



SIMSBURY FIRE DISTRICT
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2020-2021 Year in Review

Good Evening, what a way to start a report. I am reviewing the year that didn't exist. From May 1, 2020 to April 30, 2021 the world and the town of Simsbury was on hold. We were in the grips of an unprecedented global pandemic with minute by minute live coverage over social media. It was a time of limited travel, limited entertainment and no in person school. This was a time of zoom meetings, google meets, and Microsoft teams. Equipment, personal protective equipment, and basic cleaning and sanitizing supplies were in short supply.

Through it all, Simsbury Emergency Management, the Simsbury Fire District, the Town of Simsbury Unified Command, Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association, all Simsbury Departments, and the residents prevailed.

We mourned the lives lost and we praised the efforts of all those who stepped up.

In May of 2020 we were deep into the middle of the pandemic. Regular meetings of the Unified Command kept everyone informed of all local, regional and state preparations and actions. We participated in Personal Protective Equipment distribution sites and assisted delivering supplies to agencies and departments who needed it. Precautions were being taken to keep our first responders and our town employees safe and healthy.

This year's high school graduation was forced to be different but the school system adjusted. WSIM (103.5) was there to broadcast live and all involved did a fantastic job. The best moment came when our announcer asked if anyone was listening to WSIM, or if he was just talking to himself. When over a hundred cars honked their horns to let him know they were listening a smile was brought to everyone.

At the end of June 2020 we lost our leader. The man who established, directed, expanded and led the Emergency Management efforts for the town for decades, decided it was time to retire. I have worked with Deputy Chief Kevin Kowalski since 2016 and his faith in me to take his place was a great honor. I have some big shoes to fill. Simsbury Emergency Management would not be as strong or robust without your efforts over the years and I thank you.

There was no time to relax as the Month of August brought a wind storm we had not seen the power of in some time. Tropical Storm Isaias rolled up the coast and the Unified Command was prepared. Prior to the storm, during the storm, and immediately after the storm all of the town departments, the Simsbury Fire District, the Simsbury Volunteer Fire



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Company, and the Simsbury Volunteer Ambulance Association worked together to respond to the town's needs. The storm brought down trees and wires all over town. Power, internet and telephone service was interrupted for days. Despite the fact the town could not get an adequate response from the power and cable services, everyone pitched in to try to make things get back to normal. Incident Action Plans were developed and all response personnel and residents were kept up to date on the latest information. Social media was used as it had not been utilized before.

After reviewing the storm and the recovery, lessons were learned and policies and procedures were adjusted and strengthened. A new age of communication with Eversource had developed.

The hurricane season and the winter snow season were on the normal to quiet side and this allowed attention to be focused on the pandemic. Regular virtual meetings were held with local, regional and state officials and plans were starting to be developed to distribute a COVID-19 vaccine. The Town's Emergency Operations Plan had been reviewed and updated in 2020, but mass vaccination sites which would have been the schools were adjusted to the Main Fire Station. The safety and security of the students attending the schools was the priority and the Unified Command called an audible.

After it was found that the Main Fire Station was too small, the Farmington Valley Health District moved their clinics to larger sites out of town. The Unified Command worked with town agencies and local churches to find a larger more suitable site and the clinics were brought back to town in April 2021. The Simsbury Public Library was willing to accommodate the needs of the FVHD and many residents filed through and obtained their immunity.

A new Assistant Emergency Management Director was hired this year and I am looking forward to working with Jim Traficante. His experience and reputation precedes him and the town will benefit from the Fire Districts decision to bring him on board.

The 2020-2021 year was one for the record books. It brought new and complex challenges. The Unified Command of Simsbury has proven to be a wonderful orchestra. Different agencies with different responsibilities all came together to overcome all of the challenges thrown at it. 2020-2021 also has shown that the past and present efforts of Emergency Management to teach the residents to be more resilient has been successful. Now this does not mean that the job is done, efforts must be increased to use WSIM (103.5FM), social media, and community outreach to educate the public to plan, prepare, and respond. A resilient community is a safe community.
