



**MORGANTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**2007 ANNUAL REPORT**

*"A TRADITION OF EXCELLENCE!"*

## **Message from the Chief:**

Once again I have been given the great pleasure of reporting the accomplishments of the Morgantown Fire Department for the year 2007. It is with unabashed pride and unrestrained respect for the members of this Department that I do so.

## **Current Programs and Services:**

The services provided by the Morgantown Fire Department may be categorized as both proactive and reactive. Each type serves a primary function that contributes to the overall goal of protecting the citizens of Morgantown and their property from a wide variety of hazards.

The proactive services provided by the Department are designed to eliminate hazard potentials before they develop. In addition, they are designed to prepare the Department for the inevitable reactive responses to emergencies. These non-emergency services include the following:

- **Planning Services for commercial and residential occupancies**
- **Inspection services**
- **Construction Plan Review services**
- **Fire Code Compliance**
- **Arson Investigation and Cause/Origin Investigative services.**
- **Public Education Programs**
- **Public Training Programs**
- **Departmental Training Programs**
- **Equipment maintenance and repair**
- **Data Collection, Recordkeeping, and Analysis**
- **Counseling**
- **Physical Fitness Program**
- **Other non-emergency services**

Murphy's Law states that "what can go wrong, will go wrong!". Despite all of the proactive initiatives by this Department to curtail incidents and catastrophes, they will inevitably happen. When they do, the Department provides the necessary reactive emergency responses to deal with them. The emergency services provided by the Morgantown Fire Department include the following:

- **Firefighting**
- **Medical First Responder**
- **Confined Space Rescue**
- **Elevated Rescue**
- **High-angle Rescue**
- **Extrication**
- **Hazardous Material Response (Technician Level Trained)**

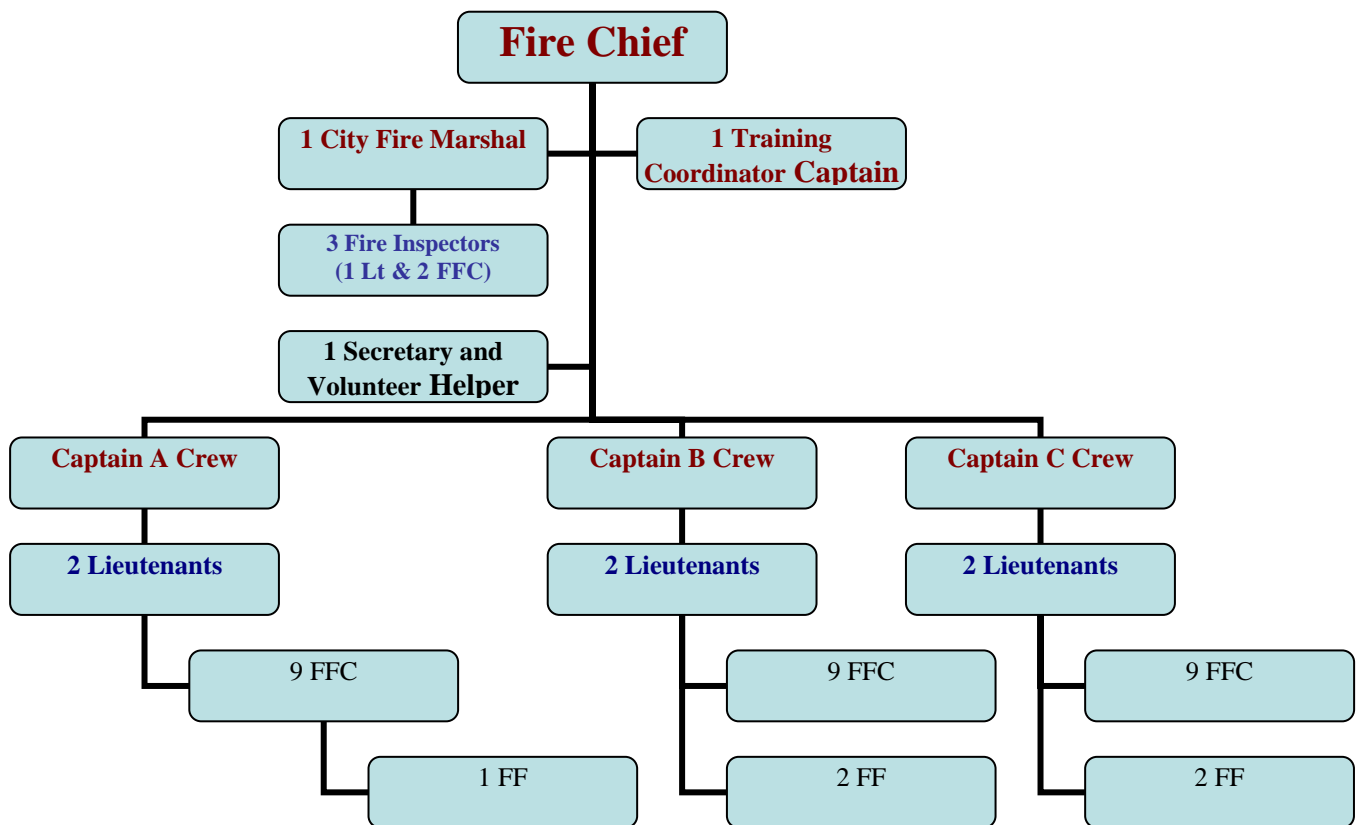
- **Water Rescue**
- **Underwater Dive Services**
- **Search and Rescue**
- **Mutual Aid Responses with surrounding departments**
- **Scene Stabilization and Security**
- **Natural Disaster Responses**
- **Man-made Disaster Responses**
- **Other Emergency Responses not otherwise classified**

**Resources:**

All three categories of departmental resources, including facilities, apparatus, and personnel have remained the same since the last annual report with minor exceptions. The Department still operates out of three fire stations and the administrative offices continue to be located at the Public Safety Building and at City Hall.

The Department still operates with forty-seven sworn members, one civilian secretary, and one civilian volunteer office assistant; however, one of the shift officers has been reassigned to the code enforcement division. Consequently, there are now two crews with fourteen persons assigned to them and one crew with thirteen persons.

The following organizational chart will help to identify the Department’s chain of command and utilization of manpower resources.



The Department's inventory of apparatus has remained the same as last year with one exception. When a crew member was transferred off of a crew and assigned to the code enforcement division, he required a passenger-type vehicle in order to accomplish his new duties. The Department requested and received funding for the purchase of a used Durango that would be used by that inspector as well as for special duties during street patrols. For this reason, the vehicle has a minimum of markings and the response lighting package is concealed until it is required for a response. The following table shows the Department's vehicle inventory and positioning and includes the addition of this most recently acquired unit:

STAFF VEHICLES	STATION ONE	STATION TWO
1999 Ford Expedition	2000 Pierce Engine	2000 Pierce Engine
2002 Jeep Cherokee	1988 Pierce Engine 4WD	1977 American LaFrance
2001 Jeep Cherokee	1991 Pierce Minipumper	1926 Seagrave Antique
2006 Jeep Liberty	1996 Pierce Ladder Truck	2002 Ford F350 Pickup
2006 Jeep Liberty	1978 American LaFrance Rescue	2002 Boston Whaler Boat
2002 Dodge Durango		Dive Trailer
STATION THREE	WHARF PARKING GARAGE	Public Education Trailer
1994 Pierce Engine	2001 John Deere Gator	HazMat Trailer
1994 Chevy 1/2 ton Pickup	1960 Jon Boat	

Finally, there are six separate structures housing the operational components of the Department. Those locations include the following:

- **Public Safety Building** = Administrative Offices including Fire Chief, Training Coordinator, City Fire Marshal, and Secretary.
- **City Hall Building** = City Fire Inspectors and Storage
- **Wharf District Parking Garage** = Supply and water response equipment storage.
- **Station One (Southside)** = Main fire station housing Engine 1, Rescue 1, and Ladder 1.
- **Station Two (Norwood)** = Sub-station housing Engine 2 and specialized trailers
- **Station Three (Wiles Hill)** = Sub-station housing Engine 3

### **Review of Past Year's Activities:**

There are four primary areas of operation where most of the Department's efforts have been concentrated. These areas of concentration include emergency responses, training, code compliance, and public education/relations. The following statistical data will attest to the efforts put forth, and successes achieved in each of these four areas.

### **EMERGENCY RESPONSES**

Emergency response calls are up 10.5% over last year. The actual number of emergency responses by this Department totaled 2,545. Although each of these

emergency responses is unique, they can be categorized into four major call types. These general call types are fires, hazardous materials and conditions, rescues/medical, and general service calls. A breakdown of emergency responses into these four broad category types is as follows:

- Fires = 175
- Hazardous materials and conditions = 179
- Rescue/medical responses = 813
- General emergency service calls = 1,378
- **TOTAL = 2,545**

It is not an exaggeration to say that Morgantown has one of the most, if not the most, aggressive, well-trained, professional fire departments in the State. This claim can be quantified with a careful analysis of the fire loss figures for the City. Each year the structural responsibility for the Department grows by many millions of dollars and each year more and more vehicles travel into and through the City limits. As such, you would expect a proportionate growth in fire loss figures; however, the inverse is true. Not only have the fire loss figures not kept pace with the proportionate value of property protected, but they have substantially decreased over last year's loss figures. These astounding figures can be attributed to the proactive code enforcement provided by the Department and to the caliber of firefighters and officers serving on the Department. Last year, there was \$1,052,150 dollars worth of property loss due to fire in the City. This year, that same fire loss figures have been reduced by over 47% for a total of \$553,180.

More importantly, there were no firefighter or civilian deaths due to fire this year! There was, however, a murder conviction relating to the Department's only fire death from last year. Lt. Ken Tennant's diligence and thorough investigation of a fire on Killarney Drive greatly assisted the Prosecuting Attorney's office in winning a very high-profile murder conviction against Michelle Michael. This case received national attention and will be aired on a nationally syndicated television program call "**48 Hours**" in early 2008.

## **TRAINING**

Contrary to most people's perception of emergency response agencies, the primary focus of resources on a day to day basis is not in the actual response to emergencies but is, in fact, in the preparation to respond to such emergencies. Along with ensuring that the equipment is in a ready state, the most important aspect of preparation is in the training of the responding personnel. The Morgantown Fire Department takes this responsibility very seriously and has achieved one of the highest trained departments in the State.

The Department has compiled a total of 10,300 hours of individual training in over fifty different training categories during this past year. Included in the 10,300 hours is 1,982 hours of certified training provided by agencies outside of the Department. This certified training covered twenty-four separate categories. Further breakdown reveals

that each member of the Department received an average of 219 hours of training during the last year or nearly 8% of their on-duty time was spent in such activity.

In addition to receiving training, the Department also provides training to outside agencies and individuals. During the past year, the Department's many certified instructors trained 96 people in a wide variety of subject matter for a total of 1,440 hours, or approximately 15 hours per person.

In order to retain the City's exemplary ISO rating of 3, the Department's Staff Officers must also achieve at least 120 hours of emergency incident management training. This mandated objective was easily met along with the required night training objectives.

### **PUBLIC EDUCATION/RELATIONS**

Each year the demand for public education and public relations activities increases. This increased demand is a result of the quality of services being provided. This year was no different. Once again the number of persons receiving such services has **increased by 5%** for a total **6,150**.

- **Adults = 1,215**
- **College = 650**
- **High School = 1,278**
- **Children = 3,007**

The demographic scope of those who seek and receive public education and public relation services from the Department is from pre-school to senior citizens. The complexity of the materials presented can vary from a professionally orchestrated puppet show to a detailed dissertation on the intricacies of a sprinkler or alarm system. Regardless of the scope or intensity of the material, the Department professionally fulfills its obligation to convey the information needed to keep the citizenry as safe as possible.

### **CODE COMPLIANCE AND INSPECTION**

The previous figures relating to the Department's emergency responses, training, and public education/relations clearly show an enviable success record; yet, in a Department accustomed to exemplary performance, there is one initiative that has surpassed even the Department's highest expectations. Without question, the most successful endeavor undertaken by the Morgantown Fire Department during the past year has been in the arena of fire code compliance and inspections.

Last year, City Council added two inspectors to the Fire Department's roster. Since then, these two inspectors have acquired considerable job knowledge, education, and experience. As such, they are far more productive. In addition, an additional crew member has agreed to be reassigned to the Department's inspection bureau making a total of four inspectors. With these additions to the bureau, Lt. Ken Tennant has been given the task of overseeing the functions of that bureau and has been named by the Chief as

the City's Fire Marshal. The following statistics will validate that all of the preceding decisions have been wise ones.

In order to keep a perspective on the accomplishments of this bureau, it is necessary to make comparisons with the last two previous years. In 2005, when the Department had only one fire code inspector, only 758 inspections were conducted. In 2006, Council added two more inspector positions and the total inspections increased by 430% for a total of 3,263. This year, with the reassignment of one more firefighter to the inspection bureau, the Department has increased its inspections to 8,020 or by another 246%. Simply stated, over a two-year period, and with an increase in personnel of 300% in the inspection bureau, the number of inspections by the Morgantown Fire Department has increased by 1,058% or by 7,262 inspections. The synergistic results of the allocated resources are very apparent and statistically proven.

Although the number of inspections completed may be impressive, they certainly do not tell the whole story. The quality of the inspections and the results that they achieve are equally important. The bottom line in any inspection program is to identify hazards and get them corrected. The Morgantown Fire Department Codes Division excels in this end. During the course of their aggressive inspection program, 3,282 code violations were identified. Of those violations, 2,755 corrections have been made as of this writing. This equates to an 84% correction rate. When you consider that many of the more extensive violations require a specified time period for the corrections to be made, and that many of those time periods extend through the period of this report, ultimately the correction rate for violations will be considerably better than the current 84%. It is expected that the correction rate will be 100%.

The Department prides itself on its ability to work harmoniously with the business community to ensure the safety of the citizens and those others who patronize those businesses through fire code compliance. The emergency response data presented earlier in this report will substantiate the effectiveness of these efforts. It is inevitable, however, that there will be times when a more aggressive approach is warranted for those who continue to ignore the fire code or who maliciously violate the same. At those times, citations must be issued and/or condemnation initiatives implemented. These types of actions usually require a court intervention and those courtroom outcomes become a way of measuring the professionalism and knowledge of the inspectors. During the last year, the Department's four code inspectors have been forced to go to Court a total of 212 times. The dispensation of those court proceedings resulted in 202 findings of guilt or no contest pleas. Six other times the inspectors willingly dropped the citation because an amicable solution was agreed. Only four times were those issued a citation found innocent by the Court. Clearly, the courts have found the Department's inspectors to be professional and correct in their actions with a conviction rate of over 95%. The fines imposed by the Court for this reporting year exceeds \$36,000.

Another critical service provided by the Department's Inspection Bureau is plans review. Whenever any new construction or remodeling of existing structures relates to occupancy types covered under the West Virginia Fire Code, plans for that construction must be submitted to the Fire Department to ensure that the new construction will meet the provisions of the fire code. The alternative to this option would be for the contractor

or developer to send those same plans to the West Virginia State Fire Marshal's Office for review and this would substantially delay most projects due to the volume of plans currently reviewed by the State Fire Marshal. Fortunately, the Morgantown Fire Department has professionally trained inspectors capable of reviewing such plans and expediting the building process. Last year, 264 such plan reviews were accomplished ranging in scope from small remodeling jobs to multimillion dollar stellar projects. The proficiency and value of these plan reviews and subsequent certificate of occupancy inspections are shown in the dollar loss figures due to fire in the emergency response section of this report.

Summarily, the statistics compiled by the Department's Inspection Bureau demonstrate the capability and professionalism of those who serve in that capacity. The true value of the preceding statistics can only be recognized by the data regarding fire deaths and the data regarding fire losses for the City of Morgantown.

### **Upcoming Year:**

THIS IS THE YEAR! Finally, after many years of proposing, hoping, and planning a new fire station will be constructed on the north side of the City. The ground has been acquired through generous donations by the County Commission and by West Virginia University. The architectural drawings and engineering are in the final stages and the project will be ready to go to bid in early January. Once the construction bid has been awarded, construction will begin in early spring and the new station will be completed by the end of the year. This completion date will be just in time for the delivery of the Department's new platform aerial truck! Both the station and the platform will be greatly appreciated by the Department and will surely improve the services to the citizens of Morgantown.

### **Summary:**

Firefighters are truly a blessed group of men and women. As firefighters, they are privileged to make a tremendous difference in other people's lives by answering their calls for help during their most traumatic moments. As such, firefighters get to experience a sense of value and self-confidence that most other people never get to experience. In addition, the fellowship that they develop with each other is unparalleled in most other professions.

Many times, during any given year, there are a multitude of agencies and individuals who express their deepest gratitude and respect for the firefighting profession and those who serve as firefighters. What is not so common is for firefighters to express their gratitude for the opportunity to serve. With that being said, the Morgantown Fire Department would like to thank the citizens of Morgantown for providing them with the opportunity to serve in the noblest profession on earth. May we always build on the reputation of our predecessors and exceed your expectations.