

# Fires down in 1990, but dollar loss up

By Joanne Maliszewski  
staff writer

Fires in Farmington Hills in 1990 decreased, but total dollar loss and damage as a result skyrocketed because of the Orchard Ridge Plaza fire that gutted offices and the well-known Roman Terrace restaurant.

"With the exception of that one fire we had an incredible reduction of dollar loss and fires," Farmington Hills fire Chief Richard Marinucci said. "In comparison to the number of buildings we have here and the increased population, it's amazing it's that low."

Firefighters in 1990 responded to 323 fires, compared to 398 in 1989. That's an 18.8 percent decrease. But dollar damage from fire totaled \$3.1 million. The Feb. 4, 1990 fire at the Orchard Ridge Plaza, on the northeast corner of 12 Mile and Orchard Lake roads, was a \$2.2 million loss or 73.1 percent of the total fire loss in 1990.

The only other fire resulting in more than \$150,000 damage was at Drake's Crossing Condominiums, 27834 Orchard Lake Road, two days after the Roman Terrace fire. Other than these two big fires, total fire loss in 1990 was \$757,458. Only eight fires exceeded \$25,000 damages.

DESPITE THE two large fires, fire loss per capita remains less than the state average. Including the Orchard Ridge Plaza fire, per capita loss was \$42.66, and \$12.52 excluding that big fire. The 1989 state average was \$33.32. In 1989, the per capita loss from fire in Farmington Hills was \$45.18.

"Reporting is much more accurate now. And when you compare losses with other communities, you have to consider the value of property in Farmington Hills," Marinucci said.

The total fire loss in 1990 can be further broken down between property loss to the actual structure and contents. Property loss totaled \$1.8 million and contents, \$1.2 million.

Fire officials attribute the decrease in fires, particularly the seriousness of fires, to the department's fire prevention education programs as well as installation of smoke alarms and sprinkling systems.

"We take a proactive stance. The number of buildings has increased, but fires are going down. That tells me this aggressive fire prevention is having an impact," Marinucci said. In 1990, firefighters conducted more

## Fire response time can't be cut further, chief says

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Farmington Hills firefighters will respond to an emergency in just less than six minutes. But the city's road network, particularly winding roads through subdivisions, make it difficult to further reduce response time.

"It would be difficult to reduce it as things are set up now. Geographically, there's certain places you can't get to very fast. It takes a long time to get a truck through the winding streets," fire Chief Richard Marinucci said.

The department's combination system with 16 full-time employees and 91 paid-callback firefighters, who are called in when there is an emergency — day or night, also make it difficult to reduce the response time.

"You're relying on volunteer firefighters. It will take them a couple minutes to get to the station

from wherever they are and get to the trucks," Marinucci said.

THE DEPARTMENT'S average response time in 1990 was 5.99 minutes. That's an average for the four stations, including 6.35 minutes for station 1 on Nine Mile, 6.26 minutes for station 2 on Middlebelt, 5.07 minutes for station 3 on Wheeler, and 6.3 for station 4, fire headquarters on Drake.

"People have oversimplified response times. You have to deal with the total reaction time in an emergency," Marinucci said.

Total response time includes the time someone takes to discover a fire, for example, as well as the time it takes for the person to notify emergency personnel. "A lot of response time is perception," he said.

But there are ways to reduce that "front-end response time." Smoke detectors, sprinkling systems and the 911 emergency system help, Marinucci said.

than 300 fire safety education programs that reached more than 16,000 people.

While fires decreased in 1990, emergency runs increased. Medical emergencies — the fire department is the community's first to respond to emergencies — topped 1,866 compared to 1,763 in 1989. Personal injury accidents, however, decreased from 464 in 1989 to 430 in 1990.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES and personal injury accidents together account for more than half of the department's total 3,945 incidents or runs. Some of the increases in medical emergencies is due to the aging of the community, deputy Chief Peter Baldwin said.

Consider that of the emergency responses, 251 were to the city's four senior adult facilities, including Detroit Baptist Manor, Grand River Village of Farmington Hills, American House of Farmington and Marlon Oakland West.

"People are staying in their homes longer before entering a nursing

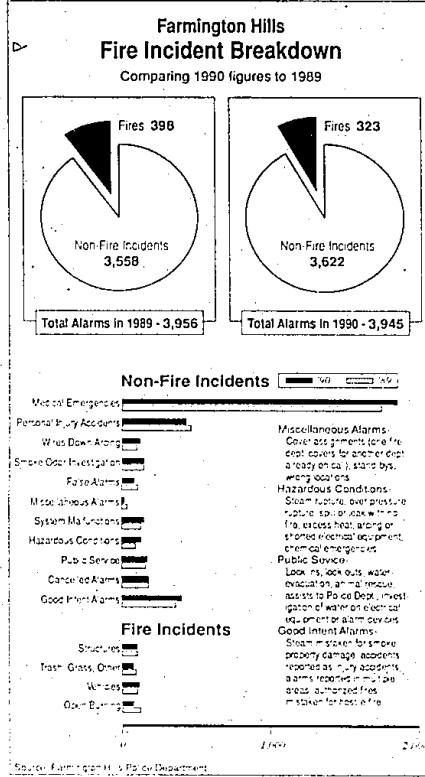
home or convalescent center. We are getting more calls now to assist these people," Baldwin said.

The fire department has three ambulances that are used in conjunction with those offered by the Novi-based CEMS ambulance service, which provides an ambulance dedicated for use specifically in Farmington Hills.

When firefighters aren't fighting fires or making emergency medical runs, some people may ask how they are spending their time. First of all, the fire department has only 16 full-time employees. Ninety-one firefighters are what are called paid-callbacks, meaning they respond to fire and emergencies when called from their homes or jobs.

"Despite the vast array of services we provide, we find there is still the old public perception that we sit around the station and wait for fires," Baldwin said.

That's not true, he added. In addition to training, including live burns where firefighters are exposed to actual fire conditions, firefighters con-



## Senior citizens attend free

Pass available for school events

People 60 or older who live in the Farmington School District may now attend student-performed plays, concerts and home athletic events free with a complimentary pass from the district.

Designated Farmington Community Education classes are also discounted with the new pass.

Seniors may obtain passes at several locations throughout Farmington and Farmington Hills, including:

- Any elementary, middle or high school office.
  - The Lewis-Schulman Administrative Center, 32500 Shawwassee, between Power and Farmington roads.
  - Farmington Community school, 30514 Shawwassee at the corner of Tuck.
  - City of Farmington Hills Special Services Department, in city hall at the corner of 11 Mile and Orchard Lake.
  - The Senior Adult Center at Mercy Center, 38600 11 Mile Road.
  - The Farmington-Farmington Hills Community Center, Farmington Road north of 10 Mile.
  - The Farmington-Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, 31411 Grand River, in downtown Farmington.
  - Both branches of the Farmington Community Library, 23550 Liberty in downtown Farmington and 32737 W. 12 Mile, between Orchard Lake and Farmington roads.
- The district will send a calendar of coming events to cardholders periodically throughout the year.

## Bryant to speak at 'Choices' seminar

Anne L. Bryant, executive director for the American Association of University Women, will be the keynote speaker at the fifth-annual "Choices" Seminar on Thursday, April 18, at Farmington High School.

Co-sponsored by the AAUW Farmington Branch and the Farmington Public Schools, the seminar is aimed at students in grades 4-8 and their parents, and is designed to stimulate interest in science, math and computer careers at an early age.

Bryant will speak at 6:45 p.m. about the results of the recent AAUW poll on girls' self-esteem.

As executive director of the AAUW since 1986, Bryant heads a 100-member staff in Washington, D.C., implementing policies to advance equity for women, education, lifelong learning and positive societal change.

In addition to her administrative duties, she testifies before the U.S. Congress, advocating equity for women and girls in education, the workplace and family.

She is currently vice chair of the National Coalition for Women and Girls in Education.



Anne Bryant  
AAUW director



## A Breath of Life

Farmington Hills city employees are learning how to save a life thanks to city firefighters who for the second consecutive year are teaching employees how to perform cardiopulmonary resuscitation techniques. While employee Jack Klein gives the tech-

nique a try, lead instructor Lt. Mike Garr (left), employees Dennis Randi, Elsie Price, Bill Paquette, Leonard Chapman, Madeline Gemoins and co-instructor and firefighter Gordon Borwick watch.

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 LANSING: 1751 E. Grand River 351-5710

SOUTH TOWN CENTER: At intersection of 24 Mile & Van Dyke  
 317-1940  
 LANSING: on Napoleon Highway across from Lansing Mall  
 323-0700

ROCHSTER HILLS: Farmington Village area  
 2401 Rockledge Rd.  
 ANN ARBOR: 1150 E. Main St.  
 313-3451