

This year the Berrien Springs Oronoko Fire Department is celebrating 125 years as a formal fire department. In the spring of 1885 the Village Council was petitioned by local residents to officially form the Berrien Springs Fire Company and to purchase a fire apparatus and hose cart for the Fire Company. Throughout the year I will be addressing the history and development of the department. But the reason the department was formed and the reason we exist today is the same. It is our desire to come to the aid of our neighbors in the time of need.

Our Mission Statement is:

*" We, the members of the Berrien Springs - Oronoko Fire Department, dedicate our efforts to provide for the safety and welfare of the public through preservation of life, property, and the environment."*

The fire and rescue service is one of the most diverse and challenging professions today. It is the diversity that inspires most men and women to enter the service. We train to prepare ourselves to cope with situations which range from building fires to childbirth, hazardous chemical spills to weather related incidents, car accidents with entrapment to nuclear accidents and almost any imaginable emergency situation in between. This diversity is coupled with the fact that these skills may be needed at any time of the day, seven days a week, in any kind of weather and very often under potentially stressful and emotional circumstances. These challenges add to the extreme personally rewarding nature of our profession.

As volunteers, we are here for two basic purposes. First is to prevent fires from occurring. This is achieved through fire prevention, inspections, fire safety education, and code enforcement programs. Secondly, we are here to prepare ourselves to control fire and rescue emergencies should prevention fail. This is done through education, TRAINING, pre-incident planning, MORE TRAINING, state-of-the-art equipment, and MORE TRAINING. We are professionals working in a "hurry up and wait" environment.

This service is not for everyone. You need more than just a desire to help people, you need courage and dedication, assertiveness, and a willingness to learn new skills and face new challenges. The fire and rescue service is not for the meek or timid or for those who lose control during times of crises. Our service compels its members to perform physically extreme work, in uncertain and hazardous environments, in all weather conditions.

The personal rewards and satisfaction received from the fire service is beyond description. Knowing you just made a difference in someone's life. Seeing all the training and effort to be prepared give you the ability to save a life or property. Being able to provided a needed service and know that very few can do what you just did. There is a sense of accomplishment after controlling a building fire, joy and elation when a child is saved, compassion for accident victims, and fulfillment in teaching fire safety. This list goes on and on.

The bottom line in our service is measured by our ability to prevent or reduce the loss of life, pain and suffering, and property damage in our community. We are here and prepared for one reason; *To provide a service to our neighbors in their time of need!*

If you feel you have what it takes to meet the challenges of our Fire Department, we invite you to join us and other prospective members for an informational meeting on Saturday, March 19th from 2-4 PM at the Oronoko Public Safety Building.