

Alsip Fire Department



**Annual Report
For
2024**

First and foremost, I am honored to serve as the Fire Chief for the Village of Alsip. I have lived in Alsip essentially all 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 continued 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 our residents, businesses, and travelers that come through our great village. This is due to most of our village being commercial/industrial based rather than all residential.

The Alsip Fire Department is made 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.

We are also researching alternative funding for the fire department throughout the year to help offset our operating costs.

This report is a summation of the activities, incidents, and accomplishments that the Alsip Fire Department either responded to or participated in 2024. This report also contains some goals planned for 2025.

Summary of the year

2024 was a roller coaster of a year for the Alsip Fire Department. We had 3 of our most senior firefighters retire between May and August. We also had 2 other vacancies to fill when the board authorized the fire department to return to a staffing level 36 firefighter/ paramedics which we haven't seen since 2010. Our Fire and Police Commission have worked diligently to replace the 3 with new hires and to fill the other vacancies. Our department along with other fire departments in Illinois have had a struggle to find and hire candidates. The pool of candidates has shrunk drastically since before covid and it took several years to see the impact as we are feeling it now. In January of 2025 we will be hiring 1 firefighter/paramedic to fill our staffing, leaving 1 vacancy to be filled.

In 2024 the fire department responded to 3737 calls for service, almost 200 fewer responses than 2023, which was surprising.

In 2024, the fire department's first Administrative Assistant, Sharon Szynalski retired after 22 years of service with the department. We wish Sharon a happy and healthy retirement.



In 2024, the Alsip Fire Department placed in service new SCBA equipment (Self-contained breathing apparatus). This equipment was purchased from receiving a FEMA grant of \$396,000.

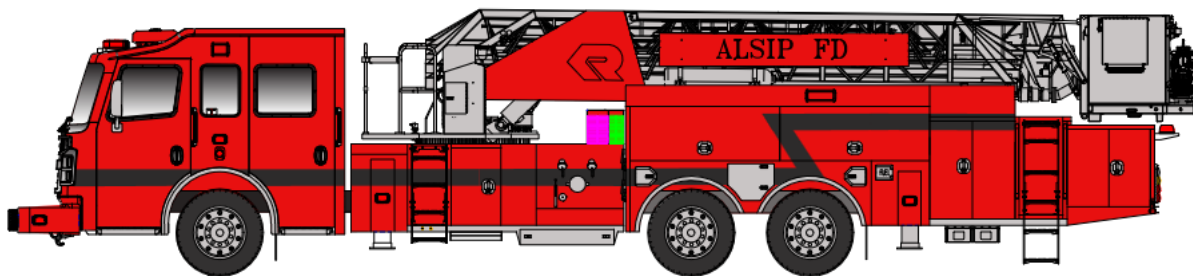
In the fall of 2021, yes 2021, the village board approved the purchase of a replacement pumper engine. This replacement engine will be replacing our oldest engine in our fleet, which is a 2001 Seagrave pumper. In November of 2024, after many months of delays due to manufacturing issues which include a delay of parts, the shrinking workforce, we finally took delivery of our new engine.

This engine looks very similar to our 2012 fire engine. The engine carries 750 gallons of water, 40 gallons of foam that can be used on flammable liquid fires or spills, can pump 2000 gallons of water a minute and is equipped with advanced lifesaving equipment. This engine along with our other 2 pump engines also carry a complement of 2200 feet of hose with sizes ranging from 1.75", 2.5" and 5" that is used for water supply (above ground water main). The new features that were added to this engine was the ability to see the level of water in the booster tank from all 4 sides of the vehicle. This is especially important while operating on the roadway or the tollway to help protect our driver/ operator.



Danielle Tyma, who was the department's first part-time fire prevention administrative assistant, has taken over the duties as the new full-time administrative assistant for the fire department.

In 2023, a committee was formed to replace our aging ladder truck. The ladder truck was purchased in 2002. While the committee was in full swing, Truck 2014 had to be removed from service in June due to frame issues. This was discovered during the annual inspection. The Alsip Fire Department has purchased a 100' Mid-Mount Tower ladder from Rosenbauer. This was a program truck (not custom). The advantage of the program truck is quicker delivery. We are expecting it in May or June of 2025 compared to waiting between 36 and 48 months for a custom vehicle. Since it is our only ladder truck, it doesn't have to mirror any other vehicle. The committee, after a year-long of meetings, visiting with various manufacturers and other fire departments, had determined the best type of aerial device for our village's needs would be a mid-mount tower ladder. This type of vehicle has many advantages over the straight ladder that our Seagrave had. The department's original ladder truck was an 85' mid-mount tower ladder manufactured by Sutphen. Funny enough, Sutphen was one of the bidders for the new truck, hoping to have a second truck with our department. The new aerial tower will have a basket to make rescues, the ability of moving any necessary equipment to an elevated position quicker and our firefighters being able to flow water from the basket which is much safer than working from the tip of the ladder. Another comparison I quote "which would you rather take going upward, an elevator or the stairs?" This is our elevator, much more efficient and effective.



Once this new aerial tower arrives, it will take nearly 2 months to place it in service because of the training that will need to be completed.

In 2023, the kitchen was completely remodeled at Fire Station #2. The last time the kitchen was remodeled before that was in 1999. The new kitchen was re-configured and is expected to have a life span of about 25 years. This project completes the remodeling of the kitchens at both stations and the completion of the bathrooms being remodeled at both stations. The bathrooms at both stations were from the original construction from 1973/ 1974.



In 2025, 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.

In 2025, we will also be taking delivery of a new ambulance that was ordered in 2022. It will replace our last Chevy ambulance that was purchased in 2013. We are also replacing our 2002 Dodge utility pick-up truck. It has been a great truck, but we are seeing more maintenance issues and want to get ahead of it. The utility truck is used as a response vehicle from Station 2 when needed, it also plows the snow at both stations and hauls our trailer and any other MABAS trailer as needed. The truck has a “Tommy” gate that was installed to lift heavy items which includes sending this vehicle out when we deploy over 300’ of 5” hose. We bring our battery-operated hose roller out to drain and roll the hose, load it back into the pick-up then take it to the appropriate station for repacking. This device minimizes injuries from lifting the roll of hose. 1 length of 100 foot of 5” hose weighs 110 pounds.

Fire Prevention

The Fire Prevention Bureau consists of 2 part-time Fire Prevention Officers, 1 part-time administrative assistant and between 8 to 10 firefighters to perform the annual inspections while off-duty.

In the beginning of 2024, Danielle, our fire prevention administrative assistant moved from fire prevention to the department's administrative assistant and a search was on to replace Danielle's position. We hired a new part-time administrative assistant for fire prevention in April, but she resigned due to personal issues in the fall. At the time of this writing, our new administrative assistant for fire prevention has started. We look forward to Karla as our new admin for the fire prevention bureau.

Due to the number of firefighters retiring plus the 2 other vacancies, 2024 was challenging for the fire prevention bureau. Our firefighters were working quite a bit of overtime which placed a strain on the bureau. We began inspections in March and continued through the year. With current technology, our inspectors are able to utilize an iPad 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. Karla, our new Fire Prevention Administrative Assistant initiates and tracks the billing of our Keltron system (radio fire alarm), fire inspections, plan reviews, pump tests and fire alarm tests. This has proven to be very successful. 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 (\$180). The sole benefit of the Keltron

radio system is it is the only system that is directly connected to our dispatch center. As soon as an alarm comes across the board, the fire department is automatically dispatched. All other systems are 3rd party. That means they can be monitored which includes from other states. These systems have to be called in our dispatch center. There may be a significant delay getting dispatched for the fire alarm or potential fire.

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. The Alsip Water Department also uses this system for tracking backflow devices.

In 2024, we asked the village to pass an ordinance now requiring all apartment/condominium buildings to install a Knox box so we can access the common areas of the building including basements, utility rooms and laundry areas. This was instituted after responding to several condo buildings on the east side of town where we had difficulty accessing the building for the report of smoke in the building and a possible dryer fire. The cost of the Knox box (\$500) is much more cost effective if we have to force entry (\$300 to \$1,000).

Also in 2024, the village passed an ordinance updating our fire code to the 2021 version. This updated code addresses a few of the problem areas that we have seen in the recent past which includes photovoltaic systems (solar panels) and lithium battery storage.

Summary of the Fire Prevention Bureau

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

Annual Inspections and re-inspections (Commercial and multi-family) - 738
Plan reviews (new construction, remodeling, fire alarms, sprinkler systems) -967
Testing (sprinkler systems, fire alarms, water flow, pump tests) - 791
Court tickets/complaint investigations - 271

Plans for 2025

1. Continue to add all pertinent data to the iPad for tracking and reference.
2. Review and update current fire prevention ordinances.
3. Continue to provide additional training to all fire inspectors.
4. Encourage other firefighters to join the program.
5. Continue to review the effectiveness of the compliance engine.
6. Continuation of a strong relationship with the building department.
7. Maintain a strong fire prevention presence for compliance.

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 the National Fire Academy class for CRR and are currently participating in a national program that we hope to institute in our village.

The Alsip Fire Department continues to provide poster contests in our grade schools and offer rides to school on the fire engine for the overall winner of each school. Our open house continues to set attendance records. An estimated 700 to 750 people attended the open house in 2024.





The Alsip Fire Department continues offering CPR to all businesses at a reduced cost (still covering our expenses). This is to promote the importance to everyone knowing CPR and maybe save a life.

The Alsip Fire Department is working on alternative and newer ways to provide the safety education to our school aged children based on current learning techniques. With the load of today's curriculum, it makes it challenging to get into the schools. 2 years ago, we conducted CPR instruction to all 7th & 8th graders at Hamlin Upper Grade School. In 2025, we will be training all 7th graders at Hamlin and working on Prairie Jr. High.

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

Summary of 2024's Public Education Events & Programs

CPR - 90 students

Fire extinguisher classes - 110 students

Open House - +750 people

Plans for 2025

The Public Education Bureau will continue to develop more programs to help with our Community Risk Reduction programs.

1. The continuing promotion of CPR for 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 nationwide initiative.
3. Developing new programs for the schools.
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. Offering bleeding control classes to businesses.

2024 Incident Statistics

In 2024, the Alsip Fire Department responded to 3,737 incidents, 200 less incidents than 2023. The administration constantly monitors our responses and modifies them as needed to increase our efficiency. Most of our incidents continue to be EMS related (65-70%) which is normal for the majority of fire departments that provide EMS.

In 2024, the Alsip Fire Department aided other departments a total of 157 times and requested assistance 74 times. The summary of incidents is as follows.

Fires

Structure Fires - 21

Vehicle Fires - 19

Other (grass, rubbish, etc.) - 21



Emergency Medical Calls & Rescue (including vehicle accidents) – 2515



Hazardous Condition Calls (including gas leaks, carbon monoxide alarms) - 122

Service calls & good intent calls (cancelled while enroute to responding towns for automatic and mutual-aid responses, citizen assists) - 233

False calls (fire alarms, smoke detector sounding) - 382

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 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 2024, we faced a rollercoaster of personnel changes due to retirements, vacancies, adding new personnel and personnel who were off on either injury or illness. We added 4 new personnel between April and January of 2025, now leaving 1 vacancy. 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, which leaves only 2 personnel to cover the village until an ambulance is available.

Training

The Alsip Fire Department uses a Training Support Team concept in lieu of a training officer. The committee consists of several people who have some type of responsibility related to training. This team concept has proven to be an effective tool and allows us to accomplish 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 constructing 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 carries 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).

The office of the State Marshal has enacted task books for several levels of certification. Typically, 100 hours of specific training over a 4-year period for each certification must be completed. This has added another level of completion of training for our members.

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 the Firefighters, Lieutenants, and Chief officers are licensed paramedics. Each person is required to attend a minimum of monthly 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 the department.

In 2024, the Alsip Fire Department continued with our training program. We also sent several of our personnel to specialized training between the Illinois Fire Service Institute, Moraine Valley Community College, the National Fire Academy and other institutions. Classes included Fire Apparatus Engineer's class, Vehicle & Machinery Operations, Firefighter Rescue Intervention, Community Risk Reduction strategies and Homeland Security classes and have sent several personnel to the Company Officer Operations program which is 160 hours long. This program is to prepare the department for future officers and hopefully chief officers from the ranks within. The 2nd class after this would be the Advanced Company officer which is 160 hours in length and finally the Chief Fire Officer program which is 13 months long.

In 2024 the Alsip Fire Department conducted our 4th Acting Officer Training Program. This program is a 40-hour class designed for firefighters who are designated Acting Officers in Charge (AOIC) if 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. The fire department also conducted a 40-hour class for new lieutenants for the immediate promotion of 1 firefighter to lieutenant and a potential second candidate. The 40- hour, weeklong course presented builds upon the AOIC course and adds the job duties and responsibilities of a lieutenant into the course. The course also conducts several scenario-based evolutions.





In 2024 the fire department changed our record reporting system. As of this writing, data is still being transferred over. However, every firefighter and officer have at the very least met the minimum requirements for training. Many of our firefighters have also attended specialty training courses such as rope operations, confined space, engine company operations to name a few. The fire department encourages our officers and firefighters to attend outside classes that benefit the department and provides a better service to our citizens and businesses.

In 2024, we completed the SCBA training container at Fire Station 2. This was a 3-year project. Thanks to Firefighters Nick Strand and Randy Talaski for their working in constructing the various stations within the can. It is 2 levels where our firefighters can transverse from one level to another. This training prop is to review the use and limitations of SCBA equipment, to build confidence in SCBA skills by creating a controlled stress environment.



Plans for 2025

Fire

1. Continued analysis of the training needs of the department.
2. Provide more scenario-based training.
3. Skills evaluation
4. Hosting cornerstone classes from the Illinois Fire Service Institute (1 a quarter).
5. Continued realistic training using props and actual structures or buildings within the village and other locations.
6. Developing alternative ways for delivery training programs.
7. Continued encouragement of outside training.
8. Re-instatement of 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 in 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 2023, the fire department discarded all of our foam that contained PFAS and replaced it with the current non-PFAS type foam. Each of our pumper-engines carry 40 gallons of foam plus we stock another 200 gallons.

In 2023, the fire department replaced all our gas-powered saws and replaced them with Makita battery operated saws. These saws do not require a flammable liquid for its fuel, we will eliminate any injuries caused by strain of using the pull cord to start. These saws run much more quietly so you can have a conversation when operating. The purchase of the saws was a combination of the IPRF grant, 2% foreign fire fund and department budget. These saws also require less maintenance.



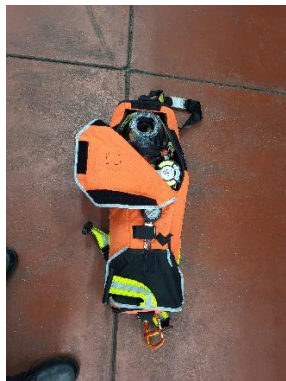
We continue purchasing dual certification gear for wildland firefighting and extrication (rescue). We also continue to outfit every firefighter with 2 sets of gear as part of our cancer prevention program.

In 2024, the fire department replaced our aging thermal imagers. Thermal imagers are used to locate victims in a structure, observe heat conditions and can be used for hazardous materials responses. A committee of 3 firefighters and 1

lieutenant field tested 3 different manufacturers which included a live fire scenario. The committee chose the manufacturer of SEEK. All 3 pumper-engines have an imager and one will be purchased for the soon to be arriving aerial tower.



2024 also enabled the fire department to replace its RIT (Rapid Intervention Team) packs. This equipment is used for firefighter rescue in the event that a firefighter gets lost or trapped in a building or has a mechanical issue with their SCBA where they are unable to get air to breathe. Due to the recent changes in the NFPA standard for SCBA, the types of couplings for the SCBA changed to a newer style in which our previous RIT packs did not have nor could be converted.



In 2024, the fire department purchased equipment to mitigate lithium-ion battery incidents. This is a growing problem in the U.S. We are seeing more and more incidents involving lithium batteries in addition to how many things that are in our household currently that uses these batteries. These incidents pose numerous problems. Both stations have equipment for mitigation and the village passed an amendment to our current spiller pays ordinance that requires the spiller to reimburse the fire department for all equipment used and provides an avenue for the spiller to hire a clean-up company for disposal.



Goals for 2025

1. Continue to focus on behavior health for the fire service. This is another growing trend because of the number of suicides nationwide by firefighters and police officers.
2. Re-evaluate the medical examinations of our firefighters based on the current NFPA standards
3. Investigate a cancer testing process for our firefighters. Currently, cancer is the leading cause of death among firefighters. This will also include evaluating our cancer prevention program.

The fire departments nationwide are always facing various challenges on a constant basis. We have seen a decrease in the amount of people testing for firefighter positions and a sharp decrease in paramedics. The administration will continue to monitor the situation and attempt to make adjustments as necessary and provide “out of the box” thinking to help battle the issue.

**End of the 2024 Annual Fire Department Report
Submitted by Fire Chief Thomas Styczynski**