

## Newsletter - Summer, 2013 issue - Forty Fort Volunteer Fire Company

**Thank you** - The members of the Forty Fort Volunteer Fire Company want to express their sincere thanks for the support the members of our community have extended to us over the years of our existence. The Fire Company has served this community since it was created in 1905 to fill a void that most people never realized existed. Everyone knows that they will never have a need to call the Fire Department. It is always the other guy that will need our help. But when the other guy needed help before 1905, they had to depend on their neighbors coming together to bring their buckets and help extinguish their chimney fire, or to help with the elderly aunt that tripped and broke a bone or struck her head. The volunteer fire company was formed from those neighbors who felt the need to band together to serve their community. That void is still being filled with your neighbors today, though it has become difficult to keep up a roster of members with all the other family- and work-related responsibilities that burden all of us in this busy and difficult time. Anyone who feels that they can assist in any way, whether it be fighting a fire or assisting with ambulance calls or providing computer skills or just enjoying the company of a dedicated group of individuals is welcome to become a member of the Forty Fort volunteer Fire Company.

**"I've come to know you"** - I have been collating and updating information that you have been providing me since the end of the last century. The information that you gratefully fill out on the reverse side of your annual donation cards is transferred onto a database of Forty Fort residential and commercial information that is held on a street by street form to enable us to better serve the people we have vowed to protect from fires and other emergencies. Those of you who take the time to fill out and update this information for me provide me with the raw material that may help us save a life or contact a relative when there is a problem in town. I feel as if I have watched families grow up, seen children go off to college, seen new families move into Forty Fort and become friends and neighbors. There are many family names who have been members of the Fire Company, retired, or just moved on to other pursuits, but I feel that I know them through my involvement with making information available through our database on computers that are mounted for ease of use in our fire apparatus. Bob Smith

**Database information** - The information that we request on our response cards is used to update the extensive data that we utilize in times of emergencies. Even if you do not feel a need to make any kind of monetary donation to the Fire Company, we urge you to make the effort to fill out the data information that we request. For your convenience, a form will be attached at the completion of this newsletter. We try to visit our commercial entities to update emergency contact and other pertinent data, but it is difficult to do that with the amount of residential addresses that we have. You can provide this info to us via mail, or stop in and see us at the Borough Building, or Fire Headquarters in Kingston when we are not out on a call or a survey.

**Update on the consolidation** - The Forty Fort volunteer Fire Company is one of three volunteer Fire Companies that help form the Kingston/Forty Fort Fire Department. There are 29 full-time firefighter/EMTs and firefighter/paramedics that staff the Department on a 24 hour basis, backed up by the volunteers when needed and available. We have been working together since

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the turn of the century, and as a functional consolidation for approximately six (6) years. It has bolstered the response in both communities along with protected lives and property.

Compliments of the diligent work of members the Department has received a grant for computer hardware and software that will update, replace and provide additional resources to provide a more efficient response to man-made and natural disasters. Besides the support the Department receives from its municipal governments the volunteer fire companies provide the means to acquire new or updated equipment. This equipment can be the protective gear that the firefighter must wear to protect him/her self on a disaster scene; the breathing apparatus that provides fresh air in hazardous atmospheres; thermal imaging cameras so the firefighter can see to search in smoke-filled houses; or even the simple equipment utilized to force entry into locked buildings or provide ventilation of extremely hot, unburned products of combustion out of a structure's roof.

**Reason for "current resident"** - On many of the fund drive returns we receive there are numerous times the respondent has crossed out the 'current resident' portion of their address label. When the Fire Company puts together its packets of material for the annual fund drive it prints out labels that enable the postal service to deliver those envelopes as swiftly and accurately as possible. We try to personalize those letters by placing the family name that we have on record for that particular address on the label. As that family may not be at that address or there are changes at the address the postal service regulations require that we also place "...or current resident" on the labels. Without this in place the material will not be properly delivered. We continue to thank you for your understanding.

**Insurance Service Office (ISO) Report** - Every 12 to 16 years this agency performs a survey of capabilities of Fire Departments in cities, boroughs, fire protection districts. Thanks to the progressive efforts of our two boroughs we have achieved a Class 3 rating. This is an improvement from a Class 5 rating that we were assigned in the 1990s. The ISO Rating Schedule incorporates Ratings of 1 through 10, with 1 being the best and 10 for non-existence. This survey or review of fire services is what our fire insurance rates are based on. From a residential standpoint the savings is minimal, from a commercial standpoint, the savings could impact a business or industrial insurance holder by a positive degree. Three basic elements are considered when this survey is conducted are:

Receiving and handling fire alarms - The Fire Department Equipment - Water Supply  
The Kingston/Forty Fort Fire Department is dispatched by our County 911 system, which receives all emergency calls and dispatches them for us. The water supply system is owned and operated by the PA American Water Company, and is annually tested and flushed as per their requirements. The water company will be making improvements to our supply system in the coming months. The Fire Department section is designed to evaluate our capability to control and extinguish structure fires. We are evaluated on several areas of our operations: Engine and ladder companies in service, equipment carried on the apparatus, fire apparatus response on the 1st alarm, automatic aid plans for fire suppression assistance, training of firefighting personnel and operational pre-planning of 'target' hazards. Through continuing hard work by the Department and its volunteer fire companies, we have continually strived for improvements to better serve our municipalities.

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**Always a need for volunteers** - The Forty Fort volunteer Fire Company is always looking for new members. In an age of multiple bread-winners in the home volunteering has become a difficult pastime. Between a need to spend time with your family, whether it be at the ball park, school sponsored activity, soccer practice, dance or music lessons it is a reality that the limited time available makes it difficult to take time for yourself or your community. Those people who find a need to assist in protecting their community, whether it be assisting at a fire, caring for an injured mini-football or baseball player or getting involved in Emergency Management training to better prepare a community for a natural disaster are always welcome to become a member of our organization.

We are always looking for a way to become more involved in community activities. Fire Company members have traditionally been involved with Fire Prevention activities at schools and any organizations who request information and/or training. Assisting with other community activities has always been part of our members' responsibilities. Anyone wishing to become involved is strongly urged to contact any of our members whenever or where ever you might see them.

**Endnote** - I am proud to be a firefighter. I have been involved in the volunteer fire service since 1966. Since that period I have provided fire/rescue/EMS services in multiple communities on the west side of the Susquehanna River. When I was hired by the Borough of Forty Fort in 1974 to perform these duties, I considered myself extremely lucky for being compensated for a job I had done and would continue to perform as a volunteer. It gave me the opportunity to gain much education in the fire/rescue field of endeavor and also be involved in Emergency Medical Services as it evolved and developed in our region. The people that I have met and worked with over these past (too many and too quick) years are a very dedicated group of men and women. I wouldn't have missed the chance to be involved for the world.

Firefighters are generally a modest group who loathe talking about their vocation/avocation to 'civilians'. We do much talking amongst ourselves about the 'jobs' we have worked on, but fail to blow our own horns or complain to those outside of our world. Public relations is not our strong suite. The average person does not know what we do, how we do it, or what it takes to do it correctly. We have all ruined good clothes, damaged expensive shoes/boots and spent days after 'the big one' with aches, pains and soreness that our friends, neighbors and relatives express their shock that we would do these things to ourselves. We have seen the best and the worst that this calling has to offer. I am proud to be associated with the Kingston/Forty Fort Fire Department. The time spent performing this job has been time well spent and productive, and I cannot see myself involved in any other profession. It has been a rewarding experience. Thank you for the opportunity. Robert P. Smith, Deputy Chief, Forty Fort volunteer Fire company

### **Forty Fort Database information:**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_ **Address** \_\_\_\_\_  
**# present in home** \_\_\_\_\_ **# of children** \_\_\_\_\_ **Pets** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Disabilities** \_\_\_\_\_ **Hazards** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Home/personal telephone #** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Emergency contact person & telephone #** \_\_\_\_\_