



The Red Line



Official Newsletter of the Greater Round Lake Fire Protection District

Spring 2026

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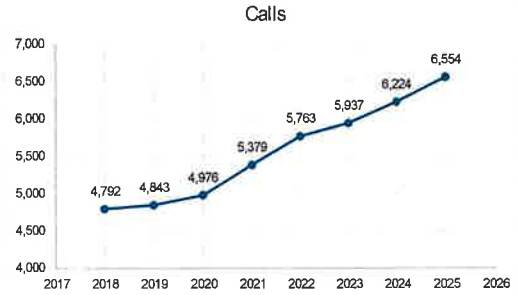
District Hits Record Call Volume in 2025

Throughout 2025, district personnel responded to 6,556 emergency calls, marking the busiest year in the department's 114-year history, and making Round Lake the busiest fire protection district and the fourth busiest fire department in Lake County. This continues a trend of steady volume increases observed annually since 2018.

Interestingly, while the district has seen new construction, the population has remained relatively stable. Census data shows a slight decrease (0.5%) between 2010 and 2020, suggesting that demand for services is rising independently of population growth.

Breakdown of Incidents:

- Emergency Medical Services (EMS) continue to drive the demand for responders, with crews responding to 5,029 medical incidents (76.09% of total volume). Averaged out, this equates to one EMS call every 104 minutes, around the clock.



- Traffic Crashes: Of the EMS calls, 180 were traffic crashes.
- Fires: District crews responded to 176 fires, 100 of which involved buildings.

Due to the district's central location in Lake County, crews frequently provided automatic and mutual aid responses to neighboring departments.

2025 Year in Review

January: Crews responded to an auto repair shop fire in Round Lake Beach. Due to a discrepancy in the reported location, our full response was routed to assist Grayslake. Despite extreme cold and challenging fire conditions, the robust response helped minimize damage.

February: A 36-inch water main break in the Village of Skokie resulted in massive flooding. The district deployed a Tender for 46 hours to serve as an emergency water supply, supporting the hospital's boiler system and keeping the facility open.



Tender 261 refills hospital boiler system in Skokie.

April: Responders managed three significant fires: a home under construction on Sunset Drive (Round Lake Beach), a deck fire on Nippersink Road (Round Lake) that damaged

multiple floors, and a bedroom fire on Clifton Drive (Round Lake Park) that extended into the attic.

May: A month of unique rescues. Crews retrieved ducklings from a storm sewer to reunite them with their mother, and successfully extricated a turtle and a cat trapped in separate fence incidents.



FF Maplethorpe & LT Verenski with new friends.

August: Responders extricated a patient seriously injured and entrapped in heavy machinery. The complex rescue required three engines and an ambulance. Due to the prolonged extrication time, the patient was transported via helicopter.

September: One home was destroyed and three others damaged during an intentionally



Intentionally set fire in Round Lake.

set fire on Summit in unincorporated Round Lake. Fire crews were forced to delay entry until police apprehended the suspected arsonist at the scene.

October: Crews battled a significant residential fire on Tomahawk Trail in Round Lake Heights.

As we close out the 2025 year, the data indicates that the trend of rising emergency call volume is likely to continue. As our goal is always prevention, we encourage all residents to check their smoke detectors and review their family emergency plans. The busiest year in our history serves as a reminder that emergencies can happen anywhere, at any time. Help us make 2026 a safer year for everyone.

Winter Heating Safety

As we contend with below-freezing temperatures, many residents are relying more on furnaces, space heaters, and fireplaces to help keep their homes warm. This is an important time to talk about Carbon Monoxide (CO), a silent killer.

CO is a colorless, odorless, tasteless gas that is invisible yet extremely dangerous. It binds to red blood cells much faster than oxygen, effectively blocking your body's ability to breathe internally. You can protect yourself and your family by following these guidelines:

- Install CO alarms on every level of your home and near every sleeping area.
- Test CO alarms monthly and replace batteries when low.
- Keep exhaust vents and flues clear of snow and ice.
- Never use grills, generators, or fuel-burning devices inside your house or garage.
- Never use the oven or stove top burners to heat your home.

- Never warm up a car (or leave it running) while parked in a garage, even with the door open.

Portable space heaters require constant supervision. Don't be fooled by their size; a small space heater can draw 1,500 watts—a heavy electrical load comparable to a major appliance.



Because of this high energy demand, never use extension cords or power strips with a space heater. They can easily exceed the device's capacity, leading to overheating and fire. Additionally, plugging multiple heaters into the same circuit can melt wire insulation inside your walls. Always plug space heaters directly into a wall outlet and keep them at least 3 feet away from any other objects.

Fireplace Precautions If you are using a wood-burning fireplace, use only dry, seasoned hardwoods such as oak, maple, or ash. Firewood should be dried for at least 6 months to burn cleaner and prevent creosote buildup. Avoid burning trash or treated wood, as these increase the risk of the fire getting out of control.

Mutual Aid - Neighbors Helping Neighbors

Have you ever seen a Fox Lake ambulance or a Grayslake fire engine in the Round Lake area responding and wondered why they are here?

You're likely witnessing the result of careful planning and sharing of resources called Mutual Aid. In the world of public safety, it is economically and operationally impractical for every community to be staffed and equipped for every potential emergency. To adapt to this challenge, departments participate in the Mutual Aid Box Alarm System (MABAS), a statewide network designed to ensure a community is prepared for a surge in call volume or a larger-scale event beyond "business as usual."

This system formalizes the concept of neighbors helping neighbors, ensuring that borders do not become barriers to effective emergency response. Just as we rely on help from our neighbors for support during our major incidents, Round Lake stands ready to assist them as well. This ensures responses are never limited by the number of personnel sitting in the local firehouse at that exact moment.

You may have heard about "5-Alarm" fires or

12134		I. C. R. R. OFFICE		2700-S	
27th St & Brewery Ave.		525-E			
PARADES	5 9 16 19	4 11	5	3 3 3 1	6 9 10
2	21 25 48 104	8 31	14	1	8
1	8 28 29 45				25
11	13 18 39 50				
17	23 49 98 103				
COMPANIES TO CHANGE LOCATION					
ENGINE	12-104 42-16	52-2	167-5	2-4	9-11 6-9
TRUCK	100-45 105-1	109-23	122-48	32-8	
FLIGHT	20-13	44-18	64-39		
FILE	32-49	77-23	111-11		
DECEMBER 18, 1992					

Box #12134 from Chicago Fire Department, 1935 "Box Alarms" before. Historically, these pre-terminated responses were set for geographic location, and sometimes tied to fire department telegraph boxes on street corners. When a fire chief needed additional help prior to wide-spread radio use, they would open the box, and pull the handle to set off the "Box Alarm." We still use the terminology today of "pulling a box" but it is now requested via radio.

Box cards are pre-planned for various emergencies, ranging from structural fires to technical rescues, hazardous-material incidents, and natural disasters. The plans specify the specific resources, their amounts, and the communities who will provide them on request. These plans are all agreed to by the affected agencies.

When a Round Lake incident commander determines an emergency needs additional help, they request a "Box Alarm" through LakeComm MABAS Division 4. This starts the process of notifying area departments, who then respond to the emergency location or to a Round Lake fire station to cover additional emergencies. All departments use common radio frequencies and follow prescribed protocols to ensure they can work together safely and efficiently, regardless of location or department. Ultimately, MABAS provides an organized, predictable way to quickly call for additional help.



Tool of the Trade - The Pike Pole



The pike pole is one of the fire service's most enduring icons. A long fiberglass or wood handle topped with a hooked metal head, it is primarily used today for pushing and pulling—tearing down drywall to expose hidden fire during overhaul, or venting windows from a distance. Its lineage dates back to the 14th

century and was originally a medieval weapon.. Previously called "fire hooks," they were used to pull down burning thatched roofs to create firebreaks, preventing spread. This primitive demolition tactic gave rise to the term "Hook & Ladder," making the pike pole a tool deeply rooted in firefighting tradition.