

Town of Menasha Fire Department



AdHoc Committee Recommendations

August, 2008

Summary

The Town of Menasha Fire Department serves the second largest town in the State of Wisconsin, covering 12+ square miles and a population of 17,000+.

The fire department provides its services through a combination of full-time and paid-on-call (PoC) staff. The headquarters building is staffed throughout the week with the chief officers, one full-time firefighter (FTF) and the fire and life safety educator. Emergency calls are staffed by the PoC who respond from their homes, places of employment or wherever they may be when the call originates. This type of service typically results in an 8-10 minute response time for fire calls and a 4-6 minute response time for medical calls.

Over the past several years, as firefighter's personal commitments change, there have been increasing occasions where the apparatus will leave the station with the bare minimum staff (three (3) firefighters). There has been increasing occasions during the past two years where, the response times have been lengthened due to the fact that there has not been a qualified driver available or sufficient staff responding during regular business hours. Recognizing this trend, in 2007 the Fire Chief convened an AdHoc committee to review the fire department's operations to see if there may be ways to improve service.

The committee was made up of individuals who represented the electorate, businesses and members of the fire department. In 2007 the committee worked for six months analyzing fire department statistical information and in August, 2007 made a recommendation to the Town Board that included increasing the FTF staffing by three with an ongoing plan for review and additional staff in a three year window of time. The Town Board approved this recommendation contingent upon securing a SAFER grant from the federal government. However, the grant was not awarded to the Town.

In April, 2008, the Fire Chief again convened the AdHoc Committee to see if there were other aspects of service that needed to be addressed. Because the committee was made up primarily of the former committee members, the need to reiterate the information presented the previous year

made the process of defining a goal much easier. The selected goal was to attain a response time of 5 minutes or less with four firefighters 90% of the time on fire calls.

Based upon the previous year's committee work, the primary way to improve response times is to decrease the time from dispatch to apparatus turnout. To address this variable, the committee looked at three options.

1. Staff the stations with FTF to attain the desired turnout time.
2. Staff stations with PoC firefighters to attain the desired turnout time.
3. Staff the station with a combination of FTF and PoC to attain the desired turnout time.

The discussions that followed over the months resulted in a recommendation from the committee to the Town Board to hire eleven (11) full-time firefighters and take the steps necessary to override the levy limit imposed by the State.

Committee Process

Following the 2007 AdHoc Committee's work, the committee was re-convened with a task of first identifying a specific goal for this session. The committee decided upon a facilitator for this year's efforts as a means to stay on tract with the discussions and to ensure a timely completion of the process.

The committee had a good concept of fire department operations and response times from the previous year's work. This year the committee reviewed statistical data, related to time of day, staffing levels responding and types of calls. They looked primarily at the critical calls which include structure fires, rescue calls that required both first responders and fire department response and emergency medical calls since that is nearly 85% of the fire department's calls for service.

To begin the discussions, the committee first addressed the manner in which response times could be improved. This was undertaken in the form of all committee members and guests contributing ideas to improving fire department operations. Ideas were written down on post-it-notes and then were categorized. The following ideas were discussed with the ones marked with an "*" being more of a strategy.

1. Sprinklers *
2. Add full-time firefighters (FTF)
3. Keep firefighting equipment in personal vehicles
4. Dedicated non-firefighting staff (adding civilian prevention staff)
5. Change staffing
6. Seek input from current firefighters
7. Regional mutual/automatic aid/box dispatch *
8. Educate the community *
9. Change Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) *

The committee began to identify barriers in the categories of full-time firefighters, paid-on-call (PoC) firefighters, and a combination of full-time and paid-on-call personnel.

Barriers to Full-Time Firefighters

- Budget
- Eligible/interested candidates; who will determine hiring standards; buy-in
- Acceptance by PoC firefighters; full-time versus PoC
- Is there a need for them?
- Buy-in by residents
- Requirement differences; full-time versus PoC
- Losing PoC personnel
- How many/which station would be staffed
- Union/bargaining unit
- Scheduling (holidays, vacations, etc.; how many firefighters are needed)

Barriers to Paid-On-Call Firefighters

- Time availability of PoC (dedication)
- Not enough PoC firefighters
- Budget/compensation
- Burnout
- Staffing requirements (firefighters, officers, first responders, drivers)
- Numbers to draw from
- Lack of interest/commitment
- Scheduling conflicts
- Qualifications
- Inequity (fair schedule)
- Requirements for duty night/shift
- Attitude/moral
- Participation requirements

Barriers to Combination of Full-time Firefighters and Paid-on-Call Firefighters

- Duties; defined roles and responsibilities (FT/PoC; shift leader; scheduling)
- Commitment of PoC
- Equipment maintenance/life cycle (additional cost)
- Morale (not on as many calls/loss of potential income/duties/interest)
- Budgeting/Cost (shift versus call pay)
- Crew positions (Driver/Operator, Officer, etc.); staffing issue; proper mix
- Compensation/Wage grades/positions; wage variance
- Due to vehicle costs inspections done by other than four-person crew
- Scheduling; back up PoC (sick leave, vacation, family emergency)
- Availability
- Lack of communication

The committee then reviewed the barriers to operational changes (i.e. firefighters respond directly to scene, strategy, carry gear in vehicles, etc.), as follows:

- Safety; on scene, equipment, personal cars on site
- Accountability (who is on scene/less than four firefighters on scene?)
- Professional appearance
- Businesses (security) – who do they let in?
- PoC do not want equipment in their personal vehicles (dirty/smell/toxic)
- Limited gear available
- Crew integrity/unified command
- Heavy requirements
- Few strategic locations to store equipment/availability of equipment
- Increase traffic to emergency scene
- Auto/mutual aid agreements do not allow personal vehicles on scene
- Cannot guarantee the desired outcome

The following meetings included discussion of the various Courses of Action (CoA) that may be considered.

CoA A: Add full-time firefighters required to achieve the goal for response time. The merits of this course of action are as follows:

- Meet the goal
- Automatic aid with other municipalities (reciprocate)
- Scheduling ease (guaranteed coverage)
- Accomplishing daytime activities (education, inspections, vehicle/equipment maintenance)
- Less likely to have turnover of full-time personnel (quicker replacement for vacancies)
- Every call will be answered (resident confidence)
- Joint training
- Guaranteed driver(s) for calls

CoA B: Use PoC firefighters to provide 24/7 coverage; maintain current full-time force.

- Retain more PoC firefighters
- Less cost than CoA A
- Improved department morale
- Complete daily activities
- Conditionally meet the goal
- Enhance automatic aid (conditionally)
- Greater resident confidence

CoA C: Combination of additional full-time firefighters and PoC staffing 24/7.

- Cost (C vs. A is less; C vs. B is more)
- Scheduling (C vs. A is less; C vs. B is more)
- Completing daily activities
- Automatic aid with other municipalities (C vs. A is less; C vs. B is more); IAFF discourages career departments calling volunteer departments to assist
- Inter-department morale
- Resident confidence

- Retention of PoC/full-time firefighters

To reaffirm that all necessary statistics were reviewed the committee gathered and reviewed statistical data on the following (Attachment C):

1. How many calls (day, week, time of day)
2. Turnout time
3. Staff per call
4. Type of calls (working structure fires, etc.)
5. Department size vs. population
6. Department size vs. number of structures
7. PoC hours by year
8. PoC turnover rate/reasons

As the requested data was reviewed it was determined that:

- Station 41 response times were higher than Station 40
- There was a difference during staffed and non-staffed times
- Less firefighters respond during the daytime hours

Discussions followed as to why the above may be and it was suggested that firefighters in Station 41's service area had a denser vehicular population to deal with when responding and that during the daytime hours fewer firefighters were available due to their employment schedules.

Another process that was undertaken during this time was to have the PoC sign an availability sheet using two FTF at each station on a 24-hour basis to see how many PoC may be available to staff the stations to ensure a 4-person crew. The result of this compilation is seen as Attachment D.

It was during this time of discussions the federal SAFER grant deadline was rapidly approaching. Due to the fact that last year's AdHoc presentation to the Board was presented when there were only two days before the SAFER grant deadline, it was decided that this year's work would proceed without the stress of trying to make a recommendation that was predicated upon the

successful awarding of a grant. The committee agreed that any recommendation by the committee would need to be made with realistic numbers that included the Town fully funding the recommendation.

As the committee discussed the above issues, the Town was preparing to circulate a town survey about Town services. The committee suggested four questions for inclusion in the survey specific to fire department service delivery, because there is a strong perception that much of the community does not have a good idea of how the fire department serves them. But more importantly the survey may provide valuable information on the community's willingness to accept additional financial burden at this time. The questions were developed and appear as Attachment B.

During the AdHoc committee's work, the Town had several significant fires which were discussed at length. The Cheese Factory fire on June 19, 2008; generated the greatest amount of discussion because there was a perception and rumors circulating that related specifically to the fire department's response times. The CAD (computer aided dispatch) sheet demonstrated that the response times for this incident were consistent with the 8-10 minute response time with the first apparatus arriving in 9.6 minutes. Other incidents such as a structure fire on W. Foster Street had a turn out time of 2.4 minutes from Station 40 because the firefighters were meeting at the station at the time the call was dispatched. Station 41's turnout time for the same incident was 5.4 minutes.

Two of the guests who attended the meetings consistently questioned the use of our PoC firefighters and that perhaps having increased numbers of them would improve response times. It was discussed and the committee's consensus was that the issue was greater than simply the number of individuals who could respond, it was their *availability* to respond. The current lifestyles of most of our citizens and firefighters have them extremely busy with family and work. It is expected that the fire department will be the third priority for the membership and that is the root of the issue. The current and possibly future PoC firefighters would not be readily available during the daytime hours because of family and employment commitments. The AdHoc Committee during the 2007 and this session had frequent discussions related to the PoC

firefighters and how they would contribute to the future of the fire department delivery of services. Discussions on how to maintain a strong PoC firefighting force was a primary focus of Committee discussions throughout.

The committee discussed the current state of affairs with the State limiting the local municipality's ability to increase their levy above 2% for the coming year. Municipalities would have to undertake a levy override in the form of a referendum to be able to increase levy limits. Grand Chute recently did that and their process was reviewed. Chief Kiesow informed the committee that the timing for this process is critical because municipalities can only do such a referendum on even years fall election. If the committee would make a recommendation to the Board for any action that would require a levy override, the entire process would have to be completed by the middle of September to ensure a November ballot.

Committee Recommendation

A recommendation from the committee will be that in order to meet the goal of a response time of five minutes or less 90% of the time with four personnel, the Town should hire eleven (11) firefighters to be used in a full-time capacity with the fire department administration determining the best schedule to accomplish the goal. The Committee took a vote and the recommendation passed 8-0.

The following meeting was focused on what it would take to accomplish the tasks associated with getting the information to the Board and, if they accepted the recommendation, get the same information out to the public so that they would be well informed in time for the referendum on the November ballot.

Should the Board allow a referendum to override the levy for the fire department staffing, the committee discussed strategies for promoting the referendum. These included:

- Flyers/brochures; public events, watch groups, PTA, parties, community center, businesses
- Speaker presentations
- Radio stations (WTBY)
- Newspaper letter campaign
- Articles in *The Bridge*
- Informative door drops
- Grassroot recruitment
- Town and fire department websites
- Town survey
- Public information meetings (canned presentation)
- News/kickoff – press release
- Flyer/information in utility bills
- Yard signs
- Fundraising (Treasurer must be assigned)
- Apartment building newsletters

- Police Liaison Officer (crime watch committees)

The committee will be meeting with the Board on Thursday, August 21 to make a presentation of the committee's recommendation. If the Board agrees to the recommendation, the Committee, members of the Fire Department and other citizens in support of this recommendation will need to begin a strong promotion campaign to ensure its success.

Attachment A

Definitions used throughout the Committee Discussions

- Average Response Time (ART) – response times (see below) calculated by total calls into total times.
- Course of Action (CoA) – A means available by which objectives may be obtained.
- Critical Calls for Service – those calls which include structure fire, rescue calls involving first responders and firefighters and first responder calls.
- False Alarms – fire alarm system activates due to malfunction, intentional activation when no fire, etc.
- First Responder – calls for fire department staff who are trained in emergency medical skills.
- Full-time Firefighters (FTF) – employees of the fire department working a full-time work schedule.
- Good Intent Call – controlled burn, cancelled after dispatch.
- Other fire calls – cooking fires contained, vegetation, vehicle fires
- Other Rescue – lock-out, water or ice rescue
- Paid-on-Call Firefighters (PoC) – firefighters that are considered part-time employees of the town.
- Response Time – time from dispatch to arrival on scene
- Rescue Calls – those calls where both firefighters and First Responders are needed, i.e., MVC, person trapped, etc.
- Service Call – smoke odor, person in distress, unauthorized burning.
- Staffed Hours – 08:00-16:30
- Structure – any building where someone lives, works or plays.
- Turnout Time – time from dispatch to when first apparatus leaves station.

Attachment B

Town Survey Questions

- What services do you believe the TMFD provides to the community:
 1. Fire protection (fire fighting)
 2. Emergency medical services (ambulance support)
 3. Fire prevention (inspections)
 4. Public education services

- Are firefighters staffing the stations 24 hours per day?
 1. Yes
 2. No

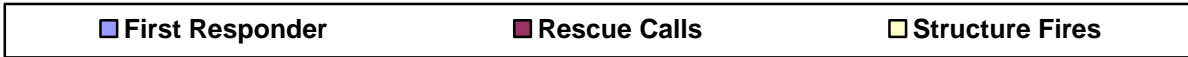
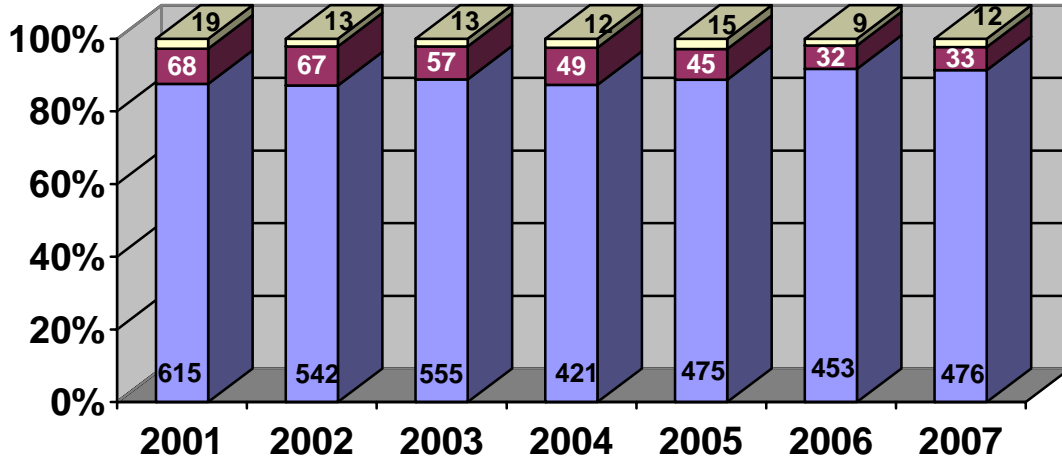
- What do you think is an acceptable time from when you call 911 for the fire department to arrive at your emergency?
 1. 3-4 min
 2. 5-7 min
 3. 8-10 min
 4. 11-13 min

- For the Fire Department to provide better service, would you be willing to pay additional property taxes?
 1. Yes
 2. No

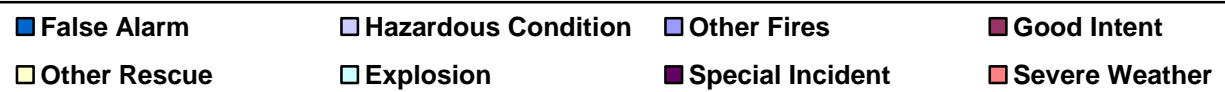
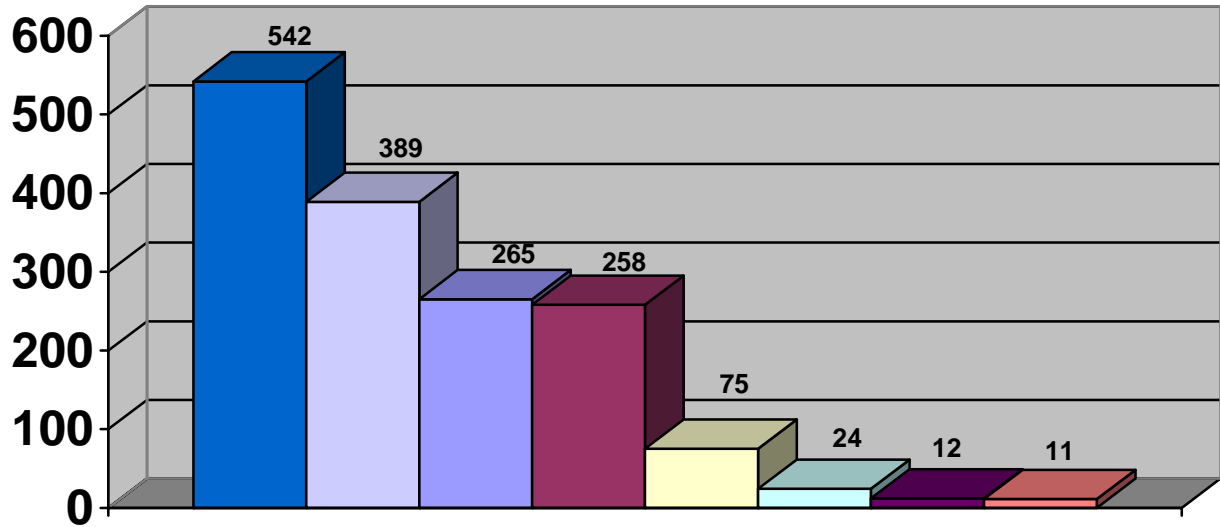
Attachment C

Fire Department Statistics

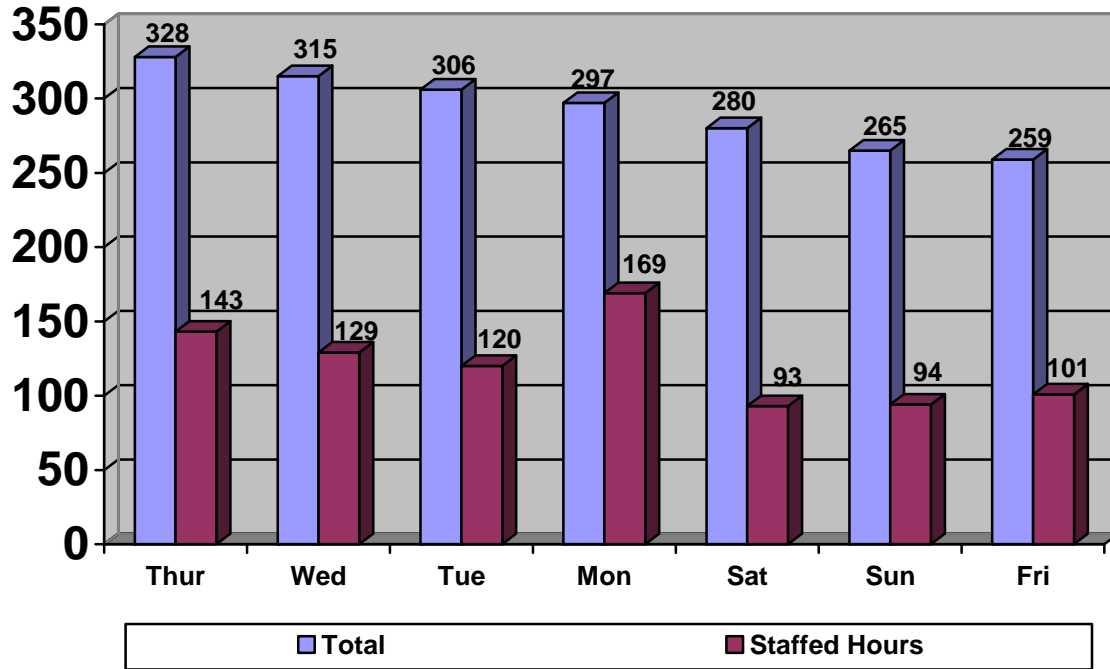
Critical Calls for Service



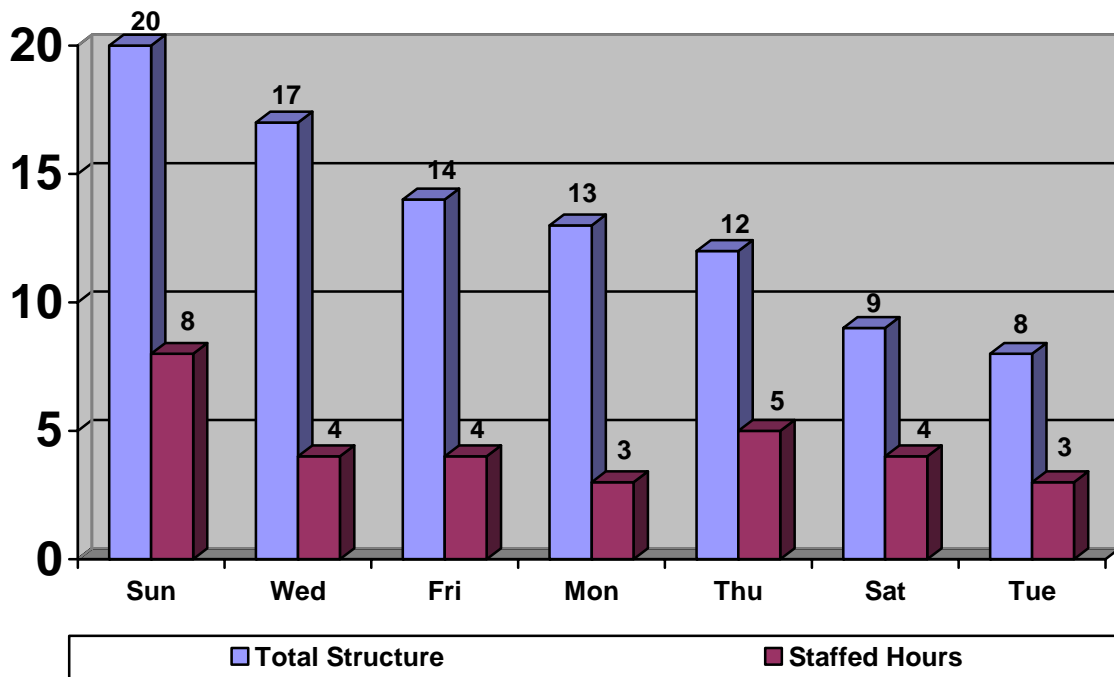
Other Calls by Category (2001-2007)



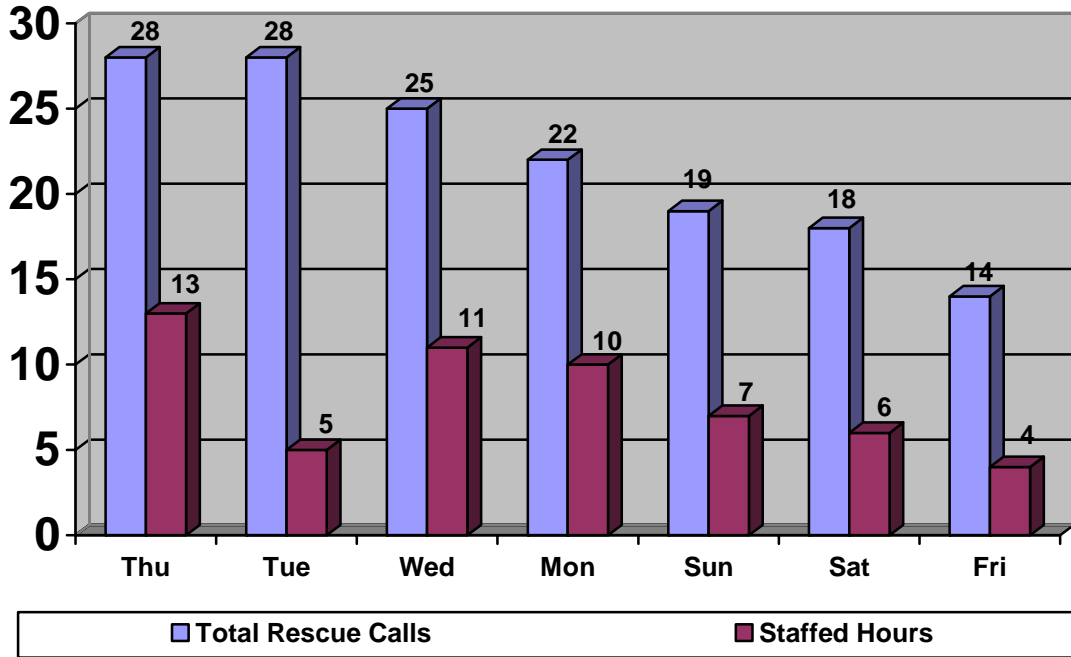
Calls for Service/Day of Week (2001-2007)



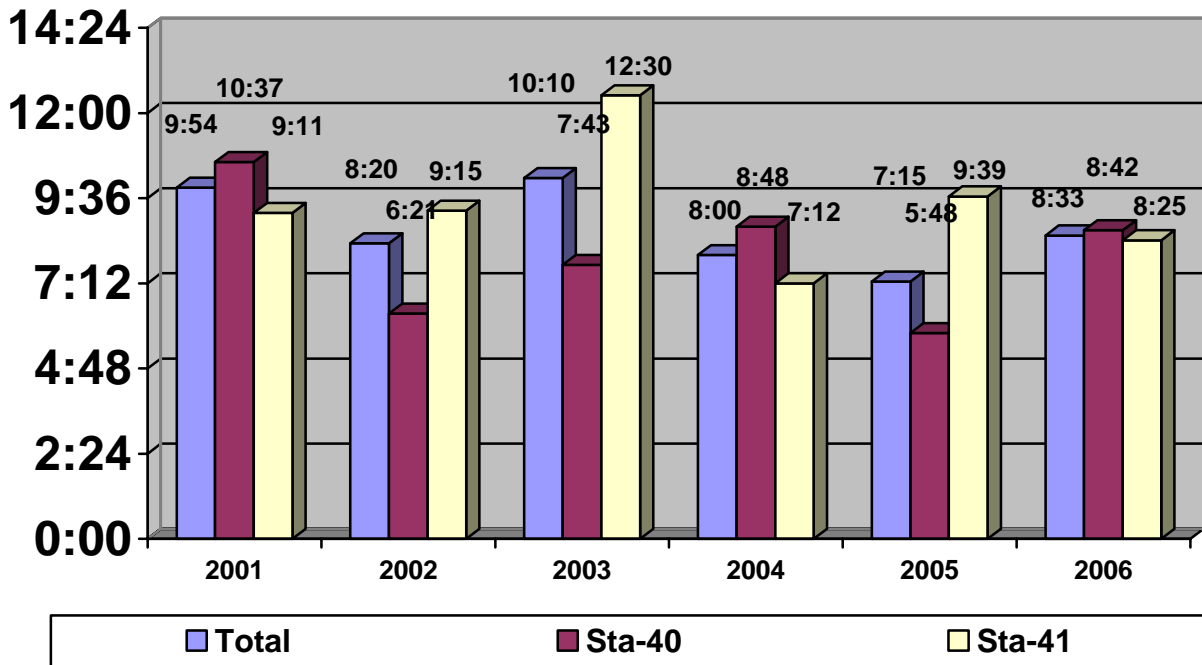
Structure Fires/Day of Week (2001-2007)



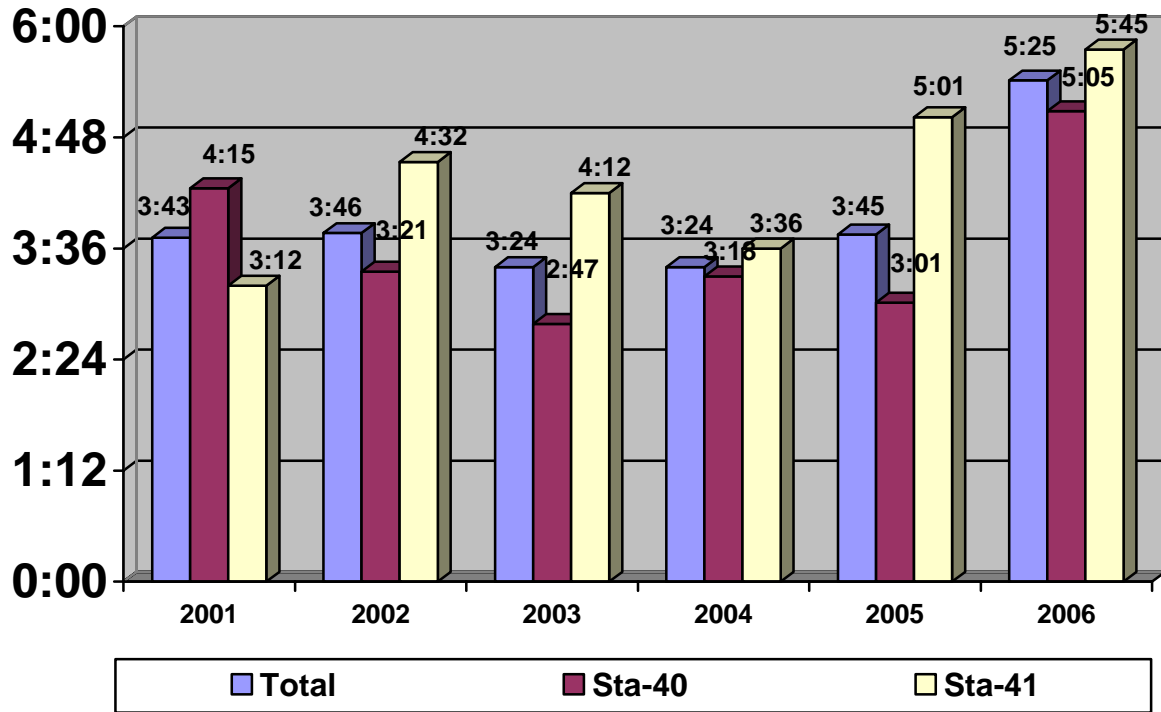
Rescue Calls/Day of Week (2001-2007)



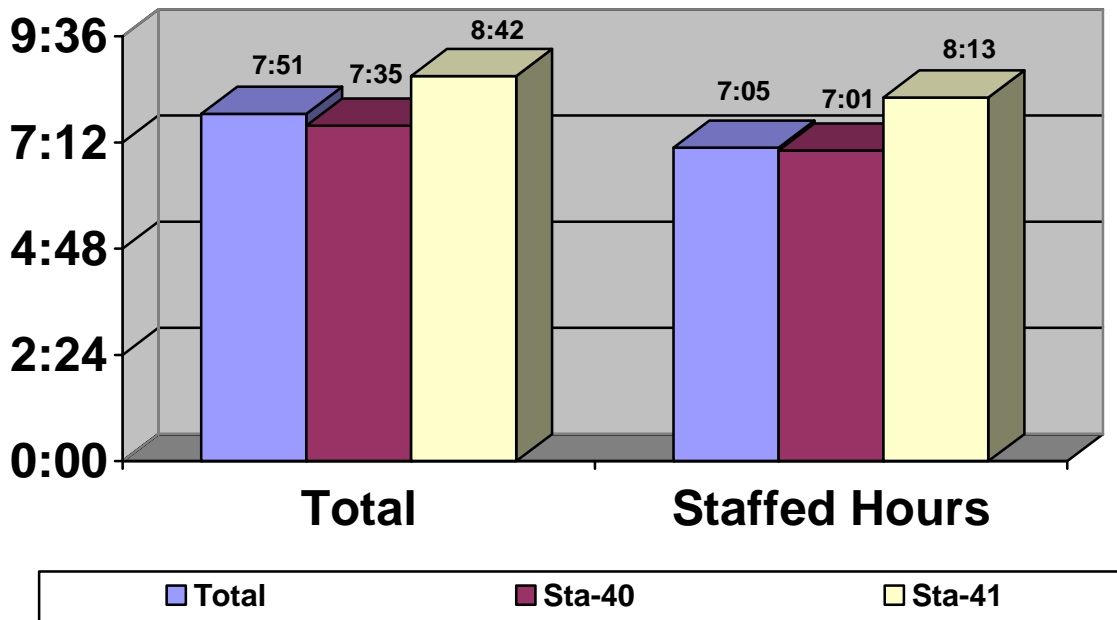
Average Response Times - Serious Incidents



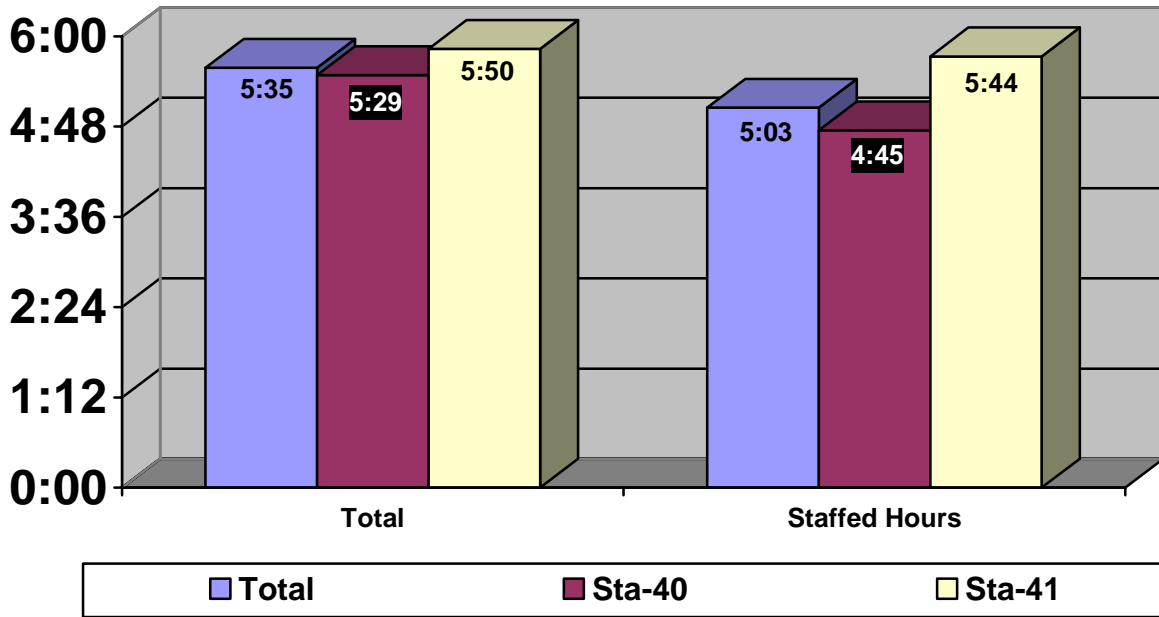
Average Response Times - First Responder



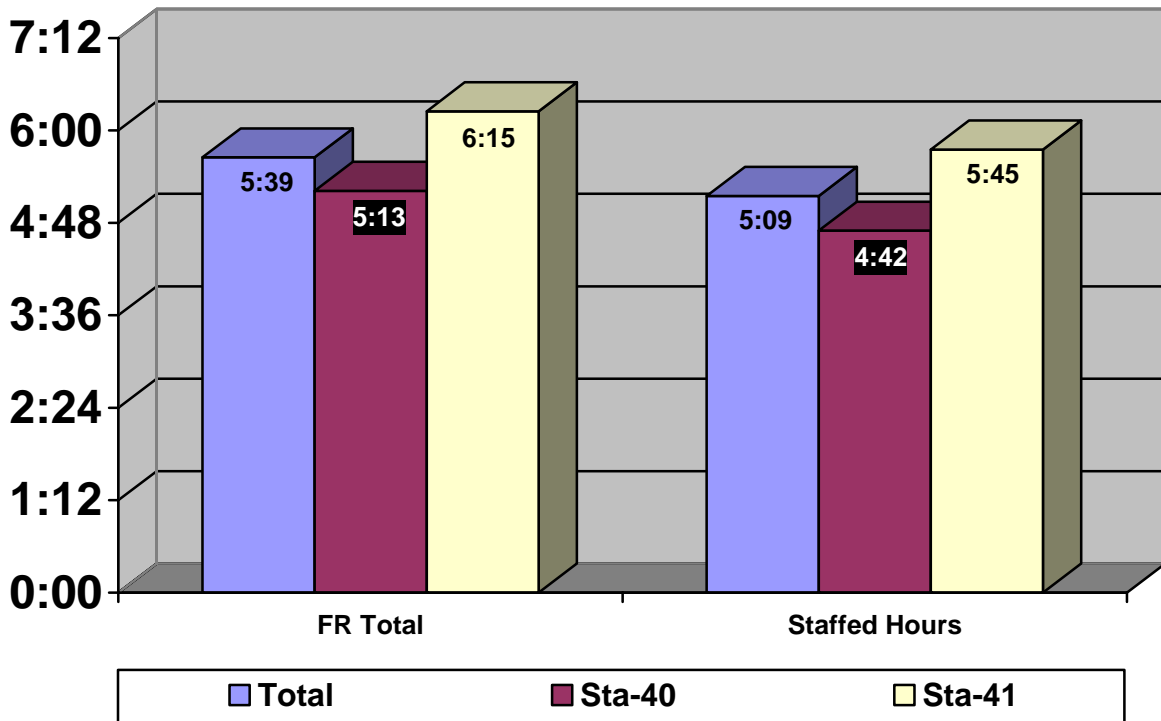
Average Response Times - Structure Fires (2001-2007)



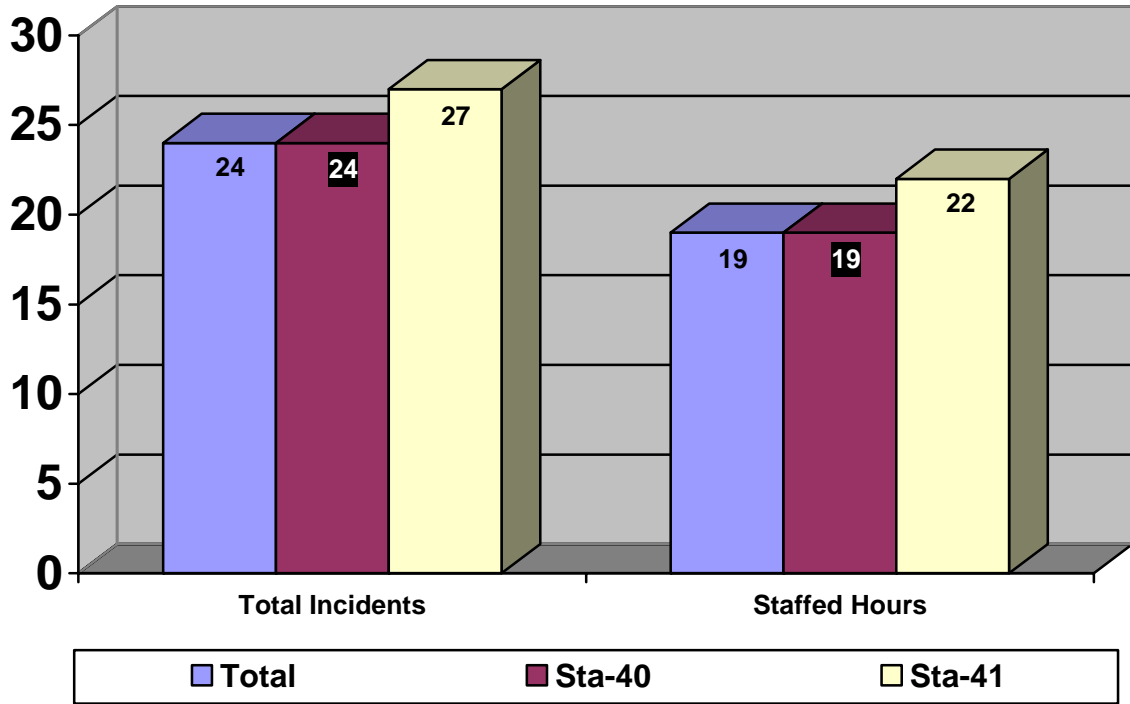
Average Response Times - Rescue Calls (2001-2007)



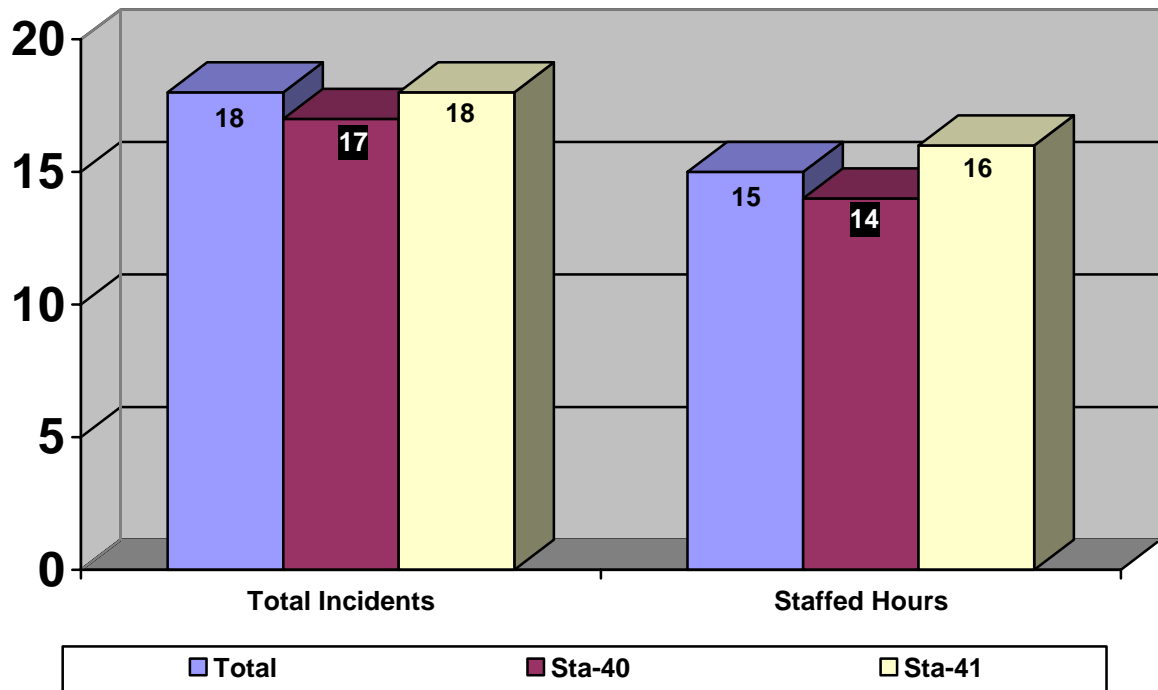
Average Response Times-First Responder (2001-2007)



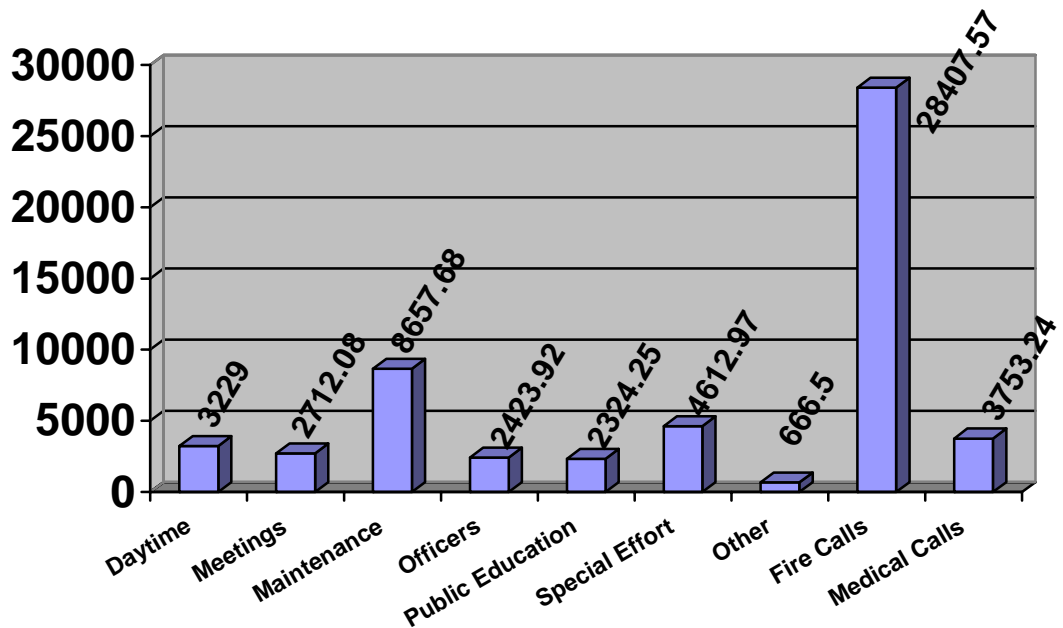
Average FF Response-Structure Fires



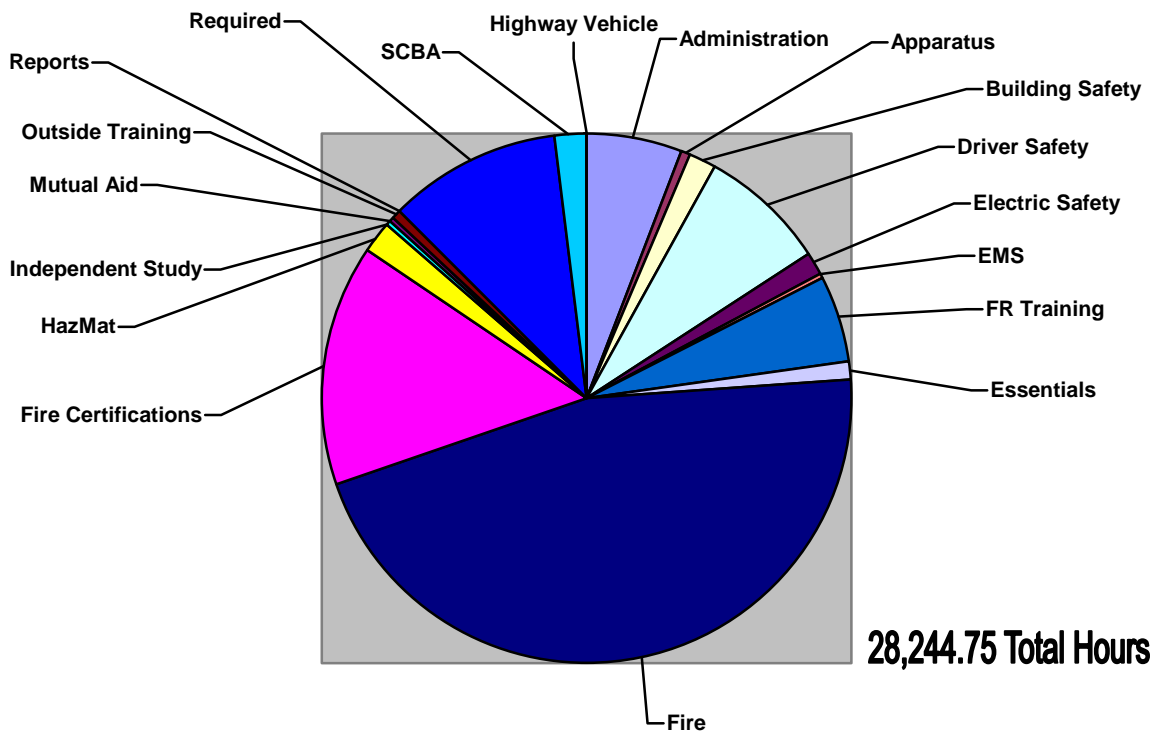
Average Firefighter Response-Rescue Calls



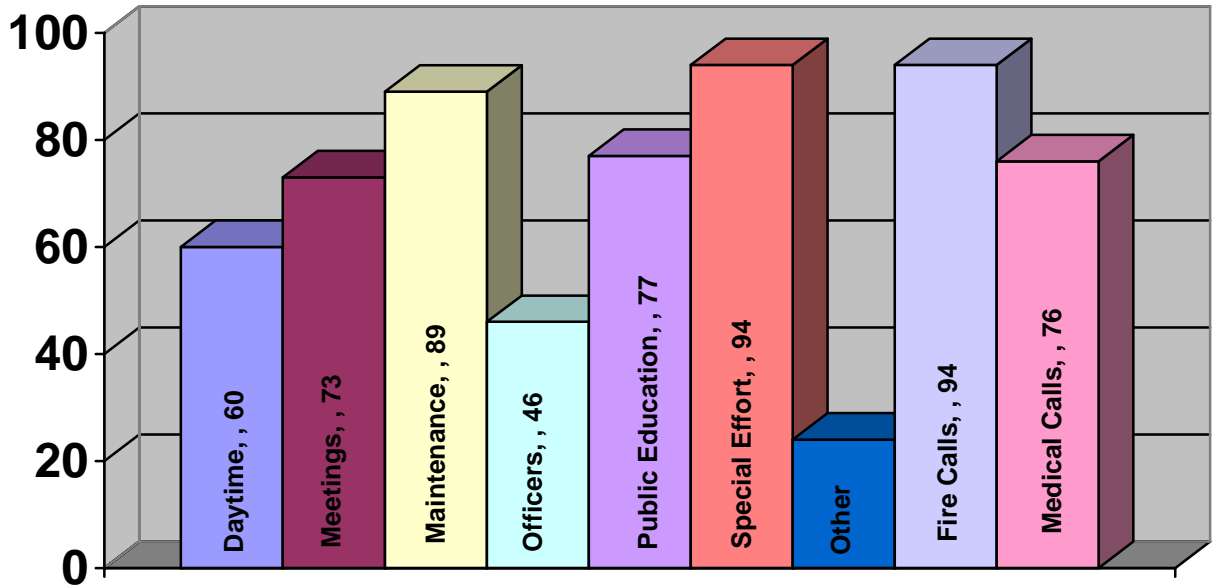
PoC Hours by Category (2001-2007)



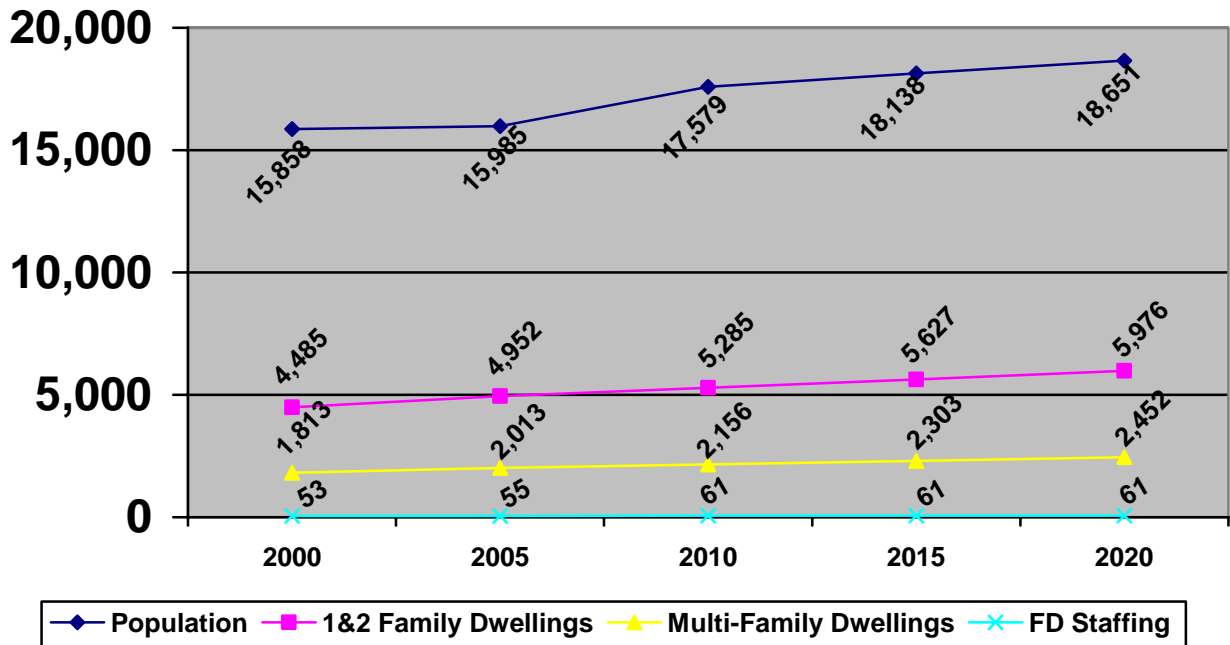
PoC Training Hours (2001-2007)



PoC Firefighters Contributing to Hours (2001-2007)



Projections



Attachment D

Firefighter Availability

June, 2008

| 08:00-16:00 | | 16:00-24:00 | | 24:00-08:00 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------|--------|---|-----------|-------------|--------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 3 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 7 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 5 |
| 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 6 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 2 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 6 | 1 | 4 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 7 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 2 |
| 29 | 30 | Assuming 2 FTF per day, there are 96-hrs/day for PoC to cover = | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 5 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 4 | 26.88/PoC per week assuming 50 PoC. | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

With this process there were comments from the PoC that a different set of hours may have made a difference in whether they would have been available to sign up for a time slot. The results showed that 25 firefighters signed the sheets at both stations.

Attachment E

Staffing Options Memorandum

Memorandum

Date: 8/5/2008
To: Keith Kiesow, Fire Chief
From: Susan Phillips, Deputy Fire Chief
RE: Staffing Options

Per your request, I have researched possible staffing options for TMFD. I also discussed with Chief Bantes the staffing proposal for GCFD as they bring their staff on board. Three considerations were made for this project:

1. Staff both stations on a 24-hours basis
2. Incorporation of the PoC firefighters in the staffing mix.
3. Keep anticipated FSLA overtime to a minimum

Option 1

2-stations, 12-hour duty, 2-shifts (A & B)

With this staffing option, there would be no FSLA overtime impact as the firefighters would be working beneath the 28-day threshold for overtime pay. The fulltime firefighters (FTF) would work 12-hour shifts, 3 days on and 3 days off. There would be three FTF and one paid-on-call (PoC) firefighter to complete a shift of four. The 6p-6a shift would be accomplished by 4 PoC firefighters at each station. This option would require that each PoC (based on 50 firefighters) would need to work 16.8 hours per week.

Option 2

2-stations, 24-hour duty, 4-shifts (A, B, C & D)

With this staffing option, there would be no FSLA overtime impact as the firefighters would be working beneath the 28-day threshold for overtime pay. The FTF would work 24-hour shifts, 1-on, 1-off, 1-on, 5-off. There would be three FTF and one PoC firefighter to complete a shift of four at Station 40 and four PoC at Station 41. This option would require that each PoC would need to work 16.8 hours per week.

Option 3

2-stations, 24-hour duty, 3-shifts (A, B & C)

With this staffing option, there would be an approximate FSLA overtime impact of \$42,000/year. The FTF would be working a "California" shift which is 1-on, 1-off, 1-on, 1-off, 1-on, 4-off. There would be 3-FTF and 1-PoC at Station 40 and 1-FTF and 3-PoC at Station 41. With this option the PoC would work 13.4 hours per week.

Option 4

2-stations, 24-hour duty, 3-shifts (A, B & C)

With this staffing option, there would be an approximate FSLA overtime impact of \$42,000/yr. The FTF would be working a "traditional" shift which is 1-on, 2-off. There would be 3-FTF and 1-PoC at Station 40 and 1-FTF and 3-PoC at Station 41. With this option the PoC would work 13.4 hours per week.

With each option, all firefighters would be eligible for State retirement program and the Town would have to offer medical insurance benefits as annual totals would exceed 600-hours. This is only the staffing hours; we would still incur additional hours with major incidents. With the later two options, I put FTF:PoC ration of 3:1 but we could easily adapt that to 2:2 but the end outcome would be the same.

GCFD is using a combination of Option 1 and 3 for their staffing solution.

If you have any questions, please let me know.