

A NEEDS ASSESSMENT FOR THE ELSMERE FIRE DISTRICT

In 2004, a study was conducted by the National Fire Protection Association in conjunction with the U.S. Departmental Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency and the U.S. Fire Administration. The purpose of this study was to; (a) define the current role and activities associated with the fire service, (b) determine the adequacy of current levels of funding, and (c) provide a needs assessment to identify shortfalls. The national study was conducted as a census and included questions developed by a Technical Advisory Group of experts in the fire service. The responses were analyzed for the nation and individual states. The report, “**A Needs Assessment of the Fire Service: New York**” can be accessed at the National Fire Protection Association website, www.NFPA.com.

The following 17 points, with corresponding questions, are based on the responses from fire departments throughout New York State, and are presented here as a tool for evaluating the Elsmere Fire District’s effort to develop goals and improve training programs and operational efficiencies. The following answers to these important questions are based on the Elsmere Fire District’s (EFD) response capabilities in light of the questions posed.

- 1. Q: Does the fire department consistently deliver 4 or more firefighters to mid-day house fires?**

A: Yes, the EFD response to mid-day fires average 19.2 personnel, per fire call. This number does not include those “mutual aid” responders from neighboring departments who automatically respond to Elsmere daytime structure fires.
- 2. Q: Do first-arriving firefighters have to wait until the rest of the first-alarm responders arrive?**

A: No, EFD first arriving firefighters are trained, equipped and able to immediately attack a fire condition upon arrival.
- 3. Q: Have all firefighters involved in structural firefighting received formal training in these duties?**

A: Yes, all EFD firefighters are required, as part of their initial training, to complete formal training in structural firefighting. Additional training for all members continues in all aspects of fire suppression on a weekly basis.
- 4. Q: Have all emergency medical service (EMS) personnel received formal training in those duties?**

A: While some of our members are involved in EMS activities, by agreement,

EFD does not respond to medical calls. The Town of Bethlehem through the local Ambulance District and paramedic services offer a comprehensive EMS response program.

5. Q: Does the department have an active program to maintain basic firefighting fitness and health?

A: Yes, firefighter safety and in particular firefighter physical fitness is of the utmost concern to the EFD. Currently we require annual physicals for all of our firefighters along with testing as required. In addition, the EFD maintains a membership in a local health center and members are encouraged to improve their cardiovascular health and overall physical condition.

6. Q: Does the fire station(s) have adequate backup power?

A: Yes, the fire station is equipped with a 120kw generator which will adequately power the station in the event of a power disruption.

7. Q: Are the fire station(s) are equipped with exhaust emission controls?

A: Yes the fire station is equipped with a Plymovent Emission System which will maintain an acceptable atmosphere within the fire station, free of engine exhaust and foreign matter.

8. Q: Does the number of stations in the department meet the maximum response distance guidelines from the Insurance Services Office (ISO)?

A: Yes, the EFD maintains one of the highest ISO ratings for Volunteer fire departments. In an effort to better serve our residents we have contracted with our neighboring fire departments to an expanded mutual aid response coverage's.

9. Q: Are all emergency responders on a response equipped with portable radios?

A: No, portable radios are issued to all district officers and are available to all officers and personnel involved in interior structural fire attack. In addition, portable radios are also issued to all Fire Police personnel.

10. Q: Are all firefighters on a response equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)?

A: Yes, all firefighters who may be involved in interior structural fire attack or possibly put into an unacceptable breathing environment have SCBA available to them on the apparatus. Fire Police and other personnel have also

been issued personal respirators.

11. Q: Are all emergency personnel on a response equipped with personal alert system (PASS) devices?

A: No, PASS alarms are part of the SCBA breathing system. Only those responders using SCBA will therefore have PASS devices.

12. Q: Do all firefighters have personal protective clothing?

A: Yes, all firefighters are issued their own personal protective equipment.

13. Q: Can the department handle a technical rescue, including EMS, at a structural collapse of a building with 50 occupants with local trained personnel?

A: No the EFD would be qualified to assess and to take remedial steps in such an incident but would request mutual aid from those nearby fire departments who specialize and are trained in such activities. As a signatory to the NYS Fire Mobilization and Mutual Aid Plan, EFD has access to qualified personnel in nearby departments within Albany County.

14. Q: Does the department have a written agreement to direct the use of non-local resources?

A: Yes, EFD, as noted above, should the need arise, could request assistance via Mutual Aid for all types of technical expertise and additional personnel and equipment.

15. Q: Can the department handle a hazmat and EMS incident involving chemical/biological agents and 10 injuries with local trained personnel?

A: No, the EFD is trained and equipped to a HazMat level B response and has been designated as part of the Albany County Hazardous Materials Response Group as a primary decontamination unit. However EFD must, for responses to level A hazardous materials incidents, request assistance from the aforementioned response group and other technical assets, which are readily available within the local response community.

16. Q: Can the department handle a wildland/urban interface fire affecting 500 acres with local training personnel?

A: No, the EFD is equipped and trained to successfully respond to grass fires indicative of the geography within the Fire District's boundaries.

17. Q: Can the department handle mitigation of a developing major flood with local trained personnel?

A: No, again the EFD is equipped and trained to successfully respond to flooding indicative of the geography within the Elsmere Fire District.

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