



## WAKEFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT REPORT FOR MAY 2023

The Wakefield Fire Department responded to 362 emergency incidents during the month of May 2023 including 26 box alarms and 336 still alarms. The department responded to four requests for mutual aid during May, twice to Reading and once each to Saugus and Newburyport. The department received mutual aid twenty-three times during the month of May, four times from Melrose, three times from Reading and Lynnfield, twice from Stoneham and Malden, and once each from Burlington, Danvers, Lynn, Middleton, North Reading, Saugus, Wilmington, Winchester and Woburn. Lt. Michael Long responded to 9 Opportunity Way in Newburyport on May 5 as a member of the District 2 Hazardous Materials Response Team after an industrial accident resulted in a large explosion at that location. Lt. Long worked together with other members of the team to remove volatile chemicals from the site so that a search for missing employees could take place. Sadly, a male employee of the plant was killed during the explosion. A crew from Engine 5 under the direction of Lieutenant Joseph Albert covered Reading Fire Headquarters during a brush fire in that community on the afternoon of May 10. Firefighters from Engine 2 under the command of Lt. John Mercurio assisted the Saugus Fire Department at the scene of a structure fire at 27 Pleasant Avenue during the evening of May 10. A crew from Engine 5 led by Lieutenant Erik Cole covered Reading Fire Headquarters during an incident in that community on the evening of May 13.

Firefighters under the command of Captain Paul Pronco responded to a reported building fire in the vicinity of 340 Main Street at approximately 4:04 P.M. on May 14. On duty firefighters were tied up at other calls at the time including a medical emergency requiring a Medflight helicopter response and an elevator rescue at 95 Audubon Road. First arriving firefighters encountered a fire in the alleyway between Charlie's Pizza on Main Street and the Wakefield Cooperative Bank extending rapidly up the outside wall and immediately ordered a second alarm at 4:10 P.M. Engine companies from Reading, Stoneham and Melrose along with a North Reading Ladder truck responded to the scene to assist Wakefield firefighters. Wakefield Fire Chief Michael Sullivan and Deputy Fire Chief Thomas Purcell also responded to the scene. Firefighters deployed multiple hose lines and were able to knock the visible fire down fairly quickly, however, interior firefighting crews continued report high heat conditions and encountered fire in numerous concealed wall and ceiling spaces, prompting Chief Sullivan to order a third alarm at 4:24 P.M. The third alarm brought engine companies from Middleton, Saugus and Woburn and a tower ladder from Lynnfield to the fire. Conditions inside the building continued to deteriorate and with the rear of the second and third floors starting to weaken and fail Chief Sullivan ordered a fourth alarm at 4:52 P.M. and evacuated all firefighters from the interior, switching to an exterior fire attack. The fourth alarm summoned engine companies from Malden, Winchester and Wilmington to the scene along with a Malden ladder truck. The exterior fire attack was successful in knocking



down the fire and firefighters were then able to re-enter the building to complete extinguishment, bringing the fire under control by approximately 5:30 P.M. The fire caused extensive fire, smoke and water damage throughout the property. Four residents and two businesses will be displaced for an extended period of time. Sadly, two pet dogs were killed as a result of the fire. There were no civilians injured during the fire. Three firefighters were injured as a result of the fire, including one who partially fell through burned flooring.

There were several factors that made this fire more difficult to extinguish. The building had numerous concealed wall and ceiling void spaces that allowed the fire to spread rapidly throughout the building. The fire was able to burn inside these void spaces for quite a while before activating the fire alarm system, resulting in a delayed notification. First alarm companies had to respond from other emergency incidents around town increasing the normal response time for a fire in downtown Wakefield. The close proximity of the fire building to adjoining structures made protecting those structures more difficult. Troopers from the State Fire Marshal's Office were called in to help determine the cause of the fire. Although still under investigation, the cause is accidental, possibly due to an undetermined electrical malfunction. A Lynn and Danvers engine company as well as a Burlington tower ladder covered Wakefield Fire Headquarters during the fire.

Relatively little rain and low humidity created drought conditions in local wooded areas during May, creating tinder dry conditions. The department started receiving calls reporting a brush fire in the vicinity of Sylvan Avenue during the afternoon of May 27 and dispatched Engine 1 to investigate. Firefighters under Lieutenant Erik Cole responded and soon discovered an extensive brush fire in the wood off of Sylvan Avenue. Lieutenant Cole called for a full on-duty response as firefighters got to work battling what ended up being approximately three acres of brush. A Stoneham engine was requested to cover Wakefield Fire Headquarters as all on-duty Wakefield firefighters were occupied fighting the fire. A forestry firefighting crew from the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation also responded to the scene to assist Wakefield firefighters. The entire burned area was thoroughly wet down before firefighters left the scene at approximately 6:30 P.M. They returned the next morning to extinguish several flare-ups and lingering hot spots. The cause of the brush fire appears to be a campfire that was not properly extinguished.

All four duty groups conducted boat training evolutions on Lake Quannapowitt during May. They also trained on rescue techniques utilizing the new battery-operated rescue tools and saws recently acquired by the department via a FY23 Firefighter Safety Equipment Grant from the Commonwealth of Massachusetts worth \$11,300. All of the department's fire hose was inspected and pressure-tested during May. Individual groups conducted pump training exercises and practiced with the department's inventory of air bags.

All groups participated in Emergency Medical Technician training in May and conducted annual business fire safety inspections. A Girl Scout troop visited Wakefield Fire Headquarters during the evening of May 11. The department hung an American flag between Ladder 1 and the Melrose ladder truck in front of the Most Blessed Sacrament Church on May 21 in honor of the Boston Wounded Warrior veteran's bike run. The department also participated in the Town's Memorial Day ceremony held at the Galvin Middle School on May 29.

## **INCIDENT RESPONSE REPORT FOR MAY 2023**

<b><u>BOX ALARMS</u></b>	<b>26</b>
<b><u>STILL ALARMS</u></b>	<b>336</b>
<b>TOTAL ALARMS</b>	<b>362</b>

EMERGENCY MEDICAL / MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENT RESPONSES	262
ALARM MALFUNCTIONS / ACCIDENTAL ALARMS	35
PUBLIC ASSISTANCE / SERVICE CALLS	19
INVESTIGATIONS / SMOKE GAS ODORS	8
ELECTRICAL EMERGENCIES	1
APPLIANCE FIRES / EMERGENCIES	6
MUTUAL AID RESPONSES	4
STRUCTURAL FIRES	1
HEATING SYSTEM EMERGENCIES	0
WATER EMERGENCIES	2
BRUSH / GRASS FIRES	12
MOTOR VEHICLE FIRES	0
HAZARDOUS MATERIALS INCIDENTS	1
FALSE ALARMS	2
CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTOR INVESTIGATIONS	5
RESCUE RESPONSES	4
RUBBISH FIRES	0

## **FIRE PREVENTION REPORT FOR MAY 2023**

SMOKE DETECTOR CERTIFICATE INSPECTIONS	51
OIL BURNER PERMITS ISSUED	8
OIL STORAGE PERMITTED (GALLONS)	1815
PROPANE GAS PERMITS ISSUED	0
SPRINKLER SYSTEM INSPECTION / SERVICE PERMITS ISSUED	2
FIRE ALARM SYSTEM INSPECTION / SERVICE PERMITS ISSUED	9
NEW FIRE PROTECTION SYSTEM PERMITS ISSUED	18
TANK REMOVAL PERMITS	4
BLASTING & FIREWORKS PERMITS ISSUED	0
CUTTING & WELDING PERMITS ISSUED	3
FLAMMABLE LIQUIDS STORAGE PERMITS ISSUED	0
FIRE ALARM ACCEPTANCE TESTS	18
FIRE INSPECTIONS RELATED TO STATE/LOCAL LICENSING	3
COMPLIANCE INSPECTIONS CONDUCTED BY FIRE PREVENTION OFFICER	25
FIRE PREVENTION COMPLAINT INVESTIGATIONS	1
SETS OF CONSTRUCTION PLANS REVIEWED	11
CONSTRUCTION SITE INSPECTIONS	11
BURNING PERMITS	0