

**Fire Department & Safety Complex Study  
2010**

**Compiled By**

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## Introduction

In an effort to further understand the Fire Department and the Safety Complex budgets, a study has been conducted on the expenses and operations in regard to the impact on expenses for these departments. With budgets and revenues still tight, it is critical that departments, all departments, run as efficiently as possible while continuing to provide quality service to the community.

Sturbridge is fortunate to have a professional and fully equipped Fire Department and Paramedic Service; however, there are some issues that arise both within the Department and with the Safety Complex that could be addressed to improve spending, both short term and long term. This study is in no way an evaluation of performance of the Fire Department nor any member of the Department, but merely an evaluation of spending and is provided to the Finance Committee and relevant parties for planning purposes.

Please note that due to differences in types and timing of reports, not all information is readily available for the current period. Therefore, the most current possible data is included and defined as necessary throughout this study.

There is an overwhelming amount of information available and necessary to intimately understand these budgets. It is beyond the scope and time of this report to offer that depth of information; however, there is an adequate compilation and summary of the expenses (Salaries, Overtime, Purchase of Services, Supplies and Other) and the factors affecting these expenses for both departments. In addition, there is relevant information provided in Appendices that may be useful in the future assessment and planning of the Departments. Hopefully, this study will help the Committees better understand these departments while bringing some issues to light.

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# Section 1: Fire Department

## Current Status

### Salaries & Wages

- Wages and Overtime are about 90% of the FY11 Fire budget; Overtime alone is about 12% of the total FY11 Fire budget.
- There are currently 25 people on staff (Exhibit 1) at the Department with a breakdown as follows:
  - Full-time = 8 people including the Chief plus 0 EMT-B, 3 EMT-I (1 as a shared role of Inspector), 4 EMT-P.
  - Part-time = 18 people including 11 EMT-B, 0 EMT-I, 4 EMT-P, 2 Firefighters plus 1 Clerk (20hrs/wk).
- All employees except the Fire Chief and the Clerk are union. All employees except the Chief are paid hourly. Therefore, these full time hourly employees are eligible for overtime. Full time employees work a 45 hour week.
- Full time employees are eligible for health benefits but Part time employees are not.

*{EMT-B provides basic life support (first aid, CPR); EMT-I provides the same level of care as EMT-B but can also start IV's and intubate; EMT-P is a paramedic that provides advanced life support with the level of care as EMT-I but can also administer medications, place patients on a heart monitor and analyze the results.}*

Scheduling of the Fire Department is a very complicated task as it relates to full time and part time employees that must attend to an unknown number of fire calls, ambulance calls, inspections and dive calls. In addition, these members respond to Sturbridge, neighboring towns and District 7 mutual aid area (Exhibit 2).

A schedule roster is developed for a 3 month time period and consists of 12 shifts per week (Exhibit 3). Full-time employees are scheduled an average of 45 hours of regular time and worked over 6 hours of overtime per week during the calendar year 2009 (Exhibit 4). This actually represents a total of 63 45-hour regular pay work weeks being paid in overtime. In 2005, a study was done on the Department that showed how responsibilities were distributed and how their time was spent. A copy of this study is provided in Exhibit 5 (There are numerous data spreadsheets as background for this study. These have not been included but are available for review); however, it should be noted that this was done before the Department went to paramedic service.

Overtime in FY2010 was spent on fire-related activities, ambulance-related activities and drills/training at an approximate ratio of 7:2:1 (Exhibit 6). Of the 11 full time people that were employed sometime during the year, 9 worked overtime, with 66% of the hours incurred by only 4 people. Of the total 2947 hours in FY2010 overtime, 291 or almost 10% was paid for drills/training.

The only scheduled part-time employee hours are on Saturday and Sunday of each week- the 12<sup>th</sup> shift- for 2 people for a total of 48 hours but can be divided up into 3 shifts (Exhibit 3). Part time staffing is done on a rotational basis. Most of the part time employees have a full time job

elsewhere and only work on call. Call hours, for both full time and part time, are not scheduled but vary depending on the number and type of calls that come into the station.

There are 3 Engine Companies (Exhibit 1). The number of firefighters that go out to an incident depends upon the type of fire. If a call comes in, the Dispatcher makes a decision on whom to call: the on duty staff, a Company call, a second Company call or a general tone. The Company that is called first is rotated daily. Pay starts at tone out, not arrival time, with a 3 hour minimum requirement and most employees are within a 15 minute or 10 mile drive to the station. Personnel make a choice at the tone whether to meet the truck at the station or meet at the incident depending on their location at that time. There is no written residency requirement for the department.

Paramedic service started in Sturbridge in 2006 and is now licensed at full paramedic service 24/7 (as of 11/21/07) with at least 1 EMT-P and 1 EMT-I on duty at all times. At this time, there is no plan to train the EMT-B and EMT-I personnel to EMT-P level. All employees, except 2 part timers, are at some level of EMT training. There are 2 ambulances that are rotated out. By having dual role personnel, there is the possibility of a crossover call. By this, when the duty crew is on a fire call, the ambulance is not staffed and vice versa. In these cases, a tone will be sent out for the necessary replacement crew.

Vacation, sick time and training time are usually filled with full time people if these shifts are during the midweek daytime hours and are volunteer based. According to the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) voluntary switching of shifts that may put an employee into overtime hours is not required to be paid at the overtime rate.

In addition to their scheduled and overtime hours, many of the crew participate in the local activities as volunteers; for example, Memorial Day parade, Feast & Fire, Christmas tree lighting, Halloween on the Common all have Fire Department presence. Their other community activities (SAFE program, Recreation Department training on defibrillators, etc) are manned during daytime shift hours. In these cases, they should be paid at regular pay (not overtime), if not voluntary.

Fire Department details are also available for Department personnel and are scheduled separately on a volunteer basis. High School football games are an example of such a detail.

The average hourly wage for full time employees in 2009 (calendar year) was \$23.21 with an average overtime rate of \$34.82/ hour (Exhibit 4). The average wage information for 2010 is not calculated at the time of this report.

#### Fire Inspector

There is one Inspector on staff (See Exhibit 7 for the current job description). This position is currently a shared role for a Firefighter/ EMT that, by contract, pays +\$1/hour while the employee is on duty regardless of the role (Firefighter/EMT/Dive Team Inspector) and is, therefore, used in the calculation of overtime. Prior to FY2008, the Inspector's position was an additional responsibility of a Firefighter/EMT but was paid for inspection time at a regular firefighter/EMT rate of pay. Inspections are typically done during daytime/ midweek hours and downtime for the employee.

The Inspector must inspect every alteration to an oil fired heating system, every home engaged in any mortgage transaction, new home and commercial construction for occupancy and most remodeling projects in addition to regular commercial fire safety checks, ad hoc fire safety checks, reports on fire incidents and complaints. There is no record at this time tracking the hours spent in this role.

**Dive Team**

There are currently 8 members of the Dive Team (Exhibit 8). There is no training requirement to be member of the team but each member has some level of training.

When needed, a general tone goes out for the team and they meet at the scene. Dive team members are paid at their rate of pay for firefighting/EMT whether it is regular time or overtime.

**Vehicles:**

In 2010, Sturbridge purchased 2 new Fire trucks, a pumper for \$355,900 and a tanker for \$279,000. Below is a table outlining the current vehicles in the department.

Vehicle	Year	Mileage (as of 12/15/10)
		(as of 12/15/10)
Chief's Cruiser	2004	89296
Squad 1: Ford Utility Pickup	1997	
A-1 (Ambulance): Ford Lifeline	2004	79907
A-2 (Ambulance): Ford Lifeline	2005	32547
Engine 1:	2010	2999
Engine 2: Freightliner Pumper (1250 gpm/1000 gal)	1998	28803
Engine 3: Freightliner Pumper (1500 gpm/1000 gal)	2005	7492
Engine 4: International Pumper	1974	Out of Service
Ladder 1: Maxim 100 ft Aerial	1976	21494
Rescue 1: Freightliner Heavy Rescue	1997	9300
Tanker 1:	2010	3956
Forestry 1: Dodge Pickup	1954	25324
Gator 1:		

### Purchase of Services

- This category includes maintenance (pagers/radio/vehicles/computer/equipment), physical exams, training tuition, dry cleaning, cell phones, fast lane, advertising, CMED (service that provides the ability to speak with hospitals) and miscellaneous and is about 4.5% of the FY2011 Fire budget. This also includes a computer support contract of \$3500 /yr.
- The current pager/radio system is only about 4 years old, purchased through a grant.
- Maintenance costs are about \$17,000 or 2% of the total FY2011 Fire Department budget but vehicle maintenance accounts for about 70% of this amount. There are no vehicle maintenance logs. Maintenance and repairs are currently performed by a local independent mechanic/garage.
- The Town pays for mask recertification on town owned masks.
- Physical exams are required for new employees only.
- Full time employees are eligible for tuition reimbursement; however, there are some training programs that offer free tuition, such as the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy (MFA)(Exhibit 9). Part-time employees are not eligible for tuition reimbursement; however, the Chief has the discretion to pay for Fire related training programs and seminars if funds are available. Additional training is available free of charge through membership in District 7. Reserve personnel cannot be assigned to an Engine Company until they are fully trained in Fire Fighting 1 & 2. Full time personnel are trained at the MFA; however, part time personnel are not allowed at the MFA so are trained at through District 7. All personnel must be trained through one of these centers to keep consistency within the Department.
- Dive Team members pay for their own dive recertification.

### Supplies

- This budget line includes training materials, Dive & Rescue supplies, fire fighting materials, ambulance supplies, equipment and uniforms and represent about 5% of the FY2011 Fire budget
- Full time employees are allowed \$650 per person per year for uniforms/ dry cleaning. Part time employees are allowed \$250 each as a clothing allowance if they work 200 hours/year. Therefore, this allowance is actually divided between Supplies, as new purchases, and Purchase of Services, as Dry Cleaning.
- There are currently about 25 full sets of firefighting gear that range in age up to about 8 years old. A few of these older sets were recently replaced with a grant. Full time employees keep their gear at the station while part time employees keep their gear with them. A full set of gear costs about \$2500 to replace. When a firefighter resigns, whether full time or part time, their equipment is returned. This was the case in 2009-2010 when several resignations of part time employees were requested due to their unavailability for calls.
- Currently 4 out of 8 Dive Team members own their suits; the Town owns 2 dry suits (~5ys old) and 1 wet suit (~10 yrs old) (Refer to Exhibit 8 for a description of suits). The Town owned suits are kept at the Station.
- The Fire Department is very frugal in its reuse of equipment and supplies. Even ambulance supplies- medications- are recycled for partial credit to the manufacturers.

### ISO Rating

The Sturbridge Fire Department is currently rated at a 7; however, this was done years ago and

