

# THE SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

## 871 HOPMEADOW STREET SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

James A. Baldis  
Chief of Department



(860) 658-1971  
(860) 658-5611

### ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF MAY 13, 2019

It is my honor to present the Annual Report of the Fire Chief for the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. 75 years ago after being informed that the fire protection for the Town of Simsbury would no longer be provided by the Ensign Bickford Company, a group of Simsbury Citizens stepped up to the challenge and formed the Simsbury Fire District and The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. To this day more than 600 men and women from our community of Simsbury have volunteered to carry out the responsibility of protecting our homes, businesses, and life from the perils of fires and other emergencies. Today our volunteers are trained to state standards of Firefighter 1 and Hazardous Materials Operational with many volunteering their time for further education and certifications. Almost all of our company officers are state certified fire instructors, which aids in the depth of in-house training as well as being involved in our local Regional Fire Training School as instructors. Many members are trained and certified in rope rescue, pump operations, aerial operations, confined space, Emergency Medical Responder or Emergency Medical Technician to name a few of the additional levels of

training our members receive. In addition to emergency response training, our officers also receive training in supervisory skills and techniques, as they are responsible for managing the team of firefighters assigned to their respective stations.

Through the ongoing support of the Fire District, our members are able to receive this training at no cost beyond the time they volunteer for the training.

The labor savings that the Town of Simsbury has enjoyed for these past 75 years easily exceeds 100 million dollars. Beyond the dollar savings, the town benefits from the heart and soul of each of our volunteers who are willing to leave their homes in the dead of night, a warm comfortable bed, a family dinner, a sporting event for a son or daughter because one of our neighbors is asking for our help. There is no paycheck at the end of the day but there is something that drives each one of us.... That is the “thank you”, the smile of appreciation, the applause when marching in the hometown parade, and the pride of being a volunteer firefighter in Simsbury. Our organization is committed to maintaining the level of service our town expects from us and I know we have the support of the community to do just that.

Being a Volunteer Firefighter is a serious commitment and it is not for everyone.

However, we have shown our ability to maintain a sufficient membership force to meet current demands without having to repeatedly call upon mutual aid from neighboring towns for help. Many communities are unable to make such a statement.

Our membership ended the year at 88 active members, which include 11 junior firefighters. This is a decrease of one over the previous year and is still ahead of the past 5-year average of 86.8 members.

We recognize the constant challenges that our volunteers face with their personal time and are committed to working closely with them to minimize time spent while not affecting the responsiveness or effectiveness of our work. We also are constantly looking for ways to recruit additional volunteers using traditional methods such as lawn signs and sandwich boards as well as non-traditional approaches such as hosting local community gatherings, targeted mailings, and recruiting at local events. Our recruitment efforts need to be one of our key focuses as well as keeping the valuable resources that we already have. To that end thanks to the continued support and efforts of the Fire District, we continue to provide state of the art facilities and equipment for the protection of each members and tools to make the job easier. Personal protection of our members is paramount as they are the corner stone of who we are. Recent new standards have been implemented that requires personal protective turnout gear be replaced every 10 years regardless of its condition. The Fire District and Fire Company are working together to implement a gear replacement program that will not only achieve this standard but will get us to our committed goal of issuing a second set of turnout gear to each member. Turnout Gear for our membership of 90 represents a total project value over \$300,000, which will cycle twice every 10 years taking into account a second set of gear for each member and does not include the cost of gear that has to be replaced early due to wear,

contamination or other unforeseen reasons. It is our commitment to keep our members safe and we are willing to make this investment and more..... In addition to turnout gear, we continue to stay committed to the health and well-being of our members. Unlike the days of our founding when fires consisted of burning wood and paper products today's fires are fueled by a wide variety of chemicals which make up the majority of plastics and composites that we find in our homes and workplaces. These chemicals pose a real danger to a firefighter and we remain committed to protecting our members from the effects of these hazardous environments starting right at the station with our apparatus. For over 30 years we have captured the exhaust of our diesel apparatus through an in station exhaust system. We provided standard washers and dryers in the stations for many years however, the requirements and standards for properly washing and drying gear lead us to replace all the washer and dryers in the stations with special washing machines designed specifically to handle turnout gear and new dryers for the gear that meet requirements for airflow and low heat. Through the efforts of the Safety Committee, Cancer awareness and education has increased through posters, direct communications, audio visual aids and more. We have stepped up the replacement of our protective hoods, which now include state of the art particulate barriers to help protect the vulnerable areas of the neck, ears, and cheeks.

Personal clean wipes are now available on every piece of apparatus for members use and quick decon kits have been placed on each pumper for on scene decon if needed. We certainly are not finished in our efforts to protect our members and remain committed to

their protection while ensuring we can continue to respond appropriately. In addition, we have stepped up our physical health-screening program, which is being expanded to include blood screening, physical agility, as well as creating a baseline history for future physicals.

In the area of equipment... This past year we replaced all of our attack hose and nozzles, which gives us the ability to remain effective in extinguishment with hose that requires less pressure, will not easily kink and requires less effort to manage.

We continue to add to our rescue equipment compliment with the addition of another battery powered combination spreader and cutter (known commonly as the Jaws of Life) which has been placed on one of our outlying engines and we are looking at adding more.

We continue to update our meters to ensure accuracy and ease of use when monitoring the atmosphere for hazards. In addition to our general use equipment, we also took delivery of a new pumper to replace our aging Engine 8. This pumper was expanded in size to accommodate additional rescue equipment and allows the engine to be more versatile in its operation and allowed us to reduce in size our new off road rescue truck which we took delivery of this past year. Our new rescue 15 is designed to allow us easier access to areas on Talcott Mountain where high angle or other rescue equipment is often needed. We also took delivery of a new inflatable rescue boat, Marine 2, which replaced our old inflatable that was no longer serviceable or repairable. Finally as part of our approved budget last year, we were able to refurbish our heavy rescue 14, which was suffering from premature corrosion. This work was completed under budget and we are

confident that the work will extend its serviceable life well beyond the 5 years we expected.

Training is the foundation of our readiness and the members of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company dedicate countless hours training. Every Monday night the entire membership gathers for training and or education. In addition, many members attend additional training programs throughout the year as mentioned earlier.

There are many more hours that our members spend learning and being educated by attending local seminars, product shows and networking among other departments.

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During 2018, we responded to 736 calls for assistance an increase of 105 over the previous year. Of these 736 calls, we requested mutual aid 6 times and had 30 mutual aid requests from our neighboring towns.

This year saw the loss of our longest surviving member at the age of 96 with the passing of Retired Assistant Chief Wesley Case. A man and company member that was proud of our department, its traditions and his contributions to the clubhouse, which he would enthusiastically tell to anyone who would listen to him.

Beyond the training and readiness of our members, we rely on the support of administration, equipment and apparatus to get the job done. I wish to thank our District Fleet Mechanic Dan Flanagan for the outstanding job he continues to do to ensure our apparatus is maintained, kept up to standards, and will perform to our expectations. To our District Maintenance person Ron Kasulaitus for his continued efforts to maintain the grounds and buildings in addition to the hydrants throughout town. Our District's Dispatching Staff and Fire Marshalls office for the continued professional service and support given to the Fire Company and community.

Outside of responding to emergency calls and training, we remain committed to the community through a number of company-involved events. This past year the company, with the cooperation and support of Rosedale Farms and Winery we commissioned "The Pride of Simsbury" a locally produced red wine which kicked off our 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary fund raising activities as we prepared for our anniversary during 2019/20. We continue to provide the color guard for the June High School Graduation Ceremony, assist in the annual Duck Race for Toot'n Hills Schools held on the Farmington River, support numerous PTO and School fundraisers with Ride to School on a Fire Truck auctions. We participate in the annual Memorial Day parades in Tariffville and the town center and also provide and maintain the American flag at the town Veteran's Memorial. We hold our annual open house in conjunction with fire prevention week in October, and participate in school visits. We host the annual Fisherman's Breakfast on the opening

day of fishing season and co-host with the Ladies Auxiliary the annual Fire Company Golf Tournament, which raises funds for charities and helps support special equipment purchases by the Fire Company.

I cannot thank enough the officers, firefighters and juniors members for the hard work, dedication and professionalism they continue to give The Fire Company, The Fire District and this community. I would also like to thank the members of the Ladies Auxiliary for their continued support of our members during training exercises and emergencies. I thank the Officers of the Fire District and The District Commissioners for their continued support and commitment to ensure our fire company is well equipped with the necessary resources to properly respond to emergencies and to keep us safe. Finally, I want to thank our tax payers for their continued support of the Fire District in funding the dollars needed for today's fire and emergency response services.

This year marks the beginning of a yearlong celebration recognizing the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company and the Simsbury Fire District. With a kick off of the recently held River Run Road race we look forward to a town wide Chicken Barbeque in June which will include great food, musical entertainment and bring back some of the old carnival game of years past. A special anniversary parade of fire trucks in conjunction with Septemberfest will be held, an expanded Fire Prevention Open house where each neighborhood fire station will be open for your visits, a history of the fire



service in Simsbury at the library in January and a celebration ending dinner event for our members past and present. I hope that you will all join us in celebrating 75 years of volunteer service to our community.

In closing, I remind the residents of Simsbury that our website at [www.simsburyfd.org](http://www.simsburyfd.org) continues to report on the Fire Company and Fire District activities and provides valuable public information on fire safety and emergency preparedness. I also invite any of our residents who may be interested in becoming a member of this incredible organization to contact us or stop by any Fire Station for more information.

Respectfully Submitted,

James A. Baldis, Chief of Department