

Fire Department

Dale Freeman, Chief

The Mishawaka Fire Department had another record setting year as the Department responded to 6,715 calls for service. Of that number 177 were for calls involving some type of fire, either commercial, residential, apartment, trash or other type of fire. The largest number of calls for service were medically related comprising 5,191 runs. Call volume for EMS responses increased by 7% from the previous year. In addition, collections were up for ambulance billing making 2015 the largest revenue year. We collected \$1,242,518 dollars for services provided. Having a third ambulance has contributed greatly to this as well as other changes in how we operate. Portable scanners for data collection are used, as well as patient records being captured and relayed to the admitting hospitals electronically in the field, both of which decrease turnaround times for the ambulances and make them available for additional calls.

“...the Department responded to 6,715 calls for service”

We continue to research and try to increase efficiency in the way we handle EMS responses. As we migrate to the new combined Saint Joseph County Dispatch Center we will be looking at how many EMS and fire vehicles we send to responses. Better caller questioning may dictate how many vehicles respond to a particular call, the need to respond with lights and sirens, or only the first-due companies. We look forward to the day when all the emergency responders in Saint Joseph County, both police and Fire will be dispatched out of the same building. It should allow for greater communication and coordinated responses by the respective agencies.

Fire Prevention

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 2015, the Fire Prevention Bureau along with the Mishawaka Building Department performed over 1,665 fire inspections of buildings in the City. The Fire Prevention Bureau works 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 36 times to investigate fires in 2015 compared to 22 times in 2014, a 64% increase. These fires included vehicle fires, house fires, commercial and buildings. All fire scenes are fully documented and 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.

The Mishawaka Fire Department Prevention Bureau has always had a strong commitment to educating the citizens, employees, students, and visitors to our City. Throughout 2015, we trained many businesses in the hands-on operation of fire extinguishers. Extinguishing a live-fire in a controlled environment helps people learn how and when to use fire extinguishers properly

and effectively. Also during 2015, many seminars and presentations were given to businesses on topics such as evacuation drills, fire safety plans, fire extinguisher use, emergency planning and preparedness, smoke and carbon monoxide detectors, fire suppression systems, and fire alarm systems. Our main focus continues to be those occupancies that contain the elderly and children.

During Fire Prevention Month in October, we brought our “Fire Safety Obstacle Course” to elementary schools, educating approximately 900 students. This program was initiated 14 years ago by Walt Disney P.E. teacher Steve Govorko. The Fire Safety Obstacle Course combines physical fitness and fire safety messages into a single class. Twelve different stations are set up, each having a different fire safety theme including the following:

- A blindfolded hose crawl
- Over-and-under obstacles
- Connecting hoses on fire hydrants
- Climbing ropes
- Ladders
- Window escape
- Stop drop and roll
- Coordination drills

In addition, a fire safety talk is given prior to each session. This program has been a great success and we plan to continue it for many years. With our assistance, we have expanded this program into other school districts with the help of Penn Township Fire Department, and the Clay Township Fire Department. We hope to continue to expand this valuable learning program again in 2016.

We continue to partner with businesses in Mishawaka to promote fire safety, prevention, and education. We were very fortunate in 2015 to be the recipient of Lowes Home Improvement



Stores “Lowes Heroes” program and receive a \$1,500 donation of smoke detectors from Lowes of Mishawaka. These detectors will enable us to continue to run our Mishawaka Fire Department free smoke detector program. This program helps us to provide free smoke detectors to the elderly or to those who may not otherwise be able to afford them. We also received a donation from Timken Bearings for \$300 that will enable us to purchase additional safety items for a variety of different programs.

Training

The Mishawaka Fire Department is moving forward with the motto “*Every Day Is A Training Day*” because continuing education is the key to our profession. Our training hours keep going up every year, which in turn translates into keeping our citizens better served and protected. The overall hours of training last year also increased to a new total high of 26,000.

With the new County Wide Dispatch Center about to open in the spring of 2016 the focus has been on training our personnel new SOG’s and SOP’s. This training is for the whole of St. Joe County firefighters and includes Incident Command, May Day, Accountability and the way we communicate on the fire scene.

Our partnership with Lisa Greco and Bethel College is continually growing every year. Along with our leadership program, which is still going strong, we are now in the process of building a wellness and fitness program to aid our firefighters in living a healthier lifestyle on and off the job. This type of education is very important to our firefighters due to the stress of the job and will deliver first-class information to guide and help us with nutrition, physical fitness, and mental health. We are now in our second year. This year we have set up a physical agility course to get a baseline established. We are also evaluating our physical fitness equipment to see how it best fits our needs to keep firefighters in shape.

In an effort to save tax dollars and provide the high quality training needed for our members we have sent several of our firefighters through two NFPA and state courses, Instructor 1 and Officer 1 to streamline the process and improve the quality and assurance of our members so we can provide the “World Class Service” the citizens of Mishawaka deserve.

Lastly, one of our main goals after moving to a three platoon system 3 years ago was to create a department of men and women who are highly trained in both EMS and fire suppression and are more than capable to ride in every seat of any apparatus at any given time. We are committed to this goal and will continually work to meet it. Our citizens can rest assured that whenever a vehicle bearing the Mishawaka Fire Department name arrives to their call, they will receive nothing less than World Class Patient Care and Customer Service.

Apparatus/Increasing Efficiency

We are currently exploring a maintenance program for our fleet which will attempt to maximize longevity of our vehicles and utilize both the resources of the City’s Motor Pool as well as exploring the option of contracting out some of the more specialized fire apparatus maintenance.

We continue to explore software which increases the efficiency of the way we conduct our day to day operations. Two of the major software purchases over the last year have been “Fire Manager” a staffing and scheduling module, and “Call back Staffing” which automates the procurement of overtime for manpower needs or extra alarm fires. Both have increased the time management skills of our Battalion Chiefs allowing them to take on additional responsibility and training for the department.

Charitable Causes

The Mishawaka Fire Department continued to give back to the community in 2015. As a fire department we go into people's homes on a daily basis and see those in need. We like to give back to the community we serve when we are able. Our Needy Family Fund raised \$5,132.45 this year to distribute to 11 needy families with 15 children. The money comes from donations from firefighters and their families only. We do not solicit funds from outside agencies. We were also able to donate an additional \$1,000 to the Mishawaka Food Pantry to assist those less fortunate.

In 2015, Mishawaka Fire Fighters teamed up with Walmart, Sam's Club and Kroger's on McKinley Avenue to "Fill the Boot for MDA". Over three days, firefighters collected \$7,611 standing in front of these stores collecting donations. The donations collected stay local and help send area children to MDA Camp Potawatomi near Fort Wayne.

Public Service

The Fire Department also performs additional public services such as fire extinguisher training and demonstrations and car seat inspections and installations. The table below summarizes these fire extinguisher training activities for 2015.

Fire Extinguisher Demonstrations

Date	Location	Attendance
June 23	Jordan Ford	61 employees
June 24	Jordan Ford	68 employees
June 25	Jordan Toyota	36 employees
July 18	Texas Migrant Council	11 employees
September 9	Tanglewood Trace	32 employees
September 30	Timken Bearings	18 employees
September 30	Waterford Retirement	18 employees
October 7	Allied Physicians	38 employees
October 8	Allied Physicians	47 employees
October 22	Golden Living	27 employees
October 22	West Rock	90 employees
November 4	Bethel College	26 students and employees



Car Seat Program

The Mishawaka Fire Department has eight car seat technicians that provide installation service. In 2015, the technicians attended three car seat clinics and one technician attended a refresher course. A total of 80 car seats were installed and 12 were given away. The car seat program is funded solely on grants and donations from citizens that have car seats installed. The program was awarded a grant in 2015 for \$900 from the Automotive Safety Council. This grant helped to ensure the continuation of the car seat program. The following table summarizes the Car Seat Program in 2015.

Month	Installs	Seats Given
January	5	
February	7	2
March	5	
April	11	2
May	8	
June	11	4
July	5	1
August	7	
September	8	
October	8	
November	2	1
December	3	2