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MONARCH

FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

INTEGRITY • ACCOUNTABILITY • RESPONSIBILITY

PROMISES MADE...PROMISES KEPT: PART TWO

Once more it is my pleasure to update our residents with some of the latest news in Monarch. As some of you will have noted, the Board has been busy for the last several months. We are working diligently to maintain or improve service and safety while holding or cutting costs.

Here is the update on recent activity:

1. The Transparency Portal is now up and running. What does this mean for taxpayers? You can look onto the District's website and see, in detail, where your tax dollars are going. The Portal lists actual wages, benefits, vendors and other providers and shows you the expenditures for each. We believe all government agencies should make this information readily available to its taxpayers and we are therefore proud to be among the first to do so.
2. Workers' Compensation costs, which had gotten out of control, are still headed in the right direction. Reforms initiated last year have been implemented to reduce waste and provide better program monitoring. The District is working to improve policies and procedures which are resulting in fewer workers' compensation claims. The Board is constantly working with the experts to get Monarch worker compensation premiums back where they should be. However, foremost is making sure injured employees receive the best care from the appropriate medical professional.
3. A comprehensive Drug and Alcohol policy has been implemented to assure that Monarch is a drug-free workplace. In addition a new "Fit For Duty" policy has been put in place that will affirm Monarch employees are fit for duty to protect our personnel and our residents. Updates to these policies that were in effect for years are in the best interests of everyone. Now every event that results in injury or property damage will see affected personnel checked.
4. District revenues came in more than \$600,000 lower than the projection provided by St. Louis County using the same calculation methods they have used for years. Major factors, cited by the St. Louis County Assessor for the decline, were unpaid property taxes and protested taxes. While the economy has experienced some recovery, this is evidence that taxpayers are still feeling the fallout from job loss and pay reductions. Fortunately, the Board plans for such unexpected economic events and maintains healthy reserves.

These reserves are not meant to be a permanent solution and the Board is looking at spending reductions in response to this serious matter. These include reducing vacation time for shift personnel to put it in line with other area fire departments, as well as implementing employee cost sharing in healthcare costs in order to align it with most other public employee groups. There has been no recommendation for a pay cut for our firefighter/paramedics who are among the highest paid in the area and the country.

Robin Harris
President
Monarch Fire District Board

HAIL AND FAREWELL

The Monarch Fire Protection District has a long history of people coming and people going, as would any organization of 57 years. And that process continues.

Monarch hailed the arrival of two new Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) employees due to the retirement of two previous FPB employees last year.

FPB Administrative Assistant Julie Gaylord started work on August 5, 2013, replacing Sylvia Gerdes who had been with Monarch for 18 years. Julie previously worked at Credo Community Center in New York as a Human Resource Assistant. She is a US Army veteran with a Purple Heart earned in a tour of service in Iraq.

Fire Inspector Joe Heitkamp started work with Monarch on September 3, 2013, replacing Roger Morris who had been with Monarch for 29 years. Joe previously worked at the Wentzville Fire Protection District where he was Fire Marshal. He has extensive experience in construction code enforcement as well as fire prevention.

Both of these employees were selected through a rigorous hiring process, and were judged the best qualified candidates for their respective jobs. We are happy to have both of these individuals in our Fire Prevention Bureau.

They were followed by the arrival of Assistant Chief Cary Spiegel in April. Chief Spiegel has more than 37 years of experience in the fire service. His training, experience and integrity will serve our District well.

Our newest arrival is Shanna Gelb. Shanna joined Monarch full-time on May 1st as a general office specialist. Her new position means she will likely be the person greeting visitors to our Headquarters.

Monarch has also said farewell to three employees recently.

Assistant Chief John Borgmann retired on March 7, 2014 after 33 years of service with Monarch. Assistant Chief Borgmann started his career with the District in January 1981. He was promoted to Captain in August of 1988, was promoted to Battalion Chief in December of 2006, and was promoted to Assistant Chief in February 2012.

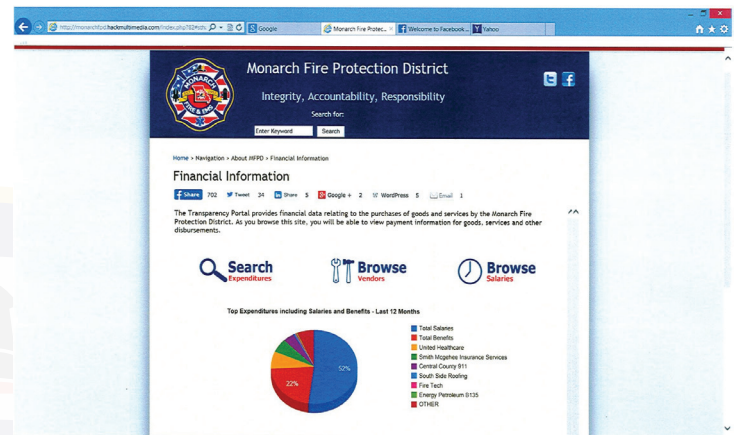
Battalion Chief Dave Houston retired on April 27, 2014 after 26 years of service with Monarch. Battalion Chief Houston started his career with the District in August 1988. He was promoted to Captain in 1999 and was promoted to Battalion Chief in 2012.

Fire Chief Tom Vineyard resigned his position May 9, 2014 after just over two years of service with Monarch to accept a position as Chief of the O'Fallon Fire District. Chief Vineyard started as Chief of the District in January of 2012. While at Monarch, Chief Vineyard was elected President of the Greater St. Louis Area Fire Chiefs Association.

We sincerely thank all three of these Chiefs for their years of service to Monarch, and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavors.

Now You Can't Be Fooled

Monarch's New Transparency Portal Discloses All Salaries and Expenses



In a few short months after the new Monarch Board elected by voters in April 2013 took over, financial information that had only been available by specific Sunshine Law requests, is totally open to the public and press at Monarchfpd.org and a click on **"Transparency Portal"**. For specifics on salaries, benefits and time off click on **"Download Detailed Information"** from the **"Browse Salaries"** screen. It is eye opening.

Information you can find on the Portal includes:

- Qualifications to be a firefighter/paramedic, the twelve ways firefighters are paid to make up the total take home pay, pensions, medical, dental and vision insurance and time off posted by individual staff member or board member.
- All expenses are updated monthly and can be searched by individual vendor and product as well as displayed in charts by the percentage of the total budget.
- You might be surprised to know that most Privates (lowest rank) make on average over \$91,000 in wages with another \$38,130 in generous benefits on top bringing the total average compensation package to \$128,000. **A dozen Privates (firefighter/paramedics) make over \$100,000 in wages alone.**
- The average total compensation package of all those above a Private is \$147,261 with the top earnings at \$178,965 for a Battalion Chief.
- Monarch Firefighters work, on average, 2 1/4 (24 hour) days per week. With the exception of an alarm, all duties end at 12:00 noon every work day per the Collective Bargaining Agreement. **The average time off annually for all safety personnel including vacation, sick and personal days is about 2 months with the most time off for an individual at about 3 months in one year.** That is not a typo!

A RECIPE FOR SAFE COOKING

Cooking brings family and friends together, provides an outlet for creativity and can be relaxing. However, cooking continues to be the leading cause of fires in the Monarch Fire Protection District, as well as the entire United States of America. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), in 2011, cooking was involved in an estimated **156,300 home structure fires** that were reported to U.S. fire departments. These fires caused **470 deaths, 5,390 injuries and \$1 billion** in direct property damage. Cooking caused 43% of reported home fires, 16% of home fire deaths, 38% of home fire injuries, and 12% of the direct property damage in home fires in 2011. It is estimated that these statistics have not changed much in the last two years.



Also according to the NFPA:

- Unattended cooking was by far the leading contributing factor in these fires.
- Two-thirds (67%) of home cooking fires started with the ignition of food or other cooking materials.
- Clothing was the item first ignited in less than 1% of these fires, but these incidents accounted for 15% of the cooking fire deaths.
- Ranges accounted for the largest share (57%) of home cooking fire incidents. Ovens accounted for 16%.
- More than half (55%) of reported non-fatal home cooking fire injuries occurred when the victims tried to fight the fire themselves.
- Frying poses the greatest risk of fire.

Here are some tips to help you PREVENT cooking fires:

- Stay alert. If you are sleepy or have consumed alcohol or medicine that causes drowsiness, don't use the stove.
- Stand by your pan. If you need to leave the kitchen for any reason, turn the burner off until you return.
- Watch what you are cooking. Even if you are simmering, baking, roasting or boiling food, check it often, never leave your home while food is cooking, and use a timer to remind you that you are cooking.
- Anything that can burn should be kept away from the stove. This includes oven mitts, plastic and wooden utensils, food packaging and containers, towels, etc. even when not cooking (burners may be accidentally turned on).
- Wear short sleeves, or roll up long sleeves.

DOS AND DON'TS IF YOU HAVE A COOKING FIRE:

- DO keep a lid or cookie sheet nearby to smother pan fires while they are still small. Smother the fire by sliding the lid or cookie sheet over the pan and turn off the burner. Leave the pan covered until it is cool.
- DO get out if the fire is too large, or has extended beyond the pan. Leave the house, closing doors behind you, and call 9-1-1 after you're safely out of the house.
- DO turn off the oven, keep the oven door closed and call 9-1-1 for fires in the oven.
- DON'T put water or anything else on a pan fire. Doing so will most likely splash and spread the fire.
- DON'T move a pan that is on fire – you will likely spread the fire and get burned.
- DON'T go back inside once you have evacuated from a fire.

Tips to prevent other kitchen accidents:

- Have a "kid- and pet-free" zone of at least 3 feet from the stove and areas where hot food or liquids is prepared or carried.
- Keep pot & pan handles turned so they are over the stove or countertop, and not over the open edge of the stove.
- Clean up spills immediately to prevent slipping while carrying hot food and liquids.
- Don't use area rugs in the kitchen – they may be a trip or slip hazard.

USE CAUTION WHEN SPREADING MULCH

Spring is the time of year to refresh your landscaping. The Monarch Fire Protection District is advising homeowners to be cautious when having mulch spread near your homes. Monarch has responded to several fire calls this spring that were determined to be caused by new landscaping mulch having been applied over or around landscaping lights. Fortunately, these fires caused no damage other than to the lights.

Fire Marshal Roger Herin would like to warn everyone that this, while seeming to be just a nuisance, can be a dangerous problem. Herin states, "Several years ago, we responded to a fire that was determined to have been caused by mulch covering a landscaping light. That fire destroyed a garage and caused significant damage to the home it was attached to."

Most landscaping lights are low-voltage, but still produce enough heat to ignite mulch if enough air space is not provided around the lights to dissipate the heat. Herin says you should always follow the lighting manufacturer's instructions for maintaining enough clear space around the lights. Also, if you have a landscaping company providing mulch, be sure to clearly indicate the location of your landscaping lights so they can avoid covering them.

If homeowners have any questions, or would like more information, they may contact Fire Marshal Herin at 314-514-0900.



IN CASE OF FIRE, GET OUT, THEN CALL 911

WHY SUCH STRIFE

Directors of the Monarch Fire District are often asked why there are so many disagreements between the Board of Directors and the Union that represents the firefighters and paramedics. The news coverage of these differences often paints both parties in a bad light and results in negative publicity. Residents and business owners who pay taxes in the District are left wondering why there is not a greater level of cooperation between the parties.

The Board's perspective is that Missouri Statutes not only empower it to run the District in the best interests of the taxpayers it represents, but require it to do so efficiently while maintaining a balanced budget. Creating a nurturing employment environment is certainly a goal of the Board of Directors, but it is secondary to providing excellent fire, rescue and EMS services to taxpayers.

Regrettably, from the Board's point of view, the leadership of the Union has been uncooperative and makes little

effort to work with the elected Board of Directors. Instead they seem to prefer engaging in conflicts and legal action. This has resulted in multiple lawsuits and other similar actions which only serve to direct negative publicity on the District and distract from the mission of the Fire District and its elected Board of Directors. In the last year alone, the District has had to spend more than \$230,000 on the many lawsuits, grievances, legal actions and extended negotiations with the Union and its members.

Rest assured that the Board seeks a return to the days when the Union and its leadership sought to work cooperatively in solving problems. While the Board of Directors recognizes the right of the Union to use whatever means and methods it deems necessary to further the interests of its members, the Board stands fast in its resolve to keep service to the residents/taxpayers of the District first and foremost in their priorities.

**In Emergency,
Call 9-1-1**
**All other inquiries,
call 314-514-0900**

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