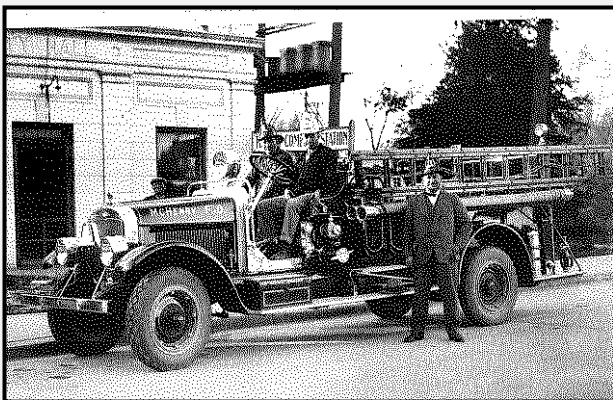


## McHenry Township Fire Protection District History



In 1939, the McHenry Township Fire Protection District was formed as a taxing body. Until this point, all fire protection was provided by the City of McHenry.

Fire department vehicles were housed at McHenry City Hall on Green Street until 1955 when a referendum was approved to build the Fire District's first fire house on Elm Street in McHenry. The current building was dedicated in June 1988 and serves today as the Fire District Headquarters, district office, and home to Company One.

In 1954, Company Two was organized in Johnsbury with 11 members. In 1963, Company Two moved from its rented quarters to a new station located on Chapel Hill Road. That location housed Company Two until 1990. A new station was constructed on Johnsbury Road and in late 1999; sleeping quarters were added on the second floor of the station.

Talks to merge Lily Lake Fire Department with McHenry Township Fire District began in 1955. The consolidation took place in 1956, and the former Lily Lake Fire Department became known as Company Three, operating out of the Village of Lakemoor Municipal Building. In 1971, a station was built on the corner of Lily Lake Road and IL Route 120. In 2001, a sleeping quarters was added to the station.

In the early days, the Fire District did not handle ambulance calls. Johnsbury Rescue Squad and McHenry Area Rescue Squad were formed to provide ambulance services. In 1983, the McHenry Area Rescue Squad merged with the McHenry Township Fire Protection District and the Johnsbury Rescue Squad followed in 1990.

Originally, a factory on Borden Street in McHenry would issue a blast from a steam whistle to notify Firefighters that there was a call. Next, sirens located at each station would sound for two minutes. Soon, each member was called by telephone. The District then moved to using the first portable receiver – about the size of a lady's purse. Next was a tone-activated pager, which is worn on a belt, and is still used today. Because of the utilization and convenience of cellular smart phones, fire personnel can now receive dispatch information over their phones, anywhere in the world.



Other historical facts include the inception of the Paid On Premise (P.O.P) program on June 1, 1986. The expansion of the P.O.P. program began February 1, 1997 at Station Two. On January 1, 1998, an additional 12-hour crew was instituted at night at Station One providing immediate ambulance response, 24 hours a day. This was the first time in the District's history that a station was staffed 24 hours.

May 1, 2000 was the start of 24 hour coverage at Station Two. On May 1, 2001 staffing began at Station Three with a 12 hour day-time shift. By May 1, 2002, Station Three was staffed 24 hours a day. Call demand increased at Station One and an additional two people were added to Station One, 24 hours a day, on November 1, 2004. An additional position was created on October 1, 2005, taking the daily staffing to four jump companies.

Due to the tax cap, the ambulance tax revenues remained flat for years, while costs continued to increase. The Fire District put forth the question of a \$0.15 tax increase in the District's ambulance fund. The tax referendum was placed on the ballot in the fall of 2002. This was the first time since 1983 that the District went to the people it protects asking for an increase in the tax rate. The referendum was approved 7,466 to 6,001.



In 1987, Steve Laing was appointed as a part-time code enforcement officer for the District. This gave the District a foundation to build a complete Fire Prevention Bureau under the authority of Steve Laing. On July 1, 1996 Laing was appointed Assistant Chief and became the District's first full time employee. Assistant Chief Laing retired October 30, 2006.

On May 1, 2005, Chief Wayne Amore became the first full-time fire chief in the District's 65 year history. The MTFPD has had seven fire chiefs in its history. Gus Freund served as chief from 1939-1949; Harold "Red" Hobbs from 1949-1960; Ed Justen from 1960-1969; Glenn Peterson, the longest serving chief, from 1969-1986; Chris Bennett from 1986-1998; Wayne Amore served as Chief from 1998-2009; Tony Huemann served as Chief from 2010-2021. Rudy Horist was appointed Chief on January 8, 2021. Each Chief was appointed to the position by the Fire District's Board of Trustees.





In March of 2006, the Board of Trustees approved the construction of Station Four on a one-and-a-half acre site in the Legend Lakes subdivision that was donated to the District as part of the annexation agreement for the subdivision. The District held a ground breaking ceremony at the Station Four site, 6300 W. Dartmoor, on June 3, 2007. Members of the George E. Johnson, Sr. family, the land donators, were present. The building was completed March 27, 2008.

Rudy Horist was hired as the Deputy Chief on June 21, 2010 after serving the Elgin Fire Department for 23 years as a Firefighter, Lieutenant, Training Officer, Captain and Assistant Chief.

On August 18, 2011, Joe Krueger and Mike Majercik were sworn in as the first full-time Battalion Chiefs working 24/48 hour shifts. Their responsibilities include apparatus and personnel management and fire ground incident commanders



In early 2014 it was decided to begin the process of building a fifth station within the District. There are many factors to consider in building a new station, including filling the shifts, owning the proper equipment and possessing the funds necessary to build and maintain a new station. It is the belief that MTFPD possesses all that is necessary to build and maintain Station 5. The purchase of 10 acres in Ringwood, near the intersection of Ringwood Road and McCullom Lake Road took place on May. Three additional acres were donated to the Village of Ringwood in an adjacent lot. Interviews for an architect took place in January 2015. Station 5 was completed and opened on December 1, 2016.

On December 18, 2014 Steve Spraker was hired as a second full-time Deputy Chief in charge of Operations after serving for 16 years in the Bourbonnais Fire Department as a Shift Commander and the Kankakee Fire Protection District as the Fire Chief. Deputy Chief Spraker was sworn in on January 5, 2015.



On December 1, 2016, Station 5 went into Service. A Dedication Ceremony and Open House took place on December 3, 2016 with over 150 in attendance.

Stations 5 is staffed with a 3-person jump company. An engine, ambulance, and brush truck are located at Station 5 along with the public education trailer and mass casualty trailer.

Call Volume and Personnel
Chief Chris Bennett 1986 – 1,800 Calls 1998 – 2,950 Calls
Chief Wayne Amore 1998 – 2,950 Calls 2009 – 4,400 Calls
Chief Tony Huemann 2009 – 4,400 Calls 2021 – 6,874 Calls
Chief Rudy Horist 2021 – 6,874 Calls

On December 28, 2020 Karen Bush was hired as Deputy Chief of Operations after serving for 24 years with the Woodstock Fire-Rescue District including 7 years as a Shift Commander.

To keep pace with the growth within the district and the increasing number of calls, the department began the transition from a predominantly part-time/POC department to one using a combination of part-time and full-time personnel. In August 2020, five full-time Lieutenants were hired followed by 12 full-time Firefighter/Paramedics in January 2021 and another 12 full-time Firefighter/Paramedics in June 2022.

As of 2022 the District protects approximately 56 square miles with a population of approximately 55,000 people. Included in the coverage area is most of McHenry Township and portions of Nunda Township along with all or parts of the municipalities of Bull Valley, City of McHenry, Holiday Hills, Village of Johnsburg, Village of Lakemoor, McCullom Lake, Ringwood, Wonder Lake and portions of unincorporated McHenry County.