

THE SIMSBURY VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY

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ANNUAL REPORT OF THE FIRE CHIEF MAY 13, 2024

Once again I am thankful and proud 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 80thth 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. Recently in collaboration with Simsbury Ambulance and Simsbury Police we are now responding to Cardiac Arrests to provide additional support and equipment for these emergencies. The result of this program has been very encouraging and has also strengthened the working relationship with our other emergency responders. 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, bikes, automobiles and mass transit busses. This new technology and

use of stored energy presents new challenges that has altered the approach and techniques for fire extinguishment. The Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company is committed to staying on top of these challenges and new ones that we will be facing in the future. We thank the Simsbury Fire District for its ongoing support with funding, equipment and specialized training that allows us to prepare in order 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 2023 with 92 members (88 regular and 4 junior) a decrease of 3 members over the previous year (1 regular member and 2 junior members). In 2023 we responded to 855 incidents an increase of 107 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.. Our success as an emergency first responding organization requires men and women who are highly trained, dedicated and are willing to put their own personal lives on hold in order to help a neighbor in their time of need. We are truly blessed to have such a strong dedicated force of volunteers.

From its formation in 1944, an agreement exists with the Simsbury Fire District that the members of the Simsbury Volunteer Fire Company would provide firefighting services at no charge. This 80 year old agreement continues to this day and has resulted in labor cost savings in the millions of dollars that have been and continue to be saved by Simsbury Taxpayers versus the cost of a fully or partially paid fire department. In return for this

savings of labor costs, The Simsbury Fire District is committed to providing the best in personal protective equipment, tools and training necessary to meet the constantly changing demands of today's fire service and to keep our volunteers safe. 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 2023 we lost Honorary Life Member – Daryl “Sam” Cramphin who was our oldest living member at the time of his passing. We lost Honorary Member Al Hunt, and Technical Member Joe Barrett who was instrumental in the establishment of WSIM Radio which serves the Simsbury Community over the FM airwaves 24 hours a day.

We recognize that each member of our community that chooses to become a volunteer 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 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's Recruitment and Retention committee is working hard to not only recruit new members into our organization but also to support our existing membership. The committee has supported a number of events during the year which includes many touch-a-truck events, events at the Performing Arts Center, Fire Company Open House, and Company Social Events. We continue to look for ways to recruit additional volunteers and maintain the volunteers that we currently have. I thank the District for its support in this critical effort to keep our volunteer force strong.

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.

The District faces escalating costs for equipment and apparatus that will create significant challenges in terms of cost and timing. Apparatus replacement costs have almost doubled in the past 10 years while life expectancy remains unchanged. The build time for apparatus has increased from a year to two or more requiring earlier planning and stepped up savings in order to have funds needed to purchase replacements. The District remains

committed to support its position of not borrowing funds 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 Rescue 14 and help put us into a better position to fund our aerial replacement in future years which will likely approach or exceed 2 million dollars.

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 Marshal's 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. I also congratulate them in the successful implementation of being a formal rehab unit for the

Fire Company at training and alarms. 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, as many may be aware I have announced my intention to retire as Chief of the fire company at the beginning of next year thus this will be my last formal report to the community in my position as Chief of Department. I thank the Fire Company, Auxiliary, District, and community for their continued support over the last 20 years and am confident that our combined organizations will remain strong and will continue to provide the first responder protections that sets the bar for others and keeps us all safe.

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