

# THE METRO INSIDER...



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GRAND TRAVERSE METRO EMERGENCY SERVICES AUTHORITY

## 2014 Year End Review — Chief's Corner ... By Chief Pat Parker

Greetings and Merry Christmas to you all! Where has this year gone? Reflecting on this year, we have accomplished so much. We have seen a rise in our call volume and we responded with vigor bringing value and making a difference in the safety and protection of our citizens. I congratulate all of our firefighters and officers for their efforts this past year. We ratcheted up our trainings both EMS & fire this year with many of them done while on duty. We also started our company inspection program which puts our crews into more occupancies looking for life safety issues. We rounded out the year with putting into service a new Engine in Acme, 3 new LUCAS devices assisting our crews with cardiac arrest patients, and seven new firefighters. Thanks to all for your countless hours put towards improving your skills and knowledge. Delivering quality customer service continues to be our goal!

2014 finally puts to rest the question on merging or consolidating with Traverse City. The long awaited consulting report finally was completed in July. The report answered the question by stating that there were no short term gains by consolidating, it still should be a long term goal to continue studying the question. The report directed both departments to continue to look for shared services opportunities of which both departments will strive to continue what was started years ago.

The year 2015 will again be a challenging year but we have the people that can meet that challenge. Our goal is to continue to raise the bar on our knowledge and readiness. That is accomplished by training of which we can all be proud of. Our townships continue to grow and we have seen some increase in construction which will equate to improved value that was reduced due to tax tribunal cases. Our 3 townships continue to see increased population growth with retirees leading that growth. There is an expectation of increased calls for service.

Accreditation is back on the burner and Metro will become an Applicant in the new Year. We hope to be either the second or third fire department in the State to accomplish this Internationally recognized standard. Much work already has been completed we now need to make it happen. In a nutshell, accreditation is looking that we say what we do, do what we say, and measure it. There are over 200 competencies in areas such as:

- Assessment and Planning
- Essential Resources
- External Systems Relations
- Financial Resources

- Goals and Objectives
- Governance and Administration
- Human Resources
- Physical Resources
- Programs
- Training and Competency



The goal will to become a candidate and achieve accreditation in 2016.

The biggest budget victory this year was being able to proceed with a new fire station for Acme. Due to complications with the initial site at the Grand Traverse Town Center (Meijer site) we have concentrated our efforts to a new site on Mount Hope Road. We hope to still come out of the ground in early 2015. To you all at Station 8, thanks for continuing to cook in the microwave, shower under the spigot on the apparatus floor and sleep in the recliners. We are working hard to remedy the situation! A huge thanks to our Authority Board for understanding the situation and agreeing to find a way to finance our new station.

I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Captain Troy Holliday for being our newsletter editor for the past 7 years. What started out as a communication tool for our membership has transformed into a citizen and community newsletter we can all be proud of. This is his last issue as editor and we all thank him for the many hours of hounding many of us for articles and for the creativity of a great product. Firefighter/EMT Cory Ellis has stepped up and will take over the reins as editor. Thank you Troy & Cory!

This year the fire service has seen a huge increase in firefighter suicides across the country. We are all one big family here at Metro. Continue to watch over each other and realize it is not a sign of weakness to talk about our feelings and things that may be bothering us. We are a fire service brotherhood and sisterhood. The department has help available. Our credo is that **"We all go home!"**

Thanks everyone for your support. Thanks for another great year and especially the fact that it was a safe year! I am truly honored to serve you all as your fire chief. I recently ran across this quote from another fire chief and I leave you with this thought for the New Year, "Be kinder than necessary- Everyone you meet is fighting some kind of battle."

Until next time, be safe out there, Merry Christmas and have a Happy New Year!

*Chief Parker*

Boy Scouts from Troop 31 of Traverse City got to try on firefighter gear and practice their newly learned first aid skills in a mock car crash with Grand Traverse Metro Fire Dept. lead by Lt. Chris Comeaux and FF Daren Mansfield.



**Congratulations to FF Cody Lipe and wife Emily on newborn son Logan Myles born on 12-9-2014.**



**Congratulations also to Lt. Nick Lemcool and his wife Belinda on their newborn son Aidan James born on 12-10-2014.**

## Department T-Shirts: Just Wearing Them or Living the Mission?

### IAFC

#### INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS

According to statistics from the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there are over 1.1 million firefighters in the United States. Let's assume that represents at least 2.2 million fire department T-shirts owned by those firefighters, plus millions more worn by friends, relatives and neighbors.

When I see people wearing a fire department T-shirt, my reaction is that the other person may be a brother or sister firefighter—solely on the basis of the familiar Maltese Cross or similar insignia. It's pretty powerful that the simple act of wearing a department logo shirt can create such a strong sense of connection to the mission of public safety.

The question arises, is the person just wearing a shirt or do they actually belong to that department? And do they consequently strive to live the mission?

I have T-shirts from departments all around the country. If the shirts could talk, each would have a unique story to tell regarding a station visit or a fire service friendship that developed along the way. While my friends' department shirts are nice, in reality, I'm just wearing that department's shirt.

On the other hand, when I put my own department's shirt on, I immediately take ownership and strive to represent the department in the best possible way.

While the shirt itself is perhaps symbolic, long-term commitment to the organization is driven by what comes from inside—as opposed to what's written on the outside of the shirt. In my combination department, we've been fortunate to experience a 30% growth in volunteer membership over the past 24 months—to over 50 active volunteer members.

We continue to have our trials and tribulations, but in the end, the members who stay and own the mission are the people who show they care—and in turn, are cared for. The members that get it understand the significance of the department logo and what it means to be an active, contributing and positive part with the organization.

For some others, it becomes apparent that the shirt itself is more important than the values that are associated with the insignia.

To illustrate the point, our department recently put together a team of members to run in a local benefit race, making up a special T-shirt for the occasion. Our team was a mixture of seasoned and newer people, including our Explorer post.

While our members were happy with the shirts, the Explorers were especially thrilled to receive theirs. Their reactions were a refreshing shot in the arm for what it means to be a part of the team.

Similarly, at the completion of their probationary period, each probie looks forward to issuance of the company shirt and everything associated with attaining that important first milestone.

So beyond the obvious, what's the symbolism of a fire department shirt?

I'd argue that what's printed on the outside of the shirt means more when the wearer embodies their own personal conviction to the cause. Don't just talk about it, live the mission.

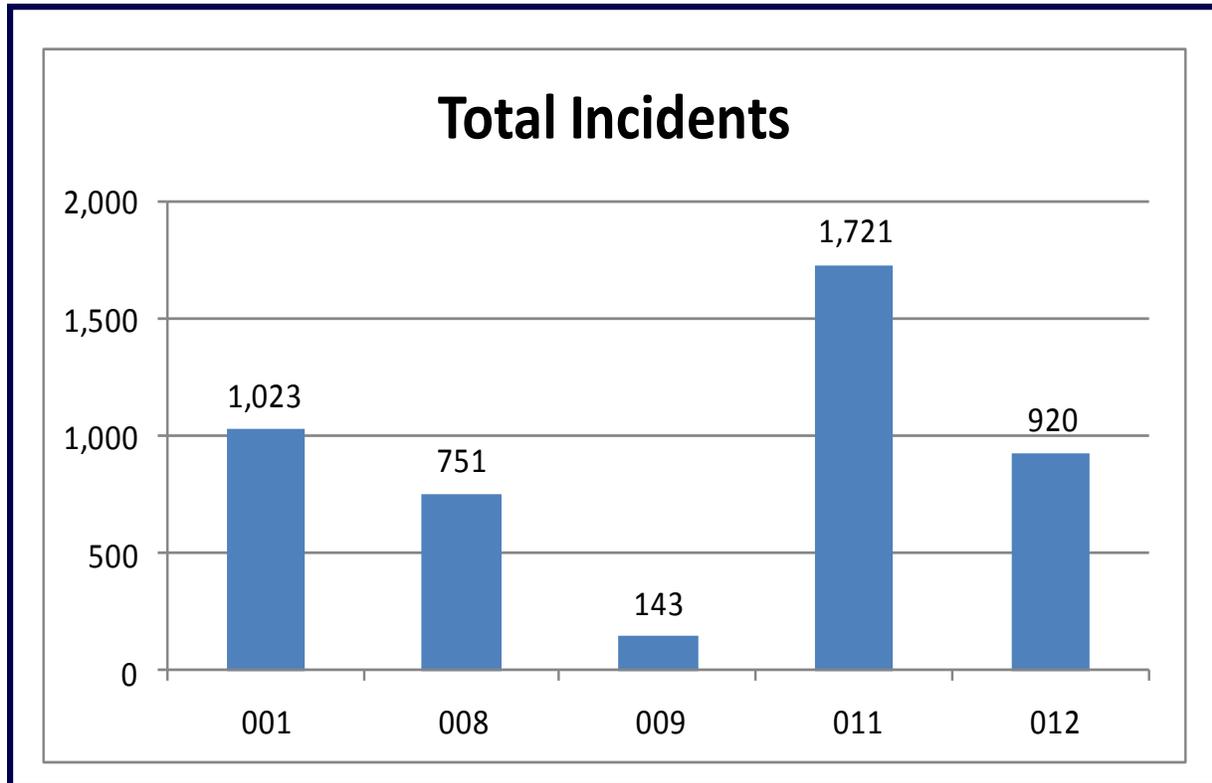
And while living the mission and wearing the shirt doesn't automatically rule out healthy differences of opinion, respecting what the shirt stands for is the glue that keeps the organization strong. Accordingly, the stronger the earned connection to the organization, the more significant the person's pride in the act of wearing the company shirt.

We all know respect is a two-way street. If we disrespect or otherwise minimize the importance of commitment to the department's mission, it's just a shirt. Literally, we should wear the pride on our sleeve.

So next time you put on a fire department T-shirt, reflect for a moment about what the simple act of putting on the shirt says about you and your department. It's a good reminder for all us to live up the mission.

*Mike Waters, CFPS, is a volunteer fire chief of Jackson Township Fire District 3, a combination department in New Jersey. He has over 25 years of fire service experience with departments in Pennsylvania, Maryland, New York and New Jersey, which means he has way too many t-shirts. He's been a member of the IAFC since 2007.*

## Preliminary Year-End Totals



Keep watching for the 2014 Annual Report!

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