

Gamewell Fire Alarm System

August 27, 2018

History of the system

- The fire alarm telegraph system was developed in 1852.
- The Gamewell Fire Alarm Telegraph Company was later formed in 1879 and continues to support the system today.
- The Town has several fire alarm circuits that run throughout town on an aerial circuit connected on telephone poles.
- We also have a multi-pair cable that runs from Station 1 on Main Street to Station 2

History continued.

- In neighborhoods west of South County Trail the majority of street boxes are connected via underground conduit.
- All of these “boxes” are connected via low voltage wiring and connected back to the fire station dispatch center to a decoding device.
- This decoding device is programmed for every fire alarm box in Town, both street and master boxes.

History continued

- In each Fire Alarm box is a brass code wheel.
- The number of teeth on the brass wheel correspond to the “box” number which is transmitted to the fire department 4 times.
- Prior to fire department pagers a horn on top of both fire stations was connected to the circuit as well and when a box tripped into the station the horn would sound alerting volunteer firefighters that a box was coming in.

Gamewell System Today

- The Town currently has three types of “boxes”
- Master Boxes total 115
- Street Boxes total 93
- Radio Boxes total 10
- This a street box the focus of this evenings discussion.



Master Boxes

- Master Boxes are found on commercial buildings, schools, places of assembly etc.
- Master Boxes are connected to an interior fire alarm system and when the system is activated internally it trips the master box notifying fire department.
- Master Boxes are required by the Fire Code. They are not the focus of tonight's discussion.

Street Boxes

- As discussed earlier they are connected to telephone poles and pedestals throughout the community.
- They are not required by code, standard or law.
- The Gamewell system can be of great value in the event of a major storm such as a blizzard or hurricane.
- The system runs on emergency power at the fire station so it always has power.

Maintenance of System

- Maintaining the system can be costly and very time consuming.
- For aerial wire, trimming annually, testing and cosmetic care can be a great strain on local resources.
- Testing is recommended at a minimum of annually, I cannot say with any certainty if its been done recently or back when I was the Chief of the Department. All I can say for sure is we have 45 not working and I want to focus on that issue tonight.

Maintenance continued



Maintenance continued



Testing Street Boxes

- We tested all 93 existing street boxes in Town during the week of August 6-10th.
- With the testing completed of all 93 street boxes we identified 45 that would not work and 5 that need some serious maintenance to be functional.
- 44 out of the 45 not working are west of South County Trail.

Fixing versus removing

- It is difficult to put a dollar value on fixing the ones presently not working. With the majority of them being supplied by underground conduit it “could” be a monumental task of troubleshooting the circuits to bring them back on line.
- With the vast majority of people having a cellphone and many homeowners with a home fire alarm system it may be time to start the removal process.

Recommendation

- The Gamewell Fire Alarm System has served the Town of East Greenwich for over 60 years. However with new technology such as radio boxes, cell phone usage and the internet it is our recommendation that street boxes be removed west of Rte 2 and a phase out of all others be started.
- Questions.....