

Newton's Fire Station 3 is officially open

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Posted Oct 27, 2017 at 2:31 PM

Updated Oct 27, 2017 at 2:31 PM

Situated in the heart of Newton Centre's commercial district, Fire Station 3 is the busiest of all the Newton fire stations. Until last year, it was also one of the shabbiest.

"That station was in deplorable condition. Getting this fire station updated and equipped was going to be a number one priority for me," said Mayor Setti Warren, about the conditions when he first took office.

In 2013 voters approved an override to pay for a new fire station and fire headquarters, which is now attached to Station 3.

On Oct. 26 the fire station had a "ribbon cutting" ceremony but instead of a traditional ribbon Fire Chief Bruce Proia and Warren unscrewed a fire house to signal the grand opening of the station.

Safety is key to the project. The way the new station is set up will save firefighters time when going to emergencies.

Now instead of pulling out onto Willow Street the trucks can pull onto Centre Street, which is anticipated to cut the response time. The new station will also be getting bi-fold doors, which take only about five seconds to open.

Previously, they had to open the doors, which could take up to 30 seconds, and then pull onto Willow Street, then Centre Street into oncoming traffic. It was less than ideal for addressing an emergency, remembers Fire Chief Bruce Proia.

"In a business where every second counts we will be saving close to a half a minute alone with these new bi-fold doors. We will be able to flush traffic on Centre Street in advance of our response with a wireless traffic signal pre-

emption system that will allow us to get through both Newton Center square, and the busy intersection of Comm Av and Centre Street in a faster and safer manner,” said Proia in his speech Thursday.

One of the other issues was the crowded bay area, where gear and equipment created tripping hazards. Now there are gear washers and driers as well as a room to store apparatus.

The washers and dryers are particularly important for firefighters for health reasons.

“We are learning more everyday day about the hazards associated with firefighting, especially the carcinogens that firefighters are exposed to and the high number of Firefighters being diagnosed with cancer because of it. We want to make sure personnel and their equipment get properly decontaminated and never enter into the clean living area of the station,” said Proia in his speech. “With that in mind we have added another gear washer and dryer as well as an equipment decontamination area.”

The new station will also have tech rescue trucks that were provided by a grant. Now 24 members of the fire department are trained between seven different specializations. The trucks are the latest technology which includes a life support unit and a boat rescue.

The new station also includes a new communication system and tower. The old radio tower was from 1928.

In addition to the fire station and headquarters, a new EOC or emergency operation center is now located in the building, which will provide a place for emergency response teams from across the city to gather during weather or safety emergencies.

The station and headquarters was projected to cost approximately \$20 million but it went over by \$4 million due to safety features and including building a wall over an MWRA aqueduct, which allowed for trucks to exit onto Centre Street directly.

Firefighters are already in the building and it is in full use.