



Deluge No. 1

Niagara Engine Company No. 6, Inc.

Schoharie Fire Department

ORGANIZED 1832

P. O. Box 428, 133 Grand St.
Schoharie, New York 12157-0428

America's First Fire Engine — 1731
On Display At Old Stone Fort Museum, Schoharie, New York

Dear Brother and Sister Firefighters,

It is with great pride and humility and hope that we write this letter on behalf of every volunteer member of Niagara Engine Company No. 6 of the Schoharie Fire Department. We were flood victims, and now we are flood survivors with a tremendous job ahead of us, and we are asking support of our brother and sister firefighters. The Schoharie Fire Department provides fire protection and rescue services to a historic, rural village in upstate New York, approximately 40 miles southwest of Albany and 150 miles north of New York City.

While not a single life was lost when Hurricane Irene visited Schoharie in August 2011, the damage throughout the area was catastrophic. More than 275 homes and businesses suffered significant water damage - in other words, over four feet of water on the ground floor. Roughly 80 percent of all structures in just the Village of Schoharie alone were damaged, mostly by muddy and contaminated waters that flooded basements, rose 4 to 8 feet up the walls of their first floors and left behind a residue prone to mildew. Roads were wiped out, phone lines and communication systems were disabled, commerce was adversely affected and transportation became nearly impossible. We watched as dirty water collapsed the foundations and consumed the houses of many friends and fellow fire department members.

Luckily, assistance was provided by the National Guard, a USAR team from Ohio, multiple swift-water rescue teams and fire departments from all across New York State. Without this mutual aid, there is absolutely no way that our fire department would have been able to perform as well as it did during the 13 days of emergency response operations. A disaster such as this put the word brotherhood into action.

With more than eight feet of water in our fire station, we lost all of our fund raising equipment, many current and historical records, some gear and equipment, and have since taken refuge in an old, cramped, tractor repair shop not nearly big enough to house all of our apparatus. At this point in time, it is likely that our fire station is totally unsalvageable and that we have to look at purchasing land for a new station.

Our community is facing financial exhaustion. Locally, Irene left \$30 million dollars in damage in its wake. Nearly every business within our fire district was affected. While some businesses and residents are undergoing renovations, not everyone is returning. Fewer homes and businesses means that those remaining will have to carry more of the tax load. Relief from insurance and FEMA support will not come close to covering all the damage and our community and fire department are in desperate need of help.

All in all, the financial recovery of our fire company (and consequently the public we protect and the neighboring fire departments for which we provide mutual aid) will take years. Seeking local funding is simply not feasible for us given our current situation. It would require tax increases that none of our elected officials can approve in the current state of our economy. Likewise, our annual fund drive has been put off indefinitely. With that being said, we are turning towards our brother and sister firefighters nationwide, seeking “mutual aid” in the form of charitable contributions. We are well aware of the hardships that all fire departments are facing today, but we are hopeful that perhaps other departments, in better situations than ourselves, might be charitable, and willing and able to steer aid in our direction.

If you have any questions or concerns, we can be reached anytime. Thank you in advance for your consideration. Stay safe.

Marty Pierce, Chief

John Borst III, 1st Lieutenant

Schoharie Fire Department

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