

THE SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF MAY 9, 2022

It is my honor to present the Annual Report of the Fire Chief for the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company has been in existence for 77 years and continues to face and overcome the challenges that we are presented with each and every day. We have come to the end of year two in having to deal with the COVID pandemic where the fire company responded with great resolve to ensure the protection of our community not only from fire and other emergencies but also from the dangers of COVID by getting vaccinated, wearing masks and other personal protective measures which included sanitizing, changing how we train in group settings and supporting the towns emergency distribution of test kits and masks.

I am proud to report that we once again have come through this challenge with very few infections and without having to resort to back up response plans with our neighboring towns to cover because of infected firefighters. The members of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company have again shown an unwavering commitment to the protection of our community every hour of every day. We ended year 2021 with 99 members (90 regular

and 9 junior) a decrease of 2 members over the previous year which were both junior members. We responded to 758 incidents an increase of 58 over the previous year that included house fires, car fires, brush fires, high angle rescues, missing persons, lost hikers, vehicle accidents, down trees and power lines, along with alarms for fire and carbon monoxide detection systems. The men and women who volunteer are highly trained, dedicated and have the compassion to put their own lives on hold and at risk in order to help a neighbor in their time of need.

From its formation in 1944, an agreement exists with the Simsbury Fire District that the members of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company would provide their firefighting services at no charge. This savings in labor cost amounts to millions of dollars that are saved by Simsbury Taxpayers versus the cost of a fully or partially paid fire department. In return, The Fire District provides the best in personal protective equipment as well as the tools and training necessary to meet the demands of today's fire service with is truly an all hazards emergency response service. Beyond the dollar savings, the town benefits from true community spirit deep in the hearts and souls of each of our volunteers.

Without advance notice, we ask our volunteers to leave the warmth and comfort of home or work at all hours of the day and night. They put on hold family gatherings, sporting events, work details, or just some well-earned personnel time all because there is a situation that requires a response from the fire department. There is no paycheck waiting for these volunteers at the end of day, week or month. This is a pure gift that comes from the heart of every volunteer each time the pager goes off and the whistle blows. Our

organization remains committed to maintaining the highest level of an all-volunteer service to our community and I know we have the full support of the Fire District and Simsbury Community to do just that.

During 2021 we lost Honorary Member and former photographer John Ross, Honorary Life Members – Bryan Lifsey, Captain Fred Arnold, George VanWormer, Richard Beard and Lieutenant Herb Salch. All who were long time volunteers for the Fire Company. The fire company also mourned the loss of Plainville Police Chief Matt Catania who served side by side our volunteer firefighters as a Simsbury police officer for 20 years.

We recognize that each volunteer that chooses to become a member is a precious gift and there are constant challenges that our volunteers face with balancing personal time and the time they are required to give the Fire Company for training and incidents. We must embrace the need for flexibility. We are committed to working closely with each volunteer to acknowledge that balance and not take advantage of their generosity. We are grateful to the district for the recent introduction of the new volunteer benefit plan which rewards the volunteer on a more frequent basis with no cap in service time unlike the former LOSAP program. We continue to look for ways to recruit additional volunteers and thank the District for efforts to retain them.

The District remains committed to the protection of its volunteer members by providing the best in personal protection equipment that meets or exceeds NFPA standards. This commitment extends to the tools and equipment that the District purchases for use by the firefighters.

While on the topic of equipment... COVID and supply chain issues continued to delay the delivery of our Quint which was delivered in March of 2022 which was 1 year late. Tower 12 was refurbished to remove excessive corrosion that had appeared. Due to an unforeseen motor failure of our ladder truck which the quint was replacing we acquired use of a ladder truck from the CT Fire Academy while Tower 12 was being refurbished. I thank the State of CT for allowing us to use this asset. The engine 8 replacement which was awarded to 4Guys apparatus was also delivered in March 2022 and completes our upgrade of all front line pumpers. I want to thank both truck committees for the work put into getting these trucks built as designed and on the line right away.

The plans for the approved new training building went out for pricing and came back way above the expected costs due to material costs and required safety design for this type of building use. The project has been paused to reevaluate to look at potential alternatives or changes that will still provide our firefighters a training building that will replicate the design features of the 100's of new apartment and town homes that have been built with egress balconies. We thank the District for their continued support of this project and training needs.

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.

Thanks to our District Maintenance employees, Supervisor Matt Pearce-Bristol and Maintenance Engineer Vic Civitillo who maintain the grounds and buildings in addition to the hydrants throughout town. A thanks to our District's Dispatching Staff and Fire Marshalls office for the continued professional service and support given to the Fire Company and community. A thank you to our Emergency Management team Mike Berry and Jim Traficante for their leadership and guidance especially with the COVID test kit giveaways.

Outside of responding to emergency calls and training, as an organization we remain committed to the community however COVID-19 continued to result in the canceling of many events early in the year. Our 75th Anniversary banquet was postponed for a second time and finally able to occur this past March (2 years late). In 2021 our fisherman's breakfast again fell victim to COVID and the elimination of an official opening day of fishing season. We were able to conduct a smaller scaled back golf tournament fund raising event in June. By the end of the year our, company picnic, dinner for our honorary life members and holiday member dinner were finally able to be held.

Simsbury Celebrates with the infamous Decorated Fire Truck Parade was able to be held to the joy of thousands who attended.

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 Auxiliary for their continued support of our members during training exercises and emergencies especially under the remaining restrictions imposed by COVID. 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.

Hopefully we continue to emerge from effects of the COVID pandemic as life returns to normal. The Volunteers of this organization along with the District continue to work together with a common goal to protect the lives and property of this community with the recognition that its volunteer force is the key to its success which will allow us to carry on for many more years to come.

In closing, I remind the residents of Simsbury that our website at www.simsburyfire.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