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# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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## INTRODUCTION

Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. (KLVFD or Department) is a not-for-profit corporation that consists of approximately 50 volunteer members. It is a combination fire department that employs 3 full time firefighters, 4 part-time firefighters. The Department was formed at the end of May 2013. This transition was primarily a management change – the Department maintains and continues the long history of quality fire service to the Key Largo community and provides 24-hour a day fire rescue services to the residents and visitors of Key Largo. The Department continues to operate out of two fire stations. Our North Key Largo Fire Station, number 25, is located at 220 Reef Drive at the intersection of U.S. Highway 1/Overseas Highway and State Road 905 at mile marker 106. Our South Key Largo Fire Station is located at 1 East Drive at the 99.8-mile marker; the intersection of Overseas Hwy. and East Dr.

Key Largo is an island community of approximately 11,000 yearly residents. During the season, on weekends and on holidays the population of Key Largo increases dramatically. There is an influx of tourists and winter residents (a.k.a. “snow-birds”) who are part-time residents that live in Key Largo for the winter. Visitation is year-round due to the subtropical climate of the area and the lure of world class fishing and diving. Key Largo is home to the largest living coral reef in the U.S. located in nearby Biscayne National Park, it’s crystal clear protected waters, largest man-

made reefs – sunken U.S.S. Spiegel Grove, Duane and Bibb. There are also numerous smaller shipwrecks and add to that, an exotic natural and relaxed atmosphere.

Key Largo is the first key or island of a string of islands off of the southernmost tip of Florida that stretch for 100 linear miles from Key Largo to Key West that make up the Florida Keys in Monroe County, Florida. The population of Monroe County is approximately 73,000 with a visitation count of over 4 million. The island of Key Largo is approximately 27 miles long and consists of approximately 22,000 acres. Key Largo Fire Department’s mandatory jurisdiction extends to the water’s edge of the Florida Bay and the Atlantic Ocean and a number of small islands in those waters as well as numerous canals and marinas that are all bordered by resort, residential and boating communities. Homes in the area consist of mobile homes and trailers, live-aboard boats/vessels, homes built prior to quality construction codes, as well as fully code-compliant homes.

Key Largo has seasonal tropical storms, a hurricane season as well as a dry/fire season.

KLVFD operates as the Key Largo incident command center, emergency operations center and shelter during tropical storms and hurricanes as well as for any hazardous or radiological emergencies that might occur as a result of an accident from the nearby Turkey Point Nuclear Power Plant. To be equipped with the ability to respond to any and all emergencies or activities that might occur during these times is imperative.

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# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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The responsibility for fire, rescue, and EMS services in the Key Largo area falls under the Key Largo Fire Rescue and EMS Special Independent District formed in 2006. The District has the authority to levy and collect ad valorem taxes for fire, rescue and EMS services from the taxpayers of Key Largo. The District has a 5-member Board of Commissioners that operates under the "Florida Sunshine Law" and oversees the budget and administration of the Key Largo District.

## LEGAL DESCRIPTOR

Monroe County Ordinance 035-1996 states the boundaries for District 6:

*That part of Key Largo from South Bay Harbor Drive and Lobster Lane to the southern boundary of the intersection of the right-of-way County roads 905 and 905A, plus Cross Key up to the US1 MM112.5 (Morris Lane/Manatee Bay Marina).*



## MISSION STATEMENT

*The Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department is committed to providing the highest level of fire and rescue services possible through community involvement, education and prevention. Our team of friendly and dedicated professionals will strive for excellence to serve our community in paradise.*

## DEPARTMENT CHARACTERISTICS

You will see from the organizational chart (*Attach. #1*) that Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department is structured in such a way to allow for the highest level of professional coverage by identifying the positions necessary to accomplish this and ensure proper checks and balances and chain of command. The nature of the mostly volunteer / combination department does not always allow us to fill every position, but we have identified the necessity and opportunity for each. We have been fortunate that in difficult economic times when budgetary constraints are an ever-tightening reality and volunteerism is ever decreasing, we have managed to retain and recruit an impressive number of volunteers. Additionally, we have been creative in identifying our needs for full-time uninterrupted coverage and been allowed to meet some of those needs with the addition of full time paid career personnel. The Department continues to meet and exceed State of Florida requirements for certification requirements for paid and volunteer personnel and to ensure that all personnel are well trained and physically fit.

Our combat operations team consists of a volunteer fire chief, safety committee, full-time paid Captain who also oversees training, 1 full-time paid Lieutenant, 5 full-time Driver Engineer/EMT/Station supervisors, and 2 local volunteer Driver/Engineers. Our full-time paid staff at Station 24 handle office related administrative issues and support both the combat operations and the administrative operations of the department. The combat operations handle all fire rescue activities from structural firefighting to fire prevention and education, pre-fire planning, hydrant inspection, training and health and safety.

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# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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Our corporate operations consist of volunteer positions as Corporate President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and three Directors. The Corporate Board of Directors oversees the Fire Chief, the membership and Corporate business matters. The Corporation also operates in compliance with the Florida Sunshine Law.

## **COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHALLENGES/VULNERABILITIES – Fire Department Response**

### **Demographics**

Key Largo is a small island community that is home for many senior citizens. The U.S. 2010 Census has the population of Key Largo at 10,433. Senior Citizens age 65 years and older comprise 18 percent of the population. Many residents of the area own second homes or are snow-birds that come seasonally and make their residence in another city and state. Most of these individuals are retirees 65 years and older. Children 18 years and under according to the U.S. 2010 Census comprise 16.7 percent of the population and Children 5 years and under according to the U.S. 2010 Census comprise 4.0 percent of the population. There are approx... 8,459 housing units per the 2010 US Census It is important to note that visitation to Key Largo is year-round with the heaviest influx during snow bird season (November through April) and Spring Break Season (March through May). Weekend visitation is extremely high. The local Chamber of Commerce estimates that the annual visitation to Monroe County can easily exceed 4 – 5 million per year. Many of these visitors spend their time in our various households/homes in the Keys.

### **Challenges/Vulnerabilities**

Key Largo residents and visitors reside in a variety of different types of homes. In addition to regular “CBS structure neighborhoods”, Key Largo has 7 trailer communities with approximately 2,800 residents (U.S. 2010 CENSUS); marinas that house live-aboard vessels (approximately 5 communities, with approximately 55 boats and 80-90 residents); and homes that were constructed prior to the development of quality building codes and “grandfathered” so that they are not required to meet current quality building and fire codes. The vulnerability for fire hazards to exist in these environments is great.

Visitation has doubled in the past 3 years accordingly to recent tourism figures. Approximately 89 percent of visitors whether it be visiting and staying in Key Largo or passing through Key Largo do so via automobile. This would account for the large percentage/number of annual motor vehicle accidents.

## **RESPONSE - INCIDENT STATISTICS**

### **EMERGENCY INCIDENT/CALL VOLUME 2016**

**(2016) Total emergency call volume** for all incidents was **924**. This is an increase of 121 calls from 2015.

**Total fire related incidents were 30 incidents** or 3.2 percent of the total call volume in **2016 (924)**.

**Motor Vehicle accidents totaled 164** and comprised 17.7 percent of our total call volume in **2016 (924)**. This is an increase of 67 calls from 2015.

# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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The Department provided **mutual aid** to neighboring fire Departments **16 times in 2016**. This is an increase of 9 calls for mutual aid from 2015.

Since the Department has a great working relationship with Key Largo EMS and are assisting with EMS calls more often now, the number of incidents where we provided **EMS or Medical assistance** totaled **596 calls** or 64.5 percent of the total call volume in **2016 (924)**. This is an increase of 90 calls since 2015.

## EMERGENCY INCIDENT RESPONSE 2016

**Average Attendance** at NFIRS (total) incidents **(924) in 2016** was **4**. **This is a decrease of .45 attending firefighter's form 2015.**

**Average Response time** to all NFIRS (total) incidents **(924) in 2016** was **1 minutes**. (From dispatch to going enroute)

Average Travel Time was **3.41 minutes**.

## UNAUTHORIZED/ILLEGAL BURNING 2016

The total number of unauthorized and **illegal burns in 2016** totaled **25** or 2.7 percent of the total call volume **(924)**. This is an increase of 13 illegal burns since 2015.

The total number of **false alarms for 2015** totaled including **malicious or mischievous calls, system malfunctions, unintentional tripping of interior device and other false alarms such as bomb scares** totaled **107** or 11.6 percent of the total call volume **(924)**. This is an increase of 24 false alarm calls since 2015.

## RESPONSE – ADDRESSING CHALLENGES/VULNERABILITIES

Since the Fire Department and Key Largo Fire Rescue & EMS District passed the open burn ordinance and the false alarm ordinance, we have experienced a decrease in these types of calls.

Key Largo experiences an annual tropical storm and hurricane season that lasts from April until November. The Department feels it is a large part of their mission and responsibility to ensure that the members and visitors to their community have the opportunity to become educated on what measures to take during such emergencies and what to do when they find themselves in these emergency situations.

## Grants and Improving ISO Ratings

Key Largo is referred to as the “Dive Capital of the World”. You are never more than 3 minutes from water when you are in Key Largo. The community consists primarily of businesses and homes that are either directly ocean, bay, canal front, or just adjacent to a water source. We do; however, have some areas in our District that are not close to an available water source. This has adversely affected our ISO rating in the past; however, by obtaining a grant through Fireman’s Fund Insurance agency, the Department was able to purchase two Turbo Drafts to aid in getting water to these areas. This has resulted in an improvement in our ISO ratings for those areas which has directly translated into savings in insurance premiums for our businesses and residents located in those areas.

# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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Our overall rating is a 5/9 in 2011 and is a 5/5 in 2015. We are looking to receive an ISO inspection sometime in 2017. ISO does not however tell us when they are coming.

The Department has made a concentrated effort working with the Key Largo Fire Rescue and EMS District to improve our service and ultimately our ISO rating through the installation of new hydrants, improvement in staffing levels, water supply, training, equipment, and many other components that are considered when an ISO review is conducted. The Department currently has more than 146 hydrants through the annual budget the Department was able to allocate funds and complete the installation of 17 new fire hydrants and has budgeted \$150,000 in fiscal year 2016/2017 for the installation of 15 more hydrants. Availability of nearby water source positively impacts our ISO rating.

Our firefighters conduct quarterly visual inspections of these hydrants and the District budgets for the Florida Aqueduct Authority to conduct a full annual inspection and maintenance program on all hydrants.

## **FIRE PREVENTION**

**FIRE PREVENTION** is the "NAME OF THE GAME" as far as Key Largo Firefighters are concerned. The best way to support our Community and provide the highest level of fire rescue services is to continually educate the public on what they can do to PREVENT fires, accidents and injuries due to emergency related incidents. We also continually strive to educate OURSELVES in the latest fire and rescue techniques and strive to ensure that our neighborhoods, businesses, marinas, schools, etc. are the recipients of pre-fire planning and

inspection. Education, training and preparation are essential in ensuring that this happens.

We continually like to encourage residents, schools and businesses to contact us for a free pre-incident inspection and fire prevention session. We regularly conduct pre-fire planning of our local businesses so that we know the layout of the property, where the necessary water sources and hook-ups are located, the type of emergency warning and sprinkler systems they have and where the control panels are located, entrance and egress to the properties, etc. so that we can provide the most efficient and highest quality service in time of need. This greatly helps should there be a fire because the Department personnel know the layout and hazards, thus they already have a plan on how best to handle the emergency.

We regularly schedule fire prevention education and activities at the local pre-schools and elementary schools during fire prevention week as well as throughout the year as requested.

## **FIRE CHIEF**

**Fire Chief Donald Bock** volunteers as the Fire Chief for the Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department. Chief Bock is also the Chief of the Key Largo Volunteer Ambulance Corps., in addition to being a career Lieutenant / Paramedic for Monroe County Fire Rescue.

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# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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## TRAINING

Our Commitment to training continues. The Department boasts 6 state certified fire instructors. In addition to daily training drills with on-duty shift personnel, the Department conducts training on Thursday evenings. The Department continues to focus on E.V.O.C training and has revamped their in-house driver training and evaluation program using guides and materials provided by our automobile insurance carrier VFIS. The department continues to send its personnel to outside training events like the Ft. Lauderdale Fire Conference, Orlando Fire Conference, and Great Florida Fire School where firefighters get to test their skills in live burn scenarios in actual CBS construction and wood frame homes, vehicle extrications, incident command, and other pertinent trainings. The department also provides in-house training courses like Building Construction, Strategies & Tactics, Course Delivery, Company Officer, Fire Service Hydraulics, Apparatus Operations, and EVOC (Emergency Vehicle Operators Course). These courses provide our personnel the knowledge to training to advance their skills within the fire service. Our Captain and Lieutenants have Fire Officer I or Fire Officer II State Certifications along with Fire Service Instructor State Certifications and are able to teach the above mentioned classes.

The Department requires all of our Driver Engineers to have EVOC, Fire Service Hydraulics & Apparatus Operations which go hand and hand in pump operations and also recommends that they retain their State Pump Operators Certificate. The Department continues to improve their existing comprehensive orientation and training for all new firefighters. This training or "Rookie Book" must be

satisfactorily completed by new volunteer firefighters prior to final acceptance with the Department along with a 12-month evaluation period where their skills are tested.

## UPPER KEYS HONOR GUARD



Key Largo Volunteers organized the first Upper Keys Honor Guard consisting of Firefighters from the Upper Keys - Key Largo, Tavernier and Islamorada Fire Departments. The Honor Guard is led by Montillo (Scott) Desquotte, a volunteer with our Department.

The members of the Honor Guard regularly train and compete and dedicate their services to their local communities as well as other Departments throughout Florida and the Nation. They are involved in awards banquets, memorial services, local charitable events, conferences, and fund raising activities such as the Fourth of July Florida Honor Guards in Paradise. Every year The Department participates in the Fourth of July Parade and celebration with surrounding fire departments like Islamorada Fire Rescue, Tavernier Volunteer Fire Rescue, Monroe County Fire Rescue, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue, Honor Guards and Pipes and Drummers from all over the country.

The Upper Keys Honor Guard regularly attends special Honor Guard Training in Ocala in order to hone their skills. Plans are in the making to partner with the Key Largo Chamber of Commerce in order to upscale local events such as 4<sup>th</sup> of July Parade and draw participants from Honor Guards throughout the Nation and to



# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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draw visitors to the Key Largo area. The Honor Guard also participates in a similar event on St. Patrick's Day in Delray Beach, FL.

Our District greatly values the positive attention that is brought to the Department and Community through the activities of the Honor Guard and continues to allocate funds in the fiscal budget in order to offset some of their expenses.

## **DONATION DRIVE**

The continued service and dedication of our approximately 60 volunteer and paid firefighters has had a significant impact on our District's ability to keep the taxes in Key Largo the lowest in unincorporated Monroe County.

We could not do it without support from our residents and business owners, however.

The Department owes a huge "THANK YOU" to the tax payers of the Key Largo District for their generosity and support by responding to our donation letter sent to businesses and residents of the Key Largo Community. These donation dollars help to supplement our District budget by enabling us to purchase more gear, tools, equipment, and provide training to more firefighters.

Our doors are always open to the public. We welcome requests for information, assistance and participation in local events, and of course we welcome anyone interested in volunteering.

## **RETENTION AND RECRUITMENT**

The Department welcomed 20 new volunteer firefighters in 2016. All of the applicants came to us as fully state certified Firefighter II's and usually have their State EMT and/or Paramedic certification as well.

The Department also completed a Fire 1 class with 6 members.

Our proximity to the mainland, Miami area and the fact that we are one of the few volunteer companies in South Florida aids us in our efforts to recruit volunteers. This very thing also works against us when it comes to retention of volunteers. We serve as a hands-on training ground for young recruits right out of the academy only to see them hired by the nearby municipalities. The experience and training the firefighters receive also helps their chances of being hired by another fire department so it's a win-win situation. This is a revolving and ongoing process. This process allows us to hone our training and management skills. Feedback from neighboring departments that hire our volunteers is highly positive.

The Department continues the volunteer reimbursement (stipend) program and training program that has proven to be highly beneficial in attracting volunteers to the Department and in retaining them even after they have accepted paid positions with other Departments. Job opportunity both full-time and part-time have aided in recruitment and retention as well.

The District approved a 401k program for all members of the Department and allocated funds in the fiscal budget to provide a percentage match of dollars contributed.

Personal assistance is provided to members of the Department interested in signing up for Obamacare. The Department's insurance agent makes appointments to personally assist members with their insurance needs.

# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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Our Department cares about the community it serves and offers support and services that extend beyond the reactive fire and rescue services through fire prevention and education, pre-fire planning, and involvement in community events. We instill a sense of “Community” in our Department. This intrinsic value of belonging and helping one another (family) is probably the largest contributing factor toward retention of volunteers and staff.

## **HEALTH AND WELLNESS**

The health and wellness of our firefighting personnel is vital. The Department makes the physical fitness and health and wellness of its firefighters a top priority. The Department encourages physical fitness in part by the use of its donation dollars to create a gymnasium equipped with state-of-the-art exercise equipment. Volunteers are encouraged to use the gym while on shift and paid personnel are allotted an hour per day to be used exclusively for physical fitness.

Annual health screenings are required of all personnel. The District budget has provided the funds to cover the cost in full of these comprehensive health screenings that are conducted on the fire department premises. All combat firefighters are required to pass the NFPA 1582 recommended firefighter medical physical.

New recruits are required to pass a physical ability test (in addition to written exam and oral interview) prior to obtaining a position with the Department. The Department is a tobacco, drug and alcohol free organization with policies governing this.

The Department has also donated to and joined a number of Cancer Awareness and support

groups and has shown their support for breast cancer awareness by “wearing pink”. The pink tee-shirts are cancer awareness combat shirts. The Department has allowed the use of its classroom to host breast cancer screenings by qualified medical professionals agencies.

## **NIMS COMPLIANT**

The Key Largo Fire Rescue and EMS District is committed to providing the most effective approach to prepare for, respond to and recover from domestic incidents. Regardless of the cause, size or complexity and supports a unified approach toward command, training, and management of resources. This is to ensure interoperability and compatibility among Federal, State and local emergency agencies.

## **DEPARTMENT BUDGET**

The Department has consistently worked with the District in an effort to reduce budget line items in an effort to keep the tax burden to our residents and businesses as low as possible.

## **CORPORATE FINANCIALS**

The end of the year financials are attached to this document as well.

## **LOOKING FORWARD...**

Since our inception in May of 2013 we have said goodbye to many of our more experienced volunteer firefighters - one a highly loved and respected founding father of the volunteer fire service in Key Largo (Dave Gow). While not forgotten and often missed we have filled the vacancies they left with new recruits – new faces. This has challenged us to update and improve our communications and training in all



# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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aspects of administration, management and operations.

We are now focusing on improving our daily training scenarios and providing more special in-house State certified courses and providing State Certified Fire Officer training. The Department is working along with the district on the “5-year strategic plan” which includes the recruitment and retention of new volunteers and paid positions along with the creation or more paid positions to meet the 2-in 2-out NFPA and State requirement on fire scenes. Having 2 paid personnel per station per day 24/7-365 will secure this regulation and also any safety concerns on emergency scenes.

We have placed emphasis on and taken a team approach to updating and improving our standard operating procedures.

Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department and Key Largo Volunteer Ambulance Corps have become a team. We are assisting on many more EMS related calls than ever before and we are encouraged by the level of collaboration, cooperation and comradery between the two organizations.

We’ve come a long way since the inception of this new department on May 27, 2013. We carry with us the tradition and history as well as much of the personnel from the previous fire department – essentially 60 years of primarily volunteer service to the Key Largo Community. Today we are still a small town Community when it comes to available resources, but we have become significantly larger when you look at the challenges we face. We continue to provide the highest level of fire services at the lowest cost in Monroe County. And we are doing this in a rapidly changing municipal and political environment with ever challenging

economic realities. Post 9-11 strengthening of requirements for the Fire Service created new challenges as well. Our challenges may be different than they were 5, 10, 50, 60 years ago, and may be not quite as evident, but very real. We have, however, managed to meet these challenges and improve our quality and level of service and will strive to continue the trend through education, communication, teamwork and strategic planning.

***Thank you to the staff and members of the Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department, our District Commissioners as well as all of the members and staff of the Key Largo Volunteer Ambulance Corps. A very special thank you to the Community we are privileged to serve.***

***Please keep up with the ever changing face of Key Largo Volunteer Fire Department by liking us on our FACEBOOK PAGE - <https://www.facebook.com/keylargofiredepartment>***

# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016



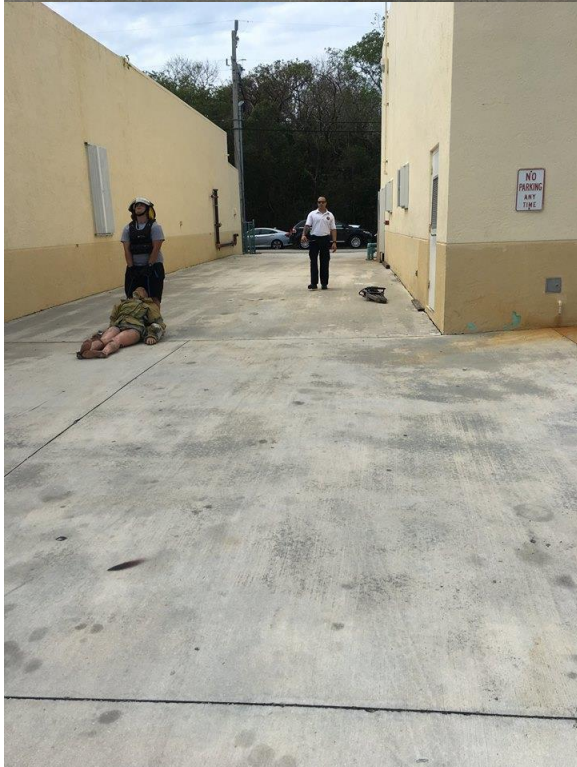
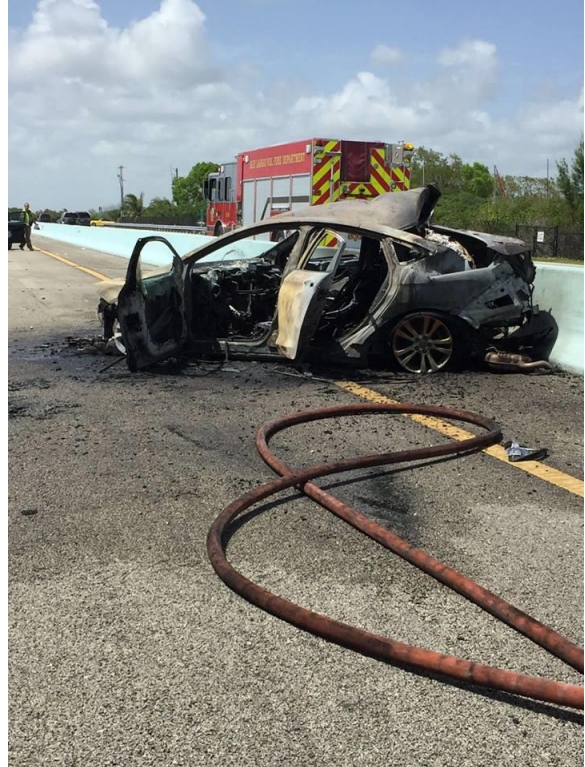


# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016





# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016





# KEY LARGO FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC. ANNUAL REPORT 2016

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