

Claymont Fire Company ushers in new era of fire technology

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Claymont, Del. —

The Claymont Fire Company has opened their garage doors to the public to show off their newly-constructed fire station.

“This is a big day in our history,” said Company President Tom DiCristofaro during an emotional speech to 100 Claymont residents who gathered for the station’s grand opening ceremony on June 22.

DiCristofaro thanked the residents whose donations helped build the \$4 million station, and the Brandywine Hundred firefighters who supported the company during the 2.5-year building project.

Dignitaries cut ribbons in front of the station’s eight garage doors and firefighters pushed two fire trucks through them to officially open the station. Residents were invited to wander through the building, explore rooms and examine equipment.

Claymont resident Amy DiSabatino and her 2-year-old son, Nicholas, used the opportunity to investigate the inside of a rescue vehicle. DiSabatino was impressed by the new station.

“We are trying to build up Claymont, make it better, and I think this new fire station is a real asset,” she said.

The station was built on the same Philadelphia Pike site as the company’s previous station, but is about 16,000 square feet larger, said Chief Mark Harris. It has eight bays for vehicles – one more than the old station – and a second floor with training rooms and offices for the administrative staff.

“People see the trucks and hear the sirens and think that is it, but there is a lot that goes on behind the scenes,” said John Fannin, the company’s public information officer.

Those behind-the-scenes administrators now have their own offices, which will allow them to operate more efficiently, he said. The building also has a fitness room and a room specifically dedicated to training, so firefighters can learn new skills and improve onsite, Harris said.



More than 100 residents salute the flag flying above the Claymont Fire Station during the station's grand opening ceremony on June 22.



Claymont firefighters push a fire engine into one of their new station's eight garage doors in a ceremony to officially open the station.

Continuous learning is a vital part of being a firefighter and the new station has state-of-the-art technology to streamline training, said E.J. Holden, a Claymont resident who has been a firefighter for 30 years.

Holden said the fire company updated equipment one piece at a time in their previous station, but having the newest technology at his fingertips in the new station will make his job easier.

“This is bringing in a new era of fire technology for Claymont,” he said. “It is like any other profession; you have to stay current with the technology.”

The station may be state-of-the-art, but the firefighters have not forgotten their history.

A fire engine made in 1928, the first engine the Claymont Fire Company owned, sits in the middle of the station, with six modern trucks and two ambulances surrounding it. Firefighter Don Lewis, Jr. said the old engine is his favorite part because it shows how far the company has come in its 80-year history.

The extra space allows trucks and ambulances to be lined up efficiently so firefighters can respond to calls faster, Fannin said, and the new dormitories allow firefighters to spend the night, ensuring the station is staffed 24 hours a day.

Mike Alloway, a 3-year veteran of the company, said his favorite feature is the TV room, with a 52-inch flat screen television and a collection of comfortable recliners. It is important that firefighters have a way to relax while they are on call, he said, because jumping into a truck in the middle of the night and speeding toward a fire is stressful.

After enduring tent-headquarters during reconstruction, moving into the new station was a huge relief, agreed Jim Herbert, a firefighter of two years. The tent was cold in the winter, hot in the summer and impossible to seal from the rain, he said. At times, rivers of rainwater ran across the floor during storms, which never failed to drench his boots.

The new station “is like a home away from home, only with eight garage doors,” he said.



Don Lewis, Jr., a Claymont firefighter, gives his family a tour of the company's newly constructed fire station during the grand opening ceremony.



Claymont Fire Company Chief Mark Harris, Ladies Auxilliary President Nancy Handlin and Fire Company President Tom DiCristofaro (left to right) cut a ribbon to open one of the Claymont Fire Company's brand new garages.



Brandywine Hundred resident Heather Newton tries to outfit her four children with plastic fire helmets inside the new training room of the Claymont Fire Station during the grand opening ceremony.



A group of Claymont residents examine an 80-year-old fire engine sitting in the center of the newly constructed Claymont Fire Station during the station's grand opening.



Tom DiChristofaro, president of the Claymont Fire Company, thanks the people who helped the company build its brand new station on the Philadelphia Pike.



Claymont firefighter Edwin Anderson hoists the fire company's flag for the first time at their new station.