

2019 Annual Town Report



Westhampton Fire Department

March 2020

2019 Annual Town Report- Westhampton Fire Department

I would like to start off by introducing myself. For those who don't know me my name is Dave Antosz and I was hired as Fire Chief for the town of Westhampton in August of 2019. I have been with the department for 17 years. This came to be due to the retirement of our long time Fire Chief, Christopher Norris. I would like to express my gratitude for all that Chief Norris has done for his 25 years of service in the Westhampton Fire Department, twelve and a half of those years as Fire Chief. Through his leadership and knowledge he brought a level of professionalism that many small towns of our size rarely get to experience.

The Westhampton Fire Department is an all-volunteer organization consisting of twenty-three 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 a response from a 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 challenges. Recruitment of new personnel continues to be a major concern for 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 if needed to respond. 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 conducted 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 2019 providing emergency services to the community. The Department responded to one hundred and ninety one 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 among other responses and requests.

2019 emergency calls breakdown

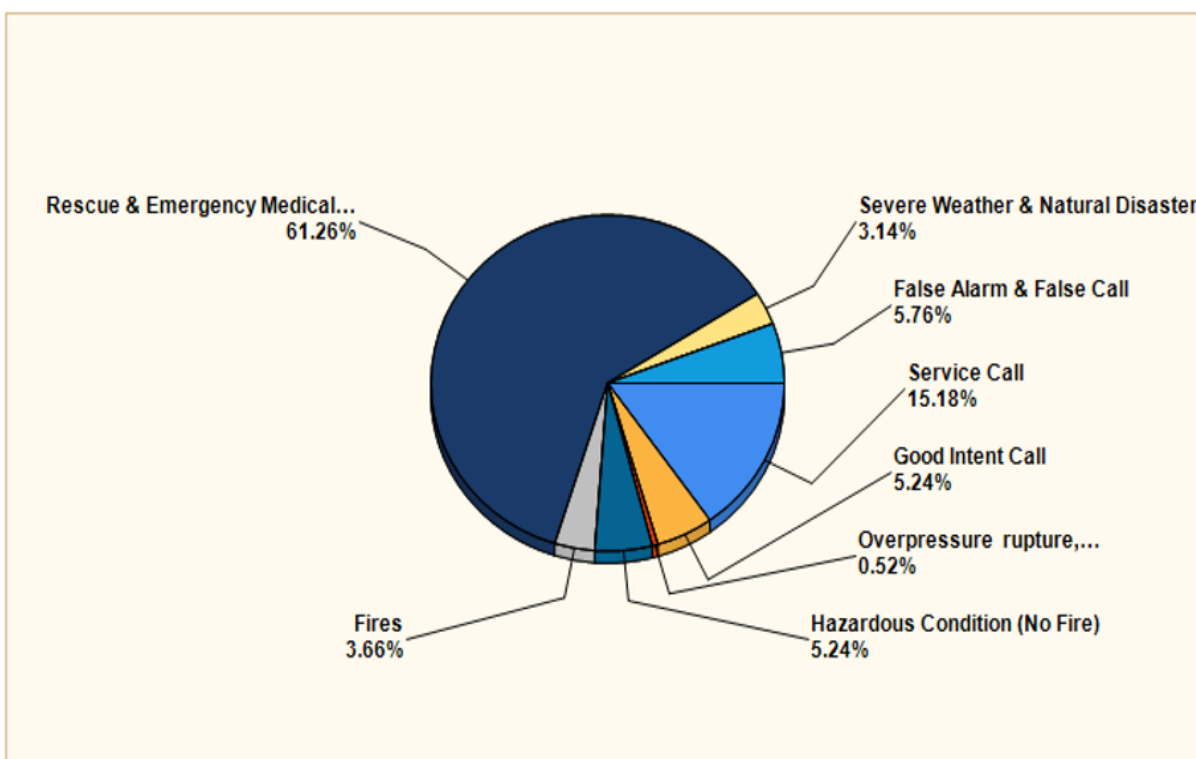
Westhampton Fire Department

Westhampton, MA



Breakdown by Major Incident Types for Date Range

Zone(s): All Zones | Start Date: 01/01/2019 | End Date: 12/31/2019



MAJOR INCIDENT TYPE	# INCIDENTS	% of TOTAL
Fires	7	3.66%
Overpressure rupture, explosion, overheating - no fire	1	0.52%
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service	117	61.26%
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	10	5.24%
Service Call	29	15.18%
Good Intent Call	10	5.24%
False Alarm & False Call	11	5.76%
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	6	3.14%
TOTAL	191	100.00%

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 2019, members in our organization completed over 1,000 hours of training. This training includes in house courses along with Hampshire County and Mass Fire Academy courses and neighboring community mutual training exercises.

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. 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 safety during emergency responses. 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 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 fire department personnel and are a critical resource for their safety.

All the department ground ladders were tested to the National Standards, ensuring they could meet the performance requirements during emergency operations. All these projects are critical to properly maintaining all of the equipment and ensuring the highest degree of safety for our personnel utilizing these resources.

Members of the Department continue 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 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 moved the website to be incorporated with the Town of Westhampton. We have transitioned all our burning permits to this online forum to make it more convenient for anyone to request or these and get immediate feedback. For a Department that is 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 emergency needs. This system is called CodeRED and provides the town the ability to call all landlines, cell phone numbers and text message or email individuals that are part of the program. 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 community. Anyone can sign up for this system by going to the Westhampton Fire Department website at westhampton-ma.com and click on the CodeRED icon on our homepage.

There are several 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 has reached a point in time to modernize the safety complex to help meet 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 question 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. The town has however voted to and moved forward with the hiring for the engineering services to finalize the plans for a new complex and have a finalized plan and potential cost in place to bring to the town. In addition to this building, one of the engines is over thirty years old and has exceeded its life expectancy. We will look at all possible options for this when the time comes for its replacement. The department will continue to utilize its existing equipment for as long as possible.

All of these items have been forwarded to the towns Capital Improvements Committee. 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 was a year that saw many years of experience leave the department. Alex Antosz left the department due to moving to the neighboring town of Goshen, Ben Fisher accepted a full time position with the East Longmeadow Fire Department as a firefighter paramedic. We also lost firefighter Jonathan Dibrindsi due to relocating to the City of Northampton and his busy work schedule. Two additional losses greatly impacted our EMS staffing. Ashleigh Norris accepted a position with Highland Ambulance along with teaching EMS classes. She will be greatly missed for her knowledge and compassion with the emergency medical response. Lastly the retirement from the Westhampton Fire Department for Chief Christopher Norris will leave a void in experience that will be hard to replace. His many years of service along with his patience and knowledge in both training exercises and actual responses will be greatly missed. Both Chris and Ashleigh were instrumental to the department for fire and EMS services to the Town of Westhampton. 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 within the organization, promotions in 2019 consisted of Scott Tirrell to the position of Fire Captain along with myself Dave Antosz to the position of Fire Chief. In addition, we welcome new firefighters Adam Brunet, Christopher Dunn and Austin Norris to the department. We hope this will continue with both young volunteers along with established residents in town to step forward and volunteer their time and skills.

Lastly, I would like to thank every member of the Department for all of the work they do. The members of the Westhampton Fire Department continue to do much more than just respond to emergencies. Throughout the years, they continue to inspect residents chimneys each fall, 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 for the elderly and provide opportunities to help the Boy Scouts with their projects.

As is always the case we are looking for new volunteers that are interested in serving in the EMT, First Responder, Firefighter or combined roles.

Thank you for your continued support.

Dave Antosz

Fire Chief

Members appointed January 2019:

Steve Holt- Assistant Chief / EMT

John Bridgman- Deputy Chief

Mark Gould- Deputy Chief / EMT /EMS Coordinator

Bill Jablonski- Captain

Rick Tracy- Captain

Steve McGrath- Captain

Christopher Brooks- Captain

Scott Tirrell- Captain

Don Fox- Firefighter

Michael Diggins- Firefighter

Matt Campbell- Firefighter

Wally Marek- Firefighter

Jeff Brooks- Firefighter

Mike Holt- Firefighter

Joe Bykowski- Firefighter

John Zimmerman- Firefighter

Robert Miller- First Responder

Garrett Antosz- Firefighter

Jake Antosz- Firefighter

Cody Guessing- Ames- Firefighter

Adam Brunet- Firefighter

Chris Dunn- Firefighter

Austin Norris- Firefighter