

Questions January 29, 2014

In recent weeks we have reported on the Building and Development Department regarding permits issued in 2013. This week we will give you some statistics on our Fire Department and how many calls they went on in 2013.

Q. Does the Fire Department keep records on how many calls they go on in a year's time?

A. Yes, they certainly do. They are required to send reports each month to the Insurance Commissioner's Office. In 2013, the Union County Fire Department responded to 1,923 incidents. Compared to the 1,860 incidents the Fire Department responded to in 2012, this is almost a 3.5% increase in the volume of incidents. This averages out to about 160 calls per month or about 5 calls per day.

Q. What kind of calls do they go on?

A. When you think of the Fire Department your first thought is that they just go out when someone's house burns but they do so much more. They responded to 29 structure fires in 2013, vehicle fires-14, outside fires-32 which includes grass, brush, and garbage fires, medical calls-1,282, vehicle accidents-142, search and rescue-29 which includes lost persons, rescues from the A.T. Trail, vehicles and elevators, public service calls-123 which includes assisting other agencies, traffic control at festivals, farmers market, etc, hazardous condition calls-30 which includes gas leaks, power lines down, etc, good intent/fire alarm calls-242 which includes false alarms, cancelled in route calls, smoke investigations, etc. So you can see that our Fire Department stays quite busy.

Q. What else do they do when they are not going on calls?

A. There are many other duties involved in keeping the fire equipment in call-ready condition. For instance, testing of fire hose must be performed annually in order to ensure its operability on a fire scene. In 2013, Union County fire Department tested over 40,000 feet of hose.

Inspecting and flushing fire hydrants annually is necessary to ensure operability, and to keep the ISO Rating as low as possible. In 2013, Union County Fire Department tested over 800 fire hydrants.

The Fire Department also performs many other activities such as installing smoke alarms, creating pre-fire plans, and performing many hours of fire, medical, and search and rescue training.

Q. Do you have any records on how many calls the E-911 Center received last year?

A. This is really an astounding figure but the Union County E-911 Center received 21,821 emergency calls in 2013. That is the number of times 911 was actually dialed. We have written about this before but please be sure that you do not make frivolous calls to 911. This could possibly tie up the lines and keep someone with a real emergency from being able to get through in a timely manner. This is very important to teach to your children.

Q. When should we call E-911?

A. 911 is for EMERGENCIES ONLY! An emergency is any situation that requires immediate assistance from the police/sheriff, the fire department, or an ambulance. If you are ever in doubt of whether a situation is an emergency, you should immediately go ahead and call 9-1-1. It's better to be safe and let the 9-1-1 call taker determine if you need emergency assistance.

911 is NOT for information, directory assistance, chit-chat, traffic tickets, animals, or pranks. If you do accidentally call 911 without an emergency, please DO NOT hang up. Tell the call taker your situation so they know it isn't an emergency. When a 911 operator receives a 911 hang up call, they have no way of knowing if there is a true emergency, or if it was a false call. 911 operators call back the telephone number to see if there is an emergency, and they always send a police officer to the residence to confirm that everything is okay. This can be a tremendous waste of manpower and resources, so if you accidentally call 911, please do not hang up but tell them of your mistake.