

Wayland Fire Department

Response to the flooding of March-April 2010

Frequently asked questions:

1. What services did the fire department perform during the flooding?
The fire department responded to over 300 individual requests for assistance during the floods. Calls for assistance ranged from flooded basements and neighborhoods to rescuing motorists that had been stranded in flood waters. Our department worked together with Police, DPW and other local and state agencies to coordinate and prioritize the assistance provided.
2. What special steps did the fire department take to ensure the safety of the public?
Additional Firefighters were recalled to duty during the event to assist in answering the high number of calls throughout the community. As the flood waters on the Sudbury River began to isolate the Pelham Island section of town, we moved a piece of fire apparatus to the island and established a temporary fire station to maintain a public safety presence for those residents. Our department coordinated with neighboring fire departments to arrange for their response to areas of our community that were difficult to access due to flooding or road closures.
3. How did the fire department coordinate with other local, state and federal agencies?
We utilized nationally established standards for incident management. All public safety personnel and all key department heads have been previously trained in the federally established, incident management system for disaster management. This system stresses the need for a means of “unified command”, whereby all stakeholders collaborate in the decision making process and keep in constant contact regarding the actions taken by each department to insure an effective and coordinated response to the needs of our citizens.
4. Who was in charge of this coordinated effort and who was assigned to do what?
Under this system of unified command the Town has a pre- designated Emergency Management Director. In Wayland, the Police Chief serves as the Emergency Management Director and the Fire Chief is the Deputy Emergency Management Director. During the flooding both Chiefs were in constant contact and worked together to organize the response and request resources as needed. On Monday March 15th Chief Irving established an Emergency Operations Center and conducted twice daily briefings

for all key government officials, the Town Administrator and his assistant, the on duty command officers of the Police and Fire departments, the DPW Director, the Facilities Director and other key department heads. These meetings helped to coordinate the response, provide a forum for consensus decision making and provide for effective communication across all departments.

5. What costs did the Fire Department incur?

Flood related cost for labor, materials and services for our department amounted to approximately \$50,000, of which \$43,000 was expended for labor costs. The most significant labor cost was for the staffing of the temporary fire station at Pelham Island. That station was staffed around the clock for 14 days at a cost of approximately half of the total overtime costs. Additional labor costs resulted from street pumping on Rolling Lane, pump details assigned to dewater individual public and private properties including the Public Safety Building.

6. Who pays for this?

As a result of the federal declaration of disaster, the town is eligible to recover up to 75% of these costs. At this point it remains uncertain if the state will provide relief for the remaining 25%.

7. What special challenges did the fire department face during the flooding?

The failure of the basement floor and subsequent flooding of the basement of the Public Safety building had a substantial effect on our operational capability during the entire event. Initially, as the waters rapidly rose in the basement, Firefighters scrambled to relocate our equipment while continuing to respond to the communities needs. For the first 12 hours our headquarters was relocated to the Town hall as we worked to establish limited power in portions of the Public Safety Building. A fire department pumper was brought into the apparatus bay of headquarters and Firefighters breached an interior wall and drafted water directly from the basement in an attempt to limit the height of the rising waters. Over the next 29 days over, 25 millions gallons of water was pumped out of that building. Faced with hundreds of calls for assistance for flooded basements and limited resources Firefighters had to travel to each location, asses the flooding situation and triage the call.

8. I called for assistance with a flooded basement and was told I was “on the list”, why did I have to wait?

The Fire department has a limited supply of portable pumps that include electrically powered, high volume, submersible units as well as some gasoline powered units. With dozens of calls for assistance we had to first travel to the site and determine if we had the right equipment for the task. Our electric submersibles require a draft of 1”-2” of

standing water and should not be allowed to run dry, while the gasoline powered units can discharge water at 250gallons per minute; they require a minimum draft of a foot of standing water. In some cases, there was either too little water to pump or no electricity available.

9. What did the fire department do to attempt to try to resolve the neighborhood flooding on Rolling Lane, Old Farm Road and Squirrel Hill Road?

We first set up our 250 gallon per minute portable pumps in these areas. As the situation grew worse we worked with local and state emergency management to obtain as many high volume pumps as we could to attempt to dewater these areas. For four days straight a fire department pumper drafted water on Rolling Lane until began to have significant mechanical issues and had to be removed. Additional “trash pumps” were leased by the town to further aid in the efforts to slow the rising flood waters.

10. Why weren't more fire trucks used to pump the flood waters and what is a trash pump?

Fire department pumpers are not designed to pump flood waters that may also contain suspended solids such as leafy vegetation. The town owns three front line pumpers and each of those was assigned to the three fire stations opened during the flooding event. The fourth pumper, a 28 year old truck was used both at the Public safety Building as well as on Rolling Lane until it was not longer safe to continue.

Trash Pumps are diesel powered, high volume, low pressure portable units designed to pump both water and suspended solids. Up to three of these units were in operation in the Rolling lane/Old farm Road neighborhood. Two trash pumps were deployed to Squirrel Hill Road and one was stationed at the Public Safety Building. Still one unit remains in service at the Public Library.

