

Firehouse Frequently Asked Questions

(current as of 5/9/2008)

These FAQs are provided in an effort to assist the residents and business community of Upper Dublin Township with their understanding of the process regarding the proposed new firehouse.

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Q1. Why is a new firehouse necessary?

A. Since the current main firehouse at 220 Summit Avenue no longer meets the needs of the fire and rescue service in the upper-end of the township, an independent study was conducted to determine three options: 1) Renovate the Summit Avenue Station, 2) Renovate the Summit Avenue station and build a new sub-station in the Maple Glen area, and 3) Eliminate options one and two in favor of building a new main firehouse in the center of the upper-end of the township. The study determined that option three was the necessary option. The Summit Avenue station no longer meets national standards and does not adequately address fire and rescue response needs for the Maple Glen area of the township, a new main station must be built. Additional information is included in the study that is posted on the [documents web page](#).

Q2. When was the Facilities Study Committee established and who was represented?

A. The committee was established in August, 2006 and was comprised of the following positions: Fort Washington Fire Company, No. 1 (FWFC) President, Chief, Deputy Chief, Assistant Chief and Chief Engineer; Upper Dublin Township Fire Services Administrator, Fire Marshal and Director of Public Works; and initially two Township Resident Advisory Representatives, later joined by two additional residents.

Q3. What is the Standard of Coverage Report?

A. This report evaluated the fire and rescue service provided to the township. It addressed types of fire apparatus and the related response times to different target hazards to meet national standards. This report is posted on the [documents web page](#).

Q4. When was the Facilities Study Report received?

A. This report was presented to the Board of Commissioners in August, 2007. This report is posted on the [documents web page](#).

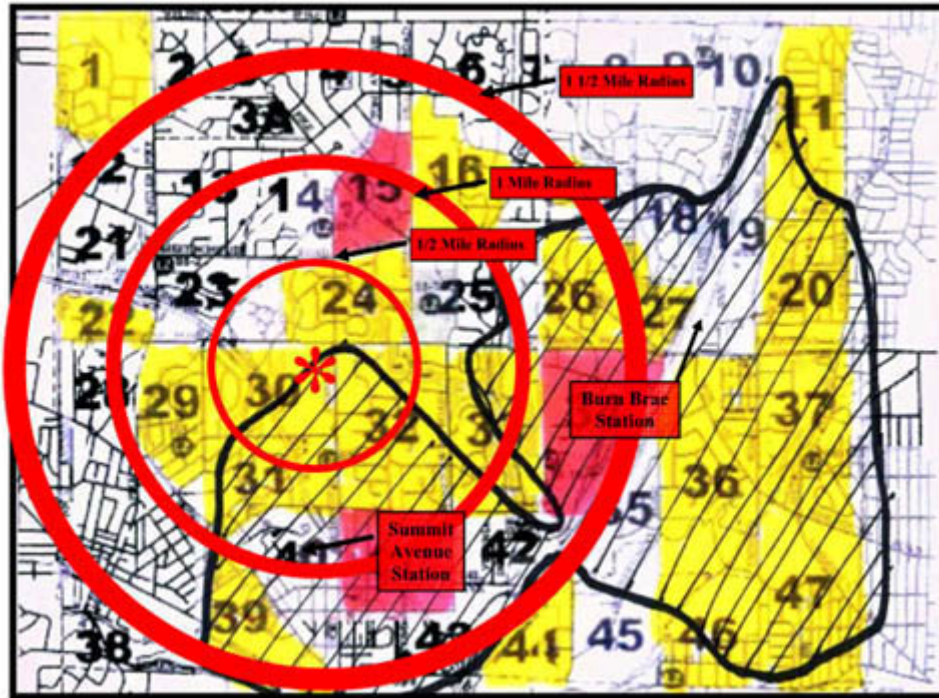
Q5. What is the Bulls-eye?

A. The bulls-eye is defined as the area best situated to support the new firehouse, so it can effectively service the entire upper-end of the township in a balanced effort. See map below.

Q6. What area of the Township is recommended for a new firehouse?

A. The inner circle with the asterisk in the center represents the bulls-eye, which indicates the recommended area to build the new firehouse (see map below). This general area will ensure balanced protection to the entire upper-end of the township by meeting nationally recognized standards established by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) involving distance and time. Each outer ring represents the extended distance from the bulls-eye that will affect the distance and time. Note: the numbers in the background represent the incident Box Number used by emergency responders to ensure that the proper resources are dispatched.

Full Township Overview of Prospective New Firehouse Location

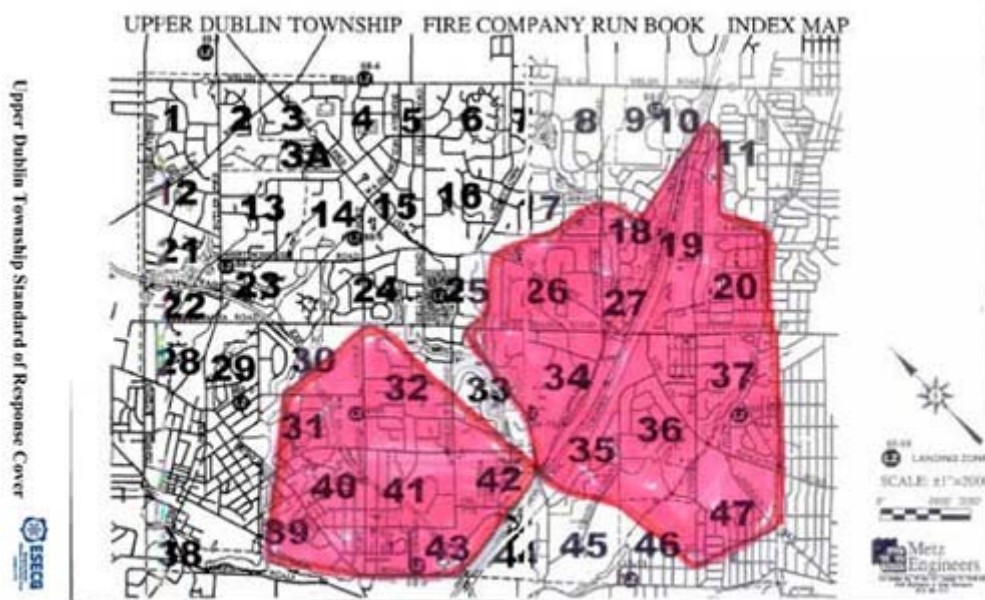


Mitchell Associates Architects

29 Thatcher Park Road Voorheesville, New York 12186

Q7. How do the current location of fire apparatus support the standards established by the ISO?

A. The outline on the map below indicates the location of the two firehouses serving the township and how the respective fire apparatus respond to meet nationally recognized standards established by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) involving distance and time. It also demonstrates the area not equally protected by township fire apparatus.



Upper Dublin Township Standard of Response Cover



ISO Engine Company Response Coverage Map – 1.5 Road Miles

Q8. What properties were identified and eliminated?

A. Many sites were evaluated and subsequently eliminated. The sites that were evaluated beyond a verbal suggestion are identified in the Facilities Study Committee Recommendation of Site for New Main Firehouse Executive Summary and Report, which is posted on the [documents web page](#). Also available to download is a one page [summary report of sites considered](#). Three sites have been recommended to the Board of Commissioners for consideration. They are 1) the former Bonsell Nursery at 1245 Fort Washington Avenue, 2) the Lenahan property at 1256 Fort Washington Avenue, and 3) the Field of Dreams at the rear of the municipal complex, 801 Loch Alsh Avenue.

Q9. What is the condition of associated roads such as Summit Avenue, Fort Washington Avenue and Susquehanna Road?

A. Summit Avenue is a narrow street consisting of densely populated residences with on-street parking and children playing nearby. Fort Washington Avenue is a state highway and main thoroughfare for the township with curbs on both sides and sidewalks on the side by the schools. Although the area proposed for a new fire house involves a school zone with the driveway outside that school zone, the line of sight is clear along the sides of this road and essentially unobstructed. An independent traffic study has been conducted that determined there is no direct safety issue by having a firehouse located at the Bonsell property. That study is posted on the [documents web page](#). Susquehanna Road is also a state highway and main thoroughfare for the township. It provides ample width for myriad vehicles and, for the most part, offers a sufficient berm.

Q10. What is the relationship of vehicular traffic to the new high school layout?

A. The design of the new high school will allow traffic to enter and exit at Susquehanna Road, thereby reducing the time specific traffic that is on Fort Washington Avenue at Hawthorne Lane. This will also apply to special events such as football games and school plays. The existing entrance and exit on Loch Alsh Avenue will remain. A depiction of this new roadway is posted on the [Upper Dublin School District web site](#).

Q11. Are there mediation efforts to better control traffic?

A. The new high school plan considers and improves the existing traffic flow in the surrounding area. The intersection of Fort Washington Avenue and Susquehanna Road is equipped with an Opticom Preemption device that stops traffic in all directions except for the approaching emergency vehicle. A significant difference in traffic flow involving a firehouse at the former Bonsell Nursery is not anticipated.

Q12. What educational facilities are located along Fort Washington Avenue?

A. The Upper Dublin High School is located at 800 Loch Alsh Avenue at the corner of Fort Washington Avenue and supports grades nine through twelve. The Church of the Open Door is located at 1260 Fort Washington Avenue and operates a day care center for pre-school children as well as an elementary school in the rear of the property for which children are primarily bused or dropped off by parents. The pending Lubavitch Synagogue will be located at 1311 Fort Washington Avenue and is also expected to operate a day care center for pre-school children. The Fort Washington Elementary School is located at 1010 Fort Washington Avenue at the corner of Highland Avenue and supports kindergarten through the fifth grade.

Q13. Are school crossing guards posted near the two schools?

A. There are four school crossing guard posts established to assist students who walk to school. One post each is located at Fort Washington Avenue and Hawthorne Lane and Fort Washington Avenue and Loch Alsh Avenue for the high school students. One post each is located at Fort Washington Avenue and Thomas Drive and Fort Washington Avenue and Highland Avenue for the elementary school students.

Q14. Are sidewalks provided for students who walk to school?

A. Concrete sidewalks are provided along each public roadway at each school.

Q15. What are the driving requirements for volunteer firefighters responding to a call?

A. Volunteer firefighters are required pursuant to the Pennsylvania Vehicle Code, Title 75, to obey all traffic laws. This includes operating their personal vehicle at 15 mph or below in an activated school zone, regardless if other motorists yield the road to them.

Q16. Will fire apparatus exceed the posted speed limit to an emergency?

A. In addition to Pennsylvania law, the fire company follows the recommendation by the Volunteer Fire Insurance Service that the fire apparatus may exceed the posted speed limit up to 10 mph, if necessary, depending on the nature of the call and road conditions. The fire company also enforces its own Standard Operating Guideline that prohibits speed in excess of 15 mph in an activated school zone.

Q17. Do the firefighters and fire apparatus currently respond to incidents by using Fort Washington Avenue in the area of the schools?

A. The fire company has always used Fort Washington Avenue as a primary response route to calls for help. This also includes volunteer firefighters driving to the firehouse to respond on the fire apparatus.

Q18. How do the police respond to calls from the municipal complex?

A. The police also use Fort Washington Avenue as a primary response route to incidents. This includes responding to an incident from police headquarters.

Q19. Has a traffic engineer analyzed the propriety of placing a fire station near schools?

A. The Township retained the professional services of Orth-Rodgers Associates, Philadelphia, to evaluate any possible safety concerns of building a firehouse on the former Bonsell property. The findings indicated there are no safety issues identified with this site. The report is posted on the [documents web page](#).

Q20. Are there other firehouses located near schools, day care centers and playgrounds in the region?

A. There are numerous examples of long-standing relationships involving a firehouse located next to or across the street from a firehouse. Most firehouses were located in the town center by design many years ago.

Examples include, but are not limited to:

Firehouse	Situated	School/Playground	Comments
Barren Hill Fire Company	three 1/2 blocks away	Saint Philip Neri ES	
Belmont Fire Company	two blocks away	Belmont ES	
Bridgeport & Goodwill Fire Companies	three 1/2 & three blocks away	MontCo Academy for troubled teens	
Conshocken & Washington Fire Companies	two blocks away each	Saint Matthew ES	
Elkins Park Fire Company	three blocks away	Meyers ES	
Flourtown Fire Company	three blocks away	Saint Genevieve ES	
George Clay Fire Company	1/2 block away	school bus crossing	
Horsham Fire Company Main Station	two blocks away	Keith Valley MS	
Horsham Fire Company Substation	across the street	large municipal park	
Huntingdon Valley Fire Company	across the street/ next door	Lower Moreland HS/ Murray Avenue School	
Jeffersonville Fire Company	next door/share driveway apron	Township park, playground, basketball & tennis courts.	
King of Prussia Fire Company	two blocks away	Mother of Devine Providence ES	
Lamott Fire Company	next door	municipal playground	
McKinley Fire Company	next door/ four blocks away	municipal playground/ McKinley ES	student crosswalk next to firehouse/ Second Alarmers sub-station across from firehouse
Norris Fire Company	trucks pass directly	Gotwals ES	Norristown's busiest firehouse - 1,200 calls per year.
North Penn Fire Company	four blocks away	Saint Rose of Lima ES	Railroad crossing gates next to the apparatus apron.
Oreland Fire Company	two blocks away	Holy Martyrs ES	
Philadelphia Fire Department			Numerous firehouses in congested school zones throughout the city.
Phoenixville Fire Company	1/2 block away	Montessori Children's House of Valley Forge	"School happy to have firehouse nearby."
Radnor Fire Company	next door	Radnor Township MS	Principal stated "he was happy to be located next to firehouse for fast help in an emergency." School being replaced with new school on same site.
Roslyn Fire Company	two blocks away	Roslyn ES	School replaced with new school on same site.

Skippack Fire Company	next door	The Goddard School	New firehouse being built next to current firehouse.
Swedeland Fire Company	near	unfenced municipal playground	
Swedesburg Fire Company	three blocks away	Lincoln Center Alternate School for teens	
Towamencin Fire Company	across the street	Firehouse Park	
Valley Forge Fire Company	next door/same driveway apron	Boy Scout Troop 73 Campground/Meeting	
Weldon Fire Company	across the street	former Glenside-Weldon ES	for 100 years
Wissahickon Fire Company sub-station	4/10 mile around the corner	Gwynedd Mercy Academy ES	Sub-station under Lower Gwynedd Twp Building.
Worcester Fire Company	one block away	Heebner Park	
Wyndmoor Hose Company	across the street	former Seven Dolores ES and current Regina Coeli Academy	for 100 years at two different locations

Also note, it is known that firehouses are located on narrow and congested streets with parking on both sides of the street and consecutive buildings. Inquiries were made to the Montgomery County Department of Public Safety, the Montgomery County Municipal Fire Officers Association, the Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioners Office, the International Association of Fire Chiefs, the National Fire Protection Association and the United States Fire Administration to ascertain if there was a known safety hazard of a firehouse being located in or near a school zone. The findings indicated there is no known correlation of traffic accidents resulting from a firehouse being in or near a school.

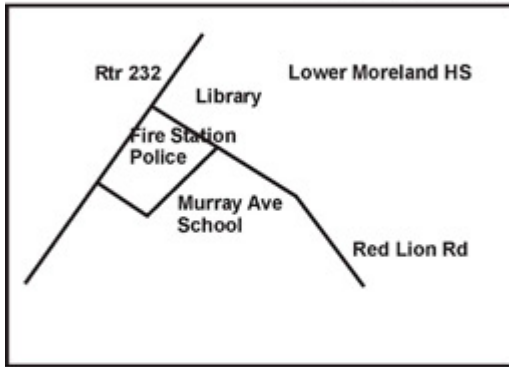
Pictures of current firehouses located near schools.



Pictures taken at Quaker School



From Front of Lower Moreland HS



Lower Moreland HS



Fire Station
Police

From Murray Ave School



Lower Moreland HS

From Huntingdon Valley FC



Radnor FC

New Radnor Middle School

Recently demolished old Radnor Middle School at this location

Pictures taken across the street



Glenside-Weldon School



Weldon FC

Pictures taken at Glenside-Weldon

Q21. Will there be a siren installed at the new firehouse?

A. The new firehouse will not have a new siren installed. The current siren behind the municipal complex will remain.

Q22. If the former Bonsell property is selected by the Board of Commissioners, where will the entrance and exit for the fire apparatus be located?

A. The design of the new firehouse has not begun and is not scheduled to begin until the second half of 2008. However, the entrance and exit can be situated toward Susquehanna Road, thereby avoiding the immediate school zone.

Q23. If a currently unidentified site on Susquehanna Road was selected, would the volunteer firefighters still use Fort Washington Avenue to respond to the firehouse?

A. The firefighters would still have to travel on Fort Washington Avenue to arrive at a firehouse on Susquehanna Road.

Q24. How many Township employees are volunteer firefighters with the Fort Washington Fire Company or neighboring fire companies?

A. The Township employs 15 volunteer firefighters. They do not respond to all calls, depending on the nature of the incident and their task at that time. Not all calls require numerous firefighters. The employees may be located throughout the township at the time of an emergency dispatch, and not necessarily at the municipal complex.

Q25. How many high school students are junior firefighters?

A. The fire company has 11 junior firefighters who attend the Upper Dublin High School and leave for emergency dispatches. There is an agreement between the school district, the fire company and the parents that the junior firefighters can leave school for an emergency dispatch. Junior firefighters are classified as members between the age of 16 and 18 years old. This privilege can be suspended or revoked if grades are unsatisfactory.

Q26. Does the Township need a firehouse in Maple Glen?

A. The concept of a substation in Maple Glen, which would be the third firehouse in the Township, was addressed in the Facilities Study Report of December 2007. It was determined that there was insufficient volunteer staffing available to adequately support a substation in this section of the Township. Moreover, a new main firehouse in the general area of the identified bulls-eye (see question 6 above) will provide adequate protection to Maple Glen.