

## **RENAMING OF THE GUYANA FIRE SERVICE TO THE GUYANA FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICE**

Cabinet, today January 2, 2013 approved a name change from the **Guyana Fire Service** to the **Guyana Fire and Rescue Service**.

It may be recalled that the institution currently referred to as the Guyana Fire Service was first established as the British Guiana Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service. The ambulance services offered by this Department were extended to the public in case of an emergency or as a paid private service in the event that a person could not walk and had to be conveyed by a stretcher to a hospital. Subsequent to the renaming of the Guyana Fire Brigade and Ambulance Service to the Guyana Fire Service, the ambulance services were handed over to the Ministry of Health primarily for use at the public hospitals.

This meant that the ambulance services previously rendered to members of the public by the Fire Service were curtailed; with the Department primarily responsible for responding with fire appliances to emergencies and being placed on standby at the airport.

However, while it appears to the public that the Guyana Fire Service tends to fires only, the Department has also been involved in rescue operations especially road accident emergencies, 'gain entries' and high angle rescues using hydraulic platforms. Fire-fighters have also benefited from training in first aid, land search and rescue, chemical incidents, road accidents rescue and other humanitarian related training. Additionally, the Guyana Fire Service played a crucial role during the 2005 flood as part of the Joint Services Coordinating Centre operated in tandem with the Civil Defence Commission (CDC) and the other Disciplined Services.

Indeed, fire-fighters throughout the world have been tasked with responsibilities other than fire fighting e.g. road accident emergencies; high angle rescues; land search and rescue; building collapses; ambulance services; disasters caused by earth quakes, tornadoes and typhoons; salvaging; and chemical spills. An examination of the names and functions of Fire Departments from other countries reveals their roles as performing both fire and rescue services.

As evidence of its intention to take on a more visible role in rescue operations, the Guyana Fire Service will soon acquire three (3) ambulances as part of its vehicular response apparatus in addition to other rescue resources supportive of the strategy to transform the Department into a modern responsive institution.

The name change to **Guyana Fire and Rescue Service** would reflect the role of the Department as one which offers services based on the resources and skills similar to other Fire Departments around the world.

Legislative provision would have to be made to reflect the change from “Guyana Fire Service” to “**Guyana Fire and Rescue Service**”. Accordingly, the Ministry of Home Affairs will seek to have the necessary amendments made to the Fire Service Act, Cap 22:02; the Fire Prevention Act, Cap 22:01; and the Fire Service Regulations in order to fully implement Cabinet’s decision.

**2<sup>nd</sup> January 2013**