Beginning today, Wednesday, Sept. 1, rotating fire station closures in Springfield will be limited to no more than one unit per day due to recent staffing increases. By Oct. 1, the Fire Department believes it will be able to end all rotating fire station closures. The Department is able to end all closures because it anticipates a reduction in the use of leave time by October. The department has had several personnel off on various types of leave, including military and sick leave, and a second set of new recruits will complete their initial training soon thereafter.

The rotating station closures began in April 2009. The process was implemented because of staffing shortages that were a result of attrition and a hiring freeze on General Fund positions that began in January 2009. The hiring freeze is still in effect. However, City Council authorized some vacancies to be filled within the Police and Fire departments as part of the 2010-2011 Fiscal Year budget due to a federal grant and a reduction in pension contributions. There are currently 20 recruits in a Police Academy. In August, 10 recruits graduated a Fire Academy, and another seven are enrolled in the current Fire Academy.

The authorized fire fighter staffing level is 212. The Department currently has 202 fire fighters in its ranks, not including the seven currently in academy. The Springfield Fire Department requires a minimum daily staffing level of 51 personnel to cover all 16 units at the city’s 12 stations 24 hours a day.

“We have been very concerned about the safety of the citizens for the past 18 months,” said Fire Chief David Hall. “By reducing or eliminating the station closures, we are in a much better position to provide the level of service the community expects.”

For more information, contact: Fire Chief David Hall, (417) 864-1507.