

Inside the Bureau of Fire Operations

By Chief of Department Thomas Richardson

The article will take you inside the Bureau of Fire Operations and detail all of the units within the Bureau that report to the Chief of Operations, as well as the duties and activities of each respective unit. The Bureau supervises more than 10,000 firefighters and fire officers who respond to fires and emergencies throughout the City each and every day. The responsibility of the Bureau is to provide all of the resources our members need to be able to meet the Department's mission. That is our most important role as leaders of a Bureau that responded to more than 600,000 fires and emergencies during 2019, including 300,000 medical emergencies. For the sake of this article, we will highlight the year 2019 using information from our 2019 Annual Report. We are still in the process of compiling the information for our 2020 Annual Report. The information presented here will provide an in-depth look at the breadth and scope of the work in our Bureau.

Bureau of Fire Operations Units

The Chief of Fire Operations is assisted by the Assistant Chief of Operations, two additional assistant chiefs, two deputy assistant chiefs, one battalion chief, an executive officer, and two captains. There are also three civilian assistants assigned to the Bureau. The following units report to the Chief of Fire Operations:

- Borough Commands
- **Special Operations Command**
- Fire Department Operations Center (FDOC)
- Counterterrorism Task Force Unit
- Incident Management Team
- Mask Service Unit
- Building Inspection Safety Unit (BISP)
- Document Control Unit
- Planning Unit
- City Planning Unit
- Fort Totten Operations
- Officer Assignment Desk
- DSCO
- Ceremonial Unit
- DiamondPlate Operations Team
- Community Affairs/Fire Safety Education Liaison

Following are some of the highlights and initiatives accomplished by each of our units.

Borough Commands

Borough Commanders worked on several initiatives to increase communications and better monitor their members. Communication with members in the field and with EMS counterparts has improved with Borough Commanders taking on a

lead role to set the standard for increased visits to firehouses and more meetings with EMS chiefs.

Brooklyn

- DiamondPlate segment and WNYF article for Box 6-6-1475. Wind-impacted fire at 702 44th Street, a six-story, 200-by-100-foot H-type.
- Started regular meetings between FDNY and Department of Transportation (DOT) to discuss various proposals and issues such as bike lanes.
- Attended several meetings between Hatzolah of Boro Park and FDNY EMS in an effort to coordinate operations.
- Started regular meetings with Division Chiefs of EMS Divisions 3 and 8.



- Following two lithium ion battery-involved fires, Division 11 contacted subject matter experts to attend division conferences and discuss hazards, firefighting tactics and other battery-related issues.
- Worked with the Safety Command in developing a training initiative to reduce accidents.



About the Author

Thomas Richardson was appointed in 1980. He was a firefighter in Engine 227, Ladder 102 and Rescue 2; lieutenant in Engine 235; captain of Engine 234 and Squad 270; and a chief in Battalion 38 and Division 15. As a staff chief, he served as Chief of the Fire Academy, Chief of Training and Chief of Fire Operations. On June 26, 2021, he was promoted to Chief of Department. He holds a bachelor's degree from SUNY Empire State College and a master's degree from the Naval Postgraduate School. He attended Columbia University's Fire Officers Management Institute (FOMI), the Advanced Leadership Program and the West Point Combatting Terrorism Program.

Bronx

- Coordinated with NYPD Bronx Borough Commander in educating NYPD members on the dangers they may face when responding to fires, and how they can assist us.
- Coordination and familiarization with Manhattan units on installation of Con Edison gas meters.
- Enhancing coordination with FDNY Explosive Escort Units with Port Authority at the George Washington Bridge.

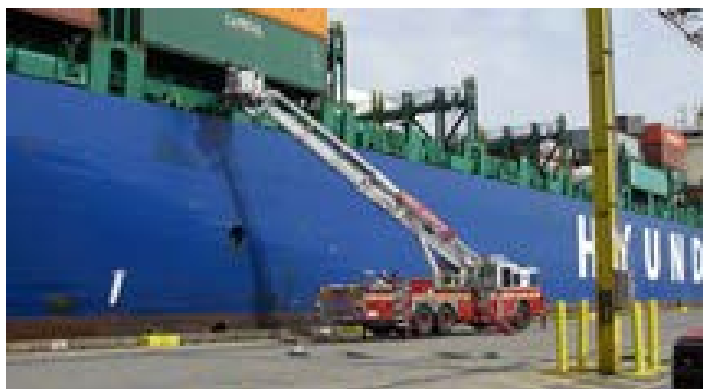
Manhattan

- Successful identification, familiarization and CIDS entries for 150 Gothic churches as well as tactical planning and apparatus access evaluation.
- Class 2 high-rise residential building identification and tactical document prepared and published. More than 1000 Class 2 buildings identified. All CIDS on these buildings have been properly submitted.
- Mega high-rise document and tactical evolutions in development.
- World Trade Center Complex total pre-fire/emergency plan being established.



Queens

- Continued discussions to establish a mutual aid agreement with Port Authority for operations at JFK and LaGuardia airports.
- Construction of East Side Access at Sunnyside Yard contin-



ues; inspections being conducted with quarterly reports to the Borough.

- LaGuardia Airport construction continues; inspections being conducted with quarterly reports to the Borough.

Staten Island

- Official opening of Squad Company 8.
- Familiarization drills at complicated facilities such as the Amazon building, Vesey Paper and Port Mobil.
- New Brush Fire Unit was requested from the Capital Discretionary Fund to replace aging equipment to enhance capabilities.
- Evaluation of the Staten Island Tactical Training Unit in coordination with the Bureau of Training to enhance and improve training center capabilities.

Special Operations Command:

Rescue Operations

- Established and expanded the Rebreather Task Force for below-grade and tunnel operations.



- SCUBA—continuing to advance current diving research and expanding ice diving training. Conducted submerged aircraft rescue training in Groton, Connecticut.
- Opened new quarters for Rescue Company 2.



- Maintained partnership with Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) for drone and robotics use, especially in the subterranean environment.
- Established a pilot program with the Drone/Robotics Unit (formerly the Command Tactical Unit) within Rescue Operations.

Haz-Mat Operations

- Began developing liquefied natural gas (LNG) awareness and response in preparation for increased use and presence

in the region.

Introduced new equipment, including the following:

- LZ 30 (laser methane detector issued to all Haz-Mat, Squad and Rescue companies)
- Toxic twins meters issued to all battalion chiefs and EMS Haz-Tac Units (measures both carbon monoxide and hydrogen cyanide, which have a synergistic effect when both are present)
- Intrinsically safe ventilation fans (issued to Haz-Mat and Vent Support Units)

Marine Operations

- Received three new SAFE Boats for the Rapid Response Craft (Summer Boat) Program. All equipped with side-scanning sonar.



- Trained more than 5000 FDNY members and 1200 of our port partners at the Shipboard Firefighting Simulator at the Fire Academy.
- Increased responses by 10 percent for the Rapid Response Craft (Summer Boats: Marine 3, 4 and 8).
- Conducted 52 cruise ship escorts with FDNY rescue paramedics on board.

Fire Department Operations Center (FDOC)

The Fire Department Operations Center (FDOC) provides situational awareness to all senior staff of Fire and EMS Operations. FDOC serves as the main point of contact for other city, state and federal agencies and is responsible for distributing daily information on Department activities to all areas of the Department.

- Established contacts and developing a relationship with the Lower Manhattan Security Initiative for access to area cameras to enhance situational awareness.
- Working with Citizens Application to develop a private streaming/network platform for FDNY.

Counterterrorism Task Force Unit (CTTF)

- Trained 1153 Fire Operations personnel and 863 EMS Operations personnel in interagency training with NYPD.
- FDNY medical protocol approach for patient care in a warm zone was approved by both the Regional Emergency Medical Services Council and the State Emergency Medical Services Council.
- The FDNY was awarded the New York State Department of

Health Innovation Award for the development of warm zone triage.

Incident Management Team (IMT)

The IMT continues to offer unparalleled service to the Department, the City and beyond. At almost 300 members now, the IMT focuses on training, succession planning and ensuring a high level of readiness for activation and/or deployment.

- 2019 had seven deployments, both within and outside New York City.
- In 2020, the IMT was a key component in assisting with the response to and management of the COVID-19 pandemic. They currently continue lending their valuable skills in the vaccine distribution program.



Mask Service Unit (MSU)

- Conducted more than 17,000 mask fit tests.
- Serviced more than 6000 self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBAs).
- 95-percent completion of SCBA PMP for line units.

Building Inspection Safety Unit (BISP)

The BISP unit consists of BISP officers, RBIS officers, Public Transportation Safety Unit (PTSU) officers, 10-35 Desk, Division Task Forces and the E-CIDS unit.

- BISP hotline handled more than 6400 calls from field units.
- Scheduled and coordinated almost 1500 complaints.
- Recorded and monitored 38 vacancies.
- Coordinated with Department of Buildings and Department of Housing, Preservation and Development on more than 3600 vacancies citywide for follow-up on possible CIDS entries and compliance.

Document Control Unit (DCU)

The Document Control Unit is a vital link in the communication network that creates, edits and disseminates information to both field and administrative units. DCU publishes essential policies, procedures and other documents. The unit currently consists of four members: a Captain, Lieutenant, EMS Lieutenant, and Firefighter.

- Published 287 bulletins.
- Between 2017 and 2019, generated more than \$400,000 in revenue for the FDNY Foundation in the form of study materials for promotional exams.

Planning Unit

The Planning Unit is led by an EMS assistant chief and is responsible for coordinating with other city agencies and NYCEM to provide situational awareness for storm preparation and for planned events throughout the City. Planning documents are created largely with a permanent staff of one full-time EMT (the Departments Special Event Coordinator), in addition to various light-duty EMTs and firefighters throughout the year.

- Coordinated or assisted with a total of 663 events, exercises,

- drills and dignitary protection operations.
- The number of planning events/activities has increased by 61 percent over the last seven years (413 events in 2013 versus 663 events in 2019).

City Planning Unit

The City Planning Unit is staffed by a battalion chief and a captain with assistance from other members. They are responsible for all construction plan reviews, as well as collaborating and meeting with other City agencies to represent FDNY interests.

- 2019 construction permit filings saw a 7-percent increase from 2018, with a total of 36,461.
- 175 DOT-related reviews
- 30 waterfront development reviews citywide
- Hudson Yard and LIRR West Side Yard expansion reviews

Officer Assignment Desk and DSCO (Firefighter Staffing)

- Created a database of all officer group numbers to more efficiently provide staffing coverage.
- Works with Bureau of Personnel to effectively manage vacation requests, compensatory time blocks and HRIS information management.
- Managing the incremental rollout of the new e-staffing program to battalions.

Fort Totten Operations

Fort Totten is an FDNY training facility. It is also occupied by several City and federal agencies including the NYPD, New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Center for the Women of New York, U.S. Coast Guard and U.S. Army. The Fort is also a public park used by hundreds of civilians daily. The park is approximately 60 acres, with five miles of roads, 10 miles of sidewalks and 25 parking lots. The Fort is also home to many FDNY units, including the First Line Supervisors Training Program (FLSTP), Ceremonial Unit, Safety Command, Fire Safety Education, College Registrar, Fire Investigation, Fire Prevention District Office, Queens Borough Command, WTC Medical Monitoring, IMT, SOC SCUBA, SOC Rebreather and the Quartermaster.

Ceremonial Unit

In 2019, the Ceremonial Unit managed a total of 890 events. These totals represented a near 20-percent increase from 744 events in 2018. Members handled these events with the utmost professionalism and pride. Events comprised the following:

- 22 funerals
- 52 plaque dedications
- 10 block parties
- 39 parades
- 568 other events

DiamondPlate Operations Team

DiamondPlate assists the FDNY in addressing the challenge of disseminating training and other information to field units in a timely manner. This information is archived for future reference and is always available; it includes operational case studies, articles and training videos. Some 2019 highlights included the following:

- Elevated 45 content pages on DiamondPlate.
- Published a Natural Gas Emergencies and Fires video series to complement the new Training Bulletin on Natural Gas Emergency Response.
- Published a new video on treating unconscious firefighters.
- Published a page and video on the new Suspicious Activity Reporting protocol.

Community Affairs/Fire Safety Education Liaison

The Bureau of Fire Operations works closely with Community Affairs and the Fire Safety Education Unit. Through partnerships with community groups, elected officials, schools, senior centers and various City agencies, Fire Safety Education professionals coordinated and participated in events that provided awareness of general residential safety.

- In collaboration with the Bureau of Training and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), delivered a special two-week training program to increase the number of fire safety educators.
- In partnership with the Mayor's Community Affairs Unit, coordinated fire safety training sessions with clergy leaders throughout Queens Community Boards 12, 13 and 14 in response to an increase in fatal fires in these areas.
- Assisted and coordinated with American Red Cross to install more than 1700 smoke alarms in southeast Queens.

Conclusion

In order to continue to meet the needs of the Department and the City we serve, a robust Bureau of Fire Operations is working hard to meet the needs of field units each and every day. We have a dedicated staff of chiefs, officers and civilians who come to work every day with one thing in mind: to focus on the mission. As illustrated, there are many different units, each with its own mission-specific tasks. Collectively, they are the Bureau of Fire Operations at large. We are always striving to improve and innovate in order to serve field units as efficiently as possible. We are so grateful for the work that you do every day in responding to fires and emergencies. We are here to serve your needs and are always looking for suggestions on how to be the best we can be. ■

