

STATUS OF VOLUNTEERS IN THE LAKE TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT



LTFD

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Executive Summary

Volunteer firefighters serve an important role in the operations of the Lake Township Fire Department. While we now refer to them as “paid-per-call” members, as they are paid by the hour, the term “volunteer” has long been used to refer to those firefighter/medical providers who respond from their homes when an emergency occurs.

In Lake Township, the State of Ohio, and the country as a whole, the number of volunteer firefighters is dwindling. Incident volume, on the other hand, is increasing. Your LTFD has seen a 72% increase in annual requests for help in the last eight years.

While part-time staffing allows us to handle the majority of routine medical calls and, with the addition of Rescue 26, small fires, the one thing we need for more involved scenes is personnel. A cardiac arrest requires as many as ten personnel to effectively work to save a person’s life. National standards dictate 15 personnel must be on scene within 9 minutes, 90% of the time, when responding to a structure fire.

As I have stated to the crews from the beginning of my time as fire chief: we cannot afford to do away with volunteer personnel in Lake Township. Nearby departments that have transitioned to full-time staffing held on to their volunteers until they had five or six daily full-time employees on staff. Until we reach the need that prompts that level of staffing and the financial considerations that come with it, we must focus on recruitment, retention, and utilizing our volunteers in new ways to meet the needs of today’s incident volume.

I share this report with you to give you a full picture of our volunteer operations, the challenges we face, and to assure you we are working to strengthen our volunteer force.

Respectfully,

Barrett A. Dorner
Fire Chief



Volunteer benefits and downfalls at a glance

Strengths

- Cost-savings by only paying personnel when we need them
- Provides more personnel responding to more demanding incidents, e.g. motor vehicle crashes, structure fires, large brush fires
- Historical and traditional value is meaningful to the members of the department and some members of the community

Weaknesses

- Unpredictable availability; varies constantly
- Responses delayed by as much as 10 minutes to get to the station, potentially even longer to wait for a full crew before responding in an apparatus
- More responders on the road running lights and sirens, increasing the likelihood of crashes
- Training limitations because of scheduling and availability
- Less crew continuity, which is critical for effective high-stress situations, due to the unpredictability of response
- Fewer recruits completing basic training requirements within their year of probation
- Fewer individuals interested in volunteering, despite the paid-per-call status
- Infrequent responses increases danger of high-risk, low-frequency situations like structure fires
- Infrequent responses make it difficult to obtain a level of competence in EMS

Volunteer Staffing Summary

Staffing and responses

Staffing levels as of June 16, 2023

	Station 27 - Walbridge	Station 28 - Millbury
Members	3	7
Also permanent part-time	2	2
Probationary (not certified)	1	1
TOTAL	5 certified personnel	9 certified personnel

Responses January 2021 through June 2023

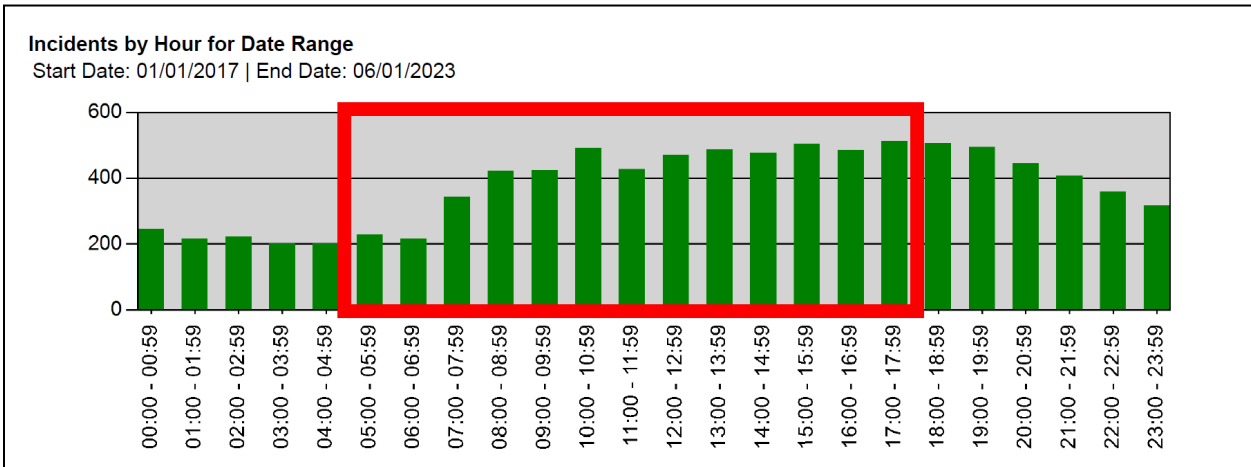
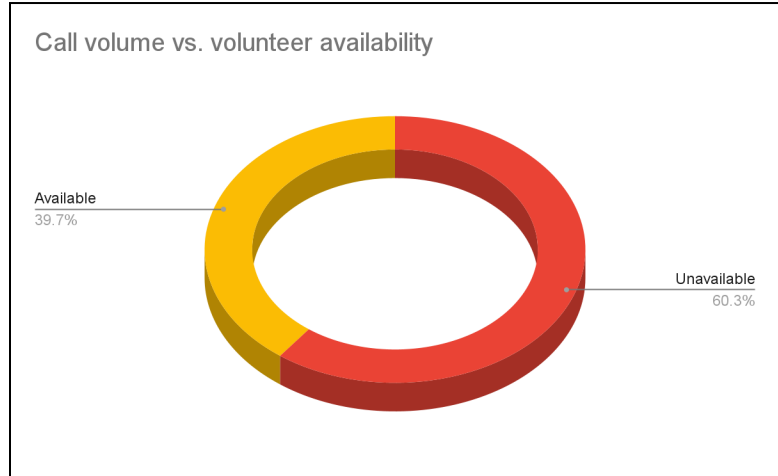
	Station 27 - Walbridge	Station 28 - Millbury
Avg. response per member	3	3
Avg. Department-wide calls per week	31	



Availability versus call volume

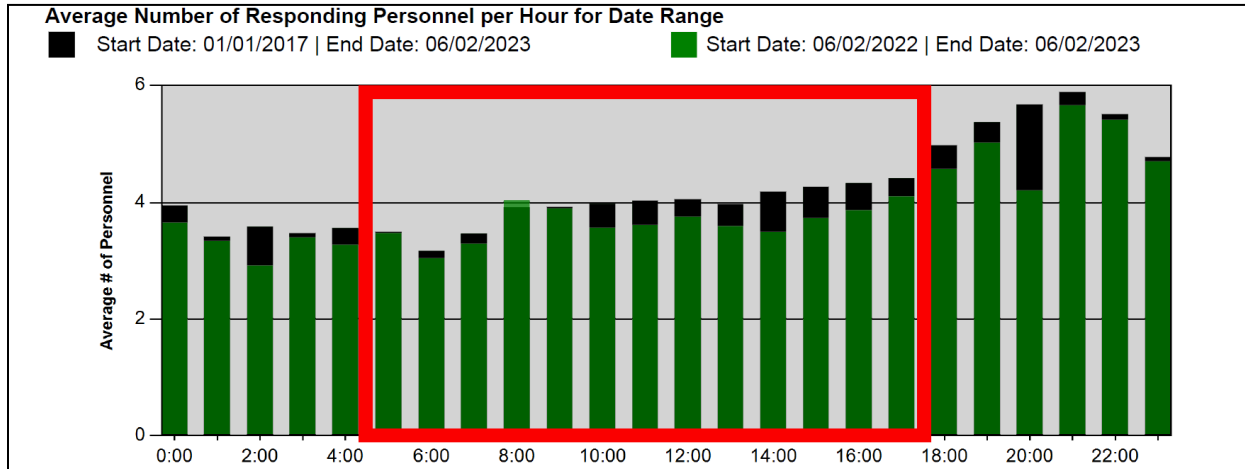
From staffing discussions and response analysis, we have determined that our volunteers are least available during regular business hours, as well as a few hours before and after. The explanation is simple: most of our volunteer personnel have full-time jobs outside the fire service, working first shift. They cannot respond to incidents just before work out of concern for being late, which could frequently happen given our 1500+ annual call volume. After work, they have travel time home and family responsibilities like picking up children from school.

Sixty percent of incidents fall in this time period. That means, at the time we need our volunteers the most, we have the fewest number available. Part-time members staffing the station are the reason we are able to respond to these incidents. The part-time members are supplemented by the part-time deputy chief, an EMT, and the three full-time administrative staff who are paramedics.



Limited turnout of volunteers

Even outside the general period of unavailability, responses in the last five years average around four total personnel. With two of those personnel being on-duty, the vast majority of the day sees a response of just two volunteers. The reasons are varied (See *Appendix B*) and are currently a challenge for fire departments across the nation.



Our average number of responders at any hour of the day is 3.9. During the time period in red, when volunteers are least available, it drops to 3.6. When volunteers are available, it increases to 4.2. You can see detailed statistics, including the responses member-by-member, in *Appendix A*.

	Avg. Total Responders	Staffed Responders	Avg. Volunteers
Overall Average	3.9	2	1.9
5am - 6pm	3.6	2	1.6
6pm - 5am	4.2	2	2.2

Overall Goals

1. Continue to recruit qualified candidates into volunteer positions in LTFD.
2. Continue to foster professional development within the volunteer ranks.
3. Through training, ensure all members – volunteer, part-time, or full-time – meet the same standards for competent, compassionate, and effective care on EMS incidents, and capable, skilled, citizens-first response to fire incidents.
4. Encourage volunteers to staff the station, whether paid at Station 26 or through other incentives to spend time at their respective stations, in an effort to:
 - a. reduce response times.
 - b. build camaraderie across the department.
 - c. encourage additional training.
 - d. reduce the stress on volunteers to ‘drop everything’ and leave home, especially on low-acuity incidents that can lead to incident fatigue.



Action Items

	Timeframe	Progress	Assigned
Additional position at Station 26 to provide fire and EMS service from a staffed station and allowing for more volunteer members to pick scheduled shifts	NA	Implemented	Chief Dörner
Flexible scheduling to accommodate volunteer members' schedules	NA	Implemented	Capt. Rosebrock
Provide additional positions that allow for professional growth and development within the department, including work hours on-station that could allow for a prompt response. Included are Field Training Officers and unit coordinators.	6 months	70%	Chief Dörner
Reduce the number of low-acuity calls volunteers prompting a volunteer response	1 month	90%	Chief Dörner
Develop an incentive system for staffing Stations 27 and 28.	6 months	0%	Capt. Rosebrock
Develop an educational reimbursement policy to encourage professional growth and development while improving the level of service to the citizens.	6 months	15%	Capt. Rosebrock
Develop a structured on-boarding process for volunteers.	6 months	10%	Chief Henninger & Capt. Rosebrock
Provide alternative training times and special events available for all members to contribute additional time.	NA	Implemented	Capt. Rosebrock
Ensure special event coverage is planned to allow for simultaneously increased emergency coverage	NA	Implemented	Chief Dörner
Meet with PENTA and Owens Community College leadership to discuss a pipeline for firefighters	6 months	10%	Chief Dörner
Develop a cost/benefit analysis and feasibility study on a live-in program	1 year	10%	Chief Dörner



Recommendations from the State Fire Marshal

In January 2023, the State Fire Marshal's Task Force on Volunteer Fire Service published its report on the challenges facing the volunteer fire service, as well as opportunities to address these challenges at the state and local levels.

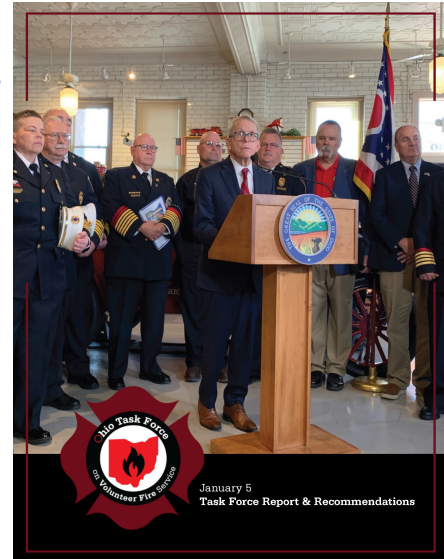
⇒ [Click here](#) or visit laketwpfd.org/incident-stats for more on the work of the Volunteer Fire Service Task Force and to read the full report.

Statewide, the number of volunteer firefighters has decreased 6.5% from 2018 to 2021.

It identified the following as the “biggest challenges impacting volunteer fire service in Ohio”:

- Recruitment and retention
- Time demands
- Financial resources at the local level
- Training requirements

Best Practices for Local Implementation



Ohio Task Force Recommendation	Lake Twp. Implementation	Progress
Establish cadet/explorer programs to be affiliated with local high schools.	We have an open invitation to PENTA fire students to attend our drills and participate in our ride-along program.	100%
Provide sleeping quarters for on call members or those not living in the community.	Sleeping quarters available at Station 26, though limited. Recliners, couches available at Stations 27 and 28. Exploring options for additional beds.	50%
Institute live-in programs for college students, young singles, and others.	Feasibility being determined.	10%
Establish a defined recruiting/onboarding process with established expectations/steps	Onboarding process being revamped by Capt. Rosebrock	50%
Establish on call duty crew assignments	In place with Station 26 staffing. Includes flexible hours for paid-per-call members. Also instituted an immediate-on-call program for multiple incidents back-to-back.	100%
Collaborate with teachers, guidance counselors, and Ohio Department of Education Trade & Industrial Education to develop a curriculum that provides career connections/explorations for younger students.	Available through PENTA, but plans to explore this with Lake Local Schools as well.	40%
Collaborate with high schools and local fire departments in rural communities to develop a volunteer fire training course primarily served by volunteer fire departments.	Available through PENTA and aimed at areas more rural than our jurisdiction.	NA

Appendix A

Incident Statistics by Station Personnel

Red text = recent resignations/retirements.

Note: Due to data issues in January 2023, there are some fire runs from that month not included in this report.

Station 27

	2023 (thru 05/23)	2022	2021	2021-2023 YTD Average	
Ammerman, Cory	8	17	29	18	1%
Brown, Ed	113	330	365	269	21%
O'Neal, Ben	56	178	169	134	11%
Nelson, Adam	34	348	421	268	21%
Nelson, Bobbi Jo	29	171	203	134	11%
Pratt, Anthony	29	116	109	85	7%
Clark, Tyler	0	14	19	11	1%
Hayes, Hunter	0	74	102	59	5%
Perry, Amy	3	6	NA	5	0%
Station Avg./Week	2	3	3	3	9%
Station Avg./Week w/o red	2	4	5	3	13%
Dept. Avg. Incidents/Week	32	30	31	31	
Dept. Total Incidents	610	1552	1608	1257	

Name	Average Responses/Week		
	2023 YTD	2022	2021
Ammerman, Cory	0.5	0.3	0.6
Brown, Ed	7.5	6.3	7.0
O'Neal, Ben	3.7	3.4	3.3
Nelson, Adam	2.3	6.7	8.1
Nelson, Bobbi Jo	1.9	3.3	3.9
Pratt, Anthony	1.9	2.2	2.1
Clark, Tyler	0.0	0.3	0.4
Hayes, Hunter	0.0	1.4	2.0
Perry, Amy	0.2	0.1	NA
Avg. Resp/Week	2.0	2.7	3.4
Avg. Resp/Week (excl. red)	2.0	4.1	4.7



Station 28

	2023 (thru 05/23)	2022	2021	2021-2023 YTD Average	
DeGross, Matthew J	87	214	250	183.7	15%
DeVore, David	48	130	195	124.3	10%
DeYoung, Stephen J	53	29	Mil LOA	41.0	3%
Myrice, Shane A	104	365	382	283.7	23%
Wagner, Forrest R	52	208	207	155.7	12%
Alvarez, Manuel J	9	37	55	33.7	3%
Yard, John	5	68	171	81.3	6%
Station Avg./Week	3	3	4	2.5	10%
Station Avg./Week w/o red	4	4	5	3.0	13%
Dept. Avg. Incidents/Week	32	30	31	31	
Dept. Total Incidents	610	1552	1608	1257	

Name	Average Responses/Week		
	2023 YTD	2022	2021
DeGross, Matthew J	5.8	4.1	4.8
DeVore, David	3.2	2.5	3.8
DeYoung, Stephen J	3.5	LOA	LOA
Myrice, Shane A	6.9	7.0	7.3
Wagner, Forrest R	3.5	4.0	4.0
Alvarez, Manuel J	0.6	0.7	1.1
Yard, John	0.3	1.3	3.3
Avg. Resp/Week	3.4	3.3	4.0



Appendix B

Report from Battalion Chief Ed Brown, Station Commander, Station 27

Chief Dorner,

I'm not sure who said 27 has had a "morale issue for years", I would say that is someone's subjective opinion but I disagree. 27 has traditionally been the "no drama Station". I would admit that there has been an increase in stressors in the last couple years with COVID and the prolonged transition of administration.

The issue I see is manpower. When I started we ran less than 800 calls a year with 25 people on the roster at each Station, with a dozen or so being active for common runs at different hours of the day, some working 24/48 shifts at their career jobs. More would show up for high priority calls. If something "Big" was dispatched, you had better hurry to the Station or there was no seat for you to ride in. Now, we have four to five active members at each Station who all have full time careers, and we are running 1600 runs a year. The limited manpower issue also exasperates the inability to implement a succession program. The old saying is "Many hands make light the work", the opposite is true. With the current call volume and lack of manpower it can be overwhelming.

Volunteer Fire Departments have also always had a social component too. We really do need to work on improving that if we want to continue having on-call members.

The manpower issue is well known. The problem is, how to fix it. The public is either unable, unwilling, or unaware to help. Our aging population is unable. Changes in social attitudes toward volunteerism has made a generation that is unwilling to volunteer. We have tried to make the public aware with social media, but have only had two in-person open house recruitment drives in the past. Once in August of '19 and once in September of '21. I know that COVID has played a role in this, but I believe that we should be doing a recruitment drive at least twice a year. I am glad to see the Department participating in the annual job fair at the High School and strengthening our relationship with PENTA. I also hope that we continue to be a presence at the School sporting events and can schedule Station tours. I think it will help to be visible to the School age children. Recruitment day is every day, you never know when you will spark the interest of the next generation. Hopefully we can change the social attitudes that are keeping people from volunteering. If we do not have any local residents that are willing to step up and join, the only option is to continue our transition to a staffed Department.

As we know, this is not a local issue. This problem is effecting every Department in the Country. If I had all of the answers, I would write a book and I would be a millionaire.

As always, available to discuss.

Ed Brown
Battalion Chief
Lake Township Fire Department

