

Clinton Fire Department close to full staffing



Tammie Stephens

By Randy Bell

Clinton Fire Chief Levius Buckley earned a round of applause from the Board of Aldermen June 2 when he announced that the fire department has filled fifty-seven of its fifty-eight funded positions.

Some firefighters have left the department to make more money in other nearby cities, and there have been a number of recent retirements, making the goal of having the Clinton Fire Department (CFD) fully staffed a challenge.

Buckley told the Board that more retirements are on the horizon, but he's committed to filling any open positions.

"We're going to keep at it, keep hiring quality personnel," the chief said.

Buckley said nine of his newest firefighters haven't undergone the basic training offered at the Mississippi State Fire Academy (MSFA) yet, but five of them are at Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) School. As the department waits for openings at the Fire Academy, the chief said he felt it was important for the recently hired firefighters to get some type of training "where they can be useful."

At the MSFA, recruits undergo seven weeks of rigorous training, which com-

bines classroom instruction with hands-on exercises to ensure that they're prepared to meet the demands of the job.

Buckley said the Fire Academy is backed up right now.

"It's a waiting game at this point," he said.

The chief told the Board that the department has done a new type of professional development session this year involving swift water rescue. He said the recent flash flood in Hattiesburg in which a woman died when her vehicle was swept away by a torrent of water was a reminder that the CFD needs to be prepared.

"We've got a few low-lying areas where it could happen," Buckley said. "We hope it doesn't, but we've got to be ready."

As of June 2, the fire department had responded to 1,486 calls this year, but only fifty-seven involved actual fires. More than seventy-seven per cent of the calls (1,155) were for emergency medical assistance.

The chief pointed out that the next-largest number of calls (137, or 9.2 per cent) were false alarms, "whether it's fire alarms or somebody mistakenly hitting their medical alert alarm."

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