



ORGANIZATION ASSESSMENT AND STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS

ROSS TOWNSHIP
ALLEGHENY COUNTY, PA

PREPARED BY
ROBB CONSULTING, LLC
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

PURPOSE

Like many government entities, Ross Township is legislatively required to provide fire and emergency services. The purpose of the project was to collaborate with the officers and members of volunteer fire companies that serve Ross Township to assess the existing Fire Rescue system and identify and recommend governance and operational objectives for the future success of the system. **At the time of the assessment, there was no current strategic plan in place for the fire-rescue system in Ross Township.** The leadership of the volunteer fire companies working through the Board of Commissioners of Ross Township (PA) agreed an outside assessment to provide recommendations, guidance for change, and new initiatives would be helpful in charting a path forward. ROBB Consulting, LLC (ROBB) was retained to accomplish this task.

The focus of this assessment and strategy recommendations report is to develop objectives that would be adopted by the volunteer fire departments in cooperation with Ross Township to promote and advance a strong cooperative working relationship.

ROBB was tasked to assess the following core areas:

- Organizational Governance and Administration
- Operations
- Communications and Community Relations

HOW DID WE DETERMINE YOUR NEEDS?

Through a series of first-person interviews, small group interviews, a community forum, two anonymous online surveys, training sessions on fire department performance and Cooperative Partnerships®, as well as a review of existing organizational and operational data and practices, ROBB identified recommendations and associated actions that will advance the volunteer fire departments and Ross Township.

OUR GOALS FOR YOU TO SUCCEED

As a result of the assessment, ROBB developed the resulting eight recommendations listed in this report in order to strengthen the volunteer fire departments and position the township and neighboring municipalities to better support the fire rescue system over the next three years.

The recommendations include the following:

1. Hire full-time fire department leadership to start forming the “Ross Township Fire Service” team, build support for the future of the volunteer fire service in Ross Township, and drive the objectives in the plan.
2. Develop internal and external communications.
3. Establish a community engagement committee.
4. Reorganize and formalize municipal oversight of the fire services.
5. Adopt performance standards with funding.
6. Develop a department-wide staffing plan.
7. Develop new Cooperative Partnerships between the volunteer fire departments and the township.
8. Develop a long-term regional solution to fire services

OUTCOMES

The strategic recommendations and recommended actions outline the best course of action for the future success of the volunteer fire service in Ross Township and provide a solid foundation for the start of a new series of discussions on the future of the fire-rescue system in Ross Township. By implementing the strategic recommendations identified in this assessment, Ross Township can develop the “Ross Township Fire Service” team and in the process create a more coordinated and successful 9-1-1 fire rescue system in the next three years. Fundamental to achieving this outcome is creating greater transparency, accountability, and visibility within the fire service by improving communications to develop and maintain a higher level of trust among all stakeholders. By strengthening township-wide relationships and working together, the volunteer fire service will be able to quickly adapt to the outside forces and challenges that impact similar communities across the country every day. However, ultimately the officers and members of the volunteer fire companies serving Ross Township need to support and champion what is best for the community.

BACKGROUND

History and Contemporary Community Overview

What is now known as Ross Township was originally part of Pitt Township in Westmoreland County. The township became part of Allegheny County when it was established in 1788. In November 1809, the township's name was changed to Ross Township in honor of James Ross, a prominent attorney and judge in Pittsburgh at the time. Except for the formation of West View Borough in 1905, Ross Township's boundaries have remained much the same. The Venango Path, a Native American trail, became the main highway used to travel north through the township. In 1849, a charter was granted to the Allegheny and Perrysville Turnpike Road Company to construct a turnpike or plank road for the Allegheny City line. What started as Perry Plank Road (now Perry Highway) extended to Wexford by 1863. In 1911, the road was covered with brick, and later, in 1929, with concrete. On January 1, 1922, Ross Township became a First-Class Township. Following World War II, the population more than doubled from 12,000 in 1938 to 24,871 in 1949. McKnight Road was completed as a 4-lane highway from the North Side of Pittsburgh to Pine Creek in 1951, which resulted in significant commercial development, including Northway Mall and North Hills Village, to serve an ever-increasing demand for food, merchandise, and services.

Community Data

The township has a total area of 14.4 square miles, which includes numerous communities and neighborhoods, including: Keown Station, Holly Hill, Berkeley Hills, Greybrooke, Kinvara, Perrysville, North Hills Estates, Laurel Gardens, Evergreen Heights, Highcliff, McKnight, Northway, Babcock Business District, Evergreen Hamlet, and White Oak Heights. Ross Township has eleven borders, including McCandless to the north, Hampton Township to the northeast, Shaler Township to the east, Reserve Township and the Pittsburgh neighborhoods of Summer Hill, Perry North and Brighton Heights to the south, the borough of Bellevue to the southwest, Kilbuck and Ohio Townships to the west, and the borough of Franklin Park to the northwest. It also surrounds the borough of West View.

The township has a large commercial sector, with many businesses located along major roads that pass through it, such as McKnight Road, Perry Highway and Babcock Boulevard. Those areas are home to many attractions that impact the number of service calls, including:

- Ross Park Mall
- Many parks, including Evergreen Community Park, Ross Municipal Center Park, and Bellevue Memorial Park

BACKGROUND

- Shannopin Country Club
- Allegheny Observatory
- Many other shops, restaurants, hotels, churches, schools, and businesses along the McKnight Road corridor

Because Ross Township is located approximately eight miles north of the city of Pittsburgh, the additional large amenities there (casino, museums, parks, sports teams, performing arts theaters, universities) also contribute to the public safety needs of the departments and the communities they serve.

Demographics

The current population of the township is 33,176 (2021 U.S. Census data), which has increased 9% (19,229) over the past 20 years. The current total number of households in the township is 14,585. The median household income is \$79,388, with 96.4 percent of the population having graduated from high school and 49.6 percent having a bachelor's degree or higher. Nearly 65 percent of the township's population aged 16 and above are in the labor force; another 22.7 percent are 65 years or older, so many of those residents are retired. The total number of businesses located within the township in 2017 (the most recent available Census data) was 808.

Persons 65 years and over represent 22.7 percent of the population, which is much higher than the national average of 16 percent. Persons under the age of 65 with a disability represent 8.2 percent of the population. The cost of living in Ross Township is slightly less than the median home price in metropolitan Pittsburgh: \$203,200 versus \$225,000 respectively (in 2021 values).

Residential Population

1960	1970	1980	1990	2000	2010	2020	% Change
25,952	32,892	35,102	33,482	32,662	31,105	33,176	+28%

Source – U.S. Census Bureau

2010 Population Characteristics

Race	Population	Percentage
White	28,119	90.4%
Black or African American	964	3.1%
Asian	1,275	4.1%
Hispanic or Latino	498	1.6%

Population by age	Population	Percentage
Under 18 years old	6,065	19.5%
19-64 years old	17,948	57.7%
65 years and older	7,092	22.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

2020 Population Characteristics

Race	Population	Percentage
White	30,489	91.9%
Black or African American	929	2.8%
Asian	1,062	3.2%
Hispanic or Latino	464	1.4%

Population by age	Population	Percentage
Under 18 years old	6,303	19.0%
19-64 years old	19,342	58.3%
65 years and older	7,531	22.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

Population Density per Square Mile

Year	Density per Square Mile
2010	2,149
2020	2,319

Source – U.S. Census Bureau

Total Housing Units

Year	Total Housing Units
2010	14,909
2020	15,254

Source: U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts

FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEMS OVERVIEW

FIRE SERVICE DELIVERY

In 2001, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) proposed a deployment standard for volunteer fire departments that was successfully adopted as NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments. Response time and staffing benchmarks throughout the standard are based on a community's population density. A community may have more than one response benchmark based on varying population densities and/or demographics.

This national deployment standard does not, however, recognize local issues, conditions, service demands, or community needs. Every community should adopt realistic response expectations based on local needs and conditions. NFPA 1720 serves as a goal and should only be utilized as a foundation for a community to establish its own service-level goals.

Fire service delivery in Pennsylvania, like the state's EMS services, has been challenged over the years to find its place at the table of basic government services. With increasing challenges statewide, the General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania enacted House Bills No. 1131, 1133, 1134, and Senate Bill 987 in 2008, amending the borough, first-class township, second-class township, and third-class city codes.

By doing so, a clause was added to those respective municipal government codes stating municipalities "shall be responsible for ensuring that fire and emergency medical services are provided within the municipality by the means and to the extent determined by the municipality, including the appropriate financial and administrative assistance for these services. The municipalities shall consult the fire and emergency medical service providers to discuss the emergency service needs of the municipality and shall require any emergency services organization receiving funds to provide an annual itemized listing of all expenditures of these funds before considering budgeting additional funding."

To attain the delivery of optimum fire services, it is essential that local governments recognize and accept that responsibility to fulfill the obligation to provide appropriate guidance and direction to:

- Oversee the formation process of the organization of fire services.
- Ensure that the fire service organization reflects the public interest.
- Protect the fire service from undesirable external interference.

- Determine basic policies for providing services.
- Legally define the duties and responsibilities of service providers.
- Operate with transparency and accountability.

Identification of this authority and responsibility is also defined in Section 3-1 of NFPA 1201, Standard for Delivering Fire and Emergency Services to the Public, as:

“The government agency responsible for establishment and operation of the fire department shall adopt a formal statement (by laws, resolution, or statute) of purpose and policies for the fire department that includes the type and levels of services that are to be provided, the area to be served, and the delegation of authority to the fire chief and other officers to manage and operate the fire department.”

Distribution and Concentration of Resources

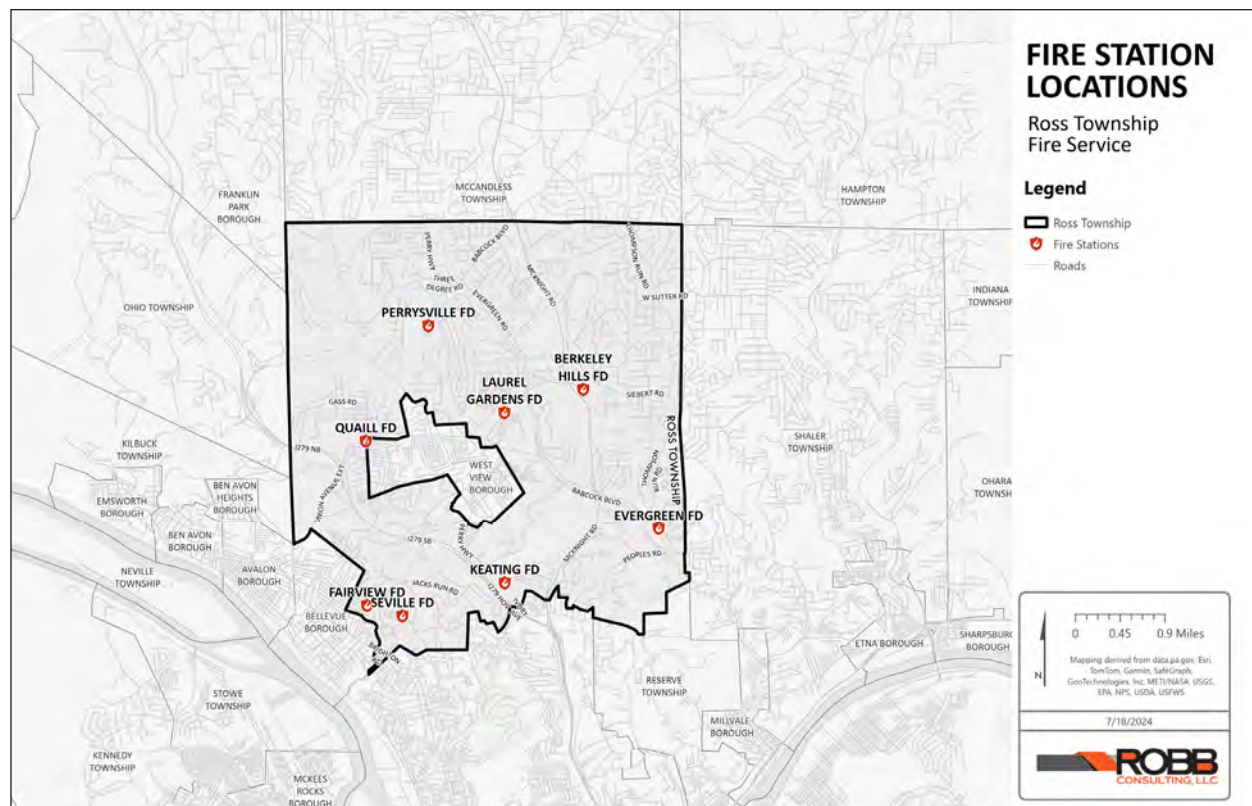
A community's distribution and concentration of fire and EMS resources have a direct effect on its ability to assemble an effective response force in a timely manner. “Effective Response Force” is defined as the total number of staff and equipment that must reach a specific emergency location within a maximum prescribed total response time that is capable of initial fire suppression and/or mitigation.” This number is generally the result of a critical tasking analysis conducted by the local fire department as part of a community risk assessment utilizing the NFPA Standard 1720 as a benchmark. Standard 1720 defines an “Effective Response Force” as 15 firefighters for a residential dwelling fire, 27 firefighters for a commercial or strip mall fire, and 36 firefighters for a high-risk occupancy fire.

NFPA Standard 1720 Effective Response Force

Type of Fire	Minimum Number of Firefighters
Residential Dwelling	15
Commercial or Strip Mall	27
High-risk Occupancy	36

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) defines *distribution* as “the station and resource locations needed to minimize and terminate emergencies. Effective distribution assures a sufficiently rapid first due response and is measured by the percent of the jurisdiction covered by first due units within adopted public policy time frames.”

FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEMS OVERVIEW CONTINUED



The Insurance Services Office (ISO) has always evaluated the distribution of fire resources throughout a community based on a fixed travel distance of 1.5 miles for an engine company (~4 minutes travel time) and 2.5 miles for a ladder/service company (~6 minutes and 40 seconds travel time).

The ISO conducted its most recent survey of the community's fire protection capabilities, effective May 1, 2021. The community's distribution was 5.63 credits out of a possible 10 credits, equating to engine and ladder companies being capable of meeting the travel time objectives approximately 56 percent of the time.

Distribution does not take into consideration whether a station is staffed by career firefighters with relatively fast turnout times or with volunteer firefighters with unknown turnout times. The primary objective of an adequate distribution of resources in an "urban" environment is to allow a community to measure itself against a standard that provides for the response of an initial engine, staffed with a minimum of four firefighters, arriving within 5 minutes and 20 seconds of dispatch, 90 percent of the time, and the assembly of an effective response force of 15 firefighter within 9 minutes of dispatch, 90 percent of the time.

Also affecting a volunteer department's ability to meet response time objectives is the distribution of firefighters' homes and their proximity to present fire station locations.

Concentration is defined as the spacing of multiple resources arranged so that an initial "Effective Response Force" can arrive on the scene within the timeframes outlined in the following NFPA 1720 Staffing and Response Time Benchmarks Table. Considerations for automatic and mutual aid should be given to the type of hazard (residential, commercial, high hazard), the proximity of the resource, the capability of the resource, and whether the resource is staffed or unstaffed.

NFPA 1720 Response Benchmarks by Population Density

Demand Zone	Demographics	Staffing and Response Time	Percentage
Urban	>1,000 people/mi. ²	15 / 9	90
Suburban	500 – 1,000 people/mi. ²	10/10	80
Rural	<500 people/mi. ²	6 / 14	80

The location and spacing of resources in adjacent communities that can assist the Ross Township fire and EMS providers assembling an effective response force in a timely manner based on an "urban" demographic include West View Borough, Ohio Township, McCandless Township, Shaler Township, Reserve Township, and the City of Pittsburgh. In addition to spacing, consideration should be given to the response time, capabilities, and staffing of the adjacent resource(s) during alarm assignment development.

The impacts of distribution and concentration on staffing and service delivery are further discussed in the Strategy Objectives – Fire-Rescue Operations section of this Strategic Assessment.

ROSS TOWNSHIP FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEM

ROSS TOWNSHIP FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEM

Ross Township Fire Departments

Ross Township is served by eight volunteer fire companies (VFC) and one volunteer fire police organization. These agencies include:

Name	Street Address	City/State/Zip Code	Year Formed
Berkeley Hills VFC	235 Siebert Road	Pittsburgh, PA 15237	1942
Evergreen VFC	2127 Babcock Boulevard	Pittsburgh, PA 15209	1946
Fairview VFC	44 East Forest Avenue	Pittsburgh, PA 15202	1933
Keating VFC	39 West View Avenue,	Pittsburgh, PA 15229	1931
Laurel Gardens VFC	160 6th Avenue	Pittsburgh, PA 15229	1930
Perrysville VFC	985 Perry Highway,	Pittsburgh, PA 15237	1912
Quaill VFC	50 Gass Road,	Pittsburgh, PA 15229	1930
Seville VFC	124 Enger Avenue	Pittsburgh, PA 15214	1934
Ross Township Fire Police	235 Cemetery Lane	Pittsburgh, PA 15237	1990

Each volunteer fire company is an independently chartered, Pennsylvania non-profit corporation. Each organization has its own members and elected and appointed administrative officers and operates based on the organization's purpose, bylaws, and operating policies. None of the fire companies nor the township have any career (paid) firefighting or leadership staff. The current fire-rescue system is staffed 100% by volunteer firefighters and other support emergency responders.

Ross Township Board of Commissioners, within the township's organizational structure, has a Public Safety Committee that meets regularly with the Presidents and Fire Chiefs of each organization. The township also employs a Fire Marshal on a part-time status. The Fire Marshal, working with the volunteer fire companies and other township departments, assists with fire code and other township wide coordination efforts. The volunteer fire companies also have a Presidents and Chiefs committee that meets regularly.

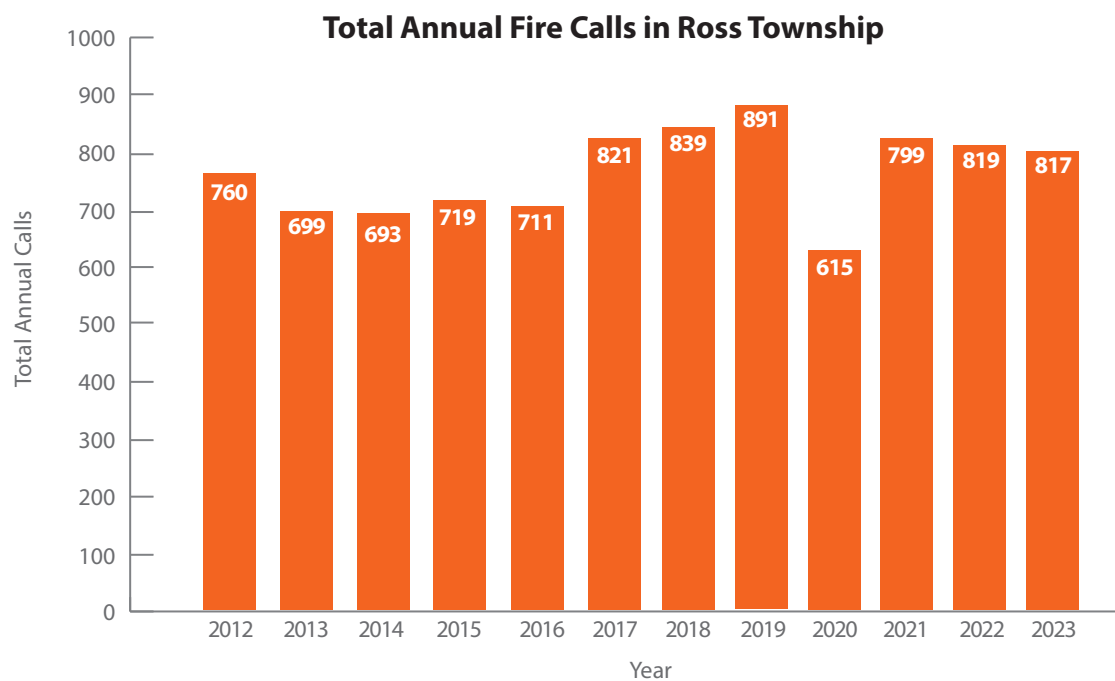
All told, the fire service providers in Ross Township respond to approximately 800 fire calls per year on average. Among the eight fire departments, there are 262 members rostered, of which approximately 85 regularly respond to calls and participate in training. Of these 85 members, the average age is 47 years old.

Ross Township Fire Service Demographics

Number of Volunteer Fire Departments	8
Number of Volunteer Fire Police	1
Total Number of Rostered Members	262
Total Number of Active Members	85
Average Age of Active Members	47

Total Annual Fire Calls in Ross Township

Year	Total Calls
2012	760
2013	699
2014	693
2015	719
2016	711
2017	821
2018	839
2019	891
2020	615
2021	799
2022	819
2023	817



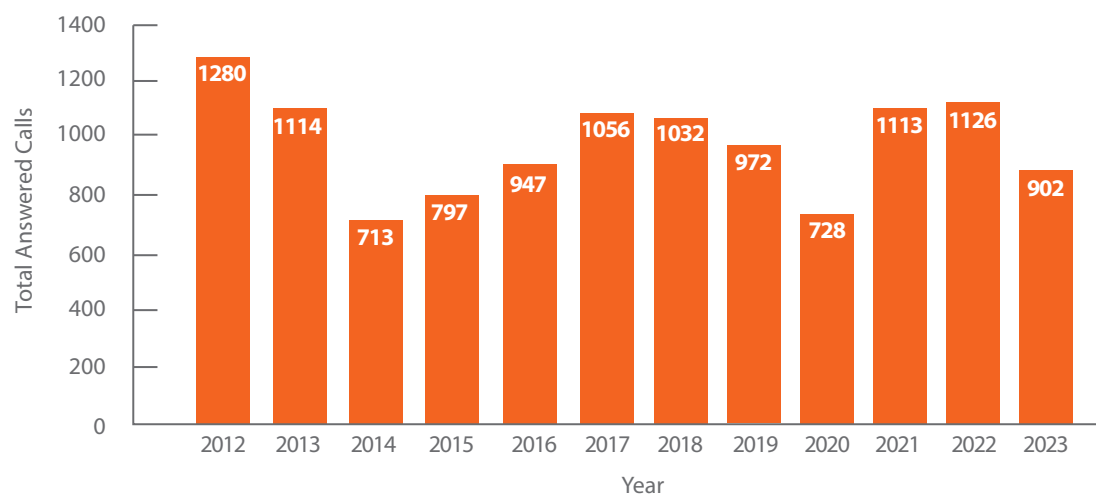
Total Annual Answered QRS Calls – Berkeley Hills Fire Company*

Year	Total Answered Calls
2012	1280
2013	1114
2014	713
2015	797
2016	947
2017	1056
2018	1032
2019	972
2020	728
2021	1113
2022	1126
2023	902

Source: Berkeley Hills Fire Company

*QRS service began in 1992

Total Annual Answered QRS Calls – Berkeley Hills Fire Company



Source: Berkeley Hills Fire Company

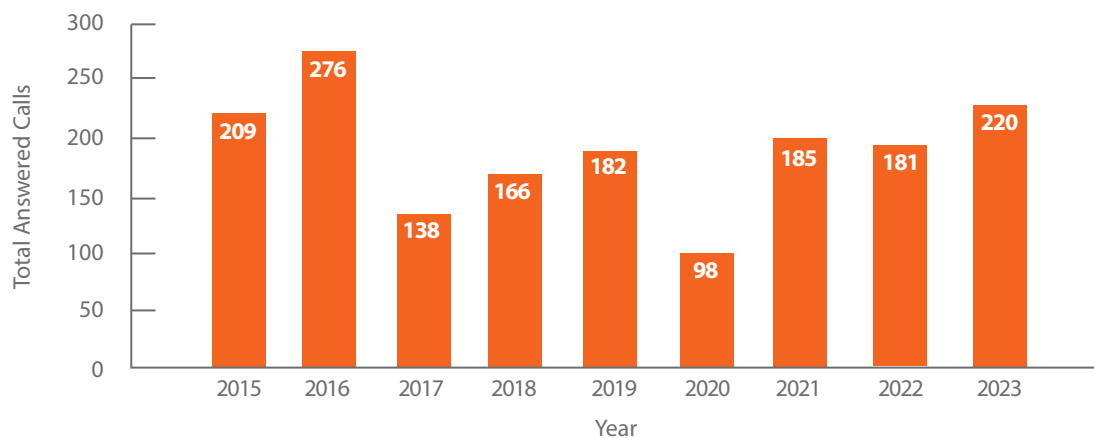
Total Annual Answered QRS Calls – Perrysville Fire Company*

Year	Total Answered Calls
2015	209
2016	276
2017	138
2018	166
2019	182
2020	98
2021	185
2022	181
2023	220

Source: Perrysville Fire Company

*QRS service began in late 2014 with duty crew

Total Annual QRS Calls Answered – Perrysville Fire Company



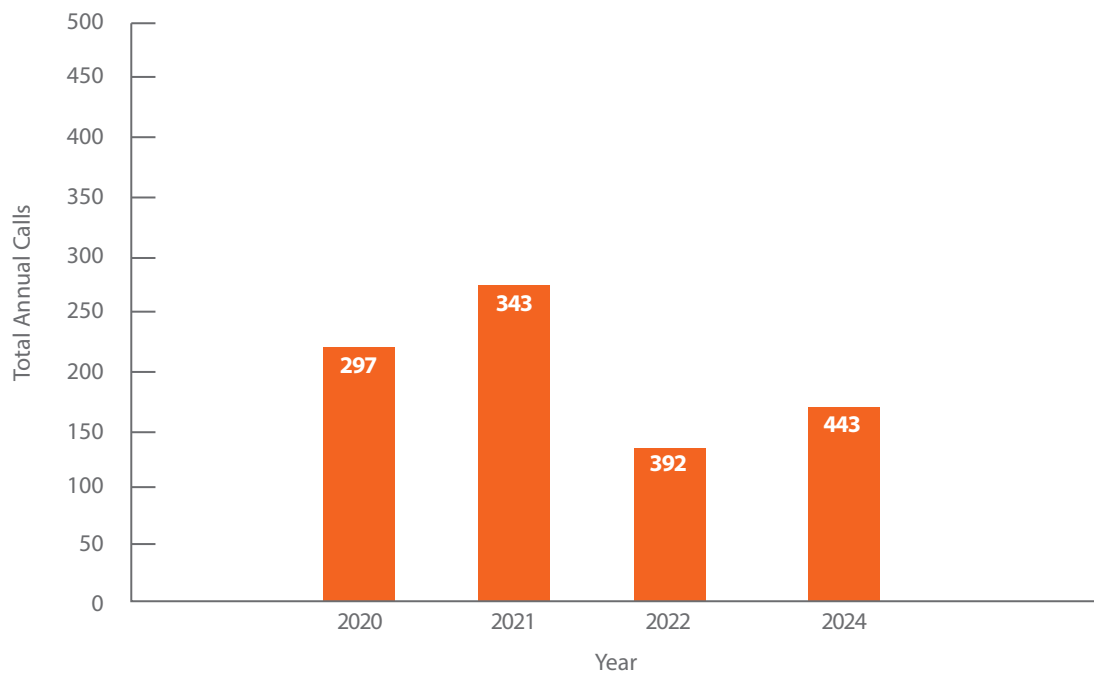
Source: Perrysville Fire Company

Total Annual Fire Police Calls in Ross Township

Year	Total Calls
2020	297
2021	343
2022	392
2023	443

Source: Ross Township Fire Police

Total Annual Fire Police Calls in Ross Township



Ross Township Emergency Medical Services

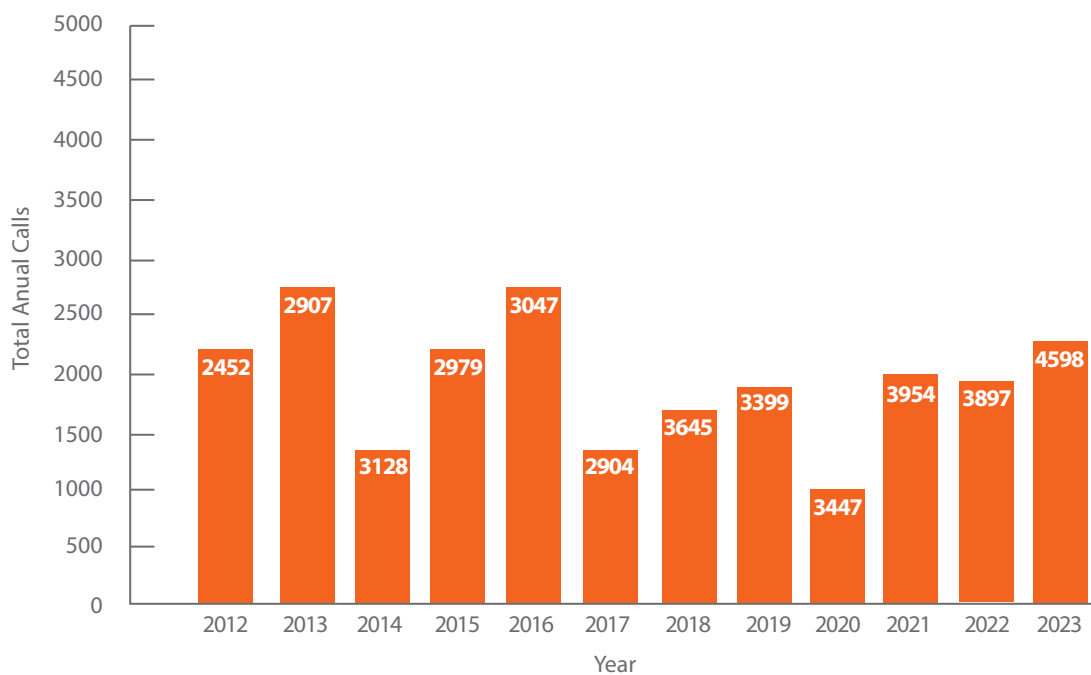
9-1-1 Emergency Medical Services (EMS) is provided by Ross/West View Emergency Medical Services Authority. The EMS authority, formerly known as Ross/West View EMS and Rescue until 2023, provides basic life support, advanced life support, rescue services, and wheelchair van services. EMS is staffed by a combination of full-time, part-time, per diem career staff, and volunteer members. In addition to serving Ross Township, Ross/West View EMS Authority serves the municipalities of West View Borough, Millvale Borough, Reserve Township, and Ohio Township.

Name	Street Address	City/State/Zip Code	Year Formed
Ross/West View EMS Authority	5325 Perrysville Ave	Pittsburgh, PA 15229	1978

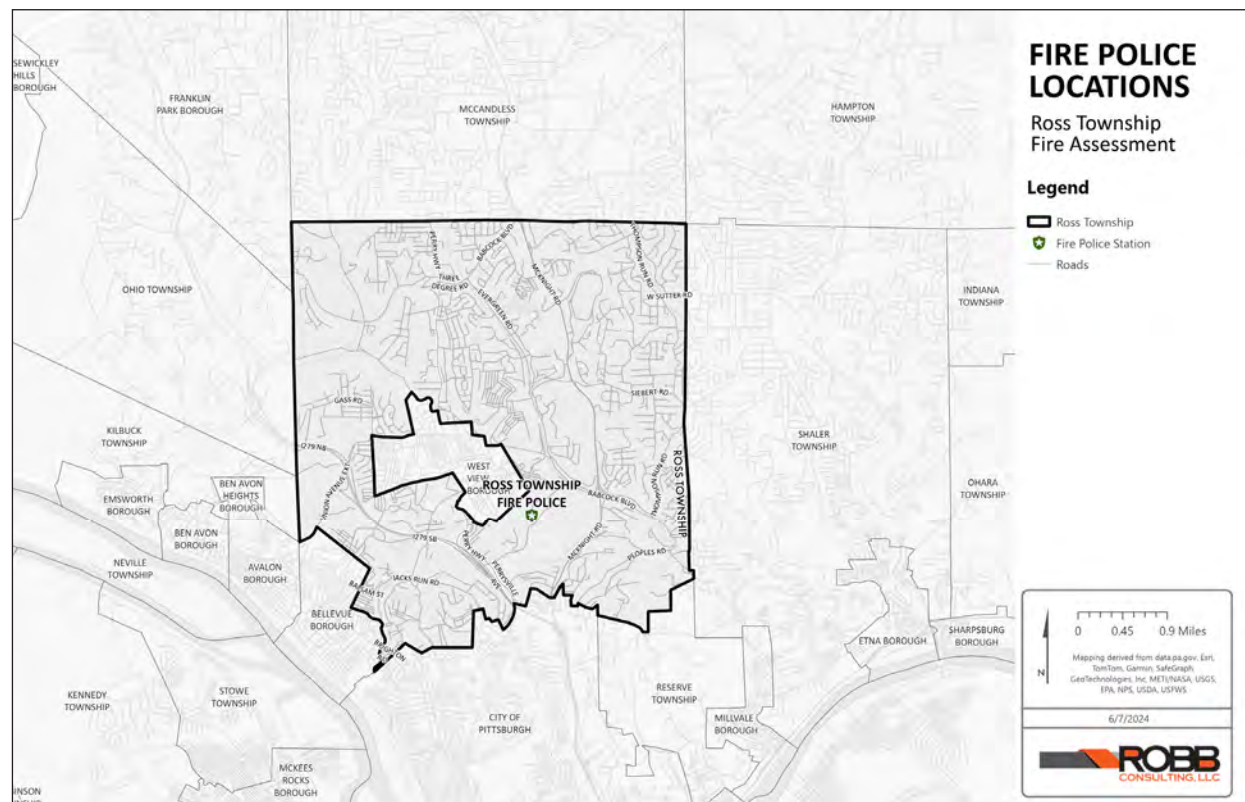
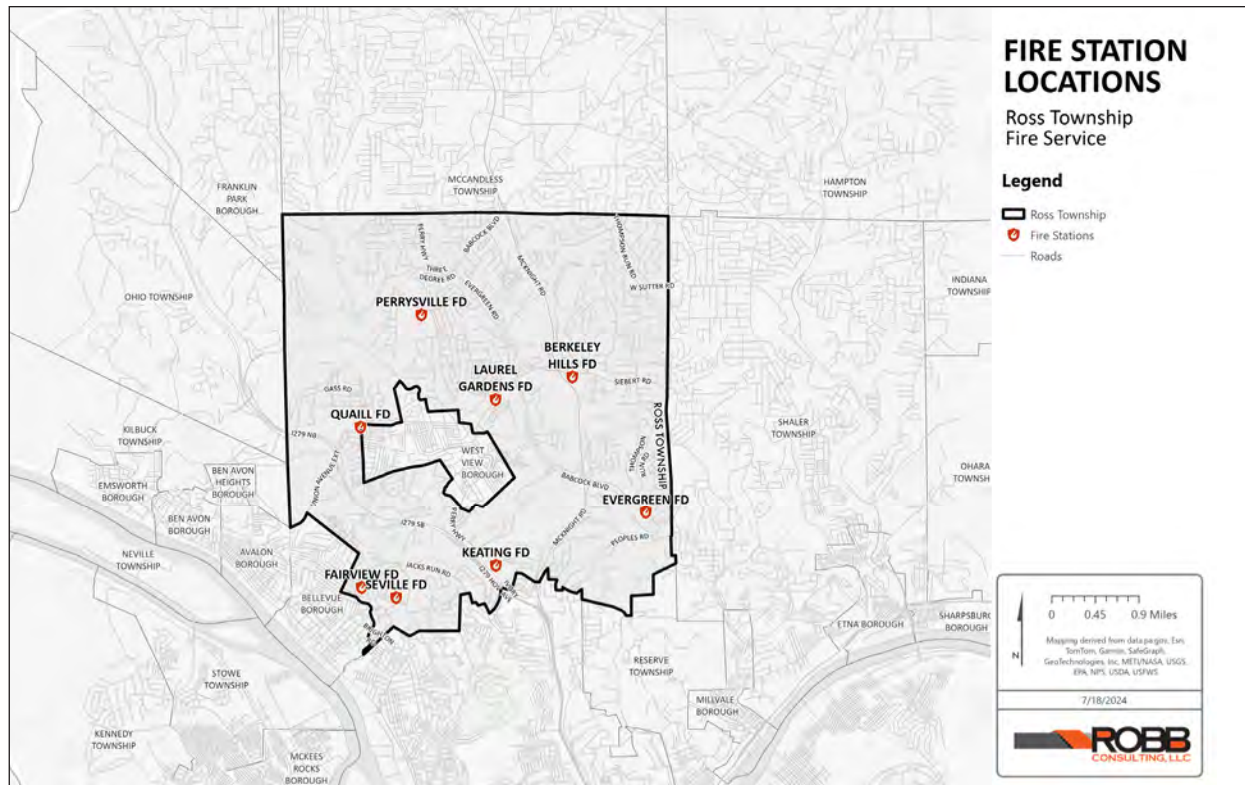
Total Annual 9-1-1 EMS Calls in Ross Township

Year	Total Calls
2012	2452
2013	2907
2014	3128
2015	2979
2016	3047
2017	2904
2018	3645
2019	3399
2020	3447
2021	3954
2022	3897
2023	4598

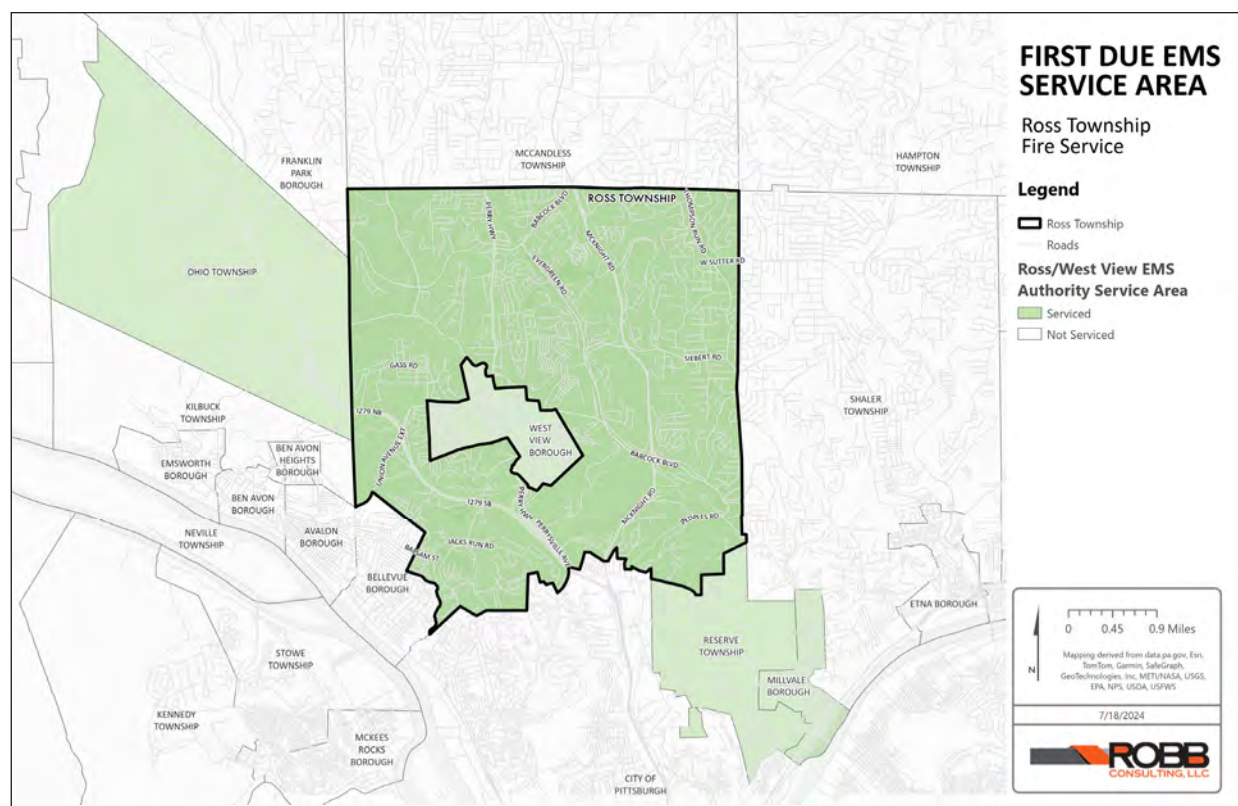
Total Annual 9-1-1 EMS Calls in Ross Township



ROSS TOWNSHIP FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEM CONTINUED



ROSS TOWNSHIP FIRE RESCUE DELIVERY SYSTEM CONTINUED



Ross Township Member Perspective

To further inform the state of Ross Township Fire Services, the Board of Commissioners of Ross Township (PA) agreed to gather objective information from a designated number of fire services stakeholders via a survey open from September 14 – 29, 2023. The goal of the survey was to leverage these stakeholders' perspectives to help leaders better understand blind spots, areas of opportunity, and areas of challenge within their fire service community. While the survey administrator received 116 responses to the survey by the closing date, the survey administrator could not calculate a participation rate because officials were unable to identify to the total population invited to participate in the survey. Also, note that no one from the Fairview Volunteer Fire Company chose to participate.

The results showed that Ross Township Fire Services enjoys significant foundational strengths on which to build. Respondents commented that fire services have a strong, core group of dedicated volunteers committed to serving the community. They also believe the community perceives fire company operations to be effective in ensuring community safety. Respondents seem aware of Ross

Township officials partnering with an outside consulting firm to review how fire services functions. Results show that people recognize that while independent cultures exist in each fire company, they are all bound together by a collective brotherhood. This dynamic creates conditions for effective problem solving and supports an ability to bring many perspectives to bear on the issues fire services are facing. Companies seem to have adequate equipment. Respondents recognize the importance of communication and collaboration during emergency responses. While they “get the job done,” folks recognize current operations are not sustainable.

Opportunity exists to improve in several areas. Respondents consistently recognized All-Calls as beneficial, although some folks indicated a need to improve on this concept. Like many other fire services in the United States, volunteer recruitment and retention, consistent, standardized training, and the need for sustainable funding pose challenges to maintaining and improving fire services in the township. Finally, respondents recognize a need to evolve and improve operations, but they note a lack of trust with township government officials and skepticism about outside recommendations for improvement. Consistent themes within the results indicate support for some consolidation and an organizational structure with a single fire chief to oversee all operations.

Careful analysis of the survey data offers the following summary:

- 1. While the public thinks highly of fire company operations, respondents recognize a need to adapt and evolve to changing needs and challenges** – Seventy two percent of respondents believe the public perceives that fire company operations are effective, with an additional 22% of folks responding “Neutral.” Despite these encouraging results, 89% of respondents also recognize a need to change. Combining the goodwill of the public with stakeholders open to doing things differently provides a solid foundation from which to evolve fire services.
- 2. The foundation for effective coordination, collaboration, and communication behaviors exist** – With 84% indicating awareness that township government partnered with an outside consultant and a theme within comments indicating support for the All-Call approach, it seems evident that fire companies work to communicate with each other in some ways. Folks recognize the importance of these behaviors during emergency responses, too, but only about 20% of respondents believe fire companies practice these behaviors consistently well or extremely well when it counts. Combined with a lack of standard training and practices, this finding can prove problematic to effective and efficient emergency responses, particularly during high priority calls involving multiple companies.

- 3. Shared energy exists to change practices specific to some resources, including volunteer recruitment and retention and funding** – Respondents recognize the vital role volunteers (69%) play in emergency response rates. Only 12% indicated that the current approach for recruiting and retaining volunteers is adequate. Results indicate that the factors that motivate individuals to join and remain as fire company volunteers, like a commitment to community service and a passion for emergency response, stay consistent over time. Financially, 91% of respondents believe funding is adequate to maintain effective operations, but only about half felt the current level of funding played a vital role in consistent emergency response. These findings seem to align with comments that indicate that fire services seem to have adequate equipment. Support for financial changes seems to be related to inequity in how township government's allocates funds, operational needs, and time dedicated to fundraising. While fire companies seem to pull together and respond "to get the job done," current manpower and financial practices are not sufficient to sustain or improve operations.
- 4. Support for some form of centralized coordination/consolidation exists, but skepticism remains** – About 60% of respondents believe that centralized township government coordination of fire company operations would improve service, with 17% neutral, and 22% not supporting this idea. In addition, only 14% of respondents saw the current level of trust between township government and fire companies as high or extremely high. This perspective may contribute to limited receptivity of recommendations from the outside consulting firm that government officials hired, with 42% indicating they were somewhat or very receptive and 22% being neutral on receiving guidance.

This section outlines eight recommendations along with recommended actions in six key focus areas –Communications, Community Engagement, Organizational Governance, Operations, Cooperative Partnerships®, and Future Considerations – to achieve in order to move Ross Township fire departments toward a successful future.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Hire Department Leadership

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Hire and appoint a paid full-time fire chief
- Reorganize and transfer administrative functions to paid fire chief

In 2024, the level of work needed to manage an all-hazards fire-rescue agency successfully is exorbitant. Budgeting, purchasing, human resources, regulatory compliance, community risk reduction, increasing calls for service, and extensive training are just some of the core functions today's paid and volunteer fire chiefs are expected to perform. Today's fire chief must also serve as a leader, manager, coordinator, enabler, change agent, capacity-builder, role model, human resource manager, facilitator, volunteer advocate, visionary, and planner.

As more and more communities are evaluating areas in which to improve their existing emergency service agencies and create a *fire rescue system*, one area that many municipal governments are considering, and implementing, is full-time, career (paid) leadership. The goal of this approach is to reduce the administrative workload of volunteer fire officers and to allow existing volunteer fire officers and firefighters to do what they signed up to do: become well trained firefighters that respond to emergency calls to help their communities. In the greater Pittsburgh region, McCandless Township, Dormont Borough, Mt. Lebanon, Peters Township, Cecil Township, North Strabane Township, Cranberry Township and Hempfield Township have full time, paid leadership that successfully directs, manages, and leads the fire service.

The challenge for many volunteer fire chiefs, in addition to trying to meet all the roles and responsibilities identified above, is they usually have full-time jobs and other commitments that limit their availability to perform everything that is required. In general, volunteer fire chiefs tend to focus their attention on training and emergency activities, while limited time is available and allocated

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Hire Department Leadership CONTINUED

to address other crucial areas. Expecting a volunteer fire chief, with limited time and availability, to successfully perform the functions that career fire chiefs perform in 40+ hour work weeks is not realistic. In addition, many volunteer fire chiefs' authority is often limited by department bylaws, creating conflict within the organization.

During the interview process, several interviewees stated that the existing volunteer fire chief in their respective organization is forced to function in several different capacities. Interviewees stated that the fire chiefs go above and beyond their duties to make things work but is often used as a catch-all or fixer upper. At times, the chief may function as the administrative leader, the training officer, liaison to the township, and apparatus driver/firefighter, just to name a few roles. This strategy is ineffective and creates additional challenges for anyone serving in this position. Several people interviewed also expressed concern that the "wearing of multiple hats" could lead to the eventual loss of the current volunteer fire chief due to burnout or potentially deter anyone from filling this role in the future.

Hire And Appoint a Paid Full-Time Fire Chief

To support the eight volunteer fire departments and fire police in Ross Township, the township should **hire and appoint a full-time fire chief** to function as the career administrative and operational fire-rescue officer for the township. This individual will also manage the organization of the proposed municipal fire department agency under Ross Township and act as the municipal fire department's Director.

This position will have two important functions.

- To plan, coordinate, and supervise the delivery of fire-rescue and related emergency services within the township.
- To ensure that the recognized volunteer fire departments are prepared to continue to provide safe and effective fire protection and first responder emergency medical services to the citizens and businesses under the jurisdiction of the township.

Additionally, the fire chief should be qualified to perform incident response and command responsibilities as the chief operations officer. A formal chain of command should be developed and adopted within the administrative and operational divisions of the proposed municipal fire department.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Hire Department Leadership CONTINUED

Reorganize And Transfer Administrative Functions to Paid Fire Chief

To accomplish the primary functions, the individual hired for this position must have several specific skill sets, most importantly strong interpersonal skills, **to build a high level of trust and communication**. Those skills will be needed to build and maintain good relationships between the volunteer fire departments, fire police, township appointed and elected officials, police department, community, and neighboring fire and EMS agencies. These relationships will go a long way in maintaining a strong volunteer-staffed fire-rescue system for the immediate future. By doing so, the volunteers will feel that they are a valuable part of the system and bring more than just warm bodies to the table.

Providing full-time leadership and organizing a municipal Department of Fire and Emergency Services will **support the volunteer line officers** by providing full-time administrative help, team building, leadership development, capital planning, goal setting, relationship building, and budgeting. This will permit the volunteer fire department and its officers to perform their existing duties and focus specifically on member development, training, and response to calls for service. This individual would also act as the link between the township government and the volunteer fire departments.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Sample Job Description

Fire Chief

- Serves as the full-time, career administrative head of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services
- Serves as the full-time, career operational fire-rescue chief for the township
- Plans, coordinates, and supervises the overall activities of the Department of Fire and Emergency Services in coordination with volunteer officers and members of the volunteer fire departments including:
 - Prepare annual Department of Fire and Emergency Services budget;
 - Coordinate strategic and long-range goals and plans for fire department staffing and the recruitment and retention of volunteer members;
 - Coordinate long-range capital needs planning for review and approval;
 - Coordinate standardized equipment and bulk purchasing;

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 1: Hire Department Leadership CONTINUED

- Coordinate with the volunteer fire department to ensure they are in compliance with state and federal health and safety regulations;
- Ensure fire department practices and procedures are consistent with pertinent governmental regulations and industry voluntary consensus standards;
- Provide for the quality control of fire dispatching;
- Provide for the health, safety, and training of staff;
- Adhere to standardized reporting requirements as established by the Township;
- Coordinate fire safety public education.
- Develop and establishes goals, objectives, policies, and procedures for the Township; oversees and evaluates such programs and activities;
- Responsible for the development, updating, and maintenance of the Standard Operating Guidelines;
- Responsible for working with township leadership to implement the strategic goals identified in this report and future comprehensive and strategic plans;
- Identify and develops future fire officers;
- Act as the Board's representative for external, non-emergency inquiries and function as the Public Information Officer at incidents involving the Township;
- Automatically respond to the following incidents/emergencies, as required:
 - All fire and rescue emergencies greater than 1st-alarm assignment;
 - Vehicle accidents involving fire and ambulance vehicles;
 - Incidents involving a serious firefighter injury or fatality;
 - Incidents involving civilian fatalities;
 - Any other event, as deemed necessary by the Township;
- Perform related additional duties as required by the Township;
- Attend and be available for all public meetings of the Township

Task Assignment: The township manager, working with township public safety committee, initiates this discussion with the township Board of Commissioners and the volunteer fire departments to advance this objective.

Timeline: Year 1

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COMMUNICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop Internal and External Communications Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Identify key stakeholders
- Determine communication strategies and implement appropriate communication plan

A multi-faceted communications strategy will be critical to the success of Ross Township's solution to provide fire and emergency services on a long-term, sustainable basis. The goal of the communications program for Ross Township's fire assessment project is to raise awareness of the state of fire services in the township and generate support for the solution proposed by the township to sustain and improve high-quality fire and emergency services.

To build support for the future of the volunteer fire departments, it is crucial that stakeholders understand the concerns about the current fire service model in the county; the financial sustainability of volunteer fire departments in the township; and the significant challenge that agencies are facing to recruit and retain adequate fire rescue volunteers.

Likewise, it is essential that stakeholders are informed about the township's plan to ensure that the long-term future of the fire service is secure for citizens and visitors. Forward actions and communication must build credibility that the township's new fire rescue system model will remedy the challenges of the current system - including financial stability and staffing.

Key audiences identified for the communication program include the following:

- **Emergency services stakeholders** - *fire company leaders, personnel, volunteers and auxiliary members*
- **Municipal leaders** - *Elected officials in the municipality served by emergency service providers*
- **Township opinion leaders** - *Other community leaders who are influential to public opinion (ex: business leaders; school administrators; religious leaders; non-profit organization leaders)*
- **Township residents** - *The community at-large*
- **Township employers** - *Employers in the township*
- **News media** - *Local digital, broadcast and print news media outlets*

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COMMUNICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop Internal and External Communications Plan CONTINUED

Upon adoption of a recommended path, these stakeholders should aspire to build and execute a communication plan to achieve the following:

- Obtain support for the proposed fire service solutions by emergency services stakeholders, municipal leaders, county opinion leaders and community health partners
- Inform and educate county residents and employers on the state of emergency services in the county (using data from the emergency services study)
- Inform and educate county residents and employers on the proposed EMS solution

The following communications tactics are recommended to achieve those outcomes:

- **Branding**
 - Create a brand identity for the initiative to build awareness and recognition
- **Key Messaging**
 - Develop key messages and FAQs
 - Equip community advisory board with talking points
- **Website**
 - Develop and launch a public education website
 - Include functionality to receive questions
 - Establish a process to respond to questions
- **Presentations**
 - Presentations to emergency services stakeholders
 - Presentations to municipal leaders
 - Presentations to other community opinion leaders
 - Presentations to community health partners
 - Presentations to county residents and employers
- **Media Relations**
 - Conduct outreach to news media outlets
- **Stakeholder Communications**
 - Deliver updates to key stakeholder audiences on a regular cadence
 - Deliver updates to the broader community via articles provided to the municipality to publish in its newsletter and/or website

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COMMUNICATIONS

OBJECTIVE 2: Develop Internal and External Communications Plan CONTINUED

- **Social Media**

- Provide social media posts for municipal social channels

Task Assignment: The proposed fire chief along with the proposed community engagement committee working with the volunteer fire departments and fire police should advance the communication plan.

Timeline: Year 1

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS –COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3: Establish Community Engagement Advisory Committee

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Educate and communicate with the community on the current status of the fire service
- Build support to implement recommendations of the strategic plan

What is an advisory board or advisory committee? It is a type of sub-board or sub-committee consisting of representatives of the public who meet on a regular basis with representatives of the township and volunteer fire departments. For Ross Township, its purpose is to build and foster partnerships among those who provide the 9-1-1 fire rescue services within the township and those who rely every day on the quick and effective response of the fire departments for a safe community.

There are two primary goals for the community advisory board:

- 1. To educate, increase communication, and build better relationships** - During the interview and survey process, it was evident that engaging the community to educate them on the challenges of managing, funding, and maintaining an effective fire rescue system was a top priority for the officers and members of the volunteer fire departments. As in most places, there is an assumption that people understand how public safety is delivered and how municipal and county government works. Unfortunately, this is not necessarily true. Most interviewees reported that the community has no idea what they do on a day-to-day basis nor how much work it takes to run a successful fire department or a fire-rescue system. Most importantly, many community members have no idea the people answering their call for help in some cases are volunteers.
- 2. To provide broad-based input into the planning and decision-making process to *assist with advancing the objectives of this assessment*.** Many municipal governments do not have the resources to provide fire services on their own. The community engagement committee can evaluate the broad range of stakeholder interests that are affected by a specific objective presented in the report and allow for in-depth and focused involvement and input from all stakeholders. As communities change and the fire, emergency medical service, and emergency management needs evolve, funding needs typically change as well. Apparatus costs and day-to-day operating costs will continue to rise. This group can also be the information and educational resource for the development of consensus when and where it is needed for resolving these complex issues that affect the broader community.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS –COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3: Establish Community Engagement Advisory Committee CONTINUED

The membership of the advisory board should consist of a ***minimum of six (6) members with a broad range of experience***. This small group size allows for greater accountability and flexibility, both in terms of ideas and scheduling. Members can build greater trust among themselves and a stronger sense of ownership. Smaller groups also tend to outperform larger teams.

As with any working group, having the correct mix and number of participants is especially important. The group must not only have a perspective for today but also a historical perspective. Remembering where emergency services came from helps inform where services need to be today and in the future. Remember the volunteer fire departments serves the community, so ensuring the residents and businesses are represented is very important.

Once appointed, the community engagement committee members will propose a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary from within its membership ranks, with approval by the Commissioners. The committee shall be considered a sub-board to the proposed Department of Fire and Emergency Services, shall exist to support the administrative, business, and operational needs of the fire service, and ***shall meet and report back to the fire department and municipal governments on a quarterly schedule***.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Sample Community Advisory Board Membership

Members	Number
Citizen representatives	2
Business representatives	2
School District representative	1
Member-at-large	1
Total:	6

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS –COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

OBJECTIVE 3: Establish Community Engagement Advisory Committee CONTINUED

Sample Advisory Board Member Qualifications

21 years of age and older
Ross Township resident
Ross Township business owner
Knowledgeable about the local community
Has a diverse background and expertise (public safety, business management, finance, human resources)

Task Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the proposed fire chief, township manager, and township fire chief's association.

Timeline: Year 1-2

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Design and establish a Department of Fire and Emergency Services as a township managed and funded department
- Maintain existing fire marshal position

In Pennsylvania, local government is the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for the provision of the delivery of fire and EMS. This requirement is statutorily required in the First-Class Township Code and is commonly referred to as Act 9 of 2008. Most home rule charter municipalities have similar language. This provision in the local government codes, however, does not state which entity will provide the service, nor to what level of service will be provided. It only says it must be provided.

In most communities across the Commonwealth, this is accomplished through the municipal government's reliance upon the local volunteer fire department, ambulance service, and/or rescue squad already tasked with providing those services. Even though these volunteer emergency service organizations are not municipally created nor municipally managed departments or agencies, such as police and public works, they need to be viewed as a valuable, local government function.

Historically, volunteer fire departments have been known to be “private clubs” that only come to the municipal governments when they need money for a capital project or daily operating needs. This relationship has also worked the other way. In many circumstances, local officials take a “hands off” approach when it comes to the delivery of fire and emergency services.

Over the last few years, Ross Township officials have become more engaged with the eight volunteer fire departments and fire police that serve the township. Slow forward progress has been made to understand the challenges the volunteer fire service faces and the opportunities that exist. These efforts have started to build a foundation for the future of the fire service in the township and region.

The township should design *and establish a township managed and funded Department of Fire and Emergency Services*. This department would be a recognized township department, created by ordinance, and function like other township departments. The Department of Fire and Emergency Services would coordinate all fire and emergency service activities within the township. The proposed

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

fire chief would be the director of the department, oversee and manage the department, and report to the Township Manager. Ross Township should review current language in its code to determine the necessary steps to revise any existing ordinances in order to further define the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. An example of an ordinance from East Norriton Township in Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, is included in Supporting Documents within this recommendation.

The township should ***maintain the existing fire marshal position*** and make the position full-time. This should happen once the proposed Fire Chief is hired and in conjunction with establishing the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. In addition to the proposed fire chief, the existing township fire marshal position brings additional value which is important for the success of the proposed Department. A small group of township businesses were interviewed as part of the assessment. When asked who the township fire chief was, they responded that the township fire marshal was the chief fire official in Ross Township. When asked why they thought this, they stated that this individual was the “visible” person in the township when it came to fire services. This may be a result of the fire marshal being available during weekday hours.

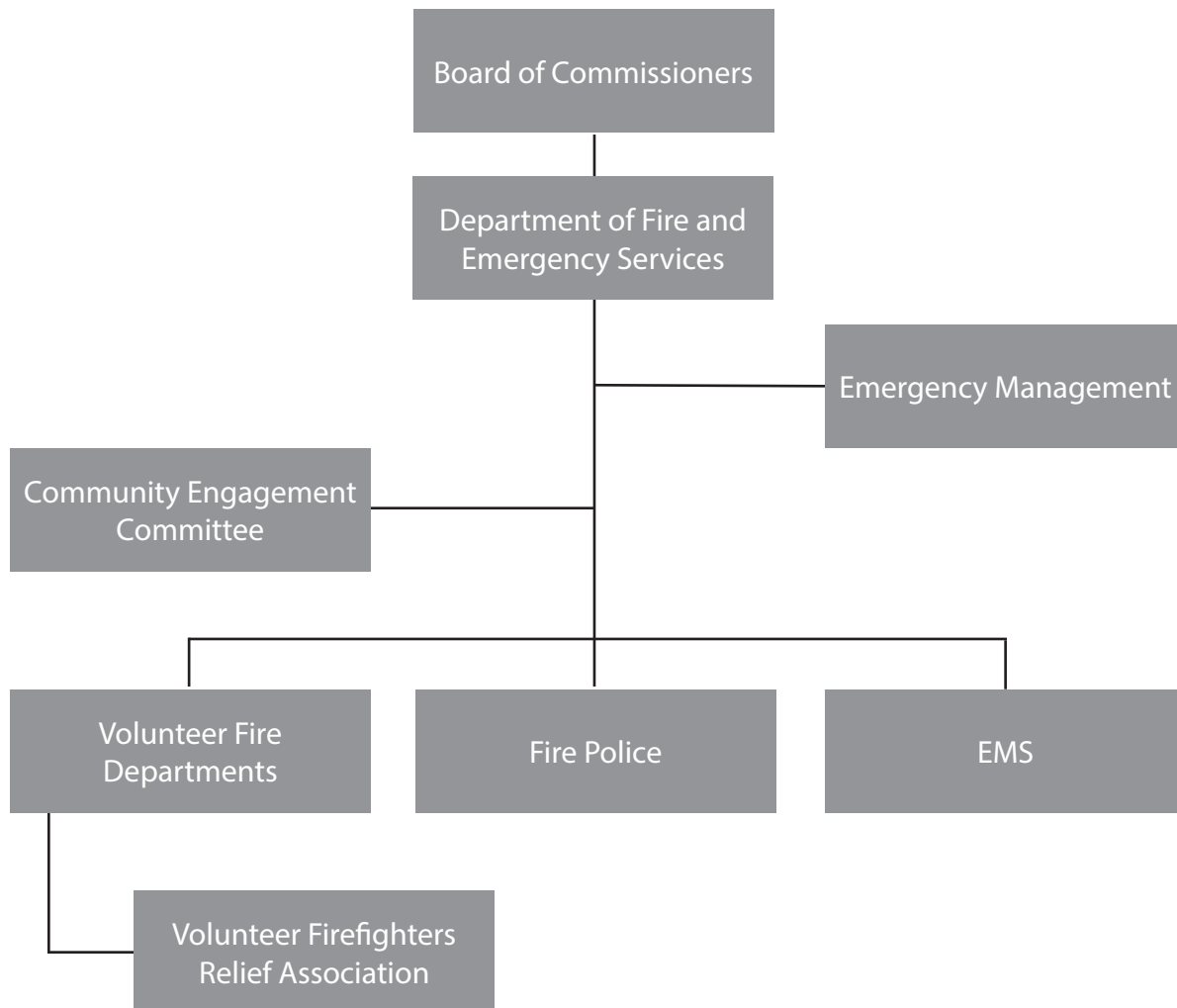
Along with existing duties, the fire marshal can play several critical roles in completing important tasks that must be addressed but need to be separate from duties of the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief will have a significant workload without these additional duties. One new duty for the fire marshal would be to achieve comprehensive and consistent data collection for all fire companies in the township and the township itself. This is further explained in Objective 5. Other work could include providing administrative support to the township’s fire companies, grant writing, training, and supporting the Emergency Management Coordinator. This essential support will allow the volunteer personnel to focus primarily on training and responding to 9-1-1 calls for service.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

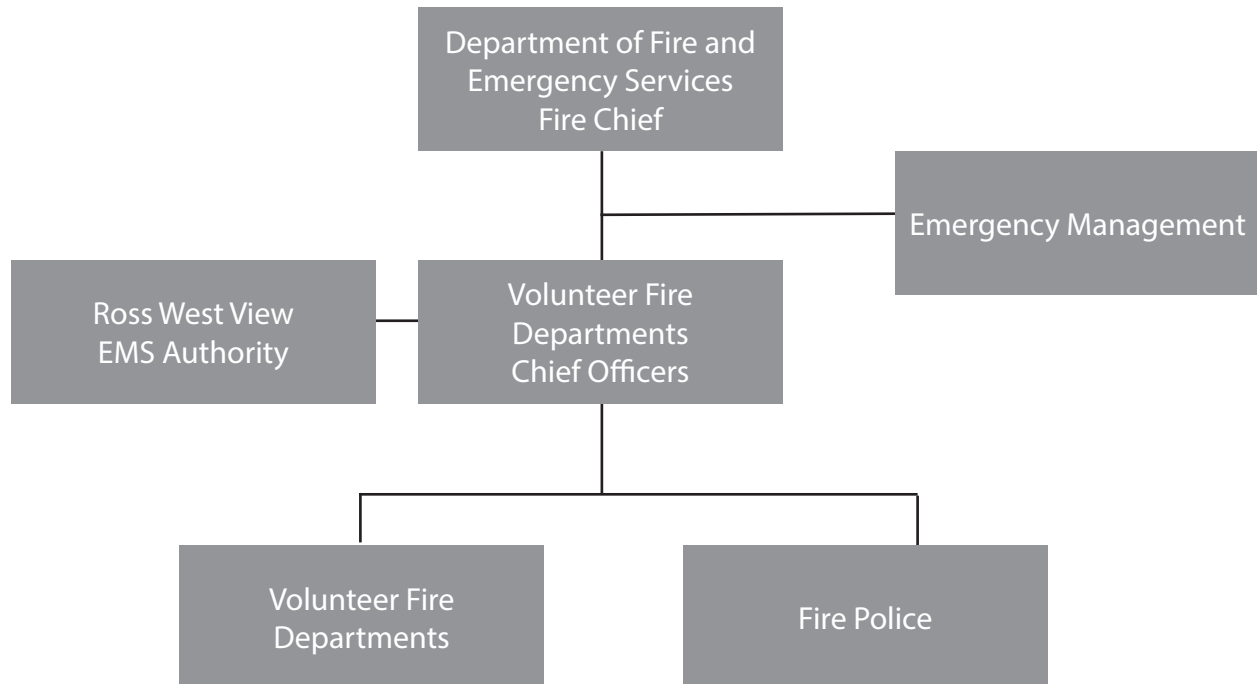
Potential Fire Services Administrative Organizational Chart



STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

Potential Fire Service Operations Organization Chart



STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

ORDINANCE NO. 584

EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA

AN ORDINANCE OF EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP, MONTGOMERY COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, AMENDING PART 1, ADMINISTRATIVE LEGISLATION, CHAPTER 10: FIRE DEPARTMENT, SECTIONS 10-12, 10-13, 10-14, 10-16, AND 10-17 OF THE EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP CODE OF ORDINANCES TO ESTABLISH A TOWNSHIP FIRE CHIEF, REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES OR PARTS THEREOF IN CONFLICT THEREWITH, AND PROVIDING FOR A SEVERABILITY CLAUSE AND AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, the East Norriton Township Board of Supervisors has adopted Part 1, Administrative Legislation, Chapter 10: Fire Department, of the East Norriton Township Code of Ordinances related to the creation, governance and regulation of the East Norriton Township Fire Department; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 10: Fire Department, Sections 10-13 and 10-14 of the East Norriton Township Code of Ordinances articulate that the position of Fire Chief shall be elected from within the Norriton Fire Engine Company pursuant to its bylaws and further establishes that said Fire Chief of the Norriton Fire Engine Company shall be the chief fire officer of the Township and shall have the power and responsibility for carrying out the provisions of Chapter 10; and

WHEREAS, Chapter 10: Fire Department, Section 10-3 of the East Norriton Township Code of Ordinances establishes that the Fire Department and all personnel comprising the Fire Department shall at all times conform to any and all rules and regulations as adopted by the East Norriton Township Board of Supervisors as well as the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Second Class Township Code, notwithstanding anything in the constitution and bylaws of the Fire Department, and vests the ultimate responsibility of the Fire Department with the East Norriton Township Board of Supervisors; and

WHEREAS, Section 803(b) of the Pennsylvania Second Class Township Code, 53 P.S. § 66803(b), empowers East Norriton Township by ordinance to make rules and regulations for the government of fire companies which are located within East Norriton Township and their officers; and

WHEREAS, the East Norriton Township Board of Supervisors has determined that the creation of a civilian management position of Township Fire Chief who shall serve as the chief fire officer of the Township and who shall be vested with the ultimate power and responsibility for carrying out the provisions of Chapter 10 of the East Norriton Township Code of Ordinances through the following amendment and enacting provisions related thereto will promote the general welfare and coordinated and practical community development within the Township.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the East Norriton Township Board of Commissioners that Chapter 10: Fire Department of the East Norriton Township Code of Ordinances is amended as follows (text to be deleted is shown as ~~strikethrough~~, text to be added shown as underline):

I. AMENDMENT OF THE CODE

Chapter 10. Fire Department

ARTICLE I. Fire Department of East Norriton Township.

§ 10-12. Annual Report.

The Fire Company shall submit annually to the Board of Supervisors (through the Township Fire Chief) an annual report of activities, operations and financial condition for the calendar year preceding.

ARTICLE II: Township Fire Chief, Township Deputy Fire Chief, Norriton Fire Engine Company Fire Chief, Public Safety Director and Emergency Management Coordinator.

§ 10-13. Appointment. This section is deleted in its entirety and is amended to read as follows:

- A. The Township Fire Chief shall be a civilian managerial position and shall be appointed by the Board of Supervisors.**
- B. The Township Deputy Fire Chief shall be a civilian position and may be appointed in the discretion of the Board of Supervisors.**
- C. The Norriton Fire Engine Company Fire Chief shall be appointed by the Fire Department based on the Fire Department's bylaws.**

§ 10-14. Duties.

- A.** The Township Fire Chief shall be the chief fire officer of the Township and shall have the power and responsibility of carrying out the provisions of this chapter.
- [B.]** ~~The Fire Chief shall report to the Public Safety Director who will report to the Board of Supervisors and the Township Manager the efficient and effective operation of the Fire Department. The Fire Chief will develop and enforce standard operating guidelines based on recognized practices and procedures.]~~
- B.** The Township Fire Chief shall report to the Board of Supervisors and the Township Manager the efficient and effective operation of the Fire Department. The Township Fire Chief will develop and enforce standard operating guidelines based on recognized practices and procedures in consultation with the Norriton Fire Engine Company Fire Chief.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

C. The Township Deputy Fire Chief shall report to the Township Fire Chief and coordinate with said Township Fire Chief in the efficient and effective operation of the Fire Department.

D. The Norriton Fire Engine Company Fire Chief shall report to the Township Fire Chief and the Township Deputy Fire Chief and shall coordinate the implementation of the Township Fire Chief's standard operating guidelines within the fire company.

[C] E. The Public Safety Director will coordinate with the **Township** Fire Chief's command of large scale or complex emergencies when such action is necessary to protect life and property. The **Township** Fire Chief, **Township Deputy Fire Chief** or other officer in charge of the scene shall have authority to close streets, initiate evacuations and exclude the public from the immediate vicinity of the emergency or place of danger.

ARTICLE III. Fire Marshall.

§ 10-16. Appointment.

The Board of Supervisors shall appoint an officer to be known as the Fire Marshal of East Norriton Township as recommended by the ~~{Public Safety Director}~~ **Township Fire Chief**, whose duties shall be as hereinafter described.

§ 10-17. Duties.

- A. The Fire Marshal shall have the power and responsibility of enforcing all laws, ordinances and regulations with respect to: (See Township's job description for this position).
- B. The investigation of the cause, origin and circumstances of fires and explosions shall be in the following order: Fire Marshal, Deputy Fire Marshal, **Township** Fire Chief, **Township Deputy Fire Chief** and the chain of command within the Fire Department.

II. REPEALER

Any and all terms, conditions and provisions of any Ordinance of East Norriton Township in conflict with the terms, conditions and provisions of this Ordinance, are hereby repealed to the extent of such conflict.

III. SEVERABILITY

It is hereby declared to be the legislative intent of the Board of Supervisors of East Norriton Township, that if a court of competent jurisdiction declares any of the provisions of this Ordinance to be invalid or ineffective in whole or in part, the effect of such decision shall be limited to those provisions which are expressly stated in the decision to be invalid or ineffective, and all other provisions of this Ordinance shall continue to be separately and fully effective.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED


IV. EFFECTIVE DATE

This Ordinance shall be effective immediately upon adoption by the Board of Supervisors of East Norriton Township.


ORDAINED AND ENACTED by the Board of Supervisors of East Norriton Township, Montgomery County, Pennsylvania, this 26th day of May, 2020.

Attest:




Robert R. Hart
Secretary

**EAST NORRITON TOWNSHIP
BOARD OF SUPERVISORS**


Kevin McDevitt
Chairman

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – ORGANIZATIONAL GOVERNANCE

OBJECTIVE 4: Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services CONTINUED

Sample Job Description

Fire Marshal

- Responsible for fire prevention programs to ensure compliance with local and state fire laws, codes, and regulations.
- Responds to serious fire calls.
- Communicates regularly, by telephone, letter, and electronic mail or in person, with Township department heads, local, state and federal fire, and county emergency services.
- Inspects existing buildings and premises for change of use, occupancy or compliance with applicable code and ordinances.
- Investigates and addresses complaints dealing with violations of various Township codes and standards.
- Performs computerized record-keeping, tracking, and report filing for all fire inspections and investigations according to federal, state, and local guidelines and laws; maintains records of fire code inspections and violations.
- Attends meetings and training workshops and seminars as required.
- Serves as an assistant to the Township's Emergency Management Coordinator.
- Serves as an assistant to the Township's Building Code Official.
- Enforces regulations on projects requiring building and related permits for new construction, additions, and alternations to existing buildings in an assigned district.
- Oversees the Township's Knox Box Rapid Entry System.
- Serves as the Township's Safety Coordinator, as assigned.
- Performs all other duties as assigned.

Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the proposed Fire Chief in conjunction with the Township Manager with the Board of Commissioners.

Timeline: Year 2

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Develop a level of service and expectations from the volunteer fire departments
- Ensure the accuracy of all statistical data with standardized reporting
- Develop a sustainable funding plan that reviews all financial activity of the fire department
- Develop and implement service agreements with the volunteer fire departments

Every resident should receive the same high level of service regardless of which township volunteer fire department is providing the service. The Ross Township resident survey showed that over eighty-two percent of respondents stated that common standards across departments are important or very important. Currently, there are no consistent standards or performance expectations amongst the Township's eight volunteer fire departments. Each department maintains its own set of by-laws, standard operating guidelines, participation requirements, training requirements, requirements for fire officer eligibility, etc. The number of responses, workload, and active membership also varies drastically amongst the departments. At the same time, each department receives the same amount of municipal funding.

Moving forward, all stakeholders should work together to ***develop a level of service and expectations from the volunteer fire departments*** that serve Ross Township. It is recommended that the Township develop performance expectations with three primary goals:

1. Improve overall performance.
2. Increase overall volunteer membership.
3. Provide greater consistency amongst the operations and administration of the eight volunteer fire departments.

In addition, the Township should consider funding the departments based on compliance with adopted performance standards, workload, and volunteer membership. The costs to operate a department with a greater workload and more active members is greater than the costs to operate a department with a smaller workload and fewer volunteer members.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

Calls for Service

	Fairview	Laurel Gardens	Berkeley Hills	Evergreen	Perrysville	Keating	Quaill	Seville	Total
Total (2021-2023)	769	907	4,770	505	1,351	448	815	773	10,338
3-year Average	256	302	1,590	168	450	149	272	258	3,445
Avg. 1st Due 2021-2022 Fire	10	54	357	84	145	48	77	33	808
Cost/Call	\$313	\$265	\$50	\$476	\$178	\$536	\$294	\$310	Avg = \$303
Cost/1st Due Call	\$8,000	\$1,481	\$224	\$952	\$552	\$1,667	\$1,039	\$2,424	Avg = \$2,042

During the interview process, fire company members stated they had concerns with the accuracy of statistical data. This data includes calls for service, staffing per call, and response times. Accurate statistical data is important for short-term and long-term planning. It is also critical to making proper staffing and deployment decisions. Moving forward, ***ensuring the accuracy of statistical data with standardized reporting*** is very important for the success of the township's fire service.

The proposed fire chief should establish a working group with the chief officers of the township's fire companies to identify and select one township-wide Records Management System. Once this is done, the group should develop township-wide data entry protocols. Finally, the group should select one individual from each of the eight fire companies and the fire police who shall be responsible for entering accurate data in the Records Management System. Together, all components listed above form the formal Reporting and Recordkeeping Process for Ross Township.

The next step is to ***develop a sustainable funding plan that reviews all financial activity of the fire department***. In order to establish a consistent and reliable funding plan, three questions need to be asked:

- What are the volunteer fire departments going to fund?
- What is the volunteer firefighter's relief association going to fund?
- What is the municipal government going to fund?

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

In Pennsylvania, the funding system that provides operating revenue to volunteer fire departments is typically received from three sources. This includes the following:

- 1. Fundraising** – Through the volunteer organization itself, volunteer fire companies, ambulances, and rescue squads have traditionally raised funds on their own through public dinners, raffles, bingo, mail solicitation, and other fundraisers.
- 2. Act 84 (Pennsylvania Foreign Fire Insurance Tax program)** – A tax levied on out-of-state (also known as “foreign”) insurers by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania which then passes the revenue to local municipalities for several uses, including fire-rescue funding.
- 3. Local government** – Direct funding from municipal government which includes general fund line-item tax revenue, dedicated fire tax revenue, dedicated EMS tax revenue, local services tax revenue, and more recently, generating revenue by creating rate-setting entities.

More and more volunteer fire departments, ambulance services, and rescue squads receive funding from tax revenue either generated by, or funneled through, the municipal government. In Ross Township, total direct contributions are budgeted at \$640,000 in 2023, or \$80,000 per department. It is recommended to develop a contribution system based on calls and active membership:

Sample Contribution System

	Evergreen	Berkely Hills	Perrysville	Quaill	Fairview	Seville	Keating	Laurel Gardens
Base Annual Funding	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000	36,000
In-District Calls	80	352	143	81	10	38	39	56
\$100.00	8,000	35,200	14,300	8,100	1,000	3,800	3,900	5,600
Fire Calls	88	363	146	191	246	138	110	246
\$75.00	6,600	27,225	10,950	14,325	18,450	10,350	8,250	18,450
EMS Calls		875	178					
\$25.00		21,875	4,450					
Active Volunteers	12	26	10	10	7	10	9	4
\$1,000.00	12,000	26,000	10,000	10,000	7,000	10,000	9,000	4,000
Total	\$62,600	\$146,300	\$75,700	\$68,425	\$62,450	\$60,150	\$57,150	\$64,050

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

No for-profit, non-profit, or government business model survives without a strong budget and financial plan. With the answer to these three questions in hand and a cost sharing plan agreed upon by all stakeholders, a budget development and approval process can be implemented. With a consistent and reliable funding plan in place, the volunteer fire department's finances will become more stable which will directly impact the following:

- The officers and members can focus on the real work of training and answering calls for service.
- The organizations become more efficient over time.
- The organizations becomes more resilient when challenges arise.

The end result will be a sustainable funding program at the proper financial levels to cover the day-to-day operations, short-term capital needs, and long-term capital needs of the township's eight volunteer fire departments for the near future.

In jurisdictions that designate a volunteer fire department, ambulance service, or rescue squad as the municipal 9-1-1 emergency services provider, the foundation for an agreed upon level of service, performance expectations, and funding are agreements between the jurisdiction and the volunteer organizations. These agreements typically govern the obligations of each party. The township should ***develop and implement service agreements with the volunteer fire departments***. Typically, these Service Agreements, Memorandums of Understanding, or other such name contain many key points, but most include at a minimum the following:

- Recognition as one of the township's fire-rescue providers
- Outline of required periodic meetings between the parties
- Minimum performance goals
- Local government funding allotment with designated annual increases
- Permitted uses of the local government funding
- Annual reporting requirements, sometimes at local government's expense
- Proof of insurance coverage

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

Service agreements should be reviewed regularly to ensure all parties are fulfilling their obligations. It should also be reviewed to make sure the agreement is still representative of the current relationship. This type of agreement clearly defines the roles and responsibilities of all parties and provides the answers to important questions when the volunteers and elected or appointed officials change over time.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Sample Performance Measures

1. All departments shall maintain a minimum of twelve (12) “Active Volunteers” as defined by NFPA 1750 and the Township of Ross.
Active Volunteer – A member that is qualified to respond on fire apparatus or other emergency vehicles to emergency incidents. In order to be “qualified” and “active,” the member must have completed the appropriate modules of the Essentials of Firefighting or EMS training based on the level they are expected to perform, must respond to a minimum percentage of the department’s calls, and must attend a minimum of 36 hours of documented In-house and/or outside training annually.
2. All departments shall maintain a minimum average response of 4 “Active volunteers” per structural fire incident.
3. All fire officers must participate in a minimum of 12 hours of documented officers training annually.
4. All driver/operators must participate in a minimum of 12 hours of documented driver/operator training annually.
5. All suppression firefighters must participate in a minimum of 24 hours of structural fire-related training annually.
6. All new driver/operators must participate in a minimum of 60 hours of documented driver/operator training, which may include EVOC, Pump Operations I & II, Aerial Operations, and/or documented In-house training.
7. All departments are required to complete annual hose, pump, ground ladder, and aerial testing in accordance with NFPA Standards.
8. All departments must participate in the development, adoption, and adherence to a common set of Ross Township Fire Department By-Laws and Standard Operating Guidelines.
9. All departments shall be required to perform background checks on new members and provide them with an initial entry level physical examination.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

10. Monthly, by the 15th of the following month, the departments shall provide a report to the Township including emergency response activities, a roster of monthly training, and other community outreach activities or events.
11. The departments shall provide an annual summary of all expenses utilizing Township funding to the Township.
12. Protective ensembles including turnout gear, helmets, gloves, hoods, and boots assigned to structural firefighters shall not be more than 10 years old.
13. All departments must complete an internal annual audit by appointing an audit committee comprised of a minimum of 3 members that shall audit all financial statements to demonstrate good financial stewardship and transparency.
14. At least quarterly, all departments shall participate in joint training with their automatic/mutual aid partners.
15. All new members shall receive a baseline medical exam. Incumbent interior firefighters and driver/operators shall receive routine medical evaluations, the frequency of which will be determined between the township and fire departments (i.e., younger members may receive a medical evaluation on a less frequent basis than older members).

Sample Implementation Process for Standard Operating Guidelines

1. Standard Operating Guideline Implementation
 - a. Development
 - i. Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) may be developed by the authority of the Fire Chief, Administrative Officer, Operations Officer, or Safety Officer.
 - ii. All new or revised SOGs will be presented to the officers at a monthly officer's meeting. The officers will then have 30 days, until the next officer's meeting, to provide feedback. New or revised SOG's will be implemented by a consensus of the officers present at the meeting, unless they address safety-related issues that require immediate implementation to avoid injury to members.
 - iii. The review process shall be to distribute the draft SOG prior to the monthly officers meeting, to discuss the draft SOG during the meeting, solicit feedback, and come to an agreement on the implementation date at the following officer's meeting.
 - iv. A failure to provide feedback shall be interpreted as being in agreement.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 5: Adopt Performance Standards with Funding CONTINUED

b. Implementation

- i. New or revised SOGs shall be placed on the bulletin board in the assembly room for review by all employees, attached to the monthly officer's meeting minutes, which is distributed to all members, and placed in the SOG Manual.
- ii. New or revised SOGs shall be placed in the Member's Section and SOG section of the fire department website.
- iii. It shall be the responsibility of the Deputy Chief to forward SOG additions/changes to his/her platoon and to provide any necessary education regarding the SOG addition/change.
- iv. It shall be the responsibility of the members to review the monthly officer meeting minutes and/or the Member's Section of the fire department website for additions and/or changes in Standard Operating Guidelines.

c. Review

- i. SOGs shall be reviewed at least annually by the Operations & Safety Division.
- ii. A log of all additions and revision shall be maintained as part of the SOG Manual.

Task Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the fire chief of each township fire department working in conjunction with the newly proposed fire chief and Ross Township Commissioner's Public Safety Committee.

Timeline: Year 2-3

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

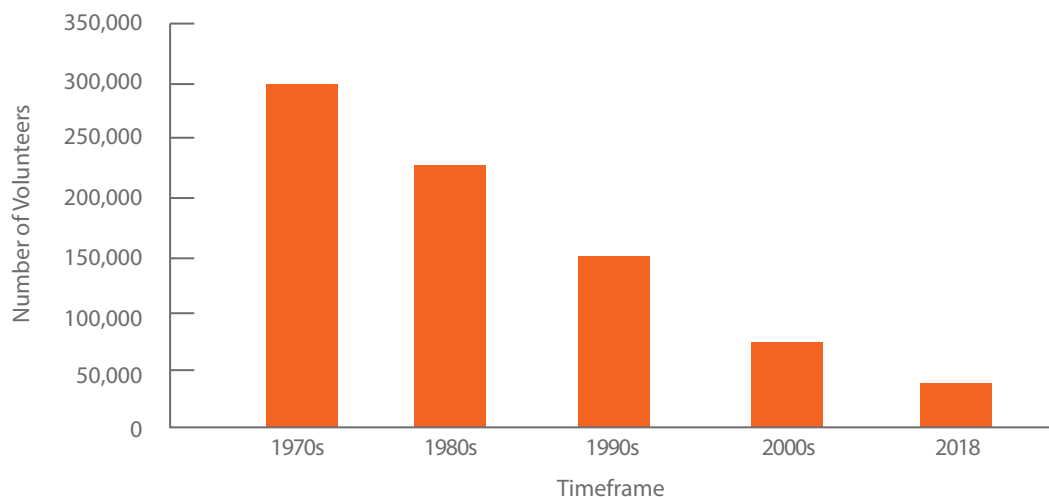
OBJECTIVE 6: Develop Department-wide Staffing Plan

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Develop a plan to better utilize the limited number of interior qualified firefighters
- Continuously monitor personnel response statistics
- Evaluate current daytime response times
- Review Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) guidelines as a possible funding source

Since the report “Pennsylvania Burning” was issued in 1976 to “SR6,” the most recent legislative report on the health of the Fire and EMS community in Pennsylvania, the number of available and trained volunteers for fire companies, ambulances, and rescue squads has continued to decrease year after year. It is estimated that Pennsylvania had roughly 38,000 active volunteers in 2018, down from an estimated 300,000 active volunteers in the mid-1970s. State-wide studies and numerous local and regional evaluations conducted across the Commonwealth indicate that volunteer numbers are steadily decreasing. Today, the number of active volunteers may even be lower. Some news outlets have reported the number of active volunteers to be around 30,000 people.

Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighters Statewide



Source: PA Senate Resolution 6

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 6: Develop Department-wide Staffing Plan CONTINUED

Based on feedback during the interviews and a review of statistical data provided by the eight volunteer fire companies, there appears to be an immediate need to help solve staffing problems with the township's fire companies. Some members reported that it has become more common to have fire apparatus respond to emergency calls for service with only a driver. In other instances, a crew of firefighters may have to wait until a chief officer arrives to their respective fire station to drive apparatus to respond to an emergency. Both of these scenarios are a serious safety concern. As a volunteer fire department, this is an anticipated problem.

To slow or reverse this trend, some outside of the box ideas and solutions must be considered to increase volunteer staffing. A department-wide staffing plan should be developed to **better utilize the limited number of interior qualified firefighters** that currently serve the township. When developing a staffing plan, the department should evaluate historical response averages, who is currently available to respond, and what level of service the community expects.

The primary goal of the *formal staffing plan* is to successfully recruit, retain, staff, and manage a substantially all volunteer-staffed fire department, bolstered by full-time leadership. As volunteer numbers continue to decrease, staffing shortages will become more prevalent. In considering a volunteer-staffed fire rescue system, keep in mind a few facts regarding volunteers and people:

1. The value in the volunteer staffing model for any fire and emergency services system is the dedicated volunteers.
2. Change to this type of staffing model may not be well received.
3. The township will need to consider alternative staffing options if the volunteer membership dwindles and a formal staffing plan is not successful, including part-time, full-time, and per diem firefighters.

A successful staffing program with satisfied and dedicated volunteer or career personnel does not come without full-time management. If there comes a need to add part-time and/or full-time staffing in the future, it is imperative that the township have a full-time employee to manage posting, hiring, intake, scheduling, payroll, discipline, and management of these employees. *It is not realistic to expect a volunteer fire department president, trustee, or fire chief to be a manager of part-time or full-time employees or to provide for the scheduling and constant oversight of a volunteer staffing program.* The proposed fire chief and the township management team must function as part of the future staffing management team.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 6: Develop Department-wide Staffing Plan

CONTINUED

Another solution, or partial solution, to providing sufficient staffing may include the implementation of a “Duty-shift Program.” This initiative can often pay dividends by attracting individuals to volunteer who prefer to schedule blocks of time to serve rather than be subjected to being always on call. This is not unlike performing volunteer work for hospitals, nursing homes, and schools. With this program, the fire department establishes minimum participation guidelines and minimum training requirements. Members agree to be at the fire station for a specified number of time blocks per month. In return, the volunteer would receive a small stipend and be entitled to all the benefits of volunteer membership.

This program is a departure from the traditional volunteer fire department model. However, many departments in the suburban Washington, DC area, for example, have found great success by implementing a “Duty-shift Program”. They have found that there is a segment of their population that is willing to volunteer, but is too busy with family, jobs, and other obligations to participate on an on-call basis.

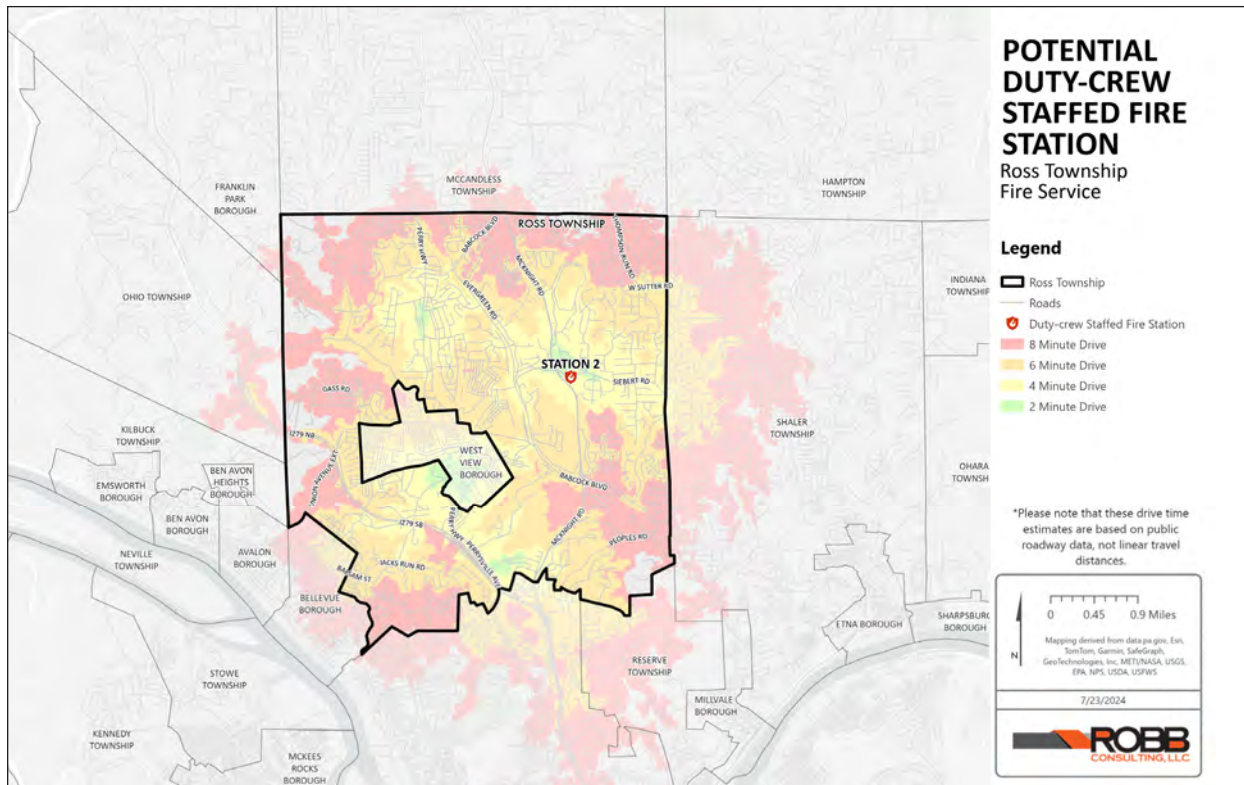
Providing workspaces at the stations for volunteer members who can work remotely is another possible partial solution to the daytime staffing issues. An additional benefit of these types of programs is the additional staffing credits received for personnel as part of the Insurance Services Office (ISO) Grading Schedule.

Locally, the Cranberry Township Volunteer Fire Department and the Moon Run Volunteer Fire Department have implemented Duty Crew Programs, where members in good standing with other local fire departments who have their Firefighter I Certification provide scheduled staffing for these departments in exchange for a stipend. Duty crew members are required to attend a minimum number of departmental trainings and schedule a minimum number of shifts per month. The Mt. Lebanon and North Strabane township fire departments pay volunteers a stipend to provide scheduled staffing. Any staffing plan must be aligned with a comprehensive recruitment and retention program to sustain a substantially all-volunteer fire department for the near future.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – OPERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 6: Develop Department-wide Staffing Plan

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Task Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the proposed fire chief and the township's fire chief's association.

Timeline: Year 3

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Build consensus to consolidate volunteer fire departments

As the assessment process continued and more discussions were held, officers and members of the township's eight fire companies admitted to members of the assessment team that some type of new partnership between any combination of the township's eight fire companies may be necessary in the near future.

Many officers and members admitted that at one time, the idea of merging fire companies was not talked about in Ross Township. It was not appreciated nor tolerated by leadership and rank and file members. Why? While the reasons provided during the interview process varied, the main reason given is that the existing volunteer fire companies would be hostile to the concept of "giving up" their individual company. This also includes "giving, transferring or donating" any assets to another volunteer fire company or the township.

For some interviewees, it was clear that for the present moment, there was a need to permit the existing fire companies to remain separate and build on areas of agreement. This strategy would allow for home grown discussions, and as trust was built, a natural progression to new partnerships would occur. This was realized when it was reported that some low-level discussions had already begun among some of the township's volunteer fire companies.

So what is a Cooperative Partnership®? A Cooperative Partnership® is any new partnership formally adopted by two or more participating entities designed to serve a basic public safety need in the community. A Cooperative Partnership® can be a merger, consolidation, regionalization or some other combination of administrative and/or operational services used to create a stronger and more resilient emergency services system.

The township fire companies and fire police do work together on several levels. This includes responding on calls together, training together, work together in the township fire chief's association, township firemen's association, and the township volunteer firefighter's relief association. Building off

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township

CONTINUED

these existing relationships would enable Ross Township to **develop a plan to consolidate volunteer fire departments** that are willing to do so.

Inevitably, two driving forces will expedite this process and drive the discussion. As noted in Objective 6, the **decrease in available, qualified active volunteer firefighters** will continue. An active member, versus a rostered member, is defined as a member who regularly responds to incidents on apparatus and participates in training. Based on NFPA and ISO, departments should maintain a minimum of 16 “active” volunteers (drivers and suppression firefighters), with 25% or 4 volunteers at any given time to ensure adequate service delivery. Since each Ross Township department operates both administratively and operationally independent, the minimum number is hard to maintain. The average number of members across all departments is 9.4 members.

The other driving force is the **cost of capital assets**. This includes apparatus, equipment, and facilities. Current estimates place a fire engine (pumpers) at \$800,000 to \$1.2 million, ladders trucks at \$1.2 million to \$1.6 million, and Type 1 ambulances at \$340,000. With a little research, these purchases can be found in the greater Pittsburgh region and highlight this cost.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Ross Township Fire Service Demographics

Number of Volunteer Fire Departments	8
Number of Volunteer Fire Police	1
Total Number of Rostered Members	262
Total Number of Active Members	85
Average Age of Active Members	47

Source: Volunteer Fire Departments

Average Number of Active Members per Agency

Number of Volunteer Agencies*	Average Number per Department
9	9.4

Source: Volunteer Fire Departments

*8 volunteer fire departments and 1 fire police department

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township

CONTINUED

Minimum Required Officers per Department

Department	Administrative Officers*	Operations Officers*	Total
Berkeley Hills	9	7	16
Evergreen	9	4	13
Fairview	n/r	n/r	-
Keating	10	6	16
Laurel Gardens	n/r	n/r	-
Perrysville	7	6	13
Quaill	9	7	16
Seville	10	2	12
Ross Twp. Fire Police	n/r	n/r	-

Source: Volunteer Fire Departments

*Minimum number required by bylaws

n/r = not reported

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township

CONTINUED

Fire Apparatus Fleet

Department	Station Number	Apparatus Type	Make/Model/Year
Evergreen	246	Engine	2014 Spartan / Smeal
Evergreen	246	Engine	2000 Spartan / Smeal
Evergreen	246	Squad	1999 Ford F250
Berkeley Hills	247	Support Vehicle	2018 Chevy Tahoe
Berkeley Hills	247	Support Vehicle	2019 Chevy Tahoe
Berkeley Hills	247	Engine	2016 Pierce Enforcer
Berkeley Hills	247	Truck	2012 Pierce Arrow XT Ladder Tower
Perrysville	248	Engine	2015 Sutphen/Monarch
Perrysville	248	Engine	1998 Pierce/ Saber
Perrysville	248	Squad	2001 Ford F550 w/Pierce body
Quaill	249	Truck (Quint)	2007 ALF/C23R-75
Quaill	249	Engine	2016 HME/RAT
Quaill	249	Squad	1998 Dodge Durango
Quaill	249	Pump Trailer	2015 Look Trailers
Fairview	250	Engine	2012 Sutphen
Fairview	250	Air Truck	2005 Spartan/Keystone
Fairview	250	Squad	2014 Ford Explorer
Seville	251	Engine	2016 Spartan/4 Guys Gladiator
Seville	251	Squad	2016 GMC 2500
Keating	252	Engine	2018 Pierce Enforcer
Keating	252	Salvage	1998 International/Smeal
Laurel Gardens	253	Engine	2019 KME Panther
Laurel Gardens	253	Engine	1998 HME / Luverne
Laurel Gardens	253	Special Service	2004 Ford F350 4x4
Ross Twp. Fire Police	254	Utility Pickup	2022 Chevy 3500
Ross Twp. Fire Police	254	Pickup	2015 Chevy 2500
Ross Twp. Fire Police	254	Utility Van	2007 Chevy 3500
Ross Twp. Fire Police	254	Utility Pickup	2011 Chevy 3500

Source: Volunteer Fire Departments

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township

CONTINUED

2023 Solicitation Results

Department	Total residential solicitations mailed	Total # of residential solicitations returned	% success for residential mailings	Total commercial solicitations mailed	Total # of commercial solicitations returned	% success for commercial mailings
Berkeley Hills*	5164	736	14.25%	38	13	34.21%
Evergreen	1180	226	19.15%	134	15	11.19%
Fairview	364	38	10.44%	2	0	0.00%
Keating	523	66	12.62%	50	11	22.00%
Laurel Gardens	972	201	20.68%	143	25	17.48%
Perrysville	3498	1268	36.25%	261	45	17.24%
Quail	1958	506	25.84%	15	7	46.67%
Seville	883	119	13.48%	7	6	85.71%

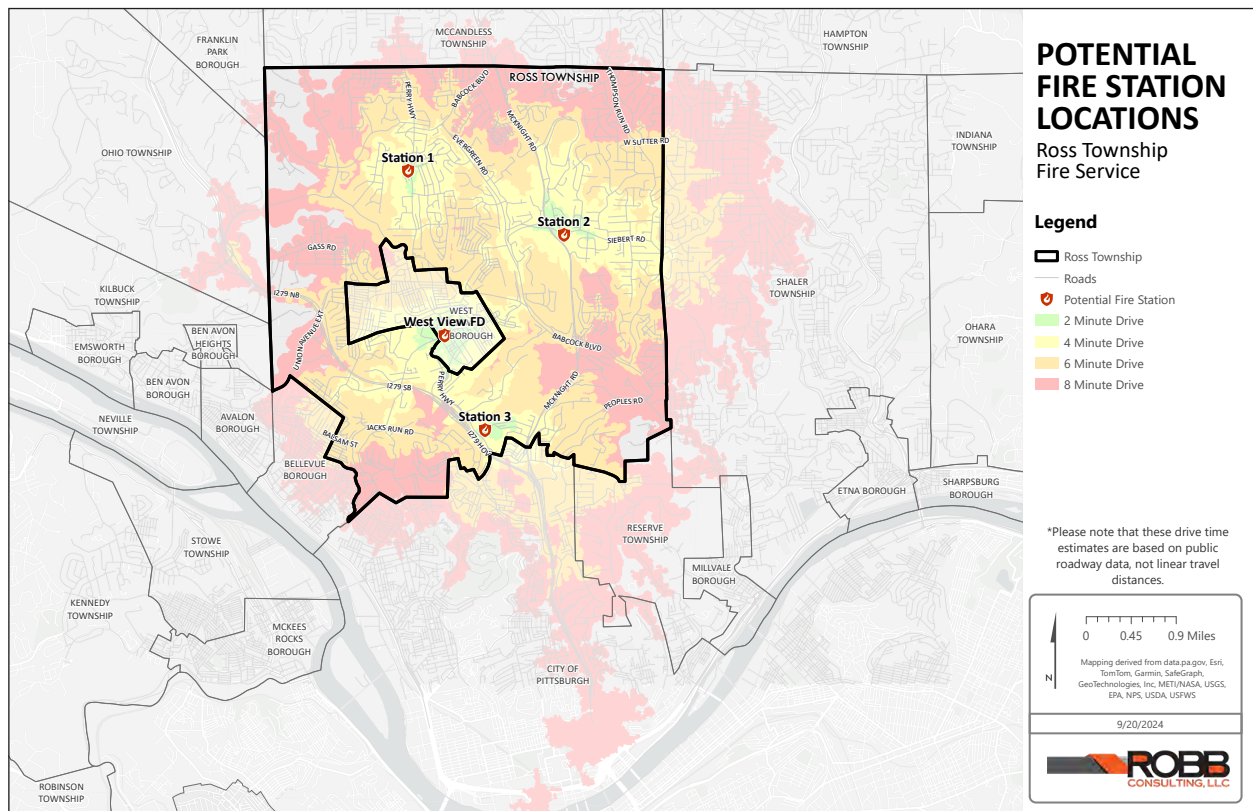
Source: Volunteer Fire Departments

*Berkeley Hills does not send solicitations to businesses as the historical return is significantly low. Business numbers noted reflect a special mailing that is sent to specific businesses that have a history of giving.

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – COOPERATIVE PARTNERSHIPS®

OBJECTIVE 7: Develop New Cooperative Partnerships® between the Volunteer Fire Departments and Township CONTINUED

Potential Future Station Locations



Task Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the president and fire chief of those township fire companies that have shown an interest in forming a new partnership with assistance provided by the township, the proposed fire chief, and consultant.

Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 8: Develop a Long-term Regional Solution to Fire Services

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- Expand regional recruitment, training, deployment, and staffing partnerships
- Develop a regional fire services delivery system

Today in the North Hills region, the continued decrease in available, qualified volunteer firefighters, soaring cost of capital assets, and duplication of those assets including apparatus, equipment, and facilities, will slowly continue to challenge municipal governments and volunteer-staffed fire departments in providing an adequate level of service to their communities. Unfortunately for staffing and costs, there are no signs of either stabilizing. Ross Township, along with its neighbors, should begin discussions on working collaboratively towards a long-term regional fire-rescue solution.

During the interview process with neighboring fire-rescue agencies, several opportunities were discussed that could be the catalyst to expand relationships with the fire-rescue organizations and municipalities. Neighbors indicated that Ross Township fire companies have a good reputation among their peers. This good reputation, along with more and more people willing to work with their neighbors, is the foundation needed to pursue projects collaboratively.

Internally, several new partnerships during the small and large group discussions were mentioned. The prevalent project is a **regional recruitment program**. This effort would focus on the North Hills region and the fire-rescue agencies that have a service area that covers the same geographic area as the North Hills School District and possibly Northgate and Shaler Area school districts.

Members also saw an opportunity for a **regional training program**. This would include more introductory training courses along with advanced training in specialty areas. This would strengthen the North Hills region in supporting the Allegheny County Hazardous Materials team, and possibly the newly formed Western Region Urban Search and Rescue Strike Team. These programs already help with building relationships and help coordinate regional needs. Participation in the North Hills Council of Governments. may someday lead to a more regional, coordinated program for apparatus purchases and staffing.

Deployment is another opportunity. As one resident stated in the community forum, “Do we really need all of these fire trucks?” *A regional, coordinated program for apparatus purchases can eliminate*

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 8: Develop a Long-term Regional Solution to Fire Services CONTINUED

costly duplication. Several members saw this as a path to more formal regionalization of services in the next three to five years as the number of volunteers continues to decrease.

A region-wide deployment and staffing plan will eliminate duplicate and redundant apparatus and provide a better financial planning tool for everyone involved. The proposed plan will also allow for proper purchasing of specialized apparatus for the varying risks in the community, and meet the legitimate ability of the volunteer fire departments to staff an appropriate fleet of apparatus. **By standardizing the fleet, cost avoidance will be possible.** The municipal governments may choose to create and maintain an apparatus replacement fund or provide yearly capital contributions from a restricted account to the volunteer fire departments.

One member provided input that they believed that members that have an interest in EMS will not gain much experience unless they are a member with Berkeley Hills or Perrysville fire companies or employed with an EMS provider. The volunteer fire departments roster several members who are certified as Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). In addition to the opportunities that could be developed with the existing quick response services in the township, consideration should be given to develop an **EMS ride-along or mentoring program** in cooperation with Ross/West View EMS Authority to provide its member with more field experience. This will provide benefits to both the volunteer fire departments and EMS by exposing members to other areas of public safety that may lead to employment opportunities.

Another area identified by several interviewees is developing a program that encourages local employers to let their employees who are active driver/operator and interior qualified volunteer firefighters, and certified EMS providers respond to daytime calls. In a few regions of the state, employers still support the local volunteer fire companies, ambulances, and rescue squads by permitting employees to leave work to respond to significant emergency calls. In most places, this luxury no longer exists. Working with local employers, a regional recruitment and retention team could be formed to adopt a standardized **Regional Work Response Program**. If properly managed, this program *may* benefit the volunteer fire departments and community by providing additional qualified personnel on emergency calls.

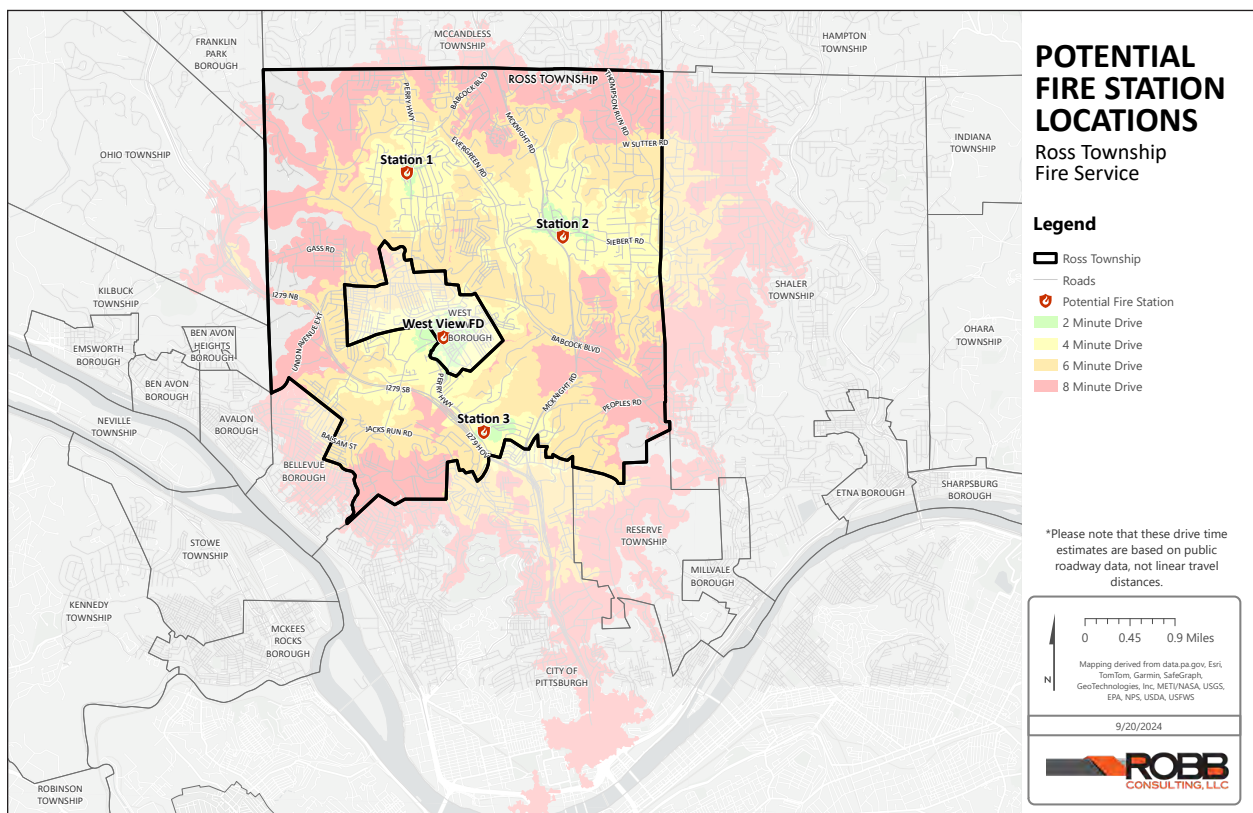
As already reported, the continued high costs of capital assets and decreasing volunteer members will continue to strain volunteer fire and emergency service organizations and municipal and county

STRATEGY RECOMMENDATIONS – FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

OBJECTIVE 8: Develop a Long-term Regional Solution to Fire Services CONTINUED

governments. By starting now to build regional relationships, any need to hire full-time employees could be approached regionally instead of each volunteer fire department and local government trying to do it on their own. By creating a **regional fire-rescue system**, more opportunities will exist for specialization, promotion, and other benefits. As volunteer members and neighboring agencies agreed, starting now and over the next three, regional cooperation one step at a time is a viable way to eliminate costly duplication of services and will act as the path forward to more formal regionalization of fire-rescue services.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS



Task Assignment: The objective should be put into action by the proposed fire chief and township fire chief's association along with the township commissioners.

Timeline: Year 1 and ongoing

WORK PLAN

WORK PLAN

Objectives	Time Frame
Hire Fire Department Leadership	Year 1
Develop Internal and External Communications Plan	Year 1
Establish Community Engagement Committee	Year 1-2
Reorganize and Formalize Municipal Oversight of Fire Services	Year 2
Adopt Performance Standards with Funding	Year 2-3
Develop a Department-wide Staffing Plan	Year 3
Develop New Cooperative Partnerships Between Volunteer Fire Departments and Township	Year 1 and ongoing
Develop a Long-term Regional Solution to Fire Services	Year 1 and ongoing

Work Plan Implementation Opportunities

The Work Plan to implement recommended actions will introduce significant change to stakeholders within Ross Township. Research shows that building on what is working within a system tends to produce desired results more effectively. Prosci®, a recognized leader in studying change, notes that individuals follow a five-step, sequential process when they are introduced to change. The process involves understanding why a change is necessary; having the opportunity to support or reject the change; learning what they need to learn to support the change; building capability by practicing new ways of functioning because of the change; and fully adopting and anchoring in the new way of operating. The most important factor to enabling this process is for leadership to acknowledge their role in the change effort and actively engage fire services stakeholders to address key issue.

Ross Township increases their likelihood of success if township government and fire company leaders actively and visibly engage stakeholders in continuing dialogue about why the changes are happening and work to build trust and a coalition of support throughout the fire services system for any change(s). While fire services have many opportunities in can leverage, ROBB Consulting proposes the following ideas for consideration to position Ross Township for anticipated future changes:

- 1. Reset the system by reconnecting independent fire companies to a shared purpose and leveraging their respective strengths to form a collective future** – Respondents hold a deep sense of community service and a passion for firefighting and emergency response, but independent cultures within each fire company may have taken priority over the brotherhood

that exists among fire service. Competition stifles practical standardization of common processes, collective training, and shared best practices. People fail to learn from each other. They may hide individual successes and challenges to the detriment of the whole system.

Research supports building on what IS working, so a place for government and fire company leaders to start is to help people redefine how they see themselves with fire services. Respondents' perception of themselves seems locally oriented, which reinforces competition. Re-framing these concepts to expand the frame of reference from which they operate may reorient them away from "my" fire services operation to a collective perspective on "our" fire services operations. For example, reframing "my community" to mean "the township" instead of "my district" enables stakeholders to expand responsibility to the whole. Strong collaborators see "their issues" as "my issues, too." Based on survey comments, respondents already recognize the need for a more holistic approach to providing services anyhow (e.g., the need for better collaboration, greater equity in funding and training, and better resource allocation to enhance fire services in Ross Township). A re-set provides a reminder of "why we are all here" and lays a foundation for future oriented change.

- 2. Build greater awareness of the current state of Fire Services in Ross Township** – A lack of transparent, visible, collective performance of the whole fire services system reinforces a culture of competition vs. collaboration. Without a commonly shared, collective perspective on the current state of Ross Township Fire Services, stakeholders cannot understand the urgency leaders perceive, cannot participate in shaping a system in which they invest their time and talent, and cannot make an informed choice for themselves about whether or how to support changes that Ross Township leadership may introduce. This shared awareness involves both leaders and supervisors bringing knowledge, transparency, and visibility to the whole Ross Township Fire Services system and all other stakeholders stepping forward to inform potential blind spots. With limited resources, it is imperative that Ross Township and fire officials make informed decisions. Doing so requires defining collective, visible, transparent measures that reflect the entire system's health and performance, so that leaders know where and how to invest.
- 3. Experiment with new, collective approaches to volunteer recruitment and retention** – Results indicate recruiting and retaining volunteers as perhaps the biggest pain point in the Ross Township fire system. Some respondents believe more recent recruits could play a vital role in bringing a new perspective to how fire companies recruit and retain volunteers.

Efforts should appeal to the motivating factors noted in the survey results (i.e., deep sense of community service and a passion for firefighting and emergency response). Coordinated, low risk experimentation, fast failure, and collective learning should inform ongoing efforts.

Relatedly, fire companies are likely to experience knowledge gaps as new volunteers join and experienced members “retire.” To aid in closing these gaps, fire companies should collaborate to create standardization. With limited manpower and new, unskilled volunteers, effectiveness is dependent on accomplishing similar tasks the same way. Fire companies should explore a common framework or way of working outside emergency responses to drive standardization wherever possible. Then when multiple companies respond to a call, the coordination and efficiency of operations during a response should improve.

- 4. Start building or repairing trust with all stakeholder groups by addressing pressing, urgent issues now** – Within the larger context, people in general have a healthy skepticism of government. Against this backdrop, survey results indicate a significant lack of trust between Ross Township leaders and fire companies. This lack of trust most likely extends to perceived agents of those leaders (e.g., the consulting company). An opportunity to start proactively addressing this dynamic may exist within funding practices. Comments indicate a significant amount of energy around inequities in how Ross Township funds individual Fire Services providers. Even if Ross Township cannot take action that satisfies these concerns, it is important that officials acknowledge an understanding that these issues exist and work toward their resolution. By addressing more urgent pain, leaders demonstrate their willingness to listen to impacted stakeholders and build the trust with individual fire companies needed to gain support for future changes.

Additionally, township officials may need to engage the public directly. Survey findings do not represent the public’s perception of the services they receive. Given other results in the survey, it seems likely that the public may not understand the challenges Ross Township fire companies are facing. As such, government and fire company leaders may need to garner public support for proposed changes.

Establishing trust among stakeholders may be the most important factor for enabling a future approach where the fire services system adopts and proficiently operates with some form of centralization or coordination in Ross Township.

APPENDIX 1: STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

Stakeholder Engagement	Start Date
Kick-off Meeting – VFD Officers and Members	March 2023
VFD data collection	April 2023
VFD small group meetings	May 2023
VFD officer meetings	June 2023
Township staff interviews	July 2023
Neighboring public safety agency interviews	August 2023
VFD membership on-line survey	September 2023
VFD data collection completed	October 2023
VFD follow-up interviews	February 2024
Community engagement forum	February 2024
Community on-line survey	March-April 2024
VFD follow-up interviews	March 2024
VFD all-hands workshop	March 2024
Draft findings presented to VFD and Township	May 2024
Final report	July 2024

APPENDIX 2: VFD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

VFD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Target Group: Ross Township Fire Service Members

Dates: September 14 through September 25, 2023

Number of Respondents: 116

General Background

The Board of Commissioners of Ross Township (PA) agreed to gather objective information via a survey open to a designated number of fire services stakeholders. In general, surveys cannot provide conclusive findings on a given topic. At best, the results provide an opportunity for the Board of Commissioners to engage survey participants by sharing the survey's results and validating the interpretation of those results with that stakeholder population. Results can help leaders further investigate identified trends and better understand blind spots, areas of opportunity, and areas of challenge.

In this case, survey administrators analyzed the data to identify the story the data is telling and the opportunities available to Ross Township officials to improve the state of fire services.

General Survey Information

The Ross Township Board of Commissioners, in partnership with ROBB Consulting, collaborated to design and launch the "Ross Township Fire Services Survey" on September 14, 2023. On behalf of Daniel DeMarco, President, Board of Commissioners, Township of Ross, Adam Ravenstahl, Assistant Manager, Ross Township distributed via email and invitation to Steve Reubi, Jim Hughes, and the Volunteer Fire Department Chiefs to have them, and their teams, participate.

Officials invited the following Volunteer Fire Companies to participate:

- Berkeley Hills
- Evergreen
- Fairview
- Keating
- Laurel Gardens
- Perrysville
- Quail
- Seville

APPENDIX 2: VFD MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS CONTINUED

The survey was comprised of 18 questions with the following areas of focus:

- **Questions 1 - 2:** Stakeholder demographics questions to aid in analyzing the data.
- **Questions 3, 6, and 7:** Current state of communication, collaboration, and coordination.
- **Questions 4 and 5:** Motivating factors for people working within fire services.
- **Questions 8 - 11:** Current state of volunteering and funding within fire services.
- **Questions 12 - 16:** Current perceptions about the future state of fire services.
- **Questions 17 and 18:** Open ended questions to discover what is working well and what could work better in fire services, respectively.

Figures 1 and 2 show a breakdown of survey participants by stakeholder group and role, respectively. Figures 3 - 6 within this appendix show a summary of the numerical results of the survey.

Figure 1: Breakdown by Stakeholder Group

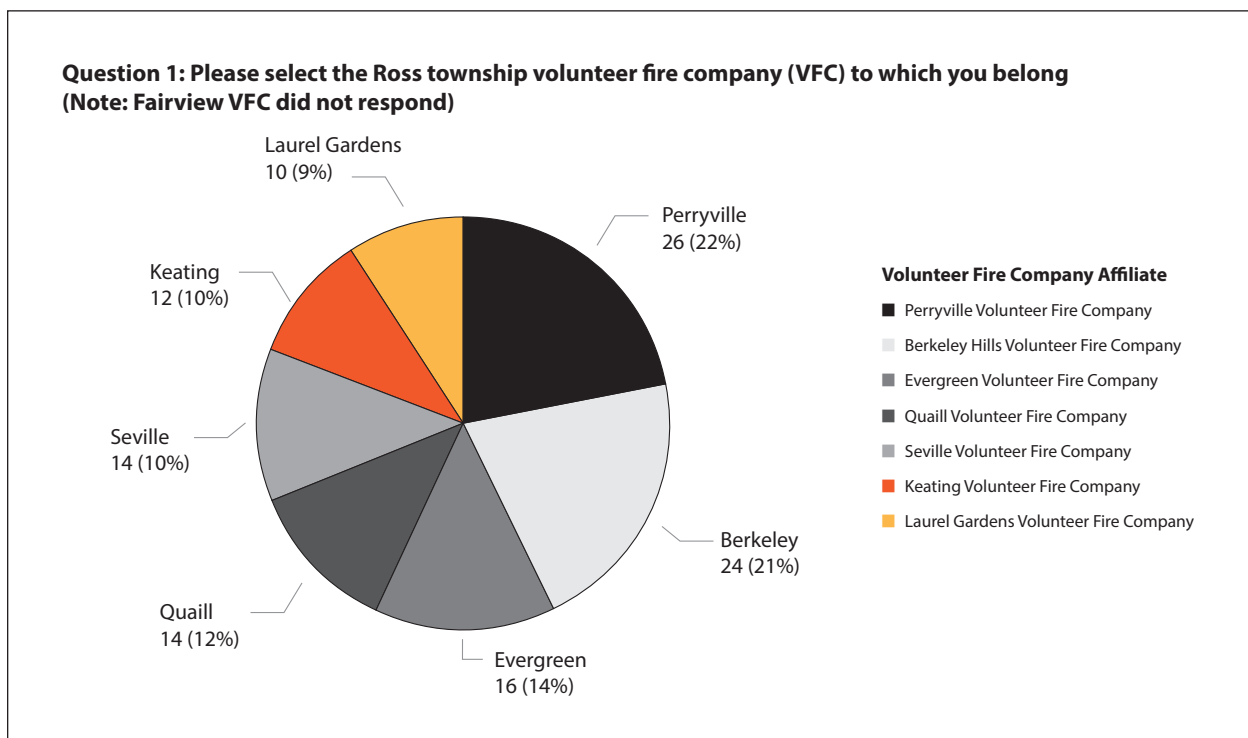


Figure 2: Breakdown by Role

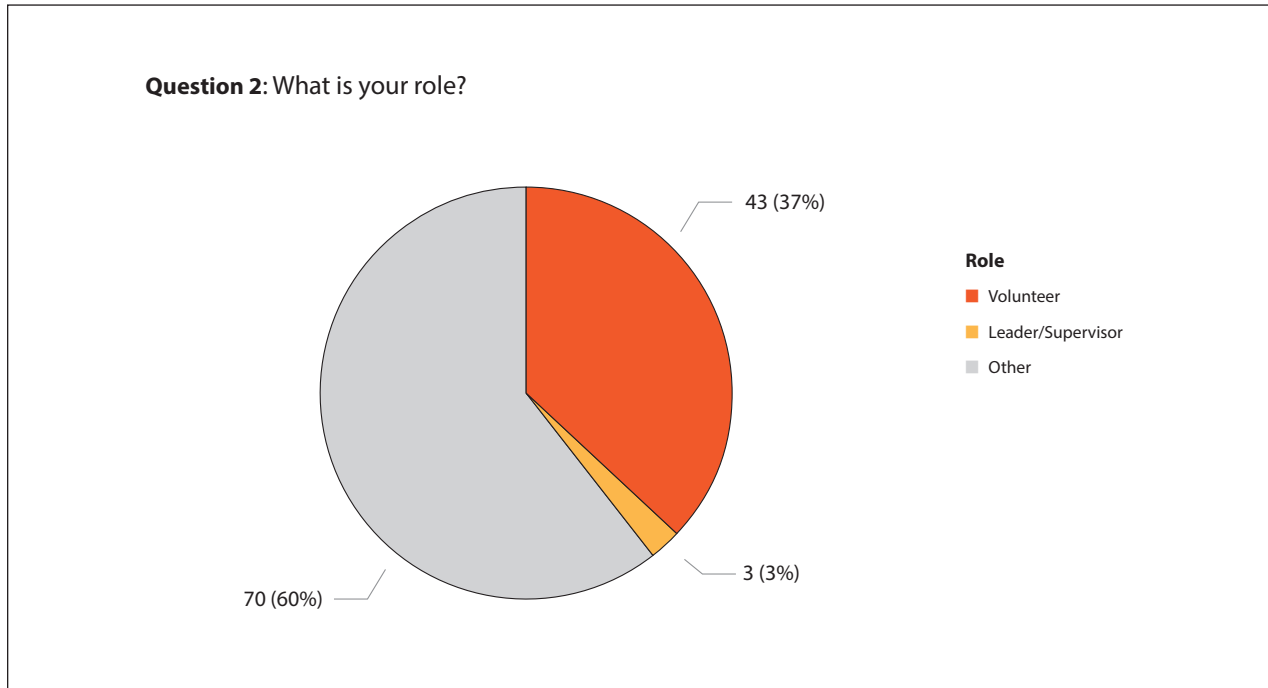


Figure 3: Analysis - Current State of Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination (Questions 3, 6, and 7)

This cluster of results shows that respondents were aware that township government sought outside assistance in developing a strategy to enhance county-wide fire services. Respondents also recognize the value of communication and coordination among fire companies during emergency responses but indicated an opportunity exists for better collaboration in an emergency response scenario.

Figure 3: Analysis - Current State of Communication, Collaboration, and Coordination (Questions 3, 6, and 7)

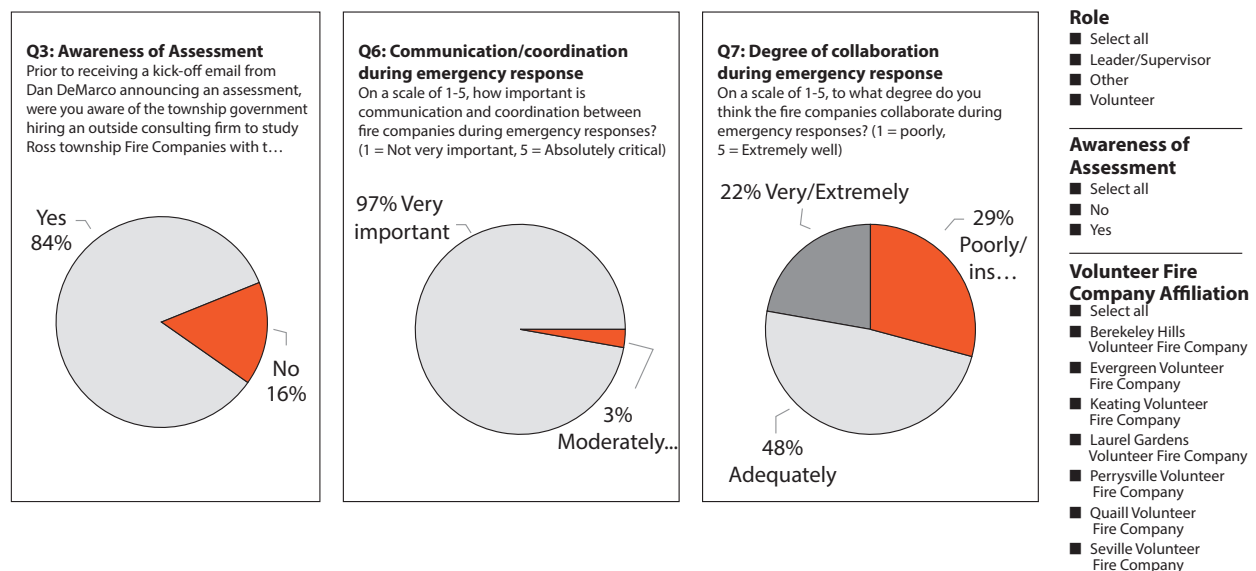
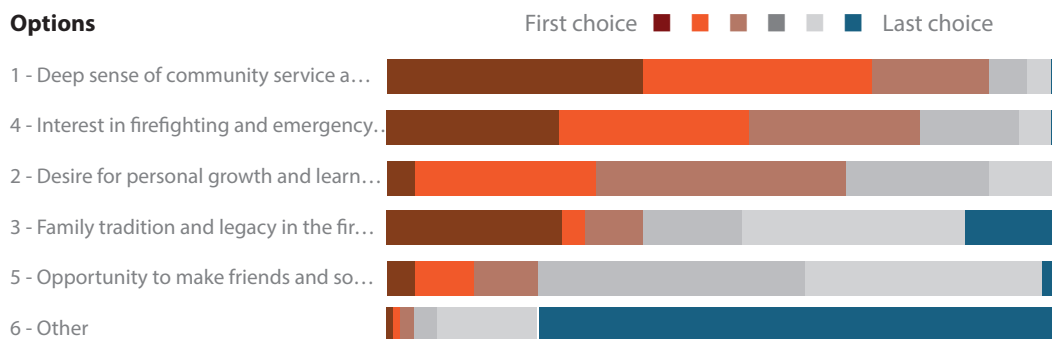


Figure 4: Analysis – Motivating Factors (Questions 4 and 5)

Respondents indicated a deep sense of community service, an interest in emergency response, and a desire to learn as their primary collective reasons for joining the fire service. Over time, their passion for emergency response and commitment to community remain strong. However, the sense of friendship they have developed with their peers replaces their desire for growth.

Q4. What motivated you initially to join the fire service?



Q5. Why do you continue to volunteer for the fire service?

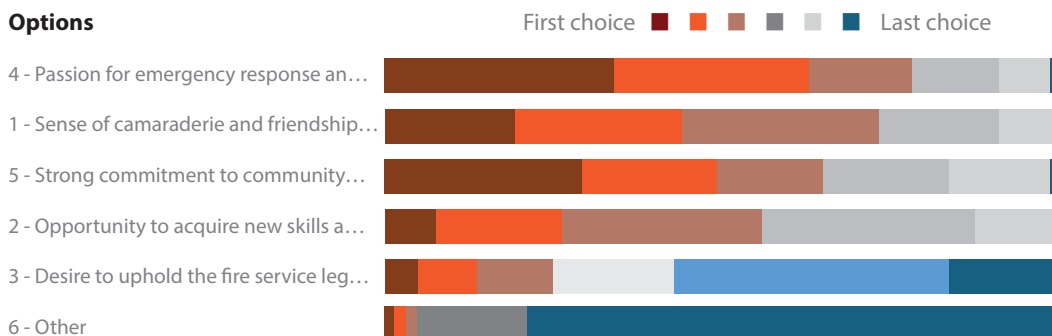


Figure 5: Analysis – Current State of Volunteering and Funding (Questions 8 - 11)

Respondents largely agree that the number of volunteers impacts emergency response rates, but current recruiting and retainment approaches challenge fire companies. They also recognize funding is crucial to fire company operations but only about half of respondents believed the current level of funding plays a significant role in the consistency of emergency response.

Figure 5: Analysis – Current State of Volunteering and Funding (Questions 8 - 11)

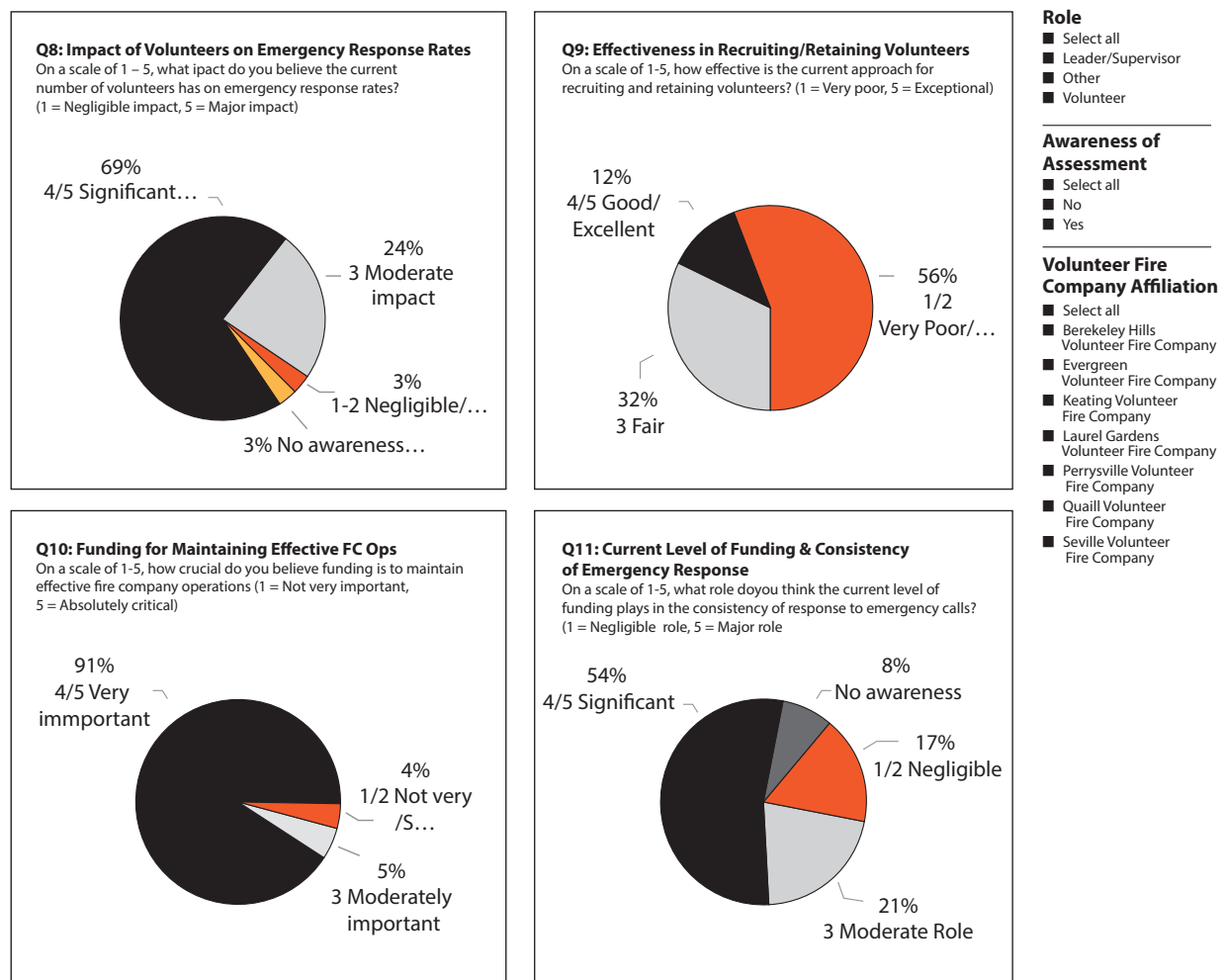
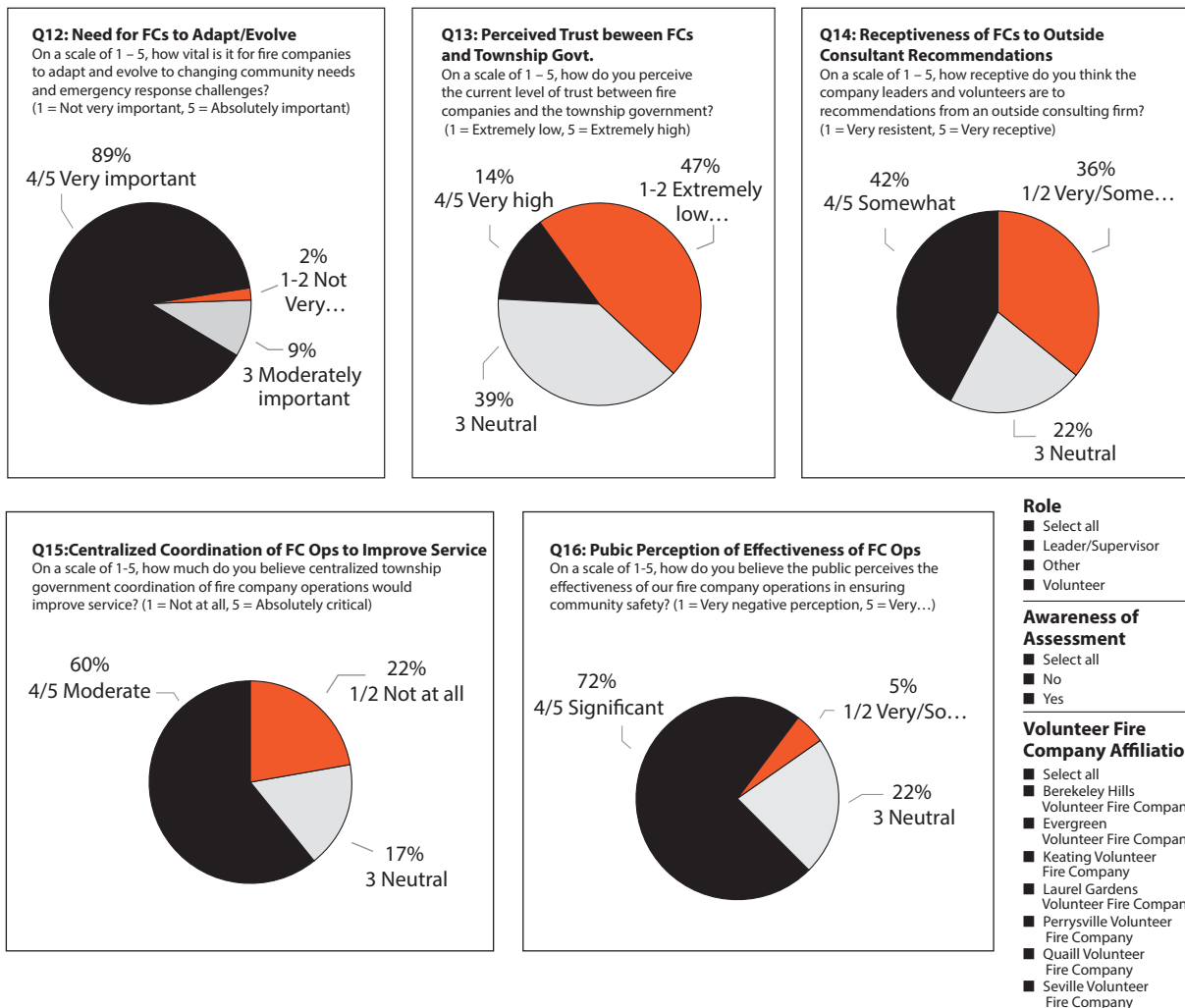


Figure 6: Analysis – Current Perceptions about the Future State (Questions 12 - 16)

Respondents recognize the need for fire services to adapt and evolve, but they believe the public sees current fire company operations as largely effective in ensuring community safety. Respondents also indicate a lack of trust between fire companies and county government and a degree of skepticism about recommendations from an outside consulting firm. Slightly more than half of respondents believe centralized coordination of operations by township government would improve service.



APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS

Citizen Survey Observations

Target Group: Ross Township Residents

Dates: March 26 through April 5, 2024

Number of Respondents: 464

Survey Instrument

As part of an overall study focusing on fire service delivery in Ross Township, a short survey was developed to solicit input from the members of the community. This survey consisted of ten questions and took approximately two minutes to complete. The survey was distributed by Ross Township officials to their constituents.

As evident by the strong response, the community appears to be engaged in this topic. In total, 464 surveys were completed representing approximately 1.4% of the population of the township.

Results

The first two questions were designed as screening questions. The first question asked if the respondent is a member of one of the eight fire companies serving the township. Twenty-four self-identified as a member of a fire company. These responses were included in the results. However, the impact of these responses was reviewed and there appears to be a negligible influence on the overall results. Question 2 asked the respondents to identify the street they live on to dissuade non-resident responses.

Question 3 asked the respondents which of the eight fire companies served their neighborhood. Most respondents did report knowing their fire company. However, just over 13% either weren't sure or reported none of the fire companies service their area.

Questions 4 - 7 were designed to gather information on the expectations of the community. Overall, the community does expect a well-run and well-qualified fire department. Nearly 83% of respondents felt common guidelines, by-laws, budgeting, and other department governance were either very or

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY MEMBER SURVEY RESULTS CONTINUED

extremely important. Respondents strongly felt (either very or extremely important) that personnel in the township fire service meet industry standard training and certification requirements (almost 95%). One area of improvement identified in the findings deals with transparency. About half (47%) indicated satisfaction with information dissemination with about 41% of respondents indicating they were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied with the amount of information provided to them.

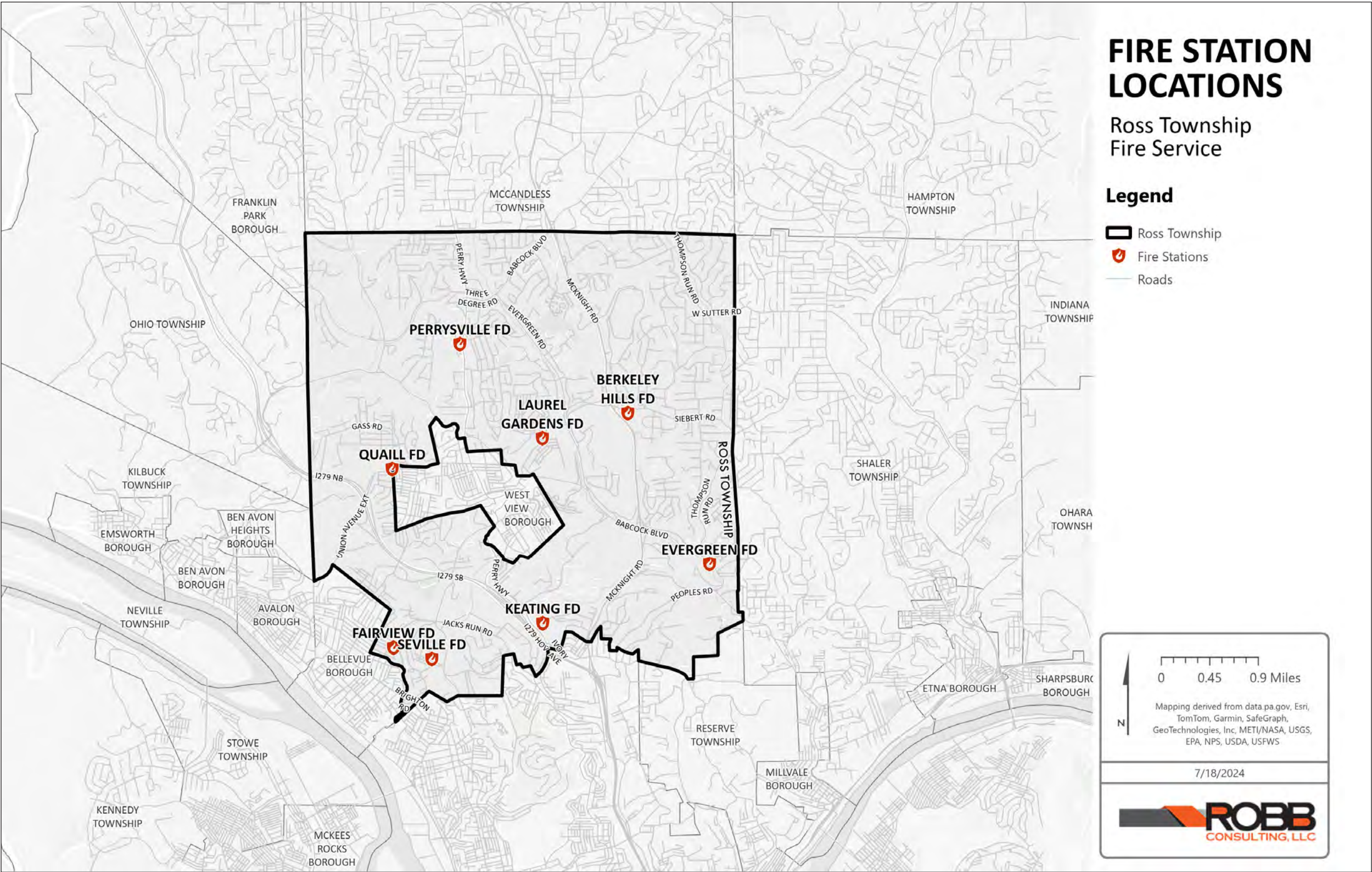
Question 6 specifically dealt with the openness of the community to consolidation of the eight fire departments. Sixty-seven percent of respondents were likely or very likely to support such an effort vs. 20% either unlikely or very unlikely. As a side note, the fire department members who responded to the survey were more supportive of consolidation with 87% likely or very likely to support this effort.

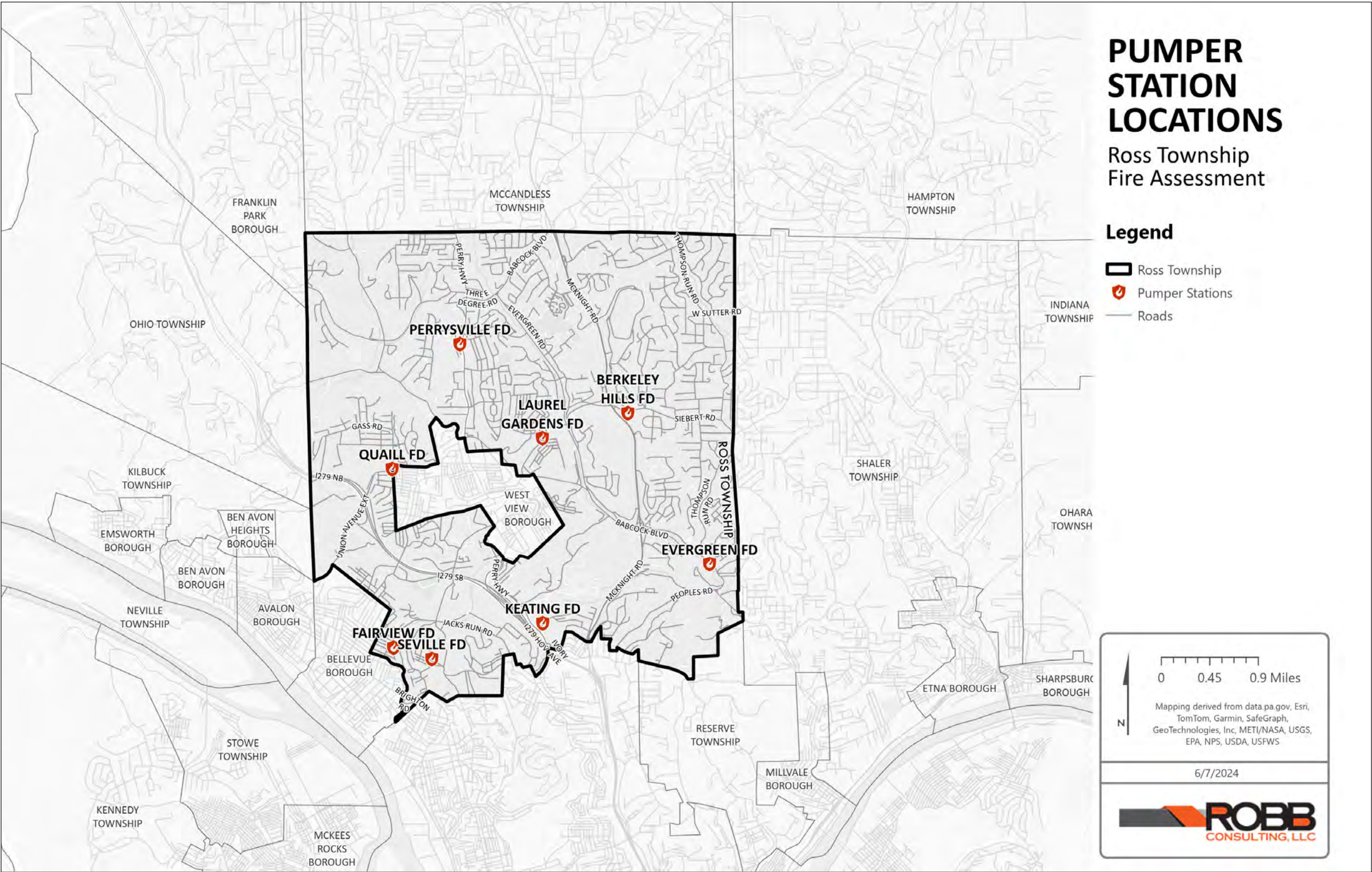
Question 8 and 9 led to questions on fund drives for the fire departments. Although all residents receive a fund drive letter, about 21% of the respondents did not remember receiving a letter. Over 78% of respondents said they were either likely or very likely to contribute to their fire department in a financial capacity.

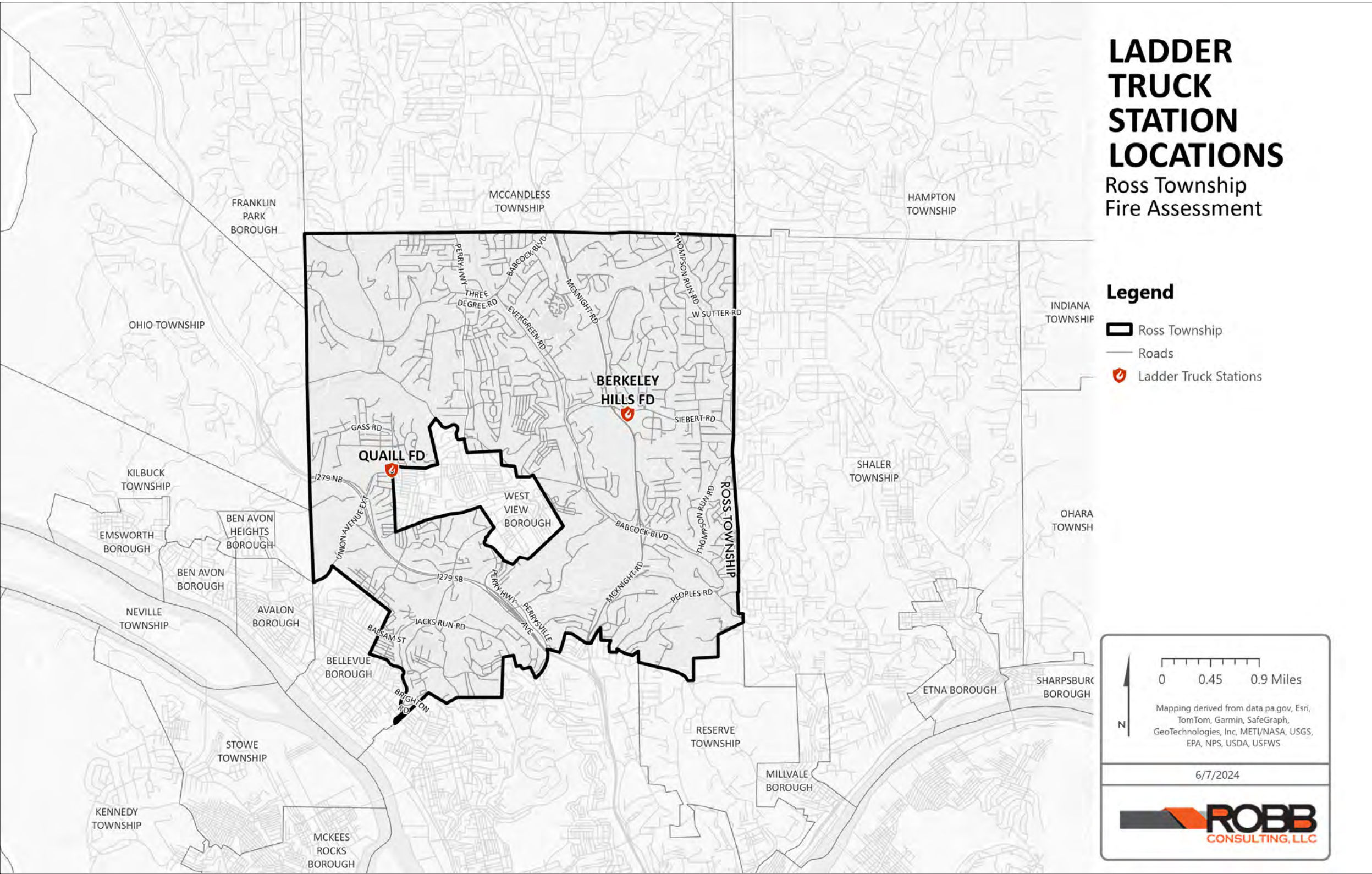
Question 10 provided an opportunity for the respondent to provide an e-mail for additional follow-up with the township on this topic. This question was not mandatory to complete the survey. Forty-eight respondents did provide e-mail addresses. All e-mail addresses were provided to the township for follow-up.

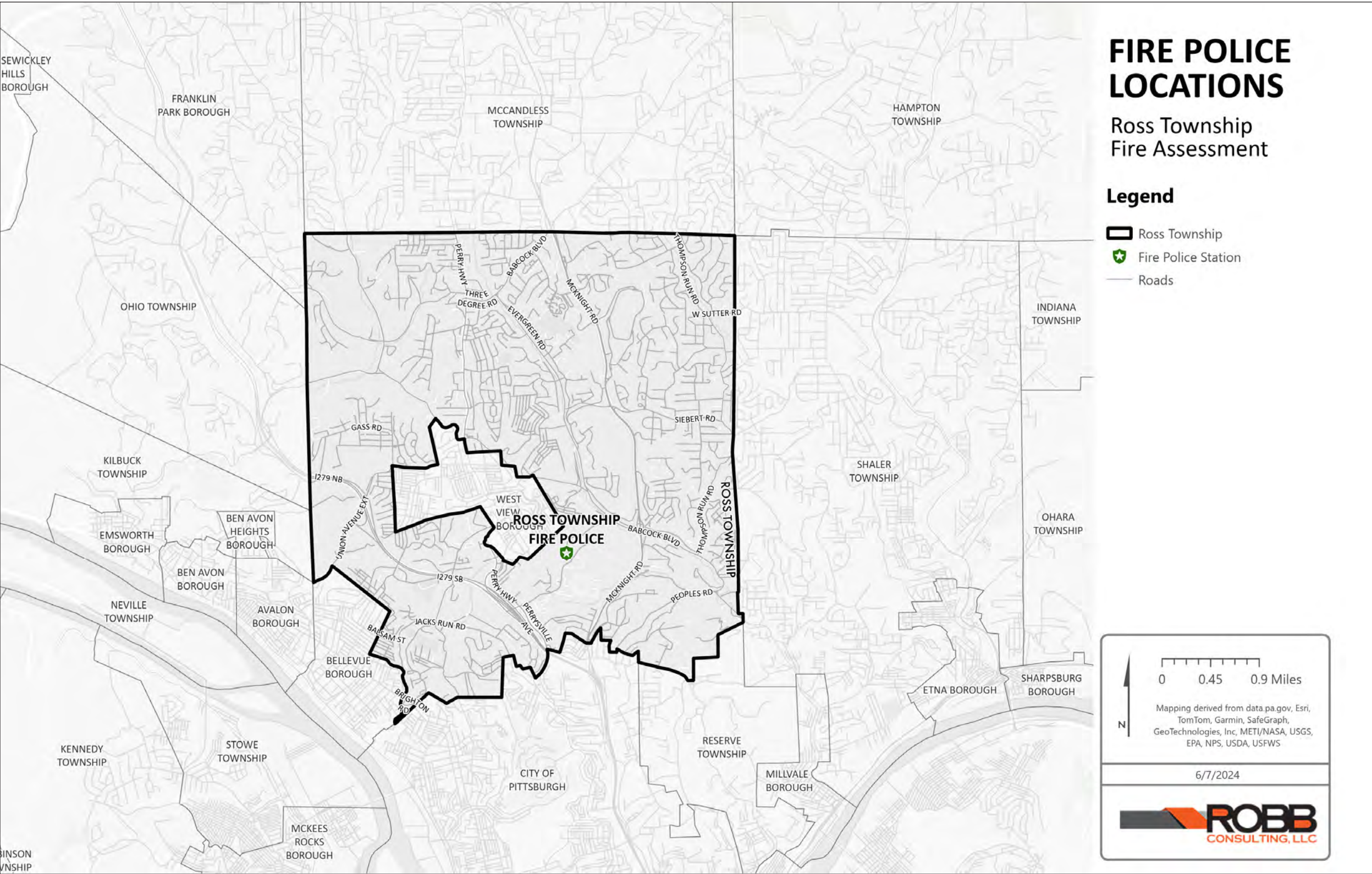
Conclusion

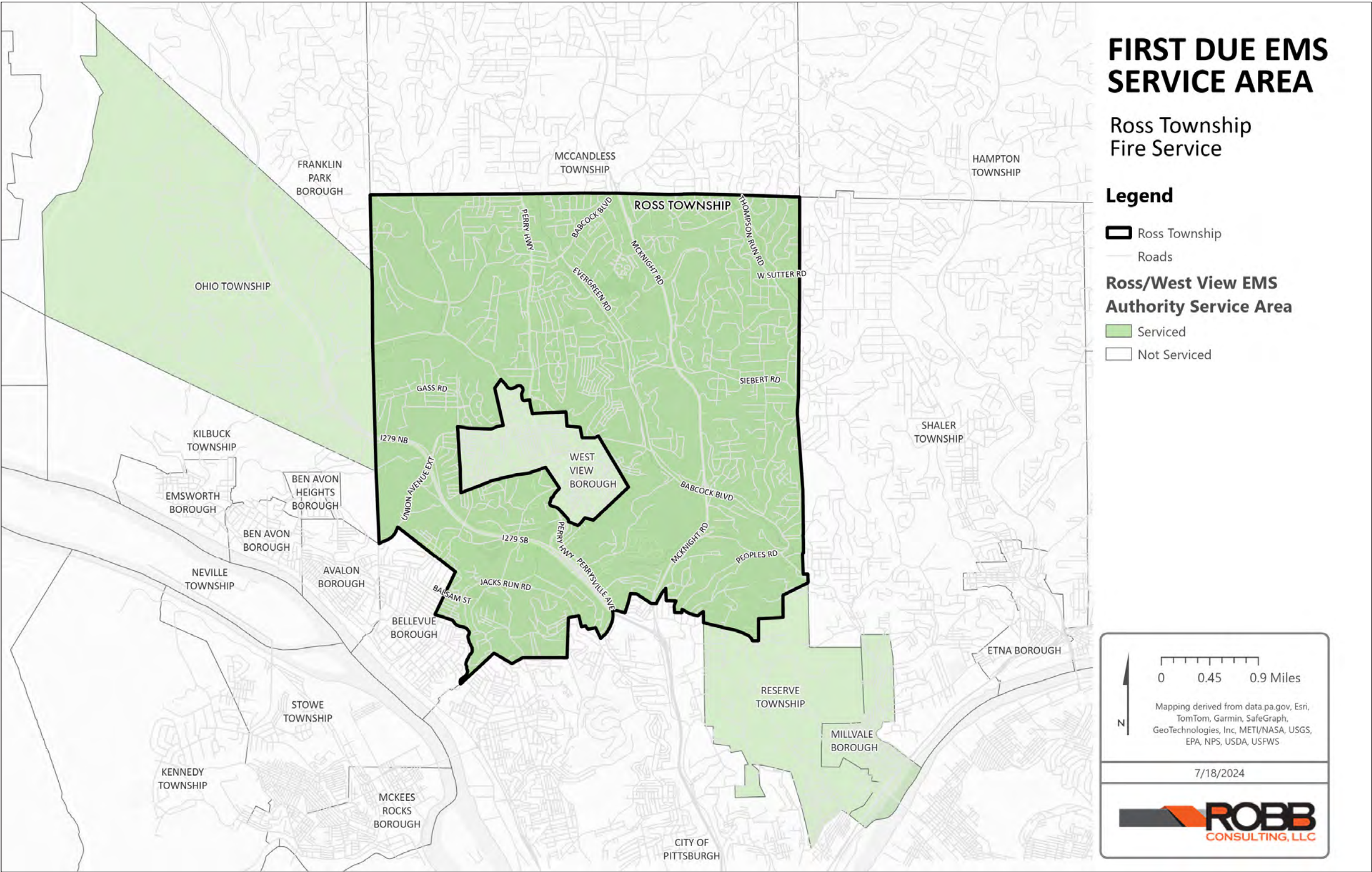
The overall results of this community-wide survey are consistent with the community meeting held on February 20, 2024, in the Ross Township commission chambers. There is considerable community engagement with this topic. Overall, the community is looking for a skilled, experienced, prepared and well-run fire service in the township to protect the community. With this, it is important that the township and fire service be open with the community to the level of service delivered to the community.

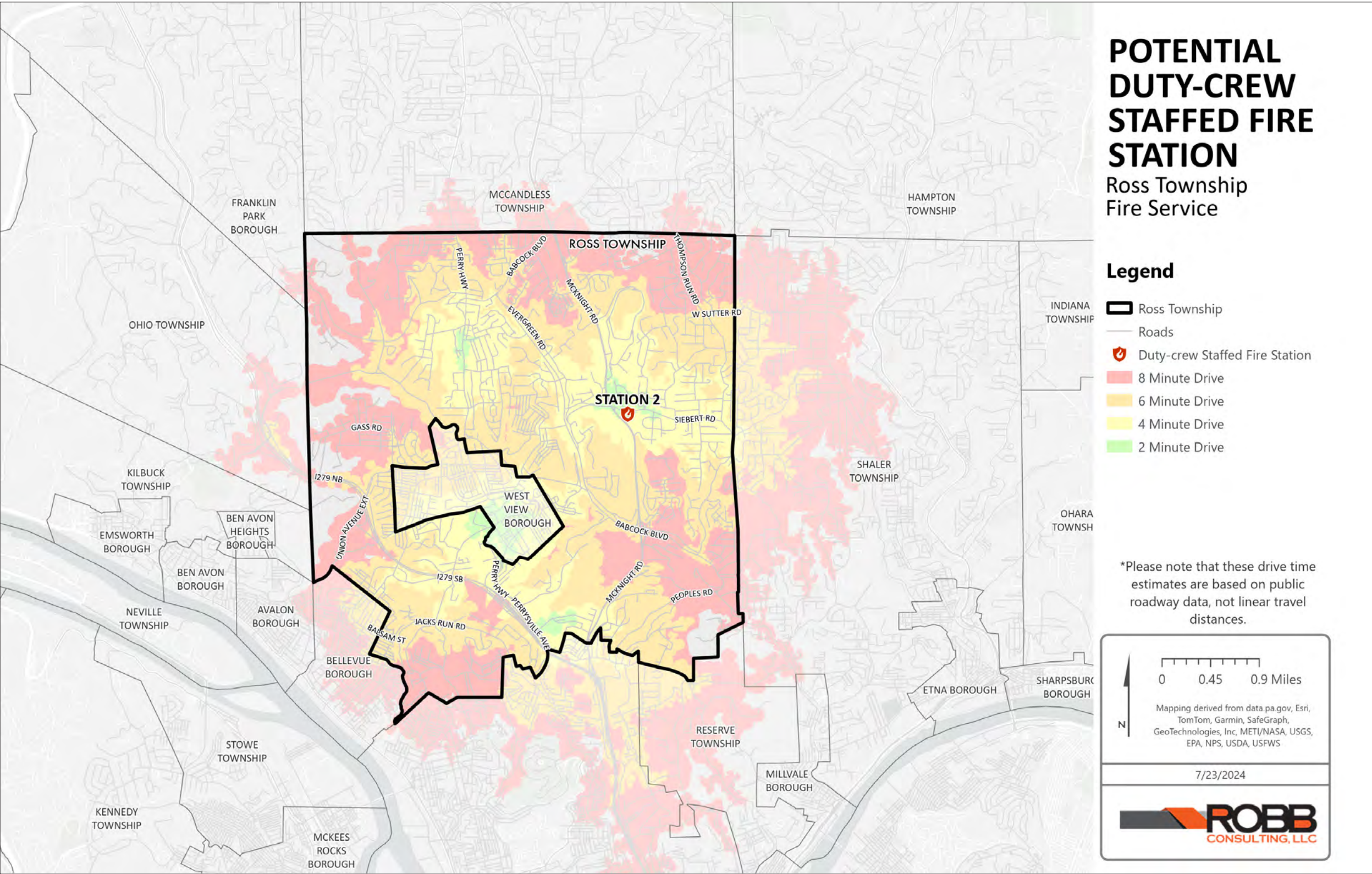


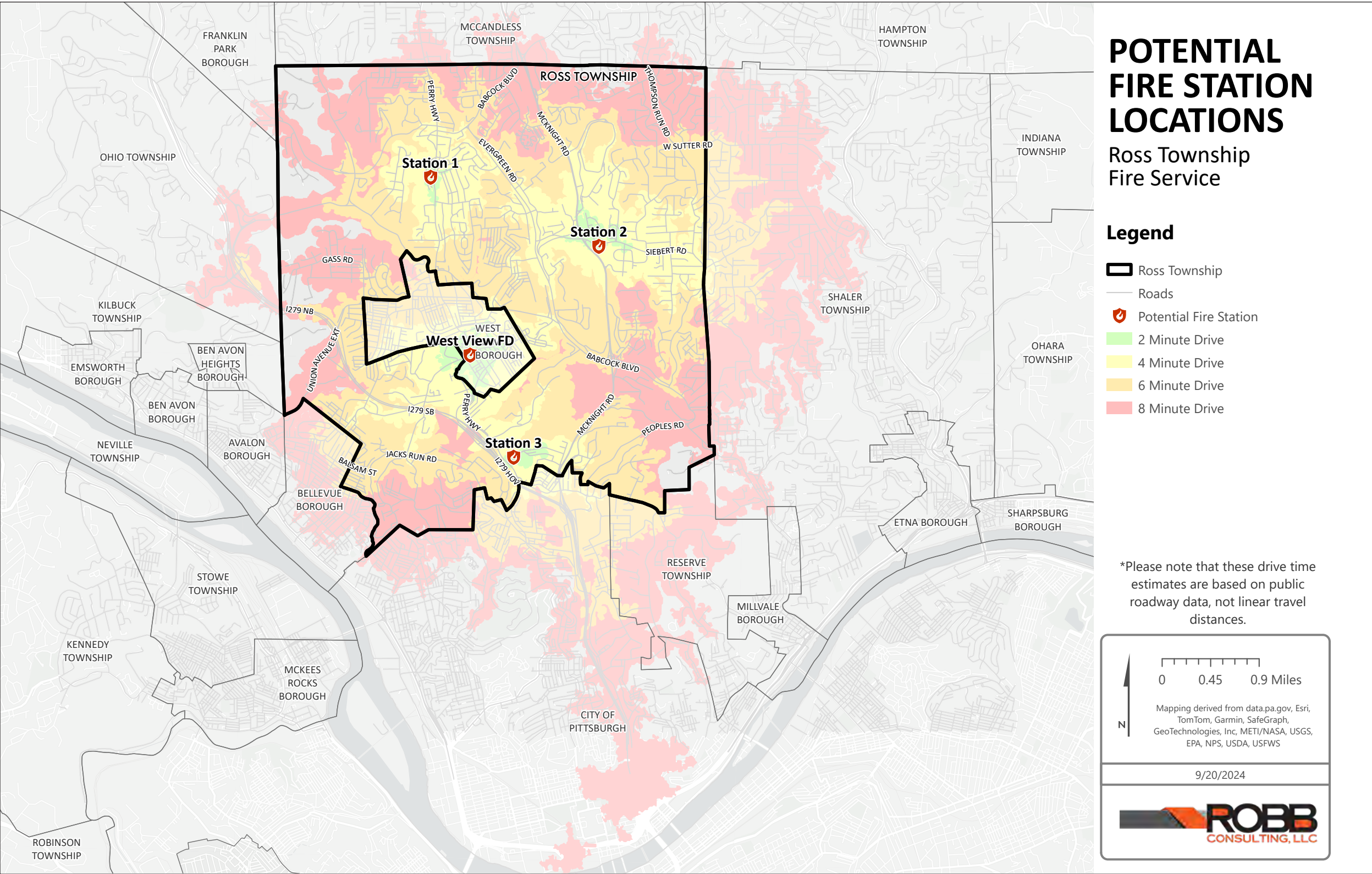












APPENDIX 5: ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Active member: A volunteer member of a fire department, EMS department, or rescue squad who regularly responds to incidents on apparatus and participates in training.

Automatic Aid: A formal or non-formal agreement between neighboring fire departments, ambulance services, and rescue squads to “automatically” assist each other on the “initial” dispatch to an emergency when apparatus and manpower are available.

Benchmark: A standard from which something can be judged. Searching for the benchmark, or best practice, will help define the superior performance of a product, service, or process.

Career Firefighter: An individual whose primary employment is as a firefighter for a municipality or other agency or company and who derives the majority of his earned income working in the fire service.

Call for Service (aka Fire Call, 911 Call): This term refers to any urgent, 911 fire, rescue, and emergency medical call for assistance. This may also include non-emergency calls for service including but not limited to lockouts, home flooding, welfare checks, lift assists, lost persons, and animal rescues.

Command: This term refers to the individual in charge of the incident that is directing the activities of all other responders.

Concentration: Spacing of multiple resources arranged so that an initial “effective response force” can arrive on the scene within the time frames outlined in on-scene performance expectations.

Distribution: Geographic location of all first-due resources for initial intervention. Generally measured from fixed response points, such as fire stations, and expressed as a measure of time.

Driver/Operator (aka Engineer, Pump Operator, Pump Technician, Chauffeur): A firefighter who is responsible for driving the engine safely to the scene of the call and operating the pumps on an engine, to provide sufficient water to the firefighters on the hose. The term may be either a position title or a rank; usage varies among departments.

Effective Response Force – The minimum amount of staffing and equipment that must reach a specific emergency zone location within a maximum prescribed total response time and is capable of initial fire suppression, EMS, and/or mitigation.

Engine (aka Pumper, Fire Engine, Pump Truck): A fire suppression vehicle that carries and pumps water and is designed to carry firehose used to supply water to the pump and attack, control, and extinguish the fire.

APPENDIX 5: ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Engine Company (aka Pumper Company): A group of firefighters who are assigned to and man a fire “engine” (pumper) apparatus with a water pump equipped with a firehose and other tools related to fire extinguishment.

Extrication: The removal of a trapped victim such as vehicle extrication, confined space rescue, or trench rescue; sometimes using a hydraulic spreader, Jaws of Life, or other technical equipment.

Fire Apparatus: Fire-Rescue Apparatus is divided into seven categories by National Fire Protection Association, Standard 1901. This includes *Pumper Fire Apparatus*, *Initial Attack Apparatus*, *Mobile Water Supply Apparatus*, *Aerial Apparatus*, *Quint Fire Apparatus*, *Special Service (Rescue) fire apparatus*, and *Mobile Foam fire apparatus*. Each of the categories is defined in detail by the NFPA Standard to which all fire apparatus must be constructed in the United States.

Fire Station (aka Fire House, Engine House): A fire station is a permanent structure or designated area established for storage of firefighting and rescue apparatus (fire engines, ladder trucks, ambulances, and related fire-rescue vehicles), personal protective equipment, firehose, fire extinguishers, and other related fire. In many cases, it may also have kitchen, dormitory living, and fitness facilities as well as work areas such as offices, meeting rooms, workshops, and laundry.

Fire Inspector: A person who is responsible for issuing permits and enforcing the fire code, including any necessary premises inspection, before allowing (or during) a large indoor gathering.

Fire Marshal: Administrative and investigative office for fire prevention and arson investigation

Fire Police: A volunteer firefighter, special police officer, or constable who is part of a fire department, tasked with ensuring the safety and security of emergency scenes, traffic control, and crowd management as well as general assistance to the fire department and other agencies.

Firefighter: A rescuer extensively trained primarily to put out hazardous fires that threaten civilian populations and property to rescue people from car accidents, collapsed and burning buildings, and other such situations. The increasing complexity of modern industrialized life with an increase in the scale of hazards has stimulated both advances in firefighting technology and a broadening of the firefighter-rescuer’s remit.

Hazardous Materials: Any materials which may include solids, liquids, or gasses which may cause injury, death, or damage if released or triggered.

ISO Rating (Insurance Services Office Public Protection Classification Rating): This is a rating number published by the Insurance Services Office used by insurance companies in many states to determine homeowner insurance premiums. Recently some insurance companies, including State Farm, have now adopted a per-zip-code, actual loss, based system in several states and no longer use the ISO (PPC) system.

APPENDIX 5: ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Ladder Truck (aka Ladder, Hook and Ladder, Truck, Aerial, Snorkel): A fire truck that has an extension ladder, carries certain firefighting equipment, and can be set up to flow large quantities of water from an elevated position is called a “Ladder Truck.”

Mass casualty incident (MCI): Any incident that produces many injured persons requiring emergency medical treatment and transportation to a medical facility. The exact number of patients that makes an incident “mass casualty” is defined by departmental procedures and may vary from area to area.

Mutual Aid: A formal or non-formal agreement between neighboring fire departments, ambulance services, and rescue squads to assist each other when “requested” by the officer-in-charge of the neighboring agency to an ongoing emergency when apparatus and manpower are available.

NFPA (National Fire Protection Association): A research group that sets several standards and best practices for firefighting, equipment, and fire protection in the United States. These standards have also been adopted in many other countries around the world.

Professional Firefighter: All firefighters are classified as “professionals” by both the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF trade union). All firefighters are required by most state laws and general practice to meet the same training and equipment standards, take the same examinations for promotion and perform the same work under the same hazards. There are two accepted categories of Professional Firefighters--Volunteer Firefighters who may or may not receive payment for services and Career Firefighters whose primary employment and source of earned income are in the fire service.

Quint: A combination type of firefighting apparatus with five defining attributes. The Quint apparatus is both a Pumper and a Ladder truck. A “Quint” has 1. a pump, 2. hose, 3. a water tank, 4. ground ladders, and 5. an aerial ladder.

Rescue: Physical removal of a live person or animal from danger to a place of comfort.

Rescue Company: A group or squad of firefighters trained and equipped to enter adverse conditions and rescue victims of an incident. In some areas of jurisdiction, this is often delegated to a Truck Company.

Rescue Engine: A single piece of fire apparatus that can operate as either a rescue or an engine. This apparatus normally is outfitted with heavy rescue equipment, hose lines, pump, water tank, etc.

SCBA (Self Contained Breathing Apparatus): Specialized breathing equipment that has an oxygen tank and a mask. This equipment keeps firefighters and other rescue personnel from breathing in smoke and other hazardous gases. This equipment is part of a firefighter’s personal protective equipment (PPE).

APPENDIX 5: ACRONYMS AND TERMINOLOGY

Standard Operating Procedure, Guideline (SOP or SOG): Rules for the operation of a fire department, such as how to respond to various types of emergencies, training requirements, use of protective equipment, and radio procedures; often include local interpretations of regulations and standards. In general, “procedures” are specific, whereas “guidelines” are less detailed.

Station Activities: In addition to calls for service, volunteer fire and EMS personnel perform many other activities while on station. This includes but is not limited to monthly membership meetings, volunteer firefighter’s relief association meetings, committee meetings, company trainings, work details, and community engagement events.

Structure Fire (aka Structural Fire, Building Fire, House Fire): A fire in a residential or commercial building. Urban fire departments are primarily geared toward structural firefighting.

Tanker (aka Tender, Water Tender): A road-based fire apparatus equipped to carry large volumes of water to a fire. This piece of apparatus is typically used in rural areas without an adequate supply system, such as rural areas without hydrants. Tenders may have pumps and associated hardware to facilitate their mission. Some regions of the country, fire departments refer to this apparatus as Tenders or Water Tenders.

Truck Company (aka Ladder Company): A group of firefighters assigned to staff an apparatus that carries aerial and ground ladders, forcible entry tools, possibly extrication tools and salvage covers, and who are otherwise equipped to perform rescue, ventilation, overhaul, and other specific functions at fires; also called “ladder company”.

Turnout Gear (Bunker Gear, Turn Outs): The protective clothing worn by firefighters and other rescue personnel made of a fire-resistant material such as Nomex or Aramid and designed to shield against extreme heat. This includes a jacket, pants, helmet, gloves, fire-resistant hood, and boots. This equipment is part of a firefighter’s personal protective equipment (PPE).

Volunteer fire department: An organization of part-time firefighters who may or may not be paid for on-call time or firefighting duty time, but who in nearly all states are held to the same professional training standards and take the same examinations to advance in rank as career firefighters. [In some regions, particularly eastern New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Maryland volunteer fire departments and fire protection districts have independent taxing authority and are equally as well equipped and paid while working as career fire department members.]