

South Metro Fire Department Year End Report

Proudly Serving the Communities of South St. Paul and West St. Paul



Message From The Chief



2021 started off like any other year but we quickly found out how different it would actually become. Covid-19 would come to dominate both locally and nationally. I remember sitting in our Health and Wellness symposium on March 6, at Thompson Park, when the State confirmed Covid-19 had reached Minnesota. My initial thoughts were how do we navigate this outbreaking pandemic when there is so little known about the disease. Covid-19 created a new normal in our lives, hopefully we return to a semblance of our old normal soon. As a department we quickly implemented policies and procedures to navigate this new normal. I want to thank each and everyone of our personnel for their continued efforts to provide outstanding service to the communities in such challenging times.

Despite the challenges of the last year we were able to accomplish some great things.

First and foremost is our continued focus on the health and wellness of our Firefighters. Giving our Firefighters the tools to remain both emotionally and physically fit was our top priority in 2020. To achieve this goal South Metro implemented a personal resiliency program called PAR360. This program will assist Firefighters with any challenges they may face related to their mental health. I believe we are leading the way and changing the fire service culture with respect to eliminating the stigma of seeking help for mental health issues.

In 2020, we also saw the delivery of two new fire engines. The acquisition is an important step in maintaining a dependable fleet of apparatus enabling us to respond to the communities needs.

I am proud to be the Chief of South Metro Fire and I look forward to a successful 2021.

A handwritten signature of Mark Juelfs in black ink.

Mark Juelfs
Fire Chief

Personnel

The heart of our organization is our outstanding personnel. Without their outstanding contributions to South Metro we would not be able to function. I thank all of them for their dedicated service to the communities. In 2020, we had three personnel leave the department. Firefighter Tom Brooks retired after over 20 years of service with South Metro. Firefighters Karl Stamm and Steve Arzdorf both left the department for outside opportunities. We thank the three for their service with South Metro and wish them the best in their future endeavors.

Firefighters

Rob Ehlert—1997
Shawn Kutney—1999
Peter Friend—2001
Paul Fletcher—2004
Tony Del Rio—2005
Jason Bessermin—2006
Tim Congdon—2007
Bill Brandecker—2007
Pat Noack—2008
Jake Ganfield—2008
Matt Dinneen—2009
Andy Dahlinger—2010
Tony Gutierrez—2012
Ange Appelholm—2013
Nate Rank—2014
Sam Seal—2014
Evan Larsen—2014
Dan Willems—2016
Logan Schewe—2017

Firefighter—Continued

Jordan Thompson—2017
Bobby Conley—2018
Billy Brandecker—2018
Steven Jensen—2019
Robby Smith—2019
Matt Kull—2019
Joe Zinniel—2019
Jake McCann—2019

Captains

Brad Quiggle—1993
Chris Snyder—1997
John Voigt—1998
Ben Bailey—1999
Adam Schewe—2004
Sean Jansen—2007

Inspectors

Steve Wenzel—1998

Administrative

Deb Wheeler—2016

Chief Officers

Mark Juelfs—1998
Mark Erickson—1999
Mike Nelson—2006
Terry Johnson—2009

Covid-19

Covid-19 had a significant impact on our operations in 2020. After the first cases were identified in Minnesota we began implementing processes to prevent the spread within the department. The first steps included ensuring all our personnel were wearing the proper PPE on every call. Prior to Covid-19 gloves were the standard on every call and crews would don gowns and eye protection as needed. Post Covid-19 eye protection and a mask are now standard on every call. Gowns are donned if there is a possibility of particulates being dispersed. Chief Terry Johnson was in charge of procuring the necessary PPE to ensure crews always had an adequate supply. In March through June supplies such as N-95's and gowns were nearly impossible to get within a reasonable amount of time. We were fortunate to have a cache of N-95's on hand and procured many others through the County and State. Additional precautions included limiting travel between the two stations, restricting access to the Stations by non fire personnel, eliminating station tours, and blood pressure checks. In the early stages we performed health assessments on personnel twice a day but soon moved to a self reporting system. The community donated much needed cleaning supplies including paper towels, wipes, bleach, and many other household items. Covid-19 was less of a concern during the Summer months as cases in Minnesota declined significantly compared to early Spring. However, the summer lull was short lived as a significant up tick in cases occurred in the Fall. Several South Metro personnel contracted Covid-19 but thankfully none of the cases were severe. We did have a mini outbreak in the late fall and early winter. Fortunately, it did not significantly impact our operations. As we move into 2021 personnel are getting vaccinated and we look forward to retuning to some semblance of normalcy.



Civil Unrest

One of the biggest events in my career took place in late May after the death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. Within days civil unrest in Minneapolis, Saint Paul, and the surrounding communities was dominating the news cycle. Along with the civil unrest, fires began to break out in both Minneapolis and Saint Paul. Both Cities quickly became overwhelmed by the number of fires. In the early morning of May 29, South Metro was called to respond to Saint Paul as part of a fire task force. South Metro Engine 1, South Metro Chief 2, along with a Ladder truck from Inver Grove Heights and an Engine from Mendota Heights made up the responding task force. Upon arrival at the staging area the task force was dispatched to a building fire on University Avenue in Saint Paul. I drove Chief 4



down to the scene so he could assist Chief 2 with command responsibilities. Driving down University Avenue at 1:00 in the morning was surreal, it was like a scene out of a war movie. I could see the glow of fire in every direction, no less than 10 buildings were on fire within a several block stretch of University Avenue between Snelling and Lexington. The Police presence by this time of morning was overwhelming. Although we were in a precarious position the Police did a great job maintaining a perimeter to allow the Fire personnel to work. The fire our task force was assigned to was dealt with quickly and they were released shortly there after. For the



next several days South Metro had extra staff on duty as night approached. Although our two communities Police Departments were very busy responding to looting and vandalism calls thankfully no fires broke out as a result of those activities.

PAR360

The mental health of Firefighters is a significant concern within the fire service and has been one of my primary focuses since being appointed Chief in 2019. In fact, according to the Ruderman Family Foundation more firefighters died by suicide than in the line of duty in 2017, 103 to 93 respectively. In the early months of 2020 the South Metro Fire Board and Fire Chief discussed opportunities to increase the awareness of mental health issues at South Metro. Two critical areas relating to mental health were identified, the need for increased training geared toward mental health resilience and performing on going mental health evaluations.

In June of 2020, South Metro implemented a program called PAR360. PAR360 is a personal resiliency program developed by Dr. Margaret Gavian. The program consists of online learning modules that present personnel with the knowledge and skills to deal with issues that affect their personal resiliency. Some of the topics covered include Alcoholism, PTSD, depression, anxiety, burnout, and suicide.

Firefighters have;

- ◆ 2 times the rate of alcohol problems
- ◆ 4 times the rate of PTSD
- ◆ 8 times the rate of depression
- ◆ 18 times the rate of anxiety
- ◆ 2 times the rate of suicide than the general population

South Metro is not immune to the above issues. Two of our members have been very open about their struggles with PTSD. I believe their openness has enabled a rapid change in culture here at South Metro. No longer do Firefighters feel the need to keep their issues bottled up inside but they are free to express themselves without fear of retribution or of being ostracized in the department.

In addition to the online learning modules, each Firefighter is meeting with Dr. Gavian one on one to assess their personal resiliency. This meeting is meant to look for issues in all facets of a Firefighters life to ensure they are personally resilient and have any resources to assist them in furthering their personal resiliency.

Getting this program in place was our most significant accomplishment of 2020 . I believe this program will save lives.



Recently retired Firefighter Tom Brooks was featured in a story by Town Square Television. The story detailed Tom's experience with the traumas of being a Firefighter. Tom retired in October of 2020 due to his PTSD. Thank you Tom for being willing to share your story with us and the rest of the world.

In addition to the Town Square Television story, Kare11 did a story on PAR360 in October of 2020. South Metro is out front on this issue and we are helping to change the fire service culture.

FIRST RESPONDERS ATTEMPT SUICIDE
6-10 TIMES MORE THAN
THE GENERAL POPULATION

New Fire Engines



In 2020 we were proud to take delivery of two new Rosenbauer Engines. These two engines replaced one 1999 and one 2000 Pirece Engine. Thank you to the truck committee, Chief Erickson, Captains Snyder and Bailey, and Engineer's Brooks and Noack, for their dedicated work on this project.

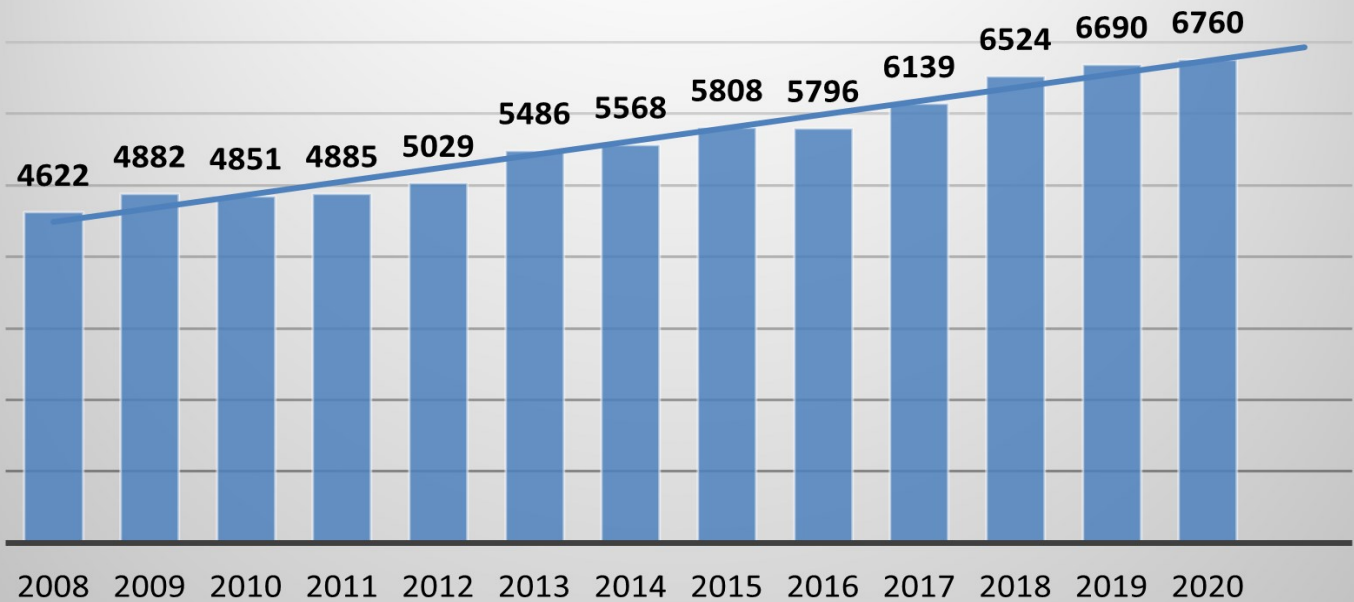


New Fire Engines



Incident Response

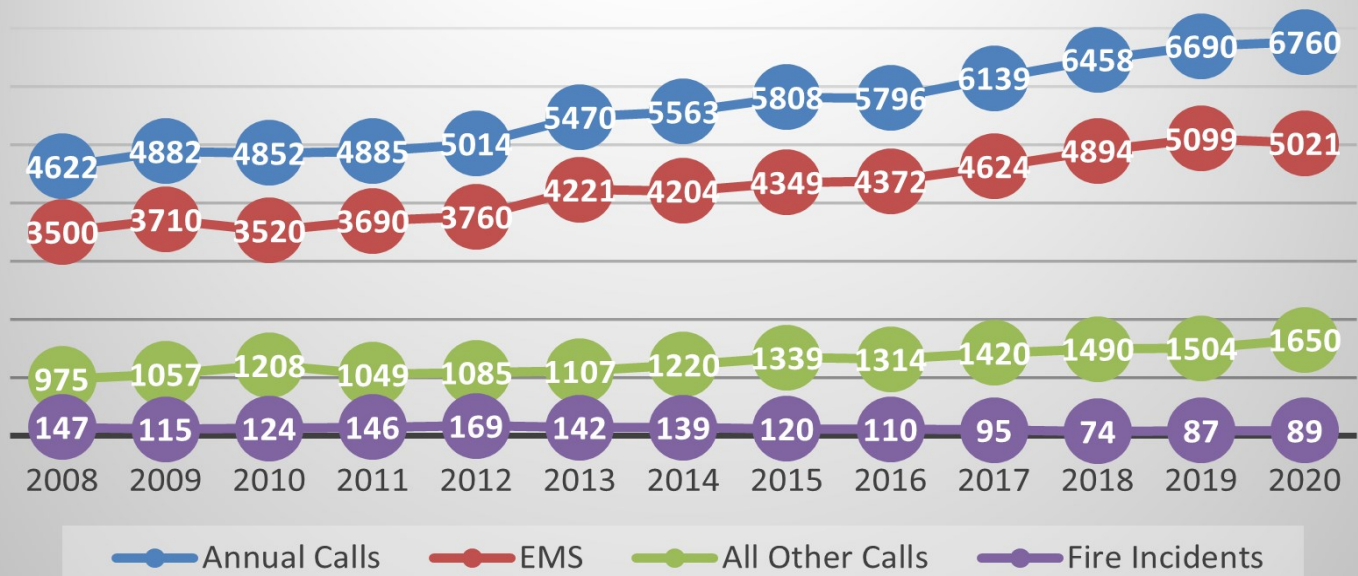
Total Calls



In 2020, our overall incident response continued to rise. South Metro responded to 6,760 incidents in 2020. This was a 1% increase over the 2019 total of 6,690. In the last 10 years, 2011-2021 our call volume has risen 28%.

Incident Response

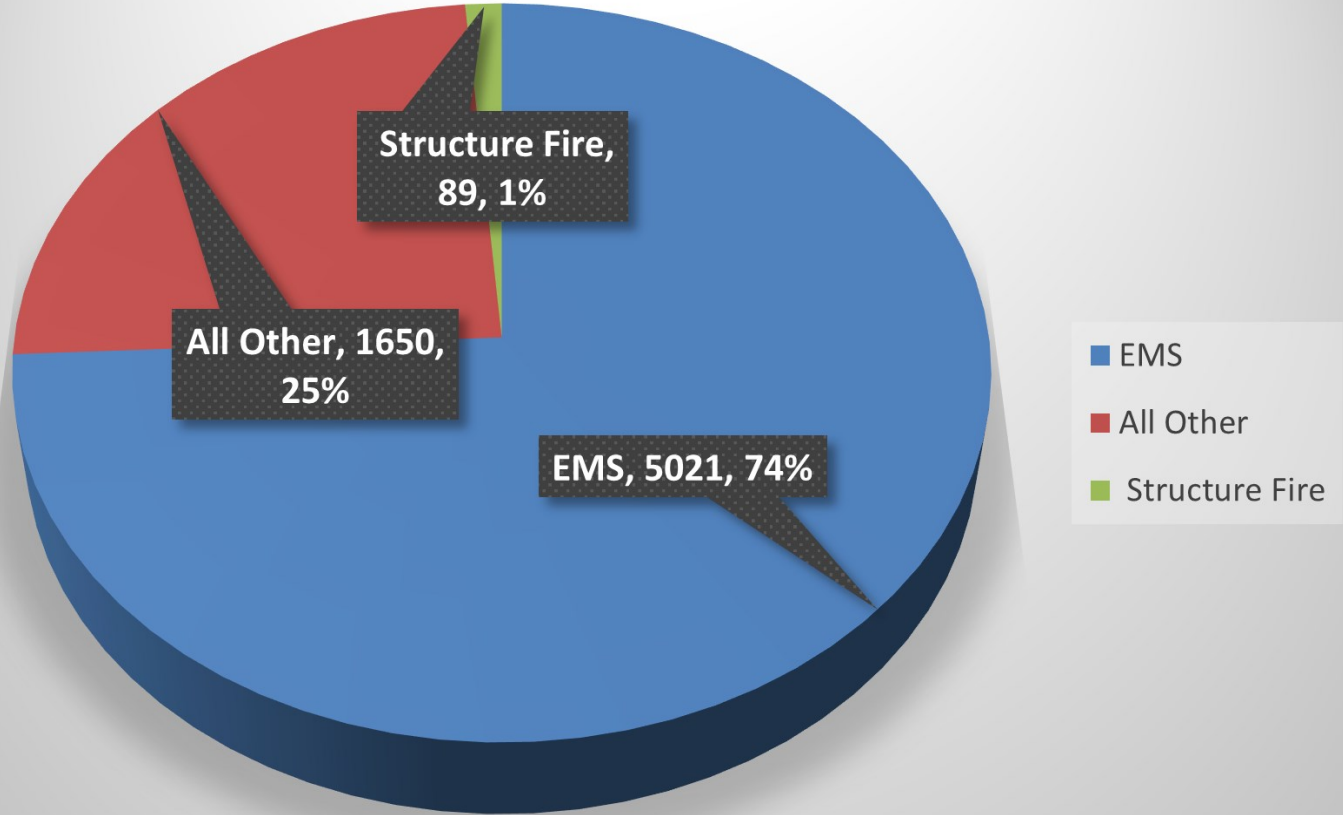
Calls by Type



The chart above illustrates the three broad categories of calls South Metro responds to including, EMS calls, Fire Incidents, and all other call types.



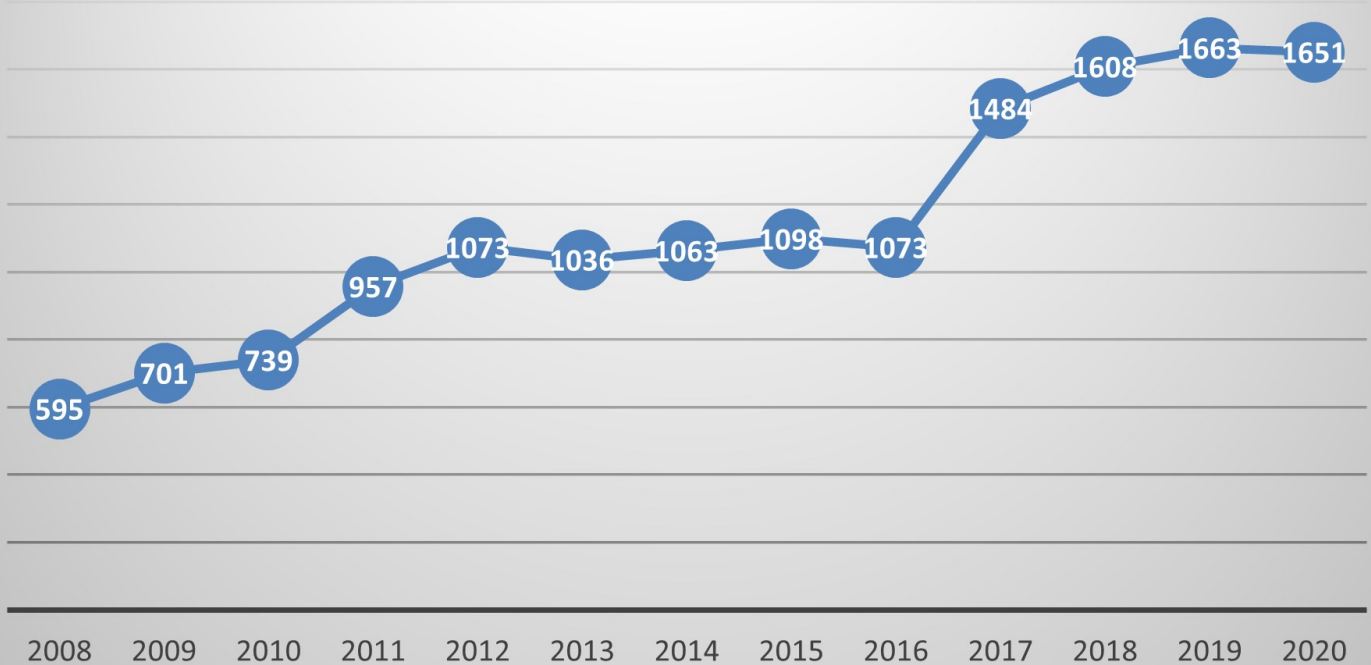
Incident Response



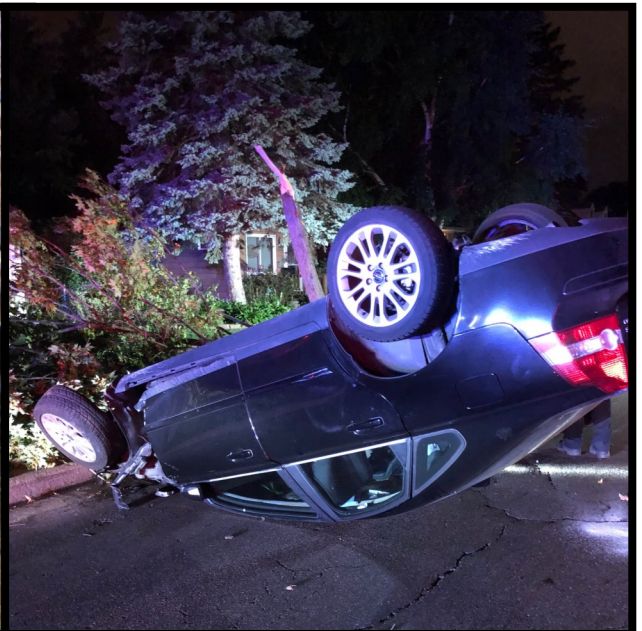
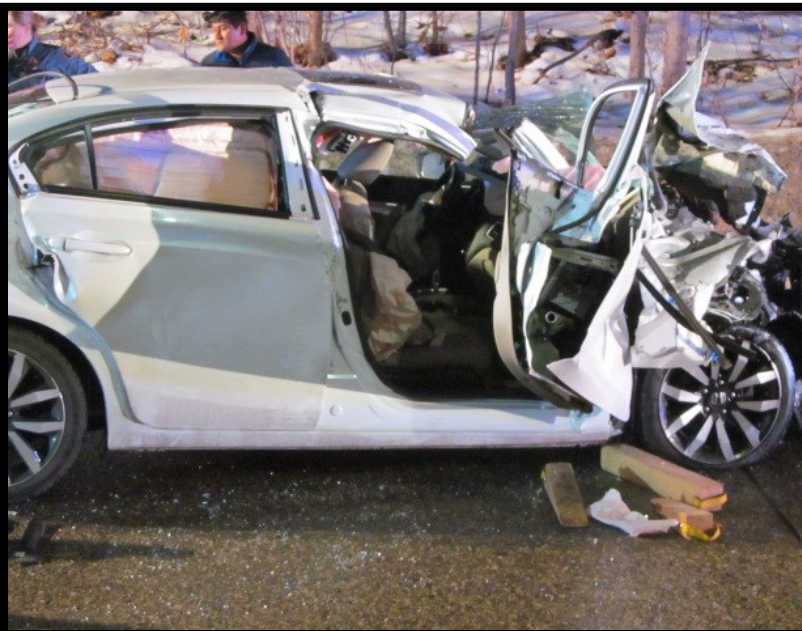
South Metro responds to three broad categories of incidents. EMS accounts for 74% of our calls, Structure Fires account for 1% of our calls, and all other call types account for the remaining 25% of our calls.

Incident Response

BLS Transports

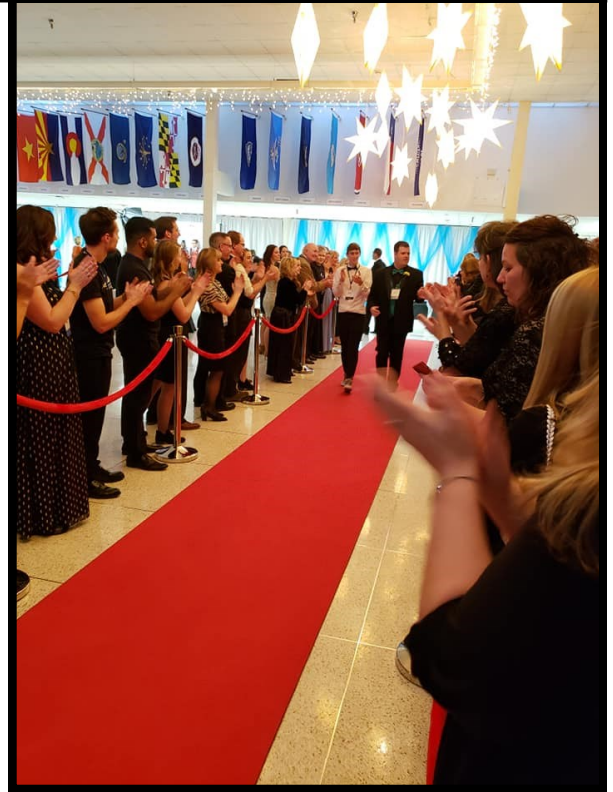


We are in the third year of a 5 year contract with MHealth Fairview to provide basic life support transport in South St. Paul and West St. Paul. The chart above illustrates the number of BLS transports. In 2020, we transported 1651 patients to area hospitals. This number is slightly down from 2019. Industry wide EMS transports were down due to Covid-19. In the beginning of the pandemic, patients were reluctant to be transported to a hospital.



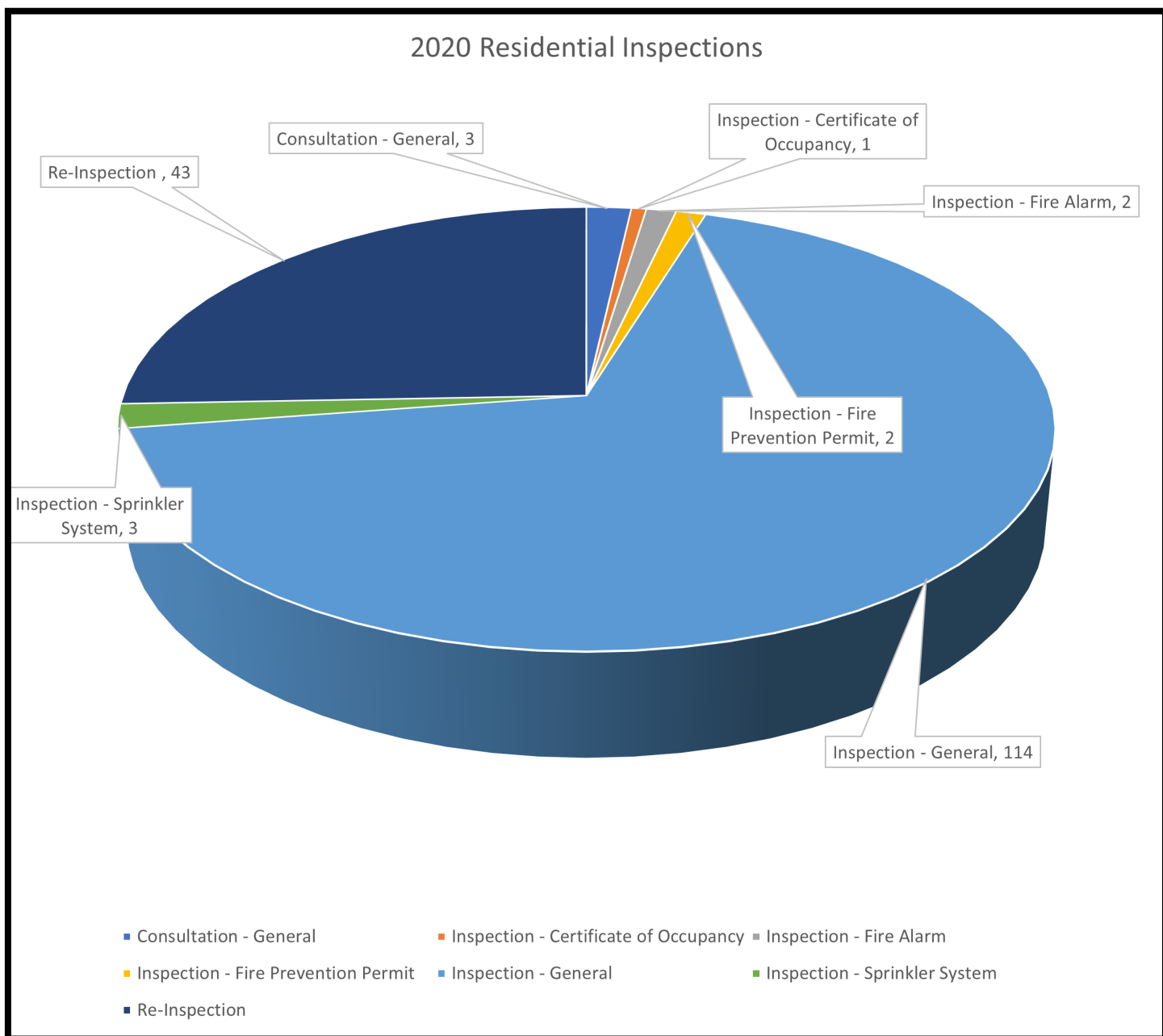
Prevention

Covid-19 had a significant impact on South Metro's fire prevention activities in 2020. To help prevent the spread of the disease our inspections were limited as we did not want to directly interact with residents and business owners. As a result, we did not do our normal amount of multifamily and commercial building inspections. In addition to the inspections we were not able to hold in person fire prevention activities such as open houses, station tours, school visits, pre-school visits, day care visits, fire extinguisher classes, hands only CPR classes, ride along programs for the colleges EMS program, and blood pressure checks. With the distribution of vaccines we anticipate getting these programs back up and running in 2021. Despite the lack of face to face contact we did participate in drive by birthday parties, the holiday parade in West St. Paul, and prior to Covid-19 we attended the Tim Tebow Night to Shine event at St. Croix Lutheran Church. We are excited to reengage with the community in 2021.



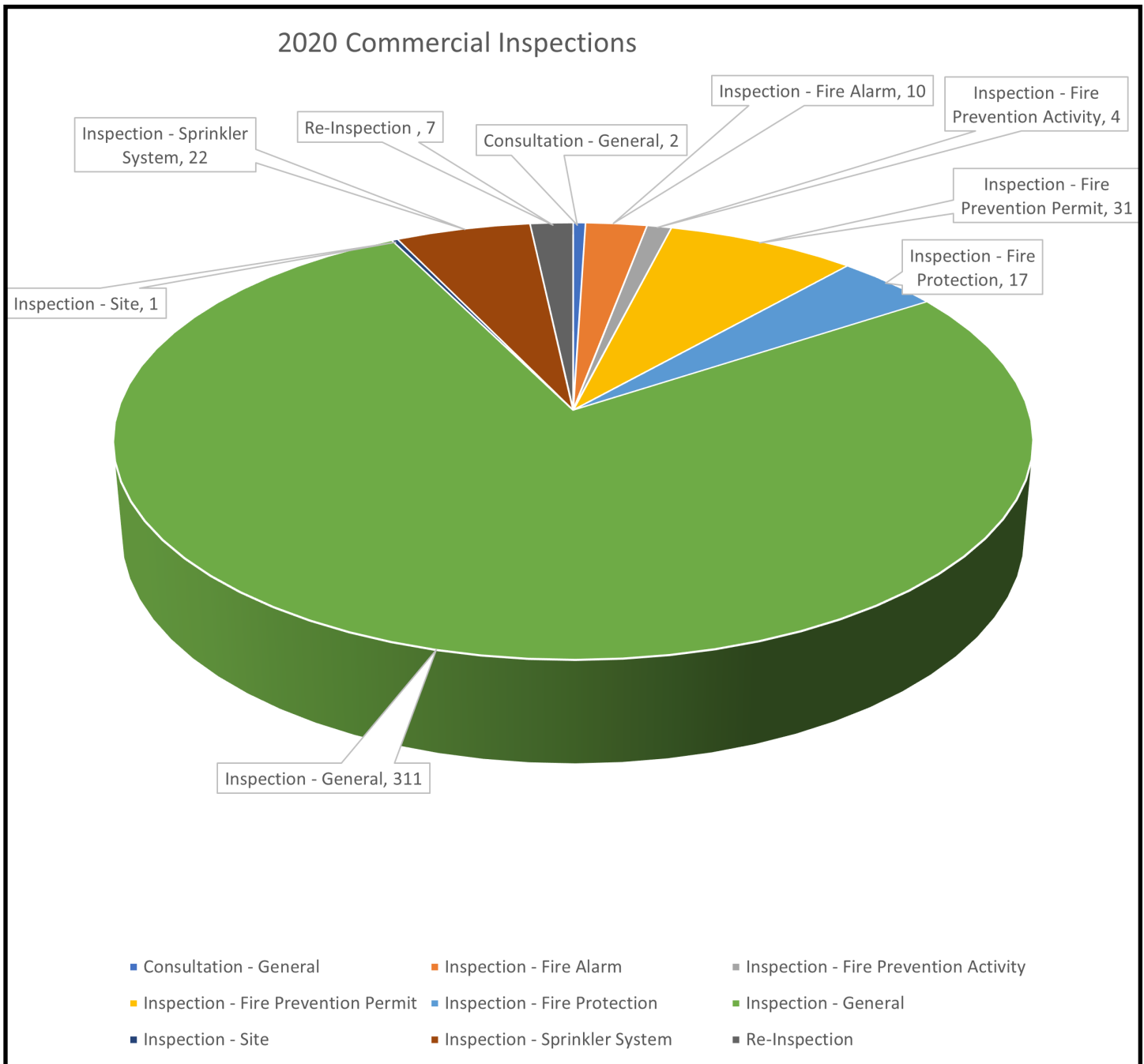
Prevention—Inspections

Below is a graph of our 2020 residential inspections. Most of our residential inspections take place in multi-family properties. The prevention division performed a total of 168 residential inspections in 2020.



Prevention—Inspections

Below is a graph of our 2020 commercial inspections. The prevention division performed a total of 405 commercial inspections in 2020.



Training

2020 Training Numbers

Total Training Hours - 5857.4 Total Training Completions - 3011

In 2020, South Metro had a skills training day held at ABLE training facility in Burnsville. At the event a total of 258 hours of training were completed including, 81 training evolutions with 25,275 feet of hose pulled during the day. This skill day gave our Firefighters the opportunity to hone the skills necessary for successfully attacking a fire. Although all our Firefighters are highly skilled, practice creates the necessary muscle memory needed under stress.



Training

2020 Training Numbers

Total Training Hours - 5857.4 Total Training Completions - 3011

2020 was the year to refresh on our Rescue Swimmer skills. South Metro and Burnsville held joint training sessions at Maple Lake. 180 hours of rescue swimmer training was completed over the course of several days including, 48 simulated victims extricated from a submerged vehicle, and 23 simulated drowning victims rescued. This program has been a great example of what can be accomplished with partnerships in the fire service.

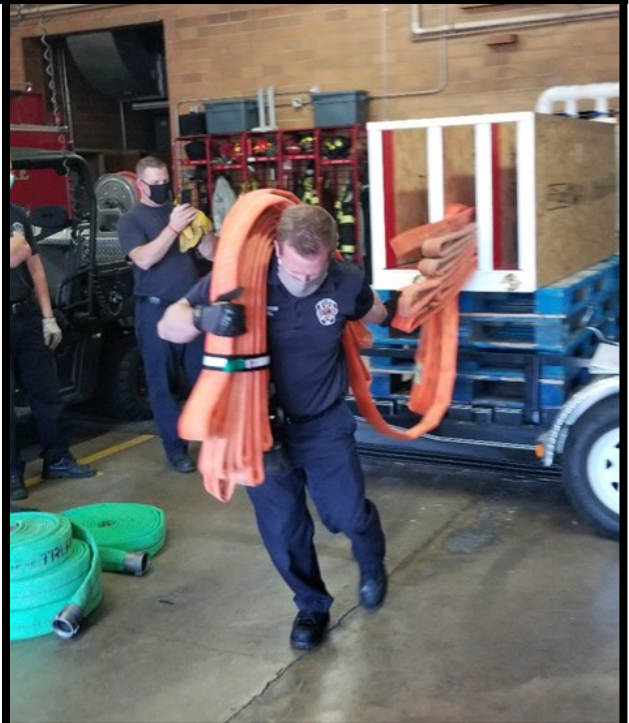


Training

2020 Training Numbers

Total Training Hours - 5857.4 Total Training Completions - 3011

2020 also saw South Metro reevaluating how we pack our hose onto our trucks. A committee made up of department members researched the most effective type of hose load which enables rapid deployment of hose lines at fires. The committee implemented the new hose loads upon delivery of our new engines. In addition, a mockup of the trucks hose bed was made to enable personnel to practice deployment and repacking in a controlled environment. All of this practice make our Firefighters very proficient and cuts down on the time to get water on the fire when we arrive.



Training

2020 Training Numbers

Total Training Hours - 5857.4 Total Training Completions - 3011

With the arrival of our new Engines in 2020 a considerable amount of training took place before they were put into service. Firefighters spent 62 hours practicing emergency vehicle operations, 68 hours on general overview and pumping, and 93 hours reviewing the new equipment on the Engines.



Training

2020 Training Numbers

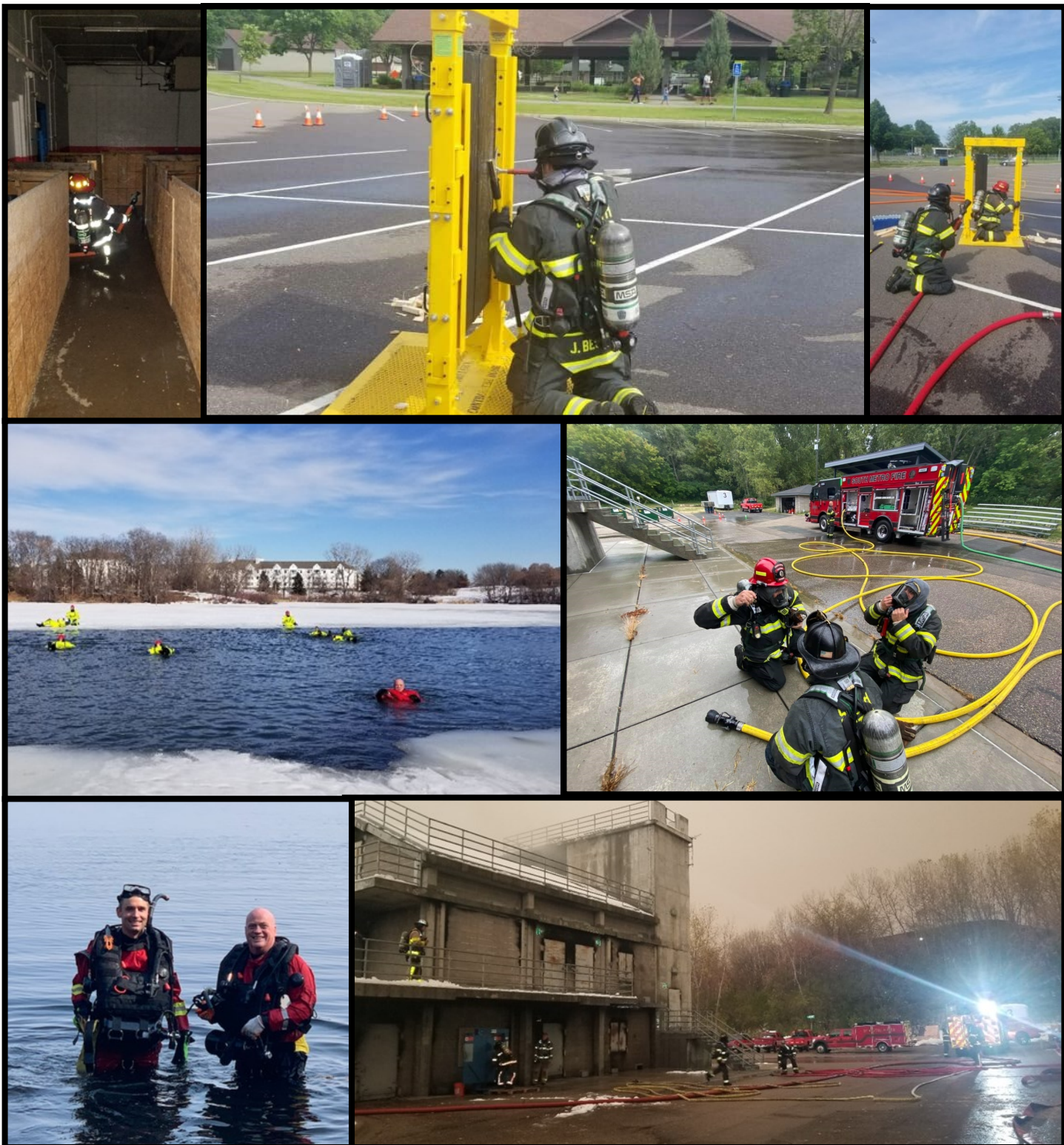
Total Training Hours - 5857.4 Total Training Completions - 3011

In 2020, South Metro Firefighters completed a total of 783 hours of EMS training. This number was down as we did have to cancel some training due to Covid-19. 75% of our incident responses are for EMS calls, therefore it is critical that we keep our training and education up to date. We continue to partner with MHealth Fairview for our EMS training. These photos show Firefighters Matt Kull and Steve Jensen practicing I.V.'s.



Training

Various training pictures from 2020



Collaborative Efforts

The following pages is a list of collaborative efforts involving South Metro

Dakota County Special Operations Team – Since 2003

A cooperative effort of all Dakota County municipalities to provide hazardous materials and technical rescue response within Dakota County through a joint power's agreement. The team is overseen by the Dakota County Domestic Preparedness Committee. South Metro currently has three personnel assigned to the team.

Minnesota Task Force 1 – Since 2005

This group serves as the State's Urban Search and Rescue Team, much like the FEMA rescue team that get deployed to hurricanes and earthquakes. The primary function of the task force is to perform rescues in collapsed buildings. South Metro is part of this team through its participation in the Dakota County Special Operations Team. The other primary partners in the task force are the fire departments of Minneapolis, St. Paul, Edina, and Rochester – all being partners in a joint power's agreement. South Metro currently has three personnel assigned to the task force.

Henry Sibley – CPR

Beginning with the 2014-2015 school year CPR became a graduation requirement. School districts must provide one-time cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automatic external defibrillator (AED) instruction in a class of their choosing. South Metro provide this training to Henry Sibley twice a year at no cost to the school district.

Inver Hills Community College

South Metro has had a strong working relationship with the college for several years. The Fire Chief currently sits on the Colleges EMS advisory committee. In addition, students in the various EMS programs ride with our personnel to accomplish the patient contact requirements in their EMS program (First Responder or EMT).

Burnsville Fire – Water Rescue

Collaborative efforts between both organizations since 2013. Includes annual initial training for recruits and ongoing training for existing personnel, development, and review of SOG's, and operational support if requested during incidents. We have also provided the initial training and program implementation for St. Paul and Lakeville Fire Departments and a handful of individuals from other organizations. We frequently field calls from other organizations about our model and how it could be used within their organizations. In September we began orientation training for Eagan Fire Department.

Collaborative Efforts—Continued

Area Maritime Security Committee

This is a local sub-committee for the U.S. Coast Guard that focuses on security, equipment, and training needs along Pool 2 of the Mississippi River and Minnesota River up to Savage. This committee meets quarterly as a group and conducts yearly training designed to improve response to a variety of security, hazmat, and disasters along the river. The trainings have the committee to identify gaps in these areas and help to bring in federal port security monies for regional efforts. Our Boat 2 is an example of one of those grant funded purchases and is considered a regional asset. Boat 2 is frequently requested for response between the confluence of the Mississippi and Minnesota Rivers and the Hastings Dam.

Burnsville, Eagan, South Metro Recruit Academy

First proposed by SMFD in 2018, this collaborative effort will begin its third academy in October of 2020. This is a 4-week joint academy that focuses on basic firefighter skills taught as they are performed within our organizations. The skills are designed to maximize the efficiency of each firefighter as they work in smaller 2-person crews as is common for each organization. This academy can maximize time and cost for each organization by limiting the number of instructors, props, and training facility time for each organization. Recruits then spend an additional 1-3 weeks focusing on skills that are specific to their organization.

Burnsville, Eagan, South Metro Training Group

This is a committee made up the primary training providers for each organization that grew from the needs of the joint training academy. This group works on developing JPR's and training needs that work for all three organizations to reduce overlap of efforts between the organizations and allow for similar operations.

Dakota County Fire Training Group

This a county wide training group that shares training resources, props, and ideas. The group meets quarterly to discuss needs and upcoming training events. The group also focuses on ways to standardize training throughout the county and fill training gaps that individual organizations are unable to fill on their own.

Collaborative Efforts—Continued

American Red Cross

South Metro has partnered with the Red Cross in their Smoke Detector installation program. The Red Cross donates smoke alarms and South Metro install them in residents homes throughout the community. In addition to the installation, South Metro also performs a home safety inspection if allowed.

Dakota County – Fall Prevention Program

South Metro partners with Dakota County Public Health on presenting a fall prevention program to the older adult population in the community. (Currently on hold due to Covid-19).

Northern Dakota County Beyond the Yellow Ribbon

South Metro sits on the yellow ribbon steering committee. The Northern Dakota County Yellow Ribbon Campaign exists as part of the State-wide Yellow Ribbon Network to provide resources to members of the military and their families. We also provide resources to Veterans who previously served in the Military.

ROMA

Responsible Owner and Managers Association is a partnership with the City of West St. Paul and owners and managers of local rental properties. This group is intended to foster a stronger relationship between City departments and the owners and managers making the City of West St. Paul a healthier and safer place to live for the rental community. South Metro is a participant in the meetings and provides training on various topics throughout the year.

In Remembrance of Those Who Gave Their Life in the Line of Duty

Firefighter George Carleton
South St. Paul
May 22nd, 1892

Firefighter Jay Bloemers
South St. Paul
June 2nd, 1968

Chief William Sudeith
West St. Paul
November 30th, 1954

Firefighter Erling Armstrong
West St. Paul
January 11th, 1974

Captain John Heuer
West St. Paul
January 11th, 1974

Firefighter Richard Neikirk
West St. Paul
January 11th, 1974