

Fire Department

Bryon Woodward, Chief

2020 – A Year Like No Other

There is no question that this year was something unheard of, the strain it put on society, our city and department was like no other. Our department will be forever changed in the way we do business following the Coronavirus pandemic. It forced significant changes to our daily operations and routines with the inclusion of new policies regarding social distancing, face coverings, personal protective equipment on calls, visitor restrictions in our fire stations, canceling all public interactions including the public education classes we deliver, and restrictions on our travel and training like never before. We battled through multiple quarantines and positive cases but much to the credit of the men and women of the fire department, emergency operations were never impacted. The members continue to serve proudly and bravely through these and all uncertain times or events to provide our community with the high level of care they have come to expect.



Response Summary

The Mishawaka Fire Department responded to 8,269 calls for service and had 16,383 total apparatus responses in 2020. The greatest number of calls for service were EMS in nature, our ambulances and fire trucks responded to 6,259 calls that required EMS response. In addition, the MFD had 199 calls for service that involved a commercial, residential, apartment fires (67) or other types of fires (132.) The remaining 1,811 included any requests by the public involving investigations, gas leaks, citizen assists, and a variety of other types of responses. Due to the pandemic and the economic toll it placed on citizens our collections were down a bit for ambulance billing in 2020. We collected \$1,436,317.28 for services provided.

Our overall calls for service were down slightly also for the same reason. Early in the year when communities went into shutdowns expecting the “first wave” of the pandemic we experienced run volumes we have not seen since 2018. April 2020, with 557 calls for service, was our slowest month since April 2018 with 553 calls for service. At the end of the year things rapidly changed for us as we experienced a massive influx in a matter of weeks, November 2020 was our busiest month setting a new record high of 787 calls for service.

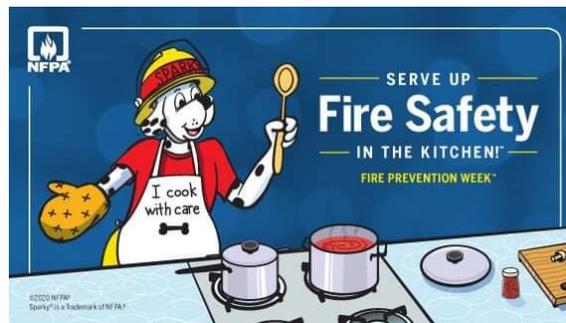


Fire Prevention

The Mishawaka Fire Prevention Bureau is responsible for inspecting buildings, new and old, to ensure the safe occupancy of the people who work in and visit them. In 2020, the Fire Prevention Bureau performed over 948 fire inspections of buildings in the City. Our Fire Marshals work

closely with the Mishawaka Building Department by reviewing all design drawings for new construction, building additions, and remodels within the City to make sure all fire and building codes are met. Final inspections and testing of safety features such as fire alarm systems, fire suppression systems, emergency lighting, etc. are completed before a final Certificate of Occupancy is given.

Fire Investigators from the Bureau were called out 40 times to investigate commercial, residential, apartment and vehicle fires in 2020. All fire scenes are fully documented, photographed, and a written report is completed as to the cause and origin. Any fire that is considered suspicious 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.



For the third year in a row, the Mishawaka Fire Department attempted to host an open house for Fire Prevention Week but unfortunately, we were not able to do it person. This did not stop our members from delivering important safety messages to our community. Instead, the firefighters took to social media and produced short videos explaining various roles within the department and posting fire safety tips. Also, during Fire Prevention Week, they created a Drop Box folder where fire prevention and safety literature was made available on various subjects such as home fire drills, office fire safety, home fire prevention, kitchen fire prevention, etc. This literature contained informational pamphlets, coloring pages and activities that could be carried out in the homes of our citizens. Educating our citizens on fire safety is a top priority!

Training

We believe in the mantra “*You can never know enough for a job that can kill you*” so the training division continuously strives for improvement. The wide variety of services we provide makes our continuing education paramount to firefighter safety. The men and women of the MFD spent over 26,044 hours in the classroom, and on the training grounds. Our longstanding, common goal is for each firefighter to survive the shift and return home to his or her family. We are taking this to a higher level with additional training in cancer prevention, PTSD recognition, and suicide prevention to give each firefighter the opportunity for a long, prosperous career and retirement.

The department is continuously evaluating our training methods which proved to be a greater struggle last year. Multiple levels of firefighters, spearheaded by Lieutenant Josh Jester, worked together and came up with a new training program to assist in the direction and topics we would safely be able accomplish by each crew.

This training program will serve as a clear outline for all Mishawaka Fire members so that all companies throughout the city will be able to perform all duties safely and effectively. As a department we strive to provide our firefighters with relevant training that applies to emergencies that might arise in the Princess City. Most of the training included in this program has been created by members within our department while also including some information from the best instructors the fire service has to offer. Along with our promise to the public, this program will also lead to

an increased level of safety for each of our members. The ultimate goal of any firefighter is to return home to their family following a shift; exceptional training is the greatest way to meet this goal.

Apparatus / Equipment

As our current fleet of apparatus ages, we need to be vigilant in maintaining and replacing our trucks in the most cost-effective manner. We took delivery of two new ambulances in 2020, the first was in January and it was a remount of our old Medic 1 onto a new 2020 Freightliner Type 1 Medium Duty chassis.



Medic 1



Medic 5

The second new ambulance, Medic 5, was introduced into our fleet in March. It is a Demers Ambulances Ford 450 Type 1 and its main function is to run as a reserve ambulance and be placed into service during times of overwhelming demand. Several times during the pandemic this was placed into service to as a fourth ambulance to assist with the increased call volume.

Medic 4 was sent in for the same remount treatment as Medic 1 in September and we anticipate its return by the end of February 2021. Once it arrives our ambulance fleet will have been completely replaced over the last four years and the system for ambulance replacement has been revamped to meet the challenges and demand for the foreseeable future.

Many notable equipment purchases were completed and delivered in 2020 including all new battery-operated scene lights and positive pressure fans. These new battery-operated tools make our firefighters safer and more efficient during operations. We also took possession of four new Thermal Imaging Cameras (TICs) to replace outdated and worn equipment. This is the second and final half of the replacement program for these cameras, giving us all new cameras over the last two years.

Another upgrade we made was purchasing four new AeroClave decontamination units to be used in each fire station and every apparatus. These units use a hands-free process to disinfect rooms, vehicles, and equipment with an EPA-approved, hospital-grade disinfectant at the push of a button and are vital to the protection of our firefighters especially during the pandemic.



Old and outdated equipment replacement remains in the forefront of our minds and another product that was purchased for every frontline, suppression apparatus is new Pro Pak foam systems, which the replaced of over 20-year-old foam pistols. Along with these packs our department did away with all

our old AFFF foam after studies showed it may cause cancer and replaced it with a new product that is firefighter and environmentally friendly.

Charitable Causes

The Mishawaka Fire Department continued to give back to the community in 2020. As a fire department we go into people's homes daily and see those in need. We always like to give back to the community we serve when we are able. Our Needy Family Fund is spearheaded by Firefighter Nicola DeCicco and traditionally the money comes from donations from firefighters and a GoFundMe drive that was established. With the money raised we provided Christmas gifts for the children, food for the families and various types of gift cards to help the families meet other needs. In a normal year we would be interviewing families and their children, then the firefighters would take them shopping as well. Unfortunately, we were not able to follow the same structure this year so our members decided to donate the money raised to the Mishawaka Food Pantry with the hope that the program will be back to normal in 2021.

The Mishawaka Fire Department has several firefighters trained as car seat technicians who check dozens of vehicles for proper installation of child passenger seats. Our technicians are required to do outreach and continuing education to maintain their certifications and one of the ways they achieve this is to participate in car seat events. During these events we check seats for proper installation, and proper fit for the child's height and weight. We have given away numerous seats to children through these events as well.

In 2020 Mishawaka firefighters again ran two very successful t-shirt campaigns to raise funds and awareness for some great causes.

For the 8th year, the fire department sold limited edition t-shirts that benefited Honor Flight of Northeast Indiana. This project was the creation of Driver/Operator Eric Hiatt, who is a veteran himself, and still heads up this amazing cause. The shirts were sold to the public and firefighters to be worn on duty in the month of May.

Honor Flight transports veterans from World War II, Korea, and Vietnam to Washington D.C. and back at no cost to the veteran. While in D.C. the veterans get a chance to visit their memorials and connect with other veterans. In 2020, \$2,529 worth of shirts were sold, in sum MFD has raised over \$13,000 to date, and many local veterans have benefited from the Honor Flight program. The Mishawaka Fire Department would like all our veterans, including Driver/Operator Hiatt, and current members of military service to know their service is greatly appreciated by all of us here. God bless you and thank you!

Every year, our firefighters take on cancer with their Breast Cancer Awareness campaign, *Guardians of the Ribbon*. As firefighters, we take cancer very seriously. Studies have shown that not only is firefighting inherently dangerous, but it is also associated with occupational exposures that increase the risk of cancer in our profession. Nobody takes this cause more seriously than Driver/Operator William Mason who met this challenge head on and continuously produces spectacular results.



A different limited edition, pink t-shirt is created every year and is worn through the month of October to raise money and awareness for breast cancer patients and survivors. Because of the firefighters' efforts and outreach, 2020 was another great fundraising year with 409 shirts and face masks sold, raising \$4,539.

Once again, we were proud to have partnered for this fundraiser with an incredible, local business called EyeCandy Apparel and its owner Candance Brown. All proceeds raised in this campaign went to an amazing woman we got to know, Tammy Thomas. Our department would like to thank all those who donated, along with our members, for their gracious and generous gifts to make this experience possible.

Lastly, our firefighters continued to fund and distribute two \$1,000 college scholarships for local students from the City of Mishawaka. Funds were raised through other functions, such as their annual golf outing.

Public Service

The Fire Department also performs, at no extra cost to the citizens, many hours of public service and education. Some of the many examples of additional public services provided are fire extinguisher training and demonstrations, smoke detector installations, car seat inspections and installations, Survive Alive, Little Red, Fitness with a First Responder, MDA Fill the Boot, and on Veterans Day firefighters place flags on the grave sites of our military veterans. The members of the Mishawaka Fire Department performed countless man-hours of public service to its community in 2020, interacting with close to 1,510 adults and children in person and countless virtually.



Accomplishments

As many new ways of doing business changed in 2020 some things remained the same. Our members continued to provide amazing service to our city day in and out and below are a few that were recognized for their actions.

In March, Fire Marshal George Schafer was awarded the President's Award from the Indiana Fire Inspectors Association for his years of dedicated service to protection of our community by his countless fire prevention efforts.

In June, Captain William Conyers and Firefighter Austin Borlik both received the tremendous honor by being selected as EMS Provider and Firefighter of the year by the VFW of Indiana. These two outstanding servants not only won this award by the VFW for the State of Indiana, but both were also VFW national recipients as well. Both of these gentlemen were selected for their exemplary efforts and the high level of service and dedication they display routinely.



Captain William Conyers



Firefighter Austin Borlik



Fire Marshal George Schafer (r)

In November, Firefighter Jason Stauffacher received the Hero's Award from Michiana Homes for Heroes for his actions in March 2020. Firefighter Stauffacher was off duty driving and responded to a working structure fire he was only a few blocks away from. Upon his arrival FF Stauffacher and members of St. Joseph County Police were told there was an elderly woman trapped in the home.

Firefighter Stauffacher and the first SJCPD officer, with no personal protective equipment, quickly entered the home and located the woman in her bedroom as a second SJCPD officer entered to assist with the successful removal of the victim to safety and EMS personnel who were arriving on scene.

Lastly, for several months in 2019 our department underwent a review with the Insurance Services Office (ISO) and had completed its Public Protection Classification (PPC) evaluation. ISO's Public Protection Classification Program plays an important role in the underwriting process at insurance companies. In fact, most U.S. insurers, including the largest ones, use PPC information as part of their decision making when deciding what business to underwrite, coverages to offer or prices to charge for Personal or Commercial property insurance.



*(l-r): Firefighter Jason Stauffacher,
Fire Chief Bryon Woodward*

In February 2020 we were proud to announce that we were reclassified to a Class 2 department, up from a Class 3 after our last review in 2012. The City of Mishawaka and the Mishawaka Fire Department is one of only 27 communities in the entire State of Indiana with an ISO Classification of 2. This also puts Mishawaka in the top 2% of all fire departments in the United States for ISO rating out of over 47,500 evaluated.



This achievement is a direct reflection of the dedication and commitment of the men and women of the Mishawaka Fire Department and their never-ending desire to always improve and provide the best service possible to our citizens.