



An Open Letter from Boston Fire Commissioner *Roderick Fraser*



September 2009

INVESTMENT IN THE BOSTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Boston Fire Department continues to provide first rate fire services while also making significant strides in the effort to modernize the Department. This progress has been made possible by the hard work and commitment of many members of the Fire Department and the willingness of the City to invest public tax dollars in the Boston Fire Department. In light of the sometime confusing mass of information being distributed in connection with ongoing labor negotiations, I think it is important to set forth the facts with regard to the City's investment in equipment, staffing, training and personnel.

OVERALL BUDGET

- Actual spending in the Boston Fire Department has grown from \$118.8 million in FY 2000 to \$165.3 million in FY 2009, not including any new salary increases. This equals a 39.2% increase over the nine (9) year period.
- In 1990, the Boston Fire Department had thirty-five (35) fully staffed fire houses. In 2009, the number of fully staffed fire houses remains unchanged.

STAFFING

- Over the course of this past year, cities and town across Massachusetts were forced to lay off hundreds of firefighters. Despite the reduction of more than \$90 million in State Aid, the City of Boston has not laid off a single firefighter.
- The City of Boston has the highest staffing ratio (3.4) of Firefighters/EMS personnel per 1,000 residents of any major American City¹.
- The City of Boston has the highest ratio (43) of Firefighters/EMS per square mile of any major American City².
- The National Fire Protection Association³ recommends that each piece of fire apparatus should be staffed with one fire officer and three firefighters, commonly referred to as the "one and three ratio". The overwhelming majority of cities and towns in Massachusetts do not staff at this ratio because of the staffing cost. The City of Boston, however has maintained a one and three staffing ratio, even during times of major cuts in other areas of the City's budget.

1. Study conducted by the City of Columbus, Ohio that included the following cities: Baltimore, Chicago, Detroit, Houston, Los Angeles, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Francisco, San Diego and fifteen (15) other major U.S. cities.
 2. Same study in footnote 1, above.
 3. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) is the world's leading advocate of fire prevention and an authoritative source on public safety.



PERSONNEL

- Boston Firefighters earn a highly competitive salary and benefits package. If the City prevails in arbitration, a Boston Firefighter will earn an annual salary of \$79,634, a Fire Lieutenant will earn \$95,318, a Captain will earn \$109,325, a District Chief will earn \$125,631 and a Deputy Chief will earn \$144,646 in FY 2010. These numbers do not include overtime and details.
- In Calendar Year 2008 the average member of the Boston Fire Union earned \$10,780 in overtime and \$2,587 in details. In Fiscal Year 2009 the Department spent \$14.7 million in overtime.

APPARATUS

- Since July 1, 2006, the City has acquired 12 vehicles, including (4) new engines, six (6) new ladder trucks, one (1) new rescue vehicle and one (1) new rehabilitation unit.
- These vehicles, in addition to six currently on order [two (2) ladders, two (2) engines, one (1) rescue and one (1) air supply], mean that the City will replace more than 30% of the front line apparatus in the Department by the end of the current fiscal year.
- Over this four year period, the City will have spent approximately \$9 million, including with \$801,000 in outside funding to upgrade Fire Department apparatus.
- In Fiscal Year 2011, the City's Apparatus Replacement Plan includes \$3 million for the purchase of two (2) ladders, three (3) engines. Additionally, the Department of Homeland Security has approved \$600,000 funding for a Chemical/Biological/Radiological Defense Response Vehicle for delivery in FY 11.

TRAINING PROGRAMS AND FACILITIES

- In FY 2009 the Department spent a total of 50,570 hours on training. This equals an average of 39.4 hours per year of training for firefighters assigned to the field. The Department has a goal of continuing to increase the number of hours spent on training.
- In the FY 2010 Budget the Department created six (6) new training instructor positions, including four (4) instructors dedicated to the new driver training program.
- In FY 2008 the Department conducted a chief officer leadership training program. The Department is now conducting a Junior Officer leadership training program on an ongoing basis.
- The Department conducts "back to basics" training, which includes refresher training in all firefighter and rescue techniques. Approximately 1,150 firefighters have completed this training since July of 2008.





Training Programs and Facilities (Con't)

- The Department partnered with the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF) to train all firefighters on the Department's five (5) Haz-Mat companies to the Haz-Mat Technician certification level. Haz-Mat operations level certification has been incorporated into the curriculum at the Fire Academy.
- A Rapid Intervention Team Training was completed for all firefighters assigned to the field. The function and priority of the Rapid Intervention Team is to search for, locate, and rescue a firefighter in distress.
- The Department recently opened a new \$4 million tactical burn building at the Fire Training Ground at Moon Island.
- The Department secured a \$168,000 grant from the Department of Homeland Security to design and build a new trench rescue training facility at the Fire Training Ground at Moon Island.
- The Department secured a donation from Dunkin Brands and the Leary Fire Fighters foundation for a new Flashover Simulator to improve training at Moon Island.
- The Department opened a new Training Facility on Holton Street in Brighton which is dedicated to Haz-Mat and technical rescue training.

HEALTH AND WELLNESS

- All firefighters have access to health insurance that includes coverage for an annual physical. This physical now includes an expanded scope of coverage that includes screenings and lab tests that might not ordinarily be performed. This expanded scope of coverage was designed to address particular health risks associated with firefighting.
- All firefighters were offered free on-site blood pressure and cholesterol screening. More than 600 firefighters participated in these screenings. This screening program was made possible due to the efforts of Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, the IAFF and Novartis Pharmaceuticals.
- The Fire Department has been upgrading the fitness equipment in all fire stations. By the end of the fiscal year each house will have a treadmill, arc trainer, total gym and a standard set of weights along with other fitness equipment. The Fire Department has spent approximately \$350,000 to upgrade all of this equipment. Firefighters are free to exercise during working hours if they are not performing other duties.

