



On The Scene

Plainfield Fire Protection District

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From the Chief

MISSION STATEMENT

THE PLAINFIELD FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT IS DEDICATED TO PRESERVING THE QUALITY OF LIFE BY SAVING LIVES AND PROTECTING PROPERTY THROUGH EFFICIENT EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND PREVENTION.

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The Plainfield Fire Protection District wishes everyone a safe and happy holiday season!



Chief John D. Eichelberger

This is my final article as your Fire Chief as I will officially retire on January 2, 2015 after 40 years of service to the Plainfield Fire Protection District. During my career I was witness to tremendous growth in the community that led to the commensurate efforts within the fire district to ensure adequate services were available and provided to our community. Being a part of the fire district changing from a strictly volunteer organization in a small rural community, to the career/combination department it is today in a mostly suburban area, is something I will always cherish in my memories.

I would like to introduce you to our new Fire Chief, David Riddle, who will assume the reins on January 1, 2015. Chief Riddle began his firefighting career in his hometown with the Harvey Fire Department as a volunteer/paid-on-call firefighter before getting hired full-time. Through his career there he steadily rose through the ranks to eventually become their Fire Chief. David was then hired as the first full-time career Fire Chief for the Channahon Fire Protection District where he proudly served before coming to the Plainfield Fire Protection District.

Chief Riddle brings many years of experience and knowledge to the fire district. He is a State Certified Assessor trained to evaluate fire service candidates for promotion, a member of the Illinois Fire Chief's Education and Research Foundation that evaluates fire service candidates for educational scholarships and grants and serves on the Will County 9-1-1 Board as well as Will County's Local Emergency Planning Committee. Chief Riddle comes from a family of firefighters, his late father retired as a Fire Chief and his late brother Gregg retired as a Deputy Fire Chief. David is married to Patti and they have two adult children and four grandchildren.

In addition to a new fire chief on January 1st we will also now have Battalion Chiefs. On January 1st, three Lieutenants, Vince Baudek, Scott Moore and Mike Obman will be promoted and assume their duties. Because of these promotions, three Firefighters, Robert Davanon, Andy Scott and Jered Zubaty will be promoted to Lieutenants and also assume their duties on January 1st.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Plainfield community for your continued support of the Plainfield Fire Protection District and for giving me the opportunity to serve you these past 40 years. I have lived in Plainfield my entire life and being able to serve this community as a firefighter like my Dad did was something I always aspired to do growing up.

Sincerely,
Chief John D. Eichelberger

Chief Eichelberger's Career



Chief John Eichelberger began his career as a volunteer firefighter on September 9, 1974. He also served as the department Chaplain from 1975-1979. He was promoted to Engineer in 1977, Lieutenant in 1978 and held the rank of Captain from 1979-1981. From 1982-1983 he was the 2nd Assistant Chief and in 1984 he became the 1st Assistant Chief. January 1, 1985 is when Chief Eichelberger became the Fire Chief. He became a full-time Fire Chief on January 1, 1994. Pictured left is Chief Eichelberger receiving his new badge as Fire Chief in 1985. Pictured from left to right is Dennis Bennett, Ralph Rouse, John Eichelberger and his father Ike Eichelberger pinning the Chief's badge on.

When Chief Eichelberger's career began in 1974 (continued on page 2)

Chief Eichelberger's Career



Station 3 Dedication Ceremony, December 16, 2006



The Gee Lumber Fire, October 4, 1995



The S&G Packaging Fire, April 1, 2002



Tornado Damaged Plainfield Central H.S., August 1990

(continued from page 1) there was one fire station in the Plainfield Fire Protection District and the department was staffed with 50 volunteer firefighters. Today there are four fire stations and an administration and training facility along with 125 combination part-time and career firefighter/paramedics and administrative staff. Fire Station Three at 25001 W. 119th Street was the first of four new fire stations all designed from the same architectural template.

Reflecting on his career, Chief Eichelberger's most memorable moments include rescuing an unconscious man from a house fire on November 16, 1978. The man was brought to the hospital and survived. The Kerr Glass fire that occurred on October 8, 1983 is a fire he will not forget either. During the Kerr Glass fire Chief Eichelberger helped an employee get out of the building for which he received a Commendable Action Award.

Chief Eichelberger will always remember the fire in the historic Gee Lumber building as a large and challenging fire that took place on October 4, 1995. The fire could be seen for miles. Chief recalls that he could see the glow 1 1/2 miles away as he left his home to respond to the fire that night. The Gee Lumber building was a total loss but thankfully no one was injured. The call for the S&G Packaging fire on April 1, 2002 came in around 6 pm and was already burning through the roof when firefighters arrived. A total of eleven fire departments worked for 2 days to fight this fire. This fire was so large it was detected by Doppler radar. The S&G Packaging Fire was a total loss but thankfully all employees that were in the building at the time of the fire were able to safely escape.

Fires are not the only calls that impacted Chief Eichelberger during his career. On August 28, 1990 the Plainfield area was struck by an F-5 tornado. One fact about the tornado that sticks with Chief Eichelberger is that school was scheduled to start on August 29th. If the tornado had hit one day later the 3 schools that were directly hit by the tornado would have been full. The 3 schools that were severely damaged by the tornado were Plainfield Central High School, St. Mary's School and Grand Prairie Elementary School. The tornado damaged 1,748 structures and over 700 structures were completely destroyed. 133 fire departments responded to assist Plainfield bringing with them 238 pieces of equipment that included 51 squads, 47 fire engines and 70 ambulances that were staffed by 868 personnel. Chief Eichelberger was also deployed through MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) to assist with the emergency response for the F-3 Utica tornado that occurred on April 20, 2004 and Hurricane Katrina in 2005 where he was stationed for 2 weeks in Algiers, a community within the city of New Orleans.

Chief Eichelberger credits his father "Ike" Eichelberger for his decision to become a firefighter. His father brought him to the fire station when he was very young, and growing up around the firefighters and seeing them help people, inspired him to want to do the same. The Plainfield Fire Protection District extends a heartfelt Thank You to Chief Eichelberger for his 40 dedicated years of service to our community and we wish him well in his retirement.



Chief Eichelberger with his father Ike Eichelberger in 2002.

Holiday Fire Safety—Keep The Wreaths Red



Each fire station is decorated with a holiday wreath that has red bulbs on it. If there is a fire from a holiday decoration then a red bulb will be replaced with a white bulb. Practicing fire safety as you decorate and celebrate this holiday season will help us to keep the wreaths red!

Natural Christmas trees should be cut at the base at a 45 degree angle and kept watered. When the tree gets dry discard it promptly. Keep your Christmas tree away from sources of heat and don't block an exit with it. Use only non-flammable decorations. The majority of Christmas tree fires are the result of electrical problems or because the tree was too close to a heat source. Keep your Christmas tree as least 3 feet away from heat sources.

Use lights approved by an independent testing lab such as UL. Inspect lights for defects before use. Don't leave lights on unattended. Always follow the manufacturers' instructions for proper use. Make sure you don't overload outlets and that the

electric decorations and extension cords you use outside are rated for outdoor use.

December is the peak month for home candle fires with 11% of home fires caused by candles compared to 4% of home fires being caused by candles each month the rest of the year. Most home candle fires are caused by the candle being too close to something that catches on fire. When burning candles keep them at least 12 inches away from anything that can burn. Always blow out a candle before leaving the room or going to bed. Never leave a burning candle unattended. For more safety tips visit www.nfpa.org/holiday or call us at 815-436-5335. Statistics are from the National Fire Protection Association.



Consider flameless candles instead of traditional candles

Fire and Life Safety for Kids

Outdoor winter sports and games are a lot of fun! When you go sledding pick a hill that's not too steep and has room for you to stop at the bottom. Don't sled on hills that are too close to the street, a pond, trees or other things that could be in your way. You want to be able to stop before you slide into a street, onto a pond or into a tree or anything else. Always follow the rules at the sled hill. When snowboarding or skiing always follow the rules that are posted or on your lift ticket. The rules are there to help keep you safe. Never stop on the hill, other people may not be able to see you and could run into you. Take lessons so you can learn the best ways to snowboard or ski. When going ice skating or playing ice hockey only go on ice in areas that are safe for skating after the ice has been checked by an adult who has been trained to check the ice. Don't go out on the ice alone, an adult should always be with you while you skate. Never go on ice anywhere else at any time. If you see someone on ice that needs help, do not go to help them, call 9-1-1 for help.



Plainfield Fire Protection District
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Dates to Remember

December 25, 2014
Christmas Day

January 1, 2015
Happy New Year!

Martin Luther King Day
January 19, 2015

American Heart Month
February 1-28, 2015

President's Day
February 16, 2015

Illinois Severe Weather Preparedness Week
March 1-7, 2015

Illinois Tornado Drill Day
March 3, 2015



Keep the Wreath Red!

Practice fire safety while decorating and celebrating this holiday season to prevent a holiday fire. If there's a holiday fire, a red bulb will be replaced with a white bulb. With everyone's help we can prevent fires and keep the wreath red!



Holiday Gift Ideas!

Smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, fire escape ladders and fire extinguishers make great holiday gifts for fire and life safety.

