
Frankfort Fire Department History

Although this area was first started as a small village in 1855, it had no local government until 1879 when the village was incorporated. There was no organized fire department until 1885 when the Village Board officially established one.

Then mayor John McDonald appointed his son Herbert as the first fire chief. The rest of the department consisted of other village board members and local businessmen or residents.

The first water tower was constructed in 1895 and had a capacity of 1,300 barrels of water. The water fed through wooden, underground pipes to ten hydrants located along the nearby streets. Gravity provided the water pressure to fill the fire hoses.

In 1905 the village purchased a wooden wheeled hose cart that was physically pulled along the street by firemen.

A fire in 1910 destroyed the local livery stable and a meeting hall. Burning embers from the fire landed on top of the wooden water tower and destroyed part of its walls.

A new 100,000 gallon (2,380 barrels -42 gallons to a barrel) water tower costing \$4,950 was built in 1916 by the Chicago Bridge & Iron company. Also, at that time new cast-iron water mains were installed.

In 1923 the first gasoline powered fire truck was purchased by the village. It was a Ford Model T equipped with American LaFrance Foamite tanks. It functioned like a large soda-acid fire extinguisher.

In 1933 the Village built a new hall with a jail cell, and a double garage area for the fire department. Back then the village supported and financed the fire department.

In 1936 an official fire department was organized, supported by subscriptions and fund-raising events. Volunteer membership in the

department numbered 36.

A brand new, 1938 American La France Company fire engine was purchased by the Volunteer department in 1938. It was equipped with a 500 gallon per minute pump, heavy wooden extension ladder and other tools.

As the village and surrounding farm area became more populated the fire departments needed more equipment. A used International Harvester tank truck and a used Ford step van were added during the years.

Then in 1958 a new Ford 500 gpm pumper was purchased from the FMC Bean Company in Tipton, Indiana.

Money raised from subscriptions and social events were eventually unable to keep up with rising costs of operating the fire department, so in 1962 a tax supported Fire Protection District was formed covering Arbury Hills, Lincoln Estates, the Village, and the surrounding farms. Total land area totaled around 42 square miles. At that time the fire district was governed by three trustees appointed by the Will County board president. In the 1970's a successful referendum was held to convert the board of trustees to five locally elected trustees.

The fire protection district purchased an empty industrial building at 105 West Nebraska Street and housed six vehicles in it.

In 1972 extensive fire prevention education and inspection services started along with expanded EMS services.

Station 2 in Frankfort Square opened in 1976 and enabled the volunteer fire department to more quickly respond to emergencies there and in Lincoln Estates and Prestwick.

In 1982 land was acquired and plans made for a completely new main station at 333 West Nebraska Street in the village. The structure was

designed to house up to 8 pieces of equipment, maintenance shop, offices and training rooms. The membership roster at that time consisted of 55 volunteers and several cadets. The department was then responding to over 500 calls per year. Now it is over 4,500.

Chiefs through the years, from 1936 on included Henry Luhring, Fred Kohlhagen, Bruce Wells, Milton Batson, John Herder, Larry Nice and presently James Grady III.

A Women's Auxiliary was active for many years and provided support for many emergency operations and other programs.

A nearby structure called the "Pfaff Volunteer Station" was built to house the antique fire apparatus collection, miscellaneous historical artifacts and off season equipment.

Because it became increasingly hard to attract volunteer firefighters the district moved to hiring full time personnel. Living and sleeping quarters were added to Stations 1 and 2.

Continued residential growth in the rural areas led to the purchase of an empty building at 24420 S. LaGrange Road in Green Garden Township. The facility became a training center and Station 3. It has undergone extensive remodeling and now houses fire fighting apparatus, sleeping quarters, training room and offices.

Station 5 at 21901 Wolf Road was completed and opened in 2009. Station 4 at 7990 W. Steger Road was finished in 2010.

In 1936 the fire department probably responded to 20 or 30 calls a year. By 1970 the number grew to well over 100. By 1980, due to the growing population of the district the number of alarms was several hundred. Today the Fire Department answers over 4,500 alarms a year.