



HoseLine

SUMMER 2020

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Fire District Open House Scheduled for October 3rd from 10 am-2 pm.

Due to the uncertainty of the Governor's executive orders related to the COVID 19 pandemic recovery plan, we are tentatively planning the Open House for October 3rd. Because of these restrictions, please watch our social media platforms and message board for latest updates.

We would love to host the community in a celebration in honor of Fire Prevention Week, but the community's safety is our first concern and we will follow all CDC, State and Federal guidelines.

The event will be held at our main Fire Station located at 10 E. Camp McDonald Rd. A FREE hot dog lunch will be served at 11:30 AM!

Covid 19 Update

Operations at the PHFD remain stable. 9-1-1 calls are at the usual level with calls also related to the COVID-19 pandemic. At this time PHFD operational objectives are:

- Delivering emergency services.
- Maintain Continuity of Operations.
- Perform mission-essential functions to maintain readiness for response.
- Ensuring adequate staffing for each 24 hour shift.

We began planning and logistics for a pandemic more than ten years ago when the flu pandemic was thought to be as widespread as COVID-19. Luckily it wasn't but it prepared the PHFD. Then we experienced the possibility of Ebola and developed additional strategies and resources. Now with COVID-19 we were already well-ahead of doing what needed to be done. It was a relief to have such plans already in place.

We began situational awareness and executing plans back on March 2. Things have ramped up quite a bit since then. Starting on March 14 we implemented heightened use of protective gear and cleaning. Our firefighter-paramedics assume every person we contact may have been exposed so they take appropriate precautions. We are actively practicing social distancing while outside the firehouses.

New guidance comes out almost daily. It's like war; there's new intelligence about the enemy constantly coming out. We're on top of it, as best we can. We are well supported by our local medical oversight authority, the Northwest Community Emergency Medical Services System (NWCEMSS) and its staff. We are also supplied with great information from the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH).

We receive countless emails with hundreds of pages of guidance from the CDC, IDPH, the Illinois Municipal League, the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), NWCEMSS, and national associations that we belong to. Much of it is repetition or not applicable to Fire/EMS but applicable to long-term care facilities, hospitals, and other occupations. So, we have to weed it out and communicate the essentials to our members. Every day we create and distribute our SITUATION REPORT that describes the things we are doing and should not do. Based on the emails and phone conferences this guidance changes, sometimes more than once in the same day.

Since March 18, twice each 24-hours shift, we screen every firefighter and paramedic by taking their temperature and conducting a check for signs or symptoms of COVID-19 or flu-like illnesses. Firefighter-Paramedics are also self-monitoring for signs or symptoms while off duty with their families. Should one of our people become sick we will exclude them from working to limit spread. We have contingency plans in place to ensure staffing remains available.

Each firefighter-paramedic works a 24-hour shift and when we are not on a call we are pretty much confined to the firehouse. The living area of each firehouse is about the same as that of a house. There is one difference: we have six adults all living in that roughly 2000 square foot space. It can get too cozy at times with no alone time. The dorm is one large bedroom with six beds. Normally, we spend a good deal of each shift outdoors on calls, training, visiting schools and businesses but not presently.



(continued on page 4)



Message from the Fire Chief:

Chief Drew Smith

Strange Times

I hope this newsletter finds you and your loved ones well. Many of us are experiencing something never seen by us before. But history reminds us that as Americans we will persevere and rise above although not without some personal sacrifice. While we have seen more than a few recessions over the past couple of decades, we as a nation have weathered the Great Depression, World War 2, and Black Monday, the stock market crash of 1987. All of these historical periods challenged Americans to work past the obstacles and restrictions and each time we enjoyed a better life. We'll do it again. The Prospect Heights Fire Protection District remains committed to ensuring that tragedy is minimized to you and your family so you can focus on doing what you need to do. We would like to provide some comfort to you, a reassurance that if something were to happen your fire department is here, ready, and prepared, to act a moment's notice should you need us.

2019 was a busy year with six more calls than in 2018. 70 percent of all calls are requests for paramedics. The remaining 30 percent are for car fires, building fires, gas leaks, fire alarm activations, and auto accidents, for example. 14 percent of the time two or more calls to 9-1-1 requesting an ambulance or the fire department occur at the same time requiring us to split our resources in order to handle each call. When we are unable to do it ourselves, we automatically get assistance from one of more of our neighboring fire departments. We gladly reciprocate this "mutual aid" doing so nearly 600 times last year.

In 2019 we conducted more than 9,200 hours of training for our firefighter/paramedics. This averages out to about 250 hours a year per firefighter-paramedic or more than two hours spent every day by every single firefighter-paramedic. We also conducted 99 events where we promoted fire and accident prevention to 6,373 children and 8,901 adults. The population of Prospect Heights is just over 16,000 people. We probably didn't reach everyone but we reached many, sometimes more than once. Ultimately, we have main two jobs: Answer your call for help and be prepared to answer your call for help. Training keeps us prepared. Everything after preparation is incidental.

The business of the fire district must go on. Preparations must be never-ending. Our oath requires such of us. We will continue to train while practicing social distancing and self-care. We will ensure our vehicles and equipment are maintained and ready-to-go. We cannot at this time engage



with you in public education and public relations activities but when restrictions are relaxed we will enthusiastically do so.

As part of our preparations, we continue to recruit for persons to join our ranks and become a firefighter-paramedic. The process is lengthy so the recruitment never ends. We have added eight new members since January. Some are brand new and need to be fully trained while others are already trained and just needed orientation of our operations. This hiring was good because several of our part time members who are employed by another fire department full time were told by their full time employer that they cannot work secondary employment during the COVID pandemic. These other employers have a desire to reduce their employee's potential exposure to COVID and therefore potential absences that would impact their workforce. Unfortunately, those actions had the exact effect on us. As a result, we cancelled all vacation time for our full time employees and have incurred some significant overtime expense in order to ensure our ambulance and fire engines are properly staffed each day. Unlike the supermarket, we simply can't close a line at checkout when we have fewer workers than originally scheduled. We have used part time workers for more than three decades as a way to maintain staffing while keeping our budget as low as possible. We now find that system less reliable when a crisis occurs.

We remain committed to all of you in our mission of **"Delivering exceptional services for everyone with Courtesy, Respect, and Empathy"**

Never hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or want to discuss anything about the PHFPD.

My phone number is 224-318-1720.

My email is firechief@phfire.com.

Sincerely,

Drew Smith, Fire Chief

10 Year Smoke Alarms

Smoke Alarms Save Lives!

These are words we believe in and promote vigorously. For more than 40 years, that's been the message. More recently we've promoted "Change Your Clock, Change Your Battery" asking people to replace their smoke alarm batteries twice a year. In reality, many people just forget to change those batteries until they chirp. And then, some folks just take the battery out of the chirping smoke alarm with good intentions to replace it but never do. Smoke alarms should also be replaced every 10 years. In an effort to ensure working smoke alarms with less required human effort the State of Illinois passed the 10-Year Smoke Alarm Act. These alarms require no battery change in ten years and are not susceptible to tampering.

Any new Smoke Alarm purchased by a citizen should be a Smoke Alarm with a "10-year" battery sealed inside the unit. These smoke alarms are mandatory under state law after January 1, 2023 but we are promoting them now. When purchasing ensure the smoke alarm is certified by UL (formerly Underwriters Laboratories) or a similar organization.

You should have smoke alarms near every bedroom and on every level of the home. If help is needed, the PHFD will install as many battery-powered alarms as a homeowner purchases. For those with limited income, we may be able to supply these smoke alarms to you at no cost.

Are You Wondering "What's This Going to Cost Me?" Look at this comparison:

Conventional Smoke Alarm w/9V Battery

\$4 to \$14 each plus

One new \$3.00 9V battery

every 6 months

(\$3 x 2/year x 10 years = \$60)

Total Cost over Ten Years: \$64 to \$74



10-Year Sealed Battery Smoke Alarm

\$15 to \$19 each

(less if multiple units purchased)

Available from all major retailers

such as Ace Hardware, Menards,

Home Depot, or Target.

Total Cost over Ten Years: \$15 to \$19

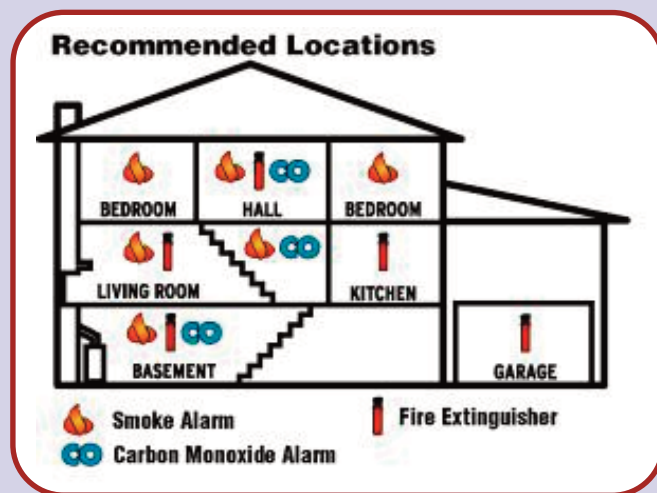


The State Law...

Smoke Detector Act Highlights (from 425 ILCS 60/)

Sec 3

- (a) Every dwelling unit or hotel shall have at least one working detector within 15 feet of any sleeping room.
- (b) Every single-family residence shall have at least one working smoke detector installed on every story, including basements
- (c) Every structure which (1) contains more than one dwelling unit, with a common stairwell, shall contain at least one approved smoke detector at the uppermost ceiling of each interior stairwell.
- (d) It shall be the responsibility of the owner of a structure to supply and install all required detectors.
- (e) The tenant shall be responsible for replacement of any required batteries in the smoke detectors, if a tenant knows a detector is not operational, written notice to owner must be made immediately.
- (f) All newly purchased smoke detectors required in such dwelling units may be either: battery powered provided the battery is a self-contained, non-removable, long term battery, or wired into the structure's AC power line, and need not be interconnected.
- (g) All smoke detectors over 10 years old shall be replaced with long term battery units if found to be inoperable. No new installs of smoke detectors with common 9 volt batteries should be permitted.
- (h) In the case of any dwelling unit that is newly constructed, reconstructed, or substantially remodeled on or after January 1, 2011, smoke detectors permanently wired into the structure's AC power line must also maintain an alternative back-up power source, which may be either a battery or batteries or an emergency generator.





Prospect Heights Fire District

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Covid 19 Update (continued from page 1)

Of the 45 firefighter-paramedics that make up the PHFD, 30 are part-time employees. Most of that 30 have a full-time job at another fire department. Since March 30, nine of our 30 part-timers have been prohibited by their full-time employer from working secondary employment. This has created a significant gap in our scheduled and we are forced to pay overtime to ensure we keep our ambulances and fire engines properly staffed with the minimum number of members needed to respond to calls.

We are about two and a half months into this pandemic and we have spent just over \$9,750 on PPE and disinfectant solutions. That doesn't include what it will cost to reimburse the school district for the supplies we have borrowed from them. We will certainly need more supplies in the next few months. Once the pandemic subsides, our need for this PPE and disinfectants will remain higher than in years past but at levels lower than present.

While we appreciate donations of food items, at this time we ask you please do not do so to limit the potential for disease spread. Many of you have sent cards, called, or knocked on our door to say thank you for serving. Those signs, gestures, well wishes – big or small – are all very much appreciated. We truly appreciate your sentiments and value that you have trust and faith in us during this challenging time. We appreciate it all!

The days are long. We are not complaining. We all signed up for this even though we didn't realize it when we took the oath, some decades ago and other as much more recently. Rest assured that we are doing everything possible to be prepared and to protect our residents during this most trying time of National Emergency. We remain committed to serving you. Never hesitate to call us. Our number is 9-1-1 or if you just have a question about something on your mind call 847-253-8060 and press "2" once the message starts to play.



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