

Dear Island Residents and Fire Board Commissioners,

I want to begin by letting you know how much I value this community and your support. I am currently recovering from surgery, which will keep me off the island for the next 4–6 weeks. While I wish I could be with you in person, please rest assured that our fire district remains fully covered during my absence.

Over the past year, I've heard some concerns about our fire units, and I'd like to address them directly. As you know, the hurricanes devastated our fleet, and every unit we had was deemed a total loss by insurance. Since then, I have worked diligently to rebuild our fleet within the financial limits of our district. This required us to purchase used vehicles, which I believe were the right choices for our needs and are capable of handling any emergency we face.

While used equipment can sometimes present unexpected repair needs, please know that this is not due to a lack of care. Our crews inspect and run every unit daily. Each of our vehicles is also equipped with 4x4 capability—an absolute necessity for our island terrain.

Our Current Fleet:

- 2001 HME Engine – 500 gallons, 1,000 GPM with CAFS (compressed air foam system)
- 2014 International Tender – 2,000 gallons, 1,000 GPM
- 1991 Top Kick GMC Tender – 2,000 gallons, 500 GPM
- 1990 Military Truck Brush Truck – 2,000 gallons, 500 GPM
- 2003 Transport Unit (Ambulance)

I also want to take a moment to reflect on the recent structure fire on Conch Shell. First and foremost, our team did an outstanding job under very challenging circumstances. At the time, our primary engine was off island for repairs, leaving us with three units. Tender 191 responded and is fully capable of handling any fire. Brush 191 also made it to the scene but experienced a mechanical failure. Thanks to quick thinking and teamwork—including Jeff, who retrieved batteries from the station—the unit was quickly brought back into service. We later discovered the issue was due to a bad alternator, which has since been repaired. I also want to thank Firefighter Cliff Linzalone for his help in keeping our equipment operational.

As for Tender 192, a starter failure occurred shortly after the engine went out for repairs. The starter was replaced, but the unit required additional work and is currently off-island being serviced.

Despite these challenges, I am proud of how our team responded:

- **4 minutes after dispatch:** Our crew arrived on scene.
- **10 minutes later:** Both victims were rescued from the pool and transported for medical care.
- **3 minutes after that:** The structure collapsed.

At that point, our efforts shifted to protecting nearby homes and the island as a whole. This would not have been as successful without the incredible support of our community, neighboring districts, LCEC, and residents like Jeff and Sherman, who worked alongside us to clear debris and keep the fire under control.

In the coming month, we will be discussing mitigation efforts to strengthen our response capabilities even further.

Thank you for your trust, patience, and partnership as we continue working together to keep our island safe.

With gratitude and respect,

Jesse J. Cottrell
Chief, Upper Captiva Fire & Rescue
Station 191