

Berwick Fire Department



10 School Street
Berwick, Maine 03901

Phone: 207.698.1174
Fax: 207.698.4592
Chief@BerwickFire.org

Annual Town Report 2012

The Berwick Fire Department consists of 29 dedicated on-call members with varying levels of training. We also have four fulltime members that make reliable response to daytime calls possible while the majority of our on call firefighters are out of town. During 2012 we responded to six hundred and twenty one calls for service including both emergency and non-emergency incidents.

What to expect when you call 9-1-1:

If you ever find yourself in the unfortunate situation of needing our services for an emergency please dial 911. Some members of the community still occasionally call directly to the station to report an emergency. This is discouraged due to the station not being staffed around the clock. Even when there are personnel on duty they may not be available to answer the phone. You can dial our station number 698-1174 between 08:30am and 04:30pm M-F for non-emergency services such as inspections, fire prevention classes, or general questions.

When you dial 911 the phone will be answered by one of several possible Public Safety Answering Points (PSAP). They will ask for some basic information about the emergency and will transfer your call to the appropriate dispatch center. Currently South Berwick Dispatch is our dispatch center. Depending on the PSAP that answers, you may be transferred more than once before you get there. This process generally takes two to three minutes.

Once the dispatch center has the required information, they will dispatch the appropriate agencies including the fire department, police, and/or ambulance. The response time of the fire department varies somewhat depending on the time of day. Weekdays while fulltime staff are on duty, a fire truck will arrive around six minutes from being dispatched on an average emergency incident. During week nights and weekends, a fire truck will arrive around thirteen minutes from being dispatched on an average emergency incident. This difference in response times is the result of on-call personnel having to respond to the station before the fire truck can respond to the call.

When we arrive on scene, we will do our very best to deal with whatever emergency situation we are faced with. Sometimes, due to a lack of enough available Berwick Firefighters or the incident being too large for our department to handle alone, we call for help from other area fire departments. This is called mutual-aid and is a service that we return when they require help from us.

Unfortunately, we cannot replace or undo what is already lost when we get called. Our job is to stop it from getting worse. For this reason, the earlier we arrive, the better chance we have for saving life and property. With average response times between eight and sixteen minutes from the time you place the call, it is important to dial 911 as soon as possible when a fire or other emergency occurs.

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2012 calls for service statistics:

During 2012 the Berwick Fire Department responded to Fifty Two fires. This includes any fire, not just buildings. Fifteen of these calls were mutual aid to other communities.

We responded to three hundred and thirteen emergency calls that were not fire related. Such as: motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials spills, carbon monoxide incidents, Medical Emergencies, etc.

One hundred and eighty eight of those emergency calls were medical emergencies. We are able to provide Emergency Medical Technicians in just under six minutes on average; that's about five and a half minutes before the ambulance. Emergency medical training is integral to the fire service, even for "traditional" fire and other emergency calls. As a result of having the training and equipment anyway, we are able to provide a potentially lifesaving medical response at a minimal cost.

We also responded to two hundred and six non-emergency calls including false alarms, unpermitted burns, flooded basements, etc. thirty of these calls were mutual aid to other communities.

In addition to the above noted calls for service, we also handled fifty fire prevention calls for service. These include fire code violations, wood stove inspections, fire prevention education at the schools and preschools, and other similar activities.

To give you an idea of how calls break down throughout the week, three hundred and ten of them, including all of the fire prevention calls, were week days while fulltime staff are on duty. Two hundred were on week nights, and one hundred and eleven were on weekends. Both of which are covered completely on an on-call basis.

Fire prevention activities:

During the month of May, Department staff visited the Hussey School with the annual smoke trailer education program. More than five hundred children participated in a simulation giving the experience of locating a safe escape route in a smoke-filled environment. In October, we presented students and school staff with a fire prevention program entitled "Protecting your family from Fire" which was a classroom delivery program. We also visited many of the in town preschool and daycare facilities providing general fire safety education.

Station and equipment update:

Our department over the last several years has been very successful with obtaining federal grant funding that has saved the taxpayers of Berwick several hundred thousand dollars on the replacement of worn out and outdated equipment. In 2012 we took delivery of a new forest fire fighting unit valued at approximately \$125,000. Fortunately, the Town only paid a bit over \$6,000 with the Federal grant paying the

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rest. This money does not need to be paid back. This new truck has replaced our old forestry unit which was a military surplus HMMWV "Humvee" from the mid 1980's that was nearing the end of its useful service life.

Throughout 2012 the fire station has been going through some major repairs. In August, an "emergency" repair that was designed to last for five years was completed. This involved installing many new columns on the second floor as well as in the truck bays to support new framing under the roof. This is intended to help with an issue of failing truss assemblies. Although the new columns take up more space in an already crowded building, the roof is now structurally stable.

Another building project that has been going on in 2012 and is carrying over into 2013 is the cleaning and re-sealing of the masonry exterior of the building. On completion, this project should help deal with the large amount of water infiltration through the walls. It should also help to control the ongoing mold issue within the station.

We hope to deal with some of the other current building issues in the upcoming year such as some of the electrical issues within the building as well as build back of one of the walls in the building that had to be removed due to previous mold issues.

Message from the Chief:

I encourage all residents to stop by the station for a tour, to look at the trucks, talk about the services we provide, or ask any questions you have. There is someone on duty from 08:30am to 04:30pm Monday - Friday or 09:30am to 10:30am Saturday and Sunday. You can also visit us on the web at ww.BerwickMaine.org and click on the fire department section or visit us on Facebook at www.Facebook.com/BerwickFireDepartment.

As always, I would like to thank our dedicated staff who put in over 6,600 man hours for calls and training alone during 2012. I would also especially like to thank our families who support us even though we are constantly being called away, usually at the most inopportune times.

I would also like to thank the citizens of Berwick. Without your continued support and funding to maintain our staffing and equipment, we would not be able to provide the services that you expect and deserve.

Respectfully,

Dennis Plante, Chief
Berwick Fire Department