

**FIRE DEPARTMENT
2016 Annual Report
(Fire and Ambulance Departments)**



Visit us at www.westminster-ma.gov/fire-department

I am pleased to report the status of the Fire and Ambulance departments.

This past year the department saw a 5.6% spike in emergency response. This past year was the highest calls that we have ever responded to with the exception of 2008 Ice Storm year.

Each year I report that the Fire Department's biggest struggle is to recruit and retain call firefighters. We are able to attract a few recruits; however, our greatest difficulty is retaining them after they are trained. The time commitment required to be a call firefighter continues to increase. We find that people's lives are very busy and the addition of becoming a call firefighter is not sustainable for them. Without call firefighters to supplement our department I will have to hire more fulltime people to be able to maintain the level of service.

Department Record:

Incidents by Type 2016:

Incident Summary Analysis		
Type	Occurrences	Percentage
Fire/Explosion	43	3.27%
Overpressure Rupture	1	0.08%
Rescue Call	709	53.92%
Hazardous Condition	65	4.94%
Service Call	199	15.13%
Good Intent Call	87	6.62%
False Call	196	14.90%
Severe Weather/Natural Disaster	1	0.08%
Special Type/Complain	8	0.46%
Undetermined	8	0.61%
Total	1315	100.00%

Personnel:

Full-Time Staffing –

We currently have 7 fulltime firefighters who work to cover the town 24x7 with a staffing level of two firefighters on duty. We use call and per diem members to keep the cost of coverage down by utilizing them to work 42 hours a week. Shifts are rotating 24 hour shifts. Three groups are staffed with two fulltime fighters; one group with one fulltime firefighter and one call/per diem firefighter. In addition to the full-time firefighters there is a fulltime Fire Chief, Fire Captain and one Department Administrator who work weekdays.

On-Call Firefighters – The department finished the year out with 11 on-call firefighters. This is the lowest level the department on-call staff has ever been. Of those 11; two are fulltime employees of the DPW. One additional on-call firefighter works in town and when available will respond to calls. The remaining on-call firefighters work out of town and are not able to respond to calls while at their employment. The recruitment and training of additional on-call firefighters is essential to the future of the department however the department is not able to recruit and retain firefighters at a pace to replace the loss of personnel. The shortage of on-call personnel is not unique to Westminster and continues to be the biggest struggle facing fire departments our size nationally. The department expects to continue to see a decrease in on-call firefighters.

Call Firefighter Recruitment: Residents 18 years of age are encouraged to contact the Chief to learn more about becoming a Call Firefighter and review eligibility.

Per-Diem Firefighters: At the end of 2016 the department has 9 Per-Diem firefighters. These firefighters work shifts alongside the fulltime firefighters. These firefighters have been utilized to keep salary costs down while maintaining our high level of service delivery. It is important to note these firefighters do not live in Westminster. These firefighters work their scheduled shifts for our department and rarely respond to calls during off hours. Per-Diem Firefighters are highly qualified firefighters who come to us as firefighters from other communities. Based on the daily activities these employees are limited in their service beyond emergency response.

Department Training: We conduct a minimum of 12 paid fire department drills each year. Many of these drills include refreshers which are mandatory to keep firefighters certifications current. Each year we see the demands of the fire service continue to grow and evolve; however, we are struggling to keep our firefighters current to these changes. We are working to expand our training to include topics that are essential to the safety of the firefighters.

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

Service Delivery:

The Fire Department goal is to provide the best possible 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.

EMS:

Emergency Medical Services – Over the last year the fire department has responded to 709 medical related calls. This includes MVA's general medicals and services calls. From those 709 calls the department treated 777 patients. Some incidents have more than one patient and require more than a single ambulance.

We continue to have highly trained paramedics working 24 hours a day 365 days a year. All of these paramedics have received the latest training in pre-hospital care and represent the highest level of pre-hospital care available. All of our paramedics have been trained to meet the changes faced as the new treatment guidelines came into effect. These paramedics continue to provide the highest level of care and are able to make life saving decision in the field which provides patients with the best possible outcome from their illness/injury. One example we continue to see is transports to specialty centers such as UMass for Trauma and Cardiac Care. In

2016 our ambulance transported to specialty resources in Worcester 46 times. These transports provide the patient with early access to a trauma center due to an injury or access to cardiac specialty resources which are not available at our community hospitals. The early recognition and transport provides patients with the best possible care available in the quickest amount of time.

Ambulance Statistics 2016:

Ambulance Calls by Level of Service 2016

Type	Occurrences	Percentage
ALS	300	38.61%
BLS	188	24.20%
Refusal/non trans	243	31.27%
Other agency	25	3.22%
Other	21	2.70%
Total	777	100.00%

Ambulance Calls by Transport Destination 2016

Hospital	Occurrences	Percentage
Heywood	253	32.56%
UMass	44	5.66%
Leominster	190	24.45%
Non-Transport	288	37.07%
St. Vincent's	2	0.26%
Total	777	100.00%

Ambulance Budget – The budget that is voted at the annual town meeting covers labor, equipment and supply costs to run our paramedic ambulance service. The revenue generated from transports returns to the ambulance account where this money is used to fund the service. Since the start of the service in 2002 we have been able to provide the best service to the community without tax payer money through the use of ambulance receipts.

On-call EMT's – We currently have three on-call EMT's that assist with ambulance coverage. These EMT's respond to medical calls and fire incidents to provide medical assistance. We continue to recruit people to assist us with the delivery of EMS.

Fire Prevention, Suppression and Response:

Fire Alarm/Monitoring – The department continues to grow the wireless network to provide a very reliable system for business and residents to report alarms directly to the station. The technology has allowed us to know what specific device is in alarm prior to leaving the station.

Technical Rescue – The Town has one member of the regional District 8 technical rescue team. This team is made up of departments from the area that can perform different technical rescues. The equipment has been made available from Homeland Security funds. We commit to a monthly training to keep our skills.

Fire Investigation - The Westminster Fire Department investigates all fires in accordance with Massachusetts Laws. The department continues to be partners with the Westminster Police Department and the State Fire Marshal office to investigate all fires fully.

Fire Prevention: Captain Kyle Butterfield

Fire Department Permit Activity 2016

Type	Occurrences	Percentages
Commercial Inspection	65	8.00%
Public Education	62	7.63%
Follow Up Inspection	18	2.24%
Plan Review	160	19.68%
Rough Inspection	20	2.46%
Solar Inspection	46	5.66%
Smoke/CO Walk Through Inspection	44	5.41%
General Permit (FP 6)	125	15.38%
Installation or Alteration of Fuel Burning Equipment	33	4.06%
Hazardous Materials Permit	12	1.48%
Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Alarms	218	26.81%
Maintain An Existing/New Underground Storage Tank Facility	10	1.23%
Total	813	100%

Fire prevention activities remained at a record pace for the fire department. The department finished the year with 813 inspections and permits for 2016. Fire prevention is one of the most unseen roles which the public sees the fire department perform but the most important. The department as a whole, places a large priority on fire prevention. All of the fulltime staff has obtained State Credentialing at the Fire Prevention Officer Basic Level and three of the fulltime staff has obtained the highest available training which is the Fire Prevention Officer Level I training. This credentialing provides firefighters with training needed to effectively perform inspections and issue permits.

The fire prevention office was 40% busier than 2015 as we set a record high for the fire department. As part of the department's comprehensive approach to fire and life safety the fire prevention office plays a major role in preventing injuries and death. Looking through the years; major changes in fire prevention laws have been preceded by a large loss of life fire or tragedy. As the department moves forward fire prevention will continue to play a major role in the department's activities. What is mostly unseen by the public makes the biggest difference in their lives. The department will continue to be involved in the town's construction projects ensuring that the fire codes are met.

Looking to the future based on the amount of plan reviews completed by the department; the current pace should be met or exceeding in 2017. Moving forward, at the rate and volume of inspections we will need a dedicated fire prevention position.

Public Education:

SAFE (Student Awareness and Fire Education) – During 2016 Pvt. Michael Sheehan has continued the work of the departments public education. The department has begun to branch out into the senior population with Senior Home Fire Inspections and the installation of battery operated smoke detectors in senior homes where applicable. The department places a large emphasis on public education and continues to devote a fulltime firefighter to be assigned to public education as part of regular shift duties. Public education continues to play a large role in the overall fire prevention efforts of the department. Through behavior changes starting in the school; students receive a consistent message of fire safety, overall the community has a very low fire loss. The continued message of fire safety prevents fire in ways that we may never know. Whether it is the child who alerts a parent to the presence of a lighter instead of playing with it or the adult who moves a towel from the cooking area; these events play out in our community. These behavior changes are all part of the departments fire safety message.

Specialized Community Services:

Halloween Bon Fire - Each year the Department partners with the Friends of the Library to provide the Halloween Bon Fire which is 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 continues to participate in community events. We review proposed events for code compliance and EMS needs. If you are having an event and would like us to assist in planning please contact us.

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.

Department Equipment:

Fire Equipment - All hose is tested yearly and in the event it fails to pass it is repaired or removed from service. Fire pumps as well as Fire Ladders have been tested and certified to meet original specs. SCBA along with the compressed air we put in the bottles is also tested each year.

Ambulance 1- (A1) (2016 Chevy Ambulance) Braun. It is used to respond to Emergency Medical calls and transport patients to the hospital.

Ambulance 2- (A2) (2012 Chevy Ambulance) Braun. It is used to respond to Emergency Medical calls and transport patients to the hospital.

Engine 1- (1999 Class A pumper) KME. It carries 1000 gallons of water and Class B foam to fight flammable liquid fires, and is in good condition. This vehicle is scheduled to be replaced in FY19.

Engine 2- (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. This vehicle is in need of some corrosion repair to extend life another 5 years.

Engine 3- (2013 Class A pumper/rescue) KME. E3 was purchased this year and it carries 1000 gallons of water and has a Class "A & B" foam system that increases the effectiveness of both normal combustibles and oil-based fire suppression. The need for a single vehicle has come out of lack of on-call firefighters. Having one vehicle provides for better utilization of personnel and more efficiency of service delivery.

Tower 1- (2005 Ladder Truck) KME 95 ft aerial ladder with tower bucket and 300 gallons of water and 2000 GPM pump.

Engine 5- (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 Chief vehicle and is designed to be an emergency response vehicle and the primary command vehicle at major incidents. Car 2 and is designed to be an emergency response vehicle and the secondary command vehicle when the Car 1 is not available. Car 3 is a utility pickup with a plow.

UTV vehicle- This past year we purchased this vehicle for off road incidents. Over the past years we have had a number of fires and rescues that needed us to call Mutual Aid from other towns to help us. This vehicle allows us to drive out into the woods for injured people and to extinguish brush fires that we cannot reach with other apparatus.

Radio Equipment- Last year the department applied for the second year for a Federal grant to replace all mobile and portable radios. We received notification that our grant was not approved. The major reason was the Town could not show a financial hardship. We again applied for the grant in 2017 with the hope we will be successful.

Station:

The Board of Selectmen disbanded the public safety building needs committee. Since this building was built in the 1990's we have been in need of space. Although garage space is better because of our reorganization of apparatus the general building space is limited. Twenty years ago we did not have 24/7 coverage here in the station. We hope over the next couple of years we will be able to find a solution that works for us and the Town. We are currently looking at funding a feasibility study.

Contact Information:

Location: Fire Station is located at 7 South Street, Westminster, MA 01473

Phone: 978-874-2313, Dispatcher Ext 0, Chief Nivala Ext 200, Karen Long, Administrator Ext 202

Fire Prevention Capt. Butterfield Ext 201

E-mail: firechief@westminster-ma.gov

Web page: www.westminster-ma.gov/fire-department

General:

As you can see from our report the department is growing and involved in many activities. Being able to continue to accomplish these items we need to have an active call firefighter force. Without them we cannot continue to respond and perform at our highest level. If you or anyone you know is interested in becoming a call firefighter please contact my office.

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. If you wish to make a donation please contact the Fire Chief.

I would like to personally thank the other departments in Town. The support the Fire Department receives from Town Hall and the others has made for a successful year. My department will continue to be available to assist both the public and other Town departments with their needs.

Respectfully Submitted,

Chief Kevin D. Nivala