



Rice Lake Fire Department 2018 Annual Report

Message from the Chief

Mayor, City Council, and Rice Lake Citizens,

Greetings! It is my pleasure to present to you the 2018 annual report for Rice Lake Fire Department. This year was filled with dedication, determination, challenges, and improvements by the women and men who serve the Rice Lake community. This year was especially significant for us in that it was the 70th anniversary of the fire departments existence. The men and women of today's fire service are challenged day in and day out to meet the growing demands of the community and have risen to that challenge making the citizens and especially myself proud. I am truly humbled and honored to lead this exemplary group of individuals whom dedicate an immense amount of time to protecting the citizens and visitors of Rice Lake. Often these members are taking time away from their families, jobs, and other responsibilities to serve and protect our community, and they do so with pride and honor.

Many community members may not fully realize or understand the type of fire department we have here in Rice Lake. Rice Lake Fire Department is a 100% Volunteer Fire Department. What this means is that the fire station is generally not staffed nor occupied by fire department personnel daily. When emergencies come in we are alerted by a paging system and respond from our homes, jobs, or wherever we may be at that moment to come and help. This type of public safety model is an extremely low-cost fire department service model for the community and saves significant dollars for the tax payers, but at the same time this model has a potential to be short personnel when needed.

The 2018 operations budget for the fire department was \$74,775. This money is used to provide training to the firefighters, purchase new personal protective equipment, provide maintenance and annual tests for apparatus and other equipment, pay for insurance costs, fuel costs, and acquire new equipment on top of the smaller day to day operational costs. We are very grateful for the funds that are provided to us annually, but to accomplish all of the department needs from year to year we work to supplement these dollars with fundraisers, grants, and investments. In 2018 we were fortunate to be selected for three separate grants from private foundations and businesses, as well as partnering with another local business to host a fundraising effort. We are very pleased to have corporate partners and business owners in the community that are willing to support our organizations mission.

The following information in this report will provide some context to the operations and accomplishments the fire department achieved in 2018. I hope you are able to find this report both useful and informational. As always, if anyone has further questions please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Have a safe and exciting 2019!

Mark Niemi
Rice Lake Fire Chief

Fire Department Mission Statement

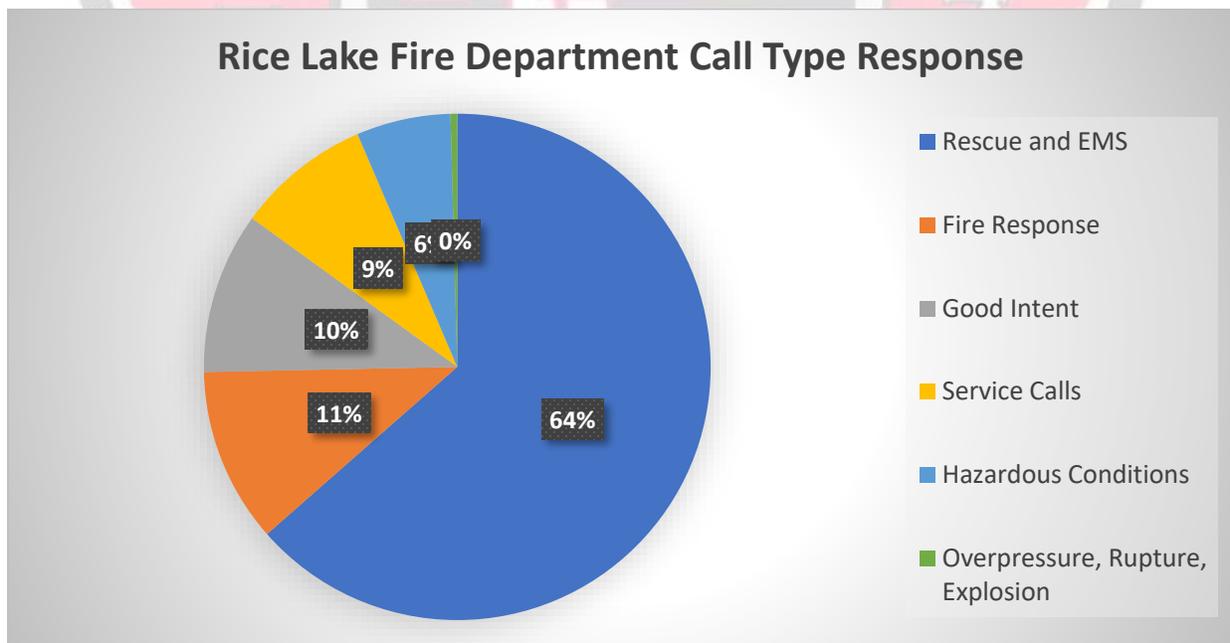
The mission of the Rice Lake Volunteer Fire Department is to minimize the loss of life and property resulting from fire, medical emergencies, and other disasters. We will accomplish our mission through prevention, education, fire suppression, medical services, and other related emergency and non-emergency activities. We will actively participate in our community, serve as role models, and strive to effectively and efficiently utilize all the resources at our command to provide a service deemed excellent by our citizens.

Call Response by the Numbers

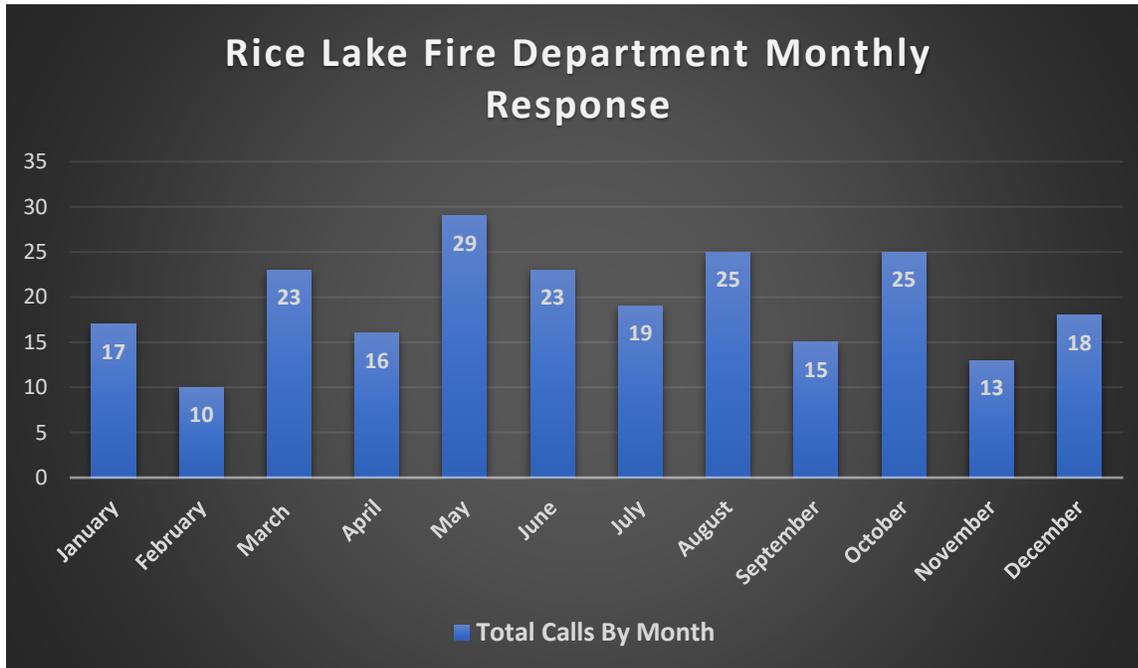
This past year we once again saw an increase in the number of calls for service. We specifically saw an increase of 17 calls this year and that was without any natural disasters/wind storm events in 2018. This increase in calls has been the common trend across the state and the nation. We have seen the calls for service increase just about every year for the last decade.

Total Number of Calls for Service: 233

- Total Rescue and EMS Calls – 148
- Total Fire Calls – 26
- Total Good Intent Calls – 24
- Total Service Calls – 20
- Total Hazardous Condition Calls – 14
- Total Overpressure, Rupture, Explosion Calls – 1



The average response time for all calls this year was approximately 9.5 minutes. When factoring in the delay from the initial page out, responding to the station for apparatus and equipment, and then responding to the scene, this is a very good response time average for the year. One thing however, is some of this data is skewed due to the fact of mutual aid response times being included which in turn throws this average off (i.e. responding to Clifton/Grand Lake takes about 25-30 minutes). We hope to be able to find a way to isolate some of this data, but we are learning the new reporting system that was implemented by the State Fire Marshal's office in December.



Volunteer Time

There was a total of 1,239 emergency responses by members throughout 2018. The total number of hours volunteered by Rice Lake Firefighters responding to emergencies and completing job duties and other tasks were 7,419 hours, which is equal to 3.5 full time employees. Once again Rice Lake firefighters receive zero compensation for the work they do on a day to day basis, saving the citizens and tax payers of Rice Lake a significant amount of money for public safety services.

Staffing

This past year we were filled with challenges regarding staff turnover. Rice Lake Fire Department is at the point in which the baby boomers that served the community are ready to retire and move on for different reasons. As an organization we have lost a significant number of years of experience this year. Retirements and separations this past year included;

- Mike Ganser – 31 years of service
- Scott Twining – 28 years of service
- Greg Haugen – 23 years of service
- Marilyn Lepak – 5 years of service
- Chase Sorlie – 3 years of service
- Brendan Brooks – 3 years of service

The fire department appreciates these individuals for their committed service to the Rice Lake community and the knowledge that they passed on during their time here.

Although the department lost a number of people to retirements and resignations this year, we were also very fortunate to be able to have a number of applicants come in to begin their probationary time. New hires included;

- Alan Baumgarten-Leveille
- Scott Beeman
- Dylan Boettcher
- Ben Prestidge
- Hannah Barry
- Wyatt Hamilton
- Caleb Johnson

With all the additions and departures this year, our current staffing numbers are at 24 highly motivated and dedicated individuals to the Rice Lake community. We are always looking for new members that want to make a difference and be positive role models within the community. If you live within a 10-minute response time to the fire station and are interested in learning more about the service we provide to the community, stop down Thursday nights at 7:30pm.

Improved our Equipment and Capabilities as well as Safety

2018 saw a significant improvement to the overall equipment needed to ensure the safety of the firefighters as well as the citizens of Rice Lake. Most notably was the addition of our new 2017 Pierce Enforcer PUC Engine. The acquisition of this new apparatus allowed us to replace our failing 1982 Ford Fire Engine. The new engine has increased the overall safety of our apparatus and personnel, has the ability to carry 6 firefighters vs. just 2, increased pump capabilities, as well as being able to carry much more equipment to be able to truly handle any type of call with one truck if needed. Furthermore, it should be noted that zero tax payer dollars were used to purchase this apparatus (as well as all apparatus in the fleet), as the money came from previous fundraisers and investments.



At the end of 2017, fire department staff sat down to try and figure out a way to improve their response efforts after some previous year struggles. When a call for emergency service comes in everyone expects that someone will answer that call for help. As is with many fully volunteer fire departments, the unknown availability of fire department staff can be a very real and difficult thing to overcome. Without having department stations staffed 24/7 or even partial hours of the day, we tried to find a way to decrease this unknown availability situation. The fire department presented an idea to Rice Lake City

Council of purchasing an additional SUV to introduce as a take home vehicle for someone who chooses to remain available and ready to respond immediately if a call for service came in.

After discussion about how the program would work and what enhancements to service the additional vehicle would have for the community, the City Council approved the request and we were able to purchase the used 2010 Chevy Tahoe from Eden Prairie Fire Department. With the ability to have staff respond directly from home to the emergency when the vehicle is committed to a fire department member, the fire department has reduced its response time by an average of nearly four minutes, thus resulting in better initial patient care and decision making on fire ground incidents.



In the later parts of 2017 Rice Lake Fire Department Chief Officers conducted a risk analysis of their current equipment and how that could or would affect operations and safety on emergency incidents. The largest gap the Officers found was to be our out dated auto-extrication equipment or “Jaws of Life”. The challenge with acquiring new extrication equipment was the significant cost to purchase new. The new equipment had a price tag of approximately \$30,000 equating to nearly half of our annual operating budget. Certainly not something we can do without a little extra help. A grant request was then written to the Minnesota Power Foundation asking for some help in making this project a reality. After reviewing, the Minnesota Power Foundation agreed to support our project with a “Challenge Grant” in the amount of \$10,000.



Annually, Rice Lake Fire Department members spend a significant amount of time fundraising in the summer months to help acquire items for its membership. A proposal for helping acquire this new equipment was made and Rice Lake Fireman’s Relief Association decided to help support this project as well with a grant in the amount of \$8,000. Between the two grants we were able to support this project with 60% grant money and the remainder out of our operating budget and investments.

Other equipment that was purchased this year included additional portable radios to ensure each firefighter has radio communication capabilities in case of an emergency. This was a significant update to increase safety of each firefighter on the department. Going along with the individual firefighter safety, the department purchased safety vests for each individual firefighter to increase road side scene safety. Previously we had a few vests on our trucks, but if all were being used some members wouldn't have a vest and operated at a greater risk on roadway incidents.

All in all, Rice Lake Fire Department took advantage of state funds, grants, investments, and tax dollars to acquire much needed equipment in 2018. Our membership is very grateful for the condition of our equipment and enjoys using and learning with it.

Training

Rice Lake Fire Department had a very successful training year. We had many training opportunities and many firefighters took advantage of local and state trainings to further their fire knowledge and leadership skills.

Some highlights of training this past year were auto extrication, water rescue, utilizing many firefighter skills and techniques during our live burn, and multiple medical trainings. Money from the 2018 training budget was paired up with available funds from the State Fire Marshal's Minnesota Board of Fire Training and Education Division, to stretch our dollars and allow us the opportunity to experience many more training topics. These funds were distributed out for training material needs, bringing in outside instructors, courses for continuing education, and our live burn in October.

The live burn gave us an opportunity to put all our knowledge and skills together to create a real life burn experience. This also gave us an opportunity to work alongside other departments that we regularly do mutual aid with. We hope that these types of trainings become more available in the future, as they are great ways for us to collectively work together and accomplish training on many different levels.



Additionally, the training staff would like to extend a thank you to the City of Rice Lake for the donation of the house on Rice Lake Road. It became a training ground for a couple months where we learned about vertical and horizontal ventilation, hose movement and advancement techniques, overhaul and salvage, and search and rescue.

Being able to participate in so many different trainings and having opportunities to work outside the walls of the fire hall really expand our abilities. We hope to continue our efforts in giving Rice Lake Fire Department the best training possible so that we can help and support the community at an excellent level when called upon.

Community Events

Rice Lake Fire Department was honored to a part of many community events this past year. The best part about these events are the relationships we have formed with those putting the events on from year to year. One of the things our staff enjoys most is having the opportunity to be out in the community at these events and meet the citizens of Rice Lake and help teach them about what it is that we do. Each event we go to generally involves kids and there is nothing more exciting than seeing the kids get to look at the trucks, try on our equipment, ask questions, and sit in the driver's seat. The giant smiles we see each and every time are what mean the most to us. We understand that not only are we here to protect the public, but also to be involved in the community and be stewards within this great City! Here are some of the events that we were able to participate in this past year.



- **Healthy Homecroft Festival** – Interacted with the community and helped with many fire safety topics at Homecroft Elementary School.
- **National Night Out at the City Park** - Provided the Food for the Large Crowd
- **Veteran's Memorial 5k** – Assisted with Medical standby and traffic control
- **Woodland Days** – Brought over fire trucks for the kids to look at and touch.
- **Veteran's Funeral Standby (July 15th)** – Provided traffic and crowd control
- **Red Run 5k** – Huge community event that is also the fire departments largest fundraiser of the year. This event is family friendly and honors our fallen brothers Matt Frantz and Randy Hiti. New this past year was the creation of the Jr. Chiefs Obstacle Course

- **Fire Prevention Day** – Every year we look forward to hosting the Homecroft Elementary School 3rd grade students at our fire hall to provide them with fire safety presentations. This has been a long-standing tradition that we thoroughly enjoy. New this year was the Home Fire Escape Plan challenge. We asked kids to draw out their escape plan with their families to help make sure families knew what to do in case of a fire. Many entries were received with the lucky winner receiving a ride to school on our new fire truck!



- **Fire Department Open House** – During fire prevention week we invite the community to come down to the fire station and learn about fire safety topics through a variety of different stations and booths.

Commendations

In December we hold a night to recognize the hard work the men and women of this department have put forth all year long. We also take time to remember the accomplishments members had on significant calls throughout the year as well as awarding outstanding performance to select individuals. The following members received awards for outstanding service and performance this past year.

- **Life Saver Awards** – Shawn Williams, Ben Grieger, Alan Baumgarten-Leveille, and Mark Niemi
- **Rookie of the Year** – Caleb Johnson
- **Firefighter of the Year** – Cory Johannesson
- **Fire Officer of the Year** – Richard Johnson
- **Fire Department Excellence Award** – Kelby Sundquist
- **Response Awards** – Brandon Zapp, Richard Johnson, Mike Conradi, Mark Niemi, Wyatt Hamilton, Caleb Johnson, and Scott Beeman

Goals for 2019

Each and every new year, we sit down and think about what it is we are hoping to accomplish heading into the rest of the year besides emergency response. The following is a list of some of those goals we have knowing that it will take partnerships and potentially some outside the box thinking to achieve them.

1. Continue working with the City Council to complete the renovations for the south fire hall and talk about the long-range facilities plan.
2. Continue working with the City Council to find a way to mitigate the diesel exhaust fumes at the fire stations to protect the health and well being of fire department staff along with keeping the station and equipment clean as well as coming to a decision on a timeline for implementation.
3. Continue to work towards implementing a capital replacement plan for high dollar equipment and apparatus replacement.
4. Take a serious look at how we can better help our responders in the areas of Mental Health, Cardiac Health, and Cancer Prevention.
5. Utilization of the Schultz Road property to create a fire department training facility
6. Begin planning preparations for Tender 3 (Large Apparatus) replacement.
7. Review and update department Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines and work to implement (standardize) existing city policies, practices, and procedures.
8. Work side by side with City Planning and Zoning Department and Building Officials to ensure expansion of the commercial projects are done safely for all entities involved.
9. Continue to pre-incident plan our businesses within Rice Lake and have these plans available.
10. Implement Knox Box System's for Rice Lake Businesses and home owners.
11. Implement new medical protocols to provide additional advanced medical care.

From all of us here at Rice Lake Fire Department, we wish you a safe and happy 2019!

Ryan Abrahamson	Wyatt Hamilton	Devin Sonnek
Andy Alander	Greg Haugen (R)	Chase Sorlie
Al Baumgarten-Leveille	Kat Hiti	Kelby Sundquist
Hannah Barry	Cory Johannesson	Scott Twining (R)
Scott Beeman	Caleb Johnson	Bud Wavra
Joe Bouchard	Lyle Johnson (R)	Niki Wavra
Dylan Boettcher	Rich Johnson	Shawn Williams
Mike Conradi	Mark Niemi	Brandon Zapp
Ryan Dahnke	Ben Prestidge	
Ben Grieger	Travis Samuelson	