

# **2018 Annual Town Report**



***Westhampton Fire Department***

***Submitted March 1, 2019***

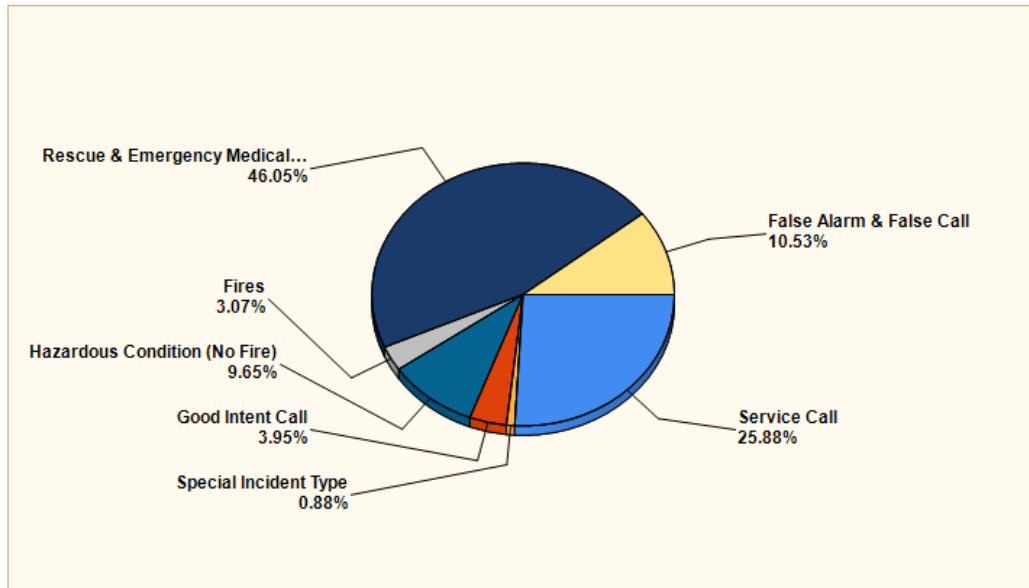
## **2018 Annual Town Report- Westhampton Fire Department**

The Westhampton Fire Department is an all-volunteer organization 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 2018 providing emergency services to the community. The Department responded to two-hundred and twenty-eight calls for service this year. These calls for service were for fire suppression, emergency medical services, hazardous materials response, carbon monoxide alarm activations, motor vehicle accidents, utility wires down, residential fire alarm activations, inspections and many more.



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	7	3.07%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	105	46.05%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	22	9.65%
Service Call	59	25.88%
Good Intent Call	9	3.95%
False Alarm & False Call	24	10.53%
Special Incident Type	2	0.88%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>100.00%</b>

### *2018 emergency calls breakdown*

In addition to the emergency responses, personnel commit numerous hours to training and other activities for the community. Continual training is a critical component for all our members in order to keep them safe and remain competent in their skill sets throughout the year. In 2018, members in our organization completed over 1,496 hours of training. Part of this training included having the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy come to Westhampton with their live fire mobile training unit for the personnel. This training prop provided realistic scenarios for all members to practice their fire suppression training.



The Department's fleet of apparatus consists of a 2004 Engine, 1986 Engine, 2017 Tanker Truck, 2002 Brush Truck, 2009 Rescue Truck, 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 (EVT's) 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 and the tanker 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.

In 2018, the town had their Insurance Services Organization rating re-evaluated. A company called the ISO (Insurance Services Office) creates ratings for fire departments and their surrounding communities. The ratings calculate how well-equipped fire departments are to put out fires in that community. The ISO provides this score, often called the "ISO fire score," to homeowners insurance companies. The insurers then use it to help set [homeowners insurance rates](#). The more well-equipped your fire department is to put out a fire, the less likely your house is to burn down. And that makes your home less risky, and therefore less expensive, to insure.

An ISO fire insurance rating, also referred to as a fire score or Public Protection Classification (PPC), is a score from 1 to 10 that indicates how well-protected your community is by the fire department. In the ISO rating scale, a lower number is better: 1 is the best possible rating, while a 10 means the fire department did not meet the ISO's minimum requirements.

According to the ISO's Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS), there are four main criteria to a fire rating score:

- 50% comes from the quality of your local fire department including staffing levels, training and proximity of the firehouse.
- 40% comes from availability of water supply, including the prevalence of fire hydrants and how much water is available for putting out fires.
- 10% comes from the quality of the area's emergency communications systems (911).
- An extra 5.5% comes from community outreach, including fire prevention and safety courses.

This year, the town had their ISO rating decrease from an 8/9 rating to a 4/4X rating. This decrease in the insurance rating is a reflection of the hard work and dedication of the personnel and the training they have completed over the years. In addition, the upkeep and maintenance of the apparatus and equipment, annual service testing of all hoses, ladders, and SCBA's also helps to keep this rating low. We have also worked hard and collaborated with neighboring communities to develop automatic aid agreements to help augment our personnel, resources, and water supply during structure fires. These types of agreements also help to lower the ISO score.

The Department had all of our self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) service tested and flow tested again this year. This ensures the equipment remains safe and operational for all of our personnel. SCBA are utilized in areas that are considered immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH). Examples include house fire, car fires, hazardous materials incidents, and carbon monoxide events. These units are an essential piece of equipment for the fire department personnel and are a critical resource for their safety.

All of the department ground ladders were 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*

The fire department continues to provide emergency medical transport services at the basic life support level to the community. 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. The Department has applied for a federal grant to replace this aging vehicle and we hope to hear in early 2019 about the status of that grant.

The Department was successful in 2018 in obtaining another federal grant. In August, the Department was awarded a competitive grant in the amount of \$25,000 for the replacement of our fire hoses. Many of the hoses being utilized were manufactured in the late 1970's. Although these hoses are pressured tested each year, national standards state that any hoses manufactured prior to 1987 should be taken out of service. This concept was the genesis for this grant application and has allowed us to remove all of this old and outdated hose from service. Below is a list of all competitive grants the department has received over the past few years **(this list does not include all grants which would add an additional \$25,000 to the total):**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Equipment</b>	<b>Federal award</b>	<b>town match</b>
<b>2006</b>	<b>communications equipment, extrication equipment, TIC</b>	<b>\$90,050.00</b>	<b>\$4,500.00</b>
<b>2007</b>	<b>CPR equipment, training</b>	<b>\$4,351.00</b>	<b>\$220.00</b>
<b>2008</b>	<b>turn out gear, washer extractor, grid gear</b>	<b>\$67,878.00</b>	<b>\$3,393.00</b>
<b>2009</b>	<b>mobile air compressor, EMS equip., alarm system</b>	<b>\$153,693.00</b>	<b>\$7,684.00</b>
<b>2013</b>	<b>SCBA, facepieces</b>	<b>\$115,416.00</b>	<b>\$5,800.00</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>turn out gear</b>	<b>\$15,429.00</b>	<b>\$5,000.00</b>
<b>2014</b>	<b>tanker truck</b>	<b>\$226,667.00</b>	<b>\$88,333.00</b>
<b>2018</b>	<b>Fire Hose</b>	<b>\$24,900.00</b>	<b>\$1,200.00</b>
	<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$698,384.00</b>	<b>\$116,130.00</b>

Members of the Department are continuing to work with the Elementary School and their staff as well as staff at Hampshire Regional High School (HRHS) to deliver public education and fire safety lessons to the Students and teachers. 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. This past year, we worked with staff at HRHS to teach them the proper procedures for utilizing a fire extinguisher. This provided them the knowledge and awareness to act safely in the event of a fire. EMT's also worked with students and staff at HRHS teaching them CPR and the use of a defibrillator. These types of programs continue to be an extremely valuable and we look forward to our continued collaboration with the school Administration.

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](http://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). This past year, the town passed by a two-thirds vote to place a question on a ballot for a proposition 2 ½ override for a new public safety complex. On 9/11/2019, this ballot questions needed a majority vote and was defeated. This need will not go away and the town will have to re-evaluate what needs to be done to accommodate public safety in the future. In addition to this building, one of the engines is thirty-two years old and has exceeded its life expectancy. However, no new engines available



will fit in the current facility given the current size and parameters. Until the town does something with this building, that engine will continue to age and reach a critical point for replacement the longer this building project is delayed.

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.

This year we had a few people retire and leave the department after many years of service. Brian and Maryanne Duggan left town and moved to New Hampshire. Both were instrumental to the department for fire and EMS services and will be greatly missed. Keith Robbins stepped back in his role as a firefighter in Westhampton as he has taken on greater roles and responsibilities with his fulltime job with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation. Jeff Dion and Sam Carrier both stepped away from the department after numerous years on the department in order to focus more time on their full time jobs and families. Finally, Deputy Chief Lee Douchkoff stepped back from his position in the fire department and will be assisting with EMS calls in the future. All of these individuals provided a tremendous amount of service to the town and I am forever grateful for their time and support to the organization.

To help fill some of these vacancies and voids within the organization, promotions in 2018 consisted of Christopher Brooks to the position of Fire Captain and Mark Gould to the position of Deputy Chief. Each of these individuals will continue to provide the leadership and guidance for all personnel moving forward. In addition, we welcome new Firefighters Cody Guessing-Ames, Perry McDonnell, Garrett Antosz, Jake Antosz, and Ryan Wilcox to the department.

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 2019:**

Steve Holt- Assistant Chief / EMT  
Lee Douchkoff- EMT  
John Bridgman- Deputy Chief  
Mark Gould- Deputy Chief / EMT  
Bill Jablonski- Captain  
Rick Tracy- Captain  
Dave Antosz- Captain  
Steve McGrath- Captain  
Christopher Brooks- Captain  
Don Fox- Firefighter  
Michael Diggins- Firefighter  
Matt Campbell- Firefighter  
Wally Marek- Firefighter  
Jeff Brooks- Firefighter  
Scott Tirrell- Firefighter  
Mike Holt- Firefighter  
Joe Bykowski- Firefighter  
John Zimmerman- Firefighter  
Alex Antosz- Firefighter  
Ben Fisher- Firefighter / EMT  
Robert Miller- First Responder  
Ashleigh Norris- Paramedic  
Jonathan Dibrindsi- Firefighter  
Garrett Antosz- Firefighter  
Jake Antosz- Firefighter  
Cody Guessing- Ames- Firefighter  
Perry McDonnell- Firefighter  
Ryan Wilcox- Firefighter