



For Immediate Release: 11.18.09

From: David Powers
Communications Director
708.358.5781

Contact: Tom Barwin
Village Manager
708.358.5770

Oak Park Fire Chief to retire

Oak Park Fire Chief William Bell has announced his intention to retire from the Village of Oak Park, effective the end of the year, as he approaches 30 years of service to the community. Bell, who joined the Oak Park Fire Department in 1980, has been chief since December 2004.

"This was not an easy decision to make. I have spent my entire career as a firefighter in Oak Park," Bell said. "The opportunity to serve the citizens of Oak Park alongside dedicated fire service professionals has provided a rewarding career. But after nearly 30 years, I believe it is time to look for new challenges and opportunities to share what I have learned as a member of a great organization."

Village Manager Tom Barwin expressed regrets for the pending loss of what he called "one of the most dependable, straight shooting" public safety executives he has encountered in his many years of municipal service.

"Bill Bell is a top-notch fire chief and he will be missed," Barwin said. "These challenging economic times have forced us to make some very tough, but necessary decisions. The Village is fortunate to have a fire chief of Bill's caliber to help guide and implement efforts to save money without sacrificing service. He will be missed. However, I understand his desire to move on. I wish him well as he embarks on a new adventure."

Barwin said an interim chief likely will be appointed from the current ranks of the Fire Department command staff.

While Bell will be retiring from Oak Park, he is not retiring from the fire service. He will become fire chief for the City of Richland Hills, a community of about 8,100 residents in the Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area.

Bell is an Oak Park native who attended Longfellow School and Oak Park-River Forest High School. He joined the Oak Park Fire Department as a firefighter in April 1980, rising through the ranks to hold numerous positions within the department, including Paramedic, Fire Investigator, Inspector, Lieutenant, Training Officer, Shift Commander, Deputy Chief of Operations and Fire Chief.

For more information on Oak Park Fire Department operations and services, visit www.oak-park.us/fire.

###