

White Mountain Apache Fire & Rescue Department

Community Fire Protection Program
Contract #CTH52T60785

Annual Report FY 06-07

Submitted by:
Fire Chief Paul D. Kuehl



Annual Report

FY 06-07

Prior to the beginning of the BIA's FY06-07 the White Mountain Apache Tribe was once again informed that the Community Fire Protection Programs nation-wide would not be eligible for PL-638 funding. It was not until June of 2007 that the Tribe learned that this decision had been reversed and that our program would again receive funding. Since we had only several months to utilize the funds, we asked for a three-month extension. It is now the middle of December 2007, three months into another BIA fiscal year and there are no indications that funding will be eligible for this current year. BIA officials must realize that fire protection is not free. If they do not want to fund this department through PL-638 funding, they must find another means for paying for it. The WMAT is under no obligation to provide free fire protection to the BIA properties.

Here is the department's annual summary for BIA FY06-07. The summary is broken down into the following topics:

- Concerns
- Awards
- Personnel
- Fire Prevention and Life Safety
- Networking and Public Relations
- Grants
- Budget and Finances
- Training
- In-house Activities
- Fleet
- Statistics

1. Concerns

1. There continues to be a great number of arson fires on the reservation, mostly in the Whiteriver area.
2. We continue to experience a high turnover rate of firefighters.
3. Uncertainties of BIA funding.
4. In 1999 the Tribal Council passed a resolution directing the BIA still to provide two fire engines through the Federal Structure Protection Program. The department has received only one to date.
5. In 1999 the Tribal Council passed a resolution directing the White Mountain Apache Housing Authority to provide the department with a fire engine and a substation at the Jurassic Park turnoff on Hwy. 73.
6. Cedar Creek and Carrizo still relies on fire protection from Whiteriver and Cibecue.

7. Due to the increase in staff in Cibecue are station is now too small, especially since EMS is also housed there.
8. The Whiteriver Fire Station is also too small. The former training room has been divided into offices. However, the new budget allows us to purchase a triple-wide modular building that will be used to house the Fire Administration offices. The building is scheduled for delivery in December 2007. Asst. Fire Chief Tessay is in charge of this project and has been working with Modtech out of Phoenix.
9. The department attempted to utilize the Cibecue Sawmill site as a helicopter landing zone for the medical evacuations. However their request was denied by FATCO management.

2. Awards

The Tribal Traffic Safety Coalition received the 2007 Mothers against Drunk Drivers Award – Tribal Nations on April 30, 2007 for their efforts in reducing the number of deaths and injuries caused by driving under the influence.

2006 Firefighter of the Year – Firefighter/EMT Alberta Johnson

2006 Captain of the Year – Captain/EMT Gary Thompson

2006 All Around Firefighter of the Year – Firefighter/EMT Alberta Johnson

3. Personnel

Fortunately the White Mountain Apache Tribal Council, based upon the recommendations of the Tribal Budget Committee, Public Safety Director and the Chief of Government Services, approved the fire department's proposed budget. The new, approved budget was for a total of more than \$3.7M, a \$2.7M increase from the previous year. This was truly a blessing. It will now be possible to staff all three fire stations with a total of thirty-three, fulltime firefighters under the direction of three deputy fire chiefs (one at each station).

The fire chief and assistant fire chief will no longer be responsible for the daily operations of the Whiteriver Fire Station. They and their administrative staff will be working out of their new administration office by January 2008. With the increase in staff and the purchase of the approved capital items, the White Mountain Apache Fire & Rescue will be able to take their services to another level.

The department sent recruitment letters to almost all of the Tribal members that were graduating from high school in 2007 challenging them to make firefighting their career. Recruitment posters were also made and distributed throughout the reservation.

A person was hired as secretary and later terminated for cause. Linda Burnette Truax was hired as the department's secretary in August 2007.

In February Firefighter Melanie Alchesay resigned for medical reasons and began working for John Hopkins University. Firefighter/EMT Craig Webster resigned his fulltime position to obtain his college degree. He is still a POC and part-time firefighter. One fulltime firefighter and one part-time firefighter were terminated for cause.

With the approval of the department's proposed FY07-08 Annual Budget, the department has been authorized to hire fill two deputy fire chief positions and to hire nineteen additional firefighters. Jacob Brock was hired October 1, 2007 as the Whiteriver Deputy Fire Chief. He will be the lead instructor for the third WMA Fire Academy beginning October 8, 2007. Jesus Hernandez will be hired as the Hon Dah/McNary Deputy Fire Chief in December 2007.

Since the department did not have nineteen, part-time, certified firefighters on the roster, it was decided to hire new recruits and get them certified. Twenty-one recruits were hired at \$9 per hour for forty hours per week. Seven Cibecue recruits enrolled in the Show Low Fire Academy in September. The other fourteen recruits will attend the Tribal Academy. Both academies will be done by the end of December. If enough of the recruits obtain their certifications, the administration plans on staffing the Hon Dah Station with twelve fulltime firefighters under the leadership of Chief Hernandez beginning in February 2008.

Since Cibecue had only one firefighter per shift the new budget authorized us to increase the Cibecue staff by six. Whiteriver also had several openings. Therefore the administration acted quickly and hired eight fulltime, certified firefighters (Darwin Aday, Bobby Bones Sr., Janet Farley, Jimmie Scott, James Borrego, Rehofus Norris, Jason Thomas and Charles Croy) and two part-time firefighters (Josh Lawyer and Daniel John) to fill all of the vacancies.

Due to the increase in staff in Cibecue, the staff remodeled the training room by building a wall to divide the training room from the new "day room". The captain's office became the officer's quarters as well.

4. Fire Prevention and Life Safety

The department is very proactive when it comes to fire prevention and life safety. Led by our Injury Prevention Specialist, Kateri Goseyun, the staff is committed to make as many presentations as possible. This year she was assisted by Melanie Alchesay who was temporarily switched from shift duty to administration duty in October. They also made appearances at TRS School and the WMAT Boys & Girls camps during the summer.

Starting October 2007 the Fire & Rescue Department targeted Fire Prevention Safety- "Practice Your Escape Plan, know two ways out" to all Pre-K through fourth graders attending school near or in the Whiteriver community. This year they saw approximately **1,519** children focusing on: Differences between toys and dangerous flammable products, knowing how to safely evacuate from your home in the middle of the night, knowing your physical address, stop drop and roll, and lastly we educated kids on the importance of booster seats.

Along with targeting schools, a session on Elder Fall Prevention and Home safety is taught through Parenting Skills Classes provided by the Tribal Social Services. Classes focusing on Home Safety and Elder Fall Prevention are offered once a quarter over the course of a year.

Every Thursday the Whiteriver crew that is working is responsible to participate in our department's Weekly KNNB radio talk show. Often the Cibecue staff takes part in the "Cibecue Happenings" radio talk show as well.

This year our firefighters installed at least 157 smoke detectors. These smoke detectors were obtained through the Sleep Safe program and the cooperation between the Indian Health Services, Whiteriver Headstart Program and our department.

The department preplanned at least 134 commercial buildings this year. The Assistant Chief was involved in at least 21 fire inspections or code enforcement visits this period. In March Chief Tessay again oversaw the inspection of all of the automatic sprinkler systems in Tribal buildings. Our department pays for the inspections and the respective department is responsible to pay for any repairs.

In October 2006 and October 2007 car seats checks were held in conjunctions with Head Start's Family Fun day. In 2006, 25 child passenger safety seats were distributed. In 2007, a total of 7 seats were distribute (not enough to give out, education was the primary focus) and a total of 96 vehicles were stopped and parent's were given information regarding the type of seats their children needed.

The Fire & Rescue department received a nice donation of five booster seats from Wal-Mart Inc. to distribute to children on the Fort Apache Reservation. Five booster seats were given to parent's whom successfully answered a question correctly, during the radio talk show conducted by the Fire & Rescue Personnel and the Injury Prevention Coordinator.

Three technicians were sent to represent the Whiteriver Fire & Rescue at the Arizona Governor's Office of Highway Safety's Child Restraint Summit in Tucson, Arizona. There technicians where exposed to the different styles, types of seats and vehicles on the market as well as earn credit to re-certify.

Health Fairs where attended by Technicians to educate the differences in styles of seats and weight and height requirements to ensure the safety of all children.

Due to the much publicized distribution, local (W.M.A.T. PD, D.P.S.-Globe, and the Pinetop/Show Low) Police department's have given options to Tribal Members to either pay or set up an appointment for education sessions with the Child Passenger Technicians at our Fire & Rescue Department.

Because of our dedication to the safety of children, we offer by appointments one-to one educational training with parents receiving child passenger safety seats or those who purchase their own and still do not understand instructions.

Classes are also offered through the Parenting Skills Classes. Educational classes were scheduled for the Client Business Office and Youth Shelter.

The Injury Prevention Program received additional funding to start a Seat Belt project targeting teens at the local high school. In collaboration with the Police department the teen seat belt initiative is to increase seat belt usage among teen drivers and teen passengers. The project also includes monthly community educational meetings, a monthly article in the local newspaper, a monthly report on the local radio station, and monthly activities targeting teens.

5. Networking & Public Relations

The department believes that it is very important to network with local, regional, state and national organizations. It also believes that it is very important to be a pro-active with coalitions. Kateri Goseyun, Wayne Cole and Paul Kuehl are members of the Tribal Traffic Safety Coalition that was formed to administer the ITCA Seat Belt Initiative Grant (\$10,000). After the project was completed Kuehl made a PowerPoint presentation to the Tribal Transportation Committee. The Coalition also was the driving force behind a Tribal resolution that requires all Tribal employees and occupants of Tribal vehicles to wear seat belts. Those who fail to do so may face disciplinary measures from a warning to suspension and termination.

Chief Kuehl was appointed to the Tribal Transportation Committee.

The department is a member of the WMAT Public Safety Committee which tries to meet monthly to discuss common issues and concerns. This committee was successful in obtaining two Homeland Security Grants (2005 & 2005) that amounted to over \$.5M. These grants were used to improve the communication systems for all four departments.

DFC Wayne Cole and his staff have been very active in their community. They are members of Cibecue's Emergency Response Team, Cibecue School Crisis Team, and Suicide Prevention Team. Their staff participated in numerous community events, such as the Meth Conference, Suicide Prevention Conference, CBQ School Shooting Lock-Down Drill, the BAER Fair, Cancer Awareness Day, and their Elderly Abuse Prevention Awareness Day. Both Chiefs Cole and Kuehl are volunteer board members of the local Boys & Girls Club.

The Whiteriver staff has also been very active in community events. Staff promoted seat belt usage at a special event involving the Alchesay High School students. They participated in the Child Abuse Prevention Walk, the Elderly Abuse Prevention Walk, Housing Authority Activity Day, Apache Youth Summit at Sunrise, WR Elementary School Fun Night, Boys & Girls Club Family Fun Day, the BAER Fair, the NAFCA Fire Awareness Day in Show Low, the Pinetop's Bike Safety Day. The firefighters participated in the "Read Across America" program with Seven Mile Elementary School. They acted as escorts during WMAT Princess Pageant and continue to make Sunday visits to the patients in the Whiteriver Hospital. As always, our staff participated with Alchesay High School's homecoming parade, bonfire, and the burning of the "A". During December 2006 Whiteriver A-Shift conducted a food drive for Whiteriver's Homeless Shelter.

Our fire department mascots, Sparky the Fire Dog, Snappy the Turtle and Buckle Bear, remain busy assisting the firefighters attending many of the events throughout the reservation.

The chief officers are members of the National Native American Fire Chiefs Association, Northeastern Fire Chiefs Association, Gila County Fire Chiefs Association, Arizona Fire Chiefs Association, and the International Fire Chiefs Association.

The fire chief reports to the WMAT Law & Order Committee during their monthly meetings. Those firefighters that are also EMTs often attend the Pre-hospital Patient Care meetings held at the Whiteriver Indian Hospital.

The chief officers were involved in several issues involving MOUs and IGAs during this period. They participated in the development of an agreement between BIA & WMAT concerning the investigation of wildland fires. Another MOU was worked on between the department and BIA Schools. The Mutual Aid Agreement for the members of the Northeastern Arizona Fire Chiefs Association was approved by the Tribal Legal Department. Assistant Fire Chief Mark Tessay attended several concerning the Cooperative Agreement between the WMAT and BIA. Chief Tessay was also very instrumental in the MOU between the WMAT and the San Carlos Apache Tribe concerning the Seneca repeater site.

The department once again sponsored the Annual 9/11 Memorial Run/Walk.

6. Grants

Since the department was established in 1988 it has received more than \$4.5M in grants. During this period the department received a Polaris 6x5 Ranger Utility Vehicle through the US Smokeless Tobacco Company Ranger Donation Grant.

The Tribal Traffic Safety Coalition was informed that they were awarded the Governor's Office of Highway Safety Grant for approximately \$70,000. However, no funds will be reimbursed until Congress passes their annual budget.

The department has been very busy trying to complete the Salt River Canyon Communications Project made possible by a 2005 Homeland Security Grant in the amount just over \$203,000. The deadline is November 30, 2007. This project requires the construction of two radio repeater sites in the canyon as well as a repeater at the 7-Mile site and a radio at the Whiteriver Police Department. To obtain the best reception in the canyon, a site on the San Carlos Apache Reservation was needed. It took a lot of work by Assistant Fire Chief Mark Tessay to obtain an IGA between the two tribes for the use of the Seneca site.

The department applied for two different 2007 Assistance to Firefighters Grant in the spring of 2007. One grant is for a computer aided routing system and the other for a

platform engine. At the time of this writing the department has not yet heard if it will be awarded either grant.

7. Budget and Finances

This fiscal year began rather poorly. The Bureau of Indian Affairs informed the White Mountain Apache Tribe that they would no longer fund the Community Fire Protection Programs country-wide. This decision would cost our program approximately \$100,000. However, in June the BIA informed the Tribe that they would once again fund the Community Fire Protection Programs.

The Whiteriver Indian Hospital also informed the department that they would no longer pay for fire protection services as they had since 1988. After several letters and meetings with IHS without any solutions the fire chief met with the new CEO, Dr. Mize. Dr. Mize informed the fire chief that they could not pay for fire protection. However, he recommended that we bill IHS for other services such as hydrant testing, pre-planning visits, fire-wise counseling, etc. The department followed his recommendations, but to date the department has not been paid. Dr. Mize no longer works for IHS.

The department had not yet been reimbursed for numerous 2006 fire assignments. Supposedly the payment center deposited these funds, but they were incorrectly informed by a Wells Fargo Bank representative that the account number was incorrect. The funds were returned to the payment center. The department is still waiting for some of these funds. The department is also having a difficult time in receiving reimbursement funds for some of their 2007 fire assignments.

The department is also waiting for approximately \$23,000 in reimbursement funds from the Arizona State Land Department for their response to New Orleans due to Hurricane Katrina.

The department submitted their proposed FY 06-07 Annual Budget in February 2007. However, they, like many other Tribal departments, never received an approved budget for they year. They were forced to work with the previous year's approved budget (approximately \$1M). The Tribal Council also passed a resolution mandating that departments institute a 25% cost containment policy.

In February 2007 the department submitted their proposed FY 07-08 Annual Budget requesting a total of approximately \$3.7M. In July of 2007 the department was informed that their budget had been approved as submitted. This budget included a 26% raise for all staff, authorization to hire two deputy fire chiefs and eighteen additional firefighters and to purchase four command vehicles, three thermal imaging cameras, extrication tools, a breathable air compressor and a triple-wide modular building.

The reasoning for the large increase in personnel was three-fold:

1. to increase the Cibecue staff from one firefighter per shift to three (this would require a total of six firefighters);
2. to hire a deputy fire chief for the Whiteriver Fire Station;

3. to finally staff the Hon Dah/McNary Public Safety Complex with a deputy fire chief and a total of twelve firefighters (four per shift).

The Tribal Council passed a resolution authorizing the department to purchase two Pierce Ultimate Configuration (PUC) rescue/pumpers through a lease-purchase agreement. One unit would be for Cibecue and the other for Whiteriver. The officers worked with Chad Anderson, the Pierce rep from First In, Inc. in designing the units. Once the units were designed and the cost was established, the tribal attorney and the attorneys from Oshkosh Financial had to work out the differences on the legal documents. This was not completed until December 2007. The units are scheduled for delivery within eleven months.

The department continues to bill non-reservation residents for their response to motor vehicle accidents. The department also receives \$500 per house fire involving Housing Authority property from Amerind Insurance Company.

8. Training

Training of our firefighters is never ending. Both stations have mandatory bi-weekly drills and monthly rope rescue training. All shifts are required to have at least one training per week.

Captains Leon I. Moody and Gary Thompson obtained their Fire Science Degree and Firefighter Janet Farley is scheduled to obtain hers in November. Three other personnel also have college degrees.

The entire department completed all of the required *NIMS* training before the October 1, 2006 deadline to be in compliance with the National Directive.

All drivers completed the department's annual driver training this year. In addition to class room work they are required to successfully drive the approved obstacle course. Several other firefighters attended the NPC *Emergency Vehicle Driving* class.

In addition to the mandatory, annual *8-Hour Safety* class, quite a few firefighters attended a variety of wildland classes through the BIA or the NFS.

Four recruits started and completed the 06-07 Show Low Fire Academy. They and one other rookie who attended the 05-06 Lakeside Fire Academy became certified firefighters during this period. Seven recruit firefighters from Cibecue began attending the 07-08 Show Low Fire Academy in September 2007. The department also recruited fourteen people to attend the 07-08 White Mountain Apache Fire Academy which started is scheduled to start on October 8.

Captain Gary Thompson attended EMT-P training and still needs to pass the National Registry exam. Firefighters Alberta Johnson and Craig Webster received their EMT-B National Registry certifications during this period. Deputy Fire Chief Wayne Cole and Firefighters Sue Whiteford and Jim Borrego completed their EMT-Refresher class. Eight

firefighters enrolled in NPC's EMT class in September 2007, but only three are still in the class.

Melanie Alchesay, Billye Martin and Davey Beatty attended a *Leadership* training in Tempe.

Fire Chiefs P. Kuehl & Wayne Cole taught two NPC classes (*Confined Space Rescue Awareness and Firefighter Health & Safety*) to all the fulltime firefighters and a few part-time firefighters.

With assistance of ITCA, all of the fulltime firefighters received the *On Site Incident Commander* training during this period.

W. Cole completed the *Weapons of Mass Destruction Train the Trainer* training in Camp Verde

Firefighter/EMT attended and passed the *Firefighter Peer Fitness Training* in Lakeside and Glendale this fall.

At least sixteen firefighters completed the *Swift Water Rescue* training with the new PPE. Two firefighters became certified car seat technicians after attending a 40-hour training. Six firefighters attended a *Vehicle Extrication* class at the Vernon Fire Department. Quite a few of our firefighters also attended the *Rope Rescue I, II, III* training in Whiteriver this fall. In fact just about all of the fulltime firefighters are now certified in all three.

Firefighters Janet Farley, Jim Borrego, Darwin Aday, Joyce Bragg and Captain Darren Chimoni attended a variety of classes this fall at the Annual State Fire School in Mesa.

Injury Prevention Specialist Kateri Goseyun and Firefighters Wilberta George and Joyce Bragg attended an *Injury Prevention* Conference in Tucson.

All fulltime firefighters participated in the *National Stand Down for Safety* this summer.

The fire department participated in the development of the BIA Safety of Dams Emergency Operations plan and the Table Top Exercise in November.

9. In-house Activities

The department's firefighters undergo their annual physical examinations, semi-annual SCBA mask fit-tests, quarterly physical fitness tests and/or physical agility tests and semi-annual personal evaluations. This year the entire staff underwent another background check that involved finger printing, submitting their certified five-year driving records and rap sheets. Staff also makes background checks utilizing the *Public Access* capabilities on the Internet.

Firefighters at both stations conduct weekly pump & roll activities as well as weekly inspections of their vehicles. Although the department has not been allowed to perform

annual flushing and testing of the fire hydrants, they have tested FATCO's and IHS's fire hydrants and cleaned around the fire hydrants.

The owners and/or directors of commercial buildings continue to be encouraged to purchase and install Knox boxes on their building.

The firefighters also pressure-tested all the fire hose per NFPA Standards.

Gen-Tech of Phoenix performed their annual checks and load tests on all three emergency generators in November.

Mechanics from First In, Inc. of Phoenix performed their annual checks on all of the department's pumpers. Unfortunately, due to a lack of funding this year, we were unable to make all the necessary repairs on the pumps and plumbing. We were also unable to have the pumps undergo their annual tests for the same reason.

Our department is still involved in the Rural Addressing (911) Project. This year Cibecue staff assisted the GIS Department in correcting any mistakes in the addressing system on Cibecue's map. They then corrected the corresponding changes in the field. We utilized both the SCA students last year as well as two college interns this summer to continue to GPS all of the other structure. While Winston Tortice is responsible for assigning new addresses, the fire department is responsible for installing the addresses on the homes. The department has also been replacing the street signs that have been stolen or run over.

10. Fleet

A 1989 E-One pumper was taken out of service and transferred to FATCO because of a cracked engine.

A 2000 E-One rescue pumper was sold to Vernon Fire Department (they took over the payments).

The two, old, military surplus engines were sold to Vernon Fire Department for \$1 each.

The 1968 International engine was sold to Nutrioso Fire Department for \$1.

The department obtained two 1998 Ford Expeditions that were released from the Police Department. One is now stationed in Cibecue and the other in Hon Dah.

The department purchased four 2008 Ford F250 pickups this year. They were issued to DFC Cole, DFC Hernandez, Assistant Fire Chief Tessay and Fire Chief Kuehl.

The Tribal Council approved the lease/purchase of two, new rescue/pumpers. One will be stationed in Cibecue and the other in Whiteriver. The lease documents were approved by the Legal Department, approved by the Tribal Council and signed by the Tribal Chairman in December. The trucks are scheduled to be built and delivered within eleven months.

11. Statistics

The White Mountain Apache Fire & Rescue Department responded to a total of 567 emergency calls during this period. Please refer to the attached statistics for the monthly breakdowns. Here is the annual breakdown by incident types.

Structure fires	56
Vehicle fires	8
Brush fires	48
<u>Nuisance fires</u>	<u>37</u>
Total fires	149
Mischievous calls	1
Good intent calls	81
<u>False Alarms</u>	<u>9</u>
Total no-contact calls	91
Motor vehicle accidents	246
Search & rescue calls	13
<u>Haz-Mat calls</u>	<u>13</u>
Total rescue calls	272
Medical assists	41
<u>Agency assists</u>	<u>14</u>
Total assist calls	55
Grand Total	567