

Valders Fire Department

By **Eric Johnson**
Photography by Fred Loomis

Nestled in the rolling farm country of central Manitowoc County is the quaint Village of Valders. On the third Monday of each month there is one building in the village that is busier than all the others, the Valders Fire Department (VFD).

There are upwards of 43 dedicated people that serve the area as firefighters and are cross trained to work on the Valders Fire Department Ambulance Service as well. Much like many of the fire departments across the state, mustering enough personnel to respond during daytime calls was a difficult endeavor. To address the issue, six personnel on the Valders Fire Department are full-time, working a rotating 24- hour shift, including Fire Chief Chris Dallas. The ambulance service provides paramedic level service, which is a huge accomplishment for them.

The department has a large response area covering a township size of 36 square miles. The ambulance responds to a much greater area of Manitowoc County. They provide paramedic level EMS service to 10 townships and villages over a whopping 260 square miles of the county! This large service area produced 87%

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FF Dallas Rutherford sets up for ropes training.



Valders Fire Chief Chris Dallas

the locker right next to the inflatable boat. You can also see many pictures hanging on the wall of various members conducting rope rescue and extrication evolutions. Something else that catches your eye hanging on the wall is a separate map that reveals the area that the VFD responds to aid in performing auto extrications across Manitowoc County. The VFD procured their first “Jaws” unit back in 1978. This was the first one for Manitowoc County. 43 years later the members of the Valders Fire Department are known throughout the county for their extrication equipment and the skills of its members that accompany the response.

What keeps the men and women motivated to keep up their skills finely honed is the drive of Chief Dallas. He has been the chief of the department for six years and is always looking at ways to either bring new types of training to the department or send members out to various schools and courses to get the training to bring it back to the members of VFD.

The Valders Fire Department protects its area with (2) engines, (1) tender, (1) command/utility truck with an Ultra-High Pressure (UHP) unit, and (2) ambulances. The

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Within their response area are several geographical features that create unique challenges to VFD. Assistant Chief Brandon Sy explained that he has seen a significant increase in people utilizing the Manitowoc River for recreational purposes like kayaking and canoeing since Covid-19 surfaced. The increase in recreationists has contributed to more calls for the VFD. Another geographical area in Manitowoc County that is the responsibility of the VFD is the DNR owned Collins Marsh. This 4200-acre parcel is the same marsh where last year a duck hunter went missing on October 29th but wasn't located until two weeks later on November 24th. Besides the waters of the Manitowoc River and Collins Marsh, there is an additional eight named lakes, numerous farm ponds and marshes in the VFD response area that create additional potential water rescue situations.

The VFD is prepared for the challenges at these unique areas. Walking around inside their station you can see the Mustang exposure suits hanging in



Stuart Hammel, Austin Shillcox, Dan Esser



Valders Fire Department has upwards of 43 dedicated firefighters and cross trained ambulance service personnel.

department also houses the Manitowoc County Communications Unit for long duration or complicated calls. But as you take a walk around the station, you can tell that the pride and joy of their fleet is with their 1931 Knot Fire Truck. It may no longer have a water tank on board, but it has been restored and is a show piece in the parades in town.

Farm accidents, vehicle crashes, fires, water rescues, medical calls, lost hunters, etc., just about anything that requires a response from the local fire department, the men and women of the Valders Fire Department are equipped and trained to handle the call.



Radio training utilizing new head sets Stuart Hammel, Devan Schneider, Davis Luckey, and Chris Dallas



Rob Stevens and Sarah Peterik, Paramedics



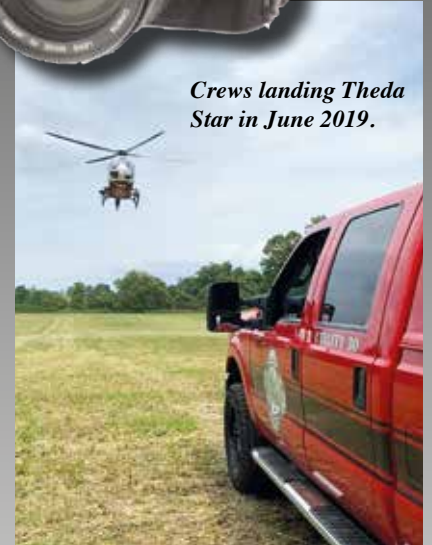
Assistant Chief Brandon Sy leads a Ropes training class

PHOTO GALLERY

Photos submitted by Valders FD



Structure fire in the village of Valders February 2021



Crews landing Theda Star in June 2019.



Structure fire winter 2018.



Structure fire in July 2019.



Department training at an acquired structure.



Motor vehicle accident.



Structure fire January 2019.