



# LETTER FROM THE CHIEF



2023 was a year of much needed new equipment at SAFD. Between a new fire engine, new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA), and new extrication equipment, there was a lot of training and immediate impact with all this new equipment.

## What drives the need for new equipment?

Some pieces of equipment have a shelf life set by various agencies like NFPA (National Fire Protection Association). Other pieces are replaced simply to provide better usability or reliability, or to replace older non-functioning equipment. The process is much longer and more methodical than buying the next hot trendy tool in fire service. We meticulously review and compare options weighing several factors - durability, cost, usability, and necessity. Once we identify something that fits our standards and budget, the process of ordering and putting into service is next.

## Extensive training results in top proficiency

To put a new tool or apparatus into service, first we require proficiency. For example, with the SCBAs (self-contained breathing apparatus) and extrication equipment, we train with vendors on how to use their equipment properly and efficiently. Following initial exposure to the tool, we will spend additional time implementing its use in department-wide drills. and then, once we reach proficiency, we put them into service on the appropriate apparatus.

Our priority is to provide the best service to our residents and neighboring cities when called upon. We achieve this through hiring and training to bring the best personnel to each incident. With the correct tools and apparatus, we can confidently handle any situation we see. We are thankful to our city and council for supporting the fire department to allow us to bring the best service every day.



# EQUIPMENT



2023 was a year of much needed new equipment at SAFD that required training but brough us immediate impact.

**FIRE ENGINE 1:** 2023 was a very busy year for fires, and Engine 1 responded to numerous vehicle, dumpster, and structure fires. Engine 1 replaced our 1999 Engine 11 and is almost a carbon copy of Engine 2 put into service in 2018. A key feature we added is a remote operated deck gun, which allows us to apply large volumes of water from a defensive exterior position on fires that have progressed too far to allow for firefighters to work on the interior. The remote allows us to aim and position the water stream without having to climb on top of the engine, increasing worker safety.

**NEW SCBAs:** On each structure fire we responded to, we used our new SCBAs that replaced our 15-year-old SCBA packs in accordance with NFPA standards. The new SCBAs have many improved safety features including quicker “bell’s” to notify the firefighter when they’ve reached a point in their air supply that they need to exit the structure. Previous SCBAs left firefighters with 25% air capacity before activating, and now new standards have increased that to 33%. This creates a longer safe window to exit a dangerous environment before running out of air. More lights and indicators help locate firefighters in smoke-filled, low-visibility areas, and Bluetooth connection ensures no critical radio traffic is missed by loud working conditions.

**NEW EXTRICATION EQUIPMENT:** Commonly referred to as Jaws of Life, our new extrication tools are now battery operated. Older systems were hydraulically powered, requiring a large power plant motor, hoses, and spreading and cutting tools. Now it is all integrated into one tool using powerful batteries that provide more reliability. They are much quicker to deploy with more mobility and usability outside of just extrication from car accidents.

**STABILIZATION EQUIPMENT:** Finally, we added a new product to assist in stabilizing vehicles that are flipped on their sides due to an accident. This rigging system enables us to safely help people who are trapped by using a more reliable method than the wood step chocks previously used.



# TECHNOLOGY



This past year we updated a lot of our equipment to newer technology. One big update was utilizing digital charting for our medical response. Previously, this was all done on scene with paper and then transferred to the computer, once back at the fire station. We were able to obtain used tablets from another agency to start this change in early February. This not only is significantly more secure technology, but also allows us the ability to look up previously seen patients to assist in delivering the best care possible.

Along with now having tablets on scene, we were able to utilize many new programs on those tablets to assist on calls. One of the biggest being a program called Jeenie. This puts us in touch with certified medical interpreters skilled with many different language options. This has already proved a positive addition on several calls, where we otherwise did not have a way to communicate with a patient.

The way we document calls has also changed with emerging technology. Now we have better capability to document interventions done on scene, such as medications given, IV’s , and other assessments done. We can time stamp everything that is done such as the moment CPR is started. This provides better ability to pull data and evaluate trends or make assessments.

We are fortunate to have the resources to provide the highest level of care. We always strive to be our best for the people we serve. These new components have greatly increased our level of care and gives us the necessary information to seek ways to improve.

# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Trust is built in our community through the events we host and attend each year. We spend countless hours building relationships through City events like VillageFest, The Pinewood Derby, and Night to Unite.

Our Fire Department Open House is by far our biggest event each October, marking the start of Fire Prevention Week. This brings hundreds of attendees of all ages to the fire station to meet firefighters and learn about the work we do.

We also host fire department tours for all ages throughout the year. Many local Cub Scout groups have toured the fire station and received training to obtain their scout badges.

In December, we spend three nights driving through nearly every street in St. Anthony hosting Santa on the Fire Truck. Firefighters spread holiday cheer while collecting donations for Toys for Tots and Nourish 282.

Social Media has also allowed us to engage even more with the community by posting about our training, education, events and the fire department itself.



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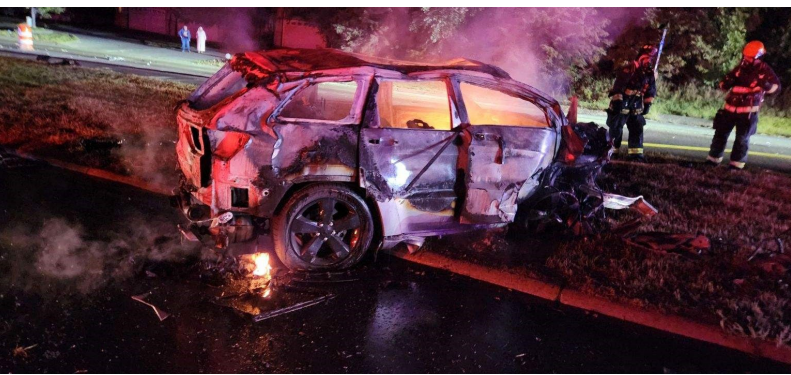
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# YEAR IN REVIEW



2023 was another record year for the department with 1,812 calls for service. The calls ranged from medicals and fires, to lift assists and false alarms. To put that in perspective, in 2003, our call volume was 906. This year marked a 200% increase in calls since that time.

We had several significant residential fires that firefighters were able to contain quickly. There were no deaths and zero reported civilian injuries documented.

Our average response time for Code 3 (emergency) calls is 2 minutes and 54 seconds.

Medical calls continue to be our highest response with 70.64% making up our total call volume.

Our hazmat team was again utilized in several responses. The hazmat team, which serves 11 cities is made up of members from 5 nearby fire departments.

Four new rookies started in 2023. Two were hired with previous firefighter/medical training already completed. The other two are currently going through their training program. We anticipate all four will be fully trained and sworn in by later this year.

Fire Chief Mark Sitarz retired with 25 years of service. Along with two other members - Firefighter Jeff Basara (20 years) and Firefighter Chris Arndt (17 years).

# TRAINING

Firefighters continuously train, always seeking improvement. Training is a vital component to firefighter's expertise at completing various tasks. We continually learn and find ways to make things better as we learn all we need to know to do the best job we can.

In 2023 we had a total of 2,101 documented training hours. These hours come from various drills throughout the year as well as classes. We had a total of 32 department drills.

- Training throughout last year included the following:
- New building walk-throughs in the City.
  - EMT
  - Advanced life support skills
  - Auto extrication
  - Electric vehicle fires
  - SCBA training

In 2023 the new equipment purchased required extensive training. Our new engine, delivered in July, required learning all the equipment as well as understanding new pumping, driving and controls. We also focused on new SCBA's and extrication equipment.

We are constantly improving the department's knowledge and skills. Training never ends in a firefighter's career.

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# PUBLIC EDUCATION



The Fire Department provides a robust Fire Prevention and Education program from preschool to senior adult and is vital to our goal of keeping our community safe.

Starting with our youngest ages, we create building blocks teaching that firefighters are their friends and not to hide during a home fire, a natural response for young children. From there, we line our education with the cognitive ability of each age, teaching students about smoke alarms, calling 911, and showing them our gear and then fire prevention classes for our upper elementary students. In the high school, we move to life safety, teaching CPR and how to use an AED.

In addition, we partner with St. Anthony Police to host a 2-day Safety Camp allowing students to witness a vehicle extrication, learn first aid, spray the fire house and tour an ambulance.

Over the past year, we delivered Senior Citizen fire and life safety education and also hosted several hands-only CPR classes for the public.

The Fire Department has a Home Safety Survey program, partnering with the American Red Cross to provide free smoke alarms for residents. During a home safety survey, we verify the operation and correct number of smoke alarms for the home and replace any that are no longer usable. We also cover general safety topics with residents and discuss emergency planning.

As we look to the future, we will continue to stay ahead of fire prevention trends and seek grants that allow us continued improvement.



# 2023 ANNUAL REPORT

