

Fire Department

Dale E. Freeman, Chief

The Mishawaka Fire Department has been serving the City since 1904. The Department is comprised of five stations with a total full-time staff of 108 employees. Four divisions operate within the Department. These Divisions are Suppression, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Fire Prevention, and Administrative.

Between these four divisions, the Fire Department is responsible for all fire suppression, emergency medical calls, vehicle extrication, water rescue, carbon monoxide investigations, hazardous material response, natural gas leaks, lift assists and other types of citizen assistance.

Divisions

Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

This past year was a busy year for the EMS Division. With both increasing calls for service and acuity of illness, our EMS providers have answered the call to duty each and every time. The demands for accurate reporting, certifications and training have continued to increase as well. In addition, the dispatchers were required to learn a new software program for dispatching calls. Special codes entered by the dispatchers indicate the type of call-out. In the past, all EMS calls were responded to with lights and sirens. Now depending on the severity of the call it may not always be necessary. This increases safety for the firefighters and the general public.

During 2011 the new EMS reporting system was completed. The completion coincides with the contracting of a new outside EMS billing company. The efficiency created by the new systems has allowed the Department to see a three quarters percent reduction in costs with the new billing company.

In January the Common Council changed the fee structure for ambulance runs to keep pace with other area providers. These changes and the addition of the third ambulance has allowed us to increase ambulance runs 472 calls over 2010, an increase of 10.8%. Revenues also increased from \$522, 521 in 2010 to \$1,112,829 for 2011.

Unfortunately the City of Mishawaka lost an arbitration ruling in December which has forced us to only have two ambulances in service some days, but we continue to work with Mishawaka Firefighters Local #360 to look for ways to increase and make better use of staffing.

Fire Prevention Bureau

The Mishawaka Fire Prevention Bureau, under the leadership of Chief Jim Schuster is responsible for inspecting buildings, new and old, to ensure the safe occupancy of the people who work in and visit them. In 2011, the Fire Prevention Bureau performed over 1,500 fire inspections of new and existing buildings in the City of Mishawaka. In addition, the Bureau works closely with the Mishawaka Building Department by reviewing all design drawings for new construction within the City to make sure all fire and building codes are met. Final inspections and testing of safety features are conducted before a final certificate of occupancy is given.

Fire Investigators from the Bureau were called out 27 times in 2011 to investigate fires as compared to 33 times in 2010. These fires ranged from vehicle fires to house fires to large commercial buildings. All fire scenes are fully documented and photographed, and a written report is completed of the cause and origin. Any fire that is considered incendiary in nature will be jointly investigated with the Mishawaka Police Department Detective Division. All Fire Investigators are on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, and 365 days a year.

The Mishawaka Fire Department Prevention Bureau has always had a strong commitment to educating the citizens, employees, students, and visitors within our city. Throughout 2011, we educated many businesses with hands-on experience of fire extinguisher use in the workplace. A live-fire in a controlled environment helps people recognize how and when to use fire extinguishers properly and effectively. During the year, many seminars were given to businesses on topics such as evacuation drills, fire safety plans, fire extinguishers, emergency planning and preparedness, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire suppression systems, and fire alarm systems.

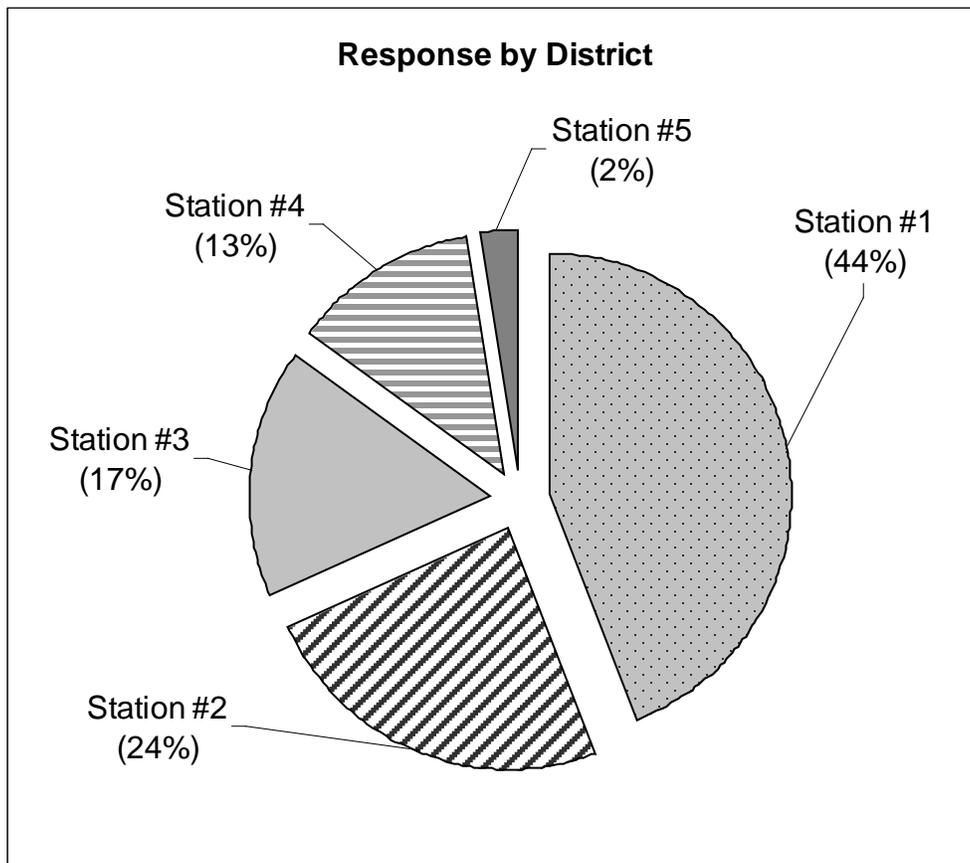
We continue to partner with businesses in Mishawaka to promote fire safety, prevention, and education. We were very fortunate again in 2011, to receive a \$1,200 donation from Lowes of Mishawaka. This money was used to purchase smoke detectors and extra batteries, carbon monoxide detectors, fire extinguishers, and fire escape safety ladders. The Department continues to offer these items free of charge to the elderly or for those who may not otherwise be able to afford them.

During Fire Prevention Month in October, we were able to bring our “Fire Safety Obstacle Course” to Walt Disney, LaSalle, and Twin Branch schools allowing a total of 1295 students to take part. The program was first initiated at Walt Disney School approximately 10 years ago and combined ideas of P.E. teacher Steve Govorko and Captain Ralph Smith. The Fire Safety Obstacle Course combines physical fitness and a fire safety message into one class. Twelve different stations were set up where each station has a fire safety theme including the following: a blindfolded hose-crawl over and under obstacles, placing hoses on and off a fire hydrant, climbing ropes, and ladders, etc. A fire safety talk is given prior to each session. This program has been a great success

and we hope to continue it for many years. For the fifth year in a row this program also took place at Elm Road School with the partnership of the Penn Township Fire Department. With our help they were able to offer this class to another 400 students making the number of students that participated in this program to around 1700.

With the assistance of Mike Seger, Director of Safety and Security for the Penn Harris Madison School Corporation, we were able to secure a \$500 grant from the PHM Educational Foundation to directly support the Fire Safety Obstacle Course. This money will be used to purchase of a fully enclosed trailer so equipment can easily be transported from school to school. Also for 2012 we are hoping to include many more fire departments and schools to participate and learn the importance of fire safety.

The total run volume for the Fire Department, including fire and E.M.S. increased this year to 6,011 from 5,727 in 2010. This averages 501 runs per month or roughly 17 runs per day. Medical runs have a minimum of one hour turnaround time and are 80% of the total call volume. The total E.M.S. runs this year were 4,804. The Department also responded to 17 commercial fires, 28 residential fires, 7 garage fires, and 11 apartment complex fires. Total fire losses were estimated at \$2,282,725 for the year.



Public Education

This year was another successful year for public education programs. Firefighters Lieutenant Brian Linson II and Firefighter Derron Hess, along with Peggy Marker from the Hannah Lindahl Children's Museum schedule the public education classes. Since its inception 27 year ago, over 76,000 people have gotten the public safety message through the Survive Alive House program. Totals for the Survive Alive House located at Emmons School were 60 groups accounting for 1,351 people. Little Red tours accounted for 206 people in 8 classes. School assemblies and tours accounted for another 33 groups of 1,351 people. In 2011 the department spent 301 hours on Public Education instructing 3,070 people.

We were glad to participate in career day held at Mishawaka High School to explain what a firefighter does in the fire service of 2011. Hopefully in years to come we are able to recruit members from the students of today.

Child Passenger Safety Certification

Officer Tim Williams from the Mishawaka Police Department trained 11 members of the Fire Department to become Child Passenger Seat Safety Technicians. The class was 32 hours and taught the participants the basics of seat installation. The training allowed us to apply for and receive a grant from the Indiana University School of medicine for \$2,000 to become a permanent fitting for car seats for children and infants. The fire department continues to look for new ways to make Mishawaka safer for all.

Recruitment

In an attempt to recruit and qualify only the best candidates for the Mishawaka Fire Department a decision was made to purchase the required testing supplies for the Candidate Physical Ability Test (C-PAT). This is a nationally standardized test developed by the International Fire Chiefs and the International Association of Firefighters Union. The test ensures fairness and is recognized as the most valid test for recruits.

Training

The Mishawaka Fire Department training has become one of the most important parts of our daily operations. Our personnel must train like their life depends on it, because it does. To deliver top quality service it takes years of training and experience to master our profession. We are considered the jack of all trades from Fire Fighting, Vehicle Extrication, Water Rescue, Hazardous Materials, EMS calls, and a host of others that are to numerous to mention. If someone calls for us, no matter what for, we will show up. Our customer service is very important part of our job.

In the past year we have put all of our Suppression Officers through a fifty hour on line and twenty four hour hands on class in strategy and tactics. This class will teach our officers to make the safest decisions on the fire ground.

For the past six years all of our Officers and Executive Board have been working with Lisa Greco from Bethel College. This is a proactive look at our department to help give us the knowledge, skills, and desire for solving personnel and professional problems in the fire service.

EMS is very important to us also. I would like to congratulate firefighters Andy Breden, Mickey Sage, and Dave Bennett who successfully completed Paramedic school. These three gentlemen sacrificed a lot of personal time to better themselves and ultimately this will make our department better as a whole.

Lastly from the youngest new recruit to the Chief of the department, we have an average of 175 hours of training per firefighter in 2011. This is up from 134 hours of training in 2010. We still have not hit our goal of 200 hours per firefighter. We have made great strides in training our people in the past 10 years and will continue to do our efforts.

Mishawaka Fire Station #4

In 2011, following eight years of planning, study and property acquisition, the construction began on replacing Fire Station #4. The 3.7 million dollar project was awarded to Casteel Construction of South Bend and is currently on schedule to be complete in late 2012.



Although existing Fire Station #4 is a beautiful and historic tudor revival building that was constructed in 1929, the existing building houses just one truck that has to be custom ordered to fit the building. The existing facility also has no off-street parking, and no room for needed expansion.

The replacement fire station is 13,750 square foot single-story building with (3) garage bays for fire trucks and/or EMS vehicles. An important component of the City's service

model is to be able to house an ambulance at this location. The building will house a training room that can also be used for official neighborhood/public meetings. In 2012, discussions will continue with School City of Mishawaka and the Mishawaka Board of Parks and Recreation to finalize plans to extend Bennington Drive, provide a signalized intersection, and make adjustments to Hums Park.

New Equipment

In 2011 the fire department made its latest truck purchase with the addition a new 105 foot midmount aerial platform. The truck is a 2012 model year manufactured by the Sutphen Corporation of Amlin, Ohio. The truck had a purchase price of 945,695. The purchase was necessitated by the continued growth of the City of Mishawaka and the buildings in it.



Giving Back

Charity Bass Fishing Tournament

Mishawaka Firefighters sponsor a bass fishing tournament held at Maggie's Marina. This year's tournament was the 18th annual and 56 teams consisting of 112 fishermen raised \$1,100 for charity. The charities selected this year were Tiny Talkers of Niles Michigan, and the Hoosier Burn Camp which split the money equally. Larry Regina has run the tournament since its inception and deserves the majority of the credit. Other firefighters help in the staging, parking, etc. for the tournament.

Needy Family Project

In its 30th year the firefighters continued to serve the needs of those less fortunate. Thanks to their generous support we were able to help 12 families and 30 children.

In addition to the contributions we had additional help from area Kroger and Meijer stores. The manager of Kroger's, Georgia gave us substantial discounts at the register as well as an additional gift card at purchase time. Also, Rick Zieff from Meijer was a huge help in making the program a success. With the overall savings from the groceries, plus a late donation, we were able to help the less fortunate. A special thanks to Battalion Chief James Cocquyt, Captain Bryon Woodward, and Driver/Operator Jeffrey Regina for their coordination efforts, but it was truly a group effort.

Fill the Boot Campaign

Lieutenant David Ray and his fellow firefighters collected \$5,836 for the Jerry Lewis Labor Day Telethon. A total of 46 firefighters took donations over the Labor Day weekend at four different locations. The donations will allow us to send local children to Camp Potawatomi.

Habitat for Humanity

Several dozen members of the fire department were able to participate again in the “Habitat for Humanity” house build in Mishawaka.

The pride of any city is its strong neighborhoods and we were able to help with two homes this year. One was located on Division Street and the other was on East Battell Street. We look forward in the future to continued participation in the Habitat program, helping those who help themselves.

In closing thank you for the opportunity to present the annual report for the fire department for 2011. We have much to be proud of thanks to the contributions of our very dedicated personnel.