

Wausau Fire Department Monthly Report

November 2022



(Keep the Wreath Green campaign began at Thanksgiving)

Fire Chief Report by Chief Robert Barteck

November saw a spike in fire incidents which we hope is short-lived. We encourage the community to have fire-safe Christmas and New Year celebrations. Check smoke alarms, review your family fire escape plan, and exercise caution with Christmas decorations, especially candles. If you are like my family and enjoy a live Christmas tree in your home, please water the tree regularly and use only high-quality UL test lights for decorations.

Here is an update on a few of the things we are working on in November:

Recruitment:

Our massive recruitment effort dominated the November calendar for the command staff. The Human Resources department received 34 applications for our revised job posting. We dropped the minimum requirements to Certified Wisconsin Firefighter I and EMT – Basic. With preferred Associate or Bachelor's degrees, Firefighter II, and Nationally Registered Paramedic. After an initial vetting, 27 candidates participated in the first step interview with the Battalion and Division Chiefs. Sixteen candidates moved on to the Chief's level interviews. We then extended ten job offers to the highest-ranking candidates. This left us short of our total recruitment goal, and the HR Department reposted the position that, garnered another ten applicants that will be interviewed in December.

The SAFER grant allows for a 180-day recruitment period before the funding begins. We are on-track to be ahead of that tight timeline. We are targeting to start these candidates in early February. Candidates who have not completed Paramedic will begin their educational Journey through a partnership program with Northcentral Technical College. We expect the course to take ten months for the candidates to complete. This recruitment and education of firefighters will be a colossal effort by our current staff. We are looking at 2023 as a transitional year for the development and education of new firefighters. We will enjoy the fruits of our labor in late 2023 and in future years as we move all those new firefighter/paramedics into our new staffing deployment model.

New Firefighters:

On November 28, we were excited to welcome three new Firefighters. Autumm Oertel, Jake Nelson, and Josh Stoinski began their careers with Wausau Fire. They will be in a three-week academy that will culminate on Friday, December 16th with their swear-in event.

EMS Revenue:

Lifequest is the company we contract to handle the complicated EMS billing. In early November, I attended their annual conference to learn what is new in EMS billing and revenue generation. It was an excellent conference, and EMS Division Chief Thompson made some changes to our EMS documentation immediately based on lessons learned there.

In November, we also passed rate changes to EMS billing that were included in the City's fee schedule. These changes were recommended by Lifequest and will bring us in line with the current market comparisons. The Wisconsin Ground Emergency Medical Transport Program created under 2021 Wisconsin Act 228 is moving towards launch. We have been anxiously awaiting news on this program because it has the potential to have a positive effect on our reimbursements from Medicaid for EMS transports. Currently, Medicaid reimbursements for services do not cover all the costs incurred in providing services. Currently, 17% of our EMS transports are Medicaid patients.

2021 Wisconsin Act 228 creates a supplemental reimbursement under Wisconsin Medicaid (MA) to public ambulance service providers. The act provides for supplemental MA reimbursements for public ambulance services, which includes any ambulance service provider that any municipality or group of municipalities owns, regardless of whether or not the ambulance service provider is organized as a nonprofit corporation, by requiring that DHS seek federal approval of a state plan amendment that would allow supplemental MA reimbursement through certified public expenditures.

The Ground Emergency Medical Transportation Supplement (GEMTS) reimbursement program is a voluntary Certified Public Expenditure (CPE) based program that provides additional funding to eligible public entities that provide GEMT services to Wisconsin Medicaid beneficiaries. The GEMTS program will allow Wisconsin Medicaid participating public ambulance providers to elect to submit an annual cost report and receive additional payments.

I hope you find this monthly report informative. As always, if you have any further questions or would like additional information added to this report, please reach out to me.
Merry Christmas and Happy New Year!

Robert Barteck – Fire Chief

EMS Division by EMS Division Chief Jared Thompson

In the fall of 2023, the EMS Division looks forward to the delivery of two new ambulances. In late summer an ambulance committee was formed to start the beginning process of specing out a new ambulance box design. The committee consisted of the Deputy Chief, EMS Division Chief, three firefighter/paramedics, and DPW personnel.

The ambulance committee has decided to have American Emergency Vehicle (AEV) build our ambulances. They are located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of North Carolina. In late October, the EMS DC and one of the ambulance committee members were able to tour the AEV manufacturing plant and see their production lines.

One aspect of AEV that drew us to them was that they perform all their own crash test on the ambulances designs that they build. To ensure their structural strength, they test their ambulances at speeds 27% above federal guidelines.



Outreach Programs (Localizing Efforts to Address Falls (LEAF) Grant)

The EMS Division is assisting the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ARDC) of Marathon County with a grant that is designed to provide funding for education to help with falls. The ARDC promotes choice and independence through personalized education, advocacy, and access to services that prevent, delay, and lessen the impacts of aging and disabilities in the lives of adults. The ARDC is using the insight of the EMS division to see how their efforts could be used to the fullest if they receive the grant that they are applying for.

Responses by Municipality (EMS Patient Care Reports):

City	# of Runs	% of Runs	# of Runs – YTD
City of Abbotsford	2	0.38%	2
City of Merrill	0	0.00%	1
City of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
City of Schofield	1	0.19%	2
City of Wausau	500	95.42%	5,156
Clark County	0	0.00%	1
Other	0	0.00%	0
Town of Berlin	0	0.00%	24
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	1
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	2
Town of Cassel	0	0.00%	3
Town of Elderon	0	0.00%	1
Town of Emmet	0	0.00%	0

Town of Franzen	0	0.00%	1
Town of Hamburg	2	0.38%	6
Town of Halsey	0	0.00%	1
Town of Harrison	0	0.00%	1
Town of Hewitt	3	0.57%	21
Town of Johnson	0	0.00%	1
Town of Marathon	0	0.00%	2
Town of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
Town of Rib Falls	0	0.00%	4
Town of Rib Mountain	0	0.00%	6
Town of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	1
Town of Stettin	0	0.00%	1
Town of Texas	2	0.38%	57
Town of Wausau	7	1.34%	98
Town of Wien	0	0.00%	3
Village of Athens	0	0.00%	3
Village of Edgar	0	0.00%	1
Village of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	0
Village of Maine	7	1.34%	85
Village of Marathon City	0	0.00%	2
Village of Rothschild	0	0.00%	2
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village of Weston	0	0.00%	10
Wittenberg	0	0.00%	1
Wood County	0	0.00%	1
Total	524	100.00%	5,502

Fire Training Division by Training Division Chief David Briggs

November Scheduled Training: (not all photographed)

- Conducting a Post Incident Analysis
- LODD Case Study – Lieutenant Charles McCarthy and FF Jonathan Croom
- RDC Ice and Water Rescue
- Officer Drill – Succession Preparedness

A brief breakdown of our scheduled activities follows:

Conducting a Post Incident Analysis

After every major incident (fire, technical rescue, Haz-mat, etc) we review the call particulars and assess where improvements could be made. We discuss the dispatch information, response, arrival on scene, vehicle positioning, initial tactics, and other concepts to learn from what went well, what went less than ideal, and what was out of the norm. On one crew's scheduled day to perform a PIA or After-Action Review (AAR), a crew member mentioned how we had not had a major incident on this shift in a while for review. Within hours, the crew was called to a working fire in which we all responded and put in a great deal of work to mitigate the incident. The crew's performance was incredible as expected and they were able to save all belongings of the second-floor tenant.

The crew returned to quarters, cleaned, and repacked their equipment, and showered to be prepared for the next call. After a short break, we conducted a PIA/AAR on the coincidental major incident that had just occurred. While we never wish a fire on anyone, this particular one provided the crew with a fresh and unique incident in which to learn from. Each incident provides unique opportunities to learn from and mentor others.



Engine 1 in front of the structure fire



"A" crew members searching for hotspots

LODD Case Study – Lieutenant Charles McCarthy and FF Jonathan Croom

This case study of a firefighter’s death emphasizes the importance of knowing building construction, fire behavior, and crew integrity. During a fire, a building collapse occurred and trapped Lt. McCarthy in a basement. Initially, crews did not know where he was or how he got entrapped. Another firefighter, FF Croom, entered the building in an attempt to rescue Lt. McCarthy. While this effort was valiant, no one knew FF Croom had entered solo to perform a rescue. During the incident, crew integrity (staying with a partner) was compromised, the severity of the fire was misinterpreted, and communications faltered. Each of these issues have their own lessons to learn from and respect the fallen in the process.



Lieutenant McCarthy



FF Croom

RDC Ice and Water Rescue

Each year when the weather turns colder, we monitor ice conditions on the river, lakes, streams, and sloughs. November is usually a pretty good guess as to when ice forms and there is a combination of open water, and ice. This time of year is a prime opportunity for us to train on water, ice, and combination water techniques to perform rescues. It also just happens to be the time when eager ice fishermen or women find themselves in a bind most often. We have a multi-faceted approach to these ice/water conditions. We can assist in a self-

rescue, perform a GO rescue in which we enter the ice/water, or we utilize our Air Ranger to affect the rescue. In the following images, crews practiced assisted and GO rescues while staying on shore, approaching the victim with a dry suit on, or by approaching with our Rapid-Deployable-Craft. Each method has benefits and drawbacks. Some people question why the Air Ranger is not our go-to method. While it is very stable, the last thing we want to do in thin-ice conditions is break the iceshelf off that a victim is clinging to.



Performing GO Rescues



Preparing and deploying the RDC

Drill – Succession Preparedness

Every organization goes through changes and cycles. Our organization is becoming a very young one, as many other fire departments across the country. A key component to preparedness and effective response is knowing your job and what may be expected of you. However, what happens if your supervisor is gone? Who takes over? How do they (you) step up and fill a need? Answers to these questions start with offering certification courses through the Wisconsin Technical College System. However, certification can only teach general concepts, methods, and tactics. This drill formalized a very simple task to learn from and narrow in on Wausau specifics; talk to your next-in-line superior and find out more about their job and how you could do it if the need arose. For our firefighters, this meant talking to a senior firefighter or even an engineer and learn what they do daily. For our engineers, this mean talking to a Lieutenant and learning some of the administrative and operational tasks they perform, and so on, and so forth. While the drill was not all-encompassing, it opened a door and created a communication channel for each level in the organization to learn about the roles and responsibilities of others. Generally speaking, a greater understanding, a new perspective, and a renewed respect for other positions followed.



Firefighters learned pump operations from their senior members in preparation for a state certification.

Driver Operator – Pumper

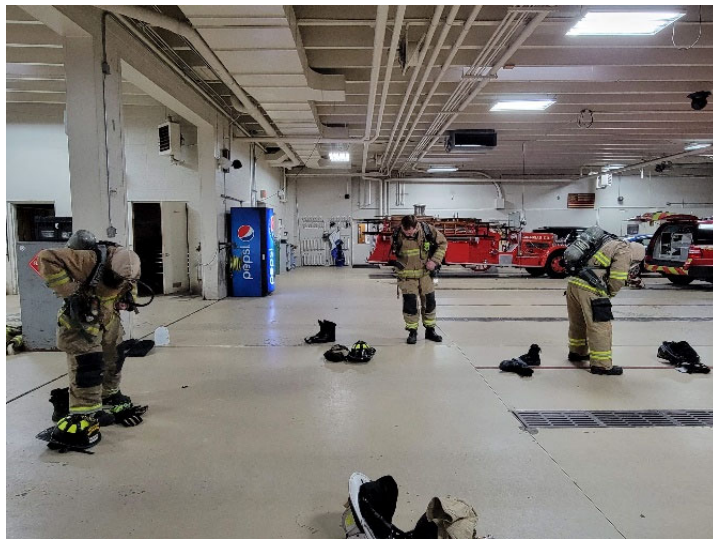
In November, four members completed a certification course on how to drive and operate pumping fire apparatus safely and effectively. This 66-hour course through NTC prepared our members to take the state certification exam on December 3rd. Following certification, these firefighters will be allowed to continue to learn the position while acting in it if the need arises due to staffing changes.



Operating a pump requires coordination, and a willing participant to staff hoselines

Welcome new Firefighters!

Three new members started their fire service career on November 28th. While I would like to share their names, I am going to refrain until they are sworn in. These new members come to us with varying backgrounds and experience. In their first week, we covered onboarding with HR, leading from every level, fire behavior, building construction, radio communications, personal protective equipment, firefighter survival, ground ladders, and search & rescue. The remainder of the week concluded with EMS education from one of the best EMS Chiefs in the state.



Our new hires getting comfortable in the PPE

Wisconsin State Committees (WFD is represented on)

Technical Rescue Committee

The technical rescue committee members met to continue collaborative efforts to bring a state certification in Wisconsin to fruition. A gameplan was established with clear goals and objectives with the end result being curriculum accreditation in June of 2023. Throughout November, members were in contact with each other to keep the ball rolling. Each of the three members took a single specialty discipline to work on while keeping each other in the loop. Our Training Division Chief is working on the Rope Rescue curriculum. Rope Rescue is considered a foundational course for all other technical rescue disciplines. The committee meets next on December 7th.

Type of Training	# of Hours	% of Hours	# of Hours -YTD
Company Training	397.25	40.15%	6,938.62
Driver/Operator Training	300	30.32%	925.25
Facilities Training	19	1.92%	132.25
Hazardous Materials Training	2.5	0.25%	661
Misc Training	25.5	2.58%	79.83
Officer Training	88.5	8.94%	932.80
Specialty Training	156.75	15.84	1,409.75
Total	989.5	100.00%	11,079.50

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	3	2.51%	100.75
EMS Training	94	78.66%	2,164.90
Fire Instructor Training	22.5	18.83%	531.50
Fire Prevention Training	0	0.00%	0
Investigation Training	0	0.00%	115
Total	119.50	100.00%	2,912.15

Fire Prevention Division by Fire Marshal Brian Stahl

Inspections: Within the City of Wausau for the month of November, we performed 486 total inspections. Of those, 47 were re-inspections. We had 51 properties that had Fire Code Violations with 50% being Fire Extinguisher Annual Maintenance. These properties will require follow up inspections to confirm compliance. We conducted 4 consultation inspections for the month of that were either remodel projects or new construction, including- Knox box installation, fire protection and fire alarm systems.

Investigations: The Prevention Division performed 1 fire investigation for the month of November. This property was located at 1040 S 12th Ave. The result of this investigation was declared accidental. Thankfully we had no recreational fire complaints for the month of October.

Public Outreach: The Prevention Division did witness 3 separate fire drills at schools with recommendations made as needed to ensure an effective and efficient exit. The schools practice fire drills once a month and the fire department is required to witness a drill at least once per year. We also performed 2 smoke and CO detector installations for 2 separate residences within the City of Wausau. These installs are performed in conjunction with a Fire Safety presentation of common hazards found within the home.

Education: At this time Lieutenant Shahn Kariger is scheduled to attend the “Fire Investigation Case Preparation and Testimony” class provided by the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg Maryland. This class is required as a requisite for Lt. Kariger to obtain his International Arson of Association Investigators (IAAI) Certified Fire Investigator (CFI) certification. Lt. Kariger will become the first member ever to hold this level of certification within the Wausau Fire Department’s history.



Prevention Division Activities:

Inspections Completed	Monthly	Year to Date
Routine Fire Inspections	435	2,853
Re-inspections	47	311
All other Inspections (Consults/burn complaints,etc)	4	47
Total Inspections	486	3,211
Fire Investigations	1	8
Inspection Department Activities	Number	YTD
Public Engagement Activities	23	131

Fire Operations Division by Deputy Chief Jeremy Kopp

Significant call:

Wausau Fire responded to seven significant calls in November. Two mutual aid fires to the City of Merrill, one for command and one with the Truck 1. Response to two grass fires, one on the side of the highway which was 20 feet by 30 feet in size and the other was extinguished before our arrival. One commercial building fire that was caused by burning rags and was extinguished by workers; Wausau Fire assisted in making sure fire was out and removing smoke from the structure. One residential fire in which the drapes were on fire and the tenant extinguished with water, Wausau Fire assisted with clearing the building of smoke. One residential fire with heavy fire showing from the 1st floor and all hands-on deck to put fire out. Six medical calls and one fire call were handled by neighboring departments throughout the duration of this incident.

Recruitment and Retention:

Three new Firefighter/Paramedics started the academy November 28th and after three weeks will move to their newly assigned crews. The swearing in ceremony will be on December 16th at station 2. Two Firefighter/EMT's were brought to the November Police and Fire Commission and were approved and will start February 6th and be part of the in-house Paramedic program. The November interviews had many applicants but only 10 were offered the opportunity to move on. Another application process has been posted and closes early December with interviews to start on December 12th.

We made an appearance at two job fairs this month, one at the Chippewa Valley Tech School as well as Wausau West High School. These recruitment efforts along with one-on-one tours at the station have proven to be very valuable in the recruitment process as well as getting young firefighters pointed in the right direction in obtaining certifications.

Fleet:

Med 2 has been giving us some issues with the airbags and check engine light. DPW had done some work on it and has now sent it to Brickners. E-1 has suffered a good size scratch due to a sharp turn and catching a street sign. New rail slides for the outriggers were ordered by Sutphen to take care of the alarm problems we have had with Ladder 2. The new pickup truck (Battalion 1) is scheduled to get upfitted in December.

Buildings and Grounds:

If you drive past station 1 on Thomas Street, you will see a new look! The windows have been tinted and has made a great difference in the offices and the kitchen at the station. The heating and cooling system does seem to be running a little bit more efficient with the sun not heating up the offices so much and causing the AC to turn on when it is cold outside.

We are still moving forward with updates to Station 3 apparatus bay.

Overtime and Scheduling:

Some members who were off on FMLA are starting to make their way back to work after additions to their families and with the new hires overtime seems to be on the downswing compared to months prior. One member remains on light duty with knee injury expected to return at the end of December.

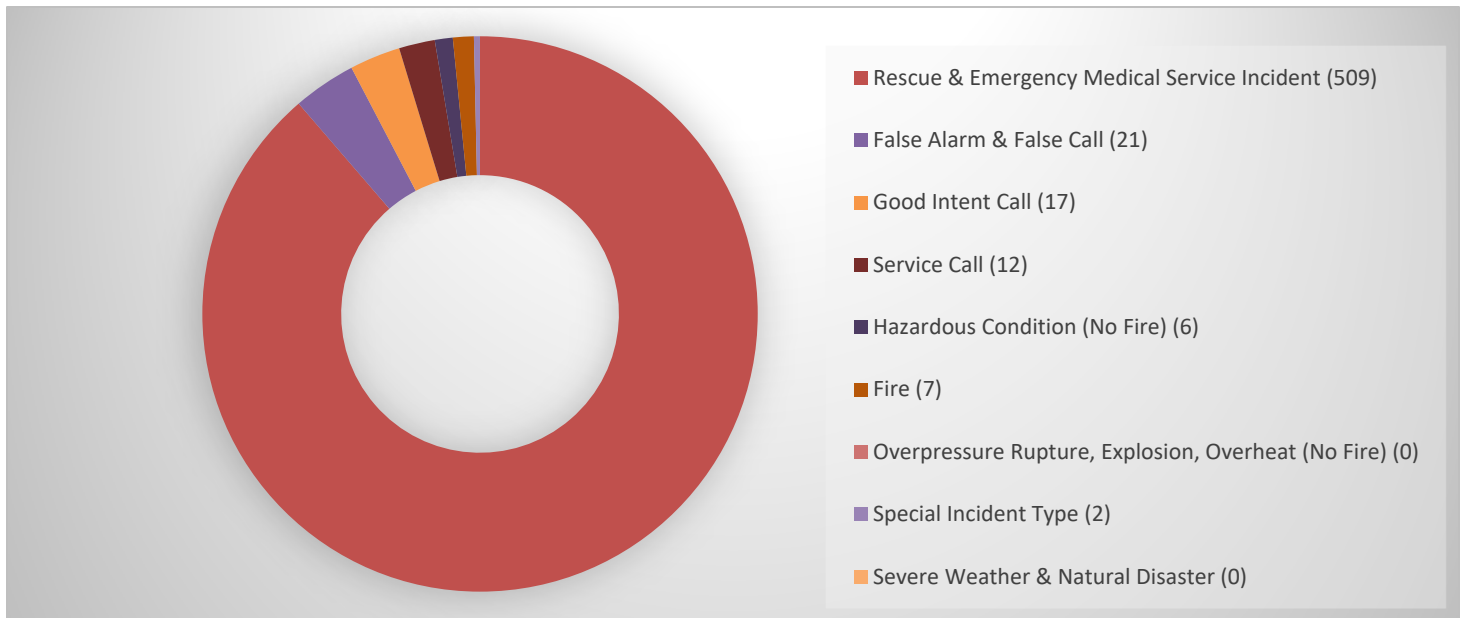
Significant Fire Events:

Date	Address	City	Incident #	Type
11/3/2022	707 Jackson Street	City of Wausau	F22001904	Natural vegetation fire, other
11/4/2022	721 Scott Street	City of Wausau	F22001917	Trash or rubbish fire, contained
11/7/2022	2705 Sherman Street	City of Wausau	F22001932	Grass fire
11/7/2022	906 Country Club Road	City of Schofield	F22001937	Building fire
11/12/2022	707 North 3rd Street	City of Wausau	F22001969	Fire, other
11/18/2022	1040 South 12th Avenue	City of Wausau	F22002017	Building fire
11/24/2022	W5935 Church Avenue	Merrill	F22002052	Building fire

Monthly NFIRS Incident Comparison**:

	2022	2021	% of Change from 2021 to 2022
January	591	502	17.73%
February	507	456	11.18%
March	540	497	8.65%
April	498	503	-0.99%
May	574	556	3.24%
June	590	583	1.20%
July	531	587	-9.54%
August	600	577	3.99%
September	524	525	-0.19%
October	545	552	-1.27%
November	574	562	2.14%
December		590	
TOTAL	5538	6490	

**New data as requested by PFC Commission



Responses by Municipality (All NFIRS Reports):

City	# of Runs	% of Runs	# of Runs - YTD
City of Abbotsford	2	0.35%	2
City of Colby	1	0.17%	1
City of Merrill	2	0.35%	5
City Of Mosinee	0	0.00%	1
City Of Schofield	2	0.35%	6
City Of Wausau	546	95.12%	5,808
Clark County	0	0.00%	1
Taylor County	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Berlin	0	0.00%	23
Town of Bern	0	0.00%	2
Town of Bevent	0	0.00%	1

Town Of Cassel	0	0.00%	3
Town Of Elderon	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Emmet	0	0.00%	0
Town of Franzen	0	0.00%	1
Town of Halsey	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Hamburg	2	0.35%	6
Town of Harrison	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Hewitt	3	0.52%	21
Town of Johnson	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Marathon	0	0.00%	2
Town Of Mosinee	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Rib Falls	0	0.00%	4
Town Of Rib Mountain	0	0.00%	9
Town Of Rietbrock	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Stettin	0	0.00%	1
Town Of Texas	2	0.35%	56
Town Of Wausau	7	1.22%	97
Town Of Weston	0	0.00%	0
Town Of Wien	0	0.00%	3
Village Of Athens	0	0.00%	4
Village Of Brokaw	0	0.00%	8
Village Of Edgar	0	0.00%	1
Village Of Kronenwetter	0	0.00%	0
Village Of Maine	7	1.22%	80
Village Of Marathon City	0	0.00%	2
Village Of Rothschild	0	0.00%	2
Village of Stratford	0	0.00%	1
Village Of Weston	0	0.00%	11
Wittenberg	0	0.00%	1
Wood County	0	0.00%	1
Total	574	100.00%	6,169

Activity/Incident Hours Committed:

Category	Time Committed
NFIRS Incidents	141:44:34 Hours
EMS Incidents	858:21:37 Hours
Non-Incident Activities (Station Maintenance, Vehicle Check-off/Fire Pre-plan, Hazmat Outreach, Administration duties, Public Education, Committee and Staff Meetings)	1,120.75 Hours
Training (including Wellness)	1,109.00 Hours

Aid Responses:

Type of Aid	# of Runs
Mutual Aid Given – EMS	4
Mutual Aid Given – Fire	3
Automatic Aid Given – EMS	11
Automatic Aid Given – Fire	0

Mutual Aid Received – EMS	0
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 to the City of Wausau (not Aid)	7
Request for Fire from Other Agencies to the City of Wausau (not Aid)	1
Total Non-Aid Incidents (outside City with no other agency response)	10