

Fire Department continues commitment to excellence...

The new Central Fire Station stands tall over downtown Meridian, a brick and mortar testament to the continuing excellence of the Meridian Fire Department.

Opened in June, the \$3-million fire station is three stories tall and includes large bays, a hose drying tower, a training room, sleeping quarters, a kitchen for the firefighters, administrative offices and even a firefighter museum. As the firefighters moved in, so did the station's new mascot, a Dalmatian named Roxanne.

Another four-legged addition to the department is Schroeder, an accelerant detection canine acquired through the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms. Schroeder is trained to locate the source of a fire when arson is suspected, so he's a great help to arson investigators.

During the year, firefighters responded to more than 3,000 calls. When they weren't fighting fires, they were training or doing inspections in our community. The Public Safety Training Facility got plenty of use,

with firefighters logging in more than 2,800 hours of in-house training. The facility is also open to other agencies and a number of them—like the Naval Air Station Fire Department and the Choctaw Fire Department—took advantage of the opportunity to train their members close to home. In addition to the training they got locally, our Meridian firefighters also attended classes in a variety of specialties at the Mississippi Fire Academy, the national Fire Academy and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms.

Our Company Inspection Program is in its second year, with firefighters completing more than 100 inspections. The program allows local businesses to ensure that their facilities are fire safe and gives firefighters the opportunity to study the layouts of the businesses—handy information in the event of a fire.

About 1,500 additional inspections were made by the Fire Prevention Bureau, which continued its outreach to 4,700 school children and introduced fourth graders to Elmer, the department's new

robotics teaching tool, which educates kids about fire safety through song and speech.

Continuing to push toward a Class 3 Fire Rating, the department purchased a new rescue truck and an aerial truck. To improve communications among the stations and the battalion chiefs, new computers were installed in all seven stations.



JUST BEFORE THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY, THE MERIDIAN FIRE DEPARTMENT—CONSISTING PRIMARILY OF VOLUNTEERS—HAD AN ANNUAL BUDGET OF \$2,344. IN 1900, AT LEFT, THE CHIEF OF THE MERIDIAN FIRE DEPARTMENT MOTORED ABOUT IN THIS STYLISH CONVERTIBLE.



IN 2000, OFFICIALS AND INVITED GUESTS DEDICATED THE \$3-MILLION CENTRAL FIRE STATION AT A RIBBON CUTTING (BELOW).