



HoseLine

FALL 2017

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The Prospect Heights Fire District 2017 Open House

Every year, the Fire District opens its doors to the community to showcase our equipment and facilities. The event helps us educate the community on the importance of fire safety and prevention in their homes. It coincides with National Fire Prevention Week, which this year runs October 8th through the 14th and locally commemorates the Great Chicago Fire. Nationwide, those in the fire industry will promote ways to boost fire prevention awareness and safety during the week. This year's theme is "Every Second Counts". During Fire Prevention Week, firefighters spend time visiting schools and community groups to help teach awareness. The weeklong event ends with the Fire District's invitation to residents to join in the fun at the main fire station for the annual open house.

This year firefighters will demonstrate various elements that residents can employ to exit the home quickly and safely, teach children to do it on their own in case you can't help, clearly visible house numbers among many other important safety tips. In addition, children will be able to have some fun taking a slide down the fire pole, helping put out a 'fire' at our squirt house, dressing up as a firefighter and getting a color photo to take home! A free hot dog lunch will be served from 11:30 a.m. until 2 p.m. We hope to see you and your family in our home during this annual event.



**Oct. 14th
Open House
10:00 a.m. to
2:00 p.m.**





Message from the Fire Chief

Chief Drew Smith



It's been a busy summer. We've responded to more calls for assistance each month this year than the year before. Besides increasing calls we've managed some rather large projects. As presented in this newsletter, two ambulances are being rechartered and our tanker required replacement. The rest of our fire apparatus fleet is aging. We keep it running and well maintained. We also congratulate Battalion Chief Bob Pyzyna on his impending retirement and Scott Olsen on his promotion to fill Bob's rank. Bob has served Prospect Heights for the past 34 years; Scott has served nearly as long. The PHFD has been lucky to have Bob as a member. We are excited to see Scott in his new role as Battalion Chief of the Gold Shift.

Our state legislature and governor have proposed a property tax freeze. While none of us likes to pay taxes, especially more taxes, a property tax is the lifeblood of fire protection districts. 93 percent of our budget comes from property taxes. Other than billing for ambulance transportation, by law we can't charge other fees that generate substantial revenue. If property taxes are frozen every aspect of our operation will be affected. While we can manage wages and benefits, we can't stop increases in our fuel, maintenance, our property and liability insurance. As the fire chief, I monitor these developments closely so we have as much time as possible to react to any adverse impact that may occur.

Over the past three years, we have cut two full time and six part time firefighters whose wages totaled nearly \$500,000 in order to balance the budget. No person lost his or her job; it occurred through attrition. Our administrative team now consists of the fire chief and deputy fire chief, a 64 percent reduction over the past three years. Gone is our administrative assistant, training officer and paramedic coordinator who oversaw these functions. We now rely on other members to perform these duties.

75 percent of our firefighters are part time staff who earn 68 percent of their full time equivalents and receive no benefits. This alone results in a savings of nearly \$1,000,000 annually. We do this because we need a defined number of firefighter/paramedics and supervisors every hour of every day. Without part time staff we could not operate two fire stations and serve the whole community.

I am telling you all of this because we are doing all we can to be responsible stewards of your tax dollars. Our priority is to deliver the quality service you have come to expect. I am extremely proud of our firefighters who serve you each day and uphold our standards of excellence. They are the ones who make a difference, no matter how big or small the emergency.

As we approach Veteran's Day in November, I also would like to extend my sincere thanks to all the men and women who have served in our nation's armed forces. I especially thank our eight current firefighters who have served; two who remain active reservists. While our firefighter/paramedics keep us safe at home, work and play, it is our military who defend our freedoms as a nation.

Please never hesitate to contact me should you have a question or concern. I am happy to listen and talk.

Drew Scott
Fire Chief

Early Renewal of Union Contract Benefits both Fire District & Firefighters

In 2015 the PHFPD and its firefighters' union ratified their very first collective bargaining agreement (contract). The process was amicable but lasted over one year and cost the fire district tens of thousands of dollars in legal fees. Over the summer the fire district and the union held a discussion about each other's needs. This half-day session and some follow up discussions resulted in an extension of the current contract until December 31, 2021 with minimal legal expense. The cooperative, professional discussions and give-and-take by both sides produced an agreement that improves operations, provides for modest increase in salary each year, and allows the fire district to forecast its budget for the next four years. The fire district administration and its nine full-time firefighters who make up the union are continue to enjoy a great working relationship.

Department Updates

Two Ambulances for the Price of One

In 2006, 2007, and 2009 the PHFD purchased new ambulances. This was in response to the excessive maintenance costs and delayed replacement of the prior ambulances that were over ten years old. The plan then was to replace an ambulance after it had been used front-line for 5-7 years. When the recession occurred this plan was delayed. Now with one ambulance 11 years old and another 10 years old these units have become costly to maintain. The third ambulance is close behind at being eight years old. The patient care module ("box") on all three ambulances is in excellent condition and requires little maintenance. The significant maintenance costs to date are with the Ford chassis and due to our severe use, which is normal.

In April 2017 the Board of Trustees authorized the fire chief to solicit vendors for the rechassis of an ambulance. The PHFD published a Request For Proposal (RFP) that included detailed performance specifications for the remounting of the existing patient care module on to a new chassis and associated work. The RFPs were due back in June and three were received. A committee of paramedics evaluated those RFPs and recommended Foster Coach of Sterling, IL. At their June meeting, the Board of Trustees awarded the work to Foster Coach. On July 18 the 2006 ambulance was sent to Foster Coach and work began immediately. Less than 90 days later the work was complete and the new ambulance was delivered to the PHFD.

Besides the new chassis, the box was repainted and any corrosion repaired. Minor repairs to hardware and wiring were also made. The interior floor was replaced. In the end, Prospect Heights has a new ambulance for half the price. At this time, the 2007 is being remounted and delivery is expected by year's end. We will have two new ambulances for the price of one. Improved reliability with lower annual maintenance costs is a win-win for the residents of Prospect Heights.



A New Tanker for the Department

In April 2017, Tanker 9 underwent its annual preventive maintenance. During this inspection it was noted that the hardwood planks that support the tank's mounting on the chassis frame were split and in need of replacement. The tanker was sent to Alexis Fire Equipment near Galesburg, IL who had quoted the work at \$12,995. Once at Alexis and the tank and body were removed, the scope of the deterioration was far worse. The chassis frame had corrosion that destroyed its top and side surfaces along much of both rails. The tank frame was also deteriorated along its entire length on both sides. To repair this would require two efforts. First, the entire chassis frame would need to be replaced. Second, the body would have to be disassembled from the tank, all damaged material cut off and replaced, then reassembled and the body repainted.

The cost to repair the tanker was now between \$170,000 and \$230,000 depending on the amount of labor and material involved. Any repairs to this vehicle are not a guarantee that other portions of the vehicle would not need significant future repairs. Welding on the current tank may cause degradation to accelerate. The current Tanker 9 was 23 years old and scheduled for replacement in two years.

Operating without a tanker for any period of time is undesirable due to the water supply challenges presented in the non-hydranted areas of Prospect Heights (about 70 percent of the city). Conducting a Request for Proposals to purchase a new tanker is highly desirable. However, the PHFPD cannot wait 90 days to do so then wait 6-9 months for delivery. This would result in the PHFPD operating without a tanker for over one year. The need for an emergency purchase was evident to the fire chief and the trustees.

An informal survey of other manufacturers reveals none had an immediately available demo unit for a price comparable or less than that of Alexis. Alexis had a new tanker available in less than 60 days for \$281,000. Similar new units under RFPs sold for \$325,000 to \$350,000. A salvage credit for the former tanker reduced the price further. While we waited for delivery, Alexis provided a complimentary loaner tanker at no additional cost. With the new tanker Prospect Heights residents are well-served for another twenty-plus years.



Retiring Battalion Chief Robert Pyzyna



By his own estimation, Battalion Chief Robert Pyzyna has watched the Prospect Heights Fire Protection District grow up. He has been on the front lines as the district evolved from a volunteer department to one that is fully staffed with full and part time professional firefighters.

"It's been quite a ride," Pyzyna says of his more than 30 years with the district, including going from a

volunteer firefighter, to part time and ultimately in management as a full-time captain and battalion chief.

Pyzyna retires at the end of this month and he admits he has mixed emotions. Not only did he watch the district grow and evolve, he helped shape it.

Pyzyna joined the district as a volunteer while he worked as a telecommunications manager for IBM, and he quickly found a way to merge the two industries. He was awarded a service grant that paid for a telemetry radio that allowed paramedics to speak with emergency room physicians and transmit electrocardiograms (EKGs) to the hospital.

He moved into a paid-on-call position before working shifts to man the station. When Pyzyna eventually retired from the private sector he was hired full time as a Prospect Heights firefighter.

"I know," he says, "it's the reverse of what most guys do. Most start young and work their way up. I didn't go full time until I was 52."

In fact, when he went through paramedic training, he was the second oldest student in the Illinois system, but he also brought valuable experience from the workplace to the fire station.

"A lot of the things I learned in corporate America, I've been able to apply here," Pyzyna says, specifically pointing to his experience in management.

Yet, those who worked with him point to another asset he brought to the district: his know how in maintenance and repair on the department's fleet of vehicles.

"His work in managing and maintaining our vehicle fleet and facilities has been invaluable," says Chief Drew Smith. "He keeps things running and has saved us a lot on money that otherwise we would have paid to a vendor."

Pyzyna also brought his experience as a scuba enthusiast to his work, consequently one of the first certifications he earned was as a member of the department's scuba team. He went on to become certified in fire investigation and even after retirement Pyzyna will continue as a part-time fire investigator for the village of Northbrook.

The amount of testing and training required of firefighters, fueled Pyzyna's interest as a lifelong learner.

"That's something I didn't see in corporate America," he says. "In fire service, you train every day, you test every day and you are required to be certified every month. I never was into school much, but in fire service I went all the time — and I loved it."

Pyzyna also loved the chance to work alongside of his son, Michael, who was a paid-on-call firefighter from 1998-2009. He now works full time as a firefighter in St. Charles.

Mentoring his son, and other young firefighters climbing the ladder in fire service, still gives Pyzyna a sense of satisfaction.

"Many of those young guys who came through here are now battalion chiefs with other departments," Pyzyna says. "That's one of the things I'm most proud of."



New Battalion Chief Scott Olsen

The way Scott Olsen looks at it, his career in firefighting has come full circle. He was promoted to the rank of battalion chief on Sept. 1 and it culminates a 35-year, full-time career in fire service and one that started in his native Prospect Heights.

"I never thought this day would come," Olson said. "I always thought being a firefighter and paramedic was my destiny. But then, I got the taste of being a lieutenant."

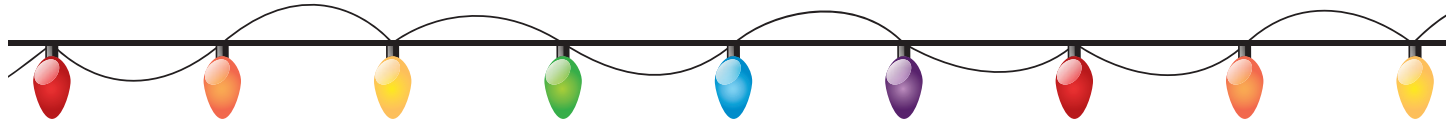
As an officer and now among the top brass, Olson knows he can make an impact, particularly on younger officers coming on board as they learn about fire service.

He brings his experience working for the Prospect Heights Fire District, as well as with the Buffalo Grove Fire Department, where he was a full-time firefighter and lieutenant before retiring in August.

"The transition from being a company officer, of managing, leading and teaching four to five officers in one house, to managing two fire houses and all of the companies is pretty dramatic," Olson says.

But his love of fire service — he started as a cadet in high school — and sheer number of years on the job, including numerous technical certifications, will help him make the jump.

(Continued on page 5)



Holiday Safety Tips

With the upcoming holidays we love to think about spending time with family and friends. It's a favorite time of year for many of us and we decorate our homes and spend time making things nice.

To assist in keeping this holiday season a time of celebration let us also keep in mind that we must do so in a safe manner. Here are a few tips to help accomplish a safe celebration.

Decorating Safety

Never use lighted candles near trees, boughs, curtains/ drapes, or with any potentially flammable item.

Wear gloves while decorating with spun glass "angel hair." It can irritate your eyes and skin. A common substitute is non-flammable cotton.

When spraying artificial snow on windows or other surfaces, be sure to follow directions carefully. These sprays can irritate your lungs if you inhale them.

Small children may think that holiday plants look good enough to eat, but many plants may be poisonous or can cause severe stomach problems. Plants to watch out for include: mistletoe, holly berries, Jerusalem cherry and amaryllis. Keep all of these plants out of children's reach.

When displaying a tree, cut off about two inches off the trunk and put the tree in a sturdy, water-holding stand. Keep the stand filled with water so the tree does not dry out quickly.

Stand your tree away from fireplaces, radiators and other heat sources. Make sure the tree does not block foot traffic or the doorways.

Avoid placing breakable tree ornaments or ones with small, detachable parts on lower branches where small children or pets can reach them.

New Battalion Chief Scott Olsen *(Continued from page 4)*

What's more, says Chief Drew Smith, who started with Olson as a high school cadet, Olson brings a rare commodity: his knowledge of the city.

"One thing Scott brings to us that no other member does is that he grew up in Prospect Heights and continues to live in the city," Smith says. "He and his wife made their home here and raised their two daughters here.

"He knows our streets and schools better than anyone," Smith adds, "and he also knows many residents on a personal level."

Olson's father, Ron, is a past deputy chief of the Prospect Heights Fire District, consequently he knew from the time he was young that he wanted to be a firefighter.

"I used to eat, breathe and sleep Prospect Heights firefighting," Olson says. "Literally, our family life revolved around firefighting."

While he has loved his years on the front lines, fighting fires and helping others as a paramedic, Olson is excited about further advancing in the department that he grew up in.

If you use an artificial tree, choose one that is tested and labeled as fire resistant. Artificial trees with built-in electrical systems should have the Underwriters Laboratory (UL) label.

Only use indoor lights indoors (and outdoor lights only outdoors). Look for the UL label. Check lights for broken or cracked sockets, frayed or bare wires, and loose connections. Replace or repair any damaged light sets.

Use no more than three light sets on any one extension cord. Extension cords should be placed against the wall to avoid tripping hazards, but do not run cords under rugs, around furniture legs or across doorways.

Turn off all lights on trees and decorations when you go to bed or leave the house. Unplug extension cords when not in use.

If using a natural tree, make sure it is well watered to avoid dry branches from catching fire from the heat of light bulbs.

When displaying outdoor lights, fasten them firmly to a secure support with insulated staples or hooks to avoid wind damage. Never nail, tack or stress wiring when hanging lights and keep plugs off the ground away from puddles and snow.

Winter Vehicle Preparation

Prepare your car for the winter by checking items such as the brakes, spark plugs, battery, and tires. Check your owner's manual for the recommended interval for a tune-up.

Be prepared for emergency situations on the road by having a winter "survival kit" in the vehicle including items such as, a working flashlight, extra batteries, reflective triangles, compass, first aid kit, exterior windshield cleaner, ice scraper, snow brush, wooden stick matches in a waterproof container, and non-perishable, high energy foods like unsalted canned nuts, dried fruits, and hard candy.

Much of this information has come from the National Safety Council

He currently is working to earn his bachelor of science degree in public safety management through Southern Illinois University. Olson takes online courses and also attends one of its off-campus locations, the College of Lake County in Grayslake every other weekend.

"It's staying with the trend in fire service," Olson says, pointing to the program's goal of advancing public safety professionals through higher education.

He already brings numerous technical certifications to his degree program, including water rescue, sonar, hazardous materials, technical rescue — rope, confined space and trench — paramedic, fire investigating and as an airport firefighter. Now, he is learning about the broader issues of management and public safety.

"I know the days of running into fires with my guys are behind me," Olson says. "Now, I'm making sure my officers are doing everything they can to make good decisions, for the well-being of the community and the men they lead."



Prospect Heights Fire District

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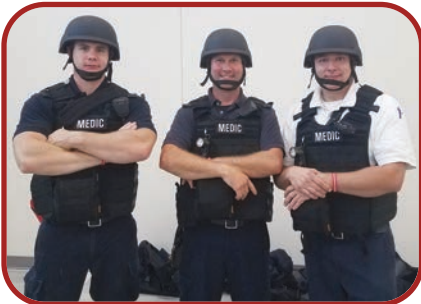
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Active Shooter/Active Threat Training



During the summer, our firefighters participated in an active shooter drill at the Fort Sheridan, Army reserve center. This exercise brought together over 50 law enforcement officers, including Prospect Heights Police and 50 firefighters from 15 different fire departments along with Federal and military personnel to simulate an active threat in a large office area with dozens of victims.

During the training, our firefighters practiced a new procedure where fire personnel, under the protection of law enforcement, enter a building while there is an active threat to assess and remove seriously injured victims.

The practice of waiting for an "all clear" is no longer considered appropriate as victims need advanced lifesaving medical care immediately. This is just one of the new sophisticated areas of responsibility all first responders must adapt to in our changing world. Be assured, the Prospect Heights Firefighters and Police Officers continue to train together to meet any challenge we all encounter.



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