

Fire numbers drop, losses increase

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While the number of fires in Farmington Hills dropped by more than 8 percent in 2000, the value of the devastation they caused increased by about the same amount.

According to the Fire Department's annual report, presented to Hills Council members on May 24, firefighters responded to 200 structure fires, comprising a total dollar loss of \$3,224,960. The largest drop occurred in car fires, down 33.34 percent from 1999.

"This is pure speculation, but the economy's up, and when times are good, you don't have as many," Chief Richard Marinucci said of the drop in car fires.

The year's largest fire loss occurred Feb. 17, at a home on Drake Road. Investigators determined the cause of the blaze, which resulted in \$307,000 in damage was arson. Another fire had occurred there in 1999, and the Department responded once more in 2000.

The case is still under investi-

gation, Marinucci said.

But the vast majority of calls — 63 percent — are responses to personal injury accidents or requests for medical attention. Of the nearly 4,000 responses to illness or injury, 3,616 patients were transported to area hospitals. Most went to Botsford, William Beaumont or Providence, the report indicated.

Four fire rescue vehicles, which carry fire suppression equipment (water, foam and a limited amount of hose) as well as having the capability of paramedic units, were placed into service last year. With firefighters now trained paramedics as well, the vehicles give them the capacity to respond to virtually any type of emergency.

"They're working out quite well," Marinucci commented. "They're doing what we expected them to do."

The report indicated the city's call volume stretched the emergency medical services system to its limit. Back-to-back calls lengthened response times for CEMS, which contracts with the city to provide ambulance ser-

vico, so Hills units were used over 300 times (8.2 percent of the total 3,992 calls) for patient transport.

In 2000, the department handled 66 hazardous materials spills and one chemical emergency, as well as 30 incidents wherein carbon monoxide detectors indicated a significant amount of the poisonous gas in 19 instances.

Among the year's highlights:

- Acquisition of new Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (to replace outdated equipment) and three thermal imaging cameras, one of which was provided by local car dealerships;
- Operation Life Safety Awards for no fire deaths and three fully sprinklered fire stations;
- Collecting 309 pints in two American Red Cross blood drives;
- Two teams, placing 2nd and 4th overall, participated in the 2nd Annual Extrication Learning Symposium and Team Competition held at Henry Ford Community College.

Alleged car thief ends up in the dog house

An alleged car thief was really in the doghouse after Farmington Hills Police officers John Pigot and Jeff King pursued and arrested him Thursday.

The two officers were following up on a traffic complaint when a police dispatcher gave the description of a stolen vehicle being driven from H.A. Smith Lumber on Grand River toward Detroit. When they spotted the vehicle, they dogged the suspect near Grand River and Seven Mile Road, attempting a traffic stop.

Attempting to "flee," the suspect sped up into a nearby residential area, then tried to escape on foot. In bloodhound-like fashion, Pigot and King tracked the man between homes until a

neighbor pointed toward a doghouse, which the suspect had entered.

According to police, the 19-year-old Detroit man was collared there. Hills Chief Bill Dwyer was quick to point out the department is always pleased to be able to return stolen property, and in this case, he was particularly gratified no residents, officers or pets were injured.

Assistant Chief Martin Bledsoe had this to say: "Fleeing the police can put you in the doghouse. This should give future car thieves reason to 'paw'."

Police are seeking felony warrants against the suspect for car theft, fleeing and eluding police and resisting and obstructing officers.

Beauty from page A1

awards. A ceremony is planned for Oct. 25 at the Costick Center.

In a departure from past practice, the commission is holding awards on nominations from the public, said Marie Donigan, commission liaison. She works for the city's planning department.

Categories include commercial/retail, office, subdivision entrance, apartment entrance, condominium entrance, place of worship, shopping center, industry, building renovation and organization.

In the past, commission members would drive around and pick the award winners themselves. That became an overwhelming task.

"This is a huge city and it's relatively unwieldy," Donigan said. "The commission just thought that after 16 years it was time for a change. This will empower the people in the community to get involved."

Jan Hunt, chairwoman of the

beautification commission, said she's excited about the nomination process.

"I think it's wonderful," she said. "We should have gone to it before."

From a personal standpoint, Hunt said she's a sucker for creative, colorful landscaping displays, consisting of primarily flowers.

"It's like looking at a piece of art," she said.

Last year's big winner, taking the Chamber of Commerce Award, was the Shell Station at Northwestern and Middlebelt. A chamber award is being given out this year as well. Carleigh Flaherty, executive director of the Farmington/Farmington Hills Chamber of Commerce, said the organization would like the honoree to come from within its own ranks.

"We would prefer that it be a member," she said.

The chamber is helping the

commission by getting the word out about the contest in its regular newsletter. The chamber also provided a list of businesses to the city.

On the form, nominators must list the property to be judged, its address, ZIP code, main cross roads, a contact name and an address.

The deadline for receiving nomination forms is June 30. They may be mailed or dropped off to Beautification Awards Program, City of Farmington Hills Planning Office, 31655 W. Eleven Mile, Farmington Hills, MI 48336. They may be faxed to (248) 428-4423.

Judging will take place from mid-July to mid-August.

Nomination forms may be downloaded from the "press releases" section of the Farmington Hills Web site, www.ci.farmington-hills.mi.us or requested by calling Marie Donigan at (248) 473-9543.

CAMPUS PIPELINE

SUBMARINE TEAM
Lawrence Technological University engineering student Dan Dresler of Farmington Hills is part of a team testing a human-powered submarine for the International Human-Powered

Submarine Races June 11-15 in Bethesda, Md.

Based on some earlier tests, the team believes their sub, Aqua Sapien, has a chance to set a world speed record at the ISIR. Inside the submarine, the driver

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