



TOWN OF WESTMINSTER

•FIRE •EMS/RESCUE •EMERGENCY SERVICES

2022 Westminster Fire Department Report

Introduction

This year the department picked up where it left off in 2021 with a very busy year. The department responded to 1,906 incidents including nine building fires. There were five 1st Alarm, one Working Fire and three 2nd Alarm building fires. In addition to the incidents the department responded to the department performed 793 inspections and issued 217 burn permits with 583 activations.

With the continued increase in call volume year after year we have seen the department has reached and surpassed a critical crossroads for the departments staffing model. This problem is multifaceted with a decrease in the call/volunteer ranks of the department coupled with socioeconomic factors that have created a safety issue in the ability to properly staff apparatus. With the changes to society, the ability to recruit and retain call/volunteer members has been an ever-increasing issue leading to our current crisis. The department's fulltime members largely live outside the community due to the cost of housing.



Throughout the history of the department, the fulltime members were relied upon to return for calls just like the on-call firefighters. With all but two members living at least 15 minutes away from the station, this has created a large gap where these firefighters are not able to reliably staff a second piece of apparatus. This has created the need for the department to seek immediate assistance from our mutual aid partners.

The department has continued to adjust the model for operations based on the communities needs. Service gaps in available on-call and off-duty staff has created a need to have additional firefighters working in the station at all times. Through 2022 the department continued to hone the model of a Lieutenant in charge of the on-duty shift. This has been a change as traditionally the Lieutenant and Captain Ranks were on-call positions. This model staffs an Officer on-duty to make decisions for the shift and community 24/7. These personnel are the backbone of the department providing inspectional services, training and overseeing the daily operations.

Through the beginning of 2022, the department dealt with an sharp increase in Covid-19 cases. With the emergence of new variants this virus escaped prior infection and vaccines and did effect the department through the Spring. At the end of Spring a majority of the department had been infected with the new variant and the need to fill shifts subsided. Through this time frame there were no significant medical complications to any of the departments members.

On-duty Staffing

The Westminster Fire Department currently has thirteen fulltime personnel.

The Fire Chief, Deputy Chief and Administrator/EMT-B work a weekday administrative schedule. While the additional ten members consisting of four Lieutenants and six Firefighters, work rotating shifts to cover the town with two Firefighters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The department supplements our full-time staff with a part-time Firefighters 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Throughout the year the departments full-time staff remained stable and included the training and promotion of existing personnel as well as increased hours for part-time staff. For Fiscal Year 2022 the fire department was approved to hire two firefighters with an additional two should the department be successful obtaining the SAFER Grant. The department was successful in the obtaining the SAFER Grant and has been working with FEMA to proceed with the hiring. This will take place in calendar year 2023.



In July, the department conducted a comprehensive assessment center comprised of both municipal government leaders and fire service leaders to hire two additional firefighters and fill one vacancy left by the departure of a fulltime member. Colton Mauch, Zachary Racicot and Jeremy Salo were hired as the department's newest fulltime members. Colton and Zachary already worked for the department in a part time capacity. Both of these firefighters will graduate the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in calendar year 2023. Jeremy comes to the department from the Gardner Fire Department and has already completed the Fire Academy.

Moving to the future the Fire department looks to our historical trends for guidance. Last year the department saw an over a six percent increase. This coupled with the fire prevention work and firefighter safety concerns; staffing will need to increase. To continue to provide the excellent service to the community and for firefighter the amount of staff on-duty will need to increase.

On-Call Staffing

First and foremost, the on-call and volunteer staff of the department are a group of highly trained men and women who proudly serve their community. The biggest challenge is that the department is not able to recruit enough of these citizens willing to dedicate the time and effort to become an on-call firefighter.

Throughout the history of the department, the on-call volunteers were the backbone of the department. They provided fire suppression and emergency medical services when needed.



The on-call department has entered a critical phase where its personnel level has reached a record low while the department is experiencing the highest level of emergencies in its history. Chief MacAloney first identified this emerging issue in 1999. This issue has been well studied by Chief MacAloney, Chief Nivala and Chief Butterfield. This shortage developed beginning with the on-call staff working out of town with critical service gaps between the hours of 6:00AM through 6:00PM. To today’s issue of not being able to find enough citizens to dedicate themselves to be on-call firefighters.

Year	Calls for Service	On-Call Firefighters	Part-Time Firefighters	Full-Time Firefighters
2000	791	34	0	3
2010	1,162	21	7	7
2021	1,783	7	16	10
2022	1,903	6	18	12

For 2022 our recruiting efforts had six citizens who wanted to serve the community. Due to the high level of recruits and time constraints with their fulltime employment the department sponsored a Regional Firefighter I/II Training Program. As time got closer two of the recruits backed out of the training and resigned from the department and one recruit was not able to attend due to employments constraints later resigning from the department. This is a common theme with the citizens who show interest in joining the department; they are not able to dedicate the time needed to undergo the training required to be a firefighter. This is a persistent problem that has led to the current crisis.

The age of our current on-call firefighter is also a looming problem. We are facing three on-call firefighters who will age out of being able to serve as firefighters within the next five to ten years. The State of Massachusetts requires all line fire service personnel to retire at the age of 65. Once these members age out of being able to serve they have the option to retire or continue to serve the community in a volunteer basis through Emergency Management.



Due to the status, the department has relied heavily on part time firefighters. These firefighters have been trained and work in other communities. They are paid a rate to work a specific shift. However they do not live within the community and are not available to come back to incidents as on-call firefighters. Moving into 2023 the department will continue to evaluate the needs and make staffing adjustments recommendations as necessary.

In previous years these recruits were sent to the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in Stow for the Call/Volunteer training program. This program is a four-month program provided two nights each week and one day every weekend to facilitate the training of on-call Firefighters who are not employed by the community full-time and need to complete the training around an outside employment schedule. The department identified this as an area that we could improve by offering the training locally to cut down on the commute to and from Stow. This program was delivered through 2022 with our regional partners to offer a training program in Westminster. This program was very successful and trained the departments three newest on-call Firefighters in the fall of 2020. Planning has already started to host a similar program in 2022 with our two newest recruits.

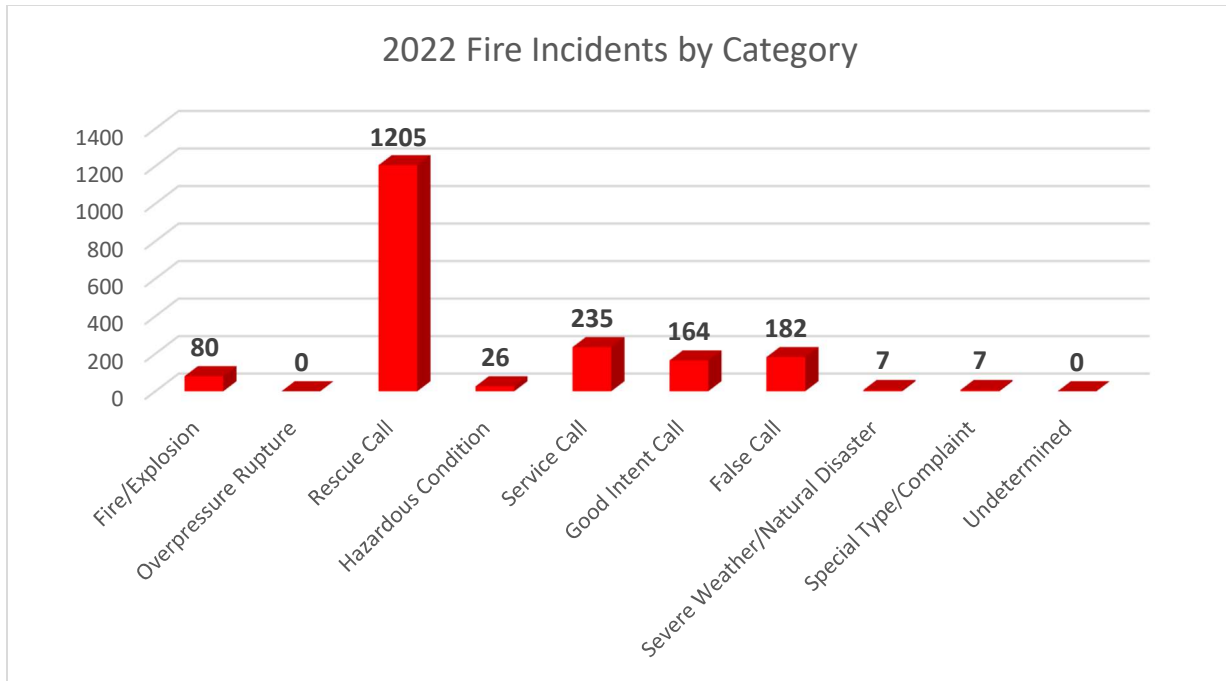
Call Volume

2022 was another year the department faced another record breaking year. The department ended the year with 1,906 emergency incidents. This was a 6.9% increase over 2021 and a 28.80% increase over the last five years. This extrapolates

Type	Total	Percentage
Fire/Explosion	80	4.20%
Overpressure Rupture	0	0.00%
Rescue Call	1205	63.20%
Hazardous Condition	26	1.40%
Service Call	235	12.30%
Good Intent Call	164	8.60%
False Call	182	9.05%
Severe Weather/Natural Disaster	7	0.40%
Special Type/Complaint	7	0.40%
Undetermined	0	0.00%
Total	1,906	100.00%

to 5.22 calls per day. This was first time that the department saw an average of over five incidents a day.

In 2022 the department saw almost a 50% increase in fires compared to 2021. Though the department did less building fires in town there was an uptick in both brush fires and vehicle fires. The department responded to a total of nine building fires to include five 1st Alarm, one Working Fire and three 2nd Alarm building fires. A first alarm fire is a fire that is able to handled with Westminster Apparatus only. A Working Fire consists of all Westminster Apparatus with four mutual aid Engine Companies, one mutual Ladder Company and one mutual aid Ambulance. A Second Alarm brings an additional Four Tankers and two Engine Companies over a Working Fire Assignment. Firefighting is a labor intensive operation and with the decrease in on-call staff has necessitated the need for additional mutual aid. The Ambulance assigned to the Working Fire was added and provides EMS on scene for citizens and firefighters. This change was made in reaction to the long wait times experienced on scene. More often than not the ambulance at least evaluates one patient per fire. The department would like to thanks Woods Ambulance of Gardner for their support. If available they provide a standby ambulance on scene for fires.



Emergency Medical Services

This year has been a year of fortification of systems within our EMS service. Key changes and advancement were implemented that have allowed us to streamline many of our older systems and processes. We have revamped the way that controlled narcotics are stored and replenished. We have streamlined our medication tracking systems and the way that many of our medications are maintained at par for the demands of our system. In addition to medication logistics, we have increased our training capabilities on a departmental level. This year, we have implemented the ability to train and certify our providers in the discipline of Advanced Cardiac Life Support. We certified all our providers in house this year. In prior years, this was a service that we had to outsource in order for our Paramedics to remain certified. In addition to our in house training, this year, we were able to partner with the Police, Town Hall, and DPW to provide training and resources to increase first aid awareness. All of the DPW personnel were certified in CPR, AED usage, and Basic First Aid. We were able to equip the supervisor's vehicles for the DPW with advanced first aid kits pertinent to the potential life threatening situations that the DPW workers could be exposed to. We were certified the Parks and Recreation Counselors and the Oakmont Coaching staff in CPR as well. This was in part because of the newly purchased CPR equipment that was purchased on



the recent Article passed at town meeting. As we move forward, we are working to continue to implement programs like these to improve community awareness as well as making our town safer.

This is our second year working under Medical Control of UMass and Dr. Laurel O'Connor. We are in the process of implementing and expanded scope of practice that will allow our practitioners the ability to treat high acuity conditions in remote locations such as Mount Wachusett. As Dr. O'Connor welcomed her second child into the world this year, we were placed under the Medical Direction of Dr. Matthew Loconte. Dr. Loconte is a specialist in Tactical Medicine and Operations. This has opened an opportunity for our personnel to implement and train for High Acuity situations such as ASHER (Active Shooter Hostile Event Response) Moving forward this increases the capabilities of our personnel and their awareness of such incidents.

We replaced our CPR machines this year. Because of strong maintenance, we were able to trade our 10 year old machine in and receive enough credit to add an additional machine to one of our Engines. This will allow us the opportunity to provide a needed piece of equipment as a resource to our providers on second and third medicals. We continue to see an increase in multiple EMS calls, many of which are simultaneous.

This year we will start the process of designing the replacement for A1. Due to the successful design of A2, it is probable that this design will be emulated for the replacement for A1.

Looking into 2023, the department will continue the trend of remote learning by adding more virtual classes, and special training opportunities through local facilities. The department strives to provide the highest level of care to the community



by staying abreast of new techniques and equipment while providing our staff with the best training and equipment available to meet the needs of the community.

Ambulance Calls By Level of Care

Hospital	Occurrence	Percentage
At Scene Other	8	0.71%
No Treatment Required	9	0.09%
Patient Refused Care	294	26.25%
Treated and Released or Refused Transport	0	0.00%
Treated, Transferred Care	16	1.43%
Treated, Transported by EMS (ALS)	290	25.89%
Treated, Transported by EMS (BLS)	503	44.91%
Treated, Transported by Private Vehicle	0	0.00%
Unknown	0	0.00%
Total	1,120	100%

Ambulance Call by Destination

Destination	Occurrence	Percentage
Health Alliance - Leominster	395	35.27%
Heywood Hospital	322	28.75%
Other, In-State	7	0.63%
St. Vincent's	10	0.89%
UMASS Memorial	1	0.09%
UMASS University	68	6.07%
No Destination	317	28.30%
Total	1,120	100%

Simultaneous Incidents

Through 2022 the department faced consistent simultaneous calls ending the year with a total of 300 incidents. Simultaneous incidents are when more than one incident occurs during the same time period. The department started to track these in 2018 where they became an emerging service gap. Since then year after year the department sees increases in these incidents.

Through 2022, the department relied on mutual aid to transport 82 patients from simultaneous calls. The current model of the staffing the department can typically respond to a basic incident. With the addition of a third firefighter per shift, on medical based calls that leaves one member to respond to second incidents to act as a first responder or provide an initial report. With the

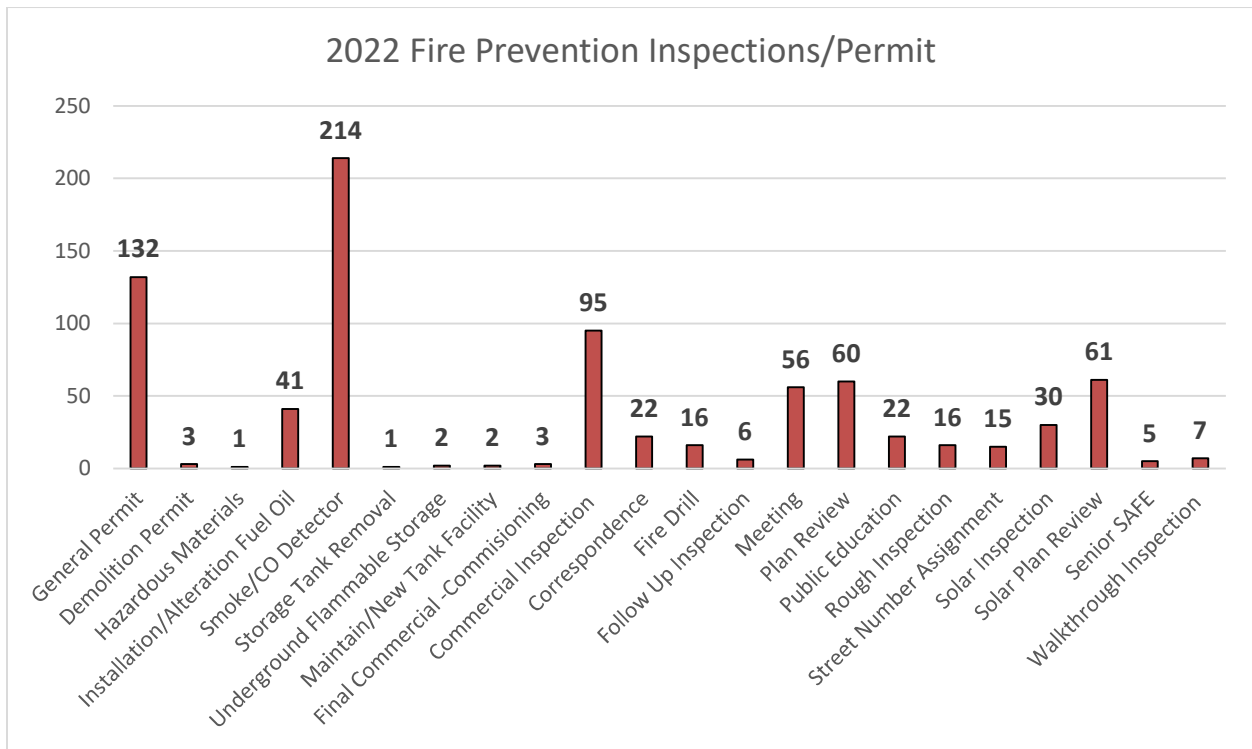
ever increasing workload the lack of on-call firefighters continues to be a major factor that hinders the department’s response to second or complex incidents.

2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
132	170	182	233	300

Out of the 300 simultaneous incidents 202 (67%) occurred during the hours of 8:00AM through 6:00PM. These are the hours that traditionally the on-call staff is at their primary employment. 98 (33%) of these incidents occurred from 6:00PM through 8:00AM. EMS calls accounted for 213 (71%) of these incidents. The department was able to staff a transporting ambulance for 84 of these calls and utilized mutual aid ambulances for 82 transported.

The ability to handle more than one incident at a time has become a critical issue for the department. The citizens expect timely service when they call 911. The vast majority of these incidents occur during the daytime hours. With that there will be additional personnel requests for the upcoming budget to address this service gap.

Fire Prevention



Throughout 2022 the department completed 810 fire prevnetion inspections and registered 593 open air fire permits. The housing market has seen a slowing which contributed to a decrease in

the sale, transfer and construction of new dwellings. Even though the residential inspections were down the department still has core inspectional requirements every year to complete. This included all businesses in the community as well as joint inspections with the Building Department. Solar technology has continued to grow and the department has seen an increase in residential battery storage systems. These systems require a permit issued from the fire department. As part of this permit the department follows the guidance provided from the Fire Marshall and State Building Officials which requires the storage to be separated from living space when over 10,000 kilowatts. These systems are generally safe and effective however should they fail they present a significant hazard for the residents and challenges for firefighters. Moving into the future it is expected that these systems will become increasingly common throughout the community.

The department continued work on the larger fire prevention activities to include commissioning a large battery storage system at the solar field on Bean Porridge Hill Road and many large plan reviews. The largest plan review's took place for the sites known as Lot I-7 and Lot I-8 in the industrial park at Theodore Drive. These sites once constructed will have large buildings that will require a significant amount of inspectional oversight.

With the ever increasing demands within the department Chief Butterfield stepped down from his position as a Board of Director for the Massachusetts Fire Prevention Association. This position is an elected position and Chief Butterfield spent two terms as part of this organization.

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.

Lieutenant Bennett Chadbourne continues to be the departments lead investigator and throughout 2022 investigated 9 building fires and numerous vehicle and brush fires. Lt Chadbourne regularly attended the International Association of Arson Investigators meetings and trainings to stay up to date on the most current topics and changes. He has shown a high degree of competency and been asked to assist numerous mutual aid partners with the investigation of their fires.

Public Education

Lt. Zack Algarin continued his work as the SAFE Coordinator bringing back many of the in person training session for 2022. This included programs tailored to the schools, community organizations and the senior population. Through his work at the schools, Westminster Elementary School Student Noah Bond received a Young Hero's Award from the State Fire Marshall. Noah utilized the skills taught to him through the SAFE Program to summons an ambulance for a family member experiencing a medical emergency. This is a tangible example of the positive outcomes from our



public education efforts. Lt. Algarin also began to deliver quarterly trainings at the Senior Center which focused on seasonal topics. Lieutenant Algarin, Senior Center Director Sue Fisher and Pvt. Josh Emerson were able to attend The Public and Life Safety Educators. This was a two day conference held in Southbridge Massachusetts which allows for SAFE Educator training as well as the sharing of programs. This year Lt. Algarin and Acting Police Chief Jason Tamulen were asked to deliver a class on Natinoal Nightout. This training provided the groundwork for communities to building their own National Night Out.

As 2022 ended Lt. Zack Algarin left his position in Westminster for a position in another department. 2023 will see a new SAFE Coordinator and we look forward to continuing the success Zack built.

Specialty Community Services

National Night Out

With last year's success, Natioal Night Out was bigger and better for 2022. Again it was hosted at Oakmont Regional High School and included an ever growing number of community partners. This year a movie night was added to provide a safe community building evening. The department looks forward to building on the success of previous years moving into 2023.

Halloween Bonfire

With this being the second year back from the Pandemic the Bonfire proceeded as scheduled. 2022 was one of the highest attended in the events history. The Forbush Memorial Library

assisted the department in the serving of apple cider and the SAFE Program provided educational materials for the residents.

Event Planning

The department continues to be part of community event planning. Due to the ongoing pandemic a majority of the annual events were cancelled. The department looks forward to working with our community partners ensuring a safe environment for all those in attendance.

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

In a traditional year the department holds 12 paid monthly trainings. Due to the ongoing pandemic, 2021 saw a modified training schedule in an effort to reduce the spread of COVID-19 thru department members. The department held an apparatus operator course for five members thru the summer and early fall. This course followed the IFSTA curriculum for apparatus operators and was taught in house by



department personnel. This course, coupled with an Emergency Vehicle Operator (EVOC) class and a pre-determined amount of practice driving and operating each piece of apparatus gives the members the training and practice needed to drive and operate the department apparatus. A training component was also added to our on-duty staffs daily routine, with lesson plans for short (1 hour) drills to be performed during their workday. An array of topics are provided to the groups each month, tailored to the time of year or small improvements that need to be made. Even as the department entered the last month of the year there were some modifications made due to increased Covid-19 cases throughout the department and community.

As the the ongoing pandemic affected the department, modifications had to be made to the training schedule. The use of Microsoft Teams was launched to provide an online training platform when in person meetings were not available. With a portion of the meetings having to be postponed, the department added a basic skills and live fire training day into the schedule in an effort to maintain the department members skill sets.

EMS Training was heavily modified to accommodate the change to a new medical director. Rather than members having to go to other Hospital's to achieve their training hours. The training was done in house with all of the required M&M Rounds being done by our medical director. M&M rounds are an opportunity



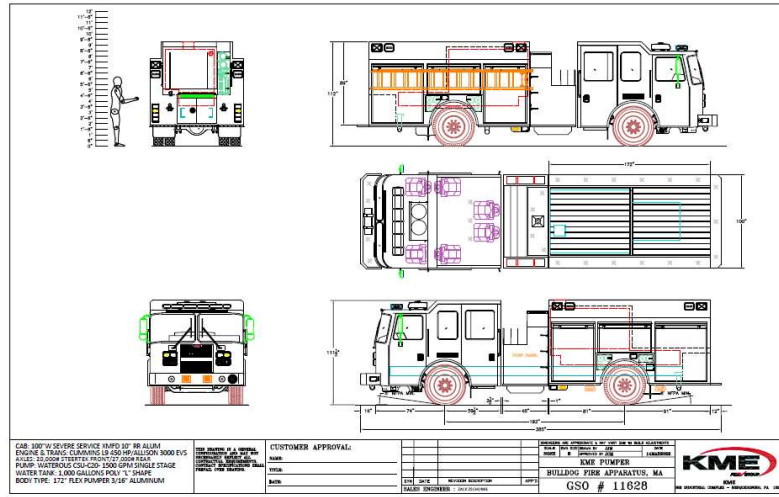
for our Medical Director to review actual call from the service area to improve service. The change to doing this as a department instead of regionally was a major improvement as we were able to focus on calls strictly from Westminster and not seven other services.

Apparatus

With the establishment of a preventative maintenance division within the department we have been able to combat common use issues, and provide a more thorough inspection of apparatus and equipment. Small engine maintenance which has typically been outsourced has been able to be kept in house. Lubrication of frame components and small non mechanical issues have also been able to be completed by our maintenance division which has assisted in taking some work load off of the department of public works mechanics. Working in New England our apparatus is effected greatly by the corrosion which has shortened the life span of our equipment drastically. In conjunction with the department of public works, a preventative plan has been implemented to establish routine washing and inspection of the undercarriages followed by seasonal undercoating. The execution of this plan has shown to slow corrosion of our current apparatus and will likely help to prevent costs of larger issues moving forward.

Engine 1 - (2019 Class A Pumper) KME. The vehicle has a 1,500gpm pump with 1,250 gallons of water and is equipped with Class A foam for ordinary fires, this Engine is the primary attack truck for structure fires. This vehicle is three years old and is in excellent shape. It serves as the main attack engine and sees the lion share of response.

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 for ordinary fires. 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. The replacement of this vehicle has been secured and is not expected to arrive until FY2025 when this vehicle has been programmed for the capital plan. By securing the replacement the town has secured a price that will not be subject to inflationary increases.



Engine 3 – (2013 Class A Pumper/Rescue) KME. This 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. This vehicle is in good shape but, has started to experience corrosion and component failure. Due to the compact nature of the vehicle, parts are significantly more expensive to replace. Over the coming years it is expected the cost to maintain this vehicle will rise significantly.

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 starting to show its age and has experienced a couple major break downs to include the motors turbo and corrosion damage to the sub-frame that holds that supports the ladder. These items were repaired as part of the refurbishment. This vehicle is reaching it’s end of life and it is expected that it will require substation repairs annually until its replacement arrives. The remainder of the refurbishment will include corrosion control and part replacement on wear and tear items.

Engine 5- (2008 Mini-Pumper) CET. Engine 5 is the departments brush truck. It has 4-wheel drive, 500gpm pump and 300 gallons of water. The vehicle is also equipped with Class A foam to increase its effectiveness on ordinary fires. This vehicle is fair shape, substantial corrosion was found on its sub-frame and was replaced. The Compressed Air Foam System (CAFS) was disconnected from the vehicle due to high repair costs. To replace this system would require a major service and removal of parts of the body. The cost benefit was evaluated and the benefits of the CAFS did not necessitate its repair. This vehicle is scheduled for replacement in the coming year and should meet its 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 the departments primary tow vehicle. This vehicle mechanically is in fair shape however the bed of the vehicle is showing extensive corrosion.

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 fair condition. It is showing signs of corrosion but should meet its scheduled life expectancy. The one factor that will extend this vehicle beyond its expected life span is the long lead times that are being encountered. A new vehicle will take 18-24 months to receive which will require more maintenance than expected.

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 is in excellent condition.

Station

In 2019, the Select Board re-formed the Public Safety Building Committee to perform a site selection process for a new public safety building. This committee completed a site selection analysis which was posted on the Towns webpage. The selected site was the Hager Park Road site. Once this site was selected the process began to transfer the land to the Town from Hager Park. This required a unanimous vote of the Hager Park Commission to proceed. There was not unanimity in the Hager Park Commission rendering this site unusable. This put the committee back to the beginning steps of its charge from the Select Board and is currently evaluating sites.

The current committee has experienced significant difficulty identifying a new site for the public safety building. As the committee moves forward a new site will have to be located outside the center of town to find a suitable site to build on.

All of the committee's documents can be found on the Town Website under the Public Safety Building Committee.

Future

The Westminster Fire Department is an all hazards response, prevention and education agency. Without a doubt the men and women who serve on the fire department provide the citizens with the highest level of service. The department's performance over 2022 have shown their dedication to the fire service and community. The Department strives to provide the highest level of service to the community as possible and our members embody this. As the department continues experiencing rising call volumes as the community grows, the department will need to grow to meet the needs of the community. I look forward to working with the town to facilitate these needs.

Please contact the office if you have any questions.



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