

# Public Safety

## Farmington integrates departments

By RON GARBINSKI

Around the country, public safety departments are becoming more popular as they take on several different forms in order to meet the expanding needs of a community.

In the City of Farmington, all functions of the police and fire departments are molded into a totally integrated system where officers work as both patrolmen and fire fighters.

"Public safety departments operate a little differently in each community. In some cities, like Farmington Hills for example, the police and fire departments are separate and work together under one director," explains Farmington Public Safety Director Daniel Byrnes.

"Other communities have a combination system where some patrolmen are firemen and some firemen are patrolmen, but not all public safety officers in the department would work both ways. Several are either fire or police specialists."

"Whatever form is employed, there are several reasons for consolidating both departments. And I feel a system like this can work in any community while being modified to meet almost any need."

According to Byrnes, public safety departments are not necessarily money-saving operations, but rather a more efficient utilization of personnel. The only real savings might be on administrative costs because both departments are combined under one director.

IN A CITY the size of Farmington, making police and firemen public safety officers enables the city to put

more men on the streets. They are able to do more productive work because 90 per cent of an officers' time is spent on police work.

So instead of just having fulltime firemen spend most of their day around the station, public safety officers are able to work patrolling the community.

Presently, there are 23 full-time officers and 22 reserves in the Farmington Public Safety Department. Their training is rather extensive and includes 200 hours of police academy training, 80 hours of in-service fire and local departmental experience and 40 hours of preparation at University of Michigan's Firemanship Training School at the Civil Defense and Disaster Training Center in Ann Arbor.

There also are regional fire fighting seminars and numerous in-service training and preplanning sessions conducted on a regular basis which help the officers prepare for emergencies.

"A public safety officer's training encompasses all dimensions of police and fire protection. Recently, 30 of our officers were awarded certificates by the State Fire Fighters Training Council for successful completion of a 40-hour training school. This program dealt with many aspects of fire fighting theory and practice," says Byrnes.

The department consists of four platoons. Each unit of four officers and a dispatcher alternate working the various shifts. Each platoon will work the afternoon shift for seven days, take several days off, then return to work days for the next week. After several days of rest, they will switch to the midnight shift for another week, and

then the schedule starts all over again.

"Usually police departments have only three platoons. We have four because this way everyone is treated equally and each officer works the three shifts," explains Byrnes. "And it works out pretty good. We post a shift schedule a year in advance so everyone can plan ahead."

The public safety department was established in 1957 and has been growing ever since. Recently, the department's facilities were expanded when the city finished the new addition to city hall. The department has just completed putting most of its records on microfilm and now is awaiting delivery of a new fire pumper truck.

Right now the department is at a disadvantage because it must dispatch two trucks to the scene of major emergencies, says Byrnes. One truck contains rescue equipment, and the other fire fighting equipment. The new pumper will enable the department to store all its rescue and fire fighting equipment on one truck and free its van for other uses.

The city has two pumper trucks and the emergency rescue vehicle. One pumper is used primarily by the full-time officers and the other is operated by reserves.

The pumper used by on-duty officers has an extension squirt that is capable of extending 57 feet and can pump 1000 gallons of water per minute about 200 feet. The other, an older and smaller pumper, can handle about 750 gallons per minute.

"There are enough fire hydrants around the city that we are able to tie into quickly so we don't really need pumps that hold a lot of water," says Byrnes.

"BEING A PUBLIC SAFETY de-

partment, we are a little more productive in what we do. Since all officers on patrol carry their own fire fighting equipment right in the squad cars, including respirators, they are able to extinguish about 25 to 30 per cent of all fires before the pumper even responds to the call," he says.

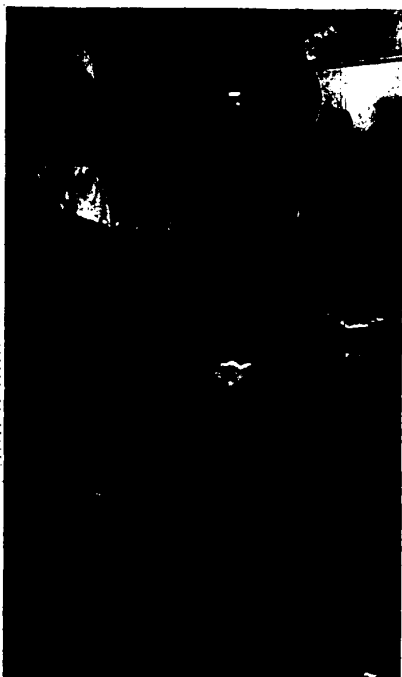
Patrolmen are dispatched to the scene and can respond almost immediately because they are already out patrolling the city. Usually the sergeant on duty at the station will drive the pumper out to the scene where the officers already will be controlling the emergency.

"This way we can eliminate most of the time lag between the initial report and the time the fire trucks arrive at the fire. We have trained men on the scene in minutes whereas the trucks take about 10 minutes," Byrnes says.

The department also has a home-alerting monitor. Push buttons on the dispatcher's desk notify officers at home of any major emergencies and usually 30 to 40 men could respond within 10 minutes.

But the department's initial contact at the scene with on-duty officers is in about two minutes, sometimes even less because they might be cruising in the neighborhood when they receive a distress call. They can respond quickly, and since the officers have all their equipment in the squad cars they are able to control most fires before they cause too much damage.

"I feel our public safety officers do a great job and our fire services are just as good as a full-time fire department," he continues. "Since we are able to extinguish most fires quickly, the city's fire damage loss is between \$40,000 and \$50,000 per year. And that is a compliment to a fine public safety department."



Sgt. John Maxwell handles a citizens' complaint, just part of his many duties as one of four platoon leaders in the public safety department.



Sgt. John Santomauro, "The Singing Sergeant," goes over scheduled assignments and activities with his squad before they start their afternoon shift. Each shift begins its day with a platoon

meeting and continuing in-service training sessions. From left are Officers Vince Ziegler, who recently graduated from the police academy, Pete Amato and Chuck Lee.



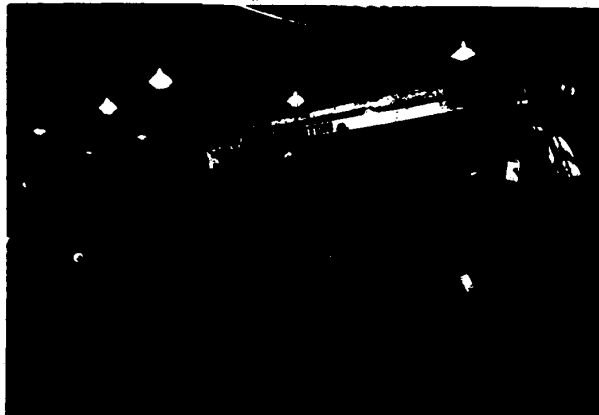
Director of Public Safety Daniel Byrnes discusses the advantages and reasons for combining police and fire protection into one integrated department.



Detective Tom Daniels prepares to take mug shots of several suspects with the department's new camera that takes a front and profile picture with its special lens.



Fire Marshall Michael Guilmette, the fire protection specialist in the department, directs the fire fighting programs and in-service training sessions the department conducts on a regular basis.



Farmington Public Safety Department Pumper No. 2 has an extension nozzle that can reach 57 feet and squirt 1,000 gallons of water per minute almost 200 feet. This unit is one of three vehicles the department uses in fighting fires within the city.