

Milton Fire-Rescue and Emergency Management 2022 Annual Report

In 2022, Milton Fire-Rescue responded to a total of 905 calls for service, 69% being medically related. This is a minimal increase in call volume over 2021. The following is a breakdown of those responses:

Incident Type	# Incidents
Fires	45
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service and MVAs	621
Hazardous Condition (No Fire)	43
Service Call	41
Good Intent Call	108
False Alarm & False Call	36
Severe Weather & Natural Disaster	10
Special Incident Type	1
Total	905

Ambulance Transports by Hospital	
Frisbie Memorial Hospital	234
Wentworth Douglass Hospital	92
Dover Emergency Room-(PRH)	1
Huggins Hospital	6
Portsmouth Regional Hospital	6
SMHC Medical Center Sanford	4

This past year presented many challenges and much of 2022 was spent navigating these challenges and ensuring a sustainable future for the department. On July 1st 2022, Milton Fire-Rescue switched dispatch centers from Carroll County to Strafford County. Significant thought and work was put in behind the scenes to ensure a seamless transfer that did not disrupt services. This switch was necessary for two reasons. First, to assist with interoperable communication between Milton Fire and Milton Police, as well as the surrounding mutual aid communities of Farmington and Middleton. Second, and most critical, was cost savings, not in the cost of the service, but in future infrastructure costs. The Milton Fire radio repeater tower on Teneriffe Mountain was in dire need of replacement. Replacing this tower would cost upwards of \$100,000 and would not improve our current weakening radio coverage area. When we switched to Strafford County, they agreed to maintain all radio communication infrastructure and the radio tower on Teneriffe Mountain is in the process of being replaced. Milton Fire will also be switching radio frequencies and joining a shared frequency with the fire departments from Farmington, Middleton, and New Durham. This new frequency will have multiple transmission and receiver sites located around northern Strafford County. This will greatly increase our coverage in areas of Milton that have previously been a challenge with our single site radio tower on Teneriffe Mountain. The department would like to thank the dispatchers of Carroll County who flawlessly served our community dispatch needs for two decades.

In 2011, the department purchased an ambulance for \$167,000 and that ambulance now needs to be replaced. The estimated cost of a new ambulance is \$405,000, an 80% increase in cost since our last ambulance purchase in 2017. Not only has the cost more than doubled since 2011, but the expected delivery time has increased from 6-8 months to 24-36 months, depending on the manufacturer. This poses unique challenges both in terms of financing the purchase, as well as ensuring we have two fully operational ambulances available to respond to the emergency needs of the community. The increased cost has pushed the purchase out of reach to be 100% replaced by revenue received from ambulance billing. After much discussion with the CIP committee, Board of Selectmen, and the Budget Committee, we have agreed to split the cost of the purchase between the ambulance revolving account and a 5-year lease purchase. On the ballot in 2023, you will find a warrant article to authorize the purchase to replace the department's 2011 ambulance.

As with the previous year, our operating budget was stretched far beyond its limits. The highlights include vehicle maintenance 125% expended, electricity 146% expended, vehicle fuel 208% expended, and building maintenance 148% expended. Additionally, the part-time line, which covers the per-diem employees that work shifts at the station, was overspent by about \$100,000. This over expenditure was a known and predicted expense. We would like to thank the Board of Selectmen for understanding how imperative it has become to ensure the ambulance and the station is staffed with a minimum of 2 people 24/7. We have been staffing the station around the clock for three full years now, utilizing a combination of CARES act money, the ambulance revolving account, and the towns operating budget. Unfortunately, the time has come that we can no longer maintain this level of service with the funding that has been allocated for this purpose. Milton Fire-Rescue hired our first full-time employee in 1999 and our second in 2007. During this time the two full time employees helped cover the station Monday through Friday 8am-4pm. The role of the full-time positions has evolved over the years and they now each work 2-24 hour shifts per week. The remainder of the shifts are covered by per-diem employees who have other full-time jobs. With the support of the Board of Selectmen and the Budget Committee, we are proposing a warrant article to hire a third full-time Firefighter/EMT. The hiring of this position will help the department in many ways including reduction in over-time for the current full-time employees, reduced reliance on per-diem employees, and assisting in making up the financial shortfall we are experiencing with the current staffing model. If this warrant article is passed it will be a huge step in the right direction to ensure the ambulance and fire station is staffed and available to respond to the community's emergencies around the clock.

At Milton Fire-Rescue we pride ourselves on our ability to stretch every dollar to its limit. One way we have been successful in doing so is through grants. This year has been no exception. In 2022, the capital improvement plan called for the replacement of the department's 2012 command vehicle. This project was to be funded through existing funds in the Fire Department Capital Reserve. NH GOFERR Locality Equipment Grant was awarded in the amount of \$50,000 to replace this vehicle. The cost to the town of Milton is estimated to be \$5,000. The department expected delivery of the vehicle in the final quarter of 2022, however the supply chain issues have pushed completion date to the second quarter of 2023.

In May of 2022, we said goodbye to one of our full-time employees, Lieutenant Chris Stevens. After nearly 20 years in the NH fire service and 9 years with the Milton Fire Department, Chris headed south for warmer climates and is currently employed at the Surf City Fire Department in

North Carolina. It took the department until the end of 2022 to find a qualified candidate to fill the vacancy left by Chris. The department was fortunate to hire Tim Wilder to fill the open position. Tim comes to Milton with 20+ years of experience from a handful of New Hampshire fire departments and brings with him a wealth of knowledge in fire prevention and fire department administration. He will serve the Milton Fire Department as a Captain and Advanced EMT.

I would like to congratulate Captain Jason Behrens on his promotion to Deputy Chief. Jason is one of our most dedicated and hardest working employees. As one of our two full-time employees, Jason continually steps up to help the department. Whether it's to cover an open shift, teach a CPR class, or visit with a group of boy scouts, Jason is there to get it done. We are lucky to have Jason in a leadership role at the Milton Fire Department.

Despite the staffing challenges we faced in 2022, the members and staff of Milton Fire-Rescue continued to provide a level of service that I am proud of. As always, I would like to thank the members of Milton Fire-Rescue and their families for their time, commitment, and dedication to Milton Fire-Rescue, as well as the Milton community. I look forward to serving as your Fire Chief for many years to come.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Nicholas Marique', with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Nicholas Marique

Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director