



Breaking News



Deputy Chief Rick Neitzer Named First Full Time Fire Chief



Monday April 11, 2011 and Monday May 9, 2011— two days that will be marked in the Oswego Fire Protection District calendar as milestones. Every ending is also another beginning, and so it goes. On that first Monday, Deputy Chief Rick Neitzer sat next to Chief Brad Smith at a Board of Trustee meeting as the chief formally announced his impending retirement from the fire service after 45 years. Approximately fifteen minutes later, with the endorsement of Chief Smith, the Board of Trustees named Deputy Chief Neitzer the acting Chief of the department effectively immediately. Additionally, they made it known that they intended to make that second Monday another milestone - to name Deputy Chief Neitzer the first full-time chief in the history of the district on Monday May 9, 2011. Another beginning.

Fire Chief Rick Neitzer

Having a full-time fire chief is a “first” for the Oswego Fire Protection District, as all previous chiefs of the department have officially been considered volunteer chiefs. On the other hand however, its yet *another first* for Chief Neitzer. He started his career in the fire service 31 years ago in 1980 at the Glenside Fire Protection District in Glendale Heights, Illinois where, although not many people know about it anymore, he earned a lifelong nickname. He then spent some time in Roselle and West Chicago before coming to the Oswego Fire Protection District in 1987 on a private contract. That private contract was the beginning of many “firsts” Chief Neitzer has accumulated with Oswego over the past 24 years.

That contract in 1987 made Chief Neitzer one of the original six full-time firefighter/paramedics hired by the district. In addition, he was named as the district’s first full-time Emergency Medical Service Coordinator upon hire and held that position for many years. As the years rolled on Chief Neitzer took on additional roles and responsibilities, and in 1992 was appointed to the rank of Deputy Chief. This milestone marked two additional *firsts* on his list: in addition to making him the first full-time Deputy Chief, it also made him the first true full-time employee of the district.

In his 19+ years as a deputy chief, Chief Neitzer has seen and been a part of many changes with numerous highlights. He was the President of the Kendall County Public Safety Dispatch Center (KENCOM) during its development and start-up phases in the early 1990’s, and was the Founding





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President of MABAS Division 14, which is made up of the following local fire protection districts: Bristol/Kendall; Lisbon; Little Rock/Fox; Newark; Oswego; Platville; and Sandwich. MABAS (Mutual Aid Box Alarm System) is a partnership with the Illinois Emergency Management Agency that has established a statewide, non-discriminatory mutual aid response system for fire, EMS and specialized incident operational teams.

As Oswego, Kendall County, and the population of the district as a whole began growing at the end of the 1990's and into the 2000's, the fire protection district had to as well in order to continue serving it's residents with the top-notch fire & EMS service they had become accustomed to receiving over the years. This meant more staffing, more fire stations, and more coordination of efforts. Chief Neitzer was instrumental in the planning, building, and staffing of the district's first satellite fire station - Station 2 at 2200 Weisbrook Drive. And shortly thereafter, Station 3 within the village of Montgomery and Station 4 within the village of Plainfield as well.

Then, culminating in June 2008, after an intense period of study, planning, and coordination, Chief Neitzer was able to take off his hat as the firefighter/paramedic coordinator with the district's contract house - he was no longer the district's only full-timer, as he managed the transformation of the fire district becoming a full-time department with full-time district employees. Another milestone, another first.



In 2009 the district opened its newest facility, the rebuilt Station 1 on Woolley Road. Although the plaque credits Chief Neitzer with "project oversight", this massive undertaking extended beyond merely oversight. Chief Smith and the Board of Trustees made the new Central Station Chief Neitzer's "baby", and with input, assistance, and insight from numerous people, Chief Neitzer not only got this new facility opened and in operation, but he just happened to be the true chief architect for the design of the building's floorplan and layout - envisioning and bringing to fruition the thought of three buildings in one.



And now, the latest *first* - becoming the first full-time Chief in the 75th year of the long and storied history of the Oswego Fire Protection District. Chief Neitzer has grown and worked side by side with retired Fire Chief Brad Smith and the Oswego Fire Protection Board over the years to shape what Oswego Fire is today, and he is looking forward to continuing that proud legacy as he leads the department into that which the future holds.

Chief Neitzer, Congratulations and Good Luck!

