



Sheila Dixon

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Mayor Dixon Releases Report from Independent Investigation of Calverton Road Fire

Baltimore, MD (August 23, 2007) – Mayor Sheila Dixon released the final report about the tragic death of Baltimore City Firefighter Paramedic Apprentice Racheal Wilson. The report, which is available at the city home page (www.baltimorecity.gov), details oversights that lead to the tragic incident, and recommends changes in procedures to prevent further accidents.

Mayor Dixon chose R. Chris Shimer, Deputy Chief of the Howard County Department of Fire & Rescue Services Emergency Medical Services and Training Section, to lead the investigation. He was supported in the development of the report by agents from the U.S. Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives and the United States Fire Administration.

“This report is a frank assessment of the failures that lead to the tragic events on February 9th,” said Mayor Dixon. “I am grateful for Chief Shimer’s leadership, and for the cooperation of the Fire Department.”

The investigative team found many of the same violations and contributing factors as were noted in Baltimore City Fire Department’s preliminary investigation. The team determined that there were 50 issues which it considered to be violations of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1403 *Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions*, 2002 Edition, and other related factors that contributed to this tragic event. Those violations and contributing factors are detailed in the report.

Chief Shimer included detailed recommendations to prevent another training accident of this kind from happening again. Some of the recommendations are:

- Adhere to NFPA 1403 guidelines at all times during live burn exercises in acquired structures and at the Training Academy’s burn facilities;
- Adhere to the appropriate departmental policies and procedures when engaged in training activities;
- Develop and apply criteria by which personnel are designated as adjunct instructors and are chosen to assist with training exercises;
- Provide all instructors and others assigned to vital positions with portable radios and Personal Alert Safety System (PASS) devices;
- Ensure that all students have adequate experience with hose line evolutions in live burn exercises at the Training Academy prior to participating in live burns in acquired structures;

- Document competency attainment and deficiencies for required skills in each student's individual files;
- Develop a method of documenting daily class and individuals activities;
- Adopt a validated physical fitness evaluation that can be used for all potential recruits, such as the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT);
- Promote a culture of safe operations that fosters the skill and experience necessary for competent performance;
- Develop a detailed plan for live fire training evolutions in acquired structures that demonstrate NFPA 1403 compliance and that must be reviewed and approved by the Chief of the Department prior to the training taking place;
- Provide all FPAs with serviceable personal protective equipment, including SCBA and PASS devices; and,
- Demand strict accountability and appropriate discipline for those who violate safety and training standards in all aspects of Department operations.

“I think about the loss of Racheal Wilson every day,” said Mayor Dixon. “I am committed to honoring her bravery and service by ensuring future training will not put others at risk.”

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