

THE SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF MAY 8, 2023

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Annual Report of the Fire Chief for the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company. The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company founded in partnership with the Simsbury Fire District is approaching its 79th year of service to the Simsbury community. The fire service continues to evolve as the needs of the community changes. Still providing the basics of Fire Protection the fire company also provides technical rescue services that include High Angle Rescue, Swift and Ice Water Rescue, Confined Space and Trench Rescue Services in addition to technical MVA extrication rescue services. We are also improving our training techniques to include the emerging dangers of Lithium Ion Batteries found in everything from Cell Phones, toys, Electric Scooters and bikes and also automobiles and mass transit busses. This new technology and use of stored electricity presents new challenges that has altered the approach and techniques for fire extinguishment. The Simsbury Fire Company is committed to staying on top of these challenges and those yet to come and thank the Simsbury Fire District for

its ongoing support that allows us to do the training that's needed to meet these new challenges.

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 2022 with 95 members (89 regular and 6 junior) a decrease of 4 members over the previous year 1 regular member and 3 junior members. The 1 regular member that we saw the reduction in this past year came at the end of the year when 50 year member Tom Post retired from active service having reached the mandatory retirement age of 70. I thank Tom for his unwavering dedication to the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company and the Fire Service in general and welcome him to Honorary Life Membership status as Assistant Chief.

In 2022 we responded to 748 incidents a decrease of 10 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 which 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, attending sporting events, work, 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 2022 we lost Honorary Life Members – James Forzono and Wayne Hoffman as well as Honorary Life Auxiliary Member Lois Salch. We also lost Simsbury Fire District Emeritus Thomas Moore who was a long-time supporter of the Fire Company as the Fire District Treasurer.

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. The Fire Company has organized a strong Recruitment and Retention committee who has supported a number of community event to promote the value and rewards of volunteering and being a member of this fire company. We continue to look for ways to recruit additional volunteers and thank the District for its support in this effort.

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.

Over the next 6 years we have three apparatus that will be up for replacement and we have seen significant increases in cost due to material, labor and inflation. In addition to these increases in costs we are seeing a long manufacturing window required to build and deliver this equipment. This creates additional challenges in our budgeting requirements as we remain committed to support the district financial position of not borrowing and avoid having to budget for debt service. As you will see shortly we are proposing a transfer of funds from reserves to the fire apparatus account which will allow us to move forward on the replacement of Engine 3 now and maintain our debt free position.

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.

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 and look forward to their support as our newly designated rehab unit. 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 and support of the Volunteer Fire Company.

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 redesigned 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 check out our website, contact us directly or stop by any Fire Station for more information.

Respectfully Submitted,

James A. Baldis, Chief of Department