



TOWN OF WESTMINSTER

•FIRE •EMS/RESCUE •EMERGENCY SERVICES

2019 Westminster Fire Department Report

Introduction

2019 continued our process of rebuilding the Westminster Fire Department. Throughout the year, the remaining vacant fulltime positions were filled and the new members attended the required entry level training to provide them a solid base to build from for their careers.

I would like to wish John McEvoy a happy retirement. John retired on January 4, 2019 after 21 years of service to the Town. John Started with the Fire Department as an on-call firefighter in 1998 and later earning his Paramedic Certification in 2007. Shortly after becoming a Paramedic he was hired fulltime and served in that capacity until his retirement.

With the promotion of Kyle Butterfield to Fire Chief the Captains position became vacant and was filled this past January. After a selection process Adam Bean was chosen as the new Captain and started his duties towards the end of January.

The department ended 2019 with 1,551 incidents which was just shy of the 2018 record year of 1,561. Over the past five years, the department has seen large increases in emergency incidents each year. Fire Prevention saw a large increase in inspections, finishing the year off with 1,091 inspections. This was a 117 more inspections than the department saw during the previous year. The department also issued 243 Open Air Burning Permits.



Full-Time Staffing

The Westminster Fire Department currently has eleven fulltime personnel. The Fire Chief, Captain and Administrator/EMT-B work a weekday administrative schedule. The administrative office hours are 8:00am – 4:30pm Monday through Friday. While the additional eight members, consisting of one Lieutenant and seven Firefighters, work rotating shifts to cover the town with two firefighters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.



In January the Captain's position was filled by Adam Bean after a selection process to fill the role and he started in January of 2019. Captain Bean comes to the department with over 20 years of experience in both small and large communities including Ashburnham, Portland Maine and most recently the Concord, MA fire departments. He has been a longtime call member of the Westminster Fire Department and has transitioned well into his new role.

During 2019 Private's Algarin and Emerson completed the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy Recruit Firefighter Training Program. These were the last of the current staff members to complete the basic training requirements of the department. Private Jason Cox was hired in April and came to the department already trained through the Fire Academy as well as already being a certified paramedic. Private Zack Spencer completed paramedic school and was the last of the members to become certified. The end of 2019 marked all eight of the fulltime Firefighters having completed the Fire Academy and be certified as Paramedics for the first time in the history of the Department.

On-Call Firefighters and Shortage

On-Call Firefighters were one of Chief Butterfield's main goals after taking the department over in 2018. The department has taken on two on-call firefighters in 2019 and the department is currently working with two additional recruits who are going through the initial hiring process. The department lost two on-call/per diem firefighters during 2019.



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Throughout 2019 the department met with 9 potential on-call firefighters. Call firefighters meet with the Chief and Captain for an initial meeting where the job and requirements to be an on-call firefighter are explained. They receive a copy of the job description and are asked to talk the decision over with their family. If they are still interested they come for a second meeting where the medical requirements and back ground information is provided to them. From there the next step is a completion of the firefighters physical and the Physical Abilities Test. If a potential recruit passes all of these steps they then become a town employee to start the six to eight month training process of becoming a firefighter.



The department continues to see firefighters from other communities moving in to Westminster interested in becoming members of the on-call department. In 2019, the department took on two additional on-call firefighters who are career firefighters in other communities. They come to the department fully trained and are ready to go to work after a brief orientation time.

Call Volume

The department completed 2019 with 1,551 incidents. This was the first year in the past five years that we have not experienced a significant increase in calls. The department averages 4.3 calls per day and the demographics of the calls have remained consistent. A little over 60% of the calls are Rescue calls that includes accidents, medicals and technical rescue incidents.

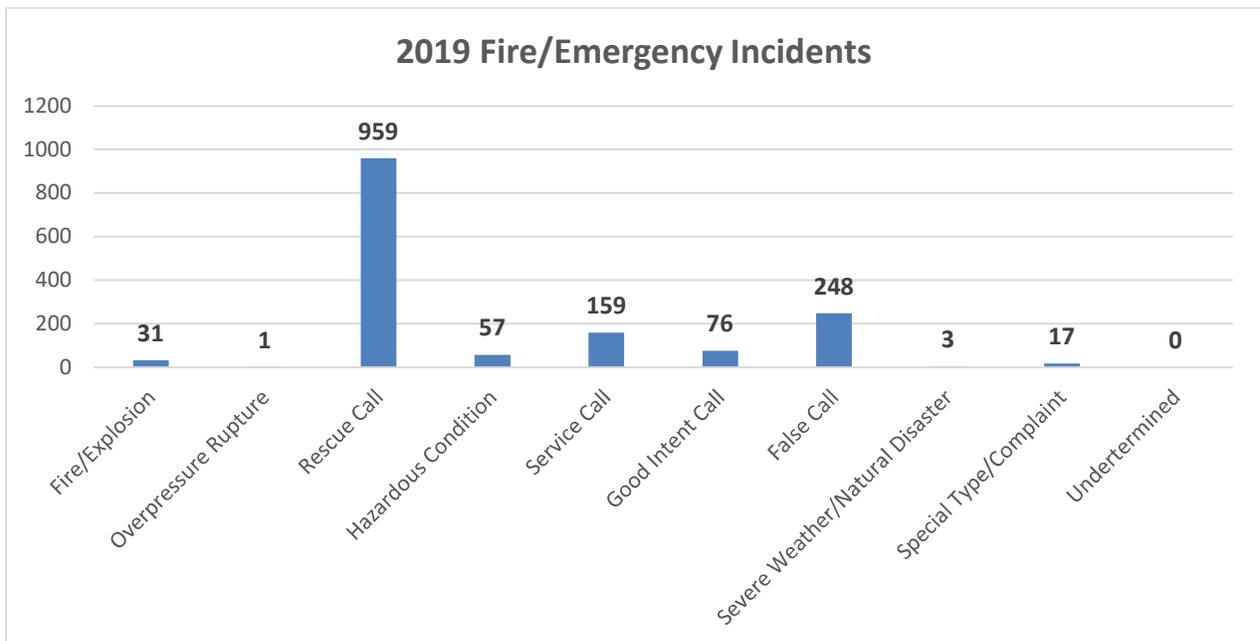
Type	Total	Percentage
Fire/Explosion	31	2.0%
Overpressure Rupture	1	0.1%
Rescue Call	959	61.8%
Hazardous Condition	57	3.7%
Service Call	159	10.3%
Good Intent Call	76	4.9%
False Call	248	16.0%
Severe Weather/Natural Disaster	3	0.2%
Special Type/Complaint	17	1.1%
Undetermined	0	0.00%
Total	1551	100.00%

Throughout the recent history of the department the split between Rescue Calls and Fire Calls has consistently been around a 60/40 split.

Since 2015 the Fire Department has seen a 29% increase in the call volume. This trend is being studied as to how the department will respond to meet the rising demand. In 2019 the department saw 10 less calls than the previous year which was the first year in the past five years there was not a large increase. As we move into 2020 we will continue to monitor the growth and respond appropriately to maintain the high level of service that our town expects.

The nature of incidents that the department face varies on a day-to-day basis. Members respond to medicals of all variety, structure fires, technical rescue calls to hazardous material incidents.

Although some of these types of incidents occur in lower frequencies the danger that members face is extremely high. This requires members to have the knowledge, skills and abilities to handle these incidents. The best way to do this is through proper training.





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Ambulance Response

The ambulance budget that is voted on at the annual town meeting provides the funding for the labor, equipment and supply costs associated with the running of the ambulance service. The department runs two

Type	Occurrences	Percentage
ALS	471	49.01%
BLS	251	26.12%
Refusal	229	23.83%
Other	10	1.04%
Total	961	100.00%

Advanced Life Support (ALS) Paramedic Ambulances. The Paramedic level provides the community with the highest pre-hospital care available.

By the end of 2019, all eight of the fulltime shift staff were paramedics. This is the first time in the departments history that all of the eight fulltime staff were fully trained and certified. There

Hospital	Occurrences	Percentage
Heywood	403	41.94%
UMass	39	4.06%
Leominster	277	28.82%
Non-Transport	240	24.94%
St. Vincent's	2	0.21%
Total	961	100.00%

are numerous benefits to this, one of which being when multiple calls occur off duty staff respond back from home to staff the second ambulance. This has reduced the reliance on mutual aid ambulances through 2019.

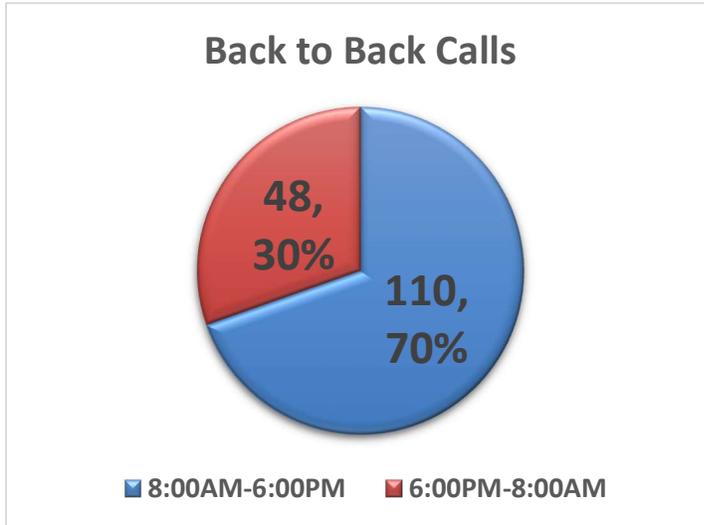
Through the year the department relied on mutual aid ambulance

transports 38 times and transported with the second ambulance 66 times.

The replacement ambulance for the 2012 Braun Ambulance was ordered in December. The department created a five-person committee to study and evaluate the needs of the community and department to spec out a new truck. A lot of work went into the creation of the ambulance spec. With the 2019 spring mud season being what it was the need for a 4x4 ambulance was identified. For a period of time during the spring the departments current ambulances were not able to respond to certain portions of the community due to the depth of mud on the dirt/gravel roadways forcing the department to rely on mutual aid for these calls. The new ambulance will have 4x4 capabilities to combat this and will be delivered in the third quarter of 2020.

Back-to-Back Calls and Missed Inspections

The department responded to 158 back-to-back calls in 2019. Starting in 2017 the department began to see a significant increase in back-to-back calls. As stated before with the increase in call



volume it is inevitable that the department will face multiple calls during the same time period. The department continued to see the majority of the calls occurring during the 8:00am through 6:00pm time frame which is tough with a combination department like ours. The majority of our call Firefighters work out of town and are traditionally unavailable during these daytime hours.

One positive change that the department saw during 2019 was a

stabilization of the fulltime staff and having eight fully trained personnel by the end of the year. The department responded to 110 medical related back-to-back calls. Of these calls department staff handled 57 of these and 25 required a mutual aid agency.

Another factor that we keep a close eye on is the impact of increased emergency calls on our Fire Prevention work. In 2019 the department missed 28 scheduled inspections due to emergencies. This is significant because some of these inspections require a permit from the fire department. These include 26F½ Permits, which are required for the transfer of a dwelling and Underground LP Permits. If the department is not able to make the scheduled time the closing on a real estate transaction could potentially have to be rescheduled and the back filling of a LP tank can be delayed.

Fire Prevention

In 2019 the fire department performed 1,091 inspections and permits and issues 264 open air burning permits. 2019 was a record high year for inspections and permits with 117 more inspections than the 2018's high of 974. This was the busiest year that the department has had to date.

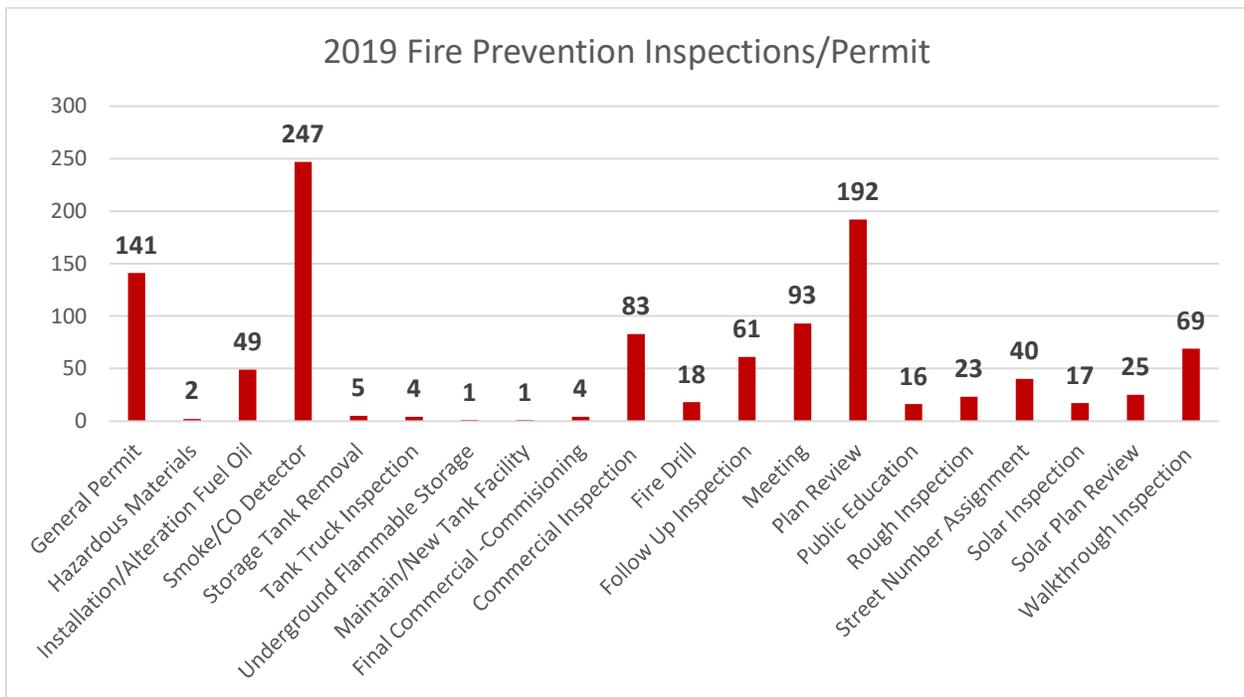
A good portion of the fire prevention activities are related to residential construction. In 2019 the Building Department issued 61 permits for the construction of new dwellings. Some of these dwellings will continue construction into 2020. The Lighthouse Lane Sub Division should close out in 2020 with the majority of the houses being completed. The White Pine Drive sub-division will continue construction in 2020 along with the potential of an additional subdivision starting on North Comon Road related to the residential portion of the Buisness Park.



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The department continues to have a strong fire prevention presence in the community with the commercial inspection program. The department completes inspections in businesses, schools, churches, etc... evaluating the life safety of the building and ensuring compliance with the fire codes. Some of the highlights that the department found during 2019 were a fire alarm that was disabled unbeknowst to the property owner. The firefighters found that there was no power to the panel due to an electrical problem. It is these items that the firefighters are inspecting ensuring a safe enviroment for the community.



All of the fulltime staff are trained to the Fire Prevention Officer – Basic level with four members being credentialed as Fire Prevention Officer – Level 1. This training provides a consistant level of code enforcement throughtout the department. Chief Butterfield also serves on the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Fire Prevention Association.

Fire Investigation

The Fire Department continues to investigate all fires in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws in conjunction with our partners from the Westminster Police Department and the Massachusetts State Fire Marshals office. All fires are investigated and when appropriote all legal options are followed.

During 2019 Pvt. Bennett Chadbourne has taken over as the lead investigator for the department. He has completed half of the training available to fire investigators through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. As Chief Butterfield transitions out of this role Captain Bean and Private Chadbourne will take on the primary responsibilities of fire investigation.

Public Education

In 2019 Private Zack Algarin took over as the Public Education Coordinator. Public Education is a key part of what the fire department does. The department provides fire safety education to the schools and community. The department plays an active role teaching to both the younger and older audiences who each face unique fire safety challenges.

Specialty Community Services

Halloween Bonfire

The Halloween Bonfire continues to be the largest event that the department hosts on an annual basis. In 2019 the date of the event was changed for the safety of the crowd. The evening of Halloween saw high winds which makes the fire unpredictable. Based on this safety concern the event was changed to the following Saturday and the department hosted a packed house and had a safe event.



Event Planning



In 2019 the department continued to play a role in event planning. During 2018 the department implemented a planning checklist to standardize for event planners what the fire department expects during large events. Through this the department assisted again with planning the Cracker Festival which was a successful event with no code violations. The department assisted with the safety planning of the Wachustt Brewery 25th Anniversary event which required planning from many different stakeholders. The hard work

that went into the planning of the event by everyone made the event a safe and successful one. The departments goal is to work with our community partners to create a fun and safe event for everyone.



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Mid-State Mutual Aid

Westminster is a member of the Mid-State Fire Mutual Aid Association. Locally each Fire Department relies on mutual aid for not only man power but equipment resources as well when incidents exhaust or overwhelm the community in which the incident is occurring.

Department Training

The Department holds at a minimum 12 monthly paid training events a year. Many of the trainings are now required by the OSHA laws in Massachusetts. During these trainings Firefighters learn new skills, refresh current ones and update old skills. Firefighting changes constantly and it is important to stay up to date on the current practices. With the implementation of the new OSHA requirements last year the department is required to hold additional training for the ambulance as well.

Apparatus

Engine 1 - (2019) KME. The vehicle has a 1,500gpm pump with 1,250 gallons of water and equipped with Class A foam for ordinary fires, this Engine is the primary attack truck for structure fires. This vehicle is new and in excellent shape.

Engine 2 – (2001 Class A Pumper) KME. This vehicle has a 1,500gpm pump with 2,500 gallons of water. This vehicle is also equipped with a Class A foam system which increases the vehicles fire suppression ability.

This vehicle is a dual role vehicle able to perform as an attack pumper or a tanker for incidents in the areas of town with no hydrants. This vehicle was refurbished in 2016 and is in good shape.

Engine 3 – (2013 Class A Pumper/Rescue) KME. This vehicle is a dual role Class A pump and Rescue. The vehicle has a 1,500gpm pump with 1,000 gallons of water. The vehicle is equipped with Class A and B foams allowing the vehicle to increase its fire suppression capability as well as fight flammable liquid fires. This vehicle serves as the department's heavy rescue carrying the specialty rescue items such as the Jaws of Life, structural cribbing, water/ice rescue and many



other items. The vehicle replaced two vehicles Engine 4 and Rescue 1 combining their capabilities into one vehicle. This allows the department to perform work more efficiently with the decreasing on-call firefighters. This vehicle is good shape.

Tower 1 – (2005 Ladder Truck) KME. The vehicle is a 95-foot aerial ladder with a bucket. This vehicle is equipped with a 2,000gpm pump and a 300-gallon water tank. This vehicle is in fair condition but will be in need of refurbishment in the coming years. It experienced a failure of a critical part of the aerial which placed the vehicle out of service in November through the remainder of the year. It has since been repaired and is back in service.

Engine 5- (2008 Mini-Pumper) CET. Engine 5 is a multi-role vehicle with year round capability having 4-wheel drive, 500gpm pump and 300 gallons of water. The vehicle responds for brush fires, fires where there is restricted response such as Leino Park due to weight restrictions on the bridge and for responses where the larger vehicles are not suited such as dirt or rough roads. The vehicle is also equipped with a Class A foam system and a Compressed Air Foam system to increase the initial fire suppression capabilities of the vehicle. This vehicle is in decent condition and experienced a premature failure of the vehicles sub frame which mounts the firetruck body to the Ford Chassis. This was repaired and the vehicle should meet its life expectancy.

Car 1 - is a 2012 Chevrolet Tahoe that is designed for emergency response and as a command vehicle. This vehicle is in poor shape and its replacement has been purchased and is slated to go into service shortly.

Car 2 - is a 2016 Ford Explorer designed for emergency response and as a command vehicle. The vehicle is in good shape.

Car 3 - is 2013 Chevrolet 3500 equipped with a plow and is used for daily inspections and as incidents require.

UTV – The UTV is a 2016 Gravelly UTV. The vehicle is designed for multiple roles including brush fire response in remote locations, rescue/transport of injured parties in remote locations and use during large events as a quick response vehicle. The department has seen and continues to have incidents in remote locations where we once relied upon mutual aid from other communities for a UTV vehicle where now the department can handle many of these calls ourselves.

Ambulance 1 – This is a 2016 Chevrolet Chassis with a Braun ambulance body. This ambulance responds to medical emergencies and transports patients to the hospital. This ambulance is in good condition.

Ambulance 2 – This is a 2012 Chevrolet Chassis with a Braun ambulance body. This ambulance responds to medical emergencies and transports patients to the hospital. The vehicle is in fair shape and its replacement is on order which will arrive in the third quarter of 2020.



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Station

In 2017, the town voted to fund a public safety building feasibility study to evaluate the current building which was built in the mid-1990's. The Selectmen appointed a Public Safety Building Feasibility committee in 2018 which in turn selected Techton Architects. This study was published in the spring of 2019 after which the Selectman authorized the committee to reconvene and discuss the next step in planning for the future building needs for the Department.

Future

The Westminster Fire Department is an all hazards response, prevention and education agency. The department continues to see higher call volumes than experienced before. The year ended with 1,551 calls. This volume stabilized for 2019 but the department expects to continue to respond to a similar or higher volume of calls in the future.

Looking to the new year I am excited to continue the process of staff development. There are two new on-call firefighters joining the department. These recruits will be coming onboard for 2020 and will complete the Call/Vol Recruit Training Program. The fulltime staff have stabilized with no recent resignations and the department will be able to focus on each Firefighters particular focus projects. Their further development will allow them to be successful in meeting the future demands that will be placed on the them in serving our community.

Please contact the office if you have any questions.

Respectfully submitted,

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