



City of South Milwaukee Fire Department

2023

Annual Report

01/01/2023-12/31/2023



**Serving the Community with
Commitment / Concern / Compassion**



City of South Milwaukee Fire Department

929 Marshall Ct · South Milwaukee, WI 53172

To the citizens of South Milwaukee,
The Honorable Mayor Jim Shelenske,
City Administrator Patrick Brever,
South Milwaukee Common Council and,
Police & Fire Commission:

It is with great pride that I present to you the 2023 Annual Report for the South Milwaukee Fire Department. This past year has been a testament to the dedication, skill, and preparedness of our team, who remain committed to being ready for all-hazard responses. Whether facing fires, medical emergencies, or any other crisis, the members of this department have proven time and again their ability to rise to the occasion, trained and equipped to protect and serve our community.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and every member of our department for their unwavering commitment to excellence and their dedication to keeping our city safe. The work they do is demanding and often dangerous, and their professionalism and courage have made South Milwaukee a safer place for all of us.

I also want to extend our heartfelt thanks to the City Administration, Mayor Shelenske, and the Common Council for your continued support of our mission. Your investment in training, equipment, and resources enables us to perform our duties effectively and ensures that our department remains ready to respond when we are needed most.

Tragically, in 2023, we experienced a fire fatality because of a cooking fire. This incident struck at the heart of our community and spurred us to action, spearheading the creation of our new **Fire Safety for Seniors** initiative. This program is designed to address the increased risk of kitchen fires among older adults, with a focus on safe cooking practices and the use of lightweight fire extinguishers. We believe this initiative will play a critical role in preventing similar tragedies in the future. With this program we as a department delivered 319 fire extinguishers and provided the community with 27 hours of fire prevention and extinguisher training.

Lastly, to the citizens of South Milwaukee, we are deeply grateful for your unwavering support of the Fire Department. Every day, we see the strong connection we have built and continue to maintain with you. It is this partnership with our community that drives us to do better and be better, knowing that we are stronger together.

Thank you again for your continued trust and support.

Sincerely,

John T. Litchford
Fire Chief of the
South Milwaukee Fire Department

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Dedicated to Excellence in Public Service

The SMFD in the Community

Aside from its role as first responders, the SMFD maintains a consistent presence at various community events. Below are a few examples of our 2023 outreach.



Human Concerns Toy Drive



Ride to School in an Engine



Peanut Butter Drive



Fire Safety for Seniors



School Visit
Fire Prevention Week



Mission Statement

THE MISSION OF THE SOUTH MILWAUKEE FIRE DEPARTMENT IS TO PROTECT LIVES AND PROPERTY FROM THE ADVERSE EFFECTS OF FIRES, SUDDEN MEDICAL EMERGENCIES AND EXPOSURE TO HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS. THIS COMMITMENT IS ACHIEVED BY DEVELOPING, PROMOTING, AND MAINTAINING EFFECTIVE FIRE SUPPRESSION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE. WE WILL CONTINUE TO PROVIDE THESE QUALITY SERVICES THROUGH EDUCATION AND TRAINING TO ALL WHO LIVE, WORK, VISIT OR INVEST HERE.

Department Information

The South Milwaukee Fire Department is an all-risk, all-hazard department that provides fire suppression, rescue and emergency medical services to an estimated 20,795 residents who reside within an area of 4.78 sq. miles. In addition, we respond on a mutual aid basis to any community as part of the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS). Starting this year our department joined the Shared Services of Milwaukee County Fire Departments. This is a reciprocal agreement program with the surrounding communities providing specific number of personnel on equipment to specific fire ground incidents. In return, these communities respond to our city when requested as part of this reciprocal agreement.

SMFD Organized – 1893

PROVIDING 128 YEARS OF SERVICE TO THE CITY OF SOUTH MILWAUKEE



City Officials

Mayor James Shelenske

Craig Maass
District 1 Alderperson

Brett Briesemeister
District 1 Alderperson

Tim Backes
District 2 Alderperson

Michal Olechowski
District 2 Alderperson

Patrick Brever
City Administrator

Sandi Wesolowski
City Clerk

Christopher Smith
City Attorney

Lisa Pieper
District 3 Alderperson

Joseph Bukowski
District 3 Alderperson

David Bartoshevich
District 4 Alderperson

Peggy Clark
District 4 Alderperson

Katie Crosby
Assistant City Administrator

Karen Skowronski
City Treasurer

Kelly Martyka
Municipal Judge

Police and Fire Commission

Under Wisconsin law, cities with a population of 4,000 or more must create police and fire commissions. Commissioners are appointed by the mayor and serve a 5-year term. Appointees filling vacancies created by the resignation, removal or death of a commissioner serve out the term of their predecessor.

The Police & Fire Commission meets on the 2nd Tuesday of the month.

Carla Uphill
President

Tobie Weberg
Secretary

Heather Frederick
Commissioner

Don O'Kray
Commissioner

Don Weber
Commissioner

Department Personnel

When fully staffed, the South Milwaukee Fire Department maintains a three-platoon system utilizing three shifts of 8 personnel each on a 24-hour, 7-day-a-week schedule. Off-duty personnel are notified when staffing levels at the station fall below a pre-established minimum or when the department responds to a report of an emergency incident that will require additional personnel to mitigate.

John Litchford
Fire Chief

Christina Garcia
Administrative Assistant

Black Shift

Capt. Nathan Fager
Lt. Jared Rentmeester
FF/P Craig Boschke
FF/P Ryan Kurz
FF/P John Rhinesmith
FF/P Ryan Porter
FF/EMT Kevin Schneider (Med School)
FF/EMT Carter Zawacki

Green Shift

Capt. John Frost
Lt. Ryan Miksa
FF/P Mike Landgraf
FF/P Luis Zamora-Martinez
FF/P Jason Helmlinger
FF/EMT Matt Boss
FF/EMT Ryan Cho
FF/EMT Gabriel Alyousef

Red Shift

Capt. Kurt Egner
Lt. Andrew Mahn
FF/P Jeremy Fronczak
FF/P Matt Swietlik
FF/P Ryan Behling
FF/EMT Nathan Christensen
FF/EMT Bryan Groshek
FF/EMT Ryan Nelson

Resigned – Nathaniel Heard 11/2023

Resigned – Mark Witt 12/2023



Special Assignments

Capt. Kurt Egner	EMS Coordination Fire Investigation Apparatus / Facilities Maintenance HIPAA Compliance
Capt. John Frost	Community Relations / Public Fire Prevention and Education Fire Inspection Radios / Communications Operations Records Management
Capt. Nathan Fager	Training / Safety Personnel Protective Equipment SCBA Maintenance
Lt. Andy Mahn	EMS Supplies / Equipment Training – Assistant SCBA Maintenance – Assistant
Lt. Ryan Miksa	Training – Assistant MSDS Online
Lt. Jared Rentmeester	Training – Assistant Bldg. & Grounds – Assistant Health & Fitness Coordinator
Lt. Andy Mahn	EMS Supplies / Equipment Training – Assistant SCBA Maintenance – Assistant
FF/P Jeremy Fronczak	Fire Inspection
FF/EMT Kevin Schneider	Fire Inspection
FF/EMT Matt Boss	Fire Inspection

Check out our website <https://smfdwi.org>

Emergency Medical Services Report

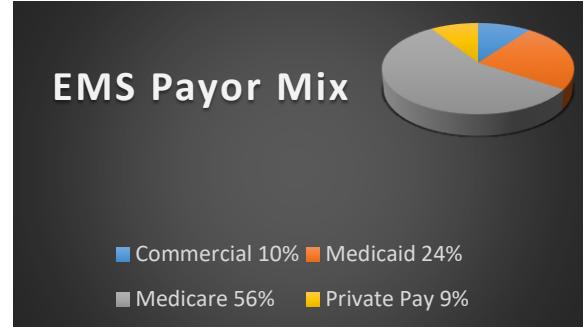
Fire department-based Emergency Medical Services (EMS) continues to be a major part of our response profile. The central location of the fire station allows for minimal response times of specialized equipment and well-trained personnel. By utilizing a flexible staffing model, the South Milwaukee Fire Department is able to provide emergency care to the Paramedic level on any given call. Citizens in South Milwaukee benefit from a high level of service when requesting emergency medical care. [This year we saw over a 18.42% decrease in EMS calls.](#)

EMS Calls by City		
South Milwaukee	2552	92.82%
Cudahy	136	4.93%
Saint Francis	22	0.80%
Oak Creek	39	1.41%
Milwaukee	1	0.04%

*Includes fire / service responses where no EMS report was generated and/or cancelled prior to an EMS report being generated

Total EMS Calls*	Transports
2750	1668

Disposition of Calls	
Patient Refused Transport (AMA)	490
Treated, Transported by Another EMS Unit	125
EMS Cancelled Prior to Arrival	116
EMS Cancelled on or after Arrival	79
Dead at Scene – Resuscitation Attempted	17
Patient Refused Evaluation, Care, & Transport	91
Dead at Scene – No Resuscitation	26
No Patient Found	20
Treated, Referred to Law Enforcement	4
Treated, Transported by Private Vehicle	7
Other	115



Transport Destination	2750	100%
Aurora Med Ctr-South Shore	1805	48.57%
No Destination: Transport Refused AMA, treated on scene, Canceled	490	35.00%
AURORA ST LUKES MEDICAL CENTER	174	6.31%
WHEATON FRANCISCAN HEALTHCARE-FRANKLIN	35	1.27%
FROEDTERT MEMORIAL LUTHERAN HOSPITAL	56	2.03%
FROEDTERT COMMUNITY HOSPITAL – OAK CREEK	18	0.65%
MILWAUKEE COUNTY MEDICAL EXAMINER	25	0.91%
CHILDRENS HOSPITAL OF WISCONSIN	26	0.94%
ASCENSION SE WI – FRANKLIN	74	2.68%
CLEMENT J ZABLOCKI VETERANS AFFAIRS	11	0.40%
ASCENSION HEALTHCARE-ST FRANCIS HOSP	4	0.15%
COLUMBIA ST MARYS HOSPITAL MILWAUKEE	7	0.26%
ASCENSION HEALTHCARE-ALL SAINTS SPRING ST	11	0.32%
Aurora West Allis Medical Center	9	0.33%
Aurora Sinai Medical Center	5	0.18%

5545 Apparatus Report

One of the most frequent compliments paid to members of our department is the extremely clean and well-kept appearance of both our apparatus and fire station. Visitors are often impressed at the condition of our apparatus and are shocked to learn their vintage and high level of use. Members of our department take great pride in the care and maintenance of both the apparatus and fire station. We proudly care for the equipment and building that the citizens of South Milwaukee have entrusted us with.

Below is a list of our current apparatus and their relative condition:

ID	Type of Apparatus	Year	Make / Model	Condition
E165	Engine	2003	Pierce Enforcer – 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal. Water Tank	Good
E163	Engine	2007	Pierce Enforcer – 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal. Water Tank	Good
T161	Aerial Ladder	1995	Pierce Lance 105' Heavy Duty Ladder – 1500 GPM Pump, 300 Gal. Water Tank	Very Good (Refurb 2021-2022)
A160	Ambulance	2016	Osage (Dodge) Type I	Very Good
A161	Ambulance	2014	Osage (Dodge) Type I	Good
Z164	Rescue Raft	2006	14' Mercury Inflatable 25 HP Outboard	Good
V165	Rescue Boat	2010	25.6' Steiger Craft Twin 150 HP Suzuki 4 stroke	Fair
C166	SUV	2015	Ford Explorer	Good
U167	Pick-up Truck	1995	GMC ¾ Ton Utility Truck	Fair
U168	Mini-pumper	2008	Pierce (Ford) – F550 150 GPM Pump, 250 Gal. Water Tank	Very Good
U169	Rescue Trailer	1993	14' Pace American	Good
Car16	Command Vehicle	2022	Ford F-250	Very Good
Med 10	Ambulance	2022	Ford	Very Good
V163	UTV	2023	Polaris Ranger	Very Good

Training Report

The Training Bureau is managed by the Department Training Officer, Captain Nathan Fager, whose primary responsibility is to develop, organize and schedule training for all department members. Each Fire Lieutenant delivers the scheduled training topics to their shift members daily. All fire department members are fully trained to operate all apparatus and equipment. Due to this unique cross-staffing format, training topics must be well-rounded and comprehensive. Our members are continuously challenged to maintain proficiency in their duties. Throughout 2023, the department's members participated in various fire and emergency medical services training sessions approximately (8850 hours per year). The overall training goal is to provide all members with opportunities to enhance their knowledge and abilities, so they can confidently and effectively fulfill the mission of the South Milwaukee Fire Department.

In January 2023, the South Milwaukee Fire Department hosted a class of over 20 fire, police and insurance professionals for a 1 day, 8-hour class on fire scene investigations. The class was put on by Rayburn Fire Scene Investigations and consisted of classroom learning as well as a "live burn" of a hand-built residential themed room. The scientific method of investigations was learned and used during this class which consists of recognizing the need, defining the problem, collecting data, analyzing the data (inductive reasoning), developing a hypothesis and then testing the hypothesis (deductive reasoning). The purpose of a fire investigation is to determine the cause and origin of a fire, and how it behaved. Fire investigations can help prevent future fires, inform safety guidelines, and hold people responsible for starting fires. They can also support coroners' inquiries, criminal cases, and insurance and liability considerations. Providing this training to our own firefighters can provide the framework for a successful fire investigation as firefighters learn what to look for and how to preserve potential evidence long after their initial arrival to a scene.

As a participating agency of the Milwaukee County Shared Services, we often rely on our neighbors for help at various incidents, including response to fire alarms, structure fires, vehicle crashes, natural gas leaks, carbon monoxide emergencies, water rescue incidents, and other emergencies. We value our relationship with our neighbors and take advantage of shared training opportunities when available. The city of Cudahy Fire Department is rebuilding one of their fire stations and welcomed the South Milwaukee Fire Department for a hands-on training opportunity at their old fire station that was awaiting demolition. Our two cities worked together on Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) training in real time, scenario-based evolutions. A simulated emergency involving the rescue of a downed firefighter was beneficial for everyone involved to hone their skills on this dangerous and complicated type of situation. Working together with members of other departments is not only a possibility but a reality at many scenes.

Not only do we value working together with our neighbors, but occasionally we can share training locations to benefit multiple cities. The city of Oak Creek obtained a vacant house prior to its demolition that they allowed the city of South Milwaukee Fire Department to use as well. Our members were able to practice the difficult but often necessary task of ventilating the roof of a residential structure. Firefighters will use multiple ladders to gain access to a roof area, primarily directly above a fire, then use power saws and hand tools to cut open a large hole to ventilate super-heated gases, smoke, and fire from a structure. This process will make the interior living areas more tenable for potential victims still inside, allow firefighters to more quickly and easily locate and extinguish the fire, and also limit the damage of a fire that would otherwise take more time to extinguish.

When multiple new firefighters are hired at the same time, providing thorough, quality training can often times be difficult for on-duty training officers to complete. In 2023 the South Milwaukee Fire Department participated and partnered with the City of Oak Creek, City of Cudahy, City of Greendale, and the City of Greenfield in the South Side Fire Training Academy. Through our combined efforts, new firefighters from each of those departments trained and learned a variety of firefighting skills together at various locations throughout Milwaukee County. Probationary firefighters trained on vehicle extrication, vehicle fires, forcible entry, search and rescue, fire hose advancement, fire attack, high-rise fires, vertical ventilation, and much more. This academy was invaluable in setting up our new firefighters for success.

All of the aforementioned training opportunities and programs reflect on the city's commitment to maintaining well trained employees. These along with the countless hours of other training that happens on a daily basis delivers on the department's dedication to providing the best trained "customer-service" delivery available to its citizens.



Grant Awards and Fundraiser

Grants and community partnerships are of paramount importance in the fire service, as they serve as the backbone of enhanced safety, preparedness, and community engagement. Grants provide essential financial resources to fire departments, enabling them to acquire advanced equipment, implement critical training programs, and improve their overall efficiency and effectiveness in responding to emergencies. These funds are instrumental in maintaining up-to-date technology and equipment, crucial for both firefighter safety and effective emergency response. Furthermore, community partnerships play a pivotal role in building trust and cooperation between fire departments and the neighborhoods they serve. Collaborations with local businesses, schools, and community organizations help create a more resilient and informed citizenry. These partnerships often result in community-based initiatives like fire safety education programs, disaster preparedness, and community outreach, fostering a sense of unity and shared responsibility in addressing fire-related challenges. Together, grants and community partnerships fortify the vital role of the fire service in safeguarding lives and property, highlighting the invaluable synergy between public resources and community involvement in ensuring a safer, more resilient community.



Public Education / Community Outreach Report

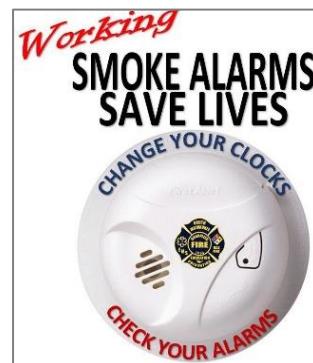
The South Milwaukee Fire Department continues to pride itself on its very interactive community presence. We started a new interactive program, "Rocket Rules," used during our K4, K5, and 1st grade outreach. We partner with the American Red Cross and the Professional Fire Fighter of Wisconsin (PFFW) to provide free smoke detectors to our citizens. A new program started after a fire in one of our many multifamily buildings was to provide lightweight and easy-to-use fire extinguishers at no extra cost to our citizens, along with one-on-one instructions through video on using a fire extinguisher.



Along with Safety Days, hosted by our local McDonalds, and our ride to school in a fire engine, we continue to provide close and personal interaction with our community. Lastly, "brats and tots" has become a new "mainstay" in our community and has been an enormous success, providing our community with another way to "meet and greet" their firefighters.

While we believe that fire safety deserves year-round emphasis, our philosophy remains that it must start early on, building solid educational foundations. Each fall, our firefighters visit students in the local schools. Elementary students in kindergarten and 1st grade are provided with fire safety programs during the annual National Fire Prevention Week in October. When students reach the 5th grade, they are provided with a more advanced Fire Safety Program that focuses on preparation for their adolescent years and the importance of home/fire safety. The 5th graders are assigned take-home projects where family involvement is encouraged. The students are also taught general home safety, such as general first aid and burn care, as many children are reaching babysitting age.

Additionally, the SMFD provides timely public awareness and educational "posts" on our Facebook page to spread the word far beyond our face-to-face audiences and the city of South Milwaukee residents. Please visit us on Facebook and see what is happening with the SMFD!!!



Fire Inspection Report

Fire inspection duties are completed by shift members assigned to each of the three shifts and are conducted during their regular duty day. This arrangement often presents a formidable scheduling challenge due to an increased call volume, ever-increasing training requirements, and other obligations to our community.

FF/EMT Matt Boss replaced FF/EMT Jason Helmlinger, who was attending paramedic school. FF/P Jeremy Fronczak, FF/EMT Matt Boss, and FF/EMT Kevin Schneider, who are State of Wisconsin Certified Fire Inspectors, each conduct fire safety code inspections in accordance with Chapter 27 - Fire Prevention, Protection, and Control of the City's Municipal Code and the State of Wisconsin Administrative Code, Chapter SPS314, which adopts NFPA 1 as the "official" fire prevention code of the State. Ultimately, these efforts are overseen by the Wisconsin Department of Safety and Professional Services. The Inspection Bureau also works in close cooperation with the City's Building Inspection and Health Departments to address other health and safety code violation matters that impact the quality of life for the residents of and visitors to the City of South Milwaukee. FF/EMT Kevin Schneider is tasked to oversee inspections of new and modified sprinkler systems on all inspectable properties within the City, based on a change within the Wisconsin code requiring inspectors to have extra training during their schooling. To provide time for inspectors to focus on properties with a trend of always having violations, inspectors are allowed to inspect properties once annually that have had zero violations over three inspection cycles; if a property has a violation that was being inspected only once a year will be put back on the bi-annual inspection cycle. This has had a positive impact on the efficiency of lowering found violations. This program still meets the State of Wisconsin requirement for inspecting properties.

Inspection Activities

408

Bi-annual fire inspections conducted

83

Violations identified
(All were corrected in 2023)

Inspection Responsibilities

FF/P Jeremy Fronczak

Commercial

Residential attached to Commercial

FF/EMT Kevin Schneider

Residential

City, County & Federally owned
Schools

FF/EMT Matt Boss

Industrial

Manufacturing

Nursing Homes

Doctor / Dental Offices

Response Statistics / Trends

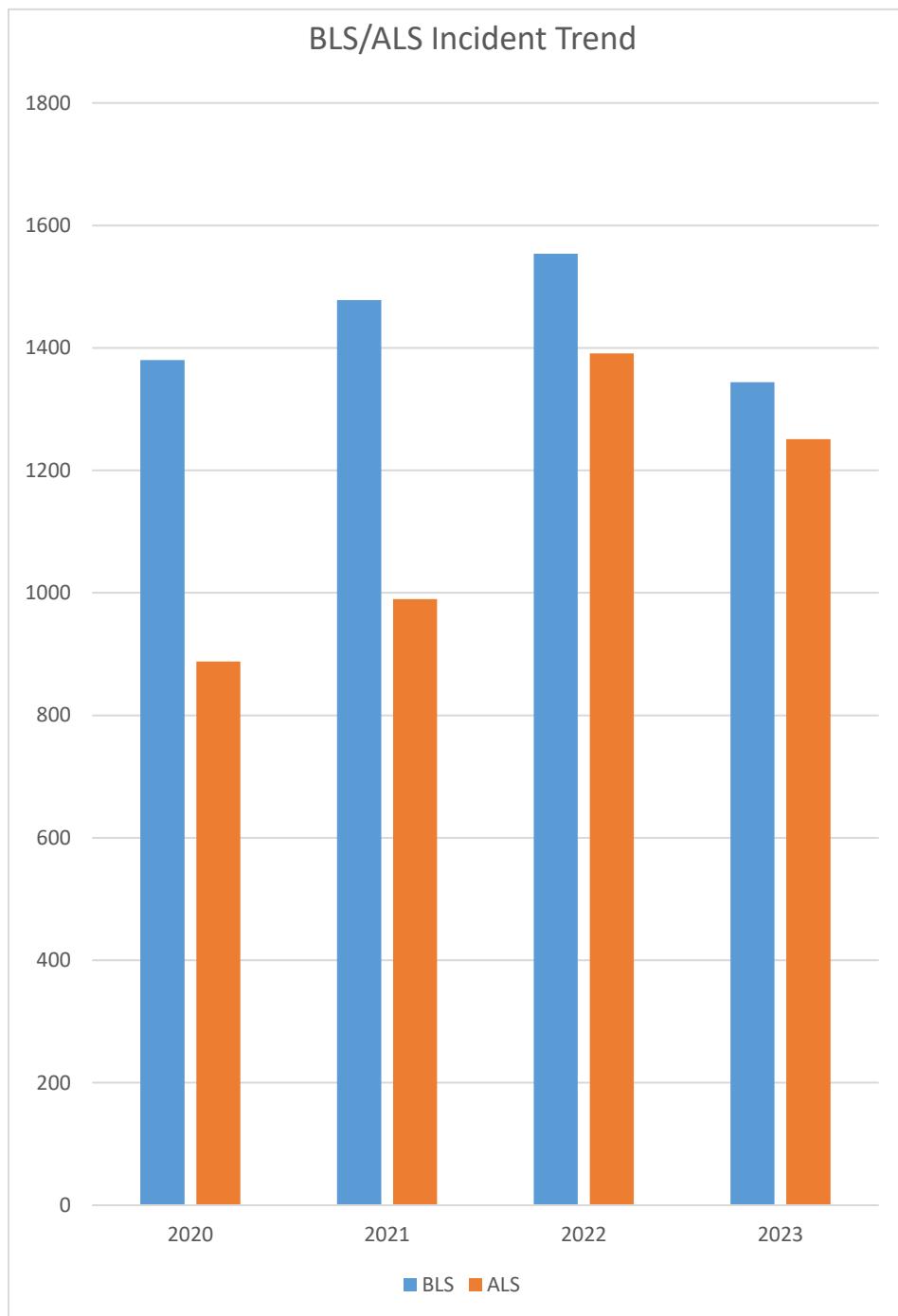
	2023	2022	2021	2020
TOTAL CALLS	3470	3881	3722	3390
increase % / decrease %	10.59%	4.27%	9.8%	1.3%
EMS Calls (Includes Calls For Service, not EMS patients encountered)	2875	3378	3279	2933
Basic Life Support Incidents	1344	1554	1478	1380
Advanced Life Support Incidents	1251	1391	990	888
EMS (requests) outside of So. Milw.	280	433	811	665
Fire Incidents	47	47	50	50
Building Fire	18	19	22	26
Cooking Fire	4	6	5	7
Rubbish / Trash Fire / Dumpster	2	3	9	9
Grass / Brush Fire	1	2	7	2
Other	22	17	7	6
Fatality	1	0	0	0
Hazardous Conditions	121	78	58	60
Motor Vehicle Crash-General Cleanup	32	31	25	29
Carbon Monoxide Investigation	4	5	0	3
Electrical / Power Line Problem	23	12	12	14
Chemical Leak / Spill	3	2	2	5
Natural Gas Leak	13	8	11	8
Other	46	20	8	1
Service / Good Intent	275	240	189	207
Smoke or Odor Removal	13	12	13	4
Service Call - CO Detector	11	20	15	29
Unauthorized Burning	1	19	32	39
Smoke Detector / Other / Investigation	250	189	129	135
False Alarms	104	97	91	97
System Activation – Malfunction	38	23	11	18
System Activation – Unintentional	7	2	49	2
System Activation – Malicious	7	2	3	1
Systems - Other	52	70	28	76
Other Incidents¹	48	41	55	43
Motor Vehicle Crash	45	34	48	35
Water Related Incident	3	7	7	8

Response Trends

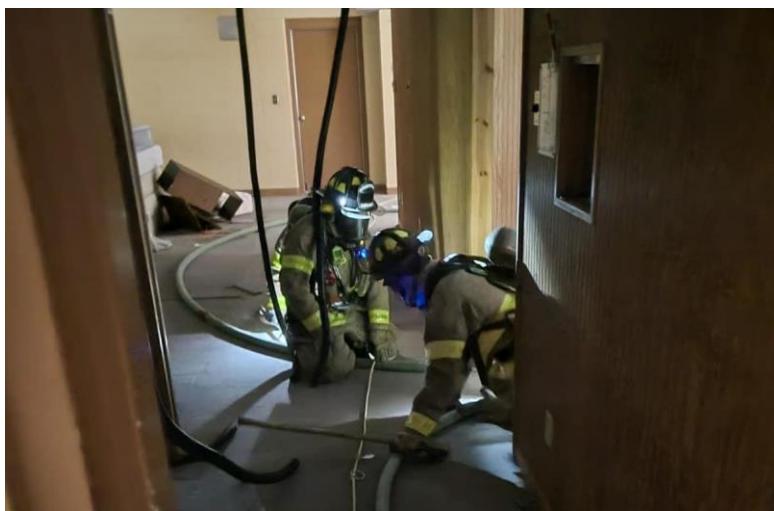
To properly understand the numbers provided on this page, one must understand that the categorizing of incident responses is subject to both the efforts of the person writing the report and the methods used to identify the appropriate code assigned to an incident. Greater emphasis has been placed on more accurately identifying an exact category rather than using a generic "Other", thus providing a more accurate *snapshot* of our response trends. In addition, while a single incident may fit into several categories (Cooking Fire & Smoke Removal, for example) only the primary Incident Type is counted.

¹To better track our responses to motor vehicle crashes and water-related incidents, these responses have been separated from the "Service / Good Intent" category since 2017.

BLS / ALS Incident Trend



SMFD on the Scene



Department Goals in 2024

Increase Overall Job Satisfaction **(Accomplished)**

Implement a Mentorship Program for Firefighters so they can act in the position of Lieutenant

Improve the Departments Standard Operating Guidelines

Acquire Paramedic Training for two Firefighters

Introduce the new MED Unit into-service

Arrival of the New Utility Vehicle

Improve Fire Safety, Prevention and Education Programs **(Accomplished)**

Installation of 65 smoke detectors within the community

Delivery of 319 lightweight fire extinguishers to the senior population

Improve Children's Fire Safety Programs

Improve Safety at Grant Park Beach locations
(Location signs/ throw-rings)

Formulate safety plans for outdoor events (In Progress)
(Emergency Management)

Increase Community Partnership Programs **(Accomplished)**

South Milwaukee Fire Department Toy Drive

Heritage Days Brat and Tot Fry

The much-anticipated return of the Spaghetti Dinner

Implement a career path to the Fire Service for the citizens of South Milwaukee

Department Goals in 2025

Increase Overall Job Satisfaction

Increased Quality Training

Sharp Performance

Introduction of Ready Rebound

Improve Fire Safety, Prevention and Education Programs

Installation of Smoke Detectors, CO Detectors

Expanding Rocket Rules and Expanding our Fire Educating and Prevention Program

Improve Safety at Grant Park Beach locations

Increase Community Partnership Programs

Introduction of Community Cardiac Care Program

Warm up Winter Coat Program

South Milwaukee Fire Department Toy Drive (Second Year)

Heritage Days Brat and Tot Fry (Second Year)

Spaghetti Dinner (Second Year)

Implement a career path to the Fire Service for the citizens of South Milwaukee