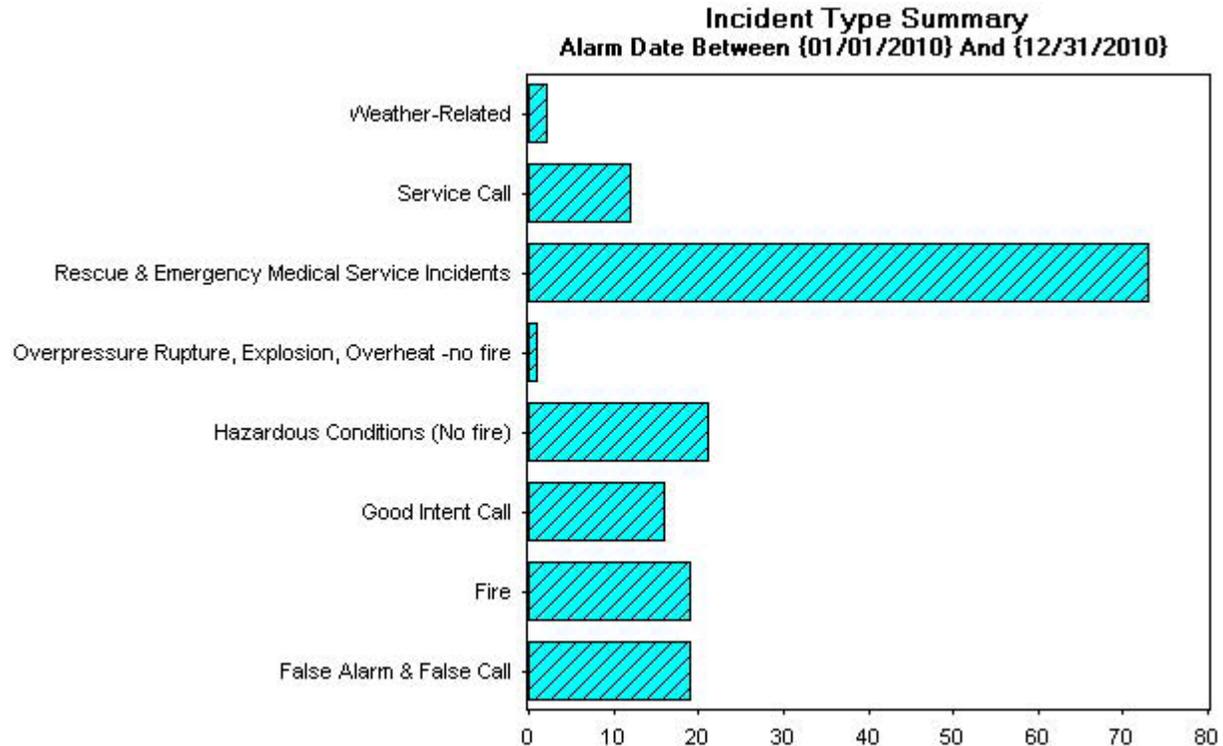


2010 Fire Department Annual Report

The Westhampton Fire Department had another busy year in 2010 providing emergency services to the community. The Department responded to one-hundred and sixty-three calls for service this year. These calls for service were for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, motor vehicle accidents, utility wires down, residential fire alarm activations, and many more. The following graph gives a visual depiction of these emergency responses over the last year.



The department's fleet of apparatus consists of a 2004 Engine, a 1986 Engine, a 1990 garage truck cab and chassis with a milk truck body converted into a Water Tanker, a 2002 Brush Truck, and a 2009 Rescue Truck. All vehicles are checked by Department personnel on a weekly basis to ensure a state of operational readiness and reliability. In addition, the Town's Highway Department has been a tremendous asset to the Fire Department, completing all routine maintenance, fluid changes, and upkeep of the vehicles. The vehicle maintenance program, as established, helps to prolong the expected life-span of the vehicles and improve the safety during emergency responses. Again this year, we had both Engines professionally pump-tested to ensure adequate pump performance as determined by the manufactures. These testing procedures are also reflected in the Department's Insurance Services Organization (ISO) rating and meet the requirements set by National Standards pertaining to Fire Apparatus.

The Department also had all of the fire hose pressure tested to ensure adequate operational effectiveness. National Standards recommend that this is done once a year, and in addition, it is reflected in the ISO ratings that this testing procedure be done to minimize the insurance rates in Town. More important, to ensure the safety of all members utilizing fire hose during operational procedures, it is our responsibility that they are provided with equipment that is safe and functioning to the highest standards. The testing revealed that the Department did have fire hose in service that did not pass the required pressure rating. These were removed from service and replaced with some of the spare hose that was also tested and passed the requirements. These testing requirements demonstrated that this was a project that was needed

and should be continued each year to help ensure that the integrity and operational capacity of the equipment is maintained. This year for the first time, we were also able to get all of our ground ladders tested to the National Standards, ensuring they could meet the performance requirements during emergency operations. All of these projects are critical to properly maintaining all of the equipment and ensuring the highest degree of safety for our personnel utilizing these resources.

One of the greatest challenges faced by volunteer departments across the country is the recruitment and retention of department members. Greater demands on training, increasing call volumes and the balance of a full time job and family all require a delicate balance that can minimize the number of people interested in becoming a member. The Town of Westhampton has been very fortunate over the years, given the difficulties seen by other departments, to maintain this type of department and the high level of performance and services provided by these individuals. The department currently has thirty-five volunteer members and is always seeking new members to help serve the community. These volunteers are vital to keeping the overall cost for services down while at the same time performing a critical service needed in the community. Per capita, based on the 2010 census published in last year's Town Report, Westhampton residents pay approximately \$10.33 for fire protection each year. This would not be remotely possible if it wasn't for all of the dedicated volunteers in the Department. In continuing to build out our department, we were proud to welcome Matt Trombley to the Department as a new member. The Department is always looking for new volunteers and anyone who is ever interested is encouraged to call the Department and speak with the Chief.

The Department continues to be vigilant for any other funding sources available for Fire Departments. Over the course of the past four years, the Department has received over \$500,000 in competitive grants and other funding sources outside of our regular operating budget funded from the tax base. This amount is more than twenty-five times our annual operating budget. This past year we were successful in procuring a grant in the amount of \$156,000 to purchase equipment to improve our operational capabilities. Part of these funds went towards the purchase of a mobile air compressor and light tower. This unit enables our personnel to replenish their self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) bottles after use. Prior to our Department receiving this, all of the bottles had to be taken out of service and filled in a neighboring community. We were also able to purchase some much needed emergency medical equipment to outfit the rescue truck for emergency responses. Some of this equipment included a new cardiac monitor and an automated CPR machine.



Mobile Air Trailer / Light Tower



Automated CPR machine

The Department was also able to install a fire detection system at the Public Safety Complex this year with grant funds as well. The concern has always been that if there ever is a fire at that location no one would be aware of it until it was too late. The Town has too much valuable equipment and vehicles at

that location, over one million dollars, to not have it monitored and at least give personnel the opportunity to save as much as possible for the Town in the unlikely case that there ever were a fire at the Public Safety Complex.

The Department was also proud to receive another grant in the amount of \$4,000 from the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security to help upgrade our equipment and supplies to respond to wildfires and brush fires. These funds allowed us to replace all of our forestry hose and buy new packs to carry water into remote areas in the woods that may be inaccessible with any vehicles. The Firefighters Association has provided the funds to help meet the matching amount for this State grant and this again will help provide vital resources needed to upgrade the current equipment being used.

There are a number of capital projects that the Fire Department is going to need input and support on from the community in the immediate future. The largest of these is a need for a new Public Safety Complex to meet the growing demands of the community. The current facility is reaching sixty years old and no longer is able to accommodate the demands placed on the Public Safety Services (Police, Fire, EMS, and Emergency Management). In addition, one of the Fire Engines is twenty-four years old and has an expected life span of twenty-five years. However, no new engine available will fit in the current facility given the current parameters. All of these items were also forwarded to the Town Capital Improvements Committee with emphasis placed on a new building. We will continue to explore all available funding options to minimize the financial impact on the community, but the conversation needs to continue in order to plan and prepare for vehicles and equipment for the next ten to twenty-five years and a facility that will continue to meet the service demands for the next fifty plus years.

Finally, I'd like to thank all of the personnel at the Department for their continued support and dedication to the Town and the Department. It continues to be an absolute pleasure and honor to work for all of them and be part of an organization that cares so much about their community. The members of the Westhampton Fire Department continue to do much more than respond to emergencies. Throughout the years, they continue to clean residents chimneys each fall, hang the flags on the utility poles in the center of town when needed, get involved in community sponsored events such as the Halloween parade, fill residents swimming pools and the water tanks at the Town Cemetery, install smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors, and put up house numbers for residences to help emergency responders find the proper location and decrease response times. The Westhampton Fire Department is one of the few healthy and vigorous volunteer departments left in the region, and all of the members are very dedicated and proud to serve the residents and community.

Most importantly, I'd like to thank my wife, Ashleigh, and two daughters, Payton and Clare, who continue to be supportive and understanding for the times I'm away for Department trainings, meetings, or emergency responses. I couldn't do it without all of their help.

Everyone have a safe and healthy year!

Christopher W. Norris
Fire Chief / Emergency Manger
Town of Westhampton