



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION DEPARTMENT REPORT

TO: Matthew R. Schmitz, MPA - City Manager

FROM: Blake Hayward – Fire Chief

DATE OF MEETING: May 05, 2025

ITEM TITLE: Department Report – Fire Department

Independence Fire is still seeing an increase in calls for service. A majority of these have been grass/field fires, but we have also seen an overall increase in other calls. As of the date of this report, we are at a rise of 21% from the same time last year. I can't express how proud I am of our department as they keep stepping up to whatever is thrown at them and take it all in stride. Some positive things that are coming from the increase in calls are that our newer members are getting a lot of real-world experience that will help develop their skills and has already shown to improve their confidence during calls. The next generation of members will have a lot of experience and hands-on training that will make them outstanding.

Along with the higher call volume, we were able to add an additional member to our department. Anthony Schuler comes to us with experience from Hazleton Fire. He currently works in town and has only been on for a short time, but has hit the ground running. With his experience and background, the learning curve is much shorter. We are excited to have him in our department and happy to have more help!

After repairs were completed, Engine 1 was shipped back to us from Banner Fire. As we started to inspect and put E1 back in service, we found a significant leak in the pump panel area. After working with Banner, we discovered that a small line had frozen and split, causing a leak in the transfer case. Repairs have been made, and last week, Engine 1 was back in service 100%.

We were recently notified by the Black Hawk Gaming Association that we were awarded \$20,000 towards a new set of Extrication Equipment (Jaws of Life). Independence Fire has been working towards a new set of Jaws for the past year and a half, and with the generosity of this local grant, we will be able to complete our goal sooner than projected. IFD uses Jaws during car accidents, agricultural accidents, vehicle fires, etc. These specialty tools are used for a number of tasks, and we have seen an increase in their use over the years. Historically, IFD had one large set that was gas-powered and required 2-3 people to operate at times. Rescues were complex and physically demanding. Of course, with technological advancements, new jaws are battery-powered, smaller, lighter, and more balanced, making it easier for one person to operate and allowing for quiet operations where patient communication is a lot easier. We are very grateful to be selected by the BHGA board, as we know they have several projects they must choose from, and fortunately, we were selected as a priority for them.