

2023 Year End Report for the Mackinac Island Fire Department

Generally speaking, fire departments do not use the word “routine” very often, However to sum up the year 2023, the MIFD would definitely describe it as routine, No major incidents, no major shake ups, and only some changes in training implemented by the State of Michigan has made any significant impacts on how we operate.

TRAINING

The department continues to hold monthly training sessions throughout the year and of course our annual “Detroit Weekend” that takes place the last weekend in February. The state standard is at least 24 hours of training hours for each member, yearly. I am happy to report that attaining that has never been an issue. The firefighters are happy to train and their attendance at these sessions is tremendous. Recently the State implemented another regiment which indicates that all members must meet 8 hours of regimented or documented training every year at other a state held or quantified exercise. We feel our Detroit Weekend meets that standard and therefore we will continue utilizing that program. We continue to train with other agencies such as EMS and Marine Rescue to provide for ease in operations in a joint department incident.

MEMBERSHIP

Due to a few members moving on from the Island, our membership has taken a hit. While we are still at decent strength in numbers, certain weekends when members leave the Island, we are getting dangerously low. Fortunately, a Firefighter Academy was started in November, and we have 7 new hires in that class. Unfortunately, we are unable to budget for the travel expense as its not something we know is going to be taught until the last second. Volunteerism across the State and the Nation continues to plague the Volunteer Fire Service. We are fortunate here and we are once again the largest department by membership in the County, perhaps the EUP. Attrition due to age WILL BECOME A PROBLEM SOON.

AQUISITIONS

No major acquisitions were acquired this fiscal year. Due to donations in memory of several locals to the Mackinac Island Firefighters Association, the Department through the Association has bought more ice rescue gear.

CAPITAL OUTLAY

As has been discussed in the past few reports, our SCBA is needing replacement as its coming to the end of its lifespan. Not an easy acquisition as the cost has soared in recent years. My last estimate to replace all SCBA has now doubled. It is something will soon need to be addressed with the finance committee. Our yearly purchase of turnout gear has worked out great. About 5 years ago the department decided that rather than buy all new gear every 5 years that it would be easier to buy 5 or 6 new sets every year thus relieving the city of a big bill to cover every year.

FLEET SERVICES

The fleet is in fine shape. I must note that replacing Squad 2, the pickup truck we keep in the Sunset Forest neighborhood has been a god-send as that truck often responds with 4 or more members and the former truck was only a two door. To that end, an attempt to sell the former truck via bids was unsuccessful as we received no bids. Due to a renewed interest, the department intends to put the unit out for bids again soon. We've been very fortunate that many spot repairs to apparatus and equipment can be done in house as the department employs a lot of handy folks.

FIRE PREVENTION

The prevention/inspection division was busy this fall. One incident came with a complaint of a dorm style building with too many safety deficiencies. Marshal Bradley and Inspector Dombrowski inspected the building, and a laundry list of upgrades were passed on to the owner. The Fire Chief, Marshall and Inspector have discussed other buildings that need a check up as ownership is changing hands.

INCIDENTS

The following is a breakdown of the 96 responses the MIFD made in 2024:

False Alarms: 77

EMS ASSIST 10

Fires 5

Severe Weather Incident 1

Search and Rescue 1

Elevator Emergency 1

MVA (motor vehicle accident) 1

Again, a pretty typical year in comparison to the last 15 years. I should note that the MIFD did provide personnel to stand by at several large events including the swim around the Island and the large road race in October.

LOOKING FORWARD

The MIFD is pleased to report that currently our training program is strong, our attendance at runs is strong, and most importantly that at the conclusion of the current fire academy, our numbers will once again be strong. Despite these current benchmarks of success, we remain vigilant and consistently re-evaluate our procedures, responses and standard operating procedurs to continue offering the residents and visitors the best we can offer in safety.

Yours in Fire Safety,

Jason St. Onge, Chief of Department
Mackinac Island Fire Department