



October 2, 2018

Michael Farrell
Town Administrator
Town of Georgetown
1 Library Street
Georgetown, MA 01833

RE: Fire Service Management Letter

Dear Mr. Farrell:

The Town of Georgetown has contracted with Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to develop a management letter that provides the community with an overview and perspective on current issues that are of significant concern regarding the long-term viability of the fire department's ability to fill shift openings which consequently could affect the delivery of fire and emergency medical service (EMS).

It is the goal of the town to have a reliable response capability for both fire and medical emergencies. This includes the rapid response of at least one unit on a 24/7 basis. A staffing model using paid on-call firefighters and per diem EMS personnel was implemented ten years ago. Continuing to utilize the current on-call organizational configuration and scheduling is not sustainable. Increasing demands on emergency services can be attributed to the growth in the Town of Georgetown, aging population requiring emergency medical services and a decline in the recruitment, retention and availability of paid on-call fire and EMS personnel.

In addition to staffing challenges, the current fire department facility does not meet the space requirements necessary to accommodate current and future staffing. This lack of workable space creates not only limited physical space but also impacts the ability to efficiently conduct normal day to day operations.

Municipal Resources Inc. conducted a cursory review of the current organizational structure. The leadership group of fire officers, as well as other department members, were solicited for input to obtain further information on current operations of the Georgetown Fire Department (GFD) in order to make recommendations for the future success of the organization.

The goal of this review was to perform an analysis of the department to identify current issues and challenges, as well as potential threats that could impact the department's success in the years to come. To accomplish that goal, this management letter is divided into four sections as detailed below:

I. OVERVIEW

The Town of Georgetown covers 13.2 square miles within Essex County in the North Shore area of Massachusetts. According to the 2010 census, the town has a resident population of 8,183 and a population density of 619 persons per square mile.

The Georgetown Fire Department is nominally a full-service fire/rescue organization which provides fire, rescue (such as vehicle extrication) and emergency medical services at the basic life support (BLS) level to the community. GFD currently has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of **4**. ISO is an independent company that services insurance companies, communities, fire departments, insurance regulators and others by providing information about the risk. ISO's expert staff collects information about municipal fire suppression efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data and assigns a Public Protection Classification – a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents an exemplary fire suppression program and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria.

January 1, 2016 through August 31, 2018, the department has averaged 1988 incidents per year. Of which, 1605 (80.7%) were EMS related. Calls for emergency medical services have been steadily increasing each year. The fire department's average annual operating budget over the past three (3) years is approximately \$490,300. The three (3) year average revenue generated by EMS services is approximately \$415,478 from ambulance transports.

The department is currently staffed with one (1) full-time fire chief, one (1) paid on-call deputy fire chief, two (2) captains, four (4) lieutenants and twenty-nine (29) paid on-call firefighters and per diem EMTs. This brings the total of Georgetown Fire Department personnel to 37 members. However, as is often the case with call fire departments, only about one-quarter of these personnel are truly active and respond to calls on a regular basis. The roster of members continually changes due to hirings and resignations of per diem personnel.



Figure 1: Georgetown FD Logo

There is a growing nationwide gap in a community's ability to recruit and retain paid on-call firefighters. Much of the gap is due to the heavy demands placed on on-call firefighters to

balance their full-time career and family, with the rigorous and time-consuming requirements for certification as a firefighter or EMT. This growing dilemma is expected to continue, leaving communities without the ability to provide adequate fire and emergency medical services to the community. This has been quantified by the statistics we analyzed and the results of the current low response to fire and EMS emergencies.

A review of calls from January 1, 2016 to March 31, 2018, indicated that during:

Weekdays:

Between 7 am and 6 pm the average number of personnel at incidents (6,414) was 5.4.
Between 7 pm and 6 am the average number of personnel at incidents (1,875) was 6.9.

Weekends:

Between 7 am and 6 pm the average number of personnel at incidents (493) was 5.5.
Between 7 pm and 6 am the average number of personnel at incidents (212) was 5.16.

The GFD operates from two fire stations. The main fire station is located jointly with Georgetown Police Department at 47 Central Street. Erie Fire Company Number 4 is located at 474 North Street. Erie Fire Company No. 4 is the oldest privately-owned fire company in the United States providing over 164 years of continuous service to the community.



Figure 2: Georgetown Public Safety Building



Figure 3: Erie Fire Company No. 4

II. SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY

MRI conducted a basic service study of the Georgetown Fire Department followed by the development of a management letter. Upon completion of its review, MRI will make recommendations for improvements that take into consideration the current and future financial ability of the town, appropriate modifications to the delivery systems to provide optimum response time and service, location or expansion of physical facilities and equipment and whether the current fire/rescue staffing is appropriate or should be modified. Specific items to be addressed include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. Identify service needs based on the characteristics of the community, statutory and regulatory requirements for response and delivery in comparison with current ability to fulfill the needs and expectations.
2. Identify the public safety risks and prioritize the level of risk that must be covered based on the data and operations of the fire and EMS operations. The type, frequency, distribution, response times, mutual aid and/or contractor provided services, staffing policies, reporting of emergency and routine responses to all services will be included.
3. Assess the current staffing plan for deploying the required number of fire and EMS officers and supervisors, along with vehicles/apparatus used and recommend cost-effective alternatives based on the type of incident. Evaluate whether there are recommended changes to improve efficiency and delivery of service.
4. Evaluate the response of personnel, including appropriate operational staffing, supervisors, management and support staff to respond from the initial call for routine and emergency services through to generating the incident report and findings along with any subsequent proceedings, such as court appearances, legal action and insurance resolution and/or inspection.
5. Identify the required staffing levels to meet the needs of the community in the most cost-effective and complete manner including operating costs, personnel impacts and impact on the delivery of service and workload.
6. Evaluate the current fire/rescue facility to determine if it is a functional platform for the Georgetown Fire Department. Identify facility needs in terms of critical operational components. Identify the viability of the facility to provide an effective base of operations for the next five years.
7. Evaluation of departmental policies and procedures, and collective bargaining provisions that impact the efficient operations of the fire and EMS departments. Include possible

recommendations that may improve the current policies, procedures, training and delivery of services in the most cost-effective manner.

8. Review and comment on on-call recruitment and retention efforts within the community.

To accomplish these tasks, the following ten methodologies were employed:

- Reviewed pertinent service demand data
- Conducted a review of response activity
- Toured the community and reviewed target hazards
- Evaluated fire service facilities and equipment
- Interviewed the town administrator
- Interviewed the police chief/fire chief
- Interviewed several other members of the fire department
- Reviewed various fire department documents and budgets
- Developed a management letter as the product of these efforts

III. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES CURRENTLY FACING THE GEORGETOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT

The emergency service expectations of the Georgetown Fire Department by the citizens of the town include the provision of basic fire protection, fire suppression and emergency medical services, including patient transport. They also expect delivery of basic rescue services, including vehicle extrication, water rescue and hazardous materials response at the basic operational level. This includes the rapid response of at least one unit on a 24/7 basis.

The MRI team's assessment clearly indicates increasing challenges and deficiencies in the department's ability to meet the public's expectations as described above. We have summarized what we believe are the most immediate issues that are impeding Georgetown Fire Department's ability to meet those expectations.

1. The staffing model which was implemented in 2007, using paid on-call firefighters and per diem EMS personnel, to provide fire and EMS coverage was a viable alternative to full-time staffing. At the time of implementation, the staffing model was designed to be a bridge to eventual full-time staffing. The steady growth in the Town of Georgetown since 2007, aging population requiring emergency medical services and a decline in the recruitment, retention and availability of paid on-call fire and EMS personnel has created non-sustainability in the current on-call and per diem staffing and scheduling configuration.
2. Fire and EMS stations are a critical community asset. These facilities support the overall goals of the organization in providing public safety services to the public. Critical to the

public safety mission is the ability to assure that both elements, personnel and facilities, are effectively designed to meet the requirements of a modern fire and EMS department. Well-designed fire and EMS facilities enable staff to perform their duties effectively, efficiently and safely. The current Georgetown Public Safety Building needs modernization and expansion to meet future staffing needs.

3. The Georgetown Fire Department Organization has a long history of proud service to the community. As with many similar fire departments, over time the organization continues to function through a perceived or perhaps deeply ingrained traditional mission. It is the normal sense of duty, responsibility and service that is the very hallmark of the fire and emergency services with a sense of community pride and involvement.

Consequently, by today's fire service organization standards, efforts in developing a clear sense of common vision and growth for the future of the Georgetown Fire Department has contributed to a number of leadership challenges for the fire chief and his efforts to move the organization forward. There are leadership gaps throughout the organization that impedes the forward progress of this proud organization. This is a whole organization growth issue and not specific to any one person or rank within the Georgetown Fire Department.

IV. STAFFING, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

As previously noted, the Georgetown Fire Department is a fire service organization that is predominantly call, with the sole full-time position held by the fire chief. The organization is further supplemented by per diem EMS personnel who staff the ambulance. The coverage schedule consists of:

- **Monday through Friday**
 - 6 AM to 3 PM: Four (4) personnel provide fire and EMS coverage.
 - 3 PM to 9 PM: Three (3) personnel provide fire and EMS coverage.
 - 9 PM to 6 AM: An on-call standby crew of three (3) firefighters/EMS personnel provides standby coverage referred to as "Car 6" from their homes. They are provided a stipend for their standby coverage time.
- **Saturday and Sunday**
 - 6 AM to 9 PM: Three (3) firefighters provide fire and EMS coverage.
 - 9 PM to 6 AM: The "Car 6" crew than assumes coverage.

The current roster of personnel listed is thirty-five (35 members). Chief Mitchell estimates that fifty-seven (57) percent are active.

During the site visit, the MRI team was made aware that a routine of “dropping” of shifts existed by personnel, creating a continual lack of consistent personnel on duty to respond to fire and medical emergencies. The “dropping” of shifts necessitates the fire chief to work the shifts so that there will be the required staffing on duty. The Chief should be recognized for his dedication as he has given up several weekend days off to ensure that a level of protection has been maintained in Georgetown.

The MRI team reviewed records between October 31, 2017 and July 05, 2018 to determine what was the incidence and reasons for scheduled duty shifts being dropped. Approximately 75 duty shifts were canceled or “dropped” by personnel scheduled to work. Documented reasons for cancellation included unable to fill the shift, no show, conflict with fulltime employment, change in baseball schedule, birthday party, needed to take dog for surgery and sick/flu.

The EMS “Car 6” program, when there are three first responders scheduled to answer fire and medical emergencies between the hours of 9 PM and 6 AM, is also impacted by “dropped” shifts.

A number of paid on-call and per diem shift workers also hold full-time emergency service positions in other communities. Actively responding to emergencies while working in their full-time position, prior to their scheduled Georgetown shift, raises concerns about the levels of readiness, effectiveness and focus.

Further contributing to the current staffing issue is the lack of ability to recruit and retain skilled, certified emergency responders. This is an ongoing nationwide issue that has been evolving and recognized as far back as 2004.

The department is under an increasing level of scrutiny based on its ability to staff all shifts for fire and EMS coverage. Community leadership has expressed concerns relative to its operational capability and response. Similar too many surrounding communities statewide and nationally, the department is at a crossroad caused in part by a diminishing level of on-call membership and response. It does not appear that the situation will improve greatly to alleviate these dilemmas now or in the future. This is quantified by the previous discussion on the department’s ability to cover the shift schedules.

It is clear that the department is not fully meeting the expectations of the community currently. If unchecked and in fact not quickly reversed, the department will soon cease to be a viable emergency response organization providing consistent and equal levels of service.

Management of the Town of Georgetown has expressed a desire to retain a strong call firefighting force and the MRI project team concurs. The department also recognizes that it is

necessary to introduce a different staffing model which will provide consistency in service delivery to the public. This will take a strong commitment from the town and community, along with strong leadership in the fire department.

March 2004, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) issued a report by the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section, entitled *A Call for Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service*. Among other things, the report highlighted the fact that the ranks of volunteer/call firefighters nationwide are declining due, at least in part, to an increasing demand for services. There are also various other factors that are prevalent in the reduction in the number of volunteer and on-call firefighters in communities such as Georgetown. Among those factors is the fact that the demographics of many communities do not support a sufficient number of the type of people who are attracted to the fire service industry in the 21st century; meaning, someone with time to dedicate to public service or who wants a career in this field. Research has shown that on average, for every five on-call firefighters recruited, two will have remained active after a period of 48 months.

¹For both career and volunteer fire departments, the nature of their service is changing dramatically from a fire-based service to a medical-based service. As seen in Figure 1, the total number of fire department emergency responses has increased to more than 31 million from 1980's figure of just fewer than 11 million. This is the case in spite of the fact that the actual number of fires and mutual-aid responses has decreased from 3,262,000 in 1980 to 2,538,000 in 2013.

However, the number of medical calls has dramatically increased from just over five million in 1980 to more than 21 million by 2013. As a result, medical emergencies now account for 68 percent of emergencies that fire departments respond to and are now a fire department's primary responsibility.

The reasons for this shift in job responsibility are numerous. First, fires are becoming much less common. Second, over the past 50 years, fire departments have gradually been expanding their role as medical providers. This evolution began largely as a result of the 1966 paper entitled "Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society," which highlighted the fact that accidents, especially automobile accidents, were the leading cause of death among persons under the age of 38. This report highlighted the dismal state of emergency first aid and recommended training firefighters in emergency medical services.

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SalterMitchell Inc. (2015) "Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Formative Research Results" prepared for the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Figure 1. 1980 vs. 2013 fire department responses.

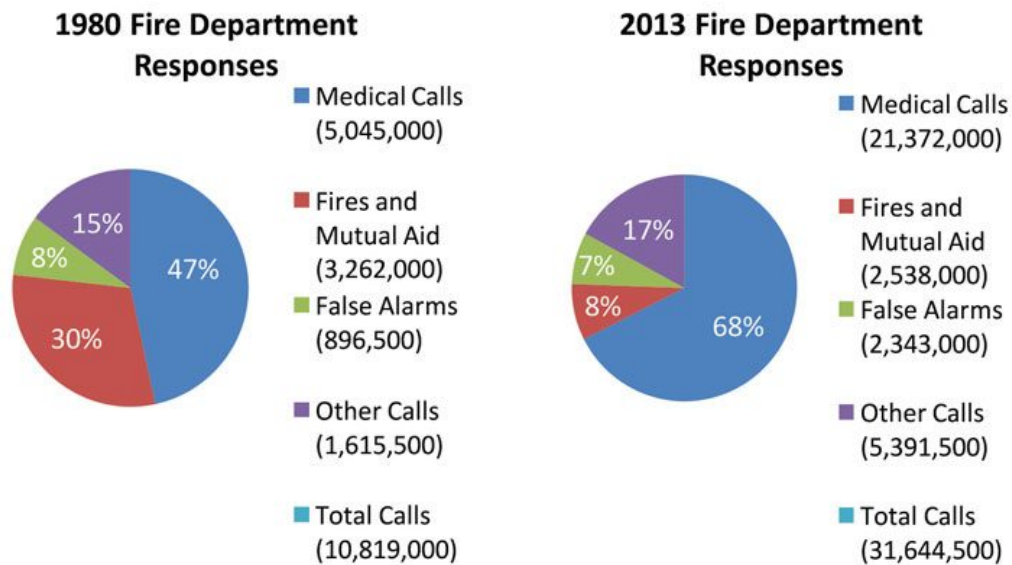


Figure 2: 1980 vs. 2013 fire department responses

Presently, the Georgetown Fire Department has a roster of approximately thirty-five (35) on-call members. On its own, this number would appear sufficient to provide an adequate level of emergency services to the town. However, as in most call/volunteer emergency service organizations, there is a percentage of members whose names still appear as “active” yet they no longer truly are, or are minimally so, for a variety of reasons. Most members of the on-call force have primary jobs, outside the fire department, which limits their availability to respond during normal business hours. Based upon this analysis, only about three to four of the on-call personnel respond to incidents on a regular basis, making the current personnel picture a concern.

Should a change in the staffing model come about, there still needs to be a proactive effort towards recruitment and retention of on-call personnel. Although Georgetown is far from alone in dealing with this reduction in on-call staff, it is essential that addressing this situation is clearly identified as a top priority and adopted as a shared mission of the entire department. This goal, along with recommendations for future staffing, will become the start of long-term sustainment of the Georgetown Fire Department organization.

The Georgetown Fire Department does not have a formal recruitment and retention program for call personnel. The MRI project team was informed that the newest members of the department are recruited by word of mouth or are “walk-ins”. There is limited use of the town and fire department’s websites or social network pages for recruitment. Recruitment and training opportunities should be frequently and prominently displayed on the websites of the town and fire department.

As recruitment issues are conquered, new members of the department must achieve a level of ever-increasing specialized skills in order to become a productive member of the department. Often, exit interviews reveal that the training commitment alone is daunting and one of the primary reasons that on-call personnel resign. Training to become a certified firefighter takes several hundred hours. In addition, annual training hours are required in order to maintain firefighter, EMT and/or paramedic certifications. Studies show that in 2018, the average citizen does not want to spend a great deal of personal time dedicated to the fire and emergency services, especially as family commitments grow and take priority. Many on-call firefighters in departments that have other full-time careers find it hard to stay motivated if they are not being utilized frequently. Other reasons for difficulty in recruiting and retaining members include:

- In overall reduction in leisure time
- Employment obligations and the common need to maintain more than one job
- The virtual elimination of employers understanding and flexibility relating to this form of community service
- Increased family demands
- Generational differences
- Increasing training requirements
- The cost of housing in many affluent communities
- Organizational culture
- Internal respect
- Recognition of personnel
- Internal communication
- Department leadership styles and commitments

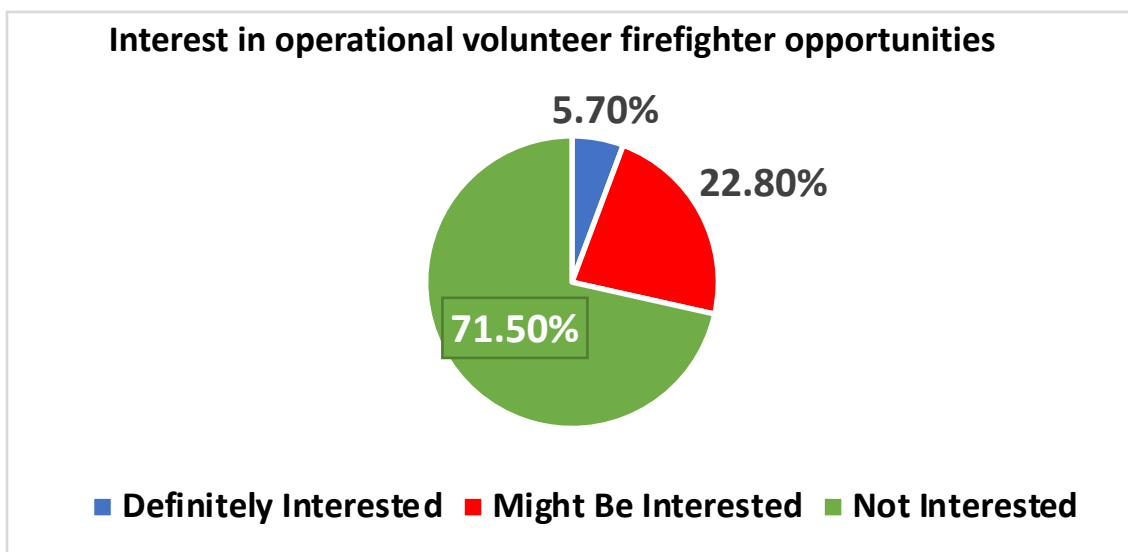


Figure 3: Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention

March 2015 Report – SalterMitchell Inc.
Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention
Formative Research Results

²The number of volunteer firefighters and emergency responders in the United States is declining – about 12 percent in just the past three decades – leaving nearly half of U.S. communities at increased risk during emergencies. This declining number of volunteers coincides with an increased call volume that has tripled in that time and an increased public expectation for more and better-quality fire and rescue services.

Although increasing the number of on-call firefighters can be judged as a cure-all to resolve staffing, and response problems. The MRI project team recognizes that current staffing models in place today must be changed to models which assure consistent and equal services, with a future goal of 24-hour emergency services staffing. Regardless of the need to consider various staffing models, the on-call firefighters within the Town of Georgetown, are and will remain a critical and necessary part of the overall organization. The staffing model may look different, but the long history of public service to the community is a value not dismissed by those changes.

The federal government has the Staffing for Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant program that pertains to funding for fulltime staffing, volunteer and on-call firefighters. It provides competitively awarded funds to municipalities to recruit and retain on-call and volunteer firefighters. The grant funds provide money for expenses such as recruitment campaigns, tuition for college curriculums in fire science, EMT and paramedic training, health insurance for call members, physical fitness programs, uniforms, and various tax incentives offered to attract and retain new candidates for an extended period of time.

The MRI consultant team recommends that the town/department should attempt to secure a SAFER grant for both staffing models, to recruit and retain on-call members for the first time. This grant should note the staffing issue that currently exists and indicate that the grant would be an attempt to meet the NFPA 1720 fire response standard.

There are no easy or guaranteed solutions to the staffing quandary facing Georgetown and other communities throughout the country. It is important to acknowledge, with regards to staffing and call/volunteer recruitment and retention, what may work in one community may not work in a nearby community. Each community must individually determine what programs, incentives, and motivations will be most effective.

² SalterMitchell Inc. (2015) “Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Formative Research Results” prepared for the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Proactively working on this issue now, will avoid costly steps for the Town, in the future. In anticipation of a continued decline in personnel available to provide coverage for fire and EMS emergencies, the MRI project team recommends that the town transition into a staffing model which would meet current and immediate future needs. A review of the current staffing model with the fire chief and other department personnel brought forward a number of staffing models that would best fit the Georgetown Fire Department. The team has compiled some staffing models for consideration. These staffing models will provide fulltime coverage, supplemented by the call firefighters and per diem staff. These are some recommended staffing models and would be dependent on available funding and could require implementation over different budgeting cycles:

1. January 2019; hire 2 career Firefighter/EMTs to work Monday through Friday, to provide fire and EMS cover from 6 am to 4 pm. Call firefighters and per diem staff would cover the nights, weekends, and Car-6 shifts.
2. July 2019; hire 4 career Firefighter/EMTs, two groups of two to work a rotating schedule Sunday through Saturday, four days on to cover from 6 am to 6 pm, then followed by four days off. Call firefighters and per diem staff will cover two additional daytime slots 7 days a week, and 7 nights a week from 6 pm to 11 pm, and Car-6 shifts.

These staffing models are proposed due to a lack of overnight facilities to accommodate 24 - hour coverage to the community. Even with 24-hour coverage, there is still a need to maintain a robust active call firefighter/EMT roster.

A number of various funding sources should be investigated to offset the cost of building a career staff of personnel in order to meet emergency needs. These include:

- Operating Budget/Ambulance Revenues
- SAFER GRANT
- Tax Revenue
- Other State and Federal Grants

Staffing, Recruitment, and Retention Recommendations

Recommendation IV.-1

The Town of Georgetown should recognize that the use of paid-on-call firefighter/EMTs and per-diem employees has been an effective model for meeting the emergency response needs of the community, however, currently and in the future the only way to develop a more active and properly staffed fire department is the hiring of career firefighters to staff positions during the daytime hours and to continue to actively continue to utilize the current on-call personnel to bolster the ranks.

Recommendation IV.- 2

Adopt a staffing model which will provide fulltime coverage supplemented by call firefighters and per diem staff to meet coverage for emergency responses.

Recommendation IV.- 3

MRI recommends that in January of 2019, hire 2 career Firefighter/EMTs to work Monday through Friday to provide fire and EMS cover from 6 am to 4 pm. Call firefighters and per diem staff would supplement the day shift as available, cover the nights, weekends, and Car-6 shifts.

Recommendation IV.- 4

July 2019, hire 4 career Firefighter/EMTs, two groups of two working a rotating schedule Sunday through Saturday, four days on to cover from 6 am to 6 pm, then followed by four days off. Call firefighters and per diem staff to cover two additional daytime slots 7 days a week, and 7 nights a week from 6 pm to 11 pm, and Car-6 shifts.

Recommendation IV. - 5

The Town of Georgetown and the Georgetown Fire Department should apply for a federal SAFER grant for fulltime positions and on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel currently in the fire department.

Recommendation IV. - 6

The Town of Georgetown should convene a focus group to determine what concepts and recruitment and retention strategies are feasible and most attractive to potential candidates.

Recommendation IV. - 7

The Georgetown Fire Department should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 5 to 10 new members over the next three years and simultaneously set a goal of maintaining the overall call member force at 30 to 35 active personnel. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the EMT-basic level.

Recommendation IV. - 8

The Georgetown Fire Department should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment program led by the call deputy fire chief. At a minimum, this program should consist of:

- 1. Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents***
- 2. Holding periodic open houses at the fire station***
- 3. Performing public outreach through the local media***

4. ***Contacting community and service groups***
5. ***Developing an eye-catching banner on the town's and fire department's websites and conducting radio and media advertisements***
6. ***Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town***
7. ***Placing a temporary signboard at various locations within the community***
8. ***Placing signs for call/recruiting volunteers in local businesses, particularly high-volume locations***
9. ***Implementing or enhancing a fire explorer program***
10. ***As part of a retention incentive consider allowing active responders to participate in the Town's health insurance at their own cost (100%) or if they respond to more than 50% of the calls provide a percentage match up to 50%.***

V. FACILITY

FIRE STATION FACILITY

Fire and EMS stations are a critical community asset. The facilities of a modern fire and EMS department are designed to do much more than simply provide a garage for apparatus and a place for firefighters and EMS personnel to wait for a call. Well-designed fire and EMS facilities enable staff to perform their duties effectively, efficiently, and safely.

The current Georgetown Fire Department station was occupied in 1985. At approximately 33 years old this building has outgrown the needs of the fire department. Increases in the number of calls and personnel over this time period has contributed to insufficient office, meeting, and training space. The station is built of Type III, concrete and wood construction. It consists of four apparatus bays double length, much of the backspace is taken up by storage and department's boats. The first-floor administrative part of the building consists of a small reception area, three office size rooms including one for the fire chief, fire prevention office, and a radio room/day room where personnel standby for calls.



Figure 4: Current GFD Kitchen

There also exists a small kitchen space located in a corner of the administrative area just below a set of stairs.

The building is equipped with an emergency generator. It is also outfitted with a source capture vehicle exhaust extraction system and a fire sprinkler system.

Over the years, the addition of modern fire apparatus and ambulances has minimized working space previously available. There are no modern adequate areas for decontamination of

medical equipment and firefighter protective clothing. The lack of sleeping quarters restricts the ability of the fire department to provide twenty-four-hour coverage.

1. The facility is not in compliance with the requirements and recommendations of **NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program** (National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, 2013 edition), which provides requirements for facility safety, maintenance, and inspections.
2. The facility is not in compliance with the requirements and recommendations of **NFPA 1581: Standard on Fire Department Infection Control Program** (National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA), which has requirements to provide minimum criteria for infection control in the fire station.
3. While it appears that the fire apparatus fits into the bays, the lack of storage space for equipment creates a crowded apparatus bay floor area making it challenging to move around.



Figure 5: GFD Apparatus Bays

The fire station is a platform that supports the needs of the fire department and the community in which it is located. It must accommodate extremely diverse functions, including housing, recreation, administration, training, community education, equipment and vehicle storage, equipment and vehicle maintenance, and hazardous materials storage. While it is usually only occupied by trained personnel, the facility may also need to accommodate the general public for community education or outreach programs. A similar need exists for the police department space within the complex.

Fire stations vary somewhat in design depending on the specific mission, i.e., the types of emergencies that will be responded to or the types of fires that will be fought.

Usually, the facility differences relate to the size of the firefighting apparatus and facility location. The location of the facility is largely driven by the need to minimize response time.

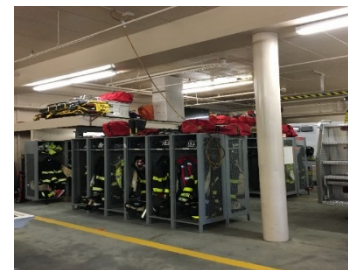


Figure 6: Protective Clothing Rack in Bays

For example, aircraft rescue firefighting (ARFF) stations provide fire protection to flight lines and aircraft and are located adjacent to the runways on airport property. Similarly, stations with hazardous waste response teams are located near likely spill sites, etc.

Major fire station functional areas include the following:

- **Apparatus bay(s):** This is where the firefighting and emergency response vehicles are stored.
- **Apparatus bay support and vehicle maintenance:** These industrial spaces are where the vehicles and other firefighting equipment are cleaned, maintained, and stored.
- **Administrative and training areas:** These include offices, dispatch facilities, and training and conference rooms.
- **Residential areas:** These include the dorm rooms, day room/kitchen, and residential support areas such as bathrooms and fitness spaces.

The two primary drivers for facility layout and functional space adjacencies in a fire station are the following:

1. Ensure that internal response times can be met (time for a firefighter to reach the apparatus and be ready to depart).
2. Separate the diverse and sometimes conflicting functions such as industrial maintenance spaces and residential spaces.

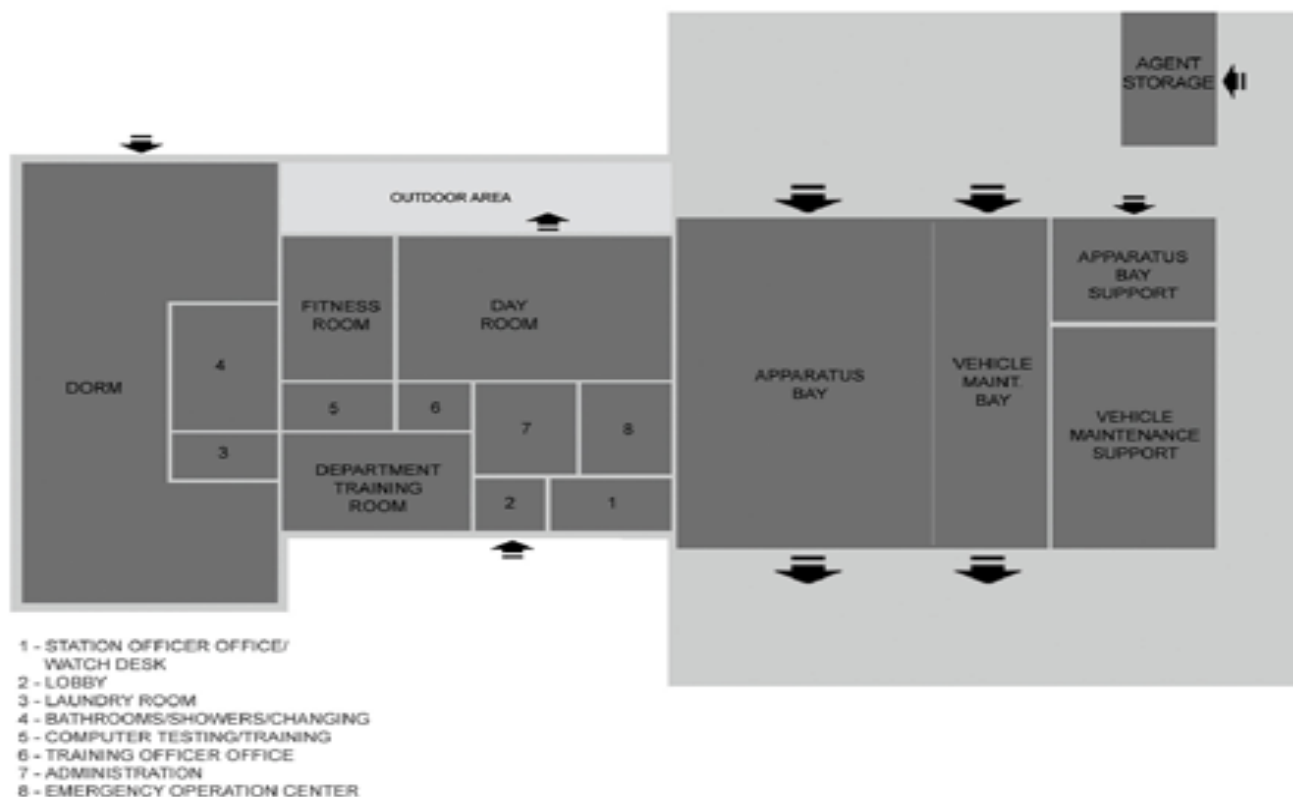
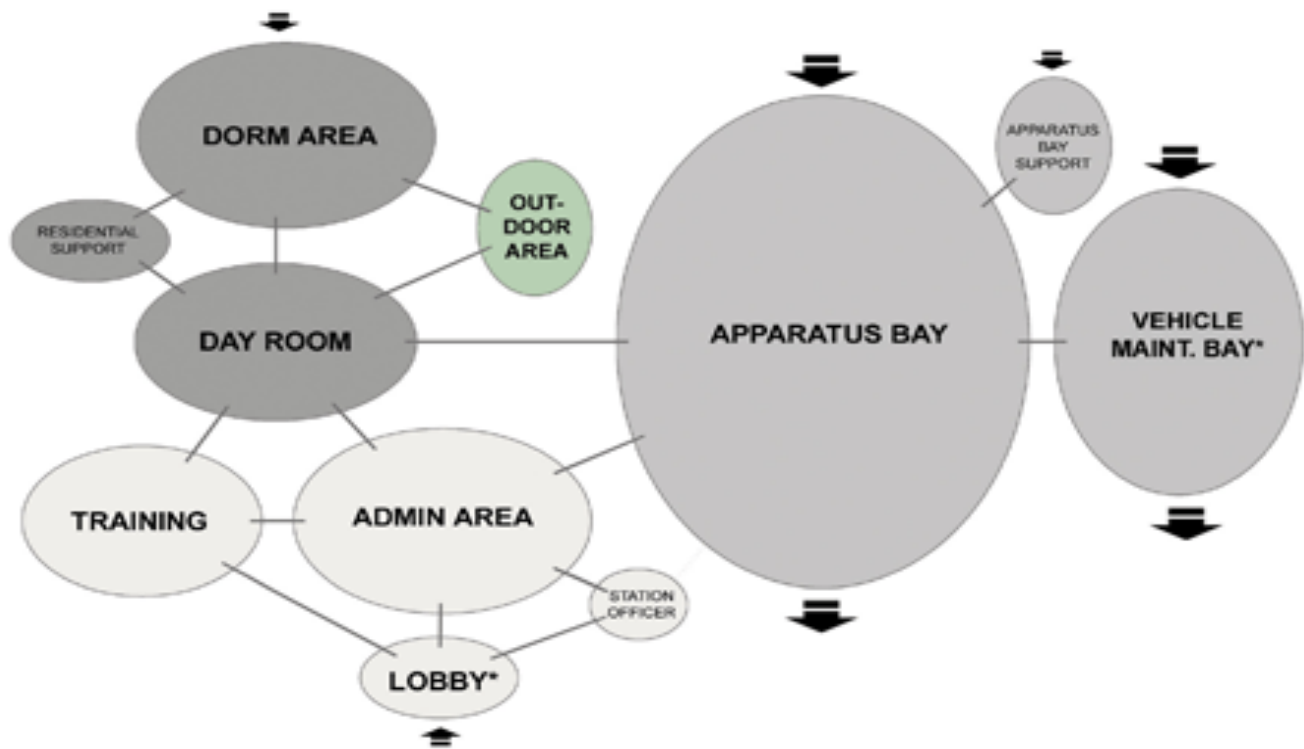


Figure 7: Facility Layout

APPARATUS BAYS

By placing the apparatus bay between the maintenance and support functions and the residential and administrative functions, both primary layout goals can be accomplished. Some of the adjacencies shown above may be accommodated through a hallway rather than a direct entrance/exit from one space to another. This is particularly true with the apparatus bay and the day room as many facility spaces require an adjacency with these two spaces. This approach to the layout can also accommodate expansion of the apparatus bay on the other side of the support and maintenance areas, although care must be taken to ensure that internal response times can be met after any expansion.

Sizing the apparatus bay is critical, and it should be designed to accommodate variable vehicle sizes. Typically, the entire room is sized based on the bay size for the largest vehicle in the fleet or the largest anticipated vehicle. Bays also include vehicle exhaust removal systems, compressed air, and power drop lines, and hot and cold water connections. Bay doors must also accommodate the largest vehicle and include a manual means of opening, in case of power failure. Ideally, the site will accommodate drive-through bays.



Sample functional layout for a fire station.
Developed by DMJM Design, Arlington, VA

Figure 8: Fire Station Functional Layout

APPARATUS BAY SUPPORT AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE

Apparatus bay support functions include cleaning and maintenance areas for the firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing, fire extinguishers, and other equipment. It also includes storage areas for firefighting gear and equipment and secure storage for medical supplies. Some of these areas are specialized spaces for disinfecting protective equipment and for maintaining and recharging the SCBA in a clean environment. See also Light Industrial space type.

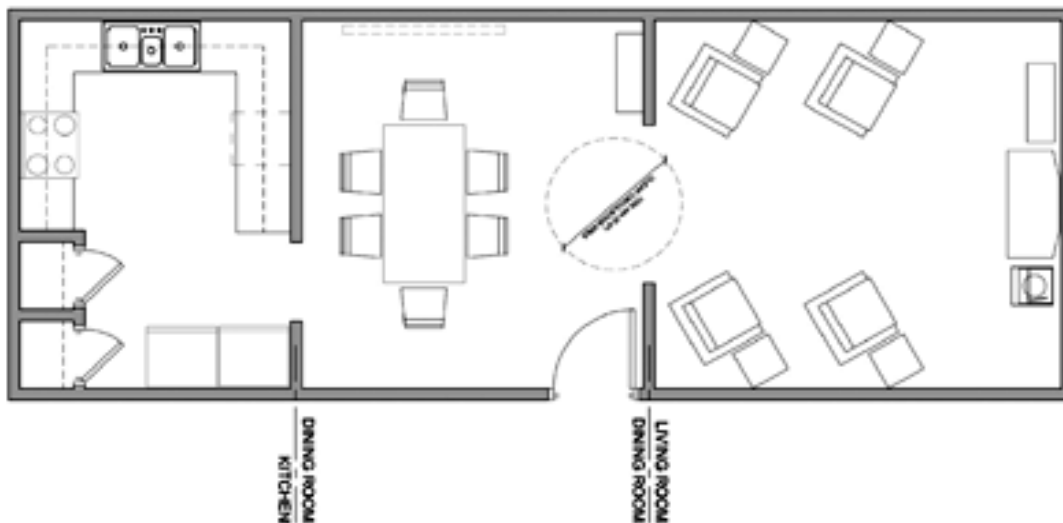
A vehicle maintenance bay may also be included in a fire station. It is a dedicated maintenance area for the firefighting apparatus and includes a heavy-duty lift and all utility connections required for large vehicle maintenance.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND TRAINING AREAS

Administrative areas include standard offices and conference and training rooms. The area will also likely include additional specialized spaces such as the chief's office, sleeping and shower facilities, and computer training/testing facilities for firefighter continuing education. Some stations may include a highly specialized dispatch room for receiving emergency calls from the public.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The day room accommodates kitchen, dining, and living/recreation functions. It is often separated into subspaces for those three functions, but an open design may also be effective to encourage interaction between the spaces. The dining space may also double as training or meeting space and might include provisions for audiovisual equipment.



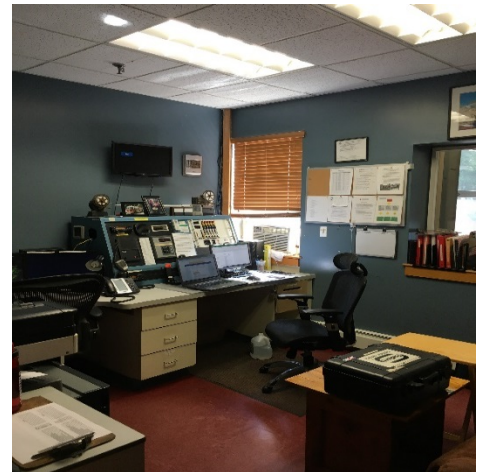
Sample day room layout for a fire station.
Developed by DMJM Design, Arlington, VA
Figure 9: Sample Dayroom

Dorm room design can vary widely from station to station and department to department. Each firefighter is provided with a place to sleep, work, and store personal items. Careful consideration should be given to the location and design of the area, to ensure response times can be met. See Emerging Issues below for more information on dorm rooms. Other residential areas include a laundry room, a physical fitness room, bathrooms and showers, and possible additional recreation spaces such as an outdoor patio and game room.

B. DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Key design goals and considerations for fire stations include the following: **PROMOTE OCCUPANT QUALITY OF LIFE.** Fire stations are occupied 24 hours a day, seven days a week by personnel in continuous 24-hour shifts. Therefore, ensuring a comfortable living environment for the firefighters is paramount:

- Provide ample natural light.
- Provide individual dorm rooms, if budget allows.
- Provide ample recreation areas and separate noisy areas (such as a game room) from quieter areas (such as a television room).
- Avoid institutional and unnatural finishes, textures, and colors.



**Figure 10: Current Radio/Dayroom
GFD**

MAINTAIN A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

As above, due to the continuous occupation of the facility by firefighters and the presence of hazardous materials, special attention must be given to designing the facility to accommodate equipment and operational strategies to both protect the occupants and maintain a healthy environment. Consider the following critical elements:

- Provide a secure facility for both personnel and materials such as controlled medical supplies and hazardous fire suppression agents.
- Use non-toxic building materials and improved maintenance practices.
- Ensure good indoor air quality and abundant natural light in the residential and administrative areas.
- Ensure good ventilation of industrial areas such as the apparatus bay and prevent contamination of clean spaces such as the SCBA maintenance areas.
- Ensure that equipment, furnishings, and finishes do not contain asbestos or lead.

ENSURE FLEXIBILITY

As firefighting technology evolves, fire stations need to evolve as well. Consider the following areas:

- Plan for potential expansion, both in the apparatus bay area and the residential areas.
- Ensure appropriate product/systems integration.
- Design for the changing nature of work.

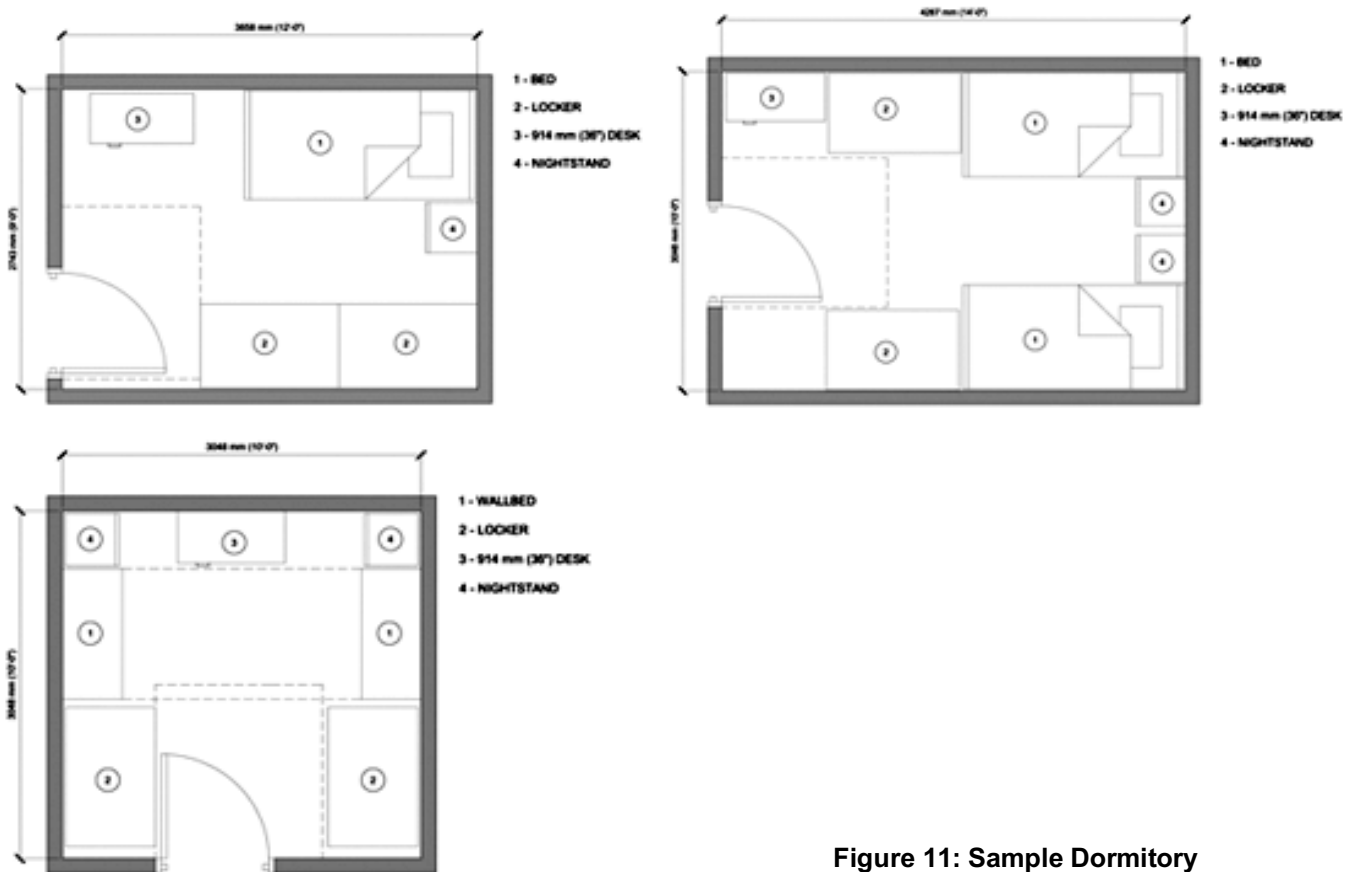


Figure 11: Sample Dormitory

Facility Recommendations

Recommendation V. - 1

Conduct a public safety complex needs assessment with a goal of identifying facility modernization, update the current facility to today's fire and life safety codes, building codes, ADA requirements, safety systems, technology, and separation of apparatus areas from administrative and personnel areas. The needs assessment should also provide estimates of costs to meet recommendations of the need's assessment.

Recommendation V.-2

Modification of current facilities should include design components to accommodate the future need to provide emergency response staffing of 24 hours per day, seven days per week. This includes additional office space, dormitory space, kitchen space, and day room space to provide comfortable working conditions for crews. The additional space can also be used for rehabilitation and accommodations for personnel who are actively engaged in prolonged events such as weather related storms and local disasters and emergencies.

Recommendation V. - 3

The existing apparatus bay floors should be configured to minimize the amount of storage on the bay floors in order to provide safe movement around apparatus.

Recommendation V - 4

While storage space is admittedly at a premium, the project team noted significant amounts of tools and equipment laying throughout the station, particularly the apparatus bays. Equipment that is obsolete, broken, or no longer used, should be properly disposed of, which will free additional storage space. Arranging storage in an orderly manner rather than haphazard will also maximize the use of available space.

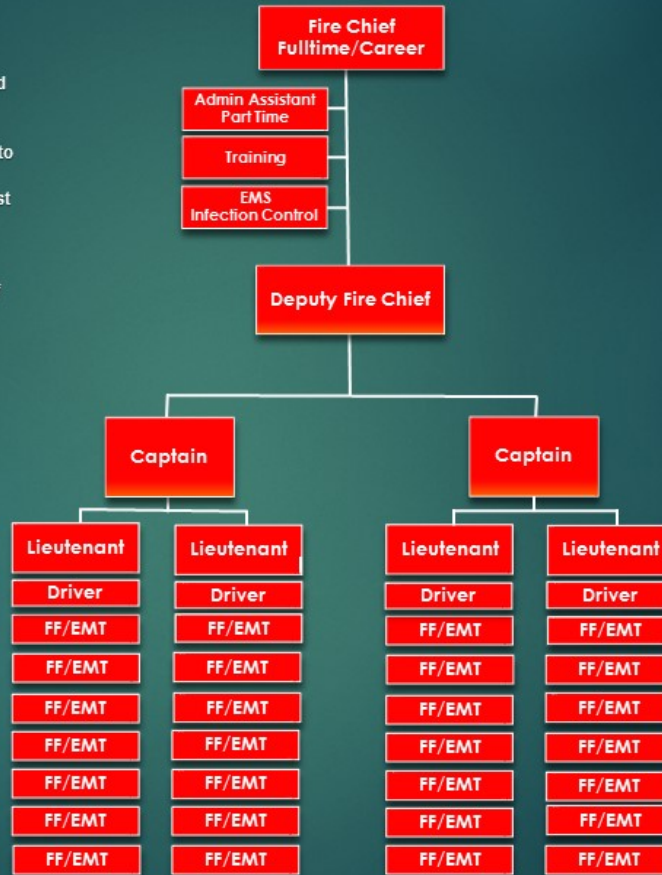
VI. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The organizational structure of any organization or entity, whether public or private, establishes and illustrates the important hierarchical relationships between various personnel and supervisors/subordinates within the organization. It allows the organization to function properly, operate effectively, and efficiently in its daily operations or the pursuit of its mission. It also helps to clearly define the organizational chain of command from top to bottom, an especially important consideration in a quasi-military public safety organization, such as the fire department where everyone from the highest rank to the lowest is subject to receiving orders and, with the exception of the lowest rank, also issues them.

Georgetown Mass FD Current Organizational Chart

Our mission is to provide a safe, professional and courteous team that strives to exceed the expectations of the community and our organization. This mission requires our members to be part of a capable, aggressive, all-risk fire department that is focused on "Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future" of those we serve.

Through our most valuable resource, our employees, we shall respond to a wide variety of Fire, Rescue and Emergency calls in a timely manner.



9/18/18

Figure 12: Current (2018) Georgetown Fire Department Organization Chart

Effective communications in any organization, especially public safety agencies, are essential and a cohesive unity of command allows everyone to know exactly who they report to and/or who reports to them.

The MRI project team suggests that the Georgetown Fire Department requires a team approach that demonstrates strong leadership and a new vision for the department. It was clear from interviews with fire department members that a long-standing, deeply ingrained culture exists. There are also a number of ongoing issues present within the organization. The current fire chief inherited these challenges upon his arrival from prior administration. The continual barrage of labor grievances and challenges by the collective bargaining unit has taken away the fire chief's ability to focus on critical fire department day to day operations and being able to work towards building organizational excellence. The current organizational structure leaves a void in the fire chief's ability to have a second in command that he can work with to address the issues at hand.

The Town of Georgetown is engaged in a contract with the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME), which is the exclusive collective bargaining unit for call firefighters and officers. The current collective bargaining agreement is in the last year of a three year contract. It should be noted that it is rare for a union to represent on-call personnel. It is unique that a bargaining unit is in place that represents paid on-call firefighters. The unit currently represents firefighters and officers of the Georgetown Fire Department including top command staff excluding the fire chief. This situation leaves the fire chief as the only non-union member of the department and places him in a difficult position.

The officers of the department are members of the union with the “senior” deputy fire chief. The fire department’s de facto ranking officer is simultaneously serving as the union vice president. The MRI team recognizes this situation as a clear conflict of interest, and at best, a situation of divided loyalties. It appears that loyalty leans more towards the union rather than the best interest of the town and the fire department.

There is an ongoing and very contentious relationship occurring between the deputy fire chief and the town that is certainly negatively impacting fire department operations. The project team’s conversations with all levels of fire department personnel clearly indicated that the ongoing issues have contributed to low morale and a sense of confusion as to the reasons behind the ongoing disputes amongst all ranks. **This situation must be resolved for the department to move forward!**

Because of the nature of a part-time organization, there is a lack of direct day to day supervision in the station. This has created a low productivity work environment, lack of communications department-wide and between fire officers, and low morale throughout the department. Direct supervision is sporadic and occurs only when one of the fire officers are working a duty shift or working on collateral duties which for some officers is a few hours per week. In the absence of a fire officer working on shift, the fire chief is relegated to managing routine day to day supervision and assignment of tasks to the duty crew. As such, he loses time that he should be focusing on the overall management of the organization and preparing for budgets, Board of Selectmen Meetings, strategic planning and other necessary duties of the top administrator. This places an undue and overwhelming burden on the chief. Despite the challenges, the fire chief continues to provide strong leadership and command presence in order to overcome these organizational deficits.

It appears that the department needs are only addressed when it is convenient and not as a priority for the benefit of the organization. The lack of daily direct supervision and communications between officers was evidenced during the project team’s observations. An example of an overall lack of communication was demonstrated when a firefighter indicated they were unaware that a response vehicle was out of service. It was not until arrival at the station that they were made aware of the out of service status.

Traditionally, and in most fire service organizations, company level officers (captains and lieutenants) are working supervisors. They form an integral part of their company, apparatus and unit. It is often necessary for them to assume hands-on involvement in operations while simultaneously providing oversight and direction to personnel. During structure fires and other dangerous technical operations, it is imperative that these officers accompany and operate with their crew to monitor conditions, provide situation reports and assess progress toward incident mitigation. During structure fires, they must be capable of operating inside of the fire building with their crews, the most dangerous place on the incident scene. It is imperative that they are highly qualified and experienced, and can command the confidence of their personnel. It is also important that personnel who are serving as chief level officers fully understand and are experienced with these skills and tasks before assuming greater responsibility. While MRI is mindful that any type of organizational hierarchy is not always going to line up perfectly on emergency incidents, the team recognizes that the organizational structure recommended will provide increased operational effectiveness, safety and improved accountability.

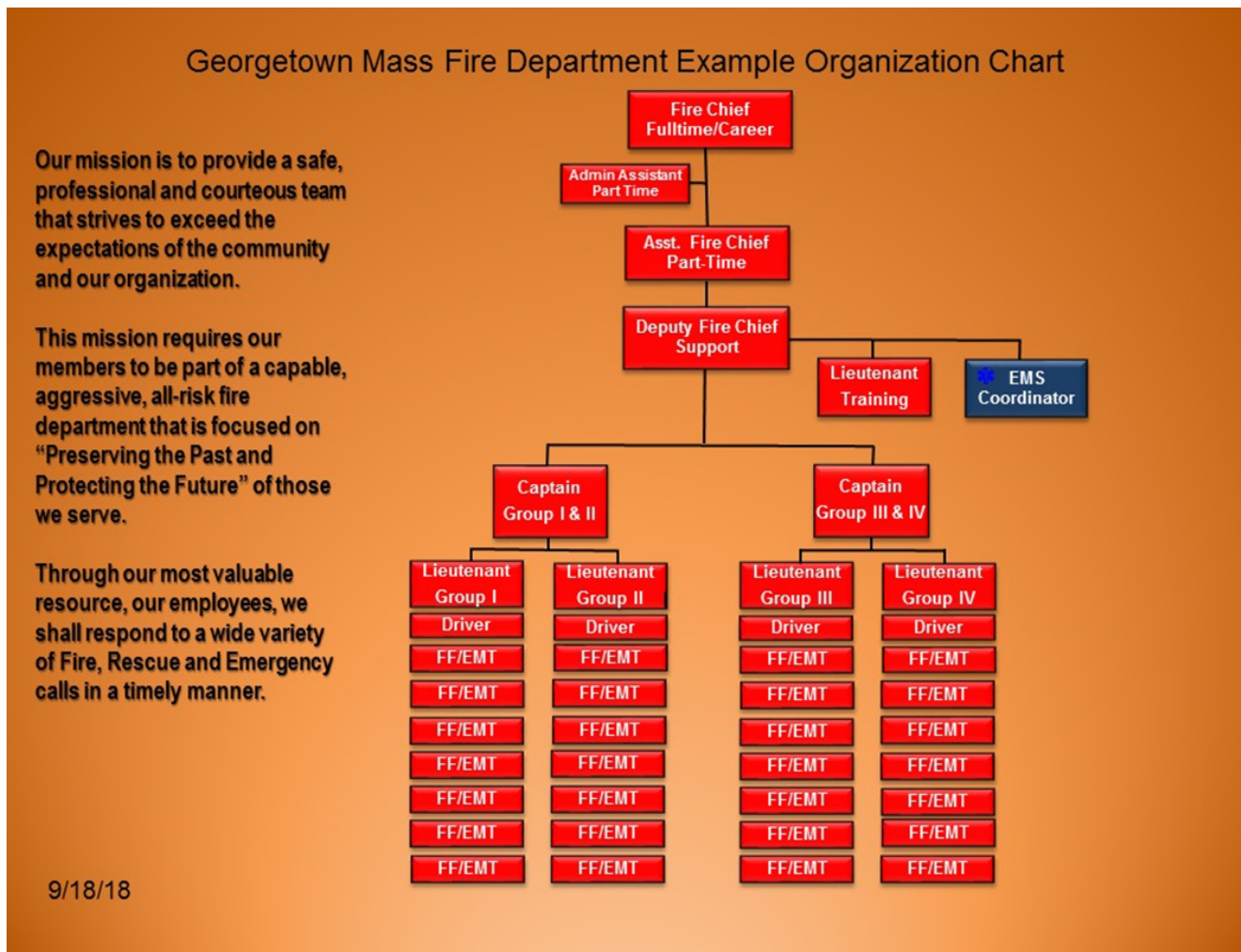


Figure 13: Example Org Chart

Training is, without question, one of the three most important functions that a fire department should be performing on a regular basis; the others being a response to emergency incidents and fire prevention activities.

One could even make a credible argument that training is, in some way, more important than emergency responses because a department that is not well trained, prepared and operationally ready, will be unable to effectively, efficiently, correctly and safely fulfill its emergency response obligations and mission. A comprehensive, diverse and ongoing training program is absolutely critical to the fire department's level of success.

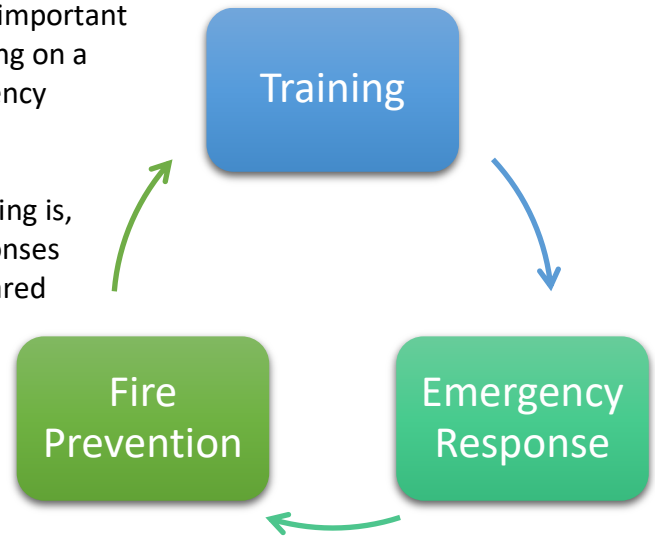


Figure 14: Fire Department Critical Functions

The need for well-trained officers, who may be faced with serious life and death decisions that must be made quickly and correctly, is absolutely mission critical to any emergency service provider's ability to perform their designated mission(s).

Professional development for fire department personnel, especially officers, is also an important part of overall training. There are numerous excellent opportunities for officers to attend training on a wide range of topics outside of Georgetown including; the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in Stow, and the Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. All state sponsored fire academy courses are offered without charge to local municipalities. Annual events, such as the Fire Department Instructor's Conference (FDIC) in Indianapolis and the Firehouse Expo, provide a wide range of classroom training, as well as extensive hands-on evolutions.

Beyond the practical benefits to be gained from personnel participating in outside training, encouraging personnel to earn and/or maintain various specialized certifications, such as Fire Instructor or Fire Officer, increases the positive professional perception of the organization and can help to demonstrate a commitment to continued excellence.

³The Georgetown Fire Department currently does not have any type of formal promotional or officer selection. The process established is referenced in the policies outlining the authority of the fire chief to appoint. All officer positions, both career and call, should be filled based upon the individual's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications and experience commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a rank appropriate assessment process, and a basic practical skills evaluation. MRI highly recommends

³ Section 4.0 Appointments Georgetown Fire Department Rules and Regulations, Standards Operating Guidelines (SOG's, and Directives. Version 2.2 January 2009

that these standards include some provision requiring completion of Fire Instructor Level I and Fire Officer Level I as a minimum. All officers should also be required to have completed rank appropriate National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. Finally, they should be required to have completed incident safety officer training.

In conjunction with formalizing the future officer's promotion process when selecting to fill the department's key leadership positions, the fire chief should work to implement a career development program and succession planning process to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department. This should include both career and call officers.

Organizational Structure, Training, Professional Development Recommendations

Recommendation VI. - 1

The current discourse within the Georgetown Fire Department must be resolved before any forward progress can be made.

MRI recommends a series of GFD group meetings be held using the nominal group process to identify specific issues and problems within the organization, develop solutions and to enhance the ability of decision making within the organization. The process is open to all members and is typically held at a convenient time to encourage as much organizational participation as possible. MRI can provide guidance on the development of this process.

Recommendation VI. - 2

The fire chief should create a significantly revised organizational chart for the Georgetown Fire Department. There is a clear need to reorganize, strengthen and provide direct leadership support to the fire chief. This should include the creation of an Assistant Fire Chief position with a scheduled 32-hour work week and not included as a member of the collective bargaining unit in order to provide operational and organizational support to the fire chief. The second in command position contributes to a higher level of consistency on a day to day basis which will fill the current supervision gaps occurring at the Georgetown Fire Department. This position would be open to all internal and external interested candidates and would require the successful passing of an assessment center in order to obtain the best-qualified individual for the position.

In addition, these changes should include the reassignment of officers within the department as needed which will closely reflect the delegation of duties and responsibilities. This will provide for greater accountability and efficiency within the organization.

Recommendation VI. - 3

All officer positions, from lieutenant to fire chief, should be filled based upon the individual's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications and experience, commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a formal, rank appropriate assessment process and a basic scenario practical skills evaluation.

Recommendation VI. - 4

The Georgetown Fire Department should ensure that all department members are trained/certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and rank. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated, it is MRI's recommendation that all officers be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level.

Recommendation VI. - 5

The Georgetown Fire Department should require its officers to obtain a certain level of fire officer certification as a job requirement, such as Fire Officer I for lieutenant, Fire Officer II for captain, Fire Officer III for deputy fire chief and Fire Officer Level IV for fire chief.

Recommendation VI. - 6

The Georgetown Fire Department should require that all officers be certified as Incident Safety Officers. Additional personnel who may be interested should be encouraged to take this training and obtain this important firefighter safety certification.

Recommendation VI. - 7

As part of the succession planning process, the fire chief should work to implement a career development program to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.

Recommendation VI. - 8

In addition to their normal emergency scene operational duties and station management responsibilities, all officers should have one or more administrative duties/responsibilities to assist the fire chief with the department's overall management. These duties and responsibilities should be reflected in rank and position specific job descriptions.

Recommendation VI. - 9

The fire chief should continue to utilize social media and to involve other members of the department in providing updated news, activities, fire prevention tips and information to enhance the community's knowledge about the Georgetown Fire Department.

Recommendation VI. - 10

The Georgetown Fire Department should seek assistance from the Massachusetts Call and Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA) and Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts (FCAM) relative to enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Georgetown.

Recommendation VI. - 11

The fire chief should obtain membership and seek assistance from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the Volunteer Combination Officers Section (VCOS) within the IAFC, in order to gain further information and education on best practices in leading a call firefighter organization such as the Georgetown Fire Department, as well as enhancing recruitment and retention efforts. The fire chief should attend the annual VCOS symposium sponsored by the IAFC organization to be able to network and gain unique ideas and perspectives from other chief officers. This is one of the largest symposiums that specifically addresses call and combination fire organizational needs.

VII. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

Based upon the MRI's project team's analysis of the current day operations of the Georgetown Fire Department, MRI has found an organization that is currently in need of a change in its current staffing model to avoid a staffing crisis in the near future. The department has experienced an increase and change in its service delivery model requiring a different approach to servicing the needs of the public.

Internal organizational discourse has led to a lack of focus, direction and common vision within the department. An inconsistent level of staffing and supervision has fundamentally left the department with no day-to-day direction or supervision, requiring the fire chief to put aside other organizational priorities to address the day to day operations. Despite this conflict, the Fire Chief should be recognized as an innovative leader that is continually striving to produce positive momentum within the organization. The project team's observation is that the Chief has the benefit of strong support from the Town Administrator and the Board of Selectmen. However, given the current culture of conflict many department members are watching events from the sidelines. **Through this management letter, MRI challenge members of the department to work with the Chief to improve the organization and move past the agendas of those that wish to upset the Chief's efforts to move the organization forward.**

In addition, the ongoing and very censorious dispute between the Deputy Fire Chief and the Town has impacted morale within the organization.

Staffing remains a problem for the department. The number of call firefighters and per diem EMTs is limited and the ability to maintaining proper levels of staffing is a growing dilemma, which is further impacted by the dropping of scheduled shifts by personnel.

Having a sense of common vision is important for any organization to ensure that the organization and its personnel are moving in unison toward a common goal(s). Having a common vision is not only about making sure that all parties are aware that they are in the same boat and rowing, but even more importantly, that they are rowing in the same direction.

The impact of not sharing a common vision is very noticeable in the quality and quantity of work performed, and in the spirit and passion that the work of the organization is accomplished.

The department lacks any type of long-range or strategic plan that charts its projected path to the future.

The rules/regulations and standard operating guidelines for department are in the process of being updated and reviewed. However, the most recent copy provided to MRI is dated from 2009, we recommend that this update be given priority.

Looking ahead, the fire department does possess some definitive positive attributes, most notably it's Insurance Services Rating (ISO) of **4** from the June 2014 Public Protection Classification Report. This is commendable for a predominantly call fire department in a small town. This demonstrates a strong foundation upon which to build.

However, the department is facing serious challenges both today and in the future. Volunteerism is declining and the ranks of call emergency services personnel is dwindling nationwide. The Georgetown Fire Department faces the dual challenges of attempting to balance a credible emergency response system, staffed primarily with call members, while simultaneously facing a steadily increasing number of requests for service, both emergency and non-emergency.

The Georgetown Fire Department is moving towards a potential staffing crisis that could compromise the delivery of equal, consistent emergency services to the community. A bridge to full-time staffing has accomplished its goal up until recently, as predicted back in 2007. The Town of Georgetown must now evaluate its current position and take a proactive approach to address the growing challenges to the Georgetown Fire Department.

Despite these challenges, MRI clearly acknowledges and recognizes that when staffing positions are filled and the organization is moving forward together as a team, the personnel of the Georgetown Fire and EMS organization produce an effective, professional and efficient response that serves the town well.

To that end, MRI proposes the following as a roadmap for initiating the significant change and major rebuilding that need to be done to the department.

Conclusions and Implementing Change Recommendations

Recommendation VII. – 1

The Town of Georgetown should formally adopt a revised organizational chart for the Georgetown Fire Department as recommended previously in this letter. This formal adoption if required by the collective bargaining agreement should include the formal bargaining and reclassification of existing personnel as appropriate.

Recommendation VII. - 2

The fire chief should form a membership/management committee. This committee is designed to enhance communication, construct more positive relationships and provide a mechanism for members to have an active voice within the organization and begin setting the direction for the future.

This committee should consist of as many stakeholders as wish to participate. The chief should hold two meetings per month for the first six months to a year and then meet monthly for the foreseeable future. Minutes of these meetings should be developed, shared with the department, the Board of Selectmen and the town administrator, as an attachment to the chief's monthly report. If necessary, outside professional assistance is available to assist with facilitating this endeavor.

Recommendation VII. - 3

The fire chief should immediately begin providing a weekly e-mail update to all members of the Georgetown Fire Department. This regular update, designed to enhance communications, should be started by November 1, 2018.

Recommendation VII. - 4

The Georgetown Fire Department should review its mission statement, vision statement and list of core values that guide the department's overall mission and operations. Any changes or modifications to these core organizational elements should be done as a team.

Recommendation VII. - 5

The Georgetown Fire Department's mission statement should be prominently displayed in the station, along with the vision statement and core values.

Recommendation VII. - 6

The Town of Georgetown should complete driving record, background checks and verification of fire and EMS certifications on all current members of the fire department to ensure that they are eligible to be firefighters or EMTs.

Recommendation VII. - 7

Conduct a comprehensive review of existing training records. The fire chief should meet individually with each member of the department to review the training file and develop a prescriptive training plan.

Recommendation VII. - 8

A concerted effort should be made to certify as many existing career and on-call members as possible to the level of Firefighter I/II through the Massachusetts Fire Training Council. This action should include a training effort that is designed to train and refresh all candidates on the 85 specific “non-fire” hands-on skills and 20 “live fire” skills essential for certification and basic level.

Recommendation VII. - 9

The fire chief should begin to identify members of the department who possess the skills to be developed into officers, begin to mentor them and provide appropriate additional training. Part of this development process could include the delegation of certain assignments to these personnel.

Recommendation VII. - 10

The fire chief should work with the department’s membership to develop a plan to improve the overnight response system in use and minimize dropped shifts within the Georgetown Fire Department. This will serve to bring improved consistency to the level of service provided to the community throughout the day.

Recommendation VII. -11

The fire chief should begin work, assisted by a committee of department stakeholders, to develop an up-to-date rules and regulations document. This document should then be submitted for approval by the Board of Selectmen. After approval, the document should then be distributed to, and signed for, by each member of the department. It should then be used to provide an orientation overview and indoctrination to the department’s behavioral expectations for new personnel.

Recommendation VII. - 12

The fire chief, assisted by a committee comprised of a cross-section of department stakeholders, should continue the revision and updating of the department’s standard operations procedures or guidelines (SOP/SOG) manual, starting with mission-critical procedures such as, but not limited to, *basic engine and truck company operations, dwelling fires, commercial structures, rapid intervention team operations, personnel accountability, gas leaks, hazardous materials incidents, ice rescue, vehicle extrication operations, thermal imaging camera use and automatic external defibrillator use.* The committee should be given whatever support is necessary to complete at least a basic manual update within one year.

Recommendation VII. - 13

Based upon the foundation that currently exists and building upon the results of the recommendations contained in this letter, the Town of Georgetown and the Georgetown Fire Department should develop a formal process for implementing a long-term vision for the department and developing a strategic plan.

Recommendation VII. - 14

Georgetown should enter into discussions with the municipal administrations and fire department leadership of its adjacent communities, for the purposes of identifying possible opportunities for shared services and long-term explore the feasibility of a more regional approach to fire protection and EMS delivery systems.

Recommendation VII. - 15

This basic service study conducted by MRI is an abridged version of the comprehensive organizational study typically conducted as part of MRI's full study package. Due to the limited nature of this short study, there are elements of the Georgetown Fire Department that the project team is unable to fully evaluate or expand upon. MRI recommends consideration of an expanded study in the future when engaging in strategic planning.

In conclusion, the missions performed by the fire department are some of the most basic and fundamental functions of government; to ensure the safety and protection of the residents and visitors of the community. The real issue facing the Georgetown Fire Department and the Town of Georgetown, as it is for every community, is to determine an acceptable level of risk and then define an appropriate level of service for the community.

There is no "right" amount of fire protection or EMS delivery. It is a constantly changing level based upon the expressed needs of the community. Determining the appropriate level of service also involves deciding upon the municipalities' fiscal ability and willingness to pay for the desired level of service. These are decisions that the citizens of the town and the Board of Selectmen will ultimately need to make.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian P. Duggan
Director of Fire Services
Municipal Resources Inc.

Shawn P. Murray, Senior Consultant
Senior Consultant



Recommendations by Chapter

IV. Recommendations Staffing, Recruitment

Recommendation IV.-1

The Town of Georgetown should recognize that the use of paid on-call firefighter/EMTs and per-diem employees has been an effective model for meeting the emergency response needs of the community, however, currently and in the future, the only way to develop a more active and properly staffed fire department is the hiring of career firefighters to staff positions during the daytime hours and to continue to actively continue to utilize the current on-call personnel to bolster the ranks.

Recommendation IV.- 2

Adopt a staffing model which will provide full-time coverage supplemented by call firefighters and per diem staff to meet coverage for emergency responses.

Recommendation IV.- 3

MRI recommends that in January of 2019, hire 2 career Firefighter/EMTs to work Monday through Friday to provide fire and EMS cover from 6 am to 4 pm. Call firefighters and per diem staff would supplement the day shift as available, cover the nights, weekends and Car-6 shifts.

Recommendation IV.- 4

July 2019, hire 4 career Firefighter/EMTs, two groups of two working a rotating schedule Sunday through Saturday, four days on to cover from 6 am to 6 pm, then followed by four days off. Call firefighters and per diem staff to cover two additional daytime slots 7 days a week, and 7 nights a week from 6 pm to 11 pm, and Car-6 shifts.

Recommendation IV. - 5

The Town of Georgetown and the Georgetown Fire Department should apply for a federal SAFER Grant for full-time positions and on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel currently in the fire department.

Recommendation IV. - 6

The Town of Georgetown should convene a focus group to determine what concepts and recruitment and retention strategies are feasible and most attractive to potential candidates.

Recommendation IV. - 7

The Georgetown Fire Department should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 5 to 10 new members over the next three years and simultaneously set a goal of maintaining the overall call member force at 30 to 35 active personnel. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the EMT-basic level.

Recommendation IV. - 8

The Georgetown Fire Department should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment program led by the call deputy fire chief. At a minimum, this program should consist of:

- 1. Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents*
- 2. Holding periodic open houses at the fire station*
- 3. Performing public outreach through the local media*
- 4. Contacting community and service groups*
- 5. Developing an eye-catching banner on the town's and fire department's websites and conducting radio and media advertisements*
- 6. Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town*
- 7. Placing a temporary signboard at various locations within the community*
- 8. Placing signs for call/recruiting volunteers in local businesses, particularly high-volume locations*
- 9. Implementing or enhancing a fire explorer program*
- 10. As part of a retention incentive consider allowing active responders to participate in the Town's health insurance at their own cost (100%) or if they respond to more than 50% of the calls provide a percentage match up to 50%.*

V. Recommendations Facility

Recommendation V. - 1

Conduct a public safety complex needs assessment with a goal of identifying facility modernization, update the current facility to today's fire and life safety codes, building codes, ADA requirements, safety systems, technology, and separation of apparatus areas from administrative and personnel areas. The needs assessment should also provide estimates of costs to meet recommendations of the need's assessment.

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As part of the succession planning process, the fire chief should work to implement a career development program to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.

Recommendation VI. - 8

In addition to their normal emergency scene operational duties and station management responsibilities, all officers should have one or more administrative duties/responsibilities to assist the fire chief with the department's overall management. These duties and responsibilities should be reflected in rank and position specific job descriptions.

Recommendation VI. - 9

The fire chief should continue to utilize social media and to involve other members of the department in providing updated news, activities, fire prevention tips and information to enhance the community's knowledge about the Georgetown Fire Department.

Recommendation VI. – 10

The Georgetown Fire Department should seek assistance from the Massachusetts Call and Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA) and Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts (FCAM) relative to enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Georgetown.

Recommendation VI. - 11

The fire chief should obtain membership and seek assistance from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the Volunteer Combination Officers Section (VCOS) within the IAFC , in order to gain further information and education on best practices in leading a call firefighter organization such as the Georgetown Fire Department, as well as enhancing recruitment and retention efforts . The fire chief should attend the annual VCOS symposium sponsored by the IAFC organization to be able to network and gain unique ideas and perspectives from other chief officers. This is one of the largest symposiums that specifically addresses call and combination fire organizational needs.

VII. Recommendations Conclusions and Implementing Change

Recommendation VII. – 1

The Town of Georgetown should formally adopt a revised organizational chart for the Georgetown Fire Department as recommended previously in this letter. This formal adoption if required by the collective bargaining agreement should include the formal bargaining and reclassification of existing personnel as appropriate.

Recommendation VII. - 2

The fire chief should form a membership/management committee. This committee is designed to enhance communication, construct more positive relationships and provide a mechanism for members to have an active voice within the organization and begin setting the direction for the future.

This committee should consist of as many stakeholders as wish to participate. The chief should hold two meetings per month for the first six months to a year and then meet monthly for the foreseeable future. Minutes of these meetings should be developed, shared with the department, the Board of Selectmen and the town administrator, as an attachment to the chief's monthly report. If necessary, outside professional assistance is available to assist with facilitating this endeavor.

Recommendation VII. - 3

The fire chief should immediately begin providing a weekly e-mail update to all members of the Georgetown Fire Department. This regular update, designed to enhance communications, should be started by November 1, 2018.

Recommendation VII. - 4

The Georgetown Fire Department should review its mission statement, vision statement and a list of core values that guide the department's overall mission and operations. Any changes or modifications to these core organizational elements should be done as a team.

Recommendation VII. - 5

The Georgetown Fire Department's mission statement should be prominently displayed in the station, along with the vision statement and core values.

Recommendation VII. - 6

The Town of Georgetown should complete driving record, background checks and verification of fire and EMS certifications on all current members of the fire department to ensure that they are eligible to be firefighters or EMTs.

Recommendation VII. - 7

Conduct a comprehensive review of existing training records. The fire chief should meet individually with each member of the department to review the training file and develop a prescriptive training plan.

Recommendation VII. - 8

A concerted effort should be made to certify as many existing career and on-call members as possible to the level of Firefighter I/II through the Massachusetts Fire Training Council. This action should include a training effort that is designed to train and refresh all candidates on the 85 specific "non-fire" hands-on skills and 20 "live fire" skills essential for certification and basic level.

Recommendation VII. - 9

The fire chief should begin to identify members of the department who possess the skills to be developed into officers and begin to mentor them and provide appropriate additional training. Part of this development process could include the delegation of certain assignments to these personnel.

Recommendation VII. - 10

The fire chief should work with the department's membership to develop a plan to improve the overnight response system in use and minimize dropped shifts within the Georgetown Fire Department. This will serve to bring improved consistency to the level of service provided to the community throughout the day.

Recommendation VII. -11

The fire chief should begin work, assisted by a committee of department stakeholders, to develop an up-to-date rules and regulations document. This document should then be submitted for approval by the Board of Selectmen. After approval, the document should then be distributed to, and signed for, by each member of the department. It should then be used to provide an orientation overview and indoctrination to the department's behavioral expectations for new personnel.

Recommendation VII. - 12

The fire chief, assisted by a committee comprised of a cross-section of department stakeholders, should continue the revision and updating of the department's standard operations procedures or guidelines (SOP/SOG) manual, starting with mission-critical procedures such as, but not limited to, *basic engine and truck company operations, dwelling fires, commercial structures, rapid intervention team operations, personnel accountability, gas leaks, hazardous materials incidents, ice rescue, vehicle extrication operations, thermal imaging camera use and automatic external defibrillator use*. The committee should be given whatever support is necessary to complete at least a basic manual update within one year.

Recommendation VII. - 13

Based upon the foundation that currently exists and building upon the results of the recommendations contained in this letter, the Town of Georgetown and the Georgetown Fire Department should develop a formal process for implementing a long-term vision for the department and developing a strategic plan.

Recommendation VII. - 14

Georgetown should enter into discussions with the municipal administrations and fire department leadership of its adjacent communities for the purposes of identifying possible opportunities for shared services and long-term explore the feasibility of a more regional approach to fire protection and EMS delivery systems.

Recommendation VII. - 15

This basic service study conducted by MRI is an abridged version of the comprehensive organizational study typically conducted as part of MRI's full study package. Due to the limited nature of this short study, there are elements of the Georgetown Fire Department that the project team is unable to fully evaluate or expand upon. MRI recommends consideration of an expanded study in the future when engaging in strategic planning.

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