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Fire chief sets new rating as department goal

Being good isn't good enough for the Hoopeston fire department.

The department, which last year improved its Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating from a seven to a six, plans further improvement by the end of this year.

Thirteen firemen, along with chief Chuck Fenwick, Mayor Bob Ault and aldermen Drew Allen and Odell Crabtree, met Monday night with Paul Boecker of the ISO.

The meeting was to question Boecker on the June 1993 survey results and seek guidance for further improvement.

Boecker praised the department, saying ISO reviews about 1,500 areas in Illinois. "You're one of the better volunteer fire departments we deal with," he said, adding the department's equipment is well-maintained and records well kept.

Boecker explained that survey results were divided into three categories: receiving and handling fire alarms, the fire department, and the water supply.

Under receiving and handling fire alarms,

which includes telephone lines and the number of operators on duty to handle fire calls, the city scored 5.7 of a maximum 10 points.

In the water supply section, which includes where and what type of hydrants are installed and water flow, the city scored 23.55 of a possible 40.

The results of the fire department section, including information on equipment and training, on the surface look less-than-stellar, with the city getting only 19.97 points of 50-plus maximum.

However, Boecker said, the department's problem is not a lack of equipment or training, but good documentation.

Boecker said firemen who inspect equipment should do so with new recruits, explaining the use of each piece and thereby increasing training time.

The department can also make cutaways of hydrants and pumps to use as training tools, and share information with other communities. "We don't have to hog all the resources to ourselves," he said. "We can share them."

See "RATING" on other side

Convicted child molester moves to Hoopeston

A man convicted of sexually abusing an Iroquois County child has moved to Hoopeston.

John Beckman, 63, formerly of Iroquois, had to leave Iroquois County as part of his sentencing agreement, said Gordon Lustfeldt, Iroquois County state's attorney.

Beckman pleaded guilty to one count of aggravated criminal sexual abuse in December after he

molested an 11-year-old girl. He was placed on four years' probation, fined, ordered to have no unsupervised contact with anyone under 14 years of age, and was ordered out of Iroquois County to keep him away from the victim, Lustfeldt said. He also had to register with the state as a convicted sex offender.

See "MOLESTER" on other side

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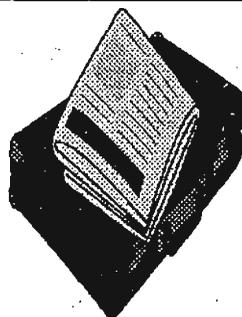
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Rating continued from other side

Also, when driving the trucks to check them, new members can do the driving, getting credit for driving time, street familiarity and other graded areas. "You get a whole lot of credit whacked out," Boecker said.

The biggest percentage of the fire department category is personnel, something Boecker said Hoopeston will never be able to attain a perfect score in. The scale lists 15 as the maximum number of points, although more are possible. "They only way to get the 15 points is sleepers," Boecker said.

Some improvements will be difficult. For example, a ladder truck would add another five points to the total, but at a high cost.

Fenwick said a used 1980 ladder truck - the oldest model he would want - costs about \$175,000. A new truck could be \$300,000, "but

we don't need that type of equipment," he said. "If we were in the city of Chicago, we couldn't justify a used one. We can't justify a new one."

Plans are already underway for the department to implement some changes and improve its rating.

Crabtree said the city's communications system will be updated when the department moves to the new city hall.

Fenwick said the department will concentrate on improving documentation. Also, he said, he would like to meet with city officials to formulate a plan for improving other areas.

The result may be an increased rating for the city and lower insurance rates for businesses and homeowners, which are tied to ISO ratings.

And the change may come yet this year. "I hope before this calendar year is up, we'll be reevaluated," Fenwick said.

Molester continued from other side

However, he said, Beckman's move to Hoopeston came as a surprise. "When he was sentenced, he indicated to the court that he would move to Bloomington," he said. "It was never our intent to flush anybody down to Vermilion County."

Beckman, now residing at 101 S. Fifth St., fondled the girl over a two-year period. "We don't know how many incidents there were," Lustfeldt said.

Forcing Beckman out is permissible under state law and "it was only with a condition like that

that we could be sure he'd have no contact with the other victims," Lustfeldt said. "There was no other way to guarantee their peace of mind. It was not an easy decision to make."

Beckman was not sentenced to jail because of his age and poor health.

Hoopeston police have been notified of Beckman's whereabouts.

In the hospital

Hoopeston Community Memorial Hospital
Feb. 7, 1994
Admitted: none.
Discharged: none.

Obituaries

FRANKLIN, Blanch, 80, of Vista CA., formerly of the Wellington-Milford area, died Feb. 7, 1994 at Vista. Funeral services will be 1 p.m. Friday at the Knapp Funeral Home in Milford. Burial will be in Maple Grove Cemetery. Visitation will be 4-8 p.m. Thursday at the funeral home. Memorials may be made to the Alzheimer's Association.

Weather

Cloudy and cold today with a chance of morning flurries. Partly sunny in the afternoon. High in the mid or upper 20s. Tonight, clouds developing. Low in the single digits. Tomorrow, partly cloudy. High near 24, low near 6.

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