

Fire & EMS Department Staff Report

Purpose

This report provides the Common Council with a clear, data-supported review of the Whitewater Fire & EMS Department's current operational capabilities, staffing limitations, and response challenges. Recent incidents have illustrated how quickly department resources can become fully committed and why current staffing conditions—particularly relying on Paid-on-Call (POC) personnel—are insufficient for maintaining reliable coverage across our 95-square-mile service area.

Overview of Performance Metrics

The department tracks several industry-standard indicators to evaluate service delivery including, but not limited to:

- Average turnout time
- Time from arrival on scene to water on the fire
- Time required to assemble adequate staffing
- Weekly reporting of call volume, mutual aid responses, and average POC turnout

POC turnout currently averages around one responder per incident, which is not a reliable staffing model for modern fire and EMS operations.

Recent Operational Snapshot: A-Shift EMS Activity

A-Shift's performance on the afternoon and early evening of August 17 provides a clear example of how quickly department resources can become strained and why staffing reliability is a critical concern.

Between 17:05 and 19:07, a span of 2 hours and 2 minutes, A-Shift (staffed with six members including a recently returned firefighter/paramedic working the limited term full-time position) responded to six EMS calls for service.

Notable operational impacts included:

- Five of the six calls required transport to Fort Memorial Hospital.
- Two incidents required a second ambulance for lifting and moving assistance.
- All three department ambulances were committed simultaneously.
- Full-time staff were depleted and unavailable for fire protection.

- Five calls occurred within the city, one in Lima township.
- No mutual aid was requested, and all calls were answered without delay.

To maintain coverage:

- Part-time EMS Chief Dean responded to the two calls needing additional manpower.
- Two POCs backfilled the station—one FF/AEMT driving from LaGrange and the other a newly certified Fire I graduate with no EMS certification.
- Assistant Chief Dion and Chief Freeman remained in town monitoring radio traffic in the event additional resources were needed or an additional call for service was dispatched.

Hospital Transport Policy Necessity

Transporting patients to the closest appropriate hospital allowed ambulances to return to service quickly. Had transports been diverted to hospitals farther away, coverage for simultaneous calls would have been compromised.

Staffing & POC Reliability

The department's service area covers approximately 95 square miles, staffed by:

- 4–6 full-time personnel on duty 24 hours a day
- About one POC per All Call
- Two full-time chiefs (fire/EMS certified) living within the city/1 POC chief (fire only certified) living within the city staffing the Battalion 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- EMS chase vehicle staffed Monday-Friday 6p-6a by the 3 EMS officers. Vehicle is not staffed 100% of the time and 2 of the 3 EMS officers live outside of the service area.

POC turnout fluctuates from 2.3 personnel to 0.7 weekly. This inconsistency makes POC staffing unreliable for fire suppression or EMS surges.

Call Concurrency

- 33% of calls occur concurrently. Meaning that 33% of the time, crews are responding to a call for service before the first crew is back in service. This leaves 1 full-time member at the station, in some cases 0 at the station.
- The third-out ambulance has responded to 27 calls year-to-date. This ambulance is staffed with the fifth person of the duty crew and the Fire Inspector if they are available. If not, AC Dion or Chief Freeman respond to the calls for service with the full-time crew.

Summary of Challenges

- Rapid depletion of full-time crew resources
- Insufficient POC response
- Increased strain on command staff
- Difficulty meeting NFPA standards
- Necessity of flexible hospital transport protocols
- Vulnerability during high call concurrency

Current Solutions in Progress

- Addition of a temporary full-time staff member assigned to A-Shift to stabilize daily staffing and improve fire/EMS response capability.
- Conversion of the part-time EMS Chief position into a full-time Assistant Chief (fire and EMS certified) beginning January of 2027. This staff member will serve on a flex schedule, including rotational shifts with the current command staff, ensuring Battalion-level command coverage 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.
- Conversion of Paid-on-Call (POC) response funding into Paid-on-Premise (POP) staffing to ensure adequate staffing during historically higher call-volume periods with low POC engagement, especially weekends.

Conclusion

The intent is simply to provide Council with an accurate picture of our current response capabilities, staffing availability, and workload. We want to make sure the data is available so that everyone has a clear understanding of where we currently stand and the challenges we face when multiple calls occur simultaneously. This report is informational and not a staffing request. It reflects the operational reality impacting Fire & EMS service delivery.

Supporting Metrics



Overlapping Fire Incidents Worksheet

	Oldest Date	1/1/2026
	Newest Date	8/14/2026
	Overlapping Incidents	451
	Total Incidents	1347
	Percent of Calls Overlapping	33%

For a **typical low-hazard residential structure fire**, NFPA 1720 Table 4.3.2 establishes these staffing and response objectives:

Demand zone	Population density	Minimum personnel	Response time	Objective
Urban	>1,000/mi ²	15	9 min.	90%
Suburban	500–1,000/mi ²	10	10 min.	80%
Rural	<500/mi ²	6	14 min.	80%
Remote	≥8-mile travel distance	4	Based on travel distance	90%

Your NFPA 1720 city target

Item	Your city
Population	15,000
Area	9 sq. mi.
Density	1,667/sq. mi.
Demand zone	Urban
Initial personnel	15
Response objective	9 minutes
Performance target	90%

So, for a qualifying structure-fire response in the **city**, NFPA 1720's benchmark is **15 firefighters/personnel arriving within 9 minutes, 90% of the time.**

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