

HOT TOPICS

Oshkosh Fire Department



CHIEF'S CORNER



The month of May has many observances but, a few are very significant to the Oshkosh Fire Department. International Firefighter Day is celebrated on May 4th each year. This is a reminder to all of us to be thankful for the countless men and women across this globe that

selflessly risk their lives every day to rescue people from the perils of smoke and fire and so many other threats. Our highly trained team combats losses from fires with skill and compassion and provides leadership in times of crisis.

The firefighters in our department also provide Emergency Medical Services (EMS). This year EMS Week begins May 15th and recognizes the rescuers who constantly rise to the challenge of caring for the sick and injured night and day, in terrible weather, and in uncertain times. On May 6, 1976 the Oshkosh Fire Department began providing ambulance services for the City. Over these last 46 years, we have offered uninterrupted service to those in need of emergency medical care. Today, our skilled clinicians provide the highest level and quality of advanced life support available. They are equally skilled in treating medical emergencies like heart attacks and strokes as they are in treating traumatic injuries that come from car wrecks, industrial accidents, or sports injuries. Thank you to the members of the Oshkosh Fire Department who provide exceptional Fire, Rescue, and EMS capabilities to our community. It is you that makes this the best fire department there is.

--Chief Mike Stanley



EMS WEEK

Rising to the Challenge
May 15-21, 2022

For all you do... Thank you!

On May 6, 1976, the Oshkosh Fire Department (OFD) began providing medical services to our community. That was 46 years ago!! In January 2003 we started providing EMS services to the outlying communities of Algoma, Black Wolf, Nekimi, City & Town of Omro, Town of Oshkosh, Poygan, Rushford, Utica, and Town & Village of Winneconne.

Looking back at data from the past 4 years, 84.3% of all calls dispatched to the OFD are in response to medical emergencies. In that time frame, we've transported 71.1% of those patients. Each year, the primary medical complaint has been 'fall'. Falls make up roughly 21.5% of EMS calls. Nearly 83% of all EMS calls are to people in the City of Oshkosh. We have used lights and sirens 59% of the time.

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BATTALION CHIEF MROCHEK RETIRES



It was a happy and sad day at Station 15 on April 19th. The retirement cake was proudly displayed in the kitchen. The halls abounded with laughter and the smells of chicken and sloppy joes. Retirees and colleagues celebrated the retirement of Battalion Chief Dan "Dano" Mrochek.

Back in recruit school, he was referred to as "Pinto" a lead character from the movie *Animal House*. Dano started with the OFD back in 1995. He moved up to Equipment Operator in 2001, Lieutenant in 2011 and Battalion Chief in 2015. Dano led the "C Shift" in addition to being the NFIRS guru. ... 27 years of service!

Chief Mike Stanley said, "Dan was dedicated to keeping our firefighters safe. He was always very contentious about making sure his firefighters went home every morning. His leadership and commitment will be missed." His team referred to him as someone who took safety seriously. "He makes Boettcher look reckless," joked Mike Wos.

Awesome **Role Model**
Kind
Persistent **Consistent** Detailed
Smart
Caring **Thorough**



CONGRATULATIONS!

Congratulations to Brian Blaha. Brian was promoted to Equipment Operator at the May 5 Police & Fire Commission meeting. Brian started as a firefighter/paramedic on May 29, 2005.



SOLE BURNER Fighting cancer one mile at a time

It was a beautiful sunny day in Appleton for the 40th Annual Sole Burner. The 5K Run/Walk started at City Park on Saturday, May 7. OFD was represented by Melanie & Bob Buchholz, Sandy & Mike Stanley, Kim Wallmuller, MJ VanGompel, Alex & Nora Johll. Money raised from the Sole Burner help fund local programs, services and critical cancer research.



Be sure to watch this month's video from Lexipol!



Equipment Operator Brian Blaha



Last week OFD received a Certificate of Recognition from the Wisconsin Coverdell Stroke Program and Wisconsin Department of Health Services in recognition of Excellence in Performance Improvement. This is the 3rd year in a row we have received this award.

MEDICAL DIRECTOR MINUTE

by Dr. Kerry Ahrens



As many of you know, May is Mental Health Awareness month. As of 2020, suicide is the 12th leading cause of death for all ages in our country. What many do not know is that EMT's, including firefighters and paramedics, rates of suicide are more than double that of the general population (Vigil 2019). On a daily basis many of our paramedics face high levels of acute and chronic stress leading to higher levels of depression and substance abuse. This job is a vigorous one with many asks: provide a high level medical care for any call type which ranges from a minimal issue to life-threatening, maintain your level of competency, know and recall utilization of turnout gear and SCBA's during high stress situations when entering burning buildings.

This level of stress, beyond leading to suicide, also is known to lead to a higher level of burnout in our paramedics; far more than that experienced by EMT's. Remle in 2017 found that burnout in paramedics was +10% higher than basic EMT's.

There are many coping strategies for those who recognize and want to act on mental health. Options include counseling, group therapy and medications. There are local peer recovery organizations. Medics should also focus on personal health and hygiene strategies including getting a good night's sleep, finding alternative outlets outside of work, developing new hobbies, exercising daily, and eating right. Additionally, work to maintain relationships and build social connections with friends and community.

Langabeer in 2020 looked at the barriers for those paramedics who do not seek help including lack of trust in employee assistance programs with maintaining confidentiality or even the risk of being seen entering a building that provides mental health treatment. Moreover, medics witness the gaping hole in our mental health system when they drop off suicidal patients and see them sitting in the Emergency Department hours on end until finding a placement.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, many alternatives to seeking care were established. Anyone needing mental health can seek it within the privacy of his/her own home. For those who need help, or individuals who may be concerned about their loved ones or peers' behavior, there are a number of excellent, confidential resources, including SAMHSA's www.findtreatment.gov site that can help identify local treatment resources.

Paramedics, you know you are at higher risk for PTSD, substance abuse, and severe depression/anxiety just due to the nature of your job. When you recognize these symptoms in yourself or your partners there are many avenues to pursue getting help. Please reach out.

City of Oshkosh Employee Assistance Program for OFD, Life Matters 1-877-307-2813

References:

- CDC *Suicide Mortality in the United States 2000-2020*. - <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/products/databriefs/db433.htm>. Accessed 5/7/22.
- Neil H. Vigil, Andrew R. Grant, Octavio Perez, Robyn N. Blust, Vatsal Chikani, Tyler F. Vadeboncoeur, Daniel W. Spaitte & Bentley J. Bobrow (2019) *Death by Suicide—The EMS Profession Compared to the General Public, Prehospital Emergency Care*, 23:3, 340-345, DOI: 10.1080/10903127.2018.1514090.
- Remle P. Crowe, Julie K. Bower, Rebecca E. Cash, Ashish R. Panchal, Severo A. Rodriguez & Susan E. Olivo-Marston (2018) *Association of Burnout with Workforce-Reducing Factors among EMS Professionals*, *Prehospital Emergency Care*, 22:2, 229-236, DOI: 10.1080/10903127.2017.1356411.
- Langabeer et al. *Recognizing and Supporting EMS Providers with Mental Health and Substance Use Disorders*. *Journal of Emergency Medical Services*: 10/9/2020 online access 5/7/2022.

EVERYONE GOES HOME

by Lieutenant Drew Jaeger

Last month marked the completion of our examination of the *16 Life Safety Initiatives* published by the National Fallen Firefighters Foundation. We will return to examining these and other firefighter safety and health topics in the coming months.

I would like to call your attention to our recently released 2022-2027 Strategic Plan. Although there are several action items in the plan, such as training and new station construction, goals that are likely to have an impact on our health and safety, Goal 7 is the one that most directly addresses safety and wellness.

This goal is to “Improve the current and life-long wellness of department employees to ensure long-term higher quality of life.”

This statement really resonated with me, as we have had a number of transitions in the last few months. Several members have retired, and we have a new class of recruits that have graduated the academy and will be on shift as this newsletter is published. Lt. Pete Fahrenkrug continues his battle with pancreatic cancer, and members have begun wearing special T-shirts on duty reflecting our unity in spirit with Pete.

Goal 7 recognizes that we intend to care about you and your wellbeing for the time you are with the department and for the rest of your life. We want you to be healthy and well not only during your fire career, but during your retirement as well. That is a pretty audacious goal! There are specific objectives that we hope to achieve in the next 5 years, such as increased availability of physical exams, enhanced mental health efforts such as the peer support team, and improved physical fitness equipment.

Traditionally, we have several gatherings where we welcome our retirees. There is a monthly breakfast at a local restaurant, where both active and retired folks are welcome. There is an annual dinner, where we celebrate those that have retired in the last year, and visit with those who may have even retired before we joined the department. We have an annual bowling tournament that is open to retirees. There is an annual camp out, a traditional dumpling fest meal; a few folks even stop in for coffee. At our most recent last day on-line gatherings, many retirees returned to share stories and laughs, and to show that they were grateful for having had the honor of working with our members. We already have a tradition of caring for those in the department and their families. This goal in our five year plan puts it in writing.

At times, we tell stories to each other about how the job is changing, and some of the aspects of social interaction, and traditional gatherings have either been lost or forgotten. I understand that perspective, but believe that the strong bonds of our shared duty experiences and genuine concern for each other are as relevant as ever. These traditions show that we have cared enough in the past to establish them, and care enough in the present to maintain them. The future will be represented both by the continuance of these and perhaps new traditions, and in our ability to actualize the objectives of this goal.



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EVERYONE GOES HOME (Continued from page 5)

The 8 supporting objectives of this goal are:

- To Identify current funding and processes for health and wellness programs;
- To determine baseline health, wellness and quality of life for all department members;
- To develop a plan for annual physical exams;
- Provide and enhance mental health resources;
- Incentivize physical fitness to build upon current participation levels;
- Create a cost analysis for fitness initiatives and equipment;
- Assess the cost and feasibility of facility improvements; and
- Build and evaluate methods for current and retired members to report work related physical and mental health outcomes.

We want the changes to have an impact. We plan to assess that through several methods of analysis, including ongoing outreach to our retiree community. A few years ago, the department safety committee conducted a small scale survey of our retirees to gain a snapshot of our cancer rates. We received approximately 50 responses, which gave us a baseline understanding of our rate of cancer. In the coming months, we intend to work with community area experts to develop a more comprehensive methodology to examine health and wellness issues more holistically.

We work, train and learn to ensure that Everyone Goes Home. But we also care enough about our firefighters of the past, present and future, to not rest on the wonderful traditions of the past. We endeavor to have our values of safety and teamwork to persist for our career and beyond.



EMS WEEK (Continued from page 1)

Year	Total # Incidents	EMS	% of Total	Transported	% of EMS	% of EMS Calls (FALLS)	Oshkosh	% of EMS	Lights & Sirens	% of EMS
2018	8,684	7,373	84.9	5,138	69.7	20.3	6,105	82.8	4,263	57.8
2019	8,873	7,325	82.6	5,313	72.5	19.9	6,134	83.7	4,417	60.3
2020	9,086	7,693	84.7	5,444	70.8	21.4	6,283	81.7	4,564	59.3
2021	9,595	8,146	84.9	5,725	70.3	22.4	6,631	81.4	4,708	57.8
YTD 4/30/22	3,232	2,750	85.1	2,047	74.4	23.4	2,304	83.8	1,689	61.4
TOTAL	39,470	33,287	84.3	23,667	71.1	21.5	27,457	82.5	19,641	59.0

We are grateful to our firefighter/paramedics for all they do! For the tremendous amount of training they do nearly every day to stay current on changes in the profession...for their empathy, care, concern and compassion.

LET'S CONNECT

