

City of Peshtigo Fire Department



By Eric Johnson

Photography by Fred Loomis

There likely is no other fire that has had more written about it or has had more influence on more communities than the fire that occurred in northeast Wisconsin, upper Michigan and across the bay of Green Bay into what is now Kewaunee and Door Counties in October of 1871.

The Peshtigo Fire essentially obliterated the area that is now known as the Town of Peshtigo and the City of Peshtigo. This issue of the Wisconsin Fire Journal is going to take a peek at the fire departments that now protect the very same area that was devastated by the infamous fire 150 years ago.



Fire Chief Charles Gardon

As you drive through the city of Peshtigo on business Hwy. 41, you will not see the tell-tale large overhead doors that indicate where the fire station is. That is because Fire Station #1 is tucked nicely behind the building complex that is also home to the library, police department and city hall. Even though the fire station is at the rear of the other facilities of the city, that doesn't mean that they are not supported very well, quite the opposite is true in fact.

Fire Chief Charles Gardon exclaimed in the interview "Peshtigo is a very caring community". We are supported very well by the mayor, city council and the city clerk's staff" stated Gardon. Chief Gardon has been chief of the department for just a few years but has been a member of the department since 1980. 41 years and still going strong is quite an accomplishment by any standards.



Assistant Chief Chris Rohde demonstrates SCBA in class.

The City of Peshtigo Fire Department protects approximately 3,600 citizens in a 3 square mile area with 6 pieces of apparatus and 2 fire stations. Chief Gardon explained that a second fire station was erected in 2000 on the east side of the city to offer better fire protection to the increasingly expanding industrial park. He also mentioned the addition of station #2 has helped to lower the costs of insurance to the businesses in the park. A hope of reducing the Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating of the department from 4 to 3 soon will further benefit the community in big ways!

On average the department responds to 80-90 incidents each year. Even though there was not a single structure fire in the city last year (which is a good thing!) the department has handled six structure and other fires in the city this year so far. EMS is handled by a differ-

ent agency in Peshtigo, but the fire department will often lend a hand on medical calls in the city.

When talking with Chief Gardon, you can sense the pride he has in his department and its members. And he has a right to be proud. Walking around the stations with the chief and seeing the changes

(continued on page 27)



City of Peshtigo firefighter memorial



City Fire Department's partial crew poses with two of department's antique trucks

Town of Peshtigo Fire Department



Fire Chief Mike Folgert

By Eric Johnson

Photography by Fred Loomis

Virtually surrounding the city of Peshtigo on all sides sits the Town of Peshtigo.

The town is hovering over 75 square miles and challenges the fire department with more than the average amount of issues:

- 6 plus miles of Hwy. 41 with 7 bridges - lots of high-speed car crashes

- 9 plus miles of the Peshtigo River (as the eagle flies) - swift water challenges that splits the entire township in two sections with few river crossings.

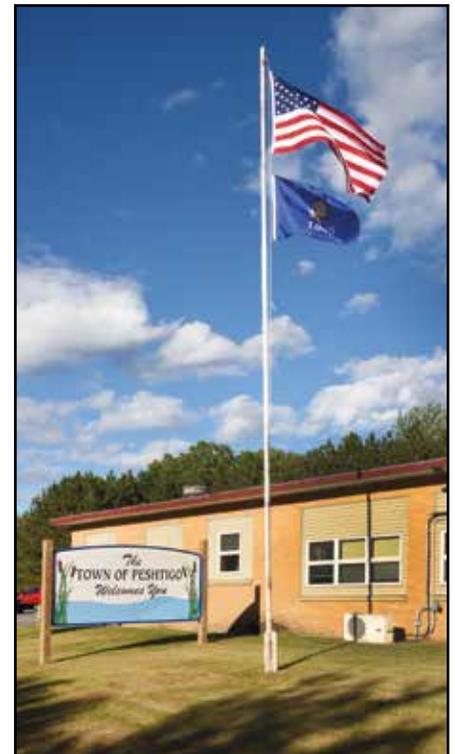
- 10 plus miles of shoreline of the bay of Green Bay - water rescues/flooding

- 1000's of acres of public land - searches for lost hikers & hunters and wildland fires

- Borders the cities of Marinette and Peshtigo - mutual-aid partners with no tender support

Even though the fire department faces unique issues within their large district, they have improvised, adapted, and overcome (what movie quote is that from?) by procuring the right types of vehicles and equipment and continued training for the unique situa-

tions they get paged out for. Chief Mike Folgert steers the rudder that guides the Town of Peshtigo Fire Department (TPFD). The personnel provide the wind that sails the department to some amazing feats.



Many fire departments across the state only require that firefighters achieve the minimum Entry Level Firefighter course. In 2020, nearly half of the members of TPFD accomplished higher certifications including Firefighter II, Fire Officer I and three members even completed Fire & Emergency Instructor I!

Other great accomplishments for several of the members of the TPFD in 2020 was the rescues of citizens in peril in not one but three different rescue situations. Life Saving Commendation Awards were presented to personnel who responded on March 7th for an ice fisherman who fell through the ice on Green Bay, on August 16th for a distressed swimmer in the bay, and for those who responded again out on the bay on November 1st to rescue three duck hunters - Great Job!



Training officer Captain Derek Monnette leads a class

The list of unique equipment for the department includes their tenders which are custom built vacuum trucks. Chief Folgert explained that they have this style of vehicle so they can be self-sufficient to refill. This is necessary because of the large district and the response times of their MABAS partners.

They actually will get fire departments responding from upper Michigan if the situations require it.

Another piece of unique equipment is the departments UTV. The department had this custom made to fit their needs by having it completely outfitted with tracks

(continued on page 27)



The Town possesses equipment to meet any challenge



Town of Peshigo's crew stands proudly in front of their fleet of vehicles

PHOTO GALLERY

City of Peshtigo F.D. submitted photos



City of Peshtigo Firefighters battle stubborn house fire



City of Peshtigo Firefighters respond to a fully engulfed house fire on December 2, 2019. Three residents were evacuated and sent to the hospital including a 101 year old woman



Mop up after December house fire



City of Peshtigo Firefighters and Police officers assist with child's birthday party during COVID



City of Peshtigo Firefighters brighten up a birthday party for twin sisters during COVID



Firefighters Christopher Gardon and Shawn Northrop, hand out firefighting material during the City's Easter Egg Hunt.

Town of Peshtigo F.D. submitted photos



Firefighters working to extinguish a second alarm fire at an Asphalt maintenance plant in January 2018



Firefighters initiating a transitional attack



Vehicle extrication training involving unstable vehicles at a local salvage yard



Setting up rural water supply for a residential fire on State Hwy 64



NWTC Flashover training conducted on 10/8/2018 at our station



Town and City of Peshtigo Firefighters hosted a 911 Memorial Walk around Peshtigo on September 11, 2020.



Firefighters initiating suppression action at an April 2020 fire involving a garage attached to a single-family residence