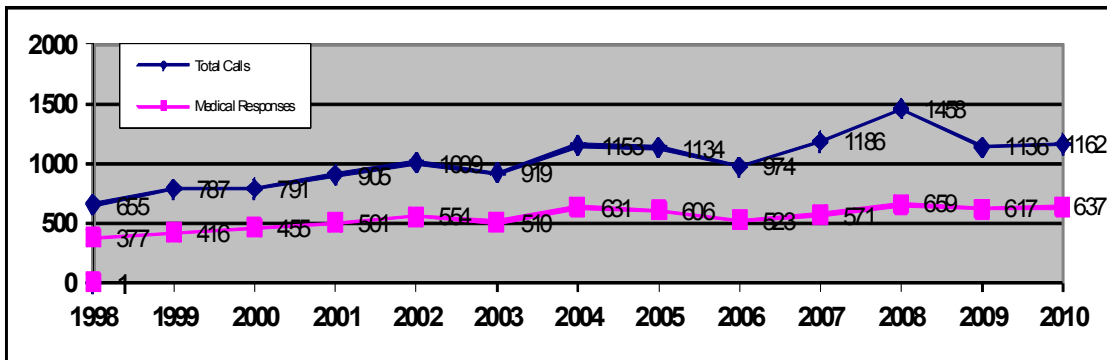


FIRE DEPARTMENT

I am pleased to submit the following Annual Report for the calendar year 2010 for the Westminster Fire and Ambulance Departments. Proudly serving the citizens of the town of Westminster for 184 years. Chief Brenton W. MacAloney



The Fire Department annual report comprises the Fire Department and the Ambulance Department reports. Since EMS has always been part of the WFD we continue to report both within the same annual report although both have different Department Budget lines.



Department Record:

Fire:

Structure	6
Brush/Illegal	41
Chimney	6
Motor Vehicle	9
Mutual Aid	57
Auto Fire Alarm	161
Electrical	2
Other Fires	10

Investigations:

Misc.	157
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Emergency Medical:

Illness/Injury	497
Motor Vehicle Accident	140

Service Calls:

Public Service	45
Hazardous Materials	9
Hovercraft Calls	0
Search and Rescue	2
Carbon Monoxide	16
Other	2

Total Incidents 1162

Permits and Compliance 2010:

Burning Permits	465 (1181 Activations)
Smoke / CO Detector Insp.	120
Oil Burner Permits	58
Blasting Permits	1
Fuel Storage	49
Plan Reviews	45
Safety Inspections	64
Fire Drills	18
Miscellaneous	2
Non-Criminal Complaint	0 (Fines issue for non compliance.)

Personnel:

Full-Time Staffing – There was no change to full-time firefighter staffing in 2010. Current full-time staffing includes 6 firefighters (4 firefighter/Paramedics, 2 Firefighter/EMT) in rotation working 10 hour days and 14 hour nights in four groups (2 in 2 groups and 1 each in 2 groups). When there is only one full-time firefighter on duty a per-diem firefighter is hired to work with them to provide two duty firefighter covering 24x7. In addition to the full-time firefighters there is a full-time Fire Captain, Chief, and Department Administrator who work weekdays.

On-Call Firefighters – Over the last year we have decreased the number of Call Firefighters by 1 due to attrition, bringing us to 15. With the passing of a special article at the annual town meeting providing funding (\$4,500) to hire and train on-call firefighters we successfully enrolled 6 on-call firefighter recruits. As of the end of 2010 four remain in the recruit training program at the Fire Academy, with 2 having dropped out the first month of the training. We are hopeful that these 4 recruits will be successful in completing the program and providing valuable manpower.

There are some Call Firefighters that are unable perform all functions including driving apparatus or operating specialized equipment due to lack of total training. The new Call Firefighters that we expect to graduate this year will also need to obtain training on all our vehicles and specialized equipment and this takes time.

Shortage of fully trained Call Firefighters continues to be our largest problem, and was worsened by budget reductions in the years prior to 2010. The special article funding for on-call firefighters at town meeting was welcomed to try to stabilize past attrition. I look forward to requesting the same funding again in 2011 to get ahead of the rate of the decline and grow the ranks to sufficient levels to provide firefighters to handle the complex incidents that require more than the two duty firefighter. Call Firefighter shortages places a burden on the full-time firefighters which results in increased overtime costs. Less fully trained Call Firefighters also puts more requirements on the remaining Call Firefighters.

Per-Diem Firefighters: We have 6 Per-Diem firefighters who are firefighters that do not live in Westminster and come to work shifts for our department. The reason for these firefighters is that we do not have sufficient number of call firefighters from town to cover shifts. Per-Diem Firefighters are either full-time firefighters or call firefighters for other communities. Although Per-Diem Firefighters have a place in our department they do not respond to general calls as they live too far away to make any difference in the majority of the calls we have.

Solution to the staffing problem: As noted above the plan is to request funding at the May 2011 Annual Town Meeting, as we did in 2010 for specifically hiring and training on-call firefighters.

As with this year we plan on hiring during June and complete the hiring process during July and August and send the recruits to the Fire Academy in Stow, MA for their training.

Call firefighter training at the Fire Academy comprises of 2 evenings per week and every other Saturday from September through mid-February. In addition to their firefighting training at the Fire Academy, they also spend time with medical training (First Responder), and training on our apparatus and equipment.

Residents 18 years of age and High School Students at least 16 years of age are encouraged to stop by the station and contact the Chief to learn more about becoming a Call Firefighter and review eligibility pending funding for hiring. For more detail contact the Fire Chief.

Department Training: We conduct 12 paid drills per year and a number of the trainings are refresher trainings each year so, we are not in a position to cover all training needs with only 12 drills. Before the Fire Department budget was cut we were funded for 24 paid drills and this provided for training on many things that we do not normally get to do. Training is integral to the ability to safely do our work.

I strongly urge the town to restore training funds in future budget years.

NIMS Compliance: The Fire Department complies with the NIMS Training requirements for 2010.

Service Delivery:

Multiple years of budget cuts has resulted in cuts to service delivery. In order to maintain our core services we cut out services such as providing public CPR and First Aid and cellar pumping. This has allowed us to utilize payroll funds for emergencies, but has left some services that we have provided the public in the past missing. We hope that at some point that these services can be restored.

It is our goal to provide the best possible customer service with regard to the delivery of Emergency Medical, Fire Suppression, Hazardous Materials, Technical Rescue, Fire Investigation, Public Fire Safety Education, Fire Prevention, and Specialized Community Services. The Department is service driven and we appreciate the feedback during the year to assist us in knowing how well we are delivering these services. Residents are encouraged to visit the station or contact the Chief of the Department at any time to inquire about the department and get answers to their questions.

Westminster ranks 329 out of 351 cities and towns in Massachusetts for the amount of square miles we cover from one station and as the town builds out our average response times will continue to increase and will require discussions about having a sub-station on already town own land in Whitmanville. The town needs to plan for this eventuality.

EMS:

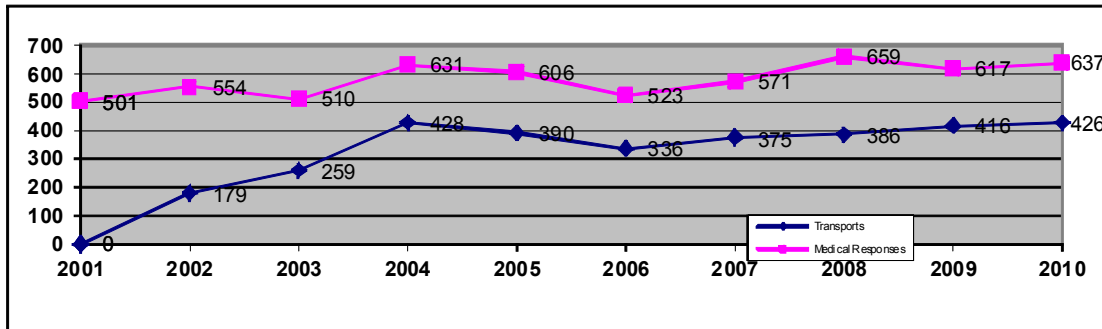
Emergency Medical Services – Over the last year 55% of the Department's responses are Emergency Medical in nature. This includes responding to all 911 calls for in-house medicals as well as personal injury accidents including motor vehicle accidents, which often require the assistance of firefighters to assist and address other hazards.

We offer outgoing EMS services that include visiting critical care and special needs patients and family to preplan a medical response in the event we are called.

Our responses to medical emergencies continue to exceed industry benchmark response times for Emergency Medical Services. Our response time from the initial call to arrival on scene is at an average of 4 minutes with 2 Firefighter/EMT's with one being a Paramedic.

During the year we utilize donations to purchase specialized equipment to assist the Paramedics with delivering lifesaving interventions.

The following chart shows the total number of medical response to ambulance transports since we started the ambulance service.



Ambulance Account - Ambulance receipts for services are put into a Town receipts for appropriation account where monies are expended only at a town meeting. Ambulance Receipts fully fund the additional costs of operating the ambulance service. The Ambulance Budget covers the cost for the ambulance, medical supplies for the Ambulance, Fire Department, Police Department, and First Aid Kits the Town Hall, Parks and Recreation, and Crocker Pond. A detailed ambulance report containing statistics and finances is provided to the Selectmen on a monthly basis.

Ambulance Audit - Ambulance Department was chosen for a detailed budget audit during 2010. The audit recommended items such as paying for ambulance billing and ALS services to other companies by appropriating the funds in the budget vs. spending directly from the Ambulance Receipts Account. This was corrected at the 2010 Fall Special Town Meeting with funds being moved from the Receipts Account to the Ambulance budget. There was no increase in costs for doing this, it just adjusted where the money came from to pay for these costs. The Audit also recommended a write-off policy. This policy was created and implemented during 2010. A second ambulance was recommended to address the lost revenue when the primary ambulance is tied up on a call or out of service being worked on. An additional ambulance is supported by previous recommendations. We currently have a second ambulance license for our Rescue truck and if we have a second ambulance we would move this license and equipment over to the new ambulance allowing for a vehicle only purchase as the equipment and license already exists.

Ambulance - During 2010 we paid off the Ambulance Bond two years early on our 2007 Horton Ambulance.

ALS/Paramedics – 2010 was our third year of operating at the Paramedic level EMT service. We currently have 4 full-time paramedics with one scheduled to work each shift. We have one additional full-time firefighter finishing their paramedic training early in 2011 and this will provide the ability to provide better Paramedic coverage when one is out. We also have a 3 per-diem Firefighter/Paramedics that provide coverage when one of our paramedics is out.

Fire Prevention, Suppression and Response:

2010 is no exception to what we have seen with an increase of State Laws that require the Fire Department to perform inspections. Although these additional requirements improve public safety, they do have an impact on the Fire Department staff. We have complaints from the public from time to time regarding our need to reschedule due to being tied up with an emergency. Since we do not have dedicated inspection personnel and utilize duty firefighters, we ask the public for understanding when we need to reschedule.

ISO (Insurance Rating) - The Fire Department maintains an ISO Fire Insurance Rating of 4/9. The ISO rating is utilized by many insurance companies to set fire insurance rates for residents and businesses. The rating of 4 places Westminster on a par with 6.9 percent of communities across the country. Just 10.3 percent of cities and towns nationwide are rated between one and four on a nine-point scale. Only 3.9 percent of communities in the country have a better rating than Westminster. The 4 rating is for parts of the community protected by town water and the 9 are for those sections of town that are not on the water system. There are many factors that are included in the rating including staffing levels, water flow, training, and alarm systems. The firefighter assigned to address the data that ISO has, supplied ISO with a number of changes to our fire protection map that resulted from including hydrants that were town owned and missing or hydrants from other communities that are close to the town line or inside of Westminster. The focus now is to work to have some of our dry hydrants rated as a hydrant to allow these to be included in the fire protection and the residents in these areas to benefit on their fire insurance. We are also working on our training to meet the ISO standard for water shuttling that will allow us to reduce the ISO rating of 9 to 6 for our water system.

Homeowners should check their insurance policy and look for the fire insurance rating and if they have questions contact the Fire Department to determine what ISO Classification area they are in. The 4 rating on our policy provides the lowest cost for fire protection of your property in Westminster.

Fire Alarm/Monitoring – Since 2006 the Fire Department has been using a wireless Fire Alarm system to monitor buildings in town. We now have 54 locations we monitor and in addition to monitoring Fire Alarms we also monitor burglar alarms and special alarms for town facilities. The system works very well and provides early information about where the alarm is coming from within the building when newer alarm panels are installed. This way the firefighters are better prepared before they arrive.

Hazardous Materials – The Fire Department is the Town's Hazardous Materials emergency response service and the location for Right To Know information for companies that report to the EPA. The Fire Department takes advantage of Massachusetts Law to bill for our Hazardous Materials responses and utilize the funds we receive go into a revolving account to pay for the storage, disposal, and replacement of equipment used. The efforts undertaken to control and clean up even minor spills protects the ground water, shallow wells from pollution, and protects the environment we all enjoy in Westminster.

Technical Rescue – Every year the Fire Department faces challenges with regard to rescuing the public. Although we do not supply all types of technical rescue we have focused on core rescue techniques that are most likely to affect the public. These include cold water/Ice rescue, vertical lift rescue, confined space rescue, and low angle rescue. Rescues that are outside the realm of what we offer can be obtained through mutual aid from other communities. These include dive rescue and trench rescue as examples.

Fire Investigation - The Westminster Fire Department investigates all fires with 2 highly experienced fire investigators that ensure that all fires are investigated completely. The efforts of the fire investigators have resulted in reduced arson resulting in stolen vehicles dumped and ignited from other communities. In addition, the town has benefited from court ordered community service. Funds are returned to the Town's General Funds for inclusion in future years expenditures.

Fire Prevention - Prevention activities are a major focus for the department that not only help reduce property loss and injuries, but also includes the development of the personal interaction between the community and the fire service. The Fire Department participates in a number of town events each year to assist in meeting the goals of the department.

Fire Prevention activities in the department include residential commercial, and industrial building plan review, residential smoke and carbon monoxide detector inspections, oil burner inspections, LP storage inspections, blasting permitting, flammable storage permitting, commercial, industrial, and industrial inspections, Senior Citizen safety awareness, preschool and daycare fire education programs, and school age fire education programs.

SAFE and related programs - Westminster is a SAFE Grant participating community having received SAFE (Student Awareness for Fire Education) State Grant funds for a number of years. This program focuses on school age children and other "at risk" groups such as seniors. Our primary focus continues to be preschool, kindergarten, and elementary school age children. Preschool and kindergarten children are taught fire safety at the Fire Station with video and live fire education programs with Smokey Bear at the guest visitor. We also take our "Friendly Firefighter" program on the road to preschools to introduce young children to firefighters so they know not be scared of us during an emergency when we have all our equipment on.

Our Elementary School age fire safety education is based on the SAFE Program. This is delivered to students at the Westminster Elementary and Meetinghouse School and also involves using the SAFE Trailer available from the Fire District and other classroom activities.

The State SAFE Grant has continued to be funded and these funds make it possible to deliver quality fire and general safety programs to the public and key "at risk" groups in the future without local funds. There is a population that often get missed during this training and that is home schooled children as they do not attend the main-stream educational locations we visit. Parents of home schooled children are encouraged to be in contact with us so we can notify them when we run our programs so their children can participate.

The SAFE Program is developmental in that it builds on the knowledge that is instilled in the children each consecutive year as the children participate. In later years the children generally know the basics of personal, family and home safety.

The Fire Department is a member of the Massachusetts State-Wide Coalition for Juvenile Firesetter Intervention Program, and provides intervention programs for children at risk. The department has trained firefighters in evaluating children for risk potential and assisting with referral to various agencies for intervention if necessary. Residents are encouraged to contact the department if they feel they know of a child at risk.

Our senior citizens are considered an "at risk" population for injury and to address this we have continued to offer assistance through programs we offer through partnership with the Council on Aging such as the "File of Life". The "File of Life" is a card with personal medical information that is kept on the refrigerator for easy access by emergency responders that provides important medical and medicine information to EMT's. Having this medical information in one place

reduces the time on-scene and potential errors that can occur by trying to obtain this information in person. We also offer assistance to seniors with the installation of self purchased smoke and carbon monoxide detectors for their increased safety. Anyone wishing assistance can call the department to arrange an appointment.

Over the year we have worked with many businesses in the community performing inspections and assisting with answering questions. We look to develop corporative relationships with businesses to assist them with their safety programs, such as fire extinguisher training, participating in safety drills, and assisting with emergency preparedness. We had to change how we provided these services in FY2010 due to budget cuts. We now need to coordinate our efforts using duty staff vs. hiring an additional firefighter to assist with the training due to costs. This has resulted in having to have businesses work around our schedule rather than us working around theirs. Businesses interested in available programs are asked to contact the fire prevention office for available programs.

Specialized Community Services:

CPR/First Aid - We had been providing the public with Community CPR & First Aid for a number of years, but with the budget cuts of FY2010 we have eliminated the community programs. The community programs were eliminated as we could not afford to pay for an additional firefighter to provide the training. Until the program was eliminated, the first half of the year we trained 49 people in CPR and First Aid.

There is an ongoing need from town business, community groups, organizations, and the general public for CPR and First Aid education. We still provide the training to Town of Westminster employees. We hope at some point funds will be available to provide this live saving education again in the future.

Lock Boxes - The Department works with residents interested in the use of residential lock boxes. The department keeps a few lock boxes purchased with donated funds to assist residents who often contact us about handicapped, or otherwise physically impaired family members that may need emergency services during hours when other caregivers are not home. Since the Fire Department does not hold residential keys it is possible that the only way we can get in the residence when needed is to force entry. We loan lock boxes to residents with temporary problems or until they can purchase there own. Anyone interested in the Lock Box program or is looking to purchase their own lock box is encouraged to contact the department.

Halloween Bon Fire - Each year the Department partners with the Friends of the Library to provide the Halloween Bon Fire held at the Public Safety Facility. This event attracts hundreds of adults and children and provides an opportunity to meet residents and to answer questions about the department.

Event Planning - The Department consults on event management venues in town. The Fire Department has developed unique skills to coordinate large multi-jurisdictional resources through managing large incidents and attending training. Any business or civic group interested in assistance in event planning should contact the department. Our assistance helps with planning a safe event for the public.

Mid-State Fire Mutual Aid – Westminster is a member of the Mid-State Fire Mutual Aid Association and like other Fire Departments in the area we continue to be dependent on mutual aid due to shortages in manpower, and ensuring firefighter safety. (It takes a minimum of 16 firefighters to fight a house fire.)

Department Equipment:

Fire Equipment - All hose has been tested and defective hose taken out of service or repaired. Fire pumps as well as Fire Ladders have been tested and certified to meet original specifications and repaired as needed. SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus), along with the compressed air we put in the bottles, is also tested each year.

Rescue Truck (R1) (2000) American LaFrance. This vehicle provides EMS (Emergency Medical Services) and Fire Rescue services to the town. It is licensed as a Class V Ambulance (back-up ambulance) Funding was obtained at the 2010 Annual Town Meeting to refurbish the body of the vehicle to abate corrosion.

Ambulance 1 (A1) (2007 Ford Ambulance) Horton. It is used to respond to Emergency Medical calls and transport patients to the hospital. The vehicle is in excellent condition. The ambulance was sent in for body work during December 2010 that was covered under the original purchase warrantee.

Engine 1 (E1) (1999 Class A pumper) KME. It carries 1000 gallons of water and Class B foam to fight flammable liquid fires, and is in very good condition. Some corrosion was addressed in 2010 with funds from the FD Budget.

Engine 2 (E2) (2001 Class A pumper) KME. It carries 2500 gallons of water and has a Class "A" foam system that doubles the rate of fire suppression. This vehicle is also capable of operating as a tanker by performing water shuttles, and is in very good condition.

Engine 4 (E4) (1990 Class A Pumper) KME. It carries 1000 gallons of water, and is in good condition for a mid-life vehicle. \$45,000 approved at the May 2009 Annual Town Meeting was spent during 2010 to perform some refurbishment to the vehicle. The original request of \$90,000 to refurbish the entire vehicle was reduced to assist with finances due to the recession. The primary focus was corrosion on the cab of the vehicle and safety issues such as upgrading the seat belts to 3 point type and replacing the door latches from ¼ turn handles to paddle latches. Although we addressed some safety problems and abated corrosion the vehicle, it still needs more work in the future. Since the vehicle lacks many safety standards required for new vehicles repair or refurbishment would not address these issues and only a replacement will solve this out of date vehicle problems from a safety perspective.

Tower 1 (T1) (2005 Ladder Truck) KME 95 ft aerial ladder with tower bucket and 300 gallons of water and 2000 GPM pump. The vehicle is in very good.

Engine 5 (E5) (2008 Mini-Pumper) CET. Engine 5 is a multi-purpose vehicle that is used year-round to respond to all outdoor fires and its size and weight allow it to be the initial structural fire response for those areas in town like Leino Park where bridge weight restrictions require the larger apparatus to take back roads that are not suited for ease of response. The vehicle carries 300 gallons of water and compressed air foam and is 4-wheel drive.

Utility Vehicles: The department has 3 utility vehicles as follows: Car 1 (2008, Chief's car – Excellent condition) and is designed to be an emergency response vehicle and the primary command vehicle at major incidents. Car 2 (2003, Duty Officer's car good condition) and is designed to be an emergency response vehicle and the secondary command vehicle when the Car 1 is not available. This vehicle will need to be planned for future replacement. Car 3 (2007 utility pick up truck – excellent condition)

Radio Equipment: The UHF radio system is in good condition. All firefighters have UHF portable radios and pagers for their safety. The department maintains our Low-band radio system as a back up and communications system for alerting and all communications on UHF are repeated on Low-Band. The public wishing to listen to us can tune their scanner to either 460.1625 or 33.96 both with a PL of 127.3

Breathing Apparatus: The breathing apparatus are fully compliant and inspected and tested yearly. The SCBA bottles carbon wrapped and have to be replaced in 15 years from date of manufacturing. Our bottles were manufactured in 1999 which results in the bottles needing to be replaced in 2014. The money for their replacement will be requested at the Annual Town Meeting in May of 2014, with purchasing occurring out of FY15 article funds. We have 28 SCBA packs with bottles with 32 spare bottles for a total of 60 bottles with a cost estimated to be \$1200 per bottle for a total article cost at town meeting estimated to be \$72,000. The town needs to plan for this future expenditure.

Station:

Our station is well maintained and in good structural condition, but lacks functional living, storage, and operational space. When the public safety complex was expanded in 1995 and the Fire Department moved in we quickly ran out of storage space for the small equipment and supplies we need to carry. Two storage sheds were added in the rear of the station over the years to assist with cold storage. Although this has been done we significantly lack space for records management and equipment and supplies. The Town has a Public Safety Space Needs Committee to address the space needs of both the Fire and Police, but due to Town finances this is seen as a long term solution.

Due to problems with the prevailing wage laws in the State we have been unable to fund improvements where the firefighters do the work. Costs to make improvements although funded were unspent and returned as the prevailing wage law requirements caused the cost of the project to double in cost. We are utilizing some space on the 3rd floor of the town hall, mostly for record storage and some bulk ambulance supplies.

The Town should continue to consider the possible solution that we have proposed is to build a Sub Fire Station on the land donated for such purpose on a parcel of land at the intersection of South Ashburnham Road and Whitmanville Road. This location provides a strategic location for a future Fire Sub-Station in the northern third of town, where growth is being experienced. The capital plan for the Fire Department includes the eventual need for a sub-station to adequately service the residents in this area and the Space Needs Committee is also considering this alternative. The fire department sees this being considered a long term solution that will be addressed by the Public Safety Building Committee.

Contact Information:

Location: Fire Station is located at 7 South Street, Westminster, MA 01473
Phone: 978-874-2313, Dispatcher Ext 0, Chief Ext 230, Fire Prevention Ext 232, Administrator Ext 231
Office hours: Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM to 4:30 PM.
Appointments: During normal office hours or by special appointment
E-mail: firechief@westminster-ma.gov
Web page: www.westminster-ma.org/fire.htm

General:

The Fire Department submits a capital replacement schedule as part of the yearly budget review. This capital plan needs to be put into an overall capital replacement plan for the Town to ensure that future funding for replacement is available in advance of the need.

Firefighting work is labor extensive and the Captain along with the 6 full-time firefighters we currently have working shifts alone can not meet the demands of the job by themselves. It actually takes a minimum of 16 firefighters to initially fight a house fire. The few full-time firefighters can not safely do their jobs without call firefighters. I am pleased with the support at the 2010 Annual Town Meeting for \$4,500 to fund the hiring and training of on-call firefighters to offset the declines we have had over the past few years. It is very important to continue to fund the same request at the May 2011 Annual Town Meeting to continue to increase our on-call firefighter ranks. The Fire Department understands that hiring on-call firefighters comes at a cost and residents do not want their taxes to go up, but on the other hand we need an adequate firefighting force to meet the needs of the community.

I wish to remind the town that;

“With out community support for the fire department in terms of people wishing to be call firefighters and coming day or night when you are called we will need more full time firefighters. It is not something the Chief and all firefighters control as we cannot do the job in the future with out help either call or full time.”

I have a great deal of respect for the current recruit class attending the Fire Academy in Stow 2 nights a week (6pm to 10pm) and every other Saturday. They have had to rearrange their schedules and make sacrifices to fit the training into their individual lives. Family support for what they are doing is critical for their success and I know that their families have had to go out of their way to accommodate their recruit. With a one hour commute to and from the Fire Academy the recruits don't often get home until after 11pm and then are up for work the next morning.

The few highly dedicated skilled on-call and full time firefighters that comprise the Department are responsible for the day-to-day operations. They do a great job of working with the community to delivery excellent services each year. They have my respect for the commitment and dedication they demonstrate. We welcome you to visit your Fire Station and meet the men and woman who stand ready when emergencies occur.

From time to time the Department receives cash donations from the public. These funds are utilized to purchase, or combine with town funds to purchase equipment that assist us deliver the services to the people we serve. The Department wishes to thank all that donate to the department either in cash and or services to help offset the cost to the town and improve the safety of the firefighters. The support from the community makes the job just that much easier for all of us, and the presents, cakes, cookies, and candies say thank you in a big way. Donations can be made out to the Westminster Fire/Rescue Fund.

I would like to thank other town departments for their high level of cooperation and professionalism in assisting us in delivering emergency services. Special thanks to the Police Department and the Public Works Department for their assistance at the many emergency responses we make each year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chief Brenton W. MacAloney