



North Palos Fire Protection District, Palos Hills, IL

Ease of scheduling, staff convenience and “transparency” are the rewards Chief Paul Mackin cites when recalling why the North Palos Fire Protection District migrated from paper and spreadsheets to the Aladtec platform several years ago.

North Palos, which operates from three stations in a roughly 15-square mile triangle bounded by U.S.Hwy. 12 on the north, Will Cook Road to the west, Calumet Sag Channel to the south and Tri-State Tollway to the east, needed an efficient solution to schedule part-time firefighters around the full-time rotations.

Mackin looked at several vendors but when he discovered the functionality of being able to simplify trades for part-timers, he gave Aladtec a try. Soon, he penned in the full-timers 24/48 shifts -- using Aladtec’s “repeats and rotations” tab -- and suddenly, staff members could view an entire year’s schedule from their smartphones.

“Tracking trades is probably the biggest asset for us and the ability (for all members) to see the entire schedule,” said Mackin, a 24-year veteran of the department. The function was used more than 50 times in a recent month.

Mackin added unique “time types” to track members’ overtime, out of class hours, paybacks and trades for trades.

Daily staffing of 16 firefighter-paramedics is the same every day of the year. A Battalion Chief oversees the three stations and their daily operations. Each station is staffed by a Lieutenant, an engineer, two paramedic/firefighters and one part-time firefighter. At least one paramedic ambulance and fire apparatus respond together to every emergency call.

A few staff members use Aladtec’s time clock option for some administrative personnel and other staffers. They’re in the process of integrating a conversion to mesh with a Chicago-area third party administration firm who handles payroll for the district.

Mackin was entirely new to Aladtec when he first started entering data but “it was pretty easy to get it up and running.”



Department Info:

Roster: 31 FT, 20 PT, staffing 3 stations.

Calls: 5,437 (3,808 EMS, 1389 Fire and 240 special service).

Service area: 15.5 sq. miles, approx. 35,000 pop.

Apparatus: 2 engines, 1 ladder, 3 ALS ambulances, brush truck, watercraft, hazmat, tech rescue equipment.

Challenges: 4 miles of Interstate 294, a major bypass through Chicago; auto-response on an additional 4 miles of Interstate; large nature preserve area with equestrian and bike trails.

Aladtec users since 2014

Neighboring agencies also using Aladtec:

Roberts Park, Burbank, Argonne, Merrionette Park, Darien-Woodridge, Calumet Park, Posen, and Homer Township Fire.



The learning curve on the program “depends on the individual”, he said, but it didn’t take long once firefighters realized they’d no longer have to call or stop by the station to initiate trades or put in for time off.

“Now everyone has access,” said Mackin. “It provides a degree of transparency.”

Mackin hasn’t used the Forms and Reports functions extensively but has created several e-forms -- an Apparatus & Vehicle check, SCBA Check, a Station Equipment & Generator Check -- and is working on another to streamline ordering of station kitchen and cleaning supplies.

Firefighters can also find certain personnel forms in the Storage area of the department’s platform.

The department doesn’t have mobile data terminals or tablets in any of its vehicles but it is something the department is considering. Currently, any online forms firefighters use must be completed using a terminal at the station or their personal smartphones.

Aladtec software costs Mackin’s department about \$50 per member, per year. He acknowledges that expenses are always a concern, but “I look at the benefits to the membership and the ease to trade shifts and view schedules. There’s an advantage to it.

“Could we go back to paper sheets for less? We could, but I think it’s a worthwhile expense,” he said.

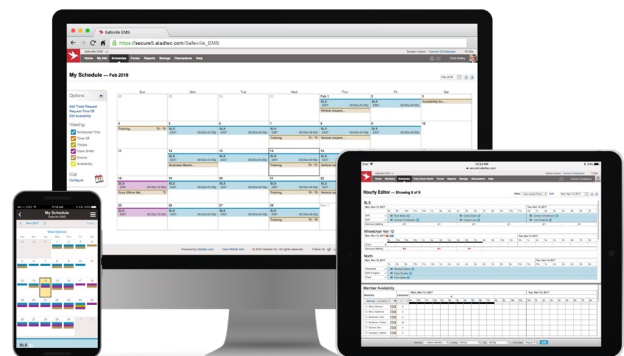
And Mackin appreciates the readily-available tech support, just a phone call away, at Aladtec’s River Falls, Wisconsin-based headquarters.

“They’re phenomenal. That’s one of the things ... It’s nice to pick up the phone and talk to someone in the Midwest.”



Chief - Paul Mackin

Paul Mackin has been a firefighter with North Palos Fire Protection District since 1994. He holds a Bachelor degree of Applied Science in Fire Service Management and a Masters degree of Public Administration.



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Aladtec, Inc. • 387 Arrow Court, River Falls, WI 54022
888-749-5550 • 715-690-2300
For more information visit www.aladtec.com

