

Barbados Fire Service 2015 Annual Report



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Commitment, Care, Concern and Continuity - these four words although not a part of our motto "Excellence Through Service", are integral components that dwell within the mindsets of the officers of the Barbados Fire Service as they carry out their duties. Commitment to our country, the people we serve and to our profession, the care that we display towards persons whom we come into contact with daily, the concern we show to unknown persons, and the way in which we risk our own lives to ensure the safety of others, in addition to the continuity in our training to constantly improve our skills to become true professionals.

This Annual Report will present a summation of the activities conducted by the members of the Barbados Fire Service over the year, 2015. It will highlight our challenges, special events and our successes that occurred during this year.

One of the successes was the celebration of the Barbados Fire Service's sixtieth (60th) anniversary on April 15th, 2015. The Department which officially became the Barbados Fire Service in 1955 has developed tremendously over the years, moving from bucket brigades and horse-drawn carriages to state-of-the-art vehicles and modern firefighting equipment.

The transition from 1955 to 2015 would have seen the department undergo many changes, some of which were extremely challenging. A major challenge the department continued to face was the loss of its human resources. A total of nine persons inclusive of the Chief Fire Officer retired in 2015. Those nine persons took with them a combined two hundred and eighty-nine (289) years of working experience and knowledge.

The Training and Development Unit ensured that the loss of knowledgeable persons did not alter the quality of service rendered to the public. This Unit achieved this by continuing in its pursuit to qualify officers in several theoretical and practical courses. The courses included: emergency medical technician, high rise operations, mass casualty management and water safety.

Several self-improvement seminars which included team-building were offered to Fire Officers. In addition, the Training Unit conducted several fire safety training courses for the National Assistance Board, Mount Gay Distilleries, Purity Bakeries Limited and Sandy Lane, among others.

Research and Planning Unit

The Fire Prevention Unit, like the Training Unit, carried out its mandate during 2015. This was achieved through the sharing of relevant fire safety information with the people of Barbados. Fire prevention and safety remained of paramount importance to the Department as private dwelling house fires and grass fires continued to be problematic areas. To this end, there were several initiatives conducted by this Unit, such as: school lectures, community lectures, fire safety training for business houses and evacuation drills. There were also several familiarization tours organized by the Unit for officers within the shifts, to high risk areas, including the Barbados Light and Power Plant in Spring Garden.

The Department responded to a total of two thousand, two hundred and twenty-six (2226) incidents during 2015 which included nineteen hundred and eighty (1980) fires. There were several categories which recorded high fire activity, namely: Grass – 856, Commercial Building – 20, Motor Vehicle – 45, Rubbish – 363 and Private Dwelling House – 83. It should be noted there was a decrease in the total number of incidents in 2015 as compared to 2014 where two thousand, eight hundred and seventy-five (2875) incidents were recorded, of which two thousand, six hundred and fifty-two (2652) were fires. There were also ninety-four (94) motor vehicle accidents registered in 2015 as compared to fifty-two (52) in 2014.

STAFFING

Resignation

Fire Officer 324 Fabian Murray resigned after serving 9 years and 2 months.

Retirement

The following Persons retired from the department during the year 2015:

- ❖ *Chief Fire Officer Mr. Wilfred Marshall, after serving 39 years and 10 months*
- ❖ *Station Officer Mr. Tyrone Trotman, after serving 38 years and 10 months*
- ❖ *Leading Fire Officer Mr. Phillip Herbert, after serving 35 years and 5 months*
- ❖ *Leading Fire Officer Mr. Charles Holligan, after serving 34 years and 4 months*
- ❖ *Leading Fire officer Mr. David Barrow, after serving 36 years and 2 months*
- ❖ *Leading Fire Officer Ms. Juanita Seale, after serving 35 years and 5 months*
- ❖ *Leading Fire Officer Mr. Stanley Absalom, after serving 34 years and 11 months*
- ❖ *Fire Officer Andre Haynes, after serving 17 years and 10 months*
- ❖ *Fire Officer Nicholas Wood, after serving 21 years and 2 months*

ESTABLISHMENT

The table below indicates both filled and vacant posts within the rank, file and civilian sections of the Department during 2015. It clearly denotes a significant amount of vacancies at the supervisory level of Leading Fire Officer and middle management level of Sub-Officer.

Officers		Administrative Staff			Vacancy
Rank	Number of Posts	Vacancy	Post	No.	
Chief Fire Officer	1	1	Senior Executive Officer	1	-
Deputy Chief Fire Officer	1	-	Accountant	1	1
Divisional Officer	3	-	Executive Officer	1	-
Station Officer	7	3	Assistant Accountant	1	1
Sub Officer	16	16	Senior Clerk	1	-
Leading Fire Officer	32	16	Clerical Officer	4	2
Fire Officer	179	1	Clerk Typist	1	1
			Stenographer Typist	1	-
			Executive Secretary	1	-
			Maid	8	5
			General Worker	4	2
			Messenger	1	1
Total	239	37		25	13

Table 1

EMERGENCY ACTIVITY

Grass Fires

The Department recorded a significant reduction in grass fires for the year 2015. Nevertheless these fires continued to be of great concern as they not only polluted the environment but caused structural damage to nearby homes. In 2015 there were eight hundred and fifty-six (856) grass fires compared to thirteen hundred and ninety-seven (1397) the previous year.



Image 1 (*Fire Officer extinguishing grass fire*)



Image 2 (*Grass fire burning in an unoccupied area*)

The graph below shows grass fire totals between 2012 and 2015 and clearly indicates a significant increase in grass fires between 2013 and 2014. However, there was a decrease of 40.1 % in grass fires between 2014 and 2015.

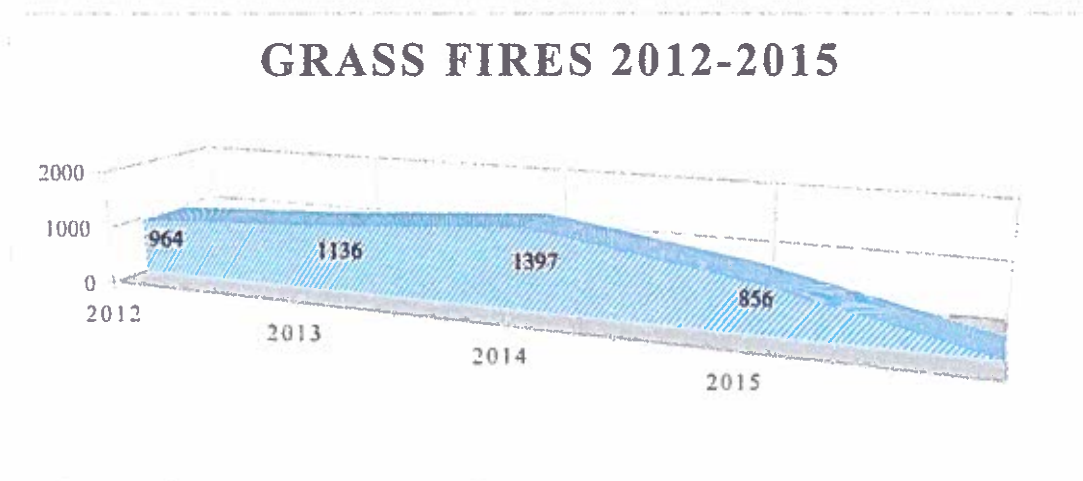


Chart 1

Chart 2 below shows grass fires as they occurred by quarters during the period under review. The quarter April to June, 2015 shows the highest number of fires in this category. This occurrence was however expected since the Barbados Fire Service responds to the majority of grass fires during what is considered the islands' dry period.

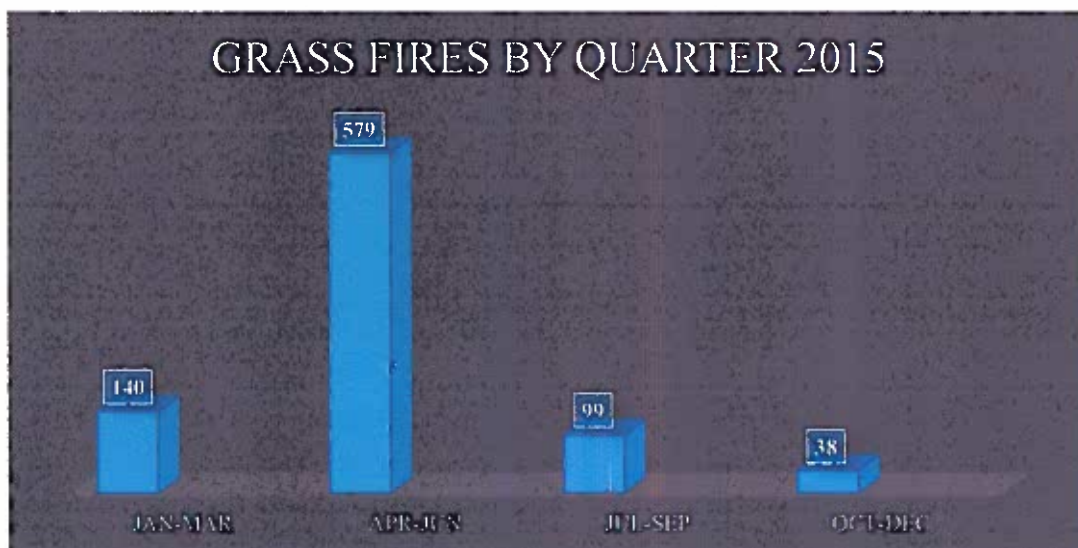


Chart 2

The table below shows grass fires by parish for the year 2015. It clearly illustrates that the majority of the grass fires occurred in St. Philip and Christ Church.



Table 2

RUBBISH FIRES

Rubbish fires, like grass fires, have the propensity to develop into a private dwelling house fire, as persons normally burn rubbish close to their homes and sometimes leave them unattended. This category of fire has over the years, proven to be a nuisance to persons within communities where particular individuals constantly burn rubbish. Fire calls for this category increased steadily from year to year as persons continued to clear land lots and accumulate refuse which they then burnt. These fires in some cases proved to be an annoyance as they were relit after being extinguished by Fire Officers.

Chart 3 below shows an increase in rubbish fires over the last four years.

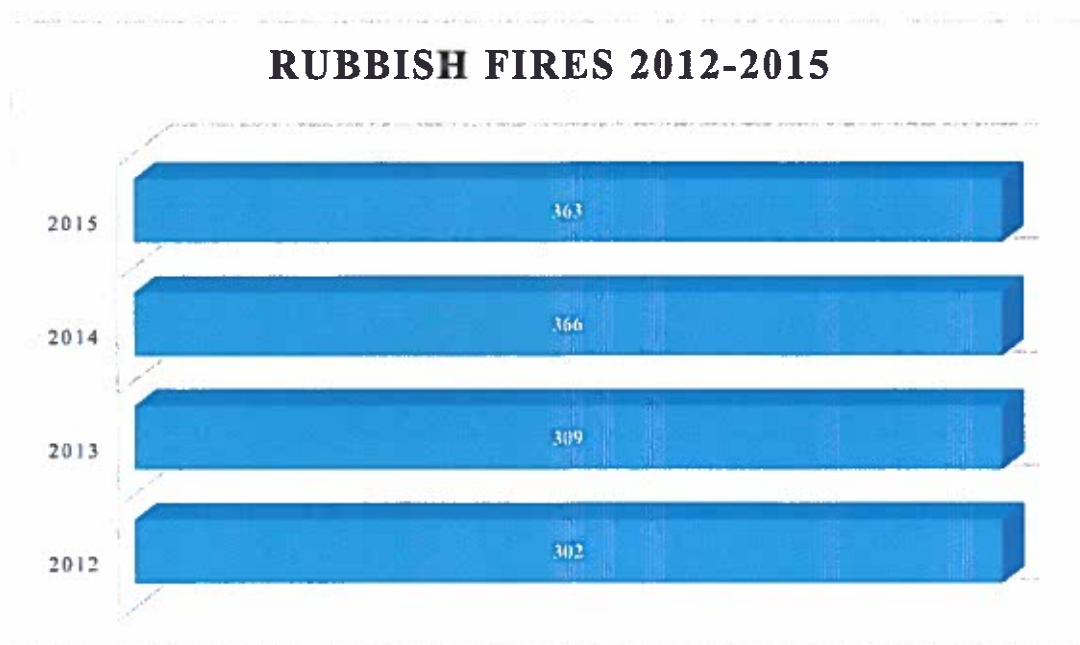


Chart 3

SUGAR CANE FIRES

Although on the decline in 2015, sugar cane fires still accounted for a large number of fire calls. This category should continue to see a reduction as the number of fields used for sugar cane production decreases. The charts below show cane fires between 2012 and 2015 and by quarter in 2015.

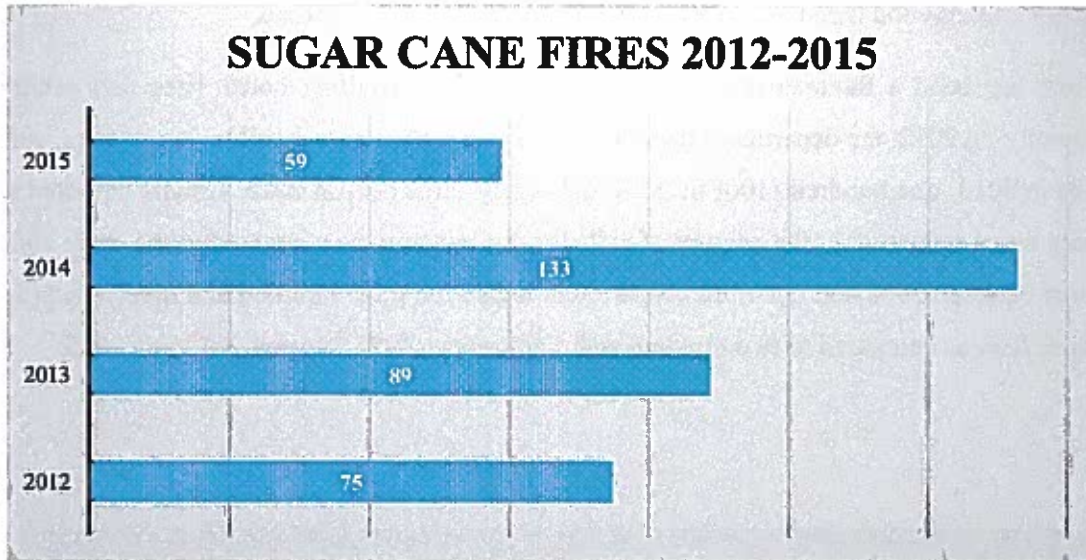


Chart 4: Sugar Cane fires for the period 2012-2015

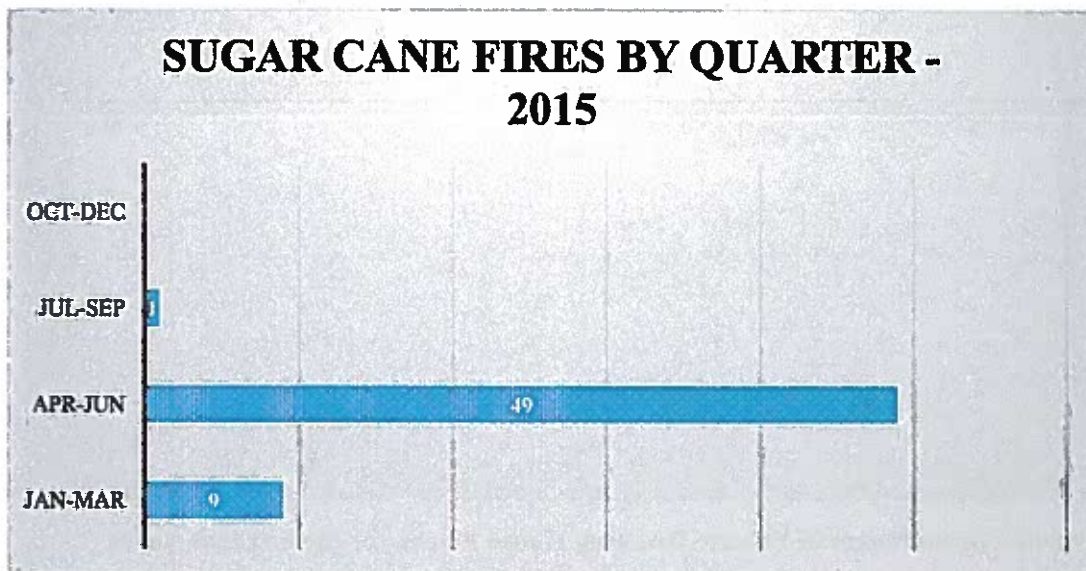


Chart 5: Sugar Cane fires by quarter in 2015

PRIVATE DWELLING HOUSE FIRES

The Barbados Fire Prevention campaigns have been focused specifically on combating private dwelling house fires. In 2015, attention was placed on the young children at the primary level through the Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) programme, Fire and Life Safety for Senior Citizens and then the general public through other focus groups.

There has been a fluctuation in the amount of private dwelling house fires that occurred annually. In 2012, the department recorded eighty-six (86) private dwelling house fires, eighty (80) in 2013, one hundred (100) in 2014 and eighty-three (83) in 2015. It must be noted that there was a reduction in the amount of calls for this category as compared to the early 2000's when between 2000 and 2004, the Department registered three hundred and ninety-two (392) house fires as compared to two hundred and ninety-nine (299) between 2012 and 2015.

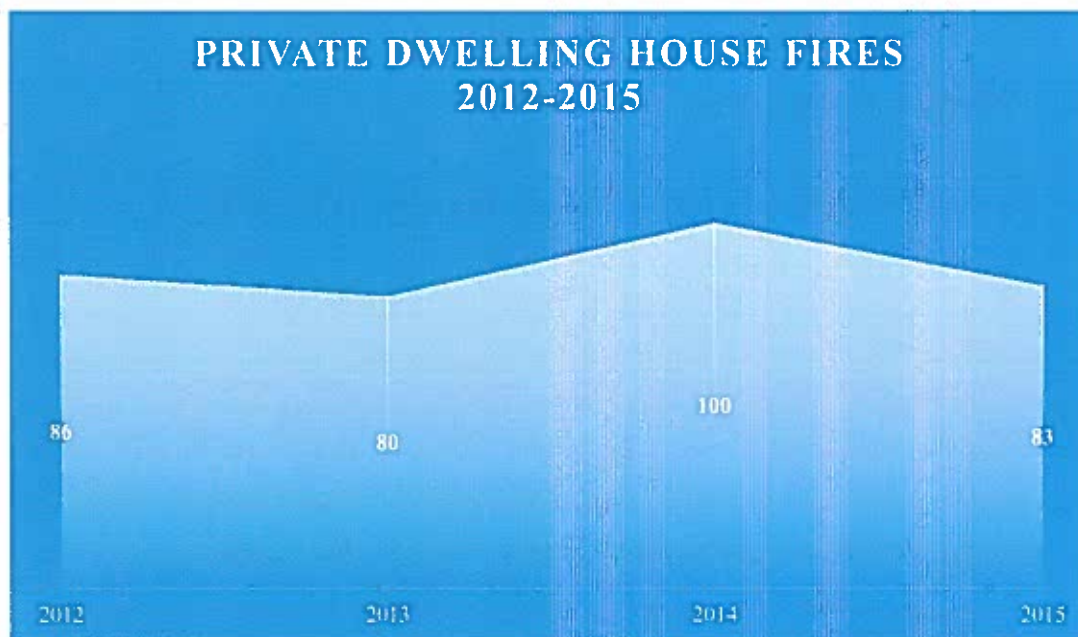


Chart 6: Occurrences of Private Dwelling House Fires over the last four years

Private dwelling house fires, unlike grass fires which occurred mainly during the dry period, were extremely unpredictable as it related to location and time of year. However, statistics have shown that the majority of these fires occur in the parish of St. Michael.

Chart 7 below shows house fires as they occurred in quarters from 2012 to 2015.

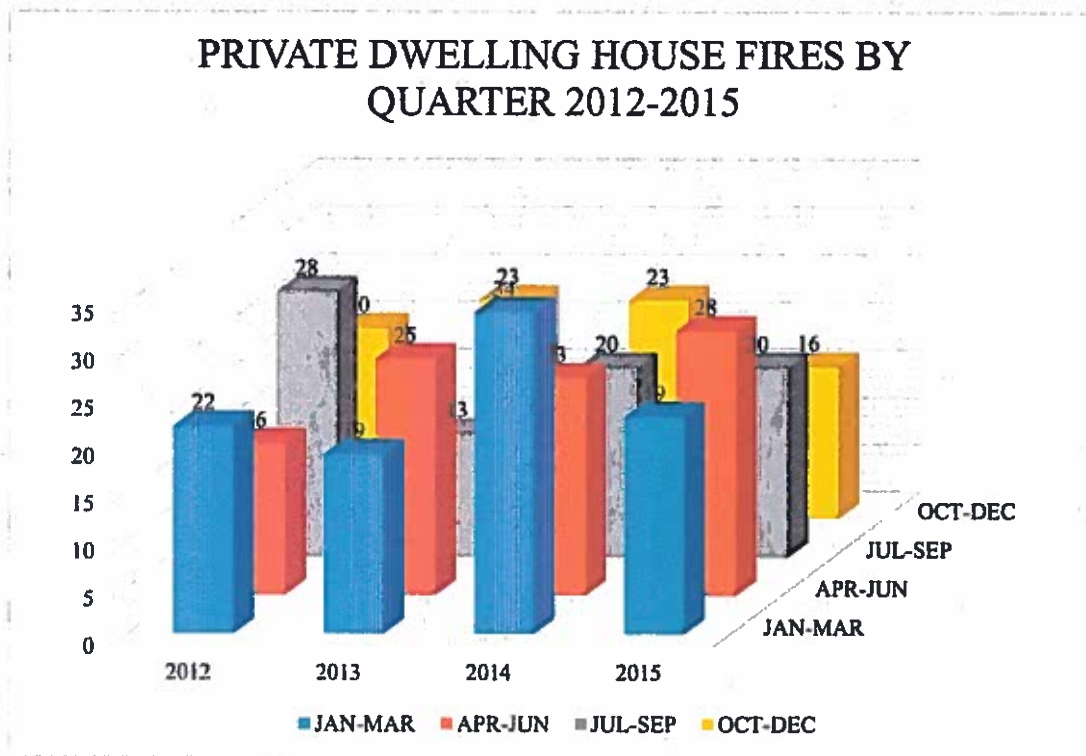


Chart 7

In 2015, there were eighty-three (83) recorded house fires, and a number of them affected other dwellings. In the department, private dwelling house fires are classified in categories – The residence where the fire started is labelled the Original, and if other residences are involved, they are listed as A, B, C, and D etcetera. This categorization allows the Department to specifically identify other residences that were affected and to also acquire knowledge on specific damage, ownership and occupancy of each structure involved. The images below show a house fire in Westbury, St. Michael which destroyed and damaged multiple residences.



Image 3 (*Fire Officer extinguishing a house fire in Westbury Road*)



Image 4 (*Charred remains of a house in Westbury Road*)

2012

There were twenty-two (22) other residences damaged or destroyed by fire resulting from the Original in 2012; the tables below will show the locations where multiple houses were either damaged or destroyed.

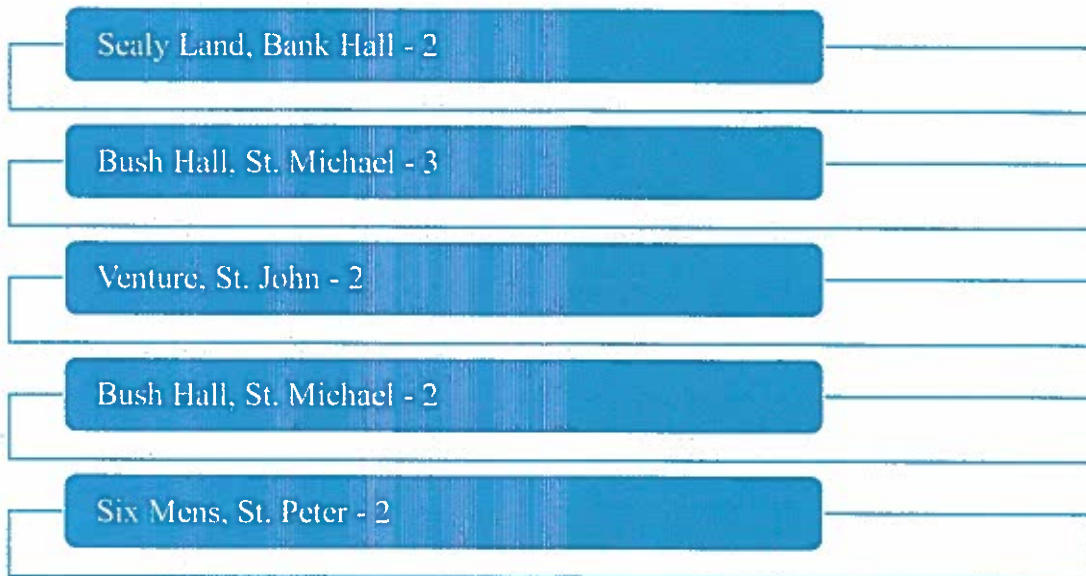


Table 3: Damage to property resulting from Original

2013

There were thirty-seven (37) other residences damaged or destroyed by fire resulting from the Original in 2013.

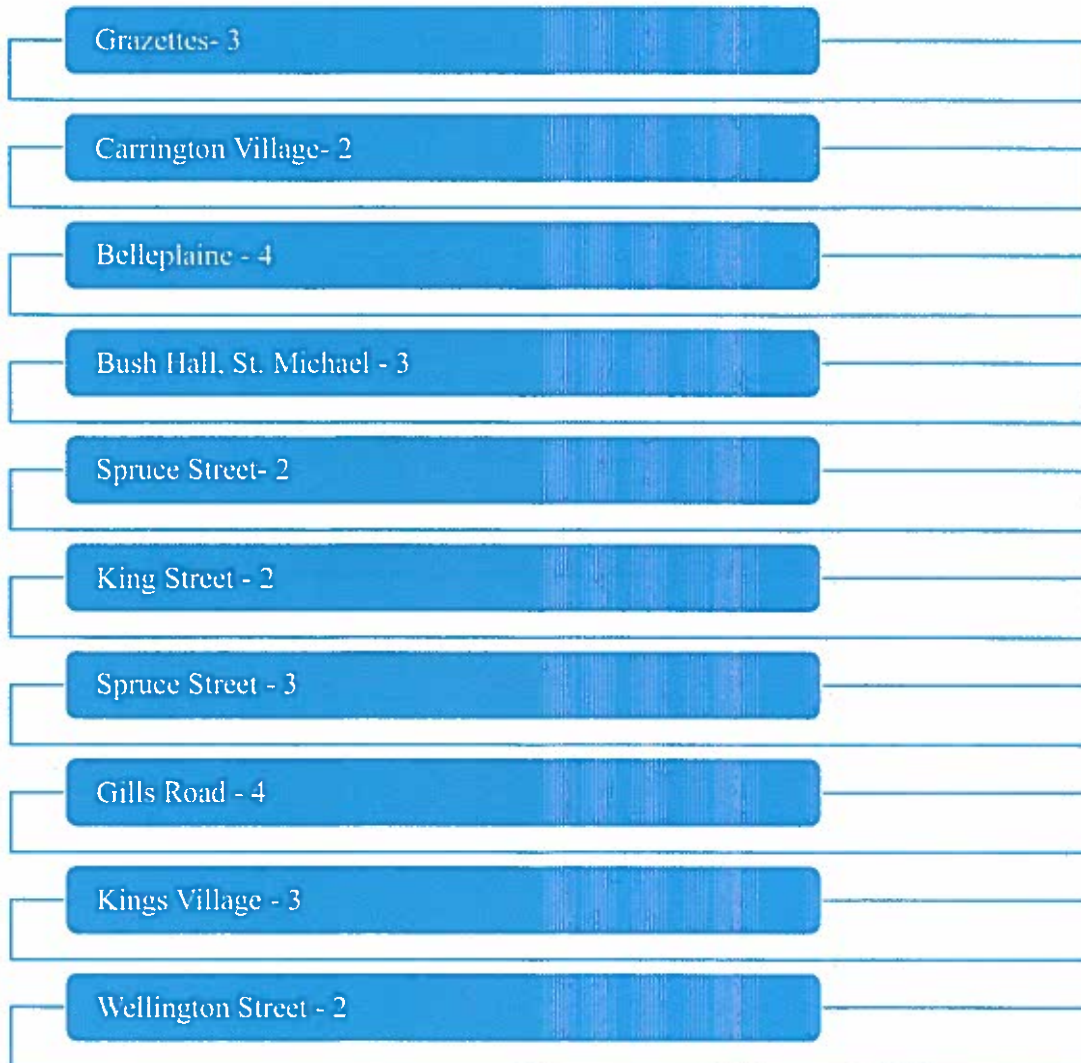


Table 4: Damage to property resulting from Original

2014

There were thirty-six (36) other residences damaged or destroyed by fire resulting from the Original in 2014.

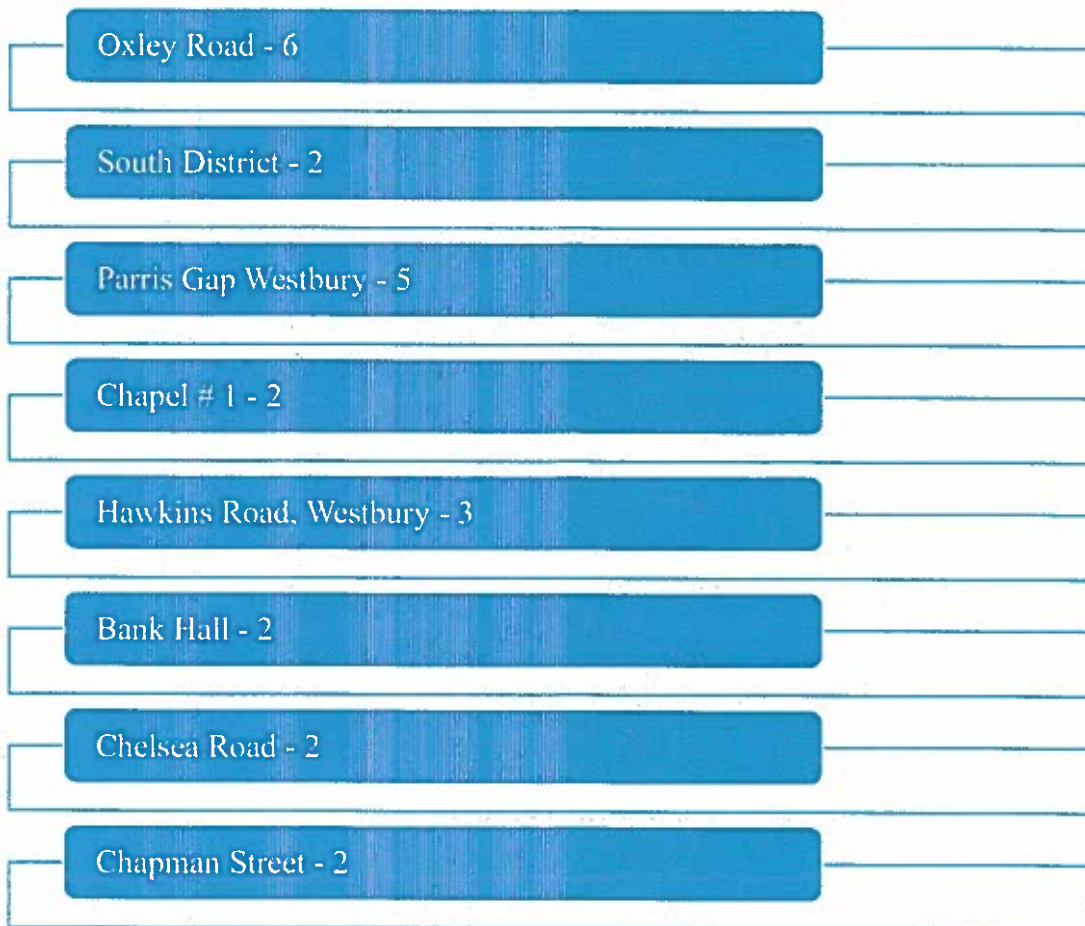


Table 5: Damage to property resulting from Original

2015

There were thirty-six (36) other residences damaged or destroyed by fire which resulted from the Original in 2015.

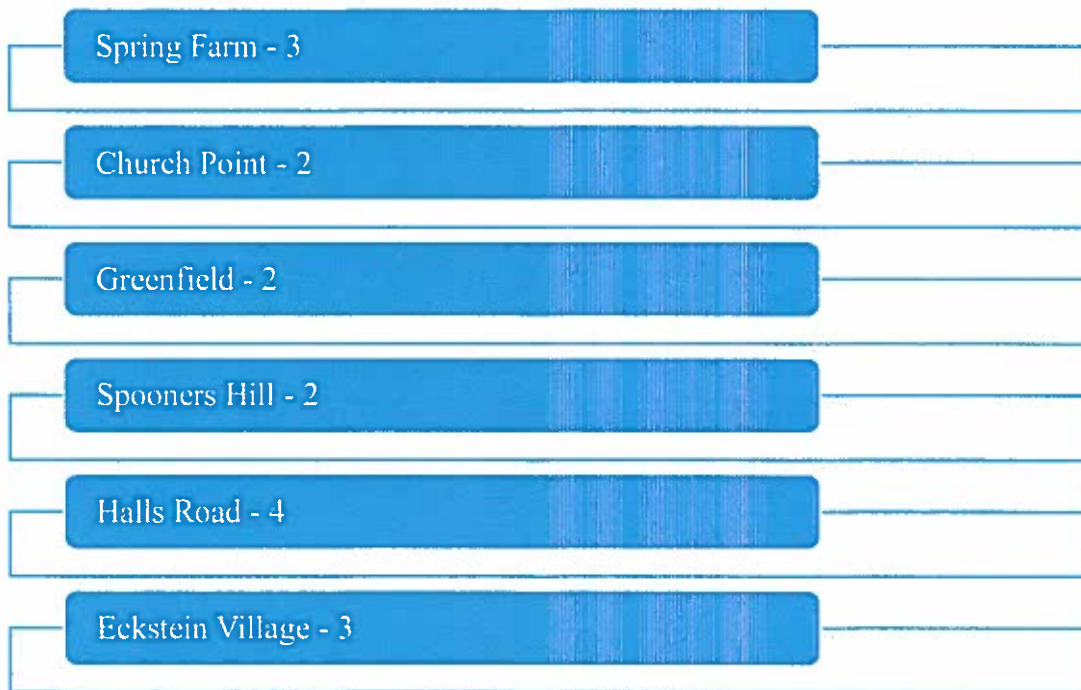


Table 6: Damage to property resulting from Original

MOTOR VEHICLE ACCIDENTS

In the year 2015 there was an alarming increase in motor vehicle accidents (MVA), with the department responding to ninety-four (94) MVA. This was in sharp contrast to the fifty-two (52) MVA recorded in 2014 which were less than the seventy-nine (79) and seventy-four (74) registered in 2012 and 2013 respectively.

There were also several mass casualty incidents during 2015. This type of incident usually requires a unified response due to the large number of persons who could be (sometimes seriously) injured, and they, like motor vehicle accidents, can result in death. Consequently, the Department continued to urge persons to practice safe driving to reduce the frequency of motor vehicle accidents.

Chart 8 below shows the totals for MVA from 2012 to 2015.

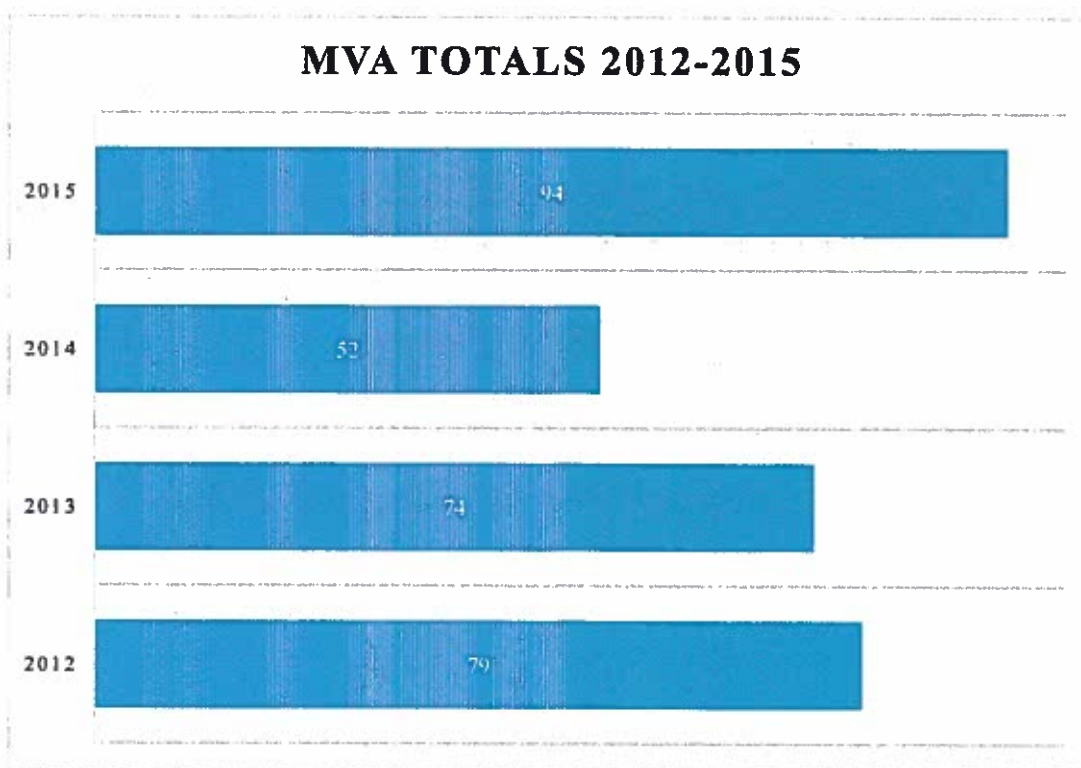


Chart 8



Image 5 below shows Fire Officers and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) personnel at a mass casualty incident involving a Public Service Vehicle (PSV).



Image 5 (*Fire Officers at a mass casualty incident*)



Image 6 (*Fire officers rescuing persons involved in a motor vehicle accident*)

AIRPORT OPERATIONS

The Airport Fire Station continued to carry out the mandate of protecting persons who work and visit the airport on a daily basis. The aerodrome fire fighter has a special role to play and must be constantly aware of dangers present in the working environment, while possessing a wealth of knowledge of the types of aircraft that arrive in the island on a daily basis.

The Airport Fire Station responds to various incidents within the aerodrome and has jurisdictional responsibility for a five mile radius outside of the airfield. Airport Fire Officers can however only leave the confines of the compound to address a fire outside if permission was given by the Air Traffic Control Officer.

On July 25, 2015, the officers at the Airport Station were pressed into action outside of the compound when a single engine Cessna aircraft crashed in the area of Ealing Grove, Christ Church. The pilot who was the only person onboard the aircraft, received several injuries. This was not the first accident involving a single engine Cessna, since another such aircraft crashed at the airport compound in 2013.



Image 7 *(Fire and Police Officers on the scene of plane crash)*

The table below will show the total number (37) of standbys responded to, by Airport Fire Officers in 2015.

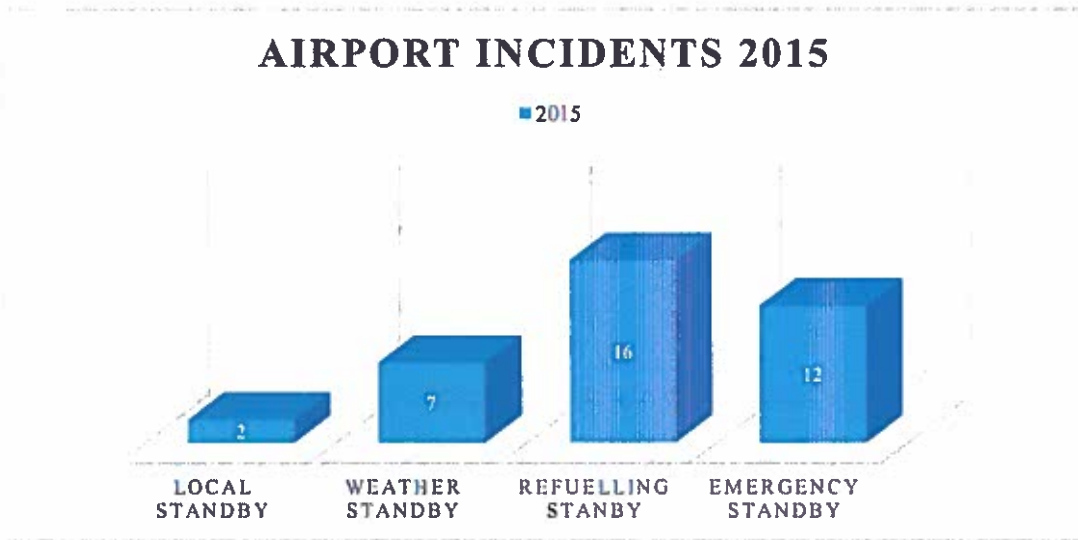


Chart 9: Airport Response 2015

The chart below shows the total standbys (151) that personnel at the Airport Station responded to annually from 2012 to 2015.

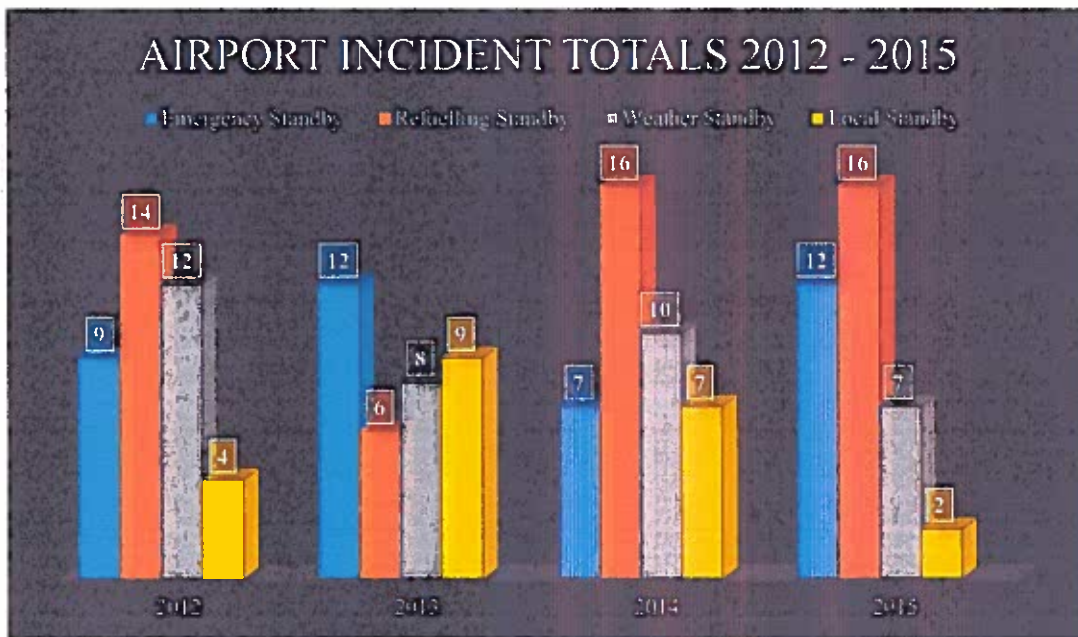


Chart 10: Airport Responses 2012 to 2015

NON-EMERGENCY ACTIVITY

Training

During the year under review, the Training and Development Unit of the Barbados Fire Service continued to improve the professional development of fire officers through ongoing training. The Unit ensured that training was offered to officers from the rank and file of the Department, providing everyone equal opportunity to become well-trained. The Unit provided a wide range of courses that developed the fire officers' practical firefighting skills and knowledge base and also conducted self-improvement seminars for the officers to build on their personal attributes, making them well-rounded individuals.

The Unit will officially be called the Barbados Fire Academy in the year 2016, and will be based at the renovated Arch Hall Fire Station in St. Thomas. It will offer an array of courses to local and regional firefighters as well as members of the public.

The table below shows courses facilitated by the Training Unit in 2015 which benefitted one hundred and eight (108) Fire Service Officers.

FIRE OFFICER TRAINING	
2015	
COURSE	PERSONS
Advance Trainer of Trainers (Hazmat)	5
Barbados National Building Code	1
Basic Cardiac Life Support	4
Caribbean Disaster Response Unit	4
Caribbean Vocational Qualification Level 4 (TVET)	9
Electrical Safety for First Responders	9
Emergency Management Awareness Program	4
Emergency Medical Technician	2
Fire Service Inspector 1	9
Fire Service Instructor 1	10
High Rise Firefighting Operations	16
Mass Casualty Management	2
Team Leading (Seminar)	2
Trainer of the Trainers (Fire Service Instructor)	13
Water Safety	18
TOTAL	108

Table 7: Internal courses conducted during 2015

The Unit also conducted Fire Safety training at several private companies. This training allowed persons to learn fire safety and fire prevention tips and techniques which could be used at their respective workplaces and within their homes. Participants were exposed to information about the elements of fire, classes of fires, how to extinguish small fires and the different types of fire extinguishers. A practical component followed the theoretical module where persons had to extinguish a small fire with an extinguisher.

A total of 521 persons were trained in fire safety in 2015.

EXTERNAL AGENCIES TRAINING		
2015		
COMPANY	COURSE	PERSONS
Sol Caribbean Ltd	Fire Safety	87
Ladymeade Reference Laboratory	Fire Safety	20
National Assistance Board	Fire Safety	10
Massy Stores	Fire Safety	30
Goddard's Group/Flight Kitchen	Fire Safety	40
G. Tech Global	Fire Safety	20
Belleville Medical Facility	Fire safety	10
Events Unusual	Fire Safety	5
Executive Air	Fire Safety	15
Sol Airport	Fire Safety	15
Mount Gay Distilleries	Fire Safety	66
Arawak Cement	Fire Safety	59
Sandy Lane	Fire Safety	16
Butterfly Hotel	Fire Safety	20
Dining Club	Fire Safety	13
William Industries Ltd	Fire Safety	30
Unna Luxury	Fire safety	15
Purity Bakeries Ltd	Fire Safety	15
Barbados Transport Co-op	Fire Safety	15
British High Commission	Evacuation Procedures	20
TOTAL		521

Table 8: Companies and personnel that participated in Fire Safety Training

JUNIOR FIRE CADET PROGRAMME

During 2015, the Junior Fire Cadet Programme provided twenty-eight (28) students between the ages of 13 to 15 years from secondary schools across the island with the opportunity to have insight into the life of a fire officer.

The five-week programme was again held at Harrison College due to the unavailability of the Arch Hall Fire Station which was (and still is) undergoing renovations. The Junior Fire Officer Programme balanced the theoretical and practical aspects of the Barbados Fire Service.

The Cadets were taught the history and structure of the Barbados Fire Service, basic squad drill, ropes and knots, first aid, water safety, report writing and communication. The true purpose of the programme was to instill in each participant, a sense of good character, confidence, healthy self-esteem, self-discipline, good work habits, self-discipline and a positive attitude.

Image 8 below shows Fire Cadets demonstrating the correct stance when handling a charged hose line.



Image 8

FIRE PREVENTION

Since its inception, the Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement Unit has had the responsibility of disseminating relevant and timely fire prevention and safety information to the Barbadian public. It is the job of every fire officer to carry out fire prevention in the community, but the Unit is specifically accountable for the coordinating and delivery of fire prevention and safety practices and techniques to schools, workplaces and neighbourhoods.

The Unit has branched out from the aspect of only fire prevention and focuses on code enforcement. This became paramount due to the revision of the Factories Act and the implementation of the Health and Safety at Work Act. Employers are held to strict occupational safety practices and must ensure that their premises have the requisite exits and could be easily accessed by emergency personnel.

In 2015, the Unit undertook other tasks such as delivering lectures, conducting fire safety training, evacuation drills, installing smoke alarms and attending career showcases. The chart below shows the activities conducted by the Unit in 2015.

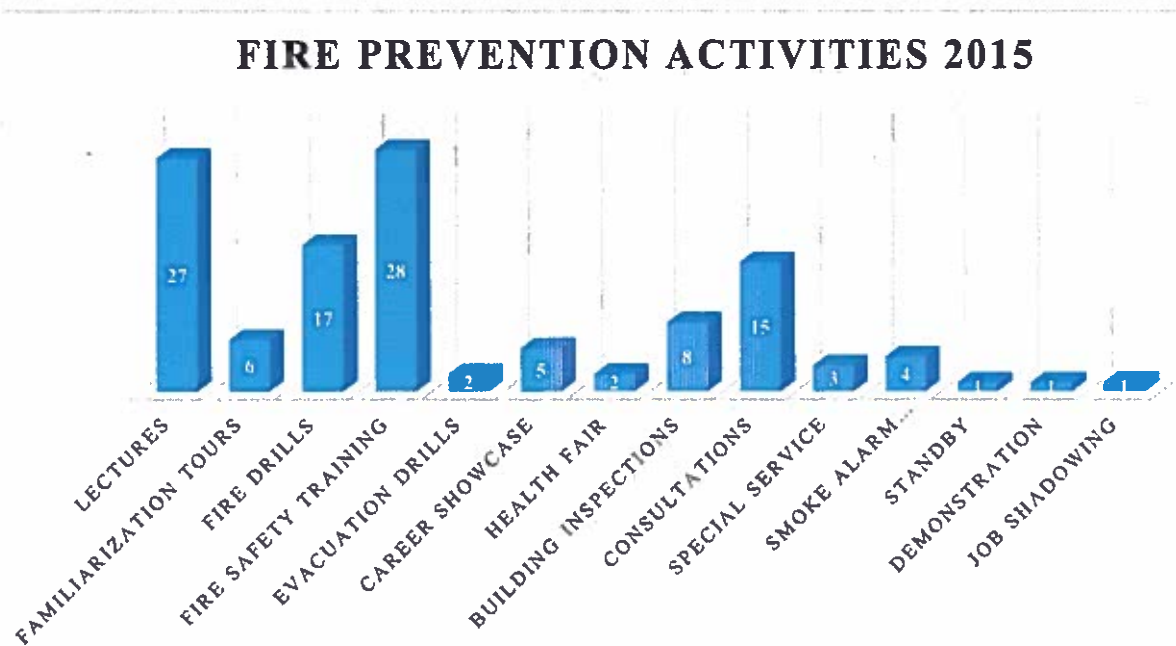


Chart 11

Image 9 below shows Fire Officers examining the storage of merchandise during a building inspection.

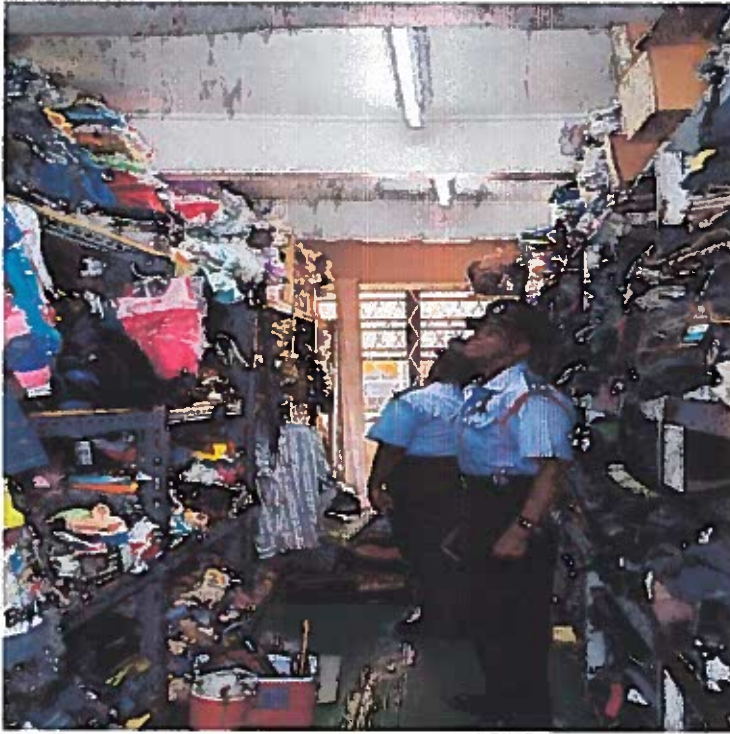


Image 9

Image 10 shows a student being shown the correct way to wear firefighting protective clothing during a Career Showcase.



Image 10

FIRE SERVICE WEEK

In 2015, the Barbados Fire Service commenced a week of activities under the theme, “A Legacy of Service, A Pursuit of Excellence”. This week began with a Thanksgiving Service at the James Street Methodist Church, James Street, St. Michael on Sunday, September 27 and ran until Saturday, October 3, 2015.

Following the Service, the week continued with a Health Fair on the 28th, a Quiz Night on the 29th and a Social Evening and Games night on October 1st, all of which were held at the Bridgetown Fire Station. There was a drill held on October 2nd at Lancaster, St. James which simulated a motor vehicle accident along the Lancaster roadway with a person being ejected from one of the vehicles and landing in the ravine below.

During the Fire Service Week, all of the Fire Stations were opened to the public for tours and demonstrations of firefighting equipment. Visitors were also able to converse with fire officers and have a better understanding of what their jobs entailed.



Image 11 (*Fire Officers participating in annual church service*)



Image 12: Presentation of smoke alarm and extinguisher to James Street Methodist Church



Image 13: Victim being prepared to be rescued from a ravine during a drill at Lancaster, St. James



Image 14: A Fire Officer demonstrating rescue equipment to children, parents and teachers

EVENTS

Sixtieth Jubilee Anniversary

On April 15, 2015, the Barbados Fire Service (BFS) reached the milestone of 60 years of existence. In 1840 the BFS was called the Bridgetown Fire Company which emerged from humble beginnings with one corporal and fifteen men under the command of the then Inspector General. In 1955, the name was changed from the Bridgetown Fire Company to the Barbados Fire Service and has since grown to a roll of two hundred and thirty-nine (239) Fire Officers under the command of the Chief Fire Officer.

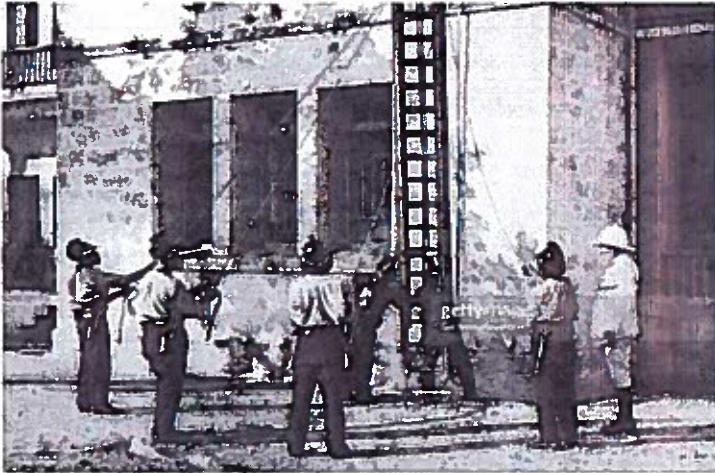


Image 15 (Historical image of Fire Officers training)

Anniversary Service

The Barbados Fire Service celebrated its 60th anniversary on April 15, 2015 with a service at the New Dimensions Ministries at Barbarees Hill, St. Michael.



Image 16 (Fire Officers at the 60th Anniversary Service)

Rescue Mission

The passage of Tropical Storm Erika caused severe flooding and infrastructural damage to the island of Dominica. A rescue mission which included Barbadian Fire Officers was formulated through the Caribbean Disaster Emergency Management Agency (CDEMA) and the government of Dominica.



Image 17: Barbadian Fire Officers making their way to Dominica to assist in rescue operations

Biennial Conference

The Caribbean Association of Fire Fighters held its eighth (8th) Biennial Conference in Barbados in October, 2015. Participants were involved in several training activities over the days of the Conference. A Cook-Off was held on the last day of the Conference, between local and regional Fire Officers, and Barbados emerged the winner.



Image 18 Fire officer 122 Boucher, winner of the first Caribbean Firefighter Cook Off

Risk Analysis Tour

Acting Chief Fire Officer Errol Maynard and a team of senior Fire Officers fielding questions from the media after a risk analysis tour of Swan Street, Bridgetown.



Image 19

Hazardous Material Incident

The Barbados Fire Service responded to a Hazardous Material Incident on July 15, 2015 after a suspicious package was sent to the headquarters of the National Union of Public Workers (NUPW). The incident caused several persons to be quarantined.

Members of the Royal Barbados Police Force, Environmental Protection Department, Emergency Ambulance Service and several Doctors from the Queen Elizabeth Hospital also responded to this Incident.



Image 20: Fire Officers donning hazardous material suits at a hazardous material incident in St. Michael

CONCLUSION

The year 2015 presented the Barbados Fire Service with a number of challenges including its loss of human resources, and the constant battle of providing adequate fire prevention and safety information to the public. These challenges were however met with great resolve and determination as the members of the Fire Service Department used them as opportunities to learn and grow as professionals.

This professionalism was as a result of continuous training and development, and has proven to be the catalyst for positive improvements in the service provided by the men and women of the Barbados Fire Service during 2015, as in past years. We are determined not to become complacent with our successes but rather aim to go further in improving ourselves thereby improving our service to the public.