

Staff Report

Presented By: Ed Melanson, Director Fire Services / Fire Chief

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026

Subject: 2025 Annual Fire Services

Attachment(s): None

Recommendation

That Council receives the 2025 Annual Fire Services report for information.

Report Summary

In 2025, Saugeen Shores Fire Services saw a 13% increase in emergency response calls. For 2026, priorities include launching a new records management system, starting the Administrative Compliance System Pilot, and planning a fire hall replacement for Station 60.

Background/Analysis

Administration

The focus of the Fire Service for 2025 was the continued development of Fire Officer / Firefighter roles and Departmental Service Levels as well as fiscal responsibility. To advance these priorities, the Department focused on risk management, training, policy development, guideline development, and efficiency. In 2025, emphasis was placed on Station Officer management initiatives and succession planning. Suitable candidates were identified for various roles, and personalized development plans were established to ensure a competitive pool of qualified individuals is available when needed.

2026 will see the recommendation for the implementation of an Administrative Compliance System (AMPS) Pilot focusing on 255 fire code articles and Saugeen Shores property standards. A cloud-based record management system will replace the aging and cumbersome system presently in use by June. Operational Guideline review and introduction will continue to be developed and include lithium-Ion battery fires, electric vehicle fires, fire ground operations, decontamination, multi-residential / multi-level fires and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

Communication

In 2025, a comprehensive review of dispatch services including Owen Sound for the Fire Service was conducted by Saugeen Shores and other Bruce County Fire Services to find both a fiscally responsible, Nexgen 911 compliant and fire centric dispatcher. On October 8, 2025, Fire

Dispatch Services began using St. Catharines Fire Dispatch which is a fire only dispatcher with NFPA certification, Nexgen 911 completion and significant monetary savings.

2025 Response Summary

Station	2025 Calls by Station	November 1, 2025 – January 1, 2026	November 1, 2024 – January 2025
50	116	15	17
60	229	42	27
Totals	345	57	44

Incident Type	Number of Incidents	%
Alarm Activation	84	24.3
Assistance to other agencies	4	1.16
Call cancelled in route	11	3.19
Carbon Monoxide	8	2.32
Fire	16	4.64
Gas leak	9	2.61
Human Perceived	25	7.25
Medical	78	22.60
Motor Vehicle Accident	34	9.86
Mutual aid	2	0.58
No-loss Indoor Fire	5	1.45
No-Loss Outdoor Fire	32	9.28
Other	6	1.75
Persons in elevator	6	1.75
Power Lines down / arcing	4	1.16
Spills	2	0.58
Unauthorized controlled burning	5	1.45
Water / Ice Rescue	13	3.79
Totals	345	100

Year	Calls	Year over year Variance (%)
2025	345	13.1
2024	305	35.0
2023	225	-14.4
2022	263	6.5
2021	247	22.3

Suppression Volunteers consisted of approximately 51 active responders contributing 3189 hours of emergency response in 2025 vs 2538 hours in 2024 of emergency response to the community.

Fire losses in Saugeen Shores reported to the Ontario Fire Marshal's Office through Standard Incident Reporting was \$2,919,000. The estimated property damage saved through outstanding chute times (response of volunteers) and tactics was \$6,885,000.

Training

In 2025, the Department kept firefighter and officer training records up to date and helped all members achieve provincial certification. These certifications align with the service levels approved by Town Council. DZ driver training, Fire Officer I, II, & III, Incident Safety Officer, Firefighter I & II and hazardous materials response were conducted in-house or through Regional Training Centers throughout the Province. 2025 also saw the completion of annual certification to London Health Sciences Dr. Davis's delegated authority and oversight for Defibrillation, Naloxone delivery and Epinephrine assistance.

All Saugeen Shores Fire Department members are certified prior to July 1, 2026, provincially mandated date. 2025 was also a success with the hiring of 16 recruit firefighters who experienced greater than 300 hours of training prior to beginning at the Stations on July 1.

2026 will see continued drive to complete technical certification of all Saugeen Shores firefighters for those disciplines that Council approved in the Fire Department Establishing & Regulatory By-law. These include water rescue, ice rescue, swift water rescue and heavy auto extrication.

Training Officer Scott McMeekin developed a comprehensive Operational Guideline and Department Policy Review Matrix that ensures each member has reviewed the required documents.

Lastly, the construction and grand opening of the Centre for Training excellence occurred in August 2025. This facility has proven invaluable in focusing our training on live fire attack, rescue methodologies, forcible entry techniques and firefighter survival. These repetitions will aid in firefighter safety while increasing competency.

Fire Prevention Division

Saugeen Shores Fire continued a philosophy of compliance in 2025 to realize higher fire code compliance levels, lower stress on the inspector and reduced court costs to the municipality. Fire Prevention and Administration continued to process Long-Term Care Drills, School Fire Drills, Complaint investigation, Inspection requests and Public Education assistance.

Fire Inspector Paul Shular continued his journey to Fire Inspector II certification in 2025.

Fire Prevention conducted 66 inspections, 33 inspection follow-ups, 17 complaint investigations and 31 designated as others, which includes drill observations and burn permit visitations. The Fire Prevention Division also maintains public access defibrillators and assists residents with smoke/ carbon monoxide alarm questions or concerns.

Public Education (Pub Ed) Division

Saugeen Shores continued to see the benefits of public education in 2025. Council approved an expansion of the Division where recruitment increased the team to 12. Pub Ed conducted 99 events that focused on Fire & Life safety messaging, Smoke Alarm for Everyone (SAFE)

program, the After the Fire Program and Emergency Planning messaging. They also conducted public events including school visits, Junior Fire fighter program, and Pumpkinfest.

The 99 public education events conducted included:

- 37 - Fire Safety related events
- 24 - SAFE home events
 - 950 doors knocked on
 - 360 homes entered
 - 204 homes compliant
 - 37 alarms installed
- 10 - After the Fire sweeps
- 6 - Station Tours
- 10 - Emergency Management Events
- 24 - Training and planning meetings

The Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief attended the National Truth and Reconciliation Day ceremonies at G.C. Huston Public School in 2025. Fire Services will continue to reflect and honour Indigenous people.

All public educators will be certified as Fire & Life Safety Educator by July 1, 2026.

Health and Wellness Initiatives

The Joint Health & Safety Committee focused on the Section 21 Guidance note “Cancer Prevention Checklist” in 2025 and will continue this valuable work in 2026. This initiative will further the reduction of products of combustion, contamination, exposure and help eliminate cancers found to be twice as high in firefighters as the public.

The development of a Peer Support / Critical Incident Management Team was a highlight in 2025. This initiative was spearheaded by the hiring of a Department Chaplain. Ann Divinski- Veyvara was hired with a wealth of experience in grief / critical stress counselling. Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) training for Jenna Stewart and Richard Mommerstag was also conducted. The team also assists the Bruce County Fire CISM team when asked. The peer support team attended 3 events in 2025.

A retired firefighter night was held in November 2025 to explain Presumptive WSIB legislation. 20 retired members attended and enjoyed a night of information, catching up, station visits and personal data confirmation.

2025 also saw the Bi-annual Fire Department Night of Honour celebration where members were recognized for their years of service while recognizing the contributions that their partners and families made to allow their loved ones to perform such invaluable service to the community.

Emergency Planning

2025 continued to realize a focused emergency planning / management program for Saugeen Shores. This included:

- Notification of Compliance by Emergency Management Ontario;

- Practicing the Emergency Management Plan through a realistic power outage exercise with our Bruce County Municipal partners;
- Stand-up exercise for the new Emergency Operations Centre located in the Council Chambers;
- IMS 100 certification for Emergency Management Control Group members;
- Expansion and implementation of scheduled confirmation of RAVE mass notification platform;
- A mobile decontamination unit exercise;
- Emergency communications training for Corporate Communications members;
- Door fobs installed at alternate Emergency Operations Centre (EOC);
- Multi-layered redundant communications installed at EOC;
- Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief participated in Huron Endeavour exercise; and
- Confirmed the issuance of Emergency notifications from the Provincial Emergency Operations Centre (PEOC) via email.

2025 also saw the movement of the backup Saugeen Shores server to a safer, environmentally controlled room, an increase in emergency planning messaging and the revision of the Saugeen Shores Nuclear Emergency Response Plan (NERP) as required by the 2025 Provincial Nuclear Response Plan. 2026 projects include a Saugeen Shores Emergency Fuel Plan, acquisition of 24 portable radios, 12 Sat-Phones and 2 satellite communication systems as redundancy for our Emergency Operation Centres.

Linkages

- Strategic Plan Alignment: Pillar 1: Meeting the Needs of a Growing Community
- Business Plan Alignment: Fire Services Business as Usual

Financial Impacts/Source of Funding

No costs or revenue is associated with this report.

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