

2023

Monroe Fire Department Annual Report



Alan Rufer, Fire Chief



Monroe Fire Department 2023 Annual Report

Message from the Chief

On behalf of the members of the Monroe Fire Department (MFD), I am pleased to present the 2023 annual report. This report is a testament to our commitment to being a first-class service organization. It illustrates our dedication to each other and the proactive approach we take to protecting our community and all who reside, work, and visit it. Despite the adversity it has faced over the past several years, the department jumped into 2023 with both feet, beginning with the launch of a rigorous schedule of public education and member recruitment events and finishing the year by naming a new Fire Chief.



While the department continues to face a few challenges, membership commitment and drive is not one of them. The men and women of the Monroe Fire Department serve their community with pride and compassion.

From an operational perspective, 2023 was a typical year, but from an organizational sense the department experienced a great deal of growth. Over 80% of the members are now certified to deliver medical care, up from approximately 40% in 2022. This is very important as EMS currently accounts for 62% of the department's calls for service.

The public safety sector is facing recruitment challenges on a national level. However, the recent culture change at the MFD is beginning to bare some fruit. For the first time since 2019 the department had a net positive from their recruitment efforts as they welcomed four new members. Recruiting is not easy, can quickly tax human resources, and requires persistence.

Recruitment is and will continue to be a regular part of what we do as opposed to an annual event. Some workforce experts have been referencing a silver tsunami as a record number of American citizens will turn sixty-five years of age this year. Providing fire/EMS services is a physically demanding job that requires a unique skill set combining brawn and brain. Building a recruitment and retention program that acknowledges the needs of our existing members while attracting new members will play a critical role in sustaining a paid-on-call service model.

As our community continues to age EMS will continue to play a large part in the services we provide. It is likely that the number of fires will continue to decline as code enforcement and public education efforts become more prevalent. With that said, those fires are likely to be larger and cause a greater amount of damage as we continue to see an increase in consumer products that are made from materials that are less resistant to fire.

Monroe is a great city, and the Monroe Fire Department is comprised of some truly incredible people. It is an honor to work for such a caring and compassionate group and I am excited about what we will accomplish together as we move forward.

Sincerely,

Alan L. Rufer, MBA, EFO
Fire Chief

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Monroe City Council

- Mayor Donna Douglas
- Alder Tom Miller, Council President
- Alder Mary Jane Grenzow
- Alder Lynn Kleven
- Alder Kyle Knoll
- Alder Andrew Kranig
- Alder Chris Schindler
- Alder Richard Thoman
- Alder Heidi Treuthardt
- Alder Corinne Wartenweiler

Monroe Public Safety Committee

- Tom Miller, Chairperson
- Andrew Kranig
- Chris Schindler
- Corrine Wartenweiler

Monroe Police & Fire Commission

- David Deininger, President
- Robin McLeish
- Amanda Fields
- Jerry Guth
- Chuck Koch



Vision and Mission Statement

Our Vision

We will constantly strive to be better people, better firefighters, and a better department....not better than anyone else, but better than we were before.



Our Mission

“The Monroe Fire Department is committed to provide prompt, reliable fire and life safety services to the residents and visitors of Monroe. We will do this through *teamwork, communication, and professional career development*. We, as firefighters, will promote an environment that encourages *safety, innovation, and creativity* from within, and always maintain a positive public image.”



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Current Staff

(Original date of employment)

Alan Rufer Fire Chief	May 25, 1993
Chuck Montgomery Division Chief/Apparatus	August 15, 1990
Eric Welty Captain/Safety Officer	August 15, 1990
Dan Perdue Captain/EMS	May 13, 2004
Ken Rufer Firefighter	January 14, 1964
Gene Jacobson Motor Pump Operator	May 29, 1979
Craig Whitaker Firefighter	June 4, 1994
Jared VanDellen Motor Pump Operator/EMR	August 1, 2007
Dan Bartelt Motor Pump Operator	October 7, 2007
Travis Andrews Motor Pump Operator/EMR	December 1, 2008
Andy Kubly Motor Pump Operator/EMR	December 1, 2008
Tony Anglin Motor Pump Operator/EMT	December 1, 2008
Shawn Bechtolt Firefighter	August 14, 2019
Cheryl Gassman Firefighter/EMR	August 14, 2019
Brett Broge Firefighter/EMT	August 15, 2019
Brian DeVries Firefighter/EMR	August 15, 2019
Shannon Jones Firefighter/EMR	March 2, 2021

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Current Staff Continued

(Original date of employment)

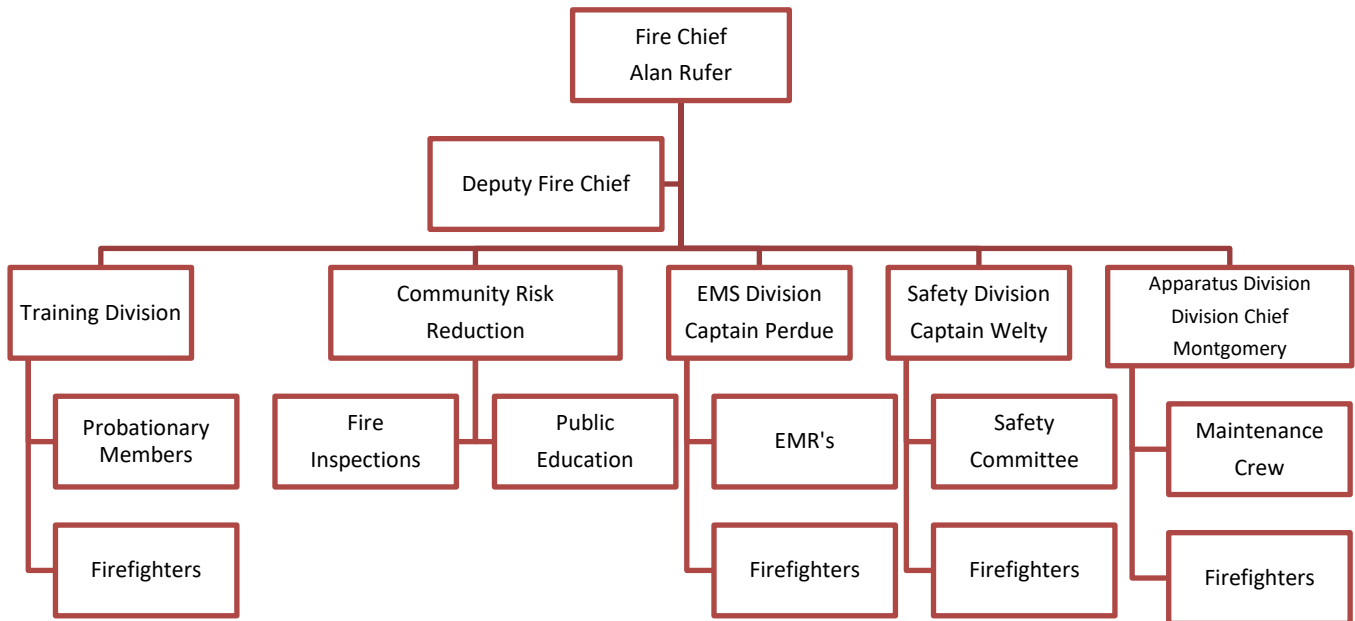
Mike Hall Firefighter/EMR	October 26, 2021
Logan Graff Probationary Firefighter/EMR	June 13, 2023
Avery Auld Probationary Firefighter/EMR	August 21, 2023
Mike Mancini Probationary Firefighter/EMR	August 21, 2023
Andrew Yoder Probationary Firefighter/EMT	November 16, 2023

Retirements/Departures

Todd Hasse Motor Pump Operator	36 Years of Service
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Organizational Chart



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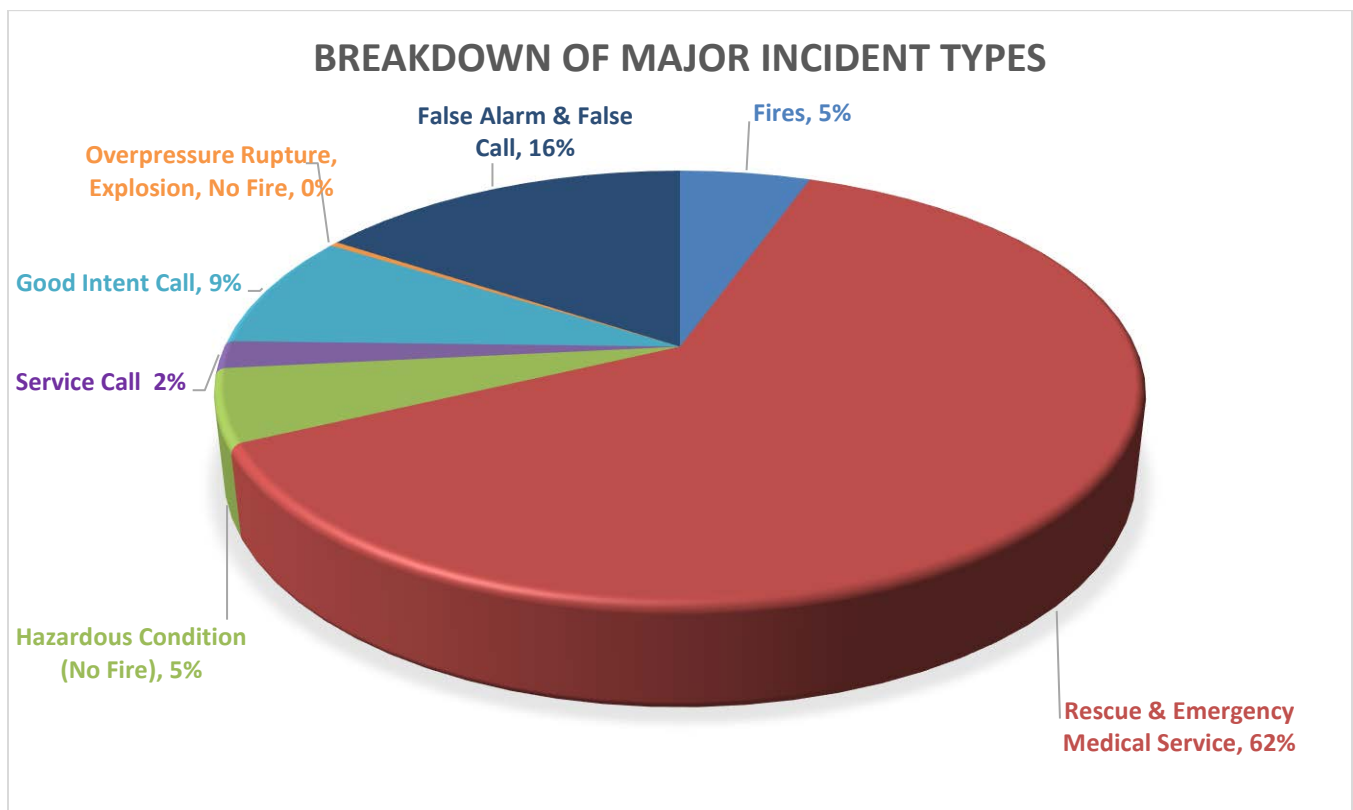


Emergency Operations

In 2023 the department responded to two hundred and ninety-three (293) calls for service. This equals a five percent (5%) decrease year over year.

The total fire loss for 2023 was \$359,950. The department responded to two significant structure fires, one was an unoccupied single-family dwelling, and the other was a mobile home. These two fires accounted for nearly half of the total fire loss in 2023.

The department's response times continue to outperform national standards. Response time is defined as the time from when the department is dispatched (paggers are alerted) until the first apparatus arrives on-scene. The department's average response time for 2023 was 0:07:37 minutes. The National Fire Protection Agency recommends a minimum response time of ten minutes for eighty percent of the calls for communities similar to Monroe.





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- **Rescue & EMS** = Any call where the primary nature of the call is medical, or trauma related. These calls include lift assists, cardiac emergencies, allergic reactions, car accidents, seizures, hospice, strokes, etc.
- **Fire** = Any call where the primary nature of the call is fire related. This could be as insignificant as a small pile of leaves burning in the street to a large structure fire.
- **False Alarm** = This is when the fire alarm system has been activated due to a malfunction of the system. It is system related, not human related, for example, if a child at school intentionally activates a pull station in the hallway it is not coded as a false alarm, it is considered a malicious alarm.
- **Overpressure/Rupture, No Fire** = These are calls where a vessel that is normally under pressure has a sudden/unplanned release, and when we arrive an active fire is absent.
- **Good Intent** = Someone calls 911 because they think there may be an emergency, but it turns out that everything is okay. For example, someone sees smoke rising from a neighbor's back yard and calls for the fire department to respond. We arrive to find that the neighbor is using their approved fire pit.
- **Service Call** = Is when someone needs help, but the situation is not a fire or medical emergency. For example, someone calls 911 to report that there are ducklings trapped in the storm sewer. Yes, this has happened, and yes, we successfully rescued the ducklings.
- **Hazardous Condition** = These are calls where a hazardous condition exists, but the primary concern is not related to a fire or a medical emergency. For example, a neighbor reports a car in the street with a leaking gas tank, but no fire.

Because of the metrics implemented in the fall of 2021, we now have multiple years' worth of data to analyze the department's response activities. Emergency medical calls experienced a seven percent (7%) increase in 2023 accounting for sixty-two percent (62%) of the department's calls. Thirty-two percent (32%) of those calls are incidents involving Green County EMS. An aging population is contributing to the increasing number of medical calls for all fire/EMS departments locally, regionally, and nationally. The department's working relationship with Green County EMS is strong and continues to develop as we work with one another to provide first-class care to the citizens who live, work, and visit the City of Monroe.

Where are the calls? The metrics allow us to track where the calls are within the city. The system divides the city into four zones: Northeast, Northwest, Southeast, and Southwest. We use 13th Avenue to divide the east from the west and 12th Street to divide the north from the south. These geographical lines were chosen to define the zones as they are major travel routes throughout the city.

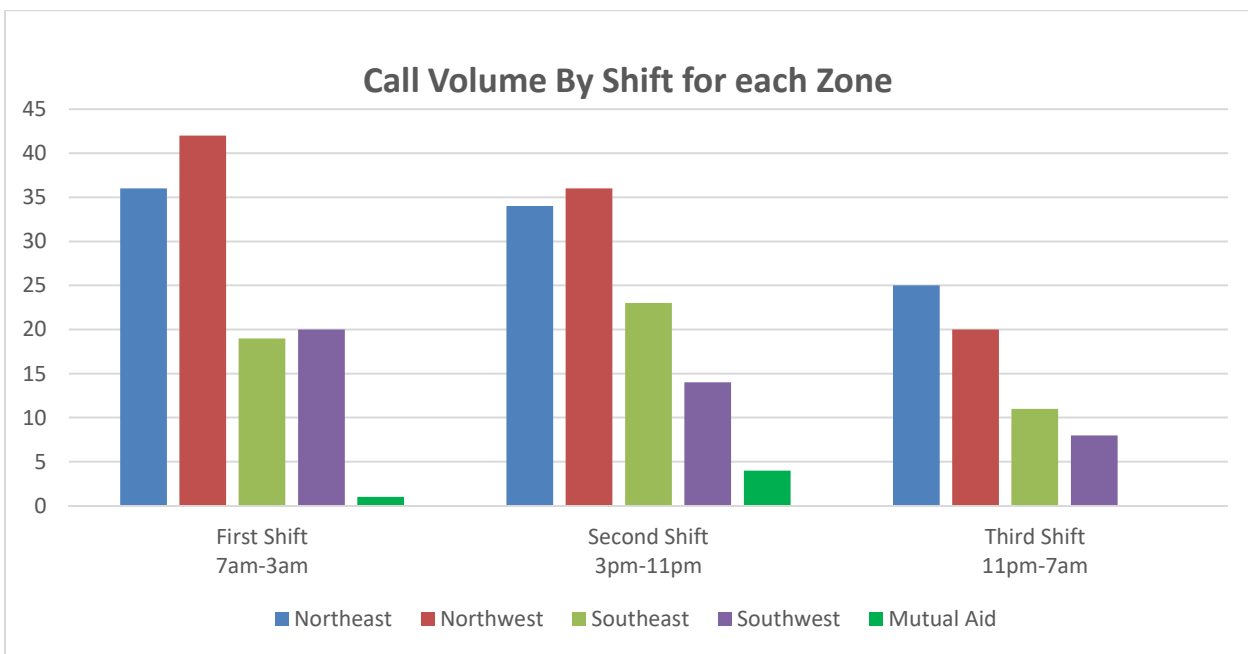
The north side of the city has significantly more calls for service than the south side of the city. We believe this is related to the north side of the city having a larger concentration of apartment buildings and most of the assisted living facilities.

**Mutual Aid is for calls outside of the city limits*

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When do the calls occur? When measured by what is traditionally referred to as first, second, and third shifts; the first shift is the busiest with one-hundred eighteen (118) calls for service, closely followed by the second shift with one-hundred and eleven (111) calls for service, and third shift with sixty-four (64) calls for service.





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Training

The members participated in over 1500 hours of training and development in 2023. Members completed professional certification in the following areas: Fire Instructor, Fire Inspector, Emergency Medical Responder, and Fire Officer. These professional certification courses are delivered by Blackhawk Technical College and Madison College and are credentialed through the State of Wisconsin Technical College System.

One of the challenges facing the department is that we often must send our personnel to Rock and/or Dane County because the courses are not frequently offered in Green County due to low enrollment in the area or the enrollment deadline doesn't match with our member's availability. Traveling to Rock and/or Dane county adds ninety minutes to each night they have class. It also adds ninety minutes of payroll expense to each class, which can increase the total cost of the course by hundreds of dollars per student.



It is not uncommon for students to leave for class right after work at 5:00pm and return sometime after 10:00pm. They often do not see their families and rarely get a good meal on these nights. Despite these challenges, our members continue to demonstrate a high level of commitment to their training and development.

The members also participated in many hours of training on topics such as Driver/Operator, EMS Operations, Officer

Development, Fire Behavior, Search & Rescue, Health & Safety, CPR, Bloodborne Pathogens, Hose Loads and Aerial Ladder Operations, etc. This training occurred in-house and utilized both fire stations and the MERIT Center.

While the department does a great job of providing its members with training through its internal operations, keeping up with the latest information, strategies, and recommended tactics is a large task. The department will continue to encourage members to attend local and regional training events. These events offer the opportunity to learn new skills while providing different points of view, which helps to prevent complacency within our systems and practices.

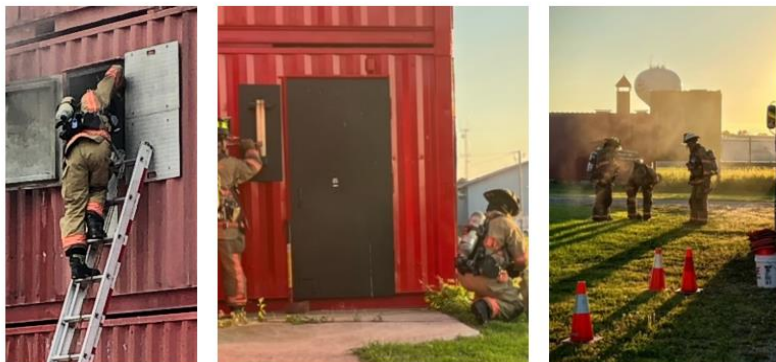


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MERIT Center

The MERIT Center is located on six (6) acres in Monroe's north industrial park. The department trains at the center regularly from April through October. The MERIT Center is owned by the City of Monroe and managed by the Monroe Fire Department.

The training center has several training props that assist in developing core skills such as fire attack, search and rescue, ladder drills, confined space rescue, flashover simulations, elevated rescues, ventilation, forcible entry, motor pump operations, and hazmat operations. The training center plays a critical role in the development of our staff.



Initially developed with money raised through fundraising events and goodwill donations, the MERIT Center has been serviced and maintained through the department's operating budget for the past decade. Due to its age and repetitive use, the training center props are showing their age. Each of the three live fire props as well as the prop used for ladder training were inspected by an engineer in the summer of 2023.



Overall, the inspection report was positive, however, it did identify several props that need repair. Approximately \$40k will be needed to complete these repairs. Some of the repairs were completed in late 2023, while others are expected to be completed in 2024 as funding permits.

The training center is utilized by private and public organizations such as Badger State Ethanol, the agricultural community, and fire, EMS, and law enforcement agencies. The MERIT Center has provided a safe place to train for thousands of children, employees, and emergency service personnel over the past decade. In addition to serving as a training facility, the MERIT Center provides value as a recruitment tool and contributes to the department's ISO two (2) rating.



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Staffing - General

The department operates under a paid-on-call (POC) staffing model. Many consider this the most cost-effective and flexible staffing model for the fire service. This cost effectiveness is not without some downside, inconsistent staffing, increased response times, and training gaps are often associated with the POC staffing model.

The department made several operational changes in 2023. Most of these changes were related to member participation requirements and response guidelines. The results have been positive. Since these changes were implemented response times have been reduced, staffing on the apparatus has increased, and participation at training events regularly exceeds seventy percent.

Many members are participating in advanced training and certifications. The department's members are active and well-trained on a wide range of topics. If there is a weakness in the membership it would be the absence of mid-range personnel, those that have 8-14 years of experience.

This experience gap is at least in part due to the department choosing not to recruit new members from 2008 to 2012 and is compounded by a national trend that shows a decline in the average time spent as a volunteer firefighter. Under the current POC staffing model it will take the department a minimum of 4-6 years of consistent and successful recruiting combined with retention efforts to overcome this experience deficit.

With that said, the department is growing its membership, improving its training, and embracing a new identity and culture.

Staffing - Recruitment

Designing and implementing an effective recruitment campaign takes a great deal of resources. Hanging help wanted banners and placing ads on social media are an important part of a recruitment campaign, but the results are often disappointing when they are not part of a larger marketing plan. Participating in local activities that offer the opportunity for members to develop relationships across a variety of demographics will increase the success rate of print, radio, and other passive marketing efforts.

The challenge with attending community events is that it places a demand on people that often have little discretionary time left in their schedules. Recruiting is no longer a singular event or action, but rather an ongoing effort that requires a commitment to financial and human resources.



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In the spring of 2023, a recruitment committee was formed. The committee was provided with general oversight and a vision for the department's recruitment program, but afforded the autonomy to mold the activities to fit what they felt would best represent the department's character.

The members used video, social media, and in-person events to channel their messaging to a variety of demographics. The goal was to recruit 3-5 new members by the end of the year, but an emphasis was placed on the importance of hiring people that would fit in with the department's culture. In short, getting the right people on the bus was more important than filling the bus. The recruitment efforts were successful, four new members were hired in 2023, all are actively responding to calls and working to complete their internal training.

Staffing - Retention

Retention efforts in the fire service are fairly new when compared to the private sector. In the past it was normal for a firefighter to remain a member for 10, 15, even 20 plus years. But changes in lifestyle, work, and family obligations have had a negative effect on longevity. While the age of firefighters is increasing, the average tenure is decreasing. Currently the national average tenure for a volunteer firefighter is five years.

In 2022 the department began looking closer at what it can do to make it easier for members to remain "active" on the fire department. What we found through general discussions was that firefighters did not consider responding to calls or attending training as a burden, rather these were two of the primary reasons expressed for wanting to be a firefighter. Activities such as administrative work, planning and prepping the training, fundraising, apparatus maintenance, and politics were frequently mentioned as deterrents to being a member of the department.



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In 2023 the department began looking beyond participation requirements and started reviewing what it could do to improve its recognition efforts. In the past, the Monroe Volunteer Firefighters “MVFF” (the department's social arm) were responsible for recognizing/rewarding the members for professional milestones and significant events such as a five-year anniversary or the birth of a child. Unfortunately, as is the case with many social organizations today, the MVFF has experienced turnover, and things get missed or reprioritized. In the fall of 2023, the department leadership decided to take on this responsibility as part of its recognition program.



The recognition program is in its infancy and considered fluid. The first step was taken last fall when we recognized the retirement of two members. The retirees and their accomplishments were celebrated with their families and current department members. The

celebration included light snacks and the presentation of a shadow box with their helmet shields, badges, and service dates.

Members who retire in good standing will continue to be recognized annually in this manner. The department will continue to identify ways of recognizing our appreciation for the members and the extraordinary work that they do.

Community Risk Reduction - Fire Inspections

The fire inspector may be one of the most misunderstood roles in the fire service. Fire inspectors do so much more than just meet with people and identify code violations. Fire inspectors make significant contributions in reducing fire loss and injuries to civilians and firefighters.

Performing fire inspections is an important part of protecting the community. The preferred role is one of an educator rather than an enforcer. Learning how to interpret and explain the vast number of codes often takes several years.

There are over eight hundred (800) inspectable properties in Monroe. Many of these are required to have fire inspections performed twice a year. The total number of fire inspections performed annually may exceed 1500 when re-inspections are taken into consideration. In addition to conducting the physical onsite inspection, the fire inspector researches specific code references, completes data entry, needs time for scheduling initial appointments and rescheduling missed/canceled appointments, and attending training. This does not include the time needed for facility pre-planning, emergency incident response, or public education activities.



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The department has not had a full-time fire inspector since late 2017. In the fall of 2023, the department reinstated its fire inspection program utilizing two part-time fire inspectors at the direction of the city council. Those inspectors completed 123 initial inspections and 26 reinspection's.

Community Risk Reduction - Public Education/Relations

The department experienced a significant increase in demand for public education/relations events in 2023, logging two-hundred sixty-five (265) hours, a 156% increase over 2022. These events benefit the community and the department as they provide an opportunity to promote fire and life safety habits while building relationships.

The department is respected for delivering quality educational programs. One of our longest-standing and most successful programs is our partnership with the Monroe School District's Parkside School where they celebrate "The Student of the Month". Once a month during the school year one of our firefighters meets the teachers at Station 1 and they pick-up a student at their home and take them to school on the fire truck where the rest of the entire school is waiting for them to celebrate their achievements.



It is a GREAT program, and the department has received many compliments from both the school district and parents for our participation.

The "Salute to Summer" event at Recreation Park continues to be a popular event. There were

games for children of all ages as well as fire prevention material and smoke detectors. We estimate that there were over 300 people in attendance throughout the two-hour event. Salute to Summer is one of many summer events where the department collaborates with Park & Rec staff.



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Here are examples of other community events/programs we participated in during 2023.

- St. Patrick's Day Parade
- YMCA Healthy Kids Day
- Memorial Day Parade – coordinated with the local American Legion
- Cars on the Square
- MHS Launch Program
- Farmers Market on the Square
- Concerts on the Square
- Various special events requests
- Numerous Station Tours for the YMCA, Rainbow Childcare, and other children based organizations
- Fire Extinguisher training for local businesses
- Twining Park – Fourth of July Celebration and Flag Raise for the Monroe Band
- SSM & MHS Don't Drink & Drive Program
- National Night Out – coordinated with Monroe PD
- In School Fire Safety Programs
- Monroe's Trick or Treat
- The Holiday Parade
- New Years Eve – Main Street Cheese Drop

There are many activities that fall within the umbrella of community risk reduction (CRR). Performing fire inspections, public education, school visits, and fire extinguisher training are just a few of the components of CRR that reduce the demand for other public services and improve the quality of life in our community. We are proud to serve such a diverse group of events in the community.



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Grants

In 2023 the department received \$142,500 for the WI EMS Flex Grant that was applied for in 2022. The funds were used to support our recruitment program, various operational equipment upgrades, and a LUCAS CPR device and the equipment needed to deliver CPR certification programs.

The department expects to receive \$825,000 from a Congressional Direct Spending Grant from Senator Baldwin in 2024. The grant is earmarked to offset the cost of the new aerial truck that is expected to be delivered in June of 2024.

The department also received a community grant from Wal-Mart in the amount of \$1500. This grant was used to offset costs associated with the department's community risk reduction programs.





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Apparatus/Maintenance

The apparatus/maintenance crew are the ones that keep our trucks and stations in working order. The amount of work they get done is nothing short of amazing. Members worked two-hundred seventy-three hours maintaining the department's apparatus and equipment. The following is a list of key projects that were completed in 2022.

- The apparatus committee met several times and visited area departments during the process of finalizing the specifications for the new aerial truck. The plans were approved in October and delivery of the new truck is expected in June of 2024.
- Continuation of the battery exchange program for the department's SCBA's. This program was implemented in 2021 after a pattern was identified that linked batteries leaking and corroding the electronics in the SCBA. The department switch brands of batteries per the manufacturer's recommendation and began changing them twice a year. There has only been one failure since the program was implemented. We estimate that this program saves the department \$500-\$700 annually. More importantly, it assures us that our equipment is always in ready condition.
- The department once again completed the testing of over 17,500ft of hose. Annual hose testing is required by the Wisconsin Administrative Code SPS 330. It takes three training nights to complete the hose testing process. We are currently reviewing the feasibility of having this service performed by a private contractor in 2024 so we can recoup those training nights.
- All of the apparatus received their annual maintenance which consists of an oil change and multi-point inspection. Division Chief Montgomery schedules the maintenance and takes off from work to take the apparatus to and from the service station.

Monroe Fire Department Apparatus		
Apparatus Name	Mfg Year	Age (Years)
Car-10	2016	8
Car-11	2012	12
Car-12	2006	18
Engine 1	2015	9
Engine 2	2015	9
Engine 3	1990	34
Ladder 7	1990	34
Squad 5	1998	26
Squad 6	2004	20
Utility 13	2003	21



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Health & Safety

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standard 1521 and Wisconsin Administrative Code SPS 330.03 require the department to have a designated Health & Safety Officer. One of the responsibilities of the Health & Safety Officer is to oversee the safety committee. The following are key projects that were completed in 2023.

- Delivered monthly safety talks to the members on training nights to promote safe and healthy habits.
- The safety committee is meeting with suppliers to review specifications for turnout gear and helmets.
- The safety committee checks and calibrates the department's gas meters and battery-operated equipment monthly.
- The safety committee meets monthly and reviews near misses and injury/accident reports.
- The safety committee makes recommendations to ensure our operational practices are safe.

The safety committee also delivers annual training on topics such as bloodborne pathogens, lock out/tag out, safe lifting practices, safe driving practices, etc. The department is proud to say that it has not had a lost time accident since 2018.



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Emergency Medical Responders

EMS is the fastest-growing category of the department's operations, now accounting for sixty-two percent (62%) of the calls we respond to. Six (6) members completed the emergency medical responder (EMR) training in 2023. All but five department members are now certified to provide medical care.

Captain Dan Perdue leads the department's EMS operations and is responsible for maintaining and recommending new equipment, assuring that we are following the guidelines set forth by the Department of Health and Safety, scheduling training for the EMR's, and developing our professional relationship with medical control and the other EMS organizations in the county. Dan currently serves as the President of the Green County EMS Commission.



In addition to his day-to-day responsibilities, Dan and the EMS members were instrumental in the success of four key projects in 2023.

For the first time ever, the EMR's went through an internal re-certification process for their state licenses. This process involved completing state required training, a great deal of documentation, and a rigorous review and approval process overseen by SSM Health, which serves as our medical control. Although the new re-certification process increased administrative time, it provided significantly more flexibility for our members and cost less to complete. In the end, the process was a benefit to the members and the department and will result in better care for our citizens.

Several members worked together to coordinate events, SWAG, video

production, and advertising as part of the department's recruitment efforts. The entire recruitment team worked together to ensure that the EMS side of our business was represented in the recruitment process.

Captain Perdue coordinated demonstrations of two different CPR devices as well as sought out the opinions and experiences of departments from around the county as well as the region. Together, the EMR's attended demonstrations, reviewed literature, and made the recommendation to purchase the LUCAS CPR device using the funds from the WI EMS Flex Grant.

Finally, four members took the initiative to attend CPR Instructor training in Janesville, WI and implement an in-house CPR program. This program will provide flexibility in meeting the needs of our membership. In addition, we will be able to provide CPR renewals for other city departments which will save money and time. The program is scheduled to begin in the spring of 2024.



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The following is a list of ongoing projects/tasks related to the EMS side of the department's services.

- Maintain and ensure operational compliance with medical control and the state of Wisconsin EMS Division.
 - Enter patient care reports into the State's Wisconsin Ambulance Run Database System (WARDS) database as required by state statutes.
 - Ensure patient care and equipment meet the Wisconsin EMS Scope of Practice for the EMS license level of Monroe Fire Department.
 - Provide training to licensed EMRs on patient care, documentation, and practical skills.
 - Provide training to Non EMRs on the equipment and techniques commonly used to move/lift patients', providing first aid and CPR, and working with EMS personnel.
 - Schedule, proctor, and train bi-annually on advance skills in coordination with medical control at SSM Health Monroe.
 - Review run data and provide monthly quality assurance reports to medical control at SSM Health Monroe.
- Connect the Monroe Fire Department with local social services partners.
 - Established relationships to connect the Aging Disabilities Resource Center (ADRC) and their adult protective services division with patients that we care for through repeated lift assist calls. Our partnership with ADRC has reduced, and in some cases eliminated calls for lift assist services as people are connected with the resources necessary to improve their quality of life while reducing their dependency on the emergency services system.
 - The department has established several private/public and public/public partnerships with organizations such as SSM Health Monroe, GCEMS, ADRC, and St. Vincent DePaul. These partnerships allow each of us to fulfill our mission and result in a healthier and happier community.
- Expand the department's capabilities for training EMR's in-house. These investments have reduced our training costs, increased our competence, and improved the quality of care provided for our citizens.
 - With the purchase of training mannequins, we now can train on the use of advanced airway placement and assessment to the level of our scope of practice.
 - The purchase of CPR training manikins, AED training devices, and associated equipment will allow us to complete CPR training in-house as needed. This increases flexibility for new and existing members and reduces the overall costs associated with recertification.
 - The purchase of CPR training manikins, AED training devices, and associated equipment will allow us to offer CPR training to other city departments which will increase flexibility for scheduling staff and reduce recertification costs.
 - The purchase of the CPR training equipment will allow us to offer community CPR training resulting in a safer community.



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- We continue to develop our working relationship with Green County EMS
 - Reduce response times in the City of Monroe by integrating an EMR response profile with medical calls in coordination with Green County EMS when their resources are over extended.
 - Standardized the medical equipment carried on the department vehicles. This improves efficiency and patient care while providing flexibility in our ability to respond with different vehicles regardless of ongoing calls or assignments.
 - Regular face-to-face meetings with staff and leadership