



# DISTRICT PROFILE

## Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District

**T**he Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District serves residential and commercial property owners in four villages (Barrington Hills, South Barrington, Lake Barrington and Inverness), and portions of unincorporated Cook, Lake and McHenry counties. Covering 48 square miles, the District is located approximately 35 miles northwest of Chicago.

Established in 1940 to provide tax-based funding for fire protection, the area has been served by the Barrington Fire Department since 1898. Today, the District is home to many large structures that offer unique public safety challenges. These include the main campus of the fourth-largest church in the United States – located in South Barrington, multiple equine farms in Barrington Hills, and a new, 175,000 sq. ft. sports complex in Lake Barrington that attracts nearly 10,000 people per month.

District residents are served by three fire stations (two within District boundaries;



the third located in the Village of Barrington). An intergovernmental agreement between the Village of Barrington and the Fire District assures that area residents benefit from high quality fire and emergency medical services at a cost that is lower than either public agency could provide by itself.

The Department's fleet of vehicles consists of two front line engines and one reserve engine, three front line ambulances, one reserve ambulance, one Quint, two tenders, one rescue squad and one brush truck. Administration, Operations and Fire Prevention Divisions help the department and its 34 full-time firefighters achieve its mission of maintaining low response times and maintaining a highly trained professional workforce.

By the time the department's new recruits become full-fledged firefighters, they have successfully completed more than a year of life-saving training. To be considered for employment, candidates must have completed paramedic school and be state licensed paramedics.

Upon passing a series of intensive written, physical and psychological tests, each new firefighter completes a minimum of 450 hours of Fire Academy training to achieve Firefighter II certification. The vast majority of

the department's firefighters has completed additional training and are certified Firefighter III. A number of the Department's firefighters and fire officers have also completed certification in HAZMAT Awareness and Operations, Technical Rescue Awareness, Fire Service Vehicle Operator, Fire Officer II and Fire Officer III.

In the early 1980s, the department was a pioneer in advancing the idea of multi-jurisdictional training when it participated in the establishment of a combined dive rescue education training program with fire departments and public safety organizations in Cook, Lake and McHenry Counties. These regional training operations have expanded to include HAZMAT and other specialized areas of expertise.

The District's Board of Trustees is comprised of five members, each representing the areas covered by the District. They are charged with ensuring quality fire and paramedic services to District residents. Combined, the current trustees have more than 40 years of service on the board.

Trustees oversee a proactive communications program designed to expand

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James Arie, Fire Chief  
John Feit, Deputy Fire Chief

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the District's ability to provide residents with information pertaining to BCFPD activities, programs and public safety services.

By cultivating relationships with local media, community newsletter editors and community access television stations, the District has improved the flow of information to residents and enhanced awareness of important services, such as the department's Knox-Box program, upgrades to a commercial fire alarm system, fire sprinkler safety, and an annual open house hosted by the Barrington Fire Department.

The District is a recognized leader in its advocacy of fire sprinkler systems. This was demonstrated when trustees passed an ordinance requiring installation of automatic sprinkler systems in all new residential construction in 1997, making the Barrington Countryside Fire Protection District the second jurisdiction in Illinois to pass such extraordinary life safety requirements. The

ordinance covers all areas of unincorporated Cook, Lake and McHenry Counties served by the BCFPD. Two of the four communities that rely on the District for fire protection have followed its lead and passed similar sprinkler ordinances.

The District was recognized for its progressive fire sprinkler codes at an awards ceremony held during the 2009 Fire Team USA Residential Fire Sprinkler Summit in Addison, IL.

A major challenge facing the District is an increase in freight train traffic created by Canadian National Railway Corporation's purchase of the Elgin, Joliet & Eastern (EJ&E) Railway. Canadian National is rerouting freight trains up to nearly two miles long onto the EJ&E rail line, which runs across key District intersections. The number of trains will increase over the next few years, increasing the likelihood of fire department personnel experiencing delays in their efforts to respond to emergency calls.

In response, the District has strengthened its automatic aid agreements with surrounding departments to reduce the risk of emergency

response delays caused by freight trains. It is also tracking the frequency and duration of the increased freight train crossings. Officials are using this information to develop operational practices that maintain the integrity of District services.

In an effort to anticipate service levels required by a growing population over the next 10 –20 years, the District is in the process of conducting a comprehensive study on staffing levels, station locations, mutual aid agreements and equipment. The study will help District and fire department officials determine how best to apply limited resources to future needs. ■

**Editor's Note:** If you would like to have your district featured in *The Fire Call*, please contact us at 800-524-6620 for more information or visit [www.iafpd.org](http://www.iafpd.org).

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