



# TUSCALOOSA FIRE & RESCUE SERVICE

PAUL RANDY SMITH, FIRE CHIEF



## 2018 ANNUAL REPORT

Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue is pleased to present the 2018 Annual Report. This document provides a brief summary of our achievements towards the Core Values of the Maddox administration.

In 2018, we responded to 16,166 emergency runs. This is an increase of 445 runs from 2017. Rescue and EMS responses comprised 83 % of the total incidents. Station 7 responded to the most runs (2,403).

We initiated several new programs and procedures to enhance our capabilities as a department and our abilities to serve the citizens of Tuscaloosa. We continue to work diligently to enhance all of our programs to maintain our high standard of service.

We successfully implemented our EMS Bike Team. This team was formed to provide better coverage and response for large events taking place in the City of Tuscaloosa. We partnered with Mobile Fire and Rescue Department which allowed us to model our program after theirs and gain knowledge and insight to apply to future events taking place in the City of Tuscaloosa.

We further developed our Communications Division by assigning a Captain and having twelve police dispatchers volunteer to become dedicated Fire and EMS dispatchers. In addition, we began the process of implementing Priority Dispatch. Priority Dispatch prioritizes calls based on nationally accepted criteria.

We were able to secure a FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) to implement the purchase new self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs) for the entire department. This ended a two-year process. We replaced accessories, equipment, and an air compressor to bring the department to the highest available standards.

We are pleased to say that Tuscaloosa closed the year with zero fire fatalities. We believe this is a direct result of the City's commitment to our smoke alarm installation program, our fire and life safety education program, advances in emergency medical services, and firefighter training.

Our mission of "Making Tuscaloosa a safer community through the highest quality of emergency response, risk reduction, and fiscal responsibility" is our top priority.

On behalf of men and women of the Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue, we thank you, the City Council, and the citizens of Tuscaloosa for the continued support.

Respectfully,

Randy Smith

Fire Chief

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## **FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE (FIRE PREVENTION)**

The Fire Marshal's Office is responsible for investigating fires, and related offenses, performing code enforcement inspections, plan reviews and public education through our fire and life safety education program.

Major strategies for reducing fire and injury risks are implemented through the Fire Marshal's office. This office administers and enforces local, state, and national fire and life safety codes.

The Fire Marshal's Office responsibilities include a wide range of activities and programs including fire inspections, re-inspections, land development permit (LDP) reviews, fire code development, fire investigations, fire and life safety plan reviews, fire sprinkler and alarm system plan reviews, new business license inspections, fire code permit inspections, hazardous materials inspections, providing awareness and identification for businesses, and emergency preparedness for the City.

This office provides 24-hour coverage ensuring rapid response of investigators to all fires, explosions and hazardous materials releases to determine cause and origin. The Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue Arson/Fire Prevention Unit in the Fire Marshal's office issues citations for code enforcement and coordinate prosecution of arson cases. The trucks and equipment purchased this year increase our capabilities and give more protection to investigators from the effects of cancer by the separation of equipment.

The rapid entry system required by the fire code is a small, wall-mounted safe that holds building keys for fire fighters to retrieve in an emergency, has been expanded to include protection from tampering by adding fire department connections locking caps. This system provides non-destructive emergency access and protection to commercial and residential property.

Plan Review for LDP's, building plans and fire protection shop drawings has been the biggest challenge for the Fire Marshal's Office this year with the loss of experienced personnel, software issues and not having a dedicated review position. The assignment of two part-time personnel to this job, decreased the number of inspectors to complete annual inspections.

## **FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY EDUCATION**

In 2018, there were no fire fatalities in the City of Tuscaloosa. This is partly because of our continued efforts to reduce the fire risk in our community.

One of our continued fire prevention efforts is our smoke alarm program, "Get Alarmed, Tuscaloosa!" which strives to provide every citizen in the City of Tuscaloosa with a working smoke alarm. Since the beginning of our program we have installed over 3,000 smoke alarms.

Project F.I.R.E. (Fire and Injury Reduction Education), our fire prevention strategy focused on education, has maintained its current partnership with five elementary schools: Oakdale Elementary, Central Elementary, Alberta Elementary, Arcadia Elementary, and Skyland Elementary.

We have continued our partnership with the Tuscaloosa Career and Technology Academy (TCTA). This partnership has helped young adults in our community have the opportunity to experience life in the public sector and the goal of this partnership is to expose students to a possible career with the fire service.

## **EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) DIVISION**

Last year the Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue responded to 12,405 medical calls, which accounts for **83 %** of our total calls for the year. Adequate primary care continues to be an issue, not only in our city, but nationwide. This makes our motto of **“The RIGHT response for the RIGHT emergency at the RIGHT time”** more relevant than ever as we face the coming years. An update on our programs to assist with this:

- 1) **Everyday EMS response** – We were able to upgrade Engine 8 to Advanced Life Support capability, bringing our total ALS units to 3 ALS engine companies, 3 ALS transport capable rescue units and 1 Alternative response paramedic SUV. All of the rest of our units remain to be Basic Life Support level.
- 2) **New Rescue Unit** - in December we took delivery of our newest addition to our EMS fleet – a 2019 model Freightliner M2 with transport capability. Some of the new features include a patient compartment video monitor, Ferno Stat-Trac cot stabilizer and an under-the-hood generator to power the module. That unit came from the Frazer-Bilt company in Houston, Texas. This unit was purchased to replace the transport unit at station #9, Rescue 26.
- 3) **Bicycle EMS program** – We were fortunate enough to be able to start a bicycle EMS unit this year. The initial concept came from our new Chief, Randy Smith, who was instrumental in the implementation of a similar program at Mobile Fire and Rescue. That unit has been very beneficial for them in covering events such as Mardi Gras. The thinking was that it would be equally beneficial for us during the Alabama Football Season. That proved to be true, and we now have four bikes with BLS and ALS equipment for a total of two teams that can be used during

football and other events such as the half marathon and the triathlon.

- 4) **A.C.T.I.O.N. program, Alternative response and EMS Prevention** – Our partnership with the University of Alabama through the A.C.T.I.O.N. program (Appropriate Care and Treatment in Our Neighborhoods) continues to evolve to better serve our citizens. This year it was decided that our Nurse Practitioner would be better utilized in a follow up capacity, rather than a response model. With cooperation from DCH medical center, we are now following up with chronic patients with a high probability of re-admission or continued 911 use. We now have a full time Case Manager funded through the ACTION program that provides clinical oversight to our social work interns. They are handling our EMS PREVENTION program now, as an outstretched arm of TFR. The ACTION program also funds a full time Social Worker who assists the Nurse Practitioner in the re-admission prevention program. Overall, these ancillary programs continue to be an asset to our department and the citizens of Tuscaloosa.
- 5) **Emergency Medical Dispatch and appropriate response** - We now have a Fire Department Communications manager and dedicated Fire Dispatchers. We have purchased Priority Dispatch software, which will enable us to much more accurately dispatch the appropriate units to each call. Once in place, it will push us much closer to our goal of **“The RIGHT response for the RIGHT emergency at the RIGHT time”**

**6) Continuing Education** - We are very proud to have had six graduates from the Alabama Fire College Paramedic program last year. We currently have one student in Advanced EMT class and are looking into ways to provide Advanced EMT certification on duty for those interested.

*EMS is a very large part of what we do here at Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue, and we continue to make it our duty to stay on the forefront of technology and innovation in order to make Tuscaloosa the safest City she can possibly be.*

### **TECHNICAL RESPONSE TEAMS (TRT)**

Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue is a member and point of contact for the Alabama Mutual Aid System's (AMAS) Division C, a 10 county response area that includes Tuscaloosa, Pickens, Greene, Sumter, Hale, Marengo, Bibb, Perry, Dallas, and Wilcox counties. We may be called upon to respond to major disasters anywhere in the state or region. We have a Collapse Search and Rescue FEMA Type II team designated as Heavy 11 and also a Swift Water/Flood Search and Rescue FEMA Type III team designated as Swift Water 7. Our teams are housed at Fire Station 2 and train every Tuesday on different disciplines ranging from structural collapse, confined space rescue, trench rescue, high angle rope rescue, wide area/wilderness search techniques, and swift water/flood rescue. We have continued to receive Homeland Security grant monies through the AMAS system to fund equipment purchases, sustainment funds to replace aging equipment and training supplies, and funds for training new members.

This past year we were very active. Our Swift Water 7 team performed a deployment drill to Prattville where we worked in conjunction with their AMAS team to perform several simulated swift water rescues and searches. We also deployed to Moundville on two occasions on December 26<sup>th</sup> and again on the 31<sup>st</sup> to help remove victims trapped by rising flood water around their homes.

Our Heavy 11 team assisted TPD on 2 occasions performing wide area/wilderness searches, one south of Skyland Blvd. for a missing elderly man who was found deceased in a wooded area, and the other in the area of Palmore Park area where a subject disappeared after eluding the police and had remained missing. This victim was also found deceased. Heavy 11 also assisted TCSO in a search near the Hillcrest area for a missing elderly man. We were unsuccessful in locating the victim who was found at a later date in a deep drainage ditch by highway workers working not far from our search area.

Members also worked in conjunction with Truck 32 using High Angle Rope Rescue techniques to lower an injured construction worker from the upper floors of a building under construction on Hackberry Lane and 13<sup>th</sup> Street.

### **Dive Team**

Our Dive Team falls under the umbrella of our Technical Response Teams and is housed at Station 2. Our members train every Wednesday they are on duty and many have received certifications beyond the open water diver to include advanced diver and rescue diver. We have continued to work closely with the University of Alabama Rowing team by providing coverage for their local meets and being alerted to their weekly practice times on the Black Warrior River.

In addition, we responded to eight calls for assistance; 1 in the city limits, 3 in police jurisdiction, 1 in Tuscaloosa County, 1 in Greene County, and 1 in Marengo County. They consisted of:

- 3 vehicle recoveries at local boat landings.
- 1 vehicle recovery in Hale County at a boat landing
- 1 body recovery in Lake Tuscaloosa due to a boating accident.
- 1 vehicle and body recovery in the Duncanville area where a vehicle had left the road and went into a pond.

- 1 vehicle and body recovery in Greene County where a victim had left the road and run in a pond.
- 1 body recovery in Marengo County

### **Hazardous Materials Response Team (HMRT)**

Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Hazardous Materials Response Team is designated as Alabama HazMat Four, a part of the Alabama Mutual Aid System (AMAS). In 2018, TFR, including the HMRT, responded to numerous hazardous material/conditions calls. These included combustible gas leaks, hydrocarbon spills, natural or LP gas leaks, and carbon monoxide incidents involving homes, businesses, and motor vehicle accidents. The HMRT was an integral part of public safety, with HM1 providing continuous air monitoring at each of the 7 University of Alabama home football games. In 2018, the TFRS HMRT continues to be a part of a regional HMRT, to include Demopolis Fire Department HMRT. Together we are designated as HazMat 4 Entry Team Type II. The teams have been working together to be better prepared for regional AMAS HazMat response needs.

The HMRT is fortunate in being able to once again secure funding from a Homeland Security grant. The 2018 grant will allow the HMRT to purchase material and supplies that aid our department in replenishment and upgrades that are needed to operate effectively as a team.

The year 2018 was another productive year for Tuscaloosa Fire Rescue's Hazardous Materials Response Team. The management philosophy of the team is changing, working toward delegating control of the different aspects of the team management to team members. This has provided for more qualified people to be able to calibrate monitors, to maintain supply inventory, to order equipment and consumables, and to maintain records. The workload is being spread among the team, giving team members more ownership in the workings of the team. The changes

have resulted in improved morale and increased interest in the haz-mat program.

Our members are well-trained, well-equipped, and proven capable of mitigating hazardous materials incidents. The team continues to maintain an excellent working relationship with the state and local EMA's, TPD, TCSO, UAPD, and other local fire departments.

### **TRAINING DIVISION**

Training consists of two staff positions, a Battalion Chief of Training and a Captain assigned as the Assistant Training Officer.

TFRS has a training cadre consisting of over 80 instructors. Every company officer is certified to a minimum of Fire Instructor I. This helps to complete the daily training that is required.

We also have several instructors that have specialized training such as HazMat, Technical Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, and Dive.

### **Fire Based Training**

Training hours are held to a minimum of the Insurances Services Office requirements. Those requirements are:

#### **Personnel Responding to Structure Fires:**

- Company Level: 192 hours, per member per year
- Facilities: 18 hours, per member, per year at a training facility.
- Driver: 12 hours, per driver, per year
- Officer: 12 hours, per officer, per year
- Hazmat: 6 hours, per member, per year

#### **Fire Marshall's Office (Fire Prevention):**

- Fire Investigator: 40 hours, per investigator, per year

- Fire Inspector: 24 hours, per inspector, per year
- FLSE (Educator): 24 hours, per FLSE, per year

### **EMS Based Training**

The Training Division began this year the process of conducting education training to meet the requirements for all of the National Registered EMTs at TFRS. The hours required are:

- **NREMT Basics:** 40 hours of continuing education every two years.
- **NREMT Advanced:** 50 hours of continuing education every two years.
- **NREMT Paramedics:** 60 hours of continuing education every two years.

### **Four Types of Training Delivery used by TFR:**

#### **1) Station Based/Company Level:**

- Each month a training topic is given to the company officers. This ranges from a variety of structure fire and emergency medical services related topics.
- Specialty training is conducted by various stations/personnel within the department monthly. This includes Technical Rescue, Dive, Hazmat, Swift Water, and Air Crash.

#### **2) In-House:**

- Throughout 2018 we conducted several in-house classes and training exercises. Some are listed below.

#### **Rapid Intervention Training**

- Training incorporated a classroom session and a hands-on session with virtually all members of TFRS. The training included such topics as, fire fighter down (mayday), search & rescue, and self-rescue. During the hands-on portion TFRS was fortunate to secure the use of a house that was scheduled to be demolished. This

allowed for very realistic training scenarios and evolutions.

### **Apparatus Operator Refresher Training**

- Was as conducted at the TFRS Drill Facility. Each person has to drive a fire apparatus on a driving course that presents different obstacles and also be instructed by the company officer on material that relates to emergency vehicle driving. All members of the department are required to complete the training in order to maintain their Emergency Vehicle Operator certification.

### **Hazardous Materials Refresher Training**

- Taught by Lieutenant Eric O’Neal. Each year, each member of TFRS is required to obtain six hours of continuing education in HazMat. LT O’Neal does a great job of keeping the training up to date with current standards and making it relevant to job duties.

### **Tiller Truck Apparatus Training**

- In 2018 we trained 9 people in the operation and driving of the tractor drawn aerial. Each person had to complete a ten-hour classroom session and ten-hours of “behind the wheel” training. This is a requirement in order to be eligible to drive the Tiller Truck at TFRS.

### **SCBA Repair Technician Course**

- In 2018 TFRS was fortunate to receive new MSA Self Contained Breathing Apparatus. We held a training course to certify 10 people to repair, maintain, and test the new equipment.

### **Wilderness Rescue Drill**

- 22 of our Wilderness Rescue Team members conducted a full-scale exercise at Lake Lurleen

State Park. This training consisted of searching for a lost person, emergency medical care, incident command, boat operations, unmanned aircraft usage, and logistical support.

### **Pediatric Advanced Life Support**

- 227 people attended a pediatric emergencies course taught in house by our instructors. This training covered many aspects of dealing with emergencies in pediatric patients including CPR and Advanced Life Support.

### **CBRNE Training**

- In a partnership with TEEX (Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service) we were able to train 15 of our members on medical management of Chemical, Biological, Radiological, Nuclear and Explosives, (CBRNE) events. Several area agencies attended this training as well.

### **AMAS Swift Water Drill**

- 10 members of our AMAS (Alabama Mutual Aid System) swift water team deployed to Wetumpka, Al. for an overnight drill. Training consisted of swift water rescues, searching for lost persons, logistical support, boat operations, and victim extrication using ALEA helicopters.

### **3) Alabama Fire College**

The partnership with the AFC has allowed TFRS personnel to attend many valuable training courses this year.

- 131 of our personnel attended and completed various certification courses at the AFC.

### **Alabama Public Safety Leadership Academy**

- Four members of TFRS started the yearlong APSLA in 2018, this Academy will continue into 2019. This course selects leaders and future leaders from multiple public safety agencies from across the State to broaden and enhance their management and leadership skills.

### **4) Out of Town Classes/Conferences/National Fire Academy**

- 65 members of TFRS attended out of town classes, conferences, and the National Fire Academy to further their knowledge base to better serve the City of Tuscaloosa. This allows for TFRS to network and learn with other departments about modern trends and direction of the fire service.

### **COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION**

As of October 2018, Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue has twelve dedicated Telecommunicators within Fire Communications. We work within the same Communications Division with TPD and work as one big team. The difference from the past is that Tuscaloosa Fire and Rescue Telecommunicators work primarily at the Fire Consoles. The advantages to this is that now they can begin to learn in greater details about the department, emergency scene needs, and “why we do what we do” through more specific training.

Also in October of 2018, the Communications Division moved to the new Emergency Operations Center on Rose Boulevard in Northport. This a co-located center. Under one roof there will be Telecommunicators from every emergency agency within the county including: City of Tuscaloosa, City of Northport, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa County, and Northstar Ambulance Service.

In November of 2018, it was approved for all personnel in Communications to be trained in Emergency Medical Dispatch, Emergency Fire Dispatch, Emergency Police Dispatch and in the ProQA system as well. This will be very intense training that will benefit our City and Responders greatly. The training will begin in March and end in June. The system will equip the TCs with protocols to follow when on the phone with the caller. Instead of primarily just gathering information and sending units to the scenes, the TC will be able to give Pre-Arrival Instructions and Post-Dispatch Instructions to the caller. Potentially saving lives even before the arrival of first-responders. An example of this is a caller who has a child choking, now TCs will be equip with the protocols to give step by step instructions to the caller on how to help the patient. Another example would be if the caller is trapped in a house fire, the TC will use protocols to assist the caller until help arrives. The system really makes the TC the “first-first responder” and the “first incident commander.”

## **LOGISTICS DIVISION**

The Logistics Division has purchased some unique equipment in this year. We have purchased mountain bikes for use by our new Bike Medic program. These along with Advanced and Basic Life Support equipment was used this year a several large events such as Alabama home games to increase efficiency and improve service at these venues. We have also purchased a new Rescue Unit to replace a high mileage apparatus. We have also focused our efforts this year to completing the equipping of our Wilderness Search and Swift Water AMAS teams. We have focused on these areas with the purpose of bringing them up to “Green” status with AMAS. Logistics has also been working to actively replace all PPE within the NFPA recommended 10 life cycle. This has required us to dedicate a large portion of our budget to this effort. This is in addition to providing the wide-ranging support to the daily operations of TFR. We feel that these efforts are the core of our mission in Logistics to provide the best services and equipment while being physically responsible.