

Peterborough Fire & Rescue 2021 Annual Report

The mission of the Peterborough Fire & Rescue (PFR) is to protect the lives and property of the people of Peterborough and Sharon from fires, natural and man-made disasters, and hazardous materials incidents; to save lives by providing emergency medical services; to prevent fires through prevention and education programs; to provide defense against terrorist attacks; and to provide a work environment that values cultural diversity and is free of harassment and discrimination. The department is led by Chief Edmund Walker, Deputy Chiefs Brian Wall, Brad Winters, and Matthew Robblee.

Despite 2021 being the second year of COVID-19 many of our key metrics began to return to “pre-pandemic” levels including our calls for service, inspections, and recruitment of new members.

The department responded to a combined total of 2,990 calls. The fire division responded to 453 calls including 67 motor vehicle accidents and 47 fires, 10 of which were building fires. The EMS division responded to 1,517 emergency ambulance calls and completed 953 interfacility transfers.

Personnel

Except for the fire chief, and six (6) paramedics, Peterborough Fire & Rescue relies entirely on part-time, per diem, and paid on call staff to meet our mission. As I write this, we have a total of 58 members on our roster, 29 firefighters and 43 EMS providers (there are 15 members who are both firefighters and EMS providers.)

In the current economy this reliance on other than full-time staff results in a rather large turnover in membership. During 2021 we were fortunate to attract and hire 14 EMS providers and eight (8) firefighters. Unfortunately, during this same period, we lost 22 EMS providers and eight (8) firefighters due to various reasons including moving out of the area and accepting full time positions with other organizations. We expect that these staffing challenges will continue, and we are incredibly grateful for the dedication of our current staff.

Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division

Deputy Chief Matthew Robblee oversees the daily operations of the Peterborough ambulance service. The service provides emergency ambulance transport for the towns of Peterborough, Dublin, Hancock, Frankestown, Sharon, and Temple as well as emergency and non-emergency transfers out of Monadnock Community Hospital, Cheshire Medical Center, and Dartmouth Hitchcock Medical Center. We accomplish this with two ambulances staffed 24 hours a day in the station and additional personnel at home.

Despite a significant amount of our operational time still being focused on, or dictated by, COVID-19 we had a significant increase in call volume over our 2019 numbers. (2019 was chosen for this comparison as the 2020 statistics were significantly impacted by the pandemic.) We saw an increase in 45.6% for emergency ambulance calls and 8.5% for interfacility transfers for a total increase of 28.6% over our 2019 call volume.

During the year, 206, or 8.3%, of our calls for service were “third calls” or calls that occurred while our two regularly staffed ambulances were tied up. To meet this demand, we rely on our off-duty members to drop what they are doing and respond to the station, just like our on-call firefighters for

fire calls. I am happy to report that on only one (1) occasion last year did we need the services of an outside ambulance to meet this demand.

In addition to this significant increase in call volume, we are also seeing an increase in the acuity level of our patients, particularly those we care for in interfacility transfers. We are fortunate that all but one of our newest paramedics is recognized as a Critical Care Paramedic, with four (4) of them being board certified to that level.

Fire Service Division

Deputy Chiefs Brian Wall and Brad Winters oversee the operation of the fire side of PFR including the recruitment, retention, and training for our 29 paid on-call firefighters. As mentioned above, we were fortunate to recruit eight (8) new members to the department this year. The addition of these members helps to ensure that we can meet the increased demand placed on our agency.

The 453 fire calls that we responded to represent a 13.5% increase in volume over 2019 and included several significant incidents including motor vehicle accidents, carbon monoxide (CO) calls, and structure fires. In addition to the calls, our members participated in over 2,800 hours of training and other non-response activities. These activities ranged from familiarization with equipment and operations to live fire and vehicle extrication training conducted here in town as well as across the region and state.

Community Risk Reduction

Fire Inspector Scott Symonds is responsible for our Community Risk Reduction program, bringing together several fire department activities related to making the Town of Peterborough a safer place for residents, businesses, and visitors. Going beyond the typical fire prevention functions, this group includes our public fire education programs, community first aid and CPR training, injury prevention, and a more pro-active approach with other community-based groups to assist in maximizing our reach. We continue to work closely with the Code Enforcement Office to provide comprehensive plans review, inspections, and investigation of fire safety violations. This year the Division conducted 104 formal inspections, and over 300 informal consultations and plan reviews.

As a safety reminder, PFR requests that each mailbox and home have four-inch numbers (preferably reflective) so that public safety officials can locate you quickly during an emergency. For information on placement, please call the fire station at (603) 924-8090 X 2.

Please remember to go to the town website (www.peterboroughnh.gov) and sign up for NIXLE emergency notifications. This free system provides our residents, and other who frequent town, with critical information in the event of a local emergency. You are also encouraged to sign up for NH Alerts, a free service to provide emergency NH Alerts by the New Hampshire Department of Safety, Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management. Emergency and community messages are initiated by authorized public safety officials at the State level and severe weather warnings are initiated directly by the National Weather Service. Additional information is available at: <http://www.readynh.gov>.

Explorers

Explorer Post 808 continues to provide an avenue for local youth to explore the fire and EMS services. In addition to learning about the profession, the Explorers provide much-needed services to the department and the community, including support at all emergency incidents and civic events

in Town. All members attended regular training this year along with the firefighters and EMTs. The Post is currently overseen by Captain John Berube. The Explorer program provides young men and women with a chance to participate in, and learn about, firefighting, while also giving PFR and neighboring departments a “farm team” from which it can fill vacancies. The department thanks these young men and women, as well as their advisors for a job well done.

Peterborough Fire & Rescue would like to thank all the businesses and merchants who support us every year, both with funding and by allowing their employees to respond to emergency calls during working hours.

Respectfully submitted,

Edmund M. Walker	Chief of Department
Matthew Robblee	Deputy Chief (EMS)
Brian Wall	Deputy Chief (Fire)
Bradley Winters	Deputy Chief (Fire)
John Berube	Captain (Fire)
John Fahey	Captain (EMS)
Cody Boutwell	Lieutenant (Fire)
Mark Kreamer	Lieutenant (EMS)
Kenneth Larry	Lieutenant (EMS)
Timothy Quinn	Lieutenant (EMS)
Michael Roina	Lieutenant (EMS)
Brian Shaw	Lieutenant (Fire)
Scott Symonds	Lieutenant (Fire)