



FIRE DEPARTMENT

2024 Annual Report



January 1, 2024-December 31, 2024

Fire Station #1
535 DeKalb Avenue
Sycamore, IL 60178
815-895-4514



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Fire Chief's Message



On behalf of the men and women of the Sycamore Fire Department, I am pleased to present to our community leaders and citizens the Sycamore Fire Department's FY 2024 Annual Report. This report should provide the reader with a strong sense of the activities of the Sycamore Fire Department (SFD) over the past fiscal year.

In FY 2024, SFD responded to 2,996 requests for emergency services, 84% of which were for Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and 3% for fire-related emergencies. The department experiences an average year-over-year call volume increase of 4%. Following this trend, our estimated call volume for FY 2025 will be more than 3,100 responses. This increased demand strains our ability to respond, as half of calls overlap each day. Consequently, we are heavily reliant on recalls of off-duty personnel to meet this growing demand.

FY 2024 saw the completion of the design phase of the project to replace Station #1 with a new station at the corner of South Prairie Drive and Borden Avenue. The new station will be approximately 20,000 square feet with four apparatus bays and room for future growth in the city. The station is also situated to better serve the citizens of Sycamore. Other important items include:



- Joining the Project Fire Buddies organization;
- Purchasing two new cardiac monitors and replacing 12 automatic external defibrillators (AEDs);
- Increasing the number of apprentices to six to develop future SFD firefighters;
- Purchasing battery-operated chain saws and ventilation fans;
- Purchasing a forcible entry training prop;
- Purchasing two battery-powered stair chairs to ease patient movement and reduce firefighter injuries;
- Participating in the ceremony to place Firefighter Brad Belanger's name on the National Fallen Firefighters Memorial in Colorado Springs, Colorado

None of these things could have been accomplished without the efforts of our firefighters providing excellent service to the citizens of Sycamore throughout the year. During the year, our personnel are involved with not just the Project Fire Buddies Organization, but also in many other charitable activities such as volleyball tournaments, basketball games, coaching the annual Powder Puff game for Homecoming, and food donations to needy people. It is through their dedicated service that we are able to provide efficient and effective responses to those in need, not just in Sycamore, but throughout DeKalb County.

This report would not have been possible without all of the valuable assistance provided by Fire Department Office Manager Natalie Nelson and photographs provided by Firefighter Ian Wheeler.

On behalf of all of us at the Sycamore Fire Department, we appreciate the support and confidence of our community leaders and the community members we serve, as we strive to provide the best emergency responses possible.

Guiding Principles

Mission Statement

To selflessly serve our community with the highest quality professional fire and emergency medical service.

Our Values

Preparedness

Our members strive to be best prepared through physical fitness, continued training, and equipment readiness in order to operate in the safest way possible.

Dedication

Our members take great pride and honor providing a loyal service to the community, while respecting the traditions of our profession.

Honesty/Integrity

Our members perform their duties honestly and ethically striving to maintain the trust given to us by the community.

Teamwork

Our members work together to achieve a common goal through mutual trust, respect, and loyalty.

Selflessness

Our members are bravely willing to sacrifice our needs to serve the needs of the community in the course of performing our duties.

Department Overview

The first fire company of the Sycamore Fire Department was officially organized in 1860, just a year after the Town of Sycamore was incorporated in 1859. The Sycamore Town Board approved a \$250 expenditure in May 1860, to buy ladders, hooks, chains, axes, ropes, and buckets necessary to complete the organization of a Hook and Ladder Company. In March 1871, a Special Council Meeting was held to buy land (16' x 62') for \$200 to build a brick firehouse with a \$200 bond sold to fund the building. Later, an appropriation was approved for \$1,500 to fund the firehouse, carriage, ladders, hoses, and rubber buckets for the Hook and Ladder Company.



Today, City of Sycamore Fire Department provides Fire Suppression, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, Hazardous Materials First Responder, Fire Prevention, and Public Education services to just over 21,000 citizens.

Our service area includes the City of Sycamore (population 18,577) and the Sycamore Fire Protection District (approx. population 2,500). In total, we service 62.5 square miles, including 9.74 square miles within the corporate boundaries of the City of Sycamore.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) 2023 rating for the City of Sycamore is a Class 4 and the ISO rating for the Sycamore Fire Protection District (unincorporated area outside the city) is a Class 4Y.



Year in Review

2024 ANNUAL REQUESTS FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES 2,996

Emergency Medical Responses: 2,503 (84%)

Patient dispositions

- Transports 1,755 (68%)
 - Basic Life Support 553 (32%)
 - Advanced Life Support 1,202 (68%)
- Non-transport (patient refusals) 899 (34%)
 - Patient received care 310 (23%)
 - Patient refused care or no contact patient 589 (66%)
- **Motor Vehicle Accidents** 169
 - Extrications 1

Total Fire Suppression Responses 77 (3%)

- Buildings & Other Structures 25
- Brush/Grass 18
- Outside/Other 12
- Vehicles 11
- Cooking (contained) 8
- Rubbish (contained) 2
- Chimney/Flue 1

Non-fire Responses 415 (14%)

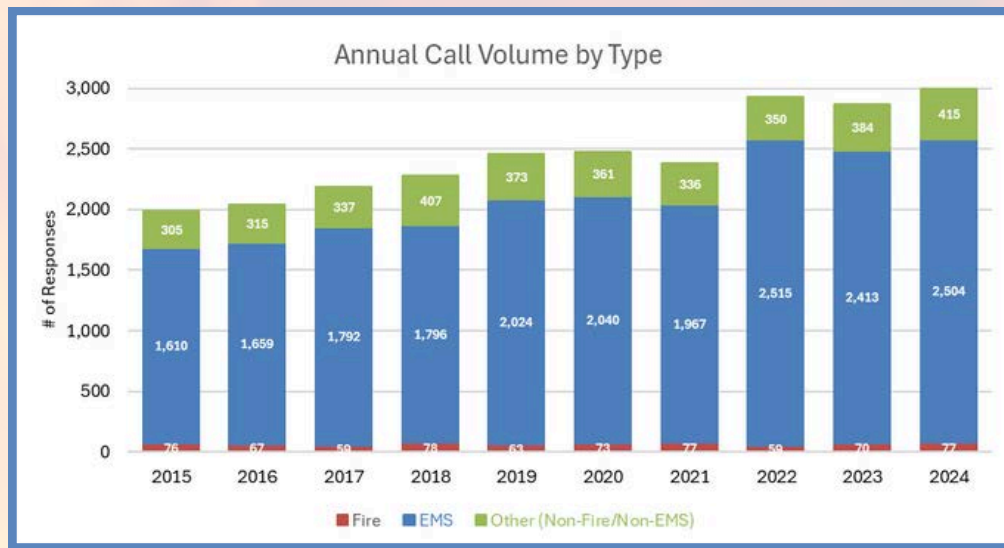
- False / Malicious Alarms 200
- Good Intent 95
- Hazardous Conditions 67
- Service Calls 51
- Burning Complaints 1

Mutual/Auto Aid Incidents 166

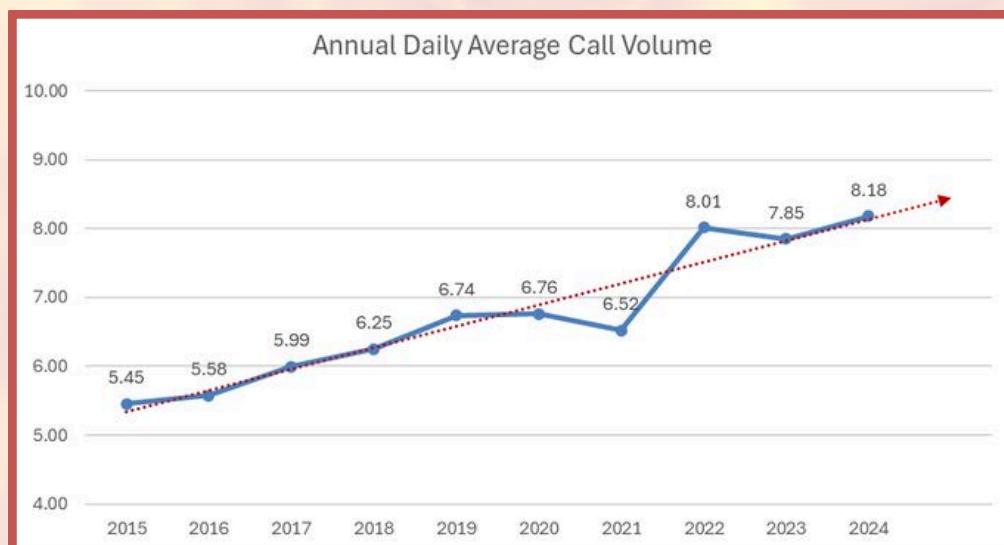
- Given 97 (58%)
- Received 69 (42%)

Call Volume

Total annual call volume **increased 4.5%** in 2024, as compared to 2023, reaching its highest level of just under 3,000 calls. As in past years, more than four out of five calls is categorized as EMS-related.



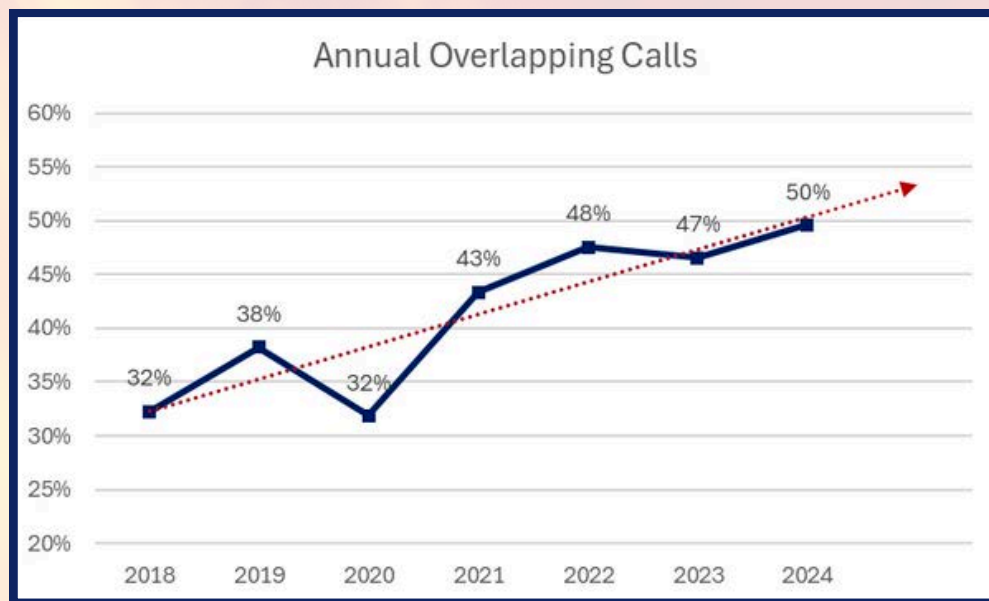
In 2024, the average daily call volume continued its upward trend. Over the past decade, the average daily call volume increased by nearly 50%, from six calls per day in 2015 to nine calls per day in 2024. Average daily call volume calculations round all decimals, as every call is counted as a whole number.



Call Volume

Simultaneous & Consecutive Calls

In the past, overlapping calls were identified as instances of fewer than 30 minutes between the end of one call and the beginning of the next call. However, this method omits when more than two calls are simultaneous or consecutive. This year, using industry-standard calculation tools built into our Record Management System (RMS), more accurate data analysis was possible. Prior years' overlapping calls were recalculated, starting in January 2018, the earliest date available.



These recalculations revealed a significant increase in the frequency of overlapping calls. In 2018, the ratio of overlapping calls to single calls was nearly 1:3. Just seven years later, the ratio is 1:2. In other words, **half of all calls dispatched today begin while at least one prior call is still in progress.**

The second call dispatched often leaves both fire stations empty and triggers a "Recall," requesting available off-duty members report for overtime duty. Since responding to a Recall is not mandatory, it is not unusual for fewer than two members--the minimum needed to operate most apparatus--to report for overtime duty.

When Recall personnel is insufficient to respond to incoming emergency calls, Mutual Aid from other agencies may be dispatched to assist.

Highest Call Volume: 19 Calls

January 22

Lowest Call Volume = 1 Call

February 3 & 23

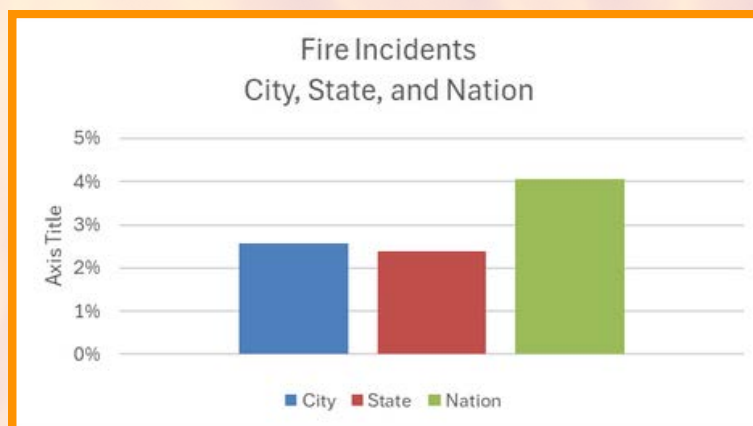
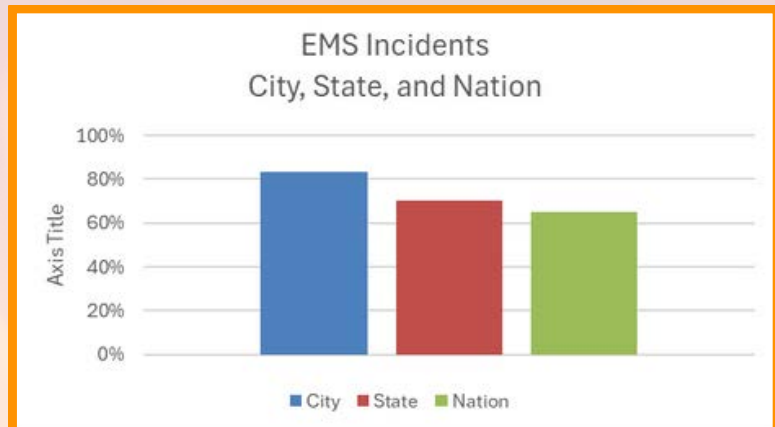
March 3

April 23

Call Volume

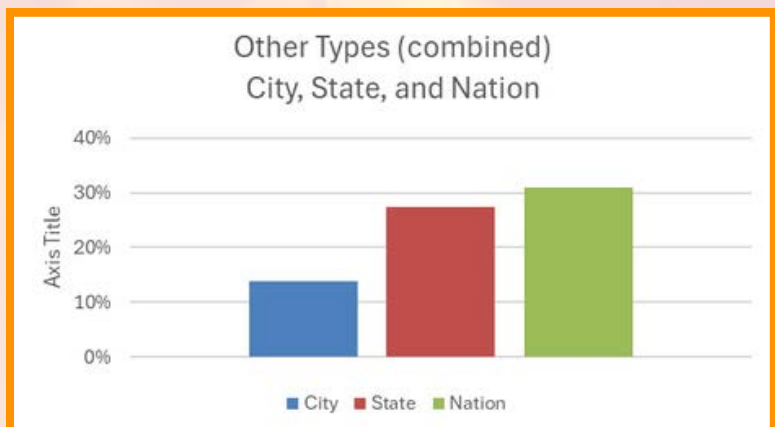
City, State & National Comparisons

Sycamore Fire Department's EMS incident call volume (84%) is significantly higher than the EMS incident call volume in the State of Illinois (70%) and the United States* (65%).



The City's Fire incident call volume (2.6%) is nearly the same compared to Illinois (2.4%) but lower than the U.S.* (4.1%)

The call volume of other incident types—including false alarms, hazards, good intent, and service calls—were comparatively lower in Sycamore than in the state and nation*.



*U.S. figures reflect calendar year 2023, the most recent complete data set available.

(https://data.fema.gov/views/NFIRSIncidentsReport/TableCounts?embed_code_version=3&embed=y&isGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&loadOrderID=0&:display_spinner=no&:display_count=n&:showVizHome=n&:origin=viz_share_link)

Call Volume

Mutual Aid & Automatic Aid

Mutual Aid

Sycamore Fire Department is a member of Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) Division 6, which coordinates the effective and efficient provision of mutual aid during emergencies, natural disasters, or man-made catastrophes. If department resources are exhausted while responding to emergencies, other MABAS members may be called upon to respond with additional personnel, apparatus, equipment, and other needed resources.

- **Mutual Aid was received for 57 incidents** within the Sycamore Fire Protection District. The call types included EMS, excluding motor vehicle accidents (60%); Motor Vehicle Accidents (25%); and Fires (7%).
- **Mutual Aid was given for 75 incidents** to other MABAS members. The call types included EMS, excluding motor vehicle accidents (35%); Fires (24%); and Motor Vehicle Accidents (19%).

Automatic Aid

Automatic Aid is rendered when incidents occur near boundaries shared with other agencies, including DeKalb, Cortland, Genoa-Kingston, Hampshire, Maple Park, and Malta.

- Automatic Aid was **received** during **12 incidents**, 83% of which were Motor Vehicle accidents.
- Automatic Aid was **given** during **22 incidents**, of which 50% were Canceled Enroute
- The Incident Type for most of Automatic Aid incidents is Motor Vehicle Accident.

Busiest Times

Month

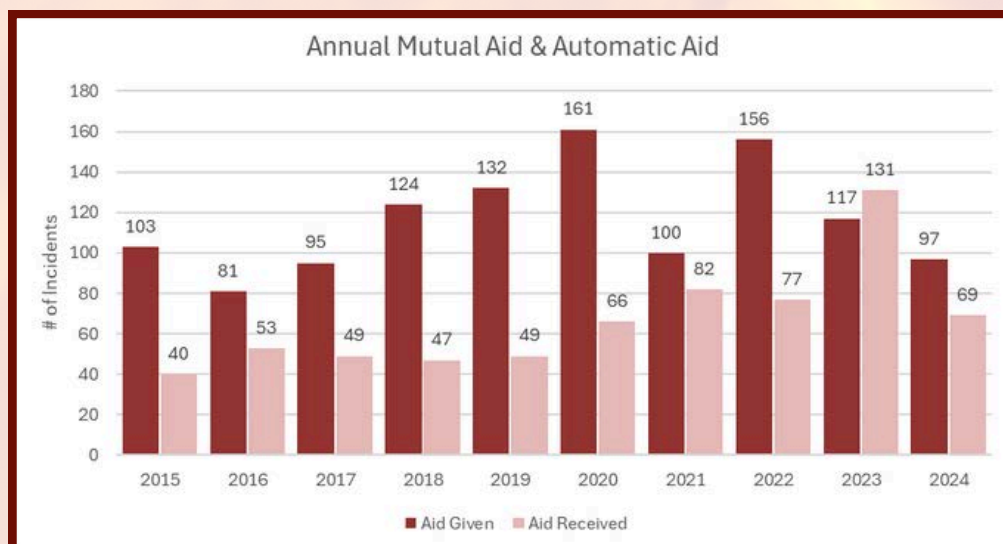
December

Day of the Week

Mondays

Hour of the Day

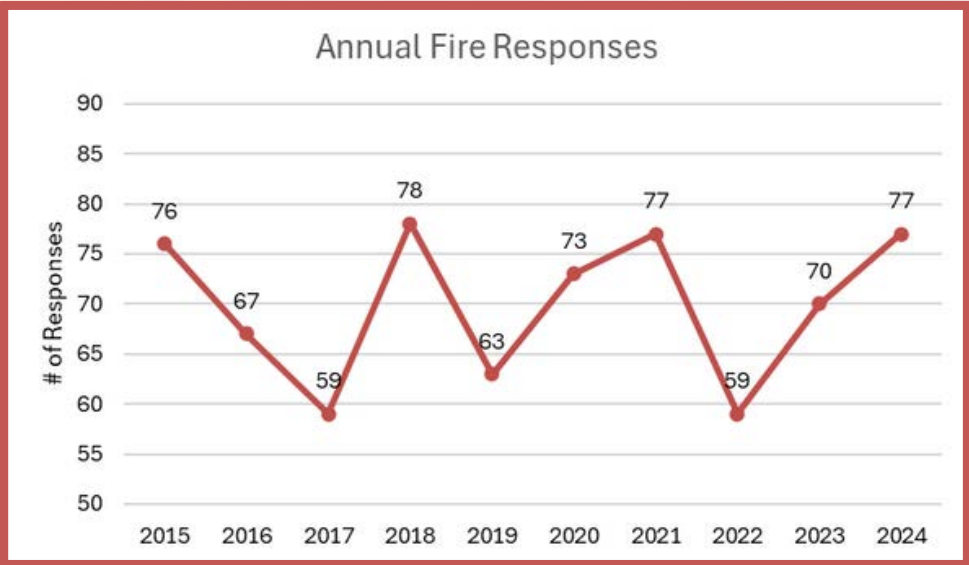
11AM-Noon



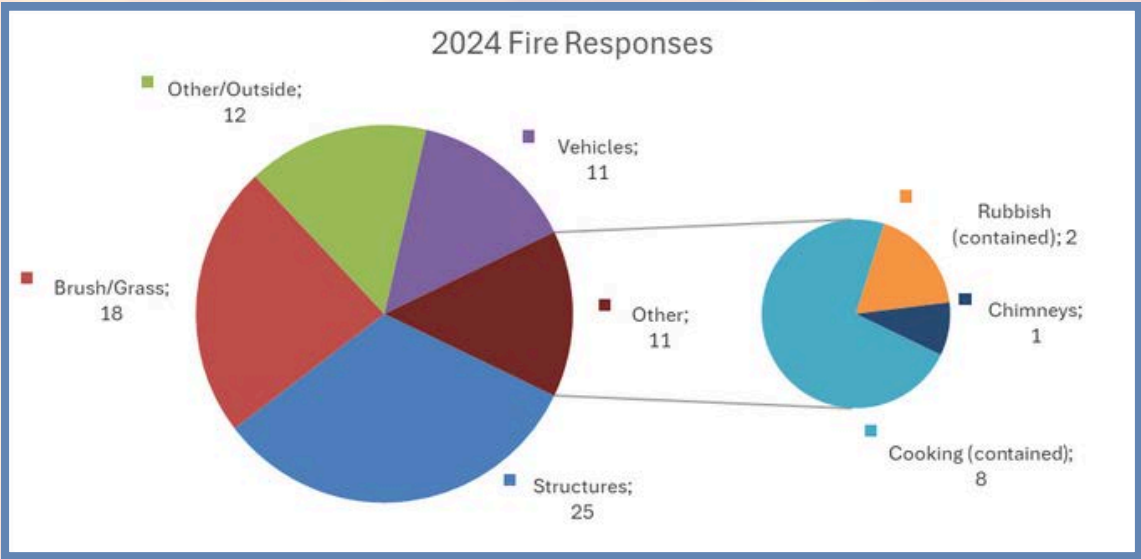
Fire Incidents

Fire Call Volume

Fire-related incident responses continued to remain steady over the past decade, averaging 71 fires per year.



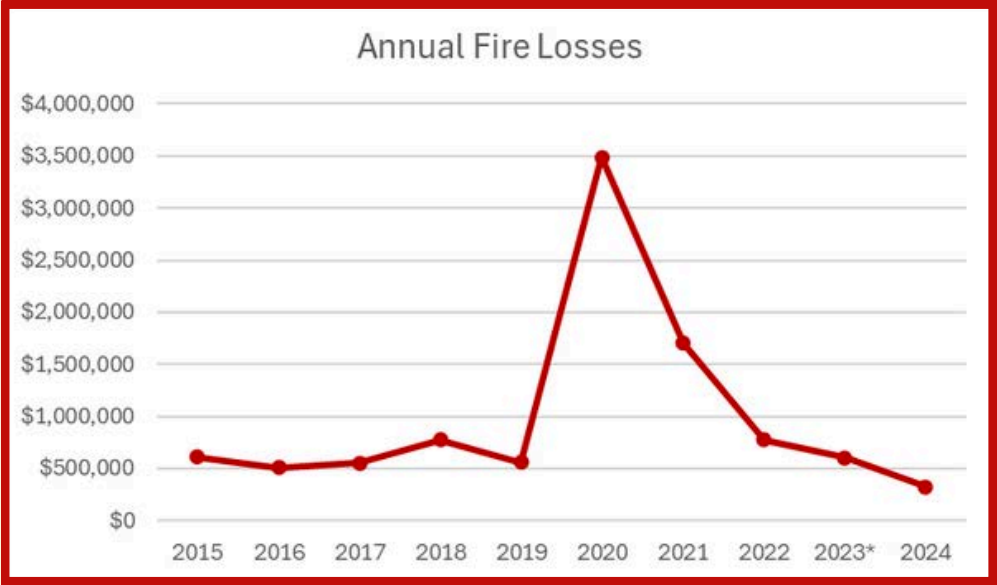
In 2024, the total number of fire-related responses increased to 77, of which 58 were within the Sycamore Fire Protection District. The total number of structure fires decreased to 25, a year-over-year decrease of 31% and the lowest in more than a decade.



Fire Incidents

Fire Losses

In 2024, the fire department responded to 58 fires within the Sycamore Fire Protection District. Total estimated fire loss, property and contents combined, was estimated at \$323,150. This continues the downward trend of decreasing fire losses and marks the lowest losses in the past decade.



Notable Fire Incidents



June 30th at 8:58 A.M.
1900 Block of DeKalb Avenue
Run #2024055433

Sycamore Fire Department responded to a fire in a dryer at a hotel/motel, causing the structure to fill with smoke. Crews assisted in evacuating the guests and employees quickly and extinguished the fire, containing it to the dryer and the area surrounding in an enclosed room. No major injuries were reported. Estimated damages to the building were \$30,000.00, and contents were \$15,000.00. Mutual Aid was provided by emergency crews from DeKalb, Genoa-Kingston, Hampshire, and Elburn.



October 5th at 12:57 P.M
23000 Block of Lovell Road
Run# 2024086716

Sycamore Fire was dispatched for a combine on fire in a field. The rural location had no hydrants. Engine crews used a Mercury Monitor for a direct attack on the active fire in the combine. Brush Truck 2 sprayed burning stubble to contain the fire. Maple Park Fire Protection District provided Mutual Aid by supplying a tender for water.

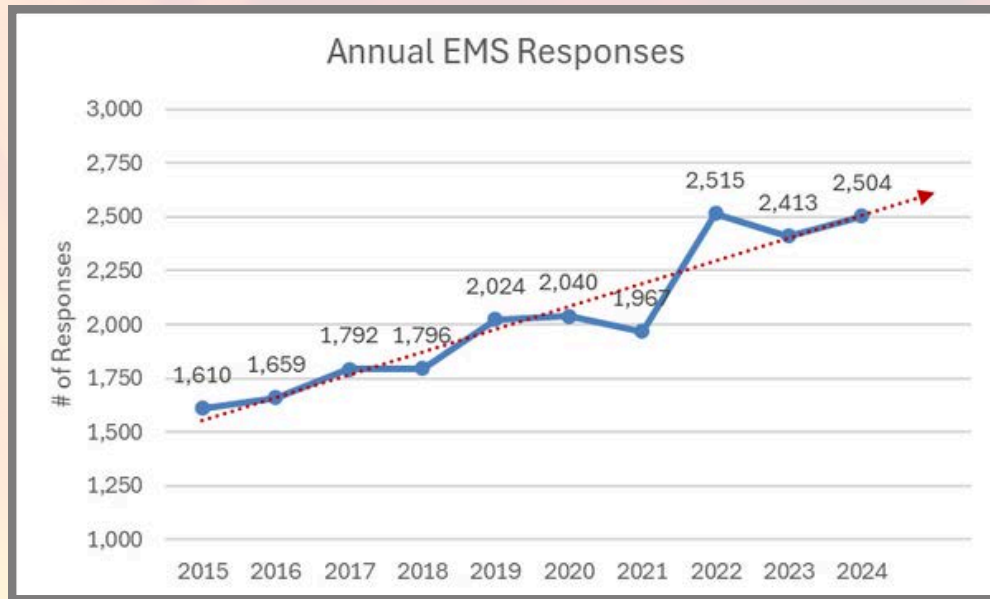


December 16th at 8:34 A.M.
900-Block of Crosby Avenue
Run# 2024109522

Sycamore Fire was dispatched for an explosion with active fire and injuries in an enclosed area of a manufacturing building. Upon arrival crews initiated an aggressive interior fire attack and had the fire under control in less than 30 minutes. Due to hazardous materials within the building, crew members were decontaminated. Injured patients were transported to NW Medicine-Kishwaukee Hospital. Estimated building damages were under \$20,000.00, and contents damages, \$20,000.00.

Emergency Medical Service

EMS incident responses continue to increase year over year. The vast majority (82%) of EMS patients were seen once during 2024. The remaining 18% of EMS patients were seen at least twice, of which a small number (11) were seen ten or more times in 2024.



Top Patient Complaints

Sick Person: 639
Falls: 368
Breathing Problem: 286
Traffic Accident: 267
Assist Invalid: 122

Patient Ages

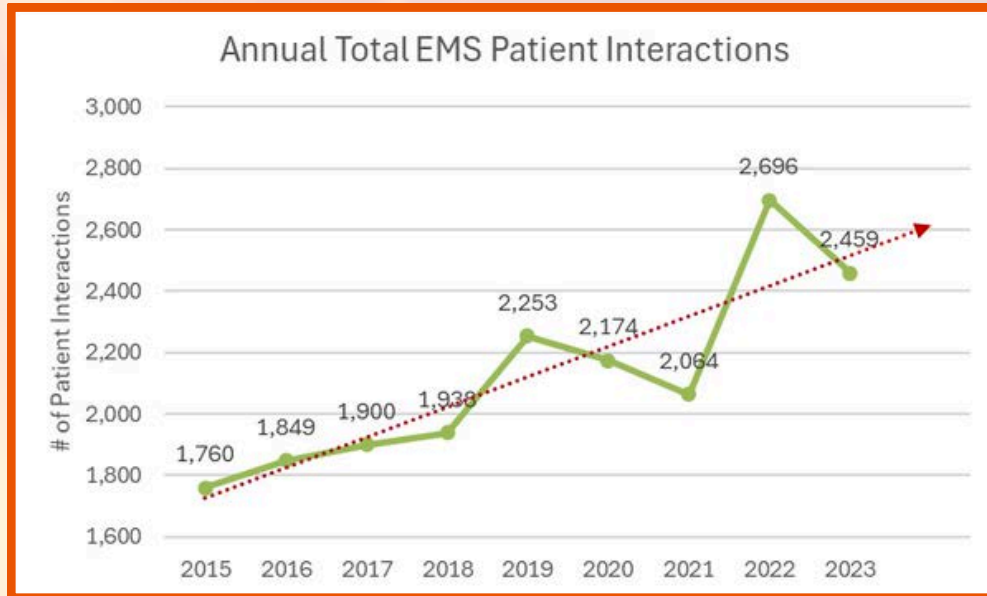
Average: 60.1 years
Youngest: ≤ 1 day
Oldest: > 100 years



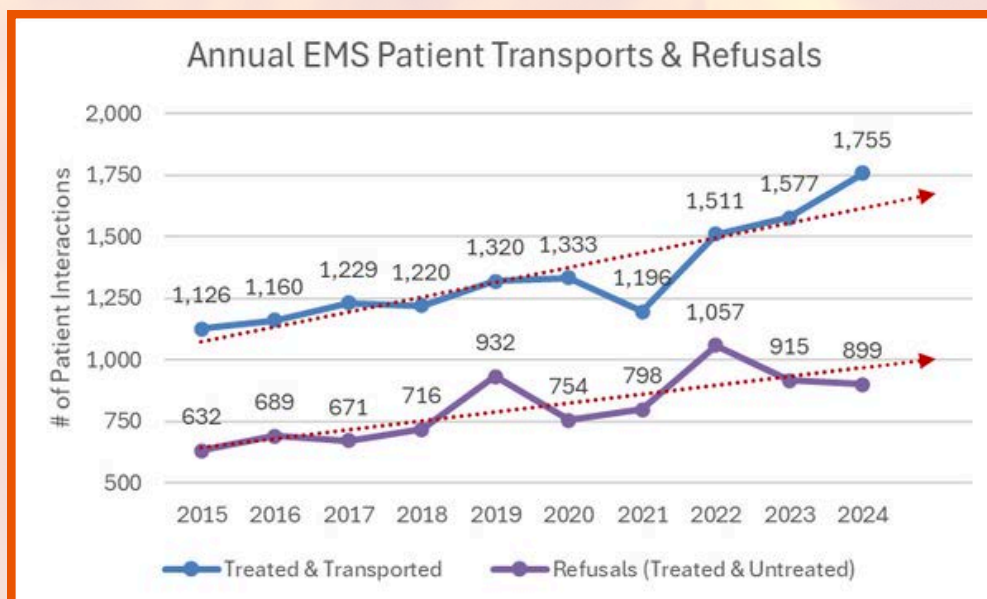
Emergency Medical Service

Patient Interactions & Dispositions

In 2024, the number of unique patients seen by Sycamore paramedics increased by approximately 8%, continuing the upward trend. Most EMS calls involve a single patient, but multi-vehicle accidents, carbon monoxide detector activation, and other large-scale incidents may involve in multiple patients.

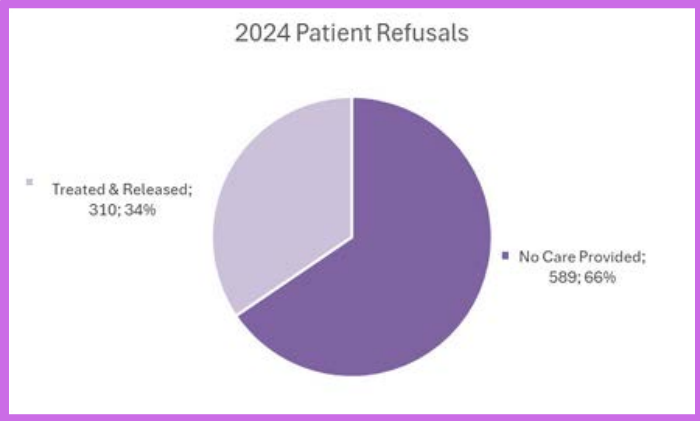


Whether a patient is transported to the hospital depends upon many factors, including the nature of the patient's illness or injury, paramedics' evaluation, on-scene treatment provided, and a patient's preference. In 2024, just over 66% of all EMS responses result a patient or patients transported to the hospital.



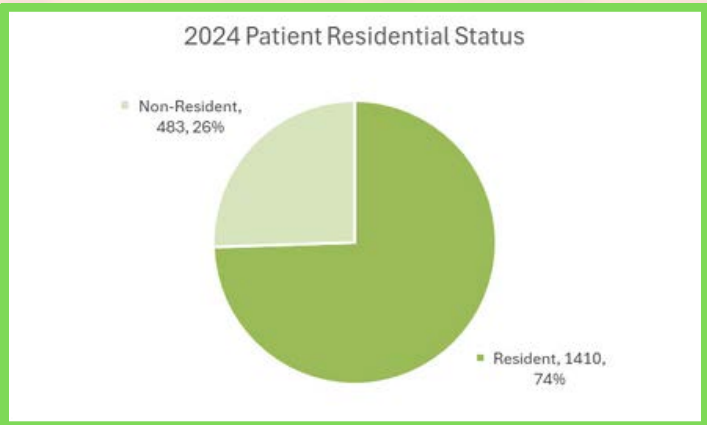
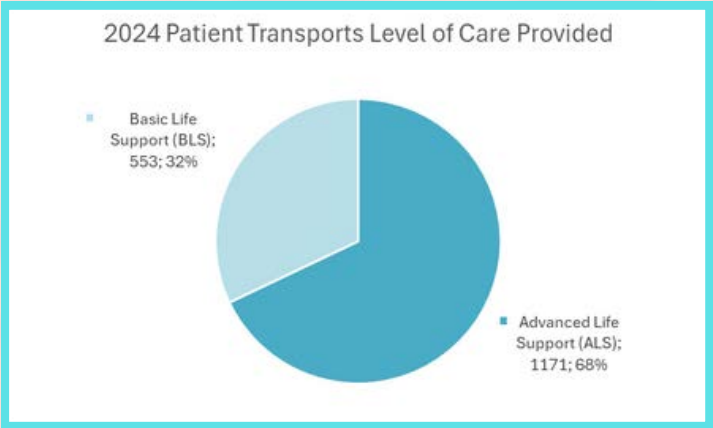
Emergency Medical Service

Patient Care & Transports



Paramedics provide medical assessment and/or treatment to just over one-third of the patients who refuse transport to the hospital.

The level of care paramedics provide to transported patients are categorized by intervention(s) employed to achieve or maintain a patient’s stability while driving to the hospital.



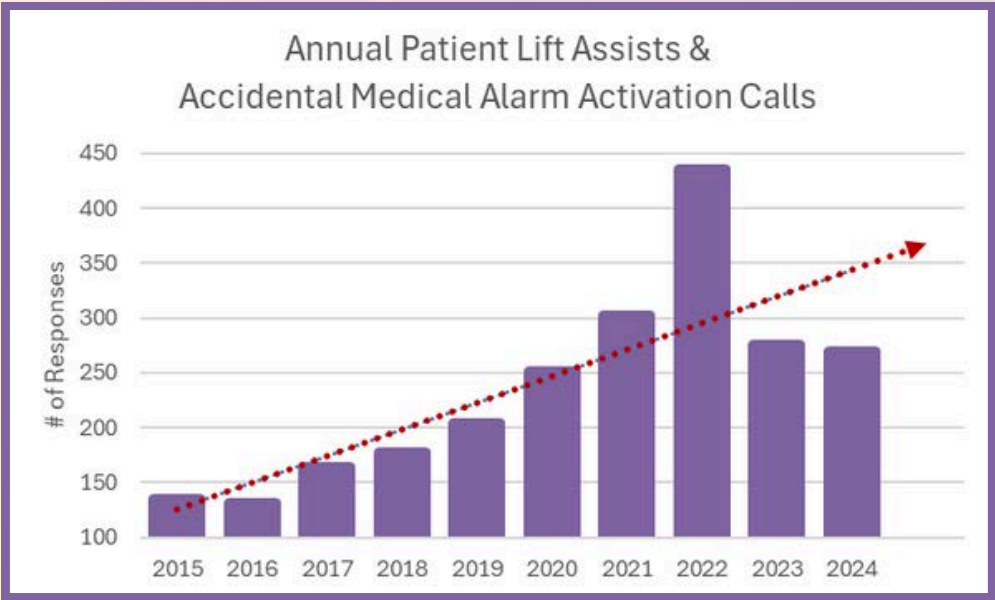
In 2024, most (74%) billable ambulance trips were for residents of the City of Sycamore or the Sycamore Fire Protection District.

The City of Sycamore Municipal Code, approved by the City Council, authorizes ambulance billing. The City contracts with a third-party ambulance billing, Emergency Medical Service Management Consultants (EMS|MC), which manages health insurance claims, patient disputes, and payments. In return, the City pays EMS|MC is paid a portion of received payments.

Emergency Medical Service

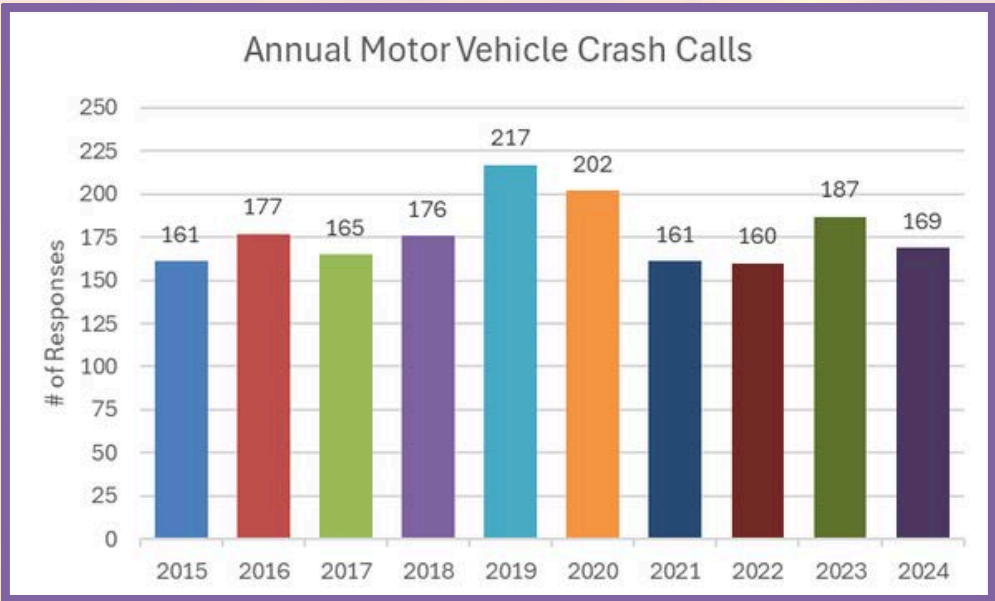
Lift Assists & Accidental Medical Alarms

Lift assists (with no treatment/transport) and accidental medical alarm activations accounted for nearly 11% of all EMS Calls in 2024. This is a 2% decrease from 2023, but past years’ trends indicate these types of calls can be expected to increase in the future.



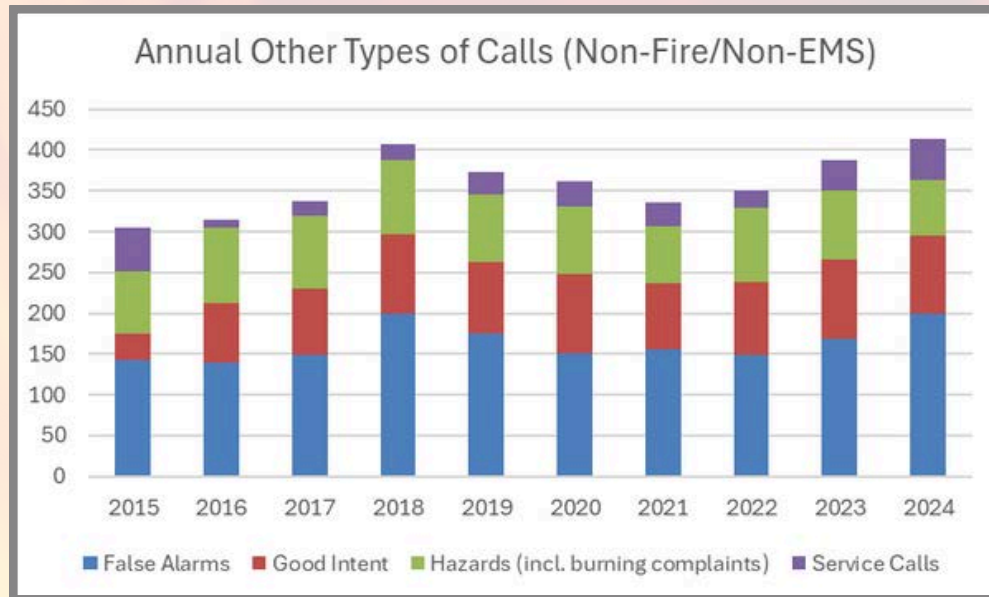
Motor Vehicle Accidents

Motor vehicle incident responses decreased by nearly 10% in 2024, accounting for approximately 7% of all EMS responses.

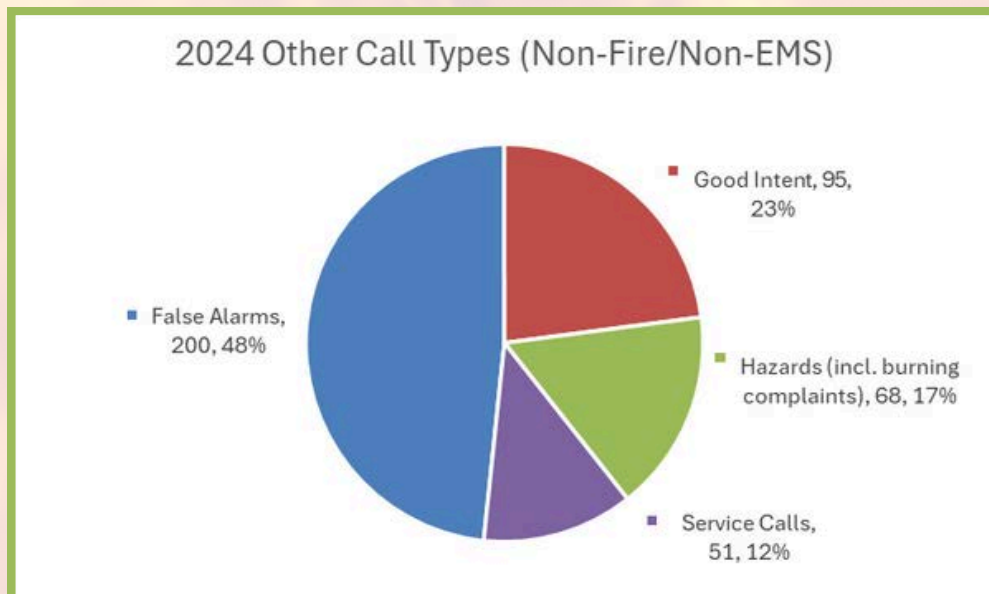


Other Emergencies

Other non-fire and non-medical responses include false alarms, good intent calls, hazardous conditions (including burning complaints), and a variety of service-related calls. The frequency of responding to these types of calls continues to follow an upward trend over the past decade



In 2024, these call types numbered 414 (14%), an increase of approximately 7% in the past year alone.



Personnel

Administration Division

Fire Chief

Bart Gilmore

Deputy Fire Chief

Jim Ward

Office Manager

Natalie Nelson



Average Years of Service

Firefighters: **8**

Operations Officers: **19**

All Fire Department: **11**

Operations Division

Battalion Chiefs

Shaun Penn

Ryan Gustafson

Adam Honiotes

Lieutenants

Darrin Hepker

Scott Flatter

Brian Thompson

Eric Walker

Erik Carlson

Andy Powers

Eric Saxton

Firefighters

Bob Maciejewski

Bill Reynolds

John Pink

Dustin Ruby

Ian Wheeler

Nick Young

Mike Hardesty

Matt Anderson

Dave VanDusen

Christian Conlon

Connor Hickey

Mike Mathey

Tylor Lampkins

Sean Peek

Logan Wright

Tyler Barton

HD Halstead

Keeley Meyer

Carlos Aburto

Austin Reidl

Evan Smith

Apprentices

Farrell Kuhn

Nolan McCaffrey

Kevin Finnely

John Knight

Rik Kozumplik

Ethan Tinsley

Personnel

Retirements



Firefighter Pat Dulzo
21 Years

Anniversaries



Deputy Chief Jim Ward
20 Years

New Hires

April 1, 2024



FF. Keeley Meyer



FF. Carlos Aburto

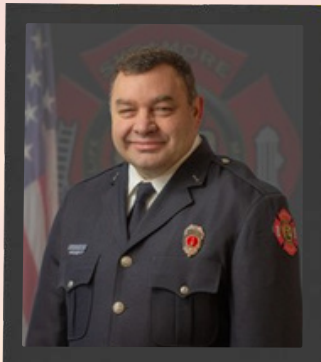
December 1, 2024



FF. Austin Reidl



FF. Evan Smith



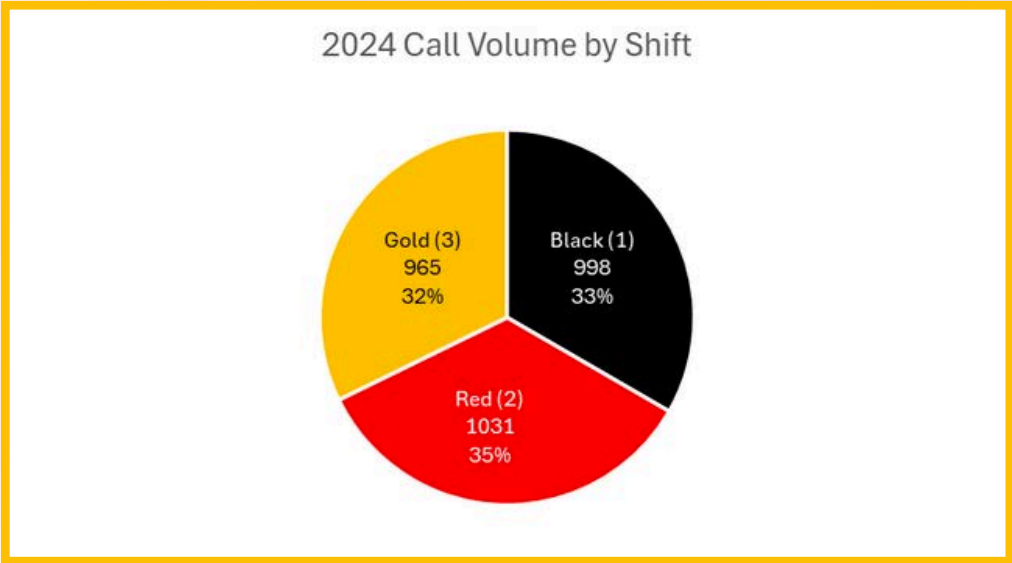
Lieutenant Brian Thompson
20 Years



Lieutenant Scott Flatter
20 Years

Personnel

In 2024, the Operations Division was comprised of 32 members, most of whom rotated shifts every three days (24 hours on duty, then 48 hours off duty). Rotating shifts are designated by color: Black, Red, and Gold. Additionally, Swing Shift members have variable schedules based upon the needs of the rotating shifts.



Each member is typically assigned to the same station each shift. Variables such as rank, seniority, qualifications (officer, engineer, paramedic, etc.), and other factors affect who works, where, and when. Shifts begin at 7:00 AM and end at 7:00 AM the next day.



**Annual Calls
By Top Responders**

Sean Peek: **591**
Tyler Barton: **572**
Bill Reynolds: **526**
Mike Mathey: **518**
Ian Wheeler: **490**

**Average Annual Calls
Per Responder**
341



Personnel

A minimum of seven operations personnel are on duty at all times, including at least

- **One battalion chief** (or lieutenant qualified to act as battalion chief), assigned to Station #1;
- **Two lieutenants** (or firefighters qualified to act as lieutenant), one assigned to each station; and
- **Four firefighters** (or higher rank), two assigned to each station.

These crews act as “jump companies,” responding to emergencies in the apparatus appropriate for the nature of the call: an ambulance or an engine or another type of emergency vehicle.



In addition to responding to emergency calls, members also assume additional responsibilities, including the following:

Special Teams

Hazardous Materials (HazMat)
Technical Rescue
Fire Investigations
Fire Prevention & Public Education

Maintenance Teams

Vehicles/Apparatus (Mechanics)
Buildings & Grounds
Tools & Equipment

Other Teams/Committees

Technology
Physical Health/Cancer Prevention
Mental Health Improvement
Training Committee
Quartermaster
Paramedic Coordinator
Technology
New Station Planning (new in 2024)

Average Personnel Ages

Firefighters: 33
Operations Officers: 46
All Fire Department: 39

Personnel

Fire Apprenticeship Program

SFD offers an intensive Firefighter Apprenticeship Program, intended to train, shape, and prepare future firefighters for successful careers in the fire service. Acceptance into this program is competitive. During 2024, six apprentices participated.



Selected applicants make a three-year commitment to be on duty one 24-shift per week to gain experience and training with SFD career Firefighter/Paramedics in real emergency situations. Upon completion of the program and all other requirements, apprentices seeking full-time positions at SFD could earn up to 15 additional preference points in the testing process.



Training

The Sycamore Fire Department continues to train on all types of potential emergency scenarios.

Internally this year, we had two live fire training sessions, one in March and one November, at the Elgin Community College Training Campus in Burlington, Illinois. Firefighters trained in actual fire conditions and worked on fire suppression, victim rescue, and injured firefighter rescue, along with several other topics.

Other internal training sessions this year included the following:

- EMS training, including CPR and Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS) recertification;
- Wildland firefighting;
- Ice rescue;
- Water rescue;
- Vehicle extrication;
- Hazardous materials;
- Technical rescue;
- Self contained breathing apparatus (SCBA);
- Officer development;
- Active shooter response; and
- Emergency vehicle safe drivers training.



**2024 Internal
Training
4,315 Hours**



External classes attended included fire investigation training (3 new investigators were certified), technical rescue training, advanced firefighting training, fire officer development, vehicle rescue & extrication training, fire inspection training and fire engineering training.

**2024 External
Classes
920 Hours**

Training

Training exercises prepare us to use specialized tools and effective methods for fighting fires, improving emergency medical outcomes, and providing other emergency services to the Sycamore community. Practicing skills, running drills, and continuing education ensure we are ready to serve in whatever capacity necessary.



SFD supports the physical and mental wellness of our members with on-site exercise facilities, as well as presentations from and access to mental health providers knowledgeable about the unique challenges fire service professionals may encounter.

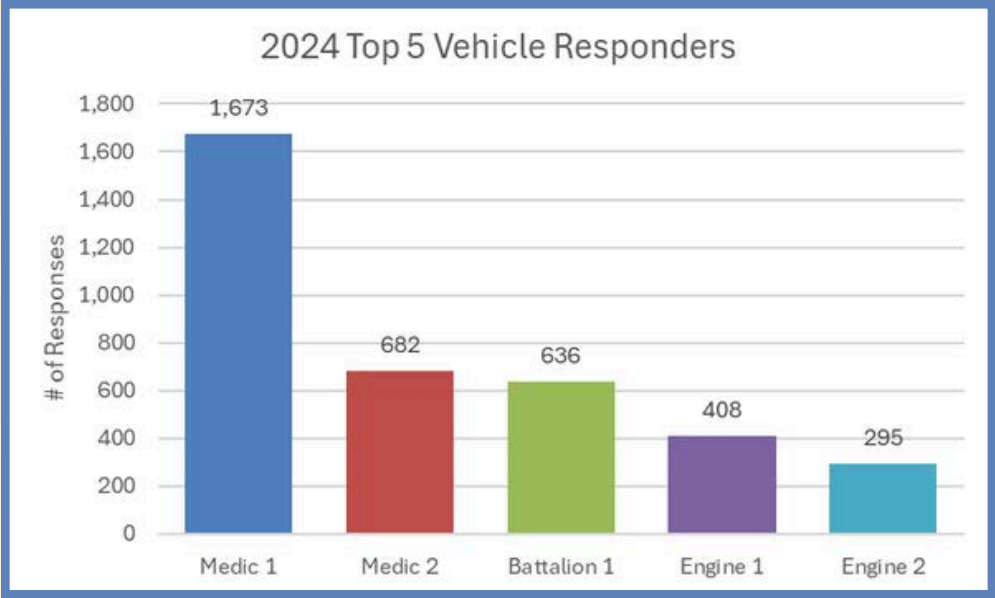


**Fire/Rescue
Training
3,091 hours**

**EMS
Training
1,224 hours**

Apparatus

Both stations each typically house two ambulances and two engines, one of each for front-line use and for backup. When a front-line apparatus is unavailable due to undergoing preventive maintenance or repairs, the backup apparatus is used. Backup apparatus help us respond when calls overlap or complex emergencies require additional resources at the scene. Depending upon the nature of the call, other vehicles may be driven, including brush trucks (2) , squad (1), utility vehicle (2), command vehicles (4), and a boat.



In 2024, the turnout time goal of less than 90 seconds was met for 96% of the responses. Turnout time is the duration between the dispatched time and enroute time.

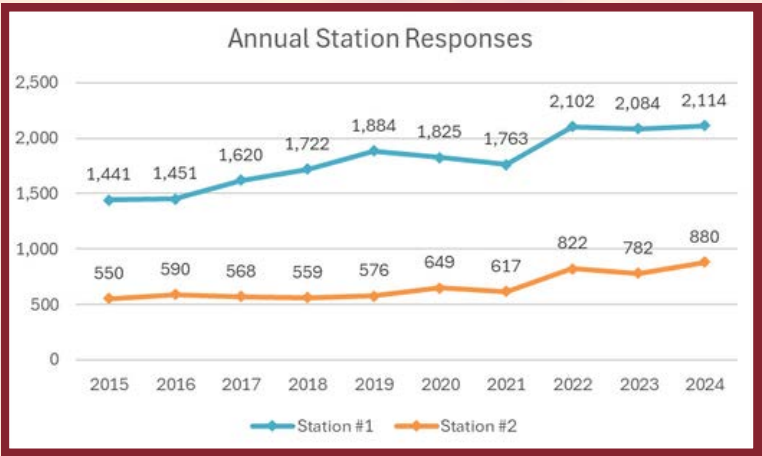


Facilities



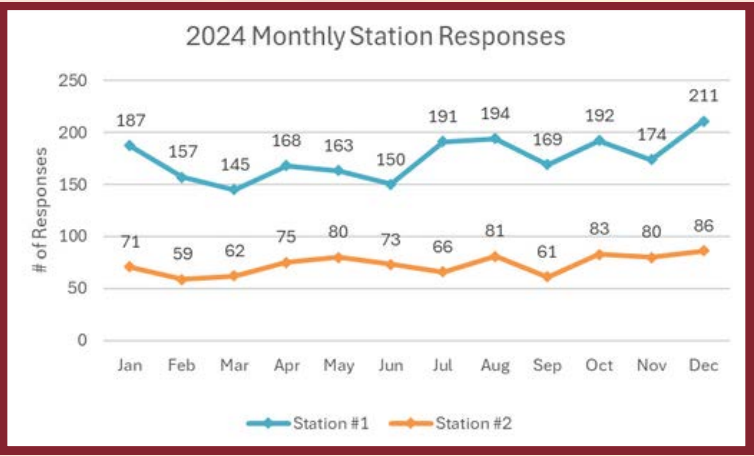
Station #1
535 DeKalb Ave.
Built 1957
15,590 sq. ft.

Station #2
2100 Frantum Rd.
Built 2008
11,370 sq. ft



Over the past decade, an average of 73% of all calls were taken by Station #1 and 27% by Station #2.

In 2024, the number of responses decreased slightly for Station #1 (71%) and increased slightly for Station #2 (29%).



Public Education

Fire Safety Video Contest

In partnership with Sycamore Community School District 427, the fire department holds an annual Fire Safety Video Contest for all Sycamore Middle School students in grades sixth through eighth.



The 2024 First Place Fire Safety Video Contest winners, eighth grade students Lyle Riebeling and Jackson Zilz, joined the fire department in the Pumpkin Parade

Fire Prevention Week

SFD recognized Fire Prevention Week 2024 from October 6th to 12th, promoting the theme "Smoke alarms: Make Them Work for You!"



SFD welcomed every kindergarten and second grade class in Sycamore to visit Station #1, where the students learned about the importance of working smoke alarms, fire safety, and other fire topics.

Public Education

Station Tours

Throughout the year, visitors of all ages from area schools, clubs, and other organizations, scheduled tours of our facilities, where they learned about fire careers and fire safety.



Open House

On October 5th, an Open House at Station #2, welcomed the community to participate in a fire suppression simulation, spraying a fire hose, and other activities.



Emergency Locations

DeKalb County's GIS Department created the Heat Map below to visibly represent the 3,077 locations of the requests for emergency services for which the fire department was dispatched in 2024. This figure includes calls dispatched and canceled before apparatus has left the responding station. The vast majority of locations are located south of Illinois State Route 64 (State Street). The balance occurred in the Sycamore Fire Protection District District, primarily rural areas designated by the red borders on the map.

The current stations are marked with a blue star. Station #1 is located on the northern edge of the industry standard 4-to-6-minute response-time area. The future fire station will be situated at the center of that response area, thus reducing our emergency response times for saving lives and property.

