

**From:** David Foster <foster@villagefire.org>

**Sent:** Tuesday, August 9, 2022 1:19 PM

**Subject:** Ambulance staffing history and July resource chart

Good afternoon,

I have attached the following documents prepared for the Fire Commissioners and Mayors.

You will see on the July charts three colors of blocks. The yellow blocks represent days and times when we had a single truck response. This could be the engine going to a fire alarm. The red blocks are multiple truck responses. This could be the ladder and an ambulance going to a chest pain call. The black blocks represent when we have zero resources.

Each day in July we staffed our second ambulance from 7 am to 7 pm. If the second ambulance was not staffed, many of the red blocks would be black.

Let me know if you have any questions.

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David Foster  
Fire Chief  
Village Fire Department

## Staffing the Second Ambulance

During 2010, five of the six members of the Board of Commissioners of the Village Fire Department were Mayors of their respective cities. Then and now, the Village Fire Department operates a fire-based EMS service. This means each firefighter is also an emergency medical technician or paramedic. When a fire emergency is dispatched, all ten on duty firefighters will fight the fire. When an EMS call is dispatched, the same firefighters respond to the EMS call as well. At that time, the Village Fire Department staffed a single ambulance. The department did have a second ambulance; however, it was not State licensed and was used only when the primary ambulance was out of service for maintenance.

I was appointed as the Village Fire Chief late September in 2010. As I reviewed past practices, policies, data and discussed concerns and successes with the firefighters, several suggested the department needed to consider the need for two ambulances. They proposed if a second EMS call was received, 2 of the 4 firefighters from the ladder truck, would then staff and respond with the second ambulance. Of course, this meant the Department's firefighting resources would be further lessened but responding to an immediate life threat is more important than holding resources for a call that may not happen. I agreed and the Department began responding with 2 ambulances.

As more effective and efficient use of resources were implemented, I discussed these changes with the Village Fire Commission. During these meetings, I provided the Fire Commission with information on department response times, number of calls and types of calls, staffing, etc. The forecast showed there would be a time when increased EMS calls demanded ambulance staffing be evaluated. In addition, during this time our primary ambulance was due for replacement. Typically, this meant the oldest of the two ambulances would be sold. I requested and received approval to keep the older ambulance in the fleet as a reserve. With three ambulances, we ensured we kept two ambulances in-service at all times.

Over the next several years, I continued to conduct risk assessments. We slowly watched the percentage of second EMS calls increase. It was during 2020 when the second EMS calls hit 20%. It was also 2020 when Covid became a household name. Sadly, the ambulance call volume increased significantly. More critically, the amount of time our crews spent at the hospital, waiting for hospital staff to assume patient care increased. That time became known as "wall time." It became typical for the ambulance to be out of service for 3 hours each call. For these hours, the residents of the Villages had no ambulance.

In the summer of 2021, the ambulance "out of service time" became problematic. I brought this issue to the attention of the Fire Commission. During this meeting an important question was raised by one of the members of the Commission, "Is the wall time a transitional issue or would it be ongoing?" The answer: While wall time or "out of service time" was initially caused by the Covid pandemic, it has continued due to the shortage of nurses at hospitals. The commission, by unanimous vote, approved to staff the second ambulance, using overtime for 12 hours each day. Initial approval was given for 90 days, then it was a month-to-month discussion and approval.

During the 2023 budget process, the Village Fire Commission continued their discussion regarding the need to staff the second ambulance. The Commission asked that I supply several possible solutions to this ongoing problem, thus giving them enough information to determine their final decision. After several budget workshops, all possible solutions now on the table, the Fire Commission decided to amend the 2022 budget, adding 3 full time employees, 1 for each shift, to staff the ambulance with

unanimous approval. The ambulances must be staffed with a crew of 2, however, the Fire Commission believed the second ambulance crewmember should be staffed by the continued use of overtime. The three full time positions were continued in the 2023 budget.

These changes are now approved by the governing cities. Today, the residents and visitors of the six cities are protected 24 hours each day, by 2 full time staffed ambulances. In addition, the reserve ambulance is now licensed by the State of Texas and will respond when three EMS calls are received simultaneously.

