

Fire Watchers Fanned to Action

City Organizes Fan Groups Into Volunteer Rescue Units

"We used to go and stand around at fires," said Charles "Jimmy" Johnson.

"Folks called us the 'Sidewalk Chiefs'!"

Then Mayor Daley and Fire Commissioner Quinn got the idea of putting the fire watchers to work.

AND MEMBERS of the Chicago Fire Fans Association and the 5-11 Fire Fans Club were organized to form the Civil Defense Fire and Rescue Service.

Johnson, 48, of 5846 N. Washtenaw, soon afterward was named chief of the 80-man volunteer organization.

Six fully equipped rescue trucks, that had been gathering dust in city garages awaiting some great disaster since 1955, were turned over to the new organization in September.

ADVANCED first aid training and other courses are taught at Tuesday night meetings at the Fire Department Drill School, 715 Vernon Park pl.

"Our first class was graduated Tuesday night, despite the snowstorm," said Johnson.

"But we saw our first action New Year's Eve at the Hub-

bard st. warehouse fire," he said. "We haven't missed a major fire since."

JOHNSON SAID his men "do anything we can to help the firemen short of actually fighting the fire ourselves."

They drag hoses, do rescue and first aid work, direct traffic, or haul gasoline for fire apparatus.

At the Hubbard st. fire the volunteers put in a 14-hour stretch salting down the warehouse roof to keep the ice melting so its weight would not cave in the building as firemen pumped water onto the flames.

Johnson, when not watching fires or assisting at emergencies, is president of the Globe Distributing Co., 1623 N. California.