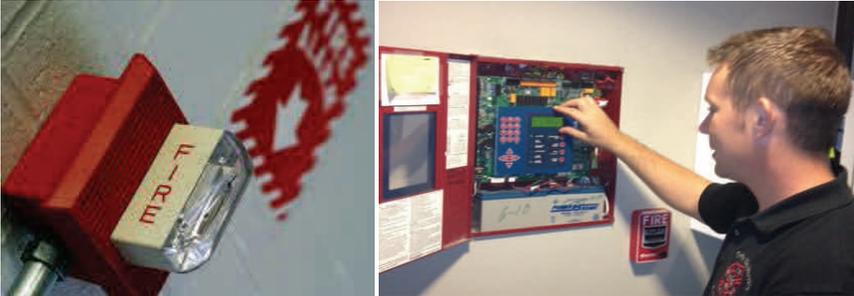


## Fire Safety at Tufts University: An Overview

By John Walsh



Fire alarm system inspection

In August 2012, I was honored to begin my new career as the next Fire Marshal/Fire Prevention Officer for Tufts University. In preparing a 'game plan' for (my vision) of the direction of the university's fire safety program, I set out on a quest to learn: (a) where we (Tufts Fire Safety Office [FSO]) currently are in our programs and policies; (b) where we need to be – at a minimum (to satisfy mandates and standards); and (c) where we should strive to be – in terms of seeking excellence beyond 'minimum requirements' in the world of fire and life safety.

Navigating the waters between the points of "where we are" to "where we strive to be..." has become my personal mission. As the "Captain of the ship" (of the Fire Safety Office) it is my duty to steer a course heading that makes sense for our organization...and to make course corrections as needed. This is a very diverse university community with hundreds of buildings, thousands of people, and three very different campus environments that present all types of challenges to fire safety. The Tufts University Department of Public and Environmental Safety (DPES), Tufts Environmental Health and Safety (TEHS) and the Fire Safety Office (FSO) each have a duty and relationship connected to all buildings and each person who attends, live, works, or visits the university. That is a very broad horizon with many navigational hazards to consider – on a 24/7/365 basis.



Fire extinguisher training

### Shaping the FSO mission.

I reviewed the "vision" and "mission" statements of the university, DPES, and TEHS – with the intention of clarifying the vision and mission of the FSO. In this review process, I identified key phrases that serve as logical guides toward defining the FSO mission and vision. I have emphasized (in bold, italics, and/or highlight) 'key words and phrases' that will influence the journey of the FSO.

Let's start with the Tufts University vision statement:

*"As we shape our future, **quality will be the pole star that guides us.** We will seek quality in our teach-*

*ing and research and in the **services that support our academic enterprise.** Our programs will be those that meet our own high standards, that **augment each other**, and that are worthy of the respect of our students and of scholars, educators, and the larger community.*

*For students, our search for quality will mean opportunities both in and beyond the classroom to become well-educated, well-rounded individuals, professionals, and scholars. For faculty and staff, it will mean opportunities to realize their talents in the service of Tufts' goals. Fulfilling our vision of quality will mean choices. **No university can do everything** for everyone, and we will seek to do those things in which we can excel. Nor is quality static, and we will therefore welcome change and innovation, continually improving quality in every aspect of the University."*

The Tufts University **Department of Public and Environmental Safety** describes the DPES mission and vision as:

*"Developing a safe and secure environment in an academic institution is the responsibility of the entire community. Within our community, the Department of Public Safety is assigned the primary responsibility to identify programs, methods, and approaches to assist the institution toward achieving a reasonably safe and secure environment. Therefore, the Department is expected to be the leader in this area. **The Department exists for one main purpose and that is to support the goals of the higher education community.** It exists to assist those who seek and those who impart knowledge, as well as those who provide support to the mission of the institution. The Department endeavors to preserve an environment where diverse*

*social, cultural, and academic values are allowed to develop and prosper. All members of the Department are expected to actively participate in the achievement of our goals and in the service of the university. For it is only through our collective efforts that our mission will be accomplished."*

**Tufts Environmental Health and Safety (TEHS)** complements and contributes to the DPES mission. The TEHS mission (in part) is described as:

*TEHS provides leadership in developing and supporting high quality programs that allow students, faculty and staff to protect themselves from potential health hazards they encounter at the University.*

*In summary, the goal of TEHS is to provide guidance to every manager, supervisor, employee, and student of Tufts University so that a safe, healthful and environmentally sustainable learning environment is achieved and maintained.*



Fire Drill

### Putting it all together.

The proposed mission of the Fire Safety Office is to support the goals of the higher education community especially by focusing on fire and life safety concerns across the entire Tufts University

**cont. Fire Safety at Tufts** community. To accomplish this mission, we will seek creative and achievable solutions to fire and life safety challenges. Specifically:

- We will seek quality in our programs and services that support the Tufts University community. Our programs will be those that meet our own high standards, applicable external standards and codes, and that are worthy of the respect the Tufts community.
- We shall provide leadership in developing and supporting high quality programs that allow students, faculty, staff and visitors to live, work, and visit in a safe campus environment, and to protect themselves from potential fire and life safety hazards.
- We shall provide guidance to all stakeholders of Tufts University on all matters related to fire and life safety concerns.

The proposed **vision** of the Fire Safety Office is continual improvement in all aspects of fire and life safety programs that serve the Tufts community. By minimizing occurrences of fire, and by enhancing life safety systems, we support each stakeholder in his or her **personal mission** as related to their role



Fire sprinkler inspection

within the university environment.

We proudly serve as **advocates and guardians** in all matters of fire and life safety for the entire Tufts community.

**The foundation of the Fire Safety Program at Tufts.**

The Fire Safety Program is based upon **three foundational blocks** that contribute to an effective fire and life safety program. The foundational blocks are:

◇ **Engineering**

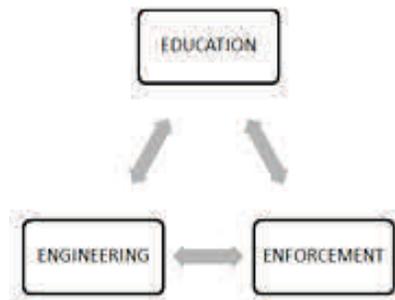
- Properly designed and installed fire protection components
- Fire alarm systems
- Fire sprinkler systems
- Fire suppression systems (range hoods, etc...)
- Emergency lighting
- Exit signage
- Fire extinguishers

◇ **Education**

- Fire / evacuation drills
- Fire extinguisher training
- Fire safety awareness training for faculty, staff, and students
- Self-guided instruction via website
- Professional development for FSO staff

◇ **Enforcement**

- Annual and quarterly testing of systems
- Regulatory compliance
- Site inspections
- Investigations
- Disciplinary (forwarded to appropriate Tufts office) follow up (if warranted)



**Tufts University Fire Safety Program: foundational blocks**

"The whole is greater than the sum of its parts." Aristotle

that pose immediate dangerous conditions, etc...

- ⇒ Respond to requests for services from internal and external stakeholders
- ⇒ Provide fire safety related training based on target needs
- ⇒ Enhance and update the website to provide newest information and resources... especially increasing internet links to video training resources

**Staffing the FSO.**

The FSO staff is currently comprised of active or retired fire service professionals who bring to the university a combined experience level of more than 100 years of fire service background.. This combination of public sector experiences and Tufts institutional knowledge provides **added value** and resources that contribute to the excellence of the university.

The Fire Safety Office is currently staffed by:

- Fire Marshal/Fire Prevention Officer – John Walsh\*\*
- Assistant Fire Marshal – Richard Mullane\*\*
- Inspector (part time) – Edward O'Brien\*\*
- Inspector (part time) – Sean Mullane\*
- Student Fire Inspectors (5) during the academic year

\*\*retired professional firefighters  
\*active professional firefighter

**Long term goals:**

- ⇒ Maintain standards identified in short term goal list
- ⇒ Improvements in 'service request' tracking and documentation
- ⇒ Improvements in systems design (in house) for prioritizing fire alarm replacement plans university-wide
- ⇒ Seek efficiencies in FSO processes via use of technology and/or methodology
- ⇒ Increase effectiveness in public (university-wide) fire and life-safety education and outreach<sup>1</sup>
- ⇒ Maintain readiness to adapt to sudden needs of the Tufts University community as circumstance dictate
- ⇒ Create workable solutions to fire and life-safety challenges as they emerge

**Future plans for the FSO.**

**Short term goals:**

- ⇒ Maintain inspection schedule for all academic and residential buildings
- ⇒ Maintain inspection schedule for all sprinkler systems
- ⇒ Respond to urgent needs as they occur. This includes fire alarm repair issues, active alarms, fire code violations

<sup>1</sup> The FSO approach to educational and training program design and delivery has been enhanced by applying the "Start with Why" philosophy to such activity. As trainers, I include this information as a potential resource you may be interested in. <http://www.startwithwhy.com/> (once on the site, be sure to click on the **TED** link).