



Michael A. Nutter
Mayor

PHILADELPHIA FIRE DEPARTMENT

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Derrick J.V. Sawyer
Fire Commissioner

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PFD Closes 2015 with Lowest Fatality Rate in Recorded History

Fire Commissioner Derrick J.V. Sawyer reports that fire fatalities reduced to all-time historic lows. During 2015, there were a total of **twelve (12)** fire fatalities, the lowest number in Philadelphia’s recorded history. For another year the Philadelphia Fire Department (PFD) worked tirelessly and consistently towards achieving the goal of zero fire fatalities. The year’s count closed with a **63%** reduction from last year’s **thirty-two (32)** fire fatalities and a **50%** reduction from 2013 which recorded **twenty-four (24)** fire fatalities. According to Fire Commissioner Sawyer, “We are working tirelessly to conquer our goal of zero fire fatalities.”

Of the **twelve (12)** fire fatalities, **six (6)** occurred in properties that did not have smoke alarms, or had smoke alarms with inoperable or missing batteries. A total of **three (3)** fire fatalities occurred in properties with smoke alarms that did activate and a total of **three (3)** occurred in properties where the Fire Department could not determine if smoke alarms were ever present.

By the close of the year, there were a total of **one hundred and twenty (120)** citizens injured during fires, which is also the lowest number of fire related injuries in Philadelphia’s recorded history. **One hundred and twenty (120)** fire related injuries is a **31%** reduction compared to last year which had **one hundred and seventy-six (176)** fire related injuries.

“I would like to thank the men and women of the Philadelphia Fire Department for their diligence and commitment to the citizens of Philadelphia, as well as their educational and outreach efforts within their respective Fire Safety and Education Districts (FSED). I am also extremely appreciative of our community partners and the citizens of this great city for working in tandem to fight the ravages of fire,” said Commissioner Sawyer.

As a result of the “Freedom from Fire” program, the PFD installed **10,639** ten year lithium battery powered smoke alarms and **45** carbon monoxide alarms into **4,168** residences. During smoke alarm installations the Fire Department also performed free home safety surveys, using the Home Fire Safety Checklist. Commissioner Sawyer noted, “A critical support component for the success of the smoke alarm installation program is Philadelphia’s 311 call center, which enables citizens to contact the Fire Department to request smoke alarms and glean information about fire and life safety concerns.”

Fire Commissioner Sawyer wishes to remind all that Fire is Everyone’s Fight™

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The Philadelphia Fire Department played a major role in several significant events during 2015 that garnered worldwide attention and praise. On May 12, Amtrak train #188 heading to New York City from Washington, D.C. derailed and crashed in the Port Richmond section of the city. Of the 238 passengers and five crew members on board, eight were killed and over 200 injured. During this event, 195 members and 75 PFD apparatus responded to the scene. Fire Commissioner Sawyer received an outpouring of calls and letters from Emergency Response Departments around the globe remarking on the outstanding work done by members of the Philadelphia Fire Department.

On Saturday, September 26, the City of Philadelphia was once again in the international spotlight as we welcomed the World Meeting of Families as Pope Francis began his highly anticipated visit to Philadelphia. After months of planning and preparation, the Philadelphia Fire Department, in conjunction with various federal, state and local government entities and non-government agencies, hosted a successful event without major incident. During this time, the Department maintained emergency service delivery to Philadelphia’s neighborhoods while also providing specialty emergency preparedness geared to meet today’s international threat. Fire Commissioner Sawyer Stated, “I was both confident and proud of in our Department’s ability to ensure a safe and secure environment for the many visitors to the City of Philadelphia and for his holiness, Pope Francis.”

During 2015, the PFD responded to **307, 360** emergency incidents, an increase of **7%** over 2014. Of these incidents, **256, 891** were emergency medical incidents, an increase of **5.3%** and **50,469** were fire and other 911 emergency public safety service requests, an increase of **1.7%**.

In response to the City’s ever increasing call for emergency services and to maintain a high level of public safety, Commissioner Sawyer stated, “It is our desire to reduce the number of emergency response incidences through Community Risk Reduction.” Reduction of risk is accomplished by identifying and prioritizing fire and life safety risks, and then focusing on mitigation and prevention. Risk Reduction by Firefighters, Paramedics and EMTs enhance community outreach and improve interactions with all citizens across all fire and EMS service areas.

The Department’s long standing partnership with the American Red Cross also proved to be truly life saving in 2015. In January, the PFD in conjunction with the American Red Cross and the Boston Consulting Group (BCG), conducted an in depth analytical study of fire fatalities in the City of Philadelphia. This study analyzed data from the previous five years to determine the prevailing cause of fire fatalities within the city.

From this study several risk factors that may have had an impact on fire fatalities were identified:

1. Smoke alarm presence and condition, whether absent or malfunctioning, was a significant factor identified in most of Philadelphia’s fire fatalities.

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2. Fires caused by electrical equipment/wiring were 1.5 times more likely to result in a fatality as compared to fires caused by cooking equipment.
3. Despite the fact that a higher number of incidents were reported during the day, most fire fatalities occurred at night.

Along with identifying several risk factors that may have had an impact on the fatality rates, the study also discovered the following performance standards that continue to keep the Philadelphia Fire Department in high regard as compared to similar cities. The study discovered:

1. The civilian fire fatality rate has dropped at a consistent rate in the last five years in the City of Philadelphia.
2. The Department ranks # 3 nationally for response times.
3. Smoke alarms have the most immediate impact to save lives during a fire. Compared to other major metropolitan cities, the Department was found to have the most proficient smoke alarm installation program.

To ensure these residents are educated on fire and life safety and all have a ten year lithium battery powered smoke alarm installed on every level of their home, Commissioner Sawyer initiated a targeted Smoke Alarm Installation Program which was piloted for three months in the 7th Fire Battalion, encompassing the West and Southwest neighborhoods of the city.

The pilot program included monthly smoke alarm installation drives in the targeted area. Volunteers of the American Red Cross and the Red Paws organization assisted the PFD in performing free home safety surveys and install free smoke alarms. The results of the pilot program proved remarkable, as the PFD witnessed the following:

1. No fire fatalities occurred within the pilot area during 2015 compared to an average of 1-4 fatalities a year in this area.
2. Fire injuries were reduced 90% within the pilot area compared to last year.
3. Over 3200 smoke alarms were installed in more than 1200 homes within the pilot areas.
4. On two separate occasions fires were reported in a home that received smoke alarms and the residents were alerted by the smoke alarm and were able to safely evacuate their home.

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The Philadelphia Fire Department remains committed to ensuring that residents are educated on prevention and fire and life safety and all homes not equipped with hard-wired smoke alarms have a ten-year lithium battery powered smoke alarm on every level. Residents in need of smoke alarms and cannot afford them should call 311.

Partnerships continued to play a significant role in 2015. Following a text to pledge event, where Fire Commissioner Sawyer rallied gala attendees to support the Department's life saving efforts, the Insurance Society of Philadelphia donated \$81,600 to the Citizens for Fire Prevention Committee (CFPC) for the purchasing of long life smoke alarms for citizens of Philadelphia. The Philadelphia Fire Department's CFPC raised a total of \$109,116 in charitable donations for the purchase of smoke alarms and other fire and life safety materials and literature over the course of the year.

As previously stated, during 2015, there were twelve (12) fire fatalities, as a result of ten (10) fire incidents. Two (2) fires resulted in multiple fatalities, four (4) fatalities occurred from these two (2) fires. These numbers reflect a decrease from 2014, in which there were five (5) multi-fatal fires that resulted in twelve (12) fatalities.

The Following are Fire Statistics by Category

- Smoking was the cause of four (4) fatalities
- Open flame was the cause of three (3) fatalities
- Electrical wiring permanent was the cause of one (1) fatality
- Electrical appliances was the cause of one (1) fatality
- Sparks/ Embers was the cause of one (1) fatality
- Undetermined was the cause of two (2) fatalities

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TEN YEAR FIRE FATALITY RECORD

YEAR	TOTAL FATALITIES
2006	52
2007	47
2008	39
2009	30
2010	33
2011	32
2012	25
2013	24
2014	32
2015	12

FIRE DEATHS BY AGE

AGE	NUMBER OF FIRE DEATHS
0 – 5	0
6 – 9	0
10 – 19	0
20 – 29	0
30 – 49	1
50 – 64	4
65 – 74	2
75 – 84	3
85 and older	1
Unknown Adult	1

During 2015, one hundred and twenty (120) citizens sustained injuries as a result of fire. Of these injuries, ninety-two (92) occurred in accidental fires and sixteen (16) injuries occurred as a result of incendiary/arson fires. Twelve (12) injuries occurred in fires where investigators could not determine the cause.

Individuals ranging in age from 50 to 64 years old received the most injuries from fires this year.

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TEN YEAR INJURY RECORD

YEAR	TOTAL INJURIES
2006	159
2007	147
2008	234
2009	237
2010	205
2011	173
2012	171
2013	169
2014	176
2015	120

INJURIES BY AGE

AGE	TOTAL INJURIES
0-5	06
6-9	03
10-19	04
20-29	14
30-49	33
50-64	40
65-74	16
75-84	03
85 and older	01

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CAUSES OF FIRES RESULTING IN INJURIES

<i>CAUSES OF FIRE</i>	<i>TOTAL INJURIES</i>
Open Flame	26
Incendiary	16
Cooking	14
Children Playing with Matches	04
Smoking	17
Electrical Wiring	15
Electrical Appliances	08
Heater – Portable Electrical	02
Heater- Fixed	01
Chem/Flam	02
Sparks	03
Undetermined	12

NINE YEAR CARBON MONOXIDE RELATED INJURIES

<i>YEAR</i>	<i>TOTAL INJURIES</i>
2007	19
2008	43
2009	80
2010	33
2011	37
2012	31
2013	18
2014	31
2015	42

MULTIPLE ALARM INCIDENTS

<i>ALARMS</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Two Alarms	10
Three Alarms	05
Four Alarms	03

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CAUSES OF MULTIPLE ALARM FIRES

<i>CAUSE</i>	<i>TOTAL</i>
Undetermined	06
Incendiary	04
Open Flame	02
Electrical Wiring/Equipment	02
Electrical Appliances/Motors	01
Smoking	01
Children Playing	01
Train Derailment	01

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division continued its expansion which began in 2014, due to increasing demand for emergency medical services. This past year EMS responded to over **256,000** emergency incidents. This continues to make the Philadelphia Fire Department’s EMS division one of the busiest per capita in the United States.

On January 17th, 2015, the Philadelphia Fire Department graduated its first class of Fire Service Emergency Medical Technicians (FSEs). FSEs are single role providers that are assigned to medic units throughout the city. A total of four FSE classes graduated from the Philadelphia Fire Academy in 2015. As a result of this hiring, 220 FSEs were added to the membership of the Philadelphia Fire Department. The addition of these emergency medical professionals greatly enhances the PFD’s commitment to providing high quality pre-hospital care and transportation.

On November 2nd, 2015, all twelve hour System Status Medic Units which normally operated from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. were permanently placed in 24 hour service. Taking action to address the City’s growing call for emergency medical services, this operational change increased the number of medic units available for service by 10%.

In response to the tragic building collapse at 22nd & Market Streets which occurred on June 5, 2013, Philadelphia City Council established a Special Investigative Committee on Demolition Practices and Mayor Michael A. Nutter appointed a Special Independent Advisory Commission to Review and Evaluate the Department of Licenses and Inspections (L&I).

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One of the Commission’s key recommendations was the transfer of fire safety inspections from L & I to the Philadelphia Fire Department. Due to a lack of critical resources the PFD recognized that it could not assume responsibility for all fire inspections. To address this recommendation, during 2015 the PFD and L & I have been conducting joint inspections of vacant properties.

During the week of April 6th, 2015, 62 vacant properties within the 7th Council District were inspected by two inspection teams consisting of one (1) PFD Inspector and one (1) L & I Inspector. One hundred vacant properties within the 8th Council District were inspected by three (3) inspection teams consisting of one (1) PFD Inspector and one (1) L & I Inspector during the week of December 14th.

To meet the increased inspection demands, significant enhancements to the Fire Departments inspection capabilities have begun to take place, including the following:

1. Staffing within the Fire Code Unit will be increased with the addition of two (2) Captains and (6) Lieutenants.
2. During the week of December 14, 2015, twelve (12) PFD Officers completed Fire Inspector Level 1 certification training.
3. By June 2016, 400 Captains and Lieutenants will receive Fire Inspector Level 1 certification training.

Fire Commissioner Sawyer remains committed to the goal of a sustainable modern mobile fleet. During 2015, the Fire Department received thirteen (13) Ford International Terrastar Medic Units, two (02) KME Tractor Drawn Aerial Ladders, six (06) Chevrolet Tahoes, one (01) training trailer for the Fire Training Academy, and eight (08) Chevrolet Cruzes for the Expanded Fire Code Unit.

As we enter into a new year, Fire Commissioner Sawyer looks forward to a safe 2016 in the City of Philadelphia and reminds us all that “Fire is **Everyone’s** Fight™.” The moniker is a national awareness campaign led by the U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) to lower the number of home fires and home fire injuries in America. Along with USFA and partner organizations across the country, the fire community is speaking out with a unified message of fire prevention and safety to the public.

Commissioner Sawyer notes that “it will be through continued efforts to raise public safety awareness and nurture working partnerships with our citizens and surrounding communities that we as a city realize our vision of Freedom from Fire.” He thanks the men and women of the Philadelphia Fire Department for their diligence and commitment to the citizens of Philadelphia and wants to remind them that there is still work to be done.

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