



Pentwater Fire Department

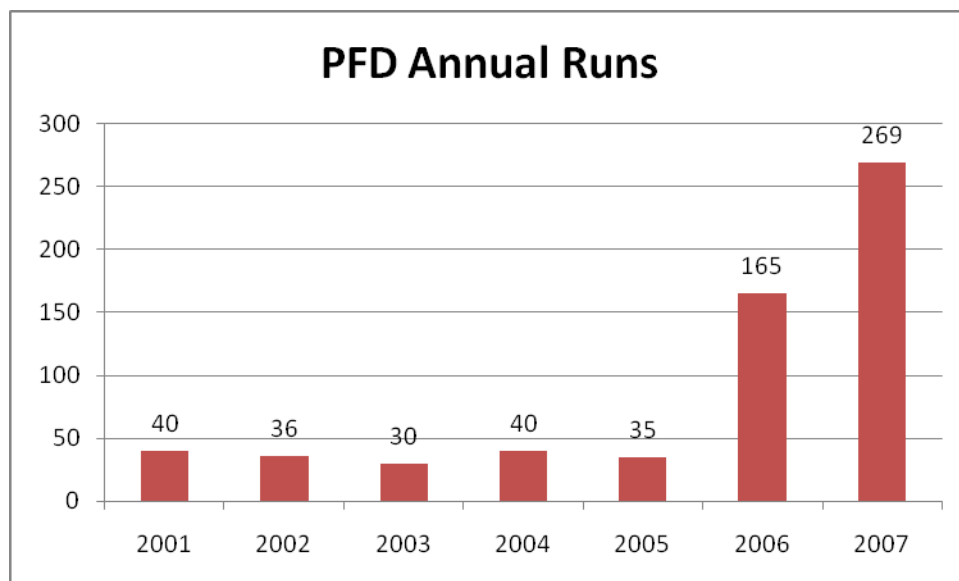
Year in Review 2007

Incident Activity

PFD had jurisdiction on three much larger than normal fires that required mutual aid from many area departments. The two well known are the Nickerson Inn and Garrison Park fires. Both of these fires had evolved to the point that there was little that could be done other than confine the fire to the structure of origin. The Garrison Park fire threatened an entire subdivision and prompted an analysis of limited access dune communities.

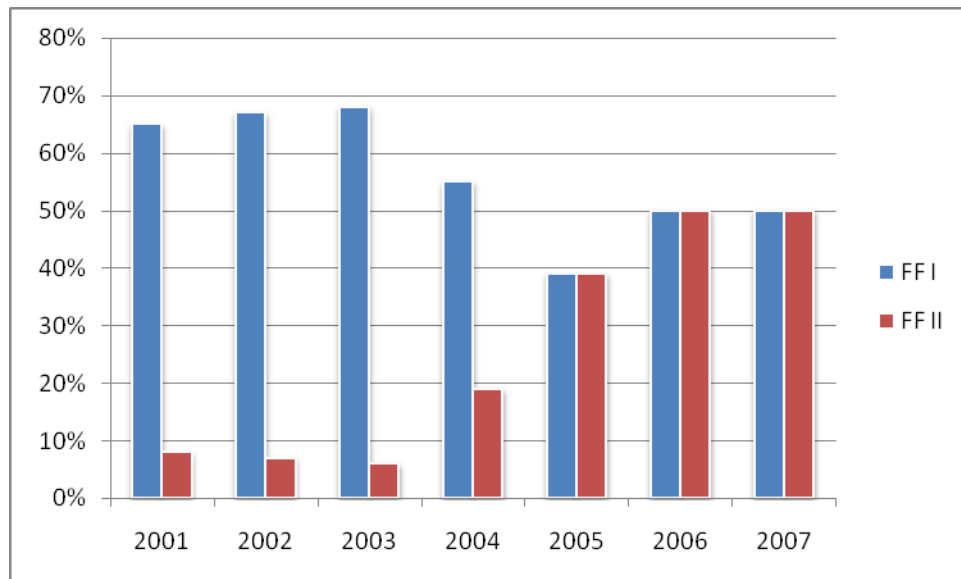
The third fire escaped headlines; 7 acres burned in the Pentwater Plains. The fire took 45 minutes to locate and required the help from 4 area departments and the DNR to extinguish.

The medical first responder (MFR) squad was busy and finished with 209 runs for the year. Implementation of the squad has been beneficial to the community and also helped the department to be much more active and better trained.



Training Qualifications

Training qualifications is one of the “big four” liabilities in the fire service, and PFD had a very active year in training. One positive trend is the number of Firefighter I&II members on the Department. In 2003, only 6% of our members were Firefighter I&II certified. In 2007, the percentage has grown to 50% with the remaining 50% Firefighter I certified.



PFD Training Qualifications

PFD added 5 members to its MFR squad; Tim Cluchey, Bear Millard, Deb Millard, Mike Moore, and Bill Lee completed the 68 hour Oceana County EMS Medical First Responder course and are either licensed or finishing up licensing through the State of Michigan. The Department now has 11 State of Michigan licensed Medical First Responders; 2 others are finishing licensing requirements.

Ray Hasil and Paul Smith completed the new Michigan Firefighter’s Training Council Company Officer I & II class. The seven class, 167 hour series provides the knowledge and skills to meet the job performance requirements for career and volunteer fire officers. Paul Smith also completed the 4 class, 55 hour Fire Officer III certification. John Sayles and Crystal Babbin have completed the six class, 91.75 hour prerequisite series and plan on taking Company Officer I & II early in 2008.

Late in the year Terry Cluchey, John Sayles, Ray Hasil, and Paul Smith completed National Incident Management System levels 300 and 400. These classes were required for the Department to be eligible to receive grant monies.

A record 425 senior fire executives and other key leaders from across the county applied for the National Fire Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program at the U.S. Fire Administration's campus in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Ray Hasil was one of the 250 selected for this four year program that enhances professional development through a series of four graduate and upper-division-baccalaureate equivalent courses. Each course culminates with an applied research project that relates to the student's organization. With the exception of a two-week meal ticket for each of the four classes, the entire program is free of charge.

Delivery of the county fire departments' live fire training trailer took place in the spring. The \$250,000 specially modified trailer uses propane and a commercial smoke generator to allow firefighters to train on a number of techniques. Ventilation, forcible entry, search & rescue, thermal image camera use, downed firefighter rescue, and fire suppression are all possible with this mobile training tool.

Community Involvement

PFD continues to play an active role in community events. Among this year's activities were: Asparagus Festival parade, 4th of July fireworks, Homecoming parade, Homecoming fireworks, Halloween night refreshments and glow necklaces, preschool fire safety and station tours, a high school forensics presentation on arson, and an assist to Santa Claus.

An emergency preparedness guide was developed and released in the spring. It contains Pentwater area specific information useful to residents and out-of-towners alike on subjects ranging from the "noon whistle" and wildland fire protection to surviving a rip current in Lake Michigan. The pamphlets were distributed door-to-door in several dune communities and also by hand at Charles Mears State Park.

As a result of the Garrison Park fire, an in-depth analysis of "dune communities" was conducted. The results were presented to Garrison and Oceana Beach residents. The analysis included a list of recommendations that can help minimize loss of life and property in these critical dune areas.

Equipment and Apparatus

A building generator was added to the fire station. The unit automatically starts and supplies electricity when the current from power lines fails. Four carbon fiber air tanks were purchased for airpacks. The tanks weigh considerably less than what old metal tanks weigh.

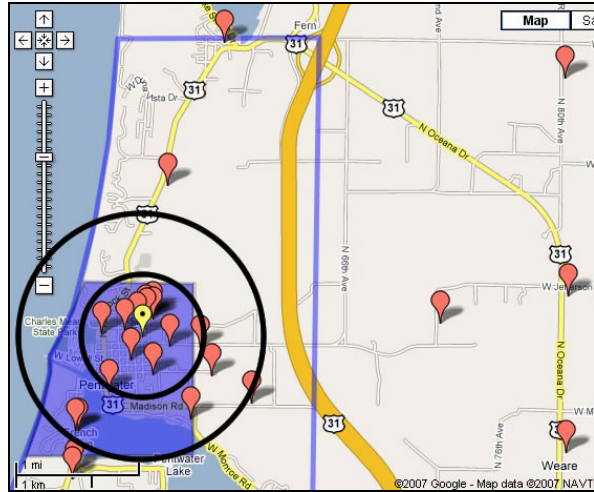
A new truck was placed into service. The department's ageing 1976 International brush truck was replaced with a 2006 Ford F350. The new truck is equipped with a 200 gallon water tank, 10 gallon foam tank, and 150 gallon per minute pump. It is also equipped with a compressed air foam system.

Membership Numbers Down

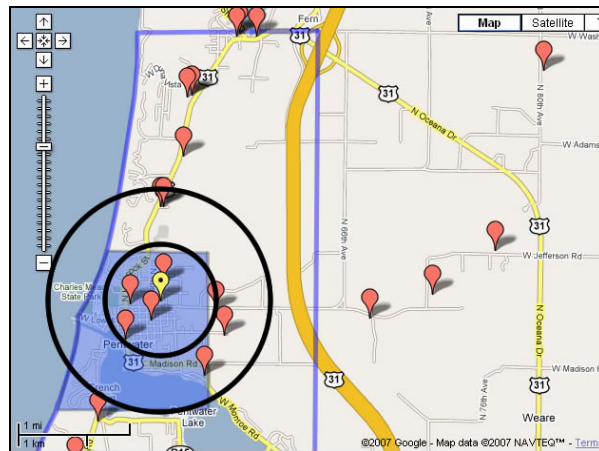
A nationwide trend of concern is a downturn in the number of new recruits joining departments. One of the reasons is that it has become harder and harder to become a firefighter, and also to remain a firefighter. Required levels of training have caused a migration in the volunteer fire service from a “social” organization to one of highly trained, underpaid professionals. For example, the bare minimum to become a firefighter in Oceana County requires nearly 300 hours of training. This training is the same training required to join a full time department in the State of Michigan. Once certified, there are requirements like CPR certification, driver training, blood borne pathogens, and many others that require annual and ongoing training.



Initial and ongoing training requirements have made it difficult for people to dedicate the time required to keep in good standing on fire departments. Compounding the problem is the lack of younger people living in the area. Although we have experienced big gains in training qualifications, fewer and fewer firefighters live in the Village of Pentwater. This is important to watch because it directly affects the proximity of firefighters to the station, which can affect response times, especially at night. In 2002, 14 members (64%) lived within the Village limits. In 2008, only 5 (23%) live within the Village.



2002 Firefighter Proximity to Station



2008 Firefighter proximity to Station

Staffing levels are adequate present day. However, it is probable that somewhere in the future, very few if any PFD firefighters will live within the Village limits. As firefighters (and families) migrate further and further from the Village, new ideas may need to be explored to ensure that response times are not affected.

Plans for 2008

Budget planning for fiscal year 2008 is nearly complete. Among the major purchases is a new Ford Expedition for the MFR squad. This MFR dedicated vehicle will be used to respond to medical emergencies rather than the more expensive compressed air foam system equipped pickup currently used. The new vehicle will allow for greater storage of MFR equipment and allow room to extricate patients from locations that an ambulance cannot access.

Other than the Expedition, we will continue to focus on our overall ability to react to the wide range of incidents we respond to through training and equipment upgrades.