



**City of River Falls
Fire Department
2021 Annual Report**

A Message From Chief Nelson

On behalf of all the men and women that make up the River Falls Fire Department it is my privilege to present the 2021 Annual Report for the City of River Falls Fire Department.

Since its inception in 1885, the River Falls Fire Department has been focused on fulfilling its mission of serving the City of River Falls and surrounding Townships through the protection of lives and property by providing public safety education and professional emergency response. Today, our mission is accomplished by 44 dedicated members.



The Covid Pandemic hit our nation early in 2020 and presented numerous challenges for our department. Most notably was keeping our members as safe as possible while performing the various functions of the fire department. This included emergency response, code enforcement, training, committee meetings and public education. We met that challenge head on in 2020 and continued to do so in 2021.

During the summer of 2021, we had a brief respite from our battle with Covid and were able to resume on a limited basis some of the functions we previously performed prior to the Covid pandemic. This included our fire prevention activities that consist of annual commercial inspections, plan review and public fire safety education. In order to keep our skills up, we followed CDC guidelines and were able to resume face to face training. Covid reared its ugly head again in the fall of 2021. Again, by following CDC guidelines, we adapted and found ways to continue with mission of the fire department.

River Falls Fire has a philosophy of learning from the past, accepting the challenge of today and planning for tomorrow. In my eleven plus years as Chief, this philosophy has served us well and I believe has positioned us for future success.

That being said, I announced my intention to retire in early 2022. It's time for me to step away and transfer "Command" to another leader who can take the River Falls Fire Department to the next level of professionalism.

It's been a great run. I'll be forever grateful for the support of the public, the Police and Fire Commission, City Council members, the River Falls Rural Association, City officials, and especially all the fire department members; who unselfishly serve our public by providing public safety education and professional emergency response

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Scott Nelson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Scott Nelson

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River Falls Fire Department Mission, Philosophy and Goals

Mission

The River Falls Fire Department is dedicated to serving the City of River Falls and surrounding Townships through the protection of lives and property by providing public safety education and professional emergency response.

Core Values

1. Family
2. Employment
3. Fire Department

Philosophy and Goals

- 1) In carrying out its mission the River Falls Fire Department's number one priority is to deliver best possible service to its customer – the public.
- 2) In carrying out its mission, members of the Department:
 - a. Will always remember that the basic organizational behavior of the Department must be customer centered. In other words, how the Department delivers its service must consider the customer's needs, perceptions and feelings.
 - b. Will always regard everyone as a customer
 - c. Will always remember that each customer believes their incident is important.
 - d. Must continually improve their customer service performance.
 - e. Will always conduct themselves in a professional manner, treating everyone with respect, kindness, patience, and consideration.
 - f. Will always consider how they and what they are doing looks to others.
 - g. Will avoid unprofessional impression members will create and maintain a positive department appearance and image with regard to: members, facilities, fire apparatus, tools and equipment, presence and personal behavior.

Membership

In 2021 the Department had 46 volunteer members and 1 full-time Chief.

Gary Eloranta	47 years 6 months	Garrett Gill	10 years 3 months
Gene McKahan	47 years 3 months	Dustin Dodge	8 years 9 months
Pauly Cudd	40 years 10 months	Brendan Johnson	8 years 9 months
Tom Foley	36 years	Justin Wilson	8 years 9 months
Douglas Rudesill	35 years 7 months	Shawn Olson	8 years 9 months
Bill Cernohous	32 years 2 months	Brian Roquette	8 years 9 months
Troy Malmer	32 years 2 months	Mitch O'Keefe	5 years 6 months
Mike Moody	32 years 2 months	Greg Deitsche	4 years 10 months
Pauline Williams	29 years 5 months	Adam Meier	4 years 10 months
Jason Sammon	26 years 1 month	Kyle Morrow	4 years 10 months
Molly Foley	26 years 1 months	Andrew Rinneck	4 years 10 months
Mark Hilden	23 years	Chad Zess	4 years 10 months
Matt Cernohous	21 years 11 months	Phil Baumer	2 year 6 months
Dean Grisar	21 years 11 months	Bill Benedict	2 year 6 months
Evan Larsen	21 years 11 months	Ryan Ross	2 year 6 months
Ed Vlack	21 years 11 months	Brandon Boe	11 months
Sean Slaikeu	18 years	Charles Conley	11 months
Michael Fecht	14 years 8 months	Jared Hines	11 months
Danny Nicholson	14 years 6 months	Gabe Henderson	11 months
James Rimer	14 years 6 months	Chris Kamrath	11 months
Scott Nelson	11 years 3 months	Harrison Oney	11 months
Neil Engel	10 years 9 months	Cody Peterson	11 months
Robert Kerr	10 years 9 months		
Ted Slowiak	10 years 9 months		

By the Numbers:

700: Total years of service of all active 47 members

15: Average years of service of all active 47 members

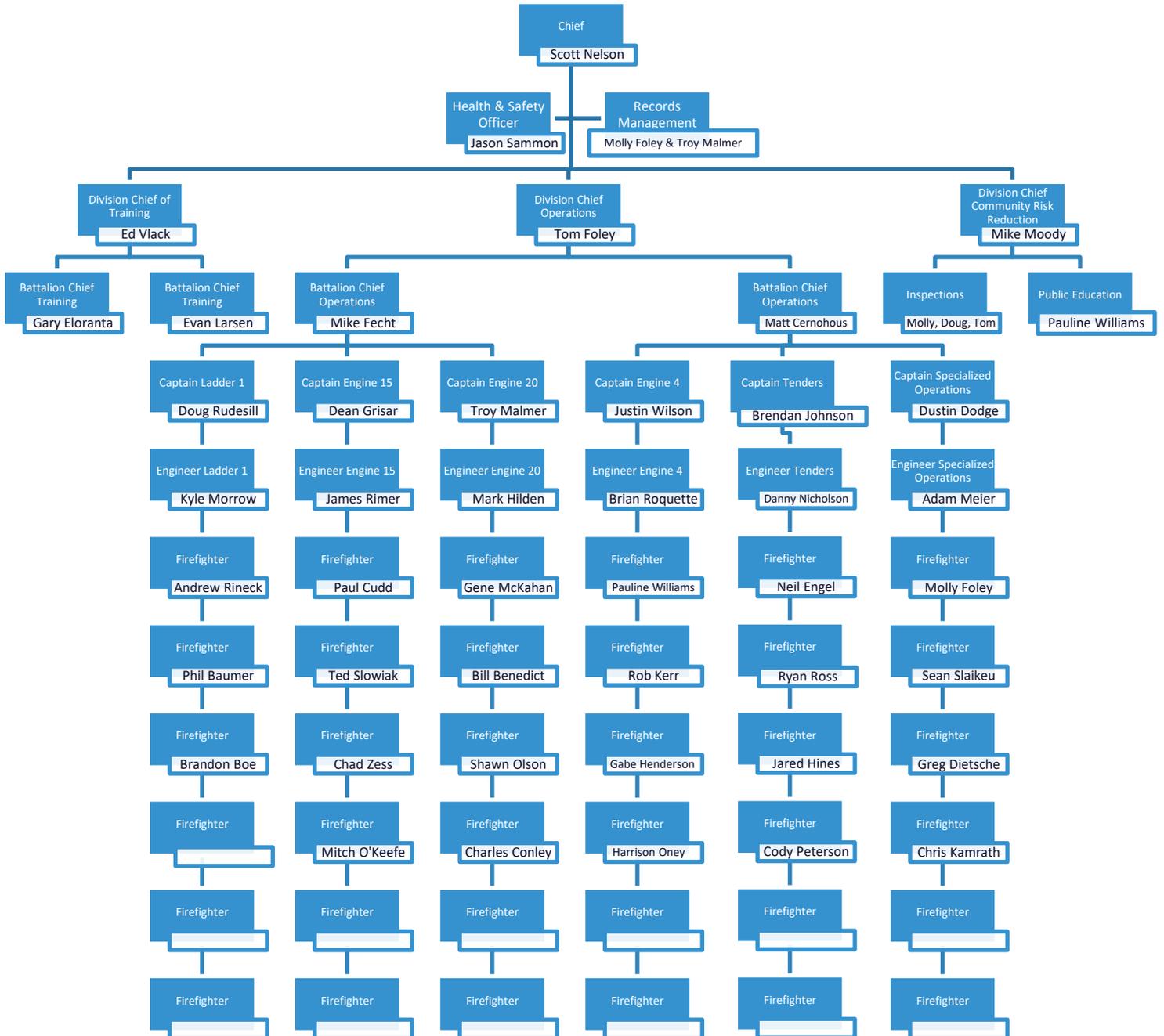
30: Average years of service of three Division Chiefs

26: Average years of service of four Battalion Chiefs

Retirements and Resignations

Gabe Lancaster – 1year 11months

Organizational Chart



Chief's Advisory Committee

The Chief's Advisory Committee continued to meet during 2021. They are facilitated by Captain Justin Wilson and are charged with examining a variety of issues related to the operation of the department. Members advise the Chief from the perspective of the entire membership. Their involvement in the recent restructuring of the department was crucial in making it a success. Today, they offer their advice on policy and operational issues. In addition, they will be involved in making recommendations to the City regarding the hiring of a new Fire Chief after Chief Nelson retires.

The group was formed in October 2018. Rather than a top-down approach, a more integrated approach was used so the entire membership could be represented. The committee was comprised of a cross-section of the entire department to represent age, gender and occupation.

Committee members:

- | | | |
|------------------------|----------|--|
| • Justin Wilson, Chair | 8 years | Captain (2-year degree in Fire Science) |
| • Gene McKahan | 47 years | Firefighter (Served in several positions) |
| • Molly Foley | 26 years | Firefighter/Inspector |
| • Matt Cernohous | 21 years | Battalion Chief |
| • Ed Vlack | 21 years | Division Chief – Training |
| • Mike Fecht | 14 years | Battalion Chief (Captain with Mpls Airport Fire) |
| • Scott Nelson | 11 years | Chief (Served with 3 other departments) |
| • Kyle Morrow | 4 years | Engineer |
| • Bill Benedict | 2 years | Firefighter (Served with other departments) |

2021 New Member Recruitment

In 2020, we were able to recruit seven additional firefighters, bringing our total number to 46 members at the beginning of 2021. It is important to note that new recruits go through extensive training prior to being able to function at emergencies. These new recruits enable us to meet our goal of providing sufficient numbers of responders to adequately protect our City and surrounding area. We were able to work with CVTC and their Covid protocols to begin this training for our newest members.



Community Risk Reduction (CRR)

Division Chief, Mike Moody

Community Risk Reduction.

The Community Risk Reduction Division is responsible for inspecting public buildings, places of employment and multi-family housing to make sure that fire prevention codes are being followed.

Fire Inspections.

Within the River Falls fire district there are over 800 properties to be inspected on an annual basis. These are performed by the Division Chief and inspectors Molly Foley, Tom Foley and Doug Rudesill. COVID created challenges again this year with getting them all done but we were able to get well over 300 inspections completed. Thanks to Molly, Tom and Doug for their dedication and getting these done. Along with inspections, the Division Chief works with Community Development and other City departments reviewing proposed building projects in the City. They monitor and oversee installation of sprinkler and alarm systems and participates in final testing of those systems. They also work with law enforcement, insurance investigators, insurance adjusters and State officials with fire cause and origin. They answers questions from the public on fire safety questions. They work with environmental companies that are performing environmental studies on properties and have questions about the history of the property in question.

Public Education

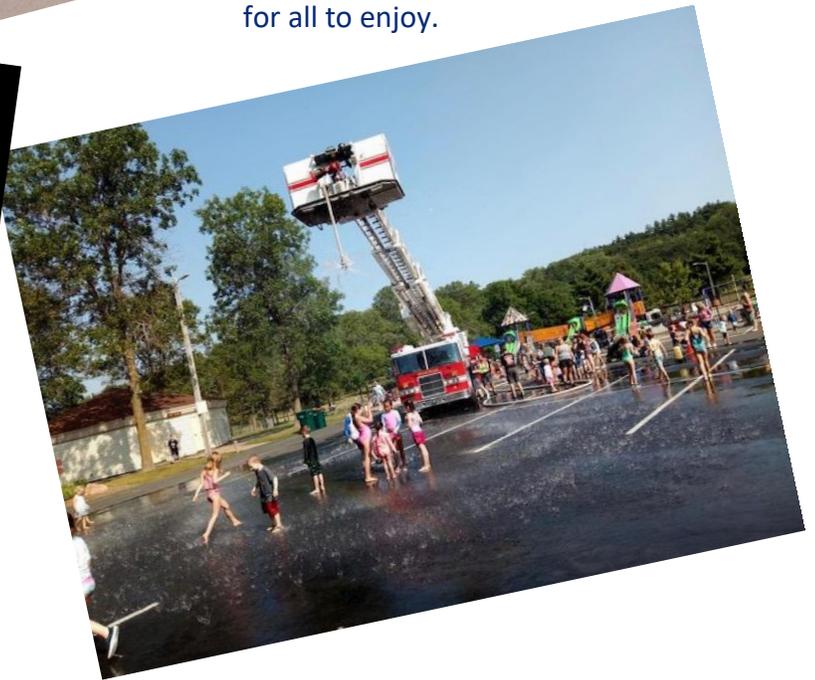
The year 2021 marked a bittersweet change for the River Falls Fire Department Fire Safety Education Program. The nearly 35-year-old “Learn Not to Burn” fire safety house, built by members of the fire department in 1982, was officially retired. In an effort to maintain this unique learning experience for students, a donation campaign was launched to replace this cornerstone of the fire safety program. With the amazing support of local businesses, organizations, area fire departments and private donations, the campaign reached its goal within 4 months! A brand-new mobile education classroom was designed and ordered from Mobile Concepts. In December of 2021 the fire department accepted delivery on the new, technology advanced, mobile classroom. The challenges of covid in 2021 were not lost on the fire safety program. Limitations on fire hall tours and in-person presentations meant firefighters were not able to present the education program to the level we have in the past. In anticipation of the arrival of the new fire safety classroom it was determined to push the annual school education programs off until the spring of 2022. At that time, we will introduce the brand new “Learn Not to Burn” fire safety trailer and present our program to the 2021-2022 classes and community.

CRR – (continued) - Public Education

In July we were honored to host a picnic for members of the fire department Legacy Club. This was a great time to honor those who have served the fire department, share stories, and reconnect. River Falls Days meant kids' water fights and teaming up for fun with firefighters. Water week with Park and

Rec had kids and adults alike enjoying several water activities and lots of laughs. We honored 9/11 with a flag display. The fire department annual open house was modified to accommodate the ever-changing dynamics of the pandemic. It was a welcomed event by many in the community. Kindergarten students enjoyed a visit from Sparky and outside tours of a fire truck.

December meant River Dazzle and the fire department dazzling up a fire truck for all to enjoy.



While 2021 meant limitations and adapting, it also reminded us of the dedication of our community in supporting fire safety education and our fire department.

CRR – (continued) – Fire Safety House

Members of the River Falls Fire Department wish to extend a huge thank you to the following organizations, fire departments, businesses and individuals for their generous financial support of the fire safety education program. We look forward to introducing the new mobile classroom very soon.

Donor List

- Turnkey Corrections and 3 Square Market
- Aladtec, Inc
- Frana Companies
- River Falls Lions Club
- Allina Health-River Falls
- Steiner Plumbing and Electric, Inc
- St Croix Valley Natural Gas
- Kwik Trip
- Dick's Fresh Market
- Krazy Kerry's Barnyard Botanicals

- River Falls State Bank
- First National Bank- River Falls
- Westconsin Credit Union-River Falls
- Royal Credit Union- River Falls
- Security Financial Bank- River Falls

- Hudson Fire Company #1
- Plum City Union Township Fire Department
- Durand Fire Relief Association, Inc
- Somerset Fire and Rescue Department
- Prescott Fire Department
- United Fire and Rescue District –Baldwin, Hammond, Woodville

- Dennis and Carol Ireland Family Community Fund of the River Falls Community Foundation, and affiliate of St Croix Valley Foundation

- Michael and Deborah Benedict
- Jim and Pam Cernohous
- Lisa and Mark Ziebarth



Operations

Division Chief, Tom Foley

The Operations division of the department is responsible for emergency response to fires and other emergencies. They also maintain apparatus readiness, facilities and standard operation procedures for emergency response. This division meets twice a month to discuss the status on projects and other day-to-day operations of the Department.

Fire Fighter Effectiveness and Apparatus Readiness are the result of our member working cross functionally internally and externally across all City Departments, Mutual Aid Departments. Plus, Continuing Education in fire behavior and tool use.



Below is the current fleet & apparatus that the Operations Division maintain and utilize

- **Chief's Car:** 2019 Chevy Tahoe
- **Engine 4:** 2001 Freightliner, 1,500 GPM
- **Engine 20:** 1989 Ford, 1,250 GPM
- **Engine 15:** 2015 Pierce, 1,500 GPM
- **Ladder 1:** 2004 Pierce, 100 ft aerial/2,000 GPM
- **Tender 1:** 1994 Freightliner, 2,000 gallon tank
- **Tender 2:** 1995 Freightliner
- **Brush 1:** 2001 Ford, 250 GPM
- **Brush 2:** 2012 Chevy, high-pressure GPM grass/brush truck
- **Kubota UTV:** 2018 Brush & Rescue Unit
- **Specialized Rescue Trailer:** 2004
- **Hazmat Trailer:** 2017
- **Fire Safety House:** 2021 Mobil Concepts
- **Ford Engine:** 1939, used for department promotions
- **Model A Ford:** Used for department promotions

Operations (continued)

Battalion Chiefs, Matt Cernohous & Michael Fecht

With large organizational changes, responsibilities of Operations have been equally divided to ensure all facets of the division are able to function efficiently. Below are some of the responsibilities of the Battalion Chiefs and Division Chief.

Name	M Fecht	M Cernohous	T Foley
Area of Assignment	Apparatus	Facilities/Station	SOG's / Administrative Regulations
Projects	Apparatus Readiness	PPE Inventory	New Equipment
	Maintenance - Checklists	Pager Inventory	Operational forecasting
	Visual layout of apparatus	Radio Inventory	Liaison to Public Works equipment repairs
	Apparatus Inventory - spreadsheets	Visual layout of station / storage	Liaison to Tom Schwalen's maintenance Team
	Apparatus Handbook	Formal/Informal suggestion process	Admin for Fire Service Manual
		Process Aid's Inventory	

Operational Achievements for 2021

- Probationary Fire Fighter Task Book
- Enhance of command and control of emergency scene
- Pump and Ladder testing completed
- Move to one radio channel for fire ground operation
- Ordered dual purpose gear for EMS assists and wildland fires
- Command tactical board for large incidents
- iPads in apparatus
- Low pressure nozzles (Firefighter effectiveness)

RIVER FALLS FIRE STAND-BY EXPECTATIONS

- Take Pride in YOUR Station
- Staff the Next Responding Apparatus
- Staff Command Center
- Listen to the Radio
- Open Location Information in Image Trend
- Document Scene Activities
- Look Over Apparatus for Equipment Familiarization
- Check SCBA Packs and Batteries
- Fill SCBA Bottles if Necessary
- Check & Remove Any Gear in Extractor and Hang to Dry
- Check & Roll Hose in Hose Dryer
- Reload Hose Trays
- Wash/ Clean Apparatus/ Bay Floor
- Take out Trash/ Recycling
- Clean Up After Yourself

Operations Mission Statement

To provide systems that will enhance effectiveness of the overall operations of the organization and maintain these systems to enable meeting the Mission of the Fire Department.

Training

Division Chief, Ed Vlack

When residents of the City of River Falls turn on a light switch, they take for granted that the light will go on and when they turn on their water faucet they take for granted that they will get water, all because the City of River Fall Municipal Utilities work to make those things happen. Likewise, when the residents of the City of River Falls are faced with a situation that needs a response by the River Falls Fire Department, the residents take for granted that the volunteer members of the River Falls Fire Department will respond at any hour of the day, 24/7, and whenever we are paged, no matter what the reason, the volunteer members of the River Falls Fire Department do respond.

Yet, few residents of the City of River Falls know that the volunteer members of the River Falls Fire Department train every Monday night of the year (except holidays) for three hours. None of the other surrounding fire departments train this often. Training on the first Monday of every month consists of vehicle and equipment familiarization and maintenance. The remaining Monday evenings in each month focus on a specific broad topic such as fire suppression or vehicle extrication in a "crawl, walk, run" format that begins with teaching skills, practicing skills, and then on the last Monday evening a simulated scenario to bring together the use of all the skills that have been emphasized that month.

While we must always keep in mind we are a VOLUNTEER fire department, not a full time fire department, we have the benefit of having five certified fire training individuals on the River Falls Fire Department and we also have the benefit of three full time fire fighters on the River Falls Fire Department.



Training - continued

The high level of training and proficiency that the volunteer members of the River Falls Fire Department have achieved is due to the following changes that have taken place since our re-organization occurred three years ago:

- Ensuring that the two positions under the Division Chief - Training are Battalion Chiefs
- Creating our 33 Core Training Categories
- Clustering a primary training subject for an entire month -- crawl, walk, run
- Sunday evening training meetings
- Formal officer training the first Monday evening of odd months
- Creating our 14 Core Officer Training Categories
- Using outside trainers
- Surprise drills to test our proficiency for certain incidents such as structure fires
- Emphasizing training for the entire month of January around firefighter safety and wellness
- Formal Wildland training now every other year in odd years
- CPR/AED training every other year in even years
- Bringing back preplans of larger structures within the city every other month during business meetings
- Creating checklists. For example, safety officer, water officer, etc.
- Creating a command sheet for incident commanders
- Beginning Public Fire Education training for all members and continuing to do so in even years
- Inviting all Captains to Sunday evening training meetings
- Providing summaries of all runs to all members

Potential goals of future training for the volunteer members of the River Falls Fire Department include:

- Sponsoring a Fire Department Training Academy in future every other or every third year.
- Training with our new dual purpose gear
- Get our own burn trailer
- Upgrading the area around the training tower to the River Falls Fire Training Center
- EMR training (Emergency Medical Response)
- Create standards to determine which officers can be assigned the Chief's vehicle
- Mass casualty incident training



Training - continued

Each volunteer member of the River Falls Fire Department is committed to abiding by our Code of Ethics. The importance of training is an integral part of our firefighter Code of Ethics, which includes that as firefighters, each member will: *uphold the standards of my profession, continually search for new and improved methods and share my knowledge and skills with my contemporaries and successors.*

Training: By the Numbers 2021

Total trainings offered - 265

Some of these included:

- Fire Investigator - 16 hours
- Fire Officer - 48 hours
- Firefighter 1 and Hazmat Ops - 120 hours
- Fire Instructor - 40 hours
- Tactics Class - 16 hours
- Fire Safety Officer - 16 hours
- Forcible Entry, VES, Search Vertical Ventilation - 5 hours
- Training Prep - 40+ sessions
- Mandatory Trainings - 46
- Over 600 hours learning, programing and teaching the new records management system
- Several multi-day Conferences



Service Area and Emergency Response

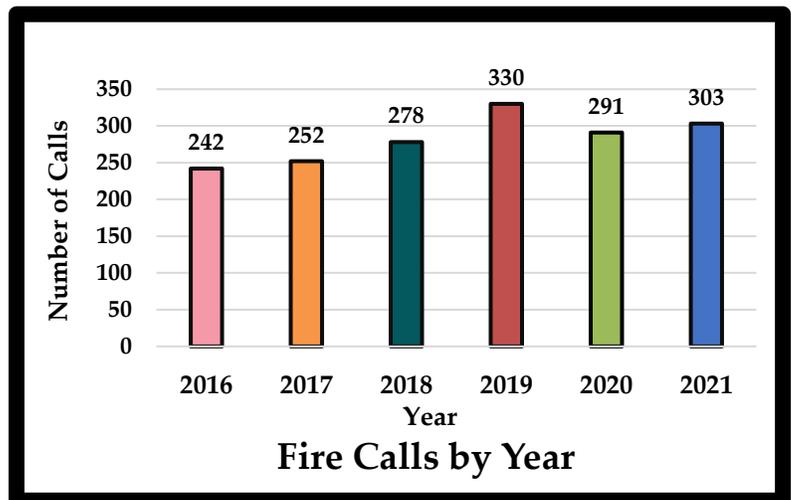
The Department continues to have a partnership with the surrounding communities. In 2021 the Rural Fire Association, which is made up of Town of Clifton, Kinnickinnic, Pleasant Valley, River Falls and, Troy, contributed 35% (\$300,203) of the total Department budget.

The Fire Department responds to a variety calls and emergencies. In 2021, the Department responded to 303 total calls varying from gas leaks, to assisting Police and Emergency Medical Services. Calls increased by 4% from 2020 to 2021

Calls are broken down into eight categories:

1. Building or Other Fire: includes cooking, vehicles, grass, and brush or dumpsters
2. Over Pressure/Rupture: Explosion (no fire)
3. Rescue and Emergency Medical Services: Trauma, illness, vehicle crashes, missing person searches, stuck elevators and follow-up visits
4. Hazardous Condition: Non-fire emergencies that include gas leaks, fuel spills, and downed power lines.
5. Service: Requests for lift assists, smoke or odor removal and aid to our neighboring communities.
6. Good Intent: Non-emergency calls for smoke, chirping smoke or CO detectors.
7. False Alarm: Unwanted or unintentional alarm, no emergency
8. Severe Weather and Natural Disaster: Assist those who have been impacted by severe weather or disaster

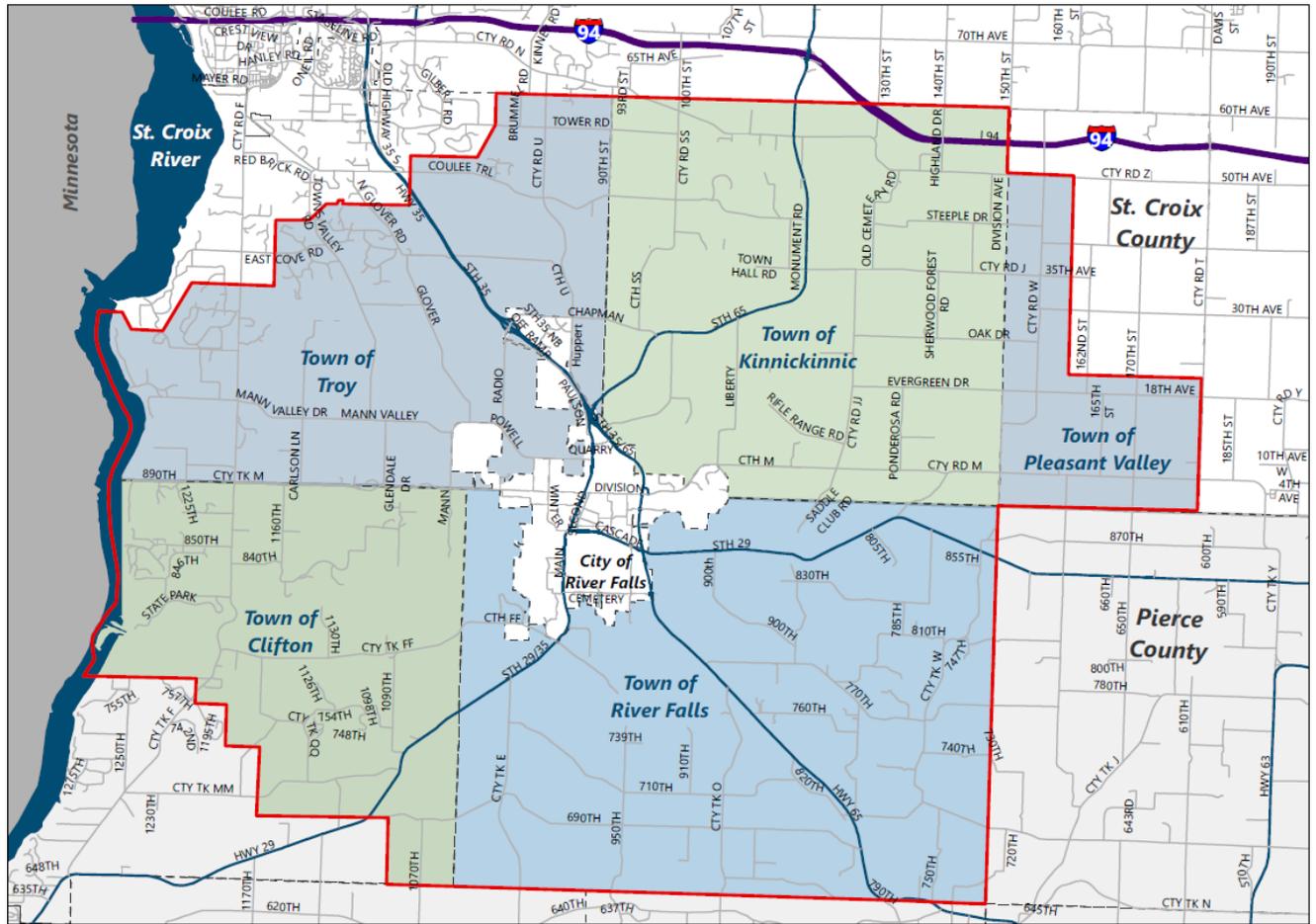
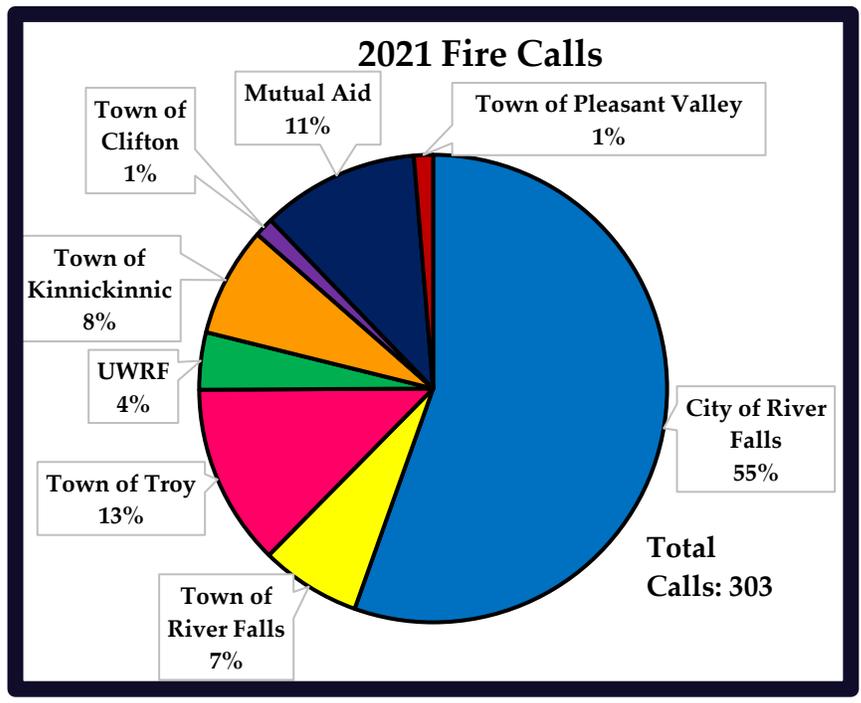
Call Response	2021
Building or Other Fire	48
Over Pressure	1
Rescue or EMS	84
Hazardous Conditions	31
Service	20
Good Intent	44
False Alarm	73
Severe Weather	2
TOTAL	303



Service Area and Emergency Response

Although the service area encompasses a large area of Pierce and St. Croix county, a majority of calls for service are still in the City.

The average response time for calls is just under ten minutes.



Future Department Goals

As we continue to grow, we have identified several projects to our work plan and goals to be met to meet the needs of the membership and the community we serve.

- **Develop strategy for replacing and hiring retiring Fire Chief. (Spring 2022)**
- **Improve inspections capabilities by training new inspectors**
- **Evaluate EMS response & training needs**
- **Budget Review and Submittal 2022-2023**
- **Training on Standard Operating Guidelines**
- **Develop plan to use new Safety House for Public Fire Education**
- **Officer training/succession planning**
- **Volunteer recruitment & retention**

- **Research funding opportunities**
 - Grants, public & private
 - Community partnerships
 - Charges for service

- **Thank You to Our Partners**
 - Rural Association, comprised of townships Clifton, Kinnikinic, Pleasant Valley, River Falls and Troy contribute 35% of the fire department budget.
 - Police and EMS departments work with the Fire department at many emergencies.
 - Other City Departments. (Development & Public Works) Work with the Fire Department to ensure new construction is “fire safe” and that rolling stock is kept operational.
 - Mutual aid partners. Fire departments from surrounding cities provide aid when resources of the River Falls fire department are exhausted.

