

Fredericktown Community Fire District
139 Columbus Road
Fredericktown, Ohio 43019
(740) 694-9701
<http://www.fredericktownfire.net>



February 17, 2018

To the Residents of the Fredericktown Community Fire District,

The Fredericktown Community Fire District (FCFD) provides fire protection and rescue services to approximately 8,700 residents in a 118-square mile area. Our staff consists of 26 personnel trained from the volunteer firefighter level up to the professional firefighter level. Our department does not provide emergency medical services as these are provided by the Fredericktown Community Joint Ambulance District.

In years past, we have been fortunate to have ample personnel available to respond to calls for service in both the daytime and evening/nighttime hours. For both of those time periods, the average number of calls for service is nearly the same. In recent years, we have experienced a decrease in the number of firefighters who work around the Fredericktown area and who are available to respond to an emergency call during daytime hours. In 2017, approximately 30% of the daytime calls were initially responded to by one or two personnel, with some calls receiving no response. On a positive note, during the weekend/daytime and all evening/nighttime hours we are not experiencing any decline in available personnel.

Our mission is to be proactive with respect to the operation of our department and avoid having to be reactive to the serious consequences of a catastrophic event. The fact of being understaffed during the daytime hours undoubtedly places our firefighters at risk and certainly increases response times or prevents us from responding to an emergency call. Minutes truly matter when it comes to freeing a person trapped in a vehicle or to preserving life and property in the event of a fire. Inadequate staffing presents a serious issue for overall firefighter safety and the wellbeing of our community.

The officers of the department have been closely monitoring this situation and discussing what courses of action could be taken in order to ensure that we are providing the appropriate level of service. We are continually striving to recruit additional people to become firefighters and are having success with our cadet program producing firefighters upon their graduation from high school. Nonetheless, the daytime personnel deficit continues to remain an issue and is on course to continue to worsen at an alarming rate with some very near future job changes taking place with several of our firefighters.

It is notable to state that this problem is not specific to our department. Similar circumstances have led to all other volunteer fire departments in Knox County to have some degree of paid staffing on duty. We are presently the only department to not have staffing. Additionally, surrounding counties are also faced with the same dilemma.

I have presented this matter to our Fire Board of Trustees and as a resolution have provided various versions of staffing scenarios during the daytime hours (daytime staffing). In general, the proposal consists of hiring two personnel to be on duty during the weekday daytime hours of approximately 8 am to 4 pm. Although two personnel are far from the ideal number to handle all of the types of calls we receive, it would ensure that at a minimum we are able to respond to every call for service and start to provide some level of remediation to the situation at hand. Additionally, the hiring two personnel is the number that our current budget, with some adjustments, would enable. To further clarify, this plan is not to provide staffing at the fire station on a 24/7 basis, but only on a weekday daytime basis.

Being able to provide a response to all emergency calls is our primary objective with daytime staffing but there are many more services and amenities that our department could provide. Among a long list of items, it would allow for interaction within our schools and businesses in which could lead to increased overall safety factors, aid in firefighter recruitment, and allow us to conduct daily business activities more effectively and efficiently.

Can we afford this proposal? Through careful planning and forecasting of the needs if the fire district over the years, we are prepared and confident in implementing this proposal. Careful consideration has been given to making the plan cost effective. As with any undertaking of this significance and the continual rise in the cost of operational expenses in conducting daily business, it may at some point be necessary to seek additional funding, as is common with any organization. We have been fortunate to operate under the same levies for the past 18 years. We have not asked the public for any increases in that time frame.

The more appropriate question might be: "Can we afford to not hire personnel?" How much damage will be done if we are unable to respond to all calls for service? If a life is lost or a severe injury results, at what price did this have to take place? If our community loses confidence in how we respond to their needs, will they continue to support our operational levies? If our firefighters become disgruntled over their working conditions and decide to leave, we would then be forced into having to pay for 24/7 fire protection coverage. These all represent values that may not have an established dollar value on the front end but most certainly would have a tremendous negative value on our reputation, the trust our community has in us, and the level of service we could provide.

The implementation of daytime staffing does have a reasonable ability to lead to the reduction of homeowner insurance rates. Daytime staffing would enable us to perform certain services that we are not able to perform currently. Conducting these services creates an extremely high likelihood that a decrease in homeowner's insurance rates will take place. During our last audit by ISO, the organization that establishes a Public Protection Classification that is utilized by insurance companies to establish insurance rates, I specifically addressed how we could effectively lower the cost of homeowner rates. This is not a simple "yes"/ "no" answer since the

rating is based on a multitude of factors and a complex numerical equation associated to those factors. However, the agent stated that having personnel on station and being able to complete certain activities are significant factors that have tremendous potential to lead to a reduction in insurance rates.

A tremendous amount of consideration and planning has been expended by department leadership to ensure that the most cost effective and safety focused resolution is presented to the Fire Board of Trustees. I encourage all residents to give this matter consideration, contact me directly (740-694-9701) for clarification of any questions or concerns, and voice your educated opinion to your Fire Board representative. The following is a list of the board members for each township.

Berlin – Gary Alverson
Pike – Roger Brown

Middlebury – Mike Gearhart
Wayne – Jim Braddock

Morris – Dick Kershner
Village – Doug Turpen

The FCFD appreciates the tremendous support and trust that we have always received from our community. I can assure you that we will continue to provide the best possible service regardless of the outcome of any future decisions. Our personnel are well trained, well equipped, and very dedicated to providing quality fire protection to our citizens.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Scott H. Mast". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Scott H. Mast
Chief