

**BOROUGH OF
CHATHAM**

ANNUAL REPORT

2010

**BUREAU OF FIRE
SAFETY**

WALTER NUGENT III – FIRE OFFICIAL

Fire Safety Inspections

There were a total of 221 new inspections conducted, 70 being Life Hazard Use inspection and 151 being Non-Life Hazard Use. There were 269 re-inspections conducted. This brings the total number of inspections to 470.

Inspection Summary for 2010

Life Hazard	70
Non-Life Hazard	151
Re-Inspections	269
Certificated Issued	226

Fire Investigations

A fire investigation was conducted at the following location.

07-31-10 540 Main Street Building 6 Multi-Family Dwelling

Penalty Account

There were two penalties collected, totaling \$500.00.

Business Registrations

Fees collected totaled \$ 11,480.00. This process as recommended by the State Division of Fire Safety has enabled us to obtain and maintain current information of all building owners and business owners in the Borough in addition to offset costs of the operation of the Bureau of Fire Safety.

Fire Safety Bureau Revenue

Life Hazard Use Registration Fees from State	\$11,609.05
Local Non-Life Hazard Use Registrations	\$11,480.00
Fire Code Violation Penalties	\$ 500.00
Permits	\$ <u>210.00</u>
Total	<u>\$23,799.05</u>

Special Projects

FEMA Grant Opportunities for Firefighters

Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)

The application period closed on January 15, 2010. The grant team and I have met numerous times pertaining to this grant. Janice Piccolo recently completed and submitted the grant application

Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)

Two grant applications were submitted for the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. The grant team has been meeting prior to this in preparation for this opportunity. New fire apparatus is difficult to acquire due to the amount of applications FEMA receives across the country. I believe Janice Piccolo has written two excellent grants with input received from the Grant Team. Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen was asked to endorse our applications and according his staff, it was endorsed. Although the Chatham Borough Fire Department never received any funding through FEMA, we feel that it was beneficial to submit this grant application and will continue to submit future grant applications. It is our hope that the Federal Government continues to fund this program.

Building Department Coverage

Coverage is provided to the building department as needed during Bill Jankowski's absence to conduct Fire Sub-Code plan review and inspections of new construction projects.

Emergency Preplan Information

Building preplan information is being maintained in the Emergency Software Products software program. Information will be utilized to assist the fire department during an emergency. Utility controls has been identified, sprinkler connection and control information has been obtained. Any special hazards identified are also noted in the emergency preplan. Information is verified and updated during each fire inspection.

Close Calls

It is rare to be able to state on any one specific day that a fire tragedy was avoided. The following is a list of three specific fire code violations that without doubt made a difference this year.

The use of extension cords is a relatively common violation to identify. At the following two properties **hot to the touch extension cords** were identified and unplugged by occupants. It is difficult to estimate when they would have failed but I have no doubt that they would not be able to sustain the level of heat found during the fire safety inspection for much longer.

- O’Gorman & Young 159 Main Street Monday March 15
- Hickory Tree Properties 97 Main Street Friday March 26

A prior fire safety inspection of St. Patrick Elementary School requested the fire alarm be tested with a report sent to my office. This is a common request. While reviewing the report I received on March 23, I noticed that 37 heat detectors and 6 pull stations were tested and passed. Unfortunately, the report did not specify the testing of any smoke detectors. I immediately went to the school to check the type of detectors located in the hallways of the school. The inspection confirmed that all devices were heat detectors. This is not only a serious violation of the NJ Uniform Fire Code but would cause a tremendous delay in notifying occupants and the fire department in the event of a fire. This apparently happened when a ceiling was replaced after last year’s annual fire inspection. The contractor arrived that afternoon, installed the required smoke detectors into the evening. I returned that later that evening to approve the installation so school was able to open the next day.

It is difficult to estimate the damage and/or injuries that may have occurred if these hazards were not identified. Fortunately, Chatham Borough and I had timing on our side this year.

Final Comments

Besides the two previously referenced “close calls” it is almost impossible to document a specific day that a fire was prevented. It is much more obvious to identify those fires that do occur.

A conscious effort is made during each inspection to educate building occupants as to why certain conditions should not exist. I have noticed that this helps to gain compliance quicker and it also reduces the chance of hazard reoccurring.

The Fire Safety Bureau was able to accomplish the inspections it did this year due to the assistance provided by Charles Salin, the Borough Firefighter/Driver who conducted many of the reported inspections. I would also like to thanks Cathy Baldwin for here assistance in processing all of the paperwork post inspection. This allows me and Charles Salin to spend more time out of the office conducting fire inspections.

I pride myself on enforcing the NJ State Fire Code uniformly and fairly to all business located in Chatham Borough. I view it as my responsibility to assist building owners in avoiding fire tragedies. Unfortunately, there are fires that were not able to be prevented. I am required to make sure that the cause of the fire is thoroughly investigated.

Respectfully Submitted,

Walter Nugent III
Fire Official