



CASE STUDY Buffalo Grove Fire Department

Buffalo Grove (IL) Fire Department Improves Recognition and Early Intervention

The [Village of Buffalo Grove, IL, Fire Department](#)—located in a suburb north of Chicago—had a large group of personnel retire around the same time, which created some issues and some opportunities.



Anyone who has served in the fire service understands that tradition is slow to change, which can be both positive and negative. The positives of the strong fire service culture are what attracts many to this profession. The professionalism, dignity, and camaraderie of the fire service have been pillar foundations that have drawn many to endure the stringent training, emotional toll, and physical endangerment that goes along with the profession.

An Opportunity to Modernize Operations

Yet, the strong culture that preserves the foundational pillars can also inhibit positive change. With a significant shift in retiring personnel, new recruits, and young lieutenants at Buffalo Grove Fire Department, the leadership team realized it was an opportunity to introduce technology that could modernize and improve operations.

Tyler Grace, Fire Management Analyst at Buffalo Grove FD, said that he was introduced to the [Guardian Tracking performance management and early intervention solution](#) by their police department. When asked why they decided to implement the Guardian Tracking solution at Buffalo Grove FD, Grace said, "It offered us an opportunity to strengthen our recognition procedures and ensure better consistency in our documentation. We have a high overtime volume and young lieutenants bouncing from one station to another who may not have consistent insight to pick up behavior patterns, whether negative or positive."

Helping Lieutenants Keep Better Track of Significant Events and Exposures

To help the leadership team keep track of personnel events across shifts and stations, Buffalo Grove FD set up thresholds to track "significant events." If they have a new firefighter responding from station #25 to a full arrest incident, and then the firefighter picks up an overtime shift at station #26 and responds to a baby-not-breathing call, these events are now documented in Guardian Tracking. When the threshold is met, an alert is triggered and escalated to the immediate supervisor and safety officer to determine the proper course of action for the mental and physical wellbeing of the firefighter.

CASE STUDY **Buffalo Grove Fire Department**

"In 2018, we had a firefighter pass away from cancer," said Battalion Chief Shawn Collins. "We did a manual review to find all the fire incidents he was at. However, while the narrative in our records system may give us an idea of whether he was on the scene and what he did at the call, it didn't really give us the exposure information we needed to validate whether the cancer was caused by a line-of-duty carcinogen exposure. With Guardian Tracking, we can drill down a lot deeper and it also gives the individual firefighter more control over the details of the documentation on exposure calls. In the state of Illinois, whether or not the family of a lost firefighter receives pension benefits is reliant on this type of detailed information.

Chief Collins said the science in the fire service is also changing. "In the past, only certain types of cancers were assumed, for example, cancers affiliated with a firefighter not using the SCBA devices properly," said Chief Collins. "Today, we need to track more information, such as proper washing procedures for bunker pants which may be contaminated and a contributing factor in absorbable cancers." Buffalo Grove FD can also use Guardian Tracking to set reminders to take an action in the future, like ensuring their HAZMAT personnel get physicals each year.

Helping Lieutenants to Catch Them Doing Positive Things

Guardian Tracking is helping Lieutenants better understand their team's performance. Grace explained that most of the entries in Guardian Tracking are to "catch personnel doing positive things and recognize them for it." In the last count, 19 out of every 20 entries were positive behaviors being entered. Non-supervisors can also enter information into Guardian Tracking to recognize their peers or report a wellness concern, which helps supervisors have a better and broader perspective into their direct reports' behaviors. The lieutenants have recognized how helpful the information is for providing objective data for performance ratings. And on the rare occasion that a negative behavior is captured, such as someone not having a spotter for a required task, Guardian Tracking has served as an informal counselor to help coach proper behaviors.

Other Technology Advancements

Buffalo Grove FD has replaced a lot of old processes that dated back 20 to 40 years and has upgraded its technology to not only include Guardian Tracking, but also has adopted [Vector LMS](#), [TargetSolutions Edition Training Platform](#), [Check It](#), and [Scheduling](#). As a result, they have modernized operations and improved their tracking and analysis, and made their jobs a whole lot easier.

About Buffalo Grove Fire Department

Services: Fire, EMS (BLS/ALS), fire prevention, public education, inspection services, technical rescue, hazardous materials response, and dive rescue and recovery

3 fire stations

54 full-time firefighters, paramedics, and officers; 6 full-time and 2 part-time staff members

Population served:
41,551

Annual call volume:
5,000/year

ISO Rating #2, which ranks their fire department in the top 5% of fire services in the U.S.