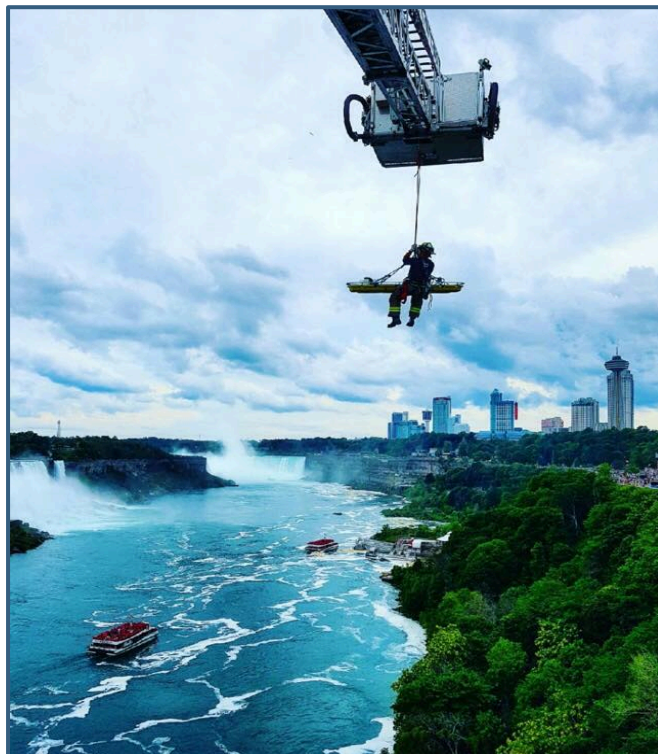




2020 Annual Report

Niagara Falls Fire Department

Fire Chief Jim Boutilier



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Message from the Chief

With Niagara Falls' unique response area, we are faced with multiple challenges requiring different skills to cover the risks. Although one specialty response may not represent a unique situation, the various response types found in our city create a fire department that is uniquely Niagara Falls. Some of the challenges we face include; density issues created routinely by myriads of tourists and traffic – more particularly in the peak tourist season, highways, international bridges and their associated traffic patterns, high-angle topography within the gorge, a high-rise city core area second only to Toronto, Falls rescues, high-angle canal issues with fast flowing waterways, highly urban and rural landscapes, etc. All of these factors present significant demands for the department, making it challenging for this organization, along with the significant responsibility to the residents, visitors and those employed by our city.

The goal of the Niagara Falls Fire Department (NFFD) is to reduce the loss of life and property and the protection of the environment. One way in which this is achieved is through public fire and life safety education to the children and citizens of our community. Public fire and life safety education are very important parts of the overall activities of the fire department and the Fire Prevention Division. Our public education initiatives strive to teach fire and life safety to every person who lives, learns, works and plays in our community.

The Fire Department's response is currently being fulfilled by 22 on-duty full-time firefighters and 65 volunteer firefighters, augmented by staff in our Communications, Training, Fire Prevention and Administration divisions.

The following is a synopsis of the NFFD in 2020. We look forward to continuous improvement and a continued high level of service to our community.

Jim Boutilier
Fire Chief

Mission, Vision, Values

➤ **Mission:**

"The Niagara Falls Fire Department is committed to safely protecting life, property and the environment through education, prevention and emergency response."

➤ **Vision:**

"Eliminate loss of life and property, injuries and environmental damage from fire."

➤ **Values:**

Leadership

"Everyone takes the lead"

Teamwork

"One for all"

Accountability

"Do the right thing"

Respect

"Give and you shall receive"



Fire Administration

- Fire Administration consists of the Fire Chief, Deputy Chief of Administration, Deputy Chief of Operations, Executive Assistant, Secretary 1 and Chaplain, operating out of the Stan Thomson Fire Administration Building on Morrison Street. The Chief is responsible for 132 career and 104 volunteer staff.
- The support position of Chaplain has proven to be an extremely valuable position within our department. Chaplain Isaac Flagg is available to provide support, spiritual guidance and counseling to each of our members.

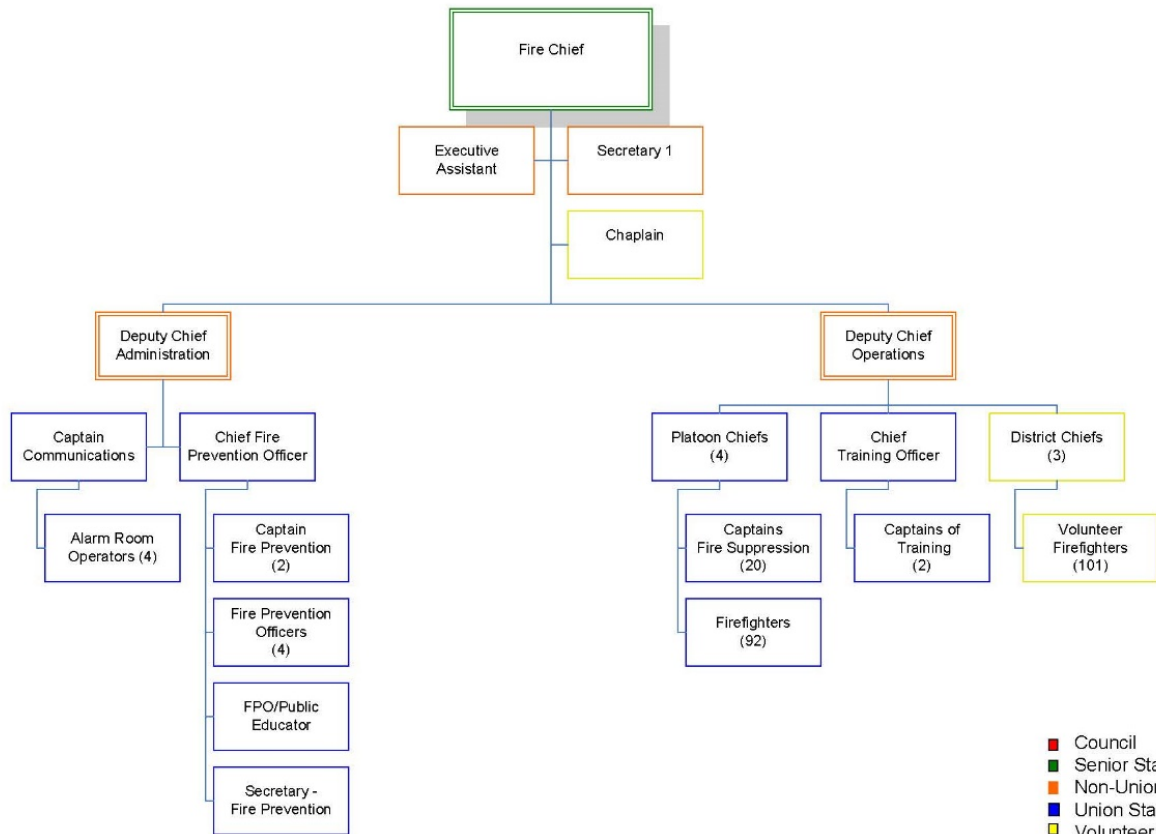


Organizational Structure

Fire Department

City of Niagara Falls

Tuesday, January 28, 2020



Budget

The budget for the Fire Department is identified through Operating and Capital allocations approved by Council.

Operating budget - \$22,725,261 Capital budget - \$430,000

As part of the capital budget, the training tower conversion was completed to propane to reduce the effects of smoke on the Firefighters and neighbours; switching our dispatch over to Next Generation 9-1-1 (NG9-1-1) continues to take shape as mandated by Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) for March 2024 to be completed.

Buildings

- The NFFD operates from six (6) fire stations and one administration building. The City owns five of the six fire stations, with a portion of Fire Station 5 on Sodom Road being leased to the City by the Willoughby Volunteer Fire Department. The new Station 7, located at 8530 Lundy's Lane, will open on May 3, 2021 with Pumper 7 responding.



Staffing

- There is a complement of 132 full-time employees operating from four divisions: Suppression, Fire Prevention, Training and Communications, and an approved complement of 104 volunteer firefighters. Three full-time stations are based in the urban area of the city and three volunteer stations are located in the suburban/rural area of the city.
- Full-time staffing is 29 firefighters on each of four shifts. If staffing is below 22 full-time firefighters on any shift, firefighters are hired to fill the positions. There were eight (8) retirements in 2020; 4 full time, 3 volunteer and 1 Deputy Chief.
- The approved complement of 104 volunteer firefighters is divided between the three (3) volunteer stations. Volunteer staffing numbers at the end of 2020 are reflective of recruitment and retention issues plaguing municipalities across the province.

Staffing District	Station 4 Chippawa	Station 5 Willoughby	Station 6 Crowland
Approved Complement	42	30	32
Staffing Dec 31, 2020	25	17	23

- When a responding district requires more resources than available, additional districts are called in to assist. For example, if a structure fire occurs in the Station 5 district, Station 6 is dispatched as well. Although this provides an alternative supply of staffing, there is a reduction of timely initial full response to the district as a result.
- Station 2 staff respond into the volunteer areas between 0600 – 1800 hours.



Fleet

- The main apparatus includes 9 pumpers, 2 aerials, 2 heavy rescues, 2 light rescues, 1 hazmat unit, 1 rehabilitation vehicle, 1 tanker and 1 tanker/pumper.
- All vehicles are serviced by mechanics from the Municipal Works department who work with manufacturers and suppliers to ensure the fleet is appropriately serviced and maintained.
- Work was completed on acquiring a new tanker/pumper to replace aging apparatus.



Suppression

- Fire suppression crews responded to 2,989 calls with a wide variety of response types as indicated below:

Response Types

<i>Response Type</i>	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2020 Call Percentage
Property Fires/Explosions	167	121	94	116	158	5.20%
Overpressure/Rupture/Explosion	6	5	0	4	3	0.10%
Pre-Fire Conditions - No Fire	164	156	131	148	139	4.65%
Burning (Controlled)	228	186	194	173	303	10.14%
False Fire Calls	564	612	678	669	633	21.18%
CO False Calls	243	211	216	184	149	4.98%
Public Hazard	167	138	125	150	144	4.82%
Rescue	478	529	545	535	423	14.15%
Medical/Resuscitator Calls	2570	2771	3084	2318	623	20.84%
Other Response	1091	1128	1058	901	414	13.85%
<i>Annual Response Total Calls</i>	5678	5857	6125	5198	2989	N/A

Fire Prevention

Fire Prevention Week: October 4 – 10, 2020

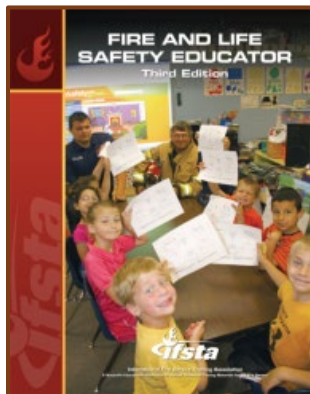
The theme for Fire Prevention Week this year was “Serve up Fire Safety in the Kitchen” focusing on fire safety messaging related to the leading cause of residential fires in North America – kitchen fires. This year, due to the pandemic, traditional public education techniques could not be utilized. Fire safety messaging was focused through the departmental social media accounts as well as the Niagara Falls Review.



Wake Up! Campaign

The department’s annual hallmark campaign was suspended for 2020 due to the pandemic. This campaign traditionally sees firefighters attending approximately 1000 homes annually to promote and verify that smoke and carbon monoxide alarms are installed in accordance with the Ontario Fire Code. Where alarms are found to be faulty, missing or improperly installed, firefighters will make the necessary corrections including installing new alarms at minimal cost to the homeowner.

NFPA 1035 – Public Fire & Life Safety Educator Course



In November of 2019, Fire Prevention staff began delivering the NFPA 1035 course to all fire department personnel. The delivery of this course consisted of two complete days of in-class instruction along with a third day of review and examination. The program was designed and implemented to provide a baseline understanding of fire loss statistics and the correlation and importance of public education in our community. This course provided staff with basic tools to begin developing and delivering fire safety education. By June 2020, the entire full-time staff (with the exception of 5), successfully completed the training and exam. Delivery of this course to the volunteer firefighters began in January 2020 and because of the pandemic, was suspended until further notice.

NFPA 1031 – Fire Inspection Level I Course

In October 2020, Fire Prevention Staff 'shadow' instructed the Ontario Fire College NFPA 1031 course that was delivered to members of the department. This process prepared Fire Prevention staff to deliver the program independently. This will ensure access to Ontario Fire College courses for department personnel as the availability of fire prevention courses at an affordable cost is difficult.

Vulnerable Occupancies

Vulnerable occupancies continue to be a particular occupancy that receives a high level of attention from the Fire Prevention Office. In January 2014, the Ontario Fire Code was amended through the Fire Protection and Prevention Act to address serious fire safety concerns that existed in care, care & treatment and retirement homes. Two components of these amendments including a duty of the municipal fire department to observe an approved fire drill based on a scenario as well as perform an annual inspection of each facility within their jurisdiction. The Fire Prevention Division has always prided itself on the effectiveness of our programming relating to vulnerable occupancies.

This year, due to the pandemic, the Fire Prevention Division was required to adapt their inspection and fire drill procedures for vulnerable occupancies as entry to these facilities put both fire staff and facility staff at risk. Educational materials were distributed to all the vulnerable occupancies in the city to ensure they had the resources required to prepare and perform table-talk fire drills with all supervisory staff. In addition, as the Fire Department would be unable to perform a fire safety inspection on the buildings, a comprehensive self-inspection checklist was adapted from the Office of the Fire Marshal and Emergency Management (OFMEM) resources and could be utilized by facility supervisors to perform their own fire safety inspection. Once this was completed, administrators were required to submit fire drill records, inspection checklist and all fire safety/protection equipment annual reports via Drop Box to the Fire Prevention Division.

Fire Prevention Staffing

There were significant staffing changes within the Fire Prevention Division. In 2020, there were three (3) retirements from the division that required

promotional processes to be conducted. Fortunately, the first two vacancies were filled simultaneously in July. This was very beneficial to the division as it provided an opportunity to deliver a formal training program that had never been implemented. Fire Prevention staff developed an internal training programme that proved to be worthwhile as it resulted in a structured introduction to Fire Prevention; however, it took extensive staff resources to develop and deliver. Approximately six weeks of staff time are dedicated to each promotional process and training which results in staff not satisfying the other regular job requirements.

When a vacancy in the division is complemented with staff from other divisions, it takes approximately two years to train the person to a base-level competency in order for them to perform fire safety inspections independently. The current staffing model for the division results in a staffing shortfall for approximately two years while the new staff receive training. The lack of access to courses in the Province due to the closure of the Ontario Fire College (OFC) will likely exacerbate this dilemma. This has a very negative impact on the workload and the quality of Fire Prevention staff.

The most detrimental change to the staffing of the division was the retirement of Roger Pigeon. With Roger's departure, the division now lacks the experience and expertise to perform many plans examination functions. The volume of development currently approved, or in the queue to approve by the City of Niagara Falls, should definitely justify the necessity for a dedicated plans examiner position. This particular issue has caused unnecessary workplace stress on divisional personnel.

COVID-19 Pandemic

The current pandemic resulted in Fire Prevention staff adapting regular procedures and/or processes to accommodate:

- Modified work schedule (12 hour shifts covering 7 days a week);
- Responding to open-air burning complaints to prevent unnecessary exposures to firefighters and completing associated incident reports;
- Coordinating work processes with other municipal staff who were working part-time or from home with limited capabilities; and
- Coordinating temporary patio approvals that deviated from traditional codes and standards.

Work / Inspections Activity

TYPE OF INSPECTION	NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS
<i>Applications</i>	
Fire Routes	2
Fireworks	3
Plan Examinations	131 (Only accounts for initial reviews. Does not take into account where multiple submissions are reviewed or if plans were submitted in previous years.)
Site Plan Approvals	53 (Only accounts for initial reviews. Does not take into account where multiple submissions are reviewed.)
Special Occasion Permits	1
Subdivision / Condo Planning	6
Zoning Amendments	29
Address Changes	70
Other	23
<i>Complaints</i>	
from Citizen	84
from Suppression Division	172
from Fire Prevention	16
Complaint – other	11
Complaint – unapproved burn	44
<i>General Assignments</i>	
File Search	69
Fire Safety Box	10
Fire Safety Plan–Approvals & Review	22
Fire Safety Plan – Review only	16
Freedom of Information Requests	19
Key Box	9
Pre-Consultation Meetings	54 (Only formal pre-con. Does not account for other development meetings, i.e. COSTCO, NFEC)
General Approvals	58 (this includes the patios approved due to COVID-19)
<i>Inspections</i>	
CO Alarm Install	42
Smoke Alarm Install	46

TYPE OF INSPECTION	NUMBER OF INSPECTIONS
Combo Unit Install	53
Inspection Order	41 (Only accounts for initial inspection. Does not include required follow-up)
Liquor License	7
Business License	105 (Only accounts for initial inspection. Does not include required follow-up)
Other	15
Building Permit	89 (Only accounts for initial inspection. Does not include required follow-up)
Request	10
Fireworks – Sale Inspections	9
Site Inspection	10
Burn Site Inspections	12
Vacant Building Inspection	136

Fire Investigations

Fire Prevention expertise for investigative services was required at 37 fire incidences in 2020. The following is a breakdown of the fire causes at incidences where Fire Prevention staff attended.

DETERMINED CAUSE OF FIRE	NUMBER OF INVESTIGATIONS
<i>Applications</i>	
Accidental	5
Arson	7
Electrical	6
Kitchen	3
Careless Smoking	3
Undetermined	13

The damages (structure and contents) from fires that Fire Prevention staff investigated totalled \$4,349,000. These statistics do not factor in fire incidences that did not involve Fire Prevention staff.

In total, the NFFD responded to 94 reported fire incidences in 2020.

This includes miscellaneous fires (car, hydro poles) and structure fires.

The increase in structure fires can be contributed to the pandemic and the increase in time spent at home by residents.

YEAR	TOTAL CALLS	FIRE INCIDENCES	% OF CALLS
2019	5198	75	1.4%
2020	2989	94	3.1%

Communications Division

The introduction of COVID-19 brought many changes and adjustments with regards to Dispatch protocols as we evolved through the pandemic.

In order to keep management informed of call fluctuations due to the pandemic, the Captain of Communications submitted daily and monthly reports to the Chiefs. This included medical call responses, as well as comparison of various incident types from 2019 and 2020.

Communicator Jennifer Langlois was promoted to Second Class Communicator and we welcomed Katelyn Halagian, Probationary Communicator to the team.

Each of the Probationary Firefighters hired spent one-month of training in the Communications Division. NFPA 1061 Telecommunicator I and II was also successfully completed with the new Firefighters and Communicator.

Communications successfully completed the process of qualifying two new Acting Captains to the division. Both Communicators, Kadri Lambert and Robyn O'Brien became eligible to act as Captain of Communications.

Firehouse software was updated this year to the newest version which was long overdue with anticipation of another update in the near future.

Training and Conferences

Prior to the pandemic, all Communications staff took part in a week of in-house training on various subjects. This included the NFPA 1035 Public Educator program, Incident Command, First Aid recertification, training on the Base Camp Connect system and a tour of the new Niagara Entertainment Centre on Fallsview Boulevard.

The Alzheimer Society conducted an in-house hands on training and information session. Communications staff gained a better understanding on how this disease can devastate anyone it touches.

Equipment Changes and Updates

With the change to a digital paging system, all previous equipment was removed from service and repurposed. Additional equipment to outfit Station 7 has been ordered. Many thanks to Enbridge Gas for their generous donation of digital pagers received to outfit the incoming Volunteer Firefighters.

Another successful upgrade was the installation of a new intercom system. This new system comes with video and voice capabilities. The intercom system also monitors Station 3 in the safe haven area and will also monitor Station 7's safe haven area once the build is complete.

The deadline to be NG9-1-1 compatible has been pushed back to March 2024 due to the pandemic.

The sub-districts for Station 7 response zone have been distinguished and programming for the new station has been completed in the training CAD.

Training Division

The Training Division is staffed by a Chief Training Officer, a Captain of Training responsible for Career staff training and a Captain of Training responsible for Volunteer staff training.

The Training staff delivers and oversees all training to the entire staff complement. Under their guidance, volunteer stations and full-time shift officers augment the delivery of routine training.

Specialty training requires extensive technical expertise and is delivered through suppression staff who has achieved expert status. Delivery has been provided by many in-house instructors. Officers conducted the review of training assigned for the year to their respective staff.

NFFD also continues the transition to web based education and e-learning training. The delivery of web based education reduces cost and provides for more learning opportunities for personnel. Training has also continued with the transition to electronic textbooks, which provides a more cost effective way to deliver educational materials for staff development. Computers/tablets are utilized for students to access textbooks and other electronic resources reducing the number of hard copy books required.

The average training for a full-time firefighter was 210 hours this year. In order to maintain Ontario Fire Marshall (OFM) certification, firefighters must train a minimum of 130 hours plus specialty training per year.

The average training for a volunteer firefighter was 102.54 hours this year.

In order to maintain OFM certification, volunteer firefighters must train a minimum of 60 hours plus specialty training per year.



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Training Department split the Volunteer recruit class of 14 into two groups. Both groups accumulated 2600 hours of training; averaging 185.7 hours per recruit.

Pump Operations

The department completed NFPA 1002 Pump Operations testing. This included all three volunteer stations in which staff completed over 2200 hours of training to prepare for the Provincial certification.

Water and Ice Rescue Training

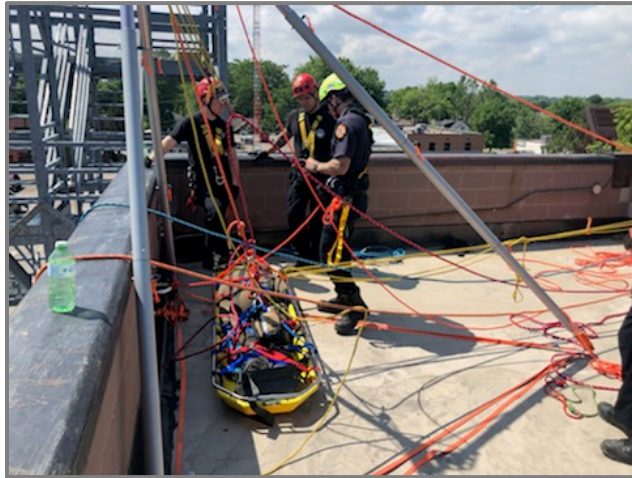
The NFFD water rescue instructors delivered over 2200 hours of training that encompassed all six stations. Full-time Instructors introduced an Emergency Response Vehicle (ERV) destined for use in the Ontario Power Generation open cut canal. The addition of the ERV, as well as streamlining response equipment, further enhanced the Water and Ice Rescue Training Program.

Confined Space Rescue Training

The NFFD's full-time firefighters have been trained to the operations and technician level of confined space. In order to enhance this training, a deck was constructed around the tanker to make training more realistic, as well as providing a much safer environment to train in. Platoons completed over 505 hours of training in 2020 to maintain their proficiency in this specialty.

Rope Rescue Training

Career firefighters compiled 2200 hours of assigned rope training. The Rope Committee revised the training program modules to include new equipment and more practical training.



Hazardous Materials Training

The Hazardous Materials Committee introduced the Altair 5x PID gas detector and the subsequent training that accompanied it. NFFD adopted another valuable piece in the purchase of two new decontamination berms. These will help to train and set up the decontamination corridor more efficiently and apply firefighter skills in a timelier manner. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the committee was unable to participate in a Hazmat seminar that was to take place in Niagara Falls. Aside from these things, regularly scheduled training ensued and were able to augment the training with the new gas detection equipment to enhance training's capabilities and improve responder safety.

All suppression staff participated in a combined 1100 hours of Hazardous Materials First Responder training.

Firefighter Survival Training

Fire ground survival continued to practice the skills that could potentially save firefighter lives. Training included Mayday prevention, self-rescue procedures and skills. All four Platoons and three volunteer stations completed 1100 hours of the advanced level of firefighter training.

Trench Rescue

The Trench Committee took delivery of the new trailer and equipment and continued with the progression of their training program.



NFFD Specialty Training Instructors include:

- SCBA/Air Technicians
- Emergency Medical
- SCBA Fit Testing
- Elevator Rescue
- Peer Fitness Instruction
- Elevator Rescue
- Forcible Entry
- Auto Extrication
- Road to Mental Readiness

Promotion and Classification Examinations

1st Class examination was completed in late 2019. Promotions took place on February 1, 2020. Successful candidates: Steven Carter-Flagg, Ryan Cesarin, Mark Dunseith, Jamie Kennedy, Kaitlyn Knezich, Andrew Martel, Jordan Michels, Jason Oliver, Brad Wiens.

3rd Class examination was completed in August 2020. Promotions took place on September 4, 2020. Successful candidates: Tim Braun, Ryan Howlett, Jon Leyenhorst, Ian Morris, Chris Seebach, John Surla, Anthony Vallonio, Ryan Van Berkel.

Career Recruit Training Program

On April 20, 2021, six new firefighters began their career with the NFFD under the guidance of Firefighter Brandon Fife, Lead Instructor for the class. The recruits spent 13 weeks building the foundation of skills essential for their careers. Many other Specialty Instructors were involved in the training program designed to develop proficiency and confidence in each other and their equipment.

Congratulations to career graduates: Matt Brunskole, Matt Campbell, Brent Dawn, Natasha Murphy, Ryan Senese and Daniel Shewfelt.

Volunteer Recruit Training Program

Fourteen volunteer firefighter recruits were hired in December 2019. This was the largest class to participate in the training program since its inception.

The class training program prepared them to challenge the provincial examination for NFPA 1001 (Firefighter 1 and 2), Hazmat Awareness and Hazmat Ops. This program was the responsibility of Captain Roberto, with support from Captain Hicks and many other Instructors from the volunteer stations. The 14 recruits graduated "virtually" from the program on June 8, 2020 completing over 2410 hours of instruction and training.

Congratulations to volunteer graduates: Station 4 - Andrew Douglas, Bryan Englebert, James Hudson, Greg Lavelle, Sarah Potts, Brody Schanbacher, Graeme Schonberg; Station 5 - Kristie McGowan, Jacquelyn Millen, Matthew Somerville, Thomas Thewliss; Station 6 - Steve Chaudar, Adam Phelps, Dylan Ryerse.

Training Ground Upgrades

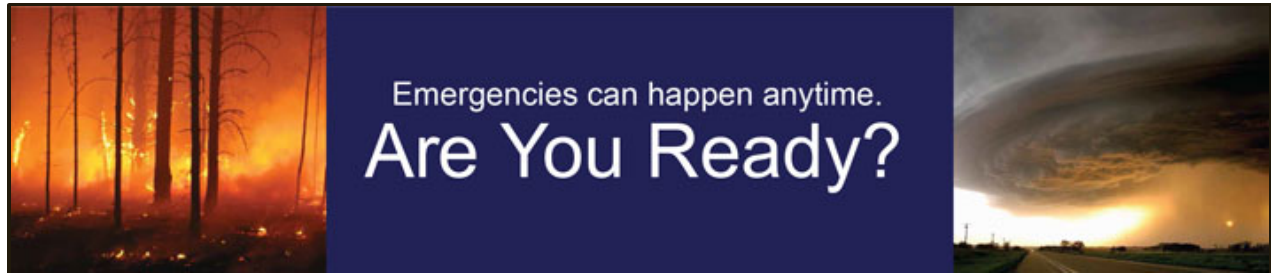
The training tower was refitted with a Class B burn system installed by Pro-Safe Fire Training Systems. The propane burning system provides safe and effective live fire training in a controlled environment. With the addition of this system, including the integrated smoke system, training can conduct multiple training evolutions with minimal preparation and almost eliminate the time consuming need to decontaminate firefighters and bunker gear. During the volunteer recruit training program, 12 "live fire" evolutions were conducted in one training day.

Emergency Management

Emergency Management Program

The Fire Chief is the Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC) and the Deputy Chiefs are alternates for the City of Niagara Falls. The CEMC is responsible for providing the forum for training, exercising and assembling the Emergency Management Team together in times of crisis. In December

2020, the compliance package was submitted to the Chief of Emergency Management of Ontario indicating that the City of Niagara Falls complied with all of the 15 annual requirements as set out in the *Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act*.



- Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the NFFD was not able to provide formal public education events in the community. Staff used the opportunity to promote public health messaging from both the provincial and municipal levels to residents in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19 within our community. Social media, the municipal website and other messaging mediums (electronic signboard) were utilized to reach the public.
- Further, to assist the citizens in dealing with COVID-19, lockdowns and the mental stress that some had to deal with, the NFFD engaged in drive by birthday parties in order to try and lift the spirit of the children.



What was New in 2020?

- Deputy Chief Ross retired on June 30, 2020 after a career which spanned 28 years and included positions as Firefighter, Training Officer, Director of Training and Deputy Chief from 2007 to 2020.
- Ken Henry joined the Administration team on July 23, 2020 as Deputy Chief of Administration. Deputy Chief Henry has been a firefighter since 1993 and worked his way through the ranks up to Acting Platoon Chief prior to being promoted to Deputy. Ken has brought a wealth of knowledge to his new role and a great asset to the management team.
- Medical calls; Niagara Emergency Medical Services (NEMS) quickly realized during the pandemic that they were in need of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE). Fire Departments across the region gave up 50% of their stored PPE in order to accommodate NEMS. As a result of this and to reduce unnecessary risk, it was recommended by the Medical Director and subsequently the implementation of a COVID-19 medical tiered response. This, in turn, reduced fire's medical calls by 50%. As of December 14, 2020, NFFD returned to the normal tiered response protocol with the exception of Long Term Care Facilities, in which at this time, firefighters are not yet responding.
- Hiring Full-time (6) and Volunteer (14) firefighters in 2020 amidst the pandemic. Further, they were able to train and graduate on schedule.
- Station 7 construction: When COVID-19 hit, it seemed likely that the new station, after all these years of planning, would be halted due to a pandemic. Construction had been well underway when the City and building industry started to shut down. It was quickly determined by the City's legal team that the new station was considered "Essential" and that construction would continue. How fortunate that during a world-wide pandemic that had affected every person, business and service in one way or another, that the station remained on schedule. By the end of 2020, approximately 75% was completed; millwork installed along with painting and flooring; landscaping completed including asphalt, sod, trees, bushes and armour stones. Plans are in place for the grand opening of Station 7 on May 3, 2021.