

Allen Park Fire Department History

The Fire Departments' role in assisting sick and injured people dates back to the department's early beginnings. All members were required to take the standard course in the Red Cross First Aid. Most of the men signed up to take the advanced course even though it was not required.

In the early years the men would often fight grass fires. There were a lot of them at that time since the Village was mainly open fields of grass and weeds with some large wooded areas. Allen Park would also assist Lincoln Park with the tasks of extinguishing building fires.

As is very common in auxiliary or volunteer fire departments the members would meet on a regular basis and elect their own officers. The group elected Mr. Menard as the President of the organization. The group also elected Mr. James Buchan as the first Chief of the Allen Park Fire Department. Mr. Buchan was elected to the position as Chief because he was the only member with previous fire experience. Mr. Buchan had been trained and worked as a member of a Volunteer Fire Department in the state of Pennsylvania. Mr. Robert Palmer and Mr. Harry Between were elected to be the first members to hold the position of Deputy Chief. They also elected Mr. Earl Osborne and Mr. Herbert Adams as the departments' first line officers Lieutenants.

The meetings were held in the old Village Hall (which formally had been a one room country school), in the basement of Mr. Menard's home and in the real estate office of Mr. John Labadie, which was also used as a Justice of the Peace Court.

The Village Council learned that they could greatly reduce fire insurance rates on all of the buildings in the Village if they could build a fire station within the Village and purchase a piece of fire apparatus approved by Fire Underwriters. The country was still at war and Allen Park did not have a fire department yet so they could not get governmental priority to purchase a truck chassis. In January of 1943, Mr. Henry Lucy, a member of the Allen Park Village Council, discovered a good used truck chassis in the State of Ohio. The truck chassis was being used to haul dynamite for three years before the Village of Allen Park purchased it. The chassis was taken to the General Fire Truck Company of Detroit to be overhauled. They were then commissioned to build a body for the fire truck that would be suitable for the needs of a small community, and installed a fire pump on the truck. The first truck was a wartime-constructed piece of equipment; a five hundred-gallon per minute single stage water pump was installed. A booster tank that carried two hundred gallons of water was also installed. The Village purchased eighteen hundred feet of fire hose and some ladders, axes and some minor firefighting equipment.

This first fire truck was housed in a garage on Dix Road, as the Village had not been able to get a priority for the building materials to construct a fire station. In the early spring of 1944, the building was started and was completed in June of the following year. The Village had a dedication ceremony in October of 1945. This was the only municipal owned building in the village at that time.

Mr. Charles Julian was elected as the second Fire Chief for the Village of Allen Park due to the resignation of Fire Chief James Buchan. Fire Chief James Buchan resigned due to a lack of time to participate and function as a member of the department.

The Village Council passed an ordinance placing the Volunteer Fire Department under the control of the Commission of Public Safety, operating under rules and regulations as if it were a paid fire department. All members were paid one dollar a year to be considered on the Village Payroll and be eligible for workman's compensation in the event they were injured on duty. The departments' association that had been formed received an annual budget of five hundred dollars each year to purchase necessary items for the department as they saw fit (later raised to one thousand dollars).

In 1949 there was another election in which Charles Julian was elected Chief, Mr. Harry Rowed was elected as the third Assistant Chief, Mr. Harry Clark became the first Fire Marshall, Mr. Steve Balogh was elected a Lieutenant and later the second person to hold the position as Fire Marshall and Mr. Harold Smith was elected to the position of Fire Captain. All of the election results still had to be approved by the Commission of Public Safety before they became official.

In 1946 the Village of Allen Park became the only community in the area that had a Fire Chiefs car. The Village repainted an old police car and presented the vehicle to the fire chief for his use.

Many of the department members spent considerable time studying State and Local Fire Codes in order to make fire inspections of public buildings. When these inspections started they were performed in the evenings and on weekends when the volunteers were off work from their regular jobs. These inspections created a lot of resentment in the community and many people felt imposed upon. There were only two schools at this time and at one of them, the conditions were so faulty that there were hazards for the students and teachers. Panic hardware on a number of doors was broken and the doors were chained and padlocked during school hours. Lockers that were not anchored were standing in some of the main areaways. This school also operated classes out of a two-story nearby frame house where they taught home economics. It was discovered that there were sixty young girls attending home economics on the second floor that was not equipped with a fire escape. The Village fire department sought the assistance of the State Fire Marshall's office to correct the situation within the school. The State Board of Education threatened to stop state funds to this school if the corrections were not made immediately. This began a co-operative relationship between the school board and the fire department that still exists today.

In the latter part of 1947, the Village President and the Council began to give serious thought of starting a paid fire department. On July 1, 1948 in the 1948-49 budget, funds were provided to start the department and to pay for the erection of an additional old building to provide more space for fire equipment and living quarters for the paid men who would be on twenty-four duty. The addition was started in September of 1948 and was finished February 1, 1949. The budget provided for six paid men and to continue with some volunteers. The first six paid men were taken from the ranks of the volunteers. They did make the stipulation that the men had to be physically fit and not too old in order to be hired as a paid fire department member. Many of the volunteers had no interest in becoming full time fire fighters so they declined the employment opportunity. In October 1948, the Commission of Public Safety chose the six men who would start the paid department.

Charles Julian was appointed as the first paid Fire Chief for Allen Park. Mr. Harry Rowed and Mr. William Lamsden became the first paid Lieutenants. Mr. Harold Smith, Mr. George Fekin and Mr. William Varga, were the first Pipemen. Chief Julian's employment began on January 16, 1949 two weeks before the other paid department members in order to purchase necessary items for the living quarters. The paid department started at midnight on January 31, 1949. The reason that the men started at midnight was because the paid contract with the City of Lincoln Park expired at that time.

Our compliment of volunteers had dwindled to fifteen men by the spring of 1949. The Village Council requested that no more men be received for the volunteers. The last man to join the volunteer group was Mr. Donald Welch who later retired as a paid Fire Captain. Mr. Welch's oldest son later was hired on the department and retired as a Sergeant.

In the spring of 1950, the Village Council approved the hiring of three additional men. The fourth man hired, as a Pipemen was Mr. Bernard Menzies. The fifth and sixth men hired as Pipemen were Mr. Loring Smith and Mr. Andrew Szemardi. Both of these men resigned their positions by January of 1953.

Mr. Richard Wigginton became the seventh man hired as a Pipemen for the Allen Park Fire Department. He replaced Mr. Smith who had resigned.

In October 1950 the Village purchased a Dodge Power Wagon Chassis and commissioned the General Detroit Corporation to build the body and install a 200-gallon per minute pump. This truck was put into service in January 1951. This truck was set up to work off the engine power take off so the truck could pump water and drive at the same time, whereas a conventional truck could not do so. This vehicle is now owned by the Allen Park Historical Commission and is housed and maintained in the current fire station. The vehicle can be used by any member of the department and has often been in local parades.

On December 31, 1952 the Village Council made it official and disbanded the Volunteer group. There were seven men on the roster at that time.

In the middle 1950's the Village Council lowered the firemen's workweek from 72 hours to 63 hours. They began to add additional manpower as the funds became available. On July 1, 1951 Mr. Edward Brown was named to the department becoming the eighth man hired as a Pipeman for the department. Mr. Brown resigned in September of 1952. Mr. Kenneth Julian and Mr. Donald Welch became the ninth and tenth men hired as Pipemen and the thirteenth and fourteenth overall hired to the department. Mr. Julian and Mr. Welch were the last two men from the volunteer roster to be hired as regular paid firemen. Mr. Edward Favor, Mr. Robert Doss and Mr. Anthony Pabis were the next men to be hired into the Allen Park Fire Department. Mr. Doss' son is a retired Police Officer for the City of Allen Park and is a member of the Historical Commission.

As the Village grew, the Village Council approved the appointment of additional members to the department although there have never been enough. In 1953 Mr. James Harris, Mr. Stanley Fairall and Mr. Ernie Mihalyfi were appointed. In 1954, Mr. Charley Donovan was hired and in 1955, Mr. Robert Pawelski and Mr. Brent Lemhagen were hired. Mr. Lemhagen resigned and was replaced by Mr. Ernest Williams. Other appointments were Mr. Kenneth Dobson, Mr. Anthony Gennaro, Mr. Charles Vella and Mr. Raymond Williams in August 1957. Mr. Robert Litner, Mr. Raymond Bertoncelli and Carlton Gibbs were appointed in July of 1958. Mr. Ernie Mihalyfi resigned in December of 1959 and was replaced by Mr. Robert Jones in May Of 1960. Mr. Jones retired from the Allen Park Fire Department as a Captain and currently serves as a member of the Historical Society.

Some of the resignations were due to an improper fit of the job requirements and the employees but most of them were due to the men finding better paying jobs elsewhere.

The department suffered a great loss with the death on May 1, 1957 of Lieutenant William Lumsden. Lieutenant Lumsden had taken an active part in building the Allen Park Fire Department since its' beginning in 1942. At the time of his death he was serving the community as Fire Marshall.

As time passed and the department grew, new officer grades were created. Lieutenant Harry Rowed was promoted to Deputy Chief on June 1, 1957. Pipeman Harold Smith was appointed Sergeant in August 1951; to Lieutenant in September 1955 and to Fire Marshall with a Captain's rating in July 1958. Pipeman George Fekin was appointed to Sergeant in August 1951, Pipeman William Varga was promoted to Sergeant in September 1955, Pipeman Bernard Menzies to Lieutenant in March 1958 and Pipeman Donald Welch was promoted to Lieutenant in July of 1958.

In 1956, a commission was elected by the people of the Village to write a new Charter and to give the community as a city. Some members of this commission felt it would be better for the community not to have a Commission of Public Safety and to put the Police and Fire Departments under control of the Council and local Civil Service Commission. The members of the Police and Fire Departments did not feel that this would give them adequate job security, and petitioned to have the State Police and Fire Civil Service Act, Act 78 included in the Charter. The Charter Commission included this in the writing of the charter and also included the Commission of Public Safety. In the spring of 1957, the people voted to pass this charter and the Village became a City.

The members of the department were once again saddened by the untimely death of Mr. Ernest Williams. He was killed in an automobile accident in the early hours of May 6, 1962. Ernest was scheduled to be on duty but had requested leave.

In August 1962, David Heslip was appointed to replace Ernest Williams. Mr. Richard was hired in January 1964 to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of Mr. Robert Pawelski. Mr. John Angellotti Jr. was hired in November of 1964 to fill the vacancy left from the resignation of Mr. Kenneth Dobson. John is the son of one of the original group of men who started the department back in 1942. Mr. William Brighton was appointed to the department at this time also.

Mr. Richard Miller was appointed on June 24, 1965 to fill the vacancy left by Mr. Wigginton who resigned after fourteen years service plus time on as a volunteer in April 1965.

On July 1, 1965 the City Council granted the men of the Fire Department a reduction in the number of working hours from 63 hours to 56 hours per week. This reduction required 3 additional men to be employed to maintain the present daily manpower in the department. At this time (July 12, 1965) three men were being processed for employment, and they brought the total people employed to 28 men.

In 1965 Mr. John Paps and Mr. James Cabadas were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1966 Mr. Fred Chearhart was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1967 Mr. Thomas E. Borowski, Mr. Vincent R. Hurley and Mr. Jerry Vimr were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1968 Mr. Richard W. Parks and Mr. Richard Sinnott were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1969 the Allen Park Fire Department hired Mrs. Ida Gyurscik to be the first full time secretary for the department.

In 1970 Mr. Leo R. Petrangal and Mr. Richard Hutchison were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1971 Mr. Willard Koths was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1972 Mr. Lawrence S. Andrews and Mr. Louis Fuciarelli were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1976 Mr. Lewis G. Sinclair was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1977 the Fire Department Radio Alarm operators were added to the staff. The first people hired to these positions were Mrs. Janice M. Kopicko, Mrs. Lynn Unger, Mr. Mark Neubacher and Ms. Kim Kochevar.

In 1978 Mr. Charles Kupovits was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department. Also in 1978 several of the new alarm operators had resigned and two more were hired. Mr. Raymond R. Politz and Ms. Ruth Ann Ferguson were added to the Allen Park Fire Department to work as Radio Alarm operators along with the one remaining Ms. Kim Kochevar.

In 1979 Mr. Neal Carrell, Mr. Thomas G. Welch, Mr. Peter P. Zammit, Mr. Fredrick J. Millner, Mr. Gary A. Jones and Mr. Mark A. Neubacher were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department. Also Mrs. Audrey A. Szor and Ms. Karen A. Vella were hired as Radio Alarm Operators.

On April 1, 1980 the work schedule for the fire suppression employees was reduced from a 54 hour per week schedule to a 50.4-hour schedule. The department needed to hire two additional people in fire suppression due to the decreased hours per employee.

In 1980 Mr. Michael P. Szor and Mr. Gregory R. Murphy were hired to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1981 Ms. Mary T. Millner was hired as a Radio Alarm Operator for the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1982 Ms. Debra L. Hassell and Mr. Thomas Lopilato were hired as a Radio Alarm Operator for the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1984 Mr. Martin DeLoach, Mr. John A. Barstad, Mr. Robert A. Lonergan and Mr. John E. Russell were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1985 Mr. Gregory J. Pinkowski and Mr. James S. Lada were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1986 Mrs. Ida Gyurscik retired and Ms. Cindy Ciolek transferred from the City Clerk's office to the fire department to work as the departments' secretary.

In 1986 Mr. William Stoddard Jr. was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In October of 1988 the City of Allen Park implemented an Enhanced 911 System. The Radio Alarm Operators were then transferred over to the City's 911 Dispatch Center located in the Police Station. This new system allowed the incoming emergency calls to have a simple three-digit number that was recognized throughout the country. The enhanced feature gives the person who answers the phone the location and the name of the person that the phone is registered to. This system has been extremely beneficial to the City's ability to respond to emergency requests.

The Allen Park Fire Department did not hire additional personnel for a six-year period. In the first month of 1992 Mr. Mark Hogrebe was hired to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In August of 1994 Mr. Dean Love and Mr. John Charvat joined the Allen Park Fire Department. Mr. Charvat resigned in 1995 due to the city's residency policy. At that time new hires were required to live in the city for the first five years of their employment.

In 1994 Mr. Michael Stasick and Mr. Steve Heim were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department. Mr. Heim resigned within a year of receiving his job with the City of Allen Park to work for the City of Lincoln Park where he had grown up.

In August of 1995 Mr. Joseph A. Hughes was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In September of 1995 Mr. Douglas D. LaFond was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1997 The City of Allen Park began the change in the way the Allen Park Fire Department services rescue (medical) requests within the City of Allen Park. This began one of the largest changes this department has ever encountered. We were a first responder emergency medical technician provider that utilized a private ambulance company to transport the patients to local hospitals. All members attended school to become advanced emergency medical technicians (paramedics). This training took around nine months of class work and clinical rotations to become eligible to take the State of Michigan examination for licensure.

The Allen Park Fire Department started operating as an advanced life support emergency medical provider. We progressed from a non-transporting basic life support provider to a transporting advanced provider in about fourteen months. This time was utilized to purchase equipment, process all of the necessary legal documents and train all of the department's personnel.

In January of 1999 the Allen Park Fire Department officially began the change in service. This service has been well received by the community.

In 1997 Mr. David A. Servetter and Mr. Ryan Wolfe were hired to work in the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1998 Mr. Jeffery O'Riley, Mr. James Aksamit, Mr. Scott Bonneau, Mr. Patrick Beyer were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 1999 Mr. Kenneth McLaurin, Mr. Craig Hickey, Mr. Jeffrey Hada and Mr. Michael Wheeler were hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 2003 Mr. Michael Schook was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 2004 Mr. Matthew Abrahamson was hired on to the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 2005 Mrs. Tammy Jones transferred from the DPS to become our new Administrative Assistant, replacing Mrs. Cindy Carry who had retired.

In 2005 Mr. Edward Cann, Mr. John Dabbs, and Mr. Joe Placido were hired onto the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 2007 Mr. James Kolusk, Mr. Daniel Sampson, Mr. Eric Taylor, Mr. Michael Stetz, Mr. John Flynn, Mr. Derrick Spencer, Mr. Robert Epperson, Mr. Grant Peace, and Mr. Jacob Steichen were hired onto the Allen Park Fire Department.

In 2008 Mr. Richard Hamilton was hired onto the Allen Park Fire Department.

The Department has had nine people promoted to the position of Fire Chief.

Chief Charles V. Julian served as the departments first Chief from 1949 until he died while on duty in 1965.

Chief Harold E. Smith replaced Chief Julian as the departments second Chief Officer. Chief Smith served as Chief from 1-1-1966 through 1972.

Chief James A. Harris took over from Chief Smith in February of 1972. Chief Harris served as Chief from February 1972 through 1974.

Chief Raymond J. Bertonecelli took over from Chief Harris in September of 1974. Chief Bertonecelli served as Chief from 1974 through 1988.

Chief James E. Cabadas took over the Chiefs duties from Chief Bertonecelli in July of 1988. Chief Cabadas served as the Allen Park Fire Chief from 1988 through May 1, 1997.

Chief Lewis G. Sinclair took over the Chiefs duties in July of 1998. An illness forced an early retirement and Chief Sinclair served as Chief from July of 1998 through October of 1999.

Chief Martin DeLoach took over the duties as Chief of the Allen Park Fire Department in October of 1999, retiring in May 2005

Interim Chief Gary Jones took over the Chief's duties from May to August 2005 .

Chief Greg Murphy took over the Chief's duties in August 2005, retiring in January 2008.

Chief Mark Hogrebe took over the duties as Chief of the Allen Park Fire Department in Feb. 2008 and is currently serving in that capacity.

There have been eleven Deputy Fire Chiefs to serve the Allen Park Fire Department. The list below shows the dates that they served the department as Deputy Chief.

Deputy Chief Harry Rowed from 8-23-1957 through 1970.

Deputy Chief James Harris from 9-30-1970 through 1972.

Deputy Chief Anthony Pabis from 3-30-1972 through 1974.

Deputy Chief Raymond Bertocelli from 9-12-74 through 1979.

Deputy Chief Raymond Williams from 7-27-79 through 1985.

Deputy Chief James Cabadas from 5-29-85 through 1988.

Deputy Chief William Brighton from 8-29-90 through 1990.

Deputy Chief Leo Petrangel from 11-29-1990 through 1999.

Deputy Chief Neal Carrell from 3-11-1999 through 5-1999.

Deputy Chief Gary Jones from 10-1999 through 2005.

The position of Deputy Fire Chief was lost due to parity with the Police Department for a period of 3 years. The position was reinstated as a Deputy Chief / Fire Marshal in Jan. of 2009.

Deputy Chief / Fire Marshal Douglas LaFond from January 13, 2009 to present.

The following people have served as Fire Inspector for the Allen Park Fire Department.

Harold Smith from 7-01-1958 through 1966.

James Harris from 5-08-1970 through 9-30-1970.

Charles Donovan from 2-10-1971 through 1985.

William Brighton from 5-29-1985 through 1989.

Lewis Sinclair from 8-24-1989 through 1998.

Martin DeLoach from 3-11-1999 through 10-13-99.

Gregory Murphy from 10-14-1999 through 2005

Mark Hoglebe from 10-2006 through 1-2008.

Douglas LaFond from 7-7-2008 to 1-13-2009

The duties of the Fire Inspector were transferred to the Deputy Chief / Fire Marshal's office on Jan. 13th, 2009. Fire inspection and investigation duties are now shared by Chief Mark Hoglebe and Deputy Chief Douglas LaFond.

The following people have served as Captain for the City of Allen Park Fire Department.

Bernard Menzies was promoted to captain on 2-06-1958.

Donald Welch was promoted to captain on 7-01-1958.

Anthony Pabis was promoted to captain on 7-01-1976.

Charles Vella was promoted to captain on 2-14-1979.

Robert Jones was promoted to captain on 10-18-1979.

James Cabadas was promoted to captain on 7-30-1984.

Richard Hutchison was promoted to captain on 7-24-1985.

Leo Petrangel was promoted to captain on 4-03-1986.

Vincent Hurley was promoted to captain on 11-29-1990.

Richard Sinnott was promoted to captain on 5-26-1997.

Charles Kupovits was promoted to captain on 3-27-1997.

Neal Carrell was promoted to captain on 8-26-1999.

John Barstad was promoted to Captain on 7-1-2008

Greg Pinkowski was promoted to Captain on 7-1-2008

Captain Barstad and Captain Pinkowski are currently serving as Shift Commanders for the Allen Park Fire Department.

There have been a lot of dedicated people who have served the City of Allen Park as firefighters. The history of the department should mention all who have stepped up and became dedicated to help people. It is unfortunate that we do not have any records that are known to exist that contain all of the names of the first members of the department. All of the men and woman mentioned in this article gave or are giving total dedication to their profession of assisting their fellow man in a time of need. Fire departments are established to help people and that is what we do best.