



SARATOGA SPRINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT
LOCAL 343 • MEMBER OF
NEW YORK STATE
PROFESSIONAL FIRE FIGHTERS ASSOC., INC.
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SARATOGA FIRE FIGHTERS MEET WITH COMMISSIONER ELECT MONTAGNINO
TO DISCUSS EMERGENCY RESPONSE PRIORITIES

Annual Emergency Call Levels Up 15 percent; Full Staffing on Fire Fighter Shifts Essential

Representatives of the Saratoga Springs Fire Fighters met on November 22 with incoming Public Safety Commissioner James Montagnino as part of its effort to develop a cooperative relationship in the weeks leading up to the start of his 2022 term.

“Our conversation with Commissioner-elect Montagnino may have been our first meeting since his election, but we are confident and committed to the notion that it will not be the last,” said Joe Brimhall, president of the fire fighters union. “We congratulate him, and look forward to a relationship that is candid, direct and frequent.”

Among the top priorities advanced by Brimhall, an 18-year veteran of the department, is a commitment to sufficient fire fighter staffing and recruitment to ensure the department is adequately prepared for the city’s year-round emergency response needs.

More specifically, Brimhall reflected on the demands placed on the fire fighters on duty during each specific shift and the importance of providing 12 fire fighters per shift to adequately meet the community’s demand.

Saratoga fire fighters serve 24-hour shifts supported by four rotating platoons providing for continuous coverage for calls that include fires, rescues, automobile accidents and medical emergencies.

“In 2020 Saratoga Springs fire fighters respond to 4,869 calls for help – that’s an emergency every 1 hour and 48 minutes. Those fire and medical alarms crisscross the city’s neighborhoods, and during the summer season increase significantly due to the many visitors who travel to Saratoga for events and attractions,” Brimhall said.

As of Sunday (November 21), Saratoga Fire Fighters had already exceeded last year’s call volume and if trends continue in December total annual calls will increase by more than 15 percent - the most ever for the department.

In 2022, at least 8 fire fighters will be eligible for retirement; and each new fire fighter hired is required to complete 14 weeks of training at the fire academy prior to being eligible to serve in the fire house. This staffing problem is further complicated by the fact that many new candidates for appointment to the department may be required to complete a year-long paramedic certification – further impacting their availability and assignment to a platoon that is impacted due to a retirement.

Higher call volumes and shortages of staff at area hospitals are extending the time fire fighters are devoting to each call. Continuity of care standards require fire fighters, each of whom is also an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), to ensure patients are safely transferred to the care of qualified medical professional prior to concluding each call.

“The issue of full staffing is at the core of providing adequate emergency services in Saratoga Springs,” Brimhall continued. “Without adequate staffing, the residents, businesses and visitors will rely on secondary support from other communities and as a result response times suffer, and city revenues decrease stemming from the cost of mutual aid.”