



**Southern Ozaukee Fire and  
Emergency Medical Services Department  
2023 Annual Report**



Southern Ozaukee Fire and  
Emergency Medical Services Department  
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SOFD Board  
City of Mequon Common Council Members  
Village of Thiensville Trustees

The Southern Ozaukee Fire Department (SOFD) established on January 1, 2023, represents the merger of the former Mequon Fire Department and the Thiensville Fire Department. The merger brings together a rich history of service and dedication to the community. The Mequon Fire Department served the community for 89 years, having been established in 1933, while the Thiensville Fire Department has an even longer history, operating for 165 years since its formation in 1857.

While both departments have a strong legacy of commitment to public safety, merging these two long-standing institutions into the SOFD creates a unified organization with enhanced resources and capabilities. This merger allows for better allocation of personnel, equipment, and expertise, which ultimately leads to improved service delivery and response times for the community.

In 2023 the SOFD responded to 2,995 fire and emergency medical calls, and 464 paramedic intercepts. November was the busiest month with 339 calls for service.

As we move forward, the Southern Ozaukee Fire Department is committed to advancing our operations and making the most of the diverse skills and experiences of our team. With a combination of full-time and paid-on-call personnel, we bring together a variety of backgrounds and expertise that enhances our ability to serve the community effectively.

Looking ahead to 2024 our focus remains on continually improving our services and ensuring that we operate with the highest standards. We strive to provide the highest level of care in the most efficient manner possible, utilizing our resources wisely while maintaining a strong emphasis on safety. Our ongoing dedication to excellence ensures that we are well-positioned to meet the needs of the Mequon and Thiensville communities, both now and in the future.

Respectfully submitted,  
*David L Bialk*  
David Bialk, Fire Chief

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## **OUR MISSION**

The Southern Ozaukee Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department exists to ensure the safety of our communities through fire suppression, response to medical emergencies, professional training and public education. We serve our communities to protect the people, property, and environment. We provide our citizens with reassurance, aid and comfort when they are vulnerable.

## **OUR VISION**

The Southern Ozaukee Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department will continuously strive to be a trusted community service that is recognized for meeting the needs of our citizens, while being good stewards of our resources. We will be known as a modern department with a professionally trained team that attains best practice standards and ensures a high level of readiness. We will innovate and continuously have an eye to the future. We will accomplish our vision of a strong combination department by investing in our people, with a workforce of committed career and volunteer team members. We will forge strong partnerships to ensure the safety of the communities we serve.

## **OUR VALUES**

Our culture reflects our shared values, and we have pride in all that we do.

### **Integrity**

We live in accordance with our values, demonstrating sound ethical principles and being honest with ourselves and others.

### **Trust**

We believe that reliability and the strength of our relationships is core to our being. Trust fosters respect and provides safety and earns loyalty.

### **Empathy**

We seek to understand the thoughts, feelings and perspectives of others from their point of view. We show compassion for those who feel vulnerable or suffer a loss.

### **Grit**

We exhibit courage, resolve and a selfless devotion to duty.

### **Excellence**

We are professional and exceptional in our skills, continuously striving to improve.

### **Stewardship**

We are responsible in our use of financial and human resources.

# COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION REPORT

## FIRE INSPECTIONS

The goal of the Southern Ozaukee Fire Department Community Risk Reduction Bureau is to develop and maintain partnerships with community members and business owners to keep the community safe through education and fire safety.

The Southern Ozaukee Fire Department is mandated by state statute to inspect all public buildings and places of employment once a year.

### Chapter SPS 314 (13)(b)

1. 'General.' The Chief of the Fire Department shall be responsible for having all public buildings and places of employment within the territory of the Fire Department inspected for the purpose of ascertaining and causing to be corrected any conditions liable to cause fire, or any violations of any law or ordinance relating to fire hazards or to the prevention of fires.
2. 'Determining the buildings that are to be inspected.' The Fire Chief shall be responsible for determining those public buildings and places of employment that are to be inspected, for each municipality for which the fire department has responsibility.
3. 'Scheduling of inspections.' Fire prevention inspections shall be conducted at least once per calendar year, or more often if ordered by the Fire Chief, in all territory served by the Fire Department.

Fire Inspections are performed by on-duty personnel. In 2023, SOFD performed 1,049 Fire Inspections between both communities and corrected 558 fire safety violations.

Creating a safe environment for people to live and work in is a goal of every fire department. Education is one way of improving safety. Annual fire inspections provide an opportunity to promote goodwill and education about the fire department's role with business owners and employees. This contact reaffirms their joint responsibility for fire prevention. The inspection program also provides firefighters the opportunity to gain firsthand knowledge of building layouts, contents, and construction in the communities.

## COMMUNITY OUTREACH

SOFD's public outreach initiatives are crucial for fostering community safety awareness and preparedness. Through engaging opportunities such as fire station tours, school presentations, and community events, we educate the public about fire prevention, emergency response procedures, and Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation. By actively interacting in the community, it allows us to not only disseminate vital information but also establish trust and collaboration, ultimately creating a safer environment for all residents and visitors to the Mequon and Thiensville area.

In 2023, some of the notable events the Southern Ozaukee Fire Department participated in are the Taste of Mequon where department staff taught hands-only CPR. The department partnered with the Thiensville Police Department for Safety Town and Bike Safety Day. At Safety Town, members taught children about how to prevent fires, respond in emergencies, and safely evacuate if needed. At Bike Safety Day members worked to instill responsible habits, such as wearing helmets and following traffic rules. Bike Safety Day promotes safe and enjoyable cycling experiences while reducing accidents, injuries, and empowers children to make informed decisions while fostering a culture of safety and resilience from a young age.

The Fire Department also attended many neighborhood block parties where members spoke about our equipment, our department, fire safety tips. Members also used the opportunity to recruit community members for the fire department.

# RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING REPORT

## Recruitment

Seven new paid-on-call members were hired in 2023. Changes to recruitment in 2023 included discontinuation of using an outside recruitment company and focusing recruitment on Mequon/Thiensville residents regardless of certifications, and only hiring non-resident applicants if they already have a fire or EMS certification.

In the last four months of 2023 after discontinued use of the outside recruitment company, nine people contacted the department with interest in employment.

Recruitment goals for 2024:

- Increase advertising of POC positions in high traffic Mequon businesses.

- Increase recruitment in the high school, sponsoring EMT during senior year.

## Training

The SOFD trains its members using the Vocational Technical College System, in-house, online education, conferences, and a variety of seminars. The department provides weekly training on Monday evenings and Tuesday mornings. This training is offered 36 weeks of the year. Average attendance is 20 members per week. Additionally, monthly Dive and Technical Rescue trainings are offered to members who wish to participate in special operations. The fire department offers over 225 hours of training to its members every year. All members completed training on mandatory Bloodborne Pathogens Policy, proper lifting, use of personal protective equipment, TB awareness, decontamination procedures and sexual harassment.

Annual ice rescue training was conducted in January for all department personnel. All new members went through new member orientation. Orientation is used to ensure all new members understand SOFD policy and procedures for how to use department specific equipment. Orientations are scheduled throughout the year as needed. All department members were recertified in CPR and AED; this is a biennial certification as it expires every two years.

The department views training as the foundation for operating efficiently and safely during all department events. The schedule is modified as needed to accommodate members and community needs. The fire department conducts in-house skills assessments called 911 Emergencies, focusing on high risk/low frequency events. Four times a year, emergency medical technicians and paramedics must demonstrate competencies in eight high-risk, low-frequency skill stations. The 911 Emergencies model is a pass/fail assessment that all EMS providers must pass to be eligible to work on the ambulance or first responder vehicle.

## EQUIPMENT REPORT

SOFD utilizes a combined fleet of vehicles previously owned by the former Mequon and Thiensville Fire Departments. The department members hold the equipment in high regard and understand the utility of adequately stocked and functional equipment. Vehicle checks are completed weekly to ensure functionality and ready equipment to best serve our communities. Department members check equipment on a rotating basis and Officers are responsible for ensuring checks are completed and any defects/deficits are corrected in a timely manner.

### Current Fire Department Vehicle Fleet

Unit	Year	Make	Type	Age
960	2006	Pierce	100' Tower Ladder, 1500 GPM	17
966	2011	Pierce/International	3500 Gallon Tender	12
959	1999	Ford F-350	Brush Truck (Re-Purposed)	24
962	2008	Pierce Impel	Fire Engine, 1500 GPM, 1000 Gal. Water	15
964	2015	Pierce Impel	Fire Engine, 1500 GPM, 1000 Gal. Water	8
956	2009	Chevrolet Tahoe	Utility Vehicle	14
970	2016	Chevrolet Tahoe	Chief's Vehicle	7
971	2017	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Deputy Chief's Vehicle	6
951	2009	Ford E-350	Ambulance	14
952	2014	Ford F-350	Ambulance	9
950	2016	Ford F-350	Ambulance	7
958-A	2021	Jeep Grand Cherokee	First Responder Vehicle	2
958	2021	Jeep Grand Cherokee	First Responder Vehicle	2
Boat	2010	Rescue One	16' Rigid Hull Boat, 2010 40HP Motor	13
Boat	2020	Inmar	12' Inflatable Boat, 2011 20HP Motor	3
957	2021	Chevy Silverado 2500	Utility Pick-up Truck	2
955	2016	Ford Step Van	Special Operations Equipment Truck	7
561	2007	Pierce Dash	105' Aerial, 2000 GPM, 475 Gal. Water	16
563	1999	Pierce Lance	Fire Engine, 1750 GPM, 500 Gal. Water	24
562	1997	Pierce Quantum	Fire Engine, 2000 GPM, 2500 Gal. Water	26
554	2014	Ford Expedition	Battalion Chief's Command Vehicle	9
556	2010	Chevy Tahoe	Utility Vehicle	13
551	2004	Chevy C4500, Medtec	Ambulance	19
552	2004	Chevy C4500, Medtec	Ambulance	19
555	2019	Chevy Tahoe	Paramedic Interceptor, Med 9	4
UTV	2007	Kubota RTV900	UTV	16



As part of the merger in 2023 the SOFD sold off some of its rolling stock.

### Vehicles Sold in 2023

Unit	Year	Make	Type	Sale Value
961	1997	Pierce Quint	100' Aerial, 2000 GPM, 475 Gal. Water	\$45,000
967	1990	Ford LTS 9000	3500 Gallon Tender	\$48,500
963	2000	Pierce Lance	Fire Engine 1750 GPM, 1000 Gal. Water	\$66,000
954	2012	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Utility Vehicle/Spare First Responder	\$5,700
954-A	2012	Jeep Grand Cherokee	Utility Vehicle \ Spare First Responder	\$6,325
Boat	1984	Boston Whaler	Boat	\$4,850
Golf Cart	2003	Cushman Commander	24V Electric Golf Cart	\$2,673

Along with the vehicle fleet, SOFD uses various advanced medical devices. Some available equipment includes a Hamilton T1 Ventilator, Butterfly IQ Ultrasound Device, Autopulse Automated CPR Device, Zoll X Series Monitors, Sapphire IV Pump, and McGrath Video Laryngoscopes. All of these specialized devices assist our advanced level providers in delivering high-quality care to our communities.

## **SPECIAL OPERATIONS TEAMS REPORT**

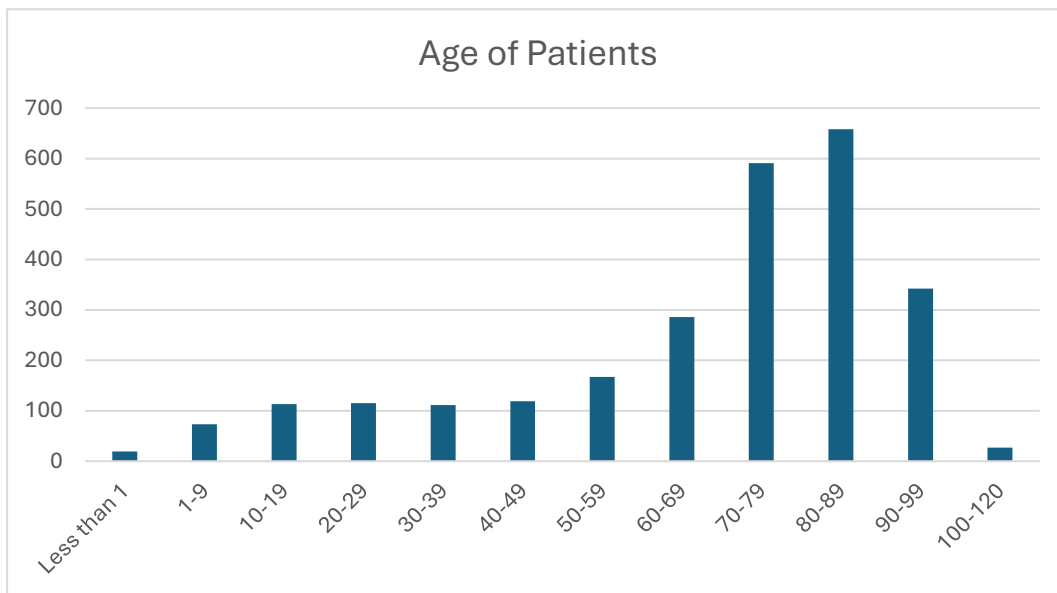
The department has two special operation teams: the Dive Team and the Technical Rescue Team. The dive team and the technical rescue team each train for three hours a month to ensure all equipment is functional and members are proficient when there is a call for service. The dive team cooperates with other departments in Ozaukee County and the surrounding area to ensure an adequate number of trained personnel are available in the event of an incident. In 2023, the Dive Team conducted pool dives, open water dives and ice dives. Pool dives are used during the winter months where the team can focus on basic SCUBA skills and equipment maintenance. In the winter months, the team will also conduct ice dives in local waters to work on thin ice and use special equipment to replicate rescuing people who have fallen through the ice. During the summer months, the dive team practices in the Milwaukee River and in local quarries and ponds. The dive team added one diver to the team in 2023. The dive team consists of seven divers and four shore support members.

The technical rescue team trains in many different environments to address emergencies that involve high-angle rescue, low-angle rescue, trench rescue, building collapse, and confined spaces. During the team's monthly training, many different scenarios are replicated to ensure each member is proficient in any rescue they may be called to. Hands-on training along with reviewing past incidents is key to ensuring each member knows the equipment and understands the team's capabilities.

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES REPORT

The Southern Ozaukee Fire Department's Bureau of EMS oversees the provision of prehospital medical care by the department's EMTs and Paramedics. Along with merging two highly-skilled departments in 2023, we also increased our EMS licensure level within the State of Wisconsin to Critical Care Paramedic. This allows us to provide the best possible care to the residents we serve as this is the highest available licensure level for EMS in the State. SOFD currently employs six Critical Care Paramedics, one Registered Nurse working within the paramedic scope of practice, 20 Paramedics, 9 Advanced Emergency Medical Technicians, and 33 Emergency Medical Technician Basics through Paid-on-Call and Full-Time positions.

In 2023, SOFD responded to 3,459 total calls. Emergency medical calls largely make up that statistic, accounting for 76% of the total call volume. This includes EMS calls in SOFD's primary service area of Mequon and Thiensville. SOFD prides itself on EMS training conducted by senior department members and medical professionals from the area to maintain a high level of skilled professionals.



\*Includes patients transports with SOFD employed Personnel during Paramedic Intercepts

## Hospital Destinations for Transported Patients in 2023

<b>Columbia St. Mary's Ozaukee</b>	901
<b>Aurora Medical Center Grafton</b>	610
<b>Froedtert Neighborhood Hospital Mequon</b>	122
<b>Children's Hospital of Wisconsin</b>	71
<b>Froedtert Hospital</b>	68
<b>Froedtert Menomonee Falls</b>	28
<b>Clement J. Zablocki VA Medical Center</b>	8
<b>Aurora Sinai Medical Center</b>	2
<b>Aurora St. Luke's Medical Center</b>	5
<b>Columbia St. Mary's Milwaukee</b>	5
<b>Froedtert West Bend</b>	2
<b>No Transport/Other</b>	802
<b>Total</b>	2,624

\*Includes patients transports with SOFD employed Personnel during Paramedic Intercepts

### Fall Trends in Assisted Living Facilities

Throughout 2023, SOFD responded to 516 calls for EMS at four assisted living facilities in Mequon and Thiensville. This makes up 22% of total EMS call volume. Within this group of calls, 38% were dispatched for a fall or lift assist.

Falls are a leading cause within the elderly population due to a multitude of reasons such as polypharmacy, chronic medical conditions, muscle weakness and gait instability, and use of walking aids such as walkers or canes. Falls can lead to a decreased quality of life, decreased ability to function, and serious injury and death<sup>1</sup>. There are strategies to prevent falls such as education and fall risk assessment that can be implemented during an EMS encounter. Simple techniques such as educating to utilize shoes or grips on socks while walking on slippery surfaces, reminders to use walking aids even for short walks, and environmental changes such as removing a rug have the potential to decrease falls within the community. A goal of the EMS Bureau for 2024 is to develop and implement ways to work collaboratively with assisted living facilities in the area to minimize these occurrences within our community.

<sup>1</sup>The Falls Management Program: A Quality Improvement Initiative for Nursing Facilities. AHRQ. (2017, December).

## **Guidelines Updates**

Periodically, community EMS professionals including two members from SOFD meet with the Medical Director, Dr. Jason Staszko, to complete a thorough review of the medical guidelines. These updates are done to follow best medical practice and to continuously improve care available for the community. Guidelines are introduced to EMS providers through several trainings and reviewed regularly. Some guideline updates introduced in 2023 include:

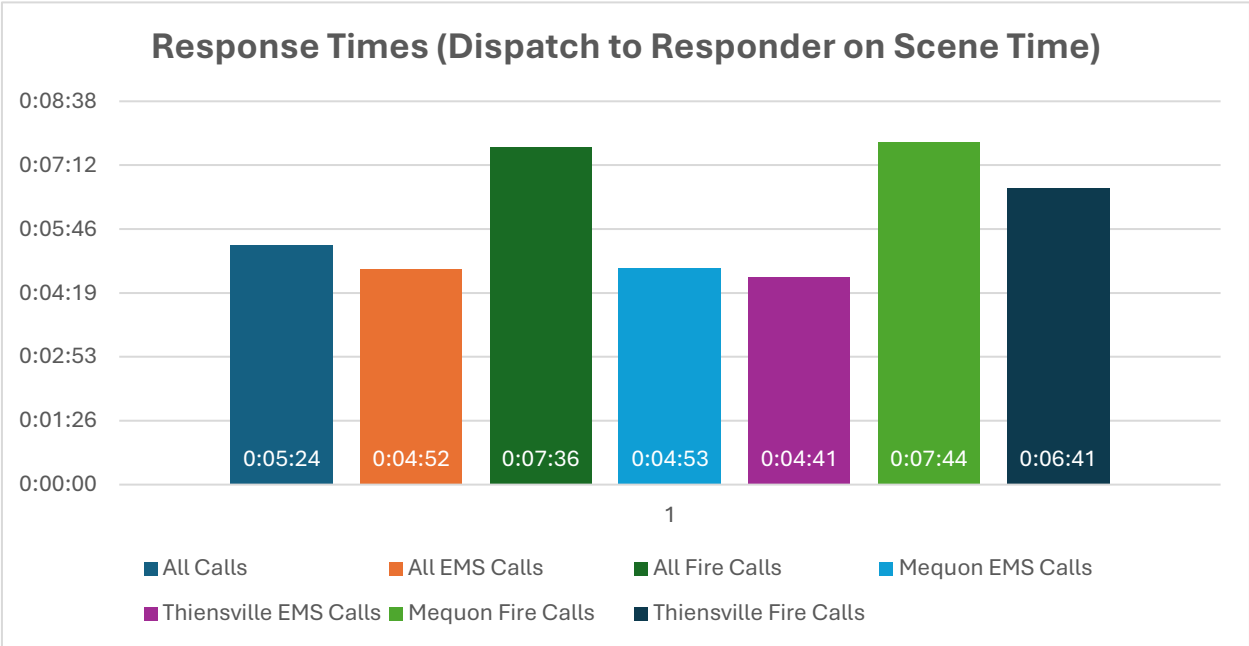
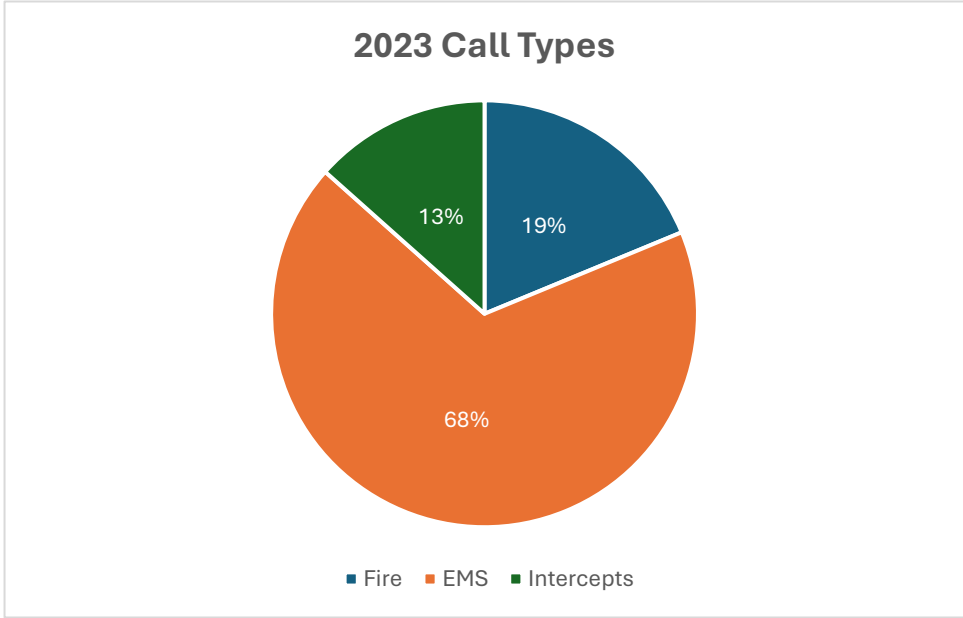
- High-Risk Refusal Sign-off Procedure
- Addition of the medication Droperidol
- Additional indications for use of the medications TXA and Ketamine
- Adding the medication Ondansetron to the Advanced EMT Scope of Practice
- New Protocols for Pediatric BRUE, Tracheostomy Management, Exchange, and Suctioning, Pediatric Bronchiolitis, Pediatric Croup, Dive/SCUBA Injuries, PICC Access
- Updates to Cardiac Arrhythmia Guidelines
- Addition of the medication Racemic Epinephrine
- Updated to the Medication Assisted Airway Guideline

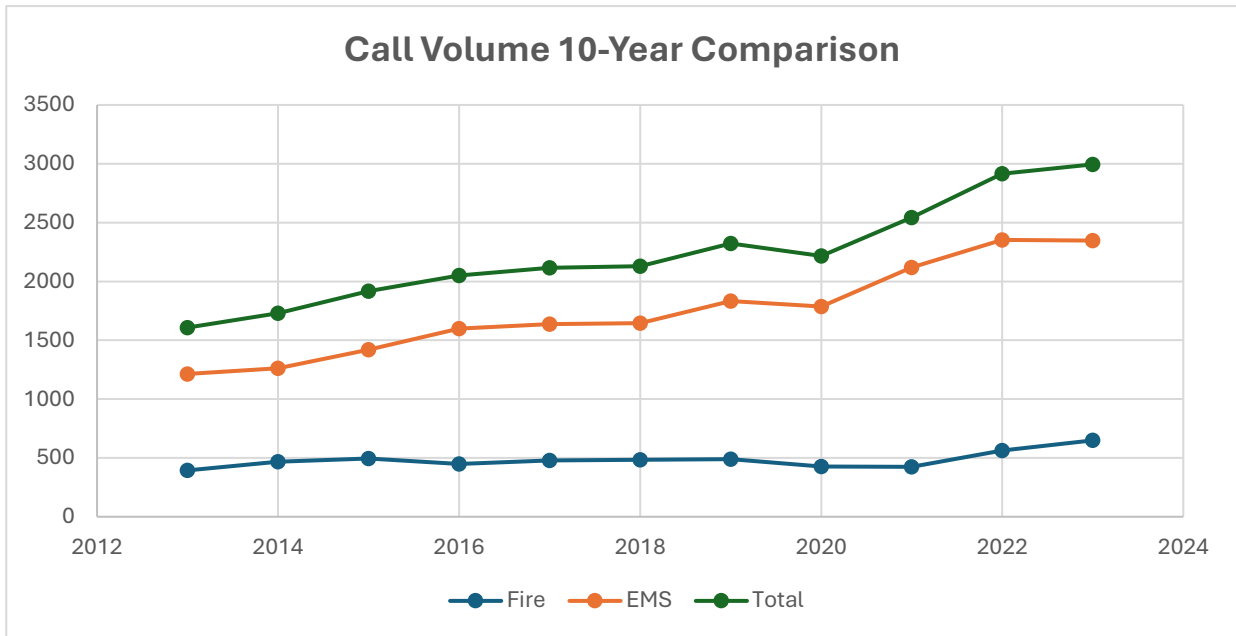
## **Paramedic Intercept and Oversight Agreement**

In January 2023, SOFD entered into an agreement with the Cedarburg Fire Department (CFD) to provide paramedic intercept services. For high acuity calls, a paramedic is automatically dispatched by Ozaukee County Dispatch and is available to respond at the request of CFD for initially lower acuity calls that are determined to require Advanced Life Support. Throughout 2023 SOFD responded to 464 calls for paramedic intercept. After arriving on scene, the SOFD paramedic can assess and treat the individual if necessary or provide guidance to on-scene crews. Additionally, the SOFD paramedic can also transport in the CFD ambulance should the patient circumstance deem necessary. Paramedic intercepts have proven to be an asset to the Cedarburg community by providing ALS services in an efficient manner.

In April 2023, SOFD entered into an agreement with Cedarburg Fire Department to oversee the creation of their paramedic services program. Each CFD paramedic is credentialed and licensed under SOFD's license. When a CFD paramedic has a question or would like to complete an ALS intervention, they can call the on-duty SOFD Battalion Chief for guidance. The Battalion Chief of EMS completes training with CFD paramedics. Additionally, when ALS transports are completed, the CFD paramedic completes reports in SOFD's reporting system for review and QI/QA by the Battalion Chief of EMS.

# DEPARTMENT STATISTICS





10-Year Comparison	Fire	EMS	Total
2013	394	1,214	1,608
2014	469	1,261	1,730
2015	496	1,421	1,917
2016	450	1,600	2,050
2017	479	1,637	2,116
2018	483	1,646	2,129
2019	489	1,834	2,323
2020	428	1,788	2,216
2021	423	2,120	2,543
2022	562	2,353	2,915
2023	649	2,346	2,995

\*2022 and 2023 includes data from both Mequon and Thiensville. 2013-2021 include Mequon data only. Intercepts are not included in data set.

