

Fire Department

Bryon Woodward, Chief

Response Summary

The Mishawaka Fire Department had another record setting year as the Department responded to 8,009 calls for service. The greatest number of calls for service were EMS in nature. Our ambulances and fire trucks responded to 5,908 calls that required EMS response. In addition, the MFD had 158 calls that involved a commercial, residential, apartment or other type of fire. The remaining 2,033 include any requests by the public involving investigations, gas leaks, citizen assists, and a variety of other types of responses. In addition, collections were up for ambulance billing making 2018 the greatest revenue year. We collected \$1,571,528 for services provided.

We continue to research and try to increase efficiency in the way we handle emergency responses. As we continue to evolve with the new combined St. Joseph County Dispatch Center we will be looking at how many EMS and fire vehicles we send to responses. We improved our technology with the continuous addition of new tablets and upgraded modems into all our response vehicles, which allows us to be on the forefront of change and continuously improve our response times and level of service to our citizens.



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 2018, the Fire Prevention Bureau performed over 2,128 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 53 times to investigate commercial, residential, apartment and vehicle fires in 2018. 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.

The Mishawaka Fire Department Prevention Bureau has always had a strong commitment to educating the citizens, employees, students, and visitors to our City. Throughout 2018, 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 2018, 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 priority continues to be those occupancies that contain the elderly and children.

For the third year in a row, the Mishawaka Fire Department hosted 3 days of open houses for Fire Prevention Week. These open houses were conducted at Fire Station 4 on October 9th, at Station 1 on October 10th, and at Station 3 on October 11th. They were from 6 to 8 p.m. and were open to the public. Each of the open houses had a bounce house for the children donated by Burns Rent-All, cake and drinks donated by Mishawaka Fire Department Local 360, cookies from Firehouse Subs, and building kits that were donated by our Home Depot in Mishawaka. Our Fire Prevention Bureau fire extinguisher training unit helped train the adults in the use of fire extinguishers. Fire prevention and safety literature was available on various subjects such as home fire drills, office fire safety, home fire prevention, kitchen fire prevention, etc. Other members of our department gave tours or taught hands only CPR to visitors. We had a fantastic turnout for these open houses and plan on continuing them for many years. 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 19,000 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 at a long prosperous career and retirement.

The department is in the process of upgrading our data management program to more accurately capture and assign hours to our members. These hours are used to design an advanced training program that continuously meets the old and new training requirements and help our department design a safer, more efficient working environment.

In 2018 we continued to partner with other regional fire departments to use new innovative methods to deliver our training. We purchased a new learning management system called TargetSolutions that will offer more options that can accommodate our ever-increasing workload. By using technology to our advantage, our members will have continuous



access to training options that are accessible at any time. We plan to have this system built and ready for use just after the first of the New Year.

Health and Wellness Program

We are still in the process of building a health and wellness 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 fifth year. We will again be providing work performance evaluations on a voluntary basis as we work towards adopting a formalized program in coordination with Mishawaka Professional Firefighters Local 360. We are also evaluating our physical fitness equipment to see how it best fits our needs to keep firefighters in shape. Each station was given \$4000 to spend on new exercise equipment, from free weights to elliptical machines to provide a high intensity, low impact workout option for our firefighters.

More importantly the fire department was able to order a brand-new set of turnout gear, 115 in total, for every firefighter and implemented a replacement program that will buy new sets every 5 years. NFPA standards state all gear must be replaced after 10 years. As the program builds it will allow each firefighter to have 2 full sets of gear. This is vital as it will allow us to change into a fresh set after a fire while immediately cleaning the dirty set of all the carcinogens that continue to risk the firefighter's health well after the fire has ended.

Apparatus/Increasing Efficiency

As our current fleet of apparatus ages, we need to be vigilant in maintaining and replacing our trucks in the most cost-efficient manner. We took delivery of two new vehicles in 2018, a Silverado for our Fire Marshal Division and a Mule that carries a cot and other medical equipment that is to be used for the many public events where the department provides safety patrols. We also replaced our Water Rescue Response vehicle, Unit 118, which pulls Boat 2 out of Station 4. The department ordered a new 100ft Sutphen Ladder truck that is slated for delivery by early May in 2019. We also have plans to re-chassis a medium-duty ambulance in 2019.

We continue to improve the efficiency of our preventative maintenance program for our fleet. Every attempt is made to maximize the longevity of our vehicles and utilize both the resources of the City's Motor Pool as well as contracting out some of the more specialized fire apparatus maintenance.

We also continue to explore software improvements which increase the efficiency of the way we conduct our day to day operations. Emergency Services Reporting has been brought online to better track all our fleet maintenance and reporting as well as track a multitude of other programs run within the department.



Other notable equipment purchases include all new battery-operated Hurst Rescue Extrication Equipment on Rescue 1 consisting of new spreaders or better known as the “Jaws of Life,” cutters to name a few. These new tools save precious seconds when only minutes can count to affect the outcome of a traumatic event.

Charitable Causes

The Mishawaka Fire Department continued to give back to the community in 2018. 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 raised \$5,326 this year to distribute to six of our traditional families and a couple others in their time of need. 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. Next, we were also able to team up with St. Joseph Regional Medical Center Emergency Room nurses to help one of their fellow members with food while they provided gifts. Lastly, we donated money to a family from Grissom Middle School who were the victims of a house fire. We would like to thank Firefighter DeCicco for all his hard work and efforts to once again put together another great year of giving.

The Mishawaka Fire Department has 6 firefighters trained as car seat technicians. During last year, they checked 50 vehicles for proper installation of a child passenger seat. Once a year we host a car seat event along with Memorial Hospital’s children hospital at Martin’s on Bittersweet. In 2018 we held a second event at Fire Station #4. 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.

Also, in 2018 Mishawaka Fire Fighters again ran two very successful t-shirt campaigns to raise funds and awareness for some great causes.

For the 6th 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 Viet Nam to Washington DC and back at no charge to the veteran. While in D.C. the veterans get a chance to visit their memorials and connect with other veterans. MFD has raised over \$10,000 to date, and 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!



Our firefighters take on cancer every year with their Breast Cancer, Guardians of the Ribbon, Awareness campaign. As firefighters we take cancer very seriously as studies have shown that not only is firefighting inherently dangerous, it is associated with occupational exposures that increase the risk of cancer in our profession. Nobody takes this cause more seriously than Driver/Operator William Mason, former Captain Will Meyers and Firefighter/Paramedic Kevin Gnivecki who again met this challenge head on and produced spectacular results. A different limited edition, pink t-shirt is created every year and worn through the month of October to raise money and awareness for breast cancer patients and survivors. Because of these three firefighter's efforts and leadership, 2018 was our best fundraising year yet with 309 shirts sold, raising \$3,102. This year we were proud to have partnered with an incredible non-profit organization called Hello Gorgeous for this fundraiser. All proceeds raised in this campaign will go to the Hello Gorgeous! organization to give women who are battling cancer a special treat to lift their spirits and make them feel gorgeous by "Providing red-carpet experiences for all women battling all cancers through full spa, ambush-style makeovers in one of our 36' mobile day spas or by one of our partnering affiliate salons across the United States, at no cost to our gorgeous women." 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 through other functions, such as their annual golf outing, continue to fund and distribute two \$1000 scholarships for local students from the City.

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, car seat inspections and installations, Survive Alive, Little Red, 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 over 25,970 man-hours of public service to its community in 2018.



Recognition

Two Mishawaka's Bravest were formally recognized in 2018 for their outstanding service. First is Captain Brent Lake who was given the Hero Award from Homes for Hero's for his actions one night while off duty. While traveling home with his family Captain Lake happened upon a serious motorcycle accident and found a critically injured female patient. Captain Lake immediately jumped into action and provided care until emergency crews could arrive, but he didn't stop there. Brent rode in the ambulance bagging her all the way to the hospital. Because of Captain Lake's knowledge, skills, abilities and selfless actions she is alive today. Our second award winner is Driver/Operator Mark Regina, who was also off duty when he performed his heroic actions.



D/O Regina was awarded the Heroic Rescue Award for the State of Indiana by the Indiana Fire Chiefs Association for his actions in the month of April of this last year. Mark was off duty, smelled something burning and noticed a residence on fire. D/O Regina then discovered the home was occupied and helped a mother and her three children escape out of window. Because of firefighter Regina's quick thinking and actions there were no injuries and a family is alive today. Mark was also awarded the Robert A. Saros Mishawaka Firefighter of the Year award for 2018 as well.



In Memoriam



Driver/Operator Raymond Myers

On April 4, 2018 the Mishawaka Fire Department lost one of its most beloved members, Driver/Operator Raymond Myers to cancer. D/O Myers remained an active 23-year veteran of our department and served as the department's IT specialist. D/O Myers will always be in our hearts and minds as his work ethic and care for his community were second to none.

