

Wauconda Fire District Chronology

1889 – An amalgamation of volunteers formally established the Wauconda Niagara Fire Company as a non-profit entity. (Niagara was the name of a hand-pump). John Strayer was elected as its first president. Many local businessmen comprised its first firefighters, and its original responsibility was to the village itself. Later the service expanded to include local subdivisions and nearby farms by subscription. As in many communities throughout the county, fire insurance companies played a major role in promoting and sustaining local fire companies. This was done through a combination of donations and premium incentives. Wrought-iron markers were often affixed to building exteriors and indicated the dwellings and other structures which were covered. Thus, early protection could be prioritized.



Pre 1931 – Original firehouse was located at the site of the current village activity center.

1931 - First motorized fire vehicle with a 500-gallon capacity was purchased for \$6,500. Wauconda Lions Club donated \$4,500.



1931 - First formally appointed fire chief, Phillip Froehlke.

1941 – Second 500-gallon fire truck purchased.

1946 – Firehouse moved to Liberty Street.

1948 – Third fire truck added which was built by volunteers using surplus materials from World War II.

1954 – Fourth fire engine acquired (1200 gallon) and customized winning best fire engine in Lake County at the Lake County Fire Association annual conference.

1957 – Fifth fire engine purchased: also, a customized model and winner of the best fire engine in Lake County at the annual county conference in 1958.

1958 – 40 fire calls / 15 emergency calls per year.

1958 - Wauconda Fire Department all-around winner at the annual Fire Convention held in Antioch. Competitive events included: water fights, truck inspection, 3-man hook-ups, 5-man hook-ups, hose rolls and bucket brigades.

1975 – First paramedics (part-time).

1978 – First fire chief and full-time paid employee, Lyle Matthews, chosen by internal corporate board. (Previously chiefs were elected by volunteers).

1978 – First three fire fighter/paramedics were hired full-time.

1980 – Starting annual salary for a fire fighter was \$15,000. (Part-time received \$6.00 per call)

2007 – Fire Protection District took operational control of what was previously the responsibility of the Wauconda Volunteer Fire Department Inc. Wauconda Fire Department realigned as one of 6 districts in western Lake County. Elected officials of the Lake County Board now appointed local district boards who have oversight over the management and operations of their respective districts.

2010 – The Village of Wauconda became part of the Fire Protection District. Prior to this, the Village had a contract for emergencies services with the Fire Protection District.

2020 – The Wauconda Fire District is comprised of 3 fire stations covering 6 townships, 9 villages, 48 square miles and serving over 40,000 people. It owns and operates 4 fire engines and 4 ambulances. The most recent cost of a fire engine was \$460,000 and the most recent cost of an ambulance was \$230,000. The District employs 65 firefighters of which there are 40 full-time and 25 part-time; there are currently 45 part- and full-time paramedics. The starting salary for a full-time paramedic/fire fighter is \$70,000.00. Operating under a 10-million-dollar budget, there averages 12 calls/ day translating to 4,200/year. The ratio of these calls is 25% fire - 75% other emergencies.



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