

# Fire calls down but emergency runs rise

By Bob Sklar  
staff writer

It's called SERT. And it's intended to provide a special response to special emergencies.

Start-up of the Special Emergency Response Team was one of the highlights of last year for the Farmington Hills Fire Department, according to the 1987 annual report. It was a year that saw a dramati-

cally lower fire loss and fewer fires, but more emergency runs than the previous year.

The 11-member SERT team, drawn from full- and part-time firefighters, underwent training and acquired equipment in 1987.

It also responded to hazardous incidents, including a fungicide spill, an underground gasoline tank leak and a chemical emergency.

"It's designed to handle incidents

that require special training or special equipment, like hazardous materials or a special rescue," Deputy Fire Chief Peter Baldwin said.

"Everyday," he added, "there are tankers running down our expressways carrying all sorts of hazardous materials: poison, waste oil, acid, whatever. Our job is to mitigate problems when they arise."

"That's where SERT fits in."

To help control expense, whoever is responsible for a hazardous material incident may be billed when SERT responds, Chief Richard Marinucci wrote in the annual report, released to the city council March 14.



Richard Marinucci  
Fire Chief  
Farmington Hills

FARMINGTON HILLS logged \$1.09 million in total fire loss during 1987, a year when fires decreased 8 percent.

No one died as a result of fire. But 11 firefighters and 18 civilians were injured, none seriously.

Non-fire emergency runs were up 11 percent in 1987.

Total runs were up 8 percent. The 3,520 runs nearly doubled the number the department had five years ago, in 1982.

The 3,520 runs represented 9.6 a day, a 7-per-day increase from 1986. Medical emergencies totaled 1,408 last year, up 3 percent.

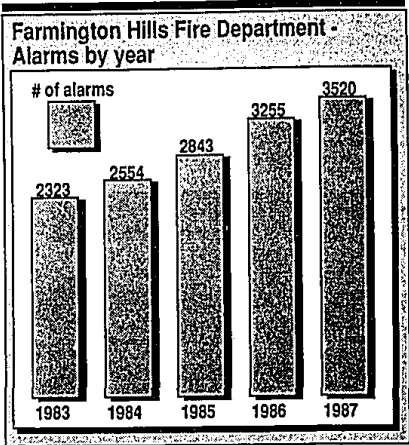
Dollar loss attributed to fire in 1987 "was down significantly," Marinucci said. "The city experienced no major commercial fires and only two dwelling fires with over \$100,000 damage."

That, coupled with an unusually high loss in 1986, resulted in a dollar loss drop of 85 percent from 1986.

There were five major fires in 1987. Four maliciously set house fires produced a combined loss of \$190,000. An accidental fire caused \$100,000 in damage to a garbage truck. Two house fires of undetermined cause left \$220,000 in damage. A suspicious house fire left \$40,000 in damage. These eight fires represent almost half of the total fire loss for the year.

FORTY PERCENT of all alarms in Farmington Hills last year involved medical emergencies, not fires. Traffic accidents with injuries accounted for 13 percent.

Only 14 percent involved actual fires. More than a third of the 506 actual fires, 185, involved open burn-

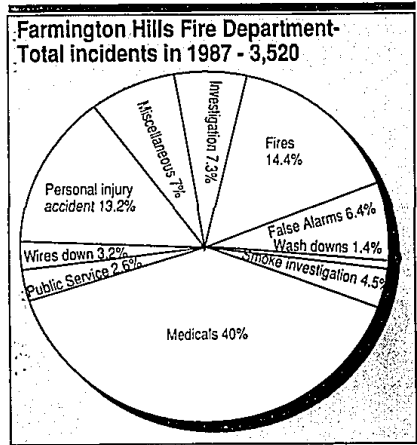


ing. There were 135 vehicle fires, 70 residential fires, 52 grass fires, seven commercial fires and two industrial fires.

Arson and suspicious fires accounted for 37 percent of all fires last year, exclusive of open burnings. Investigators determined 97 fires to be arson and 22 to be suspicious.

Residential fires were down 22 percent. Marinucci attributed that partly to luck but also to "our fire education and fire prevention efforts."

"We've gotten some positive feedback from public education and



## Supporters of candidates to state views

Representatives of five Democratic presidential candidates will address the Farmington Democratic Club Wednesday.

The public meeting will begin at 7:30 p.m. at the Botsford Inn, 28000

Grand River, Farmington Hills. Each representative will have five minutes to make an opening statement. Questions will then be fielded. Candidates who will be represented are Gov. Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts, Sen. Albert Gore of Tennessee,

Sen. Paul Simon of Illinois, Rep. Richard Gephardt of Missouri and civil rights activist Jesse Jackson of Illinois.

The Michigan Democratic Party will hold its statewide presidential

preference caucuses Saturday, March 26.

The primary is the first step toward selecting Michigan's 150 delegates to the national Democratic convention in July in Atlanta.

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