

By the numbers



The department received nearly 5,300 calls for service in 2019, ranging from emergency and non-emergency medical response to structure fires, car accidents and fire alarms. Emergency responses are handled by on-duty staff with call back, auto aid and mutual aid agreements to cover additional demand.

The fire department responds out of two fire stations and has a wide range of fleet vehicles including three engines, one ladder, two light rescues, one boat, one RAMP, an ATV and various support vehicles.

- 158 CEMT visits
- 100 hours of bike patrol
- 94 car seat checks
- 77 public education and community outreach activities that served 3,758 adult and 4,241 children participants
- 25 classes teaching 261 people hands-only CPR
- 239 fire protection permits issued
- 71 recreational fire permits issued
- 70 lockbox program participants
- 25 CERT members



St. Louis Park Fire Department 2019 Annual Report



Letter from Chief Koering



Letter from Chief Koering

In full operation since 1915, the St. Louis Park Fire Department provides all-hazard emergency and non-emergency services to the City of St. Louis Park.

Throughout history, America's fire service has been constantly evolving to meet the growing needs of the communities in which they serve. While we recognize the history and traditions of the past, we realize that we must plan and adapt for the future. The demands placed on the city and the fire department's infrastructure include changing demographics, a growing population, the expansion of transit corridors, the intentional effort to recognize and adapt to the need for racial equity, and opportunities for improved outcomes through better community health management.

The fire department is directed by a full-time fire chief who also serves as the city's emergency management coordinator. The command staff includes a full-time deputy chief of operations, assistant chief of training and EMS, and an assistant chief of prevention, who also serves as the fire marshal. A full-time career staff of 27 firefighters working 24-hour shifts coupled with 25 part-time duty crew firefighters provide staffing to address the demands for service. The department is divided into four divisions: prevention, suppression, EMS/community health management and emergency management.

Over the last 20 years, the city has supported a combination model of staffing using both career and part-time members. Department staffing levels and structure had remained largely unchanged over the past two decades, until the department was awarded a SAFER grant in 2016 to hire three additional career staff. The transition of the volunteer firefighters to a part-time duty crew, along with the additional career staff, allowed for a more predictable level of staffing and improves firefighter safety.

This annual report shows our accomplishments for 2019 and our plans for the future as we work together to build a more resilient St. Louis Park.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Steve Koering".

Steve Koering, chief
St. Louis Park Fire Department

Training



Prevention and education

Training is the backbone of any fire department. Effective training produces well-prepared firefighters who by repetition increase their competence and confidence, while decreasing their risk of injuries. Unprepared firefighters will find it extremely stressful to perform their duties in life-and-death situations. Training benefits everyone: the firefighter, the fire department and the community.

Formal department training takes place Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays each week. In 2019 more than 5,200 hours of training was recorded, averaging more than 100 hours per firefighter. In addition, each shift conducts its own training almost daily to ensure confidence in performing complex tasks in stressful situations.

In 2019 the training theme was firefighter wellness. Along with regular training topics such as hose lays, high-rise operations, basement fires, auto extrication, EMT refresher and rescue skills; firefighters also received training in understanding psychological trauma, healthy eating, racial equity awareness, understanding sleep and cancer awareness.

2019 also saw the department complete the important training goal of certifying all firefighters as water rescue technicians. This allowed deployment of a new water rescue capability for year-round response to water emergencies.



Education



Prevention and education

The fire department believes that the best fire is the one that is prevented. Throughout 2019, the department's prevention division offered nearly 80 opportunities to the community to learn about fire safety, hands-only CPR, Stop the Bleed, the PulsePoint app and community risk reduction. The community outreach coordinator, who is a department employee and firefighter, identifies and coordinates classroom fire prevention training and educates various groups on prevention and workplace/home safety.

Help save lives with PulsePoint

PulsePoint is a smartphone app that allows CPR-trained community members to provide lifesaving assistance to nearby victims of sudden cardiac arrest. PulsePoint is a free app and can be downloaded from the App Store and Google Play. Visit www.pulsepoint.org for more information.

Stop the Bleed

Stop the Bleed is a program that encourages bystanders to become trained, equipped and empowered to help in a bleeding emergency before professional help arrives. In 2019, 150 participants in four classes were trained in Stop the Bleed.

2019 Fire Department Open House

The 2019 Fire Department Open House was visited by more than 3,000 people. Highlights included:

- For the first time, a community health resource section with a number of vendors was available to help residents navigate care resources.
- The Community Emergency Response Team (CERT) was at the event promoting individual and family preparedness.
- Vehicles from the St. Louis Park Police Department, Hennepin Healthcare Ambulance, the Red Cross Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) and many large city vehicles and equipment were available for everyone to explore.
- Demonstrations included hands-only CPR, fire extinguishers, a kitchen education simulator trailer, grease fires, residential sprinklers and burn rooms showing the value of residential sprinklers.

Prevention



Community code enforcement

While code enforcement primarily maintains quality of life standards, it also plays an important role in the early identification of unsafe entry points, maintaining access for emergencies, identifying exterior hazards, reducing public health hazards and ensuring compliance with the fire code.

The fire department is responsible for enforcing ordinance requirements throughout the city. They work closely with the city's building and energy and community development departments to collaboratively define solutions that meet the needs of the customer and the overall safety of the community. The community is currently classified as an ISO 2 city, which means your home is less likely to be severely damaged or destroyed by fire and may be cheaper to insure. Communities are scored on how well equipped the fire department is to put out fires in that community.

Fire protection permits issued	239
Permit fees	\$61,944
Permit inspections	697
Commercial and multihousing inspections	190

Recreational fire permits

Recreational fires in St. Louis Park require a recreational fire permit. Applications are available at www.stlouispark.org/firepermit or at Fire Station 1, 3750 Wooddale Ave. S. A one-time fee of \$25 buys a lifetime permit for the current resident living at the property. In 2019, 71 recreational fire permits were issued.

Lockbox program offers peace of mind

One component of community resiliency is the ability to provide resources for residents to stay in their homes safely and securely, for as long as they choose. The fire department offers a lockbox program for residents who are worried that in case of an emergency, they may not be able to reach the door to let in first responders. A secure lockbox is placed at the entrance door and contains a key to the home that can be accessed only by a special key carried by police and fire personnel who can then open the door instead of forcing it open. More than 70 residents are using this program.

Preparedness



The fire department has adopted an all-hazards approach to emergency management and crisis response, enabling the community to be prepared for any incident or disaster. While infrequent, such events require planning and preparation in order to provide an effective response when a community is often at its weakest.

The fire department is committed to promoting a culture of resilience and to ensuring that everything possible has been done to prevent, mitigate and manage a catastrophic event.

In its role as emergency management coordinator, the fire department is responsible for:

- Overall accuracy and readiness of the emergency operations plan
- Defining and updating the city's hazard mitigation plan
- Training personnel in the incident command system
- Coordinating emergency management efforts with the Lakes Region and Hennepin County Emergency Management

Community emergency response team (CERT)

Community engagement in the emergency management process reinforces resiliency and readiness. One effective method of reinforcing this engagement is by supporting the community emergency response team (CERT). The CERT is a group of highly motivated volunteers who will be advocates and resources in the event of an emergency incident. The fire department works closely with CERT to secure resources, assist with training and to provide oversight. This program has 27 members, with a goal of 45 members to help increase involvement in neighborhood activities.

Outdoor emergency sirens

When sirens sound, they are for real emergencies and are designed to warn people who are OUTDOORS to seek immediate shelter. They are not designed to warn people who are indoors.

The siren sound is always the same, regardless of the type of emergency. If the sirens sound, DO NOT call 911 to ask what's going on. Seek shelter and turn on the TV or radio for information.

Testing of emergency sirens takes place on the first Wednesday of the month at 1 p.m. St. Louis Park has six sirens which are placed strategically throughout the community and are tested regularly by city staff for proper operation.

Community health



Fire chief receives Park Nicollet award

St. Louis Park Fire Department Chief Steve Koering was awarded the 2019 Park Nicollet Foundation Community Service Award by Elizabeth Warner, executive director, Park Nicollet Foundation. Chief Koering's award nomination read, in part, "He is an innovative and collaborative partner on numerous initiatives supporting Park Nicollet and Methodist Hospital patients and families...he has been instrumental in the design and implementation of our Good to Be Home Program, where firefighters make home visits to Methodist Hospital patients after hospital discharge. Community-focused solution and care are Chief Koering's cornerstone."

Focusing on need

The fire department recognizes the important role it plays in the overall health of the community. It serves as the primary first responders for all emergency medical incidents within the city. Calls for service continue to grow about six percent a year, driven largely by an aging population and increase in senior care facilities.

The department looks for ways to improve community health with the goals of:

- Improving access to healthcare for all residents
- Lowering the cost of healthcare by using the appropriate care
- Improving the reliability of the fire department for all responses

In 2014, the fire department took the lead in developing and implementing the post-discharge program with Methodist Hospital. The program's goal is to reduce readmissions to the hospital and create a safer environment for healing at home. Since the program started it has grown to include five cities and has served more than 1,400 patients.

The future of emergency management services in St. Louis Park will likely be a combination of 911 advanced life support response, basic life support response, mobile integrated healthcare and innovative programs directed at overall community health management. Working to assist patients in finding available resources and helping to integrate care plans will be important elements to improving access, lowering the cost of overall healthcare, enhancing the reliability of response and improving outcomes.