

2024 Annual Report



Winnetka Fire Department

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Message From the Fire Chief

It is with great pride that I present the 2024 Winnetka Fire Department Annual Report. This department carries an honored tradition of providing teams of highly training firefighter/paramedics to serve the Village of Winnetka, the Village of Kenilworth, and unincorporated Cook County areas of Woodley Road and Indian Hill. As Fire Chief, I am proud of the Department's rich tradition of providing an exceptional level of customer service to our community. In 2024, we responded to 2,568 calls for service, which is one of the busiest years in our history. In the midst of all emergency responses, we were able to achieve many accomplishments.

Some of our achievements for 2024 include:

- Creating a Regional Training Officer position with New Trier Township Fire Departments.
- Recertifying the Village of Winnetka Annex of the Cook County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Updating the Village Building and Fire Codes to include the requirement of residential fire sprinklers.
- Replacing 8 apparatus bay overhead doors.
- Ordering a new Pierce fire engine to replace Engine 28R (2000 Pierce Rescue Pumper).
- Renewing contracts with the Villages of Northfield and Glencoe to continue providing fire inspection services.
- Implementing Ground Emergency Medical Transport (GEMT) reimbursement for ambulance transports.

We look forward to continuing to provide exemplary customer service to our residents and anyone else that requires our assistance.

As always, thank you for your support. Stay well. Be safe.

John Ripka
Fire Chief



Organization Chart



Fire Chief
John Ripka

Deputy Fire Chief
Andy MacArthur

Fire Inspectors
Tom Hutchison
John Brewer
Dave Emanuelson
Jeremy Ziebka

Public Safety Analyst
Stephanie Wells

Administrative Lieutenant
Tim McCloskey

Chaplain
Matthew Hanisian

A Shift Captain
Dennis Legan

Lieutenant
Chris Kopecky

Firemedics
Erick Thornton
Matt Campeol
Ryne Clement
Terry Hadfield
Marty Shine

B Shift Captain
Scott Michehl

Lieutenant
Jon Colpaert

Firemedics
Scott Porter
Johnny Sengmany
Zach Fudalej
Christian Kroeger
Alec Cathon

C Shift Captain
Ryan Banks

Lieutenant
Katie Bublitz

Firemedics
Chris Tillson
Jack Poplawski
Kyle Tuttle
Chris Moreno
Chris Biernack

Quick Stats

2024 Department Information	
Fire Protection Service Area	4.5 Miles
Population Served	16,084
Total Calls for Service	2,568
Total Fire Related Losses	\$164,250
Sworn Members	24
Non-Sworn Members	1
Fire Inspectors (part-time)	4
Daily Staffing	6
Training Hours	7,502
Average Response Time	3:57

2024 Responses	
Vehicle	Responses
Battalion 28	1,430
Ambulance 28	864
Engine 28	2,050
Truck 28	704
Fireboat 2681	25

Sworn personnel are assigned to one of three 24-hour shifts.

Each 24-hour shift is staffed by 6 Firefighter/Paramedics. This includes 1 Captain, 1 Lieutenant, and 4 Firemedics.

Incident Response Statistics		
Type of Calls	Number of Calls	% of All Calls
Fire	26	1%
EMS/Rescue	750	29%
Hazardous Condition	119	5%
Service Call	283	11%
Good Intent	790	31%
False Alarm	597	23%
Severe Weather	3	0.1%

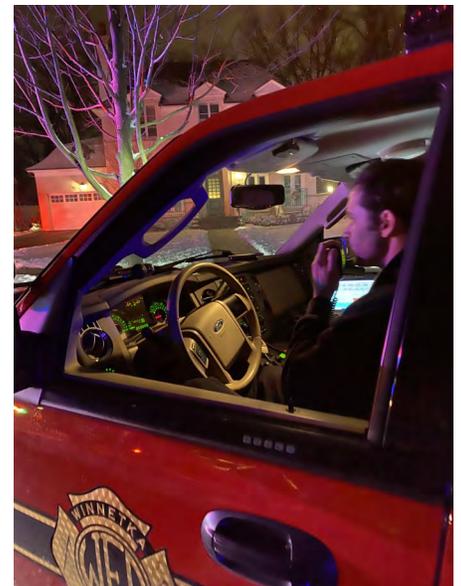
Apparatus



Battalion 28 is staffed by the Shift Commander and serves as the Incident Command Vehicle. It serves as the mobile command center during any incident, providing the Incident Commander with the space and equipment to manage the incident and stay in communication with dispatch and responding units.



Engine 28 is staffed by three Firemedics. The engine houses a wide array of tools, from extrication equipment to medical supplies. Engine 28 is also used to supply water at fire scenes. Once a hose is connected to the nearest hydrant, water is pumped through the engine and carefully calculated to give firefighters the correct supply and pressure for fire suppression at the scene.



Apparatus

Ambulance 28 is staffed by two Firemedics and is an Advanced Life Support (ALS) emergency transport vehicle. All Winnetka sworn personnel are certified to the Paramedic level to provide urgent pre-hospital treatment and stabilization. Ambulance 28 and Truck 28 are cross-staffed, meaning the nature of the call will dictate if the Ambulance or the Truck are dispatched to respond.



Ambulance 28

Truck 28 is cross-staffed by the same two Firemedics staffing Ambulance 28. Truck 28 is equipped to pump water, providing vital fire suppression capabilities and features a 75 foot aerial ladder, giving first responders better access for fire suppression, roof ventilation, and rescue activities.



Truck 28



Fireboat 2681



Fireboat 2681, operated by Winnetka, Wilmette, & Evanston firefighter/paramedics, was put into service on April 19, 2024 and taken out of service for the season on November 4, 2024. During it's second year in service, the vessel was dispatched for 25 incident responses, was utilized for two special events, and participated in over two dozen training drills on Lake Michigan.



Mutual and Automatic Aid

Mutual and Automatic Aid by Shift				
	Mutual Aid Received	Automatic Aid Received	Mutual Aid Given	Automatic Aid Given
A Shift	5	79	4	196
B Shift	0	107	13	197
C Shift	2	88	6	136
Total	7	274	23	529

The Winnetka Fire Department regularly works with neighboring fire departments while responding to emergencies. Sharing of resources and personnel aids in effectively mitigating larger and life threatening incidents.

Automatic Aid is rendered through a pre-determined agreement to automatically dispatch specific resources to or from a neighboring town based on the type of incident. Automatic aid responses are typically dispatched for general alarms.

Mutual Aid is rendered when the needs of an incident exceed local and automatic aid resource capabilities and additional resources are requested to or from neighboring and nearby jurisdictions. Mutual aid requests are typically dispatched for box alarms or special rescue responses.



FM Fudalej & FM Biernack on scene at a mutual aid fire in Evanston.

State Certified Training

The Office of the State Fire Marshal (OSFM) develops statewide standards for training, testing, and certifying firefighters at all levels and specialties. The Winnetka Fire Department is part of a cohort of over 17,000 firefighters in the state of Illinois.

In 2024, Department members achieved eighteen different specialized or state certifications.

Training Achievements			
Basic Operations Firefighter (BOF)	FMR Cathon	Advanced Technician Firefighter (ATF)	FM Biernack FM Kroeger
Company Fire Officer (COFO)	Lt. Bublitz FM Sengmany FM Fudalej	Advanced Fire Officer (ADFO)	Lt. Kopecky Lt. McCloskey Lt. Bublitz
Fire Apparatus Engineer (FAE)	FM Shine	Vehicle Machinery Operator (VMO)	FM Fudalej FM Biernack FM Kroeger FM Shine
Instructor I	FM Poplawski	Instructor II	Lt. McCloskey Lt. Bublitz
Incident Safety Officer (ISO)	DC MacArthur Capt. Michehl Lt. Bublitz	Emergency Rescue Diving International: ERD 1; ERD 2; ERD Full Face Mask Ops; ERD Drysuit Ops; ERD SSA	FM Moreno
Collapse Technician	FM Poplawski FM Sengmany	Trench Rescue Technician	FM Sengmany
Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC)	FM Clement	Blue Card Incident Command	FM Poplawski FM Sengmany

Department Training

Winnetka Fire Department personnel conduct in-house specialized training. Each shift conducts daily training drills to ensure all personnel keep their skills sharp and remain ready to respond to any emergency.

Through the formation of a Training Cooperative, the Winnetka Fire Department regularly trains with the neighboring departments of Wilmette, Northfield, and Glencoe. The Training Co-Op gathers monthly for joint training, often hosted at the Winnetka Training Tower.

The Department also regularly trains with the Winnetka Police Department, as well as local schools to ensure school administrative staff is prepared for emergencies.



Shift training—Technical rescue.



Tabletop exercise with District 36 Schools.

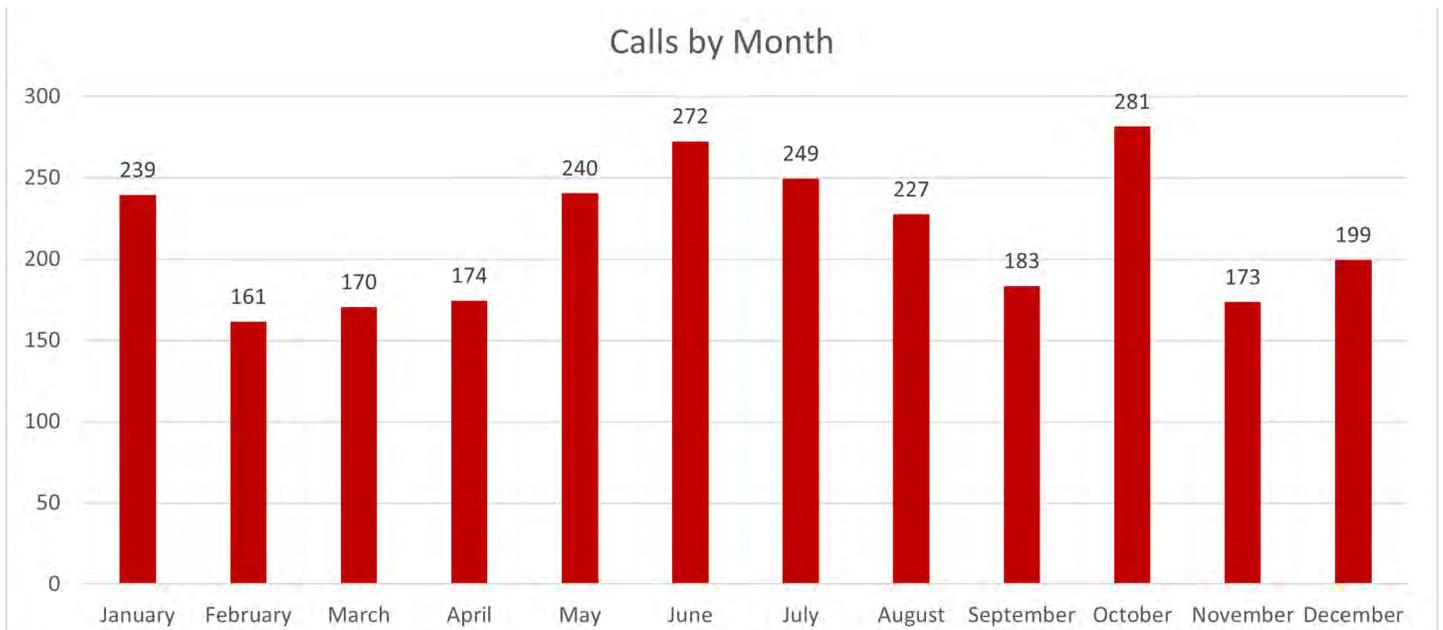


Technical rescue quick drill with Glencoe Public Safety.

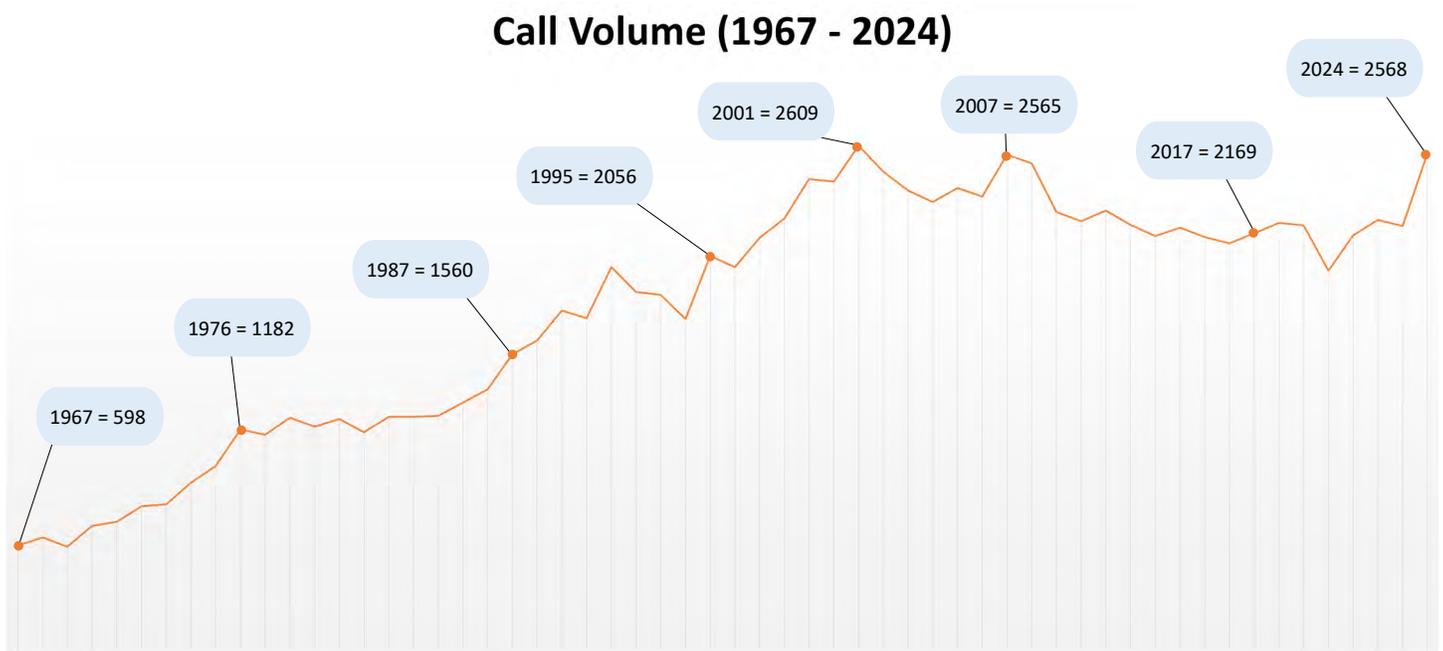


Extrication training with Co-Op partners.

Incidents & Emergency Response

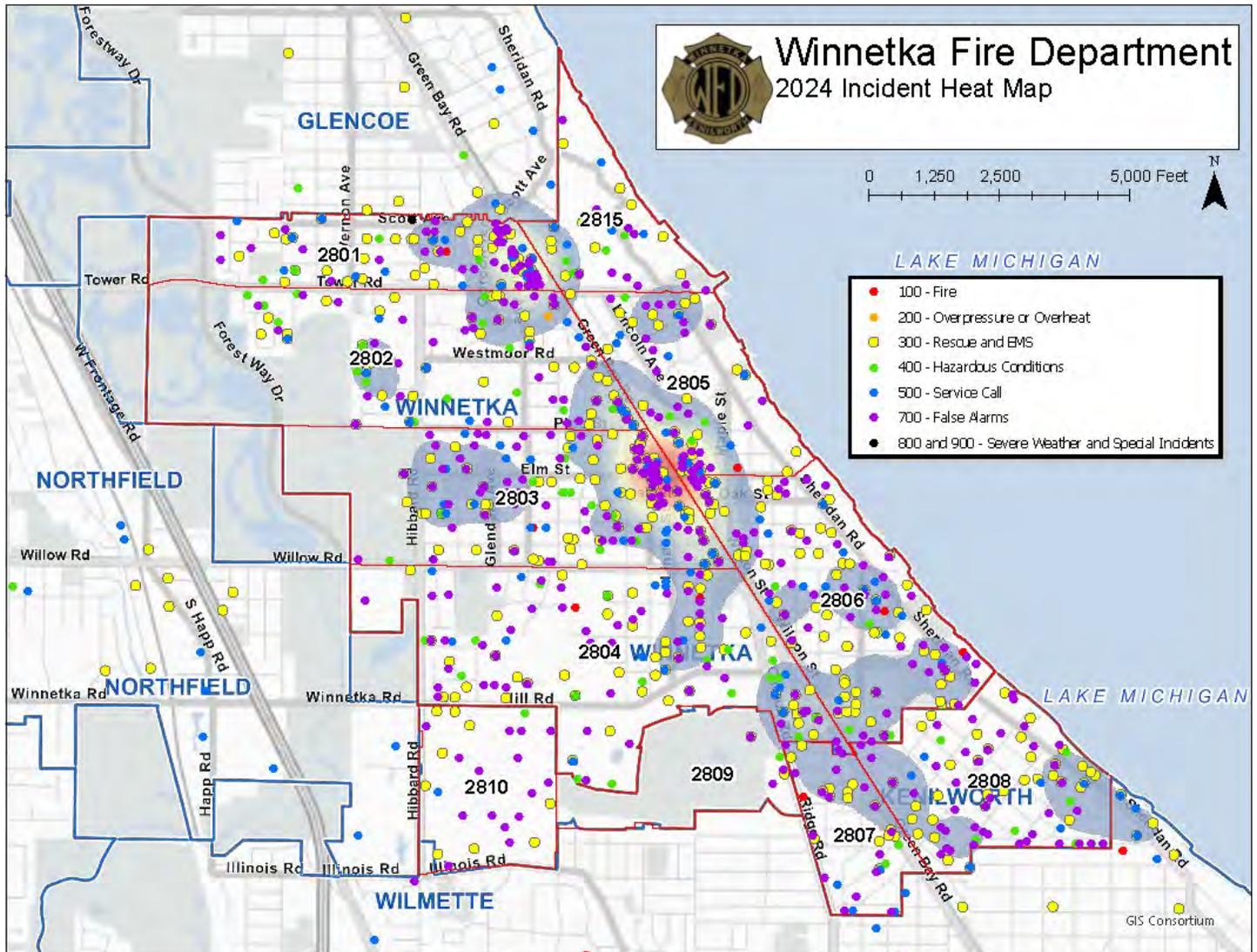


In 2024, the Winnetka Fire Department responded to 2,568 calls for service.



The above chart shows the overall upward trend of annual call volume since 1967. In 1967, the department responded to 598 calls for service. The department has seen an over 329% increase in call volume over the last 57 years.

Incident Heat Map



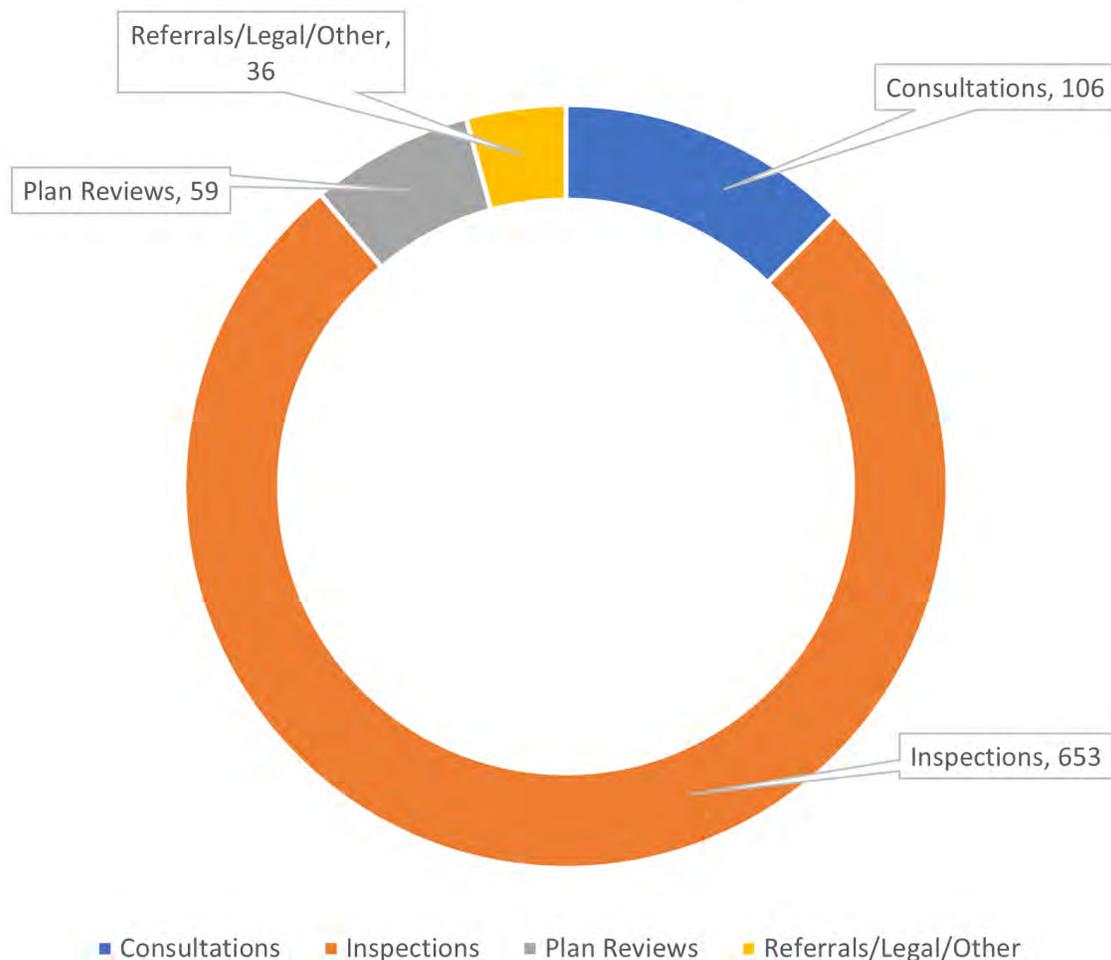
This heat map shows that calls largely congregated near the center of town, around the Elm Street Business District, and on the north of town, near the Tower Road Business District. Maps like this help correlate data to allow for more efficient analysis in the way our resources are allocated and deployed.

Fire Prevention Bureau

The Winnetka Fire Prevention Bureau is made up of four part-time fire inspectors, under the direction of the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief. The Bureau is responsible for conducting fire and life safety inspections within the Villages of Winnetka, Kenilworth, Northfield, and Glencoe. Annual inspections are required for all new and existing commercial and multi-family residential structures, as well as 1-2 family new construction with fire suppression systems.

Winnetka Fire Department Inspectors work with contractors, business owners, developers, architects, and homeowners to ensure that all buildings are in compliance with the adopted national fire safety codes and standards. The Inspectors work diligently to ensure that residents, businesses, and visitors remain safe.

2024 Fire Prevention Bureau Activities



Fire Prevention Bureau



In March, Deputy Chief Tom Hutchison retired after 35 years of service with the department. Tom then joined the Fire Prevention Bureau as the newest Fire Inspector.

In June, Inspector Randy Fromm retired after 20 years of service with our Fire Prevention Bureau. Randy's dedication and expertise have been invaluable to the Village during his time as an Inspector.



Personnel Changes

Retirements:

- Deputy Chief Tom Hutchison—35 years of service.
- Inspector Randy Fromm—20 years of service.

New Hires:

- Inspector Tom Hutchison
- FM Recruit Alec Cathon



FM Recruit Cathon sworn in by Village Manager Bahan.



(From left to right) Village Manager Bahan, Deputy Chief MacArthur, Captain Michehl, Lt. Bublitz, & Chief Ripka.

Promotions:

- Deputy Chief Andy MacArthur—Promoted from the rank of Captain—20 years of service.
- Captain Scott Michehl—Promoted from the rank of Lieutenant—17 years of service.
- Lieutenant Katie Schmidly (now Bublitz) - Promoted from the rank of Firemedic—7 years of service.

Fire Prevention Week

Fire Prevention Week is observed during the week of October 9th each year in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, which began on October 8th, 1871. During the week, personnel visit local schools supervising fire drills and conducting fire safety presentations. As the longest running public safety observance in our country, Fire Prevention Week is an opportunity for students and teachers to learn how to stay safe in case of a fire.

Each year, Fire Prevention Week is closed out by the Public Safety Building Open House. Co-hosted by the Winnetka Fire and Police Departments, Open House offers residents the opportunity to meet firefighters, tour the fire vehicles, and learn more about the fire apparatus and equipment. The event features family-friendly interactive activities, as well as a technical skill demonstration.



Public Education

Through various public engagement initiatives, the Winnetka Fire Department works to raise awareness of fire safety issues and provide valuable knowledge on handling emergency situations. The Fire Department works with local schools to conduct fire drills, station visits, classroom discussions, and assists in practicing the proper procedures for emergency situations. This provides an opportunity for the Fire Department to interact with students in a non-emergent environment and teach life safety skills.



Students learn about Engine 28 tools and equipment.



Students learn about firefighter turnout gear.



Engine 28 cools down kids at summer park programs.



Winnetka Children's Fair—June 2024



Students learn about firefighter turnout gear.

Public Education

In addition to local public and private schools, the Winnetka Fire Department frequently works with businesses, organizations, and other government entities to share fire and life safety messages. In June 2024, Lt. McCloskey, served as the department representative for a joint Lakefront Safety presentation given to Winnetka middle and high school students. The Winnetka School District, Winnetka Park District, and Winnetka Fire Department worked closely together to ensure a collaborative safety message was shared for students and teachers.



Lt. McCloskey teaches for a Lakefront Safety presentation.



Residents learn about calling 911 from RED Center dispatchers.

In 2024, the Winnetka Fire Department participated alongside the Winnetka Police Department in District 36 School's "High-Five Fridays". Each Friday during the month of October, shift personnel were on-site at a different school to greet the students as they arrived for the day. This initiative was part of District 36's Safety Month, and helped to familiarize students with their local first responders.



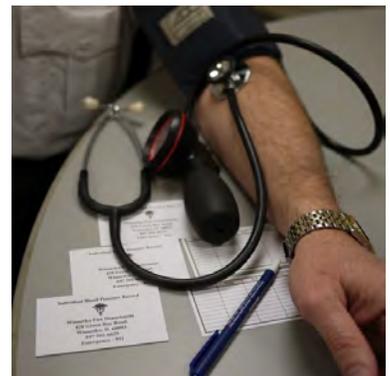
The Winnetka Fire Department Public Education initiatives are headed by Lieutenant Katie Bublitz. For questions about CPR training or public education events, feel free to contact her at kbublitz@winnetka.org, or by calling the fire station at 1-847-501-6029.

Additional Services

The Winnetka Fire Department offers a wide range of services available to the public. CPR and Stop the Bleed training classes are offered throughout the year, and are taught by trained Fire Department instructors. CPR/AED and first-aid training classes can also be scheduled for businesses, Scout Troops, medical offices, or any other interested organizations.

Through a partnership with the Solid Waste Agency of Northern Cook County (SWANCC) the fire station is able to serve as a location for residents to dispose of expired or unused medications, as well as sealed containers of used "sharps" (needles, syringes, EpiPens, and diabetic finger prick cartridges). The department also offers empty sharps containers for proper collection of used needles at home, and your filled container can be exchanged at the station should a new one be needed. All medications and sharps are collected from the fire station by SWANCC for proper disposal.

The department also offers many walk-in services for residents on weekdays from 9am to 4pm. Department paramedics are available to perform blood pressure checks and the station lobby houses a receptacle for American flags that need to be retired which are collected by the local VFW post and disposed of respectfully.



Foreign Fire Insurance Board

The Foreign Fire Insurance Board (FFIB) manages and administers the money in the Foreign Fire Insurance Fund, as required by state statute for the maintenance, use, and benefit of the Fire Department. These funds are collected by the State of Illinois from local businesses that buy fire insurance from companies outside of Illinois.

The Foreign Fire Insurance Board consists of Trustees elected from the ranks of the fire personnel and the Fire Chief. The Chairman of the Foreign Fire Insurance Board presides over all meetings of the Board. The meetings are held every other month, in which the committee discusses and approves purchases in alignment with Village procurement policies.

2024 Committee Members

- Firemedic Chris Tillson—Chairman
- Lieutenant Katlyn Bublitz—Secretary
- Lieutenant Tim McCloskey—Treasurer
- Fire Chief John Ripka—Board Member
- Lieutenant Jon Colpaert—Board Member
- Firemedic Ryne Clement—Board Member
- Firemedic Kyle Tuttle—Board Member

FFIB Fund Purchases

- Station Equipment & Maintenance
- EMS Equipment
- Fitness Items and Equipment
- Fireboat Equipment
- Hazmat Equipment
- Conference Room remodel
- Drone equipment



MABAS Illinois

MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) in partnership with IEMA (Illinois Emergency Management Agency) is a statewide, non-discriminatory mutual aid response system for fire, EMS, and specialized incident operational teams, which responds to any location within the state of Illinois.



Tower Road Beach Dive Incident

Winnetka, IL

In the early morning hours of June 17th, 2024, Winnetka Fire Department activated the Division 3 Dive Box Alarm to request aid for the search and rescue of a missing person on Lake Michigan. Representatives from Evanston, Glencoe, Glenview, Northbrook, Northfield, Park Ridge, and Wilmette Fire Departments responded to assist. Also aiding in the search was Chicago Fire Department's helicopter, Chicago Police Department's Marine Unit, Glenview Fire Department's Drone Technician, and the United States Coast Guard.

Greenleaf Street Fire—2nd level Box Alarm

Evanston, IL

In the evening hours of January 28th, 2024, Engine 28 was dispatched to Evanston when their Fire Box Alarm was elevated to the second level.

Engine 28 responded to the scene where they were assigned to assist with moving supply lines and setting up defensive fire suppression operations.



MABAS DIVISION



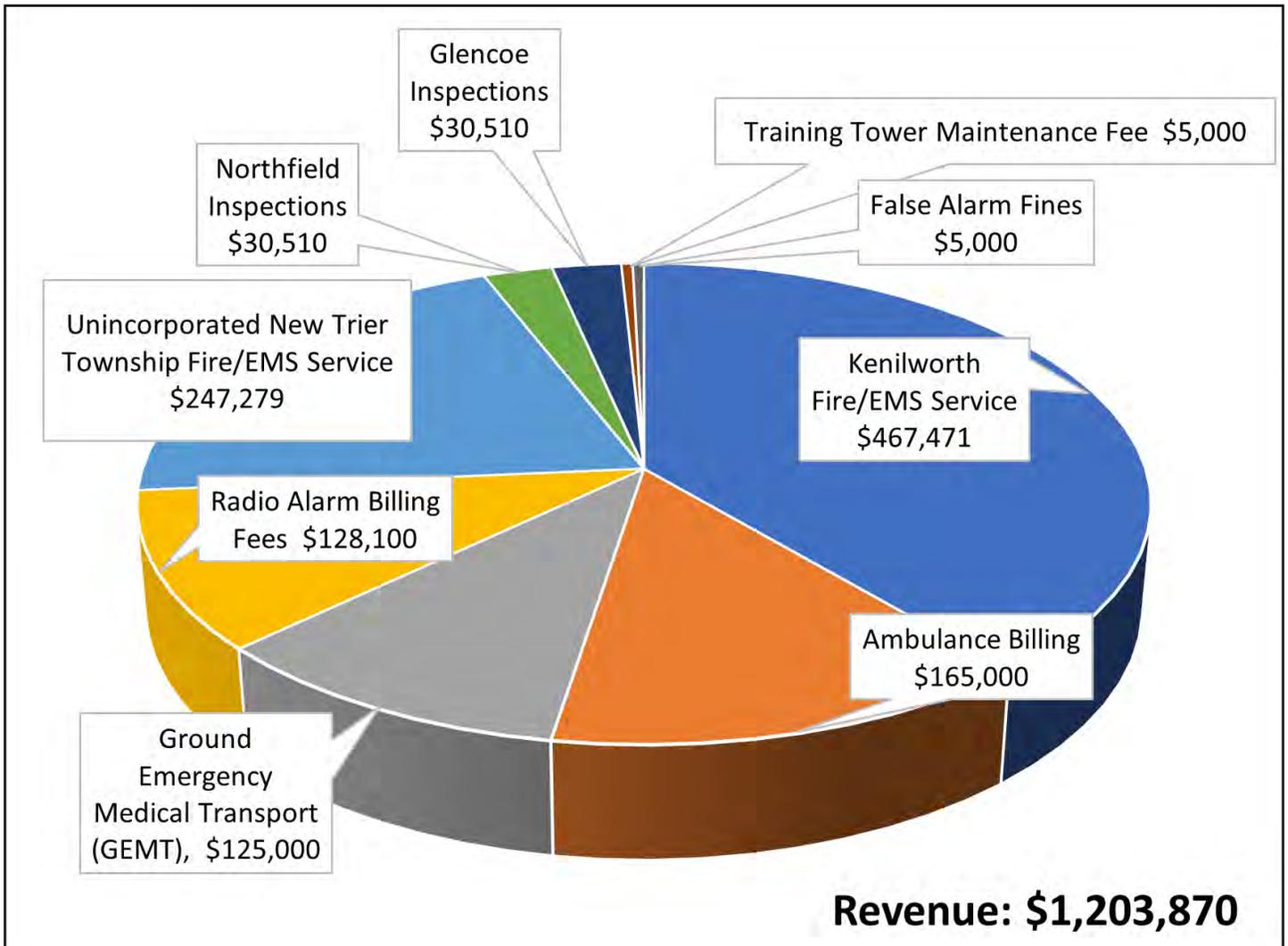
The Winnetka Fire Department is a member of MABAS Division 3, a partnership of 17 suburban fire departments and the Regional Emergency Dispatch (RED) Center organized to provide mutual aid, specialized response, unique resources, and combined training.



Winnetka Special Teams Members

Fire Investigators	Technical Rescue	Underwater Rescue/ Recovery
Captain Dennis Legan Lieutenant Chris Kopecky Lieutenant Tim McCloskey Lieutenant Katie Bublitz	Lieutenant Chris Kopecky Firemedic Johnny Sengmany Firemedic Jack Poplawski Firemedic Marty Shine	Lieutenant Tim McCloskey Firemedic Chris Moreno

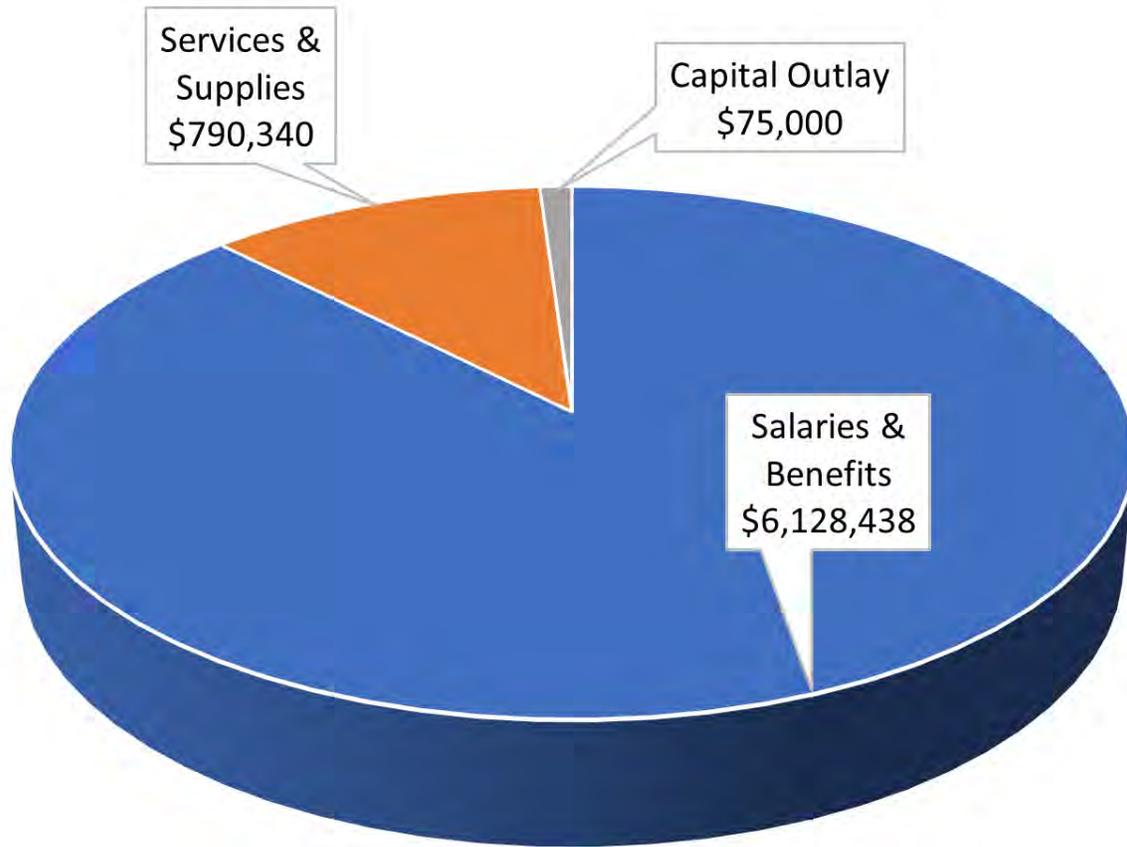
2024 Budget



The Fire Department revenue comes from multiple sources, with the largest percentage generated from providing fire suppression and EMS services to the Village of Kenilworth and areas of unincorporated Cook County. In 2024, Fire Department revenue funded approximately 17% of the department's operating budget.



2024 Budget



Expenditures: \$6,993,778

The 2024 Capital Outlay included the replacement of all eight of the overhead Apparatus Bay garage doors. Originally installed when the station was renovated in 1997, the replacement doors added additional windows to allow for more natural light on the bay floor as well as increasing reliability for proper functioning to ensure rapid response.



2024 Accomplishments

The following are a few Department objectives accomplished in 2024:

- Created Regional Training Officer position with New Trier Township Fire Departments.
- Recertified Village of Winnetka Annex of the Cook County Multi-Jurisdictional Hazard Mitigation Plan.
- Certified all Village staff in CPR/AED.
- Began Stop the Bleed certification for all staff.
- Updated Village Fire Prevention Codes.
- Placed order to purchase a new Fire Engine, replacing 2000 Pierce Pumper Engine.



2025 Goals

The Winnetka Fire Department is continuously working to improve the quality of service provided to the community. The following are a few objectives we plan to accomplish in calendar year 2025:

- Complete Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS) training for Department paramedics.
- Place new Ambulance 28 into service.
- Replace hydraulic extrication equipment on Engine 28 with battery operated.
- Continue PFAS-free firefighting gear replacement.
- Complete update of Village Emergency Operations Plan, Continuity of Operations Plan, Continuity of Government, and Recovery emergency plans.
- Host severe weather exercise with New Trier Township communities.





Winnetka Fire Department



General Fire Department Related Questions

- Fire Chief John Ripka
- 847-716-3303
- jripka@winnetka.org
- Deputy Fire Chief Andy MacArthur
- 847-716-3309
- amacarthur@winnetka.org

Fire Prevention and Inspection, Radio Alarm Network, Fire Protection Systems, and Knox Boxes

- Inspector Tom Hutchison
- 847-716-3305
- thutchison@winnetka.org

Public Education, CPR Classes

- Lieutenant Katie Bublitz
- 847-716-3383
- kbublitz@winnetka.org

Important Contact Information

- Fire Non-Emergency: 847-501-6029
- Winnetka Police Non-Emergency: 847-501-6034
- Kenilworth Police Non-Emergency: 847-251-2141
- Winnetka Village Hall: 847-501-6000
- Winnetka Public Works: 847-716-3568
- Winnetka Water & Electric: 847-716-3558
- New Trier Township: 847-446-8201
- Poison Control Center: 800-222-1222
- Report Power Outage: 847-501-2531



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Looking Ahead to 2025

March 9: Change your clock & test your smoke detector battery

May 26: Memorial Day Parade

June 20-21: Winnetka Music Festival

June 22-23: Art in the Village

July 4: Independence Day Parade and Fireworks

October 5-11: National Fire Prevention Week

October 11: Fire/Police Open House

November 2: Change your clock & test your smoke detector battery



In Memoriam

Retired Fire Chief Ron Colpaert

03.04.1949 - 04.24.2024

Served the Winnetka Fire Department from 1987 to 2004.