



Portage Fire Rescue 2025 ANNUAL REPORT



Mission Statement

Portage Fire Rescue is committed to providing the highest quality of public safety for the community, by minimizing the impact of fire and injury through public education, quality service and emergency preparedness.



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MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

Over the past year, Portage Fire Rescue has continued to respond to an increasing number of fire and emergency medical incidents while successfully adapting to the expansion of our EMS program. As call volumes and service demands evolve, our department has remained agile, enhancing staffing models, advancing training, and strategically deploying resources to ensure timely, effective response. The integration and growth of our EMS capabilities represent a significant step forward in how we serve the community, allowing us to deliver comprehensive emergency care from the moment we arrive on scene.

This year's annual report highlights the significant progress we have made across the department, most notably the development and expansion of our EMS program. As the nature of emergency response continues to shift toward increased medical call volume and complexity, we recognized the critical need to strengthen and modernize our medical response capabilities. Through advanced and ongoing training, strategic investment in state-of-the-art equipment, and the development of strong partnerships with regional healthcare providers, we have developed a comprehensive EMS program designed to enhance patient outcomes and deliver seamless care from the moment we arrive on scene. These efforts have improved response efficiency, elevated the level of pre-hospital treatment available to our residents, and reinforced our commitment to providing the highest standard of emergency medical service to the Portage community.

We encourage you to explore this report to see the dedication, achievements, and hard work of our team in action. From firefighters responding to life-threatening emergencies, to fire inspectors proactively reducing hazards, to EMS personnel delivering critical medical care, every effort is guided by a single mission: keeping our community safe.

We continue to face challenges as we move forward, remaining fully committed to our

mission, vision, and core values in service to our community.

In the interest of public safety, we provide a full range of services, including fire suppression, rescue, prevention, education, and life safety. The dedication and professionalism of our members reflect our commitment to delivering the highest level of service to those in need.

As the City of Portage grows and evolves, Portage Fire Rescue has adapted as well. We continuously work to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our operations through innovation, performance analysis, and outcome driven decision-making. Our guiding principle remains clear: service to the community comes first, and our employees are our most valuable resources.

Our recruitment and retention efforts focus on attracting individuals whose skills, character, and values align with our mission and vision. Moving forward, we will continue to provide high-quality services to Portage and surrounding communities. I am confident that our personnel will remain a reliable pillar in this community, responding with skill, empathy, and compassion during some of life's most difficult moments.

I sincerely thank Mayor Matt Fiene, the City Council members, City Administrator Justin Schoenemann, and our dedicated City staff for their continued support.

Thank you for your continued trust. As you read this report, you will see the strides we have made together in building a safer, healthier, and more resilient Portage. These accomplishments reflect the dedication of our personnel and the strong support of our community, both of which are essential to our continued success moving forward.



*Fire Chief
Troy Haase*

MISSION, VISION & VALUES

MISSION

Portage Fire Rescue is committed to providing the highest quality of public safety for the community, by minimizing the impact of fire and injury through public education, quality service and emergency preparedness.



VISION

Portage Fire Rescue will continuously strive to meet the changing needs of our community and will always strive to be leaders in the fire service. We will support a safe, healthy, and diverse workplace that is open to change. We will embrace

new technologies and techniques, focusing on training and education, to provide the highest level of customer service and satisfaction in a professional and caring manner.

VALUES

We, the members of Portage Fire Rescue, do all we can to ensure we deliver the best possible service to our citizens through smart, well trained, humble, dedicated, competent, hardworking, and safe members.

We recognize that the value of diversity helps us to work together as a team to better serve our community.

We value the public's trust and are committed to honest and ethical behavior. We hold ourselves accountable to these values. We believe in personal commitment to the organization and the community.

We seek out and value the input and opinions of members at all levels of the organization. Teamwork is the building block of our agency to improve service to the public and maintain a safe effective work environment. We believe that members have a responsibility to mentor others.

We recognize the value of change in responding to and meeting the ever-evolving needs of our customers and members. We are committed to seeking out effective methods and progressive thinking toward change.

We recognize the value of ongoing education and training.

We are a family. We are committed and accountable to each other because our lives depend on it. We value the role each member plays in our organization. We respect those that came before us and will strive to make the organization better for those who follow.

We believe communication is essential to the cohesiveness and performance of our organization. We are committed to providing effective and responsive means of communication throughout the organization and community.



ABOUT US

Portage Fire Rescue is committed to providing the highest level of service by placing the needs of the community first. The agency actively engages with residents, valuing and respecting the diversity of both internal staff and the community we serve. Through feedback, outreach, and collaborative communication, we ensure that all community members are informed about and have access to the programs and services we provide.

Our fire response coverage spans 170 square miles, serving the Townships of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, and Pacific. With the expansion of our EMS program, our medical response area now covers 232 square miles, including the Village of Pardeeville, Township of Marcellon and portions of the Township of Wycena.

Portage Fire Rescue provides a comprehensive range of services, including:

- Critical Fire Suppression
- Advanced Life Support (ALS) EMS care and transport
- Specialized Technical Teams, including technical rescue, water rescue, and hazardous materials response
- Fire Prevention and Public Education
- Fire Investigation
- Mutual Aid Support to neighboring jurisdictions

Through this broad spectrum of services, the agency ensures timely, professional, and compassionate response to the residents of Portage and surrounding communities.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



MEMBERSHIP

THE PORTAGE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

The Portage Firefighter's Association is an organization composed of firefighters employed by the City of Portage. The purpose of the Portage Firefighter's Association is to govern the social activities of the Association, to manage the finances and to set guidelines and rules for its members,

not covered by department policy or the City of Portage Ordinances. The Association membership shall consist of Career, Paid-on-Call, and Honorary Members. The Association is governed by the Officers and Executive Committee.

Association Officers

President: Troy Haase
Secretary: Ryan Armson
Melissa Pohl
Treasurer: John Loomans

Executive Committee

Terry Kibby
Brayden Asch
Melissa Pohl
Austin Smothers
Charles Coppernoll

INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS

The International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF) is a labor organization representing the 22 full-time members of Portage Fire Rescue. Established as the leading voice for professional fire fighters and emergency medical personnel, the IAFF represents more than 358,786 members across the United States and Canada. The organization has been a driving force behind nearly every major advancement in fire and emergency services in the 21st century, including improved safety standards, enhanced training programs, and advocacy for better working conditions.

Portage Fire Rescue personnel are proud members of IAFF Local 2775, which represents the interests of career members. Local 2775 provides guidance, resources, and advocacy on issues that affect hours, wages, benefits, and overall conditions of employment, ensuring that their members are supported both on and off the job.

The Local 2775 membership is governed by a structured set of rules and policies, in addition to Portage Fire Rescue regulations and the City of Portage ordinances. Leadership is provided by the Executive Committee, which ensures that the concerns of all members are represented and addressed effectively.

The following officers govern the membership:

IAFF Local 2775 Members

President: Matt Asch
Vice President: Thomas Krueger
Secretary: Ryan Armson
Treasurer: Matt Gavinski

The members of Portage Fire Rescue and IAFF Local 2775 operate under a labor contract with the City of Portage, currently in effect through December 31, 2026. This agreement formalizes the rights, responsibilities, and working conditions of our professional fire fighters while supporting the overall mission of the department: protecting the community through highly trained, dedicated, and well-supported personnel.

Membership in the IAFF ensures that Portage Fire Rescue remains aligned with national best practices in fire service, safety standards, and labor advocacy helping to maintain a professional, effective, and resilient workforce capable of responding to the complex challenges of modern fire and EMS operations.



MEMBERSHIP

Member Name	Rank	Hire Date	Years of Service
Troy Haase	Fire Chief	11/30/2020	5.25
Cody Doucette	Assistant Chief of EMS	9/25/2023	2.42
Terry Kibby	Deputy Chief	10/13/2000	25.33
Matthew Asch	Captain/Engineer/EMT	10/9/1984	28.08
Thomas Krueger	Paramedic Captain	6/15/2023	2.67
Colten Kinnison	Paramedic Captain	11/5/2024	1.25
Melissa Pohl	Captain	6/22/2005	20.67
Michael Nachreiner	Captain	8/20/2009	16.50
Charles Coppernoll	Captain	12/19/2018	7.17
Ryan Armson	Lieutenant/Inspector/EMT	8/20/2009	16.50
Joshua Meyer	Lieutenant/Engineer/EMT	6/29/2021	4.67
Matthew Gavinski	Lieutenant/Engineer/EMT	3/20/2015	10.92
Tyler Greenwood	Paramedic Lieutenant	12/16/2025	1.17
Austin Smothers	Lieutenant	9/28/2021	4.42
Mihaela Overland	Firefighter	1/6/2015	11.08
Kurtis Fries	Firefighter	10/14/2015	10.33
Johnathan Loomans	Firefighter/EMT	3/5/2021	4.92
Monte Gavinski	Firefighter	7/17/2022	3.58
Brayden Asch	Firefighter/EMT	1/6/2023	3.08
Melissa Goden Navarro	Firefighter/EMT	3/17/2023	2.92
Matthew Graf	Firefighter/Paramedic	5/8/2023	2.80
Emily Bulgrin	Firefighter/EMT	5/30/2023	2.75
Noah Tredinnick	Firefighter/EMT	5/30/2023	2.75
Karl Schwoerer	Firefighter/EMT	8/8/2024	1.50
Max Johnson	Firefighter/EMT	9/3/2024	1.42
Michael Nachreiner Jr.	Cadet/Firefighter	9/3/2024	1.42
Brody Kayartz	Cadet/Firefighter	9/3/2024	1.42
Lexin Aldridge	Firefighter/EMT	11/5/2024	1.25
B. J. Breecher	Firefighter/AEMT	11/5/2024	1.25
Austin England	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Joseph Hinchey	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Timothy Miller	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Ryan Nelson	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Sydney Spatola	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Jerry Weatherby	Firefighter/Paramedic	11/5/2024	1.25
Robert Koch	Firefighter/AEMT	11/5/2024	1.17
Brian Wheelock	Firefighter	3/3/2025	.92
Jenny Eberle	Administrative Assistant/FF	5/5/2025	.75
Hudson Tredinnick	Firefighter	5/30/2025	.75
Kaidon Cowley	Firefighter	7/29/2025	.58
Vanessa Coppernoll	Firefighter	8/11/2025	.5
Megan Bucholtz	Firefighter	8/27/2025	.5
Denise Schreiner	Firefighter/Paramedic	12/18/2025	.17
Alex Korth	Firefighter/Paramedic	1/5/2026	.08
Adelaide Gavinski	Firefighter/Cadet	1/21/2026	.05

MEMBERSHIP



The Portage Community School District plays a vital role in supporting Portage Fire Rescue by fostering relationships with local youth and introducing them to the world of emergency services. Engaging young people early is essential to building a lifelong connection with public safety, whether as future first responders or as informed, supportive members of the community.

Our Firefighter Cadet Program provides students with a safe, structured, and educational environment to learn about local fire and rescue operations. Beyond exposing youth to emergency services, the program develops valuable life skills such as teamwork, leadership, responsibility, and commitment. It also serves as an effective recruitment pathway, helping to ensure the agency continues to attract motivated and capable individuals for years to come.

This year, Michael Nachreiner Jr., Brody Kayartz, Adelaide Gavinski, and Donovan Navone are students at Portage High School and have actively participated in our cadet program. Michael, Brody, and Adelaide have successfully completed the requirements to join Portage Fire Rescue as Paid-on-Call members, demonstrating exceptional dedication and a commitment to serving their community. Programs like this not only provide personal growth opportunities for youth but also strengthen the future of public safety in Portage.

Michael Nachreiner Jr.



Brody Kayartz



Adelaide Gavinski



Donovan Navone



Front Row Left to Right: Mihaela Overland, Jenny Eberle, Cody Doucette, Troy Haase, Monte Gavinski, Melissa Goden Navarro. **Second Row Left to Right:** Charles Coppernoll, Austin Smothers, Melissa Pohl, Kaidon Cowley, Matt Gavinski, Ryan Nelson, Emily Bulgrin, Ryan Armson, Kurtis Fries, Lexin Aldridge, Karl Schwoerer, Joseph Hinchey, Megan Bucholtz, Adelaide Gavinski, Donovan Navone. **Third Row Left to Right:** Thomas Krueger, Hudson Tredinnick, Terry Kibby, Mike Nachreiner, Tyler Greenwood, Brody Kayartz, Michael Nachreiner, Jr., Brayden Asch, John Loomans, Max Johnson, Colten Kinnison, Austin England, Brian Wheelock, Matt Graf, Matt Asch. **Missing:** B.J. Brecher, Vanessa Coppernoll, Bob Koch, Alex Korth, Joshua Meyer, Tim Miller, Denise Schreiner, Sydney Spatola, Noah Tredinnick, and Jerry Weatherby.

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

CITY OF PORTAGE

City Council & Staff Members

Mayor: Matthew Fiene

Aldersperson by District:

District 1: David Trantow

District 2: Shannon Dunahee

District 3: David Paul

District 4: Steven Rohrbeck

District 5: Tim Green

Administrator: Justin Schoenemann

Attorney: Jesse Spankowski

District 6: Kyle Bernander

District 7: Karyn Wetzel

District 8: Amy Schlinkert

District 9: Christopher Crawley

Clerk: Rebecca Ness

Treasurer: Jennifer Becker

POLICE & FIRE COMMISSION

Appointed Officials

President: Thomas Drury

Commissioner: Mitchel Craig

Commissioner: Kathryn Miller

Commissioner: Jeynell Boeck

Commissioner: Duane Pixler

TOWN OF CALEDONIA

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Dave Considine

Supervisor: Tom Considine

Supervisor: James Zamzow

Clerk: Barb Davis

Treasurer: Kara Paske

TOWN OF FORT WINNEBAGO

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: William Schroeder, Sr.

Supervisor: Gary Bohman

Supervisor: Dan Demott

Clerk: Mark Considine

Treasurer: Kelly Schaller

TOWN OF LEWISTON

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Bruce Weyh

Supervisor: Tom Summers

Supervisor: Matt Bremer

Clerk: Thomas Klappstein

Treasurer: Stephanie Warren

TOWN OF PACIFIC

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Steven Pate

Supervisor: Craig Crawley

Supervisor: Julie Kayartz

Supervisor: Byron Kershaw

Supervisor: Charlie Kirk

Clerk: Marlo Gustafson

Treasurer: Mark Zimmerman

GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

VILLAGE OF PARDEEVILLE

Village Board

President: Angela Engelmann
Trustee: Kristie Chapman
Trustee: Justin Kopfhamer
Trustee: Tom Nakielski

Trustee: Michael Babcock
Trustee: Fred Kocher
Trustee: Lloyd Miller

TOWN OF MARCELLON

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Scott Holland
Supervisor: Cory Rohrbeck
Supervisor: Steven Wenzel

Clerk: Randell Fox
Treasurer: Judith Jerome

TOWN OF WYOCENA

Elected & Appointed Officials

Chairperson: Airling Gunderson
Supervisor: Ken Lezow
Supervisor: Jim Schmidt

Clerk: Michelle Goldade
Treasurer: Ellen Pulver

2025 EMS WEEK PROCLAMATION

Mayor Matt Fiene presented an EMS Proclamation to Portage Fire Rescue to recognize EMS Week in 2025. The proclamation was based on the 2025 EMS Week theme **“We Care. For Everyone.”**

The proclamation stated,

WHEREAS, emergency medical services is a vital public service; and

WHEREAS, the members of emergency medical services teams are ready to provide lifesaving care to those in need 24 hours a day, seven days a week; and

WHEREAS, access to quality emergency care dramatically improves the survival and recovery rate of those who experience sudden illness or injury; and

WHEREAS, emergency medical services fills healthcare gaps by providing important, out-of-hospital care, including preventative medicine, follow-up care, and access to telemedicine; and

WHEREAS, the emergency medical services system consists of first responders, emergency medical technicians, paramedics, dispatchers, firefighters, police

officers, educators, administrators, pre-hospital nurses, emergency nurses, emergency physicians, trained members of the public, and other out of hospital medical care providers; and

WHEREAS, the members of emergency medical services teams, whether career or volunteer, engage in thousands of hours of specialized training and continuing education to enhance their lifesaving skills.



Mayor Fiene presented the EMS Proclamation to Sydney Spatola, Cody Doucette, Thomas Krueger, and Lexin Aldridge

FIRE PROTECTION AREA

AREA OF COVERAGE

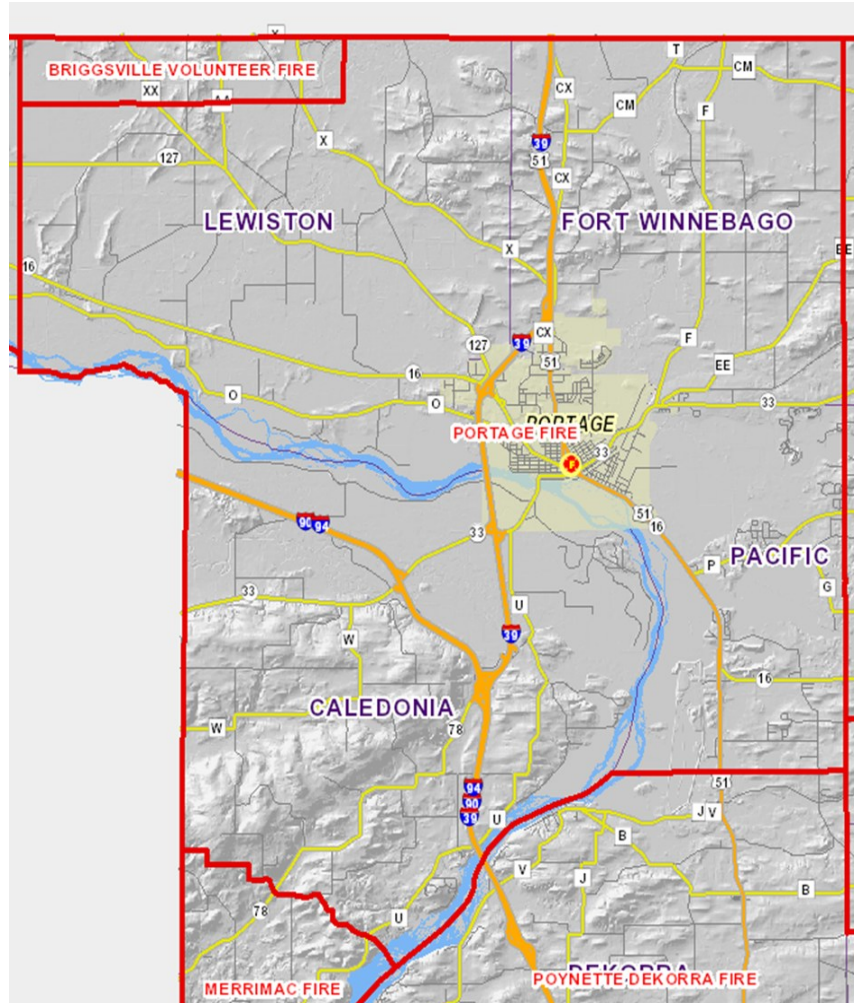
Portage Fire Rescue provides comprehensive fire protection and emergency response services to approximately 16,000 residents across 170 square miles. Our service area includes the City of Portage and the Towns of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, and Pacific, encompassing more than 21.8% of Columbia County. This broad geographic responsibility highlights the department's critical role in safeguarding lives, property, and infrastructure throughout a significant portion of the county.

TOWNSHIP WATER SUPPLY

Water is the lifeline of firefighting, especially in rural areas where access is often limited. Unlike urban environments with established hydrant systems, rural fire suppression frequently requires water shuttle operations, drafting from ponds or streams, and careful water management to sustain firefighting efforts. An adequate and reliable water supply directly impacts operational effectiveness, property preservation, and firefighter safety. Pre-planning water sources, maintaining appropriate equipment, and coordinating resources are essential to overcoming these challenges. In rural firefighting, every drop counts, preparedness saves lives and property.

Portage Fire Rescue relies on two 2,000-gallon tenders jointly owned by the townships to transport water to emergency scenes. Combined with the water carried on our two engines, the department can initially deploy approximately 5,750 gallons of water, an amount sufficient to suppress the majority of fires within our response area. When incidents require additional personnel or water resources, the department activates the Columbia County Division 135 Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS) to request supplemental assistance.

In rural communities, mutual aid partnerships are critical to ensuring adequate staffing, water supply, and specialized resources. With limited staffing and extended response distances, neighboring departments play an essential role in supporting emergency operations. The coordination of additional tenders, personnel, and specialized equipment enhances operational effectiveness, improves firefighter safety, and strengthens our ability to protect lives and property. Strong mutual aid agreements and ongoing joint training ensure seamless cooperation when every second counts. In rural firefighting, teamwork is not simply beneficial, it is essential.



FIRE PROTECTION COSTS

Providing high-quality fire protection services is essential to the safety and well-being of our residents. However, the specialized equipment, apparatus, and ongoing training required to deliver these services represent a significant financial investment.

The surrounding Townships do not operate independent fire departments; instead, they contract with Portage Fire Rescue to provide fire protection and emergency response services. When the department responds to incidents within a contracted Township, the Township is billed for those services. The Township then seeks reimbursement from the responsible party or property owner who received the services.

This contractual model ensures that residents receive professional, well-equipped fire protection while allowing Townships to efficiently manage the financial responsibilities associated with maintaining emergency services.

FIRE OPERATIONS DIVISION

At Portage Fire Rescue (PFR), one clear mission guides everything we do: protecting lives, property, and the environment through efficiency, professionalism, and dedication. Every response is built on the strength of well-trained personnel, modern equipment, and an unwavering commitment to public safety. Throughout the past year, we have continued investing in these essential components to ensure we meet the needs of our community.

The right equipment can mean the difference between life and death. This year, we strengthened our fleet and operational readiness through the addition and upgrade of key firefighting and medical resources. Improvements in personal protective equipment, fire suppression tools, and advanced life-saving medical devices enable our personnel to respond more quickly, operate more effectively, and maintain the highest safety standards on emergency scenes.

While equipment is critical, our greatest asset remains our people. Our firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, and support staff form the backbone of our organization. Their dedication, experience, and training allow them to manage fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials incidents, and technical rescues with confidence and professionalism. We continue to emphasize ongoing education, advanced certifications, and leadership development to ensure our team remains prepared for any emergency.

Highly trained firefighter/EMS personnel are essential to the safety and well-being of our community. As first responders, they are called upon to make rapid, high-stakes decisions in dynamic and often dangerous environments. Their comprehensive training in fire suppression, emergency medical care, hazardous materials response, and rescue operations equips them to act decisively and effectively. Beyond technical skill, their compassion and commitment to service ensure every call is handled with professionalism and care. Continued investment in training strengthens both individual performance and the overall resilience of our emergency

response system.

Each incident we respond to, whether a structure fire, medical emergency, or hazardous materials event, is approached with two primary objectives: saving lives and reducing property loss. Through rapid deployment, coordinated tactics, and proactive fire prevention efforts, we work diligently to lessen the impact of emergencies on our residents and businesses.

In 2025, Portage Fire Rescue responded to 527 fire and rescue incidents, a decrease from 608 incidents in 2024. Both overall call volume and fire responses declined during the year. Despite this reduction in activity, our focus on rapid response, effective fireground operations, and proactive prevention efforts continued to produce strong outcomes. Total fire loss decreased, and the value of property saved reached \$1,527,340, clear evidence of the department's commitment to protecting lives and preserving property through strategic response and community risk reduction initiatives.

Reflecting on the past year, we are proud of the progress we have made and the measurable impact we continue to have on the safety of our community. Our achievements are a direct result of the unwavering dedication of our personnel, the strong support of our residents and municipal partners, and the strategic investments that enhance our operational readiness. Portage Fire Rescue remains steadfast in its commitment to continuous improvement, fiscal responsibility, and service excellence. As we look to the future, we will continue to strengthen our capabilities, adapt to emerging challenges, and uphold the highest standards of public safety ensuring we are always ready to respond when our community needs us most.



*Captain
Matthew Asch*

EMS DIVISION

The past year marked a defining chapter in the history of Portage Fire Rescue as we successfully transitioned to providing full emergency medical services (EMS) for our community.

In January of 2025, our agency officially assumed full responsibility for EMS response, an historic milestone and a significant advancement in the level of service provided to our residents. This achievement was the result of months of careful planning, coordination, and unwavering commitment from our firefighters, officers, city leadership, and support staff. Through collaboration and strategic preparation, we ensured a seamless transition focused on maintaining uninterrupted, high-quality patient care.

With our expanded team in place, we are now able to staff the required ambulances, improve system reliability, and reduce response times, ensuring that advanced medical care reaches our residents quickly when seconds matter most. Our firefighter/paramedics and EMTs stand ready to deliver lifesaving treatment, provide



MedFlight Helicopters Respond to Major Vehicle Accident

compassionate patient care, and respond professionally to a wide range of medical emergencies.

While the launch of full EMS operations represents a major accomplishment, it also marks the beginning of a new era in advanced pre-hospital care for our community. We remain firmly committed to continuous improvement

by investing in advanced medical training, enhanced clinical capabilities, modern equipment, and state-of-the-art technology. As part of this commitment, we are exploring the implementation of carrying and administering



Three Fully Equipped Paramedic Ambulances Ready for Service

whole blood products in the field, as well as initiating IV antibiotic therapy for trauma and high-risk infection patients.

The ability to provide blood transfusions prior to hospital arrival can significantly improve survival outcomes for patients experiencing severe traumatic blood loss. Early blood administration helps stabilize patients sooner, supports oxygen delivery to vital organs, and can reduce complications associated with delayed treatment. By bringing this hospital-level intervention directly to the scene, we shorten the time to definitive care when every minute is critical.

Similarly, the early administration of IV antibiotics for trauma-related injuries and suspected severe infections has been shown to improve patient outcomes by reducing the progression of infection and lowering the risk of sepsis. Providing this treatment in the pre-hospital setting allows us to begin critical care sooner, potentially decreasing hospital stays and improving overall recovery rates.

These new progressive interventions represent our ongoing commitment to delivering the highest standard of emergency medical care.

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EMS DIVISION

By expanding our clinical capabilities, Portage Fire Rescue continues to elevate the level of service provided to our residents, ensuring that lifesaving care begins the moment we arrive at a patient's side.

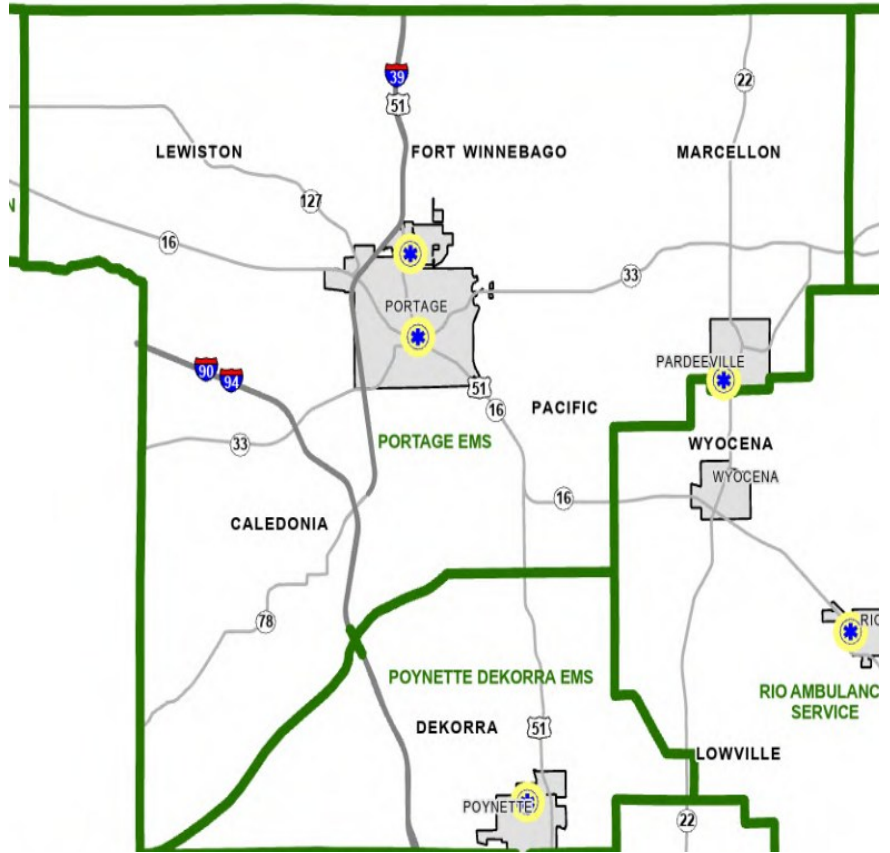
Community engagement remains a cornerstone of our mission, vision, and values. Through CPR training, public education initiatives, and emergency preparedness programs, we strive to equip residents with the knowledge and confidence to respond effectively during emergencies. Prevention, education, and preparedness are vital components of a strong and resilient community.

We extend our sincere appreciation to our dedicated firefighters, EMS personnel, and leadership team whose professionalism and determination made this transition possible. Their commitment to excellence and service is the driving force behind our continued success.

Today, Portage Fire Rescue provides EMS services to the City of Portage; the Towns of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, Pacific, and Marcellon; a portion of the Town of Wyocena; and now the Village of Pardeeville. To support this expanded coverage area, we hired three additional firefighter/paramedics to strengthen our response capabilities and ensure consistent, high-quality service delivery.

Our total response area now encompasses approximately 20,600 residents across 232 square miles, representing a significant responsibility and an opportunity to make a meaningful impact on more lives than ever before. This growth has required a thoughtful and strategic approach to deployment, staffing, and resource management to ensure that service levels remain consistent across all jurisdictions, regardless of distance or call volume.

In a rural setting, the availability of paramedics is especially important due to longer response and transport times, as well as limited proximity to hospitals and advanced care facilities. Patients in these areas often rely on the arriving EMS crew to



Portage Fire Rescue Response Area

deliver a higher level of care for a longer period of time. Paramedics are trained to provide advanced interventions such as cardiac monitoring, medication administration, airway management, and critical decision-making on scene, which can significantly improve outcomes in emergencies where every minute matters. Ensuring paramedic-level coverage across our service area helps bridge the gap between the point of illness or injury and definitive care, bringing advanced medical capabilities directly to our residents when they need it most.

Through our continued growth, our teams strong leadership, and the commitment of our personnel, we are enhancing the safety, health, and resilience of our community now and into the future.



*Assistant Chief of EMS
Cody Doucette*

EMS DIVISION

After one full year of providing Emergency Medical Services (EMS), Portage Fire Rescue has built a strong clinical foundation centered on quality care, accountability, and continuous improvement. The successful transition to full EMS operations required not only operational readiness, but also engaged progressive medical direction to ensure the highest standards of patient care.

Strong medical oversight has been essential throughout our first year of service. An active and involved medical director ensures protocol compliance, supports ongoing education, and strengthens the overall quality of care delivered in the field. This leadership directly impacts patient outcomes and reinforces the professionalism and effectiveness of our ambulance service.

SSM Health Wisconsin and Madison Emergency Physicians (MEP) partnered with Portage Fire Rescue to help establish a comprehensive and forward-thinking prehospital medicine program. Over the past year, this partnership has advanced the level of care delivered to our community, beginning at the patient's first contact with emergency personnel and continuing through coordination with receiving healthcare facilities. Together, we have built a system that emphasizes progressive medical direction, structured education, and intentional quality assurance.

Dr. Aurora Lybeck has served as the MEP Medical Director throughout our first year of EMS operations, providing vital clinical leadership and serving as a bridge between our EMS personnel and the broader healthcare system.



*Aurora Lybeck, MD
MEP/Portage Fire
Rescue's Medical
Director*

Under her guidance, our program has focused on:



Protocol Development and Clinical Oversight
Ensuring EMS protocols reflect the latest evidence-based practices, national standards, and state regulations, allowing paramedics and EMTs to deliver safe, effective, and progressive care in the field.

Quality Assurance and System Improvement
Reviewing patient care reports, analyzing case



Launching Our Full EMS Service: First Day in the Field, Tyler Greenwood, Thomas Krueger, BJ Breecher, Troy Haase, Jerry Weatherby, Ryan Nelson, and Matt Asch.

outcomes, and identifying opportunities for growth to maintain and elevate our standard of care.

Hospital Collaboration and Continuity of Care
Strengthening relationships with receiving hospitals to promote smooth patient transitions and coordinated treatment.

During our first year of EMS service, ongoing education and clinical training have remained top priorities. EMS is a rapidly evolving field, and maintaining excellence requires consistent learning and refinement.

Continued—Page 16

EMS DIVISION

Through the support of medical leadership, our personnel have benefited from:

- Structured hands-on training and scenario-based instruction.
- Routine skills assessments to ensure proficiency in airway management, trauma care, and cardiac interventions.
- Continued professional development opportunities that expand certifications and clinical expertise.

This commitment enhances decision-making in high-pressure environments, ensures effective use of advanced life support (ALS) resources, and strengthens coordination during multi-agency responses.

MEP physicians and staff played a critical role in establishing the clinical framework that guided our first year of operations. Their leadership in curriculum development, structured instruction, and formal skills evaluations helped ensure our firefighter/EMS personnel were prepared to deliver exceptional prehospital care from day one.

After one year of service, it is clear that active medical direction is more than a regulatory requirement, it is a cornerstone of clinical excellence. Strong oversight improves training, enhances patient outcomes, and strengthens the entire emergency response system.



Chief Haase recognized the fulltime members with a Unit Citation Award for their exceptional commitment, professionalism, and dedication throughout the first full year of our newly established EMS program.

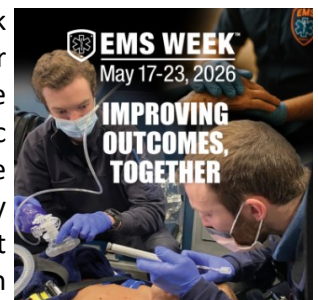
Portage Fire Rescue extends sincere appreciation to Dr. Aurora Lybeck, Dr. Kacey Kronenfeld, SSM Health EMS Regional Coordinator Stephanie Lehman, and Emergency Medical Services Liaison Dustin Weber for their leadership and dedication throughout this inaugural year.

As we move beyond our first year of EMS service, we remain committed to refining our systems, advancing our clinical capabilities, and delivering high-quality, compassionate emergency medical care to every resident we serve.



Chief Haase recognized members upon completion of their one-year probationary period. Ryan Nelson, B.J. Breecher, Tim Miller, Bob Koch, Sydney Spatola, Austin England, Cody Doucette, Thomas Krueger, Jerry Weatherby, John Loomans, Lexin Aldridge, Colten Kinnison, Karl Schwoerer, Tyler Greenwood, and Matt Graf.

Portage Fire Rescue will be celebrating EMS Week May 17-23, 2026, providing an important opportunity to recognize the dedication, skill, and compassion of the emergency medical professionals who serve our community every day. It highlights the critical role that paramedics and EMTs play in delivering lifesaving care, often during the most challenging and unpredictable circumstances. EMS Week not only honors their commitment and sacrifice but also raises public awareness about the essential services they provide and the impact they have on the health and safety of our residents.



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION DIVISION

At Portage Fire Rescue, our mission extends far beyond emergency response. While we stand ready to act when emergencies occur, we are equally committed to preventing them. Through a comprehensive fire inspection program and proactive community risk reduction (CRR) initiatives, we work diligently to protect residents, businesses, and first responders. These prevention focused efforts are essential to minimizing fire hazards, reducing property loss, and ultimately saving lives.

Fire inspections remain one of the most effective tools in safeguarding our community. By identifying potential hazards, such as faulty electrical systems, obstructed exits, or improper storage of flammable materials, our inspectors help eliminate risks before they result in an emergency. Routine inspections of commercial properties, schools, multi-family residences, and public buildings ensure compliance with state and local fire codes while reinforcing a culture of safety. When property owners promptly address identified deficiencies, they not only protect their investments but also strengthen the overall safety of our community.

In the past year, our inspection program completed 1,824 fire inspections, along with numerous liquor license reviews, motel license inspections, site plan reviews, occupancy inspections, and life safety system testing. All inspections required by the State of Wisconsin were completed, with a 50% correction rate reflecting proactive compliance and improved safety outcomes. Beyond enforcement, our Community Risk Reduction Specialist takes pride in partnering with business owners, offering practical fire prevention guidance and solutions that enhance both safety and operational continuity.

Community Risk Reduction is a strategic and data-driven approach to identifying and addressing risks before they lead to emergencies. Our CRR initiatives include fire prevention education, smoke and CO alarm installation programs, emergency preparedness training, and targeted outreach to vulnerable populations. By collaborating with schools, senior living facilities, community

organizations, and local businesses, we empower residents with the knowledge and tools needed to prevent fires and respond effectively should one occur.

Education remains the cornerstone of prevention. Fire safety programs in grade schools provide children with life-saving knowledge about hazard recognition, escape planning, and the importance of working smoke alarms. Through engaging and interactive presentations, we help instill lifelong habits of preparedness and awareness.

Fire station tours further strengthen community relationships by offering families, students, and civic groups a firsthand look at our operations. These experiences foster trust, build transparency, and provide valuable opportunities to discuss fire prevention and emergency response in a welcoming environment.

Workplace fire safety training is another critical component of our outreach efforts. Our business focused programs cover fire extinguisher use, evacuation planning, and hazard identification. A well-trained workforce can often prevent a minor incident from escalating into a significant emergency, protecting employees, customers, and property.

Fire safety is a shared responsibility. Through inspections, prevention education, and community engagement, we are building a culture of prevention that benefits everyone. The results are fewer emergencies, reduced injuries and losses, and a stronger, more resilient community.

Through education, collaboration, and a proactive approach to risk reduction, we strengthen public safety and uphold our commitment to protecting the citizens and communities we serve.



*Lieutenant—Inspector
Ryan Armson*

TRAINING DIVISION

In the fire service, preparedness is everything. Effective emergency response is the result of continuous practice, education, and realistic hands on experience. At Portage Fire Rescue, we remain steadfast in our commitment to comprehensive training, ensuring our personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to protect our community.

Emergencies demand both speed and accuracy. Through structured drills, live-fire evolutions, classroom instruction, and complex scenario-based exercises, our firefighters continually refine their abilities. Regular multi-company training strengthens coordination and communication, allowing crews to operate seamlessly during high-pressure situations. This consistent preparation ensures that when emergencies occur, our response is organized, efficient, and decisive.

Training also sharpens critical thinking and leadership skills. Firefighters must assess rapidly changing conditions, apply sound tactics, and adapt in dynamic environments. Ongoing instruction in fire suppression strategies, technical rescue disciplines, hazardous materials mitigation, and incident command enhances decision-making and reinforces accountability at every level of the organization.

A well-trained department does more than react, it anticipates and prevents. Education in fire prevention practices, community risk reduction, and specialized response areas strengthen our ability to reduce hazards before they escalate. Continuous professional development also builds pride, professionalism, and long-term commitment among our members.

In 2025, department personnel completed approximately 12,250 hours of training. Instruction covered a broad spectrum of critical disciplines, including structural firefighting, water rescue, vehicle extrication, forcible entry, confined space operations, hazardous materials response, rail incident mitigation, rope rescue, wildland firefighting, search and rescue, and bloodborne pathogen awareness.

Our Training Division remained actively engaged throughout the year, guiding new members and supporting expanding operational programs. In 2025, we added 6 paid-on-call firefighters and 3 full time firefighter/EMS personnel. Each new member completed a structured probationary process

designed to validate competency, reinforce safety standards, and ensure operational readiness.

Professional growth and advancement remained a priority throughout the year, with members actively pursuing certifications and specialized training across multiple disciplines. Our personnel strengthened their skills in foundational firefighting, hazardous materials response, incident command, wildland operations, emergency medical services, driver/operator responsibilities, and leadership development.

In addition to fire and specialty certifications, we continue to place strong emphasis on paramedic education and Advanced Life Support (ALS) training. Our paramedics undergo rigorous initial education and ongoing continuing education to maintain proficiency in advanced airway management, cardiac monitoring, medication administration, trauma care, and critical decision-making in high acuity situations. Regular skill assessments, scenario-based simulations, and medical quality assurance reviews ensure our ALS providers remain confident and clinically sharp. By strengthening our EMS capabilities, we enhance patient outcomes and ensure that advanced, hospital level interventions begin the moment our crew arrives on scene, delivering the highest standard of prehospital care to our community.



*Lieutenant
Joshua Meyer*



*Captain
Thomas Krueger*



*Captain
Colten Kinnison*

INSURANCE SERVICES OFFICE RATING

CITY ISO RATING DECREASES

Insurance Services Office (ISO) is an independent company that serves insurance companies, communities, fire departments, insurance regulators, and others by providing information about risk. ISO's expert staff collects information about municipal fire suppression efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data and assigns a PPC grade, a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents an exemplary fire suppression program, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria.

ISO collects and evaluates information from communities in the United States on their structure fire suppression capabilities. The data is analyzed using our Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) and then a Public Protection Classification (PPC®) grade is assigned to the community.

The FSRS recognizes fire protection features only as they relate to suppression of first alarm structure fires. In many communities, fire suppression may be only a small part of the fire department's overall responsibility. ISO recognizes the dynamic and comprehensive duties of a community's fire service and understands the complex decisions a community must make in planning and delivering emergency services. However, in developing a community's PPC grade, only features related to reducing property losses from structural fires are evaluated.

A community's investment in fire mitigation is a proven and reliable predictor of future fire losses. Statistical data on insurance losses bears out the relationship between excellent fire protection as measured by the PPC program and low fire losses. So, insurance companies use PPC information for marketing, underwriting, and to help establish fair premiums for homeowners and commercial fire insurance. In general, the price of fire insurance in a community with a good PPC grade is substantially lower than in a community with a poor PPC grade, assuming all other factors are equal.

ISO's PPC program evaluates communities according to a uniform set of criteria, incorporating nationally recognized standards developed by the National Fire Protection Association and the American Water Works Association. A community's PPC grade depends on:

- Needed Fire Flows, which are representative building locations used to determine the theoretical amount of water necessary for fire suppression purposes.
- Emergency Communications, including emergency reporting, telecommunicators, and dispatching systems.
- Fire Department, including equipment, staffing, training, geographic distribution of fire companies, operational considerations, and community risk reduction.
- Water Supply, including inspection and flow testing of hydrants, alternative water supply operations, and a careful evaluation of the amount of available water compared with the amount needed to suppress fires up to 3,500 gallons per minute.

Through ongoing research and loss experience analysis, we identified additional differentiation in fire loss experience within our PPC program, which resulted in the revised classifications. We based the differing fire loss experience on the fire suppression capabilities of each community. The new PPC classes will improve the predictive value for insurers while benefiting both commercial and residential property owners.

When we develop a split classification for a community, for example 4/9, the first number is the class that applies to properties within 5 road miles of the responding fire station and 1,000 feet of a creditable water supply, such as a fire hydrant, suction point, or dry hydrant. The second number is the class that applies to properties within 5 road miles of a fire station but beyond 1,000 feet of a creditable water supply. Class 10 applies to properties over 5 road miles of a recognized fire station.

ISO concluded its review of the fire suppression features being provided for Portage FPSA. **The resulting community classification was a Class 03.** This is an improvement from a 3/3Y rating in 2018.

In 2024, Portage Fire Rescue completed additional testing criteria to help lower the rating for the areas within 5 road miles of the fire station. ISO concluded its review of the fire suppression features being provided for the townships. **The resulting community classification was Class 4/10.** This is an improvement from Class 9 in 2018.

YEARS OF SERVICE

This recognition is given to a member who has exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community upheld by Portage Fire Rescue.

These members have demonstrated an allegiance to the Agency, to its firefighters, to the citizens of Portage, and the surrounding communities. They are steadfast, striving to achieve or improve upon the goals of the fire service, which will lead to improvements in the service. They understand and are committed to the policies, procedures, values, and mission of the Agency. They perform their duties in a manner that is commendable and that all firefighters should strive to achieve, and which reflects the highest standards of the fire service.

They value the public's trust and are committed to honest and ethical behavior. They hold themselves accountable to the Agency's values. They believe in personal commitment to the organization and the community. They have committed many years of their lives to Portage Fire Rescue and continue to provide unwavering support.

These members are the backbone of the fire service, bringing invaluable experience, leadership, and knowledge to Portage Fire Rescue. Their years of service provide crucial insight into fireground tactics, emergency response, and agency operations, helping to guide newer firefighters and ensure effective decision-making under pressure.

Beyond their operational expertise, these officers serve as mentors, preserving tradition while adapting to new challenges and technologies. Their leadership fosters stability, builds trust, and strengthens the fire services ability to protect communities. Experience is irreplaceable, and long-tenured members play a vital role in shaping the future of the fire service.

This year, Portage Fire Rescue proudly recognized the dedication and commitment of several long-serving members. Deputy Chief Terry Kibby was honored for 25 years of service, Captain Melissa Pohl for 20 years, Lieutenant Engineer Matthew Gavinski and Firefighters Mihaela Overland and Kurtis Fries for 10 years each, and Chief Troy Haase for 5 years of service. Their years of unwavering dedication reflect a deep commitment to protecting our community and exemplify the values of service, professionalism, and leadership that define Portage Fire Rescue.



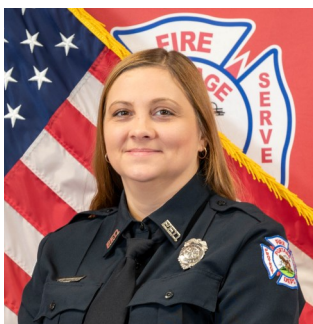
*Deputy Chief
Terry Kibby*



*Captain
Melissa Pohl*



*Lieutenant Engineer
Matthew Gavinski*



*Firefighter
Mihaela Overland*



*Firefighter
Kurtis Fries*



*Fire Chief
Troy Haase*

ANNUAL AWARDS

PAID-ON-CALL OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Officer of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community upheld by Portage Fire Rescue.

Terry exemplifies the highest standards of leadership, professionalism, and service within Portage Fire Rescue. He is an exceptional officer, a dedicated mentor, and a true role model for every member of our organization. Terry devotes countless hours to guiding our newest personnel, ensuring they learn not only the essential techniques of the fire service, but also the values of professionalism, integrity, and customer service that define our department.

On the fireground, Terry is a proven and trusted leader. He maintains a constant focus on safety, ensuring that every member operates effectively, confidently, and within established procedures. Terry is vigilant in protecting personnel while managing both large-scale and routine incidents, always working to prevent the loss of life, property, and environmental resources.

Terry's positive, outgoing approach to public service is evident in every interaction with fellow members, partner agencies, and the citizens we serve. He is always willing to support our younger officers, offering guidance, answering questions, and helping them grow into confident leaders. His mentorship strengthens our organizational culture and prepares the next generation of officers for success.

Terry's commitment to the department is exceptional. He responds to 50% of all calls each year an extraordinary level of dedication and has personally trained 90% of our new hires.

Terry's dedication, professionalism, leadership, and unwavering service embody the core values of Portage Fire Rescue. For the aforementioned reasons, Deputy Chief Terry Kibby was chosen for the 2025 "Officer of the Year" Award.



PAID-ON-CALL FIREFIGHTER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Firefighter of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who has best exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community upheld by Portage Fire Rescue.

This individual has given selflessly of himself in support of the agency, the fire service, and the community we serve. He consistently demonstrates the highest degree of dedication through his active participation in all facets of Portage Fire Rescue, including training, emergency response, and community risk reduction initiatives.

He has shown unwavering allegiance to the agency, its firefighters, and its officers. His actions reflect a deep commitment to the mission, values, policies, and procedures that guide our work. He continually engages in efforts that support progress, improvement, and excellence within the organization.

He performs his duties with a level of professionalism and competency that represents the highest standards of the fire service. Whether leading or following, he demonstrates sound judgment and adapts seamlessly to the needs of the moment. His exceptional service was further underscored by being recognized as the 2025 Top Responding Paid-On-Call Member.

For the reasons mentioned above, Firefighter Brayden Asch was chosen as the "2025 Firefighter of the Year".



ANNUAL AWARDS

FULL-TIME OFFICER OF THE YEAR AWARD

Officer of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community upheld by Portage Fire Rescue.

This year, Portage Fire Rescue proudly welcomed Paramedic Lieutenant Tyler Greenwood as a member of our agency. From the start, Tyler has demonstrated exceptional dedication, professionalism, and a strong commitment to serving our department. His leadership style reflects the values we strive to uphold; integrity, compassion, readiness, and an unwavering focus on providing the highest level of fire and EMS service.

A key part of Tyler's success this year has been his deep understanding of the role empathy plays in emergency services. In both fire and EMS work, our staff encounter people during some of the worst moments of their lives. Tyler recognizes that while technical skill is essential, compassion is what turns a response into meaningful care. His ability to show empathy not only strengthens our internal culture but also ensures that the citizens we serve receive care that honors their dignity and emotional needs during times of crisis.

Throughout the past year while navigating the rapid pace of organizational change, supporting staff transitions, and meeting the rigorous clinical and operational demands, he has also managed significant personal challenges along the way. Balancing the weight of professional expectations with the realities of life outside the station requires resilience, discipline, and emotional strength, qualities Tyler has demonstrated consistently. Despite these pressures, he has approached every obstacle with determination and calm leadership. His problem-solving abilities, willingness to adapt, and commitment to continual improvement have already produced meaningful results, strengthening our EMS capabilities, improving communication, and elevating the overall performance of the department.

For the aforementioned reasons, Paramedic Lieutenant Tyler Greenwood was chosen for the 2025 "Officer of the Year" Award.



UNIT CITATION AWARD

The Unit Citation Award is awarded to two or more firefighters who make up a company or team, who perform a credible act in the line of duty which is commendable in nature, and displays admirable initiative and accomplishment.

The members of Portage Fire Rescue were recognized with a Unit Citation Award for their exceptional commitment, professionalism, and dedication throughout the first full year of our newly established EMS program. Launching a paramedic-level service is a complex and demanding undertaking, one that requires adaptability, teamwork, and an unwavering devotion to the mission of protecting and caring for our community. This team rose to that challenge with distinction.

Yet the true measure of their success lies not just in what they did, but in how they did it. Our community experienced moments of crisis, fear, and vulnerability, and in those moments, these responders delivered compassionate, empathetic care. They upheld the guiding principle I expect from all providers: *"treat every patient as if they were your own mother."* This simple but powerful standard has become the cornerstone of our EMS identity, and throughout the past year, the members of Portage Fire Rescue embodied it repeatedly.

For their exceptional teamwork, resilience, and unwavering commitment the members of this agency are hereby awarded the Unit Citation Award. Their achievements exemplify the highest standards of the fire and emergency medical services, and their service has brought honor to themselves, to this Agency, and to the citizens we proudly serve.

For the aforementioned reasons, Assistant Chief Cody Doucette, Captains Matt Asch, Thomas Krueger, and Colten Kinnison, Lieutenants Tyler Greenwood, Matt Gavinski, Joshua Meyer and Ryan Armson, Firefighter/Paramedics Ryan Nelson, Jerry Weatherby, Matt Graf, Austin England, Sydney Spatola, Timothy Miller, and Joseph Hinchey, Firefighter/AEMTs Bob Koch and B.J. Breecher, Firefighter/EMTs Lexin Aldridge and John Loomans were chosen for a Unit Citation Award."

ANNUAL AWARDS

FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTERS OF THE YEAR AWARD

Firefighter of the Year may be awarded to a single recipient who has best exemplified the standards of excellence and service to the community upheld by Portage Fire Rescue. This individual must be a team player who supports others' efforts to achieve the goals of the agency, supports the agency by embracing its policy and procedures, and by engaging in constructive criticism that will lead to improvements in the service.

These members have given selflessly of themselves in support of the agency, the fire service, and the community we serve. They consistently demonstrate the highest degree of dedication through their active participation in all facets of Portage Fire Rescue, including training, emergency response, and community risk reduction initiatives.

Over the past year, they have exemplified extraordinary dedication by not only fulfilling their responsibility as full-time firefighter/EMTs, but also by completing more than 1,000 hours of intensive paramedic training to earn their State Paramedic Certification. Achieving this level of advanced medical training is a significant accomplishment for any provider, doing so while working full-time in the fire service demonstrates exceptional commitment, discipline, and perseverance.

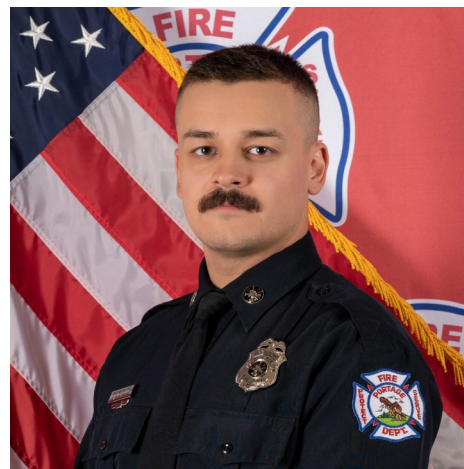
Paramedic training requires rigorous coursework, clinical rotations, hands-on patient care, and constant study. Balancing these demanding requirements with shift work, emergency calls, and the daily responsibilities of the fire service is no small feat. Their ability to manage both roles concurrently is a clear reflection of their personal drive and their unwavering commitment to serving the community at the highest possible level.

They continually engage in efforts that support progress, improvement, and excellence within the organization, and their achievement elevates not only their own capabilities but the strength and readiness of Portage Fire Rescue as a whole.

For the reasons mentioned above, Firefighter/EMT Johnathan Loomans and Lexin Aldridge were chosen as the "2025 Firefighters of the Year."



*Firefighter/EMT
John Loomans*



*Firefighter/EMT
Lexin Aldridge*

ANNUAL RESPONSE AWARDS

RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARDS

The Response Commendation Award is awarded to a member of the agency who performed service to the agency in a highly commendable manner and who responded to 40% or more of the calls.

Portage Fire Rescue relies heavily on the members of the agency to respond at all times of the day to emergency calls. Our members are expected to be on call 24/7, leave their job at a moment's notice, miss family dinners and rush to the scene of an emergency. They place themselves in harm's way for the sake of quite often, a complete stranger's life and property. I believe we all take for granted the time and effort that goes into the hundreds of hours of training that these men and women put forth, because of their dedication to helping others.

When tragedies occur, our firefighters and EMS personnel often take them to heart, replaying those critical moments in their minds and wondering if there was more they could have done. The truth is, they have given everything, every ounce of skill, training, and dedication. No matter the outcome, their commitment never wavers, and the impact of their service is immeasurable. On behalf of the community, I want to express our deepest gratitude for their courage, professionalism, and unwavering dedication to protecting lives.

For the aforementioned reasons, the following members were recognized for the 2025 "Response Commendation Award" for responding to calls from December 1, 2024, through November 30, 2025.

*Firefighter/EMT Brayden Asch—89.38%, Captain Charles Coppernoll—55.68%,
Lieutenant Austin Smothers—53.85%, Firefighter/EMT Noah Tredinnick—52.38%, and
Deputy Chief Terry Kibby—48.35%*

TOP RESPONSE COMMENDATION AWARD

The Top Response Commendation Award is awarded to a member of the agency who performed service to the agency in a highly commendable manner and who responded to the highest number of calls.

Portage Fire Rescue depends on the unwavering dedication of its members, who respond at all hours of the day and night to protect our community. These individuals remain on call 24/7, ready to leave their jobs at a moment's notice, miss family dinners, and rush toward emergencies when others are rushing away. They willingly place themselves in harm's way for the sake of preserving the lives and property of others, often complete strangers. The hundreds of hours of training they commit to each year often go unseen, but they are the foundation of their readiness and their ability to serve with such professionalism. Please know that both the community and I are deeply grateful for your commitment.

For these reasons, Firefighter/EMT Brayden Asch is recognized as the 2025 Top Responding Paid-on-Call Member, responding to an extraordinary 488 of 546 calls, an impressive 89% from December 1, 2024, through November 30, 2025. His dedication and reliability exemplify the very best of Portage Fire Rescue.



RETIREMENT

We extend our deepest gratitude to Administrative Assistant Chris Essex for more than 34 years of dedicated and exemplary service to Portage Fire Rescue. For over three decades, Chris has demonstrated unwavering professionalism, commitment, and loyalty to the department and to the citizens of Portage and the Towns of Caledonia, Fort Winnebago, Lewiston, and Pacific.

Throughout her distinguished tenure, Chris has played a vital and often behind-the-scenes role in the department's success. Her leadership and administrative expertise have been instrumental in supporting fire prevention initiatives, coordinating emergency response operations, and ensuring the smooth and efficient functioning of daily administrative responsibilities. Her organizational skill, attention to detail, and strong work ethic have directly contributed to the department's ability to deliver fire suppression services, emergency medical care, technical rescue operations, and hazardous materials response at the highest level.

Chris's dedication has strengthened not only the internal operations of Portage Fire Rescue but also the overall safety of the community. She has been a trusted resource and steady presence for firefighters, first responders, and leadership alike, providing guidance, continuity, and support through decades of change and growth.

Her knowledge, institutional insight, and passion for service have left an enduring legacy within our organization. Portage Fire Rescue and the community we serve are profoundly grateful for her years of faithful service and the lasting impact she has made on our department.



*Mayor Matt Fiene Presents Resolution
Recognizing 34+ Years of Service*



*Honoring a Legacy: Chris Essex at Her
Retirement Party*

This year, Portage Fire Rescue welcomed Jenny Eberle as our new Administrative Assistant, strengthening the operational support that keeps the department running efficiently behind the scenes. Administrative support plays a vital role in managing records, coordinating logistics, supporting personnel, and ensuring compliance with reporting and regulatory requirements, allowing our firefighters and EMS providers to remain focused on emergency response and public safety. In addition to her administrative responsibilities, Jenny is actively pursuing training to become a firefighter, demonstrating a strong commitment to service and a desire to contribute both operationally and on the front lines. Her dedication reflects the culture of professionalism, teamwork, and growth that defines Portage Fire Rescue.



Jenny Eberle

NEW MEMBERS

JOIN THE TEAM THAT SERVES AND PROTECTS OUR COMMUNITY

Portage Fire Rescue continues to seek dedicated individuals who are committed to serving their community as firefighters and emergency responders. Becoming a firefighter is more than a job, it is a commitment to protecting lives, assisting others in their greatest time of need, and standing alongside a team built on trust, professionalism, and service. New members complete rigorous training in fire suppression, emergency medical response, rescue operations, and hazardous materials awareness to ensure they are fully prepared to respond safely and effectively. The role demands dedication, teamwork, and a strong sense of duty, but it also offers the immeasurable reward of making a meaningful difference in the lives of others.

We are proud to introduce the new members who joined Portage Fire Rescue in 2025 and stepped forward to serve our community.

Brian, Hudson, Kaidon, Vanessa, Megan, and Jenny joined the Paid-on-Call staff, strengthening our response capabilities and bringing a diverse range of skills and perspectives to the team.

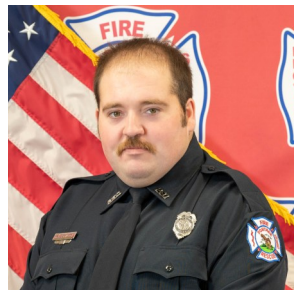
Karl and Emily were promoted to full-time positions from within our Paid-on-Call ranks, reflecting their dedication, experience, and commitment to the department. Denise and Alex were also welcomed to the team as full-time members, joining us from outside the Portage community and adding valuable experience to our organization.



*Firefighter
Brian Wheelock*



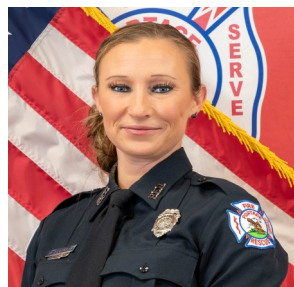
*Firefighter
Hudson Tredinnick*



*Firefighter
Kaidon Cowley*



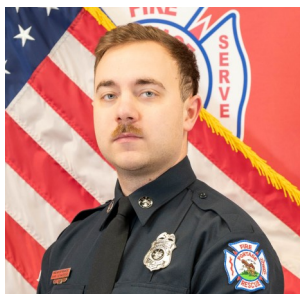
*Firefighter
Vanessa Coppernoll*



*Firefighter
Megan Bucholtz*



*Firefighter
Jenny Eberle*



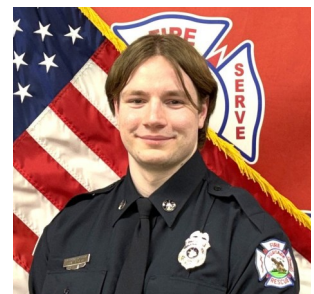
*Firefighter/Paramedic
Karl Schwoerer*



*Firefighter/EMT
Emily Bulgrin*



*Firefighter/Paramedic
Denise Schreiner*



*Firefighter/Paramedic
Alex Korth*

APPARATUS IN SERVICE

Portage Fire Rescue operates a variety of apparatus for response to structure fires, emergency medical calls, vehicle accidents and fires, wildland fires, technical rescues, and hazardous material incidents. Each apparatus is outfitted with specific equipment and gear for each type of call and responds with the appropriate personnel to resolve each emergency.

Apparatus ID#	Apparatus Description	Replacement Year	Replacement Cost
Engine 3	2015 Rosenbauer — Township Engine 2,000 GPM	2040	\$1,200,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Engine 6	1990 Seagrave — City Engine 1,500 GPM	2028	\$970,000
	Primary Engine For Wildland Fires, Structure Fire Response, Back-up Engine		
Engine 8	2022 Pierce Enforcer — City Engine 2,000 GPM	2047	\$1,200,000
	Structure Fire Response, Vehicle Accident & Fire Hazardous Material Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Squad 2	2001 Pierce/Lance Heavy Rescue	2031	1,200,000
	Vehicle Accident, Technical Rescue Farm Accidents or Medical Related Rescues		
Truck 1	2024 Pierce — City Platform 2,000 GPM, 100' ladder	2049	\$2,000,000
	Structure Fire Response, Technical Rescue, MABAS		
Tender 4	2021 Freightliner — 2,000 gallon Tender, 500 GPM Pump	2046	\$472,000
	Water Supply for Rural & City Non-hydrant Areas, Wildland Fires		
Tender 5	2002 GMC — 2,000 gallon Tender, 500 GPM Pump	2030	\$450,000
	Water Supply for Rural & City Non-hydrant Areas, Wildland Fires		
Brush 1	2009 Chevrolet 1 ton 4x4 — City/Township Pick-up Truck	2034	\$100,000
	Wildland Fires, Off Road Equipment Fires, Tow Vehicle		
Brush 2	2021 Polaris UTV — 85 Gallon Tank & Pump	2046	\$52,000
	Wildland Fires, Search and Rescue, Medical Rescue		
Boat 1	Sea Ark 21' Flat Bottom Boat	2030	\$42,000
	Water Search and Rescue		
Hover 1	1999 Hovercraft — City	2029	\$60,000
	Water Rescue, Winter Related Rescues, Medical Rescues		
Car 1	2018 Ford Explorer	2028	\$60,000
	Command Post, Tow Vehicle		
Car 2	2017 Chevrolet Silverado	2027	\$70,000
	Fire Inspection/Investigations in the City & Towns, Tow Vehicle		
Medic 650	2024 Chevy Silverado	2034	\$70,000
	EMS Response Vehicle, Tow Vehicle		
Medic 651	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		
Medic 652	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		
Medic 653	2023 Ford Osage Ambulance	2030	\$400,000
	EMS Response Vehicle		

SIGNIFICANT ACCOMPLISHMENTS

ADMINISTRATION:

- Finished the year with a positive budget balance, demonstrating strong fiscal responsibility and effective financial management.
- Secured a contract to provide EMS services to the Village of Pardeeville in 2026, expanding the agency's service area and impact.

OPERATIONAL RESPONSE:

- Began operating the EMS system within the agency, establishing a fully integrated emergency medical service.
- Responded to 2,704 calls for service, maintaining consistent coverage and rapid response to community needs.

FIRE APPARATUS/EQUIPMENT:

- Completed annual pump, hose, SCBA, and ladder testing in compliance with NFPA standards.
- Secured a DNR grant to purchase new wildland gear and tools, enhancing firefighting capabilities.

COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION:

- Completed 1,824 state-required fire safety inspections across the City and four surrounding Townships.
- Provided fire prevention education to hundreds of elementary students, local businesses, and public safety personnel, improving community safety awareness.

PERSONNEL/TRAINING

- Hired three additional personnel to enhance EMS service to Pardeeville and strengthen fire response across all jurisdictions.
- Secured HMEP and State Hazmat Grants to deliver a 40-hour HAZMAT Technician course and 8-hour refresher training for 2025, strengthening hazardous materials response readiness.

ASSEMBLY DISTRICT 40 FIRST RESPONDER OF THE YEAR: CODY DOUCETTE

Karen DeSanto presented Portage Assistant Chief of EMS Cody Doucette with the First Responder of the Year Award for Wisconsin Assembly District 40. This recognition highlights the dedication, professionalism, and commitment demonstrated in serving the community.

The First Responder of the Year Award, established in 2019, honors the courage and sacrifice of those who serve in emergency services. Nominated by members of their communities, State Representatives select one individual from their Assembly District to be recognized for their outstanding service and contributions to public safety. Karen DeSanto stated, "I am truly honored to represent Cody Doucette and other heroes like him. Cody exemplifies the dedication to community and selflessness that makes the 40th District great."



GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

For a fire and EMS agency to operate at a high level, it must establish clear goals and objectives. These provide direction and purpose, guiding decision-making, resource allocation, and overall performance. Without them, an agency risks becoming reactive and may struggle to keep pace with changing demands, ultimately impacting its ability to protect lives and property.

Goals define the broader vision, such as improving response times, strengthening firefighter and EMS training, or expanding community outreach. Objectives translate those goals into specific, measurable actions, allowing progress to be tracked and adjustments made when necessary. For instance, a goal to reduce response times may include objectives like enhancing dispatch procedures, optimizing station coverage, or implementing GPS technology to improve routing efficiency.

Well-defined goals and objectives also promote accountability and teamwork. Personnel at every level understand their role in achieving organizational success, leading to stronger coordination, improved morale, and better outcomes. In addition, clear objectives help justify funding and build community trust by demonstrating a commitment to continuous improvement.

An agency without defined goals tends to operate reactively; one with clear objectives operates proactively. Through strategic planning and consistent evaluation, fire and EMS agencies can enhance their effectiveness and remain fully prepared to serve their communities at the highest level.



FIRE & EMS OPERATIONS DIVISION

Goal Number 1: Provide adequate staff for an effective response force.

A. Objectives:

1. Respond with appropriate staff on all first due units in 2026.
2. Meet NFPA 1720 recommendation of 15 staff To assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time.

Goal Number 2: Decrease fire response times and increase response percentages.

A. Objectives:

1. Continue to improve an effective recruitment and retention program in 2026.
2. Work with dispatch to improve pre-alerts for incidents in 2026.

Goal Number 3: Improve data recording and collection for fire and EMS operations.

A. Objectives:

1. Work with Columbia County IT to allow for CAD uploads into FireWorks program.

Goal Number 4: Continue to provide the most efficient and effective Fire and EMS response to the City and surrounding Townships.

A. Objectives:

1. Continue to explore the most productive and cost-effective way to provide Fire and EMS to our citizens in 2026.



First EMS Response for Portage Fire Rescue

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

TRAINING DIVISION

Goal Number 1: Improve the established practical training program to meet ISO requirements.

A. Objectives:

1. Establish a Training Officer position to streamline training to bring consistency to the agency in 2026.
2. Continue development of lesson plans for practical training exercises in 2026.
3. Establish job performance records for practical training exercises in 2026.

Goal Number 2: Certify non-qualified agency members in appropriate certification programs.

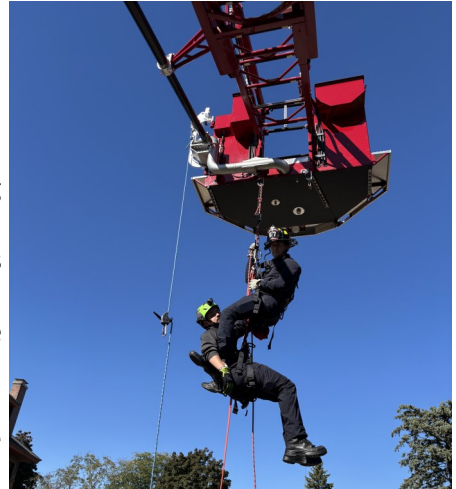
A. Objectives:

1. Plan and coordinate with Madison Area Technical College to have all eligible members complete their next certification class in 2026.
2. All new officers complete the National Incident Management Systems Courses 300 and 400 to become NIMS compliant in 2026.

Goal Number 3: Improve the agency's ability to investigate fires.

A. Objectives:

1. Train personnel in the skills of origin and cause determination to qualify for certifications in 2026.
2. Develop a local electronic fire investigation data entry program through FireWorks software in 2026.



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

Goal Number 1: Enhance fire prevention/life safety program to increase compliance of fire inspections.

A. Objectives:

1. Establish dedicated shift-based fire inspection positions to enhance inspection capacity, improve code compliance, and strengthen overall fire prevention efforts in 2026.
2. Evaluate inspection reporting data and make necessary changes to reach 100% compliance in 2026.
3. Continue re-inspection program and educate business owners on how to gain compliance using self inspection in 2026.
4. Improve inspection program by training EMS personnel to conduct fire inspections.

Goal Number 2: Evaluate Fire Prevention programs and policies to ensure adequate and appropriate fire education to the community.

A. Objectives:

1. Review and update existing public educational programs to be more effective in 2026.
2. Evaluate data and determine effectiveness of community risk reduction program in 2026.
3. Continue to integrate the initiatives of a Community Risk Reduction Program in 2026.

Goal Number 3: Enhance Community Risk Reduction by implementing new programs.

A. Objectives:

1. Complete risk assessments on all remaining businesses in response territories in 2026.



THE PORTAGE FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION

SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Portage Fire Rescue Safety Committee is comprised of four members and one advisor who meet on a regular basis to address safety-related matters within the department. Safety remains a top priority in all aspects of our operations, as maintaining a safe environment not only protects personnel but also promotes efficiency, productivity, and overall well-being.

To uphold the highest standards, the Safety Committee is dedicated to identifying potential risks, enforcing applicable regulations, and promoting best practices. Through their oversight, the committee ensures compliance with established safety protocols, helping to prevent accidents and foster a culture of accountability throughout the organization.

By working collaboratively and maintaining a proactive approach, the Safety Committee plays a critical role in creating and sustaining a safe and secure environment for all members.

Let's all do our part in prioritizing safety every day so **EVERYONE GOES HOME!**

Committee Members

Matthew Asch

Michael Nachreiner

Johnathan Loomans

Noah Tredinnick

Mihaela Overland

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE

Each year, the Portage Firefighters Association identifies projects and equipment purchases that will enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of Portage Fire Rescue. The Association's primary source of fundraising is its food stand, "Station 2," located at the Columbia County Fairgrounds during the Columbia County Fair.

Each year, the Portage Firefighters Association supports the City by funding the purchase of needed equipment and projects that are not included in the department's operating budget. Over time, the Association has made significant

contributions, including the purchase of a rescue boat, hovercraft, training center structures, rescue tools, a UTV, and other essential equipment.

These contributions play a critical role in enhancing the department's capabilities while reducing the financial burden on the City. Without the continued generosity and dedication of Association members, many of these items would need to be funded through the operating budget, potentially delaying or preventing their acquisition altogether. Portage Fire Rescue extends its sincere appreciation to all members who participated in operating the food stand this year. A special thank you is extended to Charles Coppernoll and Austin Smothers for their leadership in coordinating staffing and organizing food operations for the event.

The Portage Firefighters Association also wishes to express its gratitude to the City of Portage elected officials, City staff, surrounding townships, and the citizens of Portage for their continued support of these fundraising efforts. Without this support, the Association would not be able to complete these projects or provide the equipment necessary to support the mission of Portage Fire Rescue.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Portage Fire Rescue's effectiveness extends beyond emergency response and is strengthened through meaningful community partnerships. Building relationships with local businesses, schools, civic organizations, and residents enhances public safety, expands available resources, and fosters trust within the community.

These partnerships play a vital role in supporting fire prevention education, disaster preparedness initiatives, and recruitment efforts. Local businesses contribute through sponsorships and equipment donations, while schools and community organizations assist in promoting fire safety awareness. Ongoing community engagement also strengthens support for funding and volunteer recruitment, ensuring the department has the resources necessary to serve effectively.

Through these collaborative efforts, Portage Fire Rescue and the community work together to create a safer and more resilient environment. Strong partnerships not only enhance operational effectiveness but also promote a culture of safety and preparedness that benefits all.



WALMART/SAM'S CLUB LOCAL COMMUNITY GRANT

Walmart of Portage donated \$2,000 to Portage Fire Rescue to be used for ballistic gear at active shooter incidents. This gear will protect us when we are placed in situations where patients need to be removed from the hot zone.

CHUCK MILLER

Portage Fire Rescue is thrilled to announce the establishment of its first-ever Charitable Fund, thanks to a generous kickoff donation of \$5,000 from Chuck Miller. This new fund is dedicated to providing financial assistance to fire rescue personnel and their families facing hardship due to illness, injury, or extraordinary circumstances. This initiative aims to serve as a vital safety net for the individuals who bravely serve and protect the community every day. The establishment of this fund sends a powerful message of support and appreciation to our EMT's and firefighters. It allows us to help protect those who protect us, ensuring that when they face personal challenges, they have the resources and assistance available to assist in their journey.



FESTIVAL FOODS

In 2025, Festival Foods generously donated 200 cases of water to Portage Fire Rescue, helping ensure firefighters remain properly hydrated while operating on emergency scenes. The members of Portage Fire Rescue would like to extend their sincere appreciation for Festival Foods' continued commitment and support of our organization.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

PORTAGE CULVER'S

In conjunction with Culver's staff, Portage Fire Rescue and IAFF Local 2775 members raised \$3,007 for the Muscular Dystrophy Association. MDA is the #1 voluntary health organization in the United States for people living with muscular dystrophy, ALS, and over 300 other neuromuscular conditions. For 75 years, MDA has led the way in accelerating research, advancing care, and advocating support and inclusion of families living with neuromuscular disease.



FOREST FIRE PROTECTION GRANT PROGRAM

Portage Fire Rescue received \$1,473.57 from the FFP Program. Forest Fire Protection (FFP) 50% cost-share grants are available to Wisconsin fire departments and county/area fire associations.

CHARTERS OF FREEDOM

A full-size replica of the Declaration of Independence, United States Constitution, Bill of Rights, and Civil Rights Amendments has been constructed at Riverside Park. The City of Portage partnered with Foundation Forward to bring this beautiful and meaningful display to the community.

These installations will provide hands-on educational opportunities in American history and civics for residents and surrounding communities. During the donation process, the Portage Firefighters Association proudly contributed \$2,500 to help support the construction of this display.



WISCONSIN HAZARDOUS MATERIALS EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS GRANT

With the assistance of Columbia County Emergency Management Director Marie Darling Ellis and Emergency Response Specialists, Portage Fire Rescue was awarded a grant of \$10,622 to support a 40-hour hazardous materials course along with an 8-hour refresher course.

The Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness Grant Program is designed to provide grantees with the flexibility to implement training and planning initiatives that address the unique needs of each community. These programs are tailored based on local demographics, emergency response capabilities, commodity flow studies, and hazard analysis to ensure responders are properly prepared for potential incidents.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

Fire prevention and education efforts have expanded into all areas of our community. While the focus in past years was primarily on fire prevention, our members have broadened their outreach to address a wider range of safety concerns.

Since 1922, the NFPA has sponsored the public observance of Fire Prevention Week. In 1925, President Calvin Coolidge proclaimed Fire Prevention Week a national observance, making it the longest running public health observance in our country. During Fire Prevention Week, children, adults, and teachers learn how to stay safe in case of a fire. Firefighters provide lifesaving public education in an effort to drastically decrease casualties caused by fires.



Fire Prevention Week is observed each year during the week of October 9th in commemoration of the Great Chicago Fire, which began on October 8, 1871, and caused devastating damage. This horrific conflagration killed more than 250 people, left 100,000 homeless, destroyed more than 17,400 structures, and burned more than 2,000 acres of land.

Each year, we ask local businesses to support the Chester Sroka Fire Prevention Fund, which allows us to provide fire safety coloring books to children and explore new, innovative ways to educate and protect our citizens. Through these contributions, we are able to continue strengthening our community risk reduction efforts.

Last year, the following businesses supported our Community Risk Reduction initiatives:

Bremner Granite
Wisconsin River Title
Zimmerman Plumbing
Precision Hair Designers
Seubert Family Dentist
Hart & Olson Family Dentistry
Bank of Wisconsin Dells

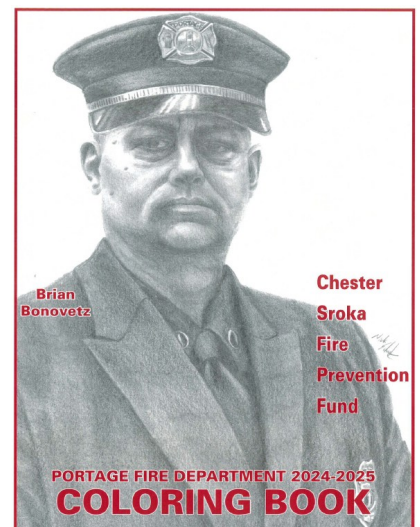
Baraboo State Bank
Edward Jones—Vehring's
Fearing's Satellite & Sound
General Engineering Company
Portage Elks Club
Wieser Concrete

Galley Studio
Cardinal Glass
Crawford Oil
Smiley Law Office
Johnson Chiropractic
Bird Crazy Gun Dogs



Each year, Portage Fire Rescue recognizes one of its members by featuring a hand-drawn illustration on the cover of the Chester Sroka Fire Prevention Coloring Book. These books are distributed to children throughout the Portage School District as part of the department's ongoing commitment to fire prevention education.

Congratulations to Lieutenant Engineer Brian Bonovetz for being selected as the 2025 recipient. Thank you to Nick Schultz for his artistic work, and to the students for their wonderful drawings.



COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

PEER SUPPORT PROGRAM

Portage Fire Rescue and the Portage Police Department have established a joint Peer Support Program designed to assist personnel in effectively coping with stress encountered in both their personal and professional lives. While each individual's experiences may differ, the impact on mental and physical health can be significant. This program provides a confidential and supportive environment where employees can talk through challenges with trusted coworkers who understand the unique demands of emergency services and are committed to helping one another.

A key goal of the Peer Support Program is to help shift the perception that seeking assistance is a sign of weakness, reinforcing instead that it is a sign of strength. By fostering a culture of openness and support, members are encouraged to reach out and connect with others who can guide them through difficult situations. In 2026, the departments will begin partnering with Hakes Wellness Solutions to further enhance member wellness and support services. This partnership will provide annual counseling sessions for each member, ensuring access to professional mental health resources, as well as continued peer support training to strengthen internal support systems and resilience within the department.

An important component of this initiative is the Chaplaincy Program, which serves two primary functions: supporting emergency response personnel and their families during times of crisis, and addressing their spiritual and emotional needs. Chaplains fulfill a vital role within the department, offering guidance, comfort, and presence during both critical incidents and everyday challenges. They may utilize a variety of approaches to provide spiritual care and assist individuals or families in times of need.

Portage Fire Rescue is grateful for the dedicated support of Chaplain Tom Drury, whose commitment and compassion will be invaluable to the well-being of our members and their families.



Chaplain Tom Drury

WELLNESS PROGRAM

Portage Fire Rescue has implemented a comprehensive, two-part wellness program to support members in maintaining their health and addressing injuries early. All personnel are required to participate in 30 minutes of physical activity during each workday. This dedicated time, built directly into the schedule, demonstrates the department's strong commitment to the health, safety, and overall well-being of its members.

This proactive approach has contributed to reducing workers' compensation claims and lost-time injuries by encouraging regular stretching, exercise, and early intervention. As part of the program, members have access to resources that allow them to monitor and report aches, pains, and potential injuries, ensuring concerns are addressed before they become more serious.

In partnership with New Life Physical Therapy, members are provided with access to a program that includes monthly tracking and on-site support from board-certified specialists. Dr. Mary Rose Strickland, a certified physical therapist, meets individually with members to develop personalized plans focused on pain management, targeted exercise programming, and injury prevention. She also evaluates the physical demands of daily operations to help design fitness strategies that reduce the risk of injury and enhance long-term performance.

Mary Rose has already proven to be an invaluable resource for many of our members, providing expert guidance, individualized care, and practical strategies to address pain and prevent injury. Her proactive approach and dedication to understanding the physical demands of our work have made a meaningful impact on both the health and performance of our personnel. She continues to be a trusted partner in supporting the overall well-being, resilience, and long-term fitness of our team.



Dr. Mary Rose Strickland

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

In 2025, Ryan Armson spent the fall visiting local schools, delivering fire safety presentations to hundreds of children. During these visits, he educated students about common fire risks in the home and the importance of prevention. Portage Fire Rescue remains committed to ensuring the safety and security of all those living in and visiting our community.

Fire incidents continue to pose a significant risk nationwide. In 2024, fire departments across the United States, serving towns, townships, cities, and counties, responded to an estimated 1,389,000 fires. These incidents resulted in approximately 3,670 civilian deaths, 13,350 civilian injuries, and \$23 billion in direct property damage. On average, a fire department responded to a fire somewhere in the country every 23 seconds. A civilian lost their life to fire approximately every two hours and 23 minutes, and a non-fatal fire injury occurred every 39 minutes.

Structure fires accounted for more than one-third of all incidents, with an estimated 470,000 fires (34 percent) occurring in or on structures. These fires were responsible for the majority of losses, including 3,070 civilian deaths (84 percent), 11,790 civilian injuries (88 percent), and \$14.7 billion in direct property damage (83 percent).



2025 FIRE PREVENTION PROCLAMATION

In 2025, Mayor Matt Fiene presented a Fire Prevention Proclamation to Portage Fire Rescue to recognize Fire Prevention Week. This proclamation was based on the 2025 NFPA Theme, **"Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home."** This theme educates the public on the safe use and handling of lithium-ion batteries, which are found in many household electronics.

KEEP THE WREATH GREEN

Portage Fire Rescue conducted its 4th Annual "Keep the Wreath Green" fire safety campaign from November 27 through January 1. Throughout the campaign, a Christmas wreath was displayed in front of the fire station as a visual reminder of the importance of fire prevention. Each time crews responded to a residential structure fire resulting in damage, a green bulb on the wreath was replaced with a red bulb, symbolizing the impact of residential fires within the community.

The goal of the campaign is to keep all bulbs green by preventing residential fires during the holiday season. In 2025, the community experienced one residential fire during the campaign period, resulting in one bulb being changed to red. Portage Fire Rescue remains committed to fire prevention efforts and looks forward to achieving an all-green wreath in the coming year.



COMMUNITY OUTREACH

NATIONAL NIGHT OUT

In August, Portage Fire Rescue partnered with the Portage Police Department to engage and educate the community during the annual National Night Out event. This event provided an excellent opportunity for public safety agencies to connect with residents, share safety information, and strengthen relationships that contribute to safer neighborhoods.

National Night Out is a nationwide community-building campaign designed to promote police community partnerships and neighborhood camaraderie. Established in 1984, the event is typically held on the first Tuesday in August and involves millions of participants across thousands of communities in all 50 states. Activities often include block parties, safety demonstrations, youth engagement activities, and opportunities for residents to interact with local police, fire, and EMS personnel in a positive, informal setting. The program aims to enhance community awareness, foster trust between residents and public safety agencies, and ultimately support crime and fire prevention efforts.



911 CEREMONY

The 9/11 Day of Remembrance Ceremony held in Portage at the Habitat for Humanity of Wisconsin River Area ReStore was incredibly meaningful. Portage Fire Rescue and the Portage Police Department assembled an Honor Guard to open the ceremony, setting a tone of respect and reflection. Veterans, firefighters, police officers, and community members gathered to honor the lives lost, recognize the heroes who emerged, and reflect on the resilience of a nation forever changed.

The ceremony commemorated the events of September 11 attacks, when coordinated acts of terrorism claimed nearly 3,000 lives at the World Trade Center in New York City, the Pentagon in Virginia, and aboard United Airlines Flight 93 in Pennsylvania. In the face of unimaginable tragedy, first responders and ordinary citizens demonstrated extraordinary courage, selflessness, and unity.

The tragic events of that day continue to remind us of the importance of unity, courage, and remembrance. As we reflect each year, we reaffirm our commitment to honor those who were lost, support those who carry the memory forward, and stand together as a community and a nation in strength and hope. Let us never forget.



FIRE PREVENTION OPEN HOUSE

Portage Fire Rescue is committed to ensuring the safety and security of everyone living in and visiting our community. Fire remains a serious public safety concern both locally and nationally, and homes are where people are at greatest risk. Most of the electronics in our homes smartphones, tablets, power and lawn tools, laptops, e-cigarettes, headphones, and toys, to name just a few are powered by lithium-ion batteries. If not used correctly or damaged, they can overheat and start a fire or explode.

The theme for the 2025 Fire Prevention Week™ is **"Charge into Fire Safety™: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home."** This theme educates the public on the safe use and handling of lithium-ion batteries, which are found in many household electronics. Key safety messages include purchasing only listed products, charging devices in safe locations and under supervision, and recycling batteries responsibly. By following these guidelines, communities can reduce the risks of

fires caused by improperly handled lithium-ion batteries and protect both lives and property.

Our recent open house was a tremendous success, drawing strong community attendance and engagement throughout the event. Attendees had the opportunity to observe a live EMS code demonstration, providing insight into the critical, high-pressure care our personnel deliver, as well as a rope rescue scenario that highlighted the technical skill and coordination required for complex rescues. In partnership with local law enforcement, a police Taser demonstration further showcased the tools and training used to ensure public and responder safety. Events like this strengthen community relationships, increase public understanding of emergency services, and reinforce our commitment to transparency, education, and service.

Below are some photos from the open house.

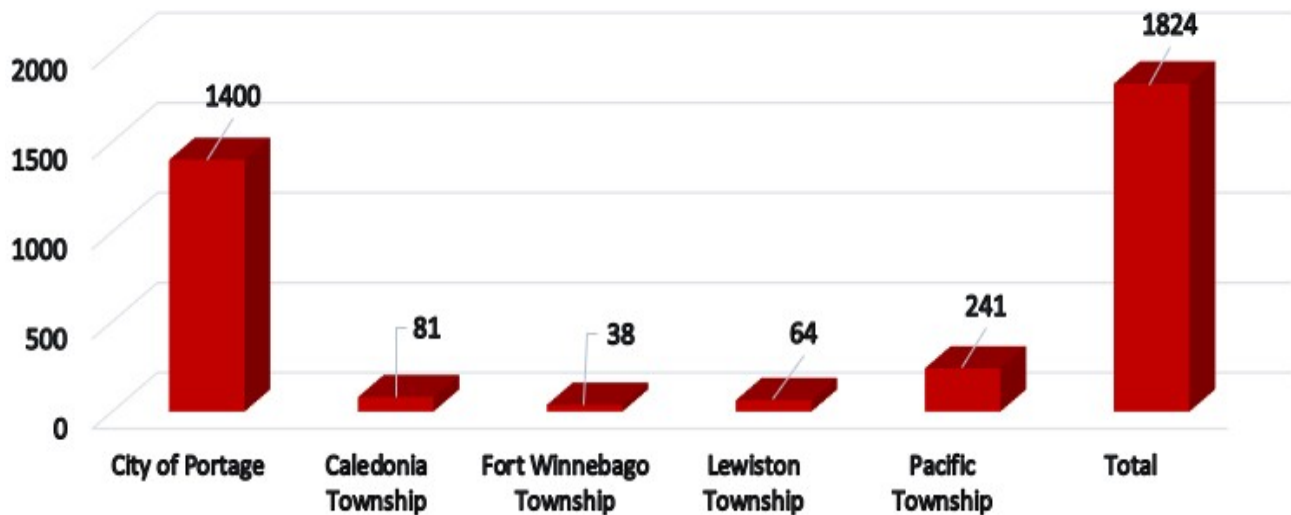


FIRE PREVENTION INSPECTIONS

Fire inspections are a critical component of community risk reduction, helping to identify and correct hazards before they result in emergencies. Guided by standards from the National Fire Protection Association, routine inspections ensure that buildings comply with fire codes, life safety systems are functioning properly, and occupants are protected. By proactively addressing risks, fire inspections play a vital role in preventing fires, reducing injuries, and safeguarding property within the community.

In addition, inspections provide an opportunity for firefighters to educate business owners and residents on fire prevention practices, emergency planning, and proper use of safety equipment. This collaborative approach not only improves compliance but also strengthens community awareness and preparedness, ultimately reducing the overall demand for emergency response services.

Community	Total Inspections Completed
City of Portage	1400
Caledonia Township	81
Fort Winnebago Township	38
Lewiston Township	64
Pacific Township	241
Total	1824



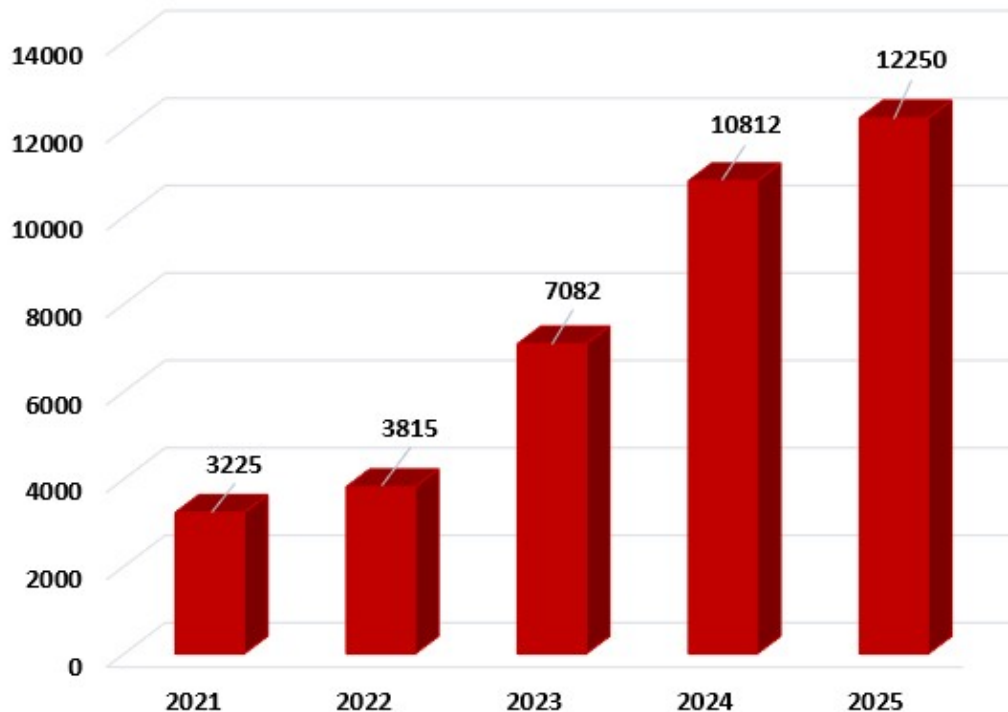
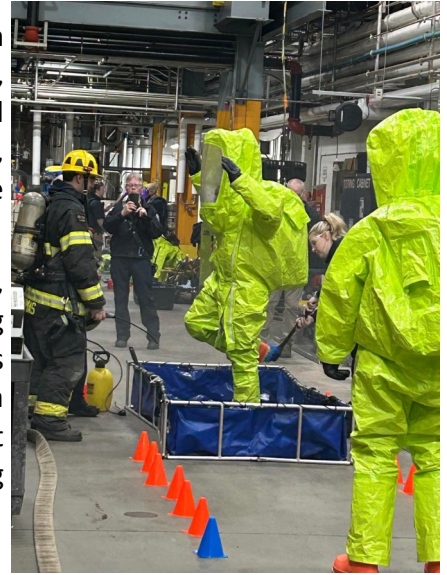
INCIDENT STATISTICS

TRAINING HOURS BY YEAR

The fire service plays a critical role in protecting the community through an all-hazards approach that includes emergency medical services (EMS), fire suppression, technical rescue, hazardous condition response, and public assistance. While EMS calls now make up the majority of incidents, firefighters must be prepared to respond quickly and effectively to a wide variety of complex and often high-risk situations.

This diversity of responsibility places a strong emphasis on continuous, hands-on training. Personnel must maintain proficiency in life-saving medical care, fireground operations, vehicle extrication, hazardous mitigation, and other technical skills. Each response can demand a different set of abilities, and ongoing realistic training ensures that firefighters can transition seamlessly between these roles while keeping themselves and the public safe.

Investing in training not only enhances operational effectiveness but also strengthens team coordination, decision-making, and confidence under pressure. The fire service's ability to respond to emergencies of any type and to do so efficiently and safely is directly tied to the dedication of its personnel to continual learning and skill development. In this way, training is the foundation that enables the modern fire service to protect lives, property, and the community as a whole.



NFPA 1720 RESPONSE BENCHMARKS

Response times for Portage Fire Rescue are showing steady improvement, with a noticeable positive trend over the past year. The addition of full-time staff has made a significant impact, allowing for faster response and improved reliability. While challenges such as travel distances, work-related limitations, and changing availability still exist, the department has made meaningful strides in overcoming these factors and enhancing overall response performance.

Portage Fire Rescue continues to take a proactive approach to addressing these issues by actively promoting volunteerism through the development of cadet and mentoring programs, placing an emphasis on building a more diverse workforce, and fostering a positive cultural shift within the organization. Despite these efforts, recruitment and retention for volunteers remain among the most significant challenges facing fire service leaders today.

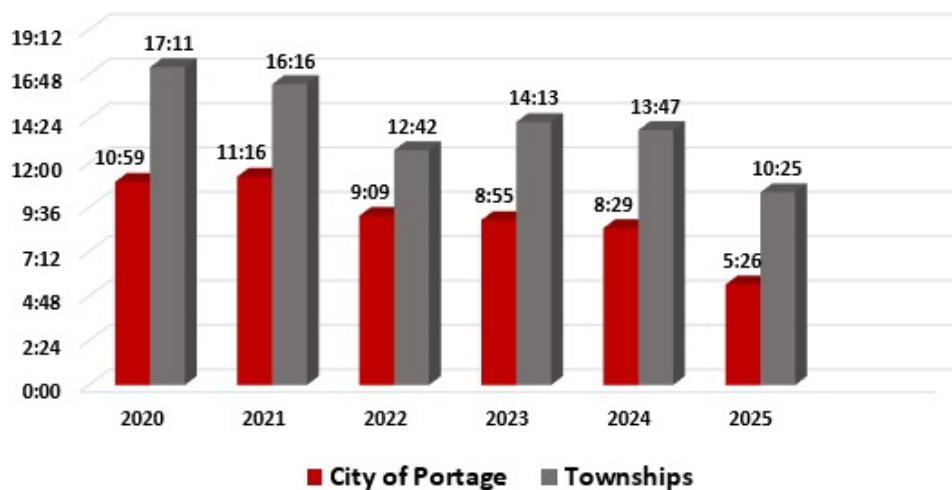
The National Fire Protection Association standard NFPA 1720 provides established benchmarks that volunteer and combination fire departments are expected to meet. This standard specifically applies to departments that do not have personnel staffed in stations on a full-time basis, but instead rely on members responding from home, work, or other locations when dispatched. This model inherently introduces variability, as volunteer personnel cannot guarantee immediate availability in the same manner as on-duty career staff unless they are already present in the station at the time of the call.

With the addition of 14 new EMS personnel, Portage Fire Rescue has improved its operational readiness by achieving an average on-scene arrival time of 5 minutes and 26 seconds. Upon arrival, EMS crews initiate fireground support operations, including conducting a 360-degree size-up of the incident, preparing a water supply by securing a hydrant for incoming engine companies, and, if necessary, donning personal protective equipment (PPE) and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) to perform immediate rescue operations.

In general, NFPA 1720 provides the following benchmarks:

- Urban Zones with >1000 people/square mile call for 15 staff to assemble an attack in 9 minutes, 90% of the time. **Portage Fire Rescue can assemble 15 personnel 23% of the time.**
- Suburban Zones with 500-1000 people/square mile call for 10 staff to assemble an attack in 10 minutes, 80% of the time. **Portage Fire Rescue takes 10 Minutes and 25 Seconds to assemble 10 personnel.**
- Rural Zones with <500 people/square mile call for 6 staff to assemble an attack in 14 minutes, 80% of the time. **Portage Fire Rescue can accomplish this benchmark.**
- Remote Zones with a travel distance = or > 8 miles, call for 4 staff, once on scene, to assemble an attack in 2 minutes, 90% of the time. **Portage Fire Rescue can accomplish this benchmark.**

RESPONSE TIME COMPARISON



INCIDENT STATISTICS

EMERGENCY RESPONSES BY YEAR

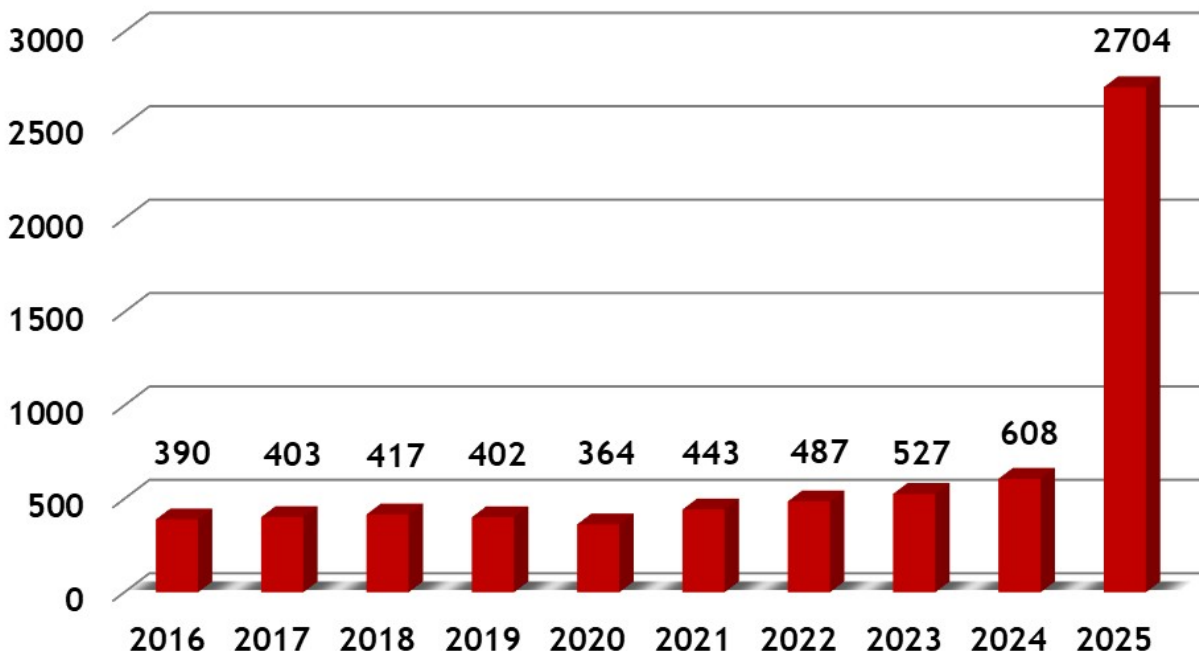
Portage Fire Rescue responded to a total of 2,704 emergency calls in 2025. This increase in call volume is largely attributed to the department assuming responsibility for emergency medical services within the City of Portage and six surrounding townships.

The following data provides a comprehensive overview of the types and frequency of incidents to which our personnel responded throughout the year. Included are detailed breakdowns of fire and EMS calls, as well as the distribution of responses within the City of Portage and each of our contracted communities.

Analysis of call patterns indicates that the majority of incidents occur between the hours of 7:00 a.m. and 9:00 p.m. While there are minor fluctuations in call volume depending on the day of the week, no consistent trend has been identified that would allow for reliable prediction of daily activity levels.

The data also highlights that a significant portion of our responses are EMS-related, reflecting the evolving role of the fire service. As you review the following statistics, it becomes clear that Portage Fire Rescue is responsible for managing a wide variety of emergency incidents. This diversity increases the complexity of our operations and requires ongoing, specialized training to ensure our personnel remain prepared.

The scope of emergency response continues to expand. While fire and EMS incidents have traditionally been the core of our services, today's environment requires readiness for a broader range of emergencies, including hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, and active threat situations. Portage Fire Rescue remains committed to adapting to these changing demands in order to provide the highest level of service and protection to our community.



INCIDENT STATISTICS

EMERGENCY RESPONSES BASED ON TYPE OF CALL

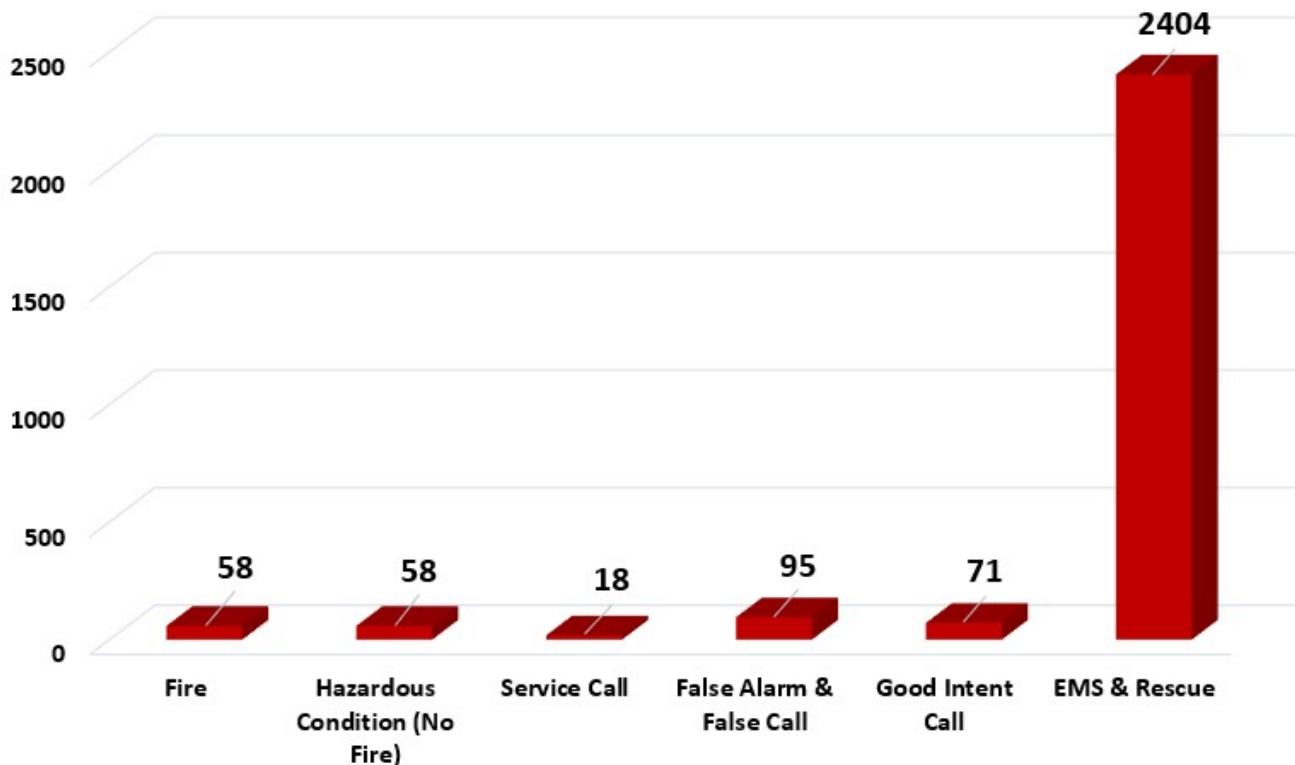
Portage Fire Rescue responds to a broad range of incident types, reflecting both the diverse needs of the community and the continually evolving role of the fire service. In 2025, these responses included 58 fire-related incidents and 58 hazardous condition calls where no fire was present, such as gas leaks and carbon monoxide investigations.

Personnel also handled 18 service calls, providing non-emergency assistance to the public, along with 95 false alarms and false calls that required verification to ensure no active hazard existed. Additionally, 71 calls were classified as good intent responses, where situations reported as emergencies were determined to be non-threatening upon arrival.

The overwhelming majority of incidents, 2,404 calls were EMS and rescue-related, accounting for approximately 89 percent of the department's total call volume. This significant percentage highlights the critical role Portage Fire Rescue plays in delivering emergency medical care to the community. EMS responses include a wide range of incidents such as medical emergencies, cardiac events, traumatic injuries, and motor vehicle crashes, often requiring rapid assessment, advanced life support interventions, and coordinated patient transport.

As the demand for emergency medical services continues to grow, Portage Fire Rescue remains committed to ensuring personnel are highly trained, properly equipped, and prepared to deliver timely, high-quality care. These figures reinforce the department's evolving role as not only a fire suppression agency, but also a primary provider of emergency medical services.

These statistics highlight the all-hazards nature of modern fire service operations and the need for personnel to remain highly trained and adaptable in order to effectively respond to a wide variety of emergency situations.



INCIDENT STATISTICS

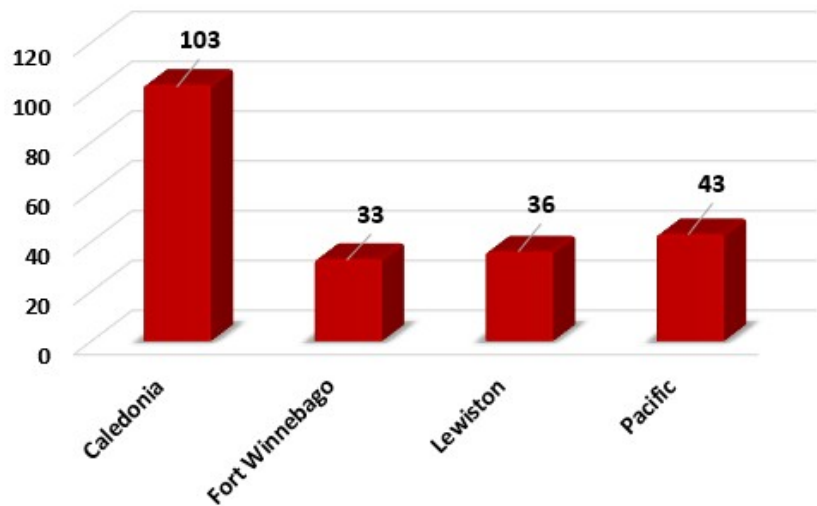
FIRE & EMS RESPONSE BY JURISDICTION

Portage Fire Rescue provides emergency services across a broad geographic area, including the City of Portage and six surrounding townships. In 2025, the department responded to a total of 2,704 incidents, with the majority, 1,841 calls, or 68%, occurring within the City of Portage. The surrounding townships also relied on the department for emergency assistance, including 267 calls in Caledonia (10%), 240 in Pacific (9%), 103 in Lewiston (4%), 82 in Fort Winnebago (3%), 42 in Marcellon (2%), and 41 in Wyocena (2%). An additional 88 responses (3%) involved intercept or mutual aid support to neighboring jurisdictions.

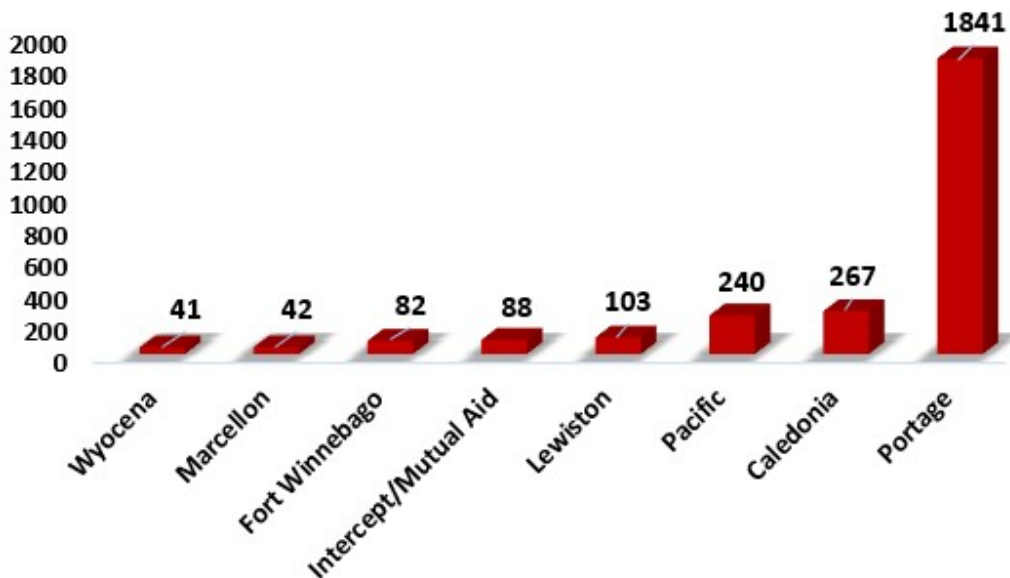
Fire-specific incidents, which include structure, vehicle, and outside fires, accounted for 215 calls across four jurisdictions. Caledonia recorded 103 fire responses (48%), Pacific had 43 (20%), Lewiston 36 (17%), and Fort Winnebago 33 (15%). These figures highlight the concentration of fire activity in both urban and rural areas, demonstrating the need for versatile apparatus, rapid response capabilities, and well-trained personnel.

By effectively covering both densely populated city areas and the more rural surrounding townships, Portage Fire Rescue ensures that all residents have access to timely, professional emergency services. This geographic distribution underscores the agency's commitment to readiness, strategic planning, and community safety across the entire service area.

FIRE RESPONSES BY JURISDICTION



TOTAL RESPONSES BY JURISDICTION



INCIDENT STATISTICS

TOP 20 RESPONSE LOCATIONS:

PROTECTING OUR MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

In 2025, analysis of Portage Fire Rescue’s responses revealed that a significant portion of calls occurred at a relatively small number of locations within our service area. These “top 20” locations represent facilities where the risk of emergencies is higher due to factors such as population density, the presence of elderly or medically fragile residents, and the nature of the services provided.

Many of these high-call locations are senior living facilities, assisted living centers, and medical care facilities. The residents in these facilities often have mobility challenges, chronic health conditions, or require specialized medical attention, which increases the likelihood of emergency medical calls, falls, or other urgent incidents. In addition, large facilities with complex layouts or high occupancy require careful coordination during fire, evacuation, or rescue operations.

Portage Fire Rescue prioritizes preparedness for these locations through pre-incident planning, building familiarization, and targeted training. Personnel conduct routine walkthroughs, review emergency protocols, and maintain an understanding of the unique needs of residents, staff, and visitors. This proactive approach allows responders to act quickly and efficiently, reducing response times and improving outcomes for some of our most vulnerable community members.

By identifying and tracking these high-frequency response locations, Portage Fire Rescue is able to allocate resources strategically, enhance safety measures, and ensure that both emergency readiness and patient care remain at the highest level. The focus on these key facilities demonstrates the department’s commitment to protecting all members of the community, particularly those most at risk.

Location	Address	Number of Calls
Heritage House Assistant Living	2685 Airport Road	172
The Rivers - Wisconsin	621 Latton Lane	72
Columbia Correctional	2925 Columbia Drive	61
Riverwood Apartments	215 West Mullett Street	55
The Rivers - Fox	611 East Albert Street	53
The Rivers - Baraboo	601 Latton Lane	52
The Rivers - Pine	613 East Albert Street	51
Hamilton Park Place	2525 Hamilton Street	43
The Ridge Motor Inn	2900 New Pinery Road	43
Our House	215 Northridge Drive	40
Cascade Mountain	W10441 Cascade Mountain Road	38
The Ram	207 West Cook Street	35
Our House Elderly Care	2876 Village Road	32
Pat Smith Manor	142 Henry Drive	28
Aspirus - Tivoli	2805 Hunters Trail	28
Manchester Place	601 West Slifer Street	25
Walmart	2950 New Pinery Road	20
Oakwood Terrace Mobil Homes	W10445 Hwy 16	20
SSM Health Dean Medical Group	2825 Hunters Trail	17
Columbia County Jail	403 Jackson Street	17



**THANK YOU TO THE CITIZENS & BUSINESSES
FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT**

Special Thanks To:

City of Portage

Town of Caledonia

Town of Fort Winnebago

Town of Lewiston

Town of Marcellon

Town of Pacific

Town of Wyocena

Respectfully Submitted By:

Fire Chief Troy Haase