



DAUFUSKIE ISLAND FIRE DISTRICT

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**GOVERNOR NIKKI R. HALEY
1205 PENDLETON STREET
COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA 29201**

DEAR GOVERNOR HALEY:

I AM ENCLOSING A COPY OF THE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND FIRE DISTRICT'S NEWSLETTER WHICH WE CALL THE "SIGNALS". WE WERE PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO ADVISE THE RESIDENTS THAT DIFD RECEIVED ANOTHER IMPROVED FIRE RATING BY THE I.S.O. AND NOW HAVE A "3" RATING. THIS SHOULD GIVE INSURERS AN IMPROVED COST FOR INSURANCE.

CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ON THE ELECTION RESULTS.

SINCERELY,

**CHARLES V. HENRY
CHAIRMAN -DAUFUSKIE FIRE
DISTRICT**



DAUFUSKIE ISLAND FIRE DISTRICT NEWSLETTER ISSUE 15

FALL/WINTER 2014

HOW FAR WE'VE COME! A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE DAUFUSKIE ISLAND FIRE DISTRICT

The Early Years and Consolidation:

Organized bucket brigades. Water mains at the sawmill and oyster factory. Cisterns like the one adjacent to the Haig Point Lighthouse. These were just a few of the fire suppression tools used by residents, business owners and employees before the development of Daufuskie Island. With the arrival of International Paper and Melrose in the mid-80's, an organized fire department needed to be in place so that future homeowners could obtain reasonably priced insurance as well as have peace-of-mind in knowing that fire emergency services were in place. So began the formation of the Haig Point and Melrose Fire Brigades to serve their individual communities and, in the late 80's, the Daufuskie Island Fire Department to serve the entire island.

The Haig Point Fire Brigade was originally located in the Employee Cafeteria. Haigie, its Dalmatian mascot, lived in a doghouse there that was a replica of a lighthouse. The Melrose Fire Brigade was located in an old fertilizer shed near the property's back gate. The Daufuskie Island Fire Department was located at the Snake Pit on School Road and its lone convertible fire truck housed the pet goat that lived on property. Trained firefighters were few and far between; volunteers came from the ranks of employees and residents; fire

suppression vehicles were at a minimum.

With the loss of two residences to fire in the CP District in 1986 and 1987, the registered islanders voted to approve the formation of one fire department to encompass the entire island and in April 1989 Beaufort County Council chartered the Daufuskie Island Fire District. Even so, Haig Point and Melrose Fire Brigades continued to provide private fire protection within their own PUD's. The newly-formed Daufuskie Island Fire District moved to the Little White School House until the existing fire station was built in 1998.

ISO Rating Improvements and the Meaning to Homeowners:

ISO is an independent organization that serves insurance companies and insurance regulators. It utilizes a Fire Suppression Rating Schedule which is filed with the State Department of Insurance that contains the criteria used to review the fire suppression capabilities of communities. The schedule measures the capabilities of the Fire Department, Emergency Dispatching System and Water Supply and develops a numerical grade called a Public Protection Classification (PPC). The PPC class number for communities ranges from 1 (perfect, low insurance premiums) to 10 (high insurance premiums).

In 1986 ISO first inspected the fire suppression capabilities of Daufuskie Island rating both Haig Point and Melrose at 6 and the CP District at 10 as it had no established fire department. In 1996 when ISO's 10-year reassessment was due, it rated both Haig Point and Melrose at 9 due to dilapidated equipment and poor record keeping. Property owners were troubled by the new, higher insurance premiums due to the reclassification and pressed for a change and in mid-1996 the Daufuskie Island Fire District absorbed the Haig Point and Melrose Fire Brigades, improved training and equipment records and prepared for another ISO inspection. In early 1997 ISO reassessed the fire district and its capabilities restoring a class 6 to Haig Point and Melrose while maintaining a class 9 in the CP District.

From 1997 to 2003 the Fire District made improving its ISO rating a top priority. The Fire District acquired necessary equipment to shuttle water to areas in the CP District that had no established water supply for fire suppression, purchased two water tankers and portable pools for water storage/pumping, installed dry hydrants with grant monies awarded, negotiated the acquisition of a 75' ladder truck from the developers of Sandy Lane, recruited and trained additional volunteer firefighters and

established a fire prevention and code enforcement inspection program. The Fire District then requested a re-examination from ISO and was awarded in mid-2003 a Class 5 island-wide rating.

With its ISO rating still a top priority, the Fire District took a pro-active approach to improve the class rating at ISO's next 10-year inspection in 2014 with the following advancements: increasing staffing by one firefighter to meet OSHA requirements; continually testing hydrants, hoses, pumps; color-coding hydrants by flow capabilities; keeping meticulous records on the maintenance of equipment; establishing a rank and structure with hundreds of hours of training requirements in accordance with NFPA guidelines; creating an island map detailing hydrants, power lines, 911 addresses and road names --- the only map of its kind in Beaufort County --- correcting 911 addresses where needed; securing upgraded communication equipment for volunteer and career firefighters and enhancing 911 communications with Hilton Head Dispatch. As a result of these efforts, ISO awarded the Fire District a Class 3 rating island-wide to become effective December 1, 2014. With only 2,410 of 49,010 communities in the U.S with a Class 3 rating or less, the Daufuskie Island Fire District is proud of its ranking in the top 5% of the nation.

The Emergency System Now: So much has changed since the early 80's. The Fire District now employs 12 full-time career firefighters (Rick Boanen, Odis Boyles, Robert Chaplin, Shane Comparetto, Brian Dozier, Harvey Dunn, Captain Donald Hubbard, Randy Loper, Fire Marshal Ronald Newton, George Perez, Chris Phillips and Mike Tuten), Chief Ed Boys and Administrative Assistant, Ginny Teerlink. The station is staffed 24 hours a day with 4 firefighters and weekdays by Chief Boys as well.

The Fire District also has 14 active volunteers to assist in fire suppression. Volunteers meet every other Monday at 4:00 PM at the fire station for training in the use of equipment, vehicle operation, water storage, pool set-up, water hauling and dumping and other duties to support the career firefighters. The volunteers have pagers so they can hear the 911 dispatch concurrently with the career firefighters. For their safety and protection they are equipped with turn-out gear similar to the career firefighters. The time they contribute factors into the Fire District's ISO rating to lower insurance costs for all Daufuskie Island homeowners. The volunteer firefighters are Rick Brazill, Aaron Crosby, Bill DeLeo, John Delnero, Gary Dyer, Chuck Henry, Reagan Hull, Cecil Humbert, Suresh Kapur, Charles Polsen, Kevin Roberts, John Schartner, Harvey Teerlink and John Tietjen.

One paramedic and one EMT are on duty 24/7. The average response time to a 911 emergency is 4 minutes. If further medical aid is necessary, emergency personnel will transport the patient to Harbour Town via a Haig Point ferry to an awaiting ambulance. Additionally, if the situation warrants, Omni Care Helicopter will be called for transport to Memorial Hospital in Savannah.

The Governing Body Now: The Fire District is run by a board of 5 commissioners who are appointed by Beaufort County Council. They meet every other month with Chief Boys to manage the day-to-day operations of the Fire District. Chuck Henry is the chairman of the commission and Tom Dickinson is the vice chairman. The other commissioners are Pat Beichler, Mike Bryant and Geoff Jenkins.

Funding for the Fire District and EMS: Our two groups of emergency personnel are separate from each other and funded differently from each other. The Fire District is funded by Daufuskie Island tax dollars.

All monies collected in property taxes come back as a direct pass-back to the Fire District to pay salaries, operating and capital expenses and all other costs associated with operating a fire station. On the other hand, EMS costs are paid by the Beaufort County General Fund to which all Beaufort County citizens contribute through their tax dollars.

Our New Helipad: The Fire District is completing a helicopter landing zone approximately 200 yards west of the fire station on Haig Point Road on property leased from Daufuskie Land Investments. The helipad provides a site for 911 emergency transports, an LZ for the National Guard in the event of a disaster or training exercise with emergency personnel and training exercises with the Coast Guard and the SC Forestry Commission.

The new LZ and its location are very important to the island's emergency operation. In 1995 the Fire District had designated 5 LZ's and identified 2 others that were not designated but known as backups. However today, due to development and growth, the Fire District has only one designated LZ located in the private community of Haig Point.

In 2010 Beaufort County Emergency Management Services and the National Guard conducted a pre-planning/training exercise in which county fire districts and emergency services agencies participated. The Fire District learned that they would not be included in this exercise because the National Guard would not land their support services on any private properties for legal reasons.

In 2011 several concerned citizens, recognizing the need for an LZ on public property, approached Beaufort County and the Fire District requesting that the construction of the LZ be pursued and indicating leasing from Daufuskie Land Investments was possible. The completed LZ will be a significant addition to the Fire District's emergency system.