

Madam Chair, Alderman and members of the public

My name is Richard C Ford II.

I serve Chicago as the Fire Commissioner of the nation's second largest department. I am pleased to be here this morning and would like to introduce my staff to you all.

(Announce others)

Under the leadership of Mayor Lightfoot we have been able to respond to not only the medical needs of the current pandemic, but also the need to provide the response required for periods of civil unrest that resulted in arson activity in many of our neighborhoods and even in our central business district.

The motto of the Chicago Fire department is, "We're There When You Need Us"

And we continue to provide not only the best fire and medical services, but do so while continuing to educate the public on fire safety and conduct inspections to assure those who live and work in our city they can be confident they are safe wherever they go.

I am pleased to report to you that the CFD remains as an ISO1 fire department as rated by the Insurance Services Office, a nationally recognized accrediting organization that has examined Chicago's fire response system and granted its top rating on our ability to receive 911 calls for help, dispatch resources, respond in a timely manner and mitigate the fire or medical emergency. We are proud to have this rating continue for our city.

And to the men and women who would like to join the best fire department in the world, I am proud to announce plans for a new Firefighter/EMT exam to be offered next September.

I will also pledge to you that we will work with each of our Aldermen, DHR and outreach professionals to ensure that word is spread far and as wide with the best marketing efforts to achieve the most diverse group of applicants.

I can also announce that our fire death numbers continuing to decline. Our count of those who lost their lives in fires in our city was 26 at this time last year. Today that count stands at 15. Of the 15 deaths, two thirds occurred in homes where there was no working smoke alarm. Or to put it another way our fire deaths could have potentially been in the single digits if working detectors had been present in those homes where a fatality occurred.

While current alarms can be purchased for under 5 dollars, we still find that many homes are without a working unit.

Our public education unit has distributed approximately 6000 smoke alarms and over 200 Carbon Moxoxide detectors free of charge to residents who might not otherwise be able to afford them. While our in-person fire safety sessions have been greatly curtailed by COVID-19, we still strive to reach as many people as possible for proper training on fire prevention and fire escape. Our latest numbers show that Public Education has conducted over 800 fire safety programs spread out across all 50 wards of Chicago. We have fine-tuned our groundbreaking virtual reality "Fire Escape" interactive residential training program for use in schools that have been able to hold classroom sessions.

But make no mistake, while safety is our number one concern, this fire department will continue to honor its obligation to do all it can to make sure we maintain the goal of making our membership better reflect the makeup of our city, strive for diversity in all command ranks including senior command, and continue to work to maximize where possible, minority and women-controlled businesses in the use of materials and services for this department. Let me again tell you our next entrance exam is set for September of next year and I look for working with all of you to welcome applicants from every neighborhood answer the call.

I am pleased to take any questions you may have.