



Portage Fire Department 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

DUTY

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PRIDE

TRADITION

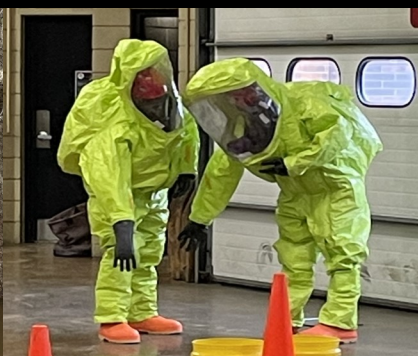
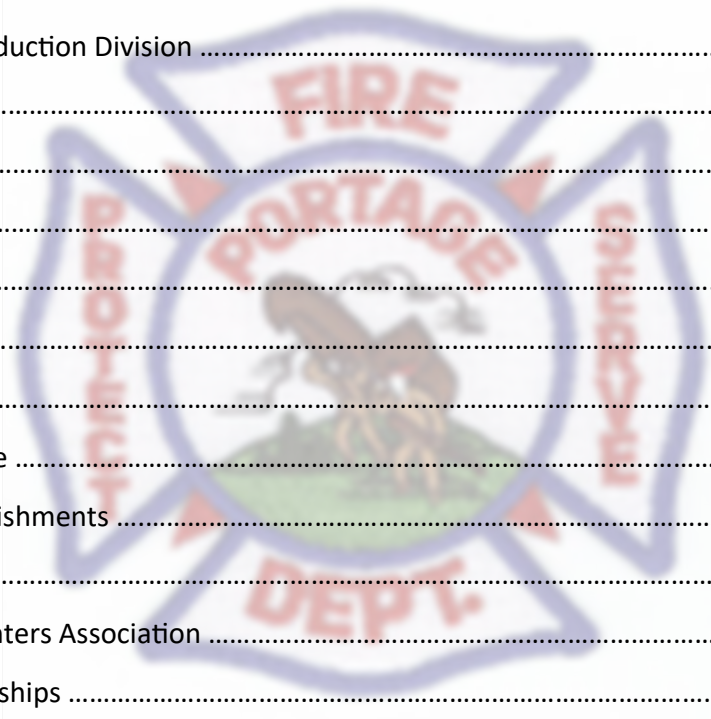


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MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

On behalf of our dedicated, trained and professional career and paid-on-call firefighters of the Portage Fire Department, it is my pleasure to present our 2023 Annual Report. This report illustrates our commitment to the residents, visitors, and businesses within our community; it also reflects our dedication to each other as a progressive fire service organization.

We continue to face many obstacles and challenges as we forge ahead committed to our overall mission, vision and values for those whom we serve faithfully and diligently. In the true interest of public safety, we continually provide a wide range of services including fire suppression, rescue, prevention, education and life safety. The efforts demonstrated by each of our professionally trained members is our commitment to providing delivery of the highest level of skilled and dedicated service to those who find themselves in need.

As the City of Portage continues to evolve and transform over time, your Fire Department has undergone changes as well. There is an ongoing effort to improve both the effectiveness and efficiency of our services through innovation and ongoing analysis of both our output and outcomes in all aspects of our operations. Our shared value is that the mission of service to the community always comes first and our employees are our most important resource. Subsequently, our recruitment and retention programs focus on hiring those candidates who possess the attributes, qualities and skills communicated in our department's mission and vision statements, and core values.

This past year we have spent many hours researching the best way to provide EMS to the City of Portage and the surrounding Townships. February 20, 2024, the city residents will cast

their votes of whether or not to support a fire-based EMS referendum. We are hopeful that the residents support the referendum, so we can provide the best EMS care possible to our citizens.

Moving forward, we will continue to do everything we can to provide high quality services to Portage and the surrounding communities. I am confident that the men and women of the PFD will remain a reliable pillar in this community, being there for all who call, and doing so with undying empathy and compassion for those experiencing their worst moments or days. Thank you for your continued support and please take the time to thank those you see in the community wearing the PFD uniform or logo. I know they would really appreciate the support.

I would like to thank Mayor Mitchel Craig, our City Council members, City Administrator Michael Bablick, and our outstanding City staff for their continued supportive efforts.

*Fire Chief
Troy Haase*



MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION

The Portage Fire Department is committed to providing the highest quality of public safety for the community, by minimizing the impact of fire and injury through public education, quality service and emergency preparedness.

"I am not here for me,
I am here for we and
we are here for them."

~ Unknown



VISION

The Portage Fire Department will continuously strive to meet the changing needs of our community and will always strive to be leaders in the fire service. We will support a safe, healthy, and diverse workplace that is open to change. We will embrace new technologies and techniques, focusing on training and education, to provide the highest level of customer service and satisfaction in a professional and caring manner.

VALUES

We, the members of the Portage Fire Department do all we can to ensure we deliver the best possible service to our citizens through smart, well trained, humble, dedicated, competent, hardworking, and safe members.

We recognize that the value of diversity helps us to work together as a team to better serve our community.

We value the public's trust and are committed to honest and ethical behavior. We hold ourselves accountable to these values. We believe in a personal commitment to the organization and the community.

We seek out and value the input and opinions of members at all levels of the organization. Teamwork is the building block of our department to improve service to the public and maintain a safe effective work environment. We believe that members have a responsibility to mentor others.

We recognize the value of change in responding to and meeting the ever-evolving needs of our customers and members. We are committed to seeking out effective methods and progressive thinking toward change. We recognize the value of ongoing education and training.

We are a fire department family. We are committed and accountable to each other because our lives depend on it. We value the role each member plays in our organization. We respect those that came before us and will strive to make the organization better for those who follow.

We believe communication is essential to the cohesiveness and performance of our organization. We are committed to providing effective and responsive means of communication throughout the organization and community.

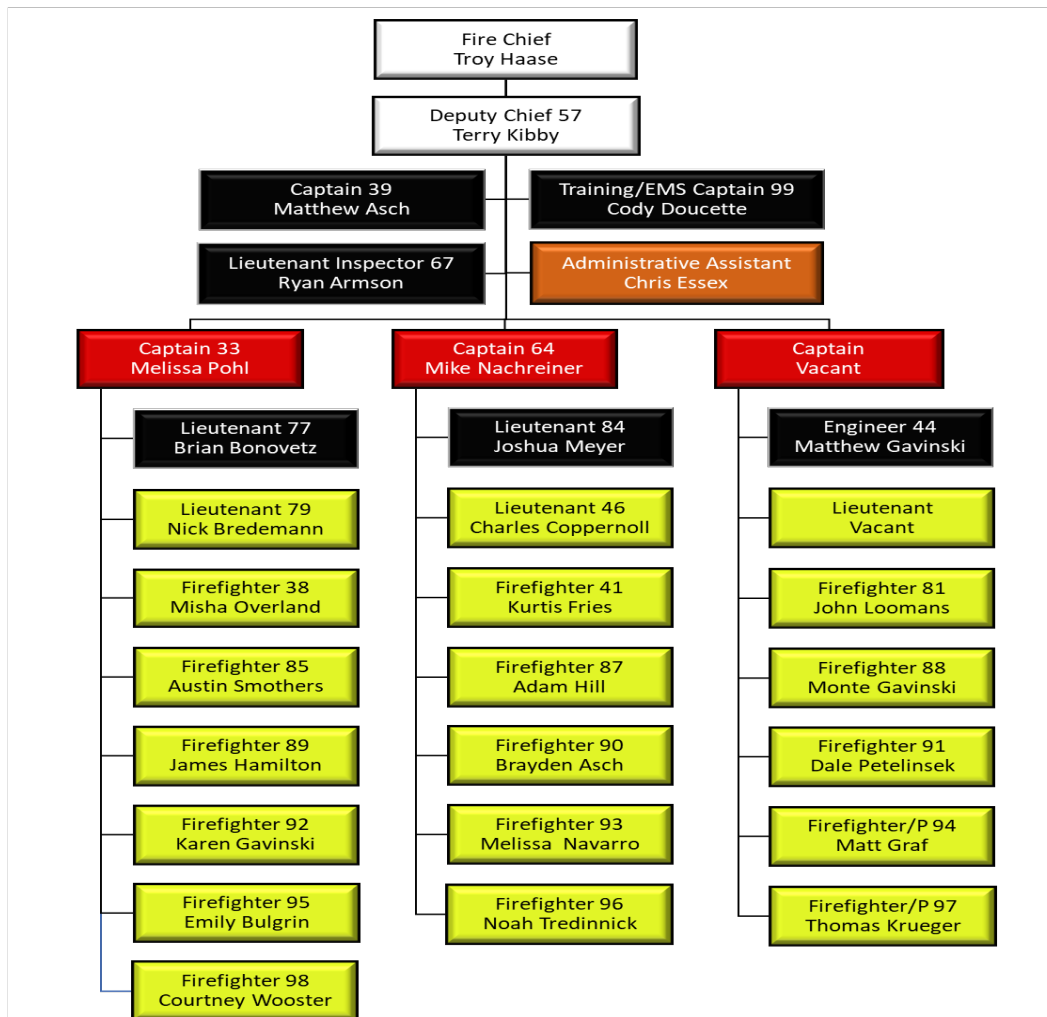
ABOUT US

The Portage Fire Department strives to provide the best service possible by putting the community and its needs first. It is the department's goal to actively engage Portage's residents. The Portage Fire Department values and respects diverse internal and external cultures, constantly working to improve service delivery to all community members. Through feedback and other cooperative communication processes, the department works to ensure the community is informed of and able to access programs and services.

The Department coverage has expanded to over 170 square miles to include the Townships of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston and Pacific. The services provided by the Portage Fire Department include:

- Critical Fire Suppression
- Technical teams, including technical rescue, water rescue, and hazardous materials (HazMat) response
- Fire Prevention and Public Education
- Fire Investigation
- Mutual aid response to neighboring jurisdictions
- EMS response for high acuity calls

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



MEMBERSHIP

THE PORTAGE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

The Portage Firefighter's Association is an organization made up of our firefighters that are hired by the City of Portage. The purpose of the Portage Firefighter's Association is to govern the social activities of the Association, to manage the finances of the Association, and to set guidelines

and rules for its members, not covered by Fire Department policy or City of Portage Ordinances. The Association membership shall consist of Career, Paid-On-Call, and Honorary Members. The Association is governed by the Officers and Executive Committee.

Association Officers

President: Troy Haase
Secretary: Ryan Armson
Melissa Pohl
Treasurer: Brian Bonovetz

Executive Committee

Terry Kibby
Austin Smothers
Adam Hill
Nick Bredemann
Melissa Pohl

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

The International Association of Fire Fighter's (IAFF) is a labor organization that the full-time members of the Portage Fire Department are proud members of. The IAFF represents more than 331,000 professional fire fighters and emergency medical workers in the United States and Canada and is the driving force behind nearly every advancement in fire and emergency services in the 21st century.

The IAFF represents the firefighters with issues that affect hours, wages and conditions of employment. The Portage Firefighters are part of IAFF Local 2775. The members are governed by a contract between the Union and the City, and the current agreement is in place until December 31, 2025. The membership is governed by the following Officers.

IAFF Local 2775 Members

President: Brian Bonovetz
Secretary: Matt Asch
Treasurer: Matt Asch
Member: Ryan Armson
Member: Joshua Meyer
Member: Matt Gavinski
Member: Cody Doucette



MEMBERSHIP

Member Name	Rank	Hire Date	Years of Service
Troy Haase	Fire Chief	11/30/2020	3.16
Terry Kibby	Deputy Chief	10/13/2000	23.2
Chris Essex	Administrative Assistant	3/4/1991	31.8
Matthew Asch	Captain	1/19/1998	26
Cody Doucette	Captain	9/25/2023	.33
Melissa Pohl	Captain	6/22/2005	18.5
Michael Nachreiner	Captain	8/20/2009	14.4
Brian Bonovetz	Lieutenant-Engineer	4/20/1993	30.7
Joshua Meyer	Lieutenant-Engineer	6/29/2021	2.58
Ryan Armson	Lieutenant-Inspector	8/20/2009	14.4
Nicholas Bredemann	Lieutenant	12/23/2014	9.08
Charles Coppernoll	Lieutenant	12/19/2018	5.08
Matthew Gavinski	Engineer	3/20/2015	8.83
Mihaela Overland	Firefighter	1/6/2015	9.0
Kurtis Fries	Firefighter	10/14/15	8.25
Johnathan Loomans	Firefighter	3/9/2021	2.83
Austin Smothers	Firefighter	9/28/2021	2.33
Adam Hill	Firefighter	4/22/2022	1.75
Monte Gavinski	Firefighter	7/16/2022	1.5
James Hamilton	Firefighter	11/10/2022	1.16
Brayden Asch	Firefighter	1/6/2023	1
Dale Petelinsek	Firefighter	1/23/2023	1
Karen Gavinski	Firefighter	3/15/2023	.83
Melissa Goden Navarro	Firefighter	3/17/2023	.83
Matthew Graf	Firefighter	5/8/2023	.66
Noah Tredinnick	Firefighter	5/30/2023	.66
Emily Bulgrin	Firefighter	5/30/2023	.66
Thomas Krueger	Firefighter	6/15/2023	.58
Courtney Wooster	Firefighter	8/29/2023	.41

MEMBERSHIP



The Portage Community School District supports the Portage Fire Department by fostering relationships and engaging youth in learning about, and ultimately becoming members of the fire department. It is crucial to attract people into the emergency services while they are young so that they form a lifelong connection, whether as a first responder or as a community supporter.

Firefighter cadet programs give youth the chance to learn about local fire rescue organizations in a safe, controlled, educational, and fun way and provides them with valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and commitment. It also provides the department with support and a powerful recruitment mechanism.

Brayden Asch

Emily Bulgrin



Brayden Asch and Emily Bulgrin are Seniors at the Portage High School and are participating in our cadet program. Brayden and Emily have also completed the requirements to join the Fire Department as Paid-On-Call members.

**COME JOIN THE PORTAGE FIRE DEPARTMENT AS
A FIRE CADET OR A PAID-ON-CALL MEMBER.
CALL (608) 742-2172**



Front Row Left to Right: Troy Haase, Kurtis Fries, Nick Bredemann, Courtney Wooster, Emily Bulgrin, Karen Gavinski, Mihaela Overland, Melissa Goden Navarro, Monte Gavinski, Adam Hill, Ryan Armson, James Hamilton

Second Row Left to Right: Austin Smothers, Matt Gavinski, Brian Bonovetz, Matt Asch, Noah Tredinnick, Johnathan Loomans, Terry Kibby, Josh Meyer, Dale Petelinsek, Cody Doucette, Charles Coppernoll, Brayden Asch

Missing: Melissa Pohl, Matt Graf, Thomas Krueger, Michael Nachreiner

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

CITY OF PORTAGE

City Council & Staff Members

Mayor: Mitchel Craig

Aldersperson by District:

District 1: Allan Radant

District 6: Kyle Bernander

District 2: Susan Bauer Frye

District 7: Karyn Wetzel

District 3: Dennis Nachreiner

District 8: Martin Havlovic

District 4: Steven Rohrbeck

District 9: Christopher Crawley

District 5: Tim Green

Administrator: Michael Bablick

Clerk: Rebecca Ness

Attorney: Jesse Spankowski

Treasurer: Jennifer Becker

POLICE & FIRE COMMISSION

Appointed Officials

President: Thomas Drury

Commissioner: Jeynell Boeck

Commissioner: Chuck Miller

Commissioner: Duane Pixler

Commissioner: Kathryn Miller

TOWN OF CALEDONIA

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Stephanie Brensike

Clerk: Barb Davis

Treasurer: Kara Paske

TOWN OF FORT WINNEBAGO

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: William Schroeder, Sr.

Clerk: Mark Considine

Treasurer: Kelly Schaller

TOWN OF LEWISTON

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Thomas Klappstein

Clerk: Tammy Lynch

Treasurer: Stephanie Warren

TOWN OF PACIFIC

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Steven Pate

Clerk: Marlo Gustafson

Treasurer: Mark Zimmerman

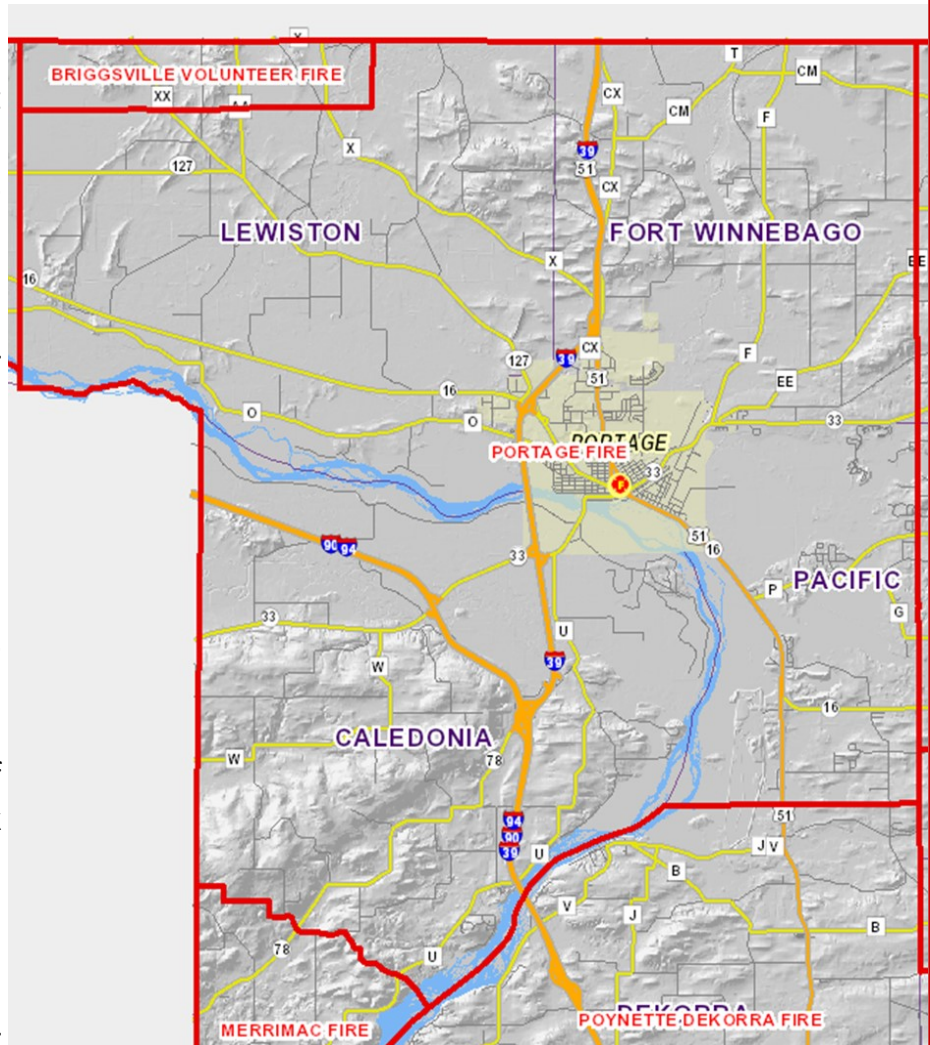
FIRE PROTECTION AREA

AREA OF COVERAGE

The Portage Fire Department protects approximately 16,000 residents and 170 square miles to include the City of Portage, the Townships of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston and Pacific. That area spans over 21.8% of Columbia County.

TOWNSHIP WATER SUPPLY

There are a few pressurized water supply systems with fire hydrants in the rural townships that are adequate to supply the fire engines. These systems are located in the Township of Caledonia at the Petro Truck Stop, the Township of Lewiston at Tri-Enda, and the Township of Pacific at the Columbia Generating Station. The Fire Department relies on water transported to the fire scene by two 2,000 gallon Tenders that the Townships jointly own. With the additional water that the two engines carry, the Department can initially bring 5,750 gallons of water to the scene, which can suppress most of the fires the department responds to. The engines get their water for firefighting by drafting out of portable tanks supplied by the Tenders. If additional water is needed they can activate the Columbia County Division 135 Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) for additional resources.



FIRE PROTECTION COSTS

Quality fire protection services are extremely important to the residents. Given the equipment and training required, those services are quite expensive. The Townships don't have their own Fire Department. Instead they contract for those services to be provided by the PFD. When the Fire Department responds to calls, the Townships are charged for those services. The Townships, in turn, pass that charge on to the responsible party or property owner who received those services.

OPERATIONS DIVISION

Greetings from the Operations Division of the Portage Fire Department. As you look through the next several pages of this report, you will see the Station information that includes our apparatuses; if you add in the personnel of our organization, you have the ingredients that make up the Operations Division.

The Operations Division is led by Captain Matthew Asch. Matt was hired as a Paid-On-Call (POC) member January 19, 1998. He rose through the ranks to Captain in 2012 and was hired as a fulltime Engineer in 2018. In 2021, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Engineer and in 2023 he was promoted to Captain-Engineer.

Our 8 full time employees, as well as, 21 Paid-On-Call Firefighters are the members that responded to the requests for service. In 2023, the Department responded to 527 incidents. For comparison sake, our Fire Department responded to 487 incidents in 2022. Even though our fire responses in 2023 increased, our fire loss totals decreased. We were able to save \$1,440,840.00 in property value. Due to the extreme loss at the Columbia County Solid Waste and Recycling Facility fire and the AMPI fire, these losses have been listed separately. The fire loss at the Columbia County Solid Waste Facility was estimated at \$30 million dollars and the AMPI fire loss was estimated at \$150 million dollars.

In 2023, we were able to hire 10 new members to our organization. These members filled existing vacancies due to employee retirements and resignations. However, we also lost 9 members throughout the year. Recruitment and retention are becoming more difficult each year as we continue to deal with the workforce shortages.

The report from the Training Division will speak to the operational impacts of getting more new personnel trained and ready for assignment in Operations.

February 20, 2024, the citizens of Portage will have an opportunity to pass a referendum to add EMS to the fire department. This will be a large undertaking, but we are ready to change the lives of our citizens. In October of 2024, we are looking forward to receiving our new Pierce Mid-mount Platform which will replace our 1992 Pierce rear-mount ladder truck.

We are fortunate to have the opportunity to serve the public in the capacity we do. The Operations Division of the PFD are the members you see in the streets taking care of people or situations when a request for service is generated. 2023 was a very busy year, our Operations personnel are a critical component in allowing our Department to meet the demand for service that exists today. We look forward to Helping People Every Day in the years to come.

*Captain-Engineer
Matthew Asch*



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION

The Community Risk Reduction Division aims to prevent and mitigate the loss of life, property, and resources associated with life safety, fire, and other disasters within our community. We are dedicated to preventing fires through public education activities, fire inspections, active code enforcement, comprehensive fire investigations, construction site plan reviews, and by identifying and mitigating fire hazards. All this is completed to reduce the loss of life and property as well as to protect the environment; thus, improving the quality of life for the community we serve. We strive and attempt with great efforts in our endeavor to create a progressive and safe environment that benefits all.



Our Division staff are highly motivated and understand the importance of customer service and fire safety education. We are determined to decrease the statistics and severity of all fires. We know that the best way to protect life and property from fire is to prevent fires or other emergencies from occurring in the first place.

The Division is staffed by Lieutenant-Inspector Ryan Armson. He started with the Department as a paid-on-call member in 2009, where he rose through the ranks. He was hired as a full-time Engineer in 2020, was promoted to Inspector-Engineer in 2021, and was recently promoted to Lieutenant-Engineer.

The fire inspection program included 1860 fire inspections, and additional liquor and motel license reviews, site plan reviews, occupancy inspections, and life safety system tests. Ryan was able to complete all inspections required by the State of Wisconsin and has a 46% correction rate.

In addition to correcting safety deficiencies during these inspections, our community risk reduction specialist takes great pride in providing business owners with valuable fire prevention tips to help keep their businesses and the public safe.

Ryan's hard work and commitment payed off when he was awarded the Fire Inspector of the Year in 2023 from the Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association.

During 2023, our public education events reached hundreds of our residents in the community. Events included grade school fire safety presentations, assisted living facility fire safety talks, fire station tours, and business fire safety classes. The Community Risk Reduction Division looks forward to keeping our City safe and vibrant in 2024 and the years to come!

*Lieutenant-Inspector
Ryan Armson*



TRAINING DIVISION

The Portage Fire Department Training Division strives to enhance firefighter safety and performance through frequent, high quality training based on current industry standards. We strive to meet all required Local, State, and Federal Fire Service training. We are dedicated to providing exceptional Emergency Services to our community while ensuring that our firefighters perform at a high level, avoid injury, and return home safely after each shift.

We coordinate regular training drills throughout the year. These training drills prepare our firefighters for challenges faced in the line of duty. This fire training is provided through educational class scenario based training, and multi-company operations. The Fire Department completed approximately 6975 hours of training in 2023. This included training in firefighting, water rescue, motor vehicle extrication, forcible entry, confined space, hazardous materials, rail car incident response, rope rescue, bloodborne pathogens, wildland firefighting, and search and rescue.



Our Training Division has been actively involved in training new firefighters and supporting new programs as needed. We hired ten new firefighters in 2023. These new members are responsible for demonstrating a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill throughout their first year on probation.

In September of 2023, the Fire Department hired Captain Cody Doucette, the first new department

employee in 30 years. Cody is in charge of training and EMS Operations. He has 20 years of experience in the fire and EMS services and we are fortunate to have him join our team.

Many of the firefighters in 2023 worked hard to improve their education and skills as they completed firefighter, fire officer and hazardous material certification classes. Six members completed Entry Level Firefighter, two members completed Firefighter I and Hazardous Material Operations Class, six members completed Firefighter II, and one member completed the Fire Emergency Service Instructor Course.

In 2024, we are looking forward to expanding our knowledge as many of our members will enroll in the National Incident Management System Classes, Firefighter I, Introduction to Wildland Firefighting, Fire Officer I, Hazardous Material Technician and EMT-Basic Class.

We are excited about the positive change and growth that we experienced this year and look forward to building on all of this and more in 2024.

*Training & EMS Captain
Cody Doucette*



YEARS OF SERVICE

25 YEARS OF SERVICE

This recognition is given to a member who has exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community subscribed to by the Portage Fire Department.

Matthew Asch has demonstrated an allegiance to the Fire Department, to its' firefighters, to the citizens of Portage, and the surrounding communities. He is steadfast, striving to achieve or improve upon the goals of the fire service, that will lead to improvements in the service. He understands and is committed to the policies, procedures, values, and mission of the Department. He performs his duties in a manner that is commendable and that all fire officers should strive to achieve, which reflects the highest standards of the fire service.

He values the public's trust and is committed to honest and ethical behavior. He holds himself accountable to the Department's values. He believes in personal commitment to the organization and the community. He has committed many years of his life to the Portage Fire Department and continues to provide his unwavering support.

This plaque was presented to Captain-Engineer Matthew Asch in recognition for 25 years of dedicated service to the Portage Fire Department and the citizens we serve.

*Captain-Engineer
Matthew Asch*



30 YEARS OF SERVICE

This recognition is given to a member who has exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community subscribed to by the Portage Fire Department.

Brian Bonovetz has demonstrated an allegiance to the Fire Department, to its' firefighters, to the citizens of Portage, and the surrounding communities. He is steadfast, striving to achieve or improve upon the goals of the fire service, that will lead to improvements in the service. He understands and is committed to the policies, procedures, values, and mission of the Department. He performs his duties in a manner that is commendable and that all fire officers should strive to achieve, which reflects the highest standards of the fire service. He has committed many years of his life to the Portage Fire Department and continues to provide his unwavering support.

This plaque was presented to Lieutenant-Engineer Brian Bonovetz in recognition for 30 years of dedicated service to the Portage Fire Department and the citizens we serve.

*Lieutenant-Engineer
Brian Bonovetz*



ANNUAL AWARDS

OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Officer of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community subscribed to by the Fire Department. This individual recipient must exhibit an extraordinary commitment to leading the Fire Department and has earned the trust and respect of their subordinates and peers. This can be evidenced by outstanding actions on the fire ground or at other functions within their community during the year.

Matthew Asch has given selflessly of himself in support of the department, the fire service in general, and the community. He has demonstrated the highest degree of dedication and participation to activities within the Fire Department including training, fire response, public education and other fire department activities.

He has shown great leadership, fortitude, and dedication to the citizens of Portage and to the members of our department. He has the unique ability to inspire, motivate, create teamwork and build morale, in all the tasks that he is involved with. His leadership abilities set the tone for the department and is always a positive influence. As one member of the agency clearly stated, "he sets a high standard for himself and strives for excellence in everything he does!"

He supports the goals of the fire service, supports the Fire Department's mission, vision and values. He recognizes the value of change in responding to and meeting the ever-evolving needs of our citizens and community. He is committed to seeking out effective methods and progressive thinking toward change. He recognizes the value of ongoing education and training.

*Captain-Engineer
Matthew Asch*



FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Firefighter of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who has best exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community subscribed to by the Portage Fire Department. This individual must be a team player who supports others' efforts to achieve the goals of the Fire Department, supports the Fire Department by embracing its policy and procedures, and by engaging in constructive criticism that will lead to improvements in the service.

Austin Smothers has given selflessly of himself in support of the department, the fire service in general, and the community. He has demonstrated the highest degree of dedication and participation in the activities within the Fire Department including training, fire response, community risk reduction.

He has demonstrated an allegiance to the Fire Department and to its firefighters and officers. He supports the goals of the fire service, supports the Fire Department's mission, values, policies, procedures, and engages in activities aimed at improvements in the Department.

He performs his fire service duties in a manner that exemplifies the competency that reflects the highest standards of the fire service and regularly demonstrates the ability to lead or follow based on the existing circumstances. He was also recognized as the 2023 Top Responding Paid-On-Call Member.

*Firefighter
Austin Smothers*



ANNUAL AWARDS

UNIT CITATION AWARDS

The Unit Citation Award is awarded to two or more firefighters who make up a company or team, who perform a credible act in the line of duty which is commendable in nature, and displays admirable initiative and accomplishment.

On December 19, 2022, Columbia County Communications dispatched the fire department for a patient pulseless and not breathing at N7548 Boulder Drive. The Fire Department responded to the scene and upon our arrival we were advised the patient was in the basement. We found the Columbia County Deputy with an AED attached and one shock had been delivered. We started CPR, opened the airway and began assessing for a pulse. As we continued, the AED called for a 2nd and 3rd shock. CPR was continued between shocks until we found a strong pulse.

As we were preparing to package the patient, he began to open his eyes. He was still not responding but had a pulse and breathing on his own. The third-party ambulance service arrived on scene and brought us a board to move the patient. We carried him upstairs and to the ambulance where he was loaded onto the cot. As they continued to assess the patient he began to wake up. He was confused on where he was, but continued to become more alert. They continued their assessment and asked for a driver to transport to Madison. Lieutenant Armson drove the ambulance to St. Mary's Hospital.

His wife Pam stated, "I want to thank all of you for your response and help in saving my husband Dustin's life on December 19th. Your actions, along with the attending sheriff's deputies, contributed in giving my husband a second chance at life. The cardiologist said he literally is a walking miracle and was released after only two days in the hospital. Thanks to all of you, along with answered prayers, it was the best Christmas gift we could receive. I have to admit, I didn't expect to see the members of the Portage Fire Department respond that day, but I am extremely glad they did. It is comforting to know we live in community where great help is there quickly when needed. You all are deserving of recognition for helping to save his life."



Left to Right: Matthew Asch, Ryan Armson, Pam Mueller, Dustin Mueller, Troy Haase

ANNUAL AWARDS

UNIT CITATION AWARDS

The Unit Citation Award is awarded to two or more firefighters who make up a company or team, who perform a credible act in the line of duty which is commendable in nature, and displays admirable initiative and accomplishment.

On January 2, 2023, Columbia County Communications Center dispatched the fire department for a general fire alarm at 301 Brooks Street. Dispatch notified us that witnesses were reporting smoke and flames coming from the roof. The Fire Department responded with all available personnel and worked through the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System to the 1st Box.

Upon arrival we attempted to make an offensive interior attack on Side A. Team 1 entered and found heavy black smoke coming from the 2nd floor where approximately 180,000 pounds of anhydrous milkfat were stored and heated for cheese processing. With no interior access, the members began a defensive attack. At the same time the Hazardous Material Team members controlled the milkfat runoff in the canal from escaping to the Fox River.

The fire consumed the contents of the milkfat process, but was contained to the room of origin and only affected a small portion of the plant. Although this was the largest monetary fire loss in the City's history, the aggressive approach to fire extinguishment and confinement helped save five and half million pounds of processed cheese.



Front Row Left to Right: Mihaela Overland, Adam Hill, Matthew Gavinski, Ryan Armson, Monte Gavinski, Nick Bredemann

2nd Row Left to Right: Troy Haase, Brayden Asch, Austin Smothers, Brian Bonovetz, Johnathan Loomans, Josh Meyer, Matthew Asch, James Hamilton and Melissa Pohl

Missing: Mike Nachreiner, Mark Publitz

ANNUAL AWARDS

UNIT CITATION AWARDS

The Unit Citation Award is awarded to two or more firefighters who make up a company or team, who perform a credible act in the line of duty which is commendable in nature, and displays admirable initiative and accomplishment.

On May 24, 2023, Columbia County Communications Center dispatched the Portage Fire Department to W7465 Hwy 16, Columbia County Solid Waste & Recycling Center for a structure fire. Dispatch updated the information reporting large amounts of black smoke with the fire in the cardboard recycling area and spreading to adjacent buildings. The fire consumed four buildings and many acres of grass surrounding the facility.

The Fire Department responded with all available personnel and worked through the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System to the 5th Box and beyond. Command requested a working still, two full box alarms, firetrucks to the 3rd box, tenders to the 5th box, and five strike teams from across the State. The fire crews worked for a total of 26 hours on scene to fully extinguish the fire. This fire was one of the largest fires in the history of the Portage Fire Department. While on scene, the Department also handled five additional responses.

The fire and EMS response included 67 apparatus and 170 personnel from 43 Fire and EMS agencies. These crews performed the largest rural water movement activity in the PFD history, hauling 550 loads or 1.6 million gallons of water.



Front Row Left to Right: Charles Coppernoll, Mihaela Overland, Adam Hill, Karen Gavinski

2nd Row Left to Right: Troy Haase, Austin Smothers, Matthew Gavinski, Ryan Armson, Emily Bulgrin, Monte Gavinski, Nick Bredemann

3rd Row Left to Right: Brayden Asch, Brian Bonovetz, Johnathan Loomans, Josh Meyer, Terry Kibby, Matthew Asch, Dale Petelinsek, James Hamilton, Cody Doucette, Kurtis Fries

Missing: Mike Nachreiner, Melissa Pohl

ANNUAL RESPONSE AWARDS

RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARDS

The Response Commendation Award is awarded to a member of the department who performed service to the department in a highly commendable manner and who responded to 40% or more of the calls.

The Portage Fire Department relies heavily on the members of the department to respond at all times of the day to emergency calls. Our members are expected to be on call 24/7, leave their job at a moment's notice, miss family dinners and rush to the scene of an emergency. They place themselves in harm's way for the sake of quite often, a complete stranger's life and property. I believe we all take for granted the time and effort that goes into the hundreds of hours of training that these men and women put forth, because of their dedication to helping others.

No doubt when tragedies happen, they take it personally, they replay those precious seconds over and over in their heads, wondering if there was anything else they could have done to change the outcome. There is not; you have given your all, and regardless of the outcome, I want you to know that the community and I are grateful.

For the aforementioned reasons, the following members were recognized for the 2023 "Response Commendation Award" for responding to calls from December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023.

Ryan Armson, Matthew Asch, Brayden Asch, Brian Bonovetz, Emily Bulgrin, Matthew Gavinski, Troy Haase, Adam Hill, Karen Gavinski, Terry Kibby, Johnathan Loomans, Josh Meyer, Monte Gavinski, Melissa Pohl, Austin Smothers and Noah Tredinnick

TOP RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARD

The Top Response Commendation Award is awarded to a member of the department who performed service to the department in a highly commendable manner and who responded to the highest number of calls.

For the reasons mentioned above, Lieutenant-Engineer Brian Bonovetz was recognized as the 2023 number one Responding Full-time Member responding to 462 of 546 or 89% of the calls from December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023.

For the reasons mentioned above, Firefighter Austin Smothers was recognized as the 2023 number one Responding Paid-On-Call Member responding to 404 of 546 or 74% of the calls from December 1, 2022 through November 30, 2023.

*Firefighter
Austin Smothers*



*Lieutenant-Engineer
Brian Bonovetz*



PROMOTIONS

In June of 2023, the Portage Fire Department held promotional processes for the fulltime and paid-on-call staff. With the retirement of Captain-Engineer Mark Bublitz an opening occurred for the Captain-Engineer position and then consequently the Lieutenant-Engineer position. In addition, we completed a process for the Lieutenant-Inspector position and POC Lieutenant.

The process began with the candidate submitting a resume and letter of intent. After reviewing the resumes and certifications to be sure all candidates qualified for the process, we set up interviews with the Police and Fire Commission. These interviews were evaluated and scores were assigned to each member's responses. A job evaluation and interview with the Chief followed before a final decision was made on each position. These members were successful in the process and were promoted to the following ranks.

Matt Asch started with the Fire Department as a POC on January 19, 1998. He rose through the ranks to Captain in 2012, and was hired as a fulltime Engineer in 2018. In 2021, he was promoted to Lieutenant-Engineer and in 2023 he was promoted to Captain-Engineer.

Joshua Meyer was hired as an Engineer on June 29, 2021, and was promoted to Lieutenant-Engineer in 2023. Joshua also serves as the mechanic for the Fire Department.

Ryan Armson started with the Fire Department as a POC on September 16, 2005. He rose through the ranks to Lieutenant in 2014, and was hired as a fulltime Engineer in 2020. In 2021, he was promoted to Inspector-Engineer and in 2023 he was promoted to Lieutenant-Inspector.

Cody Kamrowski joined the Fire Department as a Paid-on Call firefighter on March 9, 2021, and in 2023 he was promoted to POC Lieutenant.

*Captain-Engineer
Matthew Asch*



*Lieutenant-Engineer
Joshua Meyer*



*Lieutenant-Inspector
Ryan Armson*



*Lieutenant
Cody Kamrowski*



NEW MEMBERS

*Firefighter
Noah Tredinnick*



*Firefighter
Thomas Krueger*



*Firefighter
Courtney Wooster*



RETIREMENTS

In 2023, the Portage Fire Department had a fulltime member and two Paid-On-Call members retire from the fire service. The three members had a combined 105 years of fire service experience with the PFD. The members of the PFD want to thank all of them for their unwavering commitment and dedication to the Department. Below is their individual years of service and the dates they were hired and promoted.

Mark Bublitz started as a POC on October 9, 1984. He was promoted through the ranks up to Assistant Chief on January 10, 1995. He was hired as Fulltime Engineer on August 12, 1996, was promoted to Lieutenant on January 30, 2020, and to Captain on June 2, 2021. Mark retired on January 6, 2023 and has committed 38 plus years to helping others in their time of need.

Captain Mark Bublitz



Terry Schulze started with the Fire Department as a POC on July 12, 1988, was promoted to Lieutenant on July 9, 2018. Terry had a great career and retired on July 12, 2023, ending with 35 years of service.

Lieutenant Terry Schulze



Thomas Colen started with the Fire Department as a POC on August 16, 1991 and retired on September 4, 2023, ending with 32 plus years of service.

A well deserved retirement for these members that dedicated the better part of their life to the Portage Fire Department.

Firefighter Thomas Colen



NEW MEMBERS

In August of 2023, the Portage Fire Department completed a hiring process for the position of Training and EMS Captain. The candidates completed the application process, a written competency test, and a physical agility test. After the testing procedure the candidates participated in interviews with the Police and Fire Commission and a Fire Chief/Medical Director Interview Panel. Upon completion the top candidates were placed on the eligibility list. Chief Haase interviewed the candidates, and hired Captain Cody Doucette, who began his career on September 25, 2023.

Cody has been in the fire and EMS services for over 20 years, working with Divine Savior, Deforest Fire and a third party ambulance service. He also serves as the Fire Chief of the Cambria Fire Department.

In 2023, the PFD added nine new POC members to the current staff. The members that completed the hiring process began their firefighting careers by completing Entry Level Firefighter Class.

*Training & EMS Captain
Cody Doucette*



*Firefighter
Brayden Asch*



*Firefighter
Dale Petelinsek*



*Firefighter
Karen Gavinski*



*Firefighter
Melissa Goden Navarro*



*Firefighter
Matthew Graf*



*Firefighter
Emily Bulgrin*



APPARATUS IN SERVICE

The Portage Fire Department operates a variety of apparatus for response to structure fires, vehicle accidents and fires, wildland fires, technical rescues, hazardous material incidents, and medical related calls. Each apparatus is outfitted with specific equipment and gear for each type of call and responds with the appropriate personnel to resolve each emergency.

Apparatus ID#	Apparatus Description	Replacement Year	Replacement Cost
Engine 3	2015 Rosenbauer —Township Engine 2,000 GPM	2040	\$913,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Engine 6	1990 Seagrave —City Engine 1,500 GPM	2028	\$825,000
	Primary Engine For Wildland Fires, Structure Fire Response, Back-up Engine		
Engine 8	2022 Pierce Enforcer —City Engine 2,000 GPM	2047	\$1,000,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Squad 2	2001 Pierce/Lance Heavy Rescue	2031	\$781,000
	Vehicle Accident, Technical Rescue Farm Accidents or Medical Related Rescues		
Tower 1	1992 Pierce —City Platform 1,750 GPM, 100' ladder	2024	\$1,410,000
	Structure Fire Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Tender 4	2021 Freightliner —2,000 gallon Tender, 500 GPM Pump	2046	\$472,000
	Water Supply for Rural & City Non-hydrant Areas, Wildland Fires		
Tender 5	2002 GMC —2,000 gallon Tender, 500 GPM Pump	2027	\$400,000
	Water Supply for Rural & City Non-hydrant Areas, Wildland Fires		
Brush 1	2009 Chevrolet 1 ton 4x4—City/Township Pick-up Truck	2034	\$97,000
	Wildland Fires, Off Road Equipment Fires, Tow Vehicle		
Brush 2	2021 Polaris UTV—85 Gallon Tank & Pump	2046	\$52,000
	Wildland Fires, Search and Rescue, Medical Rescue		
Boat 1	Sea Ark 21' Flat Bottom Boat	2030	\$42,000
	Water Search and Rescue		
Hover 1	1999 Hovercraft – City	2029	\$56,000
	Water Rescue, Winter Related Rescues, Medical Rescues		
Car 1	2018 Ford Explorer	2028	\$45,000
	Command Post, Tow Vehicle		
Car 2	2017 Chevrolet Silverado ¾ Ton Pickup	2027	\$67,000
	Fire Inspection/Investigations in the City & Towns, Tow Vehicle		

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ADMINISTRATION:

- The Department responded to 527 calls for service or a 8% increase over 2022, which was the highest total in department history.
- Insisted on providing better service by raising the member's average emergency response percentages from 41% to 44%
- Completed promotional process for Captain–Engineer Asch, Lieutenant-Engineer Meyer, Lieutenant-Inspector Armson and POC Lieutenant Kamrowski.
- Successfully mitigated two of the largest fires in the City's history.
- Researched the most efficient and effective way to provide EMS to the City and surrounding Townships.
- Successfully complete a 2-year bargaining agreement with Local 2775.

FIRE APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT:

- Annual pump, hose, SCBA and ladder testing was completed per NFPA.
- Received a DNR Grant to purchase new wildland gear and pagers.
- Completed the specifications and ordered three Osage Ambulances to be delivered in 2024.

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION:

- Completed all State required fire safety inspections—1860 inspections completed in the City and four surrounding Townships.
- Provided fire prevention education to 780 elementary aged students in the Portage School District.
- Implemented City ordinances for fire alarms, sprinkler systems and the Compliance Engine.

PERSONNEL/TRAINING

- Secured HMEP and State Hazmat Grant for 16 hours of HAZMAT refresher training for 2024.
- Recruitment and hiring process for the first new member in 30 years - Cody Doucette
- Lieutenant Armson received the Fire Inspector of the Year from the Wisconsin State Fire Inspectors Association.
- Chief Haase received the Wisconsin State Assembly 41st District, First Responder of the Year.

Wisconsin State Representative Alex Dallman presented the First Responder of the Year Award to Chief Haase and Family.

Fire Inspector of the Year Lieutenant Ryan Armson



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

FIRE & EMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

Goal Number 1: Provide adequate staff for an effective response force.

Objectives:

- Respond with appropriate staff on all first due units in 2024.
- Meet NFPA 1720 recommendation of 15 staff to assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time.
- Complete the Insurance Services Office (ISO) process to determine the departments ability to serve the community.

Goal Number 2: Decrease fire response times and increase response percentages.

Objectives:

- Continue to improve an effective recruitment and retention program in 2024.
- Work with dispatch to implement pre-alerts for incidents in 2024.

Goal Number 3: Improve data recording and collection for fire and EMS operations.

Objectives:

- Purchase software and install to allow for CAD uploads into FireWorks program.

Goal Number 4: Research the most efficient and effective way to provide EMS to the City and surrounding Townships.

Objectives:

- Research the most productive and cost-effective way to provide EMS to our citizens in 2025.
- Develop a working relationship with all stakeholders to secure necessary agreements and funding sources for EMS in 2024.

TRAINING DIVISION

Goal Number 1: Improve the established practical training program to meet ISO requirements.

Objectives:

- Continue development of lesson plans for practical training exercises in 2024.
- Establish job performance records for practical training exercises in 2024.

Goal Number 2: Certify non-qualified department members in appropriate certification programs.

Objectives:

- Plan and coordinate with Madison Area Technical College to have all eligible members complete their next available certification class in 2024.
- All officers complete the National Incident Management Systems Courses 300 and 400 to become NIMS compliant in 2024.

Goal Number 3: Improve the agency's ability to investigate fires.

Objectives:

- Train personnel in the skills of origin and cause determination to qualify for certifications in 2024.
- Develop a local electronic fire investigation data entry program through FireWorks software in 2024.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

Goal Number 1: Enhance fire prevention/life safety program to increase compliance of fire inspections.

Objectives:

- Evaluate inspection reporting data and make necessary changes to reach 100% compliance in 2024.
- Continue re-inspection program and educate business owners on how to gain compliance using self inspection in 2024.

Goal Number 2: Evaluate Fire Prevention programs and policies to ensure adequate and appropriate fire education to the community.

Objectives:

- Review and update existing public educational programs to be more effective in 2024.
- Evaluate data and determine effectiveness of community risk reduction program in 2024.
- Continue to integrate the initiatives of a Community Risk Reduction Program in 2024.

Goal Number 3: Enhance Community Risk Reduction by implementing new programs.

Objectives:

- Complete risk assessments on all businesses in response territories in 2024.

Goal Number 4: Provide important information and fire education using social media.

Objectives:

- Expand upon the media contact list in the surrounding area.
- Update current fire department web page to provide a go to place for citizens to contact and connect with the fire department in 2024.

The Portage Fire Department and Edgewater Home and Garden worked together to prevent fires during the Christmas Season. The PFD provided fire safety messages to be placed on Christmas Trees and the staff of Edgewater are placing them on each tree. The safety messages gave helpful hints on holiday safety. These trees were provided by the Shriners Hospitals for Children.



THE PORTAGE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Portage Fire Department's Safety Committee consists of four members and one advisor who meet on a regular basis or as needed. The committee's purpose is to assist in minimizing injury, educating staff and maintaining the health and well-being of all firefighters, so that they may respond to any type of emergency. Our staff is continually reviewing the Policies and SOP's and proactively reviewing changes that are happening in the fire service. As always the Safety Committee continues to focus on providing an environment focused on safeguarding our brothers and sisters and ensuring that, "EVERYONE GOES HOME".

Committee Members

Matthew Asch
Ryan Armson
Adam Hill
Michael Nachreiner
Johnathan Loomans

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Each year the Firefighters Association chooses projects or equipment they are interested in completing or purchasing to improve the fire department. The main source of fundraising is through the department's food stand, "Station 2", located at the Columbia County Fairgrounds during the Columbia County Free Fair. This year the Association assisted in purchasing new battery operated extrication tools and other fire response related equipment. Without the firefighters generosity the Department would have to purchase these items from the budget, which would delay the purchase or eliminate it all together.

Thanks to all the members who participated in the food stand this year, and a special thank you to Matthew Gavinski and Charles Coppernoll for coordinating and organizing the members and food for the event.

The Portage Firefighters Association would like to thank the City of Portage elected officials, the City Staff, the surrounding Townships, and the citizens of Portage for all the support that they provide during these fundraising projects. Without their support we would not be able to complete these projects and purchase the equipment that is needed.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

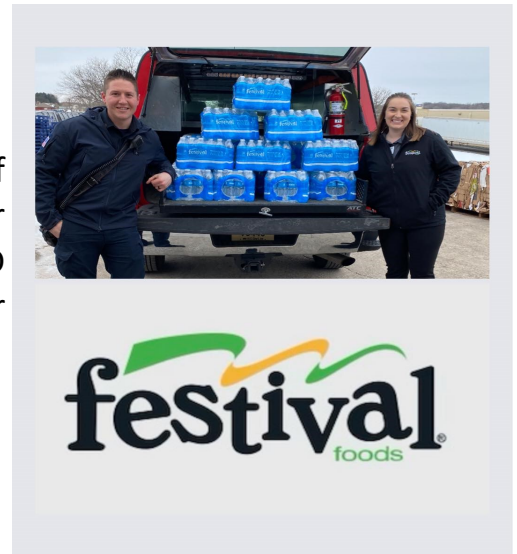


AMPI DONATION

The Portage Fire Department's partnership with AMPI continued to grow in 2023, when they presented a \$25,000 check to Chief Haase. We truly appreciate AMPI for their continued support. These funds have been used to purchase AED's and will be used for future equipment purchases for our new Pierce Mid-mount Platform.

FESTIVAL FOODS DONATION

In 2023, Festival Foods of Portage donated 126 cases of water to the Portage Fire Department to help their firefighters stay hydrated on emergency scenes. The PFD wants to thank Festival for their commitment to our organization.



FOREST FIRE PROTECTION GRANT PROGRAM

The PFD received \$2,309 from the FFP Program. Forest Fire Protection (FFP) 50% cost-share grants are available to Wisconsin fire departments and county/area fire associations. Grant funding is intended to expand the use of local fire departments to augment and strengthen the Department of Natural Resources (DNR) overall initial-attack fire suppression capabilities on forest fires.



LEAGUE OF WISCONSIN MUNICIPALITIES SAFETY GRANT



The PFD received a \$1,327 grant from the League of Wisconsin Municipalities Safety Grant. The safety grant purchased LED Smart Sequential Road Flares, Smart Infrared Med-Evac Lighting and safety harnesses. The Safety Grant Equipment Program is for insured members and the amount is based on the City's Workers Compensation Premium.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS



MACHINELAB FITNESS

Serina Seiler from MachineLab Fitness in Portage, on two occasions provided the fire department with hydration liquids for our personnel. Hydration is essential when operating at emergency scenes.

CITY OF REFUGE CHURCH

Pastor Justin O'Boyle from the City of Refuge Church donates to the fire department annually. This year they delivered two boxes of snacks and \$1,000 to be used to support our department. This money will help us purchase ballistic gear for active shooter incidents.



WALMART/SAM'S CLUB LOCAL COMMUNITY GRANT

Walmart of Portage donated \$750 to the fire department to be used for ballistic gear at active shooter incidents. Active shooter events are very dangerous for the students, staff, and first responders. This gear will protect us when we are placed in situations where patients need to be removed from the hot zone. This gear is very expensive, so we will continue fundraising efforts to meet the total cost of \$16,000.

PIZZA RANCH

On November 15th, Pizza Ranch of Portage donated 15% of their proceeds to the fire department, and many citizens and staff donated tips as well. Pizza Ranch helped raise \$1,500 for automatic external defibrillators.



THE MUELLER'S

Dustin and Pam Mueller donated \$1,500 for the purchase of AED's, thanking us for providing CPR and care for Dustin when he experienced a life threatening heart attack.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Fire prevention and education has expanded into all areas of our community. Throughout the years, the focus has always been on fire prevention only, but now the members have expanded this education into other areas as well. The new approach to community life and fire safety is Community Risk Reduction (CRR). CRR is a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. In other words, it is a process to help communities find out what their risks are and develop a plan to reduce the risks viewed as high priority.

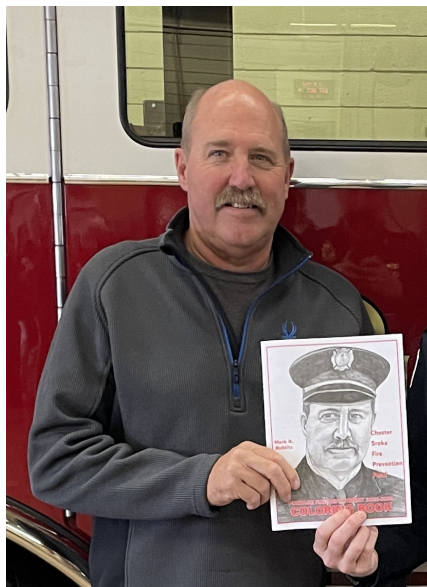


Each year we ask our community businesses to donate to the Chester Sroka Fire Prevention Fund to provide a fire safety coloring book to our children and help us look into a new approach of educating and protecting our citizens. Last year the following businesses supported our community risk reduction activities.

Bremner Granite
 Wisconsin River Title
 Zimmerman Plumbing
 Schultz Small Engine
 Miller & Miller Law
 Seubert Family Dentistry
 Elk's Club—Red Kastner
 Community Bank

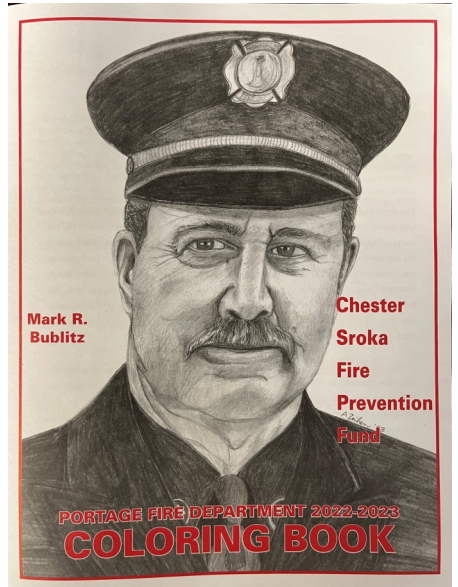
Baraboo State Bank
 Edward Jones—Klay Vehring
 Fearing's Satellite & Sound
 Precision Hair Designers
 Johnson Chiropractic
 Smiley Law Office
 Hart & Olson Family Dentistry

Galley Studio
 Penda Corporation
 Electric One
 D.W. Menswear
 Davis & Page
 Encapsys
 Crawford Oil



Each year the PFD honors one of our personnel by placing a hand drawn picture on the cover of the Chester Sroka Fire Prevention Coloring Book. These books are then distributed to the children in the Portage School District.

Congratulations to Captain-Engineer Mark Bublitz for being the 2023 recipient. Thank you to Amy Zeihen for her artistic work and the students for their wonderful drawings.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In 2023, Ryan Armson spent the fall in the schools performing fire safety talks to over 780 children. During these visits he educates the children on the fire risks in their home. The fire department is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all those living in and visiting our community. Fire is a serious public safety concern both locally and nationally, and homes are the locations where people are at greatest risk from fire. Home fires killed more than 3,800 people in the United



States. In 2021, according to the National Fire Protection Association, fire departments in the United States responded to 338,000 home fires. Cooking is the leading cause of home fires in the United States and fire departments responded to more than 166,400 annually between 2016 and 2020. Two of every five home fires start in the kitchen with 31% of these fires resulting from unattended cooking. Portage residents who have planned and practiced a home fire escape plan are more prepared and will therefore be more likely to survive a fire. Working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires almost in half. So, please check your home to be sure it is fire safe.



2023 FIRE PREVENTION PROCLAMATION

Each year Mayor Mitchel Craig presents a Fire Prevention Proclamation to the fire department to recognize Fire Prevention Week. This proclamation was based on the 2023 NFPA Theme, Cooking Safety Starts With You. It also urges the Portage residents to check their kitchens for fire hazards and use safe cooking practices.

KEEP THE WREATH GREEN

The Portage Fire Department launched its 2nd Annual, “Keep the Wreath Green,” Fire Safety campaign November 23rd through January 1st. During the month-long campaign, a Christmas wreath is placed on display in the front of the fire station. Each time firefighters respond to a residential fire with damage, a green bulb will be replaced with a red one to remind citizens of the dangers posed by fires in residential homes. So, our goal is to keep the bulbs “GREEN.” In 2023, our community had a safe holiday season, so it remained green for the entire season.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

In August, the Portage Fire Department helped the Portage Police Department educate the community at the National Night Out Event. NNO is an excellent program that helps the public safety agencies build relationships and create safer neighborhoods.



KIDS SAFETY DAY

The PFD, the City PD, the Columbia County Sheriff's Office, and Aspirus MedEvac held an interactive Safety Day for children 7-14 years old. This gave the fire department members the opportunity to discuss fire safety the importance of working smoke and CO alarms and fire escape plans.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

911 CEREMONY

The 9/11 Day of Remembrance Ceremony held at the Portage, Wisconsin Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area ReStore was incredibly special. The Portage Fire Department and Police Department assembled the Honor Guard that began the ceremony. Veterans, Firefighters, Police Officers, and residents attended. Morgan Pfaff, Executive Director of Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area, welcomed all who attended, introduced speakers, and concluded the ceremony. Annelise Bredemann, of Portage High School played Taps. Wisconsin State Senator Joan Ballweg, Wisconsin State Representatives Jon Plumer and Alex Dallman, Rebekka Cary of the Columbia County Veterans Service Office and Mayor Mitchel Craig all spoke to the Veterans, First Responders, and residents of both Columbia and Sauk County remembering that tragic day 22 years ago. They recognized those that rose up in response to 9/11 and thanked the First Responders who continue to serve and protect us on a daily basis.



HALLOWEEN

The members spent the evening of Halloween handing out candy and providing fire safety tips to the children of the community. Sparky made an appearance and spent time with the children taking pictures.



FIRE PREVENTION OPEN HOUSE

The Portage Fire Department is committed to ensuring the safety and security of all those living in and visiting our community. Fire is a serious public safety concern both locally and nationally, and homes are the locations where people are at greatest risk from fire. In 2021, local fire departments responded to an estimated 1.35 million fires in the United States. These fires caused 3,800 civilian fire deaths and 14,700 reported civilian fire injuries. The property damage caused by these fires was estimated at \$15.9 billion. On average, a fire department responded to a fire somewhere in the US every 23 seconds in 2021. A home structure fire was reported every 93 seconds, a home fire death occurred every three hours and eight minutes, and a home fire injury occurred every 47 minutes.

Today's homes burn faster than ever. You may have as little as two minutes (or even less time) to safely escape a home fire from the time the smoke alarm sounds. Your ability to get out of a home during a fire depends on early warning from smoke alarms and advance planning. Smoke alarms sense smoke well before you can, alerting you to danger in the event of fire in which you may have as little as 2 minutes to escape safely, so working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires in half.

The 2023 Fire Prevention Week theme, "Cooking safety starts with YOU, Pay attention to fire prevention," effectively serves to remind us to stay alert and use caution when cooking to reduce the risk of kitchen fires.

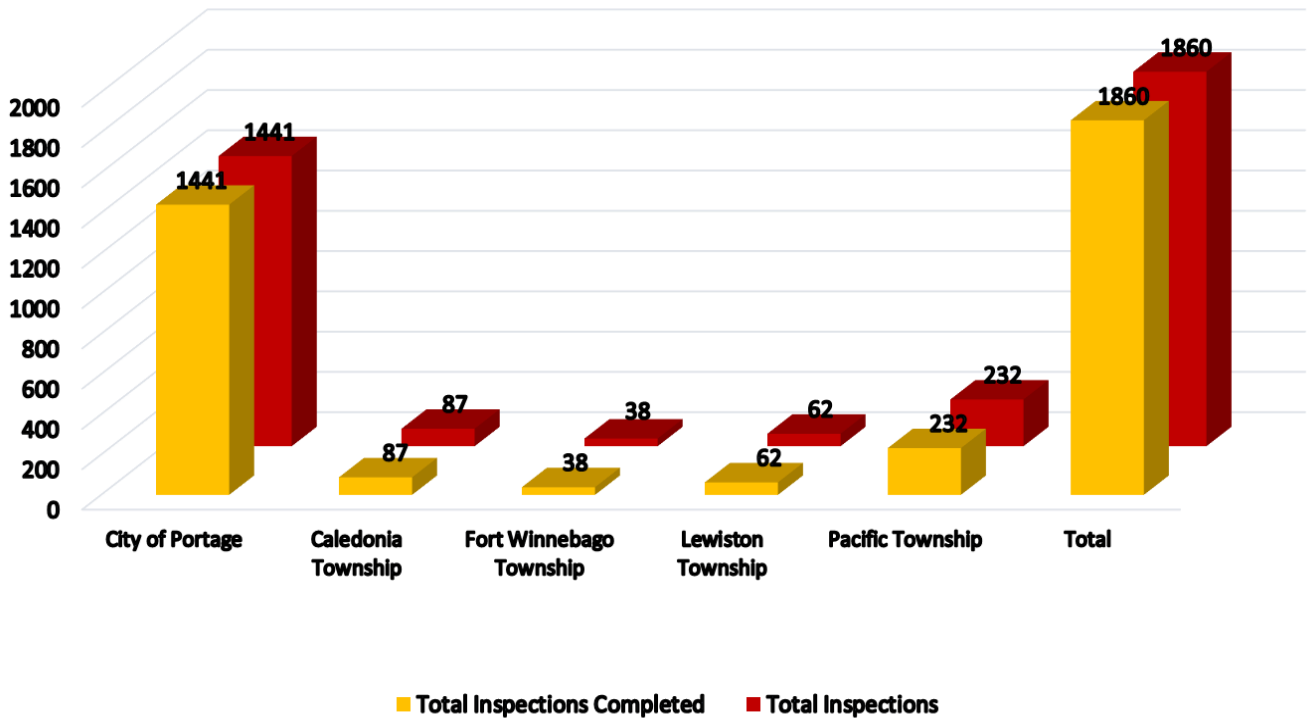
Med Flight landed at the station and educated our residents on their role in saving lives. Here are pictures of the interactions our members had with the citizens of Portage.



FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTIONS

Community	Total Inspections Completed	Total Inspections
City of Portage	1441	1441
Caledonia Township	87	87
Fort Winnebago Township	38	38
Lewiston Township	62	62
Pacific Township	232	232
Total	1860	1860

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED



NFPA 1720 RESPONSE BENCHMARKS

The response times for the Portage Fire Department have been slowly decreasing over the past three years. The inability to make major improvements can be attributed to multiple issues, such as the increased distance from the members residence to the station, the inability to leave their place of employment, differing generational perspectives, and a multitude of other reasons. The PFD is actively encouraging volunteerism by establishing cadet and mentoring programs, focusing on a more diverse workforce, and changing the culture in the fire station. Recruitment and retention are the biggest challenge for fire service leaders. NFPA 1720 provides the benchmarks a volunteer or partially volunteer department must strive to meet.

NFPA 1720 applies to volunteers who typically don't have personnel on-duty in stations, and instead respond to a page from home, work, or elsewhere. It is this fact of volunteer response that introduces a key variable into the picture. Volunteers cannot guarantee availability like career, on-duty staff can do unless the volunteers are in the station when actually alerted. In this standard response goal, criteria are very different and intended to reflect the nature of a volunteer response system.

In general, NFPA 1720 provides the following benchmarks:

Urban Zones with >1000 people/square mile call for 15 staff to assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time.

- Portage Fire Department takes 9 Minutes and 9 Seconds to assemble 5 Personnel

Suburban Zones with 500-1000 people/square mile call for 10 staff to assemble an attack in 10 minutes, 80% of the time.

- Portage Fire Department takes 9 Minutes and 9 Seconds to assemble 5 Personnel

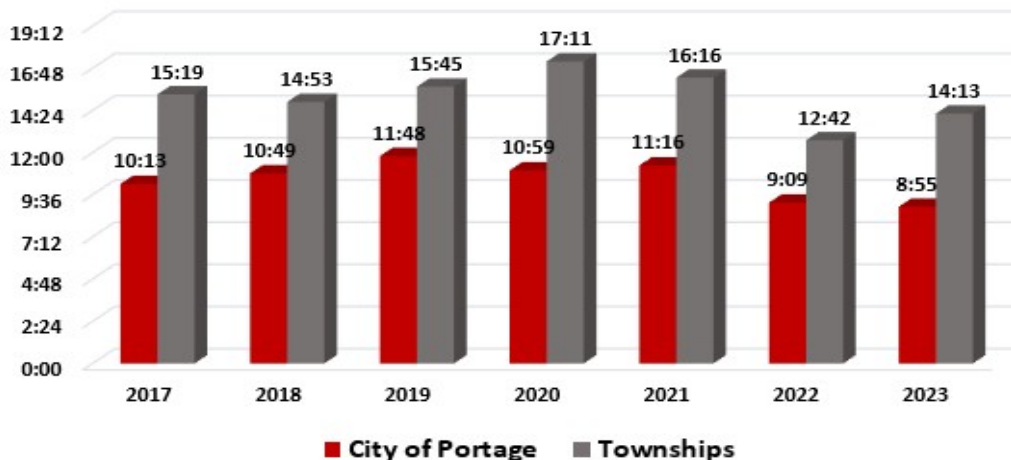
Rural Zones with <500 people/square mile call for 6 staff to assemble an attack in 14 minutes, 80% of the time.

- Portage Fire Department can accomplish this benchmark.

Remote Zones with a travel distance = or > 8 miles, call for 4 staff, once on scene, to assemble an attack in 2 minutes, 90% of the time.

- Portage Fire Department can accomplish this benchmark.

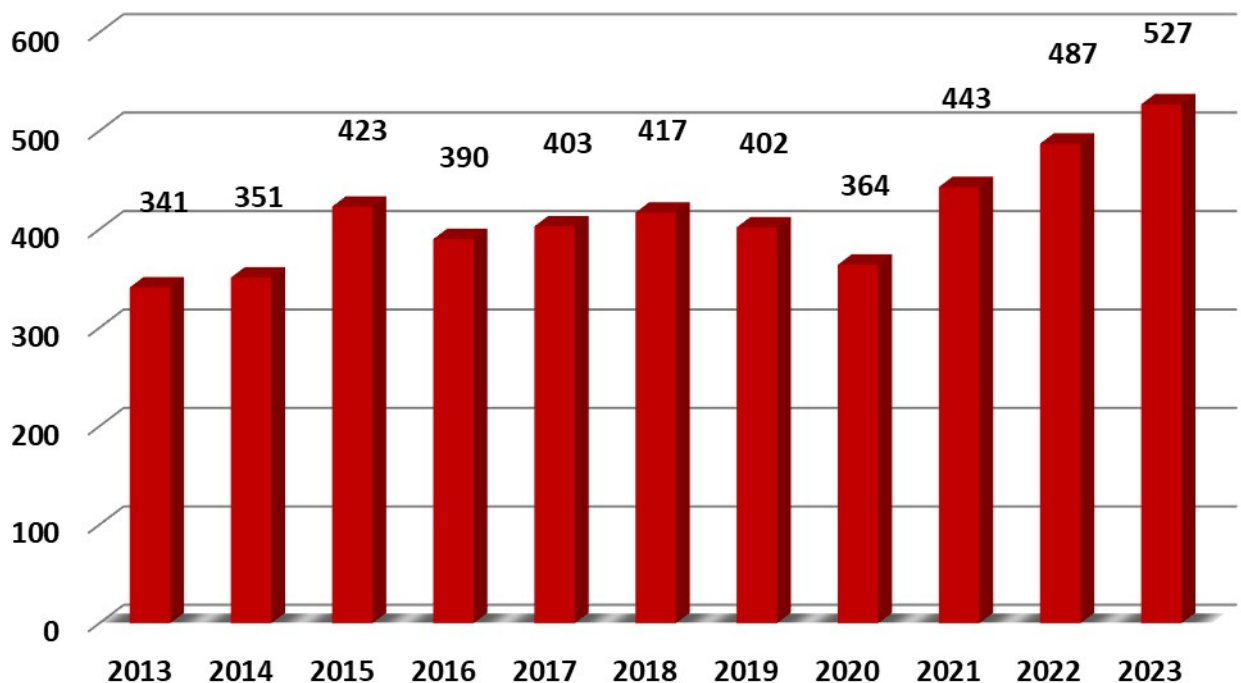
RESPONSE TIME COMPARISON



INCIDENT STATISTICS

The Portage Fire Department responded to 527 emergency calls in 2023, which is up 8% from the previous year, and up 18% on average over the past 10 years. The following statistics will provide a look at the type and number of calls we responded to. The following graphs breakdown the type and number of fires we responded to, as well as the fire loss per community. They also provide the number of calls we responded to in the City, and each of our surrounding communities. Statistics would also show that the PFD respond to more calls between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. of any given day. There is a small variation in the number of calls, based on the day of the week, but nothing that helps predict call volume. The statistics show that we respond to a high percentage of EMS related calls, but most of those are traffic crash or PNB related. As you study the statistics on the following pages, they will show the PFD responds to many different types of calls, which of course makes the job more difficult and requires additional training. The types of calls the fire service is responding to is always changing. In the past, we typically responded to fire and EMS calls, but with the changes in the world, we find ourselves responding to calls such as hazardous material incidents, methamphetamine drug labs, technical rescue and active shooter calls.

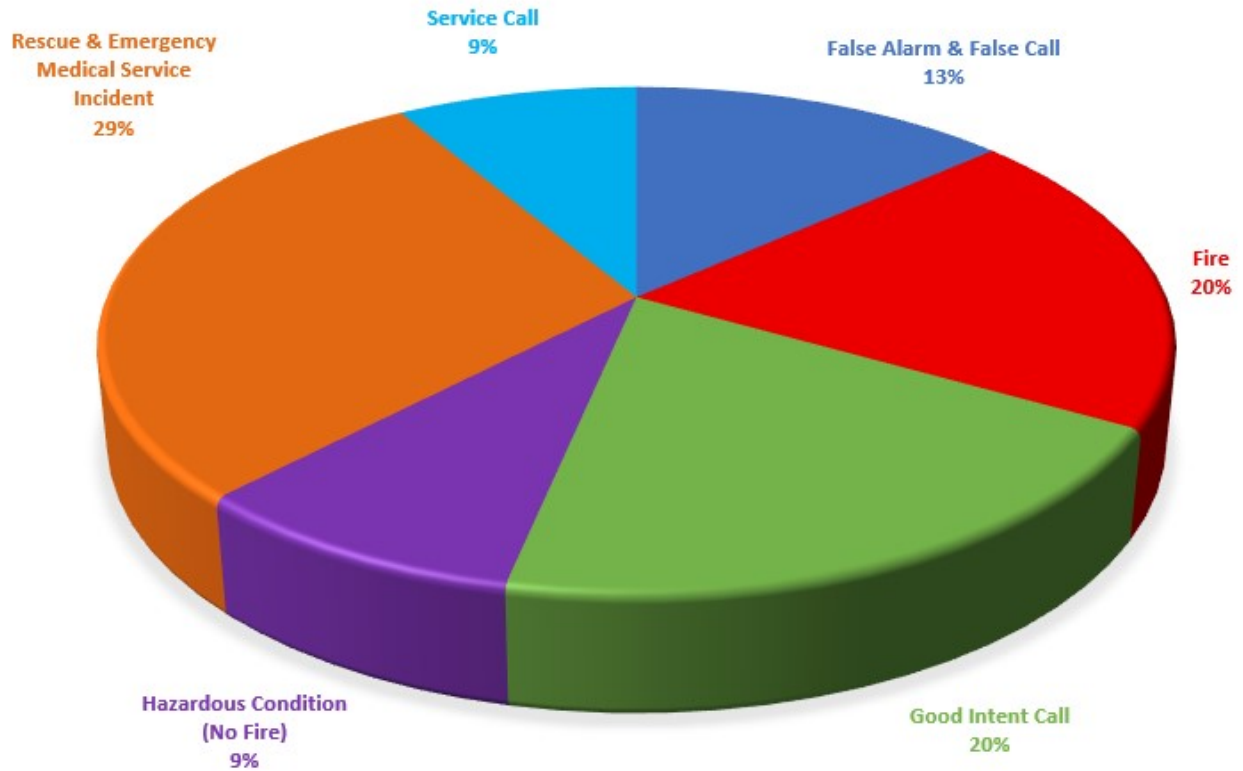
TOTAL RESPONSES BY YEAR



INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT BY TYPE	#
False Alarm & False Call	71
Fire	104
Good Intent Call	106
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	47
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	154
Service Call	45
Total	527

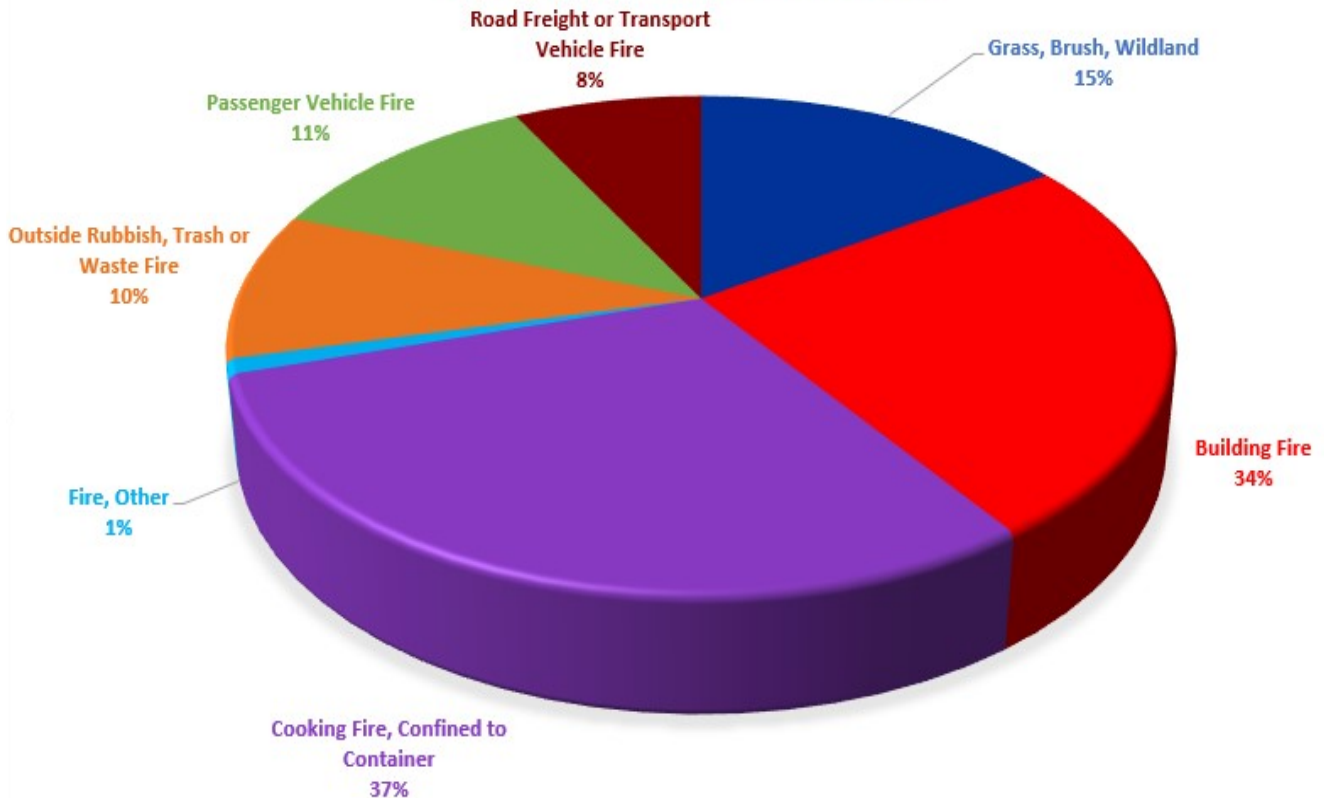
INCIDENT BY TYPE



INCIDENT STATISTICS

FIRE RESPONSE TYPES	#
Grass, Brush, Wildland	16
Building Fire	26
Cooking Fire, Confined to Container	31
Fire, Other	1
Outside Rubbish, Trash or Waste Fire	10
Passenger Vehicle Fire	12
Road Freight or Transport Vehicle Fire	8
Total	104

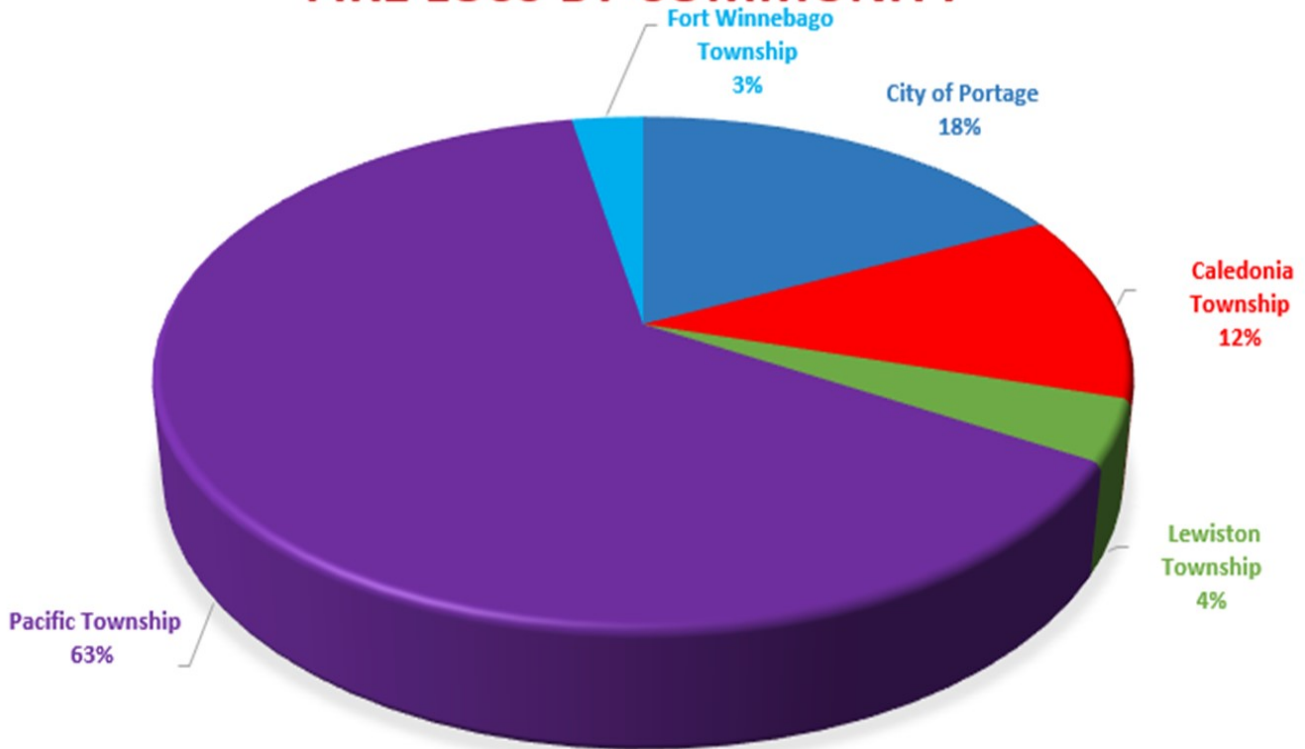
FIRE RESPONSE TYPES



INCIDENT STATISTICS

PROPERTY LOSS/SAVED BY COMMUNITY	LOSS	SAVED
City of Portage	\$128,600	\$963,360
Caledonia Township	\$86,000	\$187,280
Lewiston Township	\$28,000	\$0
Pacific Township	\$461,000	\$300,200
Fort Winnebago Township	\$20,500	\$0
Total	\$724,100	\$1,440,840
All Property Values Are Calculated Off Assessed Value AMPI and Columbia Solid Waste & Recycling Fires —Not Included		

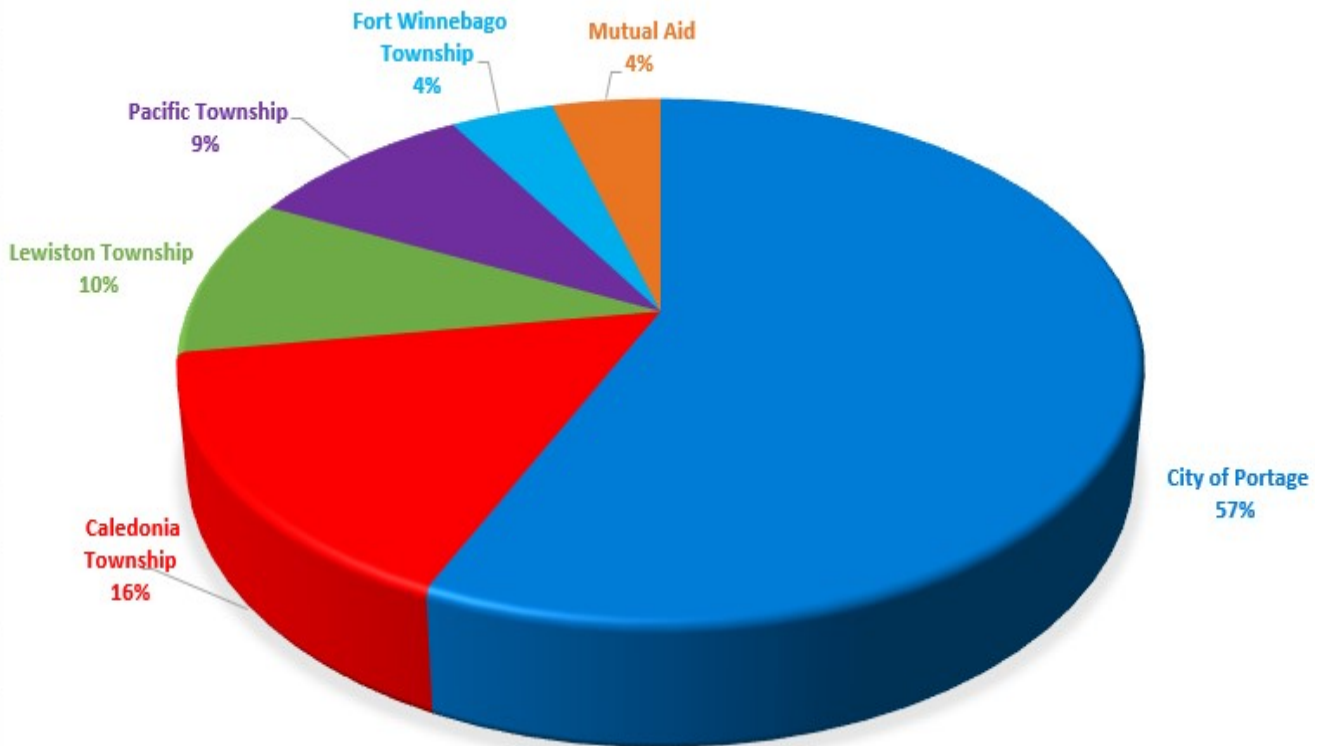
FIRE LOSS BY COMMUNITY



INCIDENT STATISTICS

RESPONSE NUMBERS BY COMMUNITY	#
City of Portage	299
Caledonia Township	83
Lewiston Township	52
Pacific Township	48
Fort Winnebago Township	22
Mutual Aid	23
Total	527

RESPONSE PERCENTAGE BY COMMUNITY





**THANK YOU TO THE CITIZENS & BUSINESSES
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT**

Special Thanks To:

City of Portage

Town of Caledonia

Town of Fort Winnebago

Town of Lewiston

Town of Pacific

Respectfully Submitted By:

Fire Chief Troy Haase