



Portage Fire Rescue 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

DUTY

HONOR

PRIDE

TRADITION



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MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

At Portage Fire Rescue, we are proud to serve and protect our community with dedication, professionalism, and innovation. Over the past year, we have not only continued our mission of fire suppression, prevention, and education but have also expanded our emergency medical services (EMS) to better meet the needs of our residents.

This year's annual report highlights the incredible progress we have made, including the development of our new EMS program. As emergency calls continue to evolve, we recognized the growing need for enhanced medical response capabilities. Through extensive training, new equipment acquisitions, and strengthened partnerships with healthcare providers, we have built a program that improves patient care, reduces response times, and ensures that our community receives the highest level of emergency medical support.

We invite you to explore this report to learn more about our agency's efforts, achievements, and the dedicated men and women who make it all possible. Whether it is our firefighters responding to life-threatening situations, our fire inspectors working to prevent hazards, or our EMS personnel providing critical medical care, every initiative is focused on one goal, keeping our community safe.

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 overtime, your agency 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 valuable resource.

Subsequently, our recruitment and retention programs focus on hiring those candidates who possess the attributes, qualities and skills communicated in our agency's mission and vision statements, and core values.

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 personnel of Portage Fire Rescue 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 our 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.

Thank you for your continued support, and we encourage you to read about the strides we have made this year. Together, we are building a safer, healthier, and more resilient community.



*Fire Chief
Troy Haase*

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION

Portage Fire Rescue 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

Portage Fire Rescue 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 Portage Fire Rescue, 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 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 agency 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 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

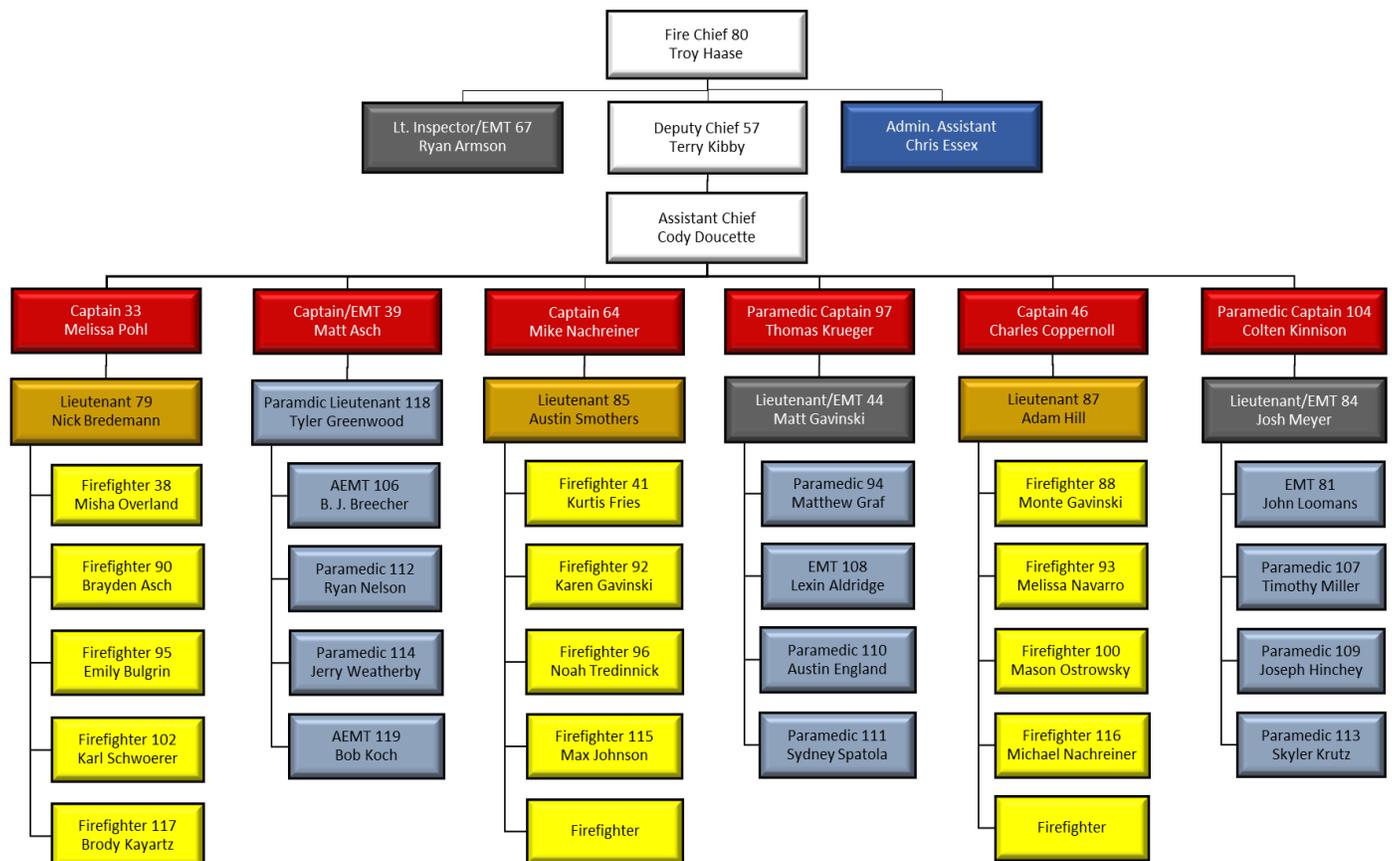
Portage Fire Rescue strives to provide the best service possible by putting the community and its needs first. It is the agency's goal to actively engage Portage's residents. Portage Fire Rescue values and respects diverse internal and external cultures, constantly working to improve service delivery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

The agency's fire response coverage is 170 square miles to include the Townships of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, and Pacific.

With the addition of the new EMS program the EMS response territory increased to 215 square miles. This also includes the Township of Marcellon and a portion of the Township of Wyocena. The services provided by Portage Fire Rescue include:

- Critical Fire Suppression
- Advance Life Support EMS care and transport
- Technical teams, including technical rescue, water rescue, and hazardous materials response
- Fire Prevention and Public Education
- Fire Investigation
- Mutual aid response to neighboring jurisdictions

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 Portage Fire Rescue 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: John Loomans

Executive Committee

Terry Kibby
Austin Smothers
Adam Hill
Melissa Pohl
Brayden Asch

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

The International Association of Fire Fighter's (IAFF) is a labor organization that the 18 full-time members of Portage Fire Rescue belong to. The IAFF represents more than 344,440 professional fire fighters and emergency medical workers in the United States and Canada and is the driving force behind almost every advancement in fire and emergency services in the 21st century.

The IAFF represents 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 following officers govern the membership.

IAFF Local 2775 Members

President: Matt Asch
Vice President: Josh Meyer
Secretary: Ryan Armson
Treasurer: Matt Gavinski



MEMBERSHIP

Member Name	Rank	Hire Date	Years of Service
Troy Haase	Fire Chief	11/30/2020	4.25
Cody Doucette	Assistant Chief of EMS	9/25/2023	1.42
Terry Kibby	Deputy Chief	10/13/2000	24.33
Matthew Asch	Captain/Engineer/EMT	10/9/1984	27.08
Thomas Krueger	Paramedic Captain	6/15/2023	1.67
Colten Kinnison	Paramedic Captain	11/5/2024	0.25
Melissa Pohl	Captain	6/22/2005	19.67
Michael Nachreiner	Captain	8/20/2009	15.50
Charles Coppernoll	Captain	12/19/2018	6.17
Ryan Armson	Lieutenant/Inspector/EMT	8/20/2009	15.50
Josh Meyer	Lieutenant/Engineer/EMT	6/29/2021	3.67
Matthew Gavinski	Lieutenant/Engineer/EMT	3/20/2015	9.92
Tyler Greenwood	Paramedic Lieutenant	12/16/2025	0.17
Nicholas Bredemann	Lieutenant	12/23/2014	10.17
Austin Smothers	Lieutenant	9/28/2021	3.42
Adam Hill	Lieutenant	4/22/2022	2.83
Mihaela Overland	Firefighter	1/6/2015	10.08
Kurtis Fries	Firefighter	10/14/2015	9.33
Johnathan Loomans	Firefighter/EMT	3/5/2021	3.92
Monte Gavinski	Firefighter	7/17/2022	2.58
Brayden Asch	Firefighter/EMT	1/6/2023	2.08
Melissa Goden Navarro	Firefighter/EMT	3/17/2023	1.92
Karen Gavinski	Firefighter/EMT	3/17/2023	1.92
Matthew Graf	Firefighter/Paramedic	5/8/2023	1.80
Emily Bulgrin	Firefighter/EMT	5/30/2023	1.75
Noah Tredinnick	Firefighter/EMT	5/30/2023	1.75
Mason Ostrowsky	Firefighter/EMT	1/11/2024	1.08
Karl Schwoerer	Firefighter/EMT	8/8/2024	0.50
Lexin Aldridge	Firefighter/EMT	11/5/2024	0.25
B. J. Breecher	Firefighter/AEMT	11/5/2024	0.25
Austin England	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Joseph Hinchey	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Skyler Krutz	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Timothy Miller	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Ryan Nelson	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Sydney Spatola	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Jerry Weatherby	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	0.25
Robert Koch	Firefighter/AEMT	11/5/2024	0.17
Max Johnson	Cadet/Firefighter	9/3/2024	0.42
Michael Nachreiner Jr.	Cadet/Firefighter	9/3/2024	0.42
Brody Kayartz	Cadet/Firefighter	9/3/2024	0.42
Chris Essex	Administrative Assistant	3/4/1991	33.92

MEMBERSHIP



The Portage Community School District supports Portage Fire Rescue by fostering relationships and engaging youth in learning about, and ultimately becoming members of the agency. It is crucial to attract people into the emergency services while they are young so 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 agency with support and a powerful recruitment mechanism. Max Johnson, Michael Nachreiner Jr., and Brody Kayartz are Seniors at the Portage High School and are participating in our cadet program. Max, Michael, and Brody have also completed the requirements to join the agency as Paid-on-Call members.

Max Johnson



Michael Nachreiner Jr.



Brody Kayartz



Front Row Left to Right: Skyler Krutz, Ryan Nelson, Matt Graf, Adam Hill, Melissa Goden Navarro, Terry Kibby, Troy Haase, Karen Gavinski, Monte Gavinski, Mihaela Overland, Tim Miller, Joseph Hinchey,

Second Row Left to Right: Kurtis Fries, Cody Doucette, Austin Smothers, Emily Bulgrin, Mason Ostrowsky, Karl Schwoerer, Ryan Armson, Mike Nachreiner, Matt Gavinski, Lexin Aldridge, B. J. Breecher

Third Row Left to Right: Thomas Krueger, Colten Kinnison, Matt Asch, Brayden Asch, Josh Meyer, Brody Kayartz, Michael Nachreiner Jr., Max Johnson, Austin England, Noah Tredinnick, Johnathan Loomans, Charles Coppernoll

Missing: Chris Essex, Melissa Pohl, Sydney Spatola, Jerry Weatherby, Nick Bredemann, Tyler Greenwood, Bob Koch

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

CITY OF PORTAGE

City Council & Staff Members

Mayor: Mitchel Craig

Aldersperson by District:

District 1: Matthew Fiene

District 6: Kyle Bernander

District 2: Susan Bauer Frye

District 7: Karyn Wetzel

District 3: David Paul

District 8: Dale Petelinsek

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: Eric Anderson

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

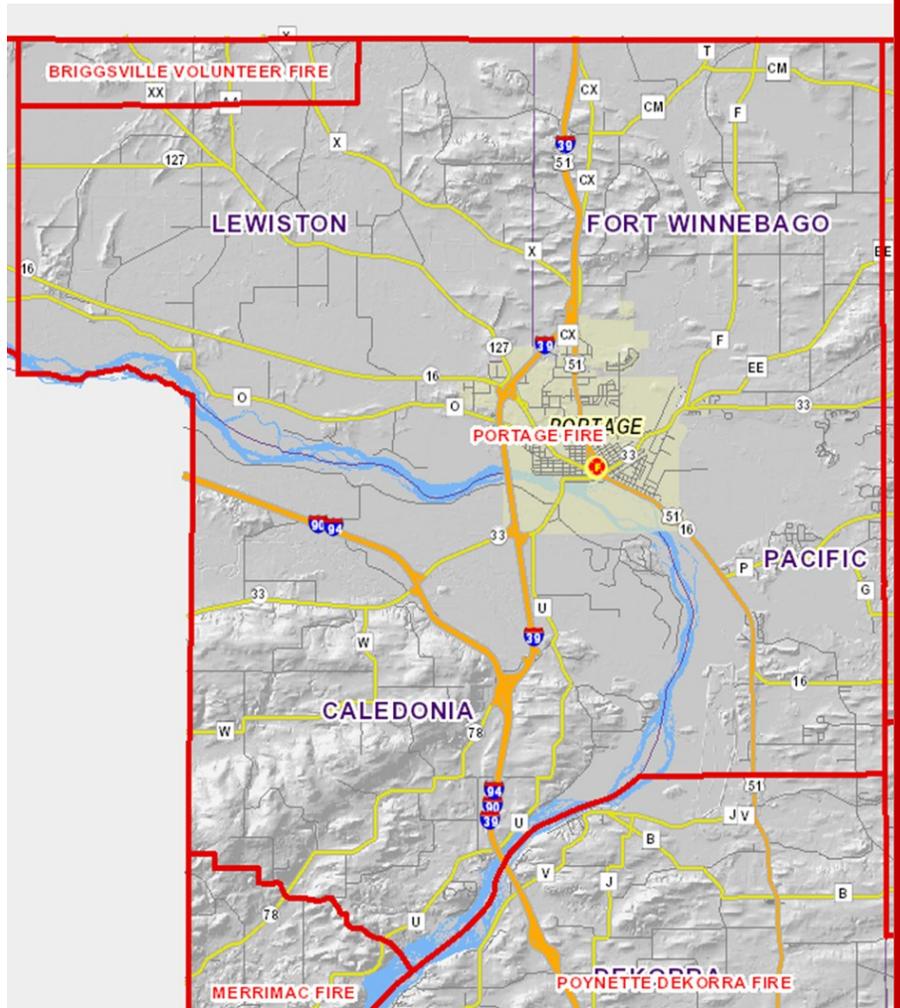
AREA OF COVERAGE

Portage Fire Rescue provides fire service to approximately 16,000 residents spread across 170 square miles to include the City of Portage, the Towns of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, and Pacific. That area spans over 21.8% of Columbia County.

TOWNSHIP WATER SUPPLY

Water is the lifeline of firefighting, especially in rural areas where access can be limited. Unlike urban settings with hydrants, rural fires often require tender shuttles, drafting from ponds or streams, and careful water management to sustain fire suppression efforts. Adequate water supply directly impacts firefighting effectiveness, property preservation, and firefighter safety. Pre-planning water sources, ensuring proper equipment, and coordinating resources are essential to overcoming these challenges. In rural firefighting, every drop counts, preparedness saves lives and property. Portage Fire Rescue 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 agency can initially bring 5,750 gallons of water to the scene, which can suppress most of the fires the agency responds to. If additional personnel and water are needed, they can activate the Columbia County Division 135 Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) for additional resources.

In rural areas, firefighting relies heavily on mutual aid partnerships to ensure adequate resources, personnel, and water supply. With limited staffing and long response times, neighboring departments play a critical role in providing additional support during emergencies. Coordinating resources such as tenders, a workforce, and specialized equipment enhances firefighting efforts, improves safety, and helps protect lives and property. Strong mutual aid agreements and regular joint training ensure seamless cooperation when every second counts. In



rural firefighting, teamwork is not just beneficial, it is essential.

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 do not have their own fire department, instead they contract for those services to be provided by Portage Fire Rescue. 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

At Portage Fire Rescue, a singular mission drives our operations: to protect lives, property and environment with efficiency, professionalism, and dedication. Every emergency response relies on a combination of well-trained personnel, state-of-the-art equipment, and a commitment to life safety, property, and environmental conservation. Over the past year, we have continued to invest in these critical areas to better serve our community.

Having the right tools can make the difference between life and death. This year, we have enhanced our fleet and firefighting resources with new equipment, ensuring our firefighters have access to the latest technology. From upgraded personal protective gear to advanced fire suppression systems and life-saving medical equipment, these improvements allow us to respond faster, operate more efficiently, and enhance overall safety on the fireground.

While technology and equipment play a crucial role, the heart of our operations lies in our dedicated firefighters, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and support staff. Their training, expertise, and commitment to service are invaluable. We continue to prioritize ongoing education, specialized training, and leadership development to ensure our team is always prepared for any emergency.

Having highly trained and dedicated firefighter EMS personnel are essential to ensuring the safety and well-being of our community. These professionals are the first line of defense in emergencies, responding to fires, medical crises, accidents, and disasters with skill and precision. Their extensive training in fire suppression, emergency medical care, hazardous materials response, and technical rescue enable them to make split-second decisions that save lives. Beyond their technical expertise, their unwavering commitment to service ensures that every call is met with professionalism, compassion, and a sense of duty. Investing in continuous education and advanced training not only enhances their abilities but also strengthens the overall resilience of our emergency response system. A well-prepared and dedicated team is the foundation of public safety, ensuring that when emergencies arise, help arrives swiftly and effectively.

Every call we respond to whether a structure fire,

medical emergency, or hazardous materials incident is guided by two primary goals: protecting lives and minimizing property loss. Through rapid response, strategic firefighting tactics, and fire prevention efforts, we work tirelessly to reduce risk and prevent devastating losses for our community.

With our expansion into emergency medical services, we hired 14 additional firefighter EMS personnel to staff three ambulances. Those 14 personnel will be integrated into our current staff of 8 full-time personnel and 21 paid-on-call firefighters. In 2024, the agency responded to 608 incidents. For comparison's sake, our agency responded to 527 incidents in 2023. While emergency responses increased our fire responses decreased. Our fire loss decreased, and our property values saved increased to \$3,455,080.



In November of 2024, we were fortunate to receive our new Pierce Mid-mount Platform which replaced our 1992 Pierce rear-mount ladder truck.

As we reflect on the past year, we recognize that our success is built on the dedication of our personnel, the support of our community, and the advancements that allow us to perform our duties more effectively. At Portage Fire Rescue, we remain committed to continuous improvement, ensuring we are always ready to answer the call when our community needs us most.



*Captain
Matthew Asch*

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION

At Portage Fire Rescue, our mission goes beyond responding to emergencies, we work proactively to prevent them. Through fire inspection and community risk reduction programs, we help ensure the safety of residents, businesses, and first responders. These efforts play a vital role in minimizing fire hazards, reducing property loss, and ultimately saving lives.

Fire inspections are a critical component of public safety. By identifying hazards such as faulty wiring, blocked exits, or improper storage of flammable materials, our inspectors help prevent fires before they start. Routine inspections of homes, businesses, schools, and public buildings ensure compliance with fire codes and create a safer environment for everyone. When property owners address these risks, they not only protect their investments but also contribute to the overall safety of the community.

Community risk reduction (CRR) is a strategic effort to identify and mitigate risks before they lead to emergencies. CCR includes fire prevention education, smoke alarm installations, emergency preparedness training, and outreach programs tailored to high-risk populations. By working with schools, senior centers, and local organizations, we empower residents with knowledge and resources to prevent fires and respond effectively in an emergency.

Fire safety is a shared responsibility. Through fire inspections and CRR initiatives, we work alongside residents and businesses to create a culture of prevention. The result is fewer emergencies, reduced injury and loss, and a stronger, more resilient community.

The fire inspection program included 1822 fire inspections, and additional liquor and motel license reviews, site plan reviews, occupancy inspections, and life safety system tests. All inspections required by the State of Wisconsin were completed with a 50% 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.

We believe that fire prevention starts with education. By teaching fire safety in grade schools, assisted living facilities, fire station tours, and business fire safety classes, we empower individuals of all ages to recognize risks, respond appropriately, and help prevent emergencies before they happen.

Fire safety lessons in grade schools provide children with critical knowledge that can save lives. Through interactive programs, students learn about fire hazards, escape planning, and the importance of smoke alarms. By instilling these lessons early, we help create a generation that understands the importance of fire prevention and preparedness.

Fire station tours offer a hands-on learning experience for families, schools, and community groups. These visits allow participants to meet firefighters, see equipment up close, and learn firsthand about fire prevention and emergency response. It's an excellent opportunity to foster trust between the agency and the community we serve.

Workplace fire safety training is essential for protecting employees, customers, and property. Our fire safety classes for businesses cover fire extinguisher use, evacuation procedures, and hazard identification. A well-prepared workforce can prevent small incidents from becoming major emergencies.

Fire safety education is not just about information, it's about empowerment. By providing knowledge and training to people of all ages, we strengthen our community's ability to prevent fires and respond effectively when emergencies occur. We are committed to educating, protecting, and serving our residents, because fire safety is a responsibility we all share.



*Lieutenant—Inspector
Ryan Armson*

TRAINING DIVISION

In the fire service, training is not just a requirement, it's a lifeline. The ability to respond swiftly, strategically, and safely to emergencies is built on continuous learning and hands-on preparation. At Portage Fire Rescue, we prioritize training to ensure our firefighters are always ready to protect lives, property, and our community.

Time is critical in emergency response. Well-trained firefighters operate with precision, reducing response times and executing tasks with confidence. Routine drills, live simulations, and scenario-based training help refine skills, improve coordination, and eliminate inefficiencies. This preparation ensures every action taken on the fireground is deliberate and effective, minimizing risks and maximizing impact.

Beyond speed, training ensures firefighters make the right decisions under pressure. From fire suppression tactics to advanced rescue techniques, ongoing education strengthens problem-solving abilities and adaptability in dynamic situations. Training also reinforces teamwork, ensuring seamless communication and coordination in high-stakes environments.

A highly trained agency doesn't just respond to emergencies, it prevents them. Through fire prevention education, hazardous materials training, and community outreach, our firefighters proactively protect lives before disaster strikes. Additionally, continuous learning fosters a culture of excellence, boosting morale, retention, and professional growth within our agency.

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. Portage Fire Rescue completed approximately 10,778 hours of training in 2024. 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 five new paid-on-call firefighters and fourteen full-time firefighter EMS personnel in 2024. These new members are responsible for demonstrating a tremendous amount of knowledge and skill throughout their first year on probation.

Many of the firefighters in 2024 worked hard to improve their education and skills as they completed firefighter, fire officer, incident command and hazardous material certification classes. Six members completed Entry Level Fire Fighter, four members completed Firefighter I and Hazardous Material Operations Class, three members completed Fire Officer I, eleven members completed the National Incident Management ICS 300 and 400 courses, fifteen members completed Introduction to Wildland Firefighting, 10 members completed the Emergency Medical Technician course, 10 members completed the Hazardous Material Technician course and one member completed Driver Operator I.

At Portage Fire Rescue we are committed to investing in training because we know it saves lives. By staying efficient and effective, we uphold our duty to serve with courage, skill, and dedication, ensuring the safety and well-being of our residents every day.



*Lieutenant
Joshua Meyer*

EMS DIVISION

A Historic Achievement: Expanding EMS Services for Our Community

The past year has been a defining moment for Portage Fire Rescue as we successfully transitioned to providing full emergency medical services (EMS) for our community. With the passage of the EMS referendum, we secured the necessary funding to build a stronger, more responsive agency, one capable of handling the growing demand for emergency medical care. This achievement was the result of tireless dedication, extensive planning, and unwavering support from our residents, local leaders, and agency personnel.

Recognizing the increasing call volume for EMS, our agency, in collaboration with city officials, undertook a comprehensive evaluation of our emergency response capabilities. It became clear that assuming full EMS operations would improve response times, enhance patient care, and ensure a more efficient use of resources. However, such an undertaking required careful planning, community engagement, and a shared vision for the future.

The EMS referendum provided crucial funding to support this transition, allowing us to hire and train 14 additional firefighter EMS personnel.



Members of the Professional Fire Fighters of WI from across the State helped educate the community on Fire-based EMS.

This expansion not only strengthened our agency but also ensured that every emergency call whether fire or medical would be

handled by highly trained, cross-functional professionals dedicated to serving the public.

With the referendum's approval, the next challenge was hiring, recruitment and training. The process of hiring 14 new firefighter EMS personnel was thorough and competitive, ensuring that we brought in individuals who met the highest standards of professionalism and skill. Each new hire underwent extensive training to integrate seamlessly into our agency operations, gaining expertise in both fire suppression and advanced medical response.



New members that successfully completed the 2024 recruit academy.

Training included classroom education, hands-on simulations, and real-world experience in the field, ensuring that our team was fully prepared to take over EMS responsibilities on January 1st. Existing personnel also participated in refresher training and new protocol development to ensure a smooth transition. This investment in education and preparation was essential to maintaining the high level of service our community expects and deserves.

On January 1, 2025, our agency officially assumed full responsibility for EMS response. This transition marked a historic moment for Portage Fire Rescue and a major step forward in enhancing public safety. The successful launch of our expanded EMS services was made possible by months of planning, coordination, and

Continued Page 15

EMS DIVISION

commitment from our firefighters, officers, city leaders, and support staff.

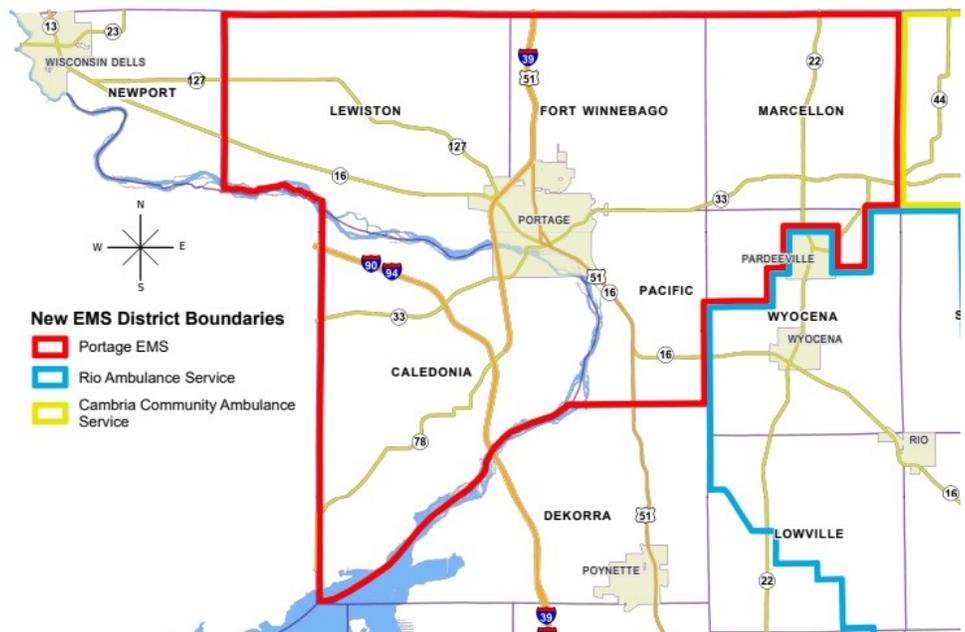
With our newly expanded team in place, we are now able to staff the necessary ambulances, reduce response times, and ensure that critical medical care arrives quickly when seconds matter most. Our firefighter EMS personnel stand ready to provide lifesaving treatment, transport patients, and respond to a wide range of medical emergencies with skill and professionalism.

While the transition to full EMS operations was a significant achievement, our work has not stop here. As we move forward, we remain focused on continuous improvement investing in advanced training, new medical equipment, and state-of-the-art technology to further enhance our capabilities.

We also recognize the importance of ongoing community engagement and education. Through public outreach programs, CPR training, and emergency preparedness initiatives, we aim to empower residents with the knowledge and tools to prevent medical emergencies and respond effectively when they do occur.

The success of this endeavor would not have been possible without the trust and support of our community. We extend our sincere appreciation to the residents who recognized the importance of this initiative and voted to support the referendum. Your commitment to public safety has enabled us to build a stronger, more responsive fire and EMS agency one that will serve our community for generations to come.

We also thank our dedicated firefighters, EMS personnel, and leadership team for their hard



work in making this transition a reality. Your commitment to excellence, professionalism, and service is the foundation of our success.

As we look ahead, Portage Fire Rescue remains dedicated to protecting lives and enhancing emergency services for all. The passage of the EMS referendum was a monumental achievement, but it is just the beginning. With a stronger, more capable agency, we are prepared to meet the challenges of the future and continue providing the highest level of care for those who need it most.

Overall Portage Fire Rescue will provide EMS service to the City of Portage, the Townships of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, Pacific, Marcellon and a portion of the Town of Wyocena. The total response area serves 18,500 residents spread across 215 square miles.

*Assistant Chief of EMS
Cody Doucette*



Together, we have built a safer, healthier, and a much more resilient community.

EMS DIVISION

NEW EMS PERSONNEL



Lexin Aldridge



B. J. Breecher



Austin England



Matthew Graf



Tyler Greenwood



Colten Kinnison



Robert Koch



Skyler Krutz



Thomas Krueger



Johnathan Loomans



Timothy Miller



Ryan Nelson



Sydney Spatola



Jerry Weatherby

INSURANCE SERVICES OFFICE RATING

CITY ISO RATING DECREASES

Insurance Services Office (ISO) is an independent company that serves insurance companies, communities, fire departments, insurance regulators, and others by providing information about risk. ISO's expert staff collects information about municipal fire suppression efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data and assigns a PPC grade – a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents an exemplary fire suppression program, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria.

ISO collects and evaluates information from communities in the United States on their structure fire suppression capabilities. The data is analyzed using our Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) and then a Public Protection Classification (PPC®) grade is assigned to the community.

The FSRS recognizes fire protection features only as they relate to suppression of first alarm structure fires. In many communities, fire suppression may be only a small part of the fire department's overall responsibility. ISO recognizes the dynamic and comprehensive duties of a community's fire service and understands the complex decisions a community must make in planning and delivering emergency services. However, in developing a community's PPC grade, only features related to reducing property losses from structural fires are evaluated.

A community's investment in fire mitigation is a proven and reliable predictor of future fire losses. Statistical data on insurance losses bears out the relationship between excellent fire protection – as measured by the PPC program – and low fire losses. So, insurance companies use PPC information for marketing, underwriting, and to help establish fair premiums for homeowners and commercial fire insurance. In general, the price of fire insurance in a community with a good PPC grade is substantially lower than in a community with a poor PPC grade, assuming all other factors are equal.

ISO's PPC program evaluates communities according to a uniform set of criteria, incorporating nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the American Water Works Association. A community's PPC grade depends on:

- Needed Fire Flows, which are representative building locations used to determine the theoretical amount of water necessary for fire suppression purposes.
- Emergency Communications, including emergency reporting, telecommunicators, and dispatching systems.
- Fire Department, including equipment, staffing, training, geographic distribution of fire companies, operational considerations, and community risk reduction.
- Water Supply, including inspection and flow testing of hydrants, alternative water supply operations, and a careful evaluation of the amount of available water compared with the amount needed to suppress fires up to 3,500 gallons per minute.

Through ongoing research and loss experience analysis, we identified additional differentiation in fire loss experience within our PPC program, which resulted in the revised classifications. We based the differing fire loss experience on the fire suppression capabilities of each community. The new PPC classes will improve the predictive value for insurers while benefiting both commercial and residential property owners.

When we develop a split classification for a community – for example 4/9 – the first number is the class that applies to properties within 5 road miles of the responding fire station and 1,000 feet of a creditable water supply, such as a fire hydrant, suction point, or dry hydrant. The second number is the class that applies to properties within 5 road miles of a fire station but beyond 1,000 feet of a creditable water supply. Class 10 applies to properties over 5 road miles of a recognized fire station.

ISO concluded its review of the fire suppression features being provided for Portage FPSA. **The resulting community classification was a Class 03.** This is an improvement from a 3/3Y rating in 2018.

In 2024, Portage Fire Rescue completed additional testing criteria to help lower the rating for the areas within 5 road miles of the fire station. ISO concluded its review of the fire suppression features being provided for the townships. **The resulting community classification was Class 4/10.** This is an improvement from Class 9 in 2018.

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 Portage Fire Rescue.

This individual has demonstrated an allegiance to the Agency, 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, which will lead to improvements in the service. He understands and is committed to the policies, procedures, values, and mission of the Agency. He performs his duties in a manner that is commendable and that all fire officers should strive to achieve, and 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 Agency's values. He believes in personal commitment to the organization and the community. He has committed many years of his life to Portage Fire Rescue and continues to provide his unwavering support.

These officers are the backbone of the fire service, bringing invaluable experience, leadership, and knowledge to Portage Fire Rescue. Their years of service provide crucial insight into fireground tactics, emergency response, and agency operations, helping to guide newer firefighters and ensure effective decision-making under pressure.

Beyond their operational expertise, these officers serve as mentors, preserving tradition while adapting to new challenges and technologies. Their leadership fosters stability, builds trust, and strengthens the fire services ability to protect communities. Experience is irreplaceable, and long-tenured officers play a vital role in shaping the future of the fire service.

This award was presented to Captain Mike Nachreiner and Lieutenant-Inspector Ryan Armson in recognition for 15 years of dedicated service to Portage Fire Rescue and the citizens we serve. An award for 5 years of dedicated service to Portage Fire Rescue was also presented to Charles Coppernoll.

*Lieutenant—Inspector
Ryan Armson*



*Captain
Mike Nachreiner*



*Captain
Charles Coppernoll*



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 Portage Fire Rescue. This individual recipient must exhibit an extraordinary commitment to leading the agency and have earned the trust and respect of their subordinates and peers. This can be evidenced by outstanding actions on the fireground or at other functions within their community during the year.

This individual has given selflessly of himself in support of the agency, the fire service in general, and the community. He has demonstrated the highest degree of dedication and participation to activities within the agency including training, fire response, public education, and other activities.

This individual has shown great leadership, fortitude, and dedication to the citizens of Portage and to the members of Portage Fire Rescue. He has the unique ability to inspire, motivate, create teamwork, and build morale in all the tasks with which he is involved. This person's leadership abilities set the tone for the agency, and he is always a positive influence. As one member of the agency clearly stated, "Josh continually goes above and beyond fulfilling his responsibilities and assuring the apparatus are ready to respond."

This individual supports the goals of the fire service, supports the agency'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. The Officer of the Year was awarded to Joshua Meyer.

*Lieutenant-Engineer
Joshua Meyer*



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 Portage Fire Rescue. This individual must be a team player who supports others' efforts to achieve the goals of the agency, supports the agency by embracing its policy and procedures, and by engaging in constructive criticism that will lead to improvements in the service.

This individual has given selflessly of himself in support of the agency, the fire service in general, and the community. He has demonstrated the highest degree of dedication and participation in the activities within Portage Fire Rescue including training, fire response, and community risk reduction.

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

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 2024 Top Responding Paid-On-Call Member. The Firefighter of the Year was awarded to Brayden Asch.

*Firefighter/EMT
Brayden Asch*



ANNUAL RESPONSE AWARDS

RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARDS

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

Portage Fire Rescue relies heavily on the members of the agency 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 2024 "Response Commendation Award" for responding to calls from December 1, 2023, through November 30, 2024.

Ryan Armson, Matthew Asch, Brayden Asch, Brian Bonovetz, Charles Coppernoll, Matthew Gavinski, Troy Haase, Karen Gavinski, Terry Kibby, Johnathan Loomans, Josh Meyer, Austin Smothers and Noah Tredinnick

TOP RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARD

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

For the aforementioned reasons, Engineer Matthew Gavinski was recognized as the 2024 Top Responding Full-time Member responding to 586 of 597 or 98% of all the calls from December 1, 2023 through November 30, 2024.

For the aforementioned reasons, Firefighter Brayden Asch was recognized as the 2024 Top Responding Paid-on-Call Member responding to 503 of 597 or 84% of all the calls from December 1, 2023, through November 30, 2024.

*Firefighter/EMT
Brayden Asch*

*Lieutenant-Engineer
Matthew Gavinski*



PROMOTIONS

In September of 2024, Portage Fire Rescue held promotional processes for the full time and paid-on-call staff. With the retirement of Lieutenant-Engineer Brian Bonovetz after 31 plus years of service an opening occurred for his position. An Assistant Chief position was created for the newly formed EMS program and two Lieutenant Paid-on-Call positions were also open.

The process began with the candidates 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. 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.

Matthew Gavinski started with the fire department as a paid-on-call member on March 20, 2015. He was promoted to the rank of Lieutenant in 2018 and was promoted to Captain in 2022. Matt was hired as a full time engineer on January 9, 2023, and was promoted to Lieutenant-Engineer in 2024.

Cody Doucette was hired September 25, 2023, as the Training and EMS Captain to help establish a new EMS program. Cody was promoted to Assistant Chief of EMS to manage all EMS operations.

Charles Coppernoll is serving for his second time, rejoining the Fire Department on December 19, 2018, was promoted to Lieutenant in 2022, and Captain in 2024.

Austin Smothers joined the fire department as a paid-on-call firefighter on September 28, 2021, and in 2024 he was promoted to Fire Lieutenant.

Adam Hill joined the fire department as a Paid-on Call firefighter on April 22, 2022, and in 2024 he was promoted to Fire Lieutenant.

*Lieutenant-Engineer
Matthew Gavinski*



*Assistant Chief of EMS
Cody Doucette*



*Lieutenant
Adam Hill*



*Lieutenant
Austin Smothers*



*Captain
Charles Coppernoll*



RETIREMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to Lieutenant Brian Bonovetz for his 31 plus years of dedicated service to Portage Fire Rescue and the communities we protect. Brian started as a paid-on-call firefighter in 1993. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 2001, Captain in 2005, and then Deputy Chief in 2010. On December 17, 2018, Brian was sworn in as a fulltime Engineer and was promoted to Lieutenant in 2021.

Throughout his career, he has exemplified leadership, courage, and an unwavering commitment to the safety and well-being of our residents. Whether on the fireground, or guiding the next generation of firefighters, Lieutenant Bonovetz has been a true example of professionalism and dedication. Brian retired on January 18, 2024, and committed 31 plus years to helping others in their time of need. As he embarks on this well-earned retirement, we thank him for his decades of service and wish him all the best in this next chapter of life. His legacy will remain a vital part of our department for years to come.



Mayor Craig & Administrator Bablick presented Brian a resolution recognizing his 31 plus years.



Chief Troy Haase presented Brian Bonovetz his Fire Helmet & Plaque

TRUCK 1 PUSH IN CEREMONY



Portage Fire Rescue received their new Pierce 100-foot mid-mount aerial platform in November. Beginning in the 1800s, after crews returned from a call on horse-drawn equipment, the horses were unable to back up into the station, requiring members to detach the horses and push the equipment into the bay. Over time, with the invention and adoption of motorized apparatus, the need to manually move the equipment was gone. In honor of those early firefighters, many fire departments hold a push-in ceremony when taking delivery of a new apparatus. These members attended the ceremony and helped the community members push our new truck in the station.

Front Row Left to Right: Brian Bonovetz, Matt Gavinski, Austin Smothers, Melissa Goden Navarro, Ryan Nelson, Jerry Weatherby, Sydney Spatola, Tim Miller, B. J. Breecher, Karl Schwoerer, Matt Graf, Troy Haase

Second Row Left to Right: Josh Meyer, Cody Doucette, Matt Asch, Thomas Krueger, Terry Kibby, Michael Nachreiner Jr., Brody Kayartz, Brayden Asch, Austin England, Noah Tredinnick

NEW MEMBERS

Join Our Team: Serve, Protect, and Make a Difference

Portage Fire Rescue is looking for dedicated individuals to join our team and serve the community as firefighters and emergency responders. Becoming a firefighter is more than just a job, it's a commitment to protecting lives, helping others in times of need, and being part of a brotherhood and sisterhood that stands strong in the face of any challenge.

Joining the fire service requires dedication, perseverance, and a willingness to learn. New members must complete rigorous training that includes fire suppression, emergency medical response, search and rescue, and hazardous materials handling. This training ensures that every firefighter is fully prepared to respond

effectively and safely to a variety of emergencies. The journey is demanding, but the reward of saving lives and making a difference in the community is immeasurable.

As a firefighter, you will be called upon at any time a day or night to respond to emergencies. It takes commitment, teamwork, and a deep sense of duty to serve in this role. But with that commitment comes the pride of knowing that you are part of something greater, a team dedicated to protecting lives and property.

If you have passion, drive, and willingness to serve, we invite you to join us. Portage Fire Rescue is more than just an agency, its a family, and we are always looking for individuals ready to step up and make a difference. Meet our new members that joined in 2024.



*Firefighter/EMT
Mason Ostrowsky*



*Firefighter
Karl Schwoerer*



*Firefighter
Max Johnson*



*Firefighter
Michael Nachreiner Jr.*



*Firefighter
Brody Kayartz*

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	\$1,200,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Engine 6	1990 Seagrave — City Engine 1,500 GPM	2028	\$970,000
	Primary Engine For Wildland Fires, Structure Fire Response, Back-up Engine		
Engine 8	2022 Pierce Enforcer — City Engine 2,000 GPM	2047	\$1,200,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Squad 2	2001 Pierce/Lance Heavy Rescue	2031	1,200,000
	Vehicle Accident, Technical Rescue Farm Accidents or Medical Related Rescues		
Truck 1	2024 Pierce — City Platform 2,000 GPM, 100' ladder	2049	\$2,000,000
	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	\$450,000
	Water Supply for Rural & City Non-hydrant Areas, Wildland Fires		
Brush 1	2009 Chevrolet 1 ton 4x4 — City/Township Pick-up Truck	2034	\$100,000
	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	\$60,000
	Water Rescue, Winter Related Rescues, Medical Rescues		
Car 1	2018 Ford Explorer	2028	\$60,000
	Command Post, Tow Vehicle		
Car 2	2017 Chevrolet Silverado	2027	\$70,000
	Fire Inspection/Investigations in the City & Towns, Tow Vehicle		
Medic 650	2024 Chevy Silverado	2034	\$70,000
	EMS Response Vehicle, Tow Vehicle		
Medic 651	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		
Medic 652	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		
Medic 653	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ADMINISTRATION:

- The agency responded to 608 calls for service or a 14% increase over 2023, which was the highest total in agency history.
- Completed promotional process for Lieutenant–Engineer Gavinski, Assistant Chief of EMS Doucette, paid-on-call Captain Coppernoll, and Lieutenants Smothers and Hill.
- Completed the ISO process and improved the City ISO rating to a 3 and improved the townships ISO rating from a 9 to a 4/10.
- Established an Advance Life Support EMS program to serve the City of Portage and the surrounding townships.

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.
- Received three 2023 Osage Ambulances for new EMS program.
- Received a 2024 Pierce mid-mount ariel platform.

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION:

- Completed all State required fire safety inspections—1822 inspections completed in the City and four surrounding Townships.
- Provided fire prevention education to hundreds of elementary aged students, local businesses and other public safety personnel in the City of Portage.

PERSONNEL/TRAINING

- Secured HMEP and State Hazmat Grant for a 40 hour HAZMAT Technician Course and 16 hours of HAZMAT refresher training for 2025.
- Secured a Fast Forward Grant from the Department of Workforce Development to send 11 personnel to Emergency Medical Technician Class.
- Recruited, hired and trained 14 new firefighter emergency medical service personnel.
- Chief Haase received the Fire Chief of the Year from the Wisconsin Professional Fire Fighters of Wisconsin



President Mahlon Mitchell presented the Fire Chief of the Year Award to Chief Haase.



Members attended EMT Class paid for by a grant from the Department of Workforce Development

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For a Fire and EMS agency to operate effectively and efficiently, it must have clearly defined goals and objectives. These serve as a roadmap, guiding decision-making, resource allocation, and overall operational success. Without them, agencies may struggle to adapt to evolving challenges, potentially impacting their ability to protect lives and property.

Goals provide a broad vision, such as improving response times, enhancing firefighter and EMS training, or expanding community outreach programs. Objectives break these goals into actionable, measurable steps, ensuring progress is tracked and adjustments can be made as needed. For example, if the goal is to reduce response times, objectives might include implementing new dispatch protocols, improving station coverage, or investing in GPS technology for faster routing.

Having structured goals and objectives also fosters accountability and teamwork. Personnel at all levels understand their roles in achieving agency-wide success, leading to better coordination and morale. Additionally, well-defined objectives help secure funding and community support by demonstrating a clear commitment to growth and service improvement.

A fire and EMS agency without goals operates reactively, one with clear objectives operates proactively. By setting and following strategic plans, agencies can continuously improve their effectiveness, ensuring they are always ready to serve their communities at the highest level.

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 2025.

Meet NFPA 1720 recommendation of 15 staff to assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time.

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

Objectives:

Continue to improve an effective recruitment and retention program in 2025.

Work with dispatch to implement pre-alerts for incidents in 2025.

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

Objectives:

Work with Columbia County IT to allow for CAD uploads into FireWorks program.

Goal Number 4: Continue to provide the most efficient and effective Fire and EMS response to the City and surrounding Townships.

Objectives:

Continue to explore the most productive and cost-effective way to provide Fire and EMS to our citizens in 2025.

Research additional funding sources for Fire and EMS.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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 2025.

Establish job performance records for practical training exercises in 2025.

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

Objectives:

Plan and coordinate with Madison Area Technical College to have all eligible members complete their next certification class in 2025.

All new officers complete the National Incident Management Systems Courses 300 and 400 to become NIMS compliant in 2025.

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 2025.

Develop a local electronic fire investigation data entry program through FireWorks software in 2025.

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 2025.

Continue re-inspection program and educate business owners on how to gain compliance using self-inspection in 2025.

Improve inspection program by training EMS personnel to conduct fire inspections.

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 2025.

Evaluate data and determine effectiveness of community risk reduction program in 2025.

Continue to integrate the initiatives of a Community Risk Reduction Program in 2025.

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

Objectives:

Complete risk assessments on all businesses in response territories in 2025.

THE PORTAGE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Portage Fire Rescue's Safety Committee consists of four members and one advisor who meet on a regular basis. Safety is a top priority in everything we do. A safe environment not only protects individuals but also ensures efficiency, productivity, and well-being. To uphold the highest standards, our safety committee is dedicated to identifying risks, enforcing regulations, and promoting best practices. Their oversight helps ensure compliance with safety protocols, preventing accidents and fostering a culture of accountability. By working together and staying vigilant, we create a safer, more secure environment for everyone.

Let's all do our part in prioritizing safety every day so **EVERYONE GOES HOME!**

Committee Members

Matthew Asch

Adam Hill

Michael Nachreiner

Johnathan Loomans

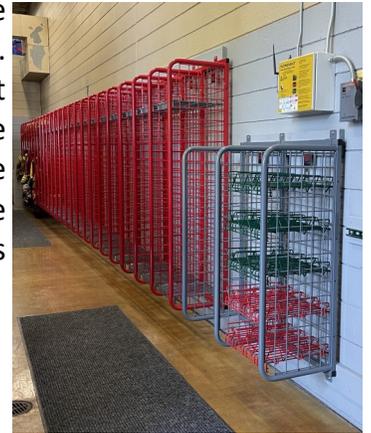
Noah Tredinnick

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Each year the Firefighters Association chooses projects or equipment they are interested in completing or purchasing to improve Portage Fire Rescue. The main source of fundraising is through the agency's food stand, "Station 2", located at the Columbia County Fairgrounds during the Columbia County Fair. This year the Association raised enough money to purchase new battery operated extrication tools and helped purchase new fire gear lockers for the apparatus bay. Without the firefighters generosity the agency 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

Charles Coppernoll and Austin Smothers 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

Portage Fire Rescue’s effectiveness extends beyond emergency response, it thrives on strong community partnerships. Building relationships with local businesses, schools, civic organizations, and residents enhances public safety, improves resources, and fosters trust.

Community partnerships help us with fire prevention education, disaster preparedness, and recruitment efforts. Local businesses provide sponsorships or equipment donations, while schools and organizations assist in spreading our fire safety message. Engaging with the community also strengthens our support for funding and volunteer recruitment, ensuring our agency has the necessary resources to serve effectively.

By working together, our agency and the community create a safer, more resilient environment. Strong partnerships not only help us excel but also build a culture of safety and preparedness that benefits everyone.

MADISON AREA TECHNICAL COLLEGE

Portage Fire Rescue wants to extend a huge thank you to Shawna Marquardt, Kallie Schultz and Peggy Nolden for their assistance with procuring a Fast Forward Grant from the Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development. This grant provided funding for eleven personnel to attend the MATC emergency medical technician course. This was a matching grant that provided two thirds of the course cost of \$85,621, with their portion being \$57,007.



WALMART/SAM’S CLUB LOCAL COMMUNITY GRANT

Walmart of Portage donated \$2,000 to Portage Fire Rescue to be used for ballistic gear at active shooter incidents. This gear will protect us when we are placed in situations where patients need to be removed from the hot zone.

CITY OF REFUGE CHURCH

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

CITY OF REFUGE

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

PORTAGE CULVER'S

Sydney Rogney and her staff donated \$2,903 to Portage Fire Rescue for the purchase of ballistic gear so our members are protected when they enter hostile work environments. 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.



FESTIVAL FOODS DONATION

In 2024, Festival Foods of Portage donated 126 cases of water to Portage Fire Rescue to help their firefighters stay hydrated on emergency scenes. The members want to thank Festival for their commitment to our organization.

FOREST FIRE PROTECTION GRANT PROGRAM

Portage Fire Rescue received \$4,310.70 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.



SUZY'S SEAFOOD & STEAK HOUSE

Jennifer Mair from Suzy's donated \$1,500 to Portage Fire Rescue to be used for ballistic gear to keep our members safe at active shooter incidents.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Fire prevention and education have 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 investigate 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 Dentist
 Elks Club—Red Kastner
 Earl & Gwynn Gall

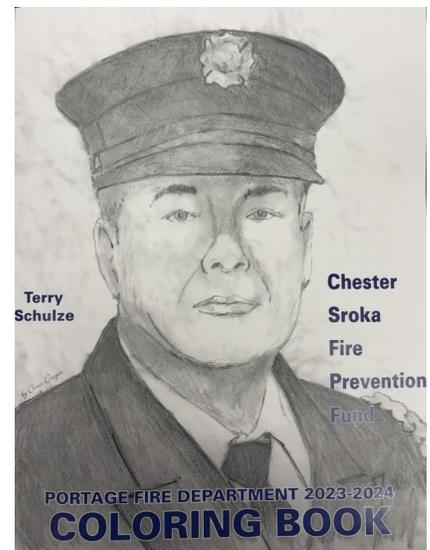
Baraboo State Bank
 Edward Jones—Klay Vehring
 Fearing's Satellite & Sound
 Precision Hair Designers
 Johnson Chiropractic
 J & J Fireball Lanes
 Hart & Olson Family Dentistry
 Shelia Link—American Family Ins.

Galley Studio
 Cardinal Glass
 Electric One
 Wieser Concrete
 Alter Metal Recycling
 Community Bank
 Crawford Oil



Each year Portage Fire Rescue 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 Lieutenant Terry Schulze for being the 2024 recipient. Thank you to **Chris Dryer** for his artistic work and the students for their wonderful drawings.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In 2024, Ryan Armson spent the fall in the schools performing fire safety talks to hundreds of children. During these visits he educates the children about 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.

In 2024, local fire departments across the country protecting towns, townships, cities, and counties, responded to an estimated 1,389,000 fires in the US. These fires caused an estimated 3,670 civilian deaths; 13,350 civilian injuries; and \$23 billion in direct property damage. On average, a fire department responded to a fire somewhere in the US every 23 seconds in 2023. A civilian was fatally injured in a fire every two hours and 23 minutes. Every 39 minutes, a civilian suffered a non-fatal fire injury. More than one-third of the fires (470,000—or 34 percent) occurred in or on structures. Most of the fire losses were caused by these fires, including 3,070 of the civilian fire deaths (84 percent); 11,790 of the civilian fire injuries (88 percent); and \$14.7 billion of the direct property damage (83 percent).



2024 FIRE PREVENTION PROCLAMATION

Each year Mayor Mitchel Craig presents a Fire Prevention Proclamation to Portage Fire Rescue to recognize Fire Prevention Week. This proclamation was based on the 2024 NFPA Theme, "Smoke Alarms; Make the Them Work for You". It also urges the Portage residents to check their smoke alarms each month to make sure they are functioning properly.

KEEP THE WREATH GREEN

Portage Fire Rescue launched its 3rd Annual, "Keep the Wreath Green," Fire Safety campaign November 28th through January 1st. During the month-long campaign, a Christmas wreath is placed on display in 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 2024, our community had two fires during this time frame, so we had to add two red bulbs. Next year our goal is to keep it green.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

In August, Portage Fire Rescue 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

Portage Fire Rescue, 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 agency 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. Portage Fire Rescue and Portage Police Department assembled the Honor Guard that began the ceremony. Veterans, firefighters, police officers, and residents attended this very special event. Wisconsin State Senator Joan Ballweg, Karen DeSanto for State Assembly, Jerry Helmer for State Assembly, Sarah Keyeski for Wisconsin State Senate, the Columbia County Veterans Service Office, Fire Chief Troy Haase and Mayor Mitchel Craig all spoke to the veterans, first responders, and residents of both Columbia and Sauk County remembering that tragic day 23 years ago. They honored the lives lost, the heroes who emerged, and the resilience of a nation forever changed. The tragic events of 9/11 remind us of the importance of unity, courage, and remembrance. Let us never forget the impact of that day and continue to honor those affected by standing together in strength and hope. Annelise Bredemann played taps for the attendees in remembrance of those that were lost.

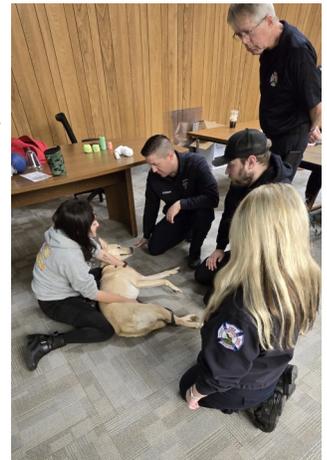


OPK9

Portage Fire Rescue invited the Operational K9 Medical Team of Wisconsin (OPK9) to Portage to train local paramedics and police officers how to treat injured K9's. OPK9 was founded in 2020 to provide education and support to law enforcement officers and other first responders assisting operational K9's. Their aim is to ensure that response personnel are equipped with the skills needed to provide essential, time-sensitive care to injured operational K9s before they are ultimately transported to a



higher level of veterinary care. Their Vision is to be the leading resource for point of injury care of wounded operational K9s in the state of Wisconsin by collaborating with the multiple agency's that support community safety and K9s.



FIRE PREVENTION OPEN HOUSE

Portage Fire Rescue 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. Smoke alarms are one of the most effective tools in preventing fire-related injuries and deaths. According to the National Fire Protection Association, three out of five home fire deaths occur in homes without working smoke alarms or without any alarms at all.

Today's homes burn faster than ever. You may have as little as two minutes or even less 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 pre-emergency 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 two

minutes to escape safely, so working smoke alarms cut the risk of dying in reported home fires in half.

To keep your family safe, install smoke alarms in every bedroom, outside sleeping areas, and on every level of your home. A working smoke alarm can mean the difference between life and death, make sure yours are ready to protect you!

This year's Fire Prevention Theme, "Smoke Alarms: Make Them Work for You," is a reminder to test your alarms monthly, replace batteries as needed, and replace the entire unit every 10 years.

A working smoke alarm gives you and your family the critical time needed to escape in a fire emergency. Don't wait until it is too late, check your smoke alarms today and make fire safety a priority!

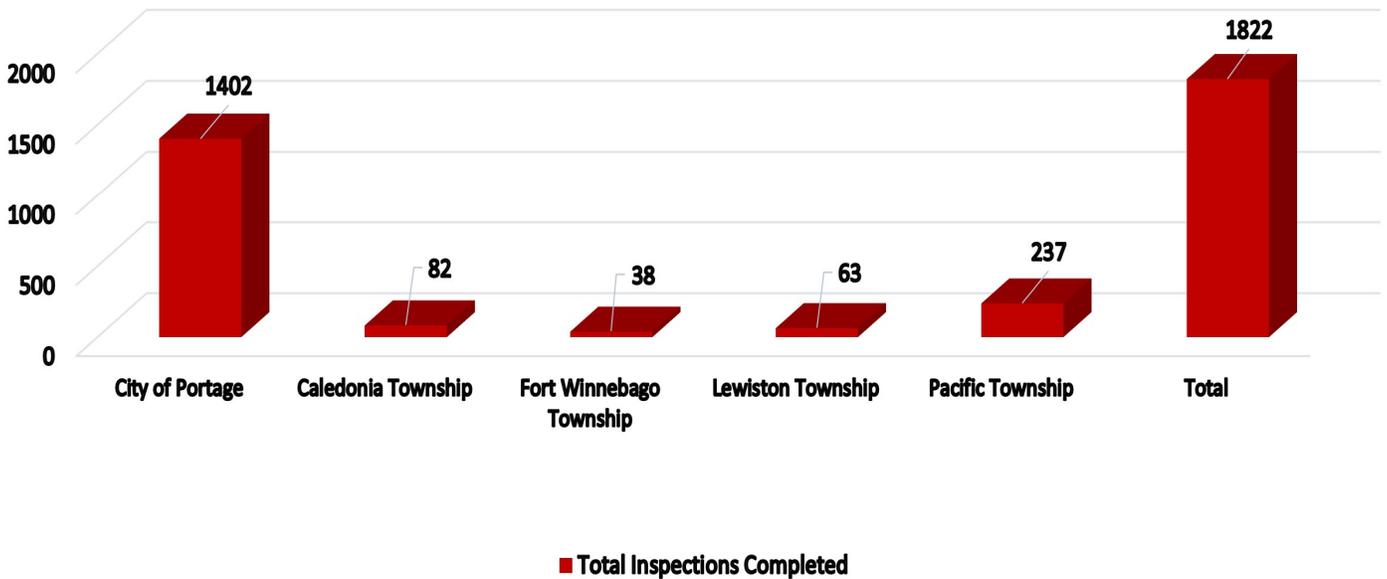
Here are some photos from our open house.



FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTIONS

Community	Total Inspections Completed
City of Portage	1402
Caledonia Township	82
Fort Winnebago Township	38
Lewiston Township	63
Pacific Township	237
Total	1822

INSPECTIONS COMPLETED



NFPA 1720 RESPONSE BENCHMARKS

The response times for Portage Fire Rescue have been slowly decreasing over the past four 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. Portage Fire Rescue 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 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 Rescue takes 8 Minutes and 29 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 Rescue takes 8 Minutes and 29 Seconds to assemble 5 Personnel

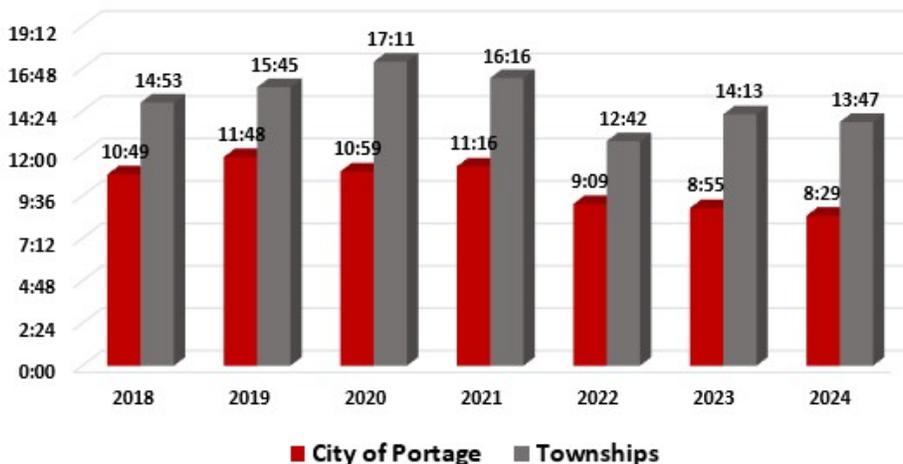
Rural Zones with <500 people/square mile call for 6 staff to assemble an attack in 14 minutes, 80% of the time.

- Portage Fire Rescue 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 Rescue can accomplish this benchmark.

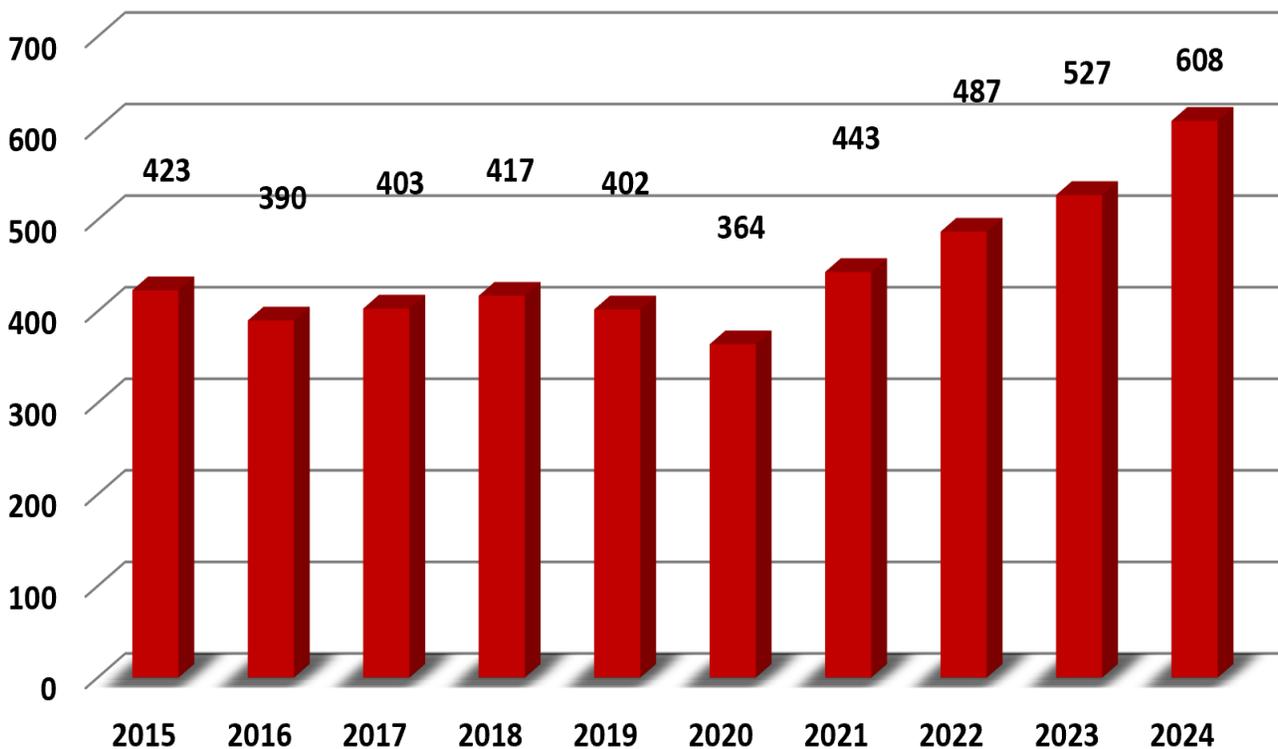
RESPONSE TIME COMPARISON



INCIDENT STATISTICS

Portage Fire Rescue responded to 608 emergency calls in 2024, which are up 14% from the previous year, and up 17% on average over the past 10 years. The following statistics will provide an account of 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 will also show that Portage Fire Rescue responds to more calls between 8 a.m. and 8 p.m. on 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 crashes or pulseless non-breathing related. As you study the statistics on the following pages, they will show Portage Fire Rescue 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 are 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, technical rescue and active shooter calls.

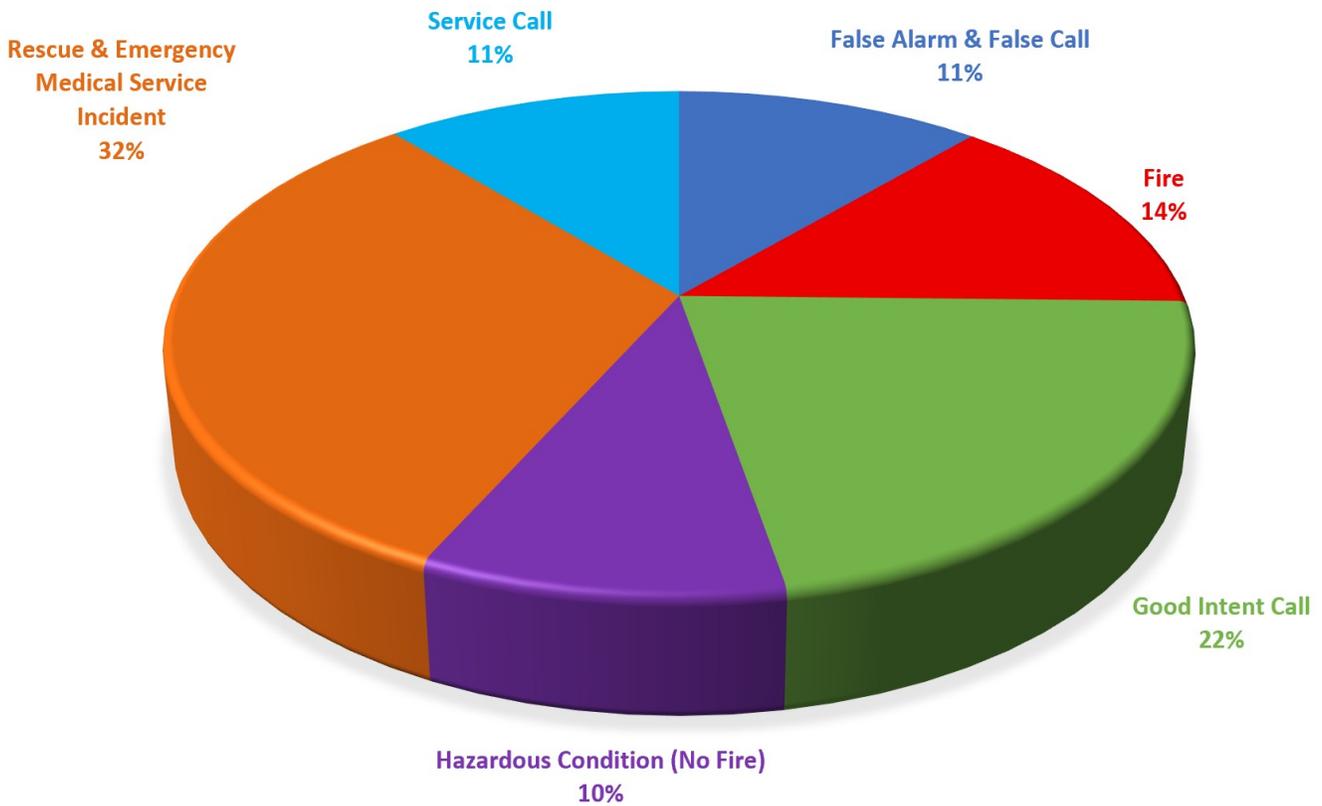
TOTAL RESPONSES BY YEAR



INCIDENT STATISTICS

INCIDENT BY TYPE	#
False Alarm & False Call	70
Fire	84
Good Intent Call	133
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	59
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	194
Service Call	68
Total	608

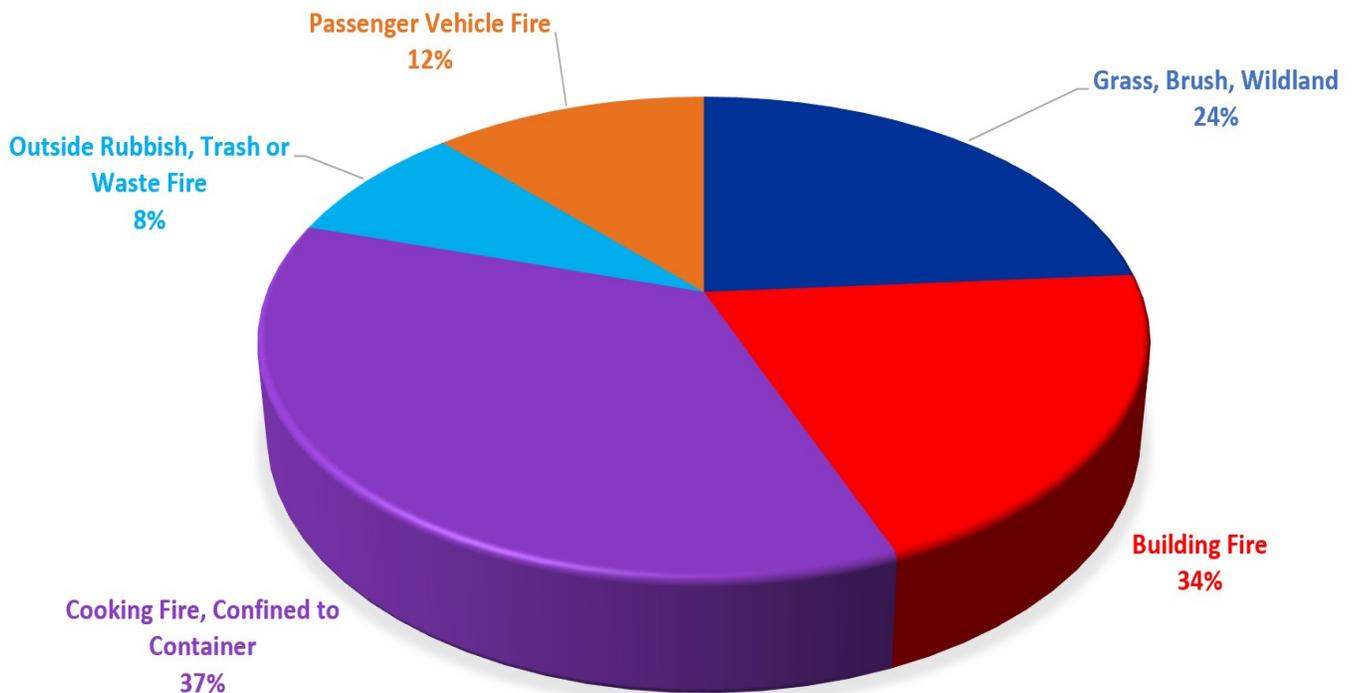
INCIDENT BY TYPE



INCIDENT STATISTICS

FIRE RESPONSE TYPES	#
Grass, Brush, Wildland	20
Building Fire	17
Cooking Fire, Confined to Container	30
Outside Rubbish, Trash or Waste Fire	7
Passenger Vehicle Fire	10
Total	84

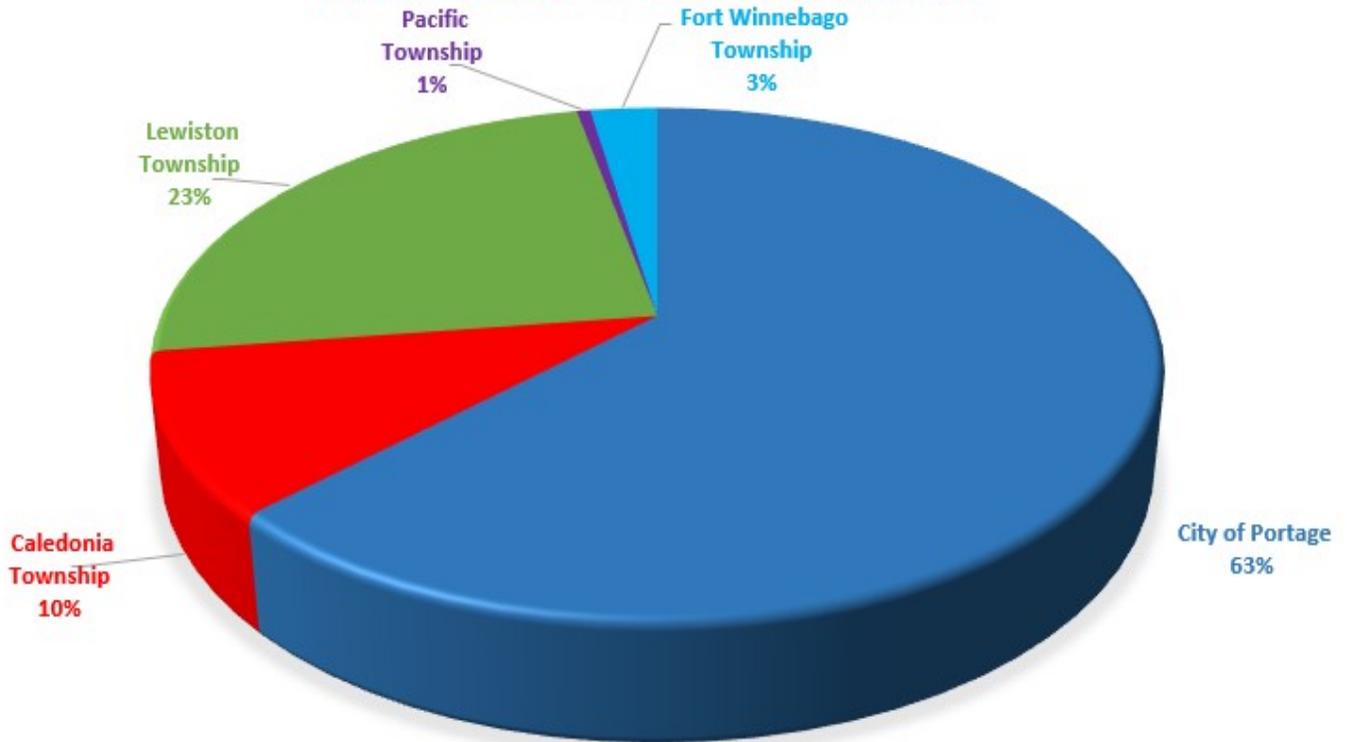
FIRE RESPONSE TYPES



INCIDENT STATISTICS

PROPERTY LOSS/SAVED BY COMMUNITY	LOSS	SAVED
City of Portage	\$1,220,360	\$3,375,080
Caledonia Township	\$197,540	\$0
Lewiston Township	\$470,000	\$80,000
Pacific Township	\$10,000	\$0
Fort Winnebago Township	\$50,000	\$0
Total	\$1,947,900	\$3,455,080
All Property Values Are Calculated Off Assessed Value		

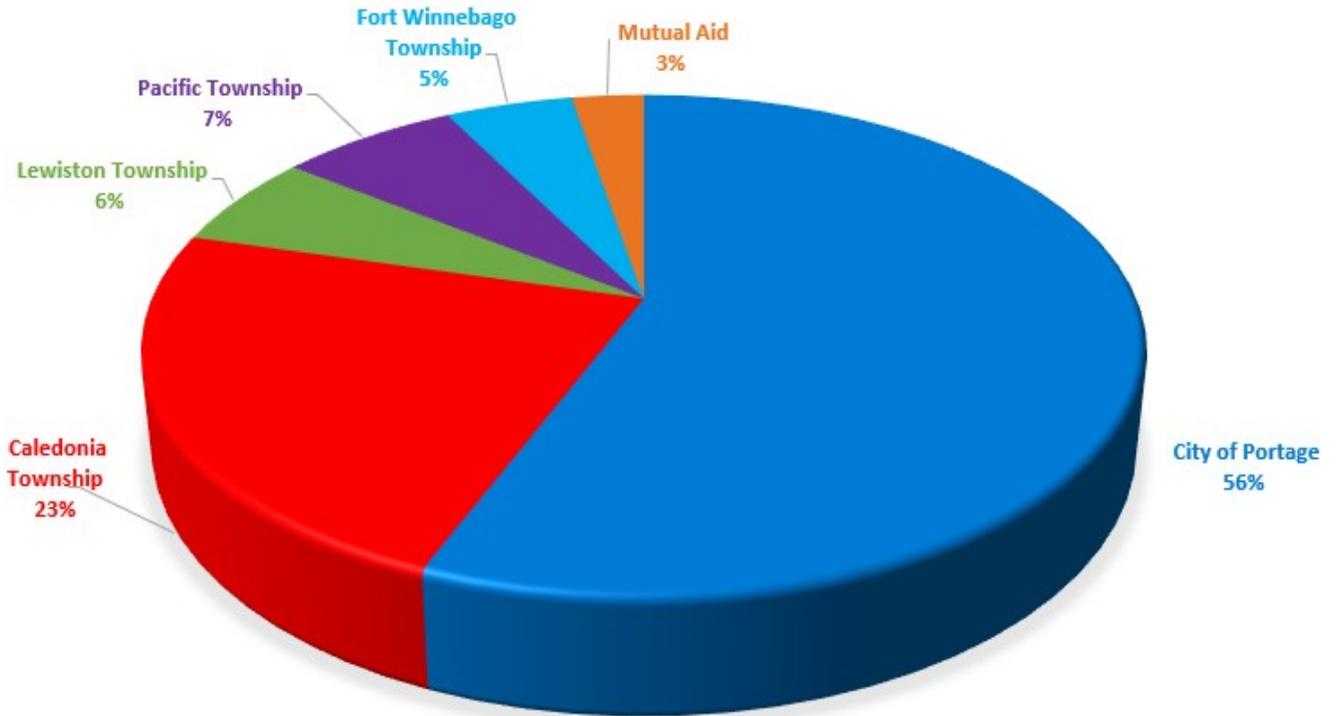
FIRE LOSS BY COMMUNITY



INCIDENT STATISTICS

RESPONSE NUMBERS BY COMMUNITY	#
City of Portage	341
Caledonia Township	141
Lewiston Township	37
Pacific Township	42
Fort Winnebago Township	30
Mutual Aid	17
Total	608

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