

**FIRE DEPARTMENT
2015 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 several changes in personnel. Several fulltime employees left for other employment and we have hired new people to replace them. These new people are going through their training. I also promoted a person to the rank of Lieutenant.

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 and is greater than ever. 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.

The department saw an increase this past year in call volume. This trend is going to continue as the town grows and the demand of services from the public.

Department Record:

Permits and Compliance 2015:

Permit Type	Occurrences	Percentages
Burning Permits	214	17.92%
Burn Permit Activations	451	37.77%
Alarm System	0	0.00%
General Permit (FP 6)	63	5.28%
Installation or Alteration of Fuel Burning Equipment	47	3.94%
Smoke Detectors and Carbon Monoxide Alarms	203	17.00%
Storage Tank Removal and Transportation	1	0.08%
Tank Truck	3	0.25%
Maintain/New Underground Storage Tank	1	0.08%
Plan Review	51	4.27%
Fire Drills	16	1.34%
Public Education Class	41	3.43%
Solar Panel Inspection	34	2.85%
Walk Through Smoke/CO Inspection	22	1.84%
Rough Inspection	10	0.84%
Commercial Inspections	37	3.10%
Total	1194	100.00%

Incidents by Type 2015:

Incident Type	Occurrences	Percentages
Fire, other	1	0.08%
Building fire	7	0.56%
Chimney or flue fire, confined to chimney or flue	6	0.48%
Mobile property (vehicle) fire, other	2	0.16%
Passenger vehicle fire	3	0.24%
Forest, woods or wildland fire	2	0.16%
Brush or brush-and-grass mixture fire	8	0.64%
Outside rubbish, trash or waste fire	1	0.08%
Outside equipment fire	1	0.08%
Rescue, EMS incident, other	8	0.64%
Medical assist, assist EMS crew	23	1.85%
Emergency medical service incident, other	13	1.05%
EMS call, excluding vehicle accident with injury	553	44.56%
Motor vehicle accident with injuries	36	2.90%
Motor vehicle/pedestrian accident (MV Ped)	1	0.08%
Motor vehicle accident with no injuries.	56	4.51%
Search for lost person, other	1	0.08%
Search for person on land	3	0.24%
Extrication, rescue, other	2	0.16%
Removal of victim(s) from stalled elevator	1	0.08%
Hazardous condition, Other	5	0.40%
Gas leak (natural gas or LPG)	9	0.73%
Oil or other combustible liquid spill	3	0.24%
Carbon monoxide incident	9	0.73%
Electrical wiring/equipment problem, other	7	0.56%
Overheated motor	1	0.08%
Power line down	1	0.08%
Arcing, shorted electrical equipment	3	0.24%
Building or structure weakened or collapsed	2	0.16%
Vehicle accident, general cleanup	8	0.64%
Explosive, bomb removal (for bomb scare, use 721)	1	0.08%
Service Call, other	14	1.13%
Lock-out	81	6.53%
Water problem, other	3	0.24%
Smoke or odor removal	1	0.08%
Animal rescue	2	0.16%
Public service assistance, other	8	0.64%
Assist police or other governmental agency	5	0.40%
Police matter	1	0.08%
Public service	5	0.40%
Assist invalid	8	0.64%

Unauthorized burning	3	0.24%
Cover assignment, standby, moveup	42	3.38%
Good intent call, other	33	2.66%
Dispatched & canceled en route	31	2.50%
Wrong location	1	0.08%
No incident found on arrival at dispatch address	2	0.16%
Authorized controlled burning	2	0.16%
Smoke scare, odor of smoke	15	1.21%
Steam, vapor, fog or dust thought to be smoke	1	0.08%
EMS call, party transported by non-fire agency	1	0.08%
False alarm or false call, other	1	0.08%
System malfunction, other	39	3.14%
Sprinkler activation due to malfunction	8	0.64%
Smoke detector activation due to malfunction	14	1.13%
Alarm system sounded due to malfunction	49	3.95%
CO detector activation due to malfunction	5	0.40%
Unintentional transmission of alarm, other	6	0.48%
Sprinkler activation, no fire - unintentional	5	0.40%
Smoke detector activation, no fire - unintentional	14	1.13%
Detector activation, no fire - unintentional	6	0.48%
Alarm system activation, no fire - unintentional	30	2.42%
Carbon monoxide detector activation, no CO	15	1.21%
Special type of incident, other	3	0.24%
Citizen complaint	10	0.81%
Total	1241	100.00%

Personnel:

Full-Time Staffing –

We currently have 6 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 84 hours a week. Shifts are rotating 24 hour shifts. Two groups are staffed with two fulltime fighters; two groups 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 – We ended the year with 13 on-call firefighters. Of those 13; 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. The shortage of on-call personnel is not unique to Westminster and continues to be the biggest struggle facing fire departments our size nationally.

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: We have 13 Per-Diem firefighters who are firefighters who 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. The reason for these firefighters is, we do not have sufficient number of call firefighters from town to cover shifts. Per-Diem Firefighters are highly qualified firefighters who come to us as firefighters from other communities. Although Per-Diem Firefighters have a place in our department they do not respond to general calls as they live too far away to make a difference in the majority of the calls we have.

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. Residents are encouraged to visit the station or contact the Chief of the Department at any time to inquire about the department and get answers to their questions.

EMS:

Emergency Medical Services – Over the last year the fire department has responded to 807 medical related calls. This includes MVA's general medicals and services calls.

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. The field of paramedics is in constant growth and our paramedics continue to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and abilities to meet these changes.

This past year we were able to refurbish our cardiac monitors to extend their serviceable life. These cardiac monitors are used on almost every advanced life support call and help the paramedics treat the patients. Along with the refurbishment the department was able to create a link between the monitors and our computer tablets so information can be imported to the patient care reports. This information is essential to continued patient care and it is now provided in the departments patient care reports instead of a photocopy which potentially can be lost.

Ambulance Statistics 2015:

Total requests for EMS	750
ALS Transports	316
BLS Transports	188
Refusals	221
Other agency transport	25
Total WFD Transports	504

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 two 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.

Anyone interested in being an on-call EMT should contact the Chief to learn more about what it takes to become an EMT and work on-call for the department.

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 State of Massachusetts is working to bring regional rescue teams to each district. Financially it is difficult to provide equipment and training for every type of technical rescue that each community faces. These teams provide the ability to share resources resulting in less of a burden on the town. As the teams and training continue to roll out we will be participating in the process.

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 Prevention – Fire prevention activities have been on the rise as the economy continues to rebound from the recession. January 1, 2015 saw the implementation of an entirely new fire code. The State adopted the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1 Model Fire Code. This is a comprehensive fire code which has greatly enhanced the fire prevention officer's jurisdiction. The fire department has been able to continue to have their firefighters attend training specializing on the changes in the fire code.

The new fire code requires the fire department to have a greater working relationship with the building department. This has caused the fire prevention office and building department to work

alongside each other on many large scale plan reviews and inspections. The end result of the new fire code is a safety community and Commonwealth.

Public Education:

SAFE (Student Awareness and Fire Education) – 2015 saw a year of changes within the fire departments public education coordinators. In the short term Captain Butterfield had continued the public education programs. Pvt. Michael Sheehan was hired fulltime by the fire department and tasked as the Public Education Coordinator. He successfully completed the Public Life Safety Educators class put on by the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy. The S.A.F.E. Grant requires that at least one firefighter be trained to this level in order to receive funding.

The public education program is an all-encompassing program which reaches children from Pre-Kindergarten all the way through the seniors of the community. This is just one piece of the comprehensive fire prevention program that the Westminster Fire Department has in place to reduce the risks of fire throughout the community.

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) (2007 Ford Ambulance) Horton. The new ambulance is scheduled to be here in May 2016.

Ambulance 2- (A2) (2012 GMC Ambulance) Braun. It is used to respond to Emergency Medical calls and transport patients to the hospital. The vehicle is in good condition and is very similar to Ambulance 1.

Engine 1- (E1) (1999 Class A pumper) KME. It carries 1000 gallons of water and Class B foam to fight flammable liquid fires, and is in good condition. The vehicle was sent out for some corrosion repair to extend the life of the vehicle.

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

Engine 3- (E3) (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. This vehicle is a combination vehicle having replaced both Rescue 1 and Engine 4 functionality in 2013. 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- (T1) (2005 Ladder Truck) KME 95 ft aerial ladder with tower bucket and 300 gallons of water and 2000 GPM pump.

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

Utility Vehicles- The department has 3 utility vehicles as follows: Car 1 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. Car 1 was replaced in October of 2015.

Radio Equipment- This year the department applied 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 with the hope we will be successful. If we are turned down again I will have to look for the Town to fund this important project.

Station:

The Board of Selectmen reappointed a 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.

Contact Information:

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

Phone: 978-874-2313, Dispatcher Ext 0, Chief Nivala Ext 230, Karen Long, Administrator Ext 231

Fire Prevention Capt. Butterfield Ext 232

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