



Staffing

DIXON FIRE DEPARTMENT

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CITY OF DIXON ILLINOIS | FIRE DEPARTMENT

Background

Since the 1960's the Dixon Fire Department has maintained a consistent career staffing level of no more than 17 personnel.

Through the years, this quantity of first responders has provided adequate coverage for the citizens of Dixon. For the bulk of these years we have seen a steady increase of requests for service from our community. Increased call volume coupled with needed cost saving cuts in call back procedures have prompted a review of staffing needs to maintain proper protection for the lives and properties within the City of Dixon.

As an organization, we have developed a culture that is reflected within our vision statement: ***“Dixon Fire Department will continue as a fiscally strong organization that delivers a superior level of traditional and innovative emergency and non-emergency services. The Department will maximize commonly accepted service methodologies and go beyond traditionally accepted practices to better serve our residents. This Department exists solely to improve the quality of life, health, and safety of our community.”***

Because of this culture and shared vision, we are constantly monitoring our response capabilities and our ability to provide the best possible service at the smallest cost. Recent assessment of our responses and responding staff revealed some concerning trends that warrant a closer look at our department staffing levels.

A fire department was once just a department that responded to extinguish fires. To place the modern fire department into that “fire only” box is a gross misrepresentation of the services we provide as a whole. Some examples include: Advanced Life Support

EMS, vehicle extrication, hazardous material responses, technical rescue response, water rescue and fire suppression. The term emergency services are a much better descriptor of what we provide for our community.

At the center of these services is the first responder. Trained to mitigate emergency incidents regardless of nature, they depend greatly on a common-sense approach to problem solving and physical prowess. Gone are the days of sitting around waiting for the next alarm. The days are spent completing maintenance on the apparatus and facilities, training for specific scenarios, physical fitness, and of course responding to a much higher volume of calls for service.

To put it into perspective, in 1968, the Dixon Fire Department responded to 243 calls for service while staffed with 17 personnel. Fifty-three years later in 2021, Dixon Fire Department remains staffed with 17 personnel and responded to 2392 calls for service. This number isn't even representative of all calls received, as we were forced to rely on mutual-aid departments to cover an average of 5 additional calls per month (60 calls for the year).

Another component that's important to consider is the percentage of overlapping calls. These are responses that are occurring at the same time. Industry standards recommend additional staffing when the percentage of overlapping calls becomes 15-20%. In 2021, we had 14.3% of our calls overlapping and even that percentage proved problematic in several instances.

Staffing Trends

“Not everything that counts can be measured, and not everything that is measured counts.” – William Bruce Cameron

Traditionally, the Dixon Fire Department has relied on a robust callback system to recall off-duty personnel to the station. They have been recalled to assist at large incidents or help guarantee a crew is available in the event another emergency occurs while the on-duty crew is engaged. This system was used to maintain a minimum of 3 personnel for any additional calls. As the response demands increased this system of recall became quite expensive. Coupled with the reality that it was becoming also quite exhausting on the organization’s members, changes were made. In 2017, we entered into an agreement with Dixon Rural FPD that minimized the callback on routine calls and allowed us to maintain less than 3 at the station. The cost savings were apparent and members weren’t spending their first day off duty going back and forth between home and the fire station.

This review of past callback procedures is significant because it was employed to ensure we had personnel responding to incidents that required an engine company. Types of calls that could require an engine company include: structure fires, vehicle fires, gas leaks, vehicle accidents, fire alarms, etc. NFPA 1710, *The Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*, states that an initial responding engine company should be composed of 4 responders for a community of our demographics. This

includes a company officer, driver/engineer and two firefighters.

To further support this engine staffing model, OSHA policy 29 CFR 1910.134(g)(4)(i) requires that firefighters actively engaged in interior firefighting operations must work in the buddy system. This means that the crew working in the interior must be a team of two and there will be two crew members on the exterior available for rescue of that interior crew should the need arise. The only allowance to ignore this policy is in the case of an imminent civilian rescue.

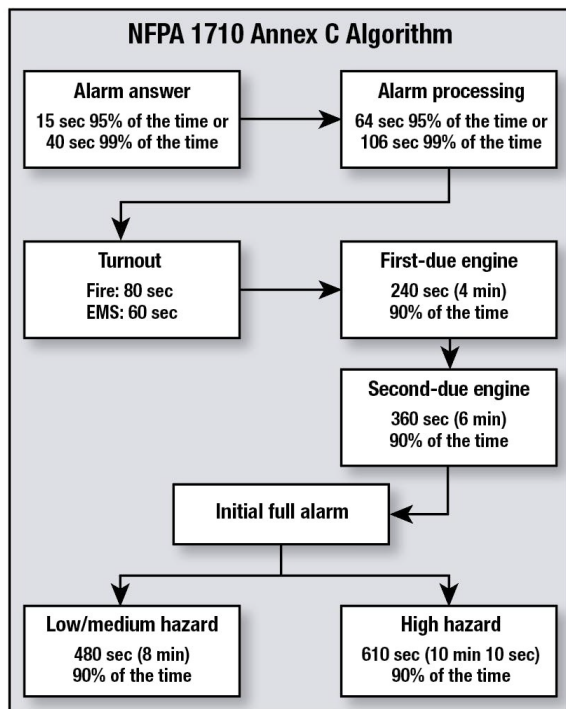
While NFPA 1710 is a standard and not law, it will be used as a basis for any litigations brought against the department and/or the City. Lack of adherence to OSHA is in fact not following the law. If we were found to be ignoring this policy, it could potentially result in significant fines.

Making an aggressive interior attack on a structure fire with adequate personnel allows for the safety of any trapped civilians and it preserves more property. People’s lives are important to all of us and sustained property and sales taxes are critical to the success of the City.

This NFPA standard and OSHA policy are relevant to the Dixon Fire Department after reviewing responses to structure fires within our service area over the last five years. The staffing levels for 25% of those initial engine responses were under the recommended four responders. Several of those instances, we were responding with only two personnel in the first arriving engine. This is only part of the big picture unfortunately. Responses to automatic fire alarms, natural gas leaks, and automobile accidents statistically are benign in comparison to structure fires but have a significant potential to be catastrophic. They

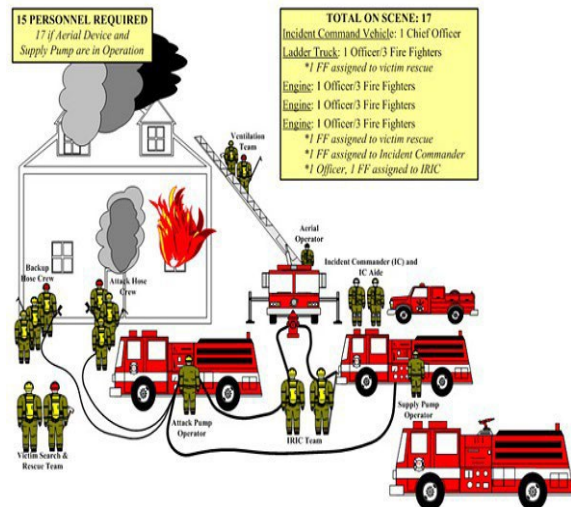
also, should require a fully staffed engine company. Increasingly, they are not. Over that same five-year period, responses to fire alarms were short staffed 20% of the time and responses to gas leaks were short 36% of the time. Any automatic fire alarm call could be an actual fire on any given day and any gas leak response has the potential for a devastating explosion.

NFPA 1710 outlines recommended structure fire responses in much greater depth than just the quantity of personnel on a responding engine. It offers a timeline of the response and the number of responders that should arrive in an acceptable amount of time for what would be considered a low/moderate hazard fire. This hazard classification would be a fire in a 2-story, 2,000 square foot residential structure. The following algorithm displays the response time recommendations:



A reminder that the first-due and second-due engine companies should both be staffed with

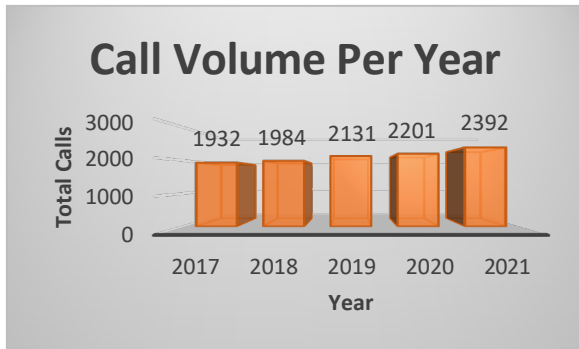
four personnel. The initial full alarm assignment for the low/medium hazard is fifteen personnel (seventeen if an aerial device is put into service).



As mentioned earlier, our first arriving engine company has been short staffed 25% of the structure fire responses over the last five years. Furthermore, the second arriving engine (automatic aid from Dixon Rural Fire Protection District) would likely never be staffed with more than 3 duty personnel. Next arriving personnel would be Chief level responders and would take over command of the response. Additional arriving responders would come from off-duty personnel being recalled. That responding crew, again over the last five years, has met the recommended standard for number of responders and response time at 9% of the structure fires. In real numbers, it has been only 3 times in 5 years. A second responding apparatus from Dixon Rural, staffed with off-duty personnel or paid-on-call, has been either short-staffed or simply unable to respond 47% of the time to our fires in the same five-year span.

These percentages as a whole, from a decision-maker position, should be very concerning. The real drop in staff availability

has been witnessed over the last three to four years. This unfortunately coincides with significant increase in call volume and overlapping calls.



This data shown is specific to the Dixon Fire Department. It does not include overlapping calls with our automatic-aid department, Dixon Rural. Based on our intergovernmental agreement, we respond with them and they respond with us on a variety of call types. Generally, these call types include fires, vehicle accidents, and technical rescue calls. We also cover each other's calls if we are having several at the same time. They can easily be unavailable because of being on their own emergency, and unable to cover our needs.

Supporting Evidence

“One accurate measurement is worth a thousand expert opinions.” – Admiral Grace Murray Hopper

The demands and service expectations on the emergency services have been increasing over the years. We have to be able to provide the expected service to the best of our ability each and every response. That is what we expect of ourselves and what our community expects from us. The information provided up to this point is pertinent because we are seeing an increasing frequency of responses where we are not properly staffed for the type of emergency. A career fire department should not be relying on bystanders to help them pull hose from a fire truck because we are short on personnel. The root cause of our staffing shortcomings is the increased call volume and percentage of overlapping calls associated with the volume. Our staffing model was designed to respond to fires; and not 2,000 EMS calls plus fire related and technical rescue calls.

The NFPA 1710 standard is outlined above and true quantitative data exists to support the importance of having fully staffed engines responding in an appropriate time frame. In 2010, NIST (National Institute of Standards and Technology) released a groundbreaking study titled: *Report on Residential Fireground Field Experiments*. For this study, NIST researchers and members of the fire service conducted over 60 fire experiments to learn about the effects of crew size, arrival times of the crews and the staggering of crew's arrivals. The experiments utilized varying crew sizes completing 22 necessary fireground tasks on a two-story, 2000 square foot test facility.

22 Fireground Activities	
Stop @ hydrant, Wrap Hose	Advance Back Up Line Stairwell
Position Engine 1	Conduct Primary Search
Conduct Size-up	Ground Ladders Placed
Engage Pump	Horizontal Ventilation
Position Attack Line	Horizontal Ventilation (2 nd Story)
Establish 2 In/2 Out	Control Utilities (Int.)
Supply Attack Engine	Control Utilities (Ext.)
Establish RIT	Conduct Secondary Search
Gain/Force Entry	Check for Fire Extension (Walls)
Advance Attack Line	Check for Fire Extension (Ceiling)
Advance Back Up Line-Front Door	Mechanical Ventilation

Crews of two, three, four, and five firefighters were timed as they performed the above shown firefighting tasks to actually extinguish a live fire. They also evaluated different arrival times and its effect on fire development.

This study was really the first look at the effects of crew size and arrival times on how quickly fireground and rescue tasks are accomplished. While there may have been previous drills/tests, none have been quantitative and accomplished under stringent controlled testing methods. What these tests demonstrated is the importance of crew size on reducing life safety issues and preserving property. They demonstrated that the four-person crews were able to complete the 22 essential firefighting and rescue tasks 30% faster than two-person crew and 25% faster than the three-person crew. The speed to which these tasks are completed is in direct correlation with the success of a rescue or the sustainability of conditions that promote survival for occupants and the overall condition of the structure. Minimal fire and smoke exposure to the structure means much less thermal

damage and much less applied water damage. In the big picture, less time spent burning means much less loss of tangible and intangible values. Not to mention the economic impact of employees not working or even sales tax revenue from a commercial building.

This study demonstrates the true impact on fireground operations based on responding crew size and response time to the very structure that is most fatal each year to civilians.

In 2017, a Public Protection Classification Summary Report for Dixon Fire Department was completed by the Insurance Services Office, Inc. (ISO). ISO is an advisory organization that provides specific information to businesses. This information is used for developing insurance rates based on the projection of future losses. One of the pieces of information provided by ISO is a rating of the local fire department's ability to respond to fires. Fire departments are assigned a class 1 through class 8 rating based on their scores in a number of focus areas. Also included in the overall score is the scores from a dispatch center and available water supply. These scores can potentially help lower businesses insurance rates due to the ability of the responding fire department.

At the time of grading in 2017, we were already scored a 4 on that 1-8 classification scale. After the review was conducted we actually were graded a class 3. This is good as the lower the class number the better service a department should be able to provide. There was one defined scoring area we were noticeably lacking in, however. The area was item 571 – *Credit for Company Personnel*. This item evaluates the available

personnel for response to structure fires. It is actually the highest points item at 15 available points. Because of our lack of consistent staffing, we only scored 6.07 points out of the available 15. This definitely was a detriment to us not making an even lower score and demonstrates a need to work on more consistent staffing levels.

The National Fire Protection Association regularly conducts research on the demographics of fire departments within the United States. This research is released in the form of a report titled: *US Fire Department Profile*. For comparison, one of the statistics that they track is number of firefighters per a population of 1,000 community members. In the report released in 2020, the range of operational firefighters per 1,000 citizens for mostly career and career departments is 1.54 - 1.81. At our current staffing level, Dixon has 1.01 firefighters per 1,000 people. Even with adding an additional career firefighter on each shift, we are still well under the 1.54 low end of the range at 1.21. Keep in mind these numbers are for available firefighters for firefighting, not firefighting and EMS.

Looking into the Future

“The art of life is a constant readjustment to our surroundings.” – Kakuzo Okakura

Current staffing numbers for the Dixon Fire Department are concerning when we look at trends and industry specific data. Going forward, the level of service expected by our community will simply not be available with 15 operational staff. So, what does that look like? That looks like an insufficient number of responders for incidents, longer response times, an increased risk for injury of our staff and an elevated threat of negligence claims.

There are several recognized factors for determining whether a department needs to develop a plan to increase staffing or at least do more than just talk about available options. **Community growth** is the number one factor. While our population has decreased over recent years, the size of our community footprint has expanded and will continue to do so. More businesses and more response area mean more emergencies. The decrease in Dixon’s population is not abnormal in this area of the state and one would surmise that would indicate less demand on services. Unfortunately, what typically accompanies a decreased population is an **aging population**. While we have less citizens to protect, the citizens here are utilizing our services more.

Reduced staffing on apparatus is a serious factor with potentially fatal consequences.

As reviewed earlier, we are seeing a substantial increase in short staffed apparatus responding to serious incidents. These instances will not be decreasing as our call volume continues to increase.

Lastly, looking at a **department’s reliance on mutual-aid for coverage** of calls. In 2021, the Dixon Fire Department relied on mutual-aid to be the sole responder to an emergency within its response area over 60 times. While some aid is simply unavoidable, such as three ambulance calls at once when we only have two ambulances, many were due to insufficient personnel resources. To further express concern, the organizations that we rely on for mutual aid coverage are all also dealing with first responder shortages.

There are genuine concerns going forward that we will not be able to adequately

respond to a consequential emergency due to lack of personnel resources. What is essential, is to develop a plan to promptly address the problem and not push it down the road.

Waiting to act until something devastating happens is not a good option and not what's best for our community.

The struggle that we experience in developing a staffing plan for Dixon Fire Department is that there is no standardized deployment or staffing formula applied across the fire service. Every department has unique qualities specific to their service area that make an industry standard approach very difficult. The intent of this report is to provide unbiased information on potential staffing options for our fire department and share the worries we are now experiencing.

Currently, the Dixon Fire Department staffs with three shifts of five sworn career members. Every career member is required to be paramedic licensed and have attended a fire academy. Each member works 24 hours on and 48 hours off. While we have five members per shift, we are generally staffed with four members due to vacations, Kelly days, and training opportunities. Four members working is our minimum number that must be on shift each day. In the event the crew on duty is covering multiple calls or on a response that leaves our station empty, we utilize a call back of off-duty personnel. Call back of off-duty staff is also used on large emergencies such as structure fires, water rescues, vehicle accidents, etc. because many resources are required at these incidents. For many years we employed a four-tier call back system. This included a call person, medical person, signal 2 and signal 3. This system was used to always maintain three personnel at the station for

any additional responses. A signal 2 was just the personnel that got off shift and a signal 3 was everyone being called back. For as long as this system was in place, no personnel were compensated for being on call. It was just an accepted part of your employment. Obviously, when members were recalled they received overtime for their time at the station. In the summer of 2017, we entered into an agreement with Dixon Rural FPD to eliminate some of the call back. This agreement allowed us to stop using the call person and medical person. This resulted in overtime relief for the City and decreased the demand on our off-duty staff. If we were still using this four-tier system now, off duty members covering the call person responsibility would be spending the bulk of their first day off work at the station.

From 2017 until earlier this year, we have made use of the signal 2 and signal 3 tiers. That's simply a recall of either the off-going shift or a recall of everyone. The issue with a dependency on calling back off duty personnel is that it is no longer reliable. We may get five people or we may get no people. In fact, earlier this year we discontinued the signal 2 tier and only do a full recall of off duty personnel. The goal is to at least get four staff that can respond in an engine if needed. Unfortunately, it doesn't happen the majority of the time.

This difficulty of recalling staff is not unique to Dixon Fire Department and is becoming a problem for most departments that have relied on it; no different than volunteer departments struggling with recruitment and retention of members. Issues like two- earner households, increasing family commitments and lack of childcare options are just a few reasons why it's becoming

more difficult to get people in from off duty. Conjointly, there are certainly generational differences at play. Many employees today simply value time off more than money. The most challenging part of this problem is that now is when we really need the recalled personnel. Our increased call volume has made the possibility that recalled personnel will be utilized for additional responses more likely.

The future of adequately staffing the Dixon Fire Department to meet the expectations of our community unquestionably presents some challenges. Predominantly those challenges are fiscal in nature. Beyond securing funding, there is a need to develop a staffing plan that considers the community needs and addresses the hardships of relying on call back of off-duty personnel and an ever-increasing demand on our services.

Options

“If you fail to plan, you are planning to fail.” – Benjamin Franklin

The fire service employs many different staffing models to ensure their citizens are getting the best service. This is a brief overview of some potential options for enhancing our staffing:

1. Volunteer firefighters provide service for the bulk of the United States. In the area of 85% of all fire departments in America are all or some volunteer. Dixon Fire Department has maintained a small cadre of “volunteer” firefighters through the years.

By ordinance we are actually allowed up to 24 volunteers. Our group is not actually volunteering because they are compensated for each call. They are actually paid-on-calls or POC’s. Traditionally, these POC’s have not pursued certifications and/or

licenses that would allow them to complete fireground or response tasks similar to that as a sworn firefighter. These may include tasks such as interior firefighting, extrication and EMS responses. To allow them to complete certain tasks without certifications and training opens the department up for significant liability issues if something was to go wrong. Over the years, predominantly, they have helped with clean up after responses and station support. Dixon Fire Department currently has three active POC’s that are in conjunction with our apprentice program. These POC’s are seeking certifications and licenses as part of the program with the goal of becoming a career firefighter/paramedic.

The main positive with building a bigger force of POC’s is the lower cost associated with employing them. Currently, our POC’s are compensated at minimum wage. It could also be a pool of future career firefighters.

The issue with taking on the task of building a comprehensive POC program is that there are not enough people willing to take on this commitment locally. For reasons mentioned previously, people simply don’t have time to respond when needed and receive years of training so that they can fully contribute.

The gap that we need filled is certified firefighters and EMT’s that are proficient. Worth mentioning is the fact that 66% of our call back of personnel occurs between 0800 and 2000. This is when most individuals are at work, spending time with family, doing sports events, etc. The return on investment of working to get POC members proper training and experience is mostly an unreliable responder that comes in when it’s not conflicting with other obligations. Gone are the days of people dropping everything to help mitigate an emergency in their community. This still works in smaller communities because the demand on their

response to emergencies is much less due to a lower volume of emergencies. However, most of them are struggling with staffing also. This is not a great option for the Dixon citizens.

2. The utilization of part-time firefighters is an option that some fire departments employ. There are several locally that have been using part-timers for many years. Like a POC member, the cost of part-time firefighters is less as they typically do not receive benefits such as insurance or pension. A part-time employee would be required to have a minimum number of certifications so that they can contribute to responses while working on shift. These would likely include Basic Operations Firefighter and EMT-Basic. They could potentially be used to bolster our daily staffing level of responders and may be a pool of future career firefighters as well.

Unfortunately, there is not a sizable quantity of these firefighters available for part-time positions. Departments that have been using this program are experiencing difficulties maintaining an adequate number to fulfill their needs. Hiring of part-time staff will likely be constant as the individuals who do this part-time firefighting work are twenty-somethings frequently testing to get a full-time position. Depending on the number of spots we would look to fill, we should probably plan on hiring at least a couple extra.

3. An often-underutilized and under-considered option for fire department staffing is peak-demand staffing. This is simply employing more firefighters during peak hours. As stated earlier, 66% of our call back occurs between 0800 and 2000. This is when the bulk of our responses occur as well. An option would be to employ extra firefighters for a twelve-hour shift versus the traditional twenty-four-hour shift. This would ensure we have extra personnel when

we need them most. Options for this position are sworn firefighter/paramedics working an 84-hour position or part-timers. While this option sounds very reasonable on paper, it is not a normal practice in the fire service. There is no guarantee that sworn individuals would want to work this position with less hours and there would have to be negotiations with the union to include this new role in the contract.

4. Obviously, there remains the option of hiring additional career staff. This is the cleanest option and most reliable. When referencing clean, it means there is not constant turnover, keeping them properly trained/certified is easier, and there's a commitment to our community. Hiring more career staff is never the least expensive option, but it is the most ideal option.

Variables to Consider

“I don't look at a problem and put variables in there that don't affect it.” – Bill Parcels

Looking at the Dixon Fire Department staffing levels, there are certainly some variables to consider for the long term. While none of these are absolutes, they should certainly be thought about when looking at appropriate staffing numbers. The first consideration is the effects of the Tier 2 pension plan. This pension plan extended both the years of service and age needed to retire. What was once 20 years of service and age 50 is now 25 years of service and age 55. This is pertinent because we don't yet know how this is going to affect injury, illness and perhaps even disability pensions in the future. By the end of this calendar year, Dixon Fire Department will have had four of its most senior five members off for extended timeframes due to injury or illness.

None of those members are 50 years old as of this writing.

It is a safe assumption that we will see considerable time off used for injury and illness in the future. Consistently using overtime to fill long-term gaps is not best practice. It essentially creates a snowball effect and causes more injuries and illness because members are constantly fatigued.

The second consideration is where are we with Dixon Rural. In 2008, the City of Dixon and Dixon Rural conducted a study on the consolidation of the departments. Many of the recommendations from that study were adopted by Dixon Fire Department, but obviously no action towards a full consolidation was done. In 2017, a review of that original study was done and mostly agreed with the original conclusions. No action came from the study review. So, there are multiple options for types of department consolidations. They are outlined below:

Administrative – departments remain separate but consolidate administrative functions – i.e. a single Fire Chief

Functional – departments remain separate but perform special functions as if a single consolidated department – i.e. apparatus maintenance, training officer

Operational – departments remain separate but join together both administrative and operation functions – i.e. operating as one department without boundaries

Merge – Both departments become one entity – i.e. Dixon Fire absorbs Dixon Rural or vice versa

At present, we are doing some functional and operational consolidations with Dixon Rural. Functional involves training together and operational involves providing automatic aid to each other and the agreement to lessen call back of off-duty personnel. We have done a couple shared purchases but nothing significant.

What is the best option for us going forward in regards to some form of consolidation or merger? That is the lasting question, but it will take both departments willing to further this process even if it's on a small scale.

From an operational standpoint, working as one department is a tremendous service to our community. Response times can be decreased as the closest resource responds. Coverage for the north side of the river could be from the Dixon Rural station and south side coverage from our station.

Looking at a full merger from a cost savings standpoint, it is only realized in the future. In fact, some of the initial costs of the merger may be quite large when you look at a reinvention of our brand. Things like uniforms, lettering apparatus and signage would all add up. Moreover, this doesn't even include the negotiations with the unions over benefits and salaries that reasonably match up. There could be no staffing cuts and apparatus savings would be well into the future simply because we may not need to replace an ambulance and/or a backup engine going forward.

There are two merge options available for consideration: the Dixon Fire Department gets absorbed by Dixon Rural or Dixon Rural becomes a paper district and is absorbed by Dixon Fire Department. In order for Dixon Rural to take over Dixon Fire it would require a referendum to allow them to tax the citizens of Dixon that aren't already being taxed by them. Without that tax money, they could not afford to take on Dixon Fire personnel and likely wouldn't be able to even with the additional tax money. The City would still have to pay the district funds to fiscally support the costs of services.

Should Dixon Rural become a paper district, Dixon Fire would take over their personnel and operations. They would remain a taxing entity and turn those funds over to the City for operational and personnel expenses. There would still be a fire protection district board that oversees the funds. This is how Sterling and Rock Falls provide service to their rural areas. This option would not require voter approval.

This is just a brief overview of the merger options. At the end of the day, the costs of providing emergency services are not going to change with either choice. Whichever option is most beneficial to the community and its members should be our focus.

Recommendation

It is my opinion that a merger of some form needs to happen with Dixon Rural. It is what's best operationally and for the communities we are sworn to protect.

However, this will not happen quickly, or even ever perhaps. We can no longer avoid adding personnel to the Dixon Fire Department based on possibilities in the future. We need more responders on our department now.

A reliance on a system of undependable call back of off-duty personnel and POC's for routine emergencies needs to be phased out. The size of our department and the size of our community will likely never allow for full elimination of call back; however, we have to plan on it not being sustainable for the future. A daily shift compliment of six firefighter/paramedics on duty will provide adequate staffing. That is a minimum. This number should provide for our needs now and into the future based on current projected City growth. This personnel level allows us to cover a variety of emergency response scenarios and enhances our ability to conduct more non-emergency activities. These additional activities could include community paramedicine and response preplanning, for example.

Understanding the costs associated with increasing staffing at the fire department, I'm offering several potential options to ensure we have adequate coverage for our community going forward. Not all of these options may be endorsed by the Union and that may present some difficulties, but they do fully appreciate the need for additional staffing. Additionally, we need to constantly be searching for funding sources such as grants. The SAFER grant should be applied for each year until we are successful. It is not a long-term financial solution, but it provides thirty-six months of salaries and benefits. I must stress; however, no grant is a guarantee and delaying action or hard planning while we wait for a grant is not beneficial.

Within the next year, we need to be working on getting a minimum daily staffing level of at least five. Just to be clear, if we hired three additional firefighters tomorrow, it would be almost three years before we could actually consider consistent minimum staffing to five. This is due to the two months of initial fire training and testing to get necessary certifications, and at least sixteen months to receive paramedic licensure. None of these courses run concurrently to fit our needs so we are at the mercy of when they are being held. Obviously, if a firefighter is hired and already has a paramedic license, that is a huge benefit.

We can discuss doing a hire each year for three years and phasing in the staffing, but it would save money overall to hire them all at once. The new hires would all be coming in on a smaller starting wage, travel and lodging expenses at training would be shared. It is likely the actual cost of the fire academy and/or paramedic class will be increased over that three-year period. If we do not receive the SAFER grant this year, dialogue needs to start immediately for funding options to add a firefighter/paramedic to each shift.

The current environment for individuals seeking employment in public safety is not ideal and there are no expectations of it improving anytime soon. This is another good reason to act now because our next test may not produce the quantity and quality of candidates that we need.

It is my whole-hearted recommendation to have six career firefighter/paramedics per shift and a minimum staffing of five now. By doing this, it allows for contractual time off. Getting to the point where we actually staff with a minimum of six firefighters would require a shift of seven career firefighter/paramedics (two more per shift than currently).

Other potential options include development of a part-time employee program or maybe start with peak-demand employees for our busiest time frame. The part-time program gives us the chance to use them just when needed to maintain six on duty. Some considerations of note; they could not be used to take the place of a career member without agreement from the union (state statute), if they worked over thirty hours a week they could potentially qualify for health insurance and any hours worked over one hundred and six in a pay-period would be overtime.

As pointed out earlier, departments that staff with part-timers locally are not getting the amount they need. We are not the suburbs with multiple community colleges offering fire science programs nor are we surrounded with other career departments of certified firefighters looking for part-time work. That is just the reality. A benefit to the part-time program is that it could be discontinued when needed; for example, if a form of consolidation occurs or the City decides to hire full-time career employees instead.

The peak demand employee could be an eighty-four-hour position and work 0700-1900 on the following rotation: Monday, Tuesday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday, Wednesday, Thursday. This is the same rotation as the police department. The savings is in that they work eighty-four hours per pay period versus the one hundred and four hours of our current staff. Overtime would be paid for anything over eighty-four hours and they would be full-benefit eligible, including pension. They would be sworn career firefighters just working a different schedule with less hours. Obviously, if there was an opening for a normal shift schedule, they would have the first chance at filling that spot.

The material provided is truthful and without unidentified opinion. Very little time was spent on expanding paid-on-call positions because in 2022 it offers very little benefit in meeting our response needs, but remains a valuable tool in developing future employees.

Let it be known that the above-mentioned staffing options are provided for transparency of all potential possibilities. In my opinion, sworn, career members offer the best chance of success in the future. They provide stability, efficiency and community commitment.

For perspective, below is a table showing some comparable sized communities, staffing, and their call volume.

It's difficult to find communities that are a clear comparison to Dixon in regards to population and response area. As you can see, effort was made to get some departments from around the state. If you look further East, there are definitely communities with comparable populations as Dixon, but most are absorbed into large fire protection districts.

In closing, this is a lot of information to digest and not being familiar with the schedule of a firefighter/paramedic and the entities that provide guidance and standards can be daunting.

I look forward to any questions and will have financial information available if you want to look at costs between the options.

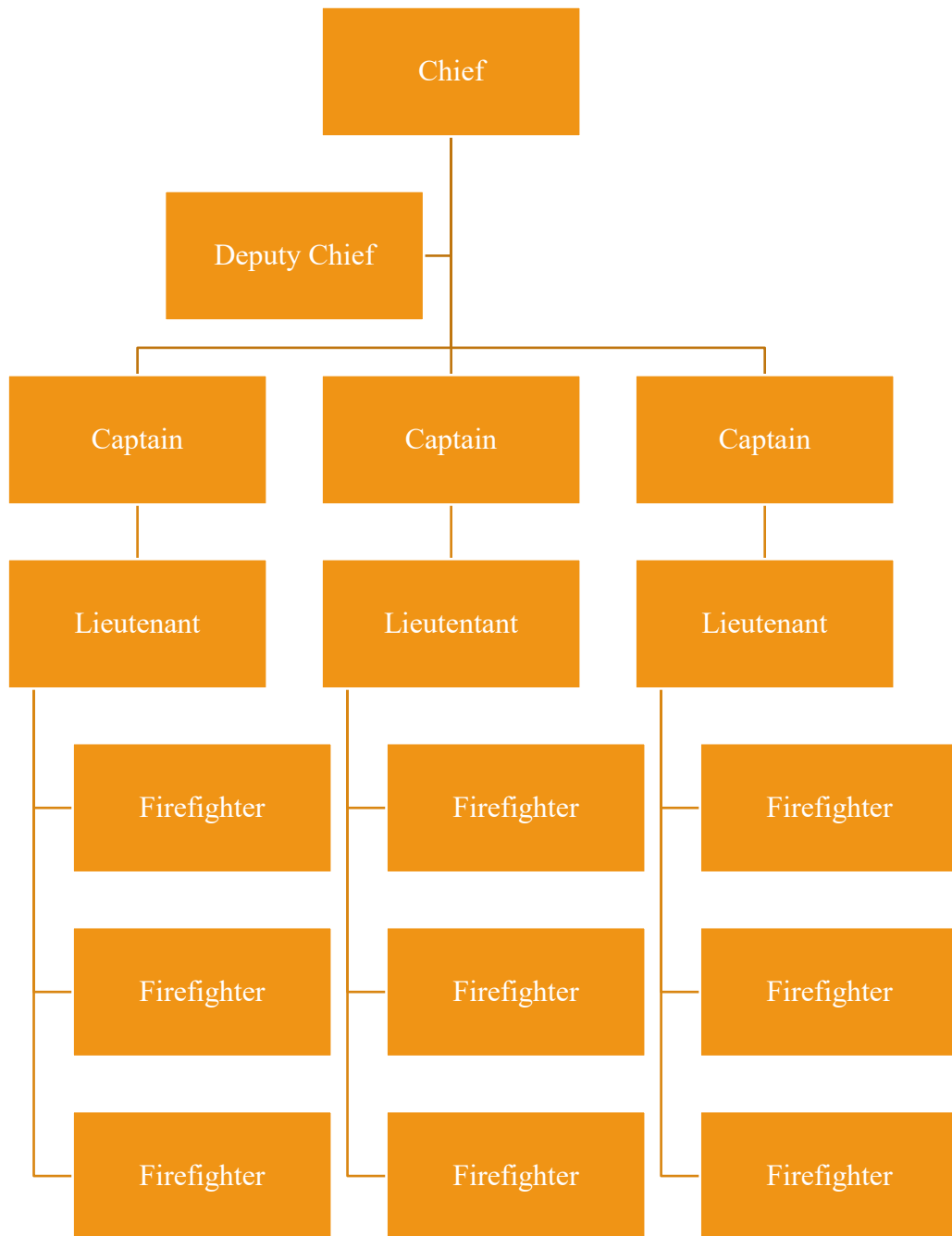
Department	Population	Call Volume	EMS	Min Staff	Max Staff
Centralia	12,356	2003	Y	4	5
Jacksonville	18,859	3000	Y	7	9
Sycamore	17,726	2380	Y	6	8
Princeton	7,603	1800	Y	4	4
Ottawa	18,792	4175	Y	7	9
Rochelle	9,160	2200	Y	4	4
Herrin	12,827	438	N	3	5
Effingham	12,563	587	N	4	5
Kewanee	12,547	2750	Y	5	6
North Aurora	18,057	2500	Y	12	12
Sterling	14,782	1402	N	5	6
Dixon Rural	16,000	667	Y	2	3
Rock Falls	8,952	980	N	3	4
Dixon City	15,433	2392	Y	4	5

Current Staffing of Dixon Fire Department

Shifts of 5 personnel

Minimum of 4 on duty to provide for time off

Reliance on off-duty personnel recall

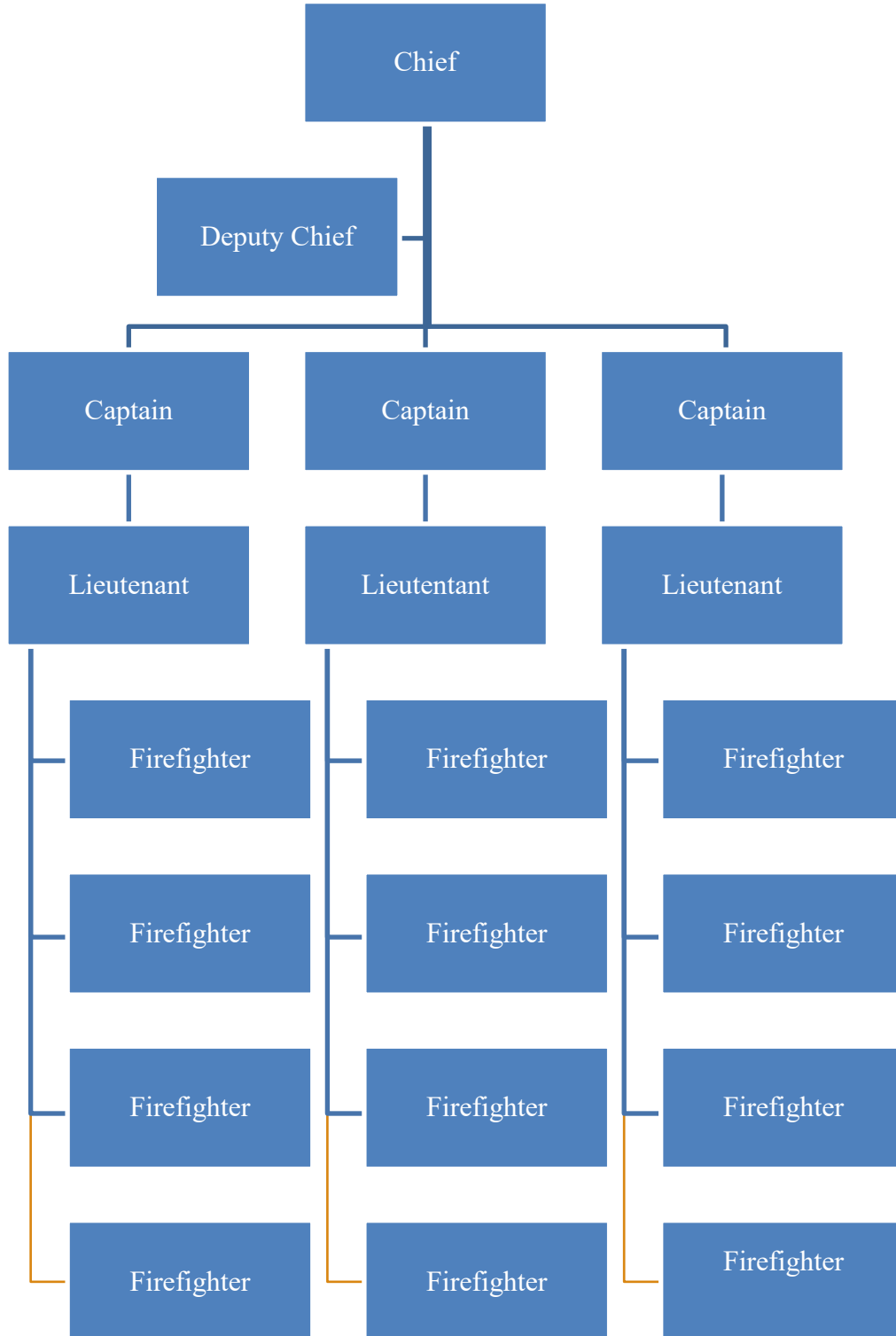


Proposed Staffing for Dixon Fire Department

Shifts of six personnel

Minimum of 5 on duty to provide for time off

Minimal change in reliance on off-duty personnel recall

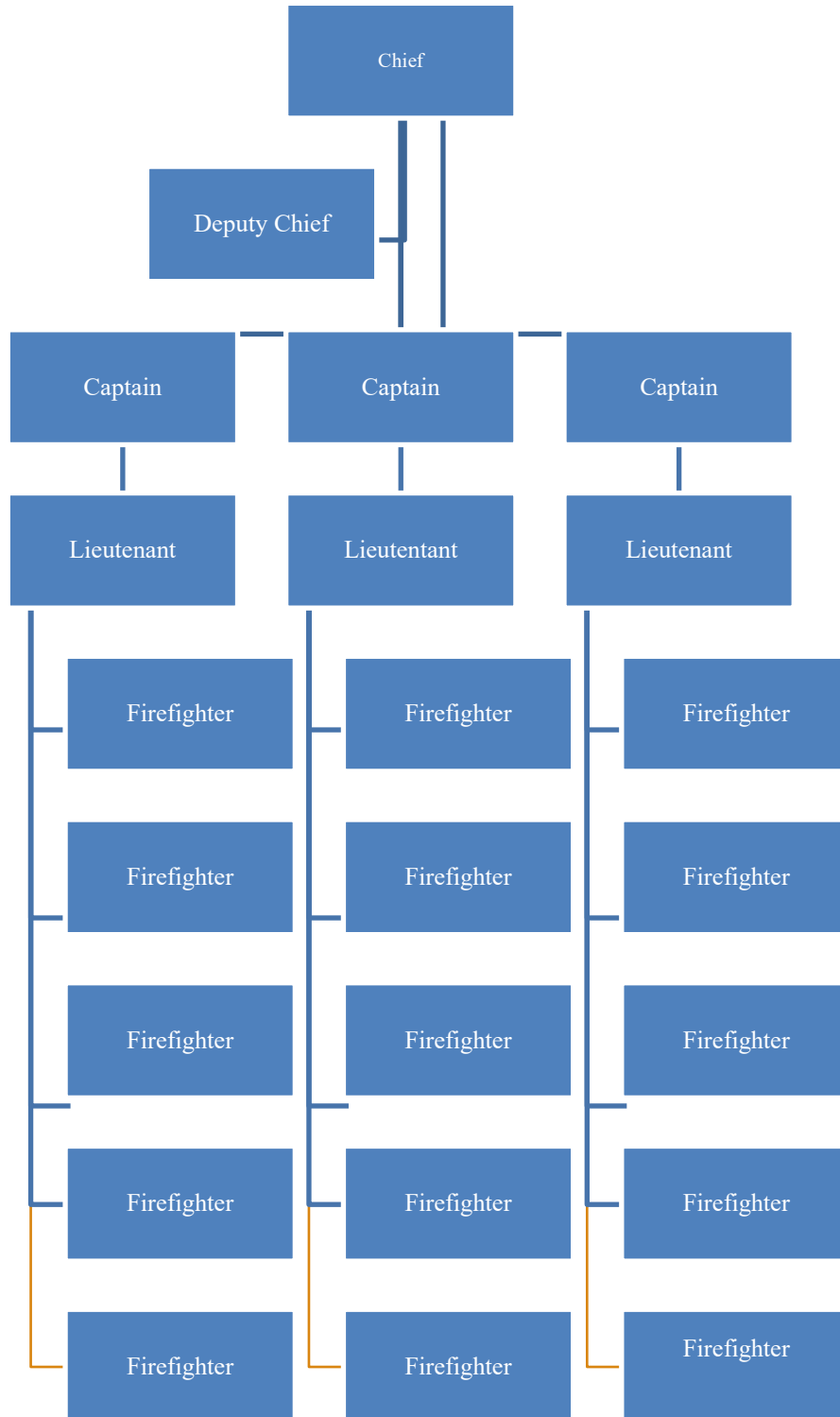


Proposed Staffing for Dixon Fire Department

Shifts of 7 personnel

Minimum of 6 on duty to provide for time off

Much less reliance on recall of off-duty personnel



Proposed Staffing for Dixon Fire Department

Shifts of 6 personnel

Minimum of 6 on duty daily

Opening caused by career member using time off filled by part-time

Pool of 4-6 part-time would be preferred

Much less reliance on recall of off-duty personnel

