

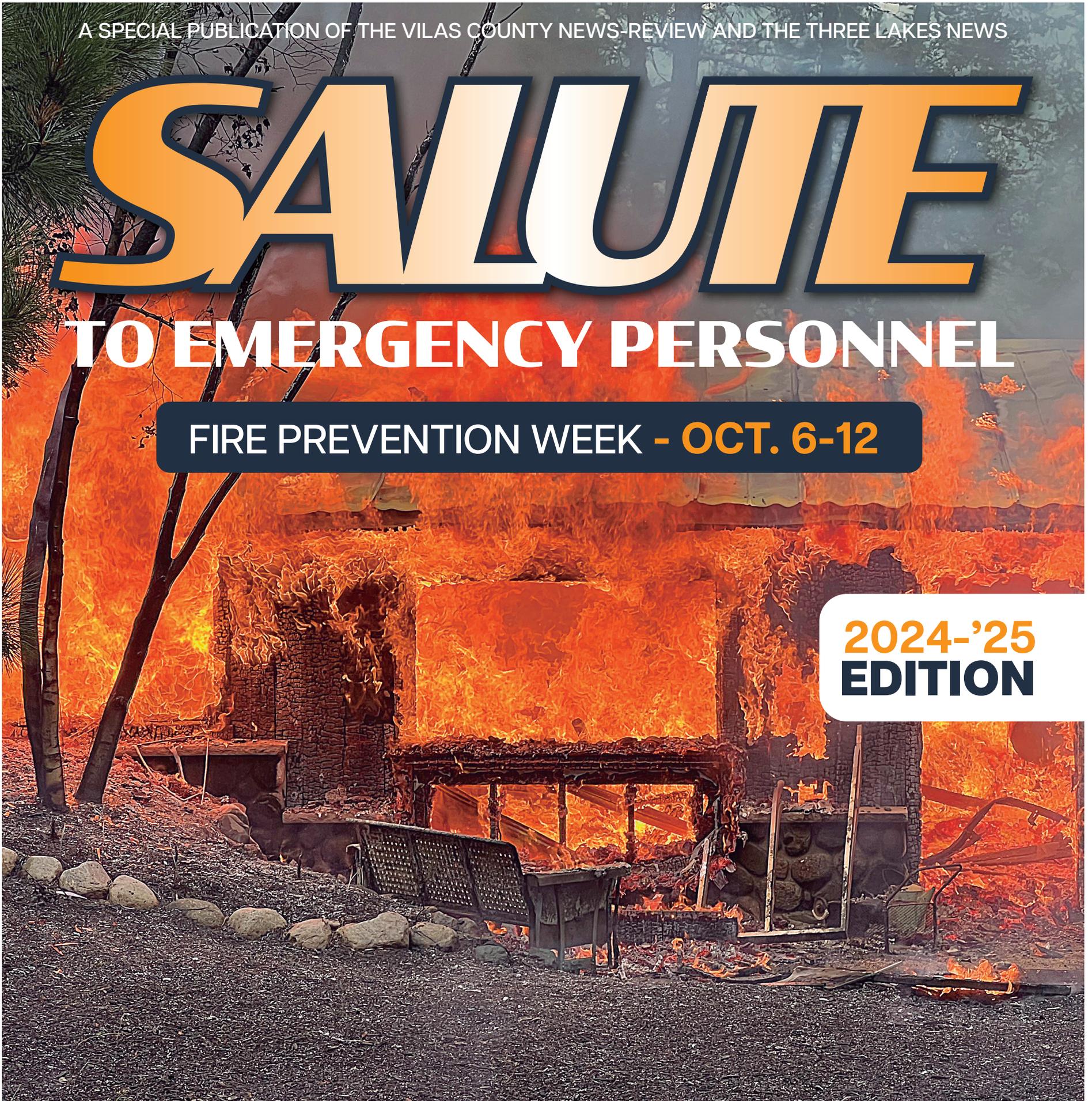
A SPECIAL PUBLICATION OF THE VILAS COUNTY NEWS-REVIEW AND THE THREE LAKES NEWS

# SALUTE

TO EMERGENCY PERSONNEL

FIRE PREVENTION WEEK - OCT. 6-12

2024-'25  
EDITION



# You can avoid a disaster with a few safety precautions.

Know that carelessness is a major cause in many fires.

Install smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in your home and work area.



## Fire Prevention Home Checklist

1. Does the wiring look good in your electrical switch box?
2. Is there at least three feet of space in front of the switch box that is free of combustible materials?
3. Are all extension cords of the proper size, hooked properly and in good condition?
4. Are motor fuels stored in proper places and in proper containers?
5. Are cleaning fuels and other cleaning liquids properly stored? Are cleaning rags stored properly?
6. Have stoves and heating equipment been kept in good repair?
7. Is furnace room neat and free of combustible materials?
8. Is building free of wastepaper, garbage, etc. outside and in?
9. How many fire extinguishers? Are they operable and have they been serviced?
10. Is the attic free of combustible material and liquids?
11. Are stairways and hallways clear for good exit purposes? Are there two ways of escape from every room?

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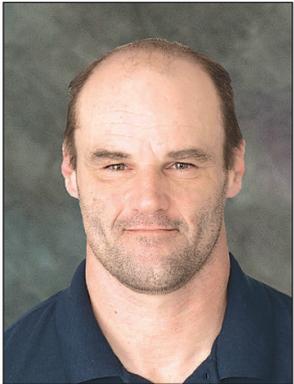
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# EAGLE RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Steve Abrams



Michael Anderson



Peter "Tripp" Anderson



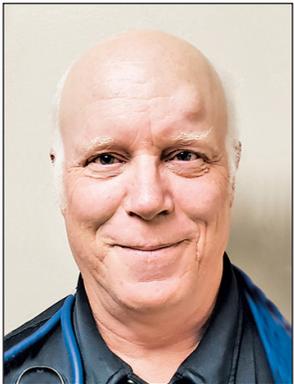
Peter Anderson



Steve Burr



Madison Champine



Robert Cline



Logan Croker



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# Eagle River Fire Department makes major upgrades and expands training programs

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

The Eagle River Fire Department (ERFD) ordered a new Pierce 110-foot Ascendant Aerial Platform Apparatus truck in April, with an expected delivery date of January, 2026.

Fire Chief Michael Anderson said the total cost of the new truck will be just under \$1.4 million.

“The current lead time on this type of apparatus from Pierce is between 33 and 36 months,” Anderson said.

“The ERFD sets aside enough funds to purchase a new engine every 10 years. We staff two stations, and this accounting practice allows us to replace an engine every 20 years. We were scheduled to take delivery of a new engine in 2026.

“Unfortunately, our ladder truck, Truck 12, will be 40 years old in 2024 and also needs to be replaced. A ladder truck is a specialty apparatus, and we do not have a replacement schedule for specialty equipment. The new Pierce Ascendant will replace both vehicles,” he added.

The Ascendant is designed to serve as a dual-purpose apparatus and will ultimately allow the department to replace two vehicles.

“This new truck has the same chassis as Engine 16, the previous apparatus we purchased in 2016. The main difference between the two vehicles is that the Ascendant will have a 110-foot-long platform ladder on top,” Anderson said.

The new Ascendant will serve as ERFD’s first due-out engine for the first 10 years of service, from 2026 to 2036, and then it will serve as a ladder truck from 2037 until it is replaced. He said he expects the new truck to last for roughly 40 years.

## First aid, CPR training

The department is also expanding its role as a trainer in the community by offering both cardiopulmonary resuscitation



The Eagle River Fire Department display on each Sept. 11 remembers those who bravely went into danger back in 2001 after the attack on the World Trade Center towers in New York City.

—Staff Photo By KURT KRUEGER

(CPR) and first aid. In 2021, the ERFD started instructing CPR in the community.

“We started by investing in a set of CPR training manikins and certifying several members as American Heart Association CPR instructors,” explained Anderson.

ERFD is also certified to inspect and maintain fire extinguishers for local businesses, groups, and

individuals. In addition, the fire department is offering hands-on training to local businesses and groups on the proper use of fire extinguishers.

## Fire commission

A lot of credit for the new equipment and training must go to the Joint Municipal Fire Commission, noted Anderson.

“Without their backing, we

would still be using outdated equipment,” he said. “I must also congratulate the officers and men and women of the fire department for their devotion to duty and willingness to demonstrate a very professional image.”

Eagle River Fire Station 1 is located at 820 E. Pine St. People who have questions about the fire department, need information about fire safety, or are interested

in the various training offered by the department may call 715-479-8835.

## High school training

Starting with the 2023 fall school semester, ERFD has partnered with the Northland Pines School District and Nicolet College to begin teaching the Certified Fire Fighter 1 course at

# EAGLE RIVER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Nick Hartung



Spencer Holms



Mark Holperin



James Kauzlaric



James Koga



Nicole Koga



James Lehmann



Mike McDonald



Quentin Morrison



Andy Nelson



Catherine O'Hagan



Tanner Perry



James Randall



Martin Sauer



Shane Scott



Greg Simic



Mark Vanden Boom



Nick Virgilio

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Pat Weber



Jaime Wise



Todd Wise



Chad Wright

# Eagle River

FROM PAGE 5

the high school.

“The idea is to train the students through a dual enrollment program and graduate certified firefighters ready to serve the community as soon as they leave high school,” said Anderson.

Enrollment is not limited to students from the Eagle River area. The school district has students from the Land O’ Lakes, Conover, St. Germain and Sayner communities. The program will include partnerships with all the local fire departments to provide trained firefighters throughout the entire area.

For details on these training opportunities, contact the department’s main office at 715-479-8835.

## SCBA tanks, filling station

In 2022, the department purchased a new cascade trailer. The trailer carries a cascade system consisting of five 6,000 psi breathing air cylinders and a fill station so members can refill their self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) tanks on the fire scene.

The department also purchased a drone in 2022, which has a thermal imaging camera, loudspeaker and searchlight. It will be used for search and rescue, as well as on emergency scenes for better command and control, Anderson said.

The new drone is identical to the one purchased by the county emergency management department, so they are compatible logistically and can be used in tandem on large emergency scenes.

ERFD also has officially opened its second fire station on Rangeline Road in the town of Washington at the entrance to the town transfer station.

Station 2 is staffed by nearby volunteers and has a fire engine, tender, and brush truck to quickly respond to fires, accidents, and rescue missions east and north of Eagle River.

“It will ensure better protection for the eastern half of

the fire district,” said Anderson.

Also in 2020, the department added a 2005 Pierce rescue pumper, a fire engine that also carries all rescue equipment.

The department acquired a new command vehicle in 2020. The new C-19 truck is a 2019 Ford F-250 specially ordered and purchased at a local Ford dealership. It replaced a 2008 Chevy brush unit.

“The C-19 is kind of like a transformer,” said Lt. James Koga, head of the C-19 crew. “The C-19 has the look of a normal truck for things like inspections, but it also acts as a fire apparatus and has the look of a fire truck when the lights come on.”

The C-19 is equipped with a custom bed slide that is more compact than bed slides on previous department vehicles.

Responding to almost every call or accident scene, the C-19 is getting a lot of use at the Eagle River Fire Department, according to Koga.

The department also made major renovations to its old command vehicle, known as C-1, converting it into a brush truck.

“We fabricated an aluminum water tank and added a pump and air shocks,” said Anderson. “We did the renovations in-house, so it all cost less than \$5,000. The brush truck will be great for fighting wildland fires.”

## New water tender

In 2018, the department took delivery of a new water tender, also known as a tanker, to improve its fire-fighting capabilities.

The \$133,000 tanker featured a 2015 International chassis and a new aluminum 3,250-gallon water tank, along with an easy-to-deploy portable fire suppression tank that is set up at the fire site.

“Funds for the truck came from the Joint Municipal Fire Commission’s apparatus account,” said Anderson. “Purchasing a completely new tender would have been over \$300,000, so we were able to save some money.”

Anderson said radios and lighting have been added to the tender, in addition to a portable pump on the truck, so the water tank can be filled at remote locations.



Training exercises run routinely by department members helps keep members of the Eagle River Fire Department honed on their skills. —CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

## Pumper added

The department made a big investment in 2016, purchasing a new Pierce Enforcer Pumper with a 1,000-gallon tank and a 1,750-gallon-per-minute pump.

“The pumper features the latest technology with a side-mount pump panel,” said Anderson.

Along with the purchase, the department also converted its 20-year-old Scott SCBA to a new G3 MSA brand SCBA.

The Enforcer Pumper cost about \$512,000. It was purchased through the vehicle outlay funds set aside in the fire commission budget. The SCBA cost \$128,000.

“In anticipation of buying the Enforcer, we put \$45,000 annually into the vehicle outlay fund until we were able to afford the new pumper,” said Anderson.

## All-purpose trailer

In 2013, the department purchased a specially designed enclosed trailer to haul a UTV used for trail rescues and fighting brush fires.

In addition to hauling the UTV, the 18-foot aluminum trailer can be used as a command center or a

firefighter rehabilitation trailer, according to Anderson.

“The trailer is designed to carry the UTV, but it is fully insulated and wired with lights,” said Anderson. “If we need it as a command center at a major fire, or as a rehab center for firefighters to warm up during the winter months, it can be quickly converted by pulling out the UTV.”

The trailer was purchased for about \$16,000, with funds raised by the department through cream puff sales and pond hockey concessions.

The UTV, a four-wheel drive John Deere Gator 825i, was purchased in 2012 for about \$25,000. It features tracks and wheels for all trail conditions, an enclosed cab, and a rear Medlite transport box with a Stokes basket for transporting accident victims.

An additional brush fire skid unit features a portable pump, 75 feet of hose, a 90-gallon water tank, a 5-gallon foam system, and an area for a Stokes basket.

A Department of Natural Resources grant helped fund the fire suppression unit that cost

the department \$5,200.

Other features of the Gator include power steering, side-by-side seating for two rescue personnel in the heated cab, and a seat in the rear Medlite unit for a first responder. The tracks can be taken off and replaced with wheels.

“The tracks handle a variety of trail conditions, including deep snow, so we probably will leave them on year-round,” said Anderson. “We can also use this on a snow- and ice-covered lake for rescues.”

The department funded the vehicle with a gift from the Bernadine “Bunny” Venn estate, funds from the department’s cream puff trailer, and proceeds from the annual pond hockey event.

The Eagle River department refurbished its older tanker truck in 2011, adding a new stainless-steel tank, new tires, and much-needed additional equipment at a cost of about \$90,000. The refurbishing project was funded through a capital outlay through the fire commission for vehicle replacements.

# EAGLE RIVER POLICE DEPARTMENT



Police Chief Chris Dobbs



Officer Jordan Braut



Donut



Office Manager Danelle Moran



Patrol Sgt./Asst. Chief  
Adam Ross



Detective Sgt. Ryan Rosing



Officer Tyler Salvinski



Officer Dustin Wichmann



## EAGLE RIVER

Supporting the community  
that supports one another

# VILAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE



**JOSEPH FATH**  
VILAS COUNTY  
SHERIFF

The department is headed by Sheriff Joseph Fath with Chief Deputy Patrick Schmidt. Captain is Gerard Ritter and William Weiss is the Jail Administrator. Sherri Congleton is the Emergency Management Director. In addition, there are 4 lieutenants, 6 detectives, 30 deputies, 4 jail sergeants, 22 correctional officers, 4 communication sergeants, 14 telecommunication officers, and 4 administrative assistants.

From the beginning of 2022, to the end of 2023 the total number of CAD calls was of 38,886. Of the calls received, 6076 were 911 calls. The department received 1,014 reports of traffic accidents. Of these accidents, 95 had personal injury, 46 snowmobile accidents (5 fatal), 12 ATV accidents, 7 watercraft accidents, 2 bicycle accidents. 317 resulted in property damage and animals were responsible for 374 accidents.

The county reported 3 traffic fatalities in this time frame.

The sheriff's department dispatches law enforcement and emergency services to 14 towns and the city of Eagle River.

## VILAS COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE MISSION STATEMENT

"The Vilas County Sheriff's Office will enhance the quality of life in the community through our service to the public, protection of persons and property, and impartial enforcement of the law."



## Vilas County Sheriff's Office Employees

### SHERIFF

Joseph Fath

### CHIEF DEPUTY

Patrick Schmidt

### CAPTAIN

Gerard Ritter

### EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Sherri Congleton

### ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

Bev Hunt Erica Buckton  
Toni Swendson Melissa Hopkins

### JAIL ADMINISTRATOR

William Weiss

### PATROL LIEUTENANTS

Jeff Schaub Gregory Fulton  
Mike Aderman Matthew Wilson

### INVESTIGATIONS DIVISION

Cody Remick Emily Miller  
Eric Santefort Nick Seeger  
Logan Pontbriand Charisse Rozga Anderson

### JAIL SERGEANTS

Alisha Wagner Jamie Meier Katelyn Kleinschmidt Jacob Vassar

### JAIL DIVISION — CORRECTIONS

Sherylyn Block Kory Sparling Austin Bender Nezerae Hansen Hutchinson  
Justin Johnson Angie Untiedt Barb Rasmussen Brenda LaCrosse  
Dave Glendinning Joe Barber Scott McFarland Blake Jensen  
Ryan Reynolds Steven Sugar Erika Hoffmann Jacob Mayo  
Crystal Morris Emil Rottier-Douangmala Amelia Gagliano  
William Stone Jack Lewan Nathan Hopkins

### COUNTY BOARD

Jerry Burkett, Chairperson Carolyn Ritter, Vice Chairperson

### LAW ENFORCEMENT & EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Jerry Burkett, Chairperson Tom Maulson, Vice Chairperson

### COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

#### Communications Sergeants:

Amanda Mattke Dawn Seals Kaisha McGreal Dana Spurgeon

#### Telecommunicators:

Pat Rine Katelyn Condon Tracy Schilling Lori Scarcelli (911 Lieutenant)  
Esmeralda Zaba Tracy Weese Shannon Lehmann Kelly Bagrowski  
Rebecca Voss Amy Len Thomason Tricia Karaba Katie Hemming  
Taylor Healy Eric Walters

### PATROL DIVISION

Jason Molle	Shyla Belzer	Glenn Huelskamp	Dale Soltow	Chad Christensen
Rob Minx	Brook Lewis	Ben Gauger	Brent Wilmot	Tyler Jakubowski
Tyler Pontbriand	Will Krueger	Zack Kozisek	Phill Newcomb	Julie Mootz
Rob Dumovich	Matt Giebudowski	Mark Giebudowski	Jacob Scheicher	Matthew Marchant
Brian Bagrowski	Shelby Retallick	Jon Euting	Ron Lueneburg	Trevor Tipp
Amanda Sergent	Brandon Trevino	Jarrold Pritchett	Matthew Twork	Zach Stern (K-9 Handler)

### PATROL CANINES

Helo Stitch

### RECORDS DIVISION

Erica Buckton Toni Swenson Melissa Hopkins

**VILAS COUNTY SHERIFF**  
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call (800) 472-7290  
EMERGENCY DIAL 911

## Vilas County Statistical Facts\*

Yearly Full-Time Population  
(based on 2020 census).....23,047  
Seasonal (peak) Population.....105,346  
Population change 2010 - 2020 ..... +1.58%  
Population/square mile - 2020 ..... 25.4  
Named Lakes.....563  
Unnamed Lakes.....757  
'05 Equalized Value.....\$6,170,900,800  
'23 Equalized Value.....\$10,846,204,300  
Total Lake Acreage.....93,889 acres  
Net Land Acreage.....8,593 acres  
Cold Water Streams.....35  
Warm Water Streams.....116  
Intermittent Streams .....16  
Miles of Roads  
State.....136.13  
County.....205.84  
Town.....1,112.04

\*From Wis. Blue Book, Extension Office

# ASPIRUS



Sherry Congleton



David Halverson



Danielle Holz



Ben Nylund



The Eagle River Critical Care Unit for Aspirus spent time this past summer helping with aid at the Merrill Rodeo in Lincoln County. The group service continues to supply much-needed medical care and transport across North and Central Wisconsin and the Upper Peninsula. —Contributed Photo

## Aspirus MedEvac receives new ambulance to support Eagle River community

Aspirus MedEvac recently received a new ambulance for its 911 crews based at Aspirus Eagle River Hospital (AERH) that was placed into service on Sept. 11.

When a 911 call comes in, and an ambulance is requested, response speed is critical. That is how lives are saved. And, in an area like Eagle River, ambulances also need to cover a lot of ground.

The hospital currently has two ambulances and a high-quality, well-trained 24/7 paramedic service covering Eagle River and the surrounding towns.

The new ambulance has a series of state-of-the-art lifesaving equipment designed to provide a higher level of patient care, as well as safety for the crew. These include a next-generation Stryker Power-LOAD system cot, a power

stair chair, a new LUCAS 3 device, and a backup assist camera.

“The power cot is an auto lift cot that provides a safer experience for patients and for our crews,” said Dan Halverson, paramedic at AERH. “Manually lifting a patient can take a toll on a person’s back, and the new cot allows us to press a button and lift heavier patients up to 700 pounds.”

Sometimes folks are injured or need assistance either upstairs or downstairs, and the power stair chair is designed with that safety in mind as it is able to support patients while going up or down stairs with little to no lifting required. It includes an increased weight capacity and patient containment system.

The LUCAS 3 device is a mechanical chest compression

system for coronary intervention during cardiac arrest. It is an automated compression device that provides high-quality and consistent compressions. High-quality CPR compressions are imperative for good survival outcomes in patients.

“We’re honored to serve Eagle River and the surrounding communities with paramedic-level service,” added Halverson. “It’s important to us and Aspirus Health that we have the tools needed to care for patients in our rural area.”

AERH ambulance service also provides paramedic intercepts to the towns of Land O’ Lakes, Conover, Phelps and St. Germain.

In addition to providing 911 coverage, Aspirus MedEvac provides 24-hour air- and ground

medical transport for critically ill or injured individuals in north central Wisconsin and Michigan’s Upper Peninsula.

MedEvac operates critical-care ground transport ambulances from Wisconsin bases in Eagle River, Medford, Mosinee, Plover, Portage, Weston, Wisconsin Rapids and Woodruff; and upper Michigan bases in Iron River/Crystal Falls and Ontonagon. Air medical helicopter bases are located in Woodruff (MedEvac Air 1) and Mosinee (MedEvac Air 2). The ground units are staffed with critical care paramedics, registered nurses, and emergency medical technicians.

For information on careers at Aspirus MedEvac, visit [aspirus.org/our-careers](http://aspirus.org/our-careers).

# World Drowning Prevention Day: A Global Call to Action

Drowning is a significant public health issue and according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), it claimed the lives of over 4,500 people each year from 2020–2022, 500 more per year compared to 2019. It is a leading cause of death among children and young people aged 1-24 years in many countries. Most drowning incidents are preventable with effective policies, education, and community action.

The Oneida County Public Safety Dive Team, a division of the Oneida County Sheriff's Department, consists of ten members, including sheriff's deputies and civilian volunteers. The Dive Team trains for drowning emergencies year-round.

"The biggest thing we want to make people aware of is that drowning doesn't look like you think it does; it doesn't look like what we see on television or the movies, or even on the cartoons," stated Michael Fraley, Oneida County Public Safety Dive Team. "It's really a silent action. People aren't able to make noise when they're drowning."

World Drowning Prevention Day is July 25 and this global event, initiated by the United Nations, aims to raise awareness about the devastating impact of drowning and to promote life-saving measures to prevent it.

"The most important thing is to not become a victim yourself," added Madison Weber, Aspirus MedEvac EMT, based in Eagle River. "It can be a really dangerous situation to put yourself in if you were to go out and try and save somebody that could potentially be drowning. So, the most important thing would be to call 911 so they can get the appropriate resources to you in a timely manner. If you have any kind of flotation device that you could throw to them, hopefully on a string that you could pull them in with, that would be a really good idea to do, as well as keeping an eye on where they're at in the water, just so you have their location."

Recognizing the signs of drowning is crucial for identifying when someone might be in distress in the water. Here are some key signs:

## **Silent Mouth:**

Drowning individuals are usually unable to call for help. They might be struggling to breathe and unable to speak.

## **Ineffective Arm Movements:**

Instead of the typical splashing and waving associated with swimming, a drowning person might have their arms extended to the sides or pressing down to keep their head above water.

## **Vertical Position:**

Drowning individuals often cannot maintain a horizontal position in the water. They might appear to be climbing an invisible ladder or floating vertically.

## **Lack of Forward Progress:**

A person who is drowning might not be able to move toward safety or make progress toward a flotation device or shore.



## **Gasping or Hyperventilating:**

They may have a panicked expression and be gasping for air.

## **Glassy or Wide Eyes:**

Their eyes might appear wide open with a blank stare, showing fear or confusion.

Hair Over Forehead or Eyes: They might be unable to clear their face of water.

## **Hypothermia:**

In cold water, their skin might appear pale or bluish, and they might show signs of shivering or an inability to control body movements.

## **Sudden Disappearance:**

Drowning can occur quickly and silently, with the person slipping below the surface without much warning.

If you suspect someone is drowning, act quickly and call for emergency assistance. According to Fraley, you don't have too much time to react. "Twenty to 60 seconds, they say, before that person is going to be underneath the water."

Once someone is pulled from the water, EMS on scene begins their assessment and lifesaving procedures. "We're automatically going to start with our ABCs," added Weber. "We're going to check the airway, their breathing, their circulation, check for any signs of trauma. We're going to check for any life threats like major bleeding. We're going to treat anything that we see there. If they don't have a pulse, we're going to start our cardiac arrest protocol, stop the bleeding."

Local communities play a crucial role in preventing drowning. Community leaders, schools, and local organizations are encouraged to organize events and activities that promote water safety awareness and education. The Oneida County Public Safety Dive Team held their annual Minocqua Island Swim Challenge to raise awareness and to raise funds for their team to continue training in the event they're needed. Aspirus MedEvac provides on-site support for the event with their bike team.

## A Message From The Publisher

### **DEAR READERS,**

The purpose of this special publication of the Vilas County NewsReview and The Three Lakes News is to recognize the hundreds of friends and neighbors who have answered the call to life-saving public service.

The sacrifices and the courage of area firefighters, EMS personnel and law enforcement officers should not be taken for granted. These farsighted individuals have trained long and hard to be ready when the phone rings and their expertise is needed to fight a fire, extract victims from mangled vehicles or to perform life-saving procedures on accident victims. Their dedication and commitment to the community is exemplary.

Oct. 6-12 is Fire Prevention Week. The week always includes Oct. 9, in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire of 1871, which began on Oct. 8, but wreaked most of its havoc the following day.

This is our 39th annual update of this publication, which keeps our readers informed on the progress and struggles that emergency personnel face as they work tirelessly to prepare for whatever disasters North Woods residents may encounter.

It is a big job collecting the information and photos in this special edition. Every department has an updated story to tell about their equipment, training and fundraising — vital tools for creating departments that are ready to respond on a moment's notice.

We make every effort to include everyone, however, we're sure someone has been unintentionally omitted. We're told about 5,500 people die in fires in this country every year — including about 100 firefighters — and another 30,000 civilians are injured. In addition, law enforcement officers and rescue personnel are injured and killed on duty. Fire is a tragedy no one wants to experience; it is a destroyer of lives and property.

The emergency personnel being saluted in this special section respond to hundreds of calls for help every year. We might not appreciate the work these people do for us until an accident or fire happens to us, a relative or a neighbor.

The tabloid includes tips on fire and accident prevention, because many of these tragic events can be prevented through improved public awareness and more attention to safety. We can't avoid all accidents, but it is reassuring to know trained and qualified emergency and rescue personnel are ready to assist us.

For the well-being of your family and your property, observe good fire safety practices this week and every week.

Make sure every member of the family has an escape route. Make sure your smoke alarms are in working order at all times, and think seriously about installing carbon monoxide alarms. Most property owners who endure a house fire are underinsured, so make sure your insurance coverage is adequate for all possible disasters.

We wish to thank everyone who helped compile the information in this publication and who cooperated with us in preparing this year's salute. And we especially want to thank the sponsors and advertisers for making it all possible.

**KURT KRUEGER, PUBLISHER**

# Three Lakes Fire Department upgrades gear and adds first responders

The Three Lakes Fire Department has made significant strides by upgrading its equipment and adding first responders.

On April 1, the department officially launched its first responder team, enhancing emergency response capabilities. Additionally, a generous grant from the Three Lakes Community Foundation provided six new AEDs, further boosting the department's life-saving resources.

Additionally, seven first responder jump kits were prepared for the first responders.

The department's equipment was further enhanced by the donation of \$12,000 from the Three Lakes Fire Department Auxiliary, which was used to purchase a 28-foot trailer for picnic equipment.

To bolster their rescue capabilities, the department acquired two new Milwaukee M18 9-inch cutoff tools for metal cutting, two new M18 chainsaws, and a new battery-powered PPV fan M18.

The Three Lakes Fire Department upgraded its equipment repertoire last year with the purchase of a Rescue 42 strut stabilizing system for car accidents, along with additional shark cribbing.

The Rescue 42 struts are an all-inclusive system that enables the department to set up a car that is on its side or top to be stabilized quickly and safely, with one firefighter setting up stabilization in minutes. The system was purchased for \$3,200.

"This is a huge help as our past struts required them to be assembled and took more time to set up, which in vehicle extrication stabilization is one of the first steps," said Assistant Fire Chief Lee Tauer. "They were purchased in-house by the department."

Additionally, the department had four firefighters complete



Members of the Three Lakes Fire & EMS Department continue a strong tradition of serving the area in and around their small Oneida County town.

—STAFF PHOTO

level A and B entry-level firefighting training as of fall 2023, including Reagan Anys, Paul Lamon, Travis Wood, and Chase Kirby. Completing levels A and B consisted of 60 hours of hands-on training, according to Tauer.

Wood, Lamon, and Whitton continued their training and completed National Certified 1, which is an additional 36 hours of emergency service training, plus 20 hours of hazardous material training. This is on top of the 60 hours required for levels A and B to become nationally-certified firefighters.

"We have also trained and worked with Life Link medical flight crews, and to have the ability to get our patients out to a trauma center in less time," Tauer added. "We've also trained

to be able to land a helicopter on a road or field close to the accident, which can have a huge impact on saving someone's life.

"Our department has five 'new' first responders and in a few weeks they will be responding to trauma and medical emergencies to help aid Med-8."

Tyler Kelley, Devan and Chase Kirby, Wood, Whitton and Tauer were among Three Lakes Fire Department personnel who completed first responder training that consisted of another 76 hours of training.

The fire department and Three Lakes Fire Department Auxiliary teamed up last year to purchase a new stage that can be used for community events, including the annual Fireman's Picnic.

"The old trailer was no longer safe and we were looking for a

replacement," said Fire Chief Robert Canada. "We were able to purchase the new trailerable stage from a production company in St. Germain."

The stage features hydraulics to lift the roof and floor. There also are lights and speakers for the stage.

"We just got it before the Fireman's Picnic in 2022 and it worked out great at last year's and the previous year's picnic as a stage for our musical entertainment," said Canada. "But we will take a look at the stage and its possible uses for other community events. We might even rent it out later as a source of revenue for the department."

The annual fire department picnic, held the first Sunday of August, is one of the town's largest social events and is the

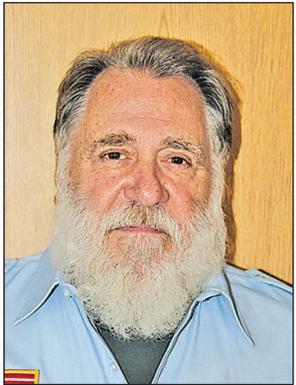
department's largest single fundraiser.

In 2015 and 2022, the department was able to purchase a total of two new Hurst electric-hydraulic extrication tools, once again with support from the auxiliary, the town of Three Lakes, and department fundraising events, including the picnic and Pumpkin Fest. The cost of the two units was approximately \$59,000.

Canada highlighted these pieces of equipment allow for more efficient extrication capabilities since they are powered by batteries rather than by conventional hydraulic hoses. They can create more instantaneous controllable power, improved portability, as well as being able to work underwater, in cases of submerged vehicles.

To 3 LAKES Pg. 14

# THREE LAKES FIRE DEPARTMENT



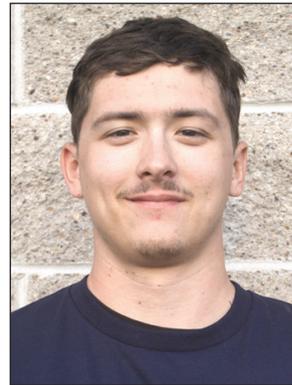
Les Anderson



James Anys



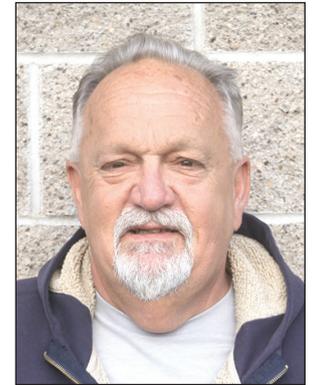
Merilene Anys



Noah Anys



Reagan Anys



Steven Bennett



Nanc Bollmann



Rober Canada



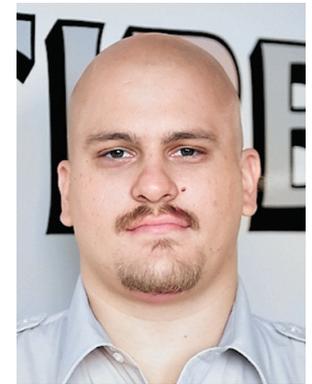
Gus Fink



John Fink



Karl Gaffron



Randall Gensler



Kelly Keating



Tyler Kelley



Chase Kirby



Dave Kirby



Devan Kirby



Paul Lamon

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# THREE LAKES FIRE DEPARTMENT



Paul Lamon



Kim Maney



Levi Schneider



Lea Scott



Lee Tauer



Josh Trammell



Jason Whitton



Travis Wood

## 3 Lakes

FROM PAGE 12

“With the community’s continued support, we will continue to be able to steadily improve the quality and scope of our services,” Canada stated.

He added that the department is always receptive to new members who are willing to freely give their time for such a worthy cause.

Those interested in joining the Three Lakes Fire Department may visit during one of the department’s monthly meetings, held the second and fourth Mondays of each month at the Three Lakes fire station, located at 1920 Epler Court. Meetings begin at 6:30 p.m.

### Tender, fire suits

The Three Lakes Fire Department purchased a new water tender in 2020, according to former Fire Chief Dave Kirby.

The 3,500-gallon tender was an upgrade from the department’s previous 1994 tender, which held 3,000 gallons of water. The tender

is equipped with the newest technologies and came with all new equipment, in part due to a \$15,000 donation from the Three Lakes Fire Department Auxiliary.

“With this new tender, all we have to do is put water in and go,” Kirby said. “The tender is a great addition to our equipment here.”

With the tender purchase complete, Canada said the department also finalized the purchase of a new patrol truck for an estimated \$40,000. “The pickup truck is used to carry additional personnel to a fire or accident scene and is also able to pull our boat or UTV,” said Canada.

The department upgraded its capabilities in 2019, with the purchase of 20 sets of wildland fire suits for firefighters, and a drone for rescues.

The fire suits cost about \$20,000, but a Department of Natural Resources matching grant paid \$10,000 of the total.

“The wildland fire suits are much lighter, but are still made with fire-retardant Nomex material,” said Kirby. “The helmet also is much lighter, which is important because fatigue can set in while fighting a

wildland fire in which firefighters are in the woods or field, covering a lot of ground. It’s not the same as a structure fire.”

The department also ordered ten pairs of boots for wildland fires, as some firefighters requested the lighter-weight boots.

The second major purchase in 2019 was a firefighter drone kit from Drone USA, at a cost of just under \$10,000. The Three Lakes Fire Department Auxiliary, with funds raised at the annual Pumpkin Fest, funded the new drone.

“The drone is used for search-and-rescue efforts by the department and it also has a thermal-imaging camera, so we use it to find hot spots from above in a fire,” said Kirby.

Kirby said the drone has about a 25-minute fly time on one battery. The department purchased six batteries for the drone.

### Other upgrades

In 2018, the department purchased a handheld thermal-imaging camera and two thermal-imaging masks. A small screen is located in the lower right-hand side of the mask, allowing the wearer to look through either the

mask or the imaging camera.

Kirby said the first two firefighters to go into a burning area wear the masks. With thick smoke obstructing the firefighters’ views, the thermal imaging cameras help the firefighters locate the hot spots of the fire, as well as victims who may be trapped inside a burning building.

The masks cost \$1,500 each, and were purchased with the department’s budget for gear and equipment.

The department also added a handheld thermal-imaging camera to its equipment for \$5,800. It was paid for by the Three Lakes Fire Department Auxiliary. The handheld camera also allows firefighters to locate hot spots in a fire, but in a handheld fashion.

Personal carbon monoxide detectors and four gas-air monitors were purchased in 2017. Firefighters wear the carbon monoxide detectors to test the levels of carbon monoxide present, making sure it is safe for them to work. The four gas-air monitors are used for testing gas levels.

Several cold-water rescue suits were also purchased for \$850 each.



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## Hiles Fire Department receives grant for upgrades

The Hiles Fire Department has once again been proactive in upgrading its equipment and facilities, securing nearly a \$30,000 grant this year to outfit a replacement fire truck with the latest in fire suppression technology. This new truck will be stationed at the fire department's building on Tuttle Road near Kentuck Lake, allowing for a faster and more efficient response in that area.

This grant is part of the department's ongoing efforts to improve its capabilities following last year's acquisition of a rescue van funded by a \$1,900 grant from the Wisconsin Public Service (WPS) Foundation. The WPS

grant enabled the purchase of essential emergency safety equipment for the van, including an emergency light bar, siren, and vehicle lettering. The van replaced an older model that had become costly to maintain due to significant rust and other issues.

In addition to these grants, the department has also focused on maintaining and upgrading other critical equipment.

Last year, they purchased a vehicle to replace their 1985 brush truck, funded largely through firewood sales to campers at the U.S. Forest Service's (USFS) Franklin Lake campground. This new vehicle is stationed at the fire department's recently completed

garage on Tuttle Road, a building made possible by a grant from the Forest County Potawatomi Community.

Firewood sales continue to be a significant source of funding for the department, with members and local neighbors cutting, splitting and wrapping wood for sale to visitors at the many campgrounds in the area.

"These funds help make it possible to purchase needed equipment," emphasized a department spokesperson, highlighting the critical role that firewood sales play in supporting their operations.

Training also remains a key focus for the department. In

June, 2022, they participated in a wildland fire training event with U.S. Forest Service representatives, where they reviewed firefighting tactics and tools. The department also takes advantage of training opportunities provided by the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, including an eight-hour wildland fire class.

With many campgrounds and recreational opportunities in the area, campfires are a popular activity. However, the department urges caution. "They ask all campers to completely extinguish campfires at all sites as some are on remote trails," the spokesperson said. "A fire

can burn underground for long distances through the peat and pine needle forest floor."

### Meet the department

Bill Prening, who holds the rank of battalion chief, and Chuck Hill serve as both EMS and firefighters.

The members of the department include firefighters Dick Bukowski, Bob Curley, Dave Parker, Brent Doden, Mary Doden, Kathy Hahlbeck, Keith Hahlbeck, Mark Lauber and Dave Michalak.

The EMS members are Service Director Nancy Ciapalo, Kathy Babcock, Lynn Parker, Kristy Palmer, and EMS in training, Tony Balistrieri.

# St. Germain Fire & Rescue utilizes new engine-aerial combination

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

St. Germain Fire and Rescue added a new engine-aerial combination in December of last year.

The St. Germain Town Board approved funding for the Pierce 107-foot Ascendant aerial, built on a Pierce Velocity chassis, at a cost of \$1.2 million and financed with a six-year loan.

The new unit replaced the prior aerial ladder vehicle, which was around 30 years old and in need of constant maintenance, and the vehicle designated as Engine 2, also of similar age and condition as the ladder truck.

The new aerial platform provides safety for firefighters ventilating rooftops, fighting attic fires, and protecting surrounding structures from the heat created by a blaze.

The new ambulance, at a cost of \$220,000, was paid for by donations and from the St. Germain Firefighters Association, which operates the flea market during the summer months, and by the annual fish fry dinner at Knocker's restaurant in St. Germain.

The department works at supporting its staff and upgrading their capabilities through training and educational opportunities.

This year the team held an EMR/EMT refresher that allowed personnel to get their license.

St. Germain Fire and Rescue carries hydraulic-powered rescue tools, commonly referred to as "jaws", and include spreaders, cutters, and rams.

When used properly, victims of vehicle accidents can be extricated very quickly. New this year are the Amkus hydraulic tools to be used with the new truck.

Over the last year, salesmen have demonstrated state-of-the-art and almost silent battery-



The St. Germain Fire & Rescue Department works across Vilas County and into Oneida County providing service to both residents and visitors of the North Woods. The department headquarters is located on Hwy. 155 just north of downtown St. Germain. —Contributed Photo

operated rescue tools.

Recently developed battery-powered devices weigh less and are quieter when being operated. This year St. Germain Fire and Rescue was able to order the new type of extrication tools through a \$15,000 workplace donation from Hilcorp Alaska, an oil exploration and production company located at Milne Point on Alaska's North Slope.

St. Germain Fire Captain Jacob Gebhardt, part of a contractor workforce for day-to-day operations and emergency services with the company, was recognized for his service, along with the Gebhardt family involvement in St. Germain's volunteer department.

Hilcorp Alaska employee Jon "Duck Tape" Wagner, who grew up in St. Germain, partook in this recognition of the Gebhardt

family's involvement in the community.

Through Hilcorp's Local Charity Giving Program, Wagner was able to aid in securing additional funding needed to procure the extrication tools.

The Hilcorp Giving Program has donated more than \$80 million to local charities across the United States over the past 15 years, and is proud to have helped contribute to the continued success of the volunteer-based St. Germain Fire and Rescue team, as well as the community of St. Germain.

"At Hilcorp, their employees and communities are central to their mission, vision, and core values, and they understand that the communities are not only where they run petroleum operations, but also equally important are the communities

where employees live, raise families, and improve their shared future," said Captain Gebhardt.

Donations have also been received by the department for services to residents who appreciated services rendered when they needed to call 911.

## Training and licensing

"Thank you for your service," is a greeting often heard by firefighters and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel.

The service provided by St. Germain Fire and Rescue, as well as other departments, includes a lot of training and cooperation at fundraising events.

Wisconsin State emergency medical technician (EMT) and emergency medical responder (EMR) licensing must be renewed

on a regular basis, as well as individual membership in the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

Almost every aspect of fire and rescue service is governed by rules and regulations designed to protect the personnel, and the public, during emergency response.

On Nov. 5 and 6, 2021, Paul Behrens, a Fire and Department of Justice instructor for Nicolet College in Rhinelander, came to St. Germain to inform local firefighters from St. Germain, Eagle River, Plum Lake, Winchester, Newbold, and other municipalities of their responsibilities while driving fire and rescue vehicles.

Passing a driving test, including parking and backing

# ST. GERMAIN FIRE DEPARTMENT



Rick Arbaugh



Brian Cooper



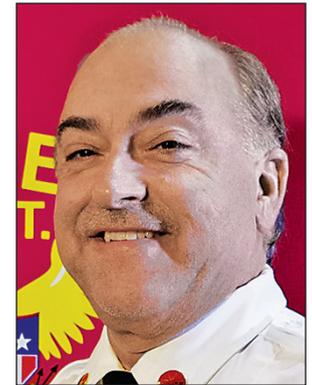
Ross Cooper



Joe Domenico



Rob Dumovich



Tim Ebert



Travis Fowler



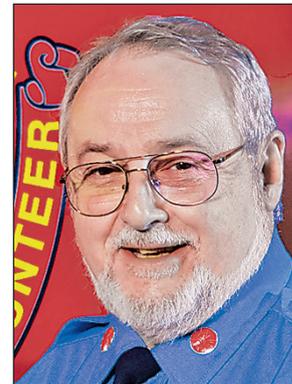
Jacob Gebhardt



Nathan Gebhardt



Tim Gebhardt



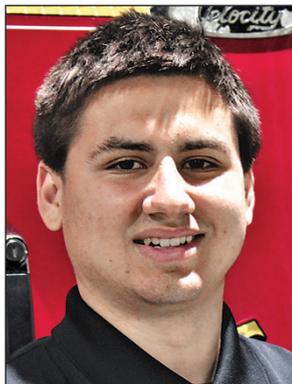
Wally Geist



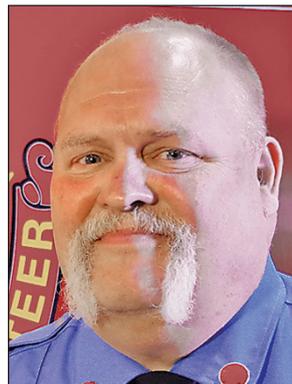
Kirby Giampa



Skyler Giampa



Trevor Giampa



Kevin Harvey



Marion Janssen

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# ST. GERMAIN FIRE DEPARTMENT



Brian Repenshek



Troy Schalinske



Sharon Seegert



Randy Sigla



Tom Stoltman



Ben Vendl



Chris Vendl



Gary Vendl



Cody Vojta Jr.



John Vojta



Angie Wagoner



Jim Wendt

"If you hear me get loud, exit immediately and call 911"



## Germain

FROM PAGE 16

up, would grant each driver a certificate and license to operate ambulances, tenders and engines on behalf of their respective departments.

Equipment, personnel upgrades St. Germain Fire and Rescue made personnel gains in 2021, with the addition of several firefighters and EMTs.

The department also added a new ambulance to its fleet in December, 2021. The department also overcame a leaky roof in the squad room that caused damage to radios, ceiling tiles, and other equipment kept in the meeting area.

Leaks also had been noticed in the furnace room and truck bays at the fire station. The St. Germain Town Board recognized the problem and acted to replace

the roof over the entire building. At about the same time as the roof replacement, new garage bay doors replaced the older doors which had worn hardware.

During the early stages of the Covid pandemic, firefighter association meetings were attended in real-time over the Blue Jeans meeting platform.

The camera, microphones, and viewing screens in the meeting room also allowed for off-site training, and enhanced sessions were delivered by Marshfield Medical Center - Minocqua Clinic emergency staff.

Donations also have been received by the department for services rendered to residents, including for extinguishing a house fire caused by lightning. St. Germain Fire and Rescue continues to work with the association to raise funds for equipment needed to support the health and well-being of residents and visitors to the community.

# FIRE



## Prevention Week **safety tips** could save lives

Fire Safety Prevention Week reminds families of how to keep loved ones safe when disaster strikes, but fire safety is a year-round practice.

Fires can start and spread quickly, so it is important to know what to do when it comes to staying safe at home. Just a little bit of planning can make a big difference for your family.

According to Children's Wisconsin and Safety Kids, parents should remind their children to never play with matches, lighters, candles or fireworks.

If they hear an alarm, see flames or smell smoke, they should leave the house immediately, and always feel doors before opening them. If it's hot, find a new way out.

Youths also should never go back into a burning building, nor stop for toys or pets.

"Get low and go" — since smoke rises, individuals should stay low to the ground to beat the heat and be able to see and breathe more freely.

Finally, if a person cannot get out of the room, the best thing to do is cover vents and cracks around the door to keep smoke out, then stand by a window and signal for help.

Smoke alarms should be installed in every floor of the home, including outside of sleeping areas and inside each bedroom.

### **DID YOU KNOW...**

- Every hour, approximately 16 children are injured from fires or burns?
- 85% of all fire-related deaths are due to home fires?
- Fires can spread rapidly and leave families as little as two minutes to escape?
- Smoke alarms reduce the chances of dying in a fire by nearly 50%?

Safekids.org has provided a list of checks families can perform to keep their homes safe.

### **CHECK SMOKE ALARMS.**

- Make sure there is a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and near sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month and replace them every 10 years or when the battery is low.
- Know the difference between smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. It is important to have both smoke and CO alarms in your home. Combination smoke and CO alarms are available, but if you have separate ones, make sure you know the sound of each alarm.

### **BE AWARE OF FIRE HAZARDS IN YOUR HOME.**

- Limit distractions when cooking. Don't leave a hot oven or stovetop unattended. Keep anything that can catch fire, such as dish towels or wooden spoons, away from your stovetop.
- Unplug small appliances when not in use. Make sure that you unplug appliances like toasters, toaster ovens and slow cookers when you are not using them.
- Keep candles at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Blow them out when you leave the room or before you go to sleep.

- Teach children never to play with matches and lighters. Make a habit of placing these items up and away, out of reach and sight of young children.
- Choose the right wood for your fireplace. Burn only dry, seasoned wood and avoid burning trash in your fireplace.

### **HOW TO CREATE AND PRACTICE A FIRE ESCAPE PLAN.**

- Create and practice a fire escape plan. Create a home fire escape plan with two ways out of every room (ex. a window and a door). Choose a place to meet outside that is a safe distance away from your home.
- Practice a home fire drill at least twice a year. Practice a home fire drill with your family during the day and at night. Practice escaping in less than two minutes. Sometimes that is all the time you will have to get out of the house safely.
- Choose one person to be responsible for getting infants and young children out of the home. Have a back-up person to help young children just in case the primary person is unable to help. Teach older children how to follow your fire escape plan. Make sure they know to "get low and go" if there is smoke when they are leaving the home. Teach them to open windows, remove screens and unlock doors if necessary.

### **IN AN EMERGENCY, LEAVE HOME IMMEDIATELY.**

- If there is a fire, leave home immediately. If there is a lot of smoke, get low and crawl out of the house as quickly as possible.
- Call 911 after you are a safe distance away from your home. Stay in the safe location until emergency personnel tell you it is safe to re-enter your home.

# Phelps Emergency Services strengthens team and upgrades equipment in 2024

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

Phelps Emergency Services have seen significant advancements in 2024, underscoring a commitment to enhancing community safety and response capabilities.

The most notable development is the addition of six new Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) to the ambulance response team. These dedicated individuals have completed rigorous training, including bi-weekly sessions of four evening hours each.

“Our big news is we have six, yes six, new EMT members of our ambulance response team,” said Phelps Fire Chief Norm Mesun. “After months of grueling meetings and hands-on training. What a huge commitment in service to our town.”

Their addition promises to improve the efficiency and speed of emergency medical responses. Notably, four of these new EMTs are pursuing Advanced EMT (AEMT) certification, which will enable them to perform advanced life support procedures.

The fire department also welcomes two new firefighter

applicants who are currently undergoing training to handle hazardous conditions.

“Their commitment will strengthen the department’s response to emergencies,” said Mesun.

Recognition was given to several emergency responders for their extraordinary service during an ice rescue operation in March.

The Phelps Town Board honored Andy Regenfuss, Rob Andersen III, Jeremy Ryan, Sean Murphy, and Damian Seals for their life-saving efforts. These individuals were also recognized as the 4th of July Phelps Parade Marshals.

Additional members of the emergency services team were acknowledged for their contributions to the successful rescue operation.

A major addition to the Phelps Fire Department is the new Pierce pumper-tanker fire engine, now operational at the North Station.

The truck, which features a 3,000-gallon water capacity and a 1,500-gallon-per-minute pump, is

To PHELPS Pg. 22



The Phelps Fire Department added a new Pierce pumper-tanker to their fleet recently.

— Contributed Photos



The Phelps Fire Department rescue boat allows the department to aid from the water with rescues or boating accidents.



The Phelps Fire Department brush truck is one of the most utilized pieces of equipment for the North Woods department.

# PHELPS FIRE DEPARTMENT



Rob Anderson



Tim Barron



Todd Bierman



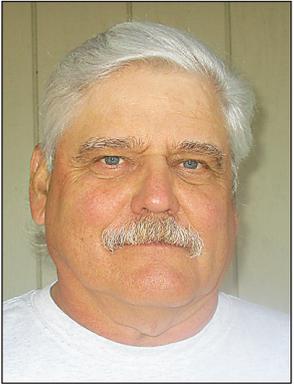
Craig Booth



Tony Campion



Joel Chimel



Roger Crass



Thomas Crawford



Michelle Cruthoff



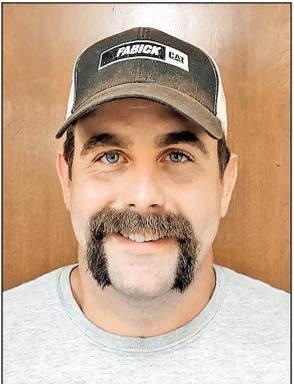
Lucas Gill



Mike Gill Sr



Brent Hafer



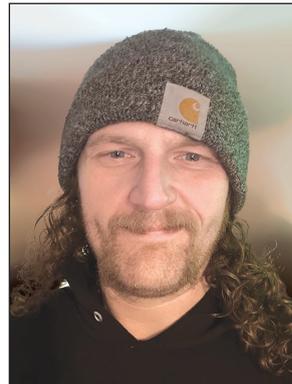
Josh Hedberg



Ray Kangas



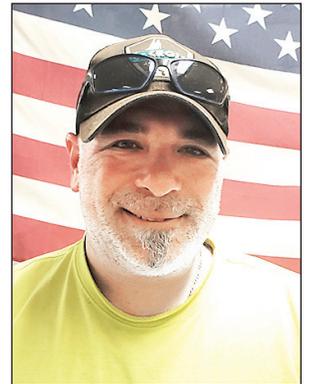
Jeff Kinner



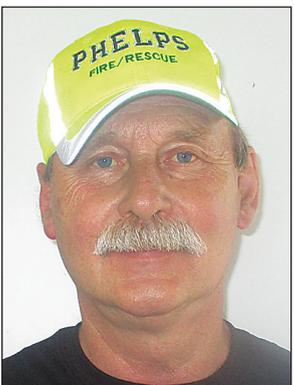
Augustus Lovett



Mikaela Luedtke



Jake Marino



Norm Mesun



Sean Murphy



Mike Myszka



Andy Regenfuss



Kathy Regenfuss



Christy Riihimaki

# PHELPS FIRE DEPARTMENT



Jeremey Ryan



Damien Seals



Carole Selin



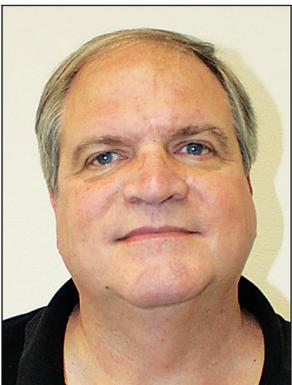
Eric Selin



Quita Sheehan



Steven Vetter



Steve Waier



Department fundraising and donations helped fund the entire purchase of the Phelps rescue boat. There was no increase to taxes or cost to town residents. —Contributed Photo

## Phelps

FROM PAGE 20

equipped for comprehensive fire suppression and rescue operations. It includes hoses, fittings, self-contained breathing apparatus units, and a battery-powered spreader/cutter (JAWS) unit. This new asset enhances the department's ability to respond effectively to fires and emergencies.

Improvements at the North Station also include the development of a helicopter landing pad, facilitating successful medical emergency evacuations by air.

"The great support that is given by our taxpayers, fundraising, and great

donations toward improved service makes all of this possible," Mesun said.

Another significant project was the complete rebuild of the brush truck, a Chevrolet 3500 crew cab with a flatbed and aluminum storage compartments.

"This vehicle is designed for wildland fires and features high-capacity suction and pumping capabilities," said Mesun. "It can transfer 3,000 gallons of water from a lake to a tanker truck in just over seven minutes, demonstrating its efficiency."

Additionally, a new open-water rescue boat—a 20-foot SeaArk semi-V with a 150 HP Suzuki outboard has been acquired.

This versatile vessel, equipped with

safety, medical assistance equipment, GPS, and sonar, is designed for water rescue operations and potential dive team use. Both the brush truck and rescue boat were funded through departmental fundraising and donations, with no property tax dollars used.

"A special thank you to Dan Plach Automotive for a great deal on the Chevrolet truck and to

Northern Edge Marine and Welding for their help in set-up and donations for the boat project," Mesun commented.

The Phelps Fire Department expresses gratitude to the community for its continued support, which enables these vital enhancements and ensures a high level of service and safety for all residents.



# Phelps

Supporting the community that supports one another

# Land O' Lakes Fire Department enhances capabilities and equipment for public safety

BY BOB HUGHES

During this last year, the Land O' Lakes Fire and EMS Departments has continued with intense training of their members to best give them the knowledge for the differing situations that they may encounter once called out.

Working as a team in these eventualities ensures the best results as well as safety for the members.

To better equip the firefighters for their role, in July 2024, The Land O' Lakes Fire Department was excited to take delivery, at relatively short notice, of a new 2025 Freightliner Pumper/Tender made by Midwest Fire, replacing their 1996 GMC 2000-gallon Tanker.

The purchase of this truck was made possible through donations, much of it from a fundraiser carried out in the Fall of 2023 by owners of the Bear Trap Inn in Land O' Lakes.

This new Pumper/Tender holds 3000 gallons of water, has a 1000-gallon-a-minute pump, pump and roll capability, and a remote-control bumper turret, which has the capability of spraying 750 gallons per minute.

In addition, this newly acquired fire truck has a power, portable tank lift for a 3000-gallon portable tank. Continuing training with this first-class Tender is a must for the members of the department.

To further add to the equipment carried on their engines this last year, the Land O' Lakes Fire Department was the recipient of a WE Energies grant to cover the purchase of an Automated External Defibrillator (AED). The Lifepak 1000 AED is a rigorously drop-tested device and comes with a protective case and bumpers. It is vehicle-friendly and designed to ride along in any vehicle without damage from continuous vibrations and other movements.

This essential piece of equipment is a real-life heart recovery machine, and having the



Pictured left to right, in front of the new 2025 Freightliner Pumper/Tender by Midwest Fire, are Joe Garvin, Brian Reiels, Michael Justice, Brad Knaack & Mozzarella, Dan Balog, Matthew Spaargaren.

AED on the Fire Department's vehicles and not just the ambulance is another piece of essential lifesaving equipment, thanks to the Grant from WE Energy.

## The Sherp

Over the 4th of July, The Land O' Lakes Fire Department was able to have on loan a Sherp from Sherp USA for a few days to demo and see how it could benefit the department.

The Sherp is produced by a Ukrainian developer and manufacturer, it is an amphibious rescue vehicle, and it can go through swamps, lakes, go over thin ice and can also go from open water back onto the ice.

This would be a great year-round vehicle for the department because it is heated and has air conditioning and it's also capable of going almost anywhere with all the outdoor recreation in the Land O' Lakes areas.

While on loan to Land O' Lakes the vehicle was extensively

tested around the area over different terrain, a Sherp would be an excellent addition to the department when on rescue calls involving rough terrain and offroad. From snowmobile and ATV accidents to ice rescue, this kind of vehicle would be beneficial, the department will be fundraising and is looking for donors for the purchase of a Sherp.

## Helicopter landing zones

There are two newly designated helicopter landing zones on town property in Land O' Lakes besides the Apron at King's Gateway Airport. One is located at Highway B and opposite Highway S. The other is located on Highway B, just west of Palmer Lake Road.

With assistance from the Wisconsin DNR, the Land O' Lakes town crew and Lifelink 3, landing zones were designated and cleared. The department is currently in the process of completing the project.

Due to remote locations in Land O' Lakes, including snowmobile and ATV trails, having designated

landing zones will reduce the time getting the patients to the trauma center.

In the past, when helicopter evacuation was needed, landing was at the airport. If a helicopter were to land somewhere else besides the airport, setting up a landing zone would take 2-4 people, which would take more of the department's personnel away from the scene. The department has small crews already, so taking personnel away to set up a landing zone could be a manpower problem.

That's why having designated landing zones in different parts of the town as considered a must. These landings will benefit not only Land O' Lakes, but also surrounding local communities.

## K9 Team Mozzarella

The Land O' Lakes Fire and EMS departments are fortunate enough to have Assistant Fire Chief, Brad Knaack and his K9 Mozzarella (Mozzi) as part of the department.

This formidable Mozzarella

team has been training with the Newbold K9 Search and Rescue Team since 2020. Brad is also a member of the Newbold Volunteer Fire Department.

The K9 Search & Rescue teams consist of 15 dogs including German Shepherds, a Czech Shephard, Bloodhounds, Rhodesian Ridgebacks, a mixed breed and Mozzi who is a German Shorthaired Pointer.

Team Mozzarella has responded to calls all over Northern Wisconsin and Upper Michigan. Mozzi is certified in Tracking, HRD (Human Remains Detection) and Water HRD. The Newbold Fire Department K9 Search and Rescue Team is a volunteer team, with the handlers investing their own money into equipment, training and travel.

The Newbold K9 Search & Rescue Team has made many finds, resulting in reunification or closure for families.

The work of the Search &

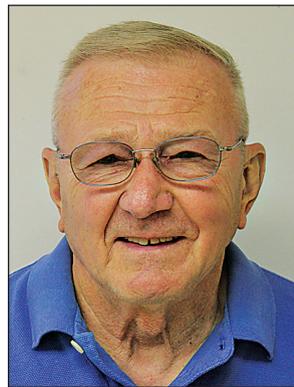
# LAND O' LAKES FIRE DEPARTMENT



Brian Achuff



Signe Baake



Dan Balog



Dean Drayna



Joe Garvin



Jean Haack



Andy Hacker



Cal Hubert



Carol Justice



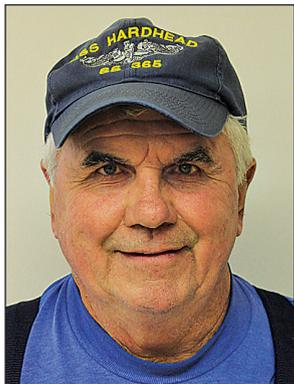
Michael Justice



Bradley Knaack



Laura Kopsi Vestich



Dennis (Mac) MMccarthy



Becky Niesen



Mary Ellen Otterpohl



Sam Otterpohl



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# Lakes

FROM PAGE 23

Rescue teams is to be admired not only for the work, but for the many hours these teams put into not only training their K9s, but to the many hours they spend on the ground in search and rescue attempts.

## Emergency Medical Services Department

Land O' Lakes Ambulance is not only dedicated to saving lives but also to growing and improving the quality of medical care available in their rural community.

With the addition of freshly certified medical First Responders and the integration of new EMTs into their team, they are actively addressing the increasing need for emergency medical services in the area. These diligent heroes are working tirelessly to ensure that residents and visitors receive the care they need, no matter the time or place.

Their commitment to the community goes beyond the sirens and flashing lights. They have rolled up their sleeves and teamed up with the Land O' Lakes Fire Department to host the Flap Jack Blast, a delicious pancake breakfast fundraising event that brought the community together for a heartwarming cause.

The successful event not only filled bellies with scrumptious pancakes but also hearts with a sense of unity and support for their local emergency services. The ambulance crew didn't stop there. They continued their fundraising efforts by offering mouthwatering French fries and cheese curds during the lively Fourth of July celebrations. The smiles and satisfaction on the faces of those who indulged in these treats were a testament to the hard work and dedication of the team. These funds, meticulously saved, are earmarked for a significant investment in the future of their service: the purchase of a brand-new ambulance, they do come with a hefty price tag.

This vital piece of equipment will enhance their ability to respond swiftly and effectively to emergencies, ultimately saving more lives. However, the Town of Land O' Lakes faces challenges in providing substantial funding for such capital expenses, making their self-initiated fundraising efforts all the more commendable. Land O' Lakes Ambulance is a shining example of what can be achieved when a community rallies behind its emergency services.



Equipment purchases through fundraising and donations continues to allow the Land O' Lakes department to improve. —Photo By Bob Hughes



Pictured left to right, in back is Matthew Spaargaren, Sam Otterpohl, Greg Wenzel, Brad Knaack, Brian Reiels, Tara Pachan, Kirsten Boehm, Joe Garvin, and in front is Laura Vestich Kopsi, MaryEllen Otterpohl.

They are always on the lookout for eager individuals who wish to make a difference by becoming EMTs. By doing so, you would not only be joining a tight-knit group of dedicated professionals but also contributing to the well-being and safety of the Land O' Lakes community.

If you're a local with a heart for helping others and a passion for making a positive impact, consider taking the life-changing step of pursuing education to become an EMT. Your journey would begin with rigorous training, but the rewards of serving your community in their most critical moments would be immeasurable. The future of rural medical care in Land O' Lakes is looking brighter, thanks to the unwavering spirit of the ambulance crew and the generous support of the community. Together, they are

paving the way for a healthier, safer, and more connected neighborhood.

The EMS department are proud of the work that the dedicated team achieves for the community of Land O' Lakes.

The Fire and EMS departments are thankful for the donations from the community which together with the department's budget allows them to purchase the much-needed equipment to fulfil their lifesaving work for the community.



The Sherpa UTV sits displayed outside the town hall in Land O' Lakes. — Contributed Photo



The Land O' Lakes Fire Department brush truck is used to tow the Sherpa UTV to and from where it's needed. —Contributed Photo

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# Conover Fire Department continues to serve and protect the community

BY JACKI HILDEBRANDT

The Conover Fire and Rescue Department is a volunteer department led by Chief Robert Martinson, Jr., who is in his second year as chief of the department. Martinson, a second-generation fireman, has 33 years of firefighting experience. In addition to Martinson as Chief, the department has additional support staff to include a deputy chief, assistant chief, two captains, four lieutenants, two fire inspectors and a safety officer.

In August, 2023, Conover Fire Department took delivery of a 2024 Chevrolet Silverado 3500 HD-Duramax pick-up truck.

This vehicle will serve multiple purposes. It will be used to respond to ambulance calls when extra manpower is needed, will transport additional personnel to fire incidents, and will be equipped with additional firefighting tools.

This vehicle was purchased and equipped solely by the department's fundraising efforts. Graphics were done by Always Tired Ink out of Woodruff.

Members of the department, Town of Conover representatives, as well as county and state officials continue to follow the Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) for Conover that is valid through 2027.

According to Chief Martinson, "The purpose of the CWPP is to provide the town, local fire departments, Vilas County and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) with information to help reduce potential risks associated with wildfires. This information was used to create an action plan which described the activities that would be pursued to educate the public and reduce wildfire risks in the town."

Department personnel continue to offer residents the opportunity to sign up for a "home ignition zone assessment"



Members of the fire department and emergency medical services for the Town of Conover continue to dedicate their time and services to residents. These men and women pledge their own time and efforts to help keep their community safe and protected. —Photo By Jackie Hildebrandt

to help with wildfire prevention.

In addition to the CWPP, Town of Conover residents receive a flier in their annual tax bill that pertains to accessing their property in case of an emergency. Fliers ask residents if emergency vehicles can "fit down your driveway?"

The fire department asks that your driveway allow adequate height and width clearance from vegetation for emergency vehicles to get to you when you need them.

The Town of Conover driveway ordinance Chapter 12 Licenses and Permits, Section 5 ordinance requirements for driveways, states that the minimum road surface width should be 14' with a minimum width clearance of 20'. The minimum height clearance is 14'. Driveways shall be free and clear of low-hanging limbs and the overhanging of brush on the traveled surface.

In March of 2024, the

department started a project looking for photos of past Conover Fire personnel.

In May of 2024, the Conover Fire Department held a department recognition event that brought together members of the department and their families. During the event, members of the department were recognized for completed training programs and job-related achievements during the past year. Family members were thanked by Fire Chief Martinson for their continued support to the fire department.

In August of 2024, the Conover Fire Department received the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) donation of canned clean drinking water.

Since 2019, Anheuser-Busch has partnered with the NVFC to create the Emergency Drinking Water for Wildland Firefighters program. Each year Anheuser-Busch pauses beer production to

produce canned clean drinking water to distribute to wildland firefighters.

## Fundraising

Members of Conover's department participate in several fundraisers throughout the year.

Fire department personnel are currently participating in one of its largest fundraising events — the 12 Days of Guns Calendar Raffle.

Tickets are \$20 each and can be purchased at any local Conover area business or from any Conover Fire Department member. The fundraiser drawings will occur daily from Dec. 1-12 at 7 p.m. The drawings will take place at the fire department, located at 4861 Highway K East in Conover.

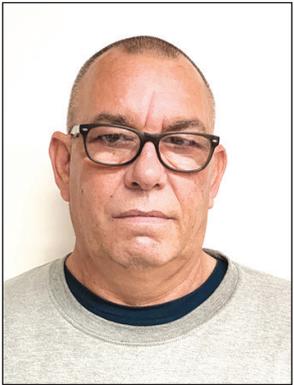
During the Northwoods Blizzard Blast in February, department volunteers help build the ice rink and snow bar that is used for the event, maintain the

sanitation services, and manage the warming bonfires, said Martinson.

The 2023 event offered the chance to "dunk" your favorite firefighter in the dunk tank. Fire personnel dressed in cold water rescue suits that had reinforced knee and elbow pads, integral gloves, and boots. Fire personnel took turns in the dunk tank so that participants could throw balls to dunk them. The event was well attended and there are plans for it to return for 2024.

The 100-foot ladder truck is used for special duty to assist event mascots in tossing treats down to the children below, he added. According to Martinson, crew members from the three benefiting departments also challenge one another using their training skills with a winter twist in The Firefighter Challenge Competition.

# CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Ken Allison



Hunter Barnekow



Jeff Barnekow



John Barnekow



Megan Barnekow



Randy Barnes



Steve Beckett



Walker Beckett



James Bonson



John Burczyk



Rob Cline



Billie Jo Ernst



Troy Ernst



Joe Framnes



Spencer Gursoy



Kevin Hartman



Jarod Hoffman



Justin Hoffman



Grace Indermuehle



Hunter Indermuehle



Madeline Indermuehle



Robin Indermuehle



Pat Indermuehle



Karsen Kincaid

# CONOVER FIRE DEPARTMENT



Gary Lagueux Jr



Kaiden LaGueux



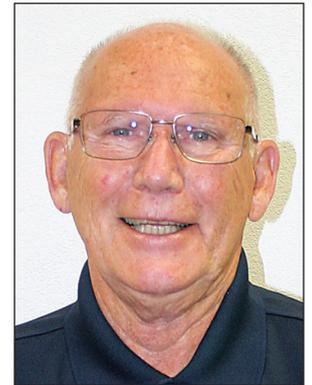
Chad Lederer



Kendra Lederer



Robert Martinson Jr



John Mccaughn



Diane Price



Eve Pusich



James Pusich



Trystan Pusich



Eric Thomas



Gary Vold



Steve Vold



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Holly Zyhowski

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# Conover Ambulance Service seeks funding for new ambulance

BY JACKI HILDEBRANDT

Kendra Lederer, Service Director for Conover Ambulance Service, has been with the ambulance service for 11 years. Currently, Lederer has eight personnel who respond to medical emergencies in Conover and the surrounding areas.

## Equipment and Training

Conover Ambulance Service has been using the Stryker Power Pro 2 with a power load system purchased in 2022. Lederer said this medical cot is able to maneuver better in small spaces and has the ability to collapse more if needed.

The power load system hooks onto the back of the ambulance and lifts the cot up on its own so that there is less lifting and the possibility of injury for our firefighters and EMTs.

## Challenges Ahead

One of the biggest challenges for a small ambulance agency in the Northwoods is staffing. Lederer said, "Like most area towns, we are struggling to get people who want to and are willing to help their community and become an EMT. A lot of people say they don't have time or that it's too big of a commitment for them at this point in their lives. I will let you know the first hurdle to making this commitment is saying 'Yes, I will help my community.'"

The Town of Conover currently pays for schooling for prospective EMTs with a bonus once the trainee passes their boards and receives their state license. Lederer says the ambulance service is not an on-premises assignment. Personnel are on call from their home and can respond to calls as long as they can respond to the station in a 10-minute time frame.

Lederer says current EMTs are asked to "sign up for

a minimum of two eight-hour shifts per week and one weekend a month; if you can give more, we would be entirely grateful."

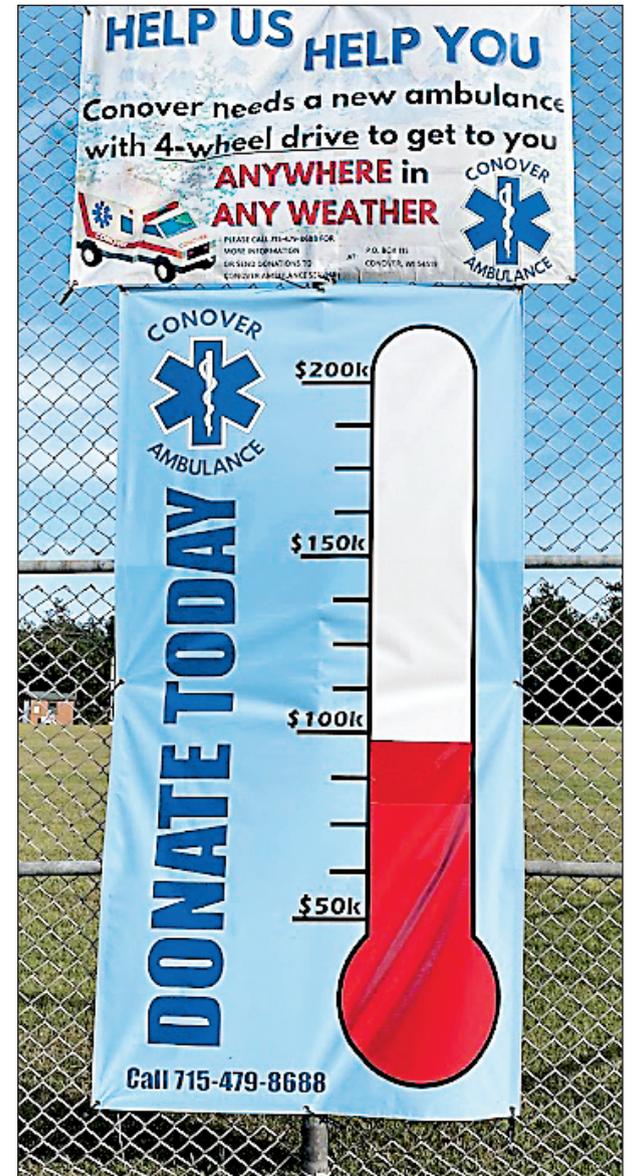
On top of staffing, the cost of a new ambulance makes it virtually impossible to replace the unit when it's needed. "The current ambulance is over ten years old. With the increased number of people moving into our community, there is a higher frequency of ambulance calls. The increase in the number of responses puts more wear and tear on the ambulance," Lederer stated.

Lederer also said, "Our winters are not easy (with the exception of this past winter), and we need a 4-wheel drive ambulance to respond to emergencies during winter months. We've had a couple occasions where we needed to be towed up a driveway, or we arrived at a driveway that hadn't been plowed." Lederer believes the answer to funding the purchase of a new ambulance is a strong community partnership.

Several fundraisers have been held, with money being collected in the amount of almost \$100,000. More events are planned to help raise the additional \$100,000 needed to help defray the cost of the ambulance that has been ordered.

In addition, collection buckets have been placed in Conover businesses to encourage donations to the fund. Lederer said, "The ambulance service is so grateful to all the local businesses, including some from Eagle River, Land O' Lakes, and Watersmeet, that have supported us with donations to help us make our fundraisers a success. Without you, we wouldn't have raised the money we have. Thank you!"

If you would like to donate to help purchase a new ambulance, please contact the town office at 715-479-8688. For more information on becoming an EMT in Conover, call the town office at 715-479-8688 or 715-891-2988



# Plum Lake earns valuable stamp from State to help EMS staffing

BY NEWS REVIEW STAFF

In May, the Plum Lake Ambulance Service gained compliance from the State Department of Health Services for their plan submitted that would allow flex staffing in the AEMT department.

Service Director Kevin Rasmussen said following the approval from the State work would begin to enhance their AEMS program.

The Plum Lake Fire & Ambulance Department improved greatly across the last year, adding a new EMS assist vehicle into their fleet.

The department was able to utilize funds from events and benefits to help with the project, while continuing their focus on paying off the loan the town incurred to purchase the new fire truck for the department recently.

Proceeds from several events continue to add to the fund to offset the \$100,000 purchase.

Last year's addition of a Brat Fry continued to raise funds for the new fire truck fund. Brats, donated by Pick 'n Save and cooked by The DryLake Crew, were served on July 26 in downtown Sayner during the "Leapin' Ladders Makers Market." This year's fry added \$1,511 to the fund.

"We purchased the truck late November, 2021, for \$640,000," said Fire Chief Jeremy Arnold. "The town took out a loan for \$800,000. Our obligation to the town is to pay back \$100,000, which was used to buy all new equipment for the truck."

Arnold said that the department got the truck for pre-pandemic prices, and it would have cost the department and the town a lot more with the way equipment prices are today.

"In February, 2022, we took possession of the truck, which we have been outfitting with all new equipment. That's why we are doing the fundraising, to pay back the \$100,000 to the town," he added.



A woodland fire that took place the past summer in the town of Star Lake was aided by the Plum Lake Fire Department. A piece of logging equipment caught fire during operations and was a total loss. —Contributed Photo

"Everything that we have bought was battery-powered to eliminate gas, to make it easier with less maintenance."

The new truck is outfitted with battery-operated extrication equipment. The equipment is very quiet because the old hydraulic equipment was operated by a loud gasoline engine, according to the chief.

"Two battery operated smoke ejector fans were also added to the new truck. If weather should preclude use of any of the battery-operated equipment, all of the new pieces also have a backup 120-volt system which draws energy from the fire truck's inverter."

Arnold said the department currently has about \$20,000 to \$30,000 raised thanks to financial help from the community.

Another big fundraiser this year was the department's record-setting spaghetti dinner held in August. Community

support was very evident at the spaghetti dinner, with donations going directly into the "boot," a fire department tradition, and raffle ticket sales for product donations by various individuals and businesses. Local residents assisted with the cooking, serving, and cleaning up of the meal.

Plum Lake's Independence Day chicken barbecue dinner, and the annual pork loin dinner at the Whitetail Inn in St. Germain, continue to be major fundraising efforts and bring the community together. Volunteers and diners are always welcome.

"Last, but not least, is the support from our community that keeps us going, 'neighbors helping neighbors,'" said Arnold.

In 2021, the department improved its rescue capabilities with the purchase of a 24-foot UTV enclosed trailer, which keeps the John Deere Gator UTV and other equipment clean when

transporting the machine to rescue missions.

"In addition to the big back door with a ramp, the trailer features a side door that gives us access to our cold water rescue gear," said former Fire Chief and current EMS Director Kevin Rasmussen.

The trailer is 8 feet high and 8-12 feet wide, allowing plenty of room for the Gator. The trailer cost \$11,000, with funds coming from the department's 2020 fundraisers.

The department also was able to purchase the John Deere Gator UTV in 2015. This is equipped for year-round use. It carries a 50-gallon water supply with pump and hose for brush fires.

The UTV also has an enclosed area for patient transportation in the event of an incident in a remote location, such as snowmobile trails or lakes. The unit also is equipped with tracks to get into snow-packed areas.

In 2020, the department

purchased eight MSA G-1 self-contained breathing apparatuses (SCBA), along with a 6,000-psi air compressor to fill the bottles, according to Rasmussen.

The former chief said funds to pay for the \$56,000 SCBAs were raised from donations and events held by the department, along with a three-year loan which will be paid for from fundraisers.

The \$15,000 compressor was funded using monies brought in by the department's various fundraisers and from memorials.

The department upgraded its vehicle extrication and rescue equipment in 2019, as well as purchased Genesis Rescue Systems battery-powered extrication tools at a cost of about \$32,000, with funds raised by the department. The tools included a spreader, a cutter, and a ram.

"The tools are all powered by 28-volt Milwaukee batteries, which are rechargeable," said

# PLUM LAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT



Jeremy Arnold



Bennett Bryner



Louise Clark



Tim Clark



Jim Daniel



Sam Daniel



Phil Desautels



Gary Errington



Mike Errington



Rob Errington



Becky Gauger



Jim Herron



Dr Kendrick



Jim Mortag



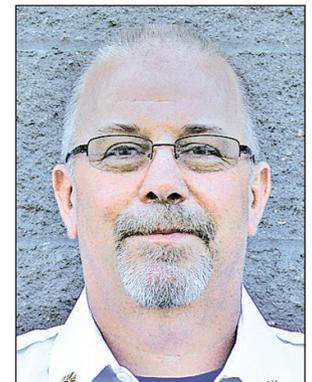
Kaitlyn Mortag



Jaqual Postuchow



Barb Rasmussen



Kevin Rasmussen

Rasmussen. “We don’t have to worry about hoses, hydraulics, or motors anymore.”

Plum Lake also purchased a \$10,000 lift bag system, hoses and controllers, with funds donated by the Plum Lake Emergency Medical Services (EMS) squad.

“The bags use 2,215-psi self-contained breathing apparatus bottles for power,” he said. “The bags have an unbelievable lift capacity.”

Rasmussen said the department continues to upgrade its firefighting and rescue equipment to better serve the community.

“We get great community support and we are grateful for that. People really support our fundraisers,” he said.

“A few years ago, we purchased cold water rescue suits and we purchased a new rescue boat. We want to be able to serve our community in time of need.”

Rasmussen said the department’s attitude of serving the community came from longtime Plum Lake Fire Chief Larry McCaughn, who was chief from 1978-'95. McCaughn died Aug. 29, 2019, at the age of 68.

“Larry started with the Plum Lake Fire Department in about 1972 and served the community through 1995,” said Rasmussen. “He was one of the leaders in developing a second fire station

in Star Lake. We probably had 40 people on the department roster when Larry was chief.”

The department purchased a 2018 Ford F-250 Super Crew transport rescue truck four years ago to help with wildland firefighting and EMS responses. The truck is used to pull the new enclosed rescue trailer. It was funded partially through a \$10,000 Department of Natural Resources grant, which was key to acquiring

the new piece of equipment, according to Rasmussen.

Department fundraisers paid for the remainder of the truck.

“We were able to build a box in the back to utilize the space to carry equipment,” the chief said. “We can carry water cans and shovels for wildland fires, and the new extrication equipment for vehicle accidents.”

# Plum Lake

FROM PAGE 31

In 2017, the department purchased an Oceanid Water Rescue Craft, a versatile, safe, durable and easy-to-use rescue watercraft that inflates in minutes using bottled air and stores deflated in a 2-foot cube.

"This equipment really helps our capabilities when it comes to ice rescues during the winter months," said Rasmussen. "It works in so many applications, it is the only nonmotorized boat a department may need. We can use it on ice in the winter and small lakes without a boat landing during the summer."

The department purchased an open-water multipurpose rescue boat in 2016. The boat has a nozzle and pump which can transport water from a lake to the shore or a tanker. The water pump can be removed to create space if the boat is needed for a rescue mission. The boat is equipped with a \$3,000 Humminbird sonar system, which tracks the places the boat has traveled and provides GPS and depth information.

The department also completed the renovation of its water tanker in 2016. The steel tank was replaced with a lighter polycarbonate 37,000-gallon tank.

## Plum Lake EMS (PLEMS)

It has been said, "The community supports those who support the community." This axiom is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in the Plum Lake community in relationship to its fire and rescue department.

Rasmussen, a National Registry advanced emergency medical technician (NRAEMT), expressed thankful sentiments of his department for the tremendous support rescue personnel receive from the town board of Plum Lake, the community at large, and Nicolet Area Technical College.

"Continuing education, that leads to licensing and license renewal of volunteers, is vitally important to being able to provide specialized services to the area," Rasmussen said.

Dr. Zachary Kendrick, a member of the Plum Lake community, an

Emergency Medicine physician with the Marshfield Clinic Health System, and a U.S. Army Reserves captain, now serves as the medical director for PLEMS. Kendrick joined the department in 2021 and is working with PLEMS to upgrade its operational plan with Flex Staffing up to the AEMT level.

While having all the right equipment to provide the best possible emergency medical services to the people of the community, personnel make it happen.

Jaqualynne Postuchow, who recently completed her NRAEMT, is an asset to the department; Louise and Timothy Clark upgraded their emergency medical responder (EMR) status to EMT; Jim Herron, paramedic and base manager for LifeLink, and Chris Herron, a paramedic with a service near Minneapolis, Minn., take calls with PLEMS when in the area; Becky Gauger is a registered nurse and nursing manager at Marshfield Medical Center Minocqua; and Phil Desautels joined the department, completed Firefighter 1 and 2, and is enrolled in an EMR class.

Being a volunteer department, members provide community care and assistance on their own time.

"The individuals who serve our community do so with their time and commitment," said Rasmussen.

Others who serve are Barb Rasmussen, NRAEMT, service secretary and treasurer for 11-plus years. She plans and executes the group's fall fundraising pork loin dinner sponsored by the Whitetail Inn, which uses funds to pay for education and continuing education, equipment replacement and upgrades, relieving the burden on the town's budget.

PLEMS also is involved with St. Germain Elementary School through the "Reading Heroes" program. It is a collaboration with Plum Lake Volunteer Fire Department, Vilas County Sheriff's Department, and the St. Germain Parent Teacher Organization to promote reading and interaction between students and first responders.

Reading Heroes was developed by Timothy and Louise Clark over 20 years ago. The original program,



Members of the Plum Lake Fire & EMS help at area events during the winter months with their Snowbalance which can be taken on area snowmobile trails when needed. —Contributed Photo

originally called "Hot Reads," encourages students to read at least 250 minutes a month. Two names per class are drawn each month for a ride in an emergency vehicle and to lunch at Knocker's; at the end of the school year, both the fire and EMS departments participate in the school's field day with water fight competitions.

PLEMS also sponsors the Touch A Truck event, held during the street fair in August, where youths of all ages enjoy getting up close and climbing on a variety of vehicles, from fire trucks to plow trucks to 18-wheelers. There also is a visit by Life Link III helicopter.

In 2018, the EMS squad purchased and installed automated external defibrillator (AED) stations at Plum Lake Public Library and the community building.

The department received a \$900 donation from the Sayner-Star Lake Lions Club to help share the cost of the project.

"These AED stations have been dedicated to the memory of the three flight crew members lost in the tragic crash of the Spirit II helicopter in April, 2018," said EMS Secretary Barb Rasmussen.

The new EMS trailer was purchased earlier this year and lettering was placed on the trailer in late March.

Plum Lake EMS has a state-

of-the-art ambulance, featuring a Stryker Power Pro, which automatically lifts the stretcher unit into the ambulance. This has a capacity of 700 pounds and allows ease of loading for the attending EMS members.

Through the help of the Howard Young Foundation, the squad also has a Lucas 2 chest-compression unit. This piece of equipment is strapped onto the patient and automatically provides CPR for someone in cardiac arrest.

The squad also has adult- and child-size CPR practice units. These units are life-size models and provide an accurate assessment of a member's CPR skills. Members can use these to practice proper breathing techniques, as well as heart monitoring and defibrillation.

Funds for equipment for Plum Lake EMS are raised through grants, donations, and the annual pork dinner fundraiser held the third Monday of September at Whitetail Inn in St. Germain. Donations can be sent to Plum Lake Ambulance, P.O. Box 7, Sayner, WI 54560.

Plum Lake EMS averages about 50 to 70 calls a year and covers Star Lake and Sayner.

## Started in 1940

The Plum Lake Volunteer Fire Department was started in 1940

to protect properties in the town of Plum Lake in central Vilas County. The fire department covers approximately 100 square miles of the town, which includes the communities of Sayner and Star Lake.

The department's fire station is at the intersection of Froelich Drive and Glenbrook Lane in Sayner, one block west of Highway 155, behind the Vilas County Historical Museum.

The department previously occupied two bays in the town garage, but moved into the new 70-by-70-foot fire station in 2002. The separate EMS building is located south on Highway 155.

The station features two drive-thru bays and a total capacity for five rigs, an office, a meeting room, a utility room with a washing machine, and restrooms complete with showers. The combination steel-and-block building also has hydronic in-floor heat. There is a large-capacity well on the property for refilling water tanks on the engines and tankers. An on-site generator can be used to power the well and the building lights.

The structure houses engine No. 1 and tanker No. 1, in addition to the Gator, a Ford F-350 brush truck, the new pickup truck, and the new multipurpose rescue boat. There also is an engine in Station 2 located in Star Lake.



The department, pictured left to right, Devan Kliss, Mike Kortenhof, Jake Nitzel, Glenn Kortenhof, Katie Bauknecht, Jeff McDonald, Randy Snyder, Jason Goeldner, Traci Ritter, Curt Hayden, Lauren Sowinski, Jed Dart, Jake Dart, Josh Kotarski, Mike Ballmann, Eli Volkmann, Alex Kaphingst, Dan Wojak.

# Sugar Camp Fire Department adds new members and gear

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

Recent years have been busy for the Sugar Camp Fire Department.

Not only has the department experienced a significant increase in calls for service, but the number of department members has increased as well, rolling over to 2024.

As a result, the fire department needed to order additional personal protective equipment (PPE) to meet the needs of current members, but also to provide PPE to the new members.

“Our membership is now at 28 members,” said Fire Chief Jason Goeldner. “Additional community members are welcome to apply; however, per our by-laws, a waiting list may be established.”

Because the department is down to 28 firefighters, Goeldner said recruiting new firefighters is a priority.

“We would like to be closer to 30 firefighters, so we have enough personnel when we respond to fires, accidents or rescues, because not everyone can respond to each call,” said Goeldner.

In 2024, the fire department responded to more structure fires than normal, compared to past years. These events posed challenging efforts for fire extinguishment as a result of the structures’ building construction.

Several structures either had metal roofs or were remodeled structures with multiple roofs connecting together, according to Goeldner.

“We even had a structure with a mobile home within a structure,” he added. “Ventilation efforts were challenging for the department, as we then only had chainsaws and axes to ventilate the roofs to allow the super-heated heats and gases to be released.”

As a result, in 2023 the fire department purchased a Stihl K-12 cut-off saw. This saw uses a designated metal cutting blade versus the chains found on a typical chainsaw.

The majority of responses for the fire department involve accidents and traffic control on state, county and town roads.

Goeldner said he feels many drivers do not respect nor slow down for rescue personnel while

on scene, even though there is emergency lighting, traffic cones, signage and firefighters conducting flagging.

Another recent purchase made was portable speed bumps. The speed bumps are deployed as close and safely to the emergency scene as possible, forcing vehicles to slow down.

This fall, the fire department is conducting the Endless Summer Raffle fundraising event to support their department.

“We have several businesses and individuals sponsor this event, which we are very grateful for,” Goeldner added.

Tickets can be purchased 1 for \$10, 3 for \$25 or 7 for \$50 from the fire department or from businesses within the Sugar Camp township.

Drawings will be held on Oct. 13 at 3 p.m. at the Sugar Camp Fire Department.

In 2023, the Sugar Camp Fire Department received a Wisconsin Public Service grant worth \$2,000, which was used for the purchase of a new battery-powered positive pressure fan, according to Goeldner.

This unit replaced the previous gas-powered one. The newer fan

is significantly lighter in weight than the previous unit, allowing firefighters more mobility and easier placement of the fan, as well as negating concerns about fuel needed for the gas-powered fan while on a call, the chief added.

The department also recently purchased new helmets for every member of the department, as well as new sets of structural firefighting gear to be used by those firefighters engaged with entering buildings during a fire.

In 2021, the department took delivery of a new Ford Super Duty F-350 four-wheel-drive diesel pickup truck, replacing a 20-year-old truck. This newer F-350 serves as Rescue 1, a wildland response vehicle with an onboard pump and water supply, according to Goeldner.

“It also serves as a tow vehicle for the Gator UTV, wildland trailer and rescue boat,” he added. “The rescue truck also transports personnel to and from incidents and assists in traffic control on highway incidents.”

The 2000 rescue vehicle was sold the previous year.

In 2020, Sugar Camp applied for and was awarded a Wisconsin

Department of Natural Resources (DNR) Forest Fire Protection (FFP) grant in the amount of \$6,951.

“This grant is a 50% match, so we received \$3,475.97 from the DNR and used the same amount of local dollars,” said Goeldner.

Items purchased by the grant included two Milwaukee battery-powered chainsaws, which were purchased following a discussion about the power these battery saws had, their weight and charging capabilities, and the bonus of not having to service additional gasoline-powered engines.

Five Motorola pagers were also purchased for use as an additional notification system of department members for requested service calls. In addition to the pagers, two Motorola portable radios were purchased to assist members where radio communications were lacking in the town.

These new items will add to last year’s purchase of a new handheld thermal imaging camera by the department.

Designed to meet the unique

## DNR details information on burning permits and fire safety

Throughout the spring and summer, forestry personnel from the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) responded to numerous forest fires that were caused by debris burning, which continues to be the number one cause of wildfires in Wisconsin.

Cool fall days may seem like the ideal time to burn the last of the branches and pine needles from the lawn, but frosty nights can rob vegetation and fuels of moisture, leading to increased fire activity when temperatures begin to warm during the day. So, make sure to continue to follow the regulations of the annual burning permit to ensure safe burning.

Whenever the ground is not completely snow-covered, burning permits are required in DNR Protection Areas. Permit holders are authorized to burn vegetative materials, such as leaves, brush, and pine needles.

The permits are designed so that burning can be done safely with minimal wildfire risk.

“Getting a burn permit is easy – and instant. Obtaining an annual burning permit is easy, fast and free,” comments a spokesperson from the Wisconsin DNR. “For the average customer, it takes less than two minutes to obtain one online. The permit is good for the entire calendar year and can be instantly emailed or mailed to your home.”

Permits can be issued from DNR field stations; however, staff frequently work in the field and are unavailable.

Therefore, it’s easiest and best to obtain an annual DNR burning permit online at [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov) (keyword “burn permit”) or by calling 1-888-WIS-BURN (947-2876) to have a permit mailed or emailed.

Once an individual has a burning permit, they must check the daily fire restrictions each day prior to burning.

Calling the WISBURN Hotline, or checking the burning regulations online, informs individuals of the legal burning hours for the day, size limitations, and/or if burning has been suspended due to adverse fire weather conditions.

Burning regulations are updated every day by 9 a.m. based on predicted fire weather for the day.



Some areas of the state are not regulated by the DNR, so it’s important to check with local municipal or fire department officials about any ordinances or other burning restrictions. The safest time to burn is when the ground is completely snow-covered.

The DNR encourages homeowners to delay burning debris piles, when feasible, by tarping or covering the piles until it snows. Recycling, mulching and chipping are also great alternatives to manage debris.

For more information on burning permits, fire danger, and preparing for wildfires around your home and property, visit [dnr.wi.gov](http://dnr.wi.gov). Search “fire.”

## Sugar Camp

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needs and challenges faced by today’s firefighters, the 3M Scott thermal imaging camera is used by firefighters in search-and-rescue missions, as well as to locate hot spots in a structure fire.

“This new model features a color display, fast start-up time (just five seconds), and a battery life of eight hours,” said Goeldner. “Our other one was 20 years old and it basically died.”

Goeldner said the new unit cost roughly \$2,700 with two batteries, and was paid for with the department’s annual operating budget.

“The new camera is lightweight, water-resistant and just more handy,” he added.

### Skids, trailer

In 2019, the department purchased two skid units and a trailer for its John Deere Gator, to assist firefighters with wildland firefighting and off-road rescues.

The skid units are interchangeable, depending on the season, and are easily slid into and mounted on the back of the Gator.

“We can easily remove the rescue skid and install the wildfire skid,” said Goeldner. For the wildfire season, the skid unit features a 50-gallon water tank, five-gallon foam tank, pump, and space for a rescue cot to carry an injured person.

The unit cost about \$6,000 with one-half paid through a DNR FFP grant. The fire department paid for the remainder of the skid unit.

The second skid unit cost about \$3,500, funded by the department, and is used for off-road trail and ice rescue.

The unit features space for a rescue cot and one firefighter.

“We have a lot of state forest in Sugar Camp, so the wildland fire skid unit will be important. We also have a lot of trails and lakes, so the rescue skid unit also is beneficial to the department,” the chief said.

The department also purchased a \$9,000 enclosed trailer in 2019

to haul the Gator. Because the trailer is 20 feet long, it is also equipped with shelving to haul the department’s water rescue gear and cold-water rescue gear.

The 2017 Gator, delivered to the department in January of 2018, cost \$23,000 and was partially funded through a \$10,000 DNR FFP grant. The Gator features tracks, power steering and accessories, including a Warn winch and extra cab lights.

“With the tracks, we can use it any time of the year,” said Goeldner. “We use it on snowmobile trails and on dirt.

“With the tracks, it’s even pretty good in some of the many swamps around Sugar Camp, where an ATV or UTV might get stuck. We were able to replace a snowmobile and ATV with the Gator,” he added.

Goeldner said the balance of the Gator was paid for through the fire department budget.

### Newest engine/pumper

A new fire engine/pumper was delivered to the Sugar Camp Fire Department in 2017.

The \$275,000 Pierce truck replaced a 1988 engine that no longer met National Fire Protection Association standards.

While the new pumper is much like the department’s 2009 engine, new features include an electric ladder rack, extra storage capacity, an extended front bumper for a preconnected hose line to a foam system, and LED lighting.

“The electric ladder system sits on top of the truck and reduces injury for firefighters and increases storage capacity,” said Goeldner.

The truck was paid for with taxpayer money through the department’s five-year capital plan.

“Money was set aside each year,” said Goeldner. “This commitment has and will continue to prepare the Sugar Camp Fire Department to respond safely to calls for service in the town of Sugar Camp and its neighboring communities, while attempting to keep insurance rates for residential and commercial low.”

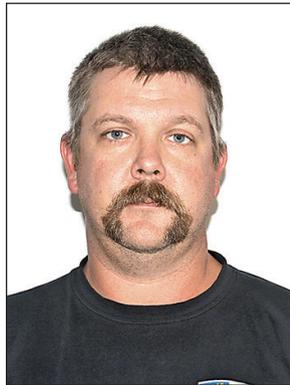
# SUGAR CAMP FIRE DEPARTMENT



Katie Bauknecht



Jacob Dart



Josh Kotarski



Roper Kotarski



Drake Millard



Jeremy Millard



Michael Ballmann



Katie Bauknecht



Steve Cogar



Jedediah Dart



Amanda Gincauskas



Jason Goeldner



Curt Hayden



Randy Ingram



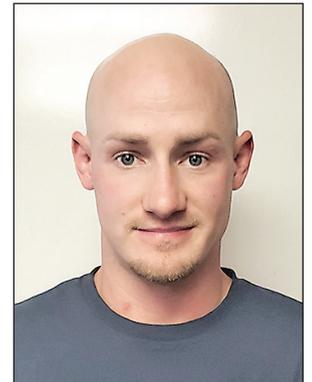
Paul Jones



Alex Kaphingst



Traci Kirkham-Ritter



Devan Kliss



Glenn Kortenhof



Jared Kortenhof



Mike Kortenhof



Jeff McDonald



Zoey McDonald



Robert Mesun

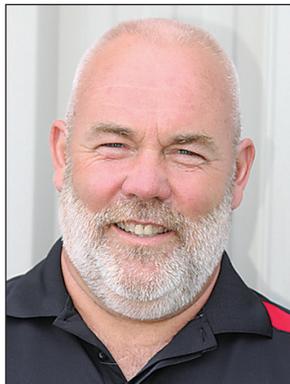
# SUGAR CAMP FIRE DEPARTMENT



Jake Nitzel



Kevin Olson



Randy Snyder



Lauren Sowinski



John Sweeney



Eli Volkmann



Daniel Wojcik



Rob Zwettler



**Sugar Camp**  
Supporting the  
community that  
supports one another

## Sugar Camp

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Goeldner said the new engine/pumper, with a 1,000 gallon water tank and 1,250 gallon-per-minute pump, responds to structure fires, while the 2009 engine/pumper is set up to respond to highway emergencies.

### Extrication

The department focused on improving vehicle extrication in 2015, upgrading its Jaws of Life and purchasing low-pressure airbags for lifting vehicles off the ground.

By upgrading the hydraulics on its Jaws of Life, the department tripled the cutting force of the unit.

For \$4,995 the cutter went from

100,000 to 320,000 pounds per square inch. Using \$5,500 from its general fund, the department also purchased low-pressure airbags to help lift and stabilize vehicles at accident scenes.

“The airbags that we bought — each bag is a little more than 10,000 pounds of lifting force, so you can take a one-ton truck and lift the thing onto its side,” said Goeldner.

The department also used a DNR grant in 2015 to purchase additional equipment, including safety fuel cans for its wildland fire truck.

In 2014, the department purchased a compressed air fill station, which serves as a universal unit that can fill various types of tanks.

The Bauer Unicus III fill station has a universal fitting for low- and high-pressure air

cylinders.

It also can fill self-contained underwater breathing apparatus (SCUBA) air cylinders, enabling them to perform dive rescues.

Because of the universal capabilities of the unit, other departments can use the Sugar Camp location to fill tanks as needed.

The unit was purchased from Jefferson Fire and Safety in Middleton, Wis.

A \$55,000 grant awarded to the department from the Federal Emergency Management Agency covered the entire cost of the unit, according to Goeldner.

### Rescue boat

The fire department's biggest purchase in 2013 was a Rescue 1 boat with a special diving platform set up for rescue divers.

This feature allows fire department members to perform

dive and rescue missions.

Another addition in 2013 was the MSA Altair four-gas monitor and Galaxy calibrator unit.

The system allows firefighters to test for oxygen, carbon monoxide, combustible gases and hydrogen sulfide.

During the winter months, when people are heating their six-stall station homes, the fire department often gets calls to do carbon monoxide testing.

With the system, they are able to test for multiple gases at once and detect if there are gas leaks in the home.

“There have been cases in the media of houses exploding when air testing didn't pick up on a gas leak due to the limited capabilities of testing equipment,” said Goeldner.

### Six-stall station

Department vehicles are

housed in a 40-by-96 foot garage with six stalls on Camp Four Road.

In addition to grants, a number of organizations, such as the Lions Club, other community clubs, and the snowmobile club also donated money to the department for equipment.

Department members have gained training through courses offered by Nicolet College, and have attended several Learning Thru Burning sessions coordinated by the college's fire training program.

During National Fire Prevention Week, held each year in early October, the firefighters visit Sugar Camp Elementary School, giving the students instruction on fire prevention and how to get out of a burning building.

# Conover

FROM PAGE 26

In July, the department hosts an annual pancake breakfast at the Conover Recreation Center. Department personnel serve blueberry pancakes, along with sausage and a beverage, to more than 500 in attendance. The event includes 50-50 raffles and donations from area businesses for door prizes.

## Training

Active members, along with junior firefighters, attended twice-monthly meetings over the past year for continuing education, working on community projects, or participating in practice drills of simulated firefighting scenarios.

Much of this training takes place in a 30- by 80-foot addition to the fire station constructed in 2009, thanks to a memorial donation from a local resident.

In December of 2023, three Conover Fire Department members participated in a practical skills day at Nicolet College. The students are enrolled in the Certified Firefighter 1 course and practiced their two-minute dress-out drills, self-rescue through the restricted passage prop, air consumption test, ladders, search and rescue, and tool and equipment maintenance.

According to Martinson, an



The Conover Fire Department recognized many members during an annual gathering this past May.  
—Photo By Jackie Hildebrandt

important aspect of training is to train to remember. “Fire department personnel must train to remember what equipment is located on each apparatus, what equipment is needed in each emergency, and how to use said equipment,” said Martinson. “Training is what makes a team work as one. Without training, the safety of everyone is at risk.”

To help prevent wildland

fires, department members continue to participate in special training programs for wildland fire assessments. Qualified department members can visit area homes and assess the surrounding area to help prevent wildland fires.

For more information about the Conover Fire Department or fundraiser events, call Martinson at 715-477-2036.



A donation of canned water from Dean Distributing in Arbor Vitae was able to be made happen through a grant proposal submitted by the Conover Fire Department.  
—Contributed Photo

# Nicolet College expands local public safety education in high schools

A new initiative that launched last year brought public safety training to two area high schools. Nicolet College held a Wisconsin Certified Firefighter 1 course at the Northland Pines School District and an Emergency Medical Responder and Emergency Medical Technician course at the Three Lakes School District. These programs, available to high school juniors and seniors, allow students to earn both high school and college credits. Upon completion, students are eligible to serve their communities as firefighters or medics — two critical roles in high demand across the Northwoods. This early exposure to public safety careers may also inspire future professional or volunteer involvement.

Grace Indermuehle is a high school student at Northland Pines who also works at the Conover Fire Department as a Junior Fire Deputy thanks to her participation in dual credit.

“Through the dual credit program, I was able to earn my fire training plus high school and college credit all in one class which was really great,” said Grace. “Since this class went so well, I plan on taking more dual credit classes. I want to earn a biology degree so these credits will help me get a jumpstart on that while I’m still in high school.”

This fall, Nicolet College is offering a Certified Firefighter 1 course at the Tomahawk School District and an Emergency Responder and Emergency Medical Technician course at the Three Lakes School District.

Nicolet College invites high school students in the Northwoods to earn college credits while in high school. Dual credit programs allow students to experience the rigor and rewards of completing college coursework, while saving them time and money. By earning college credits while in high school, students explore their academic and career interests, build a strong foundation for their future education and potentially graduate from college earlier.

“Dual credit is a fantastic opportunity for high school students to get a head start on their college careers,” said Nathan Zorn, dual credit coordinator at Nicolet College. “By taking college courses, students can develop important academic and occupational skills, such as critical thinking, problem-solving, and effective communication.”

In the last year, Nicolet College Public Safety has delivered 332 course sections, with a total of 2,327 enrollments, including 327 students in Vilas County.

To learn more about the Fire Safety, Emergency Medical Technician, Advanced Emergency Medical Technician technical diplomas or any other programs at Nicolet College, contact the

Nicolet College Public Safety Department at 715-365-4600.





The Arbor Vitae Fire & Rescue Department continues to be one of the leaders across all Vilas County with their outstanding service to the communities in and around the greater Minocqua area. With two stations and a large volunteer force the department moves into another year stronger than ever. —Staff Photo By DOUG ETTEN

# Arbor Vitae Fire & Rescue purchases new radios following fundraising

This past year the Arbor Vitae Fire & Rescue Department was pleased to have completed another important milestone, due in large part to the continued support of the general public in the area.

According to Department Captain Mike Sippin, the crew recently received and have placed into service the last of their new portable radios.

“These radios were part of a two year purchasing process where 10 radios were purchased in 2023, with the remaining 10 this year,” he said. “The Spring Mailing Fund Raising Campaign funded the entire project.

Sippin said the radios are Motorola APX 6000 portables, and cost approximately \$4200 a piece.

In total the project took \$84,000 to complete this year.

“These radios provide a significant upgrade to the previous Kenwood radios, which were general use radios,” he said. “The new Motorola’s are designed for heavy duty emergency services use, and provide a much more rugged design, better communication features, more power, larger/heavier duty lapel mics to accommodate a gloved hand, and a greater degree of reliability.”

Sippin went on to explain that Motorola is a mainstay within the emergency services community, including the Fire Service.

“They also provide us the ability to switch to a digital

communication system, identical to what law enforcement is currently using in Vilas County, at some point in the future,” he said. “Some will say ‘a radio is a radio’. However, all radios are not the same. The price tags may seem high, but when communication means the difference between life and death, no amount is too great.”

Sippin recognized Lt. Bill Trojan for his tireless efforts in overseeing the communication process within the department, including all radios, pagers, and the ‘I Am Responding’ program.

“His research and knowledge has dramatically increased our safety through the upgraded radios and associated

communication process,” he said.

Prior to this year, the Arbor Vitae Fire Department (AVFD) established a unique technical rescue team that members underwent specialized training for in May.

The group of firefighters, when completed, will have gained technical rescue skills including rope, confined space, and trench rescue.

The recent specialized training included a 40-hour Operations level Rope Rescue course, based off of NFPA 1670 and 2500, which are two National Fire Protection Standards that address the organization and required skill training at the Operations Level.

Looking back further, in

2022 the AVFD made several advancements, including the opening of the new Fire Station 2 at the corner of highways N and 51 in May. Since that time, the department has undertaken several new projects.

“Back in December, 2019, AVFD started a committee to explore options for a second fire station to be built on the northern end of our town to better serve the citizens up there, and to try to reduce fire insurance rates,” said Fire Chief Michael VanMeter. “The goal was to acquire property from the State of Wisconsin through a land trade deal with the town of Arbor Vitae and the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR).

“After many discussions and

meetings with the DNR, we settled on a parcel located at the corner of highways N and 51. The town was willing to trade its property on Highway 70 East, that they had purchased back in 1986 in hopes of building a landfill, which never was pursued," he added.

The project is 100% funded through donations, according to VanMeter.

AVFD started fundraising for the development of Station 2, with a goal of raising \$300,000 by the end of 2021 in the hopes of breaking ground in late 2022 or 2023 once funds were raised.

"Funds started rolling in and took off from there rather rapidly," VanMeter said.

With the location being only miles from the border with Boulder Junction, AVFD entered last year into an auto aid agreement with the Boulder Junction Fire Department to help provide first response emergency services to the areas of highways N, M, and 51, the chief said.

Holding its annual firemen's picnic once again this past August, VanMeter reported attendance was high and many purchased raffle tickets to support ongoing community improvements and efforts by the firefighters.

Funding will go towards the purchase of the department's new 2024 water tender/pumper truck, being constructed by Pierce Manufacturing Inc. of Appleton. The truck is a 3,000-gallon tender with a 500-gallon per minute portable pump that can supply two 1 3/4-inch attack lines for limited first-in capabilities. It is on a Freightliner chassis and was scheduled for delivery by August, 2024.

AVFD continues to recruit members. Three new firefighters recently joined the department and are currently in the minimum state-required training through Nicolet College. Two additional members were added in the past year and their duties are related to maintenance, mechanics, and driving apparatus. They, too, will soon be attending training as required by the state.

On Sept. 19 last year the Arbor Vitae Fire and Rescue was awarded an EMS-FLEX Grant that was applied for by EMS Chief Todd Rucinski in the spring. The

grant awarded the department \$27,250 and allowed Station 2 to acquire a Lucas automatic CPR device, as well as other vital materials needed for the EMS equipment supplies for both Stations 1 and 2.

The department is currently planning its third annual "Santa Claus is Coming to the AVFD." The date for this family and community event is Saturday, Dec. 9. Details will be available on the department's Facebook page in the upcoming months.

The department also purchased a used foam trailer from a department in Ohio. This will be used as a firefighting foam resource for large fires or spills involving flammable and combustible liquids, such as liquid fuels, and for airport responses. Once in service, the trailer will be available to departments across the area.

### Meet the department

The Arbor Vitae Fire Department members are as follows:

Michael VanMeter has been a volunteer firefighter for the Arbor Vitae Fire Department for 25 years and holds the rank of chief. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by the town of Arbor Vitae. VanMeter has completed courses in Firefighter I and II and is a hazardous materials tech. He is a certified training officer and has Rapid Intervention Team (RIT), vehicle-extrication and driver-operator training. He has taken many additional classes at Nicolet and Lake Superior technical colleges.

Ryan Gehrig has been a volunteer firefighter and first responder for the department for 24 years and holds the rank of deputy chief. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Sedlak Chevrolet. Gehrig has completed courses in Firefighter I, hazmat awareness, and emergency vehicle operations.

Karl Fink has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 26 years and currently holds the rank of assistant chief. He is a resident of Minocqua and is employed by Fink Brothers Inc. He has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, hazmat

awareness, incident command I, II and III, hazmat operations, and tactics and operations. He is a first responder.

Rick Budish has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 47 years. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed at Budish Electric. Budish has completed courses in vehicle extrication, hazardous materials and ventilation, and is a fire investigator.

Mike Sipin is a Captain, Training Officer and Public Information Officer (PIO). He is an Arbor Vitae resident and has been with the department for six years. He comes with 30 years of career firefighting experience. Sipin has an associate degree in fire protection from Fox Valley Technical College, a bachelor's degree in Fire and Emergency Response Management from UW-Oshkosh, and a master's degree in Organizational Leadership from Columbia Southern University. He has been teaching fire skills since 1996 through Fox Valley Tech, and currently teaches at Nicolet Area Technical College. Mike has State of Wisconsin certifications in firefighter I and II, Driver/Operator Pumper and Aerial, Fire Officer 2, and Instructor 3. He also has extensive training in technical rescue and is leading the development of AVFR's Technical Rescue Team.

Lt. Rory Will has been a volunteer firefighter with the department for six years. He has completed courses in Firefighter I and RIT. He is a resident of Boulder Junction and is employed by the town of Arbor Vitae.

Lt. Jonathan Haling has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 11 years. He is employed by the Vilas County Highway Department. He has completed courses in Firefighter I and II.

Todd Rucinski, rescue chief, has been a volunteer firefighter and first responder for the department for 36 years. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Budish Electric. He has completed courses in Firefighter I, first responder, vehicle extrication, hazmat and ventilation.

Heather Gehrig, assistant rescue chief, is an emergency

medical responder (EMR).

Mike Bernard, rescue captain, has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 14 years. He has completed firefighting and first responder training. He has extensive dive rescue and recovery experience.

Bill Trojan, safety officer, has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for six years. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by the Minocqua Police Department.

Cortney Rehm also serves as a safety officer.

Ashley Roach serves the department as secretary and public information officer. She is an EMR.

Frank Kulpa serves as fire inspector.

Steve Congdon has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 26 years. He is a resident of Woodruff and is employed by Laser Innovations Inc. Congdon has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, first responder, CPR, vehicle extrication, hazmat tech and operations, ice rescue, fire investigation, wildland fire, strategies and tactics, as well as several Learning Through Burning and other related classes.

Devin Roach has been a member of the department and rescue squad for 16 years. He is a certified firefighter and has RIT certification. He is employed at Eagle Electric.

Jeff Biertzer has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 36 years. Employed by the Vilas County Highway Department, Biertzer has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, wildland fire, extrication, and arson investigation. He was Firefighter of the Year in 1992.

James Romano Jr. has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 30 years and a first responder for 25 years. Romano is a first responder training officer. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed at Romano Tile Co. Romano has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, hazmat operations, and vehicle extrication.

Frank Bauers has been a volunteer firefighter and first responder for the department for

46 years and is the former chief. He was chief for 34 years, retiring in March, 2014. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Pukall Lumber Co. Bauers has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, officers training, hazmat, vehicle extrication, ventilation and Wisconsin Fire Instructor I.

Jeff Hunter has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 47 years. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Pukall Lumber Co. Hunter has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, Firefighter I and II refresher, first aid, hazmat, ventilation, and Learning Through Burning safety officer.

A.J. Burgoyne has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 20 years. He is employed by Schneider Construction Corp. He has RIT, pump operations, and driver-operator training.

Rodney Organ has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 20 years. He has completed Firefighter I and II training.

Michael Pockat has 16 years of firefighting experience and has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for eight years. He is employed by the town of Woodruff. He has completed courses in hazmat and RIT training.

Jeff Schommer has been a firefighter for six years. He is employed by N&M Transfer in Arbor Vitae.

Chad Bacon has been a firefighter for the department for six years and has completed courses in Firefighter I and II. He is a resident of St. Germain and is employed by Pitlik & Wick.

Frederick Suchy has been with the department for five years. He has training in CPR, defibrillator use, driver/pump operator and is certified in traffic management. He is retired.

Jeremy Hedstrom is a firefighter trainee who recently joined the department.

Emmett Walsh is a firefighter trainee who joined the department in September.

Terry Pare recently joined the department as driver trainee and will be working with the

# Boulder Junction Fire & EMS keeps moving forward

For more than 66 years, the Boulder Junction Volunteer Fire Department has protected the 96 square miles of the town of Boulder Junction along with the surrounding towns with fire, rescue, emergency medical services (EMS), and rehab services.

The department's annual call volume averages 140-160 runs, of which approximately 80% are EMS calls. The department's fundraising efforts have increased in the past few years, including many events to raise money for equipment and technical upgrades.

A fundraiser, Fall Fest, was held last Sept. 16 at the fire hall. The fest boasts food, raffles, live music and family fun, including a bounce house and face painting for the kids.

In recent years, the department purchased many items using donated funds and grant funds, according to department Treasurer Katherine Maurer.

"All of these items assist the department members when responding to calls. To name a few, we purchased two more ice water rescue suits, portable lights for scene lighting, an additional thermal imaging camera (TIC), and an ice maker machine," she said.

Thermographic cameras used in firefighting and search-and-rescue applications, TICs render infrared radiation as visible light to allow firefighters to see areas of heat through smoke, darkness or heat-permeable barriers.

A grant written by former Fire Chief Eric Johnson also was approved in 2022 by the Boulder Junction Community Foundation for a gear dryer, and hose dryer and reel, totaling about \$6,000, said current Chief Jason Maurer.

Department members also underwent Ice Rescue Training in February with Midwest Fire Tactics and Training. Participants in the training spent 8 hours learning critical rescue methods and safety when responding to critical situations and treacherous conditions on the ice.



The members of the Boulder Junction Fire Department are front row left: Krista Maurer, Hannah Menzia, Kirby Giampa, Katherine Maurer, Amanda Chartrand, Julie Schuenemann, Laura Schuenemann, Trish Menzia, Dan Wahlgren. Back row, left, Nathan Keisler, Taylor Miner, Cole Schuenemann, Matthew Maurer, Wes Beda, John Titel, Josh Thompson, and Jason Maurer. Not pictured are Doug Bailey, Troy Beda, Todd Boudreau, Ken Carlson, Olivia Menzia, Bob Prost, Linda Thayer, Rory Will.

But one of the main focuses within the department is recruitment.

"Since March of 2022, we have recruited and voted onto the department a number of different people for fire, EMS, and administration roles of our department," Katherine Maurer said. "We are always looking for more people to join to serve on the department in the areas of fire, EMS, rescue, Rehab Unit, and a variety of support roles."

Roles that the department is looking to fill include members who can act as an apparatus driver, assist with grant writing, provide Information Technology support, and administration areas.

"If you or someone that you know would like to become a member of the Boulder Junction Volunteer Fire Department, please reach out to a department member for more information," Katherine Maurer said. "You can also send an email to [firechief@townofboulderjunction.org](mailto:firechief@townofboulderjunction.org) or [emsdeputychief@townofboulderjunction.org](mailto:emsdeputychief@townofboulderjunction.org)."

The department has put an increased emphasis on grant writing in recent years to help fund the purchase of new equipment, receiving two grants submitted by Johnson for wildland gear.

In 2020, the department was awarded a nearly \$12,000 Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) 50-50 cost-share grant in support of the purchase of wildland firefighting equipment and supplies, including a new Smokey Bear fire danger sign installed outside BJVFD's Highway M fire station to keep the public abreast of often-changing wildland fire danger levels in the North Woods.

In 2019, Johnson wrote and submitted a successful grant application to the Boulder Junction Community Foundation for the \$4,403 purchase of a Groves PPE Extractor/Washer, a specialized washing machine designed specifically to clean firefighting personal protective gear (jacket, coat, and bunker pants) by removing the carcinogenic gases that

accumulate during firefighting operations.

The extractor/washer was installed in February, 2020.

"Purchasing the Groves PPE Extractor/Washer is a firefighter health and wellness initiative," Johnson said. "It will take care of our firefighters, who volunteer to provide emergency services to the residents of Boulder Junction and, when called to mutual aid, the residents of surrounding communities."

"We are grateful to the Boulder Junction Community Foundation for their support of our firefighter health and safety grant request, as cancer is the biggest killer of career and volunteer firefighters whose risk of developing cancer far exceeds that of the general population," said Johnson.

In addition to seeking grant money, the department has long been active in fundraising efforts with its popular annual fundraising chicken barbecue fundraiser, held in early July, and typically serving 1,500 full chicken dinners. Chicken barbecue funds are used for nonbudgetary

equipment purchases and special training opportunities for department members.

Despite the cancellation of the 2020 and 2021 chicken barbecue fundraisers, many supportive donors from the North Woods, Wisconsin, the Midwest, and the nation sent generous financial donations as well as thoughtful notes of support and encouragement to the department.

"We are heartened by and thankful for the outpouring we received from members of the Boulder Junction community, as well as many of our visitors, during these challenging, unprecedented times," Johnson said. "The monetary support and words of encouragement are greatly appreciated by our department members as we continue to provide emergency services against the challenging backdrop of the Covid-19 global pandemic."

## New Binder Lift system

On the EMS side of department

# Presque Isle Volunteer Fire and EMS Department celebrates 75th anniversary

The Presque Isle Volunteer Fire and EMS Department (PIVFD&EMS) marked its 75th Anniversary with a celebration that drew a crowd of over 300 people to the Annual Fireman's Picnic.

The event, which featured food, live music by Paul Christopher and karaoke led by Ron Stultz, saw a tremendous outpouring of support from the community. Attendees took part in raffles and a silent auction featuring over 90 donated prizes from local individuals, businesses and organizations, including area Lake Associations and the Presque Isle Lions Club. Proceeds from the event will fund critical supplies and equipment needed for both fire and EMS operations.

The event also paid tribute to the many volunteers who have dedicated themselves to the department over the years. Past and present firefighters and EMS personnel were honored for their commitment to protecting the lives and property of Presque Isle residents.

Retired Fire Chief Ken Brouil, who served the department for decades, was recognized as the Honorary Grand Marshal of the parade.

PIFD Chief Doug Wolter, grandson of the 1949 founding fire chief Fred Wolter, said, "My grandfather's legacy in helping create the Presque Isle fire service in 1949 has grown in both resources and personnel over the years with dedicated, committed, well-trained volunteers who selflessly serve and protect the community, our neighbors."

The PI Fire and EMS Department consists of 28 members and one part-time Fire Inspector who protect an area of 72 square miles, responding to more than 145 calls in the past year, ranging from vehicle crashes, snowmobile crashes, medical and trauma calls, and fire-related incidents.

Presque Isle EMS Director, Donna Jukich, states, "We



The Presque Isle Fire Department helps serve the northern-most town in Vilas County. The department just recognized over 75 years of service to the North Woods. —STAFF PHOTO

have added four newly trained EMT's, to our team, totaling 11, strengthening our response to community emergency needs as well as supporting neighboring towns as needed. We are truly blessed with dedicated, skilled EMS volunteers who show up when called and put the needs of others first."

## New Firefighting and Rescue UTV

The department made a big investment in 2024, purchasing a new Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV). The Sherp UTV can navigate the harshest conditions of the North Woods, which are often a severe impediment to firefighting and rescue operations. The Sherp drives anywhere — grass, woods, rocks, marsh, snow and ice. It floats everywhere - ponds, lakes, rivers, sandbanks, and frozen waters. And climbs everywhere — from water to ice, ice to water, and can overcome obstacles up to 1 meter in height.

The Sherp UTV is a reliable

"off-road" transportation and logistics solution that can deliver rescuers, equipment, fuel, water pumps and hoses, communication equipment and a rescue stretcher for victim transports no matter the weather or terrain.

The purchase of this vehicle was made possible by the action of the Presque Isle Town Board directing a private citizen request to the PI Fire/EMS for the restricted purchase of the Sherp UTV.

Other funding includes private donations to the PI VFD and from the Annual Fireman's Picnic proceeds for communications equipment, emergency lighting and medical supplies, and transport equipment.

## Meet the Department

The department is made up of a close-knit group of dedicated men and women volunteers. Like many other volunteer departments, Presque Isle provides only modest stipends and length-of-service awards, yet its members remain

deeply committed to serving the community.

Doug Wolter, a 19-year Firefighter Driver/Operator, was named Chief in 2016. He is employed by the Town of Presque Isle.

Jim Nelson, Assistant Fire Chief, is a Firefighter and Driver/Operator. Jim is a retired police officer from Racine, Wis., and has been with the department for 19 years. Jim was the Fire Chief from 2010-2016.

Donna Jukich, a Registered Nurse/EMT, has been with the department for 32 years and has been the EMS Director for the past 27 years. Donna owns and operates Cedar Bay Resort with her husband in Presque Isle.

Colin "Corky" Curtis is the Assistant EMS Director, Firefighter I and II, Driver/Operator, EMT, and has been with the department for 5 years. Corky retired from the Brookfield, Wis., Fire Department where he served for 30 years, 19 years as a Chief

Officer. He also served 41 years with the Sussex Fire Department, with the last 16 years as Chief.

Geoffrey Simmons, the Secretary/Treasurer, is a Driver/Operator and certified EMR, serving with the department for 3 years. Geoffrey is the VP of Data Science for Echo Global Logistics.

Al Eschenbauch, a former Fire Chief and Assistant Chief, has been with the department 47 years. He is a certified Firefighter I and II, and a certified EMT. Al owns and operates an eclectic construction business based in Presque Isle.

Ken Tworek, former PI Fire Chief and Assistant Chief, is a certified Firefighter I and II, as well as National Incident Management System 700, 100, and 200. Ken retired from the Cook County, Ill., Sheriff's Department, 1974-2002, where he served as Assistant Chief. Ken has been with the department for 19 years.

Curtis Cecchi, an EMR, has

# Woodruff Fire Department continues support of entire Lakeland area

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

The Woodruff Fire Department is growing as it now rests with a force totalling 21 members, all who present certification in a minimum level of Firefighter 1 and 2. Some also hold certifications in hazmat, fire officer, driver/operator, aerial operations and ice rescue.

Annual calls continue to be in the 75 to 100 range as the team often provides assistance to the greater Lakeland area, including help to the neighboring communities of Minocqua, Arbor Vitae, Lake Tomahawk and beyond. Some of this is through automatic mutual aid response.

The Woodruff Fire Department recently purchased a fire and rescue boat. The department spent much of the recent year updating lighting, motor and electronic, and sonar equipment on the vessel, all done with volunteer firefighter hours.

In addition to several hours of training with the Oneida County Dive Team, the boat was utilized to respond to a land wildfire on the backside of Pickerel lake at the Vilas and Oneida County border, according to Fire Chief Victor Gee.

“We held our annual pig roast the last week in July, and several hundred people turned out to support the department,” said Gee. “This event hosts free music, food, and kid’s games. The evening was capped off with several raffles and the drawing of several larger prizes sponsored by Lakeland Fitness and Golf.”

Also recently, rope rescue equipment and a new Can-Am Defender UTV and trailer were purchased.

The department received the UTV last summer, which, like the majority of the department purchases, was 100% paid for by fundraising, Gee noted. Like the UTV, fundraising also paid for the boat, including money raised at a big event put on in July by Lakeland Fitness and Golf.

“They (Lakeland Fitness) didn’t



With continued growth, the Woodruff Fire Department helps protect the communities that border Oneida and Vilas County, in and around the greater Minocqua area. The department’s purchase of a ladder truck in 2019 has been a valuable asset and firefighting tool. —Staff Photo By DOUG ETTEN

get a grand opening because of Covid, so they held that in the summer of 2022, needed help with the food, and asked if we’d be interested,” Gee explained.

Although they had never done an event like that before, Gee said the event raised more than \$25,000 for the department and allowed it to get the boat ahead of schedule.

“The fire department cooked the food, and then other raffles and cash donations also helped,” Gee said. In total, the department raised \$25,000 at the event between the food proceeds and other raffle and cash donations.

“We have a lot of local businesses that support us pretty well,” Gee said, which is displayed by some of the advancements in equipment and training the Woodruff Fire Department has been able to make the last few years.

Gee listed some of those accomplishments, which included taking delivery of a Ford F-550 Wildland fire truck through Stainless & Repair in

Marshfield in late 2020 (purchased 100% through donations and fundraising), and purchasing three sets of ice rescue suits and four sets of rescue ropes with donations. They also received a donated rescue boat from the Arbor Vitae Fire Department.

Department officers also completed the state officer training class and all members completed the state driver operator training. The department hosted hands-on ice rescue training with the Woodruff and Minocqua police departments, with all firefighters and police officers receiving ice rescue operator level.

Gee said the department managed to improve its ISO (Insurance Services Office) rating, in an effort to lower insurance premium costs for business and homeowners in rural areas of Woodruff. Although he hasn’t heard yet if insurance rates have been affected, the department’s efforts resulted in an increased rating.

“Our rating improved quite a bit. We now have the highest rating you can get in a rural area without making a lot of changes,” Gee said. He has shared some of the information to help neighboring departments improve their ratings as well.

Three years ago, the department also moved its annual October fundraiser to the end of July.

“It was very well attended, likely because there were more summer people around the area,” said Gee. “We did very well and we thank the community for their support.”

In 2019, the Woodruff Fire Department purchased the department’s first ladder truck-pumper and a six-wheel UTV. The \$819,000 ladder truck was purchased with taxpayer dollars, as well as donations.

The ladder truck also serves as a pumper and replaced the department’s 1991 engine. “It is used for the larger structure

fires,” said Gee. “The 30-foot hand ladders are just not enough sometimes.”

Along with the addition of the ladder truck, the Woodruff Fire Department also purchased a six-wheel UTV in 2019 through fundraisers and donations. The UTV is used for brush fires and rescue purposes. The used piece of equipment came from the town of Maine Fire Department.

The fire chief said Wildland fire equipment has been purchased through a 50-50 matching grant through the Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Those items have included a portable pump, a hose reel, and hoses.

The department also received a Wisconsin Public Service 50-50 matching grant to help with the purchase of a new portable lighting system. The lights are battery-operated with high power beams, allowing firefighters to illuminate areas without needing

# Woodruff

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to set up a generator.

The Woodruff department, through fundraisers and community donations, purchased more than \$14,000 worth of equipment for the squad in 2013. The purchase included 11 sets of turnout gear.

“The turnout gear is vital to firefighter safety and it goes hand in hand with firefighter comfort,” said Gee. “The modern gear offers thermal protection without limiting a firefighter’s mobility.”

Gee said the department also updated its thermal-imaging camera in 2013 for \$3,647.

The Woodruff Fire Department operates a 2012 model engine from Marion Body Works, according to Gee.

“The \$315,000 engine features a 2,500-gallon tank, a 1,250 gallons-per-minute pump and foam unit on a 2011 Kenworth chassis,” he said. Gee said tax dollars paid for a majority of the truck, but money had been set aside over a number of years. The department purchased equipment for the truck through fundraisers.

The Woodruff Fire Department moved into its new fire hall on Highway 47 in 2008, part of a \$2.5 million project that involved construction of a town hall/police station and a separate town shop/fire station.

## The firefighters

The Woodruff Fire Department is composed of 21 firefighters.

Victor Gee has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 22 years and is the fire chief. Gee is a state-certified firefighter,

Responder Intervention Team (RIT) trained, a DNR firefighter, training officer and is a certified emergency vehicle technician. He is a resident of Woodruff and is self-employed with North Star Emergency Vehicle Service.

Kyle Timmons has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 24 years. He holds the rank of assistant chief. He is a certified firefighter and has completed courses in DNR wildland fire and HAZMAT decontamination. He is a resident of Woodruff and is employed by Lakeland Sanitary District.

Kraig Timmons has been a firefighter for 12 years and currently holds the rank of captain and secretary. He has had training in firefighting techniques. He is the son of former fire chief, Mike Timmons, and is employed by Dean Distributing.

Ryan Krueger has been with the fire department for 15 years and currently holds the rank of firefighter. He has taken Firefighter I and II training. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Northern Concrete Finish.

Mike Timmons has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 50 years and is the former fire chief. He currently serves as treasurer. He also is the Woodruff town chairman. He has completed courses in Firefighter I, officers training, educational methodology I, HAZMAT operations, DNR wildland fires and fire inspector. He also has completed a three-part incident command system class.

Steve Timmons has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 28 years. He holds the rank of captain. He is a certified firefighter

team.

Bradley Gehrig is a junior firefighter with the department. He is the son of Deputy Chief Ryan Gehrig and Rescue Assistant Chief Heather Gehrig.

Grady Gehrig recently was promoted from junior firefighter to the department’s firefighter team. He is the son of Deputy Chief Ryan Gehrig and Rescue Assistant Chief Heather Gehrig.

and has completed the DNR wildland fire course, HAZMAT decontamination, HAZMAT awareness, National Incident Management System (NIMS) training, CPR courses, and is a fire inspector. He is a resident of Arbor Vitae and is employed by Dean Distributing.

Matt Godard has been a firefighter for the department for 17 years. He holds the rank of captain. He has completed courses in Firefighter I and II, RIT, pump training and wildland fire. He is employed by Ponsse Equipment.

Ed Mejerle is a 21-year member of the department and has completed Firefighter I and II training and NIMS training. He is employed by Ace Hardware.

Patrick Trapp has been with the department for 15 years and has taken Firefighter I, pump and RIT training. He is a resident of Woodruff and employed by Yamaha Motor Corp.

Nick Krueger has been with the fire department for 15 years. He is a resident of Woodruff and is employed by Island Collision Center.

Taylor Mandy has been a firefighter with the department for seven years, holding the rank of Lieutenant and is employed by Dean Distributing.

Merlin Hunter has been a firefighter for the department for six years. He is employed by Hunter Construction.

Andrew Hoban has been with the department for five years and is a lieutenant and firefighter.

Alex Mitchell has been with the department for two years and is a firefighter. He is employed at Parson’s of Eagle River.

New members joining the department recently include Mark Vapnar, Link Abraham and

Other department members include firefighters Todd Wiesendanger, Adam Passow, Ethan Sennett, Dave Batiste, Todd Hunter, Josh Sennett, Brian Hazelett, Andrew Alesauskas, Noah Flann, Dylan Rehm, and Mark Sigmund; and junior firefighter Brandon Bacon.

EMRs are Lea Schmidt, Kris Roy, Elizabeth Kiey, and Dawn Flann.

Matt Ritchie, who have completed state required training, with the members continuing on to driver and operator training.

Adam Vapnar, Cameron Gee

and Mason Vapnar joined as junior members; these are the sons of recently joined member Mark Vapnar. Cameron Gee is the daughter of Victor Gee.

# Boulder

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operations, EMS Director Daniell Wahlgren stated that in 2022 the department purchased two sizes of Binder Lift™ patient lift assist units from Cody, Wyo.-based Binder Lift, Inc.

Offering medical responders up to 32 handles, the torso-attached Binder Lifts are used by emergency responders to safely lift and assist patients of any size with ease, helping to reduce lifting-related injuries for fire and EMS personnel.

“A good majority of our calls are just picking people up,” Wahlgren said. “The Binder Lifts are a very helpful addition and resource. It’s much more stress-free on the patient, and safer for them as well.”

## Auto aid agreement inked

As part of neighboring Arbor Vitae Fire Department’s planned Station 2 development at highways 51 and N, just southwest of Boulder Junction, BJVFD signed an automatic aid dispatch agreement with Arbor Vitae Fire, which will automatically be paged for structure fire and motor vehicle accident calls in Boulder Junction.

“As our departments continue to work more closely together, the auto aid agreement benefits both departments,” Johnson said. “With limited fire-rescue personnel resources in this age of growing recruitment challenges, the auto aid agreement with Arbor Vitae Fire provides Boulder Junction Fire with much-needed personnel, apparatus, and equipment resources for major incidents.”

## Meet the department

Jason Maurer, Fire Chief, has been a firefighter with BJFD for 15 years. He became Fire Chief in March of 2022.

Josh Thompson, Assistant Fire

Chief, has been a firefighter with BJFD for 17 years.

Wes Beda joined BJFD in 2024 as a firefighter.

Amanda Chartrand has been an EMR for 2 years with BJFD.

Kirby Giampa has been an EMT with BJFD for 1 year.

Nathan Keisler has been a firefighter and department chaplain for 1 year.

Katherine Maurer, Treasurer, and is a member of the department’s Rehab Unit for 11 years.

Krista Maurer, has been a supportive role of the department for over 35 years and has been an official member of the Rehab Unit for 10 years.

Matthew Maurer has been a firefighter with BJFD for 2 years.

Hannah Menzia has been a member of our Rehab Unit and office support for 2 years.

Trish Menzia, Secretary for the past 12 years, and is also a member of the Rehab Unit.

Taylor Miner has been a firefighter for 2 years with BJFD.

Cole Schuenemann joined BJFD in 2023 as a firefighter.

Julie Schuenemann has been an EMT for 1 year with BJFD.

Laura Schuenemann joined BJVD as an EMT for 1 year.

John Titel has been a member for over 35 years and is a firefighter.

Dan Wahlgren, EMS Director, has been an EMT for 8 years.

Doug Bailey, has been an EMT with BJFD for 49 years.

Troy Beda, has been a firefighter with BJFD for 18 years.

Todd Boudreau, has been a firefighter with BJFD for 2 years.

Ken Carlson, has been a firefighter with BJFD for 6 years.

Olivia Menzia, joined the department as a Rehab Unit member and is now an EMT for 4 years.

Bob Prost has been an EMT since 2018.

Linda Thayer has been a member for 17 years as an EMT.

Rory Will has been a firefighter for 6 years.

# Vitae

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maintenance techs on the departments fleet of equipment.

Bob Brown is a driver trainee who joined the department in August. Brown will be working with the other maintenance techs on the departments maintenance

# Community support legacy continues with Minocqua's volunteer department

The Minocqua Volunteer Fire Department, an integral part of the community, operates out of two stations and is comprised of approximately 23 dedicated members.

Each year, the department is estimated to respond to around 150 calls, providing not only essential services to Minocqua, but also mutual aid to several surrounding communities.

The firefighters who volunteer their time are committed to maintaining their skills and attend several hours of training and education each month to ensure they are prepared for any situation that may arise.

Station 1, located just south of "the Island" on Clawson Drive next to the Chamber of Commerce, is the heart of the department's operations. This station is well-equipped with a variety of vehicles, including an engine, a 2,000-gallon tanker, a rescue pumper and two pickup trucks outfitted with pumps and water.

One of the key vehicles at Station 1 is Tanker 1, known as Truck 19, a custom-fabricated model built on a 2009 Kenworth chassis. This vehicle is capable of holding 2,000 gallons of water, supported by a Hale 500-gallons-per-minute (gpm) pump and Class A and B foam capabilities, making it a crucial asset in firefighting efforts. The tanker is designed with left and right rear discharges for efficient water deployment.

Another critical vehicle housed at Station 1 is the E-1 Pumper, designated as Truck 18, a 2004 Pierce Contender series. This six-seat custom cab vehicle carries 1,000 gallons of water and is equipped with a 1,250-gpm Waterous top-mounted pump, also featuring Class A and compressed air foam. This pumper is essential for its capacity and versatility in various fire scenarios.

The E-2 Rescue Pumper, identified as Truck 20, is a more



From left to right: Back row is Steven Brill, Don Cupp, Kris Valters, Luke Taylor, Captain Don Kort, Lieutenant Ben Susor, Captain Jeff Friedland, Lance Krolczyk, Tom Deal, Devon Gaszak, Michael Tautges. Front row is Casey Cox, Jay Christgau, Dan Lincoln, Chief Rich Carani, Assistant Chief Eric Carlson, Jack Hartzheim, Ayden Harris, Jim Pozniak.

— Staff Photo By Michaela Kieffer

recent addition, built in 2014. This U.S. Tanker custom-built rescue pumper sits on a Spartan chassis and also features a six-seat cab. Equipped with a Hale 1,250-gpm pump and a 1,000-gallon water tank, it boasts Class A and B foam capabilities, fully integrated TNT Rescue hydraulic extrication tools, and a light tower, making it indispensable for both fire suppression and rescue operations.

Station 1 also houses specialized vehicles such as an off-road rescue ATV, a boat for fire and rescue calls, an airboat, and a Tahoe, which is mainly used for nonemergency purposes like travel to classes.

Station 2 is strategically located on Bo Di Lac Road, on the west side of town near Lac du Flambeau, to ensure comprehensive coverage across the area. This station is equipped with a 1,250-gpm engine, a 2,000-gallon tanker, a pickup/

brush truck and a six-wheel vehicle, ensuring it can handle a variety of emergency situations.

The department is a proud member of MABAS Division 114, a mutual aid program that operates based on a box alarm system, which allows for efficient and coordinated responses across multiple jurisdictions.

In 2023, the department faced a significant decision regarding the replacement of a 2004 pumper. With the cost of a new pumper averaging around \$800,000, the department opted to investigate the refurbishment of the current unit due to its low mileage and engine hours.

After receiving a quote of \$200,000 for the refurbishment, the department proceeded with the updates, which included a range of enhancements to bring the engine into compliance with current standards and extend its service life.

The work involved paint touch-

ups, new tires, new brakes, new rear axle springs, underbody cleanup and protective coating, all-new roll-up doors, additional slide-out compartment trays, all-new LED emergency lighting and siren, LED vehicle lighting, LED scene lights, NFPA updates, pump overhaul, engine servicing and repairs, as well as new emergency radios and wireless headsets for the crew.

This refurbishment was completed under budget, costing about \$185,000, and the vehicle was put back into service in July, 2023. An additional \$14,000 from fundraising efforts was spent to upgrade equipment on the truck, and the department is extremely pleased with the improvements.

## Meet the department

The Minocqua Volunteer Fire Department is led by Fire Chief Rich Carani. He became part of the department two years ago after retiring from

the Libertyville, Ill., Fire Department, where he served as chief for 17 years. He also has a background in Emergency Management and a Fire Chief Officer Accreditation.

Assistant Chief Eric Carlson has been with the department for 14 years and in his current role for two years. He is a resident of Woodruff and is employed by Dan's Minocqua Fudge. He has completed courses in hazmat and is a state-certified firefighter.

Treasurer and Secretary Sue Krueger has been serving the department for 30 years and is also the department photographer. She is a certified fire inspector and assists the department with fire inspections, as well as numerous other tasks.

Captain Don Kort, celebrating his 50th year with the department, was recently awarded the State's Lifetime

# Winchester Fire Department adds new equipment for 2024

The Winchester Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (WFD/EMS) has upgraded its emergency response equipment for 2024, enhancing its ability to provide critical services.

Located at the town municipal complex, the department also continues to work on training tactics as well, according to Fire Chief John Melzer.

One of the key additions is a new Ford F450 4x4 Demers ambulance purchased from Pomasl Equipment. This vehicle will help improve medical response capabilities, especially in the rugged terrain common to the area.

In addition, the department has acquired a set of TNT extraction tools, including a cutter, spreader, combo tool and ram.

These tools are essential for performing vehicle extrications and other rescue operations, allowing the team to respond more efficiently to emergency situations.

Much of the funding for this new equipment came from generous donations made by community members. Their support has been instrumental in ensuring that the department remains well-equipped to meet the demands of its growing service area.

A new ambulance has recently been acquired and John Melzer said the funds for the new ambulance came from the town budget. Ambulance Director Renee Melzer said the new ambulance will replace the 2007 two-wheel drive model currently being used in the town of Winchester and will provide a more dependable avenue of transportation for the department.

For several years prior, the department was looking for a four-wheel drive ambulance that would be safer on roads in the winter months and include a power cot and lift to make it safer for EMTs to lift a patient, Renee Melzer said.

Also purchased in 2021 was a new, automated Lucas CPR device which John Melzer noted is a



The Winchester Fire Department added a set of TNT extraction tools which included a cutter, spreader, combo tool and a ram to help with mainly automobile accidents. —STAFF PHOTO

cardiac monitor that permanently lives in the ambulance.

"The community has been very generous in the past and we will need that support as we try to keep up with technology," said Renee Melzer.

John Melzer said the department is also interested in purchasing a new rescue boat, noting the department's old boat is narrow and there are safety concerns for firefighters.

The Winchester department improved its life-saving capabilities with a new Lifepak 15 monitor and thermal-imaging camera in 2020.

The Lifepak 15 was recently purchased for \$36,000, with funds raised through the department's letter campaign to local residents and businesses.

Renee Melzer said the Lifepak 15 monitor/defibrillator is the standard in emergency care for advanced life-support teams who want the most innovative device available today.

"We had a Lifepak 12, but it became obsolete," she said.

"The Lifepak 15 keeps the patient and emergency medical technicians (EMT) in touch with the paramedics and hospital emergency rooms."

The Lifepak is a heart and temperature monitor and automated external defibrillator, all in one advanced unit.

The fire department also purchased a handheld color thermal-imaging camera recently for under \$4,000 with donations through the letter campaign.

"The unit is much lighter than the old version. It has all the bells and whistles. The technology has really grown and the price has come down," said John Melzer. The thermal-imaging camera is used to locate hot spots in a fire, as well as possible victims inside a burning structure.

## Expansion project

Several expansion projects and renovation projects were recently completed at the current fire/EMS building.

Town electors approved the approximately \$900,000 project in 2017 that included a fire

department apparatus bay, an EMS bay, and a new classroom and restrooms for the fire department.

The project also included an addition to the town offices and renovating space in the current fire/EMS building.

Chief Melzer said the department began to run out of space, mostly due to the size of the modern-day fire-fighting equipment. He said tax dollars from supportive town residents paid for the project.

The project included a 75- by 24-foot addition to the west end of the fire station, with a drive-through heated bay for two vehicles.

"We currently park our rescue truck and rescue trailer in the new bay because together they are long and the drive-thru bay makes that easier than backing in a long rig," said John Melzer.

There also is a new 40- by 24-foot heated bay on the east end of the building for the ambulance.

"That bay is currently being used to wash off our equipment, especially during the winter

months," said the chief. An 8-by-24-foot addition for restrooms was placed on the back of a new training room.

The former EMS garage was remodeled for the training room and offices.

The town hall also got a new entrance and vestibule, office for the clerk/treasurer, records room, and conference room.

## EMS training continues

The department now has seven certified EMTs, including Renee Melzer, Steve Herzberg, Benjamin Darien, Maymee Siegner, Lindsey Peterson, Dave Inserra and Cory Siegner.

Four members of the department also took the 80-hour emergency medical responder (EMR) training in 2018, including Maymee Siegner, Cory Siegner, Mathias Schmidt, and Sharon Eichhorn, who has had a career in nursing. Audrey Johnson took EMR training in 2021. Isaac Cowart has also completed EMR training.

# Winchester

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## New pagers, radios

The department purchased all new emergency pagers and radios in 2017.

“With new pagers and radios, the department can easily communicate with one another about emergency calls,” said John Melzer.

In 2016, with the help of fundraising, the department purchased wheel chocks, chains, and vehicle-safety equipment for its first-response vehicle.

According to the fire chief, the department’s first-response vehicle, a 2009 rescue truck, is one of the most heavily used pieces of equipment. When assisting at accident scenes, the equipment helps keep department members safe while attending to the injured and also allows them to work more quickly.

The department also purchased a used wildland firefighting slip-on unit from the Cumberland Fire District.

According to Melzer, the unit carries 200 gallons of water and is updated to carry and dispense 10 gallons of foam in solution for initial attacks on wildfires.

The funding for this equipment came from the department’s fundraising efforts.

“We are very grateful for the support that the community has shown us over the years,” said Melzer.

## Meet the firefighters, EMTs

The Winchester Fire Department includes the following:

John Melzer, fire chief, also is a firefighter for the Manitowish Waters and Lac du Flambeau fire departments and has completed Firefighter I and II training. He’s been trained in thermal-imaging camera use, advanced extrication, wildland firefighting, advanced self-contained breathing apparatus and pump operations. He works at Lac du Flambeau Chippewa Housing Authority.

William “Bill” Sell, a 45-year department member, is the former fire chief. He has assumed the role of assistant fire chief firefighter. He is self-employed as an excavator.

Renee Melzer is the ambulance director and has been a member of the department for 18 years. She is a certified EMT and firefighter and is employed by Marshfield Clinic.

Jason Joling is the department’s EMS district director, and Jessie Mabie is the EMS district assistant director.

Sulo Wainio, an 18-year member, is the department’s secretary. He has completed Firefighter I, emergency vehicle operators course (EVOC), search and rescue, thermal imaging, vehicle extrication, ice rescue, snowmobile rescue, water rescue, FEMA-incident training and is a safety officer. He is the owner of Thirty Point Trading Post and Tap.

Joan Wainio is an 18-year firefighter and is the treasurer of the department. She has completed Firefighter I, vehicle extrication, EVOC, search and rescue, thermal imaging, snowmobile rescue, water rescue and FEMA-incident command training. She is the owner of Thirty Point Trading Post and Tap.

Don Melzer, Jr., has been with the department for 23 years. He has completed Firefighter I, cold-water rescue, wildland fire, LP gas, thermal imaging, vehicle extrication, search and rescue, and landing zone training. He serves as a firefighter for Manitowish Waters and Boulder Junction as well. He works at Chicago Pub.

Richard “Dick” Smith has been a firefighter with the squad for 22 years.

Mathias Schmidt is in his 16th year with the department and has completed entry-level Firefighter I and II training. He also serves as a firefighter for Manitowish Waters. He has completed training in EVOC, motor pump operator II, advanced auto extrication, landing zone safety, hazmat operations, basic rapid intervention team, hybrid vehicle safety, incident safety officer, LP natural gas,

national incident management system, and strategies and tactics. He is

wildland fire and CPR-certified. He is also certified as an EMR. He is a resident of Mercer.

Steve Herzberg is in his 11th year with the department and has completed training in emergency communications and various fire-suppression sessions. He is a certified EMT.

Wayne Russell has been with the department for 11 years and has completed CPR, search and rescue, thermal imaging, EVOC, vehicle extrication and wildland fire training.

Cory Siegner has been a member of the department for eight years. He is a state-certified firefighter and EMT. He is a resident of Winchester.

Maymee Siegner has been with the department for eight years and is an assistant EMS. She is ranked as a firefighter and is a certified EMT. She is self-employed and is a health and life coach.

Sharon Eichhorn is a certified EMR with the department and is a nurse practitioner.

Adam Carlson has been a Winchester firefighter for eight years. He has completed training in Fire A, EVOC and basic life support/CPR.

Dan Schmidt is a sixth-year firefighter and is EMR-certified. He has taken advanced basic life support for health-care professionals. A resident of Winchester, Schmidt is employed at Pukall Lumber Co.

David Chow is a fifth-year firefighter and has completed entry-level firefighter training. He is employed by GE.

Benjamin Darien is a four year EMT and is a doctor of veterinary medicine-internal medicine with 27 years at UW-Madison.

Audrey Johnston of Mercer is in her fourth year with the department and is an EMR and firefighter in training.

Other notable members of the department are firefighters Ian Derber, Joe Moore, Ryan Russell, EMTs Dave Inserra, Lindsey Peterson, and EMS Issac Cowart.

# Minocqua

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Achievement Award. Don is also a certified fire instructor and registered nurse.

Captain Jeff Friedland of Minocqua has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 43 years and is a driver and operator at Station 2. He is employed by Lakeland Area Bus Service.

Ben Susor of Woodruff is a lieutenant and has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 16 years. He is currently responsible for the department’s maintenance program and is employed by Wisconsin DNR Forestry Division as a Wildland Firefighter and Dozer operator.

Dan Lincoln has been a volunteer firefighter for the department for 32 years. He has recently retired from the Minocqua-Hazelhurst-Lake Tomahawk Elementary School and is concentrating on his music.

Lance Krolczyk, of Minocqua, has been a volunteer firefighter for 28 years and currently sells real estate in the Minocqua area.

Dave Edwards has been a volunteer firefighter for eight years. He is a resident of Minocqua and a certified firefighter II and pump operator. Dave retired from the U.S. Navy after 25 years of service.

Luke Taylor has been a volunteer firefighter for seven years and was previously chief of the department. In addition to being a firefighter, he is also a pump operator and currently manages the department’s SCBA maintenance program. He is employed by Marshfield Clinic Building Services.

Jarrett Radmer, of Woodruff, has been a volunteer for six years. He is a certified firefighter and pump operator. He is employed by the Town of Minocqua Police Department.

Devon Gaszak, of Minocqua, has been a volunteer firefighter for three years. He is a firefighter II and is employed by the Town of Minocqua Police Department.

Don Cupp, of Minocqua, joined the department five years ago. He has completed Firefighter I and was previously a firefighter in Marshfield.

Ayden Harris, of Minocqua, has been a volunteer firefighter for three years. He is a Firefighter I and is employed by Pukall Lumber Company.

Jeff Pease, of Minocqua, has been a volunteer firefighter for four years and is a Station 2 responder. He is employed by an underground contractor and works on underground piping in different areas of the country.

Jim Pozniak has been a volunteer firefighter for four years. He is a firefighter I and pump operator and retired from law enforcement near Stevens Point before joining the department.

Casey Cox, of Minocqua, has been a volunteer firefighter since last fall. Casey is a certified firefighter I and performs numerous IT functions within the department.

Steven Brill recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. He is self-employed and runs a septic service in Woodruff.

Jack Hartzheim recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. He is currently taking college classes and works with his father as a painter.

Micheal Tautges recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. He was recently elected to the Oneida County Boards and serves the community and county in numerous ways.

Tom Deal recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. He is recently retired and decided to join the department to help the community.

Kris Valters recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. Kris is employed by the Zastrow Distributing Company.

Jay Christgau recently joined the department and is a firefighter I. He recently retired from the Minocqua-Hazelhurst-Lake Tomahawk elementary school. He served the Boulder Junction area as a firefighter and EMT in the 80s and 90s.



The department, left to right, front row, Ty Rayala, Renee Melzer, Sam Kedzierski, Jen Kedzierski, Lindsey Peterson, Leeny Lerch, Rennea Remme, Deb Skrobot, Chuck Rayala, Dan Stella, Steve Herzberg, Darrel Petrusha, back row, Jessie Mabie, John Melzer, Don Melzer, Dave Inserra, BJ Bauers, Bob Skrobot, Mike Swatek, Adam Bruckner, Peter Postema, Don Postema, Matt Schmidt, Don Coan. Missing from photo is Bill Dietz, Harry Kaczmarek, Dave Krembs, Daniell Wahlgren, Chuck LaPorte, Bill King, Chris Sinberg, Bryan Klug, Jeremiah Mabie, Brian Rayala, Jamie Vandenlangenberg, Richie Dollhopf.

## Manitowish Waters Fire and EMS Department enhances capabilities and expands services

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

The Manitowish Waters Fire Company boasts the title of being one of the oldest and longest-standing fire departments throughout the North Woods area.

Established in Vilas County 66 years ago, the department has spent the last year focused on fundraising and running service calls.

The department continues to enhance its capabilities, ensuring greater preparedness for the community. A key development on the horizon is the addition of a new ladder truck, which is expected to arrive by next spring or summer.

This state-of-the-art vehicle will significantly improve the department's ability to respond to fires, particularly in multi-story structures and areas with challenging access points.

In addition to the ladder truck, the department has invested grant money in a versatile off-road rescue vehicle. This fully enclosed unit is equipped with interchangeable tires and skis, allowing it to traverse both rugged terrain and snow-covered landscapes.

The new vehicle will be a valuable asset for rescue operations in the region's diverse and often difficult-to-navigate environments.

The Manitowish Waters Fire Department is also growing its ranks through dedicated training efforts.

Recently, the department hosted an EMT class, resulting in the certification of five new Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs) and one new Emergency Medical Responder (EMR). This infusion of trained medical personnel strengthens the department's ability to provide

critical care in emergencies.

In addition, a fire training class held by the department produced two new firefighters, further bolstering the firefighting team. These new recruits, combined with the department's enhanced equipment, ensure that the Manitowish Waters Fire Department remains well-prepared to serve the community and respond to a wide range of emergency situations.

Last year was the department's 27th annual Harley-Davidson raffle.

The raffle capped at 4,000 tickets, which cost \$10 each. The first-place prize was a black 2022 Breakout 117 motorcycle. Second place was \$500 cash, and third place was two nights of luxury apartment lodging. All proceeds went to the fire company.

The department's fundraising efforts continued in the following year with a biannual

pancake breakfast, with the new fundraiser scheduled to take place once in the winter and once in the spring.

According to department data, the firefighters and emergency services personnel responded to approximately 140 total calls in 2022.

### Purchases

Several purchases were made in recent years, including a \$90,000 Diamondback airboat for year-round water-based firefighting, search and rescue operations spanning both the ice and open-water seasons, and a new \$30,000 LIFEPAK® 15 monitor/defibrillator for ambulance-based emergency medical service (EMS) operations.

Manitowish Waters Fire Chief Bob Skrobot said a community-spearheaded fundraising letter made the two purchases a reality, with the first \$10,000 raised being

matched dollar-for-dollar by a donation from Jim Reichert.

"The response back from the community was outstanding," Skrobot said. "It more than covered the cost of both the boat and the LIFEPAK. It was all paid for by donations from the community. The community support we have is just unbelievable."

In the past, Skrobot said fire company members relied on their personal boats or mutual-aid water-rescue equipment from surrounding fire departments for water-rescue calls.

Skrobot said the airboat from Diamondback Airboats, based in Cocoa, Fla., offers the department a greater range of flexibility not offered by outboard boats.

"We've had a couple of incidents in the last couple of years where outboard boats didn't really work

# Manitowish

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because it was either thin ice or low water,” Skrobot said.

“We decided a fan boat was going to be our best route. We have something we can use 12 months out of the year and not just during our summer months. We can go from land to water to up onto the ice back into the water. We can go through our channels in the winter. If somebody goes through thin ice on a snowmobile, we can go right up to them.”

On the EMS side, Skrobot called the LIFEPAK 15 monitor/defibrillator “the newest and greatest” technology available.

September 2020 marked the first anniversary of the fire company’s move to its new \$2.7 million fire station at 5797 Highway 51, on property donated by the late Frank and Betty Koller.

Plans were drawn up, and a town referendum was held to provide the department with \$2.7 million for the new hall. The referendum passed overwhelmingly, 143-12.

“The support of the town was huge,” said Skrobot. “We also contributed \$500,000 of money we raised toward the building. Besides a fire hall, the building may be used as a shelter for the townspeople if we have a big power outage or severe storm, with a full kitchen, showers, etc.

“Market and Johnson was the general contractor and did a fantastic job,” said Skrobot.

The new station includes a full kitchen, a fitness center for fire company members, and greatly increased space for housing much larger meetings and trainings than could previously be accommodated, as well as space for fire, rescue, and EMS apparatuses and equipment.

“By taking our time and designing it right with our architect, we got what we paid for by far,” said Skrobot. “We thank the taxpayers and everyone that supported it.”

The new fire station houses 2013 and 2004 engines, a 2009 tanker, a 2008 first-response truck, and an equipment van.

The Manitowish Waters

Town Board appropriates about \$69,000 annually to finance the fire department, \$20,000 of which is allocated for updating large apparatuses, including fire trucks.

Meanwhile, firefighters have often spent time cross-training with the Winchester Fire Department so that both teams are ready to work together in a large emergency incident. The company also includes certified emergency medical technicians (EMTs) who operate an ambulance squad.

The department members receive a stipend from the town to reimburse firefighters and EMS personnel for the time they spend responding to emergency calls. In 2017, the department worked hard to lower its Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating from class 8 to class 6. The ISO Public Protection Classification program involves inspecting fire departments and recording their ability to keep communities safe, from a firefighting standpoint.

Skrobot noted that the surrounding residents of the Manitowish Waters fire station benefit from a lowered ISO rating as well. People who live in a five-mile radius of the station have their homeowners’ insurance lowered with the better rating.

The fire department purchased turnout gear in 2016 to keep firefighters safe, according to Skrobot.

“Some of our stuff was getting to be 10 years old, so we got some new personal gear for our firefighters,” he said.

In 2015, the department added a pickup truck, funded by donations, to transport its all-terrain vehicle (ATV) and snowmobile rescue unit, while the EMTs purchased a new ambulance.

“Before, we were using our brush truck to haul the ATV rescue unit, and now we have a designated vehicle for that in case we need the brush truck at the same time,” added Skrobot.

## Fire and EMS members

Chief Robert Skrobot has been on the department for 31 years. He has been chief for 11 years. Bob is a state-certified FF II. He is a self-employed contractor.

Assistant Chief BJ Bauers has

been in the department for 16 years. He has been the assistant chief for 11. He is a state-certified FFII. BJ owns and operates Bauers Electric in Manitowish Waters.

Captain Bill Dietz has been in the department for 45 years. He is a state-certified FF I and has many additional certificates and specialized training. Bill is retired.

Captain Harry Kaczmarek has been a firefighter with MWFC for 56 years. He completed Firefighter I and numerous other training courses over the years. Harry is retired.

Captain Dave Krembs has been a member for 27 years. He has FF I and many other training over the years. Dave is retired.

Captain Tyrel Rayala has been a member for 17 years. Ty is State certified FF II and has many other fire training and certifications. He owns Great Escape Technologies in Manitowish Waters.

EMS Service Director Jessie Mabie has been a member for ten years. She has been the service director for eight years. Jessie has been in EMS for 19 years and is a critical care paramedic. She is state-certified FF I. She is employed by Northwoods EMS District as the Deputy Chief.

Deb Skrobot has been a member for 42 years. She is the current MWFC Secretary and has been for many years. She is a firefighter with many certifications and a recently retired EMT. She is employed by Lakeland Bus Company.

Darrel Petrusa has been a member for four years. He has been a state-certified firefighter for 44 years. He is also a certified aerial operator.

Daniell Wahlgren has been a member for six years. He is an AEMT and the service director for the Boulder Junction Fire Department. He is employed by Sysco Foods.

Charles “Chuck” LaPorte has been a member this time for six years. He is a firefighter and has been a member for 17 years in total. Chuck is retired.

Mike Swatek has been a member of MWFC for eight years. He is a firefighter and is retired.

Bill King has been a member of MWFC for 23 years during

the summer months. He winters in Racine, where he was a police officer for 31 years before retiring. Bill is a firefighter and retired EMT.

Chris Sinberg has been a member for 18 years. He is a state-certified firefighter II and has many other training and certificates. Chris is self-employed.

Bryan Klug has been a member for 18 years. He is a state-certified firefighter II and has done many other training over the years. He is employed by G&S Septic and Plumbing of Manitowish waters.

Mathias Schmidt has been a member of MWFC for 18 years; he is state-certified firefighter II with many other certifications and training. He has also been an EMR for six years and is a member of the Winchester Fire Department.

John Melzer has been a member for 15 years. He is a state firefighter 1. He has many other certifications and training as well. He is also a firefighter in Lac Du Flambeau and is the Fire Chief in Winchester. John is employed by the LDF Chippewa Housing Authority as the maintenance department manager.

Renee Melzer has been a member for ten years. She has been an EMT for 14 years. She is also the EMS Service Director for the Winchester Fire Department. Renee is employed by Marshfield Clinic.

Don Melzer Jr. has been a member for 14 years. He is a state-certified firefighter I.

He is employed by the town of Winchester.

Jeremiah Mabie has been a member for ten years. He is a state-certified firefighter II with many other certifications and training in his 20 years as a firefighter. He is employed by Vilas Cranberry as a Manager.

Chuck Rayala has been a member for the 2nd time for nine years. He has been a firefighter for 32 years. He is the owner of Little Star Garage in Manitowish Waters.

Brian Rayala has been a member for one year. He is a state-certified firefighter. He previously served as a member for 16 years. He is employed by JCN Cranberry as a manager.

Steve Herzberg has been a member for ten years during the summer months. He spends the rest of his time in Bodega Bay, California. He is an EMT and firefighter. He is employed as the Deputy Chief for Sonoma County Fire District.

Jennifer Kedzierski has been a member for four years. She has been a firefighter for two years, was an EMR for four years and is now an EMT. She is employed by North Lakeland School.

Adam Bruckner has been a member for three years. He has been a firefighter for 2 years. He is employed by Bunbury and Associates Realtors.

Dan Stella has been a member for three years. He has been a firefighter for two years. He is self-employed.

Rennea Remme has been a member for just under a year. She is an EMT and is employed by Aurora Borealis.

Dave Inserra has been a member for just under a year. He is an EMT and is employed by Marshfield Clinic.

Lindsey Peterson has been a member for just under a year. She is an EMT with Manitowish Waters and Winchester. She is a manager at Dixies Coffee Shop.

Jamie Vandenlangenberg has been a member for just under a year. She is an EMR and is employed by the North Lakeland Discovery Center.

Richie Dollhopf has been a member for just under a year. He is an EMR and is employed by the North Lakeland Discovery Center.

Peter Postema has been a member for just under a year. He is a firefighter and is employed by Lakeside Carpentry and Concrete.

Don Postema has been a member for just under a year. He is a firefighter and is the owner of Lakeside Carpentry and Concrete.

Leeny Lerch recently rejoined MWFC in 2024. She is a state-certified firefighter; she previously served in the department for ten years.

Sam Kedzierski has been a member for two years. He is the Treasurer.

Don Coan in a returning member this year. He spent many years on MWFC and is a firefighter.

# Lac du Flambeau nears completion of new and improved building

BY NEWS-REVIEW STAFF

After several years of fundraising and planning, the Lac du Flambeau Fire Department broke ground on the new construction project and building site for the new Lac du Flambeau Fire and Ambulance building.

The building and grounds are nearing completion with plans to move into the new facility very soon.

The ground-breaking took place May 24, 2023 at the new building site located at 2800 Highway 47 in Lac du Flambeau.

The department put off other purchases of equipment and improvements for the previous three years to accomplish this goal.

In 2019, the department discussed an 8,565-square-foot addition to Station 1 in downtown Lac du Flambeau that would house fire trucks and ambulances, as well as provide easier access to boat and snowmobile rescue equipment.

The town has purchased 47 acres of land south of Thorofare Road for the project. The land purchase for \$550,000 was authorized by a majority of town electors last year during the town's 2022 annual meeting. At that same meeting, electors said yes to the construction of a new fire station on the 42 acres for no more than \$5.5 million.

According to Glenn Morrison of Architecture North, the masonry work has begun, and as of late August, the project was waiting for one of the subcontractors to install a piece of heating tube to try and keep the timeline in place. Some of the work on the fire station has also been delayed because of the weather.

The department enters the last part of 2024 under the direction of new fire chief Mike Zimmerman, who was appointed following the untimely passing of former chief Chris Mayer.

Mayer was a former Vilas



Members of the Lac du Flambeau Fire Department work on a training exercise in the parking lot of the Fence Lake boat landing just east of downtown Lac du Flambeau.

—Contributed Photo

County supervisor and former Lac du Flambeau town supervisor who had been with the fire department since 2002.

Zimmerman also serves as the town's zoning administrator, is a member of the Lac du Flambeau school board, and has a 24-year tenure as a member of the fire department.

Both men have been serving in those respective positions on an interim basis since May.

In 2019, the department ordered two new Lifepak 15 monitors/defibrillators to help emergency personnel record a patient's vital signs. This machine is capable of sending an EKG directly to the hospital.

With the defibrillators, emergency personnel can take action when a patient's vitals, such as blood pressure, heart rate, and blood oxygen levels,

are irregular. This technology provides emergency medical technicians (EMTs) with the information they need to save a victim's life.

The department sent a letter to community residents, telling them what they were doing and what they wanted to do.

In 2016, the department added four key pieces of equipment, including two automatic chest-compression systems, a ventilation saw, and a response notification system, according to Wegner. Three of the purchases were funded with the assistance of outside grants. The two Lucas 2 chest-compression systems cost \$15,000 each, but the Howard Young Foundation donated \$7,500 for each unit.

The chest-compression system is a tool that standardizes chest compressions in accordance with

the latest scientific guidelines. It provides the same chest compressions for all patients and, over time, reduces fatigue or variability from rescue personnel.

The chief explained that the saw is used to cut through a roof or a wall to ventilate a burning or smoking structure, saying it will cut through wood, shingles, metal roofing, nails, and even a steel door.

Earlier this year, the Lac du Flambeau town board donated computers, which town chairman Matt Gaulke said the fire and ambulance department was in need of. The four donated computers and accompanying screens and printers were first moved to the current fire department building in downtown Lac du Flambeau and will go to the new fire department and ambulance facility at State

Highway 47 and Raven Lake Road once they are completed.

Also in 2016, firefighters took a 16-hour hazmat operations class through Nicolet College. Most members of the department are trained in water and ice rescue and motor vehicle extrication.

The department put an IamResponding system into use in 2015. IamResponding's patented system lets the department know immediately who is responding to calls and dispatches, where they are responding from, and when they will be responding.

## The firefighters/EMTs

The department members include:

Mike Zimmerman of Lac du Flambeau has been with the department for 24 years. He is a certified Firefighter I and EMT

# Presque

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served with the department for 3 years. Curtis is the Owner/Fishing Guide of Fox Valley Outdoors based in Presque Isle.

Janet Curtis is a Firefighter, Paramedic/RN, serving with the department for 2 years. Janet is a Retired Paramedic Instructor from Waukesha County Technical College and was also with the Sussex Fire Department as Lieutenant/Paramedic for 23 years.

Adam Johnson, a Firefighter, Driver/Operator, and RN/EMT, has served with the department for the past 24 years. Adam is an Advanced Practice Nurse at Howard Young Medical Center in Woodruff, Wis.

Joe Thoma is a Firefighter I and II, Driver/Operator, has served as Assistant Fire Chief and has been with the department for 28 years. Joe is currently the Director of the Presque Isle Department of Public Works.

Mark Riegelman is a Firefighter and Driver/Operator serving with the department for 18 years. Mark is the retired owner of Riegelman Aviation.

Carl Wolter is a Firefighter and Driver/Operator. Carl has the longest tenure with the department at 63 years. Carl's

father, Fred Wolter, was one of the department's founders in 1949. Carl's son, Doug Wolter, is currently the Department's Chief. Legacy. Tradition. Commitment. Hallmarks of exemplary service.

Gary Owens is a Firefighter I, Driver/Operator and EMT. Gary has been with the department for 2 years. Gary is the retired Divisional VP of Charter Communications.

Phil Eaton is a Firefighter and Driver/Operator serving with the department for 3 years. Phil is the retired President/CEO of Rosecrance Health Network.

Ryan Risinger is a Firefighter I and has been with the department 2 years. Ryan is the retired Executive Director of the Buffalo Grove Park District.

Pari Risinger is an RN/EMT and has been with the department for 2 years. Pari retired from a 15 year career as a Registered Nurse in a variety of health care settings.

Scott Messier is a Driver/Operator and has been with the department for 3 years. Scott is the Owner/Operator of Tip-Ups Food Truck.

Shirlee Messier is a Driver/Operator and EMR. Shirlee has been with the department for 3 years and is the Owner/Operator of Tip-Ups Food Truck.

Mitch Dumask, a Firefighter and Driver/Operator, returned to the department last year after serving 7 years in the 1980's when



The purchase of a new Sherp UTV will allow the Presque Isle Fire Department to access a number of areas they previously would have been unable to get to, especially for any ice rescue. —STAFF PHOTO

he was the Assistant Chief.

Ray Staubel, former Fire Chief, is a Firefighter, Driver/Operator and has been with the department for 39 years.

Max Wallace is a Firefighter, Driver/Operator, and has been with the department for 18 years. Max is employed by the Presque Isle Department of Public Works.

Joan Ouellette is an EMT/Registered Nurse and has been with the department for 1 year. Joan retired from a 32-year career, most recently with UW Health as a registered nurse.

Nathan Wolter recently joined the department in 2024 and is an In-Training Firefighter.

Christie Lloyd is an Advanced Practice Nurse, joining the department in 2023. Christie works for Marshfield Medical Center.

Mark Lloyd is a Firefighter I, serving with the department for 1 year. Mark is the Owner/Operator of Hammer Down Trucking.

Carl Frisque is the Presque Isle Fire Inspector.

## Special Projects and Fundraising

In addition to on-going routine replacement, maintenance and repair of apparatus and on-board

equipment, staying current with required replacement of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and fire hoses remain a priority.

Wisconsin DNR 50/50 cost-share grants have supported the purchase of new wildland firefighting jumpsuits, gloves, headlamps and communication equipment.

Last year the department sponsored and completed a community safety initiative in honor of National EMS Week and National Save-a-Life Day by placing defibrillators (AED's) in local businesses.

Donna Jukich, EMS Director who coordinated the project, said, "The department provided and installed the units in nine key public locations. We conducted operational training and will monitor for needed maintenance at no cost to the business owners."

Jukich further commented, "The most effective treatment for sudden cardiac arrest (SCA) is early CPR and applying a defibrillation shock to the heart with the use of an AED. This initiative will save lives in Presque Isle."

Due to the increased fire and ambulance calls involving carbon monoxide (CO) in area homes

and cabins, the department is currently exploring private foundations and grants to support a community education initiative and free smoke/carbon monoxide detectors for homes and businesses who need them.

Carbon monoxide poisoning occurs when CO builds up in the blood, replacing oxygen in the red blood cells with carbon monoxide. This can lead to serious tissue damage and death.

Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas. As with the AED project, carbon monoxide detectors save lives. This is an important initiative for the community.

If you are interested in supporting this project, contact the Presque Isle Volunteer Fire and EMS Department at 715-686-2000.

The Presque Isle Volunteer Fire and EMS Department extends its heartfelt thanks to the individuals, businesses and organizations that continue to support their efforts through donations and community involvement. Their generosity and unwavering support make it possible for the department to continue serving and protecting the community.



A fundraising corn roast event is held annually for the Presque Isle Fire Department. —Contributed Photo

# Flambeau

FROM PAGE 49

and currently holds the rank of Fire Chief.

Thomas Wegner has been with the department for 28 years. He also served with the Sussex Fire Department for 26 years and is certified in Firefighter III. He has completed training in electrical hazard response, hazmat response, incident command, ladder truck operations, methodology, fire instructor, LP gas, fire investigation, cold-water rescue, certified Wisconsin fire inspector, and advanced vehicle extrication. He is also EMT-certified.

Robert Schuman Jr. has been with the department for 16 years and has completed Firefighter I and EMT basic training. He is employed by Lake of the Torches Resort Casino. He currently holds the rank of lieutenant.

Judy Wegner of Lac du Flambeau, EMS co-director, has been with the department for 24 years and also has 23 years of experience on the Sussex Fire Department as an EMT and firefighter. She is an EMT-D-E.

Patricia Zimmermann of Lac du Flambeau has been an EMT for 22 years. She is employed by the Lac du Flambeau tribe.

Jeremy Wegner of Minocqua has been a firefighter for 23 years. He is a certified Firefighter I with ice rescue and wildland fire training.

Julia Dionne has been with the department for 22 years as an EMT and a firefighter. She is a nationally registered EMT-B. She is a resident of Lac du Flambeau.

Lisa Schuman has been an EMT for 19 years. She lives and works in Lac du Flambeau.

John Melzer has been a member of the department for 19 years and has completed firefighter training, advanced extrication, cold-water rescue, thermal imaging, fire inspector training, and wildland fire training.

Sarah Schuman is in her 16th year as a firefighter. She has completed EMT basic and Firefighter I training and is employed by the Tribal Historic Preservation Office.



Members of the Lac du Flambeau Fire Department enter into this fall season in anticipation of moving into their new facility which nears completion.

—Contributed Photo

Jeanette Sharlow is in her 15th year as an EMT. She is currently employed by the tribe as well as Lake of the Torches Resort Casino.

Melissa Thompson has been with the department for 12 years. She has completed basic training as a nationally registered EMT. She works at the Wisconsin Native Loan Fund.

Pete Kozlow has been with the department for seven years and is a certified Firefighter I.

Ernestine Rodriguez has been with the department for eight years and is an EMT.

Andrew Snow has been with the department for five years as a certified Firefighter I. He works for Lac du Flambeau Tribal Natural Resources.

Willie Goff has been with the department for five years. He lives in Lac du Flambeau and works at Lake of the Torches Resort Casino.

Sydney Bressette joined the

department in 2020 as a certified Firefighter I.

Adrien Kranz, a self-employed U.S. Coast Guard veteran, joined the department in 2020 as an EMT. She has recently completed Firefighter A and B. Kranz, also a member of Newbold Search and Rescue, is certified in search and rescue dog handling.

Kirby Giampa, a St. Germain retiree, joined the department as a firefighter and EMT last year. He brings 22 years of experience as a firefighter and EMT in Illinois.

Raymond Frank Wildcat, new to the department, is a firefighter. He is self-employed. He has attended Firefighter A and B. He is Certified I.

Guy Awonohopay is new to the department. He has attended Firefighter A and B.

Other personnel include firefighters Ray Zimmerman and Lance Chapman, and EMTs Amy Thompson and Danna Rae Allen.

**Check Your Batteries  
TODAY!**

Test smoke and carbon monoxide alarms monthly,  
and replace batteries annually.

**#CheckYourBatteriesDay**

# Mitigation efforts can greatly reduce wildfire losses

Dry leaves in a gutter, wooden shingles, vegetation growing against a house, a deck covered in pine needles—these are all invitations for traveling wildfire embers to find a pathway to burn down your house.

Decades of research into why homes burn in a wildfire has conclusively shown that eliminating these ignition pathways through mitigation work—such as hardening structures through the use of noncombustible materials and eliminating excess vegetation within 200 feet of a home—drastically reduces the chances of a home becoming a heap of ash.

And yet, only about half the population in some of the most wildfire-prone areas in the United States seem to know this potentially life-saving information.

That statistic comes from a new report, “Stakeholder Perceptions of Wildfire Mitigation for Homes: Multi-Audience Survey Research,” published in May by the Fire Protection Research Foundation. For the study, researchers from the firm EurekaFacts surveyed about 1,000 residents living in wildfire-prone counties in Oregon and California, as well as about 70 fire departments and a few dozen government officials, about their perception of the wildfire risk, what they know about mitigation, how motivated they are to act, and the obstacles that stand in the way.

The survey’s findings will help NFPA and local officials better understand residents’ views and general knowledge of these topics in order to “help identify ways to increase participation in wildfire risk reduction and where we need to break through barriers,” said Michele Steinberg, director of NFPA’s Wildfire Division.

The information gathered could also be used to help sway lawmakers to adopt sensible wildfire regulations like the kind advocated by Outthink Wildfire®, an initiative NFPA launched in 2021 to push for reforms to address the wildfire crisis. Though both Oregon and California have passed new wildfire regulations in



recent years, vocal resistance from residents and interest groups has at times succeeded in delaying or squashing key elements of those bills. “But my sense is there are a lot more people that want to protect their homes and families and do the wildfire mitigation than there are people saying, ‘Oh my God, this regulation costs too much,’” Steinberg said. “We needed a study like this to give us some insight into what most people actually believe. If legislators are hearing from their constituents, that gives them some fuel to argue back.”

For the project, researchers asked the 1,000 residents—equally distributed between Oregon and California—about what mitigation actions they’ve taken on their properties and the factors that led them to undertake those projects. If residents had done little to no work, they were asked to explain why. Residents were also asked about their willingness to spend money and labor on mitigation projects, what they value about where they live, their perception of the wildfire risk where they live, and if they were aware of wildfire mitigation incentive programs.

Steinberg, who has been working on the front lines of wildfire mitigation outreach for more than a decade, found plenty

of encouraging numbers in the survey results, but also some disappointments. Sometimes, both existed simultaneously within the same statistic.

“The awareness issue is one of those ‘is the glass half-empty or half-full?’ kind of questions,” she said. “You could think, ‘Wow, 50 percent of people are aware of mitigation!’ Or you could just as easily say, ‘50 percent of people are not aware that there is a wildfire risk and that these are things they can do to mitigate.’ What it reveals is that we have opportunities and challenges right there in that one statement.”

One positive take away from the survey is that 79 percent of residents were at least somewhat motivated to learn more about wildfire mitigation measures for their property, including a quarter who were very motivated. Crucially, the survey also found that those with more knowledge about the risks were more likely to be motivated to take proactive steps to reduce their risk, suggesting that targeted outreach efforts to those with little knowledge could have a large impact.

“If we can break through to those people who don’t know anything about this or don’t think it applies to them, that will be huge because once people are

worried about it, they’re seeking information about it, and they’re much more likely to do something about it,” Steinberg said.

The survey also found that as many as 80 percent of people are already doing some form of vegetation maintenance at least annually, such as cleaning the gutters, whether they specifically intend it as a wildfire mitigation effort or not. A caveat to that is residents did not perform these maintenance tasks nearly as often as experts recommend.

The survey found that affordability was the biggest factor for why residents don’t do more mitigation work, followed closely by a lack of knowledge of what to do and/or how to do it. Most of the government officials surveyed said there were “not enough resources and/or funding to help property owners”; 83 percent of jurisdictions reported a “lack of funding and resources” to be a major obstacle.

On the plus side, residents who received incentives, such as insurance premium discounts or government grants, were overwhelmingly more likely to do mitigation work. The survey revealed that 83 percent of those who received such incentives did at least two mitigation activities. However, only 3 percent of

residents surveyed were aware that these types of incentive programs exist, suggesting a major opportunity for more outreach on this topic.

As part of the study, researchers also performed a literature review of previous surveys to compare the current findings to past work. The comparison points to positive movement in some areas. For one, more than half of residents said the bulk of the responsibility for protecting their property is on them, the homeowner, not fire departments. Only about 30 percent put the onus mostly on fire departments, a shift from previous studies where homeowners took less responsibility, Steinberg said.

Perhaps the most encouraging change that researchers found is that 65 percent of respondents in the current survey said they believe their community was at risk of wildfire in the coming year, and 70 percent said that their community would be at risk within the next five years, “which is a very high level of risk perception,” Steinberg said. “It’s a level of concern that’s much higher than previous studies, which is exciting because, based on the other findings of this survey, that concern is going to drive people to seek out more information and ultimately take action.”

## Untapped potential

While the positives are encouraging, the big opportunity in front of wildfire prevention advocates seems to lie with the 50 percent of people who know very little about wildfire mitigation and don't do much, if any, work on their properties. The survey's help in identifying this subset of the population and learning what their challenges and motivations are is a big step toward figuring out how to break through to them.

Among other things, the survey found that those with lower incomes, those with older homes, and those with disabilities were much less likely to do mitigation work. Men were more likely than women, by more than 20 percentage points, to be knowledgeable about where to get answers to questions about improving wildfire safety and how to complete wildfire mitigation projects on their property. Renters were also much less likely to do mitigation work, in large part because they felt restrained by landlords.

All of this information will provide local officials with clues about where to focus their energy and how to tailor their messages. This level of granular detail has largely been missing from wildfire outreach efforts in the past, Steinberg said.

"The way we've put education and information out there, and I include

NFPA, is through a national program. It's generic advice, not specifically targeting individuals or demographic groups," she said. "It would make sense that, by using this generic approach, we're missing folks. I think that a more tailored approach is something that's really interesting for all of our advocate partners out there, including state governments, to think about."

There are hints in the data that the right kind of outreach could significantly move the needle. The survey indicates that a sizable chunk of the population is aware of the wildfire risk but also has little or no knowledge that they could be doing something to lessen their risk. It's easy to see how that dynamic could lead to apathy or even a sense of helplessness, Steinberg said.

"I think everybody can agree that's a crappy feeling. When you feel helpless, it's much easier to say, 'Oh, I can't be bothered with this thing because there's nothing I can do about it anyway. If I can't fix this problem, why should I keep worrying about it?'" she said. "The way to overcome that apathy is empowerment. If we can break through, if we can find the people who aren't interested and develop a tailored message to give them that knowledge and empowerment, I think that's really the key."

## Key findings from the Survey

### 50%

of residents were aware of specific actions they can take on their property to reduce wildfire risk.

funding to help property owners"; 83 percent of jurisdictions reported a "lack of funding and resources" to be a major obstacle.

### 79%

of residents were at least somewhat motivated to learn more about wildfire mitigation measures for their property, including a quarter who were very motivated.

### 3%

of residents surveyed were aware of mitigation incentive programs. More fire departments have programs to assist residents in implementing vegetation management (52 percent) than home hardening/structure modification (35 percent).

### 35%

of residents said cost was the biggest factor for not mitigating wildfire risks, which was the most popular reason given.

### 65%

of residents indicated they believed their community was at risk of wildfire in the coming year and 70 percent of respondents reported they believed their community was at risk within the next 5 years, a risk perception that's much higher than in previous research. —J.R.

### 76%

of surveyed jurisdictions said there were "not enough resources and/or

## Fire safety tips given

Fire Safety Prevention Week reminds families of how to keep loved ones safe when disaster strikes, but fire safety is a year-round practice.

Fires can start and spread quickly, so it is important to know what to do when it comes to staying safe at home. Just a little bit of planning can make a big difference for your family.

According to Children's Wisconsin and Safety Kids, parents should remind their children to never play with matches, lighters, candles or fireworks.

If they hear an alarm, see flames or smell smoke, they should leave the house immediately, and always feel

doors before opening them. If it's hot, find

a new way

out.

Youths also should never go back into a burning building, nor stop for toys or pets.

"Get low and go" — since smoke rises, individuals should stay low to the ground to beat the heat and be able to see and breathe more freely. Finally, if a person cannot get out of the room, the best thing to do is cover vents and cracks around the door to keep smoke out, then stand by a window and signal for help.

Smoke alarms should be installed in every floor of the home, including outside of sleeping areas and inside each bedroom.

### Did you know...

- Every hour, approximately 16 children are injured from fires or burns?
- 85% of all fire-related deaths are due to home fires?
- Fires can spread rapidly and leave families as little as two minutes to escape?
- Smoke alarms reduce the chances of dying in a fire by nearly 50%?
- Safekids.org has provided a list of checks families can perform to keep their homes safe.

### Check smoke alarms...

- Make sure there is a working smoke alarm on every level of your home, inside bedrooms and near sleeping areas. Test smoke alarms every month and replace them every 10 years or when the battery is low.
- Know the difference between smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms. It is important to have both smoke and CO alarms in your home. Combination smoke and CO alarms are available, but if you have separate ones, make sure you know the sound of each alarm.



# The state of smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in American homes

When working smoke alarms are present in your home, the risk of dying in a home fire is cut by 60 percent, according to the latest NFPA research. But how often are smoke alarms used in the United States, are they used properly, and what are people's perceptions of them?

In September 2024, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) published the results of a comprehensive survey that assesses the prevalence, functionality, and public perception of smoke and carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in U.S. households.

The CPSC survey, known formally as the Survey on Use and Functionality of Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarms (SCOA) in Households, is a continuation of a similar study conducted by the CPSC 30 years ago. Conducted in coordination with the Fire Protection Research Foundation (FPRF), the research affiliate of NFPA, and the National Institute of Safety and Technology (NIST), the newly released survey involved in-home interviews with 1,060 households located across the U.S. between January 1, 2019, and February 16, 2024.

## Key Findings of the CPSC Survey

According to the recent CPSC survey, nearly all U.S. households (99%) have at least one smoke alarm. But that doesn't mean they work (more on that below). Still, this is a significant increase from the 88% that were found to have at least one smoke alarm in the 1994 survey.

## Explore more smoke alarm safety information from NFPA

The different types of smoke alarms households reported having in the 2024 survey were relatively evenly split, with the largest portion (42%) reporting having ionization smoke alarms, 29 percent reporting having photoelectric smoke alarms, and 6% reporting having ionization and photoelectric alarms (23% didn't know what type of smoke alarms they had). Learn more about how these different types of smoke alarms function by reading the NFPA blog "What Kind of Smoke Alarm Should I Buy?"

## Lack of Carbon Monoxide Alarms

The 2024 CPSC survey focused not only on smoke alarms, but also on CO alarms. Carbon monoxide is an odorless, colorless gas that is created when fuels, such as wood or gasoline, burn incompletely. A person can be poisoned by a small amount of CO over a longer period of time or by a large amount of CO over a shorter amount of time, and NFPA recommends the use of CO alarms.

While most households surveyed by the CPSC recognized smoke alarms as "extremely necessary" (90%), far fewer (66%) felt the same way about CO alarms. In fact, over a fourth (26%) of survey respondents said they knew "nothing at all" about carbon monoxide alarms, and only 55% of households reported having at least one CO alarm.



## Mismatched Perceptions and Functionality Issues

Despite high ownership rates, many households have inaccurate perceptions about the age and functionality of their smoke and CO alarms, according to the recent CPSC survey. Only half (51%) of households were always accurate about the age of their alarms.

Furthermore, nearly 1 in 5 households (16%) that believed all alarms would be working had at least one functionality issue with the alarms tested, including dead batteries. CPSC researchers note that this finding has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percentage points, which means that household functionality may be as high as 87 percent or as low as 81 percent.

## Presence of Alarm Types in U.S. Households

Nearly all had a smoke alarm, but almost half were missing a CO alarm



"Accordingly," the final report on the survey states, "this may indicate that 1 in 5 households (19 percent) are at risk of not having at least one functional alarm."

## Installation, Testing, and Maintenance Knowledge Gaps

A significant portion of households surveyed by the CPSC showed a need for more education on smoke alarms. Twenty-nine percent said they didn't know how to install smoke alarms, and 23% said they didn't know how to maintain them. And while

NFPA and other safety experts recommend testing smoke alarms at least once a month, more than half of households (61%) reported testing their smoke alarms less frequently than once a month. A third (33%) said they never test their smoke alarms.

# The history behind National Fire Prevention Week

Since 1922, the NFPA has sponsored the public observance of Fire Prevention Week.

In 1925, President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed Fire Prevention Week a national observance, making it the longest-running public health observance in our country.

During Fire Prevention Week, children, adults, and teachers learn how to stay safe in case of a fire. Firefighters provide lifesaving public education in an effort to drasti-

cally decrease casualties caused by fires.

Fire Prevention Week is observed each year during the week of October 9th in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, which began on October 8, 1871, and caused devastating damage. This horrific conflagration killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres of land.



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