

City of South Milwaukee
Fire Department
Annual Report - 2019



*Serving the Community with
Commitment ♦ Concern ♦ Compassion*



City of...

South Milwaukee Fire Department

929 Marshall Court, South Milwaukee, WI 53172

Honorable Mayor Erik Brooks
Members of the Common Council
Police and Fire Commissioners
Citizens of South Milwaukee

Ladies and Gentlemen:

On behalf of the dedicated members of the South Milwaukee Fire Department, it is with great pleasure that I present our 2019 Annual Report. Contained in this report is a brief snapshot of the efforts put forth by the hard working members of your fire department who continue to provide the exceptional level of service they are known for with the limited resources on hand. Like our community, the fire service continues to change and the South Milwaukee Fire Department is committed to change, as well, to meet the needs of our community.

Of significance in 2019 was the noteworthy reduction in dollar loss associated with structure fires. While estimates of dollar loss by fire personnel attempt to be reflective of actual damages, true dollar loss could only be measured by determining what insurance costs were actually paid out to repair, restore, or replace material items, like structures and belongings. What cannot be measured is the physical, emotional, and psychological impact felt by someone who experiences a fire. While identifying a single cause for this reduction is nearly impossible, it is my belief that it can be attributed to several factors, all of which continue to be our focus: early detection of fires due to increased numbers of smoke detectors, early activation of the 9-1-1 system, quick "turn-out" and response times on the part of fire personnel, and quick and efficient personnel deployment once on scene.

Our overall call volume decreased slightly from 3481 calls for service in 2018 to 3345 calls for service in 2019, with the largest single decrease involving Emergency Medical Service (EMS) responses, which account for nearly 84% of our call volume. Our focus on the at-risk populations in our community continues with increased safety presentations in apartment buildings for those age 55-and-over, earlier referral to the South Milwaukee Health Department for more appropriate and patient-focused medical care, and continued training on response to bariatric patients, a patient demographic that continues to rise in numbers. In 2019, we utilized our bariatric response equipment on twenty-eight different responses, focusing on safe and efficient patient handling, as well as personnel safety and injury avoidance.

In closing, the South Milwaukee Fire Department will continue to answer the call 24/7/365 and maintain its high level of service delivery as we respond to the needs of the community as an all-hazard, all-risk department. Our focus will remain on community involvement, risk reduction, fire prevention, public education, and delivering timely, professional, effective, and efficient service. The members of the South Milwaukee Fire Department and I would like to thank Mayor Erik Brooks, the members of the Common Council and Police and Fire Commission, and our citizens for all their hard work and continued support.

Respectfully submitted,


Joseph Knitter
Fire Chief

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Dedicated to Excellence in Public Service

History of the Maltese Cross

The badge of a firefighter typically takes the shape of the Maltese Cross. The Maltese Cross is a symbol of protection and a badge of honor.

Its story is hundreds of years old.

When a courageous band of crusaders known as The Knights of St. John fought the Saracens for possession of the Holy Land, they encountered a new weapon unknown to the European Warriors. It was a simple, but horrible device of war and brought excruciating pain and agonizing death upon the brave fighters for the cross.

As the crusaders advanced on the walls of the city, they were struck by glass bombs containing naptha. When they became saturated with the highly flammable liquid, the Saracens would hurl a flaming torch into their midst. Hundreds of knights were burned alive; others risked their lives to save their brothers-in-arms from dying painful, fiery deaths.

Thus, these men became our first firefighters and the first of a long list of courageous men. Their horrific efforts were recognized by fellow crusaders who awarded each hero a badge of honor, a cross similar to the one firefighters wear today. Since the Knights of St. John lived for close to four centuries on a little island in the Mediterranean Sea named Malta, the cross became known as The Maltese Cross.

The Maltese Cross is our symbol of protection. It means that the firefighter who wears this cross is willing to lay down his or her life for you just as the crusaders sacrificed their lives for their fellow man so many years ago. The Maltese Cross is a firefighter's badge of honor, signifying that he / she works in courage, a ladder's rung away from death.



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 21,424 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) and on a reciprocal agreement program to the surrounding communities. In return, these communities respond to our city when requested as part of this reciprocal agreement.

SMFD Organized – 1893



City Officials

Mayor Erik Brooks

Craig Maass

District 1 Alderperson

Brett Briesemeister

District 1 Alderperson

Ray Navarro

District 2 Alderperson

R. Patrick Stoner

District 2 Alderperson

Tami Mayzik

City Administrator

Karen Kastensen

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

Patrick Brever

Ass't City Administrator

Karen Skowronski

City Treasurer

William Fenger

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.

Heather Frederick

(4/30/2020)

Carla Uphill

(4/30/2024)

Don O'Kray

(4/30/2023)

Tobie Weberg

(4/30/2022)

Joseph Bukowski

(4/30/2021)

“Like” us on Facebook . . .



Department Personnel

Joseph Knitter
Fire Chief

Shannon Hrdlicka
Administrative Secretary

Black Shift

Capt. Craig Boschke
Lt. Kurt Egner
FF/EMT Ron Wainio
FF/EMT Ryan Behling
FF/EMT Kevin Schneider
FF/P Mike Landgraf
FF/P Ryan Porter
FF/P Mike Schuerman¹

FF/P Jerre Schlax
FF/P Tyler Anders

¹Hired – 1/14

²Hired – 1/12

³Hired – 1/13

⁴Hired – 4/15

⁵Hired – 11/4

Green Shift

Capt. John Frost
Lt. Nate Fager
FF/EMT Jason Helmlinger
FF/EMT Jared Rentmeester
FF/EMT Matt Boss²
FF/P Scott Wallis
FF/P Ryan Kurz
FF/P John Rhinesmith

Retired – 2/1
Resigned – 4/26

Red Shift

Capt. Brad Sibley
Lt. Andy Mahn
FF/EMT Nathan Christensen³
FF/EMT Mark Witt⁴
FF/EMT Phillip Bishop⁵
FF/P Ryan Wendt
FF/P Jeremy Fronczak
FF/P Ryan Miksa

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.

Special Assignments

Capt. Craig Boschke

**Training / Safety
Records Management
Personnel Protective Equipment
SCBA Maintenance**

Capt. John Frost

**Community Relations / Public Education
Fire Inspection / Prevention
Radios / Communications**

Capt. Brad Sibley

**Apparatus / Facilities Maintenance
Buildings & Grounds
Operations**

Lt. Kurt Egner

**EMS Coordination
HIPAA Compliance
MSDS OnLine**

Lt. Nate Fager

**Training – Assistant
Bldg. & Grounds – Assistant
Health & Fitness Coordinator**

Lt. Andy Mahn

**EMS Supplies / Equipment
Training – Assistant
SCBA Maintenance – Assistant**

FF/PP Jeremy Fronczak

Fire Inspection

FF/PP Ryan Kurz

Fire Inspection

FF/EMT Jason Helmlinger

Fire Inspection

Check out our website at . . .

www.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.

EMS Calls by City		
South Milwaukee	2224	81.5%
Cudahy	448	16.42%
Saint Francis	30	1.10%
Oak Creek	26	0.94%
Milwaukee	1	0.04%

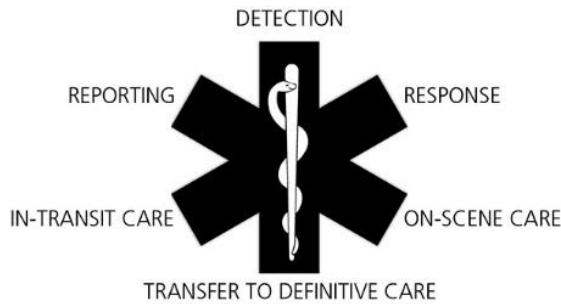
Total EMS Calls*	Transports
2814	1925

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

Disposition of Calls	
Treated, Transported by EMS (BLS)	1123
Treated, Transported by EMS (ALS)	802
Treated and Refused Transport	422
Treated, Transported by Another EMS Unit	210
Dead at Scene	50
Patient Refused Evaluation, Care, & Transport	35
No Treatment/Transport Required	37
Treated and Released (per protocol)	15
Treated, Transported by EMS (Other)	7
Treated, Transported by Private Vehicle	7
Treatment Refused, Transported	3
Treated, Referred to Law Enforcement	3
No Patient Found	1
Other	14

Star of Life

Each bar represents one of six EMS functions:



Transport Destination	2729	100%
Aurora St. Luke's – South Shore	1368	50.13%
Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center - Milwaukee	261	9.56%
Ascension - Franklin	93	3.41%
Froedtert Memorial Lutheran Hospital	51	1.87%
Milwaukee County Medical Examiner	41	1.50%
Ascension - St. Francis Hospital	36	1.32%
Children's Hospital of Wisconsin	29	1.06%
Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center	20	0.73%
Columbia - St Mary's - Milwaukee	9	0.33%
Aurora West Allis Medical Center	8	0.29%
Aurora Sinai Medical Center	7	0.26%
Milwaukee County Behavioral Health	1	0.04%
Ascension All Saints – Spring Street	1	0.04%
No Transport / Other	804	29.46%

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
1663	Engine	2003	Pierce Enforcer – 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal. Water Tank	Very Good
1665	Engine	2007	Pierce Enforcer – 1250 GPM Pump, 750 Gal. Water Tank	Very Good
1671	Aerial Ladder	1995	Pierce Lance 105' Heavy Duty Ladder – 1500 GPM Pump, 300 Gal. Water Tank	Good
1680	Ambulance	2016	Osage (Dodge) Type I	Very Good
1681	Ambulance	2009	Med-Tech (Ford) Type I	Good
Med-10	Ambulance	2014	Osage (Dodge) Type I	Very Good
1692	Chief's Car	2009	Ford Escape	Good
1693	Gator	2003	6 x 4 Wheel Drive Utility Cart	Good
1694	Rescue Raft	2006	14' Mercury Inflatable 25 HP Outboard	Good
1695	Rescue Boat	2010	25.6' Steiger Craft Twin 150 HP Suzuki 4 stroke	Very Good
1696	SUV	2015	Ford Explorer	Excellent
1697	Pick-up Truck	1995	GMC ¾ Ton Utility Truck	Fair
1698	Mini-pumper	2008	Pierce (Ford) – F550 150 GPM Pump, 250 Gal. Water Tank	Very Good
1699	Rescue Trailer	1993	14' Pace American	Good



Training Report

The Training Bureau is managed by the Department Training Officer, Captain Craig Boschke, whose primary responsibility is to organize, develop and schedule training for all department members in compliance with requirements and industry standards. The training goal is to provide all employees with quality training that is specific to their job description and needs, providing them with the knowledge, skills and abilities to fulfill the mission of the department. Funding for training is provided by a budget line item that not only reflects the City's commitment to maintaining well trained employees, but the department's dedication to providing the best trained "customer-service" delivery force available.

Training is provided to all shifts on a Monday through Saturday basis by their respective Captain, Lieutenant or another carefully chosen "Subject Matter Expert" on the topic. Much of the training information is taken from the textbooks endorsed by the Wisconsin Technical College System Fire Service Training Office or based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards and locally or nationally recognized best practices. Because of the unique cross-staffing format utilized by the department, members are cross trained in all aspects of every position.

Training is also provided for our "new hires" in a 4 week, 10-hour day format concentrating on accomplishing the Job Performance Requirements (JPR) established by the NFPA before transitioning to their assigned shift where they continue to participate in daily training for the rest of their career. These JPR's are provided in a checklist format and the recruit firefighter progresses through the exhaustive list maintaining a formal record of those that are accomplished. In addition, they receive extensive training in our emergency medical services and policies and procedures and are assigned as the third member of the EMS team until their Shift Officers feel they have accomplished the EMS competencies and are ready to respond as part of a two-person team.



Public Education / Community Outreach Report

The South Milwaukee Fire Department continues to pride itself on a very active and quite interactive public education / community outreach program.

Our philosophy is that fire safety starts early on; building strong foundations in education. Each fall, students in the local schools are visited by our firefighters. Elementary students in kindergarten and 1st grade are provided with fire safety programs during the annual National Fire Prevention Week. 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 of the children are reaching babysitting age.

In addition, SMFD provides timely fire prevention / public education “posts” to our Facebook page to spread the word far beyond our face-to-face audiences and city of South Milwaukee residents.

546

**K-4, K-5 & 1st grade
students who took part in
fire safety presentations**

196

**5th graders who
participated in the 6-week
fire safety program**

269

**Fire Station Tour
Participants**



Fire Inspection Report

Fire inspection duties are completed by shift members assigned to each of the three shifts and are conducted during the course of 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/P Jeremy Fronczak, FF/EMT Jason Helmlinger and FF/P Ryan Kurz, 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.

Inspection Activities

802

Bi-annual fire inspections conducted

755

Violations identified

Inspection Responsibilities

FF/P Jeremy Fronczak

Commercial

Residential attached to Commercial

FF/EMT Jason Helmlinger

Residential

City, County & Federally-owned
Schools

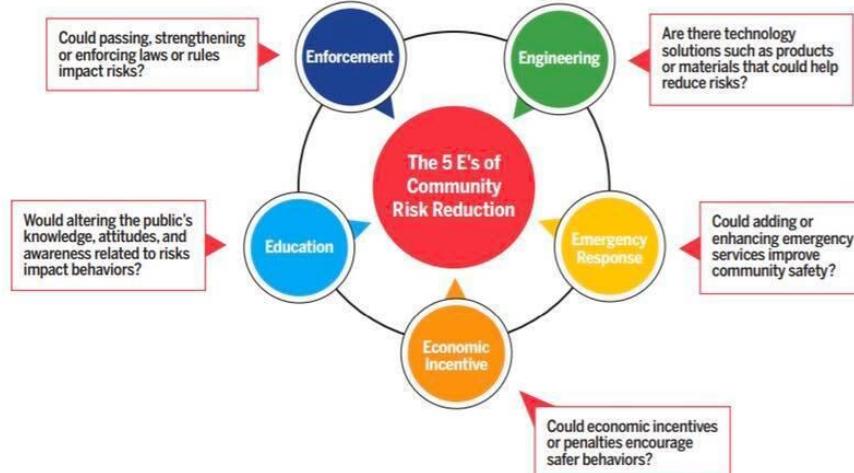
FF/P Ryan Kurz

Industrial

Manufacturing

Nursing Homes

Doctor / Dental Offices



Response Statistics / Trends

	2019	2018	2017	2016
TOTAL CALLS	3345	3481	3188	3270
EMS Calls	2814	3017	2707	2777
Basic Life Support Incidents	1467	1527	1417	1333
Advanced Life Support Incidents	842	879	816	814
ALS (requests) outside of So. Milw.	505	611	474	630
Fire Incidents	53	59	59	58
Building Fire	27	25	32	23
Cooking Fire	8	9	7	10
Rubbish / Trash Fire / Dumpster	8	7	7	12
Grass / Brush Fire	1	4	4	7
Other	9	14	9	6
Hazardous Conditions	88	69	94	72
Motor Vehicle Crash-General Cleanup	44	31	39	34
Carbon Monoxide Investigation	7	1	3	3
Electrical / Power Line Problem	12	13	14	17
Chemical Leak / Spill	2	9	12	3
Natural Gas Leak	17	14	22	8
Other	6	1	4	7
Service /Good Intent	256	189	181	263
Smoke or Odor Removal	12	10	9	11
Service Call - CO Detector	34	21	24	29
Unauthorized Burning	32	33	27	39
Smoke detector / Other / Investigation	178	125	121	184
False Alarms	86	97	86	96
System Activation – Malfunction	12	16	15	12
System Activation – Unintentional	1	2	5	2
System Activation – Malicious	7	1	3	5
Systems - Other	66	78	63	77
Other Incidents¹	48	50	61	4
Motor Vehicle Crash	44	44	52	---
Water Related Incident	4	6	9	---

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.

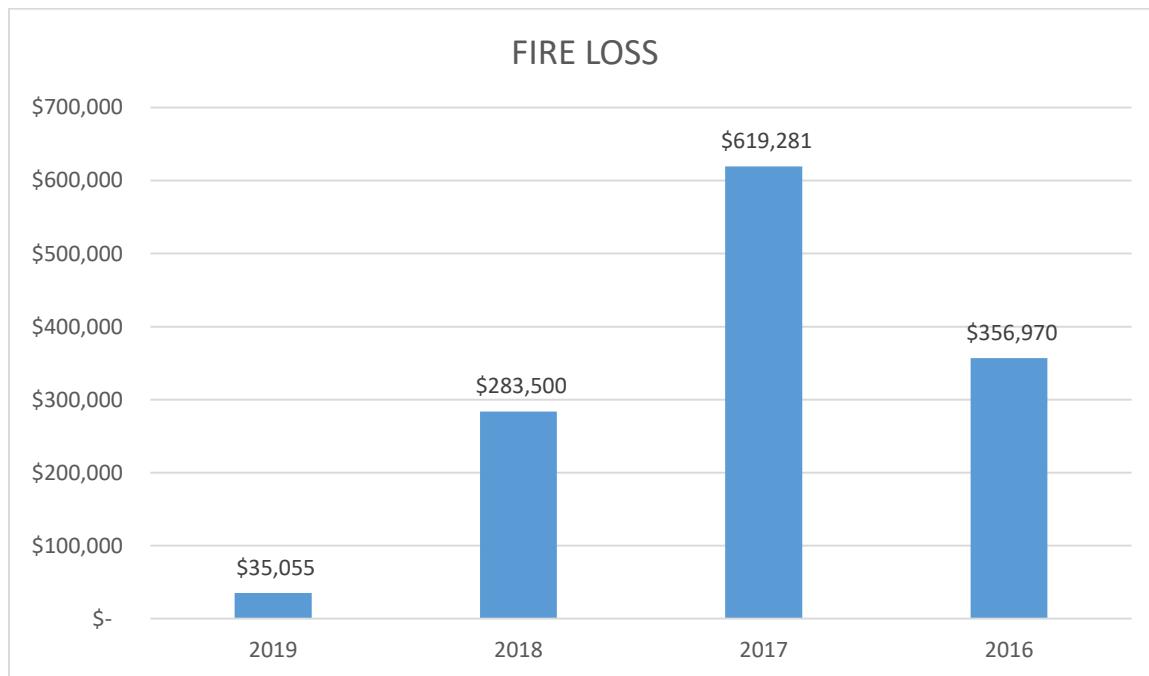
¹To better track our responses to motor vehicle crashes and water-related incidents, these responses have been separated from the “Service / Good Intent” category since 2017.

Dollar Loss from Fire

In addition to the actual number of emergency and non-emergency incidents that our personnel respond to, one of the most sought after statistics is that of the dollar loss to physical property due to damage from fire. It must be first understood that this number is a very rough estimate as actual losses paid by insurance companies may be considerably higher and involve other related expenses like replacement of furnishings, lodging, or loss of business, etc.

In the past, the justification for the existence of a fire department was based on how great this dollar loss was. Now, because of all of the ancillary responsibilities of our personnel such as fire inspecting, fire prevention activities, and training, the effectiveness of a department is based on the amount of property that was saved through aggressive fire suppression and prevention efforts. The fire service has truly shifted from a “volume-based” to “value-based” model.

In addition, the true “cost” of a fire cannot be accurately measured in dollars and cents . . . rather, it may be better measured in the impact it has emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and historically on a person, a family or a community. Take, for example, a small fire that damages a treasured family keepsake, a bride’s wedding gown, or the photo album of a family’s first born child. While the monetary cost may be relatively small, the emotional impact can be quite large.



Working
Smoke Alarms
Save lives !



SMFD on the Scene



Response Time Analysis

In 2001, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) released a standard for the *Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, known as NFPA 1710. In this standard, the NFPA established a minimum response time objective of **four minutes or less** for the arrival of the first arriving engine company at a fire suppression incident or the arrival of an emergency medical unit with first responder or higher level capability at an emergency medical incident 90% of the time. As could be expected, the South Milwaukee Fire Department is well within compliance with this nationally-accepted performance standard. In 2019, the response time average was **3.06 minutes** for the first responding apparatus to arrive on scene.

It is important to note that this number reflects *ALL* responses, both emergency and non-emergency, and provides no means to account for the location or the significance/severity of the response. Additionally, with our mutual aid system, South Milwaukee resources can be requested to areas as far away as the Town of Raymond or the North Shore communities and beyond, thus reflecting some of the extended response times. Finally, understanding that responding ***lights and sirens*** exposes both emergency responders and civilians to an increased risk of harm, an emphasis on ***non-emergent response*** has been a continued focus by many agencies throughout Milwaukee County. On duty shift officers are charged with the responsibility of determining the level of response with an emphasis on ***responding without lights and sirens*** as often as practicable.



Rescue Boat Operations

25' Steiger Craft Rescue Boat

The SMFD is the only municipal fire department between the cities of Racine and Milwaukee that maintains and operates a solid-hull rescue boat for operations on Lake Michigan. Several times each boating season, the SMFD is called upon by the US Coast Guard or neighboring fire and/or law enforcement agencies to locate and assist lost, distressed, or stricken boaters on Lake Michigan.

Typically, 3-4 personnel respond from the SMFD firehouse to the South Milwaukee Yacht Club (SMYC) to staff the boat, which is moored in a slip at the SMYC from May through October. A Shift Officer will also respond to act as the Incident Commander and coordinate operations with any outside agencies and our boat. The boat is equipped with side and bottom-scan SONAR, a Forward Looking InfraRed (FLIR) Camera, and additional navigational technologies.

This year, additional training was conducted both with the Franklin Fire Department Dive-Rescue Team and the WI Department of Natural Resources.

In addition to the solid-hull boat, a 14' inflatable raft is kept at the SMFD firehouse for deployment year-round and is available to our mutual aid partners for inland use, as well.



Stop the Bleed Initiative

In 2019, the South Milwaukee Fire Department made a commitment to begin an initiative to place bleeding control kits alongside all of the Automatic External Defibrillators (AED) located in public access buildings throughout the city (City Hall, Senior Center, Health Department, Library), as well as in the offices of the Street, Water Utility, and Wastewater Treatment Facility. In addition, training in bleeding control would be provided to city employees in accordance with a national program known as *Stop the Bleed*.

The Milwaukee Sausage Company heard of the initiative and offered to assist with the fund raising for the program. As part of it, they developed a specially formulated sausage, known as *The Firehouse*, that was sold with a portion of the proceeds donated to the SMFD for the *Stop the Bleed* Program.



Firefighter Code of Ethics

I understand that I have the responsibility to conduct myself in a manner that reflects proper ethical behavior and integrity. In so doing, I will help foster a continuing positive public perception of the fire service. Therefore, I pledge the following . . .

- Always conduct myself, on and off duty, in a manner that reflects positively on myself, my department and the fire service in general.
- Accept responsibility for my actions and for the consequences of my actions.
- Support the concept of fairness and the value of diverse thoughts and opinions.
- Avoid situations that would adversely affect the credibility or public perception of the fire service profession.
- Be truthful and honest at all times and report instances of cheating or other dishonest acts that compromise the integrity of the fire service.
- Conduct my personal affairs in a manner that does not improperly influence the performance of my duties, or bring discredit to my organization.
- Be respectful and conscious of each member's safety and welfare.
- Recognize that I serve in a position of public trust that requires stewardship in the honest and efficient use of publicly owned resources, including uniforms, facilities, vehicles and equipment and that these are protected from misuse and theft.
- Exercise professionalism, competence, respect and loyalty in the performance of my duties and use information, confidential or otherwise, gained by virtue of my position, only to benefit those I am entrusted to serve.
- Avoid financial investments, outside employment, outside business interests or activities that conflict with or are enhanced by my official position or have the potential to create the perception of impropriety.
- Never propose or accept personal rewards, special privileges, benefits, advancement, honors or gifts that may create a conflict of interest, or the appearance thereof.
- Never engage in activities involving alcohol or other substance use or abuse that can impair my mental state or the performance of my duties and compromise safety.
- Never discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, creed, age, marital status, national origin, ancestry, gender, sexual preference, medical condition or handicap.
- Never harass, intimidate or threaten fellow members of the service or the public and stop or report the actions of other firefighters who engage in such behaviors.
- Responsibly use social networking, electronic communications, or other media technology opportunities in a manner that does not discredit, dishonor or embarrass my organization, the fire service and the public. I also understand that failure to resolve or report inappropriate use of this media equates to condoning this behavior.