



January 11, 2019

Ms. Denise Dembkoski, Finance Director
Town of Groveland
183 Main Street
Groveland, MA 01834

RE: Fire Service Management Letter

Dear Ms. Dembkoski:

The Town of Groveland contracted Municipal Resources, Inc. (MRI) to provide a comprehensive review of the manner in which fire and rescue services are provided within the community. Using this review as a basis, the MRI team has developed this management letter containing recommendations for improvements to organizational practices, recruitment and retention efforts, and on-call staffing. MRI understands and fully supports the Town's effort to retain the on-call service delivery methodology. The project team has developed a narrative and has recommended appropriate modifications to the fire and rescue delivery systems to provide optimum service to the entire community. It has also evaluated the efficient use of resources, and whether the current organizational structure is appropriate or should be modified.

This assignment required intensive involvement within the community and included interviews with elected officials, appointed officials, the Fire Chief, fire personnel, representatives of various municipal boards and committees, area fire chiefs, and other stakeholders.

The scope of services also required an assessment to determine whether the existing staffing, shift coverage, and scheduling practices of the Fire Department are in line with generally accepted standards and benchmarks, and commensurate with communities of like character.

This study reviewed the following information and topics under consideration. These topics are included in the report. The project included the following:

1. MRI reviewed the background information that impact the Fire Department and performed a comparative analysis of similar communities. Items for consideration included, but were not limited to:
 - Policies that determine staffing levels and types of staffing used
 - Community population and demographics

- Target fire hazards (residential, industrial, and municipal features of the community)
 - Property values
 - Services provided
 - Special hazards and risks (i.e., hospitals, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, lakes, rivers and waterfronts, industrial facilities, fuel storage facilities, road network, and high-rise buildings)
 - Budgets, including benefits and overtime
 - Deployment strategy of manpower and apparatus by type of incident
2. As related to staffing, shift coverage and scheduling, MRI performed a historical review of past practices and a comparative analysis of the Fire Department; to the performance standards, guidelines and best practices that have been established by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA), National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security.
3. The MRI project team obtained input from appropriate individuals. Input was solicited from, but not limited to:
- Board of Selectmen
 - Finance Director
 - Fire Department supervisors, command staff and key personnel
 - Fire Department employees/Massachusetts Call Volunteer Representatives.
 - Other fire chiefs
 - EMS providers
 - Other related personnel and/or stakeholders
4. The MRI project team, evaluated the overall operations of the department to identify what works and what does not work:
- Analyzed resources and equipment
 - Reviewed budget and expenditures
 - Reviewed practices and policies of the department
 - Analyzed call volume against the availability of resources
 - Reviewed the hours of the Fire Chief
 - Reviewed organizational structure for appropriateness
 - Assessed the department's on-call staffing, and recruitment and retention efforts that exist within the community

- Identified major issues and concerns of the community regarding the operations of the Fire Department.
 - Achieved an understanding and appreciation of the values and “personality” of the community and the local government
 - Formed an understanding of the community’s needs, wants, and desires with regard to fire services in the future
 - Planned for a strong partnership between the community and the Fire Department into the future
 - Identified potential areas of risk/liability and made recommendations to reduce those exposures
6. In order to gain an understanding of the issues facing the department and the community; and to better understand the practices and procedures of the Fire Department, the following were interviewed:

- Finance Director
- Board of Selectmen
- Fire Chief
- Command Staff
- Department personnel, supervisory personnel, and other employees of the Fire Department
- Communications center staff
- Area fire chiefs
- Other local officials, employees, representatives of the Town and members of the public
- EMS medical provider

6. MRI reviewed the following documents and data:

- Budgets, audits, reports, and documents related to the finances of the Department
- Previous apparatus and organizational studies
- Relevant municipal ordinances, policies, documents, and plans
- Fire Department policies, plans, response strategies, and standard operating procedures and guidelines
- Fire Department documents, incident logs, and reports
- Fire mutual aid/automatic aid agreements
- Injury rates and causes
- Other relevant department documents, statistics, incident logs, and reports

7. In order to assess the demands on the service delivery systems of the department, and the effective utilization of departmental resources, MRI identified the most significant risk exposures faced by the department and assessed the potential levels of demand. The project team assessed departmental response and service requirements in the following areas:

- Commercial, industrial, residential and rural areas of the community
- Target fire hazards and special hazards and risk (hotels, multi-family apartment buildings, hospital, waterfront, fuel storage facilities, nursing homes, hazardous materials transportation and storage, transportation network, etc.)
- Special needs population (elderly, handicapped, etc.)
- Targeted response time for firefighting and emergency medical response times
- Response patterns by type of call, day of week, time of call, and seasonal fluctuations
- Special events
- Apparatus staffing levels and standard incident response policies and guidelines by type of call
- The extent to which risks are formally addressed through code, regulations, and bylaws
- Current mutual aid capabilities and collaborative efforts within the region

8. In collaboration with the Town, MRI identified other communities in New England that were comparable to Groveland in population, demographics, property value, community area, and fire hazards and risks. The project team compared the fire and emergency medical services operations, staffing levels and policies, response capabilities, organizational structure, budget, overtime, and scheduling procedures of those communities with the Fire Department. The project team also identified and recommended procedures, policies, and “best practices” that could be implemented in Groveland.

9. Much of this plan of service was done during face-to-face and on-site visits by MRI’s project team. The project team spent an extensive amount of time on-site; making observations, inspecting facilities/equipment/records and conducting interviews.

In addition to staffing challenges, the current Fire Department facility was evaluated for the requirements necessary to accommodate current and future staffing, as well as facility

maintenance, isolation of protective clothing, decontamination area for protective clothing and ems equipment, and the general overall condition of the building.

The project team also conducted a review of the current organizational structure, the leadership group of fire officer's, and solicited input from department members to obtain further information on current operations of the Groveland Fire Department (GFD), in order to make recommendations for the future success of the organization.

The goal of the review was to perform an analysis of the department to identify current issues and challenges, as well as potential threats that could impact the department's success in the years to come.

I. OVERVIEW

The Town of Groveland covers 9.4 square miles of land and 0.5 square miles of water within Essex County in the north western area of Massachusetts. Groveland is located in the northwestern part of Essex County, and is bordered by Haverhill to the west and northwest, West Newbury to the northeast, a small portion of Newbury to the east, Georgetown to the southeast, and Boxford to the southwest. Groveland's town center is located 9 miles (14 km) northeast of Lawrence. According to the 2010 census, the Town has a resident population of 6,459 residents with a population density of 690 persons per square mile.

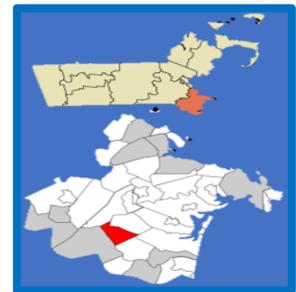


Figure 1 Groveland Mass

The Groveland Fire Department provides various fire/rescue services. These include fire, rescue such as vehicle extrication, and emergency medical services to the community. First responder medical service is provided by the Fire Department with transportation and Advanced Life Support (ALS) care, through a contract with Trinity Ambulance.

The Fire Department consists of 32 firefighters all of which serve on a paid-on-call basis. There are two stations from which firefighters respond. The manpower is split between the two stations. The Fire Department serves the Town in all areas of fire suppression including residential, commercial, and woodland properties.



*Figure 2 GFD Central Fire Station
181 Main Street*



*Figure 3 GFD South Station
107 Washington St.*

The Town currently has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of 4. ISO is an independent risk company that services insurance companies, communities, fire departments, insurance regulators, and others by providing information about the risk. ISO's expert staff collects information about municipal fire suppression efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data and assigns a Public Protection Classification – a number from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents an exemplary fire suppression program, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire suppression program does not meet ISO's minimum criteria. Further information on the ISO rating system is available at <https://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/fsrs/>.

From July 1, 2013 to June 30, 2017, the department has averaged 572 incidents per year. Of the 2,288 calls during this time period, 1320 calls (57.69%) were EMS related. The calls for emergency medical services has been steadily increasing each year resulting in a cumulative 47.57% increase. The fire related calls for service has remained relatively stable and make up the remaining 42.31% of calls from July 1, 2013, to June 30, 2017. The Fire Department's annual operating budget averaged out over the past three (3) years is approximately \$255,413.

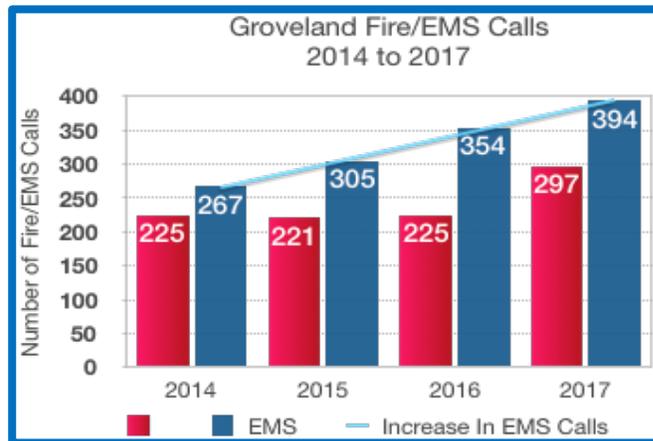


Figure 4 Groveland Fire/EMS Calls 2014-2017

The department is currently staffed with one (1) Fire Chief, one (1) paid on-call Assistant Fire Chief, two (2) Captains, four (4) Lieutenants, and twenty-four (24) paid on-call Firefighters and EMTs. This brings the total of Groveland Fire Department personnel to 32 members. The Groveland Fire Department does not currently have any fulltime staff. What is often the case with call fire departments is that only about one-quarter of these personnel are truly active and respond to calls on a regular basis. In addition, it should be expected that the roster of members continually fluctuates due to hirings and resignations. There is a growing nationwide gap in a community's ability to recruit and retain paid-on-call firefighters. Much of the gap is due to the heavy demands placed on on-call firefighters to balance their full-time career, family, and the rigorous and time-consuming requirements for certification as a Firefighter or EMT. This growing dilemma is expected to continue leaving communities without the ability to provide adequate fire and emergency medical services to the community. This is quantified by the statistics analyzed and the results of the current low response to fire and EMS emergencies.



Figure 5 Groveland FD Patch

II. SCOPE OF WORK AND METHODOLOGY



Figure 6
Town of Groveland
Seal

MRI conducted a basic service study of the Groveland Fire Department followed by the development of this management letter. Upon completion of its review, MRI has made recommendations for improvements that take into consideration the current and future financial abilities of the Town, appropriate modifications to the delivery systems to provide optimum response time and service to the entire town, location and/or expansion of physical facilities and equipment, and whether the current fire/rescue staffing is appropriate or should be modified.

Specific items addressed, included but were not limited to, the following:

- A. Identified service needs, based on the characteristics of the community, statutory and regulatory requirements for response and delivery, and comparison with current ability to fulfill the needs and expectations.
- B. Identified the public safety risks and prioritize the level of risk that must be covered based on the data and operations of the fire and EMS operations. The type, frequency, distribution, response times, mutual aid and/or contractor provided services, staffing policies, reporting of emergency and routine responses to all services was included.

- C. Assessed the current staffing plan for deploying the required number of fire and EMS officers and supervisors, along with vehicles/apparatus used and recommended cost-effective alternatives based on the type of incident. Evaluated whether there were recommended changes to improve efficiency and delivery of service.
- D. Evaluated the response of personnel, including appropriate operational staffing, supervisors, management, and support staff to respond from the initial call for routine and emergency services through to generating the incident report and findings, and any subsequent proceedings such as court appearances, legal action, or insurance resolution or inspection.
- E. Identified the required staffing levels that meet the needs of the community in the most cost-effective and complete manner including operating costs, personnel impact, and impact on the delivery of service and workload.
- F. Evaluated the current fire/rescue facility to determine if it is a functional platform for the Groveland Fire Department. Identified facility needs in terms of critical operational components. Identified the viability of the facility to provide an effective base of operations for the next five years.
- G. An evaluation of departmental policies and procedures that impact the efficient operations of the fire and EMS departments. Included possible recommendations that may improve the current policies, procedures, training, and delivery of services in the most cost-effective manner.
- H. Reviewed and commented on on-call recruitment and retention efforts within the community.

To accomplish these tasks, the following ten methodologies were employed:

1. Reviewed pertinent service demand data
2. Conducted a review of response activity
3. Toured the community and reviewed target hazards
4. Evaluated fire service facilities and equipment
5. Interviewed the Finance Director
6. Interviewed the Police Chief and Fire Chief
7. Interviewed fire officers and firefighters and several other members of the Fire Department
8. Met with two members of the Finance Board
9. Met with the Board of Selectmen
10. Reviewed various fire department documents and budgets

11. Developed a management letter

III. SIGNIFICANT ISSUES CURRENTLY FACING THE GROVELAND FIRE DEPARTMENT

The community and the Governing Body of the Town of Groveland Mass ultimately determines the level of emergency service delivery that is desired. This is often accomplished through expression of expectations during public meetings and also through the approval of the operating budget. The review of the service level revealed, that the residents of the Town of Groveland expect a timely response of a single fire suppression or first response unit on a 24/7 basis.

A balance of effective and efficient emergency services delivery, and the need to maintain a fiscally responsible tax rate for the citizens is often the primary driving force in the delivery of emergency services. The basic tenant of emergency service in Groveland includes the provision of basic fire protection, fire suppression, and first responder emergency medical services (EMS). EMS transport and Advanced Life Support (ALS) care, is accomplished through a contract with a third-party EMS Service, Trinity Ambulance, that is stationed in Haverhill, Massachusetts.

Groveland Fire Department provides first responder emergency medical care until Trinity Ambulance arrives on scene. Basic rescue services, including vehicle extrication, water rescue, and hazardous materials response at the operational level is also part of the services provided by GFD.

MRI's assessment of the Groveland Fire Department identified a number of challenges and deficiencies in the department's ability to meet the public's expectations as described above. The MRI project team has summarized what is believed to be the most immediate issues and then discussed each issue in length further in this letter.

It should be noted that while MRI has identified organizational issues within the GFD, the team did not find any operational issues (with the exception of manpower) that would raise concern for the delivery of emergency services by the Groveland Fire Department. Despite these challenges, MRI clearly acknowledges and recognizes that when staffing positions are filled, and the organization is moving forward together as a team, the personnel of the Groveland Fire and EMS organization produce an effective, professional and efficient response that serves the Town of Groveland well.

A. The organizational structure of any organization or entity, whether public or private, establishes and illustrates the important hierarchical relationships between various personnel and supervisors/subordinates within the organization that allow it to function properly, operate effectively, and efficiently in its daily operations or the pursuit of its mission. Critical to this structure is the leadership team that moves the organization forward.

Over several years the retirement of two Fire Chiefs and the appointment of interim Fire Chiefs, has created a lack of developing a clear sense of common vision, growth, and strategic planning. In addition the lack of collaboration and communication between the GFD and the Groveland Board of Selectmen continues to strain what should be a cooperative working relationship. The absence of an appointed Fire Chief creates a leadership gap that has created a rudderless ship, and has resulted in some haphazard decision making that impacts the forward progress of this proud organization. This is a whole organization issue and not specific to any one person or rank within the Groveland Fire Department.

- B. The growth in population, an increase in the aging population requiring emergency medical services, and a decline in the recruitment, retention, and availability of paid on-call Fire and EMS personnel is not sustainable. The once always available, effective group of paid-on-call first responders has been in a steady decline in recent years. Fulltime work mandates, family commitments, stringent training requirements and certifications, and other competing interests has diminished the availability of responders that is affecting a timely response to emergencies. Groveland is not immune to this dilemma and is part of a nationwide problem in the part-time fire service.
- C. Fire and EMS stations, fire apparatus, and equipment are all a critical community asset. These facilities support the overall mission of the organization in providing public safety services. Well-designed and maintained fire and EMS facilities enable staff to perform their duties effectively, efficiently, and safely. The current Groveland Public Safety Buildings are in need of modernization and modifications in order to accommodate decontamination equipment for protective clothing and EMS equipment. Fire apparatus and equipment provide firefighters with the tools necessary to respond to a number of different fires and emergencies. A comprehensive apparatus and equipment Capital Replacement Plan provides a fiscally sound roadmap to replace apparatus and equipment, while also helping to reduce spikes in the tax rate when replacement becomes necessary.

IV. ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, TRAINING, PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The organizational structure of any organization or entity, whether public or private, fulltime or part-time, establishes and illustrates the important hierarchical relationships between various personnel and supervisors/subordinates within the organization that allow it to function properly, operate effectively, and efficiently in its daily operations or the pursuit of its mission. It also helps to clearly define the organizational chain of command from top to bottom, an especially important consideration in a quasi-military public safety organization, such as the Fire Department where everyone from the highest rank to the lowest is subject to receiving orders and, with the exception of the lowest rank, also issues them.

The Groveland Fire Department Organization has a long history of proud service to the community. Common within fire service organizations, over time the organization develops its functionality through its perception of its ingrained traditional mission. It is a normal sense of duty, responsibility, and service, which is the hallmark of the fire and emergency services, and drives a sense of community pride and involvement, both proud traditions.

MRI has identified a number of recommendations and best practices that will help to resolve some internal conflict, as well as build and strengthen the working relationship between the Groveland Fire Department and the Board of Selectmen. Effective communications in any organization, but especially public safety agencies, are essential, and a cohesive unity of command allows everyone to know exactly who they report to and/or who reports to them.

MRI recommends that both the Board of Selectmen and Groveland Fire Department membership broaden their knowledge of each others organization and their role and responsibilities to the community to gain a better understanding of how each entity is structured and operates. In addition, the Board of Selectmen should tour all Groveland Fire Department facilities, to gain a stronger understanding of how the current apparatus and equipment are used during emergency operations to meet the mission of the Fire Department. In turn, the Groveland Fire Department leadership team and members should focus efforts on building a cooperative working relationship with the Board of Selectmen, in order to be able to meet current and future operational needs. This is most often accomplished by educating the Board of Selectmen on the department's mission, goals, and objectives.

It is the project team's belief that the Groveland Fire Department requires a team approach that requires strong leadership and a renewed vision for the department. The current Interim Fire Chief is committed to and working to maintain open communications internally and with the Board of Selectmen until a Fire Chief is appointed. Each day that passes without an appointed Fire Chief makes the climb the department will need to make, more challenging. Throughout the interviews with the Fire Department personnel and the Interim Fire Chief, a need to bring in strong leadership within the Groveland Fire Department was communicated by all of the GFD members. The need for strong Fire Department leadership was further communicated through discussions with others outside of the organization.

In the review of administrative tasks within the GFD, it was noted that there is no administrative support assigned to the Fire Department. As the department moves forward and should the Town of Groveland desire to change its staffing model, the need for at a minimum of a part time administrative assistant to the Fire Chief should be considered. Currently many department administrative duties are delegated throughout the organization. Due to the part time nature of the department this creates a significant delay in the processing of administrative tasks. MRI also noted that requests for information from the Fire Department often results in a lengthy time period and creates a poor impression. The project team believes that with the appointment of a

fulltime Fire Chief and an administrative assistant, part time at 20 hours per week, a significant improvement will result in the day to day efficiency of the GFD and to the community.

A review of a report submitted by the then Interim Fire Chief; Ruchala, in March of 2018 to the Board of Selectmen further quantifies MRIs recommendation for a fulltime Fire Chief. **Chief Ruchala stated; “As the town grows and the calls increase the strain on the members increases. This is especially true during the times of day that most members are away from town earning their livelihood. Typically, the on-call model erodes over time. The pressure of everyday life, fire and EMS training, and responding to ever increasing call volume is at the root of this erosion. Dedicated full-time leadership with a Fire Chief, who is a proven professional at the helm, is critical in combating this”. “The on-call firefighters are a dedicated group but all of us have limits to what we can contribute given time constraints both personal and professional. The required workload of planning, preparing, and maintaining all of the required functions of the Fire Department is a full-time job. Completing all of the required functions is not possible nights and weekends. Some things will fall to the wayside”.** During the meetings with GFD members including the current Interim Fire Chief, the input and sentiment described above was the general consensus of other GFD members as well.

MRI conducted a review of the operational budget of the GFD. Our review revealed a fire department budget that was similar to a number of other fire departments similar in size the MRI has worked with. There were no immediate concerns in the budget structure and in the items identified as line items. In comparing the budget over the past two fiscal cycles there appeared to be no overspending or unnecessary requests found. The budget reflected both personnel and operational needs.

Recommendation 1: MRI recommends that the Board of Selectmen conduct an immediate search for a Fulltime Fire Chief, for the Groveland Fire Department as a first priority and step, towards improving the current challenges faced by the GFD, with a goal of having the Fire Chief appointed by March 1, 2019. The other alternative to this recommendation would be to hire a Fire Chief for 32 hours per week to start and evaluate the benefits of converting the position to fulltime status after one year.

Recommendation 2: MRI recommends that the Board of Selectmen establish a part-time, 20 hour per week Administrative Assistant position for the Fire Department. The position would report directly to the Fire Chief. A job description detailing the position responsibilities should be developed.

Recommendation 3: MRI recommends that an independent third party conduct the Fire Chief search and develop a job description with the position and salary requirements in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen and GFD input. The search process should include an assessment center component in order to provide the Board of Selectmen with the most qualified candidate for the position, specific to the needs of the Town of Groveland. An emphasis on

experience, working in a combination fire department, and a commitment to maintaining an active on-call model shall be a requirement for consideration for the position.

Recommendation 4: MRI recommends the Board of Selectmen and Fire Department leadership develops strong collaboration and communication initiatives in order to gain a stronger understanding of the Fire Departments mission, current needs, and future strategic planning efforts. In turn, at a minimum, the Fire Department leaderships should meet often throughout the year with the Board of Selectmen (at a minimum quarterly), to discuss department issues, budget planning for the upcoming fiscal year, and strategic and capital improvement planning.

During the interviews with Fire Department personnel there was a general consensus that expressed concern that the Board of Selectmen was not fully educated or aware of the overall operations of the GFD. These personnel expressed a desire to improve this area of concern. However, MRI noted through the assessment that there was not clarity in the roles and responsibilities of both organization with each other. Through better understanding and communications both groups can build effective working relationships that benefit the community.

Recommendation 5: MRI recommends that the Fire Department leadership provide a weekly, internal summary report of Fire Department activities, to GFD members and to the Finance/HR Director, to be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for their review. A further detailed monthly report should be completed detailing emergency response statistics, equipment and apparatus service status, budget status, training conducted, fire prevention inspection and education activities.

STAFFING, RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Groveland Fire Department is at a cross roads. For decades the GFD has used the dedication and service of volunteers and as time progressed, paid-on-call personnel to meet the needs of the community. Many of the day to day activities (emergency response, fire inspections, permits, reports, checking apparatus, cleaning the station and equipment) required of the Fire Department would be completed when personnel had time to complete them. Volunteer and paid-on-call personnel often worked in town and could leave their place of employment to complete Fire Department tasks or respond to emergencies. This was the contribution of local companies to give back to the community. Today, the expanded role that the Fire Department plays in the community and with paid-on-call members working outside of the community, a shortage of available responders has been increasing over the past 10 years. Consequently, it is not unusual to have only three (3) first responders in the Town of Groveland during the weekday hours. This shortage of available first responders is the most prominent priority that the Town of Groveland must address.

The greater majority of the Groveland Fire Department members work outside the community or cannot leave their places of employment to respond to emergencies. Even day to day routine matters which a citizen of Groveland needs to have addressed by the Fire Department must wait until evening or weekends; due to the Interim Fire Chief's fulltime employment, which takes precedent and is located outside of Groveland. The many competing interests of first responders time such as full-time work mandates and overtime, family commitments, as well as the significant amount of training hours needed for certification as a firefighter or Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) has taxed the GFD first responders and is straining the delivery of emergency services to the community.

During the interview with the Groveland Police Chief, the project team was informed that on occasion, the Groveland Police Department (GPD) officers have arrived on scene of a medical emergency with no GFD responders available and have to wait for the Trinity ambulance to arrive to provide care and transport. Police Officers have limited first aid and CPR training, and while often willing to assist GFD EMT's, the response of one Police Officer responding to a medical emergency raises concerns for the responder safety, and that the non-response of GFD personnel will increase.

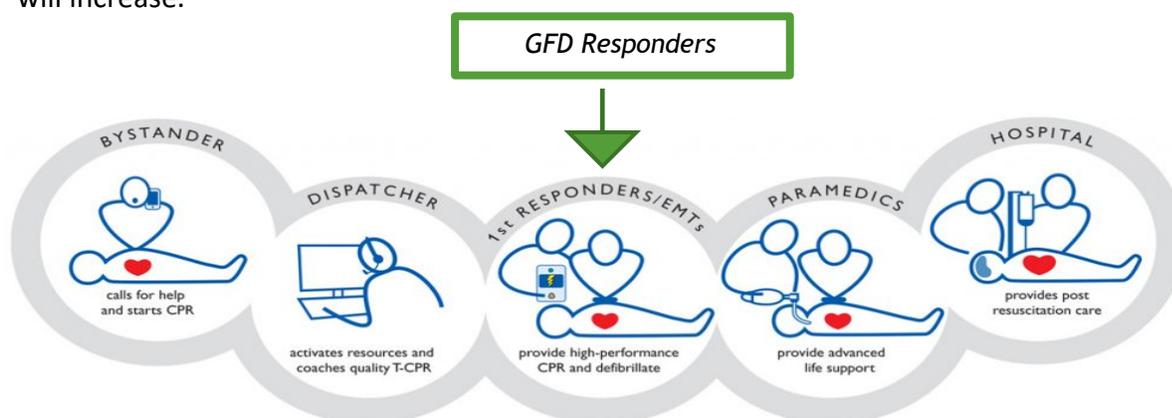


Figure 7 Chain of Survival

One of the contributing factors in this dilemma is burnout of first responders. The current Interim Fire Chief estimates that only 50% of the current roster responds routinely to emergencies.

It should be noted that not all responders are certified as EMTs and therefore do not respond to medical emergencies, unless called for a lift assistance or to assist with CPR. Essentially a limited group of EMTs are responding to the majority of calls. Some of the first responders are both Firefighters and EMTs. They respond to both types of emergencies. It is inevitable that the staffing model of paid-on-call members currently in place, will need to change. The important role that paid-on-call members contribute to the GFD will not change, however adding fulltime or per-diem day coverage; lessens the amount of time needed to respond to calls, assures a response during the day when call members are out of town, allows paid on-call members to

focus their availability to respond nights and weekends, and assures that the community receives a consistent response to emergencies. MRI also recommends the development of EMT teams of two EMS first responders, that would be available to respond during overnight hours and therefore reducing the current strain on personnel. Currently the Fire Department is utilizing an “all call” response for EMS emergencies. This notifies all EMS personnel to respond to medical emergencies. This not only leads to burnout but also is an added expense to the department as a larger group of responders is compensated.

It should be noted that the Town of Groveland has a contractual agreement with Trinity Ambulance located in Haverhill Mass. The Groveland Fire Department provides emergency medical first responder services to the community. When a medical emergency occurs in Groveland the Fire Department dispatches trained emergency medical personnel to the scene to initiate medical care until arrival of Trinity ambulance. First responders can reach the scene faster and provide critical care such as CPR or other medical aid until Trinity arrives.

Further contributing to the current staffing issue is the difficulty in recruiting and retaining skilled, and certified fire and emergency medical responders. This is a nationwide issue that has been evolving and recognized as an increasing problem as far back as 2004. The department is under an increasing level of scrutiny based on the ability of the department to meet its stated mission. The community leadership has also expressed concerns relative to its operational capability and response.

It is clear that the department is being challenged meeting the expectations of the community, and if unchecked and in fact not quickly reversed, the department will soon cease to be a viable emergency response organization providing consistent and equal levels of service.

The Town of Groveland has expressed a desire to retain a strong call firefighting force and MRI concurs. The members of GFD recognize that it is necessary to introduce a different staffing model which will provide consistency in service delivered to the public. This will take a strong commitment from the Town, community, and strong leadership in the Fire Department.

In March 2004, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) issued a report by the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section, entitled ***A Call for Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service.*** Among other things, the report highlighted the fact that the ranks of volunteer/call firefighters nationwide are declining, due at least in part, to an increasing demand for services. There are also various other factors that are prevalent in the reduction in the number of volunteer and on-call firefighters in communities such as Groveland. Among them is that the demographics of many communities today do not support a sufficient number of the types of person who are attracted to the fire service in the 21st century; someone with time to dedicate to public service or a young person who wants to make a career of it. MRI

has found that on average, for every five on-call firefighters recruited, two will remain active after a period of 48 months has elapsed.

¹ For both career and volunteer fire departments, the nature of their service is changing dramatically from a fire-based service to a medical-based service. As seen in Figure 1, the total number of fire department emergency responses, has increased to more than 31 million from its 1980s figure of just fewer than 11 million. This is the case in spite of the fact that the actual number of fires and mutual-aid responses has decreased from 3,262,000 in 1980 to 2,538,000 by 2013.

However, nationwide the number of medical calls has dramatically increased from just over five million in 1980 to more than 21 million by 2013. As a result, medical emergencies now account for 68 percent of emergencies that fire departments respond to and now are a fire department’s primary responsibility.

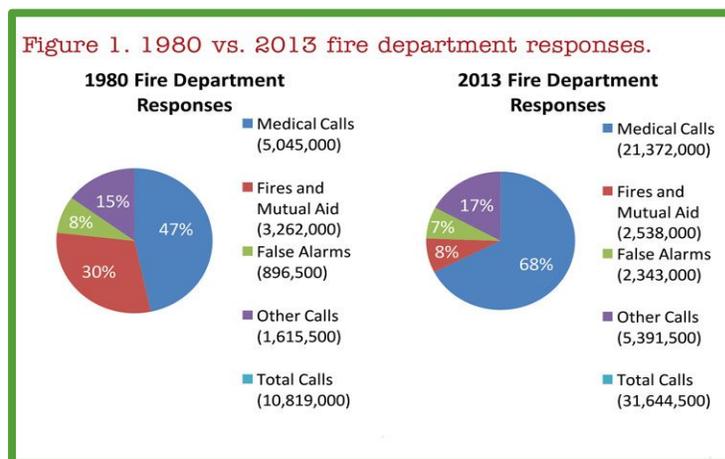


Figure 8 Fire Department Responses 1980 vs 2013

The reasons for this shift in job responsibility are numerous. First, fires are becoming much less common. Second, over the past 50 years, fire departments have gradually been expanding their role as medical providers. This evolution began largely as a result of the 1966 paper entitled “Accidental Death and Disability: The Neglected Disease of Modern Society,” which highlights the fact that accidents, especially automobile accidents, are the leading cause of death among persons under the age of 38. This report highlights the dismal state of emergency first aid and recommends training firefighters in emergency medical services. *Presently, the Groveland Fire*

¹ SalterMitchell Inc. (2015) “Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Formative Research Results” prepared for the National Volunteer Fire Council.

Department has approximately thirty-two (32) on-call members on its roster. On its own, this number would appear sufficient to provide an adequate level of emergency services to the Town. However, in almost any call/volunteer emergency service organization, there are going to be a percentage of members whose names still appear on the “active” roster, yet they no longer truly are, or are minimally so, for a variety of reasons. The fact is that most members of the department have a primary job, other than the Fire Department, that probably limits their availability to respond, mostly during normal business hours, and the current personnel picture becomes much more of a concern.

Based upon this analysis, only about three of the on-call personnel are available to respond to incidents during daytime working hours on a regular basis.

Should a change in the staffing model come about, there still also needs to be a proactive effort towards recruitment and retention of on-call personnel. Although Groveland is far from alone in dealing with this reduction in on-call staff, it is essential that addressing this situation is clearly identified as a top priority and adopted as a shared mission of the entire department. This goal, along with recommendations for future staffing will become the start of long-term sustainment of the Groveland Fire Department organization.



Figure 9 Groveland Fire Department Recruitment Poster

The Groveland Fire Department conducts passive recruiting efforts; however, they do not have a formal recruitment and retention program for paid on-call fire and EMS personnel. Most recruitment is by word of mouth or are “walk-ins”. There is limited use of the department’s website or social networking pages on the Town or Fire Department’s websites or social network pages. Recruitment advertising should be frequently displayed very prominently on the websites of call/volunteer departments.

Recruitment efforts should be an ongoing activity within the GFD. The use of internal fire officers and personnel as a “recruitment team” should be considered. It fosters a sense of participation in making the organization successful and assures that the recruitment efforts obtain the attention needed to meet staffing goals.

Even if the recruitment obstacles can be overcome, hurdles remain before a new member is a productive member of the department. Once an individual becomes interested in becoming an on-call firefighter, they must achieve a level of ever-increasing specialized skills that is time-consuming. Often exit interviews reveal that the training commitment alone is daunting and one of the primary reasons that on-call personnel resign. It is also costly to the department. To become a certified firefighter takes several hundred hours. Once certified, there are the dozens of hours training annually spent maintaining firefighter and EMT or paramedic skills and

certifications. Unfortunately, in 2018, the average citizen does not want to spend a great deal of personal time dedicated to the fire and emergency services, especially when family commitments take priority.

Other reasons for difficulty in recruiting and retaining members include:

- An overall reduction in leisure time
- Employment obligations and the common need to maintain more than one job
- The virtual elimination of employers understanding and flexibility relating to this form of community service
- Increased family demands
- Generational differences
- Increasing training requirements
- The cost of housing in many affluent communities
- Organizational culture
- Internal respect
- Recognition of personnel
- Internal communication
- Department leadership styles and commitment

**March 2015 Report – Salter-Mitchell Inc
Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention
Formative Research Results**

²The number of volunteer firefighters and emergency responders in the United States is declining at approximately 12 percent in just the past three decades – leaving nearly half of U.S. communities at increased risk during emergencies. This declining number of volunteers coincides with an increased call volume that has tripled in that time and an increased public expectation

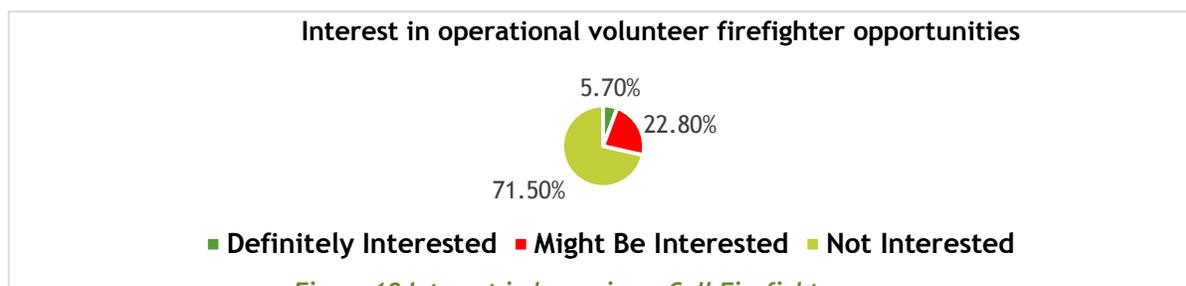


Figure 10 Interest in becoming a Call Firefighter

² SalterMitchell Inc. (2015) “Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Formative Research Results” prepared for the National Volunteer Fire Council.

for more and better-quality fire and rescue services. The interest in volunteer firefighter opportunities has declined considerably.

It is easy to believe that increasing the number of on-call firefighters, can be a cure-all to resolve staffing, and thus response problems, however in 2019, it is clear to MRI that the current staffing model in place must be changed to a model which assures consistent and equal services. In time, a long-term future goal of 24-hour emergency service staffing should be considered. Regardless of the need to consider various staffing models, the on-call firefighters within the Town of Groveland are the foundation of and will remain the primary response force into the future. The future staffing model may look different but the long history of dedication and public service by paid on-call members to the Town of Groveland is a value not to be overlooked by those changes. A paid-on-call response component should always be considered as part of the Groveland Fire Department response force.

There is a grant from the federal government titled the **Staffing for Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER)** grant program (<https://www.fema.gov/staffing-adequate-fire-emergency-response-grants>). The grant program provides funding for staffing and also to assist in the recruitment and retainment of volunteer and on-call firefighters. It provides competitively awarded funds to municipalities to recruit and maintain on-call and volunteer firefighters. The grant funds pay for expenses, such as recruitment campaigns, tuition for college curriculums in fire science, EMT and paramedic training, health insurance for call members, physical fitness programs, uniforms, and various tax incentives offered to attract new candidates to join the Fire Department, and then stay for an extended period of time.

MRI recommends that the Town of Groveland through the Groveland Fire Department should apply to secure a SAFER grant. This grant should note the staffing issue that currently exists and indicate that the grant would be an attempt to meet the NFPA 1720 fire response standard.

There are no easy or guaranteed solutions to the staffing needs of Groveland and many other communities throughout the country. It is also important to stress that what may work in one community with regards to staffing and call/volunteer recruitment and retention may not work in another community. Each community must individually determine what programs, incentives, and motivations will work, and be most effective in their community.

MRI is confident that by proactively working on this issue now, the Town will avoid costly steps in the future. The project team believes a continued decline in personnel available to provide coverage for fire and EMS emergencies during the day and evening hours will continue to be a challenge, and recommends the Town consider a transition into a staffing model which would meet current and immediate future needs. The staffing model to consider should consist of either fulltime Firefighter/EMTs or part-time assigned per-diem Firefighter/EMTs. Further the project team recommends that the GFD establish EMS teams for overnight response to medical

emergencies. The specific classification of employee (fulltime or per diem) is a decision that should be determined by the recommendation of the Fire Chief and Board of Selectmen and may require voter approval. MRI also recommends that paid on-call personnel currently on the GFD roster, who meet the qualifications of positions for fulltime or per diem positions, be given consideration first before offering positions outside of the organization.

MRI has created some staffing models for consideration. These staffing models would provide fulltime coverage or per diem coverage, supplemented by the paid-on-call firefighters. Paid on-call Firefighters would also continue to respond during daytime hours when available. These are some examples and would be dependent on available funding and could require implementation over different budgeting cycles:

1. Hire 2 career firefighter/EMTs to work Monday through Friday to provide fire and EMS cover from 6 am to 4 pm. The call firefighters would respond when available including nights, weekends, and as EMS first responders. One of the two career firefighters would hold the rank of lieutenant in order to have a supervisory fire officer to coordinate day to day activities.
2. Hire 2 part-time firefighter/EMTs (assigned shifts) or per-diem firefighter/EMTs (open day shifts) to work Monday through Friday to provide fire and EMS cover from 6 am to 4 pm. The call firefighters would respond when available including nights, weekends, and holiday's and as EMS first responders.
3. Create an overnight EMT responder schedule with current GFD EMTs (2-person teams) and provide a stipend for being on-call to respond to EMS emergencies during the overnight coverage period. This will further take some of the workload off responders who have to work the next day at their fulltime jobs as well as eliminate the "all call" EMT personnel response.

There are a number of various funding sources which could be investigated, to offset the cost of building a career staff of personnel to meet emergency needs. These include:

- Operating Budget
- Tax Revenue
- SAFER GRANT
- Other State and Federal Grants

EMS SERVICES

MRI conducted a review of EMS services provided by the GFD and from Trinity Ambulance. The review included an Ambulance Service Agreement signed on June 27, 2018 and in effect from July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2021. The contract may be extended for an additional three (3) years on/or before June 1, 2021. In addition, The Town of Groveland Fire Department operates its EMS delivery system under an EMS Service Zone Plan through Massachusetts EMS Region III.



Figure 11 Trinity Ambulance

The delivery of EMS Services by the Groveland Fire Department is regulated by the State of Massachusetts Emergency Medical System 105: CMR 170.510(C) which outlines the requirements for the compliance of local EMS Performance Standards. Local jurisdictions must set forth EMS performance standards in their service zone plan. Performance standards must meet minimum standards set forth in EMS regulations. Typically, the standards include:

- Response Time
- Staffing Requirements
- Deployment of Resources
- Adequate Backup
- Level of Service and Level of License of designated service zone providers
- Medical Control
- Appropriate health care facility designations
- Any other performance measure on which the local jurisdiction(s) wish to set standards and use as selection criteria for EMS providers.

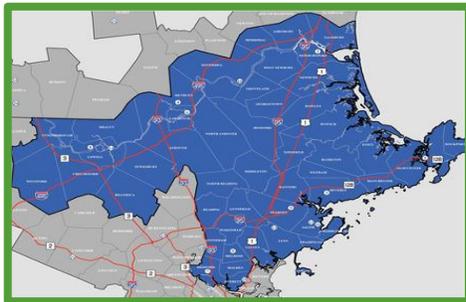
The Town of Groveland has established the following EMS Performance Standards for Response Times:

1. Groveland Police Department will arrive within **4:00 minutes-90% of the time**. Time is measured from time PSAP notified until unit arrived on scene.
2. The Groveland Fire Department will arrive within **7:59 minutes-90% of the time**. Time is measured from the time dispatch is notified by Fire Alarm to arrival on scene.
3. Trinity Ambulance will arrive within **12:00 minutes-90% of the time**. Time is measured from the time Trinity Dispatch is notified by Fire Alarm to arrival on scene.

The Town of Groveland 911 Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) is located in the Police Station at 181 Main Street in Groveland. When 911 is dialed in Groveland the PSAP receives the call. All schools and medical facilities dial 911 for emergencies. The dispatch center is staffed by one (1)

civilian dispatcher. The dispatcher processes the emergency call, and then dispatches the police and fire personnel based upon pre-established criteria. All medical emergency calls are transferred to Trinity Ambulance to provide Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD). Emergency Medical Dispatch is a process that uses a specific set of questions by a trained dispatcher to assist in determining the severity of the medical emergency. A set of pre-determined medical questions known as Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) are used to determine the type and severity of a medical emergency.

All members of the Groveland Police Department are trained to the first responder level and carry basic first aid kits and Automatic External Defibrillators (AEDs). The Groveland Fire Department operates at the Basic Life Support Level (BLS). The GFD is a licensed, Class V Non-Transporting service which includes the evaluation and treatment for patients as required.



Local receiving hospitals within the Groveland Geographic area includes: Holy Family Hospital, Anna Jacques Hospital, Lawrence General Hospital, and Holy Family Hospital Methuen. The transportation destination to one of the receiving hospitals is determined in accordance with the EMS System regulations and Department of Public Health approved, point of entry plans.

Figure 12 Massachusetts EMS Region III

BLS transportation is provided by Trinity Ambulance. Advanced Life Support (ALS) transportation is also provided by Trinity Ambulance with their full ALS crew or with a mixture of Groveland Fire Department BLS personnel and Trinity Ambulance personnel. The various transport types are dependent upon the patient presentation (severity of illness-injury), available staffing, and most appropriate utilization of resources.

Trinity Ambulance has back-up-services available in the event that one of their ambulances is not available for an emergency call in Groveland. Back up ambulance services in order are: Georgetown Fire, Byfield Fire, Pride Star Ambulance, Action Ambulance, and Newbury Fire.

For ALS back-up-service, Haverhill Fire will provide one of Trinity's dedicated ALS Units through the mutual aid system. Other back-up ALS service providers in order include: Byfield Fire and Action Ambulance.

The Ambulance Service Agreement between the Town of Groveland and Trinity Ambulance is based in part on the provisions within the Groveland EMS Service Zone Plan. Trinity provides a quarterly report which identifies all runs within the quarter and summarizes what the outcome

of the patient was, where they were transported, and identification of month, day and time of the calls. Reports are also available off cycle when requested. There is no cost to the Town of Groveland for EMS transport services by Trinity. In turn Trinity collects the billing and collection of revenue from the transports. There is no revenue sharing in this arrangement.

MRI conducted a cursory review of response time for Trinity from January 1, 2018 to June 20, 2018, which revealed an average response time of 10:22 minutes. This is well within the required EMS Service Plan requirements. A review of when emergency calls are occurring in Groveland revealed the highest amount of calls occur during the day between 6 am and 5 pm.

MRI reviewed the Fire Department Structure Report dated March 31, 2018 written by Acting Chief Ruchala, that suggested a review for the potential of obtaining two ambulances to provide Groveland Fire Department with EMS transport capabilities. It was estimated that \$241,500 in revenues would be realized after subtracting billing costs, and advanced life support interface costs, from a total estimated revenue of \$280,000, based on 400 EMS calls per year. The plan recommended the purchase of two used ambulances estimated at \$225,000. **MRI believes that the Groveland Fire Department currently does not have the capability or manpower, as well as the number of emergency calls to generate sufficient revenue that would provide a return in investment for taking over ambulance transport from a third-party service.** Maintenance and equipment costs associated with providing transport services are costly (even higher when purchasing used equipment) and would quickly use up any revenues gained from transport. The start-up costs in the purchase of EMS equipment for the ambulance, medical supplies, defibrillators, IV pumps, stretchers, drugs and disposable supplies are just a few of the costs needed for start-up costs. The eventual replacement costs for ambulances and equipment also contributes to a lengthy return on investment. There are no economies of scale, with ambulance transport in this particular scenario. The Town of Groveland is not assessed fees for the EMS and transport services from Trinity Ambulance. This provision alone provides a significant cost savings to the Town of Groveland for emergency medical services.

MRI recommends that the Town of Groveland open a dialogue with area fire and EMS organizations interested in the sharing of fire and EMS services. There are a number of communities in the Groveland area that are experiencing the challenges currently identified at GFD. Sharing of services is not regionalization. Sharing of services is developing strategies for economies of scale; with emergency service organizations with similar challenges in the delivery of fire and EMS services, who desire to maintain or improve services, by collaborating with area emergency service providers. The goals of these shared service models are to enhance the quality of service delivery, leverage acquisition of the latest equipment and training, and reduce operational costs in the future.

During our review of the EMS Service Zone Plan we noted that the most current application (9.18.18) had a previous plan with no current concurrence by the Police and Trinity Ambulance. Where both agencies are named as part of the service plan and are tasked with meeting certain response times an updated plan and documentation that all parties concur with the plan should be in the service zone plan. In addition, an annual review of the plan to quantify that the agencies named in the plan are meeting the response standards as detailed in the plan.

Recommendation 6: The use of volunteer and currently paid-on-call firefighter/EMTs over the decades has been an effective model for meeting the emergency response needs of the Groveland community. The increasing changes occurring in emergency medical calls and unavailability of first responders no longer provides the needed services to the community. Currently and in the future the model that will provide a more active and assured response to emergencies is to hire career or per-diem Firefighter/EMTs, to provide response during peak times during the day and continue to actively utilize the current on-call personnel to supplement and respond to emergencies when available.

Recommendation 7: The Town of Groveland and the Groveland Fire Department should apply for a federal SAFER grant for fulltime positions, paid on-call members, and for paid on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel currently in the Fire Department.

Recommendation 8: The Town of Groveland should convene a focus group, to determine what concepts and recruitment and retention strategies are feasible and most attractive to potential candidates. The group should also bring forth recommendations on incentives and strategies to recommend to the Board of Selectmen for the Groveland Fire Department.

Recommendation 9: The Groveland Fire Department should set a realistic goal of recruiting over the next three years, while simultaneously setting a goal of maintaining the overall call member force up to 35 active personnel. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the EMT-basic level.

Recommendation 10: The Groveland Fire Department should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment team led by a company officer. At a minimum, this program should consist of:

- ***Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents***
- ***Holding periodic open houses at the fire station***
- ***Performing public outreach through the local media***
- ***Contacting community and service groups***

- *Developing an eye-catching banner on the Town's and Fire Department's websites and conducting radio and media advertisements*
- *Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town*
- *Placing a temporary signboard at various locations within the community*
- *Placing signs for call/recruiting volunteers in local businesses, particularly high-volume locations*
- *Implementing or enhancing a fire explorer program*

Recommendation 11: Upon review of the current EMS service delivery model, MRI recommends that the Town of Groveland and GFD continue with the current EMS service delivery model with GFD as first responders and BLS - ALS emergency medical care with transport provided by Trinity Ambulance. During the term of the current Ambulance Service Agreement, the Town of Groveland and GFD should open dialogue with area emergency services to discuss the potential for sharing of services in fire and EMS delivery. If successful a comprehensive shared services plan and agreement should be implemented.

Recommendation 12: MRI reviewed a draft copy of a job description for EMS Coordinator. MRI recommends that the EMS Coordinator Position be formally adopted, and the draft copy of the position description be transformed into the position description. The EMS Coordinator is a necessary role within the GFD, due to the stringent requirements detailed in the EMS Service Zone Plan, licensing, training, quality control, call review, and to coordinate the overall first responder program.

TRAINING AND OFFICER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT



Figure 13 Groveland Fire Department Patch

Traditionally, and in most fire service organizations, company level officers (captains and lieutenants) are working supervisors. They form an integral part of their company, apparatus, or unit, and it is often necessary for them to assume hands-on involvement in operations while simultaneously providing oversight and direction to their personnel. During structure fires and other dangerous technical operations, it is imperative that these officers accompany, and operate with, their crew to monitor conditions, provide situation reports, and assess progress toward incident mitigation. During structure fires, they must be capable of operating inside of the fire building with their crews, the most dangerous place on the incident scene. It is imperative that they are highly qualified and experienced and can command the confidence of their personnel. It is also important that personnel who are serving as chief level officers fully understand and are experienced with these skills and tasks, before assuming greater responsibility. While cognizant that any type of organizational hierarchy is not always going to line up perfectly on emergency

incidents, the project team believes that a well-defined organizational structure will provide increased operational effectiveness, safety, and improved accountability.

Training is without question, one of the three most important functions that a fire department should be performing on a regular basis; the others being a response to emergency incidents and fire prevention activities.

One could even make a credible argument that training is, in some ways, more important than emergency responses, because a department that is not well trained, prepared, and operationally ready, will be unable to effectively, efficiently, correctly, and safely, fulfill its emergency response obligations and mission. A comprehensive, diverse, and ongoing training program is absolutely critical to the Fire Department's level of success.



Figure 14 Training Response Matrix

The need for well-trained officers, who may be faced with serious life and death decisions that must be made quickly and correctly, is absolutely mission critical to any emergency service provider's ability to perform their designated mission(s).

Professional development for fire department personnel, especially officers, is also an important part of overall training. There are numerous excellent opportunities for officers to attend training on a wide range of topics outside of Groveland, including the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in Stow, and the Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. All state sponsored fire academy courses are offered without charge to local municipalities. National Fire Academy programs are also provided at no cost and in some classes provide reimbursement for travel and meals. Lodging is provided on the campus of the National Fire Academy at no cost. Annual events, such as the Fire Department Instructor's Conference (FDIC) in Indianapolis and the Firehouse Expo, provide a wide range of classroom training, as well as extensive hands-on evolutions. The New England Association of Fire Chief's Conference is held every year and frequently offers free professional development classes.

Beyond the practical benefits to be gained from personnel participating in outside training, encouraging personnel to earn and/or maintain various specialized certifications, such as fire instructor or fire officer, increases the positive professional perception of the organization and can help to demonstrate a commitment to continued excellence.

The Groveland Fire Department should use a formal promotional policy for all promotional opportunities. All officer positions, both career and call, should be filled based upon the person's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications, and experience commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a rank appropriate assessment process, and a basic practical skills evaluation. MRI highly recommends that these standards include some provision requiring completion of Fire Instructor Level I and Fire Officer Level I as a

minimum. All officers should also be required to have completed rank appropriate National Incident Management System (NIMS) training. Finally, they should be required to have completed incident safety officer training.

In conjunction with formalizing the future officer's promotion process when selecting to fill the department's key leadership positions, the Fire Chief should work to implement a career development program and succession planning process to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as to identify the core future leaders of the department. This should include all classifications of personnel.

MRI noted that the Assistant Chief Position did not have a clearly identified role within the fire department. It is our understanding the position was created by a previous fire administration and that the role and responsibilities were never detailed in a job description or communicated throughout the organization. A detailed job description with roles and responsibilities of the position and where it lies within the Chain of Command should be created.

Recommendation 13: MRI recommends a series of GFD group meetings to be held using the nominal group process and an outside facilitator to identify specific issues and problems within the organization, develop solutions, and to enhance the ability of decision making within the organization. The process should be open to all members and is typically held at a convenient time to encourage as much organizational participation as possible. MRI can provide guidance on the development of this process.

Recommendation 14: MRI recommends that all officer positions, from lieutenant to fire chief, should be filled based upon the person's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications, and experience, commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a formal, rank appropriate assessment process, and if necessary, a basic practical skills evaluation.

Recommendation 15: MRI recommends the Groveland Fire Department should ensure that all department members are trained/certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated, it is the project team's recommendation that all officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level.

Recommendation 16: The Groveland Fire Department should strongly encourage its call officers, to obtain a certain level of fire officer certification as a job requirement, such as Fire Officer I for Lieutenant, Fire Officer II for Captain, Fire Officer III for Assistant Fire chief, and Fire Officer Level IV for Fire Chief.

Recommendation 17: The Groveland Fire Department should require that all officers be certified as Incident Safety Officers. Additional personnel who may be interested should be encouraged to take this training and obtain this important firefighter safety certification.

Recommendation 18: As part of the succession planning process, the Fire Chief should work to implement a career development program to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.

Recommendation 19: In addition to their normal emergency scene operational duties and station management responsibilities, all officers should have one or more areas of responsibility to assist the Fire Chief with the department's overall management. Examples include areas such as equipment maintenance, protective clothing, annual pump testing, hose testing, breathing apparatus, and other areas. These duties and responsibilities should be reflected in rank and position specific job descriptions.

Recommendation 20: The Fire Chief or designated representative should continue to utilize social media and to involve other members of the department in providing updated news, activities, and fire prevention tips and information to enhance the community's knowledge about the Groveland Fire Department.

Recommendation 21: The Groveland Fire Department should seek assistance from the Massachusetts Call and Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA) and Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts (FCAM) relative to enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Groveland.

Recommendation 22: The Fire Chief should obtain membership and seek assistance from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the Volunteer Combination Officers Section (VCOS) within the IAFC to gain further information and education on best practices in leading a call firefighter organization such as the Groveland Fire Department, as well as enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Groveland. Additionally, the Fire Chief should attend the annual VCOS symposium sponsored by the IAFC organization, in order to be able to network and gain unique ideas and perspectives from other chief officers related to combination fire departments. This is one of the largest symposiums which specifically addresses call and combination fire organizational needs.

V. FIRE STATION FACILITIES

Fire and EMS stations are a critical community asset. The facilities of a modern fire and EMS department are designed to do much more than simply provide a garage for apparatus and a place for firefighters and EMS personnel to wait for a call. Well-designed fire and EMS facilities enable staff to perform their duties effectively, efficiently, and safely.

Groveland Fire Department responds out of two fire stations. The Central Fire Station is located at 181 Main Street. Central Station is also Groveland Fire Rescue Headquarters, housing the Chief's office and is connected to the Police Station.

Central Station houses Engine 1, Ladder 1, Squad 1, and Tanker 1. Central Station is the busiest of the two stations, with coverage responsibility for large complexes such as Nichols Village, Groveland Manor, the Housing Authority at River Pines, which all generate high volume of request for medical aid and fire calls.



*Figure 15 Fire Headquarters Groveland FD
181 Main Street*



*Figure 16 Groveland South Station
107 Washington Street*

The administrative wing of the building consists of a small reception area, three office size rooms including one for the Fire Chief, fire prevention office, and a radio room/day room where personnel standby for calls.



Figure 17 Central Station Office



*Figure 18 Central Station
Kitchen Area*



Figure 19 Central Station Office

South Station is located at 107 Washington St. South Station houses Engine 2, Engine 3, Squad 2, and Combo 2. South Station covers large complexes such as Veasey Park, Whitestone Village (Diane Circle & Alyssa Drive), Washington Park, and the A.W. Chesterton Company.

Both fire department facilities appear to be structurally intact and overall in good shape. There are source capture vehicle exhaust extraction systems in both buildings. Visibly noted at the Main Fire Station were water stains from a past leaking roof. It was unknown if a repair had been made and the tiles were not changed.

Over the years the addition of modern fire apparatus and equipment has minimized any working space previously available. There are no modern adequate areas for decontamination of medical equipment, firefighter protective clothing, and a lack of appropriate sleeping quarters restricts the ability of the fire department to provide twenty-four-hour coverage should it become necessary in the future.



Figure 20 Apparatus Bays - South Station

1. The facility is not in compliance with the requirements and recommendations of **NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program** (National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA, 2013 edition), which provides requirements for facility safety, maintenance, and inspections.
2. The facility is not in compliance with the requirements and recommendations of **NFPA 1581: Standard on Fire Department Infection Control Program** (National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, MA), which has requirements to provide minimum criteria for infection control in the fire station.
3. While it appears that the fire apparatus fits into the bays, a lack of storage space for equipment creates a crowded apparatus bay floor area making it challenging to move around.

A fire station supports the needs of the Fire Department and the community in which it is located. It must accommodate extremely diverse functions, including housing, recreation, administration, training, community education, equipment and vehicle storage, equipment and vehicle maintenance, and hazardous materials storage. While it is usually only occupied by trained personnel, the facility may also need to accommodate the general public for community education or outreach programs. Fire stations will vary somewhat in design depending on the specific mission, i.e., the types of emergencies that will be responded to or the types of fires that will be fought. Usually, the facility differences relate to the size of the firefighting apparatus and facility location. The location of the facility is largely driven by the need to minimize response time. For example, aircraft rescue firefighting (ARFF) stations provide fire protection to flight lines and aircraft and are located adjacent to the runways on airport property. Similarly, stations with hazardous waste response teams are located near likely spill sites, etc.



Figure 21 Storage area at Main Street Fire Station

Major fire station functional areas include the following:

- **Apparatus bay(s):** This is where the firefighting and emergency response vehicles are stored.
- **Apparatus bay support and vehicle maintenance:** These industrial spaces are where the vehicles and other firefighting equipment are cleaned, maintained, and stored.
- **Administrative and training areas:** These include offices, dispatch facilities, and training and conference rooms.
- **Residential areas:** These include the dorm rooms, day room/kitchen, and residential support areas such as bathrooms and fitness spaces.



Figure 22 Protective Clothing in Apparatus Bays

The two primary drivers for facility layout and functional space adjacencies in a fire station are the following:

1. Ensure that internal response times can be met (time for a firefighter to reach the apparatus and be ready to depart).
2. Separate the diverse and sometimes conflicting functions such as industrial maintenance spaces and residential spaces.

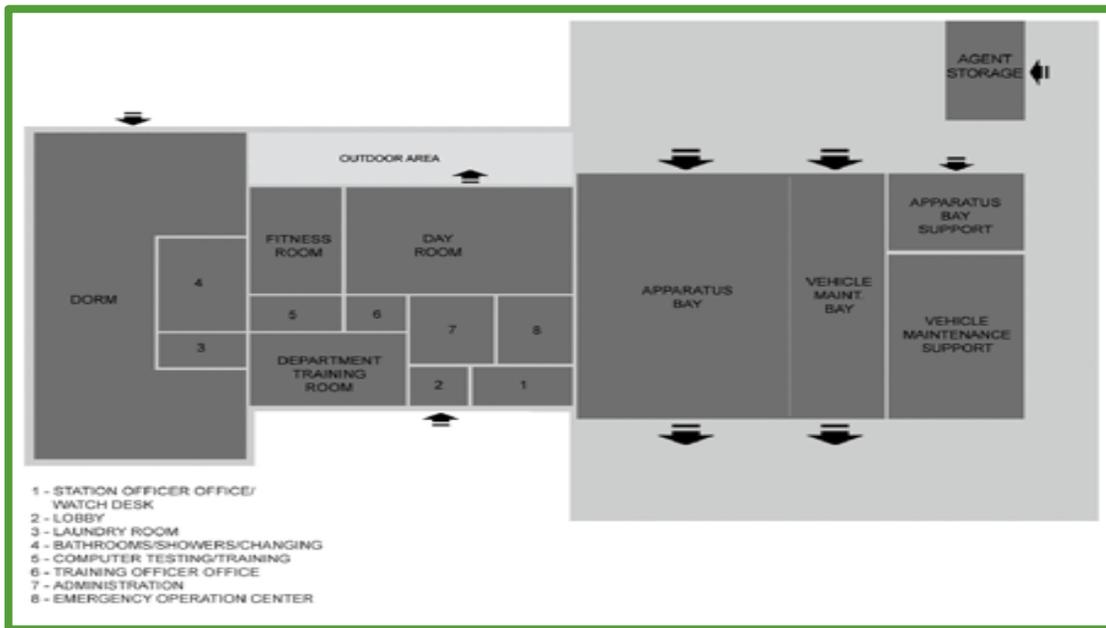


Figure 23 Fire Station Areas

APPARATUS BAYS

By placing the apparatus bay between the maintenance and support functions and the residential and administrative functions, both primary layout goals can be accomplished. Some of the adjacencies shown above may be accommodated through a hallway rather than a direct entrance/exit from one space to another. This is particularly true with the apparatus bay and the day room as many facility spaces require an adjacency with these two spaces. This approach to the layout can also accommodate expansion of the apparatus bay on the other side of the support and maintenance areas, although care must be taken to ensure that internal response times can be met after any expansion.

Sizing the apparatus bay is critical, and it should be designed to accommodate variable vehicle sizes. Typically, the entire room is sized based on the bay size for the largest vehicle in the fleet or the largest anticipated vehicle. Bays also include vehicle exhaust removal systems, compressed air, and power drop lines, and hot and cold water connections. Bay doors must also accommodate the largest vehicle and include a manual means to open, in case of power failure. Ideally, the site will accommodate drive-through bays.

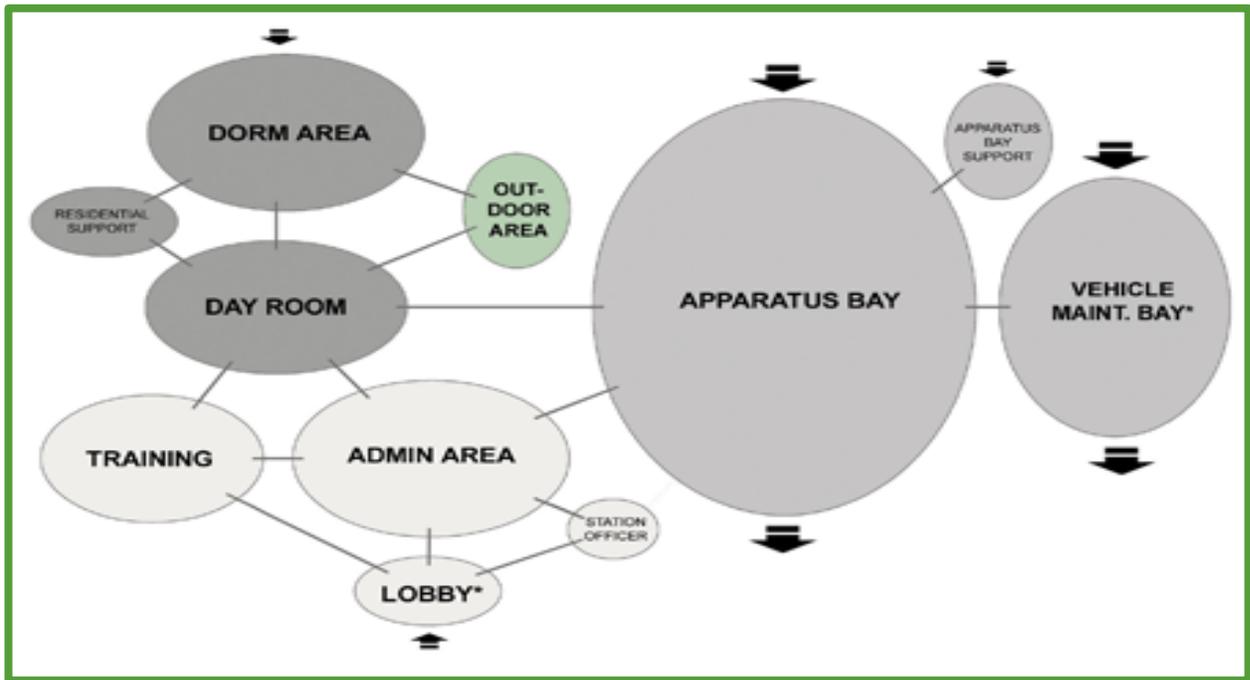


Figure 24 Functional Layout for a Fire Station

Sample functional layout for a fire station.

Developed by DMJM Design, Arlington, VA

APPARATUS BAY SUPPORT AND VEHICLE MAINTENANCE



Figure 25 Specialized Washing Machine for Disinfecting Protective Clothing

Apparatus bay support functions include cleaning and maintenance areas for the firefighter's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), protective clothing, fire extinguishers, and other equipment. It also includes storage areas for firefighting gear and equipment and secure storage for medical supplies. Some of these areas are specialized spaces for disinfecting protective equipment and for maintaining and recharging the SCBA in a clean environment. See also Light Industrial space type.

Agent storage is typically provided in a single-story structure separate from the fire station building. It should be located along the drive leading into the Apparatus Bay for ease of loading and unloading of firefighting agents. In some cases, it may be attached to the main structure.

A vehicle maintenance bay may also be included in a fire station. It is a dedicated maintenance area for the firefighting apparatus and includes a heavy-duty lift and all utility connections required for large vehicle maintenance.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND TRAINING AREAS

Administrative areas include standard offices and conference and training rooms. The area will also likely include additional specialized spaces such as the Chief's office with sleeping and shower facilities and computer training/testing facilities, for firefighter continuing education. Some stations may include a highly specialized dispatch room for receiving emergency calls from the public.

RESIDENTIAL AREAS

The day room accommodates kitchen, dining, and living/recreation functions. It is often separated into subspaces for those three functions, but an open design may also be effective to encourage interaction between the spaces. The dining space may also double as training or meeting space and might include provisions for audiovisual equipment.

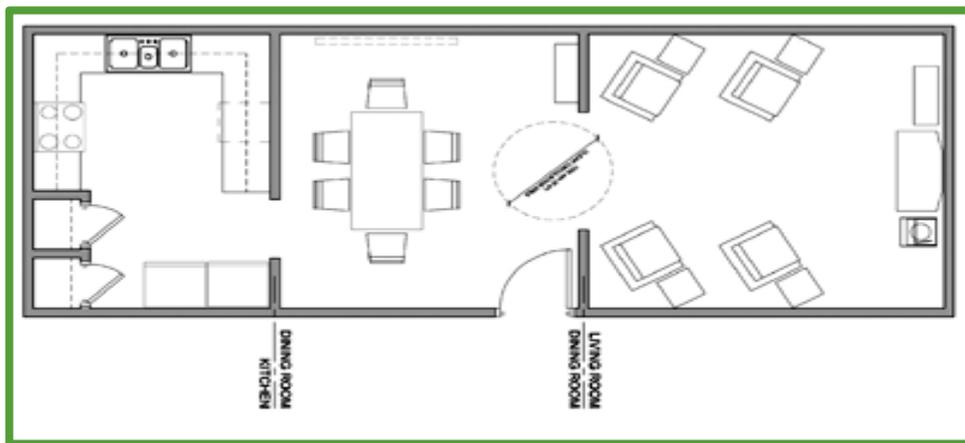


Figure 26 Residential Areas

Dorm room designs can vary widely from station to station and department to department. Each firefighter is provided with a place to sleep, work, and store personal items. Careful consideration should be given to the location and design of the area to ensure response times can be met. See Emerging Issues below for more information on dorm rooms.

Other residential areas include a laundry room, a physical fitness room, bathrooms and showers, and possible additional recreation spaces such as an outdoor patio and game room.

DESIGN CONSIDERATIONS

Key design goals and considerations for fire stations include the following:

A. PROMOTE OCCUPANT QUALITY OF LIFE

Fire stations are occupied 24 hours a day, seven days a week by personnel in continuous 24-hour shifts. Therefore, ensuring a comfortable living environment for the firefighters is paramount:

- Provide ample natural light
- Provide individual dorm rooms, if budget allows
- Provide ample recreation areas and separate noisy areas (such as a game room) from quieter areas (such as a television room)
- Avoid institutional and unnatural finishes, textures, and colors

B. MAINTAIN A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT

As above, due to the continuous occupation of the facility by firefighters and the presence of hazardous materials, special attention must be given to designing the facility to accommodate equipment and operational strategies to both protect the occupants and maintain a healthy environment. Consider the following critical elements:

- Provide a secure facility for both personnel and materials such as controlled medical supplies and hazardous fire suppression agents.
- Use non-toxic building materials and improved maintenance practices.
- Ensure good indoor air quality and abundant natural light in the residential and administrative areas.
- Ensure good ventilation of industrial areas such as the apparatus bay and prevent contamination of clean spaces such as the SCBA maintenance areas.
- Ensure that equipment, furnishings, and finishes do not contain asbestos or lead

C. ENSURE FLEXIBILITY

As firefighting technology evolves, fire stations need to evolve as well. Consider the following areas:

- Plan for potential expansion, both in the apparatus bay area and the residential areas.
- Ensure appropriate product/systems integration.
- Design for the changing nature of work.



Figure 27 Flexible Station Designs

Three sample dorm room layouts for a fire station
 Developed by DMJM Design, Arlington, VA



Figure 28 Central Station Ceiling



Figure 29 Central Station Ceiling



Figure 30 Central Fire Station Entrance

Recommendation 23: Given the age of both GFD facilities, MRI recommends that a building update, maintenance, and repair needs assessment be conducted at both GFD facilities with a goal of identifying facility modernization, to update the current facilities to today’s fire and life

safety codes, building codes, safety systems, technology, and separation of apparatus areas from administrative and personnel areas. The needs assessment should also provide estimates of costs to meet these recommendations. The facilities appear to be structurally sound and their service life would be extended with updates.

Recommendation 24: Modification of current facilities should include design components to accommodate any possible future need to provide emergency response staffing of 24 hrs. per day, seven days per week. This includes additional office space, dormitory space, kitchen space, and day room space to provide comfortable working conditions for crews.

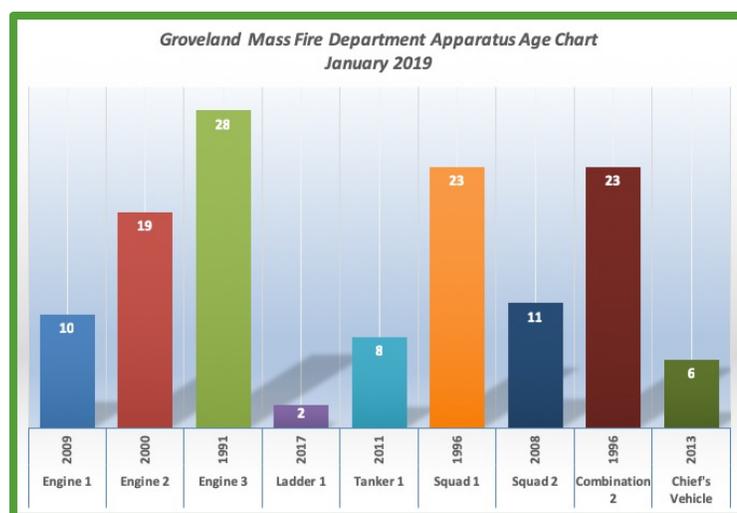
Recommendation 25: The existing apparatus bay floors should be configured to minimize the amount of storage on the bay floors in order to provide safe movement around apparatus.

Recommendation 26: The project team noted significant amounts of tools and equipment throughout the station on shelves and apparatus bays. Equipment that is obsolete, broken, or no longer used, should be properly disposed of, which will free additional storage space. Arranging storage in an orderly manner rather than haphazard will also maximize the use of available space in the various available storage areas.

VI. Apparatus and Equipment

MRI conducted a cursory review of the current fire apparatus fleet to determine the average age of vehicles. The average age of the GFD fleet is 14.44 years. The oldest fire apparatus is Engine 3 at 28 years old. Engine 3 has far exceeded its service life and should be removed from service. A detailed apparatus replacement plan should be developed and presented to both the Board of Selectmen and the Finance Board to gain concurrence. Consideration of replacing the two engines at the South Station with one modern engine and a squad would result in long term cost savings and not impact the coverage in that service area.

Figure 31 GFD Apparatus Age Chart



CURRENT APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT STATUS

An apparatus and equipment status table was created by GFD to detail the current status of fire apparatus and equipment. The chart provides a summary of apparatus and equipment with mileage and hours and recommendations of replacement dates. While this table provides a snapshot of the fire departments apparatus and equipment, a detailed comprehensive apparatus replacement program plan should be established and adopted by the GFD, Board of Selectmen, and the Finance Board. MRI was also advised that a grant for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) through a regional grant had been awarded. GFD should be commended for this effort as it will provide a significant cost savings for the Town of Groveland. GFD should continue to apply for Assistance to Firefighters Grants (AFG) for apparatus and equipment each year as the program becomes available.

**Groveland Fire Department
Apparatus and Equipment Table**

<u>Apparatus - Equipment</u>	<u>Delivery Year</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Mileage</u>	<u>Hours on Diesel Engine</u>	<u>Due to be Replaced</u>	<u>Repair Issues</u>
<u>Engine 1</u>	<u>2009</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>6743</u>	<u>1197</u>	<u>2029</u>	<u>Corrosion Emergency Lights</u>
<u>Engine 2</u>	<u>2000</u>	<u>19</u>	<u>13872</u>	<u>1654</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>Emergency Lights and leaking valve</u>
<u>Engine 3</u>	<u>1991</u>	<u>28</u>	<u>23795</u>	<u>2306</u>	<u>Spare</u>	<u>Open Cab</u>
<u>Ladder 1</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>22398</u>		<u>2042</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Tanker 1</u>	<u>2011</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>3846</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>2036</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Squad 1</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>15367</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>Over Due</u>	<u>Transmission Leak</u>
<u>Squad 2</u>	<u>2008</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>10571</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2028</u>	<u>Radiator</u>
<u>Combination 2</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>23</u>	<u>11963</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Fire Chief's Car</u>	<u>2013</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>22665</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2023</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Equipment</u>						
<u>SCBA</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>Repair as needed</u>
<u>Cascade System</u>	<u>1999</u>	<u>20</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Protective Clothing</u>	<u>2014</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2024</u>	<u>Rips and Tears - Repair when needed</u>
<u>Portable Radios</u>	<u>2017</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2027</u>	<u>None</u>
<u>Extrication Tools</u>	<u>2002</u>	<u>17</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>None</u>
	<u>Average Age</u>	<u>13.9</u>	<u>N/A</u>	<u>N/A</u>		

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLEMENTING CHANGE

Based upon this analysis of the organization and operations of the Groveland Fire Department, MRI concludes that there are four areas that should be a priority and need to be addressed. They are as follows:

1. Hiring of a Fire Chief
2. Staffing model change to meet changing emergency service demands
3. Facility Needs Assessment
4. Apparatus and Equipment Capital Replacement Plan

MRI recommends that the first priority for the Town of Groveland should be to appoint a fulltime Fire Chief. Once appointed the Fire Chief can coordinate and implement recommended changes in a proactive approach towards a consistent staffing model and prepare for the eventual need to expand upon coverage as time dictates.

MRI believes there is internal support from members of the Groveland Fire Department to move forward with staffing model changes. The key to these changes will be the inclusion of current GFD members to bring forth suggestions and ideas to make the change successful.

The project team's review of the current EMS Service Zone Plan for the delivery of emergency medical services is an acceptable level (with the exception of staffing challenges) of response to requests for medical aid.

MRI recommends and believes that it is **not** economically feasible to start up a transport ambulance service provided by the Groveland Fire Department. Given the current challenges in providing a consistent response, lengthy and poor return on investment, and no economies of scale that would benefit the Town of Groveland as a cost savings in EMS service delivery. The contractual agreement with Trinity Ambulance and first response of GFD members as a service delivery model is working.

Having a sense of common vision is important for any organization to ensure that the organization and its personnel are moving in unison toward a common goal(s). Having a common vision is not only about making sure that all parties are aware that they are in the same boat and rowing, but even more importantly, that they are rowing in the same direction. The impact of not sharing a common vision will be very noticeable in the quality and quantity of work performed, and also in the spirit and passion that the work of the organization has accomplished.

The department lacks any type of long-range or strategic plan that charts its projected path to the future. This encompasses areas such as the future direction of the department, facility needs assessment, apparatus and equipment capital funding and replacement plans. A strategic plan should be developed jointly in collaboration with stakeholders in the Town of Groveland in order

to establish goals and objectives that will assist the departments roadmap over the next three, five, and 10 years. The Groveland Fire Department has a number of positive attributes, most notably its Insurance Services Rating (ISO) of 4. This is commendable for the organization and shows the organization has the ability to build upon its successes. The Town of Groveland must now evaluate its current position and take a proactive approach to address the growing challenges to the Groveland Fire Department.

MRI also noted that dispatch services provided by the Groveland Police Department for the Groveland Fire Department has been strained as GFD personnel expressed concern that the dispatch protocols were not always being followed. MRI met with the Police Chief who expressed his willingness to continue meeting with the Interim Fire Chief to address the concerns of the GFD. Our review of the Dispatch protocols suggested that perhaps the protocols were outdated, and need revision, and clarity so that Dispatchers are aware of GFD operations and needs. Another note is that there typically may be only one dispatcher on duty during certain times. Should multiple emergencies occur at the same time this could impact the ability to get information out.

Recommendation 27: MRI recommends that the Interim Fire Chief and Police Chief continue to meet in order to rectify the specific issues and shortfalls that have created communications shortfalls between the dispatch and GFD. Both Chiefs are addressing issues as they arise. This effort should also include training for current dispatchers on fire operations as needed. MRI reviewed the current dispatch protocols and found that some of them lack clarity as to various response protocols. Frequent communications between the Police Chief and Fire Chief will assist in improvement in this area.

The final area MRI noted during our project was that during our online research we discovered that the Groveland Fire Department had at some point over the past few years changed its name to Groveland Fire Rescue. When we inquired if the name change was a vetted process and approved by the governing body, we were told it was not. The name change was done internally at GFD and the Board of Selectmen were not part of the process. This name change brings up two concerns. Our first concern is if there are state level requirements or notifications needed to formally change the name of the organization. One example is that EMS Service Zone Plan refers to the Groveland Fire Department. This change without “official” acceptance or concurrence from a governing body could affect the ability to obtain future grants, and raises legal and liability concerns. The second concern of MRI is the sense of autonomy displayed by the GFD in making those changes as a single organization within a larger governing body; the Town of Groveland. MRI recommends that the GFD rectify this issue by researching the requirements (if any) of a name change and to also seek approval/concurrence from the Groveland Board of Selectmen. The Groveland Fire Department Organization is not an autonomous organization. The GFD is governed by a Board of Selectmen who by law are appointed as the governing body in the Town of Groveland, Mass.

Despite these challenges, MRI clearly acknowledges and recognizes that when staffing positions are filled, and the organization is moving forward together as a team, the personnel of the Groveland Fire and EMS organization produce an effective, professional, and efficient response that serves the Town well.

Recommendation 28: MRI recommends that the Groveland Fire Department seek formal approval through a request to change the name of the GFD Organization and if approved should make any necessary changes with local, state, and federal agencies. The GFD Organization should seek to understand the role of the fire department as a department within the larger Town of Groveland and its governance structure.

To that end, MRI proposes the following objectives as a roadmap for initiating change and moving forward with delivery of exceptional emergency services to the community.

- 1. The Fire Chief should form a membership/management committee. This committee is designed to enhance communication, construct more positive relationships, and provide a mechanism for members to have an active voice within the organization and begin setting the direction for the future. This committee should consist of as many stakeholders as wish to participate. The Chief should hold two meetings per month for the first six months to a year and then meet monthly for the foreseeable future. Minutes of these meetings should be developed, shared with the department, the Board of Selectmen, and the Finance Director, as an attachment to the Chief's monthly report. If necessary, outside professional assistance is available to assist with facilitating this endeavor.**
- 2. The Fire Chief should immediately begin providing a weekly e-mail update to all members of the Groveland Fire Department. This regular update, designed to enhance communications, should be started by February 1, 2019.**
- 3. The Groveland Fire Department should review its mission statement, vision statement, and a list of core values that guide the department's overall mission and operations.**
- 4. The Groveland Fire Department's mission statement should be prominently displayed in the station, along with the vision statement and core values.**
- 5. A comprehensive review of existing training records should be conducted. The Fire Chief should meet individually with each member to review their training file and develop a prescriptive training plan.**

6. The Fire Chief should work with the department's membership to develop a plan to improve the day and overnight response system that will serve to bring improved consistency to the level of service provided to the community.
7. The Fire Chief should begin work, assisted by a committee of department stakeholders, to develop an up-to-date rules and regulations document. This document should then be submitted for concurrence by the Board of Selectmen. After approval, the document should then be distributed to, and signed for, by each member of the department. It could then provide an orientation overview and indoctrination to the department's behavioral expectations for new personnel.
8. The Fire Chief, assisted by a committee comprised of a cross-section of department stakeholders, should begin the revision and updating of the department's standard operations procedures or guidelines (SOP/SOG) manual, starting with mission-critical procedures such as, but not limited to, basic engine company and truck company operations, dwelling fires, commercial structures, rapid intervention team operations, personnel accountability, gas leaks, hazardous materials incidents, ice rescue, vehicle extrication operations, thermal imaging camera use, and automatic external defibrillator use. The committee should be given whatever support is necessary to complete at least a basic manual update within one year.
9. Based upon the foundation that currently exists and building upon the results of the recommendations contained in this letter, the Town of Groveland and the Groveland Fire Department should develop a formal process for implementing a long-term vision for the department and developing a strategic plan.
10. Groveland should enter into discussions with the municipal administrations, governing bodies, and fire department leadership of its adjacent communities, for the purposes of identifying possible future opportunities for shared services and explore the feasibility of a more regional approach to fire protection and EMS delivery systems.
11. This basic service study conducted by MRI is an abridged version of a comprehensive organizational study typically conducted as part of a full study package. Due to the limited nature of this short study, there were elements of the Groveland Fire Department that were unable to be fully evaluated or expanded upon. MRI recommends consideration of an expanded study in the future when engaging in strategic planning.
12. MRI recognizes and is aware that some of the identified challenges identified in this management letter are being addressed (or resolved). This management letter serves

as a document that can be used in the future to provide a record of past history therefore those areas are identified.

In conclusion, local governments missions performed by its Fire Department are some of the most basic and fundamental functions of government; that is to ensure the safety and protection of its residents and visitors. MRI is confident that the members of the Groveland Fire Department strive to meet that function. The real issue facing the Groveland Fire Department, and the Town of Groveland, as it is for every community, is to determine an acceptable level of risk and then define an appropriate level of service for the community.

There is no “right” amount of fire protection or EMS delivery. It is a constantly changing level based upon the expressed needs of the community. Determining the appropriate level of service also involves deciding upon the municipalities’ fiscal ability, and willingness, to pay for the desired level of service. These are decisions that the citizens of the Town and the Board of Selectmen will ultimately need to make.

MRI would like to take this opportunity to express its gratitude for the cooperation received through all levels of the Town of Groveland.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian P. Duggan
Director of Fire Services

Shawn P. Murray,
Senior Consultant

Consolidated List of Recommendations

Recommendation 1: MRI recommends that the Board of Selectmen conduct an immediate search for a Fulltime Fire Chief, for the Groveland Fire Department as a first priority and step, towards improving the current challenges faced by the GFD, with a goal of having the Fire Chief appointed by March 1, 2019. The other alternative to this recommendation would be to hire a Fire Chief for 32 hours per week to start and evaluate the benefits of converting the position to fulltime status after one year.

Recommendation 2: MRI recommends that the Board of Selectmen establish a part-time, 20 hour per week Administrative Assistant position for the Fire Department. The position would report directly to the Fire Chief. A job description detailing the position responsibilities should be developed.

Recommendation 3: MRI recommends that an independent third party conduct the Fire Chief search and develop a job description with the position and salary requirements in conjunction with the Board of Selectmen and GFD input. The search process should include an assessment center component in order to provide the Board of Selectmen with the most qualified candidate for the position, specific to the needs of the Town of Groveland. An emphasis on experience, working in a combination fire department, and a commitment to maintaining an active on-call model shall be a requirement for consideration for the position.

Recommendation 4: MRI recommends the Board of Selectmen and Fire Department leadership develops strong collaboration and communication initiatives in order to gain a stronger understanding of the Fire Departments mission, current needs, and future strategic planning efforts. In turn, at a minimum, the Fire Department leaderships should meet often throughout the year with the Board of Selectmen (at a minimum quarterly), to discuss department issues, budget planning for the upcoming fiscal year, and strategic and capital improvement planning.

Recommendation 5: MRI recommends that the Fire Department leadership provide a weekly, internal summary report of Fire Department activities, to GFD members and to the Finance/HR Director, to be forwarded to the Board of Selectmen for their review. A further detailed monthly report should be completed detailing emergency response statistics, equipment and apparatus service status, budget status, training conducted, fire prevention inspection and education activities.

Recommendation 6: *The use of volunteer and currently paid-on-call firefighter/EMTs over the decades has been an effective model for meeting the emergency response needs of the Groveland community. The increasing changes occurring in emergency medical calls and unavailability of first responders no longer provides the needed services to the community. Currently and in the future the model that will provide a more active and assured response to emergencies is to hire career or per-diem Firefighter/EMTs, to provide response during peak times during the day and continue to actively utilize the current on-call personnel to supplement and respond to emergencies when available.*

Recommendation 7: *The Town of Groveland and the Groveland Fire Department should apply for a federal SAFER grant for fulltime positions, paid on-call members, and for paid on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel currently in the Fire Department.*

Recommendation 8: *The Town of Groveland should convene a focus group, to determine what concepts and recruitment and retention strategies are feasible and most attractive to potential candidates. The group should also bring forth recommendations on incentives and strategies to recommend to the Board of Selectmen for the Groveland Fire Department.*

Recommendation 9: *The Groveland Fire Department should set a realistic goal of recruiting over the next three years, while simultaneously setting a goal of maintaining the overall call member force up to 35 active personnel. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the EMT-basic level.*

Recommendation 10: *The Groveland Fire Department should make it a priority to develop an active on-call recruitment team led by a company officer. At a minimum, this program should consist of:*

- *Developing a recruitment brochure and mailing it to all residents*
- *Holding periodic open houses at the fire station*
- *Performing public outreach through the local media*
- *Contacting community and service groups*
- *Developing an eye-catching banner on the Town's and Fire Department's websites and conducting radio and media advertisements*
- *Placing signs recruiting call/volunteer personnel at the main entrances to town*
- *Placing a temporary signboard at various locations within the community*
- *Placing signs for call/recruiting volunteers in local businesses, particularly high-volume locations*
- *Implementing or enhancing a fire explorer program*

Recommendation 11: *Upon review of the current EMS service delivery model, MRI recommends that the Town of Groveland and GFD continue with the current EMS service delivery model with GFD as first responders and BLS - ALS emergency medical care with transport provided by Trinity Ambulance. During the term of the current Ambulance Service Agreement, the Town of Groveland and GFD should open dialogue with area emergency services to discuss the potential for sharing of services in fire and EMS delivery. If successful a comprehensive shared services plan and agreement should be implemented.*

Recommendation 12: *MRI reviewed a draft copy of a job description for EMS Coordinator. MRI recommends that the EMS Coordinator Position be formally adopted, and the draft copy of the position description be transformed into the position description. The EMS Coordinator is a necessary role within the GFD, due to the stringent requirements detailed in the EMS Service*

Zone Plan, licensing, training, quality control, call review, and to coordinate the overall first responder program.

Recommendation 13: MRI recommends a series of GFD group meetings to be held using the nominal group process and an outside facilitator to identify specific issues and problems within the organization, develop solutions, and to enhance the ability of decision making within the organization. The process should be open to all members and is typically held at a convenient time to encourage as much organizational participation as possible. MRI can provide guidance on the development of this process.

Recommendation 14: MRI recommends that all officer positions, from lieutenant to fire chief, should be filled based upon the person's firefighting/emergency services training, certifications, and experience, commensurate with the position being sought, along with successful completion of a formal, rank appropriate assessment process, and if necessary, a basic practical skills evaluation.

Recommendation 15: MRI recommends the Groveland Fire Department should ensure that all department members are trained/certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated, it is the project team's recommendation that all officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level.

Recommendation 16: The Groveland Fire Department should strongly encourage its call officers, to obtain a certain level of fire officer certification as a job requirement, such as Fire Officer I for Lieutenant, Fire Officer II for Captain, Fire Officer III for Assistant Fire chief, and Fire Officer Level IV for Fire Chief.

Recommendation 17: The Groveland Fire Department should require that all officers be certified as Incident Safety Officers. Additional personnel who may be interested should be encouraged to take this training and obtain this important firefighter safety certification.

Recommendation 18: As part of the succession planning process, the Fire Chief should work to implement a career development program to ensure that all officers can perform their superior's duties, as well as identify the core future leaders of the department.

Recommendation 19: In addition to their normal emergency scene operational duties and station management responsibilities, all officers should have one or more areas of responsibility to assist the Fire Chief with the department's overall management. Examples include areas such as equipment maintenance, protective clothing, annual pump testing, hose testing, breathing apparatus, and other areas. These duties and responsibilities should be reflected in rank and position specific job descriptions.

Recommendation 20: The Fire Chief or designated representative should continue to utilize social media and to involve other members of the department in providing updated news, activities, and fire prevention tips and information to enhance the community's knowledge about the Groveland Fire Department.

Recommendation 21: The Groveland Fire Department should seek assistance from the Massachusetts Call and Volunteer Firefighters Association (MCVFA) and Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts (FCAM) relative to enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Groveland.

Recommendation 22: The Fire Chief should obtain membership and seek assistance from the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the Volunteer Combination Officers Section (VCOS) within the IAFC to gain further information and education on best practices in leading a call firefighter organization such as the Groveland Fire Department, as well as enhancing recruitment and retention efforts in Groveland. Additionally, the Fire Chief should attend the annual VCOS symposium sponsored by the IAFC organization, in order to be able to network and gain unique ideas and perspectives from other chief officers related to combination fire departments. This is one of the largest symposiums which specifically addresses call and combination fire organizational needs.

Recommendation 23: Given the age of both GFD facilities, MRI recommends that a building update, maintenance, and repair needs assessment be conducted at both GFD facilities with a goal of identifying facility modernization, to update the current facilities to today's fire and life safety codes, building codes, safety systems, technology, and separation of apparatus areas from administrative and personnel areas. The needs assessment should also provide estimates of costs to meet these recommendations. The facilities appear to be structurally sound and their service life would be extended with updates.

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Objectives and Roadmap:

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8. The Fire Chief, assisted by a committee comprised of a cross-section of department stakeholders, should begin the revision and updating of the department's standard operations procedures or guidelines (SOP/SOG) manual, starting with mission-critical procedures such as, but not limited to, basic engine company and truck company operations, dwelling fires, commercial structures, rapid intervention team operations, personnel accountability, gas leaks, hazardous materials incidents, ice rescue, vehicle extrication operations, thermal imaging camera use, and automatic external defibrillator use. The committee should be given whatever support is necessary to complete at least a basic manual update within one year.
9. Based upon the foundation that currently exists and building upon the results of the recommendations contained in this letter, the Town of Groveland and the Groveland Fire Department should develop a formal process for implementing a long-term vision for the department and developing a strategic plan.
10. Groveland should enter into discussions with the municipal administrations, governing bodies, and fire department leadership of its adjacent communities, for the purposes of identifying possible future opportunities for shared services and explore the feasibility of a more regional approach to fire protection and EMS delivery systems.
11. This basic service study conducted by MRI is an abridged version of a comprehensive organizational study typically conducted as part of a full study package. Due to the limited nature of this short study, there were elements of the Groveland Fire Department that were unable to be fully evaluated or expanded upon. MRI recommends consideration of an expanded study in the future when engaging in strategic planning.
12. MRI recognizes and is aware that some of the identified challenges identified in this management letter are being addressed (or resolved). This management letter serves

as a document that can be used in the future to provide a record of past history therefore those areas are identified.

