

**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

Contact: Nick Wolda,
nwolda@thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov**The Woodlands Township Fire Department opens new Central Station**

THE WOODLANDS, TEXAS (April 24, 2013) – Firefighters and community leaders gathered for the official grand opening and dedication of The Woodlands Township Fire Department’s new Central Station. The facility is the hub of The Woodlands Fire Department which also houses the Township Emergency Operations Center, The Woodlands Fire Communication Center and The Woodlands Fire Administration offices. Personnel assigned to this station provide fire, rescue and EMS service while maintaining the established five-minute response criteria to Town Center and the Villages of Grogan’s Mill and Panther Creek.

“The Woodlands Fire Department is an elite fire department in the United States,” said The Woodlands Township Chairman Bruce Tough. “The Woodlands Fire Department has eight fire stations and a state of the art training center. The Central Fire Station contains the 911 Dispatch and The Emergency Operations Center serving the 105,000 residents and 2,000 businesses in The Woodlands. The Woodlands Township Board of Directors are committed to enhanced public safety by providing emergency medical and paramedic certification to all our firefighters to assist them in saving lives. The Township Board also provides funding for the latest technological equipment and state of the art facilities to protect the property of our residents and businesses. The Board has set a five minute response time for the Fire Department to further demonstrate our commitment to public safety and to support the continued growth and expansion of our businesses and residential community.”

Mr. Tough continued, “The Insurance Service Office (ISO) rates fire departments on a scale of 1-10, 1 being the best. This summer, The Woodlands Township will be reevaluated by the ISO, and it is anticipated that our community will receive the highest rating, ISO 1. There are fewer than 60 fire departments out of 58,000 in the United States that hold this distinction. We should all be very proud of The Woodlands Fire Department and The Township’s commitment to public safety and the welfare of our citizens.”

The 26,610-square-foot fire station, located at 9951 Grogan’s Mill Road, includes four apparatus bays, living quarters, 12 dorm rooms, administrative offices, conference/study rooms, work rooms, a decontamination room and a physical wellness area. It is equipped with a fire engine, command vehicle, ladder truck, rescue boat, attack vehicle and a Montgomery County Hospital District unit.

“The Woodlands Fire Department is committed to providing our residents a high standard of care,” said Fire Chief Alan B. Benson. “We now have eight stations and an emergency training center that serves our approximately 44-square mile community with excellent service.”



Speakers for the event included The Woodlands Township Chairman Bruce Tough, The Woodlands Fire Department Chief Alan B. Benson, and Bill Neill, who was the first fire chief of The Woodlands Fire Department. Todd Stephens, district director for U.S. Congressman Kevin Brady's office, presented the station with a United States flag. Janet Stieben, chief of staff for Texas Senator Tommy Williams' office, presented the station with a Texas flag.

Vickie McMillan, a wildlife conservation artist, presented a 70" x 30" piece of artwork to the station that was painted by more than 1,000 children and adults during last year's Children's Festival to honor those who lost their homes, as well as the firefighters who helped them, during the 2011 Montgomery County wildfires.

The Board of Directors then participated with the firefighters in observing two traditions: the uncoupling of fire hoses followed by physically pushing the engine into the station. Both are old fire service traditions signifying that the station and the firefighters are prepared and ready for the next call of service.

Following the dedication of the building, a ceremony was held at the front of the facility for the Central Station Memorial. The memorial is built around the concept of three components that are significant to the fire service—a bell, a water feature and fire—and is dedicated to the remembrance of those firefighters who perished while protecting others. During the ceremony, Volunteer Chaplain Steve Vaughn led the gathering in a moment of silence to remember the public safety personnel who recently lost their lives in the West, Texas, plant explosion.

The architect of the facility was Joiner Partnership, Inc. and the contractor was Durotech, Inc. Funding for the facility was provided from proceeds from The Woodlands Township 2009 general obligation bond.

For more information on The Woodlands Fire Department, please call 281-367-3444. For more information on The Woodlands Township government, please call 281-210-3800 or visit www.thewoodlandstowship-tx.gov.

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Please see attached pages for photos and cutlines from the event.



PHOTO:

The Woodlands Fire Department celebrated the grand opening and dedication of its newly rebuilt Central Station, located at 9951 Grogan's Mill Road, with more than 250 guests. The station serves as the hub of The Woodlands Fire Department.



PHOTO:

The Woodlands Township Board of Directors, flanked by two Woodlands Fire Department firefighters, took part in the tradition of uncoupling the hoses to mark the grand opening of the newly rebuilt Central Station. From left, Driver Operator Joe Hartman, Township President and General Manager Don Norrell, Director Mike Bass, Director Jeff Long, Director Nelda Luce Blair, Fire Chief Alan B. Benson, Chairman Bruce Tough, Treasurer Gordy Bunch, Vice Chairman Peggy S. Hausman and Driver Operator Bryan Crivelli.



PHOTO:

The Woodlands Fire Department firefighters engage in the tradition of pushing the engine into the newly rebuilt Central Station. The tradition dates back to the 19th century when fire departments had horse-drawn “engines” that had to be pushed back into the station after a service call.