

Fire Services Study

Norristown Borough
Montgomery County, PA

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Pennsylvania
Department of Community
& Economic Development
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Governor's Center for
Local Government Services

Scott Little
Fire Peer Consultant



Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Josh Shapiro, Governor

PA Department of Community & Economic Development
Rick Siger, Secretary
dced.pa.gov



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Executive Summary

The Governor's Center for Local Government Services (GCLGS) was requested by the Borough of Norristown, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania to conduct a fire services study for their municipally funded Norristown Fire Department (NFD). This project included completing significant research and data collection which occurred in the summer of 2025. The GCLGS lead Fire Peer Consultant conducted the necessary field work related to this project and subsequently completed this report. GCLGS is pleased to submit this study to guide municipal officials in making informed decisions about future fire service delivery, operations, staffing, and infrastructure.

Purpose

Municipalities have an obligation to their citizens that include periodically reviewing the fire service that they are responsible for delivering under the municipal laws of the Commonwealth. The purpose should be to make sure that fire protection is being delivered with the needed resources, operational efficiencies, and management oversight that citizens expectations are met.

Methodology Used

To better understand the municipality, technical information and data for this report have been provided by various sources. These sources are deemed to be dependable, valid, and cited where appropriate. Additional information has been gathered from written documents, site visits, and interviews. Such information is submitted in the report and is believed to be valid for the purpose presented. No part of this report constitutes an audit of financial statements. The intent of this report is to provide information for municipal officials to assist in making informed decisions regarding public fire protection for the Municipality of Norristown.

Opinions expressed herein are those of the Peer Consultant based on the best practices of the modern fire service and should not be constructed or interpreted as the opinion of any agency with which the Peer Consultant is affiliated.

Overview

In depth reviews were conducted on the following areas during data collection and assessment.

- Funding Sources
- Effective Staffing Model
- Fire Apparatus/Equipment
- Response Times
- Training/Qualifications
- Fire Station Locations/Facilities
- Standard Operating Procedures/Guidelines
- Incident Response Types

Recommendations

Throughout this report, the Fire Peer Consultant and DCED provides evaluation and analysis of the municipality and the NFD based on participants' supply of requested data. The leadership and members of its organization should be commended for their proactive approach and requesting a fire services study. These actions and intentional conversation throughout the process demonstrate the willingness to continuous improvement while being focused on efficiency, effectiveness, and the safety of the public. Where appropriate, the report makes recommendations for consideration and implementation steps.

Emphasis on Sustainability

The sustainability of fire protection and how the service is delivered is a central concern addressed throughout the study. As the community faces shrinking volunteerism, aging infrastructure, increased demand on current services, future land development, and limited financial resources, the path forward requires a deliberate focus on long-term viability, balancing operational effectiveness, fiscal responsibility, and resiliency.

Key Findings

- Sustainable and effective staffing model to maintain and achieve community expectations into the future.
- Upgrade infrastructure to support all-hazards response, health and safety initiatives for staff.
- Optimize service delivery through regional planning and collaboration when appropriate.
- Expand Community Risk Reduction Initiatives. Soley dedicated Fire Marshal to overseeing Fire Safety Inspection Program and administrating the entire program.
- Fire apparatus replacement schedule that outlines systematically replacing aging apparatus while controlling cost and long-term outlook on funding needs.
- Explore new funding revenue streams including user fees, grants, and enhanced fire tax strategies.

Conclusion

With the rapid growth from successful economic development and housing stock increase, proactive and sustainable investments in fire and emergency services will be required to meet the service demands. By implementing the recommendations of this report, the Borough of Norristown can ensure resilient and community-focused fire protection for the years ahead.

The fire department benefits from proactive leadership that strongly supports its dedicated staff. The commitment and initiative of its personnel drive the department's success, and the ongoing efforts toward continuous improvement have established it as a recognized leader in Pennsylvania's fire service.

Introduction: Objectives & Study Design

This Assessment of Fire Service Delivery for the Borough of Norristown was conducted by Scott Little, Fire Services Peer Consultant. He was assigned to carry out this scope of services and provide a report of observations and recommendations to the Governor's Center for Local Government Services, and the Borough of Norristown.

An initial meeting was held with representatives from the municipality to develop the scope of services. The main objective of all interviewed was to determine the level of service being provided to the residents of the borough.

The scope of services for this project has been identified in the overview section of the Executive Summary.

For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that the information provided by the municipality and their officials is accurate and complete.

The primary objectives of this Assessment of Fire Service Delivery for NFD are as follows:

- **Provide Clear and Accurate Information:** Deliver a comprehensive overview of the current state of fire protection services, including apparatus inventory, response times, station locations, staffing levels, and community demographics.
- **Support Decision-Making:** Offer data-driven insight to assist municipal officials and fire department leadership in making informed decisions regarding resource allocation, strategic planning, and policy development.
- **Evaluate Performance:** Assess the effectiveness and efficiency of current delivery of fire protection services by analyzing key performance indicators and comparing them against established standards such as those set by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA).
- **Identify Trends and Emerging Risks:** Analyze historical data to detect patterns in call volume, response times, and community growth, enabling proactive identification of potential challenges and areas requiring attention.
- **Recommend Strategies for Recruitment and Retention:** Develop actionable recommendations to enhance staffing levels both career and volunteer, focusing on recruitment, retention, training, and succession planning to ensure sustainable service delivery.
- **Enhance Community Risk Reduction Efforts:** Propose initiatives aimed at mitigating fire and life safety risks within the community, including public safety education programs, fire prevention strategies, and targeted outreach to vulnerable populations.
- **Facilitate Long-Term Planning and Investment:** Inform long-term planning efforts by identifying infrastructure needs, potential station location, apparatus replacement schedule, and funding opportunities to support growth and evolving service demands.

By achieving these objectives, the report aims to strengthen the municipality's fire protection capabilities, enhance public safety, and ensure the efficient and effective delivery of emergency services to the residents of Norristown.

The transformation in Norristown built around rapid revitalizing projects has allowed for a population increase over the past two decades. These successes have several impacts for the sustainability of emergency services.

- **Increase Demand:** A larger population in urban high demand zones requires expanded fire protection programs, EMS, and public safety services. The demand will continue to increase as population and development expand into the municipality.
- **Infrastructure Needs:** Strategic planning for the most effective response to all corners of the municipality with an emphasis on regional cooperation.
- **Staffing Considerations:** Recruitment and retention of emergency response personnel must keep pace with population growth to ensure adequate coverage of both career and volunteer members.
- **Community Engagement:** Enhanced public education and community risk reduction programs will be vital in addressing the needs of a diversifying population.

Municipal Overview – Borough of Norristown

The Borough of Norristown is a borough with home rule status and the county seat of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, United States, in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. Located along the Schuylkill River, Norristown had a population of 36,075 as of the 2024 census. It is the fourth-most populous municipality in the county and second-most populous borough in Pennsylvania.

It is the largest non-township municipality in Montgomery County and is located 49.8 miles southeast of Allentown and 18.8 miles northwest of Philadelphia.

Norristown has four distinct neighborhoods: the West End, the East End, the North End, and the downtown.

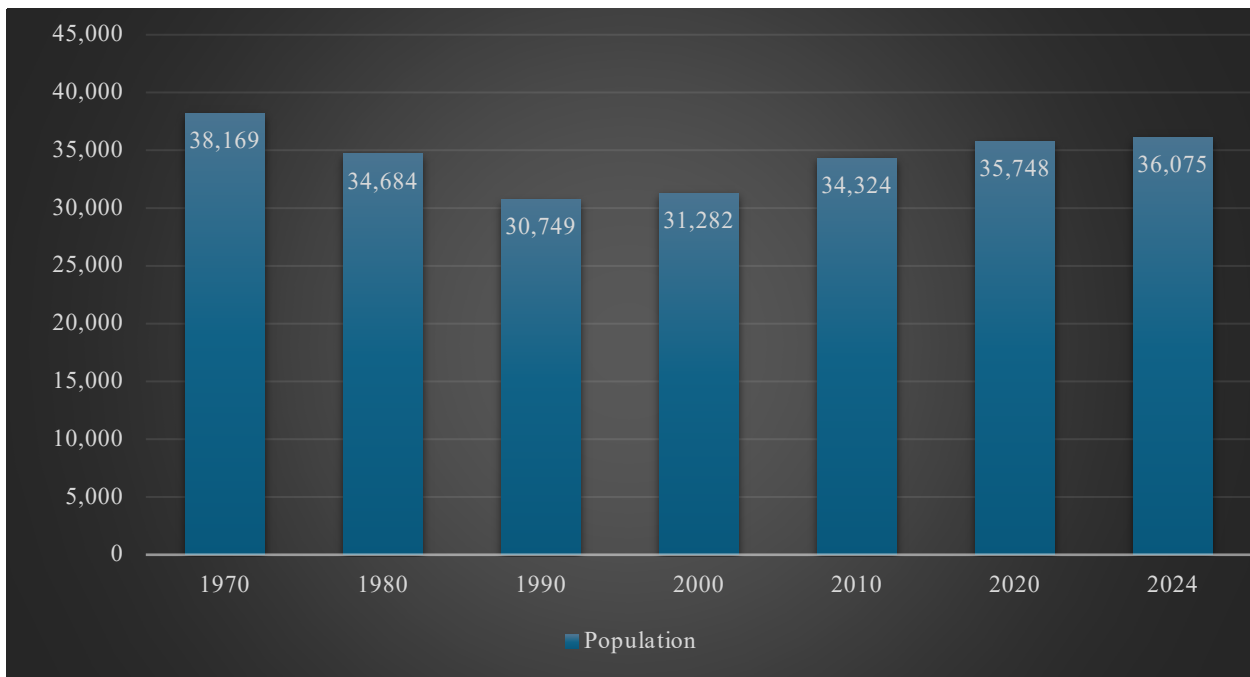
Norristown's economy is based largely on institutions in the government, healthcare, legal, and social services sectors. The Montgomery County government is the municipality's largest employer. Major Norristown employees include the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection, the Montgomery County Intermediate Unit, and the Norristown Area School District.

Race and Ethnicity
32.9% Hispanic
32.2% Black
26.3% White

Median Age
33.7 years

Median Income
\$65,058

Population Over the Years



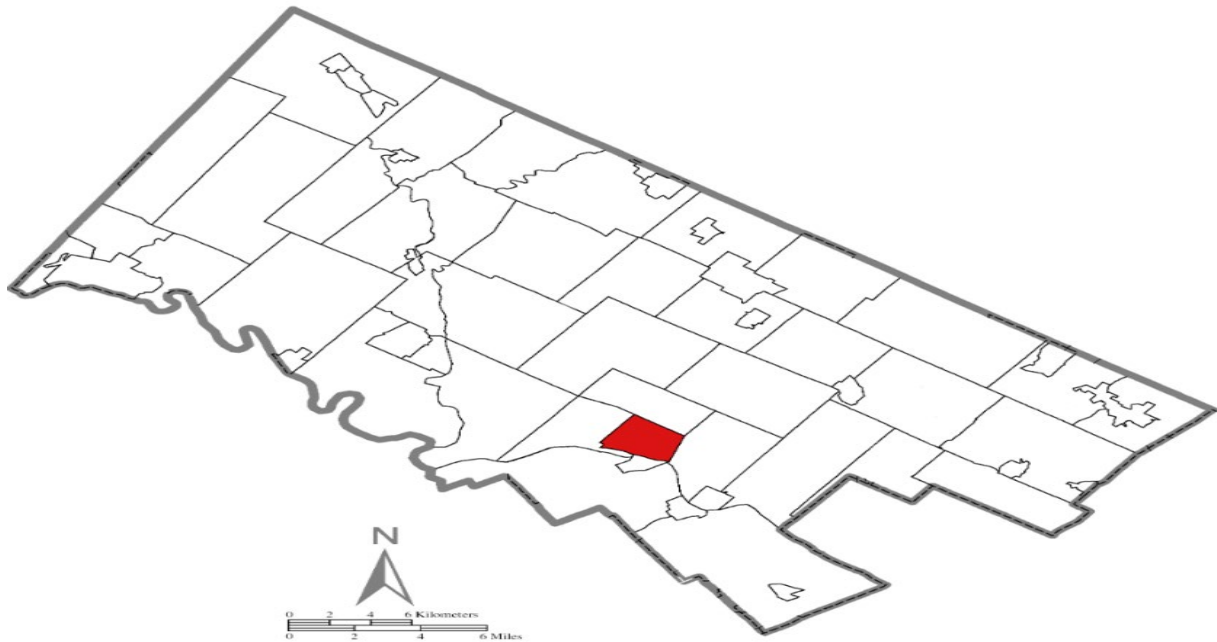
Municipality of Norristown

2025 General Fund Budget

- Total General Fund Revenue - \$43,792,153
- Fire Department Budget - \$6,218,203

Percentage of Fire Department portion of budget 14%.

Real property taxation in 2025 on each dollar assessed valuation at a rate of 19.00 mills to support general government services expenses.



Norristown's 3.5 square mile borough is bordered by West Norriton, East Norriton, and Plymouth, well as the borough of Bridgeport.

Fire Service:

Municipality funded combination department as recognized by the Office of the State Fire Commissioner.

EMS:

Provided by Plymouth Community Ambulance Association (PCAA). PCAA serves twelve municipalities.

Other:

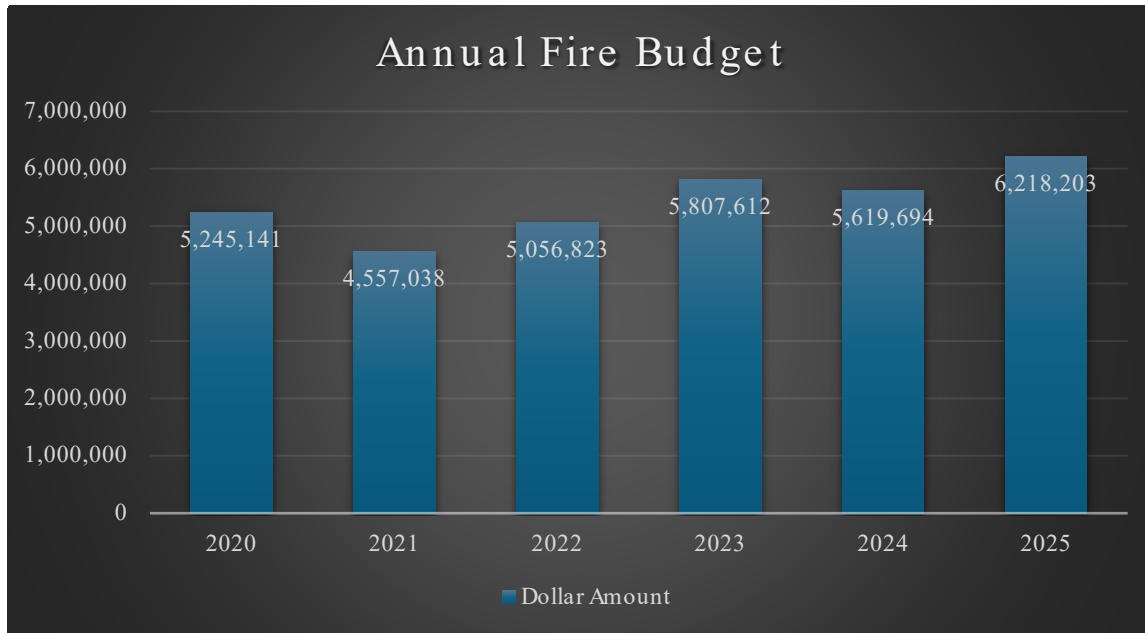
Norristown residents are afforded a full service of municipal funded departments that include administrative, police, and public works.

Public Protection Classification (PPC) Class 2 as of 2025.

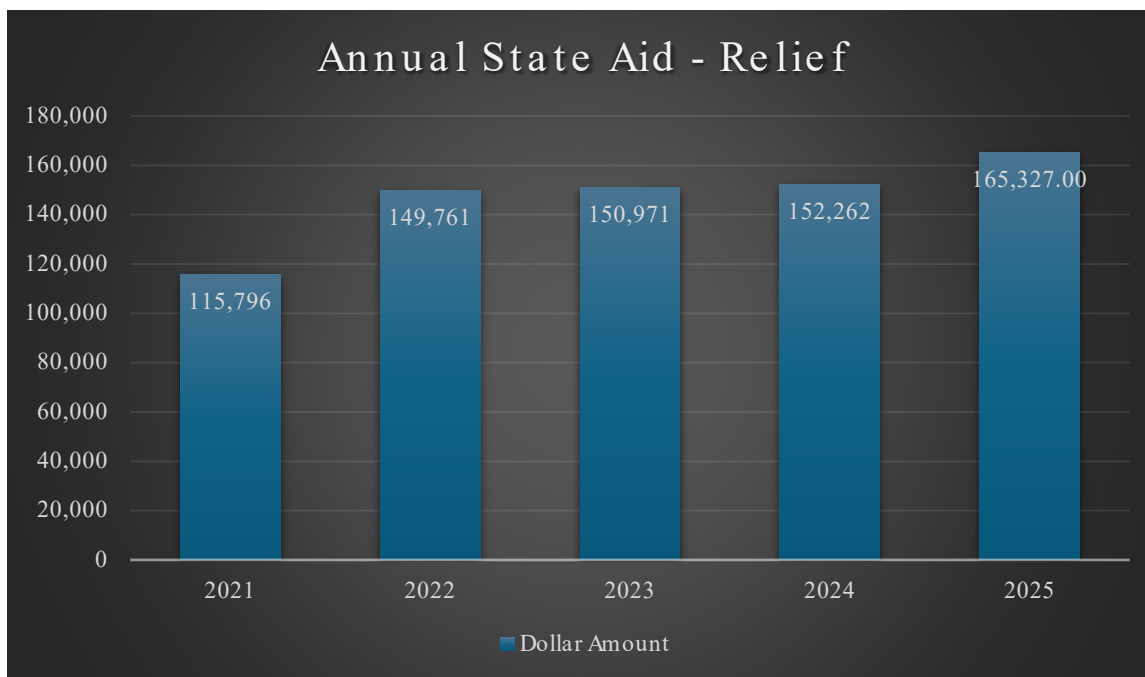
Municipal Overview – Current Situation

Municipal fire protection is provided through the local government as a combination system which consists of both career and volunteer members. An all-hazard response organization trained and equipped to handle a wide range of emergencies, including both natural and human-made disasters.

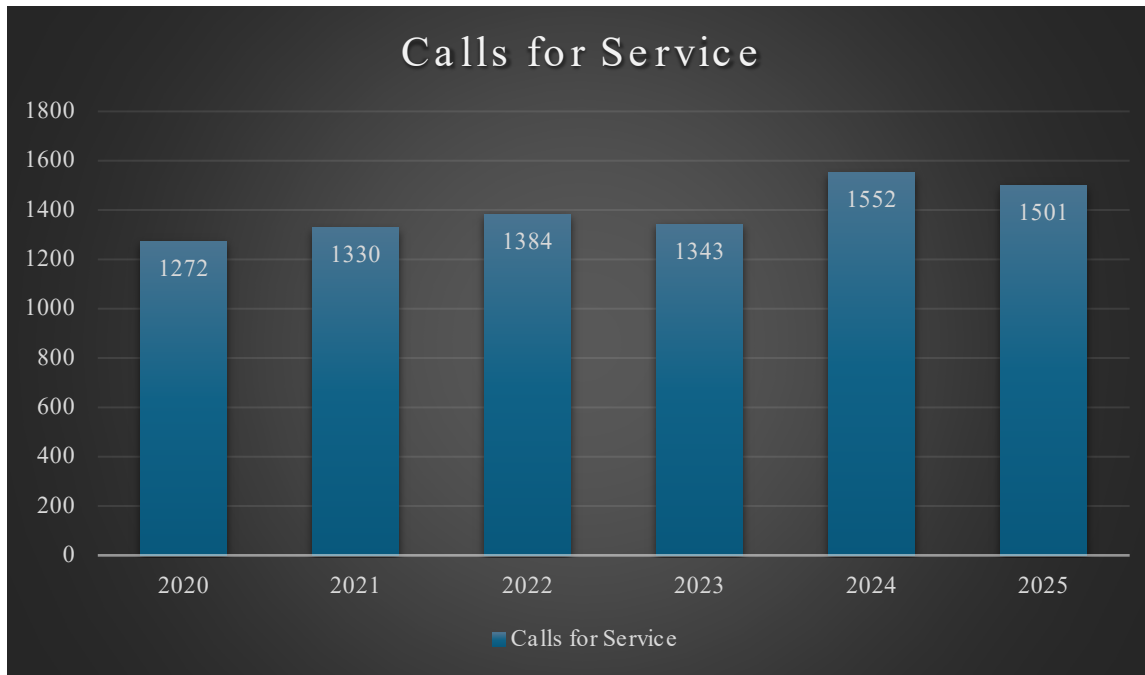
Fire Department Budget



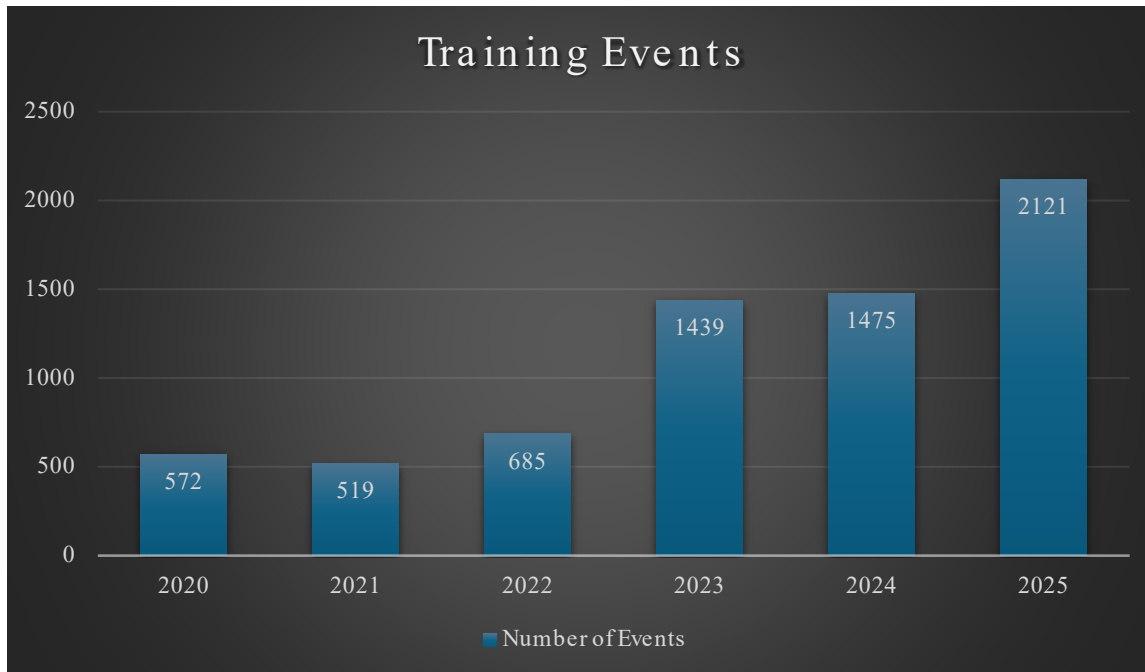
Fire Department Relief State Aid



Fire Department Emergency Dispatches



Fire Department Training Events

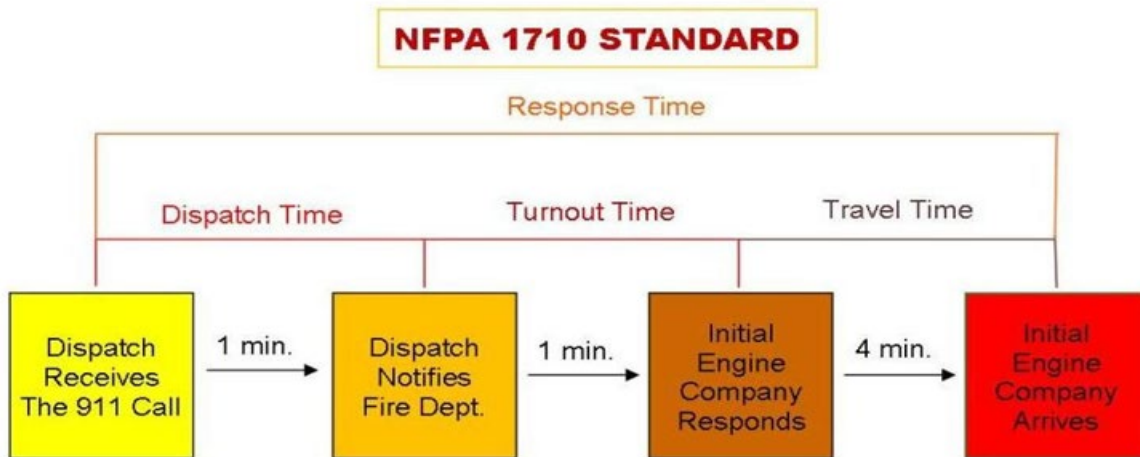


Mission Statement:

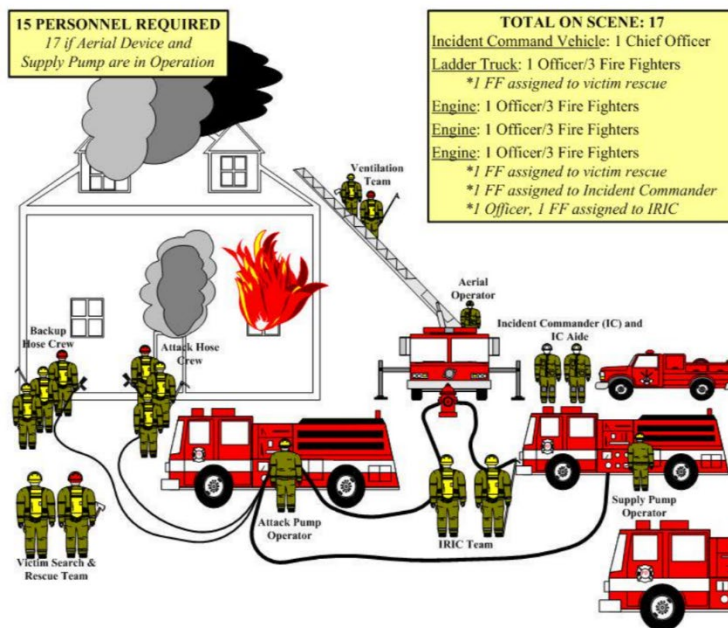
To protect lives and property through prevention, education, preparedness, and response.

Operational Readiness

Measurable Description	Average for NFD	Target
Average Response Time (Dispatch, Turnout, Travel Time to On Scene)	4 minutes 21 seconds	Response Goal for first unit total response time for a fire dispatch = <5 minutes 90% of the time



NFD continues to exceed both internal goals and NFPA recommendations when addressing the need for immediate response to an emergency.



Fire Department Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2025-2028

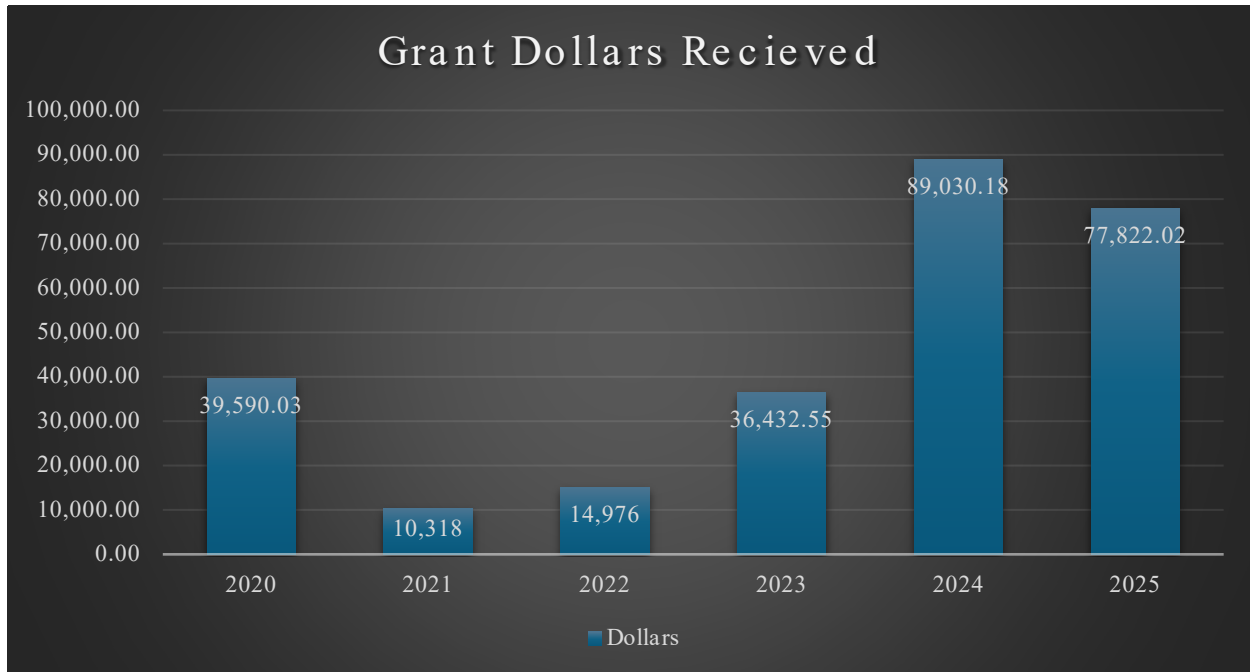
The CIP allows municipal officials and management to effectively plan, approve, and implement a sustained and continuous effort when operating a modern fire protection service delivery system through a proactive budgeting strategy. This is necessary for creating a baseline of equipment and identifying the sources of funding to support an equipment and facilities replacement schedule based on a formally established policy specifying the useful service life of equipment and facilities. Certain safety equipment, such as structural firefighting gear and self-contained breathing apparatus, have OSHA/NFPA mandated service life.

Year	Purchase Request from NFD
2025	Water Rescue Boat \$25,000 *Fire Station \$12,000,000
2026	Ladder Truck \$2,500,000 Rescue Pumper \$1,500,000 Fire Chief Vehicle Replacement \$100,000
2027	**eDraulic Rescue Tools \$100,000
2028	Deputy Chief Vehicle Replacement \$115,000 Marine Unit \$500,000

* Limited number of volunteers to staff the existing three fire stations, eliminate duplication of equipment and effort, decrease operational costs. Facilities have outlived their usefulness without major upgrades.

**Municipal officials should work with volunteer firefighter relief association and/or grant funding to offset costs with future approved equipment purchases which are permitted under the statutory authority of the Volunteer Firefighters' Relief Associations (VFRAs) that are contained in the VFRA Act.

Grant Awards



These grants have significantly improved the health and safety of firefighters serving in these fire stations, as well as the well-being of the broader community. With this funding, Fire Department leadership has been able to purchase essential items such as exercise equipment, smoke alarms, training props, and PPE extractors and dryers.

Economic Improvement Projects

With the planned land development in Norristown, the demand for emergency services and community risk reduction initiatives is expected to rise. As the population continues to grow, so too will the demand for these essential services.

- Norristown State Hospital
- The Grand at Main and DeKalb
- Arbor Place
- Arbor Knoll Townhomes
- Montgomery Park Senior Housing
- Baer Building Redevelopment
- 257 East Main Street Redevelopment
- Elmwood Zoo Park
- Benjamin Court
- New Hope Street
- Green Valley Road
- East Fornance Street
- West Wood Street
- DeKalb Street
- Thomas Street
- Sandy Hill
- Stinson Hall
- Curren Terrace
- Montgomery County Justice Center
- Lafayette Street Corridor
- Markley Street Reconstruction Project
- One Montgomery Plaza
- Nexus Apartments
- Arts Hill
- Main Street Streetscape

Implementation of recommendations will be critical for long-term sustainability within the fire department and their rapid deployment to emergencies.

Economic growth can positively impact public safety by increasing government tax revenue to support more services, equipment, and personnel. This investment can lead to safer communities.

Public Protection Classification (PPC) Program

To help establish appropriate fire insurance premiums for residential and commercial properties, insurance companies need reliable, up-to-date information about a community's fire-protection services. ISO provides that information through the Public Protection Classification (PPC®) program.

The PPC collects information on municipal fire-protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, the PPC analyzes the relevant data using the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS). They then assign a Public Protection Classification from 1 to 10. Class 1 generally represents superior property fire protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program doesn't meet the minimum criteria.



By classifying communities' ability to suppress fires, they help the communities evaluate their public fire-protection services. The program provides an objective, countrywide standard that helps fire departments in planning and budgeting for facilities, equipment, and training. And by securing lower fire insurance premiums for communities with better public protection, the PPC program provides incentives and rewards for communities that choose to improve their firefighting services. More than 40,000 fire-response jurisdictions are evaluated across the United States. In Pennsylvania, 2,036 evaluations were completed with only 27 agencies receiving a PPC rating of 1 or 2.

Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) Overview

The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria used in reviewing the fire prevention and fire suppression capabilities of individual communities or fire protection areas. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire protection system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPC®).

FSRS employs nationally accepted standards developed by such organizations as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the American Water Works Association (AWWA), and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International. When those organizations update their standards, the evaluation changes as well. The PPC program always provides a useful benchmark that helps fire departments and other public officials measure the effectiveness of their efforts — and plan improvements.

The FSRS lists several items that a community should have to fight fires effectively. The schedule is performance based and assigns credit points for each item. Using the credit points and various formulas, they calculate a total score on a scale of 0 to 105.5.

Scores and PPC Ratings

The FSRS considers three main areas of a community's fire suppression system: emergency communications, fire department (including operational considerations), and water supply. In addition, it includes a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation.

Volunteer Fire Service Historical Review

Volunteer firefighters are summoned to a wide array of emergencies across the country every day including fires, emergency medical incidents, vehicle accidents, terrorist and active shooter events, natural disasters, hazardous materials incidents, water rescue emergencies, high-angle and confined space emergencies, and other public service calls. The public relies on the volunteer emergency services to be their first line of defense in these emergencies. Volunteers spend an enormous amount of time training to prepare for these emergencies.

Today, volunteers comprise 65% of firefighters in the United States. The time donated by volunteer firefighters saves municipalities across the country an estimated \$46.9 billion dollars per year. The cost savings provided by fire service volunteers is tremendous. For many communities, transitioning to a career staffing model is not feasible.

Many local volunteer fire departments are struggling to meet staffing needs. The number of volunteer firefighters in the U.S. reached a low in 2020. At the same time, call volume has more than tripled in the last 35 years, due in large part to the increase in emergency medical calls. Major factors contributing to recruitment challenges include increased time demands, more rigorous training requirements, and the proliferation of two-income families whose members do not have time to volunteer. Fire departments today are also expected to provide a wide range of services and multi-hazard response, creating further challenges for resource constrained departments.

Community leaders need to ask these questions:

Are we duplicating equipment and service?

Are we placing higher emphasis on competent trained firefighters to answer the call or demand more hours to fundraise?

Are we treating our greatest asset, our volunteers, with a work/life balance

Challenges Facing Volunteerism

Recruitment and Retention Challenges	Time Demand
Changes in Sociological Conditions	Training Requirements
Industry Changed	Call Volume
Aging Membership	Higher Cost of Living (Dual Income)

The number of volunteer firefighters in Pennsylvania has fallen from 300,000 in the 1970's to 38,000 in 2018. An estimated 30,000 in 2026.

Due to these challenges, cooperation among communities is essential to blend together across defined municipal boundaries. Every day, mutual aid is provided and received for fires, vehicle crashes, medical emergencies, and a variety of other calls for citizens in need of a rapid, caring response. According to the Intergovernmental Cooperation Handbook published by the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development (DCED), municipalities are not walls or barricades.

It has been proven that cooperation will lead to better efficiency and effectiveness in the provision of services. As communities grow, so does the need for new and expanded services. Citizens will expect more from their government and fire department. Cooperation is the future: the question is whether it is in your department's future. How to make cooperation work?

- Inclusive and Intentional from the start
- Involve members and leaders of the fire department
- Involve community members
- Involve elected officials and municipal staff

It is essential to communicate effectively. If members of the process are not kept informed, decisions will be made on assumptions rather than facts. To maintain a cooperative spirit, it is important to be proactive, flexible, patient, and to think about what is best for the community.

Departments are finding it difficult to attract younger members due to a range of reasons, including increased demands on people's time, longer commuting distances to and from work, the prevalence of two-income households, and increased training requirements.

Norristown's volunteer component is challenged to remain solvent in fire apparatus and response. For 2025, the year-to-date average for volunteer turnout to an emergency is .57. In addition, fire department leadership does not track volunteer apparatus response since the apparatus is used as reserve units staffed by career members.

Consolidation of all NFD response stations into one location will enhance emergency response and operational efficiencies.

- Improved efficiency and Service delivery
- Optimized resource allocation
- Streamlined Operations
- Consistent standards, messaging, and training
- Reduce cost, duplication of effort
- Enhance capabilities and resources
- Merging personnel for emergency response
- Bring all resources under one roof, utilize facility more effectively
- Improve training
- Potential for cost savings
- Initial investment is required
- Long-term benefits outweigh the upfront cost
- Opportunity to sell duplicate apparatus and equipment

- Work towards PPC Class 1
- Addressing Challenges
- Volunteer shortages to respond from multiple stations
- Improve allocation of budget funds
- Reduce budget dollars going towards station maintenance and upkeep
- Public Safety and Community Benefits
- Deploy a robust response force with immediate resources from one location
- Improve communication
- Public education and community center

Small communities (populations under 10,000) across the U.S. are typically protected by all volunteer departments. In some cases, however, these communities have hired a few paid firefighters to assist. Mid-sized communities (populations between 10,000 and 100,000) are typically served by departments that use a combination of volunteer and paid firefighters. Large communities (populations over 100,000) are most often protected by combination paid and volunteer departments that consist of primarily paid staff. There are few strictly paid fire departments in the U.S., but those that exist are primarily found in very urban areas.

There is no national average of the amount of time a volunteer firefighter gives to his or her community. Volunteering in the fire and EMS service, however, is one of the most demanding volunteer activities today. Time commitments include operational responses (often at a moment's notice), training, fundraising, vehicle and station maintenance, and various administrative duties.

Volunteer recruitment and retention have become a challenge for the majority of communities across the nation. Apply recruitment and retention strategies within your community. Some of the best practices include:

- Community engagement
- Modern marketing
- Highlight purpose and impact
- Recognize and Reward Participation
- Promote work-life balance
- Be adaptable to meeting changing needs of community

The General Assembly in Pennsylvania commissioned Senate Resolution 6 report to provide legislative initiatives to address the volunteer crisis throughout the Commonwealth.

- The six areas for recommendations included:
- Emergency Medical Services
- Government Support
- Innovation
- Recruiting and Retention
- Regulations and Codes
- Training and Operations

Local communities must focus on the service being provided and how the local authority having jurisdiction can answer the following questions.

- What do I need to protect the community?
- What are the economic benefits?
- How much will it cost?
- What are my funding sources?
- How do I deliver these services?

At the local level, the elected officials should review and align with these priorities:

- Emphasize the importance of local support for this basic community service
- Provide appropriate levels of funding for necessary equipment and training
- Engage in strategic planning processes with local first responders to address long-term sustainability
- Use of mutual aid to offset service and technical deficiencies
- Use of uniform incident management system
- Use of performance measurements to measure and analyze response times, firefighting effectiveness, training, and retention rates of volunteer fire companies

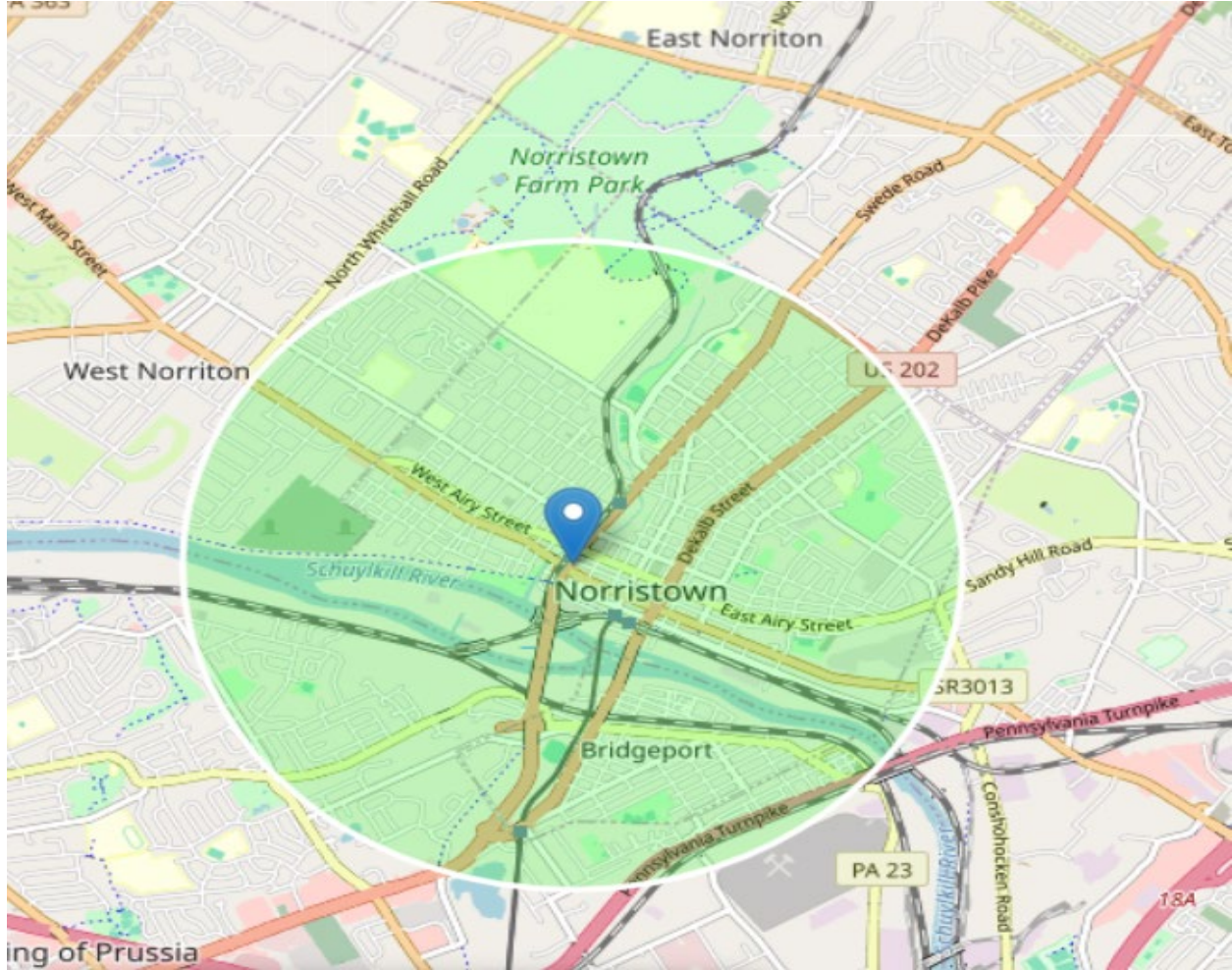
Senate Resolution 6 Commission, Report to the Senate of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, (January 2017).

Future Fire Station Locations:

With local and county officials working together, one proposed site has been considered to consolidate municipal resources into one fire station.

Proposed Fire Station-West Penn Street & Markley Street

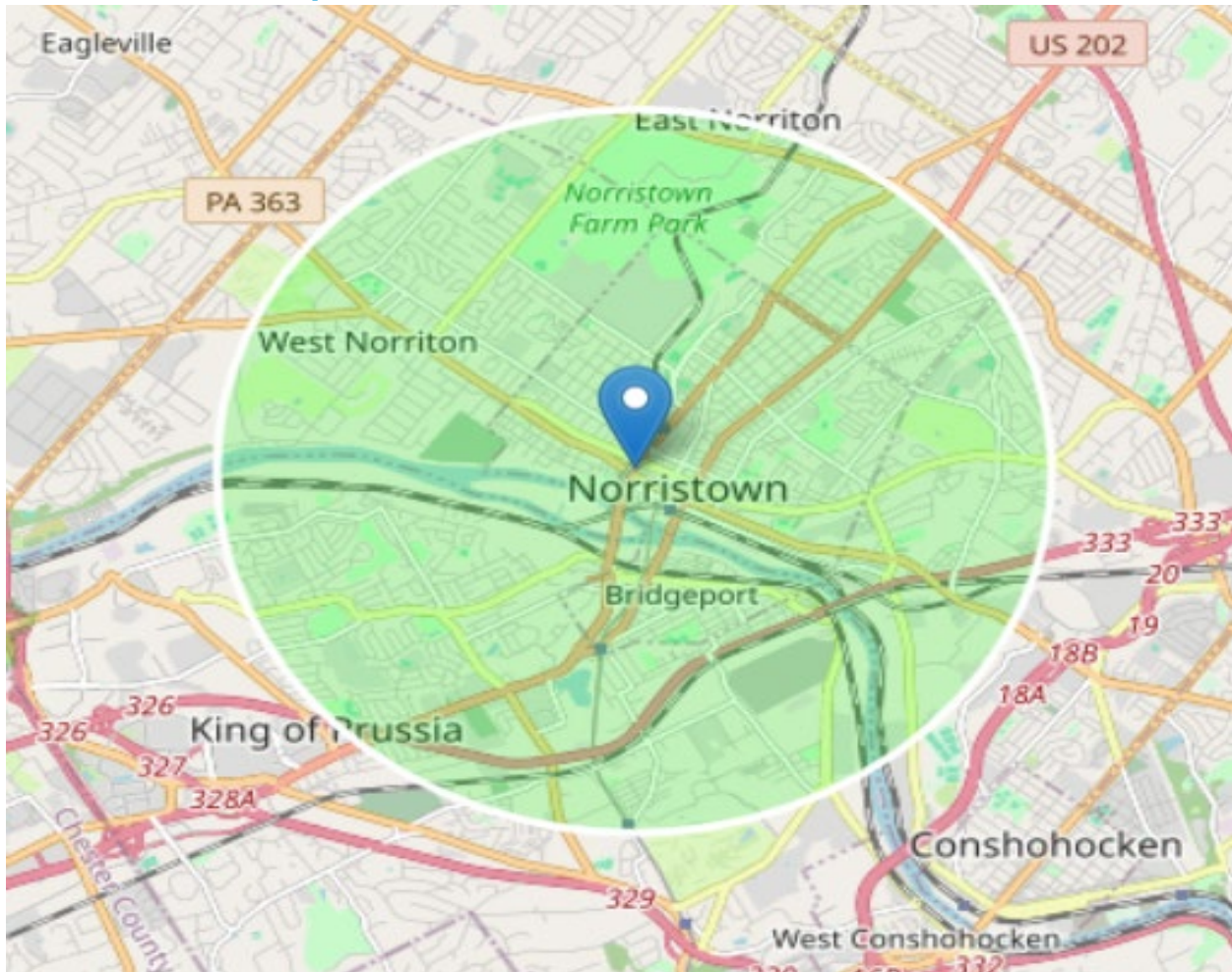
1.5-Mile Area Response Zone



Response area is highlighted above to represent the coverage area based on 1.5-mile area for engine company response zone. A 1.5-mile response zone for an engine company refers to the area within a 1.5-mile road distance from a fire station, which is a standard used in fire protection to ensure a first-arriving engine can reach the scene quickly. This standard is part of a broader deployment analysis, which aims to place fire apparatus close enough to cover residential and commercial properties effectively and meet response time goals set by organizations like NFPA.

Proposed Fire Station at West Penn Street & Markley Street

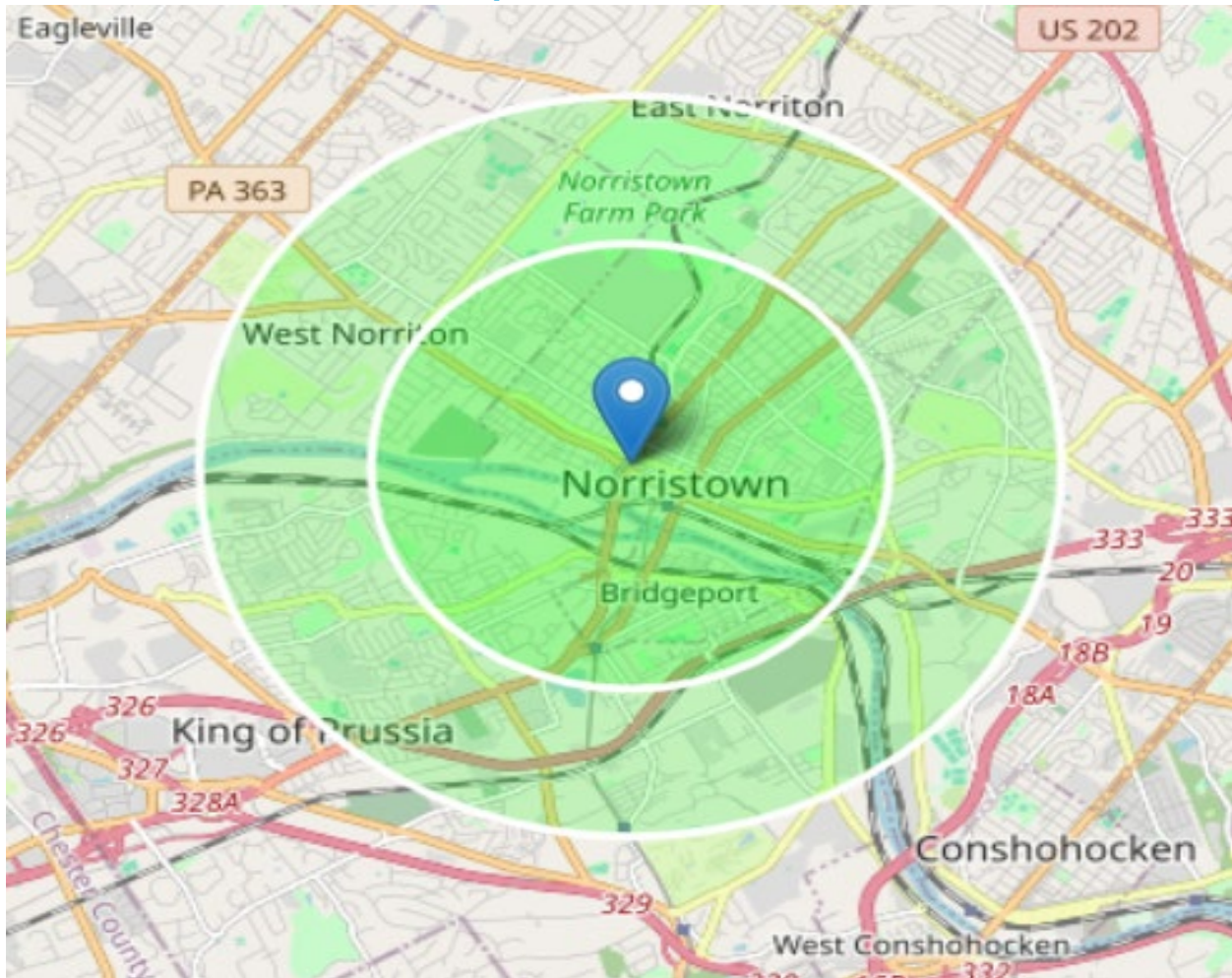
2.5-Mile Area Response Zone



Response area is highlighted above to represent the coverage area based on 2.5-mile area for truck company response zone. A 2.5-mile response zone for the truck company refers to the area within a 2.5-mile road distance from a fire station, which is a standard used in fire protection to ensure a first-arriving ladder truck can reach the scene quickly. This standard is part of a broader deployment analysis, which aims to place fire apparatus close enough to cover residential and commercial properties effectively and meet response time goals set by organizations like NFPA.

Proposed Fire Station at West Penn Street & Markley Street

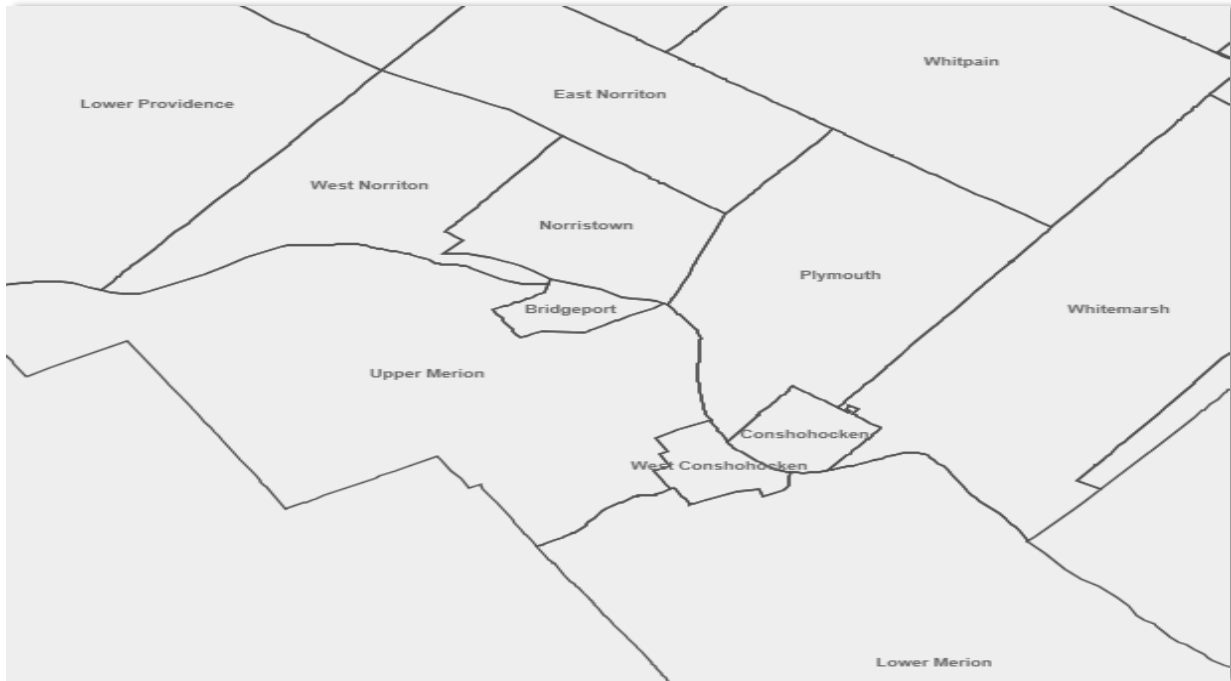
1.5-Mile & 2.5-Mile Area Response Zones



This overview provides a glance at the 1.5 mile and 2.5 response zones for the engine and truck company when using a one fire station model.

Automatically mutual aid fire companies are dispatched to assist as needed on pre-determined incident types.

Mutual Aid Support & Locations



Bordering municipalities with either combination or volunteer fire departments, who commonly respond to Norristown on an automatic mutual aid agreement.

- Bridgeport Borough
- East Norriton Township
- Lower Providence Township
- Plymouth Township
- Upper Merion Township
- West Norriton Township

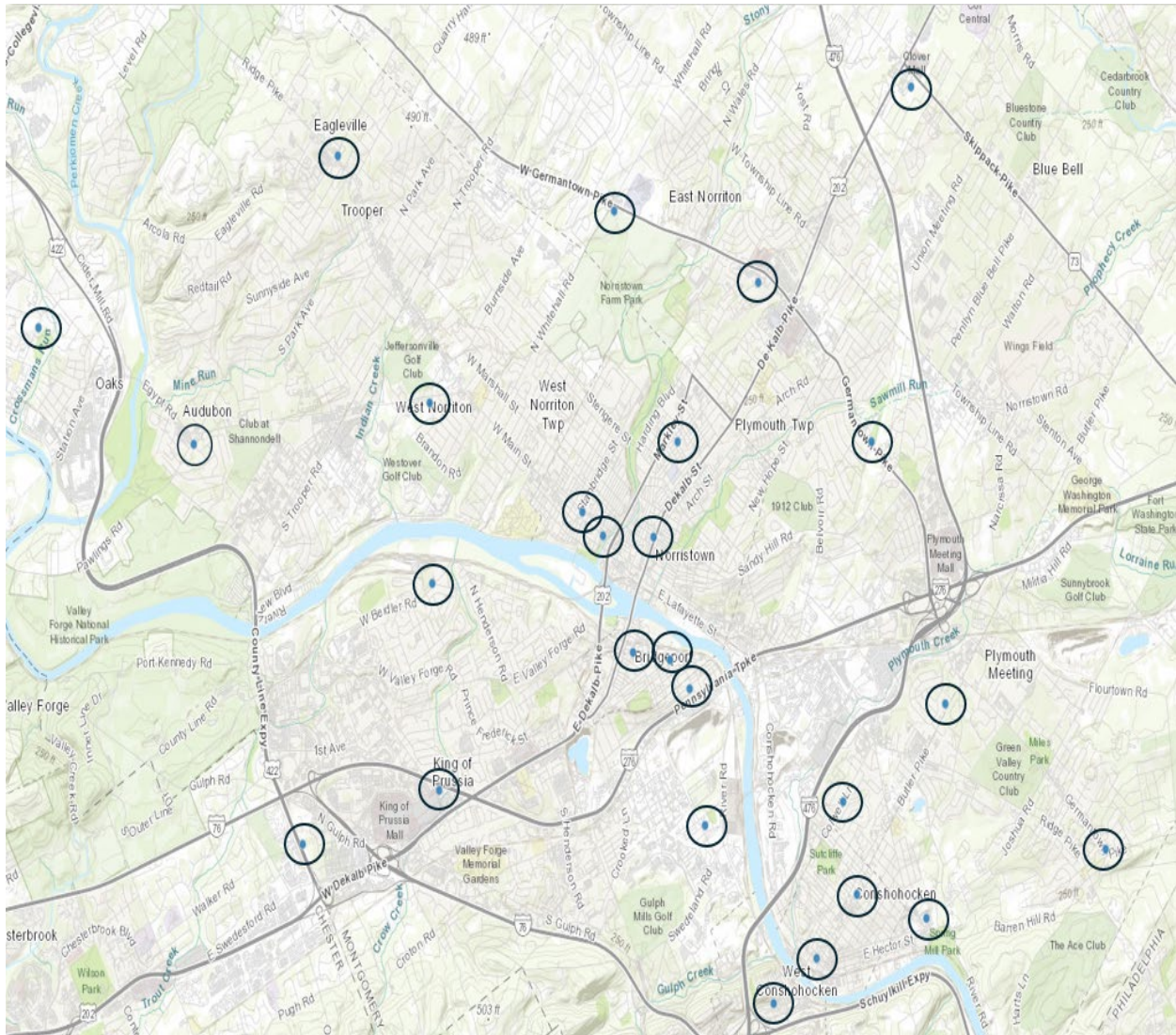
Mutual aid in the fire service refers to agreements between fire departments to provide assistance to each other, especially during large or complex incidents. This means that if one department needs help, other departments can provide resources, personnel, and equipment, even if they are outside of the initial department's jurisdiction. This system ensures that fire departments have the resources they need to handle incidents beyond their individual capabilities.

Norristown's urban response area, increase on service demand, and all-hazard response organization requires consent communication and training with neighboring agencies.

Continuing with the regional fire response deployment model to achieve NFPA 1710, 2020 Edition. These on-scene firefighters are required by NFPA to arrive within (8) eight minutes.

- Low hazard (single family dwelling 2000 Sq Ft) 17 firefighters
- Medium hazard (garden-style apartment or strip mall) 28 firefighters
- High hazard (schools, nursing homes, public assembly) 43 firefighters

Mutual Aid Station Locations



Mutual Aid Fire Stations Broken Out by Mileage

Bridgeport Fire Company	1.1
Goodwill Fire Company	1.5
Swedesburg Fire Company	1.9
Norriton Fire Company (day-time staffed)	2.5
Jefferson Fire Company	3.2
Harmonville Fire Company (Germantown Pike)	3.2
Swedeland Fire Company	3.4
Plymouth Fire Company	3.7

Harmonville Fire Company Bulter Pike	4.0
Conshohocken – Washington	4.3
King of Prussia	4.4
Conshohocken – Spring Mill	4.6
West Conshohocken	5.0
Lower Providence	5.0
Centre Square Fire Company	5.4
Barren Hill Fire Company	5.9
Upper Merion (career staffed)	5.9

While regional mutual aid efforts have supported the ongoing standardization of operations, they cannot guarantee the consistent availability of dedicated personnel from mutual aid agencies. Norristown should incorporate future planning strategies that focus on increasing the number of staffed apparatuses to enhance operational readiness and reduce reliance on external support.

Fire Department Apparatus and Equipment



Unit	Year	Make	
Quint 27	2018	E-One	Fire Suppression
Squad 27	2024	Pierce	Fire Suppression
Engine 27	2012	KME	Fire Suppression
Engine 27-2	1997	KME	Fire Suppression
Engine 27-3	1993	KME	Fire Suppression
Utility 27	2002	Spartan/EVI	Fire Suppression
Utility 27-2	2016	Ford F-350	Fire Suppression
Car 27	2018	Expedition	Support
Car 27-1	2019	Expedition	Support
Car 27-2	2024	Expedition	Support
Car 27-3	2019	Expedition	Support
Car 27-4	2018	Expedition	Support
Car 27-5	2014	Expedition	Support
K-9	2024	Expedition	Support
Boat 27-1	2019	Zodiac	Emergency Management
Boat 27-2	2019	Zodiac	Emergency Management
Marine 27	2013	Chevy 3500HD	Emergency Management
Boat Trailer	2012	Shore Lander	Emergency Management
High Water 27	2024	Accela	Emergency Management
Traffic 27	2010	Explorer	Emergency Management
ATV 27	2016	Polaris	Emergency Management
ATV Trailer	2019	Alumacraft	Emergency Management
Fire Safety Trailer	2020	Diamond	Support
Light Tower Trailer	2014	Allmand	Emergency Management
Light Tower Trailer	2011	Allmand	Emergency Management
Hazmat Trailer	2006	Carmate	Emergency Management
Sign Board 1	2023	Wanco	Emergency Management
Sign Board 2	2012	American Signal	Emergency Management
EMTRL 1	2024	Carmate	Emergency Management
EMTRL 2	2025	Snake River	Emergency Management

Future fire apparatus fleet replacement plan should be managed through a structured workflow that clearly divides responsibilities among Fire Suppression, Support, and Emergency Management Units.

For continuous operations, frontline fire suppression units should maintain an operational reserve to ensure uninterrupted capability.

Staffing Analysis

Current Fire Service Staffing and Apparatus Deployment

Type	Number	Personnel
Ladder	1 – frontline	(1) Unit Officer (1) Driver Operator (2) Firefighter/EMT
Rescue Pumper(s)	1 – frontline 1 – reserve	(1) Unit Officer (1) Driver Operator (2) Firefighter/EMT
Incident Command	1 – frontline 1 – reserve	(1) Assistant Chief
Total	Minimum Three (3) Frontline Units	Minimum (7) Seven On-Duty Maximum (9) Nine On-Duty

Future Fire Service Staffing and Apparatus Deployment with Increased Demand

Type	Number	Personnel
Ladder(s)	1 – frontline 1 – reserve	(1) Unit Officer (1) Driver Operator (2) Firefighter/EMT
Rescue Pumper(s)	1 – frontline 1 – reserve	(1) Unit Officer (1) Driver Operator (2) Firefighter/EMT
Pumper	1 – frontline	(1) Unit Officer (1) Driver Operator (2) Firefighter/EMT
Incident Command	1 – frontline 1 – reserve	(1) Assistant Chief
Total	Minimum Four (4) Frontline Units	Minimum Ten (10) On-Duty Maximum Thirteen (13) On-Duty

**Support units should be cross-staffed with on-duty and recall of off-duty personnel.*

NFPA 1710, 2020 Edition. All personnel on scene and operational within 8 minutes.

Incident Command Vehicle: 1 Officer

Aerial Apparatus: 1 Officer / 3 Firefighters

Engine: 1 Officer / 3 Firefighters

Engine: 1 Officer / 3 Firefighters

Engine: 1 Officer / 3 Firefighters

Total on Scene: 17

Current Operational Positions

Shifts	Number of Minimum Personnel
A	1 – Assistant Chief 2 – Captains 6 – Firefighter
B	1 – Assistant Chief 2 – Captains 6 – Firefighter
C	1 – Assistant Chief 2 – Captains 6 – Firefighter
Breakdown by Position	3 – Assistant Chiefs (Shift Supervisor) 6 – Captains (Unit Officer) 18 – Firefighters
Total	27 Assigned to Suppression

Current Administrative Positions

Administrative Positions	Funded
Fire Chief/Emergency Management	1
Deputy Chief/Fire Marshal	1
Volunteer Deputy Chief	1
Volunteer Assistant Chief	1

Future Operational Positions

Shifts	Number of Minimum Personnel
A	1 – Assistant Chief 3 – Captains 9 – Firefighter
B	1 – Assistant Chief 3 – Captains 9 – Firefighter
C	1 – Assistant Chief 3 – Captains 9 – Firefighter
Breakdown by Position	3 – Assistant Chiefs (Shift Supervisor) 9 – Captains (Unit Officer) 27 – Firefighters
Total	39 Assigned to Suppression

Future Administrative Positions

Administrative Positions	
Fire Chief	1
Deputy Chief	1
Volunteer Deputy Chief	1
Volunteer Assistant Chief	1
Fire Marshal	<i>1 New standalone position</i>
Administrative Assistant	<i>1 New position</i>

Current Operating Fire Stations

Norristown operates three fire stations in cooperation with the volunteers of Fairmount Engine Company #2, Montgomery Hose, and Hancock. Many current Norristown career fire department staff have come from the volunteer ranks.

1. Montgomery Hose, located at 201 West Freedley Street (active station with 24/7 staff) was built in 1938 and remodeled in 1994 and has limited fire apparatus space.



2. Fairmount Station, located at 401 West Main Street (not an active responding station, used for storage only) was built in 1880 and has numerous structural deficiencies.



3. Hancock Station, located at 820 West Airy Street (active station with 24/7 staff), was built in late 1800's and remodeled in 2003 with limited fire apparatus space.

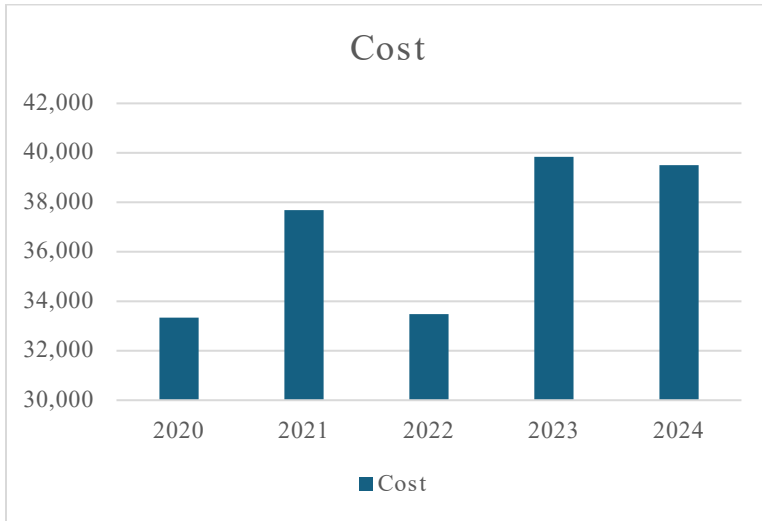


4. Fire Department Headquarters & Emergency Operations Center, 3rd floor, 235 East Airy Street.



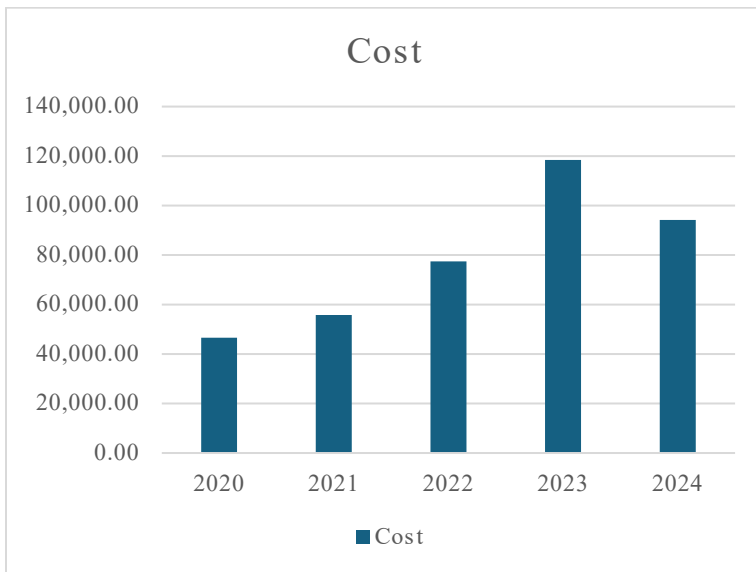
Modernizing fire stations for health and safety involves physical and technological upgrades like separating clean and contaminated zones, improving ventilation and decontamination bays, and installing dedicated fitness and rest areas. Upgrades also include energy efficiency measures, and smart technology for improved alerting and reduced physiological stress from abrupt light changes. The goals are to protect firefighters from carcinogen, improve physical and mental well-being, and create healthier, more resilient facilities.

Annual Station Facility Cost
Montgomery Fire Station



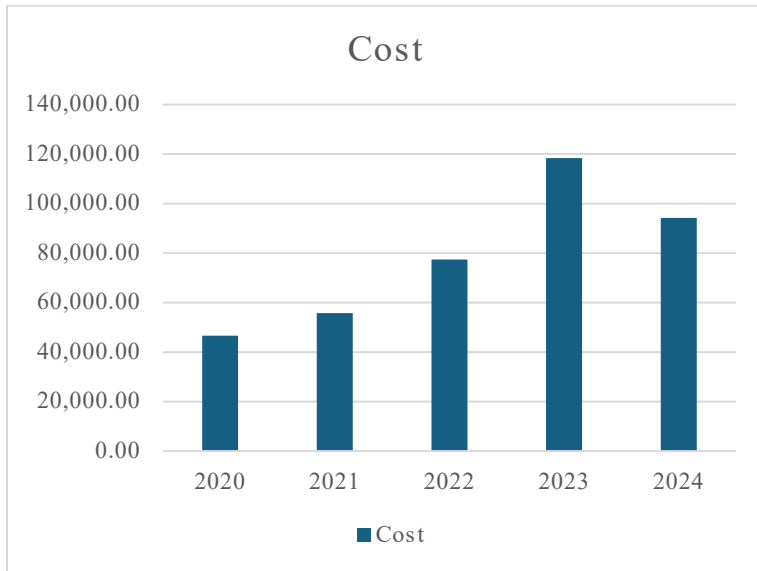
General Repairs, Utilities, Insurance – gas and electric the largest portion

Hancock Fire Company



Mortgage Payments, Insurance, and Utilities

Fairmount Fire Station



Municipal funds are spent each year to maintain operational fire stations in coordination with the volunteer fire companies.

Regional Opportunities/Co Share/Intergovernmental Agreements

A regional fire response plan was developed as a guide for coordinated response to major incidents. It is structured to establish a unified command and ensure a uniform response across the county.

Continue with the strong relationship within the immediate area on regional response plans and operations. Continue to assess and document mutual aid turnout to an emergency within the municipality.

Standard Operating Guidelines/Procedures

Best practices for fire department Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) include inclusive development where members provide input, ensuring SOPs are clear, concise, and flexible, and addressing core topics like response protocols, training, and chain of command.

Effective SOPs should also be realistic, regularly reviewed and updated, and consider factors like current resources, necessary training, and potential impact on personnel.

Training

Training program in place to ensure all firefighters are meeting ISO 2 requirements on annual hours of training. This ensures staff have the skills needed to execute all operations that they may be asked to perform safely and successfully.

Currently, career firefighters are required to complete 192 hours per year at a minimum. Approximately 2 hours each shift is designated to physical training, daily training topics, after action reports, etc.

Community Public Education & Engagement Programs

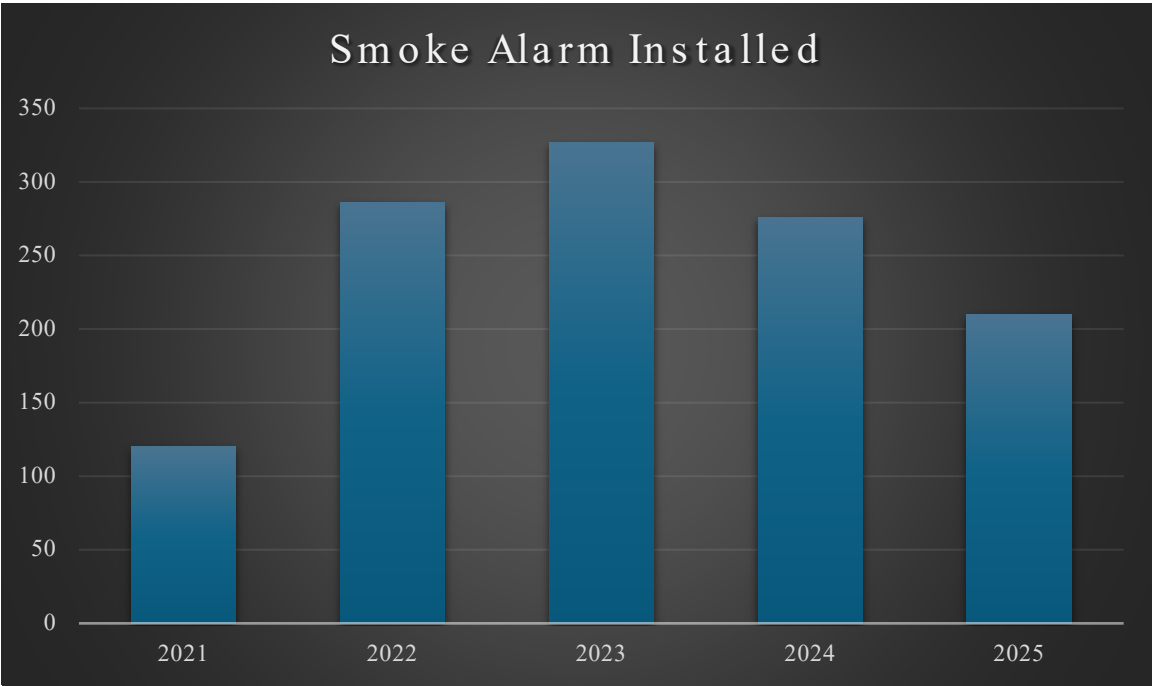
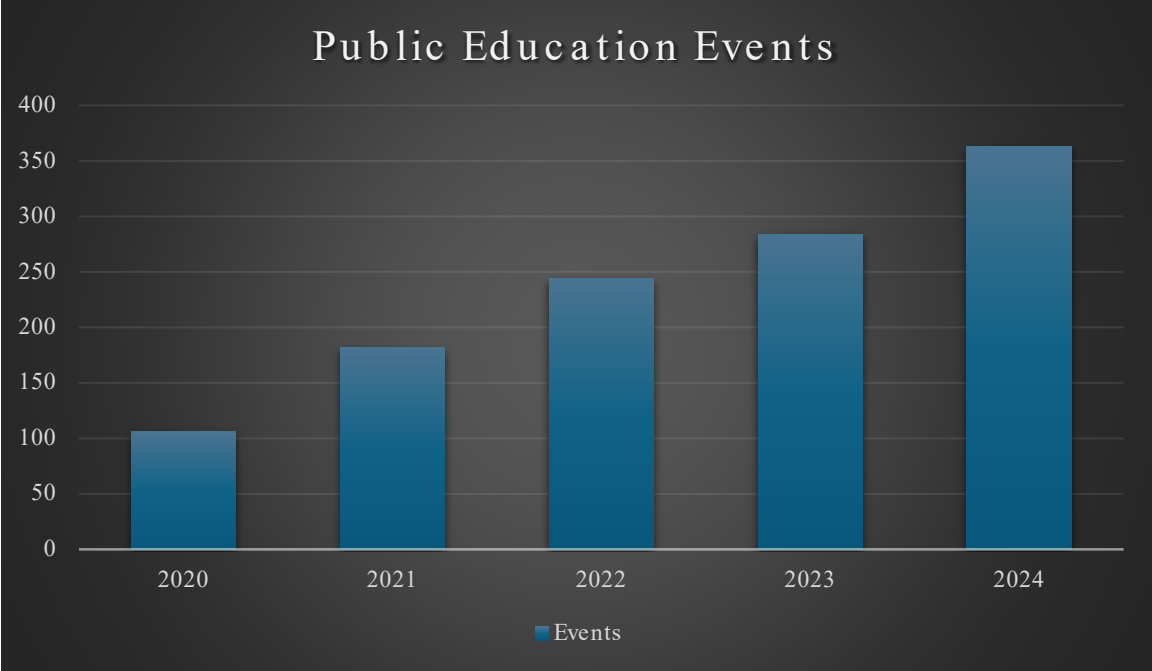
Engaging with the community is more than just a good practice for fire departments; it should be a vital part of their mission. Increasing community engagement offers several significant benefits, from enhancing public safety to securing financial support from community members. By focusing on proactive outreach, fire departments can build lasting relationships that benefit both the department and the community they serve.

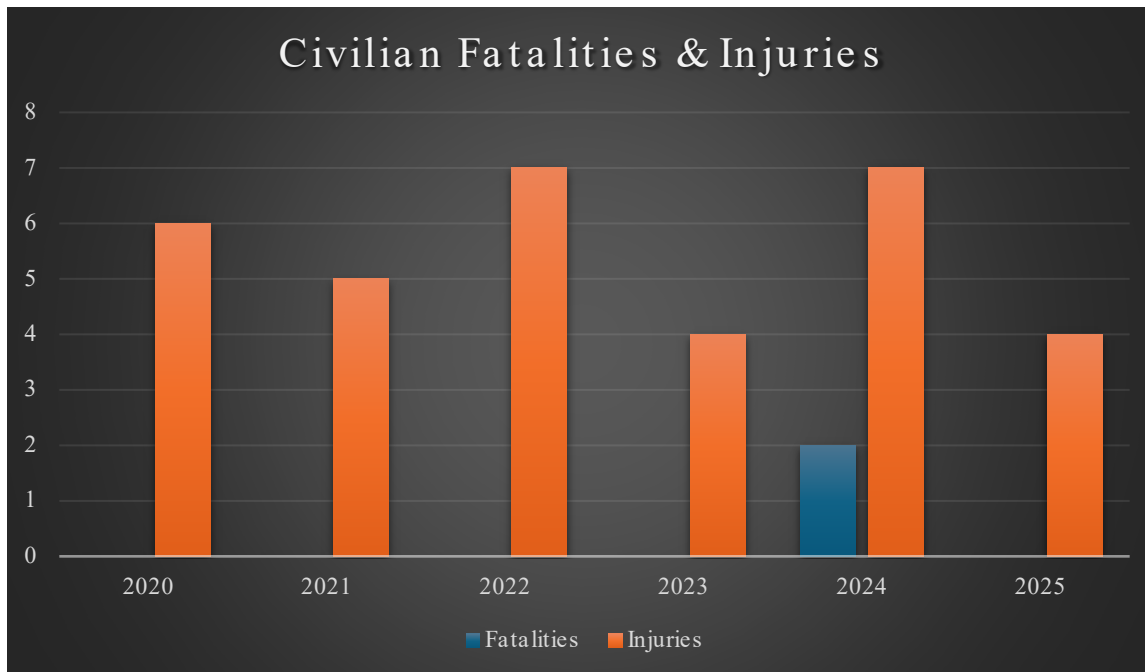
Safer Communities

Educating the community about fire safety is one of the most effective ways to prevent fires. When fire departments take the initiative to teach individuals, families, and local businesses about fire hazards, they can significantly reduce the occurrence of fires. This can be achieved through public fire drills, safety workshops, and educational campaigns that emphasize the importance of proper safety measures in various situations. By fostering a culture of safety, fire departments help create safer communities.

Current programs offered by the Norristown Fire Department include:

- Free Smoke Detector Program Smoke Alarm/Carbon Monoxide Alarm Program
- Fire Safety Trailer and Education
- Station Tours/Safety Talks
- Car Seat Install and Inspections
- Recreational Water Safety
- Fire and Life Safety Inspections
- K9 Arson Detection
- Knox Box Program





Summary & Recommendations

This report is intended to be a tool to help elected officials make informed decisions regarding public fire protection for the Borough of Norristown. It is important to remember that the borough is responsible for public fire protection.

The focus of fire protection often reflects the ability of the fire department to respond to and extinguish fires. A greater emphasis needs to be placed on fire prevention. The biggest challenges for the delivery of fire services within the municipality include:

- Aging facilities not meeting today’s fire service needs
- Staff to meet the ever-changing needs of the community
- Apparatus Replacement Plan to forecast financial impact
- Volunteer staff recruitment and retention sustainability
- Career staff recruitment and retention efforts

Recommendation 1

Consolidation of all fire response stations into one location will enhance emergency response and operational efficiencies.

- Municipal oversight and ownership of facility
- Improved efficiency and cost savings in maintenance
- Utilization of staff in a coordinated effort
- Streamline training and operational procedures across the entire organization

Recommendation 2

Increase in-service apparatus and staffing through long-term investment and based on data collection with increased demand for service. The complexity of urban settings requires faster response times, rapid deployment of resources on arrival, reducing critical time spent waiting for additional mutual aid resources before initiating operations.

Dedicated companies and staffing foster stronger teamwork and increase efficiency. Adequate staffing improves firefighter safety by enabling proper crew composition for various tasks and reducing the need for crews to operate shorthanded. Adding these resources requires investment and necessitates careful consideration of funding options and justification to the community

Recommendation 3

Recruitment and Retention of both volunteer and career members. Addressing workloads, investing in management tools, support well-being, and ensure competitive compensation, benefits, and flexibility that reflects the demands of the role. Greater conversation between the municipality, fire department leadership, volunteer members, and career members.

Recommendation 4

Continue with the strong relationship within the immediate area on regional response plans and operations. Continue to evaluate and document mutual aid turnout to an emergency within the municipality to meet the baseline of NFPA 1710 and overall effective response force times.

Recommendation 5

Creation of Fire Marshal position. Fire Marshal fire inspection programs are crucial for ensuring public safety by identifying and mitigating fire hazards in buildings and facilities. These programs help prevent fires, protect lives and property, and enforce fire codes. Regular inspections educate business owners and residents on fire safety practices, promoting a culture of prevention.

Recommendation 6

Creation of Administrative Assistant position. Provides a variety of routine and complex administrative, clerical, and technical work in assistance to all personnel of NFD. Coordinates Fire Marshal invoicing with Finance Department. This would allow the Operational Chiefs to be engaged at the Platoon level versus balancing administrative duties. Will assist with workflow efficiency and time-consuming routine task.

Recommendation 7

Creation of Quick Response Service (QRS) Program. A non-transport level of EMS that utilize medically trained personnel to respond to emergency calls and provide care before an

ambulance arrives. Plymouth Ambulance is a 911 Emergency only, Advanced Life Support, Paramedic Ambulance Service serving a total of twelve municipalities and over 110,000 permanent residents.

Recommendation 8

Continue participation in Pennsylvania Voluntary Swiftwater/Flood Search Rescue Program. The program credentials emergency service organizations in Swiftwater/flood search and rescue. It ensures that the team continues to meet minimum education, equipment, staffing, and ongoing training requirements.

Recommendation 9

Continue to have a strong relationship between labor, management, and volunteers to achieve success. From top-down leadership to internal communications, the NFD demonstrates a solid organization foundation that supports its mission and operational excellence.

Recommendation 10

Formalize fire apparatus replacement plan to create long-term schedule focused on the financial strategy including a dedicated reserve fund.

Recommendation 11

Purchase a reserve ladder truck to ensure emergency response operations are not interrupted if primary equipment is out of service for maintenance.

DCED and Emergency Services Program Staff

Richard P. Vilello, Jr., Deputy Secretary
Community Affairs and Development

Kathy Wyrosdick, AICP, Executive Director
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Andrew Sheaf, Deputy Executive Director
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Yvonne Lemelle, Emergency Services Program Manager
Governor's Center for Local Government Services

Anne Weaver Morrow, Local Government Specialist
aweavermor@pa.gov or 717-720-7384

Angela Callie, Local Government Specialist
acallie@pa.gov or 717-317-5351

Scott R. Little, Fire Peer Consultant

Kelly Wilson, Administrative Assistant

Notes