



# MARSHAL MATTERS

## AUGUST 2026 EDITION

|                                             |     |
|---------------------------------------------|-----|
| Marshal's Minute.....                       | 2   |
| Terry Nydegger Honored.....                 | 3   |
| Dominic Vespa Honored.....                  | 4   |
| James Schreiber Honored.....                | 5   |
| Illinois State Fair.....                    | 6-7 |
| Battery Take Back Event.....                | 8   |
| SFM Pankow NASFM Conference.....            | 9   |
| Buffalo Grove 1000 Smoke Alarm Installs...  | 10  |
| Jerseyville Check Presentation.....         | 11  |
| Ignite Her: Discover Your Fire Service..... | 12  |

|                            |       |
|----------------------------|-------|
| Illinois CRR Minute.....   | 13    |
| Steps-to-Safety Class..... | 14    |
| Smoke Alarm Blitz.....     | 15    |
| IFSI Minute.....           | 16-17 |
| Stop on Red Week.....      | 18    |
| Back to School Safety..... | 19    |
| National Dog Day.....      | 20    |
| OSFM Training.....         | 21-22 |
| Shout Outs/Kudos.....      | 23    |

**Marshal's Minute-State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow**

September is Campus Fire Safety Month and Illinois joined numerous states across the country to raise awareness of fire safety in on and off-campus housing. Governor JB Pritzker has again proclaimed September as Campus Fire Safety Month in Illinois. This month is a time for universities and colleges to work with their local fire departments to ensure students reside in a fire-safe living environment and are provided with fire safety information.

College is often the first time many young people are living away from home, meaning it's more important than ever for them to understand how to create and practice a fire safety escape plan. Having working smoke alarms, sprinkled residential dwellings, and other fire safety plans in place can create a safe living environment.

According to data from the Center for Campus Fire Safety, from January 2000 to September 2024, 94 fatal fires have been documented that occurred on a college campus, in Greek housing, or in off-campus housing within three miles of the campus and claimed 134 lives. An astonishing 94 percent of fatal campus fires examined took place in off-campus housing, with 7 fatalities occurring here in Illinois since 2000.

While cooking remains a leading cause of fires in campus housing, there is growing concern on college campuses about the increasing number of fires caused by lithium-ion batteries. Many college students rely on e-bikes, e-scooters, laptops, and other electronic devices powered by these batteries, but mishandling or misuse of these batteries can lead to safety hazards such as overheating, fire, or even explosions. Students are encouraged to learn how to safely charge, store, and use these devices and other electronics properly. The NFPA offers safety tips on their website at Lithium-Ion Battery Safety ([nfpa.org](https://www.nfpa.org/lithium-ion-battery-safety)).

College students are balancing busy schedules, new responsibilities and life away from home, but taking a few minutes for fire safety can make all the difference. Lithium-ion batteries power many of the devices' students rely on every day, and when they are damaged, improperly charged or used incorrectly, they can create a serious fire risk. As students settle into the new school year, I encourage everyone to take a few minutes to identify their escape routes, keep exits clear, charge devices safely and know what to do if a fire occurs. A few simple precautions can make a lifesaving difference.

## Terry Nydegger Honored

Terry Nydegger touched the lives of countless first responders throughout Sangamon County and dedicated his life to serving the citizens of his community through the Rescue Squad. He also served as Police Chief in New Berlin for nearly 28 years. For 48 years, Terry proudly served the citizens of Sangamon County with honor, dedication, and distinction. He also served for 24 years as a paramedic with the Sangamon County Sheriff's Tactical Response Unit.

Rest easy, Chief. Thank you for a lifetime of service.



## Dominic Vespa Honored

The OSFM sends our thoughts and prayers to the family and friends of Dominic Vespa, along with our brothers and sisters at Riverton Fire and EMS. Dominic served as a volunteer firefighter for the Riverton Fire and EMS for over 65 years reaching the rank of Chief. Dominic retired from the Illinois Department of Transportation after 35 years of service. He served with the Army National Guard from 1962-1968. Rest Easy, we will take it from here!



## Proclamation

Presented this 27<sup>th</sup> day of August 2026

*WHEREAS*, all residents owe a debt of gratitude to the firefighters of Illinois who selflessly serve their communities daily to protect and keep families and property safe; and,

*WHEREAS*, every day, these men and women are willing to face great risks while performing their duties; and,

*WHEREAS*, on August 9, 2026, Dominic Vespa, 86, passed away; and,

*WHEREAS*, a valiant and passionate public servant, Dominic Vespa's dedication to his community was unparalleled, having served with the Riverton Area Fire Protection District for more than 65 years; and,

*WHEREAS*, Dominic is survived by his sons, Greg and Chris, sister, Elinor, as well as many other family members, friends, and countless public servants he inspired;

*THEREFORE*, I, JB Pritzker, Governor of the State of Illinois, encourage our residents to honor the life and service of Dominic Vespa, who, by his faithful and loyal devotion to duties, has rendered invaluable service to his community and whose service shall forever be an inspiration to the people of Illinois.



*JB Pritzker*  
JB Pritzker  
Governor, State of Illinois

Printed by the Authority of the State of Illinois



## James Schriber Honored

Captain James Schreiber of the Bloomington Fire Department unexpectedly passed away at the age of 53. Captain Schreiber earned numerous certifications including EMT and Hazardous Materials Technician and served as acting Battalion Chief. He served with the Bloomington Fire Department for 29 years and he led his crew with wisdom, compassion, and an unwavering commitment to public safety. Rest Easy, we will take it from here.



## Illinois State Fair

The Illinois State Fair always seems to come faster than expected and goes even faster! Once again, the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal (OSFM) had a great time connecting with fairgoers and sharing important fire safety messages at the OSFM Fire Safety Tent.

Thank you to everyone who stopped by the tent this year. Whether you came for the popcorn, to meet Norman the Illinois State Fire Dog, talk with firefighters, learn about fire safety or simply say hello, we enjoyed seeing you! The tent was filled with activity, conversations, demonstrations and plenty of smiles throughout the fair.

We also couldn't put on such a great event without the amazing fire service organizations and partners who helped staff the tent each day. Their time, energy and commitment made it possible for us to reach thousands of fairgoers with important fire and life safety information.

A special thank you goes to:

- Illinois Association of Fire Protection Districts
- Illinois Professional Firefighters Association
- Illinois Fire Inspectors
- Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS)
- Chicago Fire Department
- Illinois Community Risk Reduction
- Illinois Fire Service Institute & Illinois Society of Fire Service Instructors
- Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance
- Illinois Firefighters Association
- Illinois Fire Chiefs Association & Northern Illinois Alliance of Fire Protection Districts



And, of course, no fair would be complete without Keith "Doc" Patterson! Doc continues to be a big draw at the fair, entertaining and educating fairgoers with his amazing puppet show and magic. His fun, interactive approach helps children and families learn important fire safety messages while making memories along the way.

New this year, the National Waste & Recycling Association brought its battery safety trailer to the Illinois State Fair on Friday, August 14, and Saturday, August 15. Woodsy Owl was also on hand to help raise awareness about the importance of properly handling and disposing of household batteries.



## Illinois State Fair

The National Waste & Recycling Foundation's "Skip the Bin! Turn Your Batteries In!" PSA campaign, featuring Woodsy Owl in partnership with the U.S. Forest Service, educates the public about the fire risks associated with improperly disposing of household batteries, particularly lithium-ion batteries. The campaign encourages people to keep batteries out of trash and recycling bins by using safe handling practices and finding convenient battery drop-off locations. These simple steps help protect workers, waste and recycling facilities, firefighters and communities from battery-related fires.

From fire safety education and hands-on activities to puppets, magic, popcorn and plenty of great conversations, this year's Illinois State Fair was a fun and successful event. Most importantly, it provided another opportunity to connect with Illinois families and share messages that can help keep them safe.

Thank you to all of our partners, volunteers, firefighters and fairgoers who helped make this year's event such a success. We had a great time — and we're already looking forward to seeing everyone again next year!



## Battery Take Back Event



### Skip the Bin Turn Your Batteries In

The OSFM and Illinois CRR partnered with The Battery Network, the National Waste & Recycling Association and Waste Management during the Illinois State Fair to collect used household batteries and raise awareness about the importance of safe battery recycling.

Why does it matter? Because batteries can create a fire hazard when they are thrown in the trash or recycling. Even batteries that are considered “dead” can retain energy. When batteries are damaged, crushed or come into contact with other materials, they can spark, overheat and ignite fires in household trash, garbage trucks and waste facilities.

Recycling your batteries keeps them out of the waste stream and allows valuable materials to be recovered and reused. In Illinois, household and medium-format batteries are prohibited from being thrown in the garbage and must be properly recycled.

From AA and AAA batteries to rechargeable batteries used in phones, power tools and other everyday devices, don't toss them in the trash or your household recycling bin. Turn them in and help reduce the risk of fire.

Find a battery drop-off location near you:

[The Battery Network Drop-Off Locator](#)



### BATTERIES ACCEPTED



- **Single-Use:** AA, AAA, 9-Volt, C, D
- **Button Cells:** From watches, hearing aids, and small electronics
- **Removable Rechargeable:** Lithium-Ion (Li-ion) and Nickel-Cadmium (NiCad) from toothbrushes, shaving razors, drones, laptops, cameras, phones, and power tools

### BATTERIES NOT ACCEPTED



- Automotive (car) batteries
- Vapes
- Industrial or large-format batteries, including uninterruptible power supplies (UPS), e-bike, and scooter batteries
- Batteries still inside devices, please remove batteries before bringing them

## SFM Pankow at NASFM Conference



Collaboration makes the fire service stronger through unity and shared initiatives!

Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow attended the National Association of State Fire Marshals conference in California.

The conference provides a great opportunity for State Fire Marshals from across the country to come together, share ideas, discuss challenges and collaborate on solutions to issues impacting the fire service and the communities we serve.

By working together and sharing experiences, we can help make Illinois and communities across the country safer. The OSFM has several members of the agency that are currently involved in committees through NASFM that meet monthly with other members of State Fire Marshal's Offices from across the country.



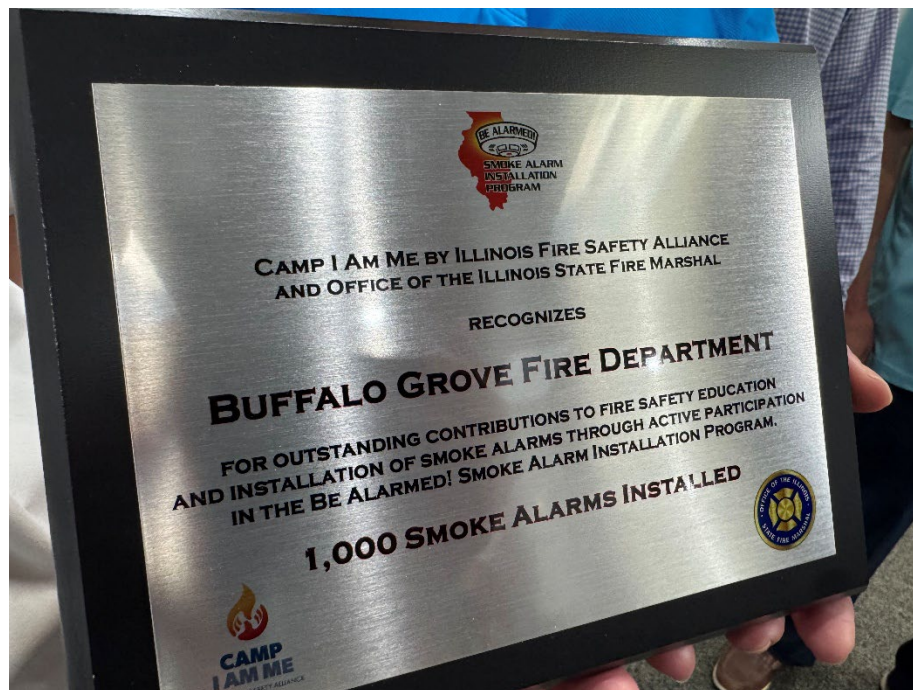
## Buffalo Grove 1000 Smoke Alarm Installs



Members from OSFM joined our friends and partners from Camp I Am Me by Illinois Fire Safety Alliance to honor and congratulate the Village of Buffalo Grove Fire Department on their 1,000<sup>th</sup> smoke alarm installation through the Be Alarmed! Smoke Alarm Installation Program.

To learn more about this program and to get your department involved visit:

<https://www.ifsa.org/prevention-resources/smoke-alarm/>



## Jerseyville Check Presentation



Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow stopped by the **Jerseyville Fire Department** to present them with a check and congratulate the department on their Small Equipment Grant Award. Thanks to Fire Chief Keith Norman and Mayor Kevin Stork for their hospitality!

Chief Norman says they are using the grant to purchase PPE and upgrading their current gear.



## Ignite Her: Discover Your Fire Service

Ignite Her: Discover Your Fire Service Future!

Illinois State Fire Marshal Michele Pankow visited with Victoria Westfall, a firefighter with QEM Fire Protection District in Grafton to discuss the upcoming Ignite Her weekend.



This hands-on opportunity is designed for women ages 16-45 to experience what it's like to be a firefighter, learn more about the fire service, and explore the many opportunities available to them.

Programs like Ignite Her are helping engage more women and encourage the next generation of female firefighters to answer the call. To learn more about the program visit QEM Fire Protection Districts Facebook page.



## Illinois CRR Minute

The OSFM in conjunction with Illinois CRR has now become the home of the Sound Off Program in Illinois. Teaching children about fire safety at an early age can help build lifelong habits that keep them and their families safer. Sound Off with the Home Fire Safety Patrol is a free educational program designed to help elementary students learn important home fire safety skills while encouraging them to take those lessons home to their families.

Designed for students in grades 2–3, the Sound Off program brings together educators, firefighters, students and families to focus on some of the most important home fire safety practices. The curriculum includes lessons and activities that teach children about smoke alarms, common home fire dangers and the importance of having and practicing a home fire escape plan.

The program gives students an opportunity to become Home Fire Safety Patrol members, encouraging them to look at fire safety in their own homes with an adult. Students learn to recognize the different sounds made by smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, understand the importance of testing alarms and identify potential hazards around the home.

Sound Off provides teachers with a variety of resources, including a teacher's guide, student activity sheets, videos, a classroom poster and a home fire safety storybook. Materials are available in English and Spanish, with simplified activities also available to accommodate different reading levels.

The program's activities give students the opportunity to:

- Learn what smoke and carbon monoxide alarms sound like and what to do when they sound.
- Identify potential fire hazards in the home.
- Create a home fire escape plan.
- Identify two ways out of every room when possible.
- Talk with their families about practicing their home fire escape plan.
- Take what they learn in the classroom home to their families.

Fire departments and community fire safety educators can also partner with schools to bring the program directly into the classroom. The Sound Off resources include a Fire Service Presenter's Guide to help fire safety professionals implement the activities and work with teachers and students.

Learn more by visiting: <https://ymiclassroom.com/lesson-plans/soundoff-teachers/>

## Steps-to-Safety Class

State Fire Marshal Pankow presented on August 6<sup>th</sup> in Plainfield at the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Steps-to-Safety Prevent Fires and Falls at Home Train the Trainer class. Members of the OSFM were also on hand to help provide information and other resources to attendees.



The NFPA Steps to Safety™ Prevent Fire and Falls at Home program pairs fire and EMS professionals with community partners to educate older adults about home fire and fall safety through group presentations, home visits, and the creation of a local resource network. Formerly titled Remembering When™ A Fire and Fall Prevention Program for Older Adults, the updated Steps to Safety™ (STS) program includes an online professional training curriculum and new digitized and print assets to support learning and behavior change in the older adult population. The approach is one that promotes independence, collaboration, engagement, and empowerment. Rooted in fire and behavioral science and sound educational principles, STS provides the framework and tools for fire and EMS professionals and their health and social service partners to impact their community to reduce incidence and injury from home fire and falls.

Learn more about this program by <https://www.nfpa.org/education-and-research/home-fire-safety/older-adults>.



Smoke Alarm Blitz



# Smoke Alarms Save Lives!







## 2026 Statewide Smoke Alarm Blitz

### October 18-24

### Register Your Department Today!

## IFSI Minute



### AN UPDATE FROM THE ILLINOIS FIRE SERVICE INSTITUTE (IFSI)

IFSI provides an average of 1,200 courses each year to more than 50,000 students statewide. Although training is available at the Champaign campus and through the IFSI Virtual Campus, most instruction is delivered off-site at locations throughout Illinois.

In FY26, IFSI offered over 700 classes through the Cornerstone Program, providing no-cost training to over 15,000 students. Training was delivered to personnel from 662 departments across Illinois. The Cornerstone Program ensures first responders have convenient access to critical skills development opportunities.

See below for more detailed information about the Cornerstone Program and other no-cost training opportunities available through IFSI.

### NO COST TRAINING

IFSI offers a variety of no-cost training opportunities each year at locations across Illinois. This training is available through funding from the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal.



The IFSI Cornerstone Program offers Illinois fire departments and mutual aid organizations the opportunity to bring essential training directly to their communities. Eight Regional Representatives work with local departments to identify training needs and deliver no-cost classes.

Cornerstone training is offered at the firefighter, vehicle operator, company officer, and chief officer levels. Locations are selected to provide convenient access for departments with limited opportunities to send personnel off-site for training.

Visit [fsi.illinois.edu](http://fsi.illinois.edu) for a list of Regional Representatives who manage all requests for training.



IFSI has developed a comprehensive three-year training plan that enables training and company officers to deliver structured skill development opportunities for their departments and crews. The Team IFSI program facilitates annual training requirements through a broad range of subject areas.

Easy-to-use lesson plans include PowerPoint presentations, skill sheets, drill plans, and supporting videos to help trainers deliver high-quality, effective training.

An IFSI student or staff login is required to access the materials through the IFSI Student and Staff Resource Center.

## IFSI Minute



Light and Fight events offer hands-on training that meets the needs of firefighters at all experience levels. Participants have the opportunity to engage in various rotations offering skills development for:

- Basic SCBA
- Hose handling and movement
- Ladder raises
- Carries
- Climbing
- Tool handling
- Proper tool selection

Students are introduced to basic Responder Intervention Team (RIT) and Saving Our Own concepts and offered the opportunity to serve as members of a fire suppression team.

Protective clothing and equipment is required. Participants must furnish an approved helmet,

turn out gear, eye protection, gloves, SCBA, and boots. Advance registration is required to attend Light and Fight classes.

Explorer Cadet Field Training delivers immersive training opportunities for explorers, cadets, and junior firefighters ages 15-20. Activities are designed to prepare students for careers in the fire service.

The program introduces students to essential firefighting skills, including:

- Hoses and appliances
- Fire behavior
- Search and rescue
- Ladders
- Use of hand tools
- Self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)

Students also learn about the value of teamwork, leadership, and followership during these one-day “down and dirty” training sessions.



**LEARN MORE ABOUT THESE PROGRAMS AT [FSI.ILLINOIS.EDU](https://FSI.ILLINOIS.EDU).**

## Stop on Red Week

### Stop Today. Protect Tomorrow.

Every time a driver approaches a red light, there is a choice to make: stop or keep going. Stop on Red Week 2026, observed August 2–8, reminds drivers that making the safe choice can help prevent crashes and protect lives. This year's theme, "Stop Today. Protect Tomorrow.", highlights how one moment of patience can make a lasting difference.

Red-light running continues to be a serious roadway safety concern. In 2024, more than 1,100 people were killed and more than 141,000 were injured in red-light-running crashes nationwide. That averages approximately three deaths and 386 injuries every day. Fatal red-light-running crashes have also increased by nearly 60% over the past decade, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety.



Whether you're driving to work, school, the grocery store or your next appointment, take the extra moment to slow down and stop when the light is red. A safe decision at an intersection today can help protect someone's tomorrow.

Stop on Red. Stop Today. Protect Tomorrow.



## Back to School Safety

# BACK-TO-SCHOOL SAFETY

## SCHOOL BUS SAFETY

Whether you're driving, walking, or riding the bus, everyone has a role in keeping students safe.

**DRIVERS:**

Slow down and stop when a school bus has its red lights flashing and stop arm extended. Never pass a stopped school bus.

**STUDENTS:**

Stay alert around buses, use sidewalks and crosswalks when available, and wait for the bus to come to a complete stop before approaching.

**BUS RIDERS:**

Stay seated, keep aisles clear, keep hands and heads inside the bus, and follow the driver's instructions.



## SLOW DOWN, STAY ALERT, AND WATCH FOR SCHOOL BUSES!



LET'S MAKE THIS SCHOOL YEAR A SAFE ONE FOR EVERY STUDENT.

## National Dog Day



*Happy*  
**NATIONAL  
DOG DAY!**

**AUGUST 26**

Today we celebrate a  
very special member of  
the OSFM family —  
**Illinois State  
Fire Dog Norman!**

 Fire safety is for  
the whole family —  
including our  
four-legged friends!

 Include your pets in  
your home fire escape plan.

 **THANK YOU, NORMAN,**  
for helping keep Illinois safe!

August 26<sup>th</sup> is National Dog Day, and we take a few moments to thank our Accelerant Detection K9's Paqui, Udon, Bauer, Rowan, Csello and Loki for all they do to help assist departments across the state. We also want to give a big shout out to State Fire Dog Norman for all he does to help spread the fire safety message.

## OSFM Trainings



# Introduction to **Fire Inspections**

— **5 ONE-DAY CLASSES** —

*Presented by the  
Illinois Fire Inspectors Association*

This class is designed for new and experienced inspectors who want to strengthen their knowledge of fire inspection fundamentals.

## FIRE INSPECTION CHECKLIST

- ☒ Exits Clear
- ☒ Fire Extinguisher
- ☒ Emergency Lighting
- ☒ Fire Alarm
- ☒ Sprinkler System
- ☒ Signage
- ☐



### LEARN

the essential principles and practices of fire inspections.



### APPLY

best practices to improve safety and ensure code compliance.

*There is no cost to this class*

*Class will run from 8 am - 4 pm*

*Lunch will be provided*

## CLASS LOCATIONS



**Cherry Valley  
FPD**

**September 26, 2026**

4919 Blackhawk Rd  
Rockford, IL 61109



**Effingham FD**

**October 10, 2026**

505 W Fayette Ave  
Effingham, IL 62401



**O'Fallon FD**

**October 17, 2026**

1215 Taylor Rd  
O'Fallon, IL 62269



**Tolono FPD**

**November 14, 2026**

214 N Bourne St  
Tolono, IL 61880



**Washington FD**

**March 13, 2027**

200 N Wilmor Rd  
Washington, IL 61571



**RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!**  
SPACE IS LIMITED – REGISTER EARLY

For more information  
or to register, visit:

[www.IllinoisFireInspectors.org](http://www.IllinoisFireInspectors.org)

**Class Size Limited to 30 Students**

## OSFM Trainings

### *Youth Firesetting Intervention Class*

The Robbins Fire Department is pleased to announce they will be hosting a Youth Firesetting Intervention Program class for the Office of the State Fire Marshal.

**Date & Time:** Wednesday, October 21, 2026 & Thursday, October 22, 2026

**Wednesday:** 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

**Thursday:** 8:00 am to 4:00 pm

**Place:** Robbins Police Department  
3323 W. 137th Street  
Robbins, IL 60472

This class is limited to **25 students**. Please park in the rear, classroom is on the 2nd floor, building is next to the fire station.

There is a fee of \$100 per student for this class. Please make the check payable to the Office of the State Fire Marshal, and mail it to the Office, prior to the training date.

Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshal  
Arson Division – YFSIP  
1035 Stevenson Drive  
Springfield, IL 62703

For further information, please feel free to call me at (217) 720-5835, or email [sfm.yfsi@illinois.gov](mailto:sfm.yfsi@illinois.gov).

We are looking forward to seeing you in Robbins!

**Dale Smith**

YouthFire Setting Intervention Program Coordinator



## Shout Outs/Kudos

### OSFM Anniversaries

#### August 1st

- Kelly Cavanaugh – 21 years
- Cathy Stashak – 20 years
- Debbie Wickenhauser – 19 years
- Deian Ivanov – 9 years
- Garry Grugan – 3 years

#### August 2nd

- Chris Cole – 5 years

#### August 16th

- Kensie Proctor – 15 years
- Bob Sutton – 13 years
- Bobby Joe Brown – 10 years
- Melinda Anderson – 3 years

### Promotions

- Derek Decker – Fire Certification Specialist, Cook County (full time, was previously intermittent) – August 16



OSFM Fire Prevention Division Manager Jeff Rath recently stopped by the Chicago Ridge Fire Department to congratulate retiring Chief Bob Smart on an incredible 28 years of dedicated service to the community.

Chief Smart's leadership, commitment, and passion for protecting others have made a lasting impact on the department and the residents he has served.

Thank you, Chief Smart, for your years of service and sacrifice. We wish you a happy, healthy, and well-deserved retirement!