South Area Fire & Emergency Response District

ANNUAL REPORT 2023



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INTRODUCTION – JOSH FINKE, FIRE CHIEF

At the end of each year, I take a moment to look back on the challenges we have faced and those that are yet to come. Overall, the district had a strong 2023, thanks to the dedication of our firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, and nurses. We continue to work with high call volumes, a small workforce, and an overall challenging healthcare environment. In early 2024, the western part of Wisconsin lost 2 hospitals and several clinics, which has an effect on many fire and EMS agencies in the central and western parts of the state. The fire service continues to struggle with recruiting and retaining firefighters and paramedics. We were fortunate enough to recruit four good employees to fill open full-time positions in late 2023 that we hope will have long productive careers here.

We continue to face many challenges moving forward with the largest being budgets during a time of significant inflation. As we try to navigate this, we will continue to do what the district has always done and what the fire service does in general. We have found ways to deliver service using the tools that we have available to us. As we move into 2024, we continue to look into further partnerships and shared services agreements to improve service to our citizens.

Training has always been an important part of the job of any firefighter, although sending individuals to training has become costly. In late 2023, the district purchased 3 shipping containers that were transformed into a training facility at our Weston station. This structure will allow us to simulate search and rescue, confined space, ground ladder deployment, vertical ventilation, and technical rescue training, just to name a few. All of this can be done on duty, without travel, lodging, and overtime expenses.

In closing, the fire service is experiencing significant change, and the district is in an excellent position to adapt and move forward to provide a high level of care for our citizens.

Respectfully,

Joshua J Finke

Joshua J. Finke
Fire Chief

PERSONNEL & STAFF

ADMINISTRATION

Fire Chief
Joshua Finke



Deputy Fire Chief
Eric Lang



Administrative Assistant
Cher Latimer



Director of Medical Services
Cally Gordon-Haessly



Fire Marshal
Marty Christiansen



BLUE SHIFT

Battalion Chief Evan McBain



Captain Chris Klapoetke



Lieutenant Michael Zellner



Engineer Jason Brandt



Firefighter Jacob Kolb



Firefighter Chad Allen



Firefighter Kyle Kizewski



RED SHIFT

Battalion Chief Mark Meyers



Captain Glynn Novak



Engineer Kristy Chula



Engineer Robert Schultz



Firefighter Landon Franck



Firefighter Stephen Haas



Firefighter Mackenzie Massa



GREEN SHIFT

Battalion Chief Stephen Genrich



Captain Andrew Lohman



Engineer Amy Breit



Engineer Cody Ewan



Firefighter Blake Lepel



Firefighter John Hanson



Firefighter Brianna Welch



PART-TIME STAFF

Lt. Bruce Bartus



FF Dan Stanchik



FF Jaclyn Swatloski



Aux FF Robert Pound



FF ID Ukpong



FF Kyle Borchardt



FF Andrea Lerch



FF Ryan Haessly



FF Matthew Isakson



FF Noah Flann



FF Sherri Esslinger



FF Dennis Reynolds



FF Derek Hart



FF Madison Wolfgram



FF Anastazia Goldberg



FF Mckenzie Walters



FF Cory Hanson



FF Erik Butt



Not Pictured
FF Paul Rheinschmidt
FF Christopher Passow
FF Destiny Amundson
FF Tab Scully

INTER-FACILITY TRANSFER STAFF

EMT Darin Westover



CCP Tim Stieve



RN Tracy Parlier



Dr. Mignon Rademen



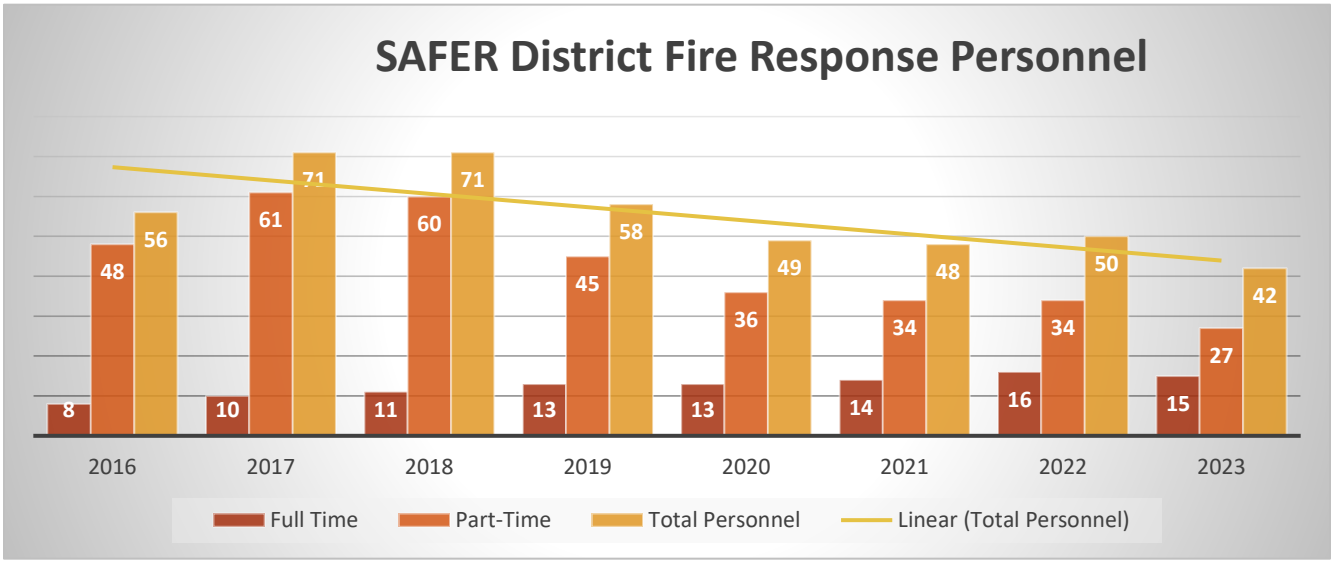
Inter-Facility Staff Not Pictured
RN Steve Baltzell
RN Rachel Isakson
RN Mindy Diedrich
RN Jessica Baptist

STAFFING REPORT

In 2023, the district lost a total of 16 staff. Of those, 4 resigned to take jobs with career departments (3 – Wausau FD, 1 – Manitowoc FD), 1 resignation was to take a position with Marathon County Emergency Management, 1 was to take a position with State Patrol, 2 were due to relocating out of state, 4 were due to low activity, and 4 resigned with less than 1 year of service.

SAFER hired a total of 15 employees. Of the 15 employees hired in 2023, only 4 were lost due to various reasons resulting in a 73% retention rate for 2023 hires, one of our highest yearly retention rates to date.

Staffing shifts was challenging in the first half of 2023 despite adding 0.5 FTE to our staffing model. This resulted in the district being staffed at 6 personnel (our minimum) on most days but allowed us to offer overtime in the second half of 2023 to maintain staffing at 7 to 8 personnel on most days. We also lost 0.5 FTE as our EMS Division Chief resigned with her position being filled with a part-time person.



Staffing Lost 2023

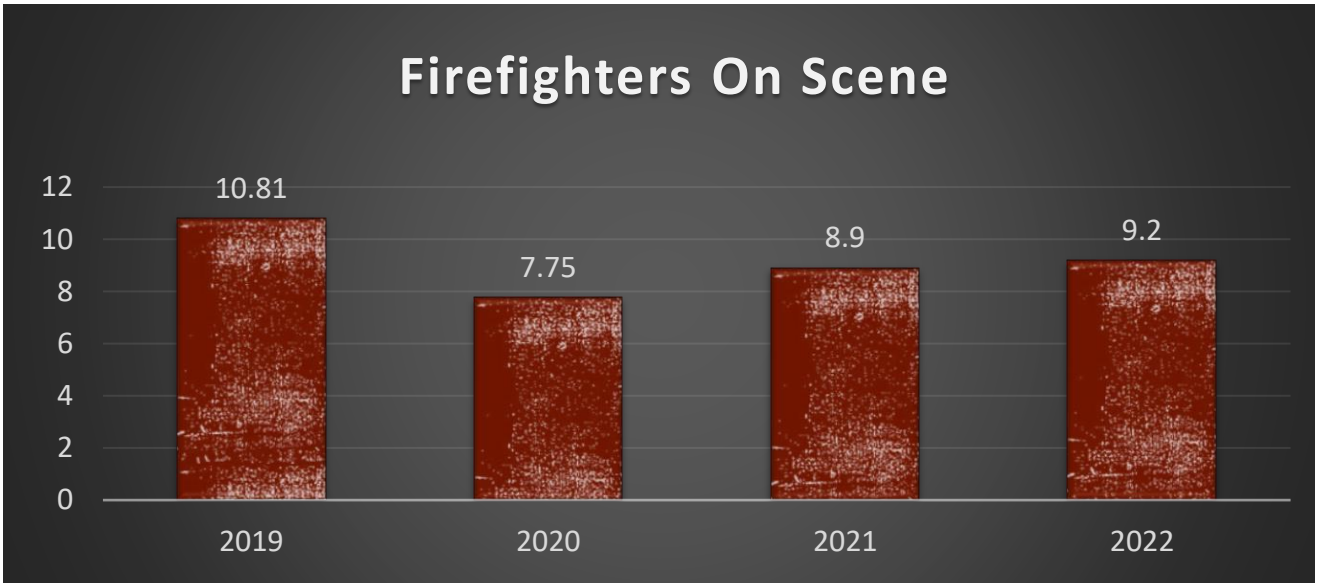
BC John Lauer, FF Zach Ihle, FF Matthew Robinson, FF Ethan Cordova, RN Christina Wimmer, FF Stephen Britton, FF Chris Larson, EMS Div Chief Kelly Bechel, Engineer Ben Riesterer, FF Ben Nelson, Casey Bilen, Austin Landowski

Staffing Hired 2023

Capt. Glynn Novak, FF Mackenzie Massa, FF Dennis Reynolds, FF Derek Hart, FF Madison Wolfgram, EMT Destiny Amundson, FF Anastazia Goldberg, FF Brianna Welch, FF Cory Hanson, FF Mckenzie Walters, RN Jessica Baptist

NFPA 1720: *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments*, states that we (SAFER) should have a minimum of 10 firefighters on fire scenes within 10 minutes, 80% of the time. In order to attempt to meet this standard, we rely on off-duty response and mutual aid. When we look at increased staffing during the day with administration and disregard actual staffing with EMS units out, we continue in 2023 to only meet this standard about 30% of the time.

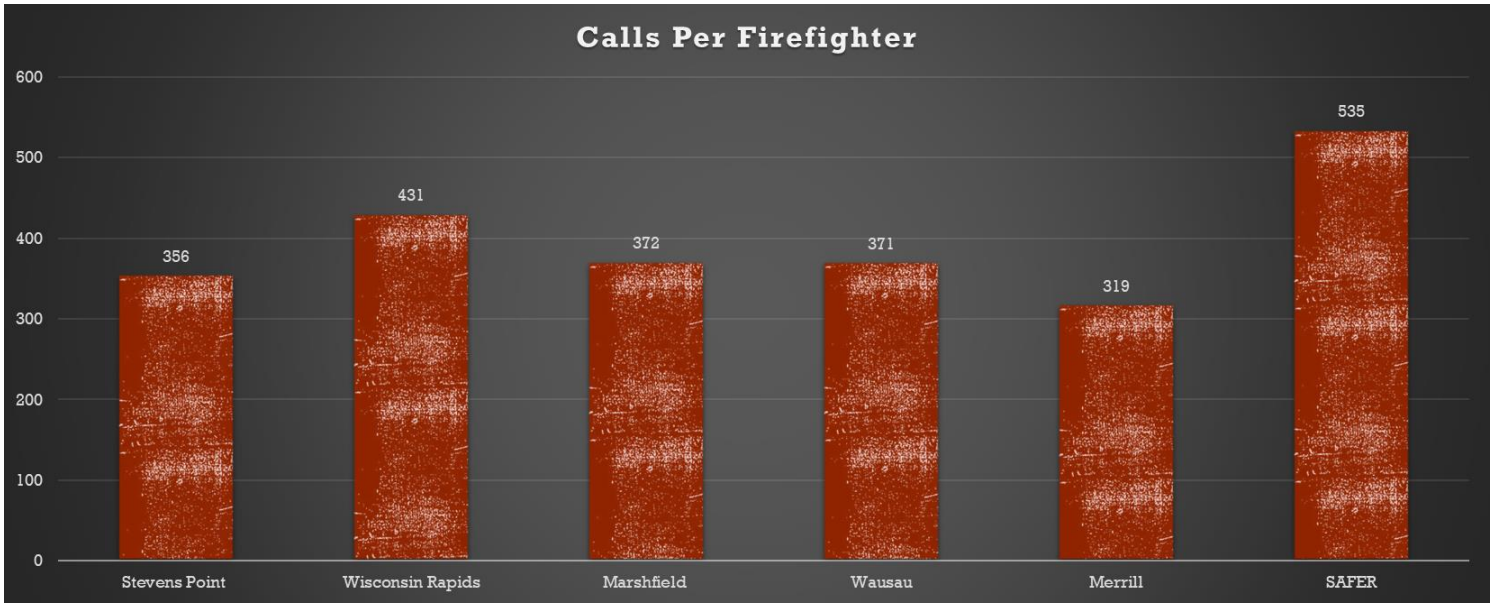
Number of Firefighters at Structure Fires



Central Wisconsin Career FD Staffing vs SAFER - 2022

	Stevens Point	Wisconsin Rapids	Marshfield	Wausau	Merrill	SAFER
Daily Staffing	13	11	11	18	7	7
Minimum Staffing	10	9	8	15	5	6
Call Volume	4628	4746	4096	6686	2233	3746

Central Wisconsin Career Dept. Firefighter Workload vs SAFER 2022 (Call Volume/Daily Max Staffing)





2023 EMPLOYEE AWARD RECIPIENTS

In 2023 SAFER continued the employee recognition program. The three awards are; Firefighter Service Commendation, EMS Service Commendation, and the Leadership Award. The recipients of the two commendations are awarded commendation bars to display on their uniforms and their names on a plaque displayed at station 1 while the recipient of the leadership award is given a glass plaque. The qualifications each award recipient is held to, and the recipients are as follows:

EMS Service Commendation
The EMS Service Commendation Bar is awarded to an individual who is nominated by their peers and chosen by the SAFER District Officers, who consistently characterizes the values of the district while operating as an Emergency Medical Technician or Paramedic during responses, training, and public relations.

Firefighter Service Commendation
The Firefighter Service Commendation Bar is awarded to an individual who is nominated by their peers and chosen by the SAFER District Officers, who consistently characterizes the values of the district while operating as a Firefighter during responses, training, and public relations.

Excellence in Leadership Award
The Excellence in Leadership Award is awarded annually to an individual who is nominated by their peers and chosen by the SAFER District Officers, who shows exemplary leadership skills either on or off of emergency scenes. This award is NOT limited to those in an officer position.

Captain Glynn Novak



Engineer Bob Schultz



Engineer Amy Breit



Leadership Award



FF Service Commendation

EMS Service Commendation



EMS REPORT – CALLY GORDON, DIRECTOR OF MEDICAL SERVICES

In 2023, the SAFER Fire District continued to provide emergency medical services (EMS) to eight different communities. These included our two primary response areas, the Village of Rib Mountain and the Village of Weston, along with six contract areas. The district responded to a total of 3,163 EMS calls throughout the year. SAFER District members also provided coverage in a standby capacity at events such as the State Park Speedway, the 525 races, Balloon Fest, Rock Fest, and Country Fest. In 2023, SAFER averaged a chute time (time between the initial page by dispatch until the ambulance is en route to the call) of 70 seconds, beating our District goal of 90 seconds.

Compared to 2022, SAFER District EMS calls for 911 response in 2023 remained similar, with only 52 fewer calls. The largest change in call volume occurred in the district's inter-facility transports, with 136 fewer transports than in 2022. This change was in part due to a focus on the types of inter-facility transports accepted, with the goal to accept those requiring higher levels of care for longer transport distances. Additionally, in comparison to 2022, there was an overall decrease in the requests for SAFER Paramedic intercepts by a total of 48 calls. The change in this call volume can be attributed to the presence of a new Paramedic-level service in the area offering intercepts to neighboring EMT/AEMT services.

SAFER continues to maintain staffing at both locations to the Paramedic level with the ability to staff three ambulances as needed. In 2023, Rescue 21 was also equipped with Advanced Life Support (ALS) equipment. The purpose of this addition was to ensure a rapid response when ambulance call volume may be high and provide additional personnel to scenes where critical interventions are needed, all while maintaining readiness for fire and/or calls requiring extrication or rescue.

Medical Direction continues to be carried out by emergency medicine physicians at both Aspirus Wausau Hospital and Marshfield Medical Center-Weston. Dr. Tom Nielsen continued to serve throughout the year as the Medical Director at Aspirus Wausau Hospital. In spring 2023, the Medical Director role at Marshfield Medical Center-Weston changed from Dr. Steve Muhle to Dr. Mignon Rademan.

The year also saw the resignation of EMS Division Chief Kelly Bremer, who held the position since its creation in 2015. With this change came the restructuring of the position to form the new role of Director of Medical Services. As of August 2023, this new role was filled by Cally Gordon-Haessly, who has been with SAFER District since 2015.

The end of 2023 brought about many new and exciting changes to how EMS will be carried out in 2024 and beyond. OperativeIQ, a software program used to track and order EMS supplies, was put in service in the fall of 2023 to ease the process of supply ordering and stocking. In 2024, we are anticipating the rollout of new equipment in the form of the Phillips Tempus cardiac monitors and Sapphire intravenous pumps. The Handtevy program, a specialized program geared towards the care of pediatric patients, was purchased in 2023, and training for all SAFER personnel will begin in 2024. Additionally, the end of 2023 saw a significant revamping of EMS training with a focus on in-person training in 2024.

Overall, many changes occurred in 2023 that will foster new and exciting changes in the realm of EMS going forward. SAFER will continue to push forward with ensuring our personnel are regarded as some of the most highly trained and skilled EMS providers in the state.

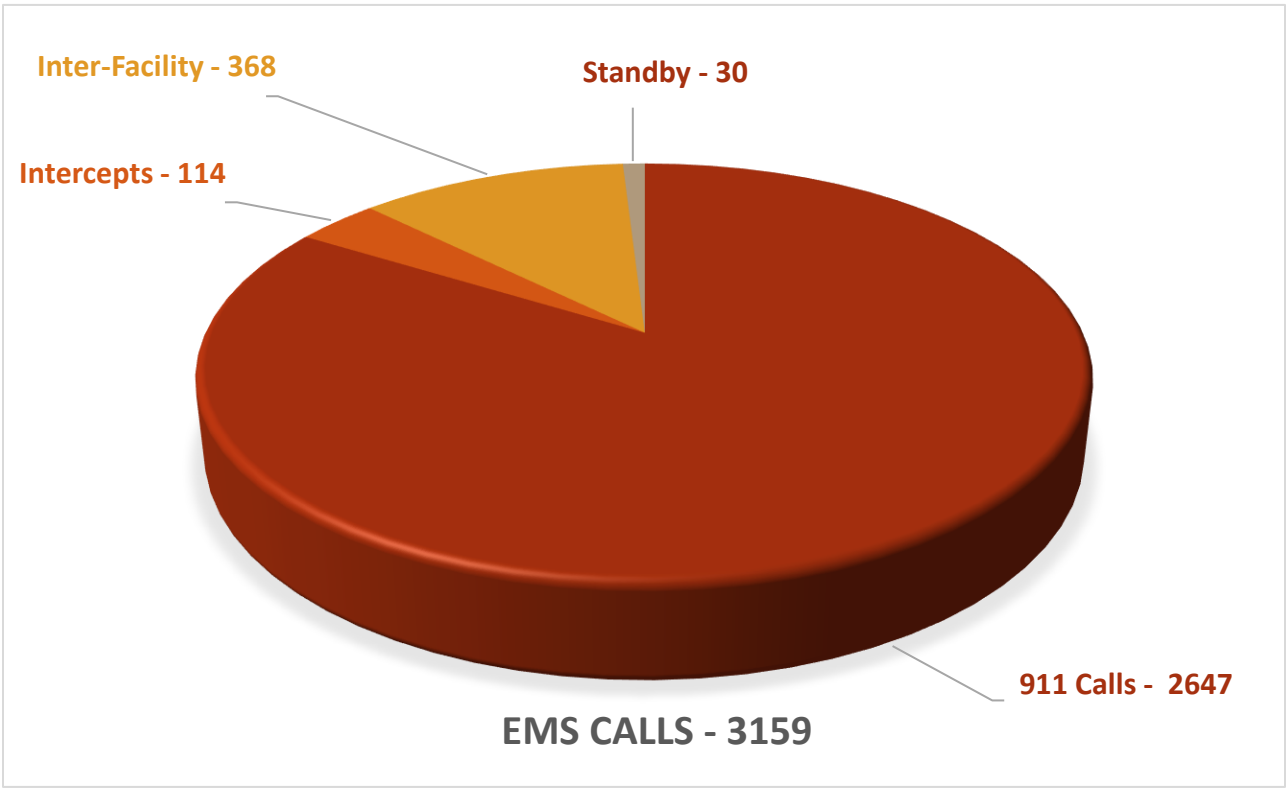
Respectfully,

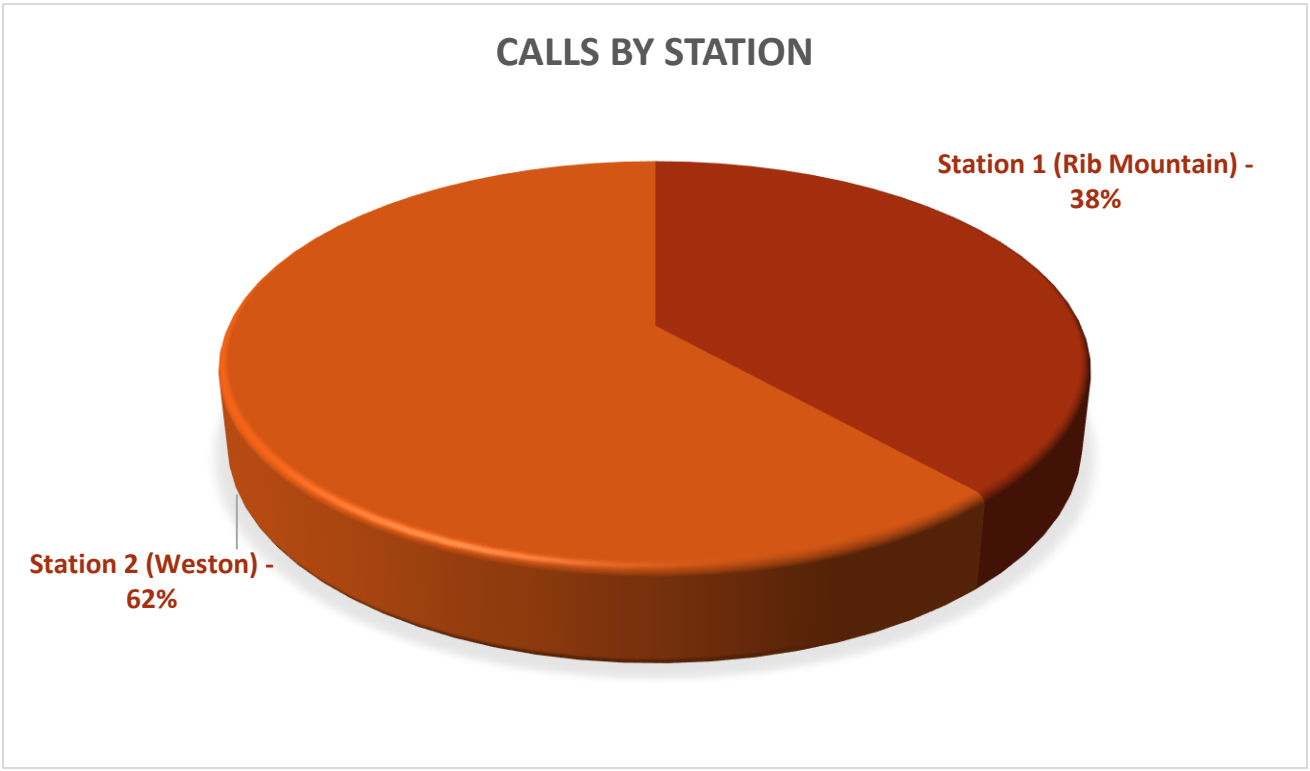
Cally Gordon-Haessly

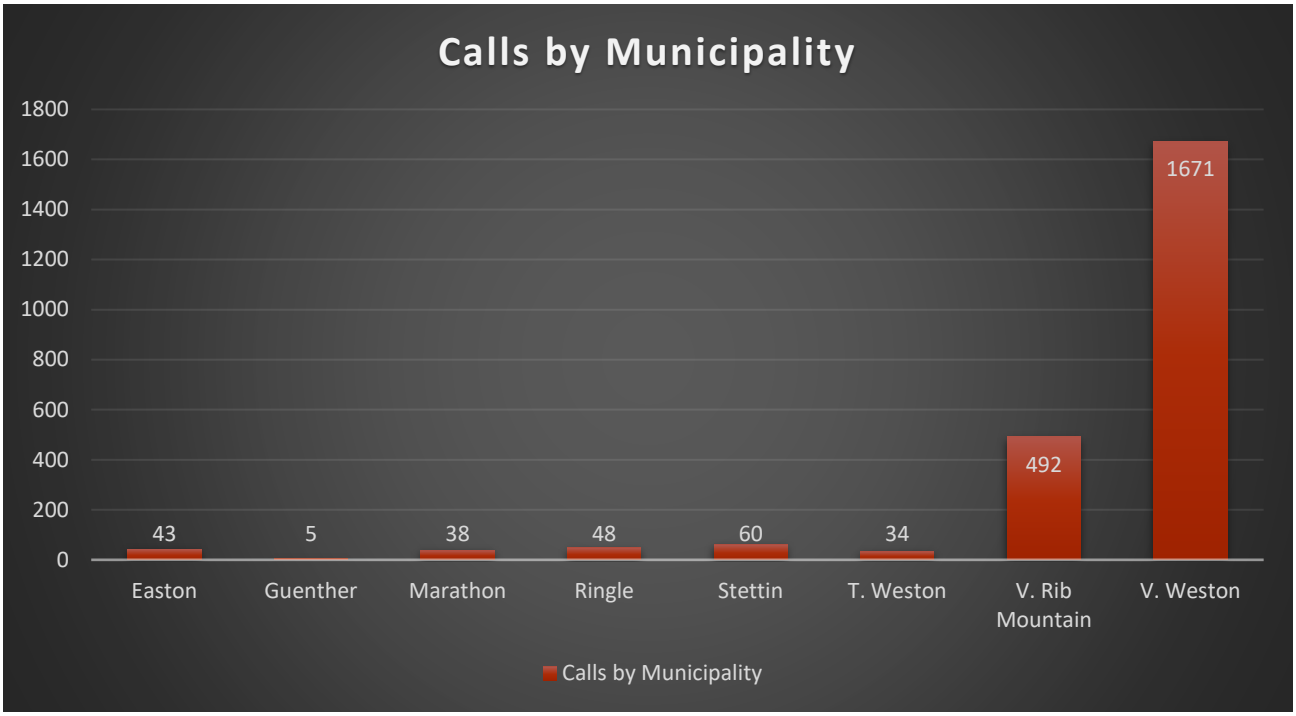
Cally Gordon-Haessly
Director of Medical Services
SAFER District

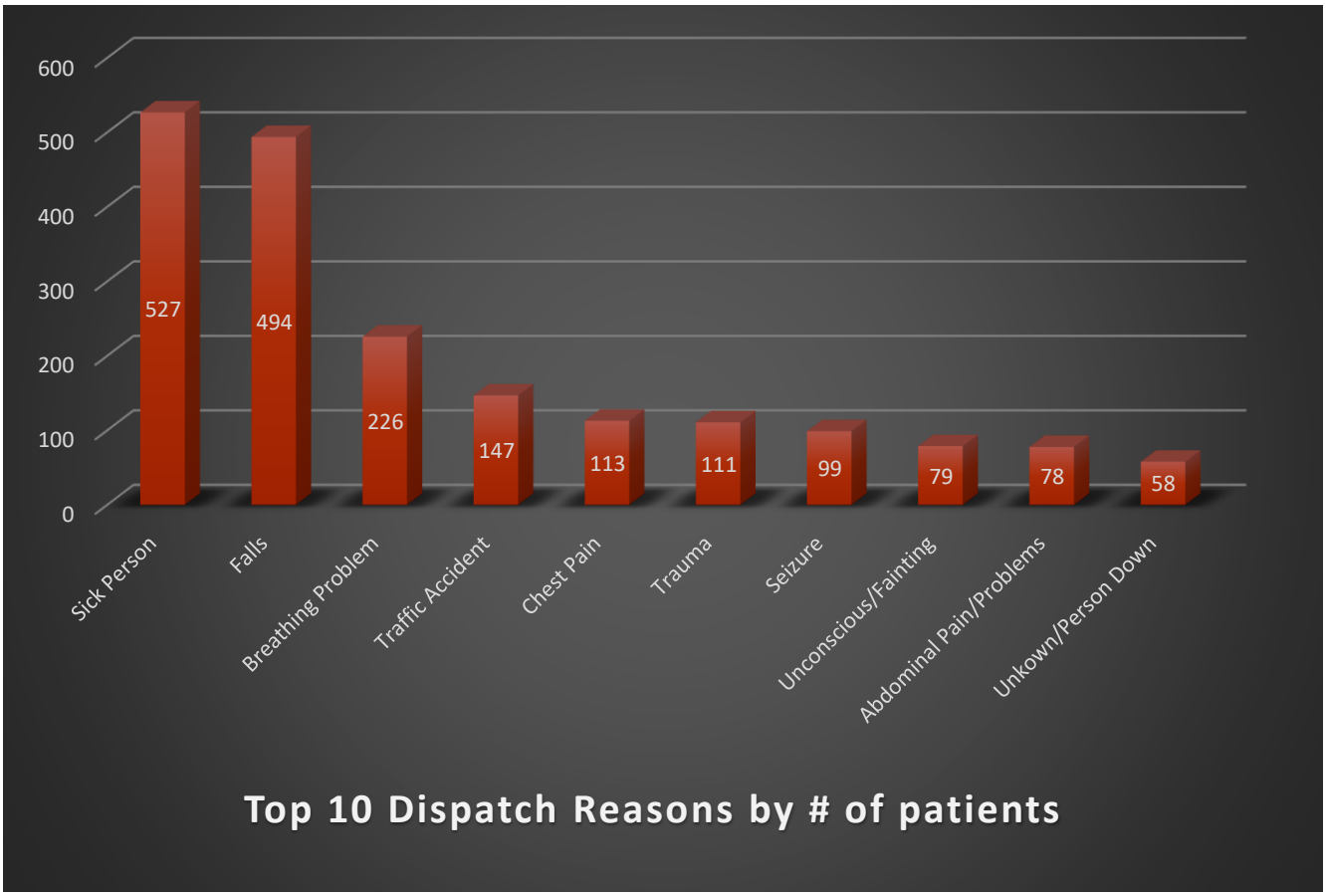


2023 EMS RESPONSE DATA






Calls by Municipality
1800
1600
1400
1200
1000
800
600
400
200
0
43
5
38
48
60
34
492
1671
Easton
Guenther
Marathon
Ringle
Stettin
T. Weston
V. Rib Mountain
V. Weston
Calls by Municipality


600
500
400
300
200
100
0
527
494
226
147
113
111
99
79
78
58
Sick Person
Falls
Breathing Problem
Traffic Accident
Chest Pain
Trauma
Seizure
Unconscious/Fainting
Abdominal Pain/Problems
Unkown/Person Down
Top 10 Dispatch Reasons by # of patients

FIRE/RESCUE DIVISION REPORT – EVAN MCBAIN, BATTALION CHIEF

2023 was a busy year for SAFER fire and rescue divisions. We saw a dramatic increase in our fire response numbers due to a policy change. Starting in January 2023, we outfitted Rescue 21 out of station 2 with ALS equipment and medications. With this, we began running the rescue as a first responder apparatus when our primary ambulance at station 2 was on other calls and an ambulance was responding from station 1. We also chased the primary ambulance at station 1 and station 2 with the rescue for critical calls. This resulted in an increase in fire response volume from 321 calls in 2022 to 752 calls in 2023, with 321 of those in 2023 being EMS call-related. 2023 also saw a number of technical rescues including a silo recovery in the Town of Bergen and a low angle rescue at the skateboard park in Weston.

With our staffing levels, we also changed our fire response. We entered into an automatic-aid agreement with the City of Wausau for their ladder truck. This resulted in our initial responding fire apparatus being Rescue 21, Engine 11, and an ambulance on all fire calls. We also receive an ambulance from Mosinee as an auto-aid agreement on all fire calls.

In 2023, we placed an emphasis on our technical rescue program. We spent considerable time training and standardizing our response. Two training sessions on Rib Mountain were held in July and October to standardize response and technique between the three shifts. This was in response to the demobilization of the Marathon County Technical Rescue team, which consisted of technicians from different fire departments across the county. The remaining departments offering rope rescue are the City of Wausau and SAFER.

Other noteworthy activities for 2023 included selling the hovercraft, implementing new software for NFIRS and training reporting, standardizing pre-connected hose loads across all apparatus, and replacing our ice rescue suits.

Respectfully,

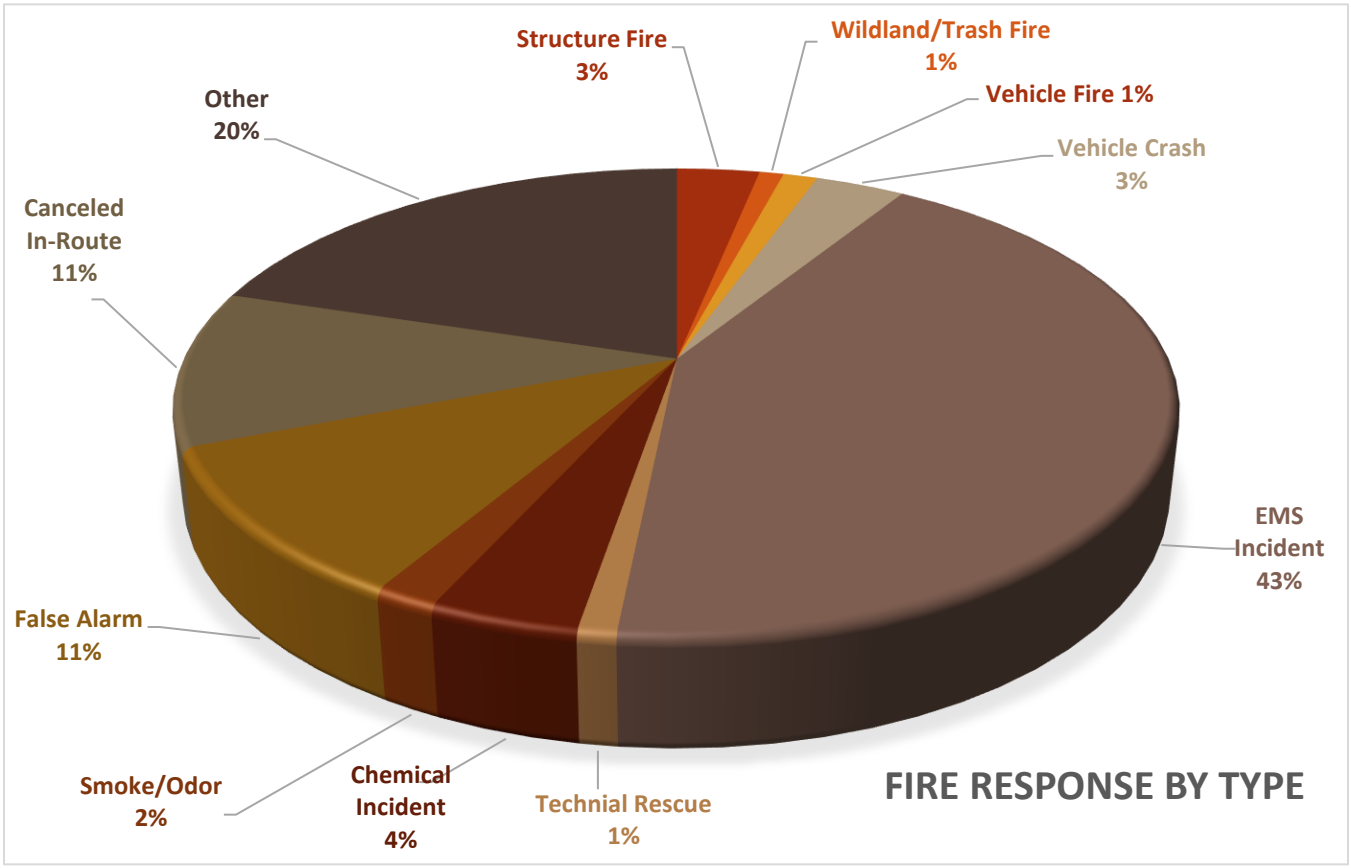
Evan McBain

Evan McBain
Battalion Chief – Blue Shift

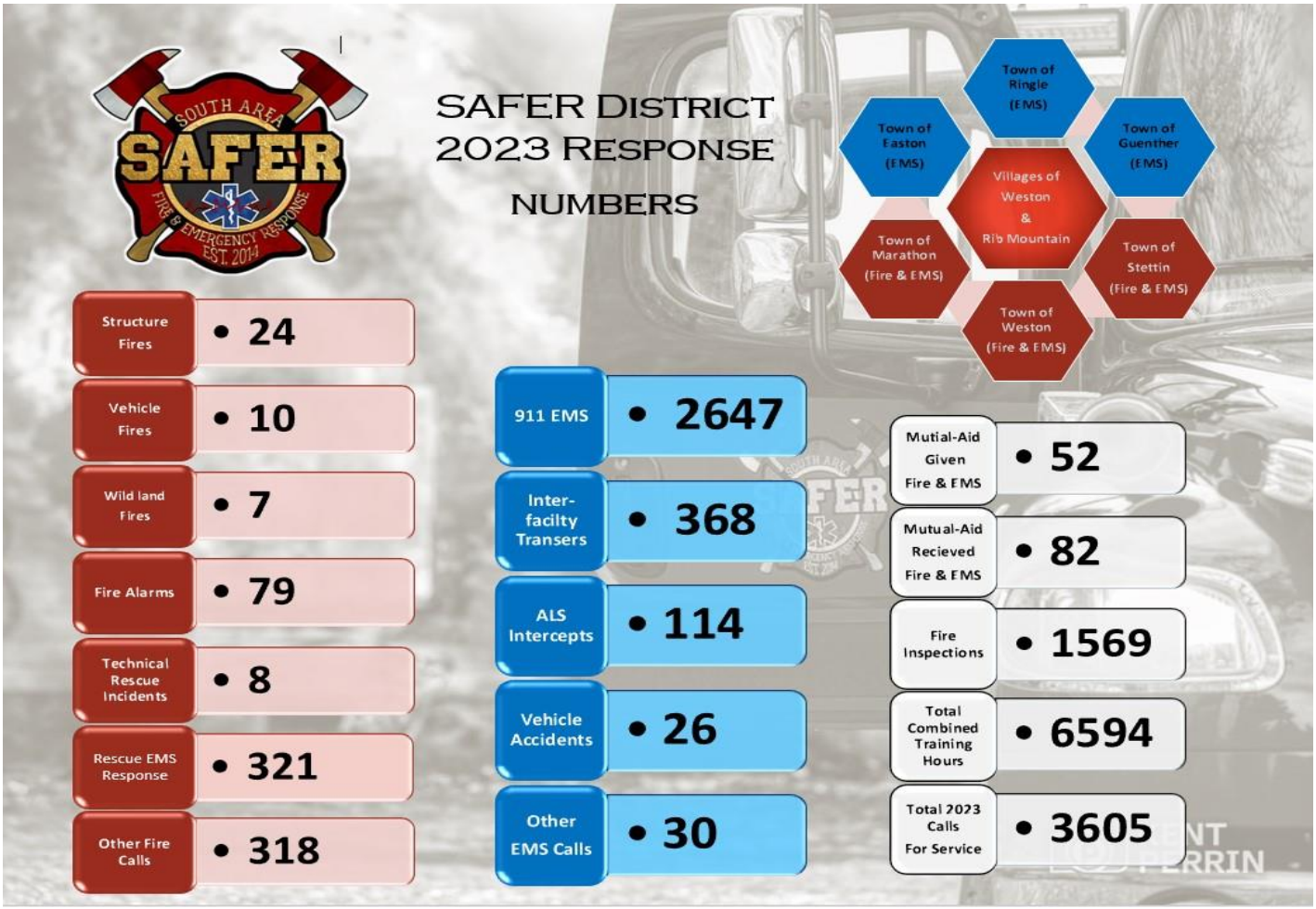


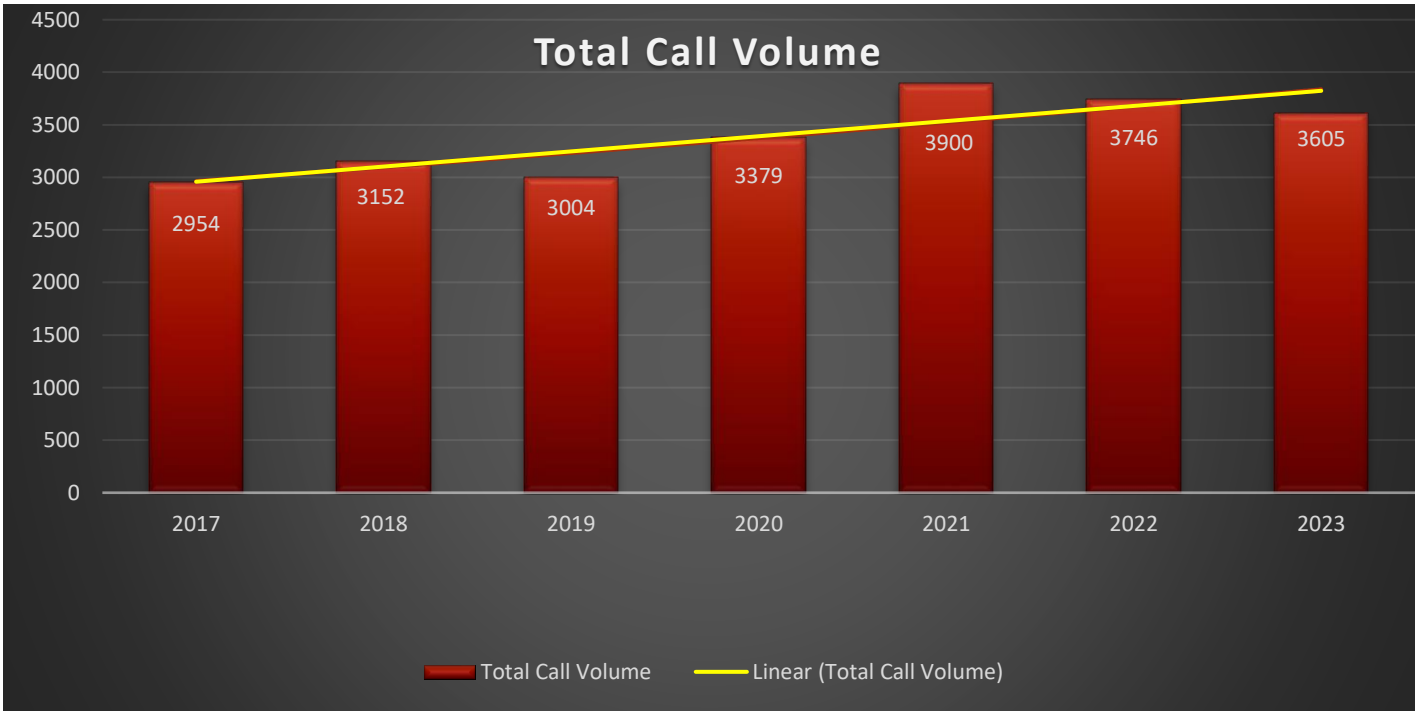
2023 FIRE RESPONSE DATA





2023 CUMULATIVE RESPONSE DATA





FIRE INSPECTIONS REPORT – MARTY CHRISTIANSEN, FIRE MARSHAL

In 2023 we implemented new inspection software to do fire inspections as well as pre-plans for each occupancy in the Fire District. We had a lot of setup to do for the new software and are working on getting the bugs out so we can get reliable numbers out of the software. We used shift crews to do fire re-inspections to free up time for more annual inspections and pre-plans, pre-construction meetings, and site inspections during the buildout process. I also worked with vendors for sprinkler system testing, alarm testing, kitchen hood suppression systems, and elevators, which the district must witness before going into service. It usually requires multiple visits to accomplish the job, sometimes with very little notice from the vendors because of construction timelines. Knox boxes, FDC, and related sprinkler equipment need multiple inspections to make sure they are placed in the correct place before the job gets too far or finished.

Meetings

The Villages of Rib Mountain and Weston have Planning Commission meetings once a month. I attend those meetings to stay ahead of projects coming to the Villages and to answer any questions they may have for the district. With that, I also attend meetings with the Villages, contractors, and business owners, look at plans, and answer questions that may come up during the planning process.

Inspections

In 2023 we did 71 inspections for new, expanding, or moving occupancies for the Village of Rib Mountain, the Village of Weston, the Town of Stettin, the Town of Marathon, and the Town of Weston. The Village of Rib Mountain had 18 new businesses and 2 completely new builds. Weston had 25 new businesses, 8 completely new builds, and Stettin had 3 new businesses. There were 18 business expansions for the Village of Weston. The Village of Rib Mountain had 2 businesses move, and the Village of Weston had 4. We also inspected 9 new or updated kitchen hoods, 18 sprinkler systems, 5 alarm systems, and added 27 new Knox Boxes in 2023.

The SAFER District now has 1,086 occupancies to inspect: 291 in Rib Mountain, 749 in Weston, 29 in Stettin, 16 in the Town of Marathon, and 1 in the Town of Weston, for a total of 1906 inspections.

Training

As in past years, we continued with two weeks in the spring and fall with company inspections of new, unusual, and larger industrial facilities in the district and did inspections with the duty crews. Training on inspection software for fire inspections will continue so re-inspections are closed on time and correctly.

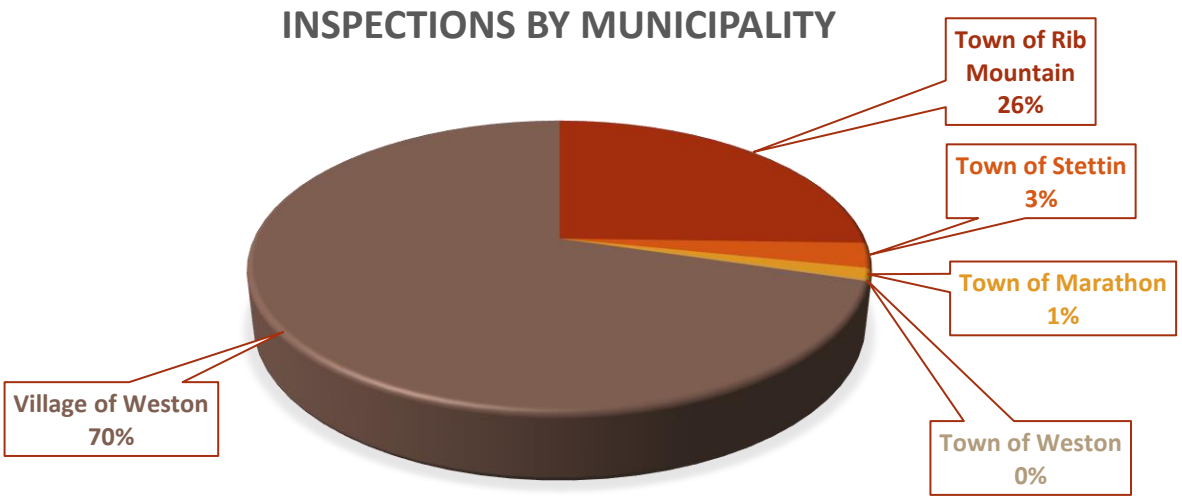
I also continued my involvement in the Area 9 Fire Prevention Group. We meet quarterly for inspector training topics and networking. The 2023 Inspectors Conference was held in Wisconsin Dells. I attended classes for sprinkler acceptance, sprinkler antifreeze systems, cold rolled steel, station nightclub disaster, and breakout sessions on fire code. Between classes, we had

opportunities to network with industry exhibitors and learn about their unique products and services that could benefit our department.

Respectfully

Martin Christiansen

Martin Christiansen
Fire Marshal/FF/EMT-I
SAFER District





TRAINING DIVISION REPORT – STEPHEN GENRICH, BATTALION CHIEF

In 2023 we had a record number of training hours for our crews as we completed a combined total of 6594.25 hours of training.

- Fire/Rescue: 3566.5 hours
- EMS: 1986 hours
- Other: 1041.75 hours

Fire/Rescue training consisted of fire attack, ladder evolutions, pumping, hovercraft training, extrication, ventilation, FF I certification, HAZMAT, rope rescue, EFO and confined space class among others. EMS training consisted of training that is required for our licenses for the state and national registry so that we can keep up with those. It also included some new equipment training such as ultrasound for cardiac arrest.

Other topics would include Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) class that was taken by a few of our members, Field Training Officer (FTO) class that was in Stevens Point, and Officer Development training that was held for our Engineers to help them be prepared to cover shift as an OIC in case of a sick call or vacation. We were also able to do some training at a local business that has an MRI scanner. They showed us what we would need to know in case of a fire in that facility.

As you can see, we have spent a lot of time training to better prepare for whatever lies ahead. I also believe some of the increase in training hours is attributed to Saturday training. We have trained on Saturdays before, but it was not consistent. It is now on the schedule to train on Saturdays. Before, when there was training on a Saturday, it was because we had special training or the crew felt like training on something specific, like extrication or ladder evolutions. This was done because there was a little more time to do it on a weekend when we didn't have other things in the daily schedule besides vehicle checks or PR events.

Looking Ahead:

We have new training props at station 2 that we have been working on to get in working order to have better and more realistic fire and technical rescue training. There will be areas in the new training facility that allow us to do search and rescue training, confined space training, high-angle rescue, and roof ventilation, to name a few topics. We can use the smoke machine to make our training more realistic for fire attacks and S/R. It will also make it easier to simulate downed firefighter or RIT (Rapid Intervention Team) training so that in the event we have a firefighter that goes down in a building, and we have the tools and the skills necessary to rescue them. We have also been contacted to potentially have some houses to train in and eventually do some live fire training evolutions as well. We don't get these training opportunities very often in the fire service. There can be a lot of time spent to get the structure safe for us to train in. I know it sounds odd. However, if the floor is not sturdy or there are holes in the walls, it is difficult for us to train in the structure. If there are holes in the walls or ceiling, we have to cover them. Or the fire that is set can travel through the house and put our recruits and instructors in danger. Holes in the floor or weak floors will not allow us to have crews in the best place to fight the fire for training. These are things we can control while we are training. Those are just a few things that

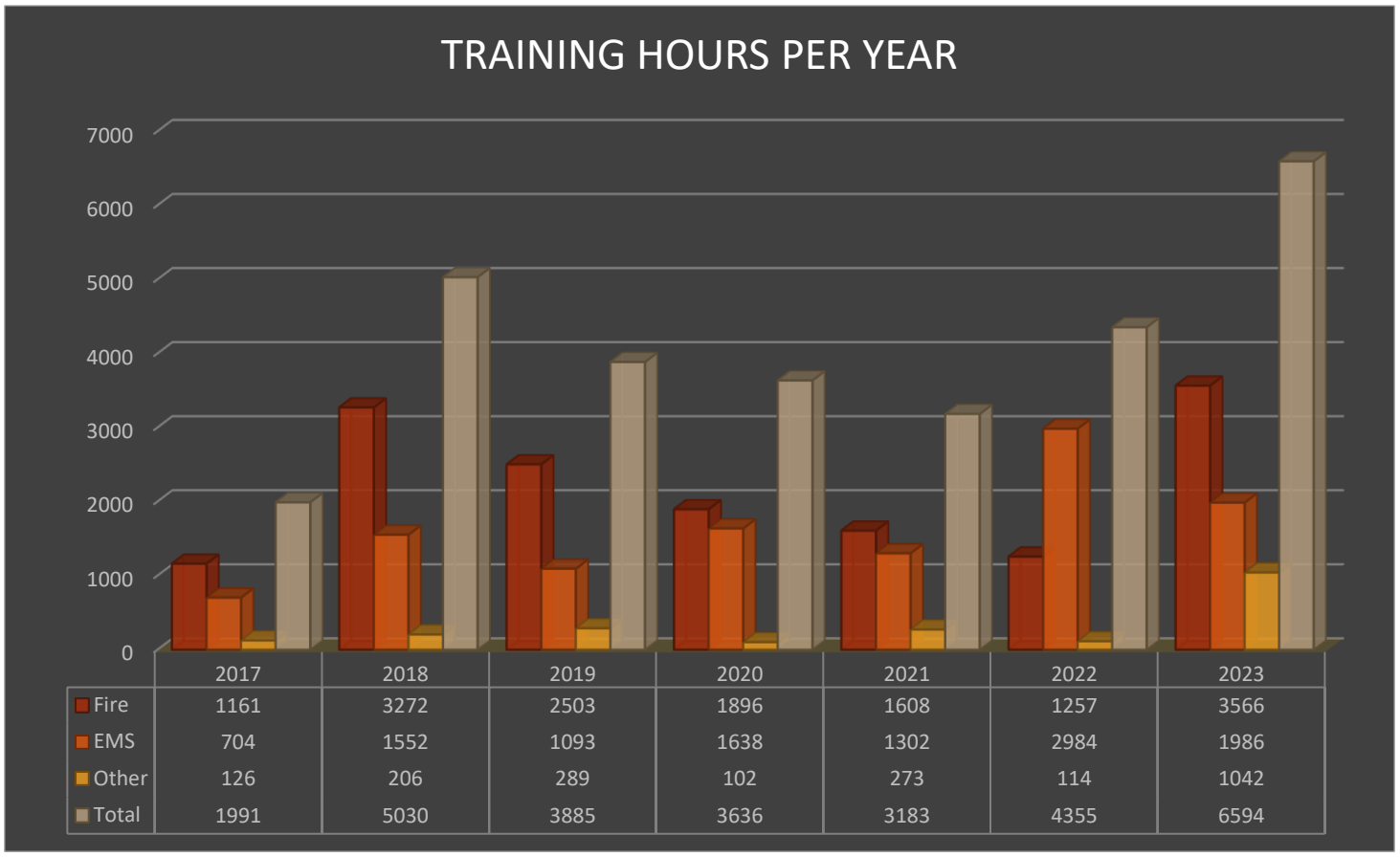
need to be examined when looking at these houses for live fire training. I also look forward to training with some of our neighboring departments this year.

I am very much looking forward to this coming year's training at our department. There are many exciting things coming for our members and the communities we cover.

Thank you,

Steve Genrich

Steve Genrich
Battalion Chief – Green Shift
Training Officer



	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Fire	1161	3272	2503	1896	1608	1257	3566
EMS	704	1552	1093	1638	1302	2984	1986
Other	126	206	289	102	273	114	1042
Total	1991	5030	3885	3636	3183	4355	6594

HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT – MARK MEYERS, BATTALION CHIEF

The South Area Fire & Emergency Response District employs a Health & Safety Committee to focus on the inherent hazards and safety issues of the fire suppression and emergency medical services industry. Specifically, we focus on those hazards and issues pertinent to the SAFER District. The intent is to identify ways we can minimize or prevent injuries and hazard exposures. Identification of safety trends is done through an analysis of our worker injury reports and incident reports, including near-miss reporting. Near-miss reporting is a way to report those incidents that did not result in injury, death, or fiscal impact but easily could have. Analysis of all reports allows us the opportunity to identify measures we can take to reduce similar incidents in the future. It is our commitment to the safety and well-being of our members that drives the Health & Safety Committee to develop best practices to minimize the impact on our members, our district, and our community!

Initiative-taking measures

In 2023, we instituted measures to help minimize several health and safety concerns identified within the SAFER District. While this is not a complete list of all the district's concerns, these are the areas identified in 2023 for which initiative-taking measures were employed. The identification and addressing of health and safety concerns is an ongoing and ever-evolving process.

In Q1 2023, we distributed the yearly competencies training. As part of this training, we addressed blood-borne pathogens, hand washing, and back safety. All members of the district are required to, and did, complete these vital training videos and accompanying quizzes. Those areas where members had trouble with the test were addressed with the members through remedial training.

In Q3 2023, we placed Fire Wipes on all vehicles with the SAFER fleet. Fire Wipes are a commercially distributed product used in the decontamination process for our members after a fire. Studies have shown that the soot and contaminants produced in a fire are carcinogens leading to cancer in firefighters. Areas such as the face, neck, and wrists are identified as susceptible to collecting soot and contaminants. After a fire, and as part of our decontamination process, members are required to use the Fire Wipes on the scene as a stopgap until members can return to the station. There they use the saunas to decontaminate their pours before taking a shower.

Starting in 2023, we continue to assess our Safety Data Sheets needs for all chemicals used in our stations. The goal is to have an accurate and up-to-date database of Safety Data Sheets (SDS) that is easily accessible in both stations, as well as an electronic database that can be accessed from outside of the station. The process is tedious and ongoing. This process will also help us to identify any chemicals in the stations that are no longer used and allow us to dispose of them properly.

In 2023, the district sent five members, including our district Chaplain, to Critical Incident Stress Management training. This training covered group and individual resiliency training to address the mental health of our members. These five members are better prepared to address the mental health of our members through peer counseling and critical incident debriefing. As a standard

approach, the district continues to evaluate the traumatic incidents our members respond to and offer peer counseling, group debriefings, and/or licensed mental health counseling for those members who are having difficulties coping with traumatic events. As part of the district's commitment to mental health, we have an Employee Assistance Program that we encourage all our members to use. Mental health is a focus for the fire and emergency medical services field and locally within our district.

Compliance with Certification Recommendations

In 2023 we came into compliance with certification recommendations by sending Battalion Chief Mark Meyers to the Incident Safety Officer and the Health & Safety Officer courses. Battalion Chief Meyers successfully obtained Pro Board certification in both disciplines. Battalion Chief Meyers serves as our Health & Safety Committee Chairperson and oversees our Health & Safety program for the SAFER District.

Conclusion

The SAFER District Health & Safety Program is committed to the members of our district, the district, and the community by identifying, preventing, and mitigating the hazards and safety issues associated with fire suppression and emergency medical services. We will continue to analyze work conditions, injuries, and incidents to find opportunities for improvement. We strive to provide the safest work environment to ensure all our members go home.

Thank you,

Mark Meyers

Mark Meyers
Battalion Chief – Red Shift
Health and Safety Officer



2023 INJURY AND INCIDENT REPORTS

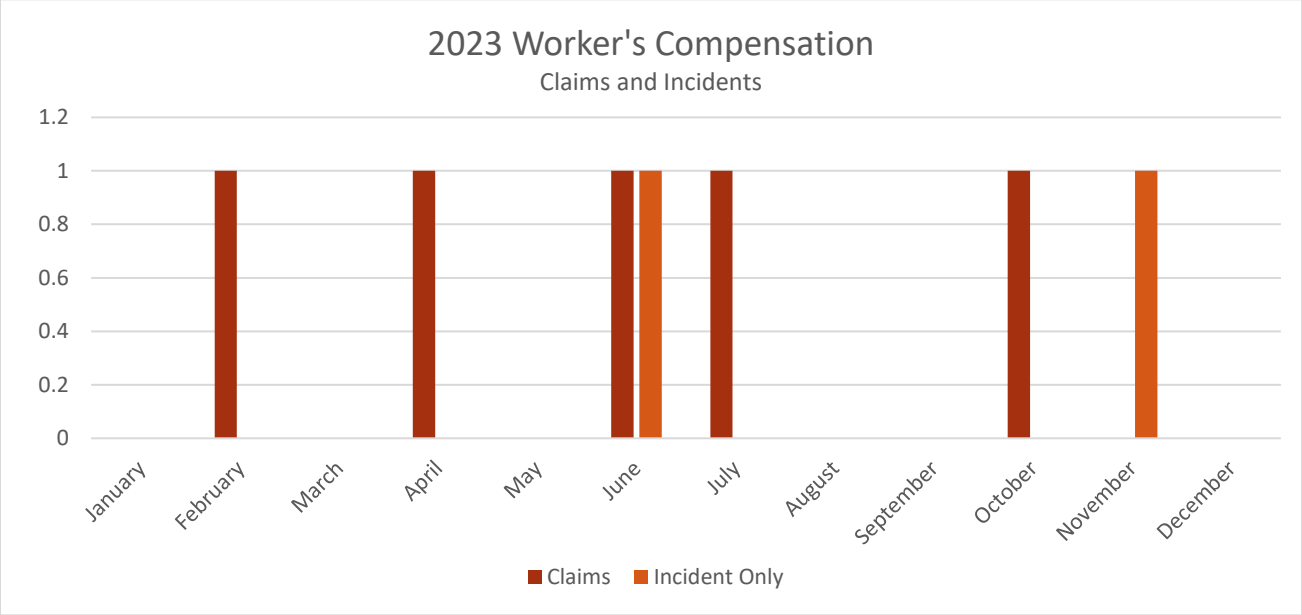
Below is the breakdown of the injury and incident reports as reported to our worker's compensation insurance company, United Heartland Insurance Agencies.

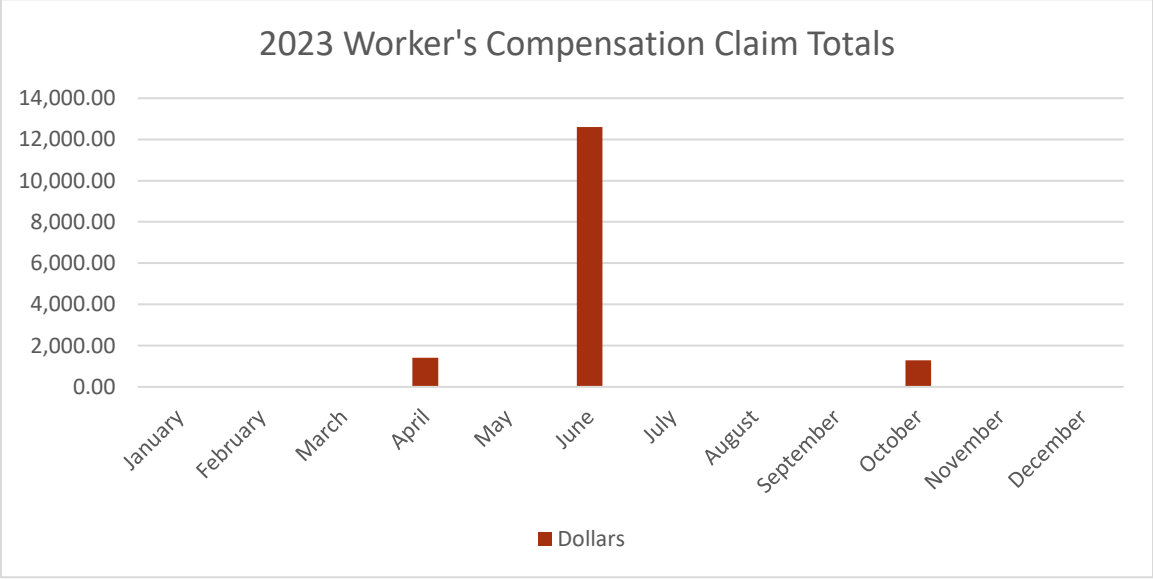
United Heartland Insurance Agencies

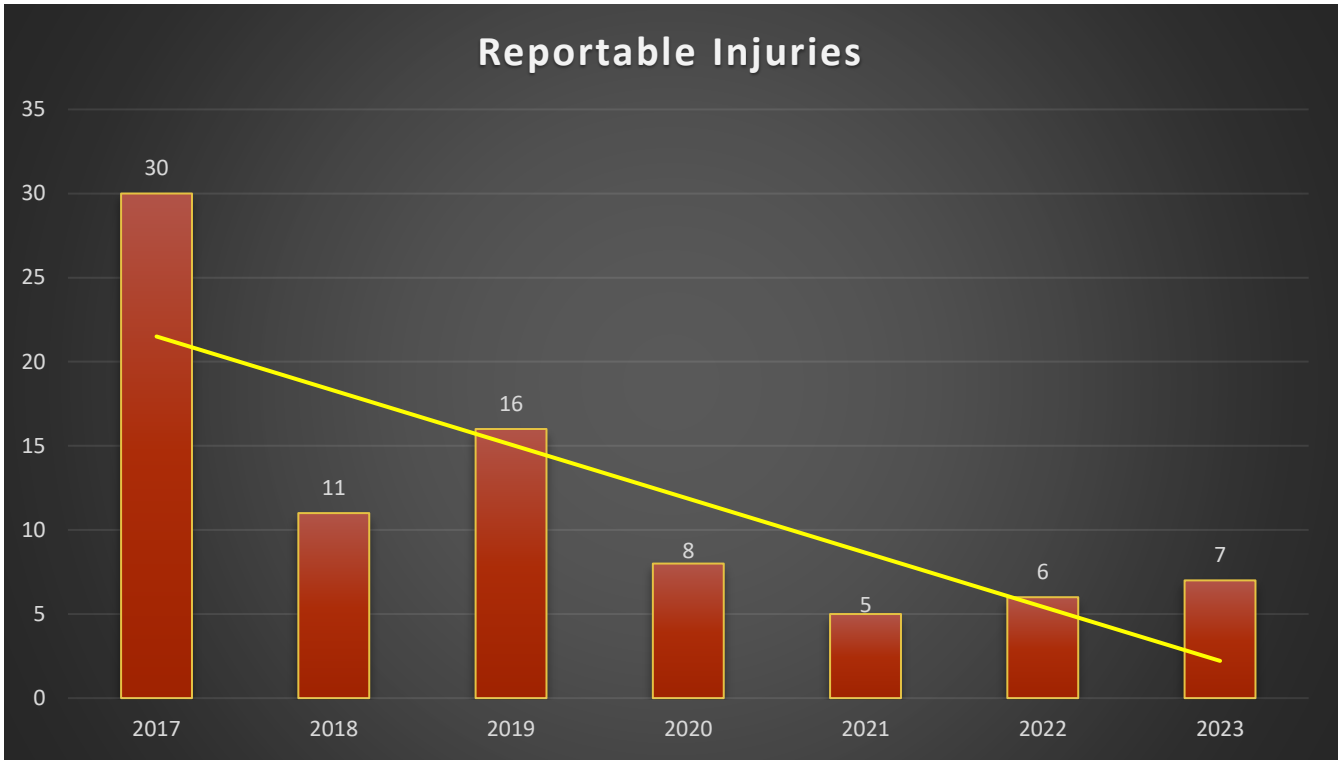
Policy Period Summary: 1/1/2023 to 1/1/2024

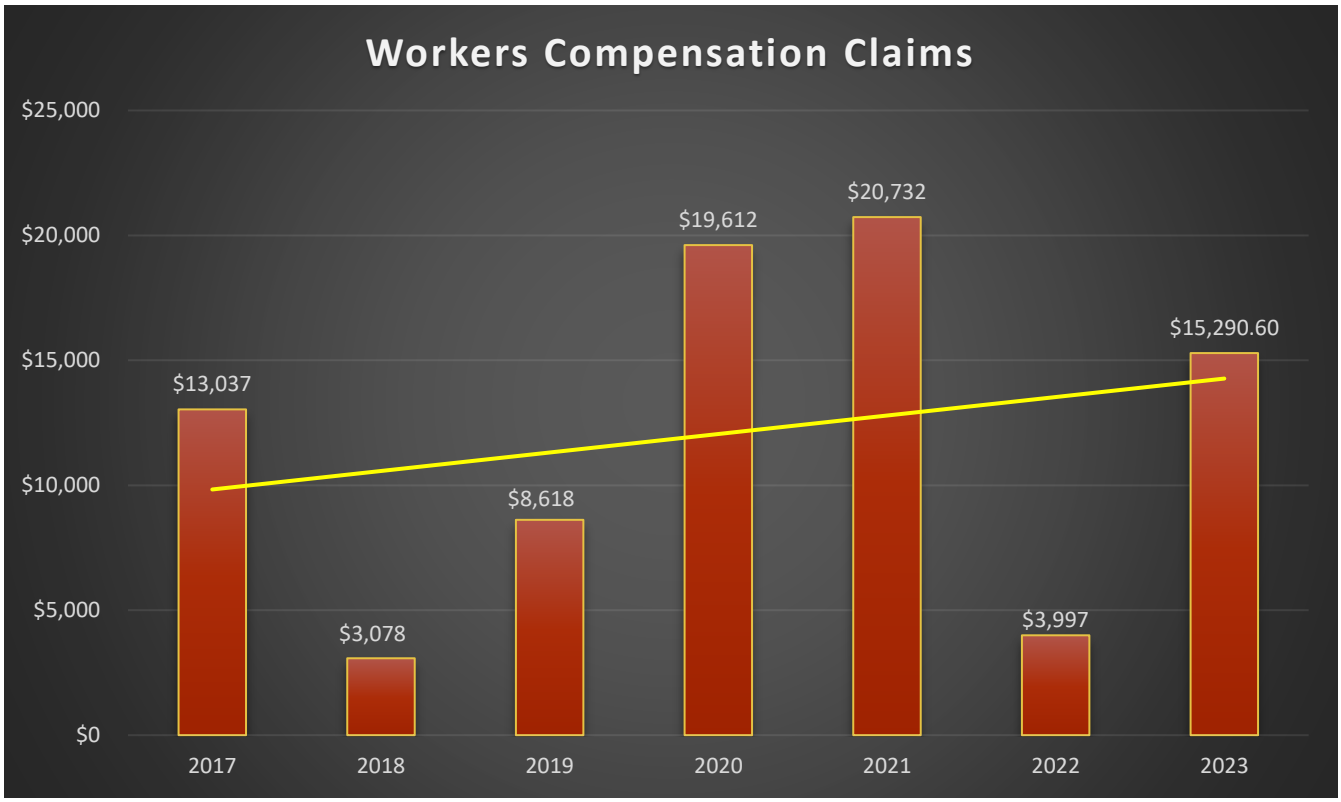
	Open	Closed	ReOpen		Paid	Reserves	Incurred
Medical Claims:	**0**	**4**	**0**	**Medical Claims:**	**$15,290.60**	**$0.00**	**$15,290.60**
Indemnity Claims:	**0**	**0**	**0**	**Indemnity Claims:**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**	**$0.00**
Total Claims:	**0**	**4**	**0**	**Total Claims:**	**$15,290.60**	**$0.00**	**$15,290.60**

Total Claims: 4 **Incident-Only Claims: 3** **Litigation: 0**






Reportable Injuries
35
30
25
20
15
10
5
0
30
11
16
8
5
6
7
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023


Workers Compensation Claims
$25,000
$20,000
$15,000
$10,000
$5,000
$0
$13,037
$3,078
$8,618
$19,612
$20,732
$3,997
$15,290.60
2017
2018
2019
2020
2021
2022
2023

PUBLIC RELATIONS REPORT – KRISTY CHULA, ENGINEER

The end of 2023 marked the closing of the first decade of South Area Fire & Emergency Response (SAFER). SAFER has made many changes over the last ten years. In 2022, SAFER moved away from the term "public relations" and integrated the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) Community Risk Reduction (CRR) platform. Social media was our biggest tool throughout the years, allowing information to be instantly shared. Our community partners also help build a strong community education base. In 2023, we evaluated the data for EMS calls and public events from 2022 to determine what education could benefit the community.

Following NFPA fire and life safety education standards, we use the same language and age-appropriate material nationwide. Using the education tools of NFPA, we have reached every age group with targeted messages. The CRR mentality allowed SAFER to evaluate and target any age group that might be at risk. SAFER found that older adults (60 and up) comprised a large percentage of the EMS call volume. SAFER and the Stepping On program teamed up to provide education and resources to adults 60 and older who have fallen or have a fear of falling. This seven-week class had such an overwhelming response that three additional classes had to be opened. This program also held a 1-day seminar allowing SAFER to demonstrate fire safety and risks for that age group.



Stepping On was just one of the many parts of the CRR program. GiGi's Playhouse of Wausau first partnered with SFER in 2021 for their glow run. In 2023, our partnership has grown. This year, SAFER raised the flag for the national anthem at their glow run and kicked off the school year with a tailgate party. Their cooking and kitchen safety classes used NFPA's Learn Not to Burn program. SAFER also ran a hands-on CPR and AED class for staff and parents. GiGi's playhouse allows SAFER's crew members to interact with community members with Down Syndrome. This not only teaches our crews the different medical complications that can arise but gives them first-hand experience of the challenges that a Down Syndrome person may face. Through this partnership, SAFER and GiGi aim to build a world where Down Syndrome individuals are accepted and embraced.



The DC Everest School District is a huge part of our CRR. Throughout the year, SAFER coordinates escorts for DCE teams that win at the state level. SAFER organizes the fire departments in the Everest district, meets the winning team at the school highway, and escorts them back to the high school. This small act builds a bond between the local fire department and the school district. Escorts are also set up for homecoming and graduation. During the summer, DCE has a Rollin Reader bookmobile. SAFER has partnered with them

to draw in more kids, providing them with free reading material over the summer. SAFER also provided fire safety for the local elementary schools.





The biggest part of our CRR program is our social media platforms. 2023 SAFER's social media was used for three major things. First, SAFER used social media to push out important or emergency messages. This included road hazards and weather issues. Second, we used social media to inform the public about health and fire-related issues, allowing SAFER an additional public education platform. With our social media reaching global audiences, we can bring awareness to otherwise overlooked topics. And finally, our social media is used to bring the community into our daily lives. Whether posting about training or holiday dinners, we provide a transparent look into our day-to-day activities at the firehouses. In 2023, our social media reached over 50,000 people, up almost 37% from 2022.

Respectfully,

Kristy Chula

Kristy Chula
Engineer – Red Shift
Community Risk Coordinator



FLEET INFORMATION

Station 1

Engine 11 – 2020 Custom Fire Pumper
Truck 11 – 1999 Pierce 100’ Platform
Rescue 12 – 2010 Marion Heavy Rescue
Tender 11 – 2006 Pierce 3000gal Tender
Med 11 – 2021 Type 1 Braun Ambulance
Med 12 – 2014 Type 3 PL Custom Ambulance
Med 13 – 2023 Type 3 Osage Ambulance
Medic 1 – 2016 Ford Interceptor
Brush 11 – 2010 Dodge 4500
Battalion 1 – 2019 Ford F150
Boat 11 – 2005 Zodiac
UTV – 2022 Intimidator
Car 1 (Chief) – 2023 GMC Sierra
Car 2 (Deputy Chief) – 2016 GMC Canyon
Car 3 (Fire Marshall) – 2022 Bronco Sport

Station 2

Engine 21 – 2020 Custom Fire Pumper
Rescue 21 – 2016 Custom Fire Pumper
Battalion 2 – 2016 Ford F150
Med 21 – 2020 Type 1 Braun Ambulance
Med 22 – 2019 Type 3 Braun Ambulance
Hovercraft – 2022 Neoteric
Brush 21 – 2020 Dodge 3500
UTV – 2021 Intimidator





CLOSING REMARKS – ERIC LANG, DEPUTY CHIEF

This past year, we continued to see growth in the district while offering exceptional service to the communities. The biggest challenge in 2023 was implementing a new software program for the district. Over the last several years, we have been utilizing ESO management software. During that time, we confronted major issues with technical support and the fire inspection module. Due to these major problems, we sought a new software provider. After demoing several programs, we entered into a contract with EPR FireWorks. We started implementation in April/May of 2023 with the buildout of the fire inspection module. After the fire inspection module went live starting in June, we implemented the training, fire reporting, and scheduling modules, followed by the EMS reporting module in January 2024. The EPR FireWorks program is extremely versatile, making implementation a long process for each module. A significant number of hours were spent by administrative staff ensuring the modules fit our way of conducting business. We anticipate that in 2025, we will have enough data in the system to create reports that will allow us an in-depth and innovative look at the district.

Accomplishments in 2023 were conducted with the help of the SAFER Board of Directors. ARPA funds were given to the district by the Villages of Weston and Rib Mountain and the Town of Weston, and we were successful with several other grant opportunities. In all, grant totals of $145,693 were secured in 2023 to offset current and future costs to the district. Purchases made in 2023 with grant monies included; a hose washer, firefighter NFPA-compliant cancer-reducing hoods, drip torches, class A foam, high fidelity EMS training mannequins, AED, partial purchase of Med 13, Paramedic tuition, and work completed on the shipping container training facility.

Our outstanding team of professionals realized further accomplishments in 2023. Some of these are listed in the reports preceding the overview of events. I wanted to take this opportunity to single out the crews that were awarded lifesaving awards at the 2023 awards banquet. The efforts of these individuals resulted in saving three people who are alive and well today. I'd like to recognize; Battalion Chief Genrich, Battalion Chief Meyers, Captain Lohman, Lieutenant Zellner, Engineer Breit, Engineer Ewan, FF Stanchik, FF Franck, FF Kolb, FF Lepel, and FF Welch.

The final big changes for the district in 2023 were the approval to add three full-time staff in 2024 and the unionization of our full-time staff. IAFF Local 5452 voted in and started operating in late 2023, with the first contract negotiations regarding wages, benefits, and working conditions starting in early 2024. The foundation for labor-management relations was set by Chief Finke in 2022 after his appointment, with the creation of the labor-management committee. This committee acted in a very similar way to the negotiation process, working through several labor issues. Due to the foundation set by Chief Finke's leadership, we look forward to positive working relations with the union in the future.

Respectfully



Eric A. Lang
Deputy Fire Chief