

## **Fire Department: 2018 Year End Report**

**James M. Vuona - MPA, CFO  
Fire Chief**



### **Our Mission:**

**Protect Life, Property and the Environment through;  
Public Education, Fire Prevention and Emergency Response.  
Be Helpful, Courteous and Professional.**

### **Executive Overview:**

The Shrewsbury Fire Department consists of 38 full-time and 15 on-call/part-time members. Two (2) of the 38 positions; the Fire Chief and Deputy Fire Chief are primarily administrative positions. Additionally, we have one (1) Administrative Assistant that works at Fire Headquarters to handle billing, payroll, and general secretarial work. We protect nearly six (6) billion dollars in assets extending over 20.78 sq. miles and serve a population that is approaching 40,000 residents. In 2018, our firefighters responded to 4,055 calls for service. This is the most responses in the history of the Fire Department (an increase of 174 calls). This equates to an average of 11.1 response calls per day. Additionally, the staff processed nearly 3,000 permits and related inspections. That said, firefighting staff has remained relatively unchanged.

Since 2013 as Fire Chief, I have been advocating for an increase in fire department staffing by a total of 8 -10 positions. In February of 2016, we added the position of Deputy Chief to our ranks. Please note; this is primarily an administrative dayshift position that was designed and created to handle Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement.

The following excerpt is from the 2013 Fire Department Town Report:

“We continue to operate with a staffing level that was established at Town Meeting back in 1987. For perspective purposes, it should be noted that in 1987 the population in Shrewsbury was 22,547 people and that today’s population exceeds 35,000. In 1987, the Shrewsbury Fire Department responded to 789 calls for service. That is nearly 3,000 calls less than we responded to in 2013. To adequately protect our community, the Town should consider incrementally adding 8-10 full-time positions to the Fire Department over the next five (5) years.”

We have received the support of the Town Manger’s office and the Board of Selectman from FY 2015 through the present to pursue Federal (AFG) Grant funding for four (4) firefighter positions to address our staffing shortages. Funds for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grants Program are awarded on a competitive basis and made directly to local fire departments and other eligible organizations. As of this date, we have been unsuccessful in three (3) attempts to secure funding. I believe the reason we have failed to receive AFG funding for a staffing grant is due to the following; we have not asked for enough personnel to reach the nationally recognized NFPA 1710 standard that guides the award process. If we would have applied to fund eight (8) positions, we would have increased our chance for success.

The Town of Westborough recently applied for eight (8) and was awarded eight (8) firefighter positions through the AFG Grant process because they demonstrated the ability to achieve a recognizable standard (NFPA 1710). This brings Westborough’s staffing to forty (40) firefighter positions (which is now larger than Shrewsbury’s Fire

Department) despite the fact that Westborough's population is approximately half that of Shrewsbury. The current fire department staffing deficiencies we face also negatively impacts the town in the following ways/areas:

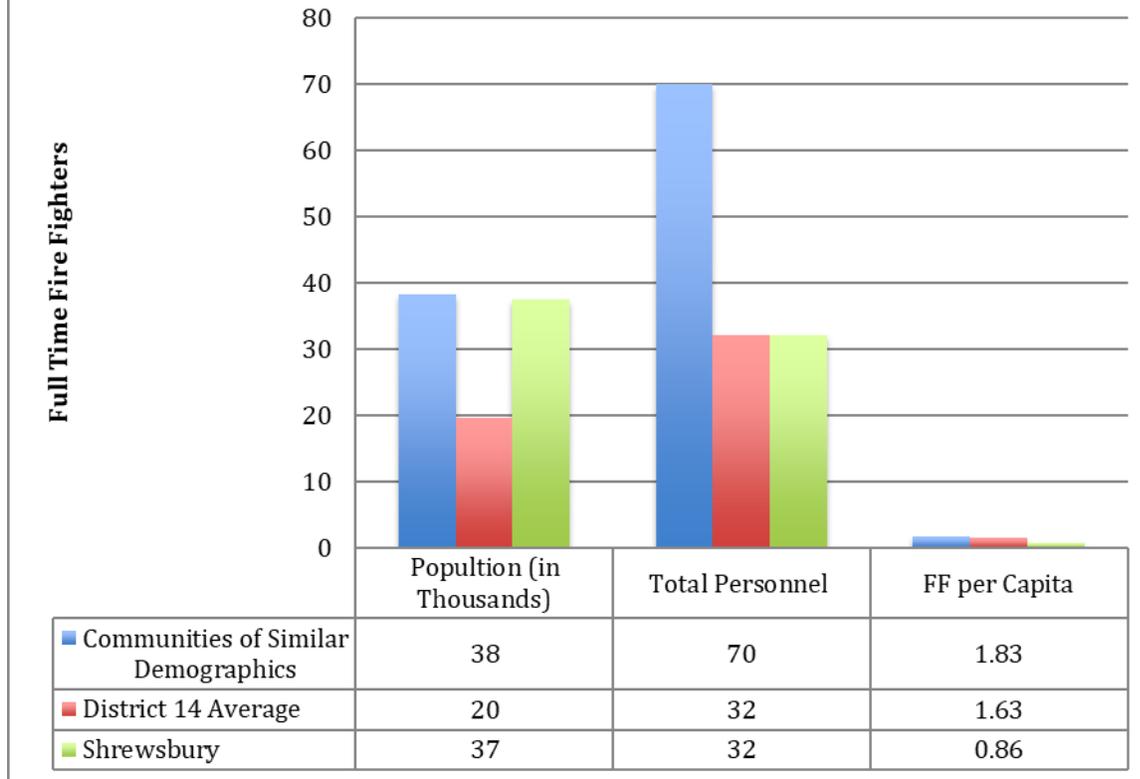
- Insurance Rates (Poor ISO Ratings)
- Increased Injuries to firefighters (NIST & NIOSH Studies)
- Overtime expenditure (lost work time due to injuries)
- Delayed or ineffective responses (lack of staff and supervision)
- Healthcare and Legal Costs (IOD/111F/Liability Issues)

For the past three (3) years, Town government has agreed to the terms of the Federal (SAFER) Grant. Which are; 75% paid by grant award in years one (1) and two (2) and 35% in year three (3) with the balance each year paid by the town. In the fourth year (FY20), the Town would be assuming the full financial responsibility for the positions. In other words, that timeframe to assume this cost is upon us this budget cycle. The former Town Manager stated that more funds would become available at the completion of the Lakeway Commons Project (now completed). Further, reduced funding over the next several years to fully fund OPEP (Retirement Benefits) should make additional funding available to the Town to be used towards public safety purposes. In the future, consideration for operating an EMS-based Fire Service (aka Ambulance Service) could further support and defray the cost of operating the Fire Department. Over three and half (3.5) million dollars in annual billing goes to private ambulance providers generated from medical emergencies within the Town of Shrewsbury. That annual revenue stream could be used to increase staffing and at the same time offset the operating costs of fire department. In other words, the town could be better protected from a man power standpoint while operating at reduced cost to the tax payers. Statistically, emergency medical responses and vehicle accidents accounted for over 70% of our call volume.

Over the past five (5) years, I have spoken with members of the Board of Selectmen (both past and present) and all have agreed that the fire department is in need of more staffing. Members of the fire department have worked with representatives of the Finance Committee (past and present), including a Public Safety Subcommittee that concluded the Shrewsbury Fire Department is in need of increased staffing. The most recent Town of Shrewsbury Masterplan cited the need for increased staffing for both the Fire and Police Departments. The simple fact of the matter is – the fire department has fallen way behind any and all recognizable standards, and we currently operate at levels that are unsafe for firefighters and ultimately unsafe for the general public. The town has grown exponentially since 1987, yet the fire department has not. In 2001, Chief Gerald LaFlamme created a 10- Year Fire Department Strategic Plan which advocated for more personnel and supervision (including Lieutenants). Some 18 years later, little has been accomplished to meet the basic safety goals outlined in that document.

Shrewsbury's firefighter (FF) staffing levels demand prolonged periods of increased workloads and escalate the probability of injury on duty, as well as line of duty deaths. According to a National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) survey (2015), the national average FF per 1,000 people is 1.54. As of November 26, 2018, the Professional Firefighters of Massachusetts (PFFM) indicates fire department staffing within the Commonwealth is 1.58 FFs per 1,000 people (2018). With thirty-two (32) FFs, Shrewsbury's FF per 1,000 people is at a dangerously low 0.86. Comparatively, similar communities are reporting 1.83 FF per 1,000 and Massachusetts Fire District 14 partners are reporting 1.63 FF per 1,000 people. The following graph illustrates this comparison.

## Fire Fighter Staffing Comparison



These statistics demonstrate that the Shrewsbury Fire Department has one of the lowest staffing levels per capita in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Additionally, the percentage of funding the Town allocates annually to staffing the fire department is among the very lowest in the state for comparative communities. At this time, a considerable staffing correction is needed and required at the Shrewsbury Fire Department. I am requesting Town Government make an investment in the public safety of this community in FY 2020.

At the supervisory level, we need to create a rank structure that includes Lieutenants. This will help us operate more safely at emergency scenes and address span of control shortcomings we experience on a daily basis. In 2018, we responded to 139 calls for fires. Structure fires accounted for 84 of our responses throughout the past year. The high percentage of these fires were rapidly extinguished while they were still relatively small. This is the true advantage of having full-time career firefighters who work 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. However, a great percentage of our calls are performed without a supervisory officer to oversee the scene and the safety of our personnel.

### **Risk Management Programs**

Our department has been built on a foundation of progressive Fire Prevention and Public Education programs. We have worked throughout the community to manage risk and limiting the devastating effects of uncontrolled fire. Public Education Programs, Fire Prevention, Code Enforcement and Inspectional Services make up a large part of our Community Risk Reduction efforts. Proactive Public Education and Fire Prevention programs have been proven to be the most cost efficient and effective ways to manage risk and reduce the likelihood of fire within the community. The creation of a Deputy Fire Chief position in 2016 has helped to address a large portion of our Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement duties and achieve compliance goals.

Deputy Chief Bruce Card Jr. oversees Fire Prevention and Code Enforcement, Operations, Compliance Standards and Record Keeping. The four (4) Fire Captains and the Building Inspector's Office work together to support the goals of our Fire Prevention Program. The complexity of life safety systems, evolving building requirements and mechanical systems creates a challenging environment for Town inspection officials. Interpretation, application and enforcement of the State mandated Fire and Building Codes (Massachusetts General Law) is a very time consuming and tedious effort.

Most firefighter training is conducted while working on shift. Training includes the following: firefighting tactics, strategy, hazardous materials response, medical emergencies, technical rescue, ice and water rescue, and the list goes on. Captain Aaron Roy schedules and oversees all aspects of training for the fire department. All personnel are required to attain and maintain a variety of skills to mitigate any emergency situation that may be encountered. Emergency medical training is a continual process to maintain skills and certifications. We encourage higher education and lifelong learning for all of firefighters to make themselves the best and most well trained emergency responders they can be.

The department strives to be accessible to the community through various outreach and educational programs in our schools and with our senior citizens. We work to assist our seniors by partnering with the Council on Aging, Elder Services of Worcester and the American Red Cross. Firefighter David Muntz and Captain Frank Ludovico coordinate our S.A.F.E. Program (Student Awareness of Fire Education) and work with a team of trained firefighters to educate citizens and students on the dangers of fire and promote injury prevention. This is done through school based programs, open houses, community partnerships and regular station visits. The Shrewsbury Fire Department has an active "Child Safety Seat Installation Program" with hundreds of installs per year. Residents are continuously reminded that working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide (CO) detectors are their best bet for surviving a fire. Smoke detectors and CO alarms provide early notification to your family in order to escape safely when there is a fire or toxic smoke/gases present in your home.

- Massachusetts S.A.F.E. (Student/Senior Awareness of Fire Education) Grants have been awarded to supplement public education and safety programs in our schools, community events and our senior population. This year we have been awarded \$8,254.00 to supplement our educational programs by the Executive Office of Public Safety and Security, the Department of Fire Services and the Governor's Office. Public Education programs were substantially funded by State grants and private donations.

#### **Equipment and Maintenance:**

In 2018, the Fire Department was fortunate to receive enough funding to replace, repair and upgrade some of its older and outdated equipment. Equipment news and updates:

- \$400,000 was appropriated for the purchase of new MSA Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) and related equipment to outfit the entire Fire Department. The new equipment represents a substantial safety upgrade over the twenty (20) year old SCBA units that were placed out of service. The new MSA SCBA include many safety upgrades that include; a built in thermal imaging camera and radio/blue tooth capability. These advances in technology enhance firefighter's ability to see and hear in a hostile fire environments and provide highest level personal safety available on today's market.
- \$56,000 was appropriated to repaint and refurbish our 1997 E-One Fire Engine currently in service at Fire Headquarters. Unfortunately, Calcium and Salt mixtures used to keep our streets safe during the winter also causes corrosion issues with our vehicles under carriages, paint, body and electrical components.
- A New Hovercraft and Ribcraft Rescue Boat were placed in service in late 2017/early 2018. This has been made possible through the generosity of Mrs. Barbara Donohue, who has donated over \$80,000 to the Town in the past year. We sincerely thank Mrs. Donohue for her continuous support and philanthropic efforts. This equipment has substantially increased our effectiveness and lifesaving capability on Lake Quinsigamond, and throughout the region. It has also allowed us to work in joint training and rescue efforts with the Worcester Fire Department and Fire District 14 Technical Rescue Dive Teams.

- The largest portion of our capital budget is dedicated to the maintenance and repair of our existing equipment, facilities and infrastructure. This includes; all fire engines, trucks, SUV's, powered tools, hydraulic rescue equipment, radios, communication equipment and generators. The great majority of our maintenance work is performed in house by Firefighters Joseph Milosz (Certified Lead Mechanic) and Robert Fulginiti (Assistant Mechanic). The skilled and dedicated work of these men represents a substantial savings for the Town.

#### **Personnel:**

We have added six (6) new members to the Call Department in 2018 to replace members who have left for other opportunities over the last couple of years. We welcome Firefighter Craig Mawdsley who graduated from the Massachusetts Fire Academy Call/Volunteer program on June 27, 2018. Further, we welcome new Call Firefighters Owen Bouffard, Steven Ebers, Michael Filiere, Connor Jordan and Alex Milosz, who will be attending the MA Firefighting Academy in the spring of 2019.

#### **Awards and Achievements:**

Firefighter Joseph Milosz – 2017 Shrewsbury Fire Dept. 'Outstanding Firefighter Award'  
Firefighter's Michael Guarino and Jim Zack – 2017 Shrewsbury Fire Dept. 'Life Saver Award'  
Captain Sean Lawlor – 2017 Shrewsbury Fire Dept. 'Service and Achievement Award'  
Mrs. Barbara Donohue – 2017 Shrewsbury Fire Department 'Community Hero Award'

#### **In Memoriam:**

With regret we report the passing of the following Retired Shrewsbury Fire Personnel:

Captain Alfred 'Al' St. Onge, (88), who served with us from 1957 – 1985. In addition to his 28 years of proud service to the Fire Department., Captain St. Onge was a United States Army Veteran of the Korean War and a member of the Army Reserves. We thank him for his leadership, dedication and service to both the Town of Shrewsbury and our country.

Firefighter Donald 'Donny' Baker.

Firefighter Baker was truly one of the great guys many of us had the pleasure of working with in the 70's, 80's and 90's. Donny was well known for his sense of humor, colorful personality and love of the Fire Department. In addition, Don was proud veteran of the United States Marine Corps.

Fire Department Secretary June LaMier

We send sincere condolences to the families and friends of the St. Onge, Baker and LaMier families.

#### **Contact Information:**

Business: 508.841.8522    Emergency: Call 911    Email: [fdinfo@shrewsburyma.gov](mailto:fdinfo@shrewsburyma.gov)

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# Shrewsbury Fire

## 2018 Incidents - Detailed Report

<b>1. Fires</b>	<b>139</b>
Structure Fires	84
111-120, 531	
Vehicle Fires	17
122,123,130-138	
Brush Fires	30
140-143	
Fires, Other	8
100,150-173	

<b>2. Overpressure Rupture, Explosion, Overheat</b>	<b>1</b>
Overpressure, Explosions, Overheat, Other	1
200-251	

<b>3. Rescue &amp; Emergency Medical Service</b>	<b>2,875</b>
First Responder	2,631
311, 510, 554	
Motor Vehicle Accident w/ injuries	136
322	
Pedestrian Accident	10
323	
Motor Vehicle Accident w/o injuries	69
324, 463*	
Motor Vehicle Accident w/ extrication	1
352	
Elevator Rescue	14
353,555	
Water & Ice Rescue	5
342,360-365	
Rescue, Other	9
331, 351, 356	

<b>4. Hazardous Conditions (No Fire)</b>	<b>187</b>
Gas Leak (Natural Gas or LPG)	59
412	
Carbon Monoxide Incident	28
424	
Electrical Problem	32
440-443, 445	
Power Line Down	29
444	
Structural Collapse	4
461	
Explosives, Bomb Incident	3
471, 721	
Hazardous Material Incident	32
400-411, 413-422, 451, 460, 480	

<b>5. Service Call</b>	<b>212</b>
Lock Out	92
511	
Water Problem	29
520-522	
Assist the Police	19
551, 552	
Unauthorized Burning	31
561	
Station Coverage (Mutual Aid)	6
571	
Animal Rescue/Problem	2
541	
Service Calls, Other	33
500, 512, 550, 553	

<b>6. Good Intent</b>	<b>153</b>
Canceled Enroute or On Arrival	99
611-622	
Good Intent, Other	54
600, 631-671	

<b>7. False Alarm</b>	<b>477</b>
Fire Alarm or Sprinkler False Alarm	392
700-735, 740-745	
CO False Alarm	85
736,746	

<b>8. Severe Weather &amp; Natural Disaster</b>	<b>1</b>
Flood Assessment	0
812	
Lightning Strike (no fire)	1
814	
Severe Weather or Natural Disaster, Other	0
800	

<b>9. Special Incident</b>	<b>10</b>
Citizen Complaint	10
911	
Special Incident, Other	0
900	

Total 2018 Incidents

**4,055**

# Shrewsbury Fire

## 2018 Non-Emergency Statistics - Detailed Report

Fire Prevention & Code Enforcement	Inspections	Permits
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1262</b>	<b>1521</b>
Business/Assembly	549	-
26F	609	601
Black Powder	-	0
Blasting	-	2
Commercial Alarm Systems	-	34
Commercial Flammable Liquids and Gasses	-	101
Commercial Kitchen Systems	-	1
Dumpsters	-	83
Hazardous Material Processes	30	3
Liquid Petroleum Gas	-	67
Misc. Permits	-	44
Oil Burning & Tank Install	16	149
Open Burning	-	240
Plan Review	20	20
Plumbing Inspection	-	0
Re-inspections Fees	-	83
Report Copies	-	10
Residential Monitored Alarm System	-	0
Residential Tank Removal	-	0
Sprinkler	-	45
Tank Truck	21	21
Transfer Tank	17	17

Student Awareness of Fire Education	Total	Hours
<b>Total:</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>118</b>
Public Education	16	25
PreK Education	7	3
Kindergarden Education	8	31
Grade 1 Education	2	3
Grade 2 Education	1	3
Grade 3 Education	1	2
Station Tours	23	48
Birthday Party	1	3

<b>Child Safety Seat Installation Lessons</b>	<b>84</b>
Total number of car seats installation Lessons	84

# Shrewsbury Fire

## 2018 Statistics Summary

Total Incidents

**4055**

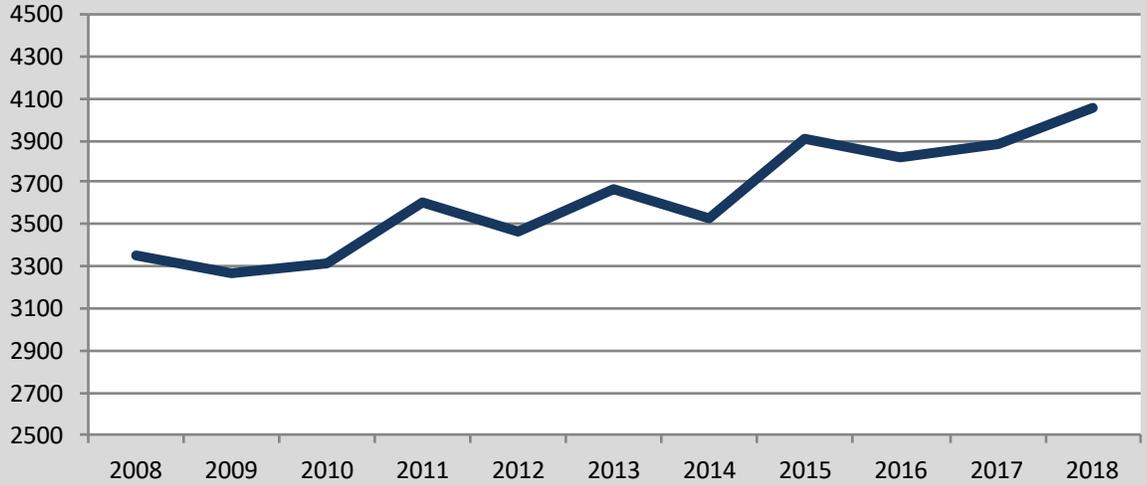
Avg Response Time

**5:03 min**

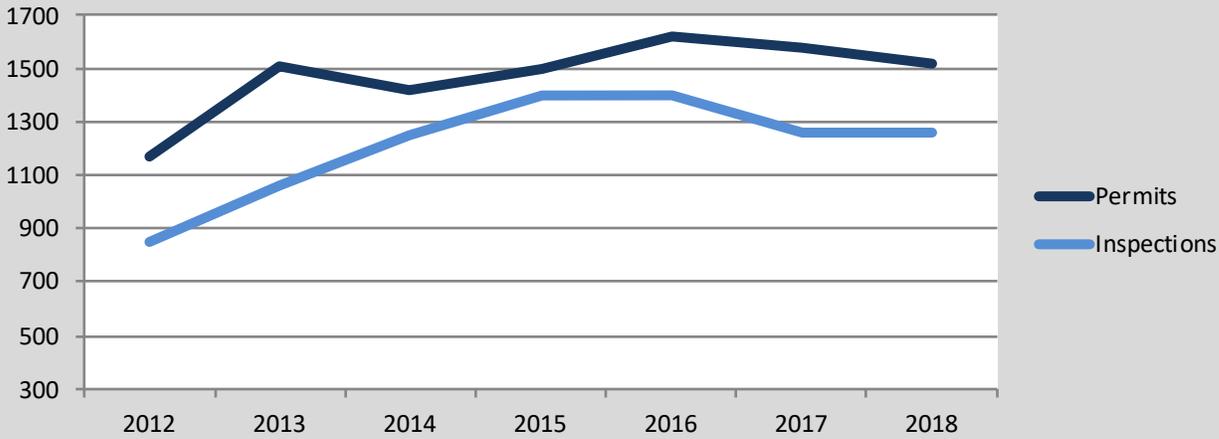
Avg Incidents per Day

**11.1**

### Incidents



### Fire Prevention



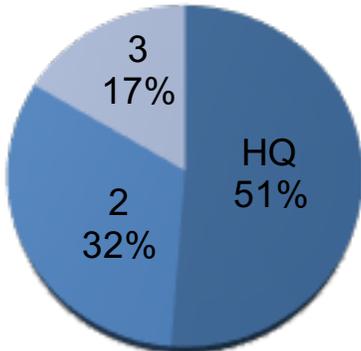
Total Permits

**1574**

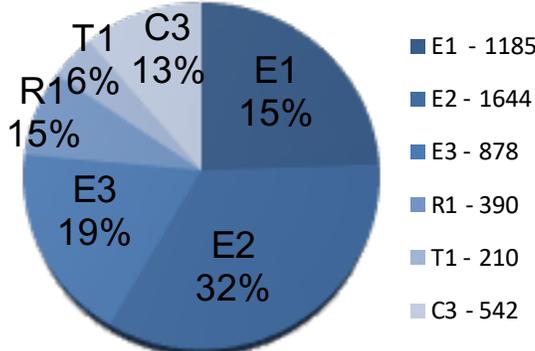
Total Inspections

**1257**

### Incidents by District



### Incidents by Company



### Incidents by Station

