



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Town of Whitestown currently receives fire and EMS first response services from four village fire departments, and two private, non-profit fire departments located outside of the Town's borders. Each fire department is fully staffed by volunteers, and the village fire departments are well equipped.

The system by which emergency incidents in the Town are dispatched involves two dispatch centers, one of which receives the 911 call and broadcasts the incident to the responsible fire department (the "primary PSAP"). The other, operated by the Town of New Hartford, records individual apparatus response and provides other dispatch services. There is no single centralized fire or emergency response recordkeeping system, which rendered a complete analysis of emergency response performance impossible.

Each of the village fire departments is equipped for operation with complete independence from all of the others, despite their physical proximity. This results in our finding that there is excess heavy fire equipment within the Town and the villages, resulting in excessive cost. The number of class A pumpers within the Town is approximately one per 2,000 residents, while other jurisdictions including larger municipalities operate with one pumper per 7,000-14,000 residents. There are also four class A "quint" fire apparatus¹ (aerial ladder apparatus that also have organic pumping capability) in communities where buildings in excess of three stories are rare. The community, which currently has 10 pumpers and four ladders, could be adequately served with six to seven engines and two ladders.

Approximately seventy percent of all responses are for emergency medical services. Yet the number of personnel trained at the EMT or higher level is small, and several individuals acknowledged that at times it is difficult to get a single EMT available to respond to medical calls, and the focus of the officers and members with whom we met was clearly toward the fire suppression aspects of these organizations' responsibilities.

The Town finds itself in a challenging position. Under the current statutory scheme, the Town cannot simply start a town-operated fire department, which might otherwise be a financially viable option. However, there are several options available to the Town to decrease its expenditures for fire and EMS services, increase its ability to account for expenditure of taxpayer dollars for fire and EMS services, or improve the level of service provided to citizens of the Town. These options are detailed in the body of the report.

¹ By contrast, an "aerial ladder" or "ladder truck" does not carry water or hose, and depends on a separate pumping engine to supply its master stream device with water.