



# Stamford Professional Fire Fighters Association

International Association of Fire Fighters · Local 786

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## **STAMFORD FIREFIGHTERS CALL FOR OPEN PUBLIC HEARING ABOUT 66 VALLEY TRAIL HOME FIRE IN THE LONG RIDGE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY DISTRICT**

***Fire Rages for 3-Hours After Volunteer Chief Calls Off Aid from Stamford Fire & Rescue***

***Two Firefighters Injured & Property Severely Damaged As Issue of Accountability In North Stamford Fire Emergencies Leaves Family Homeless***

The Stamford Professional Fire Fighters Association, is calling on the Mayor who also holds the position of Director of Public Safety, Health and Welfare and Stamford's Board of Representatives to hold an open public hearing to discuss and investigate the conduct of the Long Ridge Volunteer Fire Company in its handling of a significant house fire at 68 Deep Valley Trail, as a fire raged for three additional hours after a paid volunteer Assistant Chief called off assistance already in route from the Stamford Fire & Rescue. Two firefighters were injured.

On the evening of May 10, 2010 the homeowner called 911 twice saying that there was a chimney fire, following an automatic alarm being transmitted by the monitoring company. First dispatched units were from the Long Ridge Volunteer Fire Company, followed by the Stamford Fire & Rescue Department and the Turn of River fire units. However three minutes after being dispatched and before conducting an on the scene manpower assessment, a volunteer fire fighter who is a paid employee of the Long Ridge Fire Company Inc., cancelled all other units from responding, except for those from the Long Ridge Company.

The initial dispatch occurred at 8:50 pm. At 8:53 pm the Long Ridge Assistant Chief requested dispatch cancel all other units responding. At 8:57 pm Long Ridge Fire Company Engine 71 arrived at scene and reported the roof on fire to dispatch, reinstating the alarm as a working fire (*Dispatch Ticket to Fire and Audio Attached*) and called for additional assistance. The full response was reinstated only after the Asst. Volunteer Fire Chief arrived on the scene and was prompted by the dispatcher to do so.

It took approximately three hours for seven units and 28 members of the Stamford Fire and Rescue Department working together with volunteer companies to get the fire under control. Two firefighters, one from Stamford Fire and Rescue and one from Long Ridge Fire Company both had minor injuries. The home sustained significant damage.

"Last night's fire showed the dangers of Stamford's current disjointed system of separate fire departments and in the case of the volunteer companies, really no accountability," **said Brendan Keatley, president of the Stamford Professional Fire Fighters Association.** "How can you give a volunteer assistant chief, paid or otherwise the authority to unilaterally waive off assistance before he or any fire units have arrived on the scene to fully assess the dangers? This was extremely poor judgment that would never be tolerated in a professional department."

According to Stamford Professional Fire Fighters Association officials, the May 10 fire offers further proof that the city's system of multiple fire companies isn't working. Stamford is served by five separate volunteer companies and the professional Stamford Fire & Rescue Department which primarily serves the area south of the Merritt Parkway. However

the professional firefighters in Stamford Fire & Rescue also regularly respond to calls outside their primary area when there is an inadequate volunteer response in the fire districts served by the volunteer companies.

“The taxpayers of Stamford – especially those North of Bulls Head -- have the right to know what kind of response they will receive in an emergency, be it a fire or medical emergency,” **said Keatley**. “There needs to be a public forum as to why the city is partially funding five fire companies that they seem to have little or no control over in terms of operations or standards. In these companies, just exactly what are the requirements to become a Chief or Assistant Chief and be put in command of a situation when innocent lives and property are on the line?”

According the federal **National Institute for Standards & Technology (NIST)** – Web site: <http://www.nist.gov/index.html>) it takes just 2:40 for a fire to grow from inception to reaching 2,000 degrees (View Testing video:<http://www.ufanyc.org/cms/contents/view/6887>) as modern fires burn faster and hotter due to chemicals and fibers used in the manufacture of carpet and furniture. NIST is a division of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

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