



TOWN OF WESTMINSTER

•FIRE •EMS/RESCUE •EMERGENCY SERVICES

2020 Westminster Fire Department Report

Introduction

2020 was a year like no other that we have experienced in our lifetime. The year started carrying on with increasing emergencies and fire prevention work that we experienced in the last few years. Then took a sudden turn with a worldwide coronavirus pandemic and all the changes that have come along with it. Throughout the



pandemic, the department saw a record high call volume and remained busy with fire prevention activities as the economy and housing industry began to recover. The Fire Department had to make many changes throughout the year in order to serve the community while maintaining a healthy work force. The department also had to get creative to keep things moving forward and sponsored a local delivery Recruit Training Class with the help of surrounding towns. In the midst of the pandemic, the Fire Department had the busiest year in the department's history. Throughout the year the department saw the promotion of one Firefighter to Lieutenant and the loss of two fulltime Firefighters.

The department finished the year responding to 1,687 emergency calls and completing 931 fire prevention inspections. Due to a persistent increase in emergencies experienced over the last five years, the department is beginning to see weaknesses in its legacy structure. The command staff has identified these deficiencies and proposed changes to correct them in our budget while continuing to be fiscally conscious of the town's financial status. Volunteerism is on the decline due to number of socioeconomic factors that towns and departments of our size and type are facing. Westminster is not unique; this problem is well documented countrywide. With the growth of our community comes an increase in emergency calls as well as inspectional activities. This year's emergency call volume was significantly busier than the previous two years. From 2018 to 2020 the department saw a 15.69% increase in call volume. Fire prevention inspections were down slightly in 2020 due to the shutdown measures that were taken throughout the year to deal with the virus, but have re-bounded as restrictions have been lifted.

Throughout early 2020, the Coronavirus became the department's primary concern. Due to the virus being a novel virus not much was known about how it spreads, how to protect personnel and how the virus would act in the future. As the department made it through the Spring the dangers posed by the virus became more established and operations were modified to complete our mission while keeping our staff and the community safe.

In response to the aforementioned identified weakness, the Chief requested the promotion of three of our permanent staff to the rank of Lieutenant in the FY21 budget. The selectman approved one of these promotions and after a selection process the department promoted Private Zach Algarin to the rank of Lieutenant in August. In the fall Privates Ryan Major and Zack Spencer resigned as fulltime members of the department. Private Major took a job with the Fitchburg Fire Department and Private Spencer with the Bellingham Fire Department. Shortly after receiving their resignations two jobs were posted, a hiring process conducted and Kyle Halliday and Michael Lemoine were offered and accepted the fulltime positions. Both Privates Halliday and Lemoine have worked for the department as call/per-diem Firefighters for the last few years. They will be completing the required training of our fulltime staff through 2021.



Shortly after receiving their resignations two jobs were posted, a hiring process conducted and Kyle Halliday and Michael Lemoine were offered and accepted the fulltime positions. Both Privates Halliday and Lemoine have worked for the department as call/per-diem Firefighters for the last few years. They will be completing the required training of our fulltime staff through 2021.

Full-Time Staffing

The Westminster Fire Department currently has eleven fulltime personnel. The Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and Administrator/EMT-B work a weekday administrative schedule. While the additional eight members, consisting of two Lieutenants and six Firefighters, work rotating shifts to cover the town with two firefighters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department also supplements our fulltime staff with a Per Diem Firefighter 8:00am through 4:00pm, 7 days a week.

2020 saw some changes in the fulltime staff comprising two promotions of existing personnel and the departure of two personnel. In August, Adam Bean's title changed to Deputy Chief from Captain. This change was made to align the rank with the actual job being performed by the departments second in command. Much of the available training is geared towards a departments higher ranking officers in its priority selection. This means that when a class is available it is filled with people of the highest ranks first regardless of the roles they perform,

and then continues down the line as room is available. In the Fire Service rank structure the Fire Chief is commonly followed by an Assistant or Deputy Chief, Battalion or District Chief, Captains and then Lieutenants. The Westminster Fire Department has gone thru a period of fifteen or so years with the departments second in command being a Captain, this promotion brings us more in line with the national standard and allows our second in command better access to educational opportunities. The second promotion was of one of our fulltime Firefighters to the rank of Lieutenant. In the FY21 budget we requested the promotion of three of our fulltime Firefighters to the rank of Lieutenant. A Lieutenant is a working line officer but for us will also be our shift commander or the officer in charge for the 24 hour period that he/she is working. This budget request for three Lieutenants was designed to provide the town with a supervisor on duty 24x7x365 to supervise the remainder of our Fulltime/Per-Diem/On Call Firefighters. After the budget process the town approved the promotion of one Lieutenant and after a comprehensive selection process Pvt. Zach Algarin was promoted to Lieutenant.

Also in 2020, two Fulltime Firefighters resign their Fulltime positions after taking jobs in other communities. Pvt. Ryan Major resigned after accepting a Fulltime job with the City of Fitchburg and Pvt. Zach Spencer resigned to take a Fulltime job in Bellingham. The jobs were posted and after a comprehensive hiring process we hired Pvt. Kyle Halliday and Pvt. Mike Lemoine as members of our Fulltime staff. Both have some additional training to complete over the next twelve months but they both have worked for us previously as On Call/ Per-Diem Firefighters so that are not totally new to the town.

On-Call Staffing

Throughout 2020, the department was able to train two additional on-call firefighters in the midst of the pandemic. These two firefighters are vitally needed on-call staff as the department is still experiencing a significant shortage of on-call firefighters. Through 2020 the department interviewed 11 potential on-call firefighters. In order to become



an On-Call Firefighter. Interested parties complete a background check, pass a firefighter specific physical and pass a Physical Abilities Test. After the successful completion, they then can become a town employee and are sent to a six-month training program. This consists of two nights a week and one day every weekend at the Mass Fire Academy in Stow. This process is explained in the initial interview as it is a substantial commitment for both the town and the interested party. After these 11 initial interviews only 2 town residents decided to continue with the process.

Due to the pandemic the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy shutdown training for the Call/Vol program. This created a major problem for our two new recruits who would now have to wait over a year to complete their training.

Westminster wasn't alone in this and seven of the surrounding communities voiced the same concerns. Prior to the State Fire Academy offering the Firefighter 1 & 2 program for Call/Volunteer Firefighters, we used to provide the training locally. In Westminster then Deputy Chief Charles Clarkson spearheaded to program for our region and trained hundreds of Firefighters in Northern Worcester County over his time on the department. With the State Academy shut down Deputy Chief Bean took a



lead role resurrecting the program that Deputy Chief Clarkson created back in the 1990's to provide the training in house. With the help from the seven communities involved we were able to train 17 recruits to the Firefighter I/II standard. Each community shared in the burden of providing equipment, instructors and apparatus, making it possible. In honor of Deputy Clarkson the student with the highest academic grade, least practical deficiencies and best attitude was awarded the first ever Deputy Chief Charles Clarkson Award. For the 2020 Rookie School this recruit was Steve Robinson from Westminster. A big thank you goes out to all those from Westminster and other communities who helped staff instructor and support roles throughout the program. Without their help this program would not have been possible.

Finding citizens who are willing to dedicate their time to training for over six months is difficult. This was evaluated holistically on how the department can help relieve some of that burden and maintain adequate numbers on the On-Call department to complete our mission. The recruit program being offered locally is currently being evaluated as a long term solution to help reduce the time spent driving to the Massachusetts Firefighter Academy. Based on potential on-call recruits in the future the department may decide to pursue another training program.

Call Volume

The department completed 2020 with 1,687 incidents. This was the busiest year in the departments history. As the call volume increases the need to staff additional firefighters on duty is here. During the summer a request was made to the

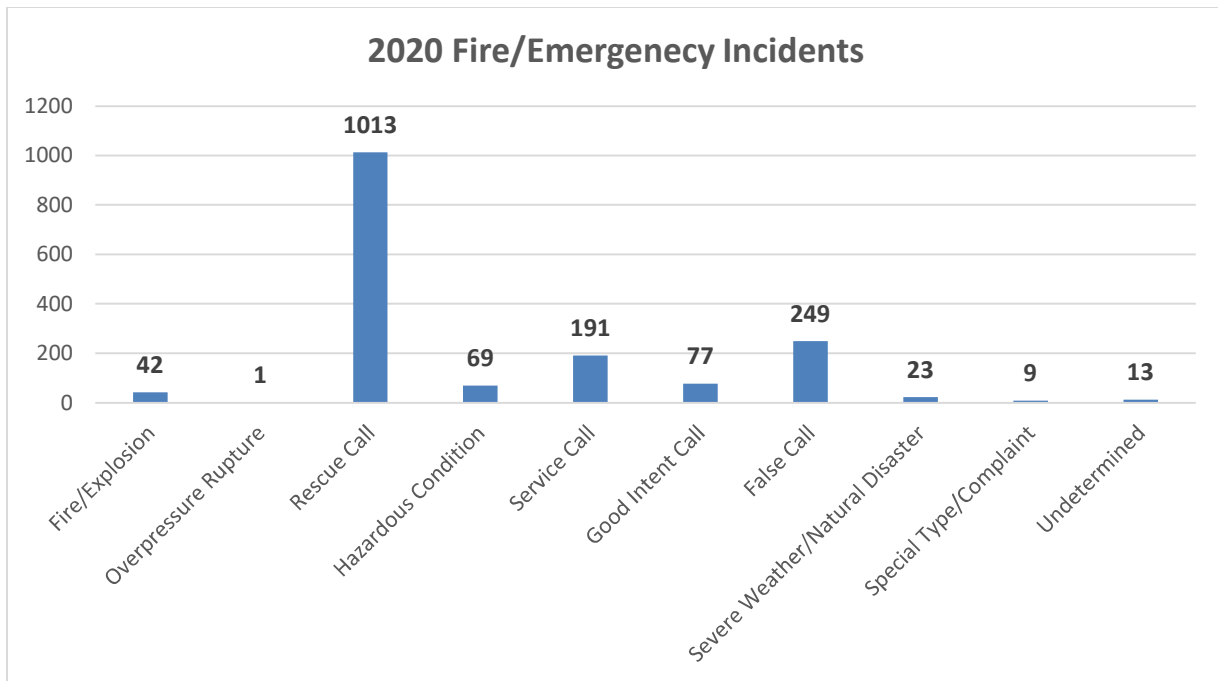
Type	Total	Percentage
Fire/Explosion	42	2.50%
Overpressure Rupture	1	0.10%
Rescue Call	1018	60.30%
Hazardous Condition	70	4.10%
Service Call	192	11.40%
Good Intent Call	81	4.80%
False Call	250	14.80%
Severe Weather/Natural Disaster	24	1.40%
Special Type/Complaint	9	0.50%
Undetermined	0	0.00%
Total	1687	100.00%

Selectmen to allow the department to apply for the SAFER Grant. The SAFER grant is an annual grant program put on by FEMA to provide communities with the finances needed to increase full time staffing. The grant criteria changes from year to year but for this budget cycle FEMA is offering 100% of the salaries and benefits for each Firefighter for a three year period. The department will be applying once the application period is opened for four additional fulltime Firefighters. On average, the fire department responded to 4.62 calls per day and these additional positions will give us three fulltime Firefighters on duty 24x7x365, supplemented by the per-diems from 8am-4pm.

The call demographic remains around 60% Rescue Call and 40% Fire Response so when you tie in our staffing model to this it takes a minimum of 2 Firefighters to staff one ambulance and according to the NFPA standard for Fire staffing we should have four Firefighters on each fire apparatus. If awarded the grant we will be much closer to achieving the staffing goal laid out in the NFPA standards a majority of the time for our first out truck and will still rely on our On Call and off duty Fulltime Firefighters to staff the other two Engines and the Ladder truck coming in from home.



In 2020 the department broke to previous incident record by 126 emergency incidents. Based on historical monthly averages this increase equivalent to adding an additional months call volume. As the department moves into the future the need for additional staffing has arrived. Proposed in the Fiscal Year 2022 Budget per diem firefighter coverage has been requested to be increased from eight hours a day to 16 hours a day. This will provide the department with three personnel on duty for approximately 85% of the time. Having another firefighter on duty allows for response to back-to-back calls, inspections and the completion of the ancillary duties such as vehicle inspections, training and equipment maintenance.



Emergency Medical Services

The largest change the department made in the EMS Service during 2020 was the change to Leominster Hospital for Medical Control. The department also took delivery of Ambulance 2's replacement.

In July the department moved to Leominster Hospital for Medical Control of the Ambulance Service. As part of that change Doctor Laurel O'Connor has taken over as the departments Medical Director. This



move was necessary for the department to grow and continue to provide the high level of care that our citizens deserve. Some of the larger changes that are underway and will be implemented in 2021 are the use of Ketamine in the field and the start of a Community based medicine program. Ketamine is a drug available for the treatment of pain and psychosis that is not a narcotic. With the prevalence of opioid addiction nationwide, this offers another tool in the toolbox for treatment of patients in severe pain. Additionally, the department started the process of gaining approval to provide Flu and COVID vaccinations. Approval has been gained by the Medical Director and the training will take place in early 2021. This will allow members of the Fire Department to provide vaccinations and will help not only with the current pandemic but with the potential of future crisis.

The department took delivery of Ambulance 2's replacement. A committee was formed to review the needs of the department and design a vehicle to service the community. The committee selected a Ford F-550 truck type ambulance. In 2018, Chevrolet stopped offering a diesel motor in their van cut ambulances. Because of this, other solutions were looked at and the Ford vehicle was selected. The vehicle is equipped with 4x4 which was a major criteria of selection. In Early 2020 the Town saw a prolonged and severe mud season where the previous ambulances were not able to serve. In the areas affected mutual aid was planned to be called initially for the treatment of patients.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic the department has been successful in adapting trainings to fit socially distant and virtual guidelines. This past year the department was able to offer more EMS in-house trainings to include Advanced Cardiac Life Support, with department staff becoming certified as instructors.

Throughout the year the department has been working with mutual aid companies to offer the most streamlined and efficient EMS services to the Wachusett Mountain and Leominster State Forest recreational areas. Joint trainings have been held with Princeton Fire, Sterling Fire, and the District 8 Technical Rescue team. With an increase in outdoor recreation, specialized equipment has been adapted to EMS operations including ice crampons, GPS's and thermal imaging cameras. Slated for 2021 the department will continue this trend by adding more virtual classes, and special training opportunities through local facilities.

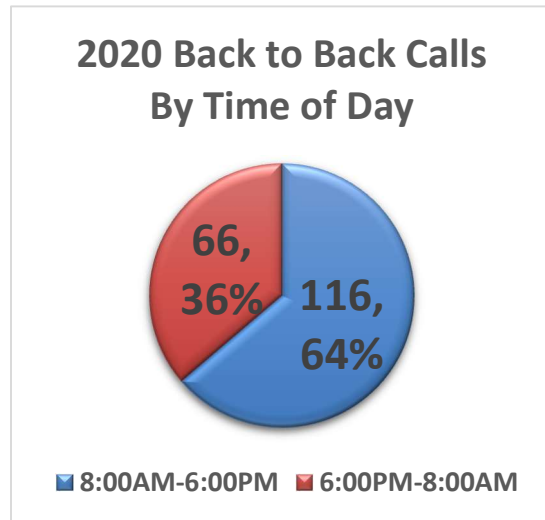
Ambulance Calls By Level of Care

Hospital	Occurrence	Percentage
Dead at Scene	6	0.62%
No Treatment Required	13	1.34%
Patient Refused Care	195	20.06%
Treated and Released or Refused Transport	20	2.06%
Treated, Transferred Care	2	0.21%
Treated, Transported by EMS (ALS)	447	45.99%
Treated, Transported by EMS (BLS)	287	29.53%
Treated, Transported by Private Vehicle	1	0.10%
Unknown	1	0.10%
Total	972	100%

Ambulance Call by Destination

Destination	Occurrence	Percentage
Health Alliance - Leominster	344	35.39%
Heywood Hospital	337	34.67%
Other, In-State	6	0.62%
St. Vincent's	6	0.62%
UMASS Memorial	4	0.41%
UMASS University	37	3.81%
No Destination	238	24.49%
Total	972	100%

Back-to-Back Calls

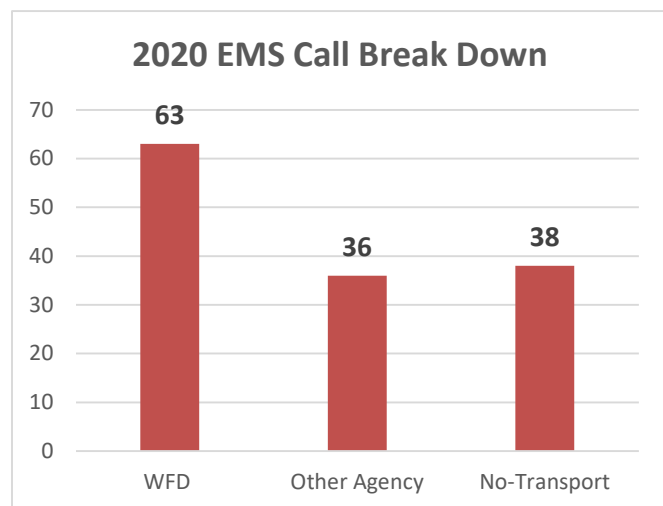


patient such as motor vehicle accidents which is why there were 137 patient contacted during the 116 incidents.

The biggest factor with the department being able to cover the majority of the incidents during the week day is due to supplementing our fulltime staff with a per diem. This person allows one staff member to be available to perform inspections while the ambulance is tied up on a call. This also leaves one person available to cover a second call with the Chief, Deputy or off duty staff coming in from home.

In 2020 the Department encountered 182 back-to-back calls. The two previous years a large increase in the amount of back-to-back calls were experienced. 2020 was no exception and the Department saw an increase in back-to-back calls. Out of the 182 calls, 116 of these occurred during the hours of 8:00am through 6:00pm and 66 occurred from 6:00pm through 8:00am.

Out of the 116 EMS related calls, the Department was able to staff the second ambulance for 63 transports. Mutual aid from another agency was requested for 36 transports and 38 of the calls were non-transports. Some incidents have more than one

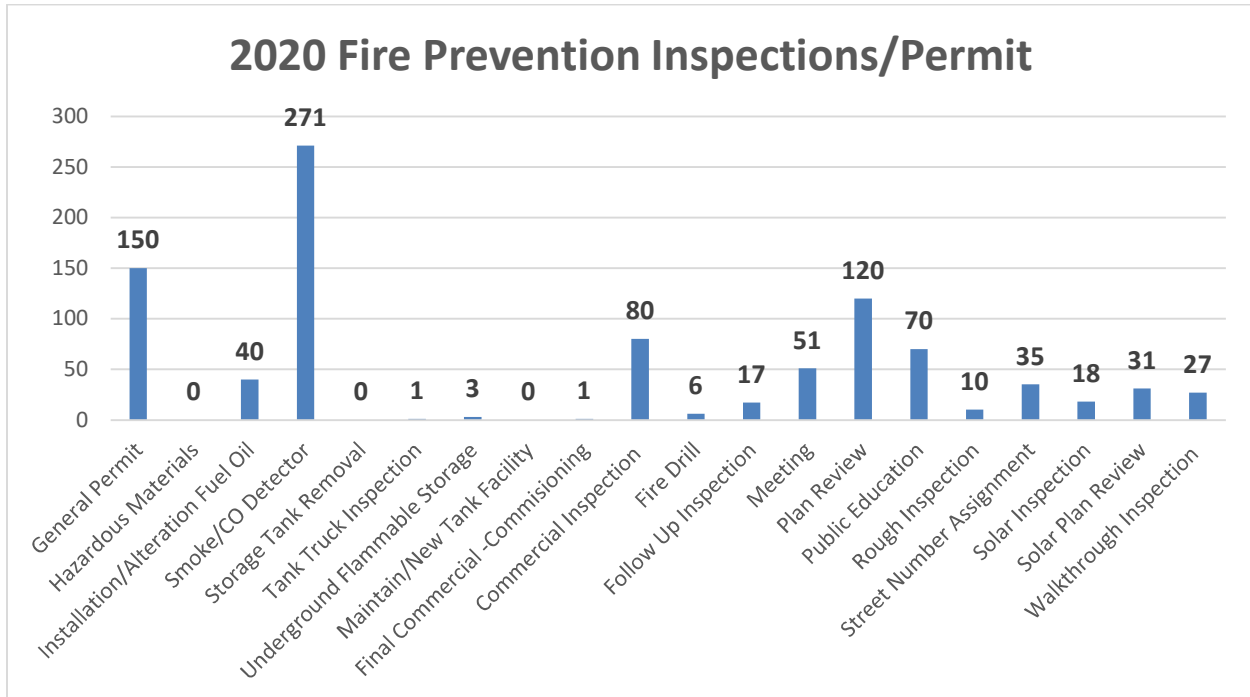


Fire Prevention

2020 was a different year for the fire departments fire prevention program. In conjunction with an Executive Order from the State Fire Marshall, all inspections were deferred from March until July. The focus of this order was to keep first responders available and healthy for core essential functions. Westminster is no different than many small communities where the firefighters performing inspections are the same firefighters who staff the ambulance or fire engines. Once this deferralment ended all of the outstanding inspections were completed.

Throughout 2020 the Town added 39 new residential units, 37 being single family homes and one duplex. A good portion of the fire departments fire prevention activities are directly tied to the residential market. This includes the sale and transfer of property, new construction and addition/renovations. The Lighthouse Lane subdivision is nearing completion for 2021, and work continues to be steady on the White Pine Drive subdivision. Single lot ANR plans continue to be a large source of new construction.

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 consistent level of code enforcement throughout the department. Chief Butterfield was re-elected to serve on the Board of Directors for the Massachusetts Fire Prevention Association until 2022.



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 appropriate, all legal options are followed.



Pvt. Bennett Chadbourne continues to be the lead investigator for the department. He has completed half of the training available to fire investigators through the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. Through 2020 Pvt. Chadbourne investigated two intentional arson fires that occurred in Westminster.

Public Education

2020 was a difficult year for fire prevention due to the COVID pandemic. Lt. Algarin was able to perform some Senior SAFE Activities on a one on one basis in homes. Lt. Algarin was also able to provide the local Girl Scout troops with classes on first aid and a socially distanced tour of a fire truck. The Fire Department's public education focuses the majority of its' efforts in the spring time. With school being performed remotely for the majority of the spring our normal activities were not able to be completed. Lt Algarin was able to attend the virtual Public Fire and Life Safety Educator Course (PFALSE). This is a 40 hour course that prepares SAFE educators to go out into the public and teach fire safety to all age groups.

Specialty Community Services

Operation Trick of Treat

Due to a limit on the size of gatherings, the Annual Halloween Bonfire was sadly cancelled. In response to this, in conjunction with the Police Department, Operation Trick of Treat was formulated. The Departments took donations of candy from the community and the Police and Fire Departments delivered the candy to pre-registered households. Throughout the evening on Halloween over 500 children were delivered candy.



Event Planning

The department continues to be part of the community event planning. Due to the pandemic the departments typical community role was greatly reduced. We look forward to 2021 and continuing to build community relationships.

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 normally holds a minimum of 12 monthly paid trainings a year. These trainings cover topics that are required on an annual basis and new skills. These trainings offer a refresher or update on current skills and the introductions of new skills. Like all professions the fire service changes over time and it is important to stay up to date on the new skills, tactics and strategies.

The biggest problem in regards to training that the Fire Department faced during 2020 was the limit on gathering sizes by executive action of the Governor. Some training was cancelled early on during the pandemic due to difficulty catering training with gathering restrictions. By the summer time training was restarted and changes were made to stay in compliance with gathering limitations.

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 two years old 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 moderate shape. The vehicle is starting to show its age.

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 number of 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 is scheduled to receive a refurbishment in two years.

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 fair shape and should meet its expected life expectancy.

Car 1 - is a 2020 Chevrolet Tahoe that is designed for emergency response and as a command vehicle. This vehicle was placed in service in March of 2020 and is in excellent shape.

Car 2 - is a 2016 Ford Explorer designed for emergency response and as a command vehicle. The vehicle is in moderate shape and is scheduled to be replaced in the coming years.

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

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 2020 Ford F-550 with a Braun ambulance body. This ambulance responds to medical emergencies and transports patients to the hospital. This vehicle will go into service in the winter of 2021.

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 Tehton Architects. This study was published in the spring of 2019 after which the Selectman authorized the committee to re-convene and discuss the next step in planning for the future building needs for the Department. This committee has worked through 2020 on site selection. The committee expects to publish their findings and selected site in early 2021.

The 2019 Study and Virtual Tour can be found on the Fire Department website.

Future

The Westminster Fire Department is an all hazards response, prevention and education agency. The Department strives to provide the highest level of service to the community as possible. In 2020, the call volume increased significantly posing a new challenge to the department. For 2021 additional per diem staffing hours has been requested to meet this demand. As the town grows and demands on the Department increase, our staff adjusts to meet the challenge.

Please contact the office if you have any questions.



Fire Chief Kyle S. Butterfield
Westminster Fire Department
7 South St. Westminster, MA 01473
(978)-874-2313 x200 – kbutterfield@westminster-ma.gov