

TILTON-NORTHFIELD FIRE & EMS

2021 Fire Chief's Report

In 2021, I thought COVID would become less relevant. I was wrong. The virus was very prevalent in the first few months of 2021 but eased as the warmer months arrived. Venues opened up, and things moved towards what we used to consider normal. Vaccines were available and later boosters as well. Then the fall arrived, and as the weather got cooler, cases began to rise again. We also had the arrival of the Omicron variant. Most ambulance calls seemed to be COVID-related. Statistics from the State related that nearly 70% of patients hospitalized with COVID were unvaccinated. All employees of the Fire District have been vaccinated and have received or are in the process of getting their booster shots.

The year 2021 ushered in some significant changes for TNFD. The first is that we hired four additional Firefighter/EMTs through the SAFER Grant program. We placed one on each of our four shifts bringing the on-duty complement to four people 24/7. The effects of having four people on duty are dramatic, especially in response times for simultaneous calls. With three people on duty, the response time for a simultaneous call averaged over 22 minutes. With four people on duty, the average response time for these calls is less than 8 minutes. That is an improvement of 275%. In addition, the new staffing model allows us to man two ambulances at the same time.

The second change was placing the new Engine 2 in service on Christmas day. The engine was manufactured by Sutphen. It carries 1000 gallons of water and can pump 1750 gallons per minute. The engine was designed by a committee of career and call firefighters. This engine replaces a 2001 engine. A third change was implementing a new records management system from Image Trend. The old records management system called Fire House is being discontinued.

TNFD responded to 2014 incidents in 2021. Emergency Medical Service calls amounted to 1340, which was 67% of our total call volume.

The annual District Meeting approved the purchase of surplus property from the State adjacent to the Park Street Fire Station property and the southbound on-ramp at Exit 19. The purchase price was \$5,000. District meeting also voted to purchase a new ambulance for \$285,000 and another new engine for \$720,000. The ambulance should arrive in the early spring of 2022. It will replace Ambulance 2. The new engine will arrive in the late summer of 2022 and will replace Engine 3.

Another Building Committee was formed in 2021. This committee will propose a fire station project using the Design-Build method. In addition, they are currently looking at the Park Street property for improvement. It is anticipated that this proposal will come before the 2023 Annual District Meeting.

A building permit for a communications tower located in the back corner of the Park Street property was issued in 2021. The plan is to construct a 185-foot-tall tower there. Wireless Edge and the Fire District's lease agreement requires that Wireless Edge provide antenna space at the top of the tower for the Fire District and any Tilton or Northfield municipal radio equipment free of charge. Wireless Edge is also to provide an equipment shelter with an emergency backup generator to the Fire District. It is expected that construction will begin in early 2022. The first tenant on the tower will be AT&T/FirstNet. Once the tenant is up and running, TNFD will start to receive monthly rent. The rent will increase with the addition of more tenants like Verizon or T Mobile, for example. Fifty percent of the rent received goes towards reducing the operating budget in the following year. The remaining fifty percent is placed into a special revenue fund with the Fire Commissioners as agents to that fund.

The Dennis Manning Training Facility, behind the Park Street Station, saw many additions and improvements in 2021. TNFD and other area departments use this facility to practice hose advancement,

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search and rescue, ladder placement, firefighter rescue, and combined operations. It is also the area where we practice vehicle extrication. This facility, along with the additions and improvements were made possible mainly through donations to TNFD.

I want to thank the community and community organizations who have helped the Department throughout the year. I also want to thank all the career and call employees who have provided excellent service to our District. The services provided within our District could not happen without our employees' dedicated and professional work.

Finally, I want to let everyone know that if there is ever a question or comment about the Department, or if you would like a tour of our facilities, my door is always open. Please get in touch with me so that we can discuss your concerns. Our goal is to provide a professional service with customer satisfaction and safety held in the highest regard.

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Fire Chief
Tilton-Northfield Fire & EMS