

HISTORY

The Fire Department has expanded with the needs of the Village and will continue to strive for enhanced fire and rescue protection in the future.

1950s

1953-On November 4th, an organizational meeting was held to establish a volunteer fire department. The meeting brought together 66 men to discuss their service to the community.

1953-On December 11th, the Town Board authorized the establishment of the Caledonia Fire Department.

1954-Forty of the original 66 commit to volunteer their services for the new department beginning January 1st. Their equipment included a 1954 International engine, a used Ford engine with a 1000 gallon tank, and a GMC front-mount pump with an 800 gallon tank. The original fire station was located at the Caledonia Town Hall, 6922 Nicholson Road. Sieberen Dykstra was elected Fire Chief. The first recorded call for the new department was on March 26th. At 5:00 pm, a pumper and tanker responded to a grass fire at the C.N.W. Railroad siding. Training began in rescue techniques for the new department. The Town Board authorized the purchase of a rescue truck that was delivered and in service by February, 1955. The Caledonia Fire Department was now capable of responding to fire and medical emergencies.

1955-Harvey Holding was elected to the position of Fire Chief.

1960s

1961-A second fire station was opened on the east side of Town in the highway department garage at 6156 Douglas Avenue. (This fire station was not staffed until 1967 and then by one full-time firefighter, who was there only during the day. By 1972, this fire station was staffed 24 hours a day by two full-time firefighters. A mobile home was located next to the garage for living quarters.)

1962-Chief Holding was appointed to full-time Fire Chief by the Town Board. (He served as chief until 1979.) The Fire Department received a new Pirsch 1000 gpm engine with a 1000 gallon water tank.

1963-A new 11,500 square-foot fire station was built south of the Town Hall at 6900 Nicholson Road as part of the new safety complex. This building is still in use as Fire Station #1. There were 37 active paid-on-call firefighters in 1963.

1965-It was decided that full-time personnel were needed to staff the fire station. It is unclear how many were hired originally, but there were ten full-time firefighters in 1971. A new Pontiac station wagon ambulance was purchased.

1970s

1970-A 75 foot Snorkel was purchased from Pirsch Fire Apparatus. This truck had a 1000 gpm pump and a 300 gallon tank. (It remained in service until 1991.)

1973-Department members were sent to EMT training. This was a new Emergency Medical Technician level for rescue personnel. It enhanced the level of medical treatment that personnel could give to the injured or sick. This was the first class offered in the Racine area.

1976-A permanent fire station was built at the corner of 5 Mile Road and Douglas Avenue. This is Station #2, located at 6040 Douglas Avenue. This station continued to be staffed 24 hours a day by two full-time firefighters. The old station was vacated and is now used by the Highway and Park Departments, and as the Community Center.

1979-Chief Holding retired and John R. Smith was appointed to Acting Chief. There were two staffed fire stations with 15 full-time firefighters and 21 paid-on-call.

1980s

1980-John Smith was appointed to the Chief's position and served until 1991.

1981-The fire department took delivery of two new 1980 Ford Pirsch engines. They both had 1000 gpm pumps, one had a 1000 gallon tank and the other had 550 gallons. One was placed in service at Station #1 and the other, at Station #2. The department also took delivery of its first two modular rescue units; Ford E350 chassis with Marion bodies. (Both modules were refitted on new E350s in 1990). The Juvenile Firesetter program was started by Assistant Chief Robert Stedman.

1982-A fire prevention program was developed using Sparky the wonder dog. Sparky was donated to the fire department by one of its members. Sparky was a black and white dalmatian that lived at the fire station. She was trained by the firefighters to perform fire-safety demonstrations. She would Stop, Drop and Roll, crawl in low smoke and put out a lit match. She would bark when she saw a lit match or lighter. Sparky was an integral part of the department's public education program for 13 years.

1984-Engine #3, a Ford Pirsch with a 1000 gpm pump and 750 gallon tank was delivered. This engine was placed in service at Station #2; replacing a 1954 International engine.

1985-Full-time staffing was now at 17; the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief and 15 firefighters. There were 32 paid-on-call firefighters as well. The fire department took delivery of a third modular Ford E350 rescue unit. The fourth rescue unit in reserve service, was a 1975 Dodge van.

1988-The EMTs were trained to administer epinephrine for persons in anaphylactic shock. One year later, the department was trained in the use of automatic defibrillation for persons in cardiac arrest.

1989-Four additional full-time personnel were hired. This brought the level of manpower to 21; the Fire Chief, Assistant Fire Chief and 19 firefighters; with an additional 21 paid-on-call firefighters.

1990s

1990-Full-time staff increased to 23 members and paid-on-call firefighters increased to 25.

1991-Chief John Smith retires. Captain Wesley Hanson was appointed to the position of Fire Chief. Chief Hanson served in that position from July 1991 to May of 1996. The department took delivery of a 75 foot Quint aerial from Pierce Fire Apparatus. This truck has a 1500 gpm pump, 400 gallon tank, a full compliment of ground ladders and a hose bed. This vehicle replaced the 1970 snorkel. Truck #1 was quartered at Station #2.

1992-The manpower was increased to 25 full-time firefighters including the Chief and Assistant Chief, with 30 paid-on-call firefighters. The 30 paid-on-call was set by the Town Board as the maximum number allowed.

1993-Two new tankers were ordered. They are 1993 International 4900s with 2000 gallon water tanks. They have three dump valves and a hose bed. They also carry a 2000 gallon porta-tank, 20 feet of hard suction hose, and various adapters that allow us to work with mutual aid departments. A 1965 International tanker with a 3300 gallon tank and a 1962 engine were taken out of service with their arrival.

1994-The department took delivery of a 1993 Hummer. This apparatus carries a pump, water tank and hose; and will be used for brush fires and off-road vehicle accidents. It replaces two 1940 vintage military vehicles that were used as brush vehicles.

1995-Staffing levels include one Fire Chief, one Assistant Fire Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, 21 full-time firefighters, and 30 paid-on-call firefighters.

1996-In February, Battalion Chief Donald Damaschke was appointed to Assistant Fire Chief under Chief Wesley Hanson. In May, when Chief Hanson retired, Assistant Chief Damaschke was appointed to the position of Interim Fire Chief. He served in that position until February of 1997, when Chief Waselchuk was appointed by a new Police and Fire Commission.

1997-Captain Peter Waselchuk, from the Village of Allouez, Wisconsin, assumed the position of Fire Chief.

1998-In July, the first six paramedics came on line after six months of intensive training. The first ALS rescue squad operated out of Station #2. A Fire Science Internship program was established in cooperation with Gateway Technical College. This is a credited course in the AAS Fire Science curriculum.

1999-A third station was opened at 9433 Northwestern Avenue. Station #3 is a joint venture between the Town of Caledonia and the Town of Mount Pleasant. Staffing for this station is six, three from each community. Apparatus includes a Caledonia rescue and quint, and a Mount Pleasant rescue and pumper-tanker. A new International 4700LP paramedic rescue squad went into service at Station #2. It replaced one of the 1990 Ford modulars. Nine additional full-time firefighters were hired and the paid-on-call staff was reduced to six firefighters. A final decision was made to eliminate the position of paid-on-call through attrition.

2000s

2000-Three additional full-time firefighters were hired. Paid-on-call ranks were reduced to three.

2001-In January, another International 4700LP paramedic unit was purchased and is being housed at Station #3. It replaces a 1993 Ford modular. The department has 19 paramedics and 17 Emergency Medical Technicians on staff. All are cross-trained as firefighters. The department operates out of three stations with three ALS rescue squads and a BLS squad, three engines, two tankers, one 75' quint, one Hummer all-purpose vehicle, one Jeep command car, and two staff cars. In August, a new Emergency-One engine went into service at Station #1. It replaced a 1980 Ford-Pirsch as a front-line engine. The staffing level is as follows; Chief, Assistant Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, six Lieutenants, 27 Firefighters, three paid-on-call firefighters, one Administrative Assistant.

2002-On July 31st, POC firefighter Robert Holding retired from the department after 37 years of service. Robert was the last POC employed by the CFD. In October, a second new Emergency-One engine went into service at Station #2. It replaced a 1984 Ford-Pirsch as a front-line engine. A 1980 Ford-Pirsch engine was sold. The staffing level is as follows; Chief, Assistant Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, six Lieutenants, 27 Firefighters, one Administrative Assistant.

2004-On January 1st, the department celebrated its 50th anniversary. Also on January 1st, an additional firefighter was added to the staff, bringing the total number of career personnel to 40; the same number that volunteered to create the department in 1954. The staffing level is as follows; Chief, Assistant Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, six Lieutenants, 28 Firefighters, one Administrative Assistant.

2005-In June, a new command vehicle was placed into service. The Chevy Silverado 2500HD four wheel drive, with crew cab and Extended bed command center, replaced a 1995 Jeep Cherokee. Also placed into service was a rapid deployment rescue craft to assist in ice and water rescues.

2006-In July, the department's staff was increased by two firefighters. The staff of 42 includes: Chief, Assistant Chief, three Battalion Chiefs, six Lieutenants, 30 Firefighters, Administrative Assistant. In November, a 2007 International 4100LP rescue squad went into service at Station #2. A 1990 reserve Ford modular was removed from service.

2007-Three Lieutenant positions were added by promotion. The staff of Lieutenants is nine. In September, a 2007 Pierce 100' platform was placed into service at Station #3. The 1991 Pierce quint was placed in reserve and the last Ford-Pirsch was removed from service.

To be continued . . .