

Fire alarm

By Kathy Hudson

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Word came on New Year's Day that equipment at the Roland Park fire station had been out of service for three days in a row. This is part of budget cutting efforts by the the City and the fire department.

Now Saturday, news comes from the [Roland Park Civic League](#) that since July 11, one or the other of two pieces of equipment there, engine 44 or truck 25, has been removed from service, for a total of more than 50 days or nights! As the Civic League notice points out, that means on average one piece of equipment is either moved from the station or out of service more than twice a week.

Perhaps that explains why, when a Roland Park resident reportedly called the fire department Christmas day, because a tree was on fire in her yard, the response time was slow. It reportedly took almost 15 minutes for a response. The resident finally spotted the engine sitting at a corner. It was an engine from another fire station, so the driver was less familiar with neighborhood streets.

What if the fire had ignited neighboring houses? 15 minutes is too long. Response time was only a couple of minutes in the 2007 fire at 218 Ridgewood Road, and that fire produced two fatalities.

With the Roland Park fire station being the station closest to four large schools north of Deepdene Road and two universities, plus hundreds of wood-shingled houses, having either truck or engine out of service makes no sense.

Does it count for nothing that Roland Park and surrounding communities helped secure over \$240,000 to repair and make safer the Roland Park fire station? This station serves the residents of surrounding neighborhoods and thousands of school children from all over the city and nearby counties every day. Does taking equipment out of service increase their safety?

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Kathy Hudson is a freelance writer who lives in in Roland Park. Her interests include gardening, literature and city life. She's a terrible cook, so she's always on the lookout for a decent meal, carryout or otherwise. She's written for "The Baltimore Messenger" since 1995 and has had a bi-weekly column, "Hudson's Corner," since 1998. For "Style" magazine she writes spotlights on people and regular garden features.