



THE CITY OF HURON, OHIO

HURON MUNICIPAL BUILDING

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Mrs. Milla Kette

Mrs. Kette:

Thank you for letter. I apologize for the delay in responding as I was out of the office the past couple of days on personal leave.

I would like to explain the operations of the Fire Division that should answer your questions on manning and maintaining the ladder truck and ambulance service. More than 80% of fire departments in the United States perform some level of emergency medical services (EMS), making professional fire fighters the largest group of providers of prehospital emergency care. No other organization – public or private (NCEMS) is capable of providing prehospital emergency response as efficiently and effectively as fire departments.

Unlike private contractors, fire departments have the flexibility to provide emergency medical care by utilizing fire apparatus staffed with cross-trained/dual role fire fighter emergency medical technicians (EMTs) and paramedics. Fire-based systems can maintain the shortest possible response times while avoiding duplication of services by cross training employees to function effectively in fire suppression, rescue, and EMS. Private contractors, therefore, attempt to maximize profit by transporting a maximum number of patients with as few ambulances as possible.

The Huron Fire Division utilizes NCEMS to transport non-emergent patients to appointments, such as a resident of Huron Health Care (Admirals Point) to a doctor's appointment in Cleveland). If we were to accept the responsibility of transporting these types of calls, it would be detrimental to our ability to respond to emergency calls. The National Institutes of Health suggest first responders should arrive on the scene in less than 5 minutes, 90% of the time. The average response time for the Huron Fire Division is less than 3 minutes for EMS calls within the City and 3:50 minutes for fire responses.

The ladder truck is a 105' Seagrave Aerial; it is capable of reaching most three (3) and four (4) story buildings. It is useful in providing protection to neighboring structures for exposure when a building is engulfed in fire as well as be utilized in horizontal reach scenarios. I would like to add that the ladder truck was purchased by the township as are several other pieces of equipment. This merger allows us to share the costs and maintain the best fleet of apparatus in the area.

To address the cost of maintaining and manning the division, the Fire Division's budget is approximately 1.3 million dollars. Almost 90% (\$1,160,900) of this budget is dedicated to wages and fringe benefits, which leaves approximately 10% (\$139,100) for training, maintenance of equipment, contractual services, materials and supplies. Nearly 80% of our responses are EMS related, although this activity generates the most responses it doesn't reflect the amount of time required to prepare for the all hazard approach to emergencies that we are required to provide to our citizens. A significant amount of time is dedicated to providing fire safety inspections to each and every business, fire prevention and education, pre-planning for larger disasters and emergencies, maintaining the equipment, training, and acquiring additional revenue to support our operations (grants).

The Fire Division has been very successful in receiving monies to offset the costs to the City to improve and replace identified capital expenses. In 2004 the division received \$78,371 for two (2) projects, the establishment of a Wellness/Fitness program and the addition of a vehicle exhaust removal system. The acquisition of these funds enabled us to develop a comprehensive wellness program that includes annual physicals for all employees and the addition of workout equipment to ensure our members have the physical attributes required for the proper performance of their duties, reduce the frequency and severity of job related injuries and extend the health and longevity of our employees. This grant required 10% matching funds (\$7,837) which was shared by the City and Huron Township.

In 2005 we were awarded \$277,635 for the replacement of our communication system, a system that was reaching its maximum serviceability and \$64,795 for the upgrading and replacement of the division's self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). This grant allowed us to replace the outdated communication equipment within the department to ensure firefighter safety on incidents, improve county wide access for mutual aid, create a secondary means of dispatching for the City and Erie County in the event of natural or man-made disasters, and to deliver a more efficient and professional response to the needs of our citizens. The second part of this grant allowed us to replace and upgrade the departments SCBA's to meet the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards which include Heads-up display, Universal RIT (Rapid Intervention) fittings, integrated PASS (Personal Alert Safety System) devices, and performance when exposed to CBRN (Chemical, Biological, Radiological or Nuclear) agents. Again, this grant required matching funds of 10% (\$34,243) which was shared by the City and Huron Township.

Finally, in 2006 the division was able to secure funding to replace the divisions Fire/Rescue boat. The current boat, a 22' Boston Whaler, is 20 years old (at the end of its service life), equipped with a portable pump that could produce 75 gpm of water and limited space to effectively perform rescue operations. The division purchased a 30' Argus Class, NFPA Class C compliant Fire/Rescue boat. This vessel is an aluminum hulled boat, powered by twin 250hp Evinrude E-tech outboards. The pump engine is a 5.7L GM/American Turbine jet engine that can produce 3,000 gpm of water or be utilized as a jet drive. This vessel is designed and equipped to handle all emergencies on Lake Erie and can assist with inland firefighting as a stationary pump. The built-in dive door and open aft area provide a stable platform for dive operations and the pilot house is designed to accommodate medical emergencies. This Fire/Rescue boat was purchased with funding from the Department of Homeland Security, at a total cost of \$309,131, again the matching funds of 5% (\$15,456) was shared by each jurisdiction, the City and Huron Township.

I would like to add the Department of Homeland Security identifies priorities that it will fund. The Fire Division has followed these guidelines and pursued what we believed to be most advantageous for the operations of our department. It has been mentioned that we pursue funding for the replacement of a fire engine; these grant requests are also awarded based on need and to be quite honest we would not qualify due to the age and condition of the rest of our fleet. The grants for fire apparatus are very competitive and there are many fire departments that have a greater need. I am involved in several state-wide committees, which allow me the opportunity to compare our operations and equipment within the state. We are by far ahead of the curve in equipment, training, and proactive in addressing the constantly changing requirements of providing and planning for all disasters, natural and man-made.

I hope this answers your questions and thank you for taking the time to consider what is best for you and your family.

Respectfully,



Paul D. Berlin
Fire Chief