

# **Alsip Fire Department**



**Annual Report  
For  
2020**

First and foremost, I am honored to serve as the Fire Chief for the Village of Alsip. I have lived in Alsip essentially all of my life and have been a part of the Alsip Fire Department since 1971 when my father became a volunteer with the fire department. It is a great honor to serve the people that we protect.

I would also like to thank Mayor Ryan and the board of Trustees for their support to the Alsip Fire Department. I believe that all of you share the same vision as I do as what type of service the fire department should provide.

As the Fire Chief, I am charged with leading the Alsip Fire Department in providing; fire protection, EMS, technical rescue, hazardous materials, fire prevention, public education, fire investigation, water rescue, and everything else that comes our way to all of our residents, businesses, and travelers that come through our great village. This is due to the majority of our village being commercial/industrial based rather than all residential.

The Alsip Fire Department is made of up of very dedicated and highly trained personnel to provide the services. We strive to have the most current and state-of-the-art equipment, offer the most up-to-date training programs and practices, and great facilities to maintain our level of competency and proficiency.

We are constantly evaluating ways to improve our service and training by monitoring current trends in the fire service, looking at new equipment, and evaluating our responses. This process is ongoing throughout the year. We have made several modifications over the past years to keep our effectiveness and efficiency.

We also research alternative funding for the fire department throughout the year to help offset the costs of our budget.

2020 has been a very challenging year due to the Pandemic, the civil unrest on multiple occasions and economic issues from both. The Alsip Fire Department has had to make several changes to our responses and create plans to combat all 3 challenges.

**This report is a summation of the activities, incidents, and accomplishments that the Alsip Fire Department either responded to or participated in in 2020. This report also contains some goals planned for 2021.**

### **Summary of the year**

2020 by far was the most unique of any year within our lives. It brought many challenges in every aspect of our world. We have seen the entire world become hostage to a virus. We saw this virus spread like wildfire in the United States and infecting hundreds of thousands and killing an unprecedented number of people. Even though we saw a decrease in our overall call volume in 2020, by far we busier in other aspects including planning for coping with the virus, protecting our personnel by educating them about the virus, providing the necessary protective equipment to keep them safe, educating, training and planning for civil unrest and adjusting plans as necessary as conditions change. In 2020, we had 2 firefighters retire after 22 years with the department. We hired replacement firefighters to fill their spots and at the time of this writing, both are doing very well during their probationary period. Unfortunately, we lost retired firefighter Mike Rachan to COVID-19. Mike had only retired 1 year prior.



In 2020 the fire department responded to 3368 calls for service. This is a decrease of 200 calls from 2019 mainly due to the pandemic. Due to the virus people were apprehensive about going to the hospital and we saw less people in the businesses and less travelers through the village.

In 2021, the Alsip Fire Department will be applying for various grants. The Alsip Fire Department applied for a small equipment grant from the Office of the State Fire Marshal. This grant if awarded will be used to install UV/ air purifying technology in our ambulances to help protect our personnel and patients from communicable diseases. We are also applying to FEMA under the Assistance to Firefighter's Grant for a replacement ambulance.

In 2020 we had several improvements planned for both fire stations which included remodeling the last bathroom at Fire Station 1 (original bathroom from 1974), remodeling the kitchen at Fire Station 1 (last done in 1999) and replacing our driveways and parking lots. Due to COVID-19 and the unknown financial impact to the village, all of these projects were postponed. However, the board did approve the installation of security cameras at Fire Station 1, a much-needed project. At the time of this report, this year's budget is being prepared and we hope some of these projects will be able to be completed this fiscal year.

During 2021, the stations will be evaluated to determine what other projects are going to be needed in the future. Our goal is to keep up both facilities which in turn cuts down on the the overall expenses by having a proactive approach.

In 2021, we will continue to remain focused on our external customers (residents and businesses) and internal customers (officers and firefighters) by evaluating all current programs and making necessary adjustments when necessary.

### **Fire Prevention**

The Fire Prevention Bureau consists of 2 part-time Fire Prevention Officers, 1 part-time administrative assistant and 12 firefighters to perform the annual inspections while off-duty.

Due to the pandemic, 2020 was a challenging year for the Fire Prevention Bureau. We began the year performing our annual inspections then shut down the program in March as COVID-19 numbers increased. The inspection program began back up in June once when it was determined what was needed to keep

our firefighters safe. This includes having specific plans for inspections, the use of personal protective clothing, the use of hand sanitizer and cleaning the car(s) at the end of the day. Because of the shutdown of the program for several months, approximately 100 businesses were missed in 2020. Considering the 9-month long situation, we felt that it was still amazing to get that many completed. The inspectors have been utilizing an iPad for the past 7 years for annual inspections. This has proven to be an invaluable tool for inspections. The fire inspector can track the current inspection, search the past inspection, and ensure that the business' fire alarm system, sprinkler system, and any other protective systems are inspected on an annual basis. During the annual inspections our inspectors consistently find numerous businesses which do not have a current business license and report it to the building department for resolution. The iPad also allows the inspector to take a picture of any violations and upon completion of the inspection, the representative then signs on the iPad and the report is then e-mailed. Any pictures of violations are included in the e-mailed report.

We continue to bill for annual fire inspections to recoup the costs of the inspections. In January 2019, we took over the billing of our Keltron System (Radio fire alarm) from our previous contractor. This has proven to be very successful. Under the previous contractor the village was owed quite a bit of money. With our current system we have checks and balances in place to insure we collect what is owed. If any business falls behind, we start the process by sending letters reminding them of the balance. If the issue is not resolved, they are sent a municipal violation ticket and finally if no resolution they are given 30 days to obtain another monitoring system and we drop them from Keltron. At no time is any business behind more than 1 cycle (\$165).

Several years ago, the fire department enacted The Compliance Engine. This is a third-party database that tracks all of the businesses, and multi-family buildings to make sure they are compliant in providing the annual testing documentation of all fire alarm systems, sprinkler systems and exhaust hood systems. It gives the fire department the ability to make sure the businesses are having these important inspections completed and by people who are certified to complete the tests.

### **Summary of the Fire Prevention Bureau**

The following report represents the activities of the Fire Prevention Bureau from January 1 thru December 31, 2020.

Annual Inspections and re-inspections (Commercial and multi-family) - 2115  
Plan reviews (new construction, remodeling, fire alarms, sprinkler systems) -965  
Testing (sprinkler systems, fire alarms, water flow, pump tests) - 345  
Court tickets/complaint investigations - 144

### **Plans for 2021**

1. Continue to add all pertinent data to the iPad for tracking and reference.
2. Look at upgrading to a newer system for inspections.
3. Review and update current fire prevention ordinances.
4. Continue to provide additional training to all fire inspectors.
5. Continue to review the effectiveness of the compliance engine.
6. Continuation of a strong relationship with the building department.

### **Public Education Programs**

The Alsip Fire Department recognizes the importance of solid public education programs. These programs exist to help in the reduction of fires and to promote fire safety, instruct classes for CPR and instruct our businesses' employees how to operate a fire extinguisher. The Public Education Bureau is an extension of the Fire Prevention Bureau. The Public Education Bureau is managed by two coordinators. This is further assisted by several firefighters who assist in delivering the programs. The goal of the Public Education Bureau is for Community Risk Reduction (CRR). Both of our Public Education Coordinators have attended at National Fire Academy class for CRR and are currently participating in a national program that we hope to institute to our village.

Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 world we moved into, it prevented the fire department from providing our traditional presentation of programs. This included our annual visits to the schools, annual poster contests and rides to school on the fire engine. The fire department had to move away from our annual in-person open house and provided a reverse-drive-by instead. Thanks to many of our local businesses and their generous donations we were able to provide both child and adult gift bags. The bags included fire safety information, 5 masks (thanks to the village), wooden toy kits for children (Home Depot), cookies, (Doubletree and Aryzta), hand sanitizer (Alsip Jewel-Osco) and other giveaways. There was an estimated 100 people that stopped by in October.



The Alsip Fire Department continues offering CPR to all businesses at a reduced cost (still covering our expenses). This is to promote the importance of everyone knowing CPR and maybe save a life. Although the pandemic slowed if not stopped other programs, the fire department was still able to provide a few CPR classes and fire extinguisher classes to several businesses in a safe way.

In October 2020, Fire Chief Styczynski was involved in the creation of a video promoting fire safety along with State Fire Marshal Matt Perez. The video was sent out all over the state to show alternative ways to promote fire safety during fire prevention week. Pub-Ed Coordinators Lt. Kraus and FF Harding also created several videos on fire safety for that week. The fire department also partnered with Local 281 of the sprinkler fitters and the Northern Illinois Fire sprinkler Initiative and created a video of the traditional side by side burn with the

additions of showing the reason to use solid core doors in bedrooms, why to keep your bedroom door closed when you are sleeping and the importance of having a smoke detector in your bedroom. We are hopeful that the final version of this video will be out in a few weeks.



The Alsip Fire Department maintains a Facebook page for social media which is constantly being updated.

### **Summary of 2020's Public Education Events & Programs**

CPR - 100 students

Fire extinguisher classes - 50 students

Reverse drive-by for Open House - 100 people

### **Plans for 2021**

The Public Education Bureau is hoping to return to some of the previous programs prior to 2020 and planning for in 2021:

1. The continuing promotion of CPR for the businesses and residents.
2. The continuation of the Vision 20/20 program for community hazard reduction which includes voluntary home inspections. This is becoming a nation-wide initiative.
3. Application for a FEMA grant to enhance our programs.
4. Continued Safety visits at the Heritage I & II complexes.
5. Continued Participation in the Office of the State Fire Marshal's & Illinois Fire Safety Alliance's "Be Alarmed Smoke Detector" installation program.
6. The initiating of the home inspection program.

7. Offering bleeding control classes to businesses.

### **2020 Incident Statistics**

In 2020, the Alsip Fire Department responded to 3,368 incidents, a decline from 2019. The administration constantly monitors our responses and modifies them as needed to either increase our efficiency or reduce our liability. The majority of our incidents continue to be EMS related (65-70%) which is normal for the majority of fire departments that provide EMS.

In 2020, the Alsip Fire Department provided assistance to other departments a total of 250 times and requested assistance 64 times. The summary of incidents are as follows;

#### **Fires**

Structure Fires - 27

Vehicle Fires - 16

Other (grass, rubbish, etc.) - 28



**Emergency Medical Calls & Rescue (including vehicle accidents) - 2261**

**Hazardous Condition Calls (including gas leaks, carbon monoxide alarms) - 136**

**Service calls & good intent calls (cancelled while enroute to responding towns for automatic and mutual-aid responses, citizen assists) - 429**

**False calls (fire alarms, smoke detector sounding) - 412**

## **Other external customer services and specialty teams**

The Alsip Fire Department belongs to the Mutual-Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS). This is the statewide mutual-aid plan for the fire service. It is a clearing house to provide resources for all-hazards including major fires, natural disasters and man-made events (terrorism). The Alsip Fire Department houses a specialized generator and lighttower for these types of incidents. These assets could be deployed at anytime that they are needed and anywhere in the state of Illinois or possibly adjacent states through mutual-aid.

We have 4 personnel that are members of the Southwest Hazardous Materials Response Team. They are our local hazardous materials response team. All of the team members are specially trained to mitigate hazardous materials. The fire department also houses the local response team's science and command vehicle. This vehicle contains all of the specialty monitoring equipment for a hazardous materials response as well as functioning as a command post for the team.



We have 4 personnel who are part of the Combined Agency Response Team (C.A.R.T.). This is our local technical rescue team. All of the personnel on the team are specially trained to mitigate specialized rescue such as; Confined Space, High Angle, Trench, and Structural Collapse.

The Alsip Fire Department has 4 personnel who are part of the area's Origin and Cause team (Fire investigations). These personnel respond investigate fires in our village and also to the surrounding fire departments to assist with fire cause and point of origin. All specialty team members are required to attend monthly training sessions to remain proficient in their skills and are required to be certified by the Office of the State Fire marshal.

The Alsip Fire Department also has two members that are part of the Illinois US&R team (Urban Search and Rescue).

### **Responses to incidents**

The administration constantly evaluates our responses and modifies them as needed to provide the best responses and the number of personnel needed for each type of incident. We strive to ensure we have enough personnel on the scene in all aspects from command and control to task level personnel. With the number of shift personnel and automatic-aid, we have between 25 And 27 people responding to structure fires in our town. If necessary, we can increase those numbers by using our box alarm system and for calling mutual-aid from other fire departments. This is a structured response that brings in resources based on our needs. This includes fires, technical rescue, hazardous materials, EMS, firefighting foam, water rescue, and water tenders.

### **Staffing levels**

In 2020, we faced a rollercoaster of personnel who were off due to COVID-19, some family members, some personnel. The Fire Department is bound by the collective bargaining agreement to provide 8 personnel on shift every day.

We continue to struggle occasionally when all three ambulances are out in which leaves only 2 personnel to cover the village until an ambulance is available.

### **Plans for 2021**

In September of 2020 one firefighter was let go. We were able to fill that position in January of 2021. We will also continue to evaluate our responses within the Village of Alsip and with the towns that we provide automatic-aid and mutual-aid with. We continually review our staffing levels at each station to remain efficient in our responses and utilization of our manpower. We occasionally move vehicles around for increased efficiency.

### **Training**

The Alsip Fire Department uses a Training Support Team concept in lieu of a training officer. The committee consists of 5 different personnel who has some type of responsibility related to training. This team concept has proven to be an invaluable tool and allows us to accomplish the many needs within the realms of training. Some of the features of the Training Support Team include; developing

and maintaining training schedules, evaluating the training needs of the department, lesson plan development, securing off-site locations for training, training tower maintenance, developing and the construction of training props, maintaining the current props, arranging building walk thrus, pre-plans, and providing consistent delivery of the training program for the department.

The fire service is driven by training. The fire department is the “One call does all” all hazards first responder. We must be the masters of all including fighting fires (both structural and non-structural), emergency medical services, hazardous materials, technical rescue (high angle, confined space, trench, structural collapse), vehicle rescue, specialized rescue such as ice and water, disaster management and planning plus anything else that no one wants. Firefighters must have great mechanical aptitude and are able to make something work out of nothing (improvise) at a moment’s notice. All of our fire apparatus carry specialized equipment that every firefighter and officer must know how to use proficiently. We are required to complete annual training requirements by several agencies including NFPA (National Fire Protection Agency), Illinois Dept. of Labor (IDOL – OSHA equivalent), ISO (Insurance Services Organization), IDPH (Illinois Dept. of Public Health) and the OSFM (Office of the State Fire Marshal.

**Breakdown of yearly requirements for ISO;**

240 hours annually of firefighter specific training

16 hours for officer training (chiefs and company officers)

Minimum of 4 hours of driver refresher including practical skills

Pre-planning of all commercial buildings or walkthroughs/ visits

12 hours of multi-company drills

4 hours of Radiation Awareness

**Illinois Dept. of labor requirements;**

16 hours of respiratory protection training (SCBA)

Driver’s training along with ISO (Initial 40 hours plus practical driving for each type of vehicle.

Blood borne pathogens review (6-8 hours)

Hazardous materials - 40 hrs. for Operations trained (IDOL & NFPA)

12-hour refresher training each year

Hazardous Materials Technician - 80 hours initially, 24 hours refresher annually (team drills)

Technical Rescue 8 hrs. annual refresher - Team members initially +400 hours plus minimum of 24 hours refresher training annually (team drills)

### **Specials Hazards/Training;**

Lockout/ tagout (4 hours annually)

Vehicle Rescue - 12 -20 hours annually (Not a requirement, but must keep up with skills, knowledge of extrication plus new technology of vehicle construction)

Pump Operator Training- 24- 32 hours annually (not a requirement, but must keep up with skills/ knowledge)

Live fire training- varies for time

Policies, SOGs, administrative rules

Traffic Incident management

National Incident Management (NIMS)- required by federal government

### **Illinois Dept. of Public Health**

All of the Firefighters, Lieutenants, and Chief officers are licensed paramedics. Each person is required to attend a minimum of 3 sessions of continuing education annually through South Cook County EMS System (Ingalls hospital, our resource hospital). Each session is approximately 6 hours. Additionally, all paramedics are required to have a total of 100 hours of continuing education every four years.

Training is usually handled at the crew or shift level. However, there are certain times that for consistency or special training, specific and specially trained personnel are brought back to instruct for the department.

In 2020 despite COVID-19, the Alsip Fire Department was fortunate to take advantage of the use of the Edca buildings and Ed's Lawnmower on Pulaski. The fire department was able to hone skills with live fire training, ventilation, forcible entry, master stream devices and fire investigation.





The Garden Homes Fire District also used these 2 buildings for training and Moraine Valley Community College used the Ed's Lawnmower building for a fire investigation class.



In 2020 the Alsip Fire Department introduced the Acting Officer Training Program. This program is a 40-hour class designed for firefighters who are designated Acting Officers in Charge (AOIC) in the event that the lieutenant at Fire Station 2 is off for the day. It consists of leadership review, simulations of fires, company officer responsibilities and live fire training with command functions. This program was designed and delivered by Lieutenants Freitag and Kraus. 2 classes were held in 2020.



In 2020, our firefighters engaged in a total of 13,260 hours of training. This equates to an average of 378 hours per Officer/ Firefighter. This is above the recommended average of training for firefighters.

In November of 2020, the Alsip Fire Department hosted a 4-hour Resiliency class provided by the Illinois Fire Service Institute. This class was offered due to the number of suicides that the fire service has been experiencing over the past several years with a drastic increase in 2020. 2 additional classes were cancelled between November and December due to the rise in COVID-19 numbers but were held in January of 2021. All three shifts have completed the training.

## **Plans for 2021**

### **Fire**

1. Continued analysis of the training needs of the department.
2. Provide more scenario-based training.
3. Skills evaluation
4. Delivering 1 to 2 more AOIC classes.
5. Hosting a Hazardous Materials Incident Command class from the Illinois Fire Service Institute (February).
6. Hosting a Rope Rescue Operations course from the Illinois Fire Service Institute (March)
7. Continued realistic training through the use of props and actual structures or buildings within the village and other locations.
8. Developing a SCBA training prop with an intermodal container.
9. Developing alternative ways for delivery training programs.
10. Continued encouragement of outside training.
11. Continuation of the pre-plan program.

12. Continued joint training with the police, public works and water depts.

## **EMS**

1. Offer specific specialty training classes such as advanced care practices.
2. Providing training on evaluating the skills of our paramedics.

## **Future resources and operational practices**

The administration of the Alsip Fire Department continues to evaluate the trends of the fire services and monitors technology. The advancement of technology continues to advance in the fire service.

In 2020 we continued implementing our cancer prevention program. This is due to the studies of the past 5 years with the increase of cancer in firefighters. Fire fighters have a 22% higher chance of acquiring cancer then the general public because of the exposure to carcinogenic materials. Firefighters are exposed to over 41 known cancer-causing materials at an average fire. The overall goal is to provide a second set of turnout gear to all firefighters so theirs can be laundered after a fire and has a clean set to use while still on duty. Each firefighter now has a second protective hood and second set of gloves for the same reason.

In 2020 we started field testing dual certification gear for wildland firefighting and extrication (rescue). Even though we don't have "Forests", the prairie along the CSX railroad always presents challenges for prairie fires. Since the majority of our prairie fires are usually in the warmer weather and are long in duration, the current structural firefighting gear is too thick due to the several layers of protection meant for structural fires. They can cause the firefighters to overheat and succumb to heat exhaustion or other heat emergencies. The wildland gear provides more mobility to the firefighter and is lighter weight to minimize heat production. This gear is also more effective for vehicle extrication. It is more cut resistant than our normal structural firefighting clothing.

In 2021, we will also continue focusing on behavior health for the fire service. This is another growing trend because of the number of suicides nationwide by firefighters and police officers.

**End of the 2020 Annual Fire Department Report  
Submitted by Fire Chief Thomas Styczynski**