
For Immediate Release
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Greenfield Fire District Answers the Call during Windstorm

GREENFIELD CENTER, NY – the Greenfield Fire District responded to over 97 emergencies during the February 17th windstorm that left more than 200,000 people without power for up to four days. These calls varied in type including three structure fires, carbon monoxide alarms, wires/trees down and medical calls – requiring volunteers to staff the stations for up to four days.

The Maple Avenue Fire Company ran nearly 40 calls in only 30 hours, setting a record for the department, but that was only one of the four fire stations in the district. The Greenfield Center Fire Company answered 26 emergencies in the badly damaged Town of Greenfield.

In fact, some of the Town of Greenfield was without power until the following Monday afternoon, requiring volunteers in the Porter Corners Fire Company to staff the station for four days – the rest of the town had power restored late Saturday. During these four days, the Porter Corners Fire Company responded to 15 total emergencies – setting a record for that fire company.

The western portion of the Town of Greenfield covered by the Middle Grove Fire Company also ran it's share of calls – totaling 16 over the weekend – some residents lost electricity for almost 24 hours.

“It was certainly the busiest I have ever known the district to be in such a small period of time,” commented Chief Dennis McConkey. “But we were ready and able to respond when our community needed us the most.”

According to Chief McConkey the fire companies were so busy at times, many volunteers used their personal vehicles to block off dangerous road obstructions until the town highway departments could come and clear the roads. “We really needed our fire trucks available to answer more serious emergencies, so our volunteers graciously offered to use their personal vehicles to block these roads up, freeing up our fire trucks to answer other emergencies.”

But that's not the only way that the fire district served the community. The Maple Avenue Fire Company supplied lighting at the Maple Avenue Middle School – which was turned into a shelter by the American Red Cross. The entrance was poorly lit, so Maple Avenue's rescue truck lit the entrance to the school with its large light tower – directing residents to the front entrance out of the cold.

Some residents of the district were also on medical life support with no electrical backup systems. With no possibility of electricity returning quickly, they turned to the fire department for help. Members of the Maple Avenue Fire Company drove some generators to these residences – and provided gas every few hours to keep the generators running.

This has spawned an initiative at Maple Avenue headed by Captain Duane Bogardus and President Gary Bullard to compile a list of these residents on medical life support – to better prepare for this type of contingency. Residents with these special needs are urged to call the Maple Avenue Fire Department Tuesday nights at 7 pm – 584.1401, to be placed on the list.

Now that the emergency is over, Commissioner Richard Spackmann is spearheading an initiative to critique the district's readiness of this emergency. "The Chiefs of each company are preparing a 'wish list' of items to have if such an emergency happens again." The Board will then prioritize these items and see which would be possible to purchase now based on funding, and what items may need to be budgeted for next year. The fire district always re-evaluates its procedures, in an effort to better serve the community.

In fact, the district recently established a firehouse generator program this year where the district will be installing an emergency generator at each firehouse – to provide power during these emergencies. This year, the district is focused on installing a generator at the Greenfield Center Fire Company fire station.

Last but not least, the Board of Fire Commissioners and Chief McConkey wishes to thank all of our volunteers who served our communities with distinction during the storm. They left their loved ones and their homes to protect others throughout the weekend and they all deserve our gratitude.

Picture requests and questions concerning this press release can be forwarded to Chairman Richard Spackmann via the contact information above or Chief Dennis McConkey.

About the Greenfield Fire District

The Greenfield Fire District encompasses all of the Town of Greenfield and the southeastern part of the Town of Wilton including the Exit 15 commercial corridor.

The Greenfield Fire District is composed of four sister fire companies: Greenfield Center, Porter Corners, Middle Grove and Maple Avenue. It is the largest fire district in Saratoga County and is the busiest volunteer fire district in the county running over 1500 calls annually.