

**Bath Township Fire Department
Annual Report
January, 2017**

Brief Overview / Introduction:

The Bath Township Fire Department (BTFD) was established 7/30/1929 and formally organized by Board action 6/30/1941. Around 1945, the Township purchased the first fire truck, a 1945 Ford with 500 gallon water tank and a John Bean high pressure pump. BTFD still owns this truck although it is not currently operational.

Department History

The BTFD existed for many years as a quasi-governmental agency run by a group of firemen appointed by the Township Board. The firemen in turn elected a fire chief. No further oversight or supervision of the agency by township officials or board members occurred. For many years the department was funded by township funds in combination with fundraising activities such as barn dances, pancake breakfasts, and donkey basketball games. Over time, this model has evolved and the fire department is now an authentic government agency funded by township general funds and the Police and Fire Millage with formal reporting relationships to township administration and the Police and Fire Board. All fire department employees are now hired through the township's employment processes.

Bath Township Firefighters Association

The employees of the fire department have a 501-C3 non-profit charitable organization called the Bath Township Firefighters Association. This organization solicits and expends funds in support of the department, its members, community charities as well as persons in need.

Staffing

The BTFD has 22 of thirty roster positions filled. This includes a 1.0 full-time equivalent (FTE) Chief position and 0.5 FTE firefighter position with remaining positions classified as part-paid/on-call. Department leadership is provided by Chief Dan Oberst, Assistant Chief David Snyder, Captains Millard Sivak and Walt Holden along with two Lieutenants, two Sergeants and a Chief's Aide/Field Incident Technician. Part-paid/on-call employees are paid an hourly rate when they work which includes responding to emergency calls, attending required trainings, meetings or carrying out tasks directed or assigned by department leadership. Officers receive an additional stipend.

In 2016, the township had a 1.0 FTE vacancy in the Department of Public Works (DPW). The Chief and Township Superintendent collaborated to replace this position with a shared DPW and Fire Department employee. This position now provides 20 hours of dedicated coverage per week. Additionally, the position is available to respond for high priority calls during the remaining 20 hours of the work week. This coverage is needed during weekdays as most of the remaining part-paid/on-call employees have other full time employment.

Delivering service

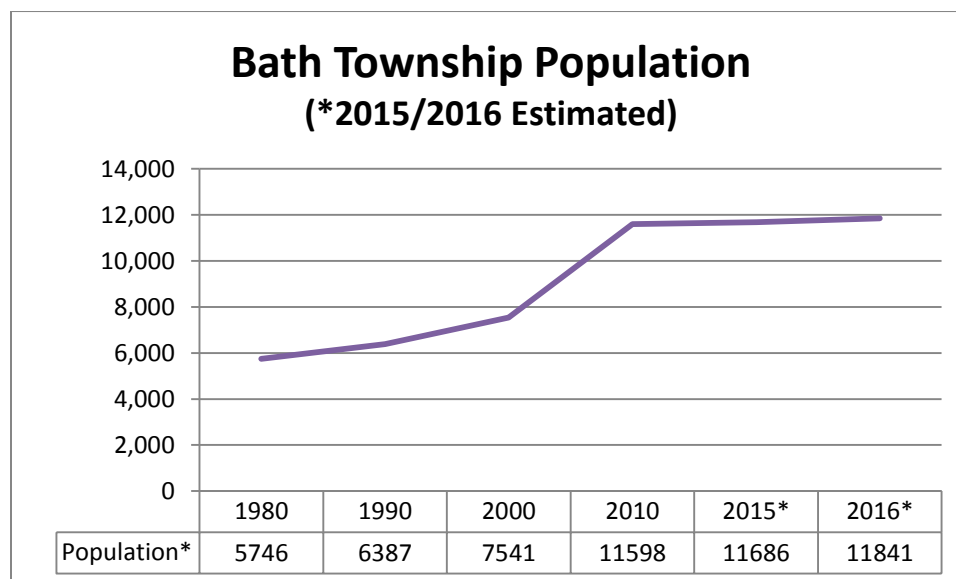
The service delivery model tasks the Fire Chief with administrative responsibility for the department including making policy, hiring personnel, carrying out disciplinary functions, planning and monitoring department budget(s), and ensuring compliance with regulations directed toward fire service. The Fire Chief also represents BTFD at local and regional meetings and workgroups involving other jurisdictions' public safety agencies and operations. The Fire Chief additionally responds to emergency calls as required for efficient operations. The Assistant Chief and other officers have primary responsibility for responding to emergency calls as availability dictates and are assigned limited tasks and responsibilities. Department officers work an average of twelve hours per month including required monthly meetings. The part-paid/on-call firefighters train and work an average of six hours per month responding to emergency calls as available around work, school, family and other obligations. The normal response on medical assist calls is 1-4 responders while fire response ranges 4-12.

Cooperating agencies

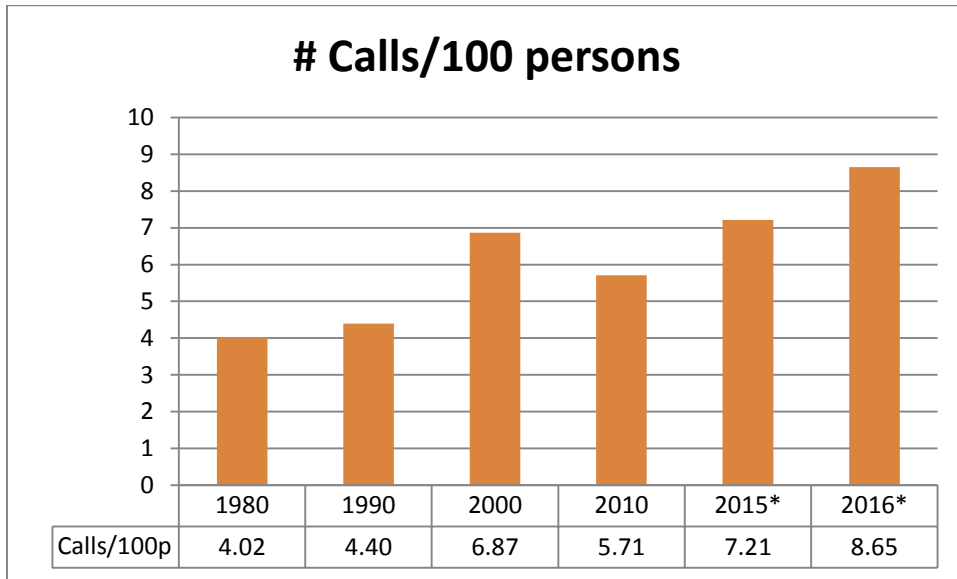
The Township has designated Lansing Mercy Ambulance of Dewitt to provide automatic advanced life support response and transportation. When Lansing Mercy Ambulance is unavailable, mutual aid agreements provide advanced life support response and transport from neighboring agencies. Dewitt Township Fire Department assists BTFD on an automatic basis for fire calls. Further, all Clinton County Fire Departments have signed a mutual aid agreement to help each other when need arises and resources are available. BTFD also provides rescue and fire protection for several thousand acres of State of Michigan Department of Transportation and Department of Natural Resources land with no state funding or assistance.

Numbers

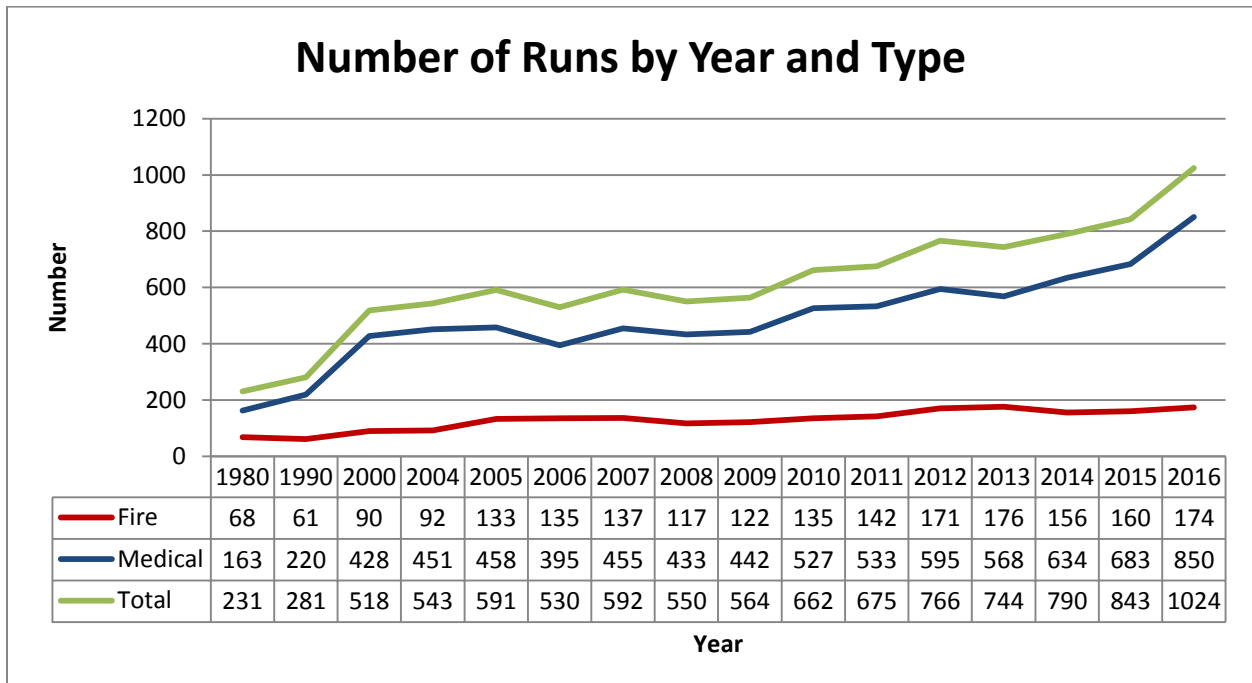
The call volume for BTFD has increased significantly as the Township's population has grown since 1980.



In addition to a greater number requiring service, this period has also been characterized by a doubling of the call for service. When total run volume is analyzed by 100 persons, the response increased from 4.02 calls/100 in 1980 to 8.65 calls/100 in 2016.



Medical emergency response numbers account for approximately 80% while fire response calls make up the remaining 20% on average over the last 16 years. Fire calls increased 13% from 2010-2016 while medical calls increased 27% per year during this same time. The increase in medical response calls has occurred despite eliminating outdated automatic response categories such as requests for non-emergent nursing facility or Urgent Care transfers. These calls are characterized by a request for transport by the private ambulance company rather than a call for aid.



Recent Accomplishments:

Personnel Recruitment and Retention

Key successes over the last two years include nearly doubling the part-paid/on-call staffing from twelve to 22. The majority of new hires came to the department already having fire and medical first response training. A number of new hires have provided significant injections of perspective, expertise and experience. Tom Hovey was formerly Assistant Chief at Clinton Area Fire and Rescue (CAFAR) and has over twenty years of experience. Similarly, Walt Holden was a Captain at Lansing Fire Department with nearly thirty years of experience.

Participation in Multi-Agency Efforts

Department staff members have also increased participation with countywide organizations. Capt. Walt Holden was recently appointed to help run the Clinton County Fire School. Chief Dan Oberst has been elected vice president of the Clinton County Chief's Association and nominated to serve on the Clinton County 911 Policy Committee. Most importantly, the department has been able to retain key people including Dave Snyder and Milt Sivak. Chief Oberst and Chief Rose (Bath Township Police Department) have further prioritized cooperation between the two agencies. Within the last year, the efforts of both departments resulted in two automatic external defibrillator saves and an ice rescue save of a community member and her dog.

Through diligent documentation and cooperative dialogue, BTFD convinced Clinton County Central Dispatch (CCCD) to invest over \$70,000 of county funds on installing a pager repeater at the new Cutler Road radio tower. Prior to this, fire paging was working marginally and firefighters missed pages resulting in poor response to emergency calls. Since installation, the occurrence of missed pages due to radio coverage has been nearly completely eliminated.

Training:

The department invested in an electronic system to manage and document firefighter training. This provides a ready reference to department staff and leadership to ensure that all employees are compliant with MIOSHA and other regulatory agencies. In 2016, BTFD received a \$10,000 FEMA Grant awarded on a competitive basis for Blue Card Incident Management training. This funding will support fire officer operations training to a national standard and may be able to support partner agencies as well. Active Violent Incident (AVI) training will be offered to the department in 2017-2018. This training will allow firefighters to respond to AVIs earlier in the incident in cooperation with law enforcement. This may result in more lives saved instead of deferring response until the "police work" is done.

Fire Station Utilization/Maintenance

In addition to providing an environment for firefighters to exercise study and socialize with each other, the Fire Station is also available to other township employees to visit, work and at times share a meal. Having the firefighters and other township staff in and around the station more frequently results in more timely maintenance of the facility and its equipment. More importantly, the department can improve response times by providing a setting in which firefighters may gather.

Equipment Utilization/Maintenance

The department took possession of a new Fast Attack Response Vehicle (FARV) during 2016. The new truck, A-62, is smaller, faster, and is stocked with the most frequently utilized equipment. Maintenance costs are lower with this vehicle and the versatility limits wear and tear (miles and hours) on the larger, more expensive trucks. The plan is to buy another FARV in 2018 and then a squad (multirole response unit) in 2019. The department may request to expedite the squad purchase if a reliable used one becomes available. Soon, at least four older trucks will be eliminated from the fleet.

In addition to the building and equipment, fire apparatus is now maintained on a regular schedule. In 2016 the Fire Department spent over \$25,000 on apparatus maintenance and repair. Equipment is now on a maintenance and replacement schedule similar to that for vehicles. The newly developed multiyear replacement plan is tied to the multiyear budget to replace and/or service equipment regularly. This will decrease the need to maintain problematic old equipment while keeping state of the art safety equipment serviceable and available to protect residents as well as firefighters.

Current Challenges:

Principal Limiting Factors – Funding/Staffing

Recruiting and retaining Firefighters and Emergency Medical Personnel is a nationwide challenge. Firefighters are especially hard to recruit in the Bath Township service model which relies almost exclusively on part-paid/on-call staff that start at slightly above minimum wage. These firefighters juggle full-time employment, busy family schedules, other community or organization volunteer opportunities, significant training demands, and the risk of injury or death for little monetary reward. Many new prospects resign or fail to meet standards within two years. Of 22 personnel, only six have more than five years with BTFD. In addition to firefighter shortages, the department has little secretarial support or “front office” representation resulting in service delays to the public.

Deferred Maintenance/Acquisitions

Years of deferred maintenance and acquisitions due to economic instability and other factors have led to recent spikes in expenditures likely requiring four to five more years to stabilize. The good news is the station facility is now returning to a normal state after much deferred maintenance.

Minimal Guidance and Expectations

Little guidance from the public or elected leaders on options for service delivery models or standards has historically been received. The current model of emergency service delivery is scarcely adequate and arguments could be made for two remedies:

1. Invest in the department and increase the standard; or
2. Decrease functions substantially and only provide high priority medical and fire response.

Super-utilizer Impact

Bath Township has experienced variation in the characteristics of the population. The proportion of population that resides in single family homes or farms has plateaued while the availability of higher-density housing and specialized housing (i.e. medical care facilities) has increased. The impact of this growth is an increased demand for services. Metropolitan communities with fully staffed fire departments may be equipped to manage the additional responses. A department relying on a part-paid/on-call model of service requires alternatives (e.g. imposing fees on false alarms, hiring additional staff, etc.) to deal with this.

Bath Township has grown much recently and so have certain user's impact on the Fire Department and other residents. In an average lifetime a single family home will utilize the fire departments services less than once per 20 year period. In the case or properties such as an apartment building or complex of buildings, the multiplier is the number of residents. This holds true for other high density uses such as manufactured home communities or office buildings. Other uses of property such as free standing emergency medical care facilities, drinking establishments, student housing, and congregate care facilities use the resources of the Fire Department at an even higher rate. While most metropolitan communities have the ability to absorb this increase, rural communities such as ours do not. Take for instance an average home that may have a smoke detector activate and notify no one, does not require a Fire Department response. An apartment complex with thousands of detectors occupied by young adults who frequently burn a meal means the fire department responds several times a month. Also an adult foster care operation full of elderly or infirmed people may also use the resource several times per month. While taxation may address part of this issue, False alarm fees for addresses with frequent use may encourage better maintenance on alarm systems or curbing behaviors that bring the fire department when not needed.

Department Goals:

Short term (within 12 months):

1. Increase the number of personnel on the roster. It is sometimes difficult to assemble a crew to respond to calls. Increased numbers of staff may ensure a better chance at adequate staffing and distribute the work load to more individuals.
2. Adopt an updated version of the International Fire Code or adopt the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1 code. The last adoption was the 2009 version and the code has since been updated twice.
3. Continue to develop the multi-year replacement and budget plans.
4. Institute measures to curb and seek cost recovery from super-utilizers.

Long term:

1. Increase on-duty staffing to plan, maintain, train, and provide quicker response to calls. Presently the time from notification of a call to response at times exceeds 10 minutes. Add 5-7 minutes to travel to the call and occasionally BTFD arrives as second responders behind the ambulance.
2. Certify or hire staff that may perform the following key functions: 1) life safety and fire inspections, and 2) plans examiner. BTFD is responsible for building and venue

inspections to ensure the safety of visitors and residents in all commercial, assembly, and non-owner occupied residential buildings. There is no evidence to support the Department's ongoing inspection of buildings beyond that required to obtain a final occupancy certificate. The recent fire in Oakland, California reinforces the need for the township to ensure owners are providing safe conditions for their tenants and visitors. This year we will attempt to get two Firefighters trained and certified as fire inspectors.

3. Provide a sustainable service delivery model that has resources available for use, ensures a small surge capability for busy times and events, and avoids providing unnecessary or duplicated services.

Requests for Consideration to Board of Trustees:

- Approve funding to hire at least 1.0 FTE fire inspector, plans examiner, and life safety /community risk reduction coordinator in support of long term goal #2.
- Fund 40 hours of part-time firefighters in addition to the on-call model in support of short term goal # 1.
- Adopt an updated fire code in support of short term goal #2.
- Continue the multi-year planning and budgeting strategy in support of short term goal # 3.
- Give scope of work, scope of authority, direction, and expectations to Police and Fire Advisory Committee (board).
- Provide input to the Fire Chief and Police and Fire Advisory Committee members to explore additional ways to improve or reduce BTFD services in support of long term goal #3.
- Be aggressive in formulating strategies that require property maintenance/fire protection code compliance on fire suppression and detection, as well as property access in accordance with local and adopted codes and ordinances in support of short term goal #2 and long term goal # 2.
- Maintain the Fire Department as a non-transporting emergency response function to avoid improper expenditures for redundant services in support of long term goal #3.
- Research and consider policy/ordinance models that require super-utilizers (a person that uses an extraordinary amount of the Fire Department resources) to pay some portion of the expense of response in support of short term goal # 4.
- Approve reasonable fees to fund unusual amounts of use, and discourage inappropriate use of township resources in support of short term goal #4.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel Oberst
Fire Chief
Bath Charter Township