

Town OKs fire sign initiative

Written by Mark Jaeger
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Officials say program will reduce surprises for firefighters battling blazes

The Town of Saukville is the latest community to get behind a collaborative effort by area fire departments to identify properties with long driveways.

In rural areas where firefighters rely on pumper trucks to get water to the scene of a fire because there is no fire hydrant system, there are few problems worse than running out of fire hose.

To avoid that risk, four area fire departments — Newburg, Saukville, Fredonia and Waubeka — are leading a campaign to mark the driveways that are 1,000 feet or longer.

That distance is a key number, because most trucks can carry only about 1,000 feet of large-dimension hose.

All four departments provide fire protection to sections of the Town of Saukville, and cooperate in mutual-aid support when there are larger fires.

Fire department officials have said posting standardized signs is critical in townships, because firefighters from outside the community frequently respond to calls.

Newburg Fire Chief Dave Geidel explained the concept to the Town Board last month, noting that the department has identified 61 properties in the township with drives of at least 1,000 feet.

Several town properties are believed to have driveways that are more than 2,000 feet long.

To anticipate problems before they happen, the departments want reflective signs similar to those used for fire numbers placed at the entry to each long driveway.

Geidel explained that the signs would be erected the end of each of the long drives. For exceptionally long driveways, additional “drop” signs will be posted in 1,000-foot intervals, indicating where lengths of hose should be left to be connected by the following truck.

To minimize the cost of the signs, the departments submitted a group order to Lange Enterprises of Oconomowoc.

According to Geidel, the driveway signs will cost \$6.85 each, and would be attached to the posts of a property’s existing fire number.

In addition, he said 56 footage signs and additional posts would be needed, bringing the cost of the campaign in the town to just under \$1,500.

Geidel also asked the town to consider adopting a ordinance that would require future properties to comply with the sign standards.

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For existing properties, the town will send letters to the owners asking them to pay for the signs.

The Town Board agreed to cover any shortfall in costs incurred by requiring the driveway signs.

The sign program was previously endorsed by the Fredonia Town Board.