

City of Rochelle  
Fire Department  
2015  
Annual Report



Submitted by  
Dave Sawlsville,  
Fire Chief  
February 2016



## **JANUARY 2015**

### **New Contract between Fire Fighters Union and City**

A new 5-year union contract was approved on 1/13/15 by the city council. The agreement was retroactive to May 1st of 2014. After months of hard work and compromise on both sides, an agreement was reached without any dramatic changes to the contract. The contract will last until May 1<sup>st</sup> 2019.

### **Fire at Ethanol Plant**

On January 19<sup>th</sup>, a fire was reported Illinois River Energy plant at 1900 Steward Road south of Rochelle. The facility produces ethanol fuel. Emergency personnel received word of the flames a short time before 10:30am in the grain room. The problem involved corn being burnt. There were no reports of any injuries from the incident. The cause of the fire was electrical in nature. There was minor cost damage to some equipment at the facility. Emergency crews were on the scene for just over an hour.

### **Fire in Downtown Rochelle**



On 1/22/15 a Fire destroyed a downtown building which was used as an auto repair shop. At one time this buildings was also a lumber company.

The blaze was noticed a short time after 11:30 at 510 West 2nd Avenue & Washignton Street. Upon arrival of the first fire engine, a wood burning stove was on fire and the flames were already in the attic area. Smoke was already coming out the east and west sides of the building. The fire started in the middle of the structure where the stove was located. Crews went into a

defensive mode once the roof caved in as the fire was throughout the entire building. Most of the fire was extinguished by Rochelle Ladder 1 and DeKalb Fire Departments ladder truck . Several area departments responded to the scene to battle the blaze, including Malta, Lynn-Scott Rock, and Ashton. The 2 railroads in Rochelle were stopped from traveling through the downtown area for a period of time. The building is located between the 2 tracks. Black smoke was seen for several miles & the building was a total loss. Cost damage is estimated to be in the 6 figure range. The building is owned by a bank in DeKalb.

# 95<sup>th</sup>

## Annual Firemen's Ball

The Rochelle Fire Department Social Organization continued a long tradition by holding its Annual Fireman's Ball on January 31st. Ogle-Lee held their Christmas party in conjunction with the Rochelle Fireman's dinner prior to the ball. At 7pm the first of two different bands took the stage. Then there was a silent auction and a 50/50 raffle. The event was held at The Flight Deck. Even with poor weather the community still came out.

Though not truly "annual", as it was not held for two years during wartime, it can be traced back to the 1800's. It may be the longest running event in the community. Funds raised by the ball support the service efforts of the Rochelle firefighters. Including an annual Kishwaukee College scholarship, Rochelle Little League, the Needy Family Food & Toy Drive, C.A.N. Children's Christmas Walk, and the Firefighter's Social Hall among others.



**95TH ANNUAL  
ROCHELLE FIREMEN'S BALL**

**ROCHELLE  
FIRE**  
Est. 1877

**When** Sat. January 31<sup>st</sup> 2015

**Where** The Hanger at Flight Deck Bar & Grill  
1207 W Gurler Rd, Rochelle, IL 61068

**Time** 7pm till 12am

**Cost** \$10.00 per person  
The Rochelle Firefighter's Social Organization awards one \$2,500 scholarship to a graduating RTHS senior attending Kishwaukee college.

**Hors d' oeuvres** **Firefighter Bartenders** **Silent Auction** **50/50** **Pictures With Gertie**

**Burn N Bush** **THE VODKA BOYS**

**7:30pm-9:30pm** **10pm-12am**

## FEBRUARY 2015

### No Injuries in Townhouse Fire

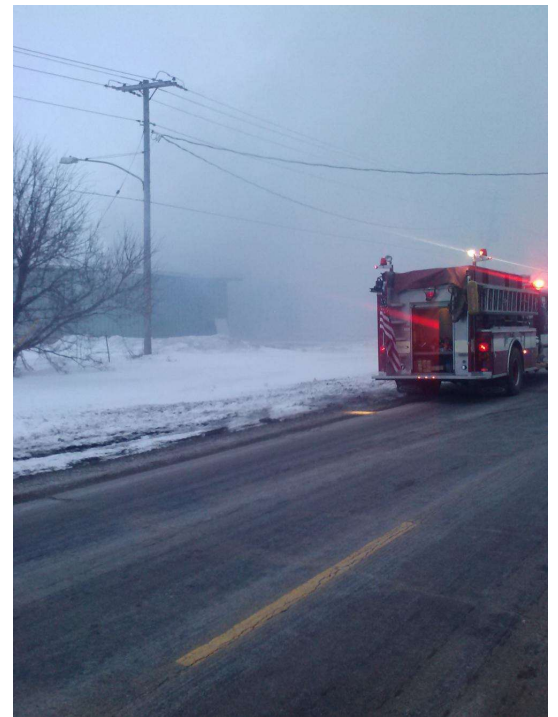
On February 8<sup>th</sup> a townhouse fire was reported. The blaze took place a short time before 11:30pm at 555 South Main Street, the Golf View Townhouses. Lieutenant Dan Miller said that the fire was contained in the living room area. The cause appeared to be an entertainment center which included a TV. There was a woman and her child asleep in the townhouse when the fire began. Lt. Miller said that the smoke detector went off which saved them from any injuries. Cost damage is estimated to be around \$15,000. Most of the damage involved the smoke inside the townhouse. There was little fire damage. There was no other fire or smoke damage to any other townhouses.

## MARCH 2015

### Rochelle Truck Center Fire

On March 5<sup>th</sup> a fire which did extensive damage to the Rochelle Truck Center was estimated to exceed 6 figures in value. The blaze took place Saturday evening a short time after 5pm. RTC is located at 1631 South Main Street.

The flames were contained in the office area on the south side of the building. There was extensive smoke and heat damage throughout the facility. Chief Johnson said that the fire started near a desk in the office area. The first arriving Fire engine on scene said that the office area was fully engulfed in flames. No one suffered any injuries from the fire. The fire department was on scene for several hours. There were no injuries reported.

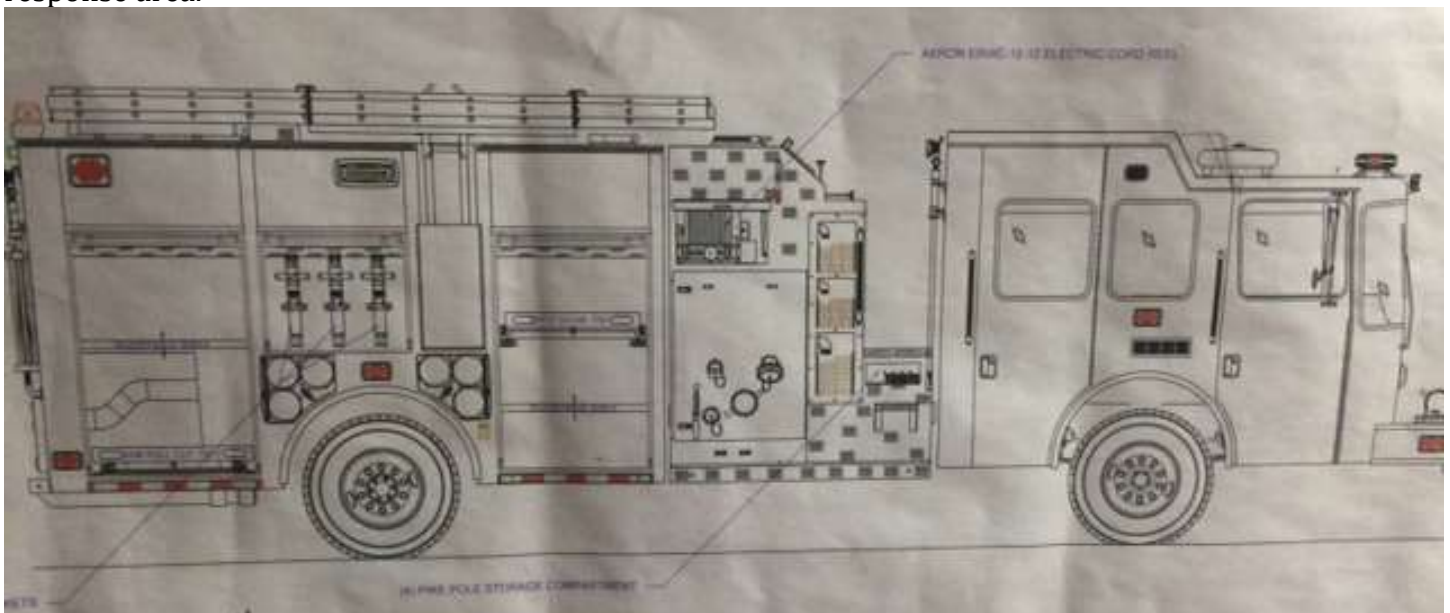


### Serious Crash on Rt. 38 & Dement Rd.

On 3/11/15 In heavy fog conditions, a collision occurred involving a SUV and a semi-tractor trailer truck. Unfortunately it claimed the lives of 2 students from Aurora Central Catholic High School. Multiple other occupants of the SUV were treated for injuries after they were extricated. The driver of the semi was not injured in the accident. The students were on their way to RTHS for a basketball game.

### New Engine Ordered

After a great deal of work and thought the new fire Engine that will replace the 1995 Engine 3 has been ordered. Bids were placed by multiple companies and Alexis Fire Equipment Company won the bid for the contract. They hope to begin work on the new engine late summer/early fall, with the delivery planned for Early 2016. Engine 3 serves as the initial response vehicle for all structure fires in the response area.



**APRIL 2015**

## **Grass fires in the area**



In the first week of April Rochelle and Ogle-Lee Fire Departments conducted several controlled burns for the purpose of training to prepare for the upcoming wildland burning season. The area practiced on was several acres between I-88 and Intermodal Drive near Del Monte.

Residents in Rochelle saw heavy smoke for several hours. Often

times, during the spring many area farmers burn fence rows and ditches to help control weeds, sometimes the wind comes up and causes the fire to spread in unintended directions, or an un-attended fire gets called in by a passerby. Any burn must be attended or it is considered an illegal burn and will be extinguished. Area residences are encouraged to call the fire department or the local dispatch to report controlled burns before starting and when finished.



## **Tornado Hits Rochelle Area**

**APRIL 9<sup>TH</sup>** For the 1st time that emergency personnel can remember, a tornado touched down in rural Rochelle and did extensive damage to homes and businesses. There were no fatalities from the twister, but several non-life threatening injuries were reported at Rochelle Community Hospital.

The tornado touched the ground a short time before 6:30. Ogle County Sheriff Brian VanVickle said the advanced warning of the emergency sirens prevented any deaths or serious injuries.



Approximately 20 homes had extensive damage or were destroyed in the Hickory Ridge subdivision along with the Deer Creek Subdivision, north and south on Skare Court, and Cherry Hill Subdivision. The tornado was about a quarter of a mile wide as it touched down near Skare and Flagg Roads. It then traveled northeast to the area of Hemstock and Center Roads. The Tornado was rated for a short time at EF 4 and also an EF 3 for an extended period of time.

There was an outpouring of support from the entire region with large amounts donations of common house hold goods. Volunteers lined up to assist with the cleanup. They also walked fields and did anything they could do to help. The fire station was one of many drop off points in town for donations.

Prior to hitting rural Rochelle, the tornado struck Crest Foods along Route 38 in rural Ashton. Then the emergency sirens went off 3 times for residents in Rochelle along with Ogle County prior to the tornado coming into the area. There was minor damage reported in the city of Rochelle itself. The tornado then continued on through the rural countryside heading north east. The tornado did extensive damage to the town of Fairdale before it eventually dissipated.

The heavily damaged area took first responders several day's to make sure it was safe to begin clean up. Many hazards existed including electrical, collapse and natural gas. The fire department called mutual aid from many surrounding communities although resources were limited because the tornado's path affected many of those nearby resources. Multiple technical rescue teams were called in to help assess the damage and check for victims and other hazards. Initial response from Rochelle fire and Ogle-Lee crews rescued 13 people from Grubsteakers restaurant and another crew pulled a person from a basement in the Cherry Hill subdivision. The incident command post was staffed for multiple day's at the Flagg Center fire station.



## **Rochelle man injured following a back yard fire**

A Rochelle resident suffered 1st and 2nd degree burns to his left leg on April 29<sup>th</sup> after a brush fire got out of control in his backyard. The fire took place a short time after 11:30 at 1026 Lincoln Highway. The man had been burning some leaves and sticks in the backyard when he accidentally fell into the pile due to a medical problem. A retired Rochelle fireman was driving by the home and saw the smoke and heard the man yelling. He was able to drag him off the burning pile prior to emergency personnel arriving on scene. The flames spread to a pile of wood and to the garage at the home. There was minor damage done to the outside area of the garage along with smoke inside the structure. The victim was transported by ambulance to Rochelle Community Hospital for treatment of his burns.

**MAY 2015**

## **2 Injured in Head-On Collision in Rochelle**

The accident took place a short time after 11:30am at the intersection of Route 38 and Dement Road. A van was traveling westbound on Route 38 and turned left onto Dement Road. The collision occurred with an eastbound car. Two occupants were transported by ambulance to Rochelle Community Hospital with non-life threatening injuries. The driver of the other car was not hurt in the crash.

**JUNE 2015**

## **Early Morning House Fire**

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, a fire started at approximately 4:15am at 309 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., just east of Main Street near downtown. The flames were contained to the first floor of the home with smoke damage throughout the residence. Damage is estimated to be nearly \$100,000. The Office of the State Fire Marshal is assisted in the investigation. No injuries were suffered in the fire.



## **2 Injured Following an Army Convoy Accident on I-39 Southbound**



On June 19<sup>th</sup>, two individuals suffered injuries following an afternoon crash involving an Army convoy. The accident took place a shortly after 1pm near the Rt. 38 & I-39 Interchange. At least 3 army vehicles collided with one another, and there was possibly an additional, civilian motorist involved in the collision. The injuries did not appear to be life threatening. Extra ambulances

were called to manage the multiple transports and multiple patients refused medical care. The military personnel were prepared to assist with care of the injured. They were professional and well-disciplined and helped keep a potentially hectic situation calm and organized. Traffic was backed up for a period of time in the southbound lane of I-39 following the crash.

## Garage Fire

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, a fire occurred at 1811 Locust Rd. in Steward just before 10:00am. When fire crews arrived on scene, the 20x30 foot building was full of smoke. Damage is estimated to be approximately \$50,000. There were multiple pieces of large equipment and a fuel tank inside the garage. The cause of the fire was traced to a small utility vehicle inside the structure. The flames started in either the engine or cab area. No injuries were suffered during incident. Fire crews were on the scene for nearly an hour.

## Johnson Wedding

On June 20<sup>th</sup>, Firefighter Ben Johnson married Jacque Voss at the Steward United Methodist Church. The Reception followed at the NIU Barsema Alumni & Visitors Center. The wedding was well attended by department personnel. The department wishes Ben and Jacque many happy years together.



## Three Semi Accident on I-39

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, two semi operators suffered injuries after three semi-trucks collided in a chain-reaction crash on I-39. The accident took place near the construction zone area north of Rochelle in the southbound lane, shortly after 3pm.

A truck driver from Wisconsin failed to stop in time and struck the rear of another semi. That vehicle was then pushed into another semi-truck that was stopped in traffic. The Wisconsin man was flown from the scene by helicopter to a Rockford hospital with non-life threatening injuries. A woman from California was driving one of the semis and received treatment for minor injuries at Rochelle Community Hospital. The third truck driver refused medical treatment at the scene. Traffic was backed up for a period of time while emergency crews worked at the scene. 1 driver was extricated from the cab of his semi. Traffic was detoured to Illinois 251 North through Rochelle following the crash.

## Third Accident on I-39 in Ten Days Sends Three people to the Hospital

Three people suffered injuries June 28<sup>th</sup> following a rainy afternoon chain reaction crash which involved two semi-trucks and three cars. The accident took place shortly before 3:15 about four miles north of Rochelle in the southbound lane of I-39 in the construction zone area. One truck driver was trapped in his cab. Firefighters were able to extricate driver as he was later transported by a helicopter to Rockford Memorial Hospital with non-life threatening injuries. The two other patients were treated at Rochelle Community Hospital for non-life threatening injuries. Another semi-truck also crashed just north of the first accident on I-39. A large amount of diesel fuel was spilled from the truck. Mutual aid was received from the Lynn-Scott Rock Fire Protection District to help handle the chain reaction accidents.

***JULY 2015***

## **Annual Fireworks Display**

With Chief Brian Johnson in charge, Rochelle Fire members continued the tradition of a Fourth of July fireworks display. The show was about 25 minutes in length and witnessed by a large crowd under a perfectly clear night and temperatures in the 70s. The firefighters worked hard to prepare for the show throughout Independence Day Week. Purchasing shells, cleaning and preparing equipment, setting up equipment, and cleaning up the shooting site requires many hours of labor by the fire department.



## **Mattress Fire in Rural Rochelle House**

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, crews responded to the Ogle-Lee FPD for a mattress fire in a 2-story home in rural Rochelle. Smoke filled the residence a short time before 10pm at a residence on South Skare Road. Chief Brian Johnson said that the mattress was in a 2nd floor bedroom and had been smoldering prior to the residents returning. There were no flames showing, but smoke filled the home. No one suffered any injuries. The cause of the fire appears to be an air conditioning cord that was near the bed. Initial reports indicate that the cord caught fire which then spread to the mattress. Damage inside the home was estimated to be around \$8,000.

## **North 11st Street Porch Fire**

Smoke was noticed coming from the porch area of an 11<sup>th</sup> St. residence at around 12:30pm on July 28<sup>th</sup>. The fire was contained to the porch and there was very little smoke inside the home. Two adults and a child who lived at the residence were not home when the fire began. Firefighters were able to save the family dog that was in its kennel. Cost damage to the home was estimated to be around \$5,000.





## **Lincoln Highway Heritage Festival**

Firefighters were busy during the LHHF, selling over 2000 pork chop sandwiches for the social organization and participating in the parade. The American flag was flown from atop Ladder 1 over the Hub City Cruiser's annual downtown car show. "Gertie" was also on display at the car show.

(Gertie can be seen at the bottom of the picture, this photo was taken from atop of Ladder 1)

## **Water Rescue Training Conducted**

The department conducted annual water rescue training. This includes primary philosophy of "reach, throw, row then go." The first attempts are to either "reach" a victim from shore using tools, or "throw" ropes to a victim who is physically able to assist in the rescue. If those measures are unsuccessful or not possible, the rescue boat is deployed and "rowed" to the victim. "Going" into the water using swimming or SCUBA equipment is the most dangerous technique and is implemented if no other rescue methods are viable.



**SEPTEMBER 2015**

### **Alexis Begins Building New Fire Engine 3**

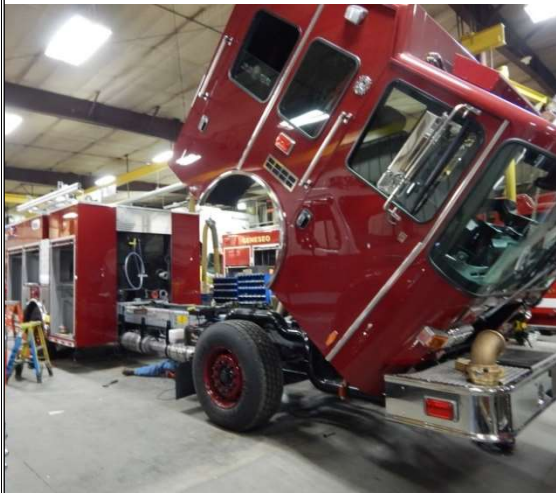
Beginning of September they started fabricating the rear half.



By mid-October it was ready to paint.



The HME Chassis had also arrived from the manufacturer by mid-October.



By mid-November the rear half had been mounted on the chassis.

In December, the installation of the water pump began. Approximately two more months of work was required prior to completion.



## Chief Johnson Announces his Retirement from the Fire Department

Chief Johnson announced his retirement from the Rochelle Fire Department after 34 years with the department. His last day was Friday, September 25th.

Chief Johnson began his career as a paid-on-call firefighter until he was hired full-time in 1985. He became a Lieutenant with the department in 2000. Johnson was named Fire Chief in 2009 following the retirement of Tom McDermott. Johnson also served as Chief of the Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District and as Emergency Management Director for the City of Rochelle.

He plans to keep busy in the future with his volunteer work with United Methodist Hub Cluster. Johnson also said that with his two children living in Rochelle, he will keep busy working on their houses.

## **Lt. Sawlsville Appointed Interim Chief**

City Manager Dave Plyman named Lieutenant Dave Sawlsville as the interim fire chief. Sawlsville, who has been with the department for 34 years, 28 years as a full-time firefighter and was the senior Lieutenant. He was promoted to Lieutenant in 2002 & holds an A.S. Degree in Fire Science and a B.S. Degree in Behavioral Science and is a graduate of two National Fire Academy programs.



## ***OCTOBER 2015***

### **Station Roof Replaced**

The roof work began on the installation of a new roof over the entire fire station. The existing roof was over twenty years old and was in desperate need of repair. The old roof was removed and a new rubber roof was laid down. The work took about 1 month to complete. The work on the roof was completed by Sterling Commercial Roofing.

### **Car vs. Building**

On October 31<sup>st</sup>, Little Caesars a passenger vehicle drove through the front glass of the Little Caesars restaurant shortly after 6pm. Two people were sitting on a bench in the business when the car came into the building. No significant injuries were reported.

## **NOVEMBER 2015**

### **Carls Wedding**

On November 6<sup>th</sup>, Firefighter Tyler Carls married Brittney Spandet at the Faith Lutheran Church in Rochelle. The reception followed at the Flight Deck. The wedding was well attended by department personnel. The department wishes Tyler & Brittney many happy years together.



### **Fire Station HVAC Upgraded**

The fire station's original heating and air conditioning units were replaced with new, more energy efficient models. The units were installed in 1970 and the failure of a heating coil left most of the fire station without heat. Anderson Plumbing won the bid and completed the overhaul. Three independent radiant heat units were also installed in the apparatus room to provide heat to fire equipment.

## ***DECEMBER 2015***



## **Parades of 2015**

RFD's pride and joy, Engine 1, or "Ol' Gertie" as she is better known, again participated in every parade held in Rochelle this year. Beginning with Memorial Day, she participated in parades during Independence Day, the Lincoln Highway Heritage Festival, RTHS Homecoming, and the Christmas Walk Parade. "Gertie" is on display in the Rochelle Fire Department Museum.

## **Needy Family Food & Toy Drive**

The Rochelle Fire Department again hosted drive, accepting and storing donations throughout the month. On December 17th, Ogle-Lee firefighters delivered Christmas boxes to families in the rural areas. Students from RTHS gathered at the fire station on December 19<sup>th</sup> and delivered boxes to the families in Rochelle. Before delivering, Rochelle Firefighters and their families prepared and hosted a breakfast at the Fireman's Social Hall for the students. This has been a long standing tradition that puts an exclamation point on the Christmas season.

## **Emergency Responses**

<u>Ambulance Responses</u>	
January	156
February	125
March	124
April	94
May	137
June	115
July	125
August	104
September	134
October	140
November	107
December	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>1470</b>

<u>Fire/Rescue Responses</u>	
January	25
February	30
March	25
April	28
May	21
June	23
July	17
August	22
September	17
October	19
November	24
December	23
<b>Total</b>	<b>274</b>

**Total Incidents: 1744**

Total property and contents loss to structure fires this year was \$453,000. Due to the work of the fire department, over 98.3% of property affected by structure fires were saved. There were two total losses on structures where fire had spread rapidly before crews arrived (One Commercial and one Residential). Two other fires were at the ethanol manufacturing facility & Rochelle Truck Center where only a portion of the property was damaged and they were able to stay in business. There were multiple other house fires that occurred that were contained to a small portion of the residences. The data on the April 9<sup>th</sup> tornado was not available for this report as it occurred within the Ogle-Lee Fire Protection District. During the course of the year, Rochelle firefighters have compiled thousands of continuing education hours. These hours consist of required hours for EMS certifications, refresher hours for fire & rescue training, firefighter safety, Haz-Mat, and water and dive rescue training. Multiple firefighters also spent countless hours taking fire officer classes improving their knowledge and skills to become future leaders.

**Rochelle Fire Department Roster  
Career Firefighters**



***(Retired) Chief Brian Johnson***



***Lt./ Interim Chief Dave  
Sawlsville***



***Lieutenant Jason Underwood***



***Lieutenant Dan Miller***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Brian Edwards***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Robert Workman***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Zach Prewett***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Jeremy Good***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Josh Lewis***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Jody Willis***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Benjamin Johnson***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Tyler Carls***



***Firefighter/Paramedic  
Ryan Baylor***

***Paid-on-Call Firefighters***



***FF Tim Leahey***



***FF Ryan Daugherty***



***FF/EMT Curt Ward***



***FF/EMT Josh Valdivieso***



***FF/EMT Ryan Brown***



***FF Brian Bakkier***



***FF/EMT Lanet  
Erickson***



***FF/PM Ken Dougherty***



***FF/ EMT Jason Shull***



***EMT Jordan Miller***



***Maria Perusquia***

***Paid-On-Call personnel not pictured:***

***FF David Simmons***

***FF/EMT Curt Helgren***

***FF/EMT Matt Bolhous***

***FF/PM Angela Gillis***

***FF/PM Chris Clark***

***FF/EMT Wes Mellor***

***FF K. Nay***

***FF/ PM L. Harmon***

***FF/ EMT Brandan Sanders***

***FF Amanda Ungar***

***FF/ EMT Nick Rhoads***

***FF Austin Gillis***