

EWING TOWNSHIP FLOODING DUE TO REMNANTS OF TROPICAL STORM IDA September 1, 2021

Overview

Chief Douglas Brower, Station 31

Throughout Ewing Township, flash flooding from Tropical Storm Ida's heavy rains flooded roadways and many homes as local creeks and streams overflowed. Over 30 victims were removed from homes and disabled vehicles due to the 6-8 inches of rain that fell upon Ewing Township on September 1, 2021. The first responders in Ewing Township responded to multiple calls for assistance, the majority being between 7:30 p.m. and midnight. The three fire entities of Ewing Township, Prospect Heights Fire Co. (Station 31), Ewing Fire Division (Station 30) and West Trenton Fire Co. (Station 33), worked together all across Ewing Township. There is no doubt in many people's minds that lives could have easily been lost without the response, coordination, and expertise of all responding Ewing firefighters on this evening of September 1, 2021!

Two specific swift water incident locations are noted below, where specialized swift water skills were put into action where lives were in peril: the area of Ewingville Rd. and Whitehead Rd. Ext. and the area of 85 Jacobs Creek Rd. and Bear Tavern Rd. These were performed by firefighters from all three fire companies with swift water certifications at the operations and technical levels and were supported by the balance of firefighters responding to these calls.

Once the rain began falling around 7 p.m., the rain became heavy very quickly. The first calls for water rescue came in at 7:38 p.m. at the Grand Ave. train overpass with a vehicle stuck in the high-rising water with occupants. The last call for swift water rescue was at 1:30 a.m. on September 2, 2021 on 4th Street. All three fire companies with multiple units responded from incident-to-incident. Once it was obvious we were into a major flooding incident, Chief Douglas Brower established a command post at Station 30 in the middle of the Township and coordinated response efforts from there in conjunction with Ewing Police and Ewing EMS and Mercer County Central Communications.

Many of the water rescues in Ewing Township included multiple calls at the same location throughout the evening. A quick summary of locations for water rescue assignments in Ewing Township follows:

Scotch Rd. train overpass	Sullivan Way @ TCC	Olden Ave. @ Arctic Pkwy ++
Grand Ave. train overpass	Prospect St. @ car wash ++	Olden Ave. @ Parkside Ave. ++
Stratford Ave.	Terrace Blvd. ++	Bear Tavern Rd.
Spruce St. @ 4 th St. ++	Pingree Ave. (between Concord & Berwyn)	Olden Ave. @ Pennington Rd.
W. Farrel Ave.	Jacobs Creek Rd. (area of #2 and #85)	Rosedale Ave. (multiple locations)
Carlton Ave. (bridge)	Ewingville Rd. @ Whitehead Rd. Ext.	Parkway Ave. (multiple locations)
Ewingville Rd. @ Federal City Rd.	Lower Ferry Rd. ++ (multiple locations)	5 th St. @ Columbia Ave.

++ multiple incidents

There were other types of calls during the evening as well. The locations above are just water rescue in incidents. Ewing units also handled calls for a residential smoke condition and odors of natural gas.

Two additional noteworthy responses:

- Station 31 provided swift water rescue mutual aid to Lawrence Twp. at the area of the intersection of Rt. 1 and Baker's Basin Rd. for a major flood evacuation of two motels with occupants trapped by rising waters and also a fire in one of the motel rooms at the same time.

- Station 33 responded the next day, Sept. 2nd, into Manville, NJ which was experiencing major flooding of two rivers there. They were called for their water rescue boat with an onboard fire pump on it to assist with the firefighting of burning homes in the middle of floodwaters.

Ewingville Road & Whitehead Road Extension Water Rescue Narrative

Captain Kyle Brower, Division 30

Squad 30 responded from the street to above address for a swift water rescue. Squad 30 arrived with Ewing PD on scene to find multiple vehicles partially submerged in flooded waters in the roadway and two victims attempting to get out of the water to high ground. Victims were walking/swimming towards Squad 30, and a female victim along with a Ewing PD officer was found to be trapped on the guardrail near the creek and wood line on the other side of the intersection in very fast moving swift water.

Captain Brower immediately removed the two victims walking/swimming towards Squad 30 and moved them to high ground with both refusing medical treatment. Squad 30 crew then immediately directed their efforts on the Ewing PD officer and female victim trapped on the guardrail, treating that as a priority. With no boats available at that time, Squad 30's crew, staffed with all swift water technicians, started setting up an anchor point on the lawn of 180 Ewingville Rd. with multiple rope bags. Captain Brower tied off to the rope and entered the water up stream and swam to both victims on the guardrail. Captain Brower reached both victims. The female victim was being held on to the guardrail by Ewing PD Officer Justin Quinlan (badge 219). Without a portable radio, Captain Brower utilized Officer Quinlan's portable radio and radioed to PD supervisors on the lawn of 180 Ewingville to advise Squad 30's crew to send the second swimmer, Firefighter Oscar Estrada, to him with life vests.

Firefighter Estrada swam from upstream to Captain Brower's location on the guard rail with the victims with a life vest. Captain Brower advised Officer Quinlan of his plan of removing the female victim first and that Firefighter Estrada would remove him second. Captain Brower put the life vest on the female victim and advised her he was hooking to the back of her life vest to be attached and that they were going to enter the water together being pulled back to the other side of the intersection via the rope attached to Captain Brower. The female victim grabbed ahold of Captain Brower facing him, Captain Brower along with the help of officer Quinlan, turned the victim around, hooking onto the back of her life vest. Captain Brower gave signal to Firefighters Michele Anderson and Jeffrey Ritter on the anchor point and entered the water with the victim. Captain Brower and the female victim were pulled downstream and back to 180 Ewingville Rd. via rope.

Captain Brower detached himself from the victim and the victim was turned over to Ewing PD and Ambulance 139. Firefighter Estrada, still with Officer Quinlan on the guardrail, was sent over via rope already attached to him, another life vest for the officer. Officer Quinlan removed his PD tactical vest, donned the life vest and Firefighter Estrada attached himself to Officer Quinlan. Firefighter Estrada advised him that the same thing was being done that Captain Brower conducted with the female victim. Firefighter Estrada signaled Firefighters Anderson and Ritter on the anchor, and both Firefighter Estrada and Officer Quinlan entered the water, being pulled downstream and then over back to 180 Ewingville Rd. via rope. Firefighter Estrada unhooked from Officer Quinlan and Officer Quinlan was turned over to PD supervisors and Ambulance 139. Both the female victim and Officer Quinlan refused medical treatment and were uninjured. The rest of Rescue 33's crew checked 3 more vehicles on the other side of the bridge and found them to be unoccupied. Tower 31 and SQ-

31's crew checked two vehicles on the top of the bridge removing two more occupants to high ground out of the water, all refusing medical treatment.

After all victims were removed, accounted for and all vehicles checked clear, crews started picking up equipment and went available, responding to the next assignments. All apparatus and crews at this time were responding and operating in storm emergency mode.

85 Jacobs Creek Road Water Rescue Narrative Chief Michael Anderson, Station 33

Station 33 and 31 were dispatched to 85 Jacobs Creek Road for an elderly male trapped in his house that was flooded and unable to exit due to entire lower level of the house being under water due to the Jacobs Creek flooding way beyond its banks. Chief 33 and Marine 33-1 responded along with Station 31 units. Chief 33, Mike Anderson, arrived on scene and established command along with Utility 33 and Marine 33-1. Ewing Police were on scene stating that a male was on the second floor of the house but unable to exit due to the creek's rising water had put the entire first floor of the structure under water. Utility 33 with Marine 33-1 arrived and Assistant Chief 33 Carmen Mazzuca and Captain Brian Brandmaier along with Firefighter Kacper Zajdel went down the steep driveway and evaluated the conditions and requested Chief Anderson to come down the driveway to discuss an operational rescue plan. Chief Anderson transferred command to Deputy Chief Tom Leese then became the Operations Sector Chief for the incident.

At the time of the incident, Jacobs Creek flooding conditions were over twenty to twenty-five feet above normal conditions. This is evaluated as a Class V in the International Scale of River Difficulty, making water rescue extremely hazardous with constantly changing conditions. Add to the conditions heavy rain and darkness. Just a stone's throw upstream in Hopewell Township less than one mile away from the incident at 85 Jacobs Creek Road, a resident of Raritan, New Jersey perished in her vehicle. The vehicle was swamped by the raging waters where the creek overtook Pennington-Titusville Road.

Chief Anderson & Captain Brandmaier evaluated the extreme flooding conditions surrounding the house and resident at 85 Jacobs Creek Road and identified no immediate danger to the victim with him being on the second floor of the residence. A rescue plan was devised using Marine 33-1, an inflatable boat. Personnel rigged multiple lines to a tree upstream with additional tag lines for controlling the boat to the second-floor deck of the home to remove the victim from the house. Fully equipped swift water personnel from Stations 33 & 31 were briefed on the plan and assignments were distributed amongst the team.

Captain Brandmaier's first attempt to throwing a rope bag around a tree further in the creek for an anchor point was unsuccessful so Captain Brandmaier suggested the use of a wooden guiderail in place along the steep driveway. While lines were being tied and anchor points being secured to the wooden railing with specialized rigging to the boat by Chief Anderson, Captain Brandmaier, FF Kacper Zajdel, FF Don Hilti and Assistant Chief 31 Eric St. Amand. Equipment runners were FF's Rob Horlowski, Raleigh Luz and FF Trey Hill. Additional lines were added on the port and starboard side of the stern to steer the boat across the rushing water to the second story deck.

Assistant Chief 33 Carmen Mazzuca and Firefighter Nicholas Hall were assigned as the boat rescue crew. Chief Anderson directed the crews with verbal commands of which line to release or retrieve for

the operation. The boat was ferried out in an attempt to reach the deck but was unsuccessful due to the volume of water pushing around the front of the house and the angle of the anchor point on the wooden guiderail. Operations Sector Chief Anderson saw that the rushing water was too much for the boat with the anchor being not far enough to reach the planned area on the deck. Chief Anderson terminated this attempt and directed the lineman to retrieve the boat back to shore.

Chief Anderson requested to make another attempt, tying to the first anchor point that was initially planned. A rope was tossed by Assistant Chief Mazzuca around the initial tree which was successful and the anchor lines were moved further out in the creek for a better angle to the second floor deck. Additional equipment of a flat head axe and an attic ladder was retrieved by FF's Hill to reach the upper section of the deck. The deck railing had to be removed after the boat was in place and secured.

Once all rigging lines were in place, the boat was ferried back out into the flooded water to the deck. When the stern of the boat reached the deck, it was secured to a deck support column for stability of the inflatable boat. Assistant Chief Mazzuca used the axe to remove a section of the railing around the deck for access and ease to evacuate the victim from the deck. The attic ladder was raised in the boat to the upper section of the deck to extricate the victim.

The victim came out of the second floor onto the deck and was given a life preserver. Chief Anderson noticed the male had the life vest on backwards. A boat crew member climbed the ladder to secure the life preserver on the victim correctly. Assistant Chief Mazzuca climbed the ladder and properly secured the life preserver on the victim while FF Hall maintained stability of the ladder. The male victim went back into the home to get his dog, stating he was not leaving without his pet.

Chief Anderson told the boat crew to have him wrap the dog in a blanket or towel to keep the dog calm and protect against biting the rescuers. The male exited the house with the dog wrapped in a blanket and handed it to Assistant Chief Mazzuca. The boat was untied and ferried over to the shoreline. Now out of harm's way, the dog was handed over to a neighbor for safe keeping. The crew then ferried the boat back to the deck and re-secured the boat and extricated the male from the second floor. The male was removed from the boat along with the crew. The male refused any medical treatment and went with the neighbor who was comforting his dog.

This was truly a team effort by everyone! The complexity of this swift water rescue that included the timely rigging of multiple ropes and mechanical advantages and coordination of all personnel assured a safe outcome of rescuing a victim and his dog from extremely hazardous swift water conditions.

RECOGNITION

Due to the above events, the following individuals are being recognized:

Life saving awards:

- Ewingville and Whitehead Road:
From Division 30 Captain Kyle Brower, FF Michele Anderson, FF Oscar Estrada and from Station 33, FF Jeffrey Ritter
- 85 Jacobs Creek Road:
Station 33 Chief Michael Anderson, Asst. Chief Carmen Mazucca, Captain Brian Brandmaier, and from Station 31 Nicholas Hall

General Commendation Awards

Fire personnel who responded to water rescue incidents throughout the evening of Sept. 1, 2021 and directly impacted the rescue of occupants from flooded homes and vehicles as well as supported the lifesaving actions of their peers at Ewingville Rd. and Whitehead Rd. and 85 Jacobs Creek Rd.

Station 31	Station 30	Station 33
Matthew Abelowitz	Christopher Aldridge	Chief Michael Anderson
John Bozek	Michele Anderson	Captain Brian Brandmaier
Chief Douglas Brower	Captain Kyle Brower	Joseph Canulli III
Cameron Brower	Drew Cascais	Matthew Canulli
Sean Cummings	Oscar Estrada	Stephanie Canulli
Charles Gibson	Stephen Ettinger	Patrick Ferry
James Hall Sr.	Captain Douglas Fort	Donald Hilty
Asst. Chief Eric St. Amand	Captain Daniel McManimon	Asst. Chief Carmen Mazzuca
Nicholas Hall		Jeffrey Ritter
William (Trey) Hill III		Kacper Zajdel
Robert Horlowski		
Deputy Chief Thomas Leese		
Raleigh Luz		
Captain Kyle Moody		
Captain Keegan Slate		