

Message from the Fire Chief

The Rockwall Fire Department was started in 1903 to protect the lives and property of the citizens of Rockwall. The department was created because the city was losing valuable property by fire within the community. The volunteers originally were just men from the community who wanted to help. They owned business and homes within Rockwall and they had little to no training. They were a re-active group of men. When emergencies took place, they reacted and responded to do what they could to help.

A lot has changed in the fire service, but one thing that still makes us different from most other departments is that we are mainly a volunteer department, supplemented by limited paid staff. The firefighters of today are still business owners and homeowners who want to serve their community and protect the lives and property of the citizens. The difference now is that we are living in a complex world where we have to be pro-active and not re-active. Today's firefighters have to be highly trained, physically fit and prepared to handle today's complex emergencies.

At our current 30,000 population, the city fire department currently operates out of four fire stations. The department's paid staff consists of a Chief, Fire Marshal, Battalion Chief, three Captains, six Driver/Operators, one Fire Inspector/Arson Investigator/Firefighter, one Fire Inspector/Fire Investigator/Firefighter, one Inspector/Firefighter/Public Educator, Administrative Assistant and an Administrative Technician. We also have twenty-four certified part-time/volunteers assist in filling in as a Driver/Operator at stations. Each station is manned 24/7 with one Driver/Operator on duty. The volunteer command staff consists of two Assistant Chiefs, Deputy Chief/Secretary, ten Captains and a safety officer. We currently have thirty-six volunteers and are recruiting more. Our goal today is to have a maximum of seventy-two volunteers. When calls come in, the full time Captain, Driver/Operators respond with the needed equipment and the volunteers respond as firefighters. The volunteers are highly trained in many areas. Within the volunteer staff, we have certified paid firefighters who range from master, advanced, intermediate and basic level, certified volunteer firefighters, driver/operator certified personnel, certified hazardous material technicians, Texas Fire Commission instructors, high angle instructor, arson investigators, fire inspectors, swift water technicians, search & recovery scuba divers, emergency medical technicians, paramedics and emergency care attendants.

As each year passes, our community grows larger and larger. Today's technologies, construction, fire fighting equipment, complex emergencies and fire fighting methods are changing rapidly. This puts more demands on the volunteers as each year passes, but they still come through and do the job with pride.

If we were a fully paid department today, operating with the four stations and our required four engine and two ladder companies, we would need seventy-two full-time personnel. The total cost to operate a fully paid department including operations, equipment, administrative staff, salaries, insurance benefits, retirement, workers compensation, etc would be approximately \$ 6,515,809.00 per year. The cost to operate the mainly volunteer department with our current paid staff and operation expenses today is \$1,743,359.15. The savings for having a mainly volunteer department is \$4,772,449.85 which equates to \$0.27.4 cents per hundred dollars at today's assessed tax value. On a home valued at \$150,000.00 this equates to a savings of over \$410.00 per year.

Other factors which contribute to our maintaining a volunteer force are the ability to keep good man power levels, low fire loss, and expedient response times. Our Insurance Services Offices (ISO) Public Protection Classification (PPC) is a 3. The PPC rating 1 is the best and 10 is the worse. See more on our web page about PPC Rating.

We are glad to present the Rockwall Fire Department Business Plan as part of the city's overall Balance Scorecard Strategic Initiative. We recognize the value of setting goals, developing priorities for our objectives, and measuring departmental effectiveness in saving lives and property. Through writing this plan, it is our intention to bring clarity and greater unification to the Department. It will communicate to the citizens our core values and guiding principles. Furthermore, the plan will explain our objectives and goals and how we plan to accomplish them as well as how they relate to the City Council's Seven Focus Areas. See more on our web page about our Balance Scorecard.

To join the volunteer 100 year tradition of our department see **How Do I Become A Rockwall Fire Fighter** on our web page. There you will find the application, minimum requirements and job description. If you have any questions about our department please feel free to call me at 972-771-7770 or send me an e-mail to mpoindexter@rockwall.com.