday, October 11, 2014, the Department's new fireboat, *Relief*, was dedicated at Alexandria Waterfront Park. Replacing *Vigilant*, *Relief* was purchased through the 2010 Port Security Grant Program, was built to specific Alexandria Fire Department standards, and arrived in late September. The new vessel will provide the Marine Operations Team with greater pump capacity, speed, and enhanced equipment for the mitigation of all-hazards rapid responses on and near the Potomac River and for better patient care. *Relief* has a large, climate-controlled cabin and patient care and command area as well as additional seating for operational personnel.

Several issues with the manufacturing caused a delay in presenting the boat to the public and putting it into service, but staff are currently in training to keep the boat in service and all members of the department are encouraged to participate.

The dedication ceremony was attended by Mayor Euille and members of the City Council, including Vice-Mayor Silberberg, Councilman Lovain, Councilman Chapman, Councilwoman, Pepper, Councilman Smedberg, and Councilman Wilson. Also in attendance were representatives from MetalCraft Marine, the manufacturers of *Relief*, Richard Sparacino of the United States Coast Guard, Mark Harris from the Maryland Department of Transportation and former City Manager, Rashad Young.

A special thank you went to Captain Rodney Masser for his outstanding dedication and assistance in the design and acquisition of *Relief*, including the maintenance, delivery, and training of the staff to put *Relief* into service. None of this could have happened without his commitment, perseverance, and enthusiasm.

The boat will be docked at the City Marina.



Mayor Euille, Asst. Chief Bonnette, Fire Chief Dubé, Asst. Chief Thomas & Deputy Chief Sharpe



Fire Chief Dubé, Fire Boat Cpt. Masser & City Council christening the fire boat Relief.



Fire Boat Relief.



Fire Chief Dubé and Mayor Euille, with Council Members & Former City Manager Young.

Racing the Clock

How you can help First Responders during an emergency?

By: Shawn Gore

Do you ever wonder what you're actually supposed to do when you hear and see the lights and sirens of First Responders quickly approaching from behind? If you are like the vast majority of the population, you probably have one of three reactions: stop exactly where you are, move over, or pull over to a shoulder.

The safest reaction is to drive to the safest shoulder (clear intersections) and stop and remain there until the emergency vehicle has passed. Also, watch for other fire apparatus, as several emergency vehicles may be responding. Drivers should stay alert and as traffic and other road conditions permit, quickly and calmly pull over. Before re-entering the road, drivers should look in all directions and use proper signals to merge back into traffic, proceed with caution and due regard for safety and traffic conditions. Stay at least 500 feet behind emergency vehicles and never race behind an emergency vehicle to get through a traffic light. By following these simple steps, you not only help First Responders get to the scene faster and more safely but also ensure your own personal safety.



TRAINING/ PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Firefighter/Hazmat Technicians Rowan and Shorter are shown practicing their plugging and patching techniques using small tools while wearing Level "A" suits.

AFD Conducts HAZMAT DRILL

By: Michael Dunn

Every year, all certified hazardous materials technicians and specialists must obtain at least twenty four documented refresher training hours in order to be recertified by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management and remain on the hazardous materials team.

As Part of the annual training, each member of the team must don and work in a fully encapsulated Level "A" suit. This "work" includes walking, going up and down stairs and communicating. Another aspect of the drill is using small tools and equipment, so that personnel practice dexterity which is difficult with reduced visibility while wearing three layers of gloves.

Combined Specialty Drill

By: Randolph Woodson, Jr.

Temperatures were in the 50s, accompanied by a gentle breeze, bright sunshine and chirping birds. The usual hustle and bustle of the area was evident, as horns blew sporadically and traffic sluggishly moved along. As many others were making their way to work, the men and women of the Alexandria Fire Department were on duty, making necessary preparations for the uncertainty that this seemingly routine day would bring.

Morning meetings were taking place; intense conversation was underway over cups of coffee at Firehouse 206; the front ramp of Station 209 was saturated with the sound of diesel engines as the crew checked out their Hazardous Materials fleet; intense workouts had begun downstairs at 208. We, however, weren't the only ones on the job on this beautiful morning of October 21. City collection crews were hard at work, Alexandria Police were patrolling the busy streets, and two sanitation plant employees were finishing up a routine cleaning of a gravity separator tank. All seemed to be going as planned, up until one of the sanitation workers unexpectedly fainted in the tank due to poor air quality. The other employee was able to evacuate and call 911, which immediately activated a Technical Rescue and Hazardous Materials Response.

Now, don't bother going to look back through the log book to find this call that you can't believe you missed. You won't find it there. From October 20-22, the AFD's Technical Rescue and Hazardous Materials teams combined at the Alexandria Sanitation Plant to conduct a drill based upon the aforementioned scenario. These drills were planned and facilitated by Captain Wells Wilson, Captain Mike Dunn, and Firefighter Arash Hematti, and completed over all three suppression shifts by personnel from Rescue 206, Engine and Truck 208, and Haz-Mat 209. While the drill focused on Confined Space Rescue, undoubtedly a technical rescue discipline, the air monitoring and decontamination necessary to complete the job is a specialty of the Haz-Mat team.

"Drills like these allow us to increase interoperability between the specialty teams," said Dunn. According to Hematti, "the best part about having this drill completed on three different shifts, by three different crews, is that you get to see three different methods of achieving the same goal. We can now go back and share our experience and learn from each other's methods."

"It is important that we, as a department, continue to practice these high risk-low frequency scenarios," added Lieutenant John Harris.

"They allow us to gauge our strengths and weaknesses, and provide direction for where to focus our efforts

during daily drills," Hematti said. "This scenario is a definite possibility, as the plant is active and the tanks are cleaned by plant personnel every couple of months. We hope that it never happens, but if it does, we will be ready!"



HazMat responders perform decon after entry into the tank.



Crews prepare to extricate the sanitation worker from the separation tank.



Participants from HazMat and Tech Rescue Teams debrief following a successful learning experience.

First Fire Medic Academy Completed in December

By: Hilary Gates

AFD recently wrapped up its first Fire Medic Academy, a training class for current medics who had existing firefighter certifications. In line with Chief Robert Dube's plan to cross-train members of the department, the class was taught by Lieutenants Warner Sherman and Jimmy Taylor at the Professional Development Center. Six employees completed the six-week training: EMS Supervisor Michael Cahill, and Medics Brett Buehler, Eric Doddington, Brett Fitzgerald, Rick Krimmer and Adam Wynn.

Because the trainees had previous fire certifications, Sherman and Taylor designed the course to be a refresher of skills and knowledge. A pre-assessment was conducted to determine the level of knowledge the medics held, and the class consisted primarily of drills and practicals that helped teach AFD's style of firefighting.

Sherman recognized that for some of the trainees, it had been an extended period of time since they had practiced their skills.

"Their attitudes and efforts were great," said Sherman. "On the whole, they were somewhat out of practice."

Taylor agreed.

"The medics handled themselves professionally, and they soaked up knowledge like sponges," he said. Taylor noted that they were very receptive to being guided through the program. This helped them understand methods specific to Alexandria.

Wynn was one who benefited from the training.

"I liked that it was 95% hands-on and included really progressive stuff like Nozzle Forward," he said.

The instructors taught the AFD approach to engine operations, high rise operations, truck operations and bail-outs. Guest instructors and subject matter experts assisted, as did AFD Field Training Officers Andrew Beckett and Donald Scott. Beckett designed and built the new maze at the burn building, which the trainees and Sherman both appreciated.

"The new maze is really cool," said Wynn. "One of the most enjoyable aspects of class was the level of motivation by everyone involved."

For his part, Buehler said that he was interested in becoming cross trained so that he could serve multiple roles within the department. He noted the challenge of the live training evolutions, but was grateful for the instructors' dedication.

"All of our instructors were very motivating and knowledgeable, including our guest instructors," said

Buehler. "I would like to say thank you to all them, especially our lead instructors Lt. Sherman and Lt. Taylor."

The medics are currently continuing their training with fire crews and will be finished once their skill task book and internship has been checked off and approved by their officers over the upcoming months. Training will continue, as the Field Training Office prepares more continuing education for all members of the department.

"We hope to continue to build confidence through this practical training," said Beckett.



First Fire Medic Academy doing search & rescue drill.

Are you really prepared for a mayday?

A first hand account from AFD firefighter Roxanne Givens

I believe we all, as firefighters, feel a certain sensation when we hear the radio transmission of a frantic mayday call during a fire. Some may try to envision the scene, perhaps mentally willing one of our own to find a way out, maybe later rehearsing what our own actions would be in a similar scenario. But how likely are we to have the capacity to carry out these rehearsed actions under high heat, fatigue, disorientation, or low air supply?

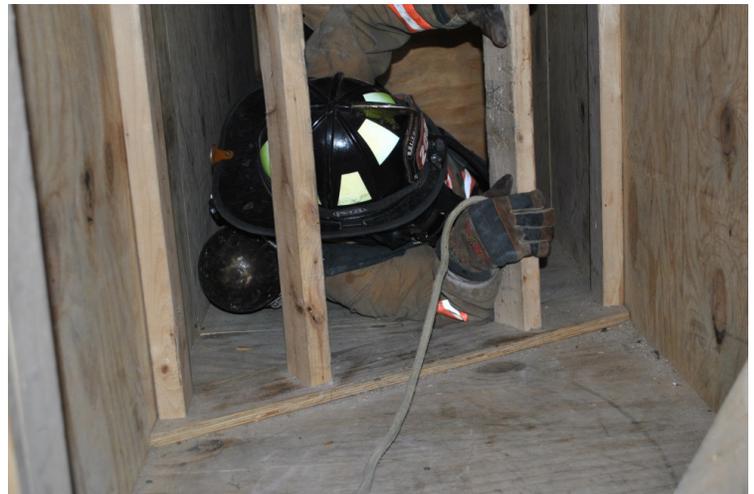
Many lost in the line of duty may have had the tools and ability to survive, but along with other contributing factors, the stress of the situation incapacitated them. For example, in Texas (2010), a volunteer Captain with 11 years of experience died while attempting to exit a commercial structure fire, due to high heat conditions, with another officer leading the way. The other officer was able to regain orientation after they lost the hoseline, ran low on air, and lead them back toward the entry point. Even after running out of air, this officer was able to breach an interior wall and find other personnel to assist in breaching the outer wall for his escape. The victim was later found only 10 – 15 feet away. He had either stopped or lost consciousness moments before escape. Something separated these two individuals put in the same circumstances together; something drove one's will and allowed clarity during crisis.

In October 2014, I attended a Professional Development Conference hosted by the Fairfax County Professional Fire & Rescue Officers Association. There was training provided on Fire Behavior, Search & Rescue, Incident Command, and several other topics, but I was intrigued by the course entitled Stress Exposure Training (SET). The purpose of the course is to expose firefighters to survival skills in a more realistic, fast-paced, stressful environment. Day 1 started with a brief lecture explaining the effects of stressors on our cognitive and psychomotor skills, drills on the basics in survival skills and calling the mayday, gradually increasing the stressors (to a level tailored to each individual) involved. A couple of evolutions of wall breach, entanglements, and forcing entry evolved into completing tasks and ultimately, surviving in tight spaces, under heat, smoke, radio traffic, and an "officer" barking orders. By Day 2, we were putting it all together on a live burn, riding up on the apparatus lights and sirens, throwing ladders, rescuing victims (the instructors were clearly Truck enthusiasts), and ultimately ourselves, in a real fire environment, at fireground speed.

This was an extremely rewarding (and fatiguing) course, and I feel confident that in a high stress situation, that training would kick in and I would be able to maintain composure because I can say I've encountered this before, I can overcome this. That moment when the floor drops out from under you and

you're buried under wires is scary even in training, but at least if it's real, it won't be the first time you have experienced that type of stress, after this course. How do firefighters know what their stress threshold is? I encourage firefighters to find that out for themselves and train to surpass that level, because you never know if you will one day have to call a mayday and find a way to survive.

I want to thank Firefighter/Paramedic Rob Blasetti of Fairfax County Fire & Rescue for pushing to make this course happen in our region. He teamed up with some dynamic partners from his time in Cape Coral, FL to form a course called Firefighter Survival and Rapid Intervention Team Concepts. Rob brought the concepts for that course to Fairfax, and his partners traveled up to make it happen, along with some excellent instructors from Fairfax County Fire & Rescue, including Lt. Scott Kraut and Lt. Jason Abitz. Depending when and where firefighters completed their initial fire academy training, they may or may not have ever had to perform duties under high stress. I encourage all firefighters to seek out the training that could one day save your life, because ultimately, it's up to you.



FF Givens at Stress Exposure Training (SET) Drill.

FIRE PREVENTION & LIFE SAFETY TIPS

WINTER FIRE SAFETY TIPS

Winter fires can be prevented!

By: Andrea Buchanan & Russell Furr

The men and women of the Alexandria Fire Department Fire Prevention and Life Safety Section are working to remind everyone that home fires are more prevalent in winter than in any other season. This is due in part to an increase in cooking and heating fires. Holiday decorations and winter storms that can interrupt electrical service and cause people to turn to alternative heating sources also contribute to the increased risk of fire in winter.

Kerosene Heaters

- Be sure your heater is in good working condition; inspect parts for any carbon build-up. Make sure the heater has an emergency shut off in case the heater is tipped over.
- Only use fuel recommended by the heater manufacturer. NEVER use fuel that is not made for your unit.
- Keep kerosene or other flammable liquids stored in approved metal containers, in well ventilated storage areas outside of the house.
- NEVER fill the heater while it is operating or hot. Avoid overfilling your kerosene unit also. Refueling should be done outside the home or outdoors.
- Keep all young children away from space heaters.



Furnace Heating

- Be sure all furnace controls and emergency shutoffs are in proper working condition.
- Leave furnace repairs to qualified specialists; do not attempt repairs yourself unless you are qualified.
- Have your furnace inspected on an annual basis to ensure proper working condition.
- Check the flue pipes and pipe seams. Make sure they are well supported and free of holes and cracks. Soot around the seams may be an indicator of a leak.
- Make sure the chimney is solid with no cracks or loose bricks. Unused flue openings should be sealed with solid masonry.
- Keep trash and other combustibles away from the heating system.

Other Fire Safety Tips

- Never discard hot ashes inside or near the home. Place them in a metal container well away from the house.
- Never use a range or an oven as a supplementary heating device. It is a fire hazard and it can release toxic fumes.
- If you use an electric heater, be sure not to overload the circuit. Only use extension cords which have the necessary rating to carry the amp load.
- Avoid using electric space heaters in bathrooms or other areas where they may come in contact with a water source.
- Never thaw frozen pipes in your home with a blow torch or open flame. Use hot water or a UL labeled device such as a hand held dryer for thawing.
- If there is a fire hydrant near your home, you can assist the fire department by keeping the hydrant clear of snow so it can be located easily.
- Be sure every level of your home has a working smoke alarm, and be sure to check and clean it on a monthly basis.



Change your smoke and carbon monoxide detector batteries.

Smoke alarms are still the most effective way of preventing fire deaths in the home. Unfortunately, far too many people fail to replace the batteries to guarantee their continued operation. Replace any smoke alarm older than 10 years and any CO detector older than five years.

ADMINISTRATION & LOGISTICS NEWS

Perception is Reality: Putting the “Human” back in HR

A Message from HR’s Racheal Sawyer & Amanda Jackson

Do you perceive Human Resources (HR) as your “nemesis”? That HR is lurking around every corner waiting to catch you in a “Gotcha!” moment? Are you concerned HR works only on behalf of the organization and not its employees?

If you answered yes to any of the above questions, then it’s time to rebuild trust and reestablish successful two-way communication between you and your HR Department. By establishing proper communication channels, HR and employees can work together to define goals, establish expectations and respect each other’s talents. This in turn helps quickly eliminate problems and encourages team work, fairness and consistency.

Working together also ensures that everyone is informed and up-to-date on organizational policies and procedures. By being knowledgeable about your organization’s expectations, both HR and employees can take responsibility for engagement, behavior and performance.



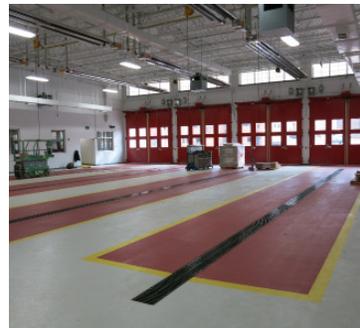
Amanda Jackson & Racheal Sawyer presenting to AFD Recruit Class 41.

AFD Station 210



Alexandria Fire Department’s HR Office Manager Amanda Jackson, and HR Professional Racheal Sawyer are both committed to high-quality service and employee wellbeing. Jackson and Sawyer stress the importance of having both the right HR practices and the right employee perceptions of those practices. Their goal is to create a healthy and successful work environment in which people are empowered, productive and happy.

The department admires the motto from Mahatma Gandhi: “You must be the change you want to see in the world.”



AFD Station 210 located in the Eisenhower corridor is now open.

FALL 2014 RUN STATISTICS

(SEPTEMBER, OCTOBER & NOVEMBER)

	UNIT	MEDICAL	FIRE SUPPRESSION	TOTAL	2014 YTD	2013 YTD
Station 201	E201	125	213			
	Total			338	1313	1319
Station 202	M202	377	97			
	U202	2	6			
	Total			482	1815	2091
Station 203	E203	169	161			
	T203	33	223			
	Total			586	2138	2294
Station 204	E204	156	180			
	M204	317	95			
	T204	39	372			
	Total			1159	4132	3478
Station 205	E205	237	336			
	M205	458	120			
	T205	0	1			
	Total			1152	4294	4627
Station 206	E206	273	336			
	M206	512	174			
	RS206	41	96			
	Total			1383	5118	5460
Station 207	E207	241	238			
	M207	395	95			
	Total			969	3699	4209
Station 208	E208	423	347			
	M208	551	150			
	T208	61	201			
	Total			1733	6750	7219
Station 209	E209	154	237			
	H209	1	26			
	U209	0	4			
	Total			422	1495	1493
Total Responses				8224	30754	32190
2015FY/ YTD Total Incidents					7062	