

2014

# Westbrook Fire-Rescue Department Annual Report

Andrew Turcotte

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# Westbrook Fire-Rescue Department Annual Report



ANDREW TURCOTTE

CHIEF OF DEPARTMENT

## Table of Contents

Mission Statement .....	4
Executive Summary.....	4
Organizational ChartStatistical Breakdown .....	5
Call Response by Apparatus.....	6
Mutual Aid Responses.....	7
Mutual Aid Given .....	7
Calls for Service .....	8
Structure Fires.....	9
Emergency Medical Services.....	9
Fire Engine Response .....	10
Hazardous Material Program .....	10
Fire Prevention and Education.....	11
Fire Investigation.....	13
Special Hazards Division.....	13
Training and Resource Development.....	13
Fire Department Intern and Ride-Along Programs .....	15
Tips .....	15
Closing Remarks .....	16
Frequently Asked Questions .....	16



## ***Westbrook Fire Rescue Department***

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Telephone: (207) 854-0654 Fax: (207) 854-0657

Chief Andrew Turcotte

Deputy Chief Steve Sloan



Mr. Jerre Bryant, City Manager  
City of Westbrook  
2 York Street  
Westbrook, ME 04092

Mr. Bryant,

It is my honor as the Fire Chief of Westbrook Fire Rescue Department to present the following summary of our activities for the year 2014. The Department strives to meet the needs of the community through the committed efforts of 70 plus dedicated staff members. These dedicated individuals have chosen a career path centered on helping people, in both emergency and non-emergency situations. We deliver our service to the community out of two fire stations with eight front line pieces of apparatus - three fire engines, one quint, and three ambulances.

We are dedicated to providing our services to the community in the most cost effective manner possible, utilizing some of the most up-to-date equipment and training methods available today. As budgets have become tighter and staffing levels have decreased, we have continued a strong emphasis on fire prevention education and safety measures aimed at reducing the number of fires and hazardous situations in our city. The Department provides both emergency medical transport and first responder services, with over 25 highly trained paramedics currently on staff.

Population, economic, and healthcare changes will demand that the fire and emergency services of the future adopt Emergency Medical Services as a primary mission. Innovation in the fire service is essential to meeting the increased demand for service as well as the expectations of the public for additional services in the future.

Our Firefighter/Paramedics responded to 3,561 calls for service in 2014, a record number of incidents for our department. As in previous years, the majority of our calls for service are EMS related (approx. 75%), and the remainder are fire related calls (25%). The demand for Fire/EMS services from our community is continually growing. We are meeting these demands through progressive training, state-of-the-art equipment, and advances in technology in the fire service; while fostering regional collaborations with other local fire departments to enhance our overall service delivery.

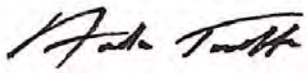
Our department took the position that it's not "business as usual" for the fire service. In doing so, our department did an internal review of our entire operational platform for efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery. Following our review, we instituted EMS patient transport and cost recovery along with the vision to upgrade our front line Fire Engine and Ladder Truck to the status of Advanced Life Support (ALS). This enhancement would ensure that all of our front line Fire Engines and Ladder Truck would be staffed with ALS licensed Firefighter/Paramedics, equipped to provide ALS

services, and licensed by the State of Maine to provide ALS just as our Rescue Units. What this means to our community is that they have the highest level of Fire based EMS service delivery available in their time of need.

Our department will continue to strive to provide the necessary emergency services that the community demands within the parameters of all the “Best Practices” our industry has to offer. Additionally, our department will continue to focus on Safety, Training, and Customer Service as our core values in steering our organization forward.

With the support of the citizens, Mayor, City Council, our City administrator and his staff, as well as the other City departments and supporting governmental agencies, we continue to be an exemplary organization that prides itself on being proactive, efficient, and exceptionally effective in our delivery of services. I would also like to thank all of the men and women of this fine organization for all of your dedication and continued commitment to excellence.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Andrew R. Turcotte". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'A'.

Andrew R. Turcotte

Fire Chief

## Mission Statement

*It is the mission of the Westbrook Fire Rescue Department to be the leading force in the provision of fire and rescue services through our commitment to professionalism, superior training, advanced skill development and superior service.*

## Executive Summary

2014 was a year of both growth and transition for the department. During the past year department members responded to all nature of emergency calls for service all the while maintaining a rigorous training schedule. Members responded to 3,561 calls of which 2,644 were for medical emergencies.

During this period the department hired four additional full time members in an effort to extend a greater level of service to the citizens of the City of Westbrook. The department also experienced a transition of leadership with the departure of Public Safety Director Michael Pardue and the hiring and later promotion of Deputy Chief Andrew Turcotte to the position of Fire Chief. During the leadership reorganization the process was also initiated to fill the now vacant Deputy Fire Chief position.

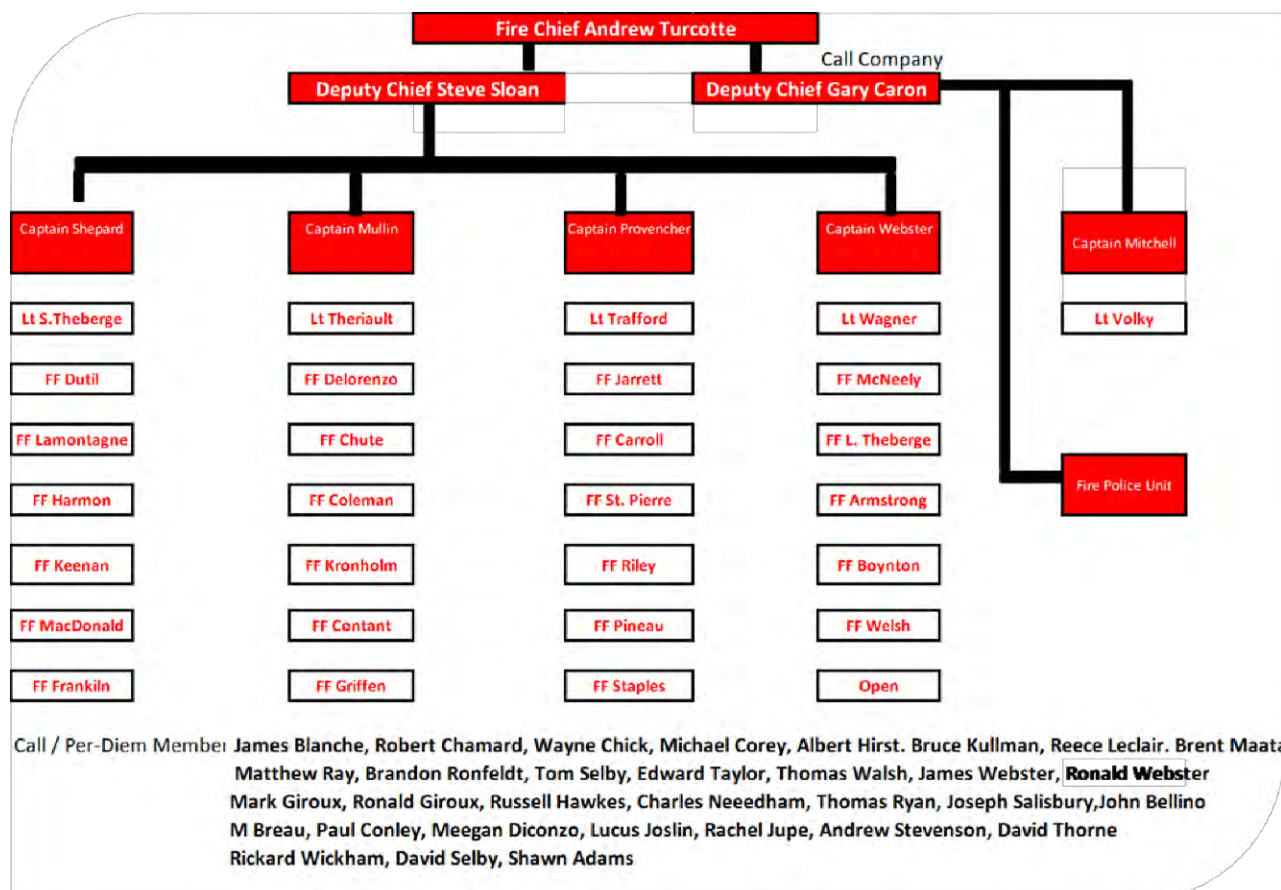
2014 was a year of long range planning with updates to both the vehicle fleet and fire department facilities. Design and construction was initiated for a new fire engine to serve as Engine 3, stationed at the Prides Corner firehouse located on Bridgton Road. This apparatus will be delivered and placed in service in the spring of 2015. Refurbishment plans were approved for Engine 2, this fire engine will be taken out of service for refurbishment in the spring of 2015. Planning for ongoing fleet maintenance and replacement of apparatus was initiated with a focus on the future strategic needs of the department. This will allow the department to extend the service life of these vehicles reducing the financial impact on the City.

Facilities upgrades were planned and approved for the Prides Corner Fire House. The building dates back over forty years and is reaching the end of its service life. During 2014 the City Council approved funding for renovations to stabilize the building in the hopes of extending its service life. Planning must be started for a replacement facility to be built within ten years. The renovations were started at the end of 2014 and will continue into 2015.

A cosmetic renovation of the Public Safety Building was started in 2014 at a very low cost to the City. Interior repainting started in the latter half of the year and will be completed early in 2015. The painting labor was provided by an inmate work crew from the Cumberland County Jail. The cost to the City was for paint and materials only.

During the year the Call Company division of the Fire and Rescue Department experienced an increase in its membership. The additional Call division members will be involved in ongoing department training over the coming year and will serve as an additional resource to the department when called upon.

## Organizational Chart



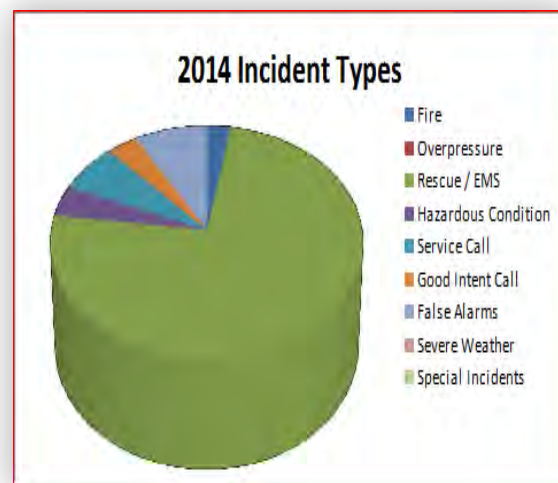


## Statistical Breakdown

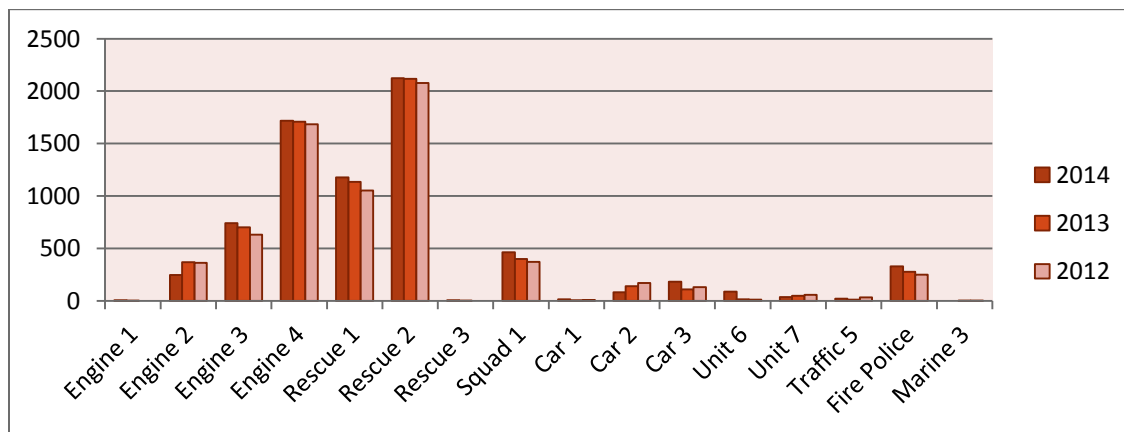
Westbrook Fire Rescue responds to a variety of calls for service. Examples range from structure fires and medical emergencies to citizens locked out of their homes or trapped in an elevator.

Call volume for the department has been steady with an increase consistently noted year after year through 2014. We expect this trend to continue and must adjust our staffing accordingly.

	2014	2013	2012
Fire	98	109	96
Overpressure	0	3	0
Rescue / EMS	2644	2648	2686
Hazardous Condition	154	115	126
Service Call	246	234	237
Good Intent Call	124	129	132
False Alarms	294	260	213
Severe Weather	0	2	3
Special Incidents	1	0	2
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>3561</b>	<b>3500</b>	<b>3495</b>



## Call Response by Apparatus



As you can see the vast majority of our calls are for Emergency Medical Services

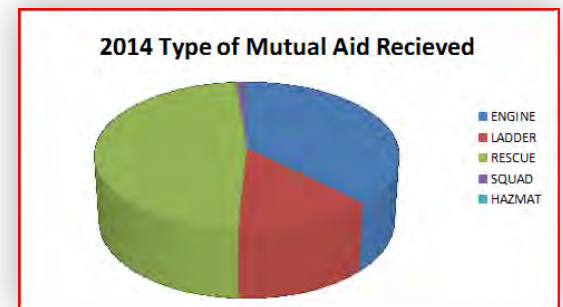
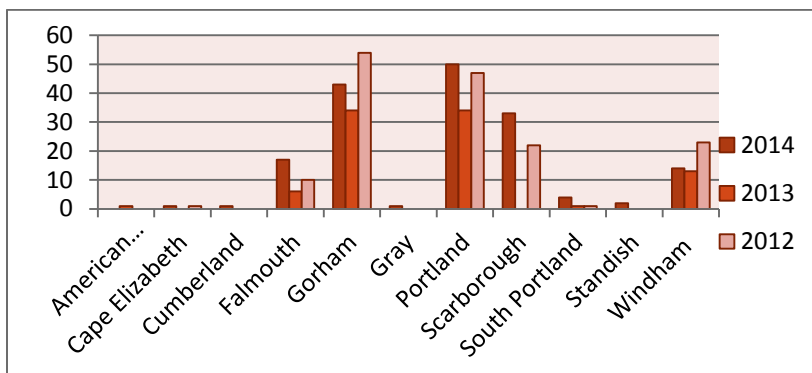
	2014	2013	2012
<b>Total Calls</b>	<b>3561</b>	<b>3500</b>	<b>3495</b>
<b>EMS Calls</b>	<b>2526</b>	<b>2494</b>	<b>2525</b>
<b>Fire Calls</b>	<b>1035</b>	<b>1006</b>	<b>970</b>



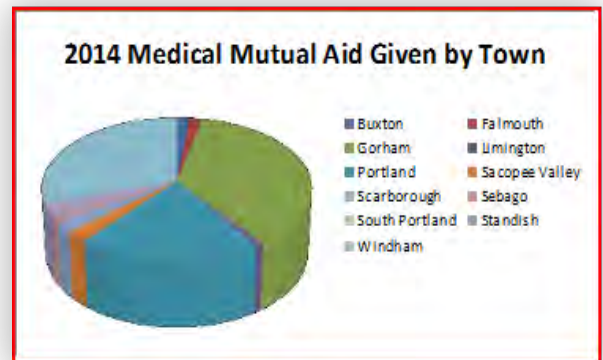
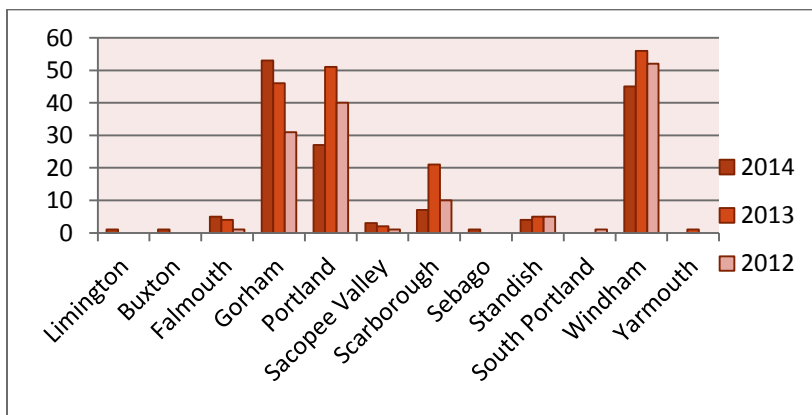
## Mutual Aid Responses

Mutual aid agreements exist between the City of Westbrook and the neighboring cities and towns. These reciprocal agreements help augment the departments emergency response capabilities; in effect, we borrow resources on an as needed basis. These statistics serve as a long term planning guide for the department; they help the chief officers formulate strategic changes in the department as the needs of the city change.

The following is a breakdown of mutual aid received over the past year with prior years listed for reference.



## Mutual Aid Given



Medical mutual aid is delivered in the form of Westbrook Fire Rescue ambulances responding to neighboring communities as well as Fire department paramedics intercepting ambulances from other communities. In the case of an intercept, an out of town unit that is staffed at an EMT or Advanced EMT level is transporting a patient that requires a higher level of care that only a Paramedic can administer. An ambulance from the department meets up with the out of town ambulance and a paramedic from the department boards the other ambulance and assumes patient care. This system assures that regardless of the staffing level of more rural services the highest level of care is administered to patients in emergency situations.

	2014	2013	2012
Engine 1	6	4	0
Engine 2	247	368	362
Engine 3	740	702	631
Engine 4	1716	1709	1684
Rescue 1	1179	1136	1053
Rescue 2	2123	2117	2077
Rescue 3	5	2	0
Squad 1	463	399	372
Car 1	14	6	8
Car 2	81	140	172
Car 3	184	111	132
Unit 6	88	14	12
Unit 7	35	49	57
Traffic 5	21	11	34
Fire Police	329	279	251
Marine 3	0	2	2

	2014			
	District 1	District 2	District 3	N/A
Engine 1	2	3	1	0
Engine 2	128	89	29	1
Engine 3	222	208	309	1
Engine 4	726	918	69	1
Rescue 1	402	368	405	3
Rescue 2	991	1060	70	1
Rescue 3	4	1	0	0
Squad 1	201	191	70	0
Car 1	6	5	3	0
Car 2	40	28	13	0
Car 3	77	80	27	0
Unit 6	39	40	9	0
Unit 7	18	13	4	0
Traffic 5	8	6	7	0
Fire Police	142	117	47	0
Marine 3	0	0	0	0

### Calls for Service

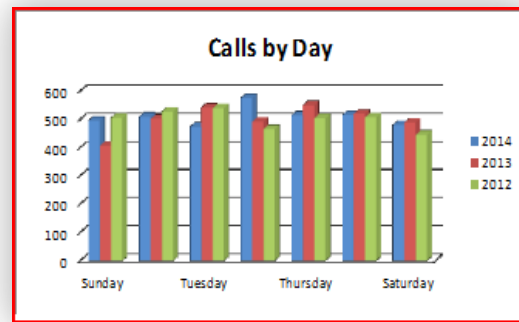
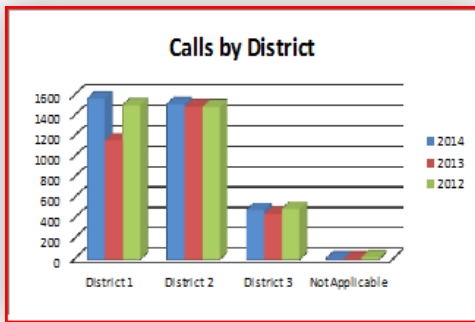
The department has three response districts within the City. These dictate which apparatus responses to the different calls.

Westbrook Fire Rescue operates a variety of apparatus that are used to respond to emergencies. The Following apparatus are routinely staffed by full time members: Engine 4 – Engine 3 – Rescue 2 – Rescue 1. The department call company members staff Engine 2 and Squad 1 on an as needed basis. Engine 1 and Rescue 3

serve as back up apparatus that are used when primary units are out of service for maintenance.

The following tables show apparatus response numbers relating to the geographical location in the city. District 1 is centered on the Presumpscot River and extends east to the city border with Portland. District 2 continues from the Presumpscot River westward toward the city border with Windham. District 3 covers the Prides Corner section of the city along the Bridgton Road corridor.

	2014			
	District 1	District 2	District 3	N/A
Engine 1	1	0	0	0
Engine 2	0	4	0	0
Engine 3	43	46	176	0
Engine 4	392	602	8	1



## Structure Fires

Over the last year the department has responded to the report of a building fire 98 times. These calls require significant manpower and require the assistance of our mutual aid partners in order to provide effective fire suppression activities. Although these calls only make up a small portion of our call volume, they are the highest risk call that we face. These low frequency/high hazard calls cause numerous injuries to the employee and to the public.

The value of the property at risk in these fires totaled over 6 million dollars, however we were able to limit the damage to just under a million dollars. If it were not for the quick response and training of our employees that amount could have been significantly higher.



## Emergency Medical Services

The department operates two fully staffed Fire Department ambulances, Rescue 1 and Rescue 2. These rescues are staffed primarily by firefighter paramedics and firefighter EMTs. Rescue 2 is stationed at fire headquarters located at the Westbrook Public Safety Building. Rescue 2 has a primary response zone of District 1 and District 2. Rescue 2 covers mutual aid responses to the Town of Gorham, Town of Windham, and the City of Portland. Rescue 1 is stationed at the Prides Corner Fire station located on Bridgton road. Rescue 1 has a primary response zone of District 3 and covers mutual aid

responses to the Town of Windham, Town of Falmouth, and the City of Portland. Each rescue is responsible for city wide coverage when the other unit is out on an emergency response. When both city operated rescues are on emergency calls and further calls for service arise mutual aid responses are requested from neighboring towns and cities.

### Fire Engine Response

Westbrook Fire Rescue operates four fire engines, all of which are equipped with emergency medical equipment. Engine 4 and Engine 3 are staffed at all times with staff that are cross trained as Paramedics and EMTs. Serious medical emergencies often require additional trained staff beyond the crew that is on the rescue. In these cases a staffed engine would be dispatched along with the rescue to mitigate the call. The following is a breakdown of those responses.

### Engine Responses to Medical Emergencies

Often staffed fire engines are dispatched to respond with fire department ambulances on serious medical emergencies. The dispatch determination is made according to the state wide standard emergency medical dispatch (EMD) protocol and policies set by the department. Many times serious medical emergencies require more than just the two responding personnel on a standard fire department ambulance. Situations such as heart attacks and profound breathing difficulties require four or more personnel to mitigate.

Situations such as sudden cardiac arrest often require even more personnel. When sufficient staff responds on serious emergency medical calls the results can be dramatic and lives are saved because of it.

	2014	2013	2012	2011	2010*	2009
Engine 1	1	1	0	1	0	
Engine 2	4	9	12	9	16	
Engine 3	265	265	248	179	264	:
Engine 4	1003	993	1025	1065	1002	:

\* information was imported from the old reporting program

### Hazardous Material Program

Nearly 30 years ago the Westbrook Fire Rescue Department joined in a collaborative effort with the neighboring communities of Gorham and Windham to form the



Presumpscot Valley HazMat Team. It was the first of its kind in Cumberland County. Since that time the group has expanded to include the Towns of Scarborough, Standish and Gray.

Through our combined efforts with resources, equipment and personnel we are able to meet the needs of our various communities in a cost effective way that would not be possible without this collaboration. Our team is funded by a combination of local, county, and state homeland security funding and we have responded to calls all over Cumberland County. This regional approach to hazardous materials response has proven to be not only extremely cost effective, but also very successful.



Our team conducts monthly trainings that cover a variety of subject areas and also tours of some of the higher at risk facilities. In addition to these trainings, the team conducts biannual drills and also full scale exercises. We train with other teams in the area, including the Portland and South Portland RRT's, as well as the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) and the National Guard's 11<sup>th</sup> WMD Civil Support Team (CST).

There are several major hazardous materials transportation corridors that transect or pass near Westbrook. They include the Pan Am railway, the Maine Turnpike and Routes 302 and 25 with heavy truck traffic. Two major natural gas pipelines also pass through our response area. Additionally the City of Westbrook is home to numerous fixed facilities that use or handle dangerous chemicals, some of which have been classified as EHS (Extremely Hazardous Substance) Facilities.

Like many communities, Westbrook has a significant potential to experience these types of incidents. The citizens of Westbrook should rest assured that we are, in conjunction with the PVHMT RRT, well trained and prepared to respond should an incident occur.

## Fire Prevention and Education

In an effort to reduce the loss of life, injury, and property in the City of Westbrook, the Westbrook Fire & Rescue Department is dedicated to providing education to the public as part of our mission.

As the hazards presented to the public change, so will the program offerings to the public. It is the department's desire and intent to facilitate current and ongoing education and training to our members so they may better educate the public about the hazards they may face and the best ways to avoid them.





While it is a core mission of the Westbrook Fire Rescue Department to respond and mitigate incidents in the City of Westbrook, it is also the department's mission to reduce the number and severity of those incidents by proper code development and enforcement, effective, and efficient response, and ongoing public education. It is through this continuous and comprehensive program of education that the department maintains a culture of safety in the community.



This general program area of public education is vital to the success of the fire department mission. Many time throughout the year we have the privilege to interact with our community and provide fire safety and education information.

***The following are some of the services that the Department offers:***

Crews currently conduct Safety Surveys throughout the month to ensure the safety of our citizens. The Westbrook Fire Rescue Department inspects all businesses and all residential facilities that are capable of housing three families or more for potential fire violations and general safety concerns. These safety surveys are carried out primarily by line firefighters as a normal part of their annual duties. Due to these surveys and our inspection process, there has been an increased awareness of violations and safety issues by property owners in Westbrook and numerous corrections made for existing violations. Value added components to these inspections are better relationships with business owners in general and better awareness and familiarity for firefighters with buildings in the City of Westbrook. Once crews identify a violation or concern, it is then forwarded to our fire inspector for follow up.

Another public safety activity that the department participates in is the installing of smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors in residences that may have no working detectors or detectors that have passed their service life. Smoke and CO Detectors are proven to save lives and make homes safer. These detectors were acquired through federal grant funding received by our surrounding communities and it is a privilege to be able to participate in this program.

## Fire Investigation

Fire investigations by the department are performed by a core group of trained personnel from within the fire and police departments. The department also utilizes investigators from the Office of the Maine State Fire Marshal for fires that involve fatalities, injuries, or in fires with criminal elements. This relationship utilizes the concept of shared resources to properly perform mandated investigations of fires for cause and origin as well as potential criminal investigation if necessary. A working relationship with the City of Westbrook Code Enforcement Office/Inspection Department is also a very important part of our investigation process that utilizes expertise and experience in other areas of building inspection to determine the cause of fires.



## Special Hazards Division

The department has conducted numerous trainings in order to meet the needs of our community. Currently we have individuals that are certified in Hazardous Material, Swift Water Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, High Angle Rescue, and Motor Vehicle Extrication. These certifications are in

addition to the standard certifications department members are required to maintain according to both state and federal regulations. Each of these specialty courses requires between 24 and 48 additional hours of training every year to maintain credentials.



## Training and Resource Development



The nature of the responsibilities of a fire department requires the continuous training of its personnel to assure the best possible chance of a positive outcome when critical incidents occur. This is especially important when such events do not occur very often; we have one chance to get things right. Training and preparation is tailored to create effectiveness, efficiency, and safety when the fire department



responds to incidents. Westbrook Fire Rescue conducts the training of its employees through many different programs using a variety of methodologies that are designed to best meet the needs of the department both fiscally and operationally. Because of the inherent dangers present in the job, many of the training areas are statutorily mandated for the protection of both the employee and the citizens we serve.



Due to restructuring of the Department a number of years ago, duties were redistributed to numerous personnel in an effort to maintain adequate training. These personnel also monitored compliance to ensure all mandatory training requirements were met. One of the ways Westbrook Fire Rescue works to maintain cost effective training is through the development and utilization of “in-house” instructors. These instructors are from both the line staff and administration of the fire department. These instructors hold certification through Maine Fire Training and Education, Maine EMS, or the Maine Technical College System and train in various areas including Emergency Medical Services, Technical Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, Swift Water Rescue, Firefighting, Incident Management, and Weapons of Mass Destruction. When no qualified instructor is available from within the department, the department will occasionally send an individual to train-the-trainer education for that topic, or have an outside instructor or subject matter expert brought into the department.

**The following is a list of the major training topics delivered in 2014:**

- Ice Rescue Training
- Thermal Imaging Camera Familiarization and Use
- New Hire Orientation and Training Academy (6 new hires in 2014)
- Confined Space Rescue Training
- Hazardous Materials Refresher Training
- Rapid Intervention Team Training
- Firefighter I and II Academy
- New EMS Equipment Familiarization Training
- CPR Recertification
- Advanced Cardiac Life Support Training

## Fire Department Intern and Ride-Along Programs

In 2014, the Westbrook Fire Rescue Department entered into mutually beneficial agreements with Southern Maine Community College (SMCC) to provide a site for firefighting students to serve in an intern capacity with the Westbrook Fire Rescue Department.

Individuals who wish to be considered for internship with the Westbrook Fire Department, must submit a resume' along with proof of successfully passing a medical evaluation which may include screening for illegal substances. Final decisions to allow an individual into the intern program lies with the Fire Chief.

Interns are fully functional firefighters that are able to assist at fires, participate in trainings, and do station work. They are not permitted to drive fire department vehicles or fill a full-time firefighter's position. This internship is considered part of their course work with the technical college so they are not compensated for their time with the department. They are considered additional personnel only and are under the day-to-day supervision of the Company Officer of the Unit to which they are assigned.

In similar agreements, the fire department continues to have a ride-along program for Emergency Medical Technician or paramedic students from Southern Maine Community College. These students are required to have a prescribed number of mentored hours and patient contacts as part of their coursework with the paramedic program. These students work with department preceptors to gain field experience and knowledge in their quest for paramedic licensure.

The benefit of these types of programs is great and varied. These programs allow the department to get first-hand exposure to potential employment candidates prior to a hiring process. The interaction with students in a mentoring role helps to strengthen our own staff by being current and up-to-date with what is being taught in the community colleges. These additional hands on the apparatus are very helpful in certain situations that require more manpower to be as efficient and effective as possible. This is also a great way to assure that well-trained cores of potential workers in the area are available to serve the community.

## Tips

Below are some tips as well as frequently asked questions and answers, hopefully you will find them useful and understand why the department operates like it does.

- Be sure your street address is clearly visible from the road; we can't help you if we can't find you.
- Make sure you have working smoke detectors on every floor of your home. Change the batteries when you change the clocks.
- For any outside fire (other than for cooking) you must obtain a State Burning Permit.
- Learn CPR, it is a proven fact that early CPR will improve chances of survival of a victim of sudden cardiac arrest.

### Closing Remarks

In closing I would like to remind the citizens of the City of Westbrook that we are always accepting applications for every aspect of our department, from fire police to interior firefighters. If you would like more information on how to give back to your fellow residents and community, please contact me at [aturcotte@westbrook.me.us](mailto:aturcotte@westbrook.me.us).

### Frequently Asked Questions

#### How many people work for the Westbrook Fire Department?

- 1) 1 Fire Chief
- 2) 1 Deputy Chief (career), 1 Call Company Deputy
- 3) 4 Fire Captains, 1 Call Company Captain
- 4) 4 Fire Lieutenants (career), 2 Call Company Lieutenants
- 5) 32 Full time employees
- 6) 20 Call company members

#### Why is WFRD goal of 3.5 min to 4 minute response time so critical?

The current staffing and apparatus placement allow us to maintain an average response time of 4.34 minutes. This is critical for many reasons. The following are examples where studies have shown:

- Infant/pediatrics who experience oxygen deprivation begin to suffer permanent brain damage at 4 minutes (choking, drowning, sudden cardiac arrest, etc).
- In just 2 minutes, a structure fire can become life threatening. In 5 minutes, a residence can become engulfed in flames. Fires double in size every 1-2 minutes, so response time is critical for search and rescue to take place.
- A 3.5 to 4 minute response time enables a responding fire department to limit fire damage to the room of origin, limiting excessive fire loss.

#### Why do firefighters work 24 hour shifts? Wouldn't that be more cost effective to work 8 hour shifts?

Actually, it is most economical for the city to have their firefighters work 24 hour shifts. Westbrook firefighters work an average of 42 hours per week. If staffed with 8 hour shift employees, it would require overtime for anything above 40 hours. There would need to be 10% more firefighters, or significant overtime, to provide the same daily staffing levels as is currently maintained.

In addition, this does not take into consideration the added overtime costs when firefighters respond to an incident near the end of their shift. They are duty-bound to stay late and complete the emergency incident, on overtime. With 8 hour shifts, there would be three times the opportunity for this to occur which would drastically affect overtime costs as well.

**Who determines which apparatus are needed for a determined call?**

The Westbrook Fire Rescue Department dispatch center is located in the public safety building. Many times the type of situation found upon arrival is very different from the situation portrayed to dispatch over the 911 phone call. People experiencing an emergency may be under stress at the moment and understandably may not always accurately describe their situation to dispatch. Units are dispatched according to information received by dispatch. Dispatch works to reasonably dispatch for the worst case scenario. This helps to prevent the firefighters from arriving at an emergency understaffed or underequipped. It is better for the incident commander to return staffing, apparatus and equipment back to the station than to realize more help was needed and not have it available on scene. Experience has taught the department that it is better to have too much help initially than not enough.

**Why do fire apparatus respond on medical runs with an ambulance?**

The Westbrook Fire Rescue Department ambulances are staffed with 2 EMS providers, including one Paramedic. The fire apparatus are staffed with 2 or more personnel, many of them paramedics. If the person calling 911 describes a situation that sounds like a serious medical emergency to the dispatcher, both an ambulance and a fire apparatus (first responder) are sent. The Westbrook firefighters are bringing the emergency room to you. In an emergency room at a hospital, there are multiple people helping a critically ill patient. Firefighters/Paramedics are no different, they also need to have multiple personnel on scene to adequately provide the highest level of services for the patient.

**Why do firefighters break windows and cut holes in roofs when the fire is inside a building? It seems that they are causing more damage than the fire.**

Fire in a building creates a tremendous amount of heat and smoke. In many instances, firefighters must remove this heat and smoke before they can get close enough to the fire to extinguish it. The removal of windows and cutting vent holes reduces heat and improved visibility which allow firefighters to safely and quickly rescue trapped occupants and extinguish the fire. Heat and smoke rise, so cutting a hole in the roof and breaking out windows in strategic locations allows the superheated-black smoke to vent out and cool air to enter the structure from below. This process is called "ventilation". It also reduces the possibilities of backdraft (an explosion of heated gases) and flashover. By venting the window of a room that is on fire, it actually helps to contain the fire to the room of origin. Otherwise, superheated gases spread throughout the inside of a structure and spread the fire further. Breaking a window actually prevents much more damage than it causes. Westbrook Fire is proud of the fact that by utilizing these tactics in a timely manner (response times) we are able to contain a structure fire to its room of origin over 90% of the time.