

MENDOTA HEIGHTS FIRE DEPARTMENT



A MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

Since 1947, the Mendota Heights community has relied on a group of dedicated, proficient and skilled group of firefighters who devote a significant amount of their lives to service.

Teamwork and a desire to serve is what drove the City's first firefighters to form the Department, and it's what drives our firefighters today. From its modest beginnings, the Department has grown in size and capabilities, to match the growth and service expectations of the community.

In 2022, the Department responded to 394 calls for service, the highest in our history. As you will see in this report, the women and men of your Fire Department respond to all types of fires; technical rescues such as vehicle accidents and water/ice rescues; medical emergencies, hazardous material spills and leaks; and fire alarm activations. In addition to emergency response, firefighters also participate in various public education and community service programs.

Over the past 75 years, the dedication and efforts of hundreds of individuals has contributed to the current success of the Mendota Heights Fire Department. To the original members, and all those who have served, I offer my sincere appreciation and thanks for a job well done.

-Fire Chief Dave Dreelan

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EQUIPMENT UPDATE

The Mendota Heights Fire Department is responsible for, and responds to, more than fire and medical calls in homes and businesses. With the vast recreational trail system, parks and wetlands in Mendota Heights and the surrounding service areas, it is not uncommon for off-road emergencies to happen.

To help respond to these types of emergencies, the Fire Department acquired a new Utility Terrain Vehicle (UTV) in 2022. The Polaris quad UTV 4x4 features a full cab and a utility bed, and can be used to respond to off-road fire and medical emergencies. The UTV travels at a top speed of 55 MPH and is road-ready so it can be driven rather than trailered to calls for service. It has seating for up to five firefighters and can carry a victim laying down on a backboard out of remote locations.

The UTV is also used to transport firefighters and gear for grass and brush fire response. With the addition of this new vehicle, MHFD continues to keep the community safe on and off road.





PUBLIC EDUCATION

Community keeps community safe. While the Mendota Heights Fire Department works hard to be able to quickly and safely respond to emergencies, public education can go a long way in helping our first responders before they arrive on scene.

The Mendota Heights Fire Department's public education team coordinated 17 events in 2022, connecting with more than 1,500 people on fire and life safety topics. Five of those events were hosted by the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Department, including three days of Safety Camp at Harmon Park in West St. Paul. Collaborating with other city departments and neighboring agencies helps to expand access to fire prevention and life safety information for residents. Mendota Heights firefighters also participated in 13 community events including Night to Unite, Touch-A-Truck and Pickleball with Public Safety.

One example from this past year, of how public education helped a family, was when a Mendota Heights family experienced a house fire while gathered for a holiday. After the incident, the family shared that when the children were alerted to the fire in the house, they immediately exited, leaving all of their belongings behind and ensuring everyone was safe. The family credited their children's responses to the education they received from Mendota Heights Firefighters during their annual Fire Prevention Week visits to the elementary schools.

Firefighters always hope that both children and adults feel well prepared for emergencies, and stories like this reinforce the importance of doing the work in advance to prepare for an emergency. The Fire Department public education team is excited about new educational topics and more collaboration opportunities with the Mendota Heights Parks and Recreation Department in 2023 as they continue weaving these vital lessons throughout the community.





A FOCUS ON RECRUITMENT

The Mendota Heights Fire Department has preserved its tradition as a Paid-On-Call department made up of residents interested in serving the community. The MHFD is one of the only remaining departments of this kind in the Twin Cities metro region. As a means of ensuring the Department is adequately staffed, the MHFD has taken a deeper look at how it attracts and retains firefighters. From working with the City Council to increase retirement pension benefits, to modernizing the way we promote job vacancies in order to better reach potential members in our community, the MHFD has been working hard to find the next generation of Mendota Heights firefighters. New recruits train for a full year through the in-house training program to learn what it takes to become a Mendota Heights Firefighter. If you love teamwork, enjoy problem-solving and wish to be part of something greater than yourself, consider joining today: MendotaHeightsMN.gov/BecomeAFirefighter.

DEPARTMENT RETIREMENTS

Dan Willems had always been interested in being a firefighter; so, after graduating from college and starting a “real world job,” Dan signed up for the Firefighter 1 class at Hennepin Technical College, even though he knew nothing about the fire service. After passing his Firefighter 1 class in 2011, Dan applied and was hired with the Mendota Heights Fire Department. Most firefighters take on the role in addition to their fulltime jobs, but Dan quickly decided an entire career change was in order. He left corporate America and landed a fulltime job with the LaCrosse Fire Department, and shortly thereafter with South Metro Fire.

During this time, Dan continued to serve with the MHFD and took on multiple roles and responsibilities. He managed and maintained the Department’s self-contained breathing apparatus and was heavily involved in the specifying and procurement of the department’s new all-terrain vehicle and boat. In addition, Dan became the Vice President of the Department’s Relief Board and in 2020 was promoted to the rank of captain.

In 2022, Captain Willems retired from the MHFD. He was a great asset to the City and the Department; his sense of humor, commitment to the job and leadership will be greatly missed. On behalf of the MHFD and the entire community, we wish him the best on his next chapter!



A DEDICATION TO TRAINING

The training division supports the Mendota Heights Fire Department's mission to preserve and protect life and property from fire and other hazards through community education, emergency response and community service.

2022 was another demanding year for department members. The training division prepared and delivered 3,656 hours of training to Mendota Heights firefighters. To help meet the ongoing and ever-increasing training requirements, staff assembled a committee of highly-motivated firefighters and officers to assist with the development and delivery of training sessions throughout the year.

In addition to typical training topics such as rope rescue, ladders, search and rescue, fire attack, first aid, and water rescue, firefighters also received training that was directed at improving their personal health and wellness. Guest speakers from outside agencies presented three different programs in 2022 related to firefighter wellness and nutrition, mental health, and cancer prevention. All three wellness sessions addressed topics that have risen to the forefront of the fire service.

In addition to ongoing training for the current firefighters, the training staff is responsible for the extensive training first year firefighters receive. Traditionally, the Department has relied on outside agencies to provide this initial firefighter training. After careful consideration, training staff determined that due to the talent within the Department and the training features that are built into the new Fire Station, department members could host our own in-house training and the first-ever Mendota Heights Fire Academy Class. The training staff has dedicated hundreds of hours to teaching new recruits the initial firefighter skills required for state certification.





FIREFIGHTER RELIEF ASSOCIATION

In addition to the strong sense of community in the Department, the training and teamwork that firefighters gain through their time with the department, another significant benefit to serving is that firefighters get a pension plan that they qualify for upon retirement from the department. The Fire Department and its members stand ready 24 hours per day, 365 days per year. The pension plan helps to ensure that the men and women who care for their community through their service on the Mendota Heights Fire Department are also taken care of following their retirement.

Vesting in this plan begins after the completion of 10 years of service and a member is fully vested after 20 years. The pension plan is funded by annual contributions from the City of Mendota Heights and the State of Minnesota. The Fire Relief Association administers the pension plan, manages the investment portfolio of the funds in the plan, and ensures accurate record keeping of all matters related to the pension and the members who participate in the plan.

While managing the pension plan is the primary purpose, the Relief Association engages in several other activities, all intended to support the mission of the department and its members – past and present. The Relief Association conducts separate fundraising activities that fund benefits, activities and events beyond those provided through funding by the City.

If you would like to support the men and women of the Mendota Heights Fire Department, the Relief Association is grateful to accept donations. All donations received go directly to support the activities the Relief Association conducts to support our members.



Donations may be sent to:

**Mendota Heights Fire Department Relief Association
2121 Dodd Road
Mendota Heights, MN 55120**

Thank you for helping the men and women dedicated to being there to help you when you need it most!



SUMMARY OF FIRE CALLS

Incident Type	Lilydale	Mendota	Mendota Heights	Sunfish Lake	Total
Fire Buildings, vehicles, grass, cooking and other fires	1	0	23	1	25
Rescue/Medical Provide EMS, vehicle accident and lift assist	11	3	50	4	68
Hazardous Conditions Gas spill/leak, Carbon Monoxide, electrical and power line incidents	1	0	34	1	36
Public Assist Search, police assist and forced entry	4	1	6	0	11
Good Intent Smoke/odor scare, investigate (non-fire) and canceled en route	9	2	93	13	117
False Alarm Sprinkler or smoke detector activation	5	1	93	8	107
Total	31	7	299	27	394*

*Includes 30 calls for mutual aid assistance to the Cities of Eagan, Inver Grove Heights and South Metro Fire (West St. Paul, South St. Paul).



Mendota Heights Fire Department
2121 Dodd Road
Mendota Heights, MN 55118
MendotaHeightsMN.gov



OPEN HOUSE

Don't miss the annual
Fire Department Open House!

SATURDAY, OCT. 14
8 A.M. - NOON
MENDOTA HEIGHTS FIRE STATION

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

MendotaHeightsMN.gov/Calendar