

Wausau Fire Department Monthly Report

March 2022



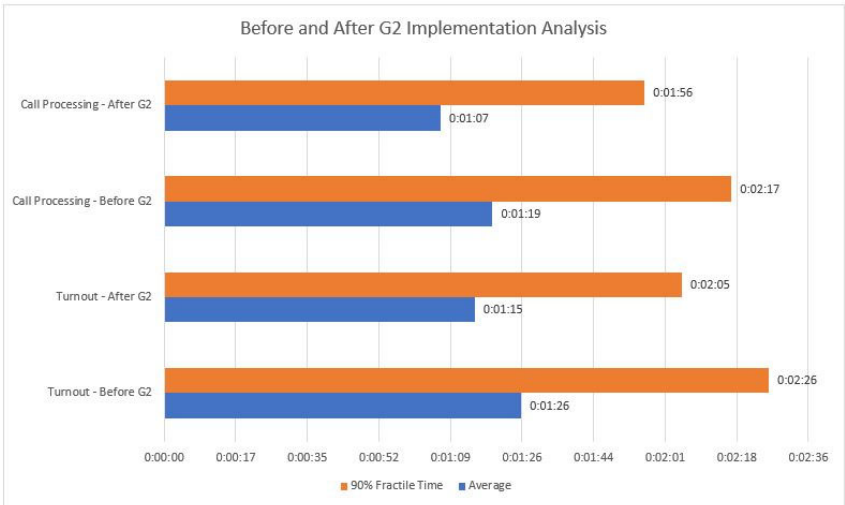
(A Crew performing aerial training on a beautiful Wausau morning)

Fire Chief Report by Robert Barteck

My March report will be longer than my regular monthly report. This month I will cover an interesting training I attended in Alabama and report on one year of data since implementing our new alerting system. The bulk of this report I dedicated to covering the most significant single problem facing our department, recruitment and retention. I hope you find this report interesting and informative. Please reach out to me with questions or things you would like to see in future reports.

FEMA - Center for Domestic Preparedness. I had the pleasure of traveling to FEMA’s Center for Domestic Preparedness (CDP) in Anniston, Alabama, for some training in March. I had been to the CDP with WI-DMAT Team a few years ago and had a fantastic experience, so I was excited to return. I was accepted into a pilot course titled Disaster Responder Exposure and Monitoring (DREAM). The course introduced new software and systems for post-disaster monitoring of responders. The course was developed in response to 9-11 responders getting sick and dying from misunderstood disease processes. The newly developed software and systems will be used to gather essential data about responders and potential exposure that will then be used to create a Registry that can monitor the long-term health effects of those responders. My class was an interesting mix of fire service personnel, emergency management, public health, and even an epidemiologist. The training ended with a capstone event in the famed disaster alley, where our team implemented lessons learned. I will now use those lessons learned to create exposure monitoring policies and procedures for our organization.

Phoenix G2 Alerting System Upgrade Report. March marks one year since we completed the two-year project of updating all three fire stations to the Phoenix G2 Alerting system. When new station two was built, we installed the G2 Alerting system while under construction. We immediately saw the benefit of the alerting system and applied for retrofitting the system into Stations 1 and 3 in 2021 using CIP funds. The alerting system uses an automated voice for dispatch that allows the dispatcher to stay on the phone with the 911 caller and gather information while simultaneously alerting the proper units for emergency response. This system has drastically reduced call processing time in dispatch and Wausau Fire apparatus turn-out time. The transition to the new system was near-seamless, with only a few glitches that needed to be addressed. Both dispatchers and firefighter/paramedics feel the system has aided them in doing their job better.



Data from the first year of the Phoenix G2 Alerting System in Wausau Fire Stations

Recruitment and Retention

The Wausau Fire Department has not been immune to recruitment and retention problems currently plaguing fire and EMS agencies across the county. While attending the Wisconsin Fire Chief's Education Conference in Madison, the topic of recruitment and retention is at the top of every Fire Chief's current issue list. The Wisconsin State Fire Chiefs has launched an initiative to study the problem and explore statewide solutions. In the meantime, Wausau needs to get creative to find realistic solutions. Below is my synopsis of the recruitment and retention of firefighter/paramedics within Wausau Fire.

Current Status In January, we hired five new firefighter/paramedics, and for the first time since 2020, we had all positions within the department filled. Then over the next three months, we had four-employee departures. In January, we let a probationary employee go due to failure to meet department training benchmarks. In March, we had an engineer's retirement, and two firefighter/paramedics resigned to take positions in other larger fire departments in different state regions. Which put us back into the same short-handed place we were in the entirety of 2021. Fortunately, we just completed a hiring posting with HR and have three qualified applicants to that we have extended conditional offers for employment too. We anticipate starting those candidates in early May. This will still leave us one position short.

Ongoing Recruitment, The Human Resources Department has opened another recruitment for entry-level firefighter/paramedics that will close on April 17. Candidates from this recruitment will be used to fill the one current opening and begin the staffing expansion once final Council approval is received for the first three positions. We advertise recruitments on social media (Facebook & YouTube) and other venues. The recruitment film released earlier this year and the other videos on the department's YouTube page has helped attract applicants who might otherwise know who we are. All three of the current candidates state that the videos helped attract them into applying with us.

We will provide another update on the results of this latest hiring process in the April and May monthly reports.

Future Staffing Needs: In January, with permission and direction from the Common Council, we applied for a Staffing for Effective Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant for nine additional firefighter/paramedics. The Public Health and Safety Committee and the Human Resources Committee has recommended that the city hire 12 additional Firefighter/Paramedics. Ideally, these positions would be funded through a mix of City and Federal funding. Currently, the topic sits at the Finance Committee level, which needs to determine a funding source for the first three of the additional 12 positions. At their direction, I have submitted and request for the use of ARPA funds to pay for these positions for the first two years. We expect the Finance Committee to take this up in April.

I have asked the Finance Committee to consider contingency plans for hiring additional firefighters if we do not receive federal funding. The SAFER grant is highly competitive, and FEMA received 1546 grant requests this year and is only expected to award 500 grants. One possible alternative funding source would be a public referendum on the November ballot. Successful public safety referendums have recently passed in Beaver Dam, Grand Chute, Fond du Lac, and Pleasant Prairie.

Long Term Solutions/Recommendations We are currently actively implementing long-term solutions and have many recommendations to improve the workforce problems we are experiencing today. There is not a singular solution. Instead, several strategic initiatives must be implemented and continued for many years to ensure Wausau recruits and retain talented firefighter/paramedics.

- *High School Outreach.* The department has actively sought opportunities to speak to High School students and discuss careers in the fire service. We have attended several events, including a career event hosted by the UWSP- Wausau Campus, in which we were able to contact high school students from throughout Central Wisconsin.
- *Wausau Fire Career Night events.* We will hold the second Career Night on May 19th at Station Two. During the event, interested people sign up for an in-depth look into the life and work of a career

firefighter/paramedic. The event includes testimonies by current Wausau firefighters, videos, and interactive, hands-on activities.

- *Expanded Recruitment.* Using the new recruitment film posted to YouTube, we reach a broader audience from Wisconsin and beyond. We have also found social media groups specifically for fire service careers on which we are posting job opportunities. We are also exploring joining the Fox Valley Technical College fire/medic recruitment process. The \$1,000 cost would be worthwhile if we recruit even a single candidate through the process. We need to continue to explore ways to reach potential candidates.
- *Lower minimum requirements for large recruitments.* We are researching lowering the minimum qualifications for hire from State Firefighter II and Wisconsin Paramedic licensure to Firefighter I and EMT-Basic. After hiring, we would need to train the candidates to the Firefighter II and Paramedic levels. Depending on the training program, this could take 6 to 10 months, and we would need at least nine candidates to run a training course. We have asked NTC about the feasibility of an intensive Paramedic training program and how long a program like that might take. These conversations are early but need to move quickly to be ready for large recruitment in 2023 if the staffing expansion from the SAFER Grant comes to fruition.
- *Monetary incentives.* In 2021 we had two firefighter/paramedics resign to take positions as paramedics with an area helicopter medical service. Private medical ambulance and helicopter services offer highly competitive wage and benefit packages and large sign-on bonuses to lure paramedics to work for them. We have not implemented any such sign-on bonuses or other financial incentives to attract paramedics that are highly sought after by fire-based EMS agencies and private medical transport agencies. We need to consider incentivizing our offerings to compete with today's workforce recruitment and retention.
- *Remove Volunteering Restrictions.* In the SAFER grant notice of funding, FEMA spells out that any firefighters hired using grant funding shall not be discriminated against if they choose to volunteer as a firefighter for another department. Currently, we have contract language with Local 415 that restricts what they are allowed to do on off-duty time related to firefighting. They are not allowed to volunteer as firefighters elsewhere. We have heard from many potential candidates that they have chosen not to apply for us because they want to continue volunteering for their hometown volunteer fire department. An example would be if a firefighter from Edgar Fire Department wanted to apply with Wausau Fire, they would need to quit Edgar Fire Department at the time of appointment with Wausau. This practice of restricting off-duty activities has become very unpopular and could be prohibiting interested candidates from applying. If/when we receive federal funding for firefighters via a SAFER grant, we must remove restrictions for those firefighters.
- *Increased Wages.* This summer, we will enter contract negotiations with Local 415 for a new contract beginning in 2023. To stay competitive, we need to elevate the wage package of our firefighters to above the mid-point. Most career fire departments like ours offer Lateral Transfers, which has allowed firefighters to gravitate to departments with high wages without losing vacation time or other benefits. This contract negotiation is an opportunity to make wages more attractive to potential candidates.
- *Create new partnerships.* Many solutions to long-term workforce problems will come from partnerships with educational institutions like area technical colleges and high schools. Relationships with these entities need to be fostered and solutions for recruiting and retaining quality firefighter/paramedics to serve our community are at the top of our leader's priority list.

The short staffing in 2021 and this year has led to high amounts of overtime and has increased the strain on our staff. No single action will solve this problem for our community. Instead, we need to remain in the forward-leaning posture and pursue every little detail that may improve our chances of recruiting and then retaining bright, talented servants to meet the growing demands of our city. I will provide regular updates on this topic to the PFC and the PHS Committee.

Thank you for your continued support.

Robert Barteck – Fire Chief

EMS Division by EMS Division Chief Jared Thompson

The EMS Division would like to highlight a case study that was sent to the entire fire department concerning the performance that C-crew delivered to a patient in cardiac arrest. This performance is linked to the amount of cardiac arrest training that we participate in.

The American Heart Association recommends that chest compressions be performed for 80% of the entire cardiac arrest resuscitation attempt. Their studies find that chest compressions are performed 50-60% of the time during cardiac arrest resuscitation. This case study data lets us know that our training is paying off and that we are delivering the highest quality of care to the patients we serve.

Through the data collection software that we use, we are measuring data from every cardiac arrest that our crews respond to in an effort to always look at areas for improvement. We can measure precisely how much oxygenated air we put in a patient's lungs, how deep we compress a patient's chest, and how fast we allow the patient's chest to recoil from each chest compression.

Below is the case study sent:

This call occurred on 3/10/2022

Crew members:

Firefighter/Paramedics: Z. Becker, H. Herold

Lieutenant Prausa

Engineer Marks

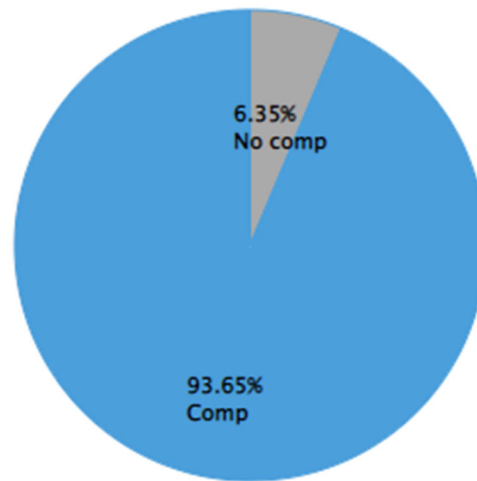
Battalion Chief Kruzan

Due to the patient's size, the AutoPulse (*our department's mechanical CPR machine*) was not utilized, so the manual chest compressions were performed for **over 47 minutes** with a Chest Compression Fraction (CCF) of **93.65!**

This type of CCF is almost always associated with *mechanical chest compressions*, not manual chest compressions. Therefore, I feel the need to highlight this to the department. The only way to accomplish this high of a CCF is by practice, strong closed-loop communication, and diligence. I want to reiterate...***this CCF is unheard of with manual chest compressions, especially when performed for over 47 minutes with the overall quality of compressions remaining the same for the entire duration.***

This resuscitation is as close to perfect as humanly possible! Now I know I was not there, but this is what the data shows. We don't know what we don't measure. Fortunately, we have software that can measure a lot of data.

CHEST COMPRESSION FRACTION ?



Total average Title Volume: 446 mL (PERFECT)

Total average Compression Depth: 2.4 inches (PERFECT)

Total average Compression Rate: 109 compressions per minute (PERFECT)

Total average Compression Release Velocity (CCRV) Trend: 371mm/second (NOT BAD)

- Chest compression release velocity rate (CCRV) is the rate measured in millimeters per second that the chest recoils from compressions. The goal measurement is >400 mm/second which is associated with increased neurologic outcomes with ROSC.

Responses by Municipality (EMS Patient Care Reports):

City	# of Runs	% of Runs	# of Runs – YTD
City of Merrill	1	0.21%	1
City of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
City of Schofield	0	0.00%	0
City of Wausau	460	94.46%	1,410
Clark County	0	0.00%	0
Other	0	0.00%	0
Town of Berlin	1	0.21%	5
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	1
Town of Cassel	0	0.00%	0
Town of Elderon	0	0.00%	0
Town of Emmet	0	0.00%	0
Town of Hewitt	2	0.41%	5
Town of Marathon	0	0.00%	1
Town of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
Town of Rib Falls	1	0.21%	2
Town of Rib Mountain	1	0.21%	5
Town of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	0
Town of Stettin	0	0.00%	0
Town of Texas	7	1.44%	19
Town of Wausau	7	1.44%	25
Town of Wien	0	0.00%	0
Village of Athens	1	0.21%	1
Village of Edgar	0	0.00%	0

Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	0
Village of Maine	6	1.23%	16
Village of Marathon City	0	0.00%	0
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	1
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	0
Village of Weston	0	0.00%	1
Total	487	100.00%	1,493

Fire Training Division by Training Division Chief David Briggs

Training

March was host to multiple training disciplines including fireground initial attack drills, fire officer personnel management, firefighter survival, and lots of confined space. Members honed their skills in the respective positions by pulling hoses, pumping water, and performing initial on-scene actions related to fire suppression.



(Battalion Chief Becker and his crewmembers repacking hose following drills)

Firefighter Entanglement Training

Sadly, things can go wrong during fire suppression, and we must prepare for those events as well. Each member of the department also performed firefighter entanglement drills which included crawling as if performing a search, having a simulated collapse happen, and then the firefighter must call an emergency MAYDAY to request help as they begin to disentangle themselves. While entanglements are rare, they are frequent enough to warrant specific training to free one-self.



(Lieutenant Brockman escaping an entanglement)

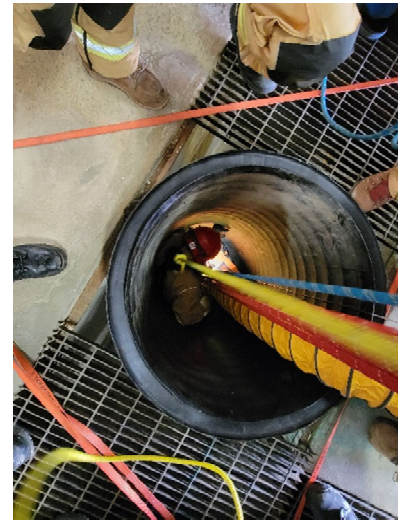


(Even with the best technique, it is still very easy to become entangled)

Confined Space Technician

The week of March 14-18 was a long one, but also one filled with incredible learning. Fourteen Wausau Firefighters, two Marathon County Emergency Response Team members, and two Wausau Public Works employees completed a 40 hour Confined Space Technician course hosted by Northcentral Technical College. This course provided a tremendous opportunity to increase our skills for the event of a confined space emergency. Con-Space entries occur throughout the city daily. Without proper training and the right equipment, these entries are extremely hazardous to the entrants and would-be rescuers.

A Wisconsin Emergency Management Haz-Mat and Emergency Preparedness grant was co-written by Marathon County Emergency Management and our Training Division Chief to fund the course. This funding allowed for WFD members and the other attendees to learn together as we often interact in the community. Wausau DPW workers informed us that this class was so beneficial to them, that they recommended it to their supervisor for all DPW confined space entrants over their prior method of training.



(Each of the above images depicts various methods of precaution, preparation, and response to confined space entries and rescues)

Wisconsin Technical College System Committee Work

Committee Update:

Following completion of the *Entry Level Technical Rescue* course design and presentation at the February Wisconsin Emergency Services Instructor conference, the Training Division Chief and other committee members have collectively decided to teach the course throughout the state free-of-charge to ensure responders are safe at their workplace in special rescue situations. These offerings will be provided at strategic Wisconsin Technical College locations on Saturdays to allow career and volunteer rescuers to attend regardless of their work schedules.

A New Committee:

Training Division Chief Briggs was selected by the Wisconsin Technical College System to be a committee member to update the Certified Fire Officer curriculum for new fire officers throughout the state, including our own here at WFD. The initial phase of this committee began in March which included reviewing three textbooks, their associated digital curriculum, and their test-banks. This committee will continue for months to come to bring fire officer training to a new level.

Type of Training	# of Hours	% of Hours	# of Hours -YTD
Company Training	508.58	37.19%	1,967.08
Officer Training	97.5	7.13%	410.8
Driver/Operator Training	28.5	2.08%	91
Hazardous Materials Training	48.5	3.55%	201.25
Specialty Training	661.5	48.37%	799.5
Facilities Training	21	1.54%	33
Misc Training	2	0.15%	49.33
Total	1367.58	100.00%	3,551.96

Training Categories:

Company Training – General firefighting training

Officer Training – Included leadership, management, supervision, and tactical considerations

Driver/Operator Training – Operation of fire apparatus

Hazardous Materials Training – How to mitigate the leak or spill of hazardous substances

Specialty Training – Rope, confined space, trench, collapse, ice, water, and other special rescues.

Facilities Training – Training at a live-burn facility (may include off-duty time)

Misc Training – Any other training category such as software, administrative, etc.

Type of Training	# of Hours	% of Hours	# of Hours -YTD
Admin Training	26.75	11.53%	54.25
Fire Instructor Training	68.75	29.63%	261.75
Fire Prevention Training	0	0.00%	0
Investigation Training	0	0.00%	0
EMS Training	136.5	58.84%	719.5
Total	232	100.00%	1035.5

Fire Prevention Division by Fire Marshal Brian Stahl

Inspections: Within the City of Wausau for the month of March, we performed 229 total inspections. We had 5 properties that had Fire Code Violations. These properties will require follow up inspections to confirm compliance. We conducted 3 consultation inspections on new construction sites. Two of these were for Hydro tests of newly installed Sprinkler Systems and one was a final Occupancy Inspection.

Investigations: The prevention Division conducted a total of one Fire Investigation throughout March. This was a single-family rental property.

Public Outreach: Our Public outreach programs for March consisted of three Smoke Detector and CO detector installations. We installed a total of six smoke detectors and three CO alarms.

Education: Lieutenant Shahn Kariger and Firefighter/inspector Brad Ludwig were accepted into the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg Maryland. Lt. Kariger will be attending an "Expert Witness and Testimony" Class. Inspector Ludwig will be attending a Fire Investigation "Origin and Cause" class. Both Lt. Kariger and Inspector Ludwig will be attending at different times in the month of April.



Spring Cleaning for Fire Safety

Inside The Home

-  Test your home's smoke and carbon monoxide alarms.
-  Don't use electrical appliances with frayed cords.
-  Check for water around electrical appliances.
-  Clean debris from your clothes dryer lint trap and exhaust duct.

Outside The Home

-  Remove dead leaves and other debris around foundations, decks, porches, and stairs.
-  Check grills for rust, worn parts, insects, grease, and other debris before use.
-  Grills should only be used when at least 10 feet away from your house or any building.



Prevention Division Activities:

Inspections Completed	Monthly	Year to Date
Routine Fire Inspections	221	406
Re-inspections	5	34
All other Inspections	5	13
Total Inspections	229	449
Fire Investigations	1	5
Inspection Department Activities	Number	YTD
Public Engagement Activities	14	21

Fire Operations Division by Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp

March was a real wet and grey month. We saw big movements in temperatures between night and day as well as day to day. These can present challenging situations and force firefighters to prepare for the unexpected even more than normal with challenges that are weather related.

Significant calls: We responded to six fires in March ranging from one structure fire to a rubbish fire. We were very fortunate in the case of the structure fire where we had three units occupied in other calls at the same time. Two ambulances were on other calls and on engine was assisting one of those ambulances with a patient who was not breathing. The available crews were able to find the seat of the fire very quickly and knock it down without needing to ask for help from other departments.

Fleet: All equipment stayed in good working condition with normal pm's being done and minor electrical work done on Truck 1. Estimates have come back for repairs to the front of engine 2 and waiting approval from CVMIC.

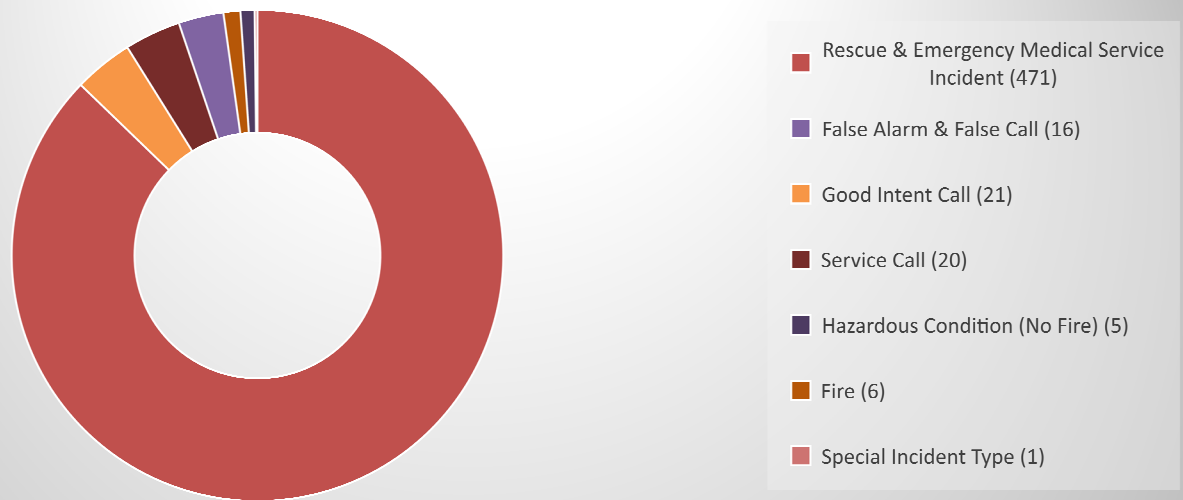
Guardian tracking: The software is up and rolling and personnel are using it as intended. This tool will prove to be more and more valuable as we get into it and learn all its capabilities.

Buildings and grounds: Exterior cleanups have begun with snow melting around the stations. Emergency generators were serviced in March. One overhead door at central fire malfunctioned and stuck open on a cold day causing call into repair company.

Charitable foundation: Confirmed a dream vacation trip and dates for family of fallen police officer in Merrill. Checks were given to a family who lost their home to a fire in Kronenwetter. Also gifts of money were given for parents who lost their son in a vehicle accident in Hatley.

Significant Fire Events:

Date	Address	City	Incident #	Type
3/6/2022	821 North 9th Avenue	City of Wausau	F22000390	Fire, other
3/11/2022	936 Maple Hill Road	City of Wausau	F22000422	Building fire
3/13/2022	234460 US 51 NB	City of Wausau	F22000434	Passenger vehicle fire
3/13/2022	707 Humboldt Avenue	City of Wausau	F22000436	Cooking fire, confined to container
3/20/2022	South 10th Street & Kickbusch Street	City of Wausau	F22000495	Passenger vehicle fire
3/28/2022	522 Adams Street	City of Wausau	F22000550	Outside rubbish fire, other



Responses by Municipality (All NFIRS Reports):

City	# of Runs	% of Runs	# of Runs - YTD
City of Merrill	1	0.19%	1
City Of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
City Of Schofield	0	0.00%	1
City Of Wausau	513	95.00%	1,552
Clark County	0	0.00%	0
Taylor County	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Berlin	1	0.19%	5
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Cassel	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Elderon	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Emmet	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Hamburg	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Hewitt	2	0.37%	5
Town Of Marathon	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Rib Falls	1	0.19%	2
Town Of Rib Mountain	1	0.19%	6
Town Of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Stettin	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Texas	7	1.30%	19
Town Of Wausau	7	1.30%	25
Town Of Weston	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Wien	0	0.00%	0
Village Of Athens	1	0.19%	1
Village Of Brokaw	0	0.00%	1
Village Of Edgar	0	0.00%	0
Village Of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	0
Village Of Maine	6	1.11%	16
Village Of Marathon City	0	0.00%	0
Village Of Rothschild	0	0.00%	1
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	0

Village Of Weston	0	0.00%	1
Total	540	100.00%	1,638

Activity/Incident Hours Committed

Category	Time Committed
NFIRS Incidents	91:53:08 Hours
EMS Incidents	798:15:03 Hours
Non-Incident Activities (Station Maintenance, Vehicle Check-off/Fire Pre-plan, Hazmat Outreach, Administration duties, Public Education, Committee and Staff Meetings)	798.25 Hours
Training (including Wellness)	1,599.58 Hours

Aid Responses:

Type of Aid	# of Runs
Mutual Aid Given – EMS	3
Mutual Aid Given – Fire	0
Automatic Aid Given – EMS	0
Automatic Aid Given – Fire	0
Mutual Aid Received – EMS	16
Mutual Aid Received – Fire	0
Automatic Aid Received – EMS	0
Automatic Aid Received – Fire	0
Other Aid Given – EMS	0
Request for EMS from Other Agencies (not Aid)	1
Total Non-Aid Incidents (outside City with no other agency response)	8