



WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE

Notice of Board of Directors Meeting

September 8, 2021
6:30 PM Board Work Session

A work session of the West Metro Fire-Rescue District Board of Directors will be held:

Date and Time: *Wednesday, September 8, 2021 at 6:30 PM*

Location: West Metro Fire Station 3
4251 Xylon Avenue North
New Hope, MN 55428

For additional information, contact the Board Secretary, Anne Norris at 763-531-1000.
Posted at: Crystal City Hall, West Metro Fire Station 3, and New Hope City Hall.

Dated: September 2, 2021



WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT
BOARD OF DIRECTORS WORK SESSION AGENDA

September 8, 2021
6:30 PM Work Session

- A. Call to order by Board President.**
- B. Roll Call**
- C. Staffing Discussion**
- D. Other Matters and Announcements**
 - 1. Regular Meeting of the West Metro Board of Directors October 13, 2021 at 6:30 PM
- E. Adjournment**



MEMORANDUM

To: Board of Directors
From: Sarah Larson, Fire Chief
Date: September 8, 2021
Subject: Staffing

BACKGROUND

I am asking for the Board's approval to apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Grant (SAFER).

SAFER was created to provide funding directly to fire departments and volunteer firefighter interest organizations to help them increase or maintain the number of trained, "front line" firefighters available in their communities.

The goal of SAFER is to enhance the local fire departments' abilities to comply with staffing, response and operational standards established by the NFPA (NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments and/or NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments).

According to NFPA 1720 the West Metro Fire-Rescue District (WMRFD) protects an urban area which is an area with a population greater than 1000 per square mile. An urban area requires a minimum of 15 staff to respond within 9 minutes 90% of the time to structure fires.

At this time, a SAFER grant covers 100% of the salary and benefits of a full-time employee at the rank of firefighter for three years.

CURRENT FULL-TIME STRUCTURE

This successful paid, on-call (POC) fire department requires the support of full-time staff. A balance has to be maintained for the POC firefighters allowing them to use the bulk of their time for incidents, training and events. Paperwork, daily operations and administration are not effective uses of POC firefighters time and energy.

The District has seven full-time staff. This staff performs code enforcement and public education in both cities, runs administration for 50-60 POC staff, creates and performs training programs, runs IT, and accomplishes logistical management including repairs. All full-time staff are responders to emergency incidents.

Under current operations, full-time staff cover the time period of 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM, Monday through Friday. During the hours of 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM, Monday through Friday all calls for service except resource driven calls (structure fires, extrications, and mutual aid) are handled by full-time staff without paging POC firefighters. In 2019, 587 of the 2,018 calls for service occurred Monday thru Friday from 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM. In 2020 this number was 621 of 1,828 calls for service. Of the 35 structure fires we responded to in 2019, not including mutual/auto aid, 21 occurred during this time period.

In order to cover these hours most full-time staff work (4) 10 hour shifts per week and stagger their hours, two to three starting at 6:00 AM and two to three leaving at 6:00 PM. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:00 AM – 2:00 PM are the only times that all full-time staff are scheduled to be in the office at the same time. Two of our Assistant Chiefs respond with our Duty Chief Program. The Duty Chief Program requires a chief officer to participate in a rotation of six chief officers to be available for response for either a two or three day period of time. This program guarantees a chief level response to resource driven incidents.

The full-time staff are the program managers for every function of the WMFRD.

Deputy Fire Marshal and Inspector are responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- Fire Prevention
 - Complete all code enforcement including:
 - All plan reviews
 - New construction meetings
 - New construction inspections
 - Certificate of occupancy inspections and meetings
 - Existing commercial building inspections
 - All licensing
 - Supervise inspectors in training program
- Fire Investigation
 - Investigate fires for determination of cause
- Public Education
 - Coordinate and provide school programs for all the Robbinsdale School District Schools and charter schools
 - Pre schools
 - Senior Facilities
 - Apartments
- Residential
 - Complete and/or coordinate Home Safety Survey Program
- Responds to calls for service

Assistant Chief of Administration is responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- Promotional Processes
- Recruitment and hiring of all firefighter candidates
- Coordination of the WMFRD honor guard program
- Personnel
- Community Outreach Programs
- Fire Explorers
- Coordination of apparatus and firefighters at public events
- Scheduling
- Accident reporting

- Coordination of certifications and licensing
- Discipline
- Uniforms
- Social Media
- Responds to calls for service
- Participates in duty chief rotation for response

The Assistant Chief of Training is responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- Developing, coordinating and delivering WMFRD drills
- Coordination of outside training
- Coordination of technical rescue training
- Development, coordination and delivery of training for the West Suburban Fire Academy
- Development, coordination and delivery of the WMFRD mentor program
- Development, coordination and delivery of the WMFRD fire apparatus operator program
- Development, coordination and delivery of the WMFRD lieutenant training program
- Development, coordination and delivery of the WMFRD chief training program
- Development and coordination of the WMFRD specialty equipment training
- Manages annual training and course reimbursements
- Responds to calls for service

The Assistant Chief of Operations is responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- IT/Computer network and security systems
- Records management software
- Data entry
- POC payroll entry
- Reports and data requests
- Communications (Code Red/Active 911)
- Coordination with Hennepin County Radio
- Coordination with police departments
- Coordination of auto aid and mutual aid
- Coordination of EMS training
- Emergency Management including North Suburban Planning Group and Hennepin County
- Website
- Development of operational guidelines and policy
- NFIRS Reporting
- Responds to calls for service
- Participates in duty chief rotation for response

The Assistant Chief of Logistics is responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- Facility maintenance
- Equipment maintenance, including annual testing, repair, and preventative maintenance
- Vehicle maintenance, including annual testing, repair, and preventative maintenance
- Inventory management
- Development, implementation and facilitation of general operating and capital budgets

- Health and Safety Program Coordinator
- Coordination of vehicle extrication group
- Written specifications for equipment and apparatus
- Procurement of equipment and vehicles
- Coordination with Hennepin County Radio
- Responds to calls for service
- Assists with training
- Back-up accounts payable and payroll
- Develops and constructs training props

The Fire Chief is responsible for the following WMFRD functions:

- Responsible for WMFRD operations
- Manages full-time staff and WMFRD programs
- Coordinates with financial advisor
- Accounts payable
- FT payroll
- Coordinates benefits
- Management and development of all budgets
- Attends director and senior staff meetings
- Meets with city managers
- Coordinates and executes pump operator training
- Updates to city councils
- Development of WMFRD board packet
- Coordinates and executes WMFRD board meetings
- Maintains relationship with Board
- Develops and presents reports and information as directed by the WMFRD Board
- Coordinates officer meetings and trainings
- Emergency management
- Responds to calls for service

CHALLENGES

Although our current full-time staffing model serves the WMFRD well, it is not sustainable with its existing structure and staffing. There are a number of vulnerabilities with the current structure that could be mitigated with additional staff.

Our current full-time staffing model has seven firefighters responsible for calls for service during the weekdays, M-F 6:00 AM 6:00 PM. Due to the staggering of hours the number of full-time staff available for response is at or below minimum. Due to scheduling and project management staff routinely responds with two firefighters on an engine, which is often not an effective response. If any of the staff take time off, are sick, are on light duty, or have meetings this impedes the response even more. Because of the need for response, consistently over the last several years time off is hard to arrange and many of the staff have exceeded their allotted vacation time accruals. A number of staff have not accrued vacation for well over a year. Adding additional full-time staff will allow us to maintain the response and will give more latitude with scheduling.

Any full-time staff being off for any reason seriously impedes our ability to garner enough responders during the week days. We have attempted to overcome full-time staff being out of the office and unable to respond by staffing a POC duty crew when three full-time staff are off or in meetings for an extended period of time. Often these shifts go unfilled by the POC.

Many of the programs and activities for the department occur in the evening hours due to availability of the POC firefighters. This requires full-time staff to work numerous evening hours. Because of the responsibility for daytime response the full-time staff may not be able to flex their hours when working these evenings and end up working multiple 12 to 14 hour days.

Current Staffing

Time of Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
0600	2	3	3	3	3
0700	2	3	3	3	3
0800	3	4	3	4	4
0900	4 or 5	6	5	6	4 or 5
1000	5 or 6	7	6	7	5 or 6
1100	5 or 6	7	6	7	5 or 6
1200	5 or 6	7	6	7	5 or 6
1300	5 or 6	7	6	7	5 or 6
1400	3 or 4	5	4	5	3 or 4
1500	3 or 4	5	4	5	3 or 4
1600	3 or 4	4	3	4	2 or 3
1700	2 or 3	3	3	3	1 or 2

Staffing with Additional Firefighters

Time of Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
0600	2	3	3	3	3
0700	2	3	3	3	3
0800	3	4	3	4	4
0900	7 or 8	9	8	9	7 or 8
1000	8 or 9	10	9	10	8 or 9
1100	8 or 9	10	9	10	8 or 9
1200	8 or 9	10	9	10	8 or 9
1300	8 or 9	10	9	10	8 or 9
1400	6 or 7	8	7	8	6 or 7
1500	6 or 7	8	7	8	6 or 7
1600	6 or 7	7	6	7	5 or 6
1700	2 or 3	3	3	3	1 or 2

Turnout and Response Times to Structure Fires in 2019

	First Unit Weekdays M-F 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM	First Engine Weekdays M-F 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM	Second Engine Weekdays M-F 6:00 AM - 6:00 PM
Turnout Time Average	2 Min 23 Sec	2 Min 49 Sec	8 Min 41 Sec
Response Time Average	6 Min 16 Sec	7 Min 16 Sec	15 Min 19 Sec

The 2019 average amount of firefighters that responded to structure fires M-F 6:00 AM – 6:00 PM was 17.5. On average we did not garner the needed 15 firefighters within 9 minutes.

The goal of this grant is to provide funding to improve response times and increase the number of firefighters assembled on the scene within 9 minutes. With these three additional responders and our auto aid partners it is feasible that during the week days we will meet the NFPA 1720 requirement of having a minimum of 15 firefighters to respond within 9 minutes 90% of the time to structure fires.

The current logistics assistant chief has an overwhelming work load. He is responsible for maintaining three stations, including coordinating with both cities on projects, an entire fleet of vehicles and all equipment. Many projects are put off year and year again because of a lack of time to complete them. The bathroom project planned for in the capital budget is an example of this. This project has been carried over for at least two years. The compressor on Squad 1 has been down for over six months due to a lack of available time to complete this extensive repair while prioritizing more critical repairs. Contracting these projects out still requires significant time and oversight from the Chief of Logistics and has previously had unsatisfactory costs and results for the WMFRD.

If we brought on another full-time logistics staff member in addition to response they would assist with equipment and apparatus repair; preventative maintenance of gas powered and electric equipment; annual testing of pumps, hose, ladders, SCBA, turnout gear and Tower 1 certification; data entry of service requests, repairs, inventory and preventative maintenance records; OSHA compliance; and research, quotes and cooperative purchasing for procurement.

The assistant chief of training has a multitude of responsibilities outside of the regular scheduled hours. This includes night drills, weekend drills, FAO, recruit summer training and fire academy. He must also be available during the daytime hours for response. In order to keep the number of firefighters that attend training within a range that promotes learning we offer training to the firefighters about 84 times per year. This does not include fire academy, FAO or summer recruit academy and is essential for operationally ready firefighters. The assistant chief of training has a staff of 3 POC captains and a POC battalion chief. This team spent nearly 1100 hours training our firefighters in 2019, mostly in the evening.

Along with response, an additional full-time staff member assigned to training would coordinate, develop, and execute the mentor program and West Suburban Fire Academy. They would lead the recruit summer training program and coordinate specialized training. They would also assist with development and execution of department drills. This would alleviate burnout on the part of the assistant chief of training and add sustainability to the position.

Presently all community outreach is coordinated by our assistant chief of administration and public education is coordinated, developed, and executed by the deputy fire marshal. Bringing on an additional firefighter to specialize in these programs would greatly improve the programs and would help with managing the work

loads of these two individuals. This person would also cross train to support the IT needs of the District. They would be responsible for our social media and website.

Our full-time staff is aging. Three staff will be retiring within the next 3-5 years. Putting additional staff in place will assist with succession of their positions.

COSTS ASSOCIATED WITH HIRING THREE FULL-TIME STAFF

Currently the SAFER Grant pays 100% of the salary and benefits for a firefighter for three years. The 2020 SAFER Grant was the first one that covered 100% of the costs for three years, prior to this there were shared costs with the department that increased over the life of the grant. In 2019 the SAFER Grant covered 75% of the of the cost of a firefighter for the first two years and 35% the third year.

The costs to the District beyond what the SAFER Grant would cover if the SAFER Grant covers 100% of the cost of a firefighter:

	Uniforms	Work Stations	Office Furniture	Hiring	Lieutenants Salary	Overtime	Benefits	TOTAL
First Year	\$3,000	\$6,000	\$10,000	\$10,000	\$21,000	\$9,000	0	\$59,000
Second Year	\$2,250	0	0	0	\$36,000	\$10,000	0	\$47,250
Third Year	\$2,250	0	0	0	\$51,000	\$11,000	0	\$62,000
Forth Year	\$2,250	0	0	0	\$270,000	\$12,000	154,090	\$436,090

In 2023 the additional cost would be split about 50/50 between the two cities, so year one would be about a \$30,000 increase per city. There is also a \$35,000 increase per city in 2023 for the new engines. The combined increase would be about \$65,000 plus the usual \$60,000 annual increase, for a total increase of about \$125,000 per city in year one.

CURRENT POC STRUCTURE

WMFRD is currently authorized for up to 66 POC firefighters. These firefighters must live within 6 minutes of a fire station and respond from their home to the station and then from the station to an incident. They are responsible for all calls for service Monday through Friday from 4:00 PM to 8:00 AM and 24 hours per day on the weekends. From 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM during the week days POC firefighters are only responsible for resource driven calls such as a structure fire. It is imperative to a successful POC department that a balance is maintained for the firefighters allowing them to use the bulk of their time for incidents, training and events. Paperwork, daily operations and administration are not effective use of POC firefighters time and energy.

Three stations are staffed with up to 17 firefighters, a captain, lieutenant, and lieutenant candidate. There are also three training captains and 3 battalion chiefs. Annually, one captain serves in the role of chief in training.

On Friday’s and Saturday’s from 6:00 PM to 2:00 AM and Sundays from noon to 8:00 PM we staff a two-person EMS stand-by crew to support the police during some of their busier times. This crew responds to all medical calls for service in the two cities.

POC firefighters are held accountable to a minimum requirement for response to incidents and drill attendance. They also participate in community outreach, outside training, and fire prevention.

TRIGGERS FOR A CHANGE IN POC STRUCTURE

Increased calls for service

In 2019 POC firefighters responded to 1431 calls for service from 6:00 PM - 6:00 AM on weekdays and 24 hours per day on the weekends. Of these calls 699 were handled by the EMS stand-by crew and no stations were paged out. This means the POC stations responded to 732 calls for service. There was an average of 1.5 calls per week for each station between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM. This is manageable, however if this number increases to the point where firefighters are being woken up multiple times during the week to respond there will become a need for evaluation of the service model.

2019 Calls for Service from Local Departments

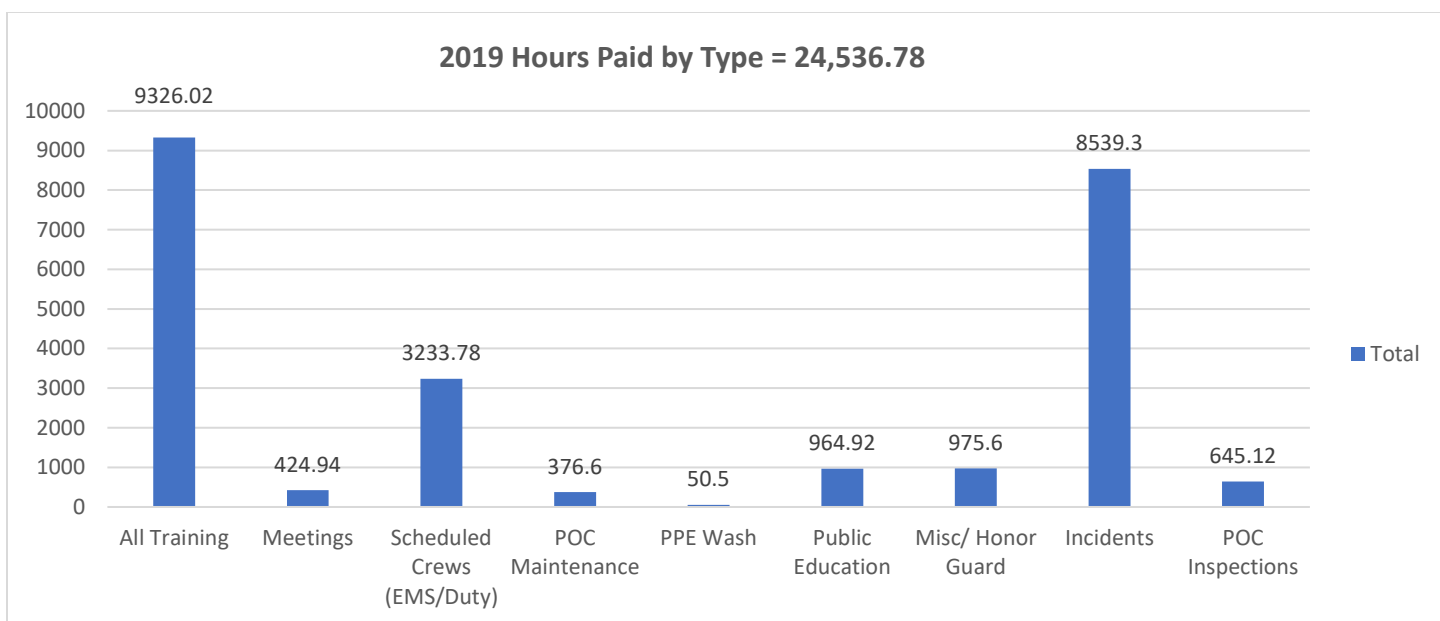
Anoka/Champlin	776	Primarily POC
Andover	1336	Primarily POC
Brooklyn Center	1622	10AM-10PM Daily Duty Crew
Eden Prairie	1861	24/7 Duty Crew
Elk River	494	Primarily POC
Excelsior	916	Primarily POC
Fridley	2596	Combination
Golden Valley	733	Primarily POC
Hopkins	1429	24/7 Duty Crew
Inver Grove Heights	1821	24/7 Duty Crew
Lakeville	1694	24/7 Duty Crew
Long Lake	415	Primarily POC
Maple Grove	998	Primarily POC
Mendota Heights	374	POC
Mnetonka	3649	24/7 Duty Crew
Mound	568	Primarily POC
Plymouth	2025	Primarily FT supplemented with POC
New Brighton	382	Primarily POC
Osseo	362	POC
Ramsey	975	Primarily POC
Richfield	4411	24/7 FT
Robbinsdale	369	POC
Rogers	521	Primarily POC
Roseville	5471	Primarily FT supplemented with POC
Savage	525	Primarily POC
Shakopee	957	Primarily POC
St Anthony	1538	Primarily FT supplemented with POC
St Louis Park	4984	24/7 FT
Stillwater	2041	Primarily FT supplemented with POC
Wayzata	299	POC
West Metro	2018	Primarily POC

Increased time commitment

The time commitment for a POC firefighter has steadily increased over the years. The amount of time given by the POC firefighters is at or close to its maximum threshold. Increases to the time commitment will become an unsustainable burden on the POC firefighters and should cause us to look at what services we provide or

evaluate the service model. The following table shows the hours worked by POC firefighters for the years 2000, 2010, and 2019:

Year	2000	2010	2019
Number of POC Firefighters	63	54	58
Total Annual Hours Worked	19,189.37	19,870.32	27,882.24
Average Annual Hours Worked Per Firefighter	304.59	367.97	480.73
Average Monthly Hours Worked Per Firefighter	25.38	30.66	40.06



2019 Summary of Hours Paid

Payroll Type	Total	Weekly Average	Per Person Weekly Average	Monthly Average	Per Person Monthly Average	Quarterly Average	Per Person Quarterly Average
All Training	9,326.02	179.3	3.1	777.2	13.4	2,331.5	40.2
Meetings	424.94	8.2	0.1	35.4	0.6	106.2	1.8
Scheduled Crews (EMS/Duty)	3,233.78	62.2	1.1	269.5	4.6	808.4	13.9
POC Maintenance	376.6	7.2	0.1	31.4	0.5	94.2	1.6
PPE Wash	50.5	1.0	0.0	4.2	0.1	12.6	0.2
Public Education	964.92	18.6	0.32	80.4	1.4	241.2	4.2
Misc/Honor Guard	975.6	18.8	0.32	81.3	1.4	243.9	4.2
Incidents	8539.3	164.2	2.8	711.6	12.3	2,134.8	36.8
POC Inspections	645.12	12.4	0.2	53.8	0.9	161.3	2.8
Grand Total	24,536.78	471.9	8.1	2,044.7	35.3	6,134.2	105.8

Recruitment

WMFRD recruits every other year and usually brings on a class of about 10 firefighters. To get 10 quality candidates we need approximately 30 to 40 applications. In 2014 we received 77 applications, in 2016 we received 47 applications, in 2018 we received 54 applications, and in 2021 we received 48 applications. These

are good numbers and allow us to hire excellent recruits. Receiving less than 20 applications would limit our ability to recruit quality candidates and would prompt an evaluation in our service model.

Seasonal Weekend and Holiday Staffing Shortages

In 2019 our average response on weekends and holidays in the summer was 27 firefighters for resource driven calls and 10 POC firefighters for single station calls compared to 2021 where we are averaging 20 firefighters for resource driven calls and 8 POC firefighters for single station calls. A continued downward trend in responders over the summer months should lead to an evaluation of the service model.

Police Response

If police continue to get busier and request us more often a change in services provided to the cities may be necessary in order to support their efforts. Our response would have to be from the stations not homes if we are to make a difference in medical calls for service.

CONCLUSION

Adding three additional full-time staff would help us retain current levels of service by allowing us to maintain the response and giving us more latitude with scheduling. These additional staff members would also curb burnout of our current staff, add a community outreach position and be pivotal to succession.

There are many triggers that the Board needs to be aware of that could require an evaluation of the service model including increasing number of calls for service, increasing time commitment, inability to recruit new POC firefighters, weekend and holiday staffing shortages and a change in police requests for our response.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends the Board pursue the SAFER Grant for 3 positions and monitor the triggers discussed in this memo.



2021 WEST METRO FIRE-RESCUE DISTRICT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

Board of Directors

Chief

