

University Heights Division of Fire Annual Report for 2016

Douglas D. Zook, EFO
Chief of Fire
1 May 2017



Management's Discussion

The University Heights Division of Fire contributes to the vitality of the University Heights and other area communities by preventing and mitigating harm to persons and property caused by illness, injury, fire, natural events and other mishap. It accomplishes this mission through public education, code enforcement and response to calls for assistance. Prior to the division's creation on 1 April 1942, University Heights contracted with the City of Cleveland Heights for fire services.

Operations

The division, like most fire and emergency medical services organizations, is structured primarily to respond to calls for assistance. Most other work-time activity, such as personnel training, and equipment, vehicle and station maintenance, support this aspect of the division's mission. However, the division also inspects 291 commercial, multi-family, educational and assembly occupancies to promote their safety through compliance with the Ohio Fire Code, and helps to maintain almost 550 fire hydrants.

The Insurance Services Office (ISO), a private organization providing various services to the insurance industry, evaluates the fire protection capabilities of local communities. Insurance companies use a community's ISO "public protection classification" in setting insurance premiums for properties located in the community. Classifications range from 1 (the best) to 10. A community's fire division accounts for 50% of this grade, with the water system affecting 40% and emergency communications 10%. University Heights has a classification of 3, which places it in the top 10.8% of communities nationwide.

Emergency activity is frequently both intermittent and cyclical, but overall the division has seen a 15% increase in calls since 2012. This increase, however, amounts to an average of only one additional call every 1.5 days, well within the division's capacity given current organization and staffing. In 2016, a little over a third of emergency responses resulted in no hazardous condition being found or no patient requiring transport to hospital. Of those patients that the division did take to hospital, many actually did not require an ambulance, but the division's policy is to transport all patients who desire it.

Most fire and emergency medical services organizations cannot meet the emergency response demands of their communities without relying, from time to time, on assistance from other jurisdictions. University Heights is no exception to this rule and participates with area communities in various aid arrangements.

As a small agency, the division cannot provide on its own the specialized services required by certain rescue and hazardous materials incidents. To be prepared for emergencies of these types, the city since 1997 has participated in the Heights Area Special Rescue Team (HASRT), an organization composed of personnel from University Heights and the cities of Beachwood, Euclid, Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights and South Euclid. This team trains and deploys for trench, rope, structural collapse, confined space, swift water and ice rescue incidents. Along with direct financial support of \$2,820 in 2016, the division assigns Firefighters Michael DiDomenico, James Faciana, Caleb Schuster and Kevin Vonhaz to this team. By virtue of participation in HASRT, the city obtains, at no additional cost, hazardous material incident response services

from the Chagrin/Southeast Hazardous Materials Response Team (CSHMRT), through a services exchange agreement between the HASRT communities and the communities comprising CSHMRT.

Since 2004, University Heights has been a member of EASTCOM, a joint fire and emergency medical services dispatch center serving the cities of University Heights, Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights. EASTCOM is the only dispatch center in Cuyahoga County dedicated solely to fire and emergency medical communications. Overseen by a governing board comprised of the mayors (or manager) and fire chiefs of the three member communities, the center is administered and managed by the City of Cleveland Heights, and is housed at that city's Fire Station 1. The University Heights share of 2016 EASTCOM operating costs, which are prorated amongst the three participating communities, was \$109,251. In 2016, the city entered into an agreement with the cities of Cleveland Heights, Shaker Heights and South Euclid to form a joint police, fire and emergency medical service dispatch center to be housed in the MetroHealth Cleveland Heights medical office building on Severance Circle. The cities intend to have the new center operating in late 2017.

Personnel

As a service organization, the caliber of the division's performance rests mainly with the quality of its employees. Of the division's 25 members, all hold State of Ohio Firefighter 2 certification (the highest level of firefighter certification), 24 have Paramedic certification (the highest level in emergency medical service), 1 holds Emergency Medical Technician-Intermediate certification and 12 hold Fire Safety Inspector certification. Additionally, 7 have Ohio certification as fire instructors and 2 as emergency medical service instructors. That so many employees hold the highest level of certifications in their field, and that several have additional, optional certificates, speaks well of the professional dedication of the division's members.

Captain Robert Perko oversees the division's training program. Members regularly receive training to maintain and to improve their professional knowledge and skills. Emergency medical training, most of which is provided by outside instructors, meets the continuing education requirements of the State of Ohio for Emergency Medical Technicians and Paramedics. Instructors from both within and outside the division provide training meeting both the state continuing education requirements for firefighters and the particular needs of the University Heights community. Additionally, members attend classes outside the division at other fire agencies and schools. During the year, Firefighter Joseph McGee completed Fire Safety Inspector training at Cuyahoga Community College, and several firefighters and officers completed a series of three company command courses delivered through the Ohio Fire Academy's outreach program. The division offered this training jointly with Cleveland Heights and Shaker Heights fire divisions.

The division saw the retirement of Captain John Pitchler (39 years of service), Firefighter Randy Witczak (27 years) and Firefighter Mathew Matlack (26 years). To replace these men, the city promoted Robert Perko to captain and Douglas Robinson to lieutenant, and hired Chad

Rapier, Jonathan Thomas and Eric Lewis. These three new firefighters came to the division with both Paramedic and Firefighter 2 certification, and work experience with other fire departments.

Vehicles and Equipment

The division's vehicle roster consists of a 1992 Pierce ladder truck, 2011 Rosenbauer pumper, 2006 Ford/Braun ambulance, 2014 International/Horton ambulance, 2007 Ford F250 pick-up, 2007 Jeep Grand Cherokee and a 2008 Chevrolet Trailblazer. Each year, the division tests its self-contained breathing apparatus, hose, ladders and fire pumps according to nationally accepted standards, repairing or replacing items not meeting those standards.

Finances

Funds for the division's operation come from general city revenue (mostly income and property taxes, and state local government funding). The division, however, since 2004 has contributed to city revenue through collection of fees for transporting medical patients to hospital. The level of care administered to the patient and the distance to the destination hospital determines the rate charged. The city's rates, last adjusted in 2010, are \$450 for a basic life support (BLS) transport, \$550 for an advanced life support (ALS) transport, \$700 for an advanced life support level 2 (ALS2) transport and \$10 for each transport-mile. The total amount billed varies year to year depending on the number of patients transported and the level of service required by the patients' medical conditions. These factors, along with payer mix, affect the amount collected and the collection rate. In 2016, transport fees produced \$280,531, an increase of almost \$42,000 over 2015 and the highest amount in at least six years. An increase of 58 patients transported and a larger number of patients requiring an ALS level of care contributed to this growth. The city uses as its billing agent Life Force Management, a company specializing in medical billing.

From time to time, the division receives grants for certain training course tuition and capital purchases, such as vehicles and equipment. In 2016, the division received a \$2,500 grant from the State of Ohio for emergency medical equipment.

Although separation pay to three retiring employees resulted in one-time costs of \$114,545, and maintenance and repair costs were \$27,284 more than in 2015, these expenditures were offset by reductions in other areas, most notably a \$66,679 decrease in overtime costs. The division's total expenditure of \$3,659,583 was only \$19,000 (.5%) higher than that of 2015 and was the third lowest in the past seven years. The division attained this result without negatively impacting service to the community.

Looking Ahead

The year 2017 promises to be challenging for the division. The city will negotiate a new collective bargaining agreement with the firefighters' union, again with a view to containing costs by maximizing employee value for the benefit of the community. The start-up of the new joint dispatch center and the smooth transition of emergency communications to this organization will require close cooperation between division and center personnel. The city will purchase a new

ambulance to replace a 2006 vehicle and examine the best manner in which to receive ladder truck services as its 1992 ladder truck nears the end of its service life. The most glaring capital need, however, is a new fire station. The current building, erected in 1941 and later expanded, no longer meets the needs of 21st Century fire and emergency medical services. Spaces for vehicles, equipment, supplies, records and offices, and building utilities, are inadequate, poorly arranged and unsafe. New training will emphasize the management, administrative, command and leadership knowledge and skills required of the division's officers and senior firefighters, with attention paid particularly to that training needed to prepare employees to assume new responsibilities. Finally, the division will continue to maximize taxpayer value through continuous cost/benefit analysis of operational practices, capital purchases and cooperative arrangements with other jurisdictions.



Captain Robert Perko
Promoted 31 July 2016



Lieutenant Douglas Robinson
Promoted 31 July 2016

Statistical Tables

Unless noted, all statistics are compiled from division records.

Responses to Calls for Assistance

Number of Incidents by Type (Including Aid to Other Jurisdictions)

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Building fire in University Heights	8	9	2	3	8
Building fire in another jurisdiction	31	26	27	29	43
Vehicle fire	5	4	4	5	4
Outdoor vegetation fire	4	0	4	2	11
Cooking fire (confined to container)	19	42	44	77	60
Other fire	5	4	3	13	6
Medical or rescue	1,176	1,167	1,192	1,182	1,266
Hazardous condition (no fire)	111	106	85	113	128
Service call	94	84	119	96	109
No cause for concern	221	254	248	238	291
Other	<u>3</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>2</u>
Total incidents	1,677	1,697	1,730	1,764	1,928

Aid to/from Other Jurisdictions

Source: EASTCOM Automatic and Mutual Aid Reports

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Aid to other jurisdictions	166	147	223	185	267
Aid from other jurisdictions	128	153	122	145	176

Number of Incidents by Time of Day (Including Aid to Other Jurisdictions)

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
0000-0759 hours	274	287	295	319	323
0800-1559 hours	766	742	741	730	815
1600-2359 hours	<u>637</u>	<u>668</u>	<u>694</u>	<u>715</u>	<u>790</u>
Total incidents	1,677	1,697	1,730	1,764	1,928

Number of Patients Seen by Medical Condition (Including Aid to Other Jurisdictions)

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Abdominal pain/problems	41	29	83	67	56
Airway obstruction	5	1	8	5	4
Allergic reaction	8	9	17	8	15
Altered level of consciousness	38	34	56	60	53
Behavioral/psychiatric disorder	128	89	80	73	78
Cardiac arrest	8	1	4	7	8
Cardiac rhythm disturbance	8	14	14	11	11
Chest pain/discomfort	56	50	70	58	63
Diabetic symptoms (hypoglycemia)	37	28	21	20	12
Hyperthermia	0	1	1	2	0
Hypothermia	0	0	1	1	0
Hypovolemia/shock	6	9	1	2	1
Inhalation injury (toxic gas)	0	0	1	3	0
Obvious death	1	9	5	9	9
General medical, not otherwise listed	318	326	341	376	434
Poisoning/drug ingestion	31	34	22	18	30
Pregnancy/OB delivery	3	3	6	6	9
Respiratory distress	55	70	62	57	62
Respiratory arrest	0	1	0	0	0
Seizure	17	26	34	37	31
Sexual assault/rape	0	0	0	0	1
Smoke inhalation	1	2	0	0	0
Sting/venomous bite	1	2	0	1	1
Stroke/CVA	15	16	20	18	9
Syncope/fainting	25	33	44	23	29
Traumatic injury	169	140	156	149	175
Non-traumatic bleeding	12	12	18	12	22
Vaginal hemorrhage	2	1	3	5	3
Not applicable	<u>209</u>	<u>214</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>102</u>	<u>78</u>
Total patients seen	1,194	1,154	1,168	1,130	1,194

Number of Patients Transported to Hospital

Source: Life Force Management, Inc.

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
BLS patients	352	318	481	431	351
ALS patients	455	447	358	365	502
ALS2 patients	<u>15</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>
Total patients transported	822	767	845	803	861

Other Activity

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Fire safety inspections	259	362	597	424	280

Financial Data

Operating Expenses (\$)

Source: Department of Finance Expense Reports

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Salaries	2,354,158	2,387,362	2,285,234	2,335,463	2,258,308
Fringe benefits	1,088,733	1,056,293	995,534	1,077,837	1,114,256
Materials and supplies	56,669	58,393	46,429	47,719	59,573
Contractual services	162,725	160,220	174,462	147,850	167,771
Maintenance and repair	36,026	20,442	20,310	28,422	55,706
Other expenses	<u>3,954</u>	<u>3,775</u>	<u>2,555</u>	<u>3,119</u>	<u>3,969</u>
Total	3,702,265	3,686,485	3,524,524	3,640,410	3,659,583

Patient Transport Revenue

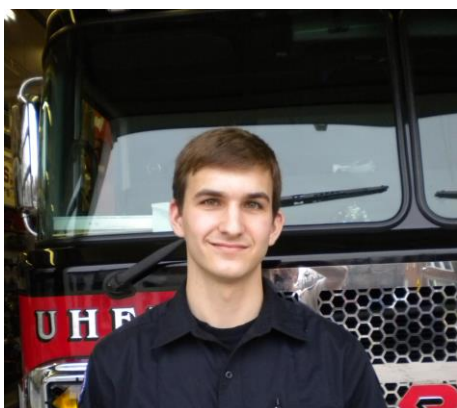
Source: Life Force Management, Inc.

	<u>2012</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>2015</u>	<u>2016</u>
Transport fees billed (\$)	460,017	427,565	458,144	438,870	479,147
Transport fees received (\$)	265,776	270,139	248,649	238,680	280,531
Collection rate (%)	58	63	54	54	59
Percent of operating expenses	7.2	7.3	7.1	6.6	7.7



Division Roster with Dates of Hire

Lieutenant Keith Kanner	03-20-88	Lieutenant Douglas Robinson	11-20-00
Firefighter Michael DiDomenico	01-22-89	Firefighter Brandon Hope	04-11-01
Captain Brian Phan	02-19-89	Lieutenant Andrew Boylan	12-13-01
Captain Peter Pucella	03-04-90	Firefighter Caleb Schuster	12-18-06
Firefighter James Faciana	03-04-90	Captain Robert Perko	03-12-07
Firefighter Christopher Stacey	03-04-90	Firefighter Joseph McGee	01-04-09
Firefighter Christopher Calo	01-30-95	Firefighter Lukasz Curkowicz	03-27-13
Firefighter William Phelan	04-27-99	Chief Douglas Zook	02-24-14
Firefighter Kevin Vonhaz	05-23-99	Firefighter Kevin Lee	12-04-15
Firefighter David Hollo	04-11-00	Firefighter Chad Rapier	05-02-16
Firefighter John Novosielski	05-05-00	Firefighter Jonathan Thomas	07-05-16
Firefighter Damon Picone	07-09-00	Firefighter Eric Lewis	08-19-16
Firefighter Thomas Hren	10-29-00		



Firefighter Chad Rapier
Hired 2 May 2016



Firefighter Jonathan Thomas
Hired 5 July 2016



Firefighter Eric Lewis
Hired 19 August 2016