

THE YEAR IN REVIEW WITH A LOOK TO THE FUTURE

At year's end, it is often helpful to reflect on the past to see where we've been so we can determine where we are going. The FDNY is no different in this regard. We can review 1998 with a sense of pride and see many accomplishments:

- Purchased integrated PASS (personal alert safety system) alarms for SCBA.
- Developed annual medical exams that focus on wellness and fitness.
- Secured permanent use of Fort Totten, which will expand FDNY's training capabilities.
- Created five new Squads (18, 61, 252, 270 and 288), trained to respond to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction, as well as "routine" hazardous materials incidents. These units--with their additional training, equipment and capabilities--also will enhance firefighter safety at major fires and emergency incidents.
- Initiated better in-house training for company officers by providing captains from the Management Program with digital cameras and laptop computers to assist company officers in drills specific to their response districts.
- Continued the "Design Build" program that provides for a total rehabilitation of our firehouses most in need of repair.
- Purchasing lighter Scott cylinders, beginning with our mid-town companies.
- Created Ladder 133 for southeastern Queens to cover Jamaica, St. Albans and South Ozone Park--the first time in more than a decade that a new fire company has been established.
- Created a new SOC battalion to oversee operations of Rescue, Squad and Haz-Mat companies and provide for the presence of Chief Officers knowledgeable in complex Special Operations at these kinds of inci-

dents.

- Developed a back to basics training program for ladder companies.
- Purchased individual facepieces.
- Acquired site in Rockefeller Center for an additional "Fire Safety House," opening in the spring/summer of 1999.
- At this writing, received 1998 delivery of 32 new rigs with air conditioning (22 pumpers, two Squad pumpers and eight tower ladders). Twelve more pumpers are slated for delivery and will be put into service by December 31, 1998.

While these accomplishments give us a great deal of satisfaction, 1998 ends, too, with pain and regret. We lost three of our Bravest in line-of-duty deaths--Firefighter Raymond H. Nakovics, Lieutenant James W. Blackmore and Captain Scott LaPiedra. Please take some time out during this joyous time of the year; think of them and remember them and their families in your prayers.

The future of the FDNY looks bright. FDNY 2K, a strategic plan to propel the Fire Department into the next millennium, has been developed. Already, 2K Team members are meeting with individual Bureau personnel to

define objectives, determine how to meet them and decide on appropriate indicators to track performance. Simply put, FDNY 2K is our plan to make the world's best Fire Department even better. The future--while challenging and demanding--never has looked brighter.

In closing, I want to wish you and your families a healthy, happy and fire-safe Holiday Season.



Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, City-Wide Tour Commander Daniel Nigro (left) and Deputy Chief Seamus McNeela (right) confer at Bronx fourth alarm, Webster Avenue, August 16, 1998.

photo by FF Peter Connolly

Thomas Von Essen