

2016 Annual Town Report



Westhampton Fire Department

Submitted March 1, 2017

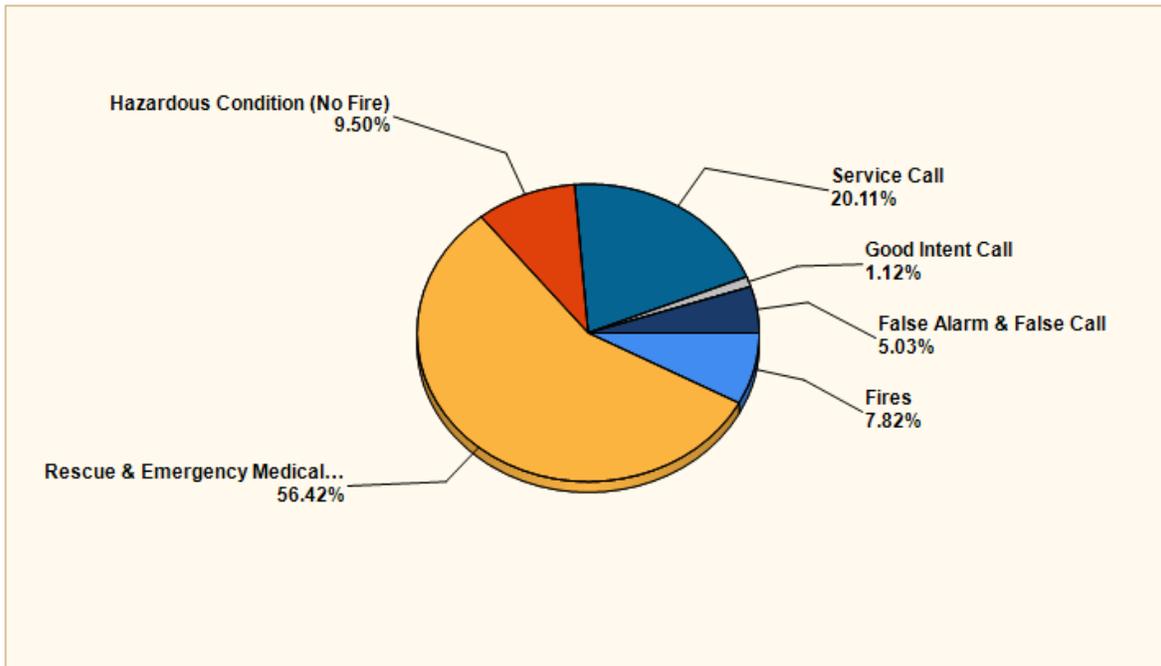
2016 Annual Town Report- Westhampton Fire Department

The Westhampton Fire Department is an all-volunteer organizations consisting of thirty Firefighters and Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT's) that respond to numerous emergency calls throughout the year. All personnel are alerted to an emergency in town through a paging system that provides the emergency responders with the location and nature of the call. Emergency personnel then stop what they are doing to respond to the Fire Station to retrieve equipment and vehicles needed for the response. We have continually educated people throughout the community that given the current type of volunteer organization the town has in place, there is a possibility that someone may have an emergency and not get any response from any member of the Westhampton Fire Department or Westhampton EMS. Additionally, we have informed the public that, if we do have personnel that can respond, from the time of notification for an emergency, to the time we arrive on the scene and begin mitigation efforts, could be anywhere from 10-15 minutes depending on the location in town that the emergency occurred. This time frame is within the normal response time based on Call/Volunteer Departments as outlined in the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1720 Standard.

Like many organizations, the fire service continues to face many challenges. Recruitment of new personnel continues to be a major concern for many small-volunteer organizations. The Westhampton Fire Department is always looking for anyone willing to make the commitment and join the Department so we can maintain this active organization. Ongoing training and education is a significant focus in the fire service based on the need to keep up with changing technologies and hazards encountered by our personnel. The safety of all our personnel and mutual aid partners has always been paramount and a primary focus of our mission. Throughout the year, personnel are expected to attend local, county, state, or federal training programs to remain competent and operate safely during any emergency.

Based on the volunteer nature of the fire department, many preventative measures have been explored or implemented to help maintain this type of organization. Open burning is only allowed on Saturdays or Sundays with a valid permit in order to have a higher probability that personnel will be home during these hours of burning. Residential sprinklers have been required previously in subdivisions here in town as well as promoted during any new construction projects. Fire extinguisher training programs have been offered and encouraged for all residents in town to help everyone understand how to safely operate these devices. Finally, smoke detector and carbon monoxide detector installation projects have been implemented and undertaken in collaboration with other groups throughout the town to help increase the safety of our residents. These are just a few examples of how we have tried to increase the safety of all our residents while maintaining a volunteer organization.

The Westhampton Fire Department had another busy year in 2016 providing emergency services to the community. The Department responded to one-hundred and seventy-nine 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, inspections and many more.



2016 emergency calls breakdown

MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	14	7.82%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	101	56.42%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	17	9.50%
Service Call	36	20.11%
Good Intent Call	2	1.12%
False Alarm & False Call	9	5.03%
TOTAL	179	100.00%

TOTAL 179 calls-- 100.00%

The department's fleet of apparatus consists of a 2004 Engine, a 1986 Engine, a 2017 Tanker Truck, a 2002 Brush Truck, a 2009 Rescue Truck, a 2009 Mobile Air trailer with a light tower and generator, and a 1996 ambulance. All vehicles are checked by Department personnel on a weekly basis to ensure a state of operational readiness and reliability. All of these vehicles have service completed by certified Emergency Vehicle Technicians throughout the year 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.



2017 Tanker Truck

The new Tanker Truck was put into service on November 20, 2016. This vehicle was obtained with the assistance of a \$226,000 federal grant last year as well as funding from the Town in the amount of \$85,000. This vehicle is critical for our operations as the town has no municipal water supply or hydrants and relies solely on a mobile water system for fire suppression. This vehicle provides much more versatility and pumping capabilities that the older vehicle never had. Most importantly, this vehicle is much safer and more reliable and is designed for emergency vehicle response.

The Department received a \$5,000 grant this year from the Massachusetts Interlocal Insurance Association (MIIA) to install backup cameras in all of our emergency vehicles. Motor vehicle accidents continue to be a significant challenge for emergency response agencies across the Country. These cameras will increase the safety of our personnel and limit our exposure for property damage to the vehicles and buildings.

In October, the Fire Fighters Association partnered with the Council on Aging on a carbon monoxide installation campaign. Carbon monoxide is a colorless, odorless, and tasteless gas that can be only detected with a metering device. Although state law requires these metering devices to be in every residential home that has an attached garage or fossil fuel burning heating equipment, many homes still do not have these. The Fire Fighters Association purchased thirty of these detectors and installed them in the homes of seniors across the community to help protect them from this deadly gas.

In February 2016, we began working with representatives from the Pioneer Valley Planning Commission to update our community Hazard Mitigation Plan. This plan can be viewed on the town website, and provides the town a template for responding and dealing with all hazard emergencies. This document is required for federal reimbursement and grants and must be updated at least every five years. David Blakesley and Ginny Curtis put a lot of time and effort into this process to ensure this got done on time and approved by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

This year, the Department 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. We also had 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.



1996 Westhampton Ambulance

This past year was the first full year the town has had the ambulance service in operation. The system is structured so a private ambulance service, Pioneer Valley Ambulance, provides transportation between the hours of midnight and 4PM, and the Westhampton Fire Department provides transportation between the hours of 4PM and midnight. These times allow for the volunteers to get home from work, school, etc. and provide coverage as needed when calls come in. All EMT's will continue to respond 24 hours a day, seven days a week, but will respond in their personal vehicles during those off hours. In 2016, the ambulance service transported nineteen patients.

In fiscal year 2015, prior to the town providing EMS transport services, the town allocated \$8,550 for expenses for the fiscal year. These funds were used to purchase equipment and supplies such as defibrillator pads, certifications cards, training, and EMS disposable equipment. In fiscal year 2016, the first year we provided EMS transport services, the town allocated \$17,000 for these operations. Ambulance receipts collected for that fiscal year were \$8,267. The Department also turned back \$1,762 in used funds for that same fiscal year. Total EMS expenditures for fiscal year 2016 for full paramedic service to the Town of Westhampton was \$6,971 (which is less than what was used prior to Westhampton not doing the ambulance service and more importantly does not take into consideration the increase in service with this transport capability). Finally, prior to Westhampton not having an ambulance, the Town was being charged \$18,600 just to provide service on top of our own expenditures mentioned previously and the town was not able to recover any costs to help offset the cost for the services that were provided. Below is a chart outlining the costs that communities of similar size pay for the same type of emergency services:

Town	Population	Fire Budget	EMS budget	Fire Chief Salary	Total Cost
Leverett	1,851	\$65,689.00	\$27,200.00	\$19,904.00	\$112,793.00
Pelham	1,321	\$64,278.68	\$26,000.00	\$25,017.54	\$115,296.22
Shutesbury	1,756	\$53,299.00	\$28,300.00	\$53,000.00	\$134,599.00
Russell	1,769	\$107,197.00	\$33,892.00	In negotiations	\$141,089.00
Chesterfield	1,247	\$33,000.00	\$46,940.00	\$6,000.00	\$85,940.00
Westhampton	1,586	\$42,200.00	\$17,000.00	\$11,500.00	\$70,700.00
Average	1,588	\$60,943.95	\$29,888.67	\$23,084.31	\$110,069.54

No revenue collections for any of these other communities due to no ambulance transports

Members of the Department are continuing to work with the Elementary School and their staff to deliver public education and fire safety lessons to the Students. This education is done in the form of classroom presentations and demonstrations as well as public education programs at Town events such as the Fall Festival. Our Department continues to be a member of the Hampshire County Fire Defense Association providing us access to a regional public education trailer to assist in the delivery of the fire safety lessons. This continues to be an extremely valuable program and we look forward to our continued collaboration with the school Administration for this purpose.

The Department continues to rely heavily on its website to help with the communications throughout the community. We have transitioned all of our burning permits and inspections to this online forum to make it more convenient for anyone to request or schedule these and get immediate feedback. For a Department that is an all volunteer, we have already seen a dramatic improvement in communication both externally and internally with our members. We hope to continually make improvements such as this in the future to better service all the residents as efficiently as possible.

The Town continues to have a mass notification system to alert all Town residents for any emergent needs. This system is called CodeRED and provides the Town the ability to call all landlines, or any other cell phone numbers, text message, or email individuals on the alert. The intent of this type of system is to improve communication prior to a large scale disaster, or weather related event to provide guidance and direction to the community on things such as expectations of power being restored, opening of warming shelters, and items that individuals are expected to have on their own. We have done two test calls with this system with positive feedback from the system and the community as a whole. Anyone can sign up for this system by

going to the Department website at www.westhamptonfire.org and click on the CodeRED icon on our homepage.

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 seventy 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 Engines is thirty years old and has reached its life expectancy. However, no new Engine available will fit in the current facility given the current size and parameters.



Westhampton Public Safety Complex

All of these items have been 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.

In June, the Department had a promotional ceremony recognizing some new positions and responsibilities for some of our members. Steve Holt was promoted to the position of Assistant Fire Chief. He brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this position and will help to oversee the day to day operations of the Department. Additionally, Rick Tracy and Mark Gould were both promoted from the rank of Lieutenant to Captain, as well as Dave Antosz and Steve McGrath being promoted to Captain. Each of these Officers will be a valuable asset to the organization. The Department also appointed Brian Duggan as the Emergency Management Coordinator to help oversee all of the emergency management functions and activities as well as the operations and management of any significant events during all-hazard emergencies.

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. Thank you and have a safe and healthy year.

Respectfully Submitted,

Christopher W. Norris
Fire Chief / Paramedic

Members appointed January 2017:

Steve Holt- Assistant Chief / EMT
Lee Douchkoff- Deputy Chief / EMT
John Bridgman- Deputy Chief
Brian Duggan- Emergency Management Coordinator / EMT
Bill Jablonski- Captain
Mark Gould- Captain / EMT
Rick Tracy- Captain
Dave Antosz- Captain
Steve McGrath- Captain
Don Fox- Firefighter
Michael Diggins- Firefighter
Matt Campbell- Firefighter
Christopher Brooks- Firefighter
Wally Marek- Firefighter
Jeff Brooks- Firefighter
Scott Tirrell- Firefighter
Mike Holt- Firefighter
Alan Torrey- Firefighter / EMT
Joe Bykowski- Firefighter
John Zimmerman- Firefighter
Alex Antosz- Firefighter
Kayla Chudzik-Holt- Firefighter
Jeff Dion- Firefighter
Sam Carrier- Firefighter
Ben Fisher- Firefighter / EMT
Keith Robbins- Firefighter
Robert Miller- First Responder
Maryanne Duggan- EMT
Ashleigh Norris- EMT