

2022 WESC ANNUAL REPORT



DUANE OBER, FIRE COMMISSIONER

WARWICK EMERGENCY SERVICES COMMISSION – 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

2022 continued to be a busy year for WESC and the efforts to improve and sustain emergency services in Elizabeth Township, Warwick Township, and Lititz Borough. We had a lot of success in the past year relating to our volunteers and paid staff, while also finding it challenging at times.

WESC has officially been here since 2013, with the former Warwick Emergency Services Alliance dating back to 2001. I have been employed with WESC since October 2014, while the part-time assistant, Brett Fasnacht, has been with us since June 2021.

In total, the four fire companies, Brickerville, Brunnerville, Lititz, and Rothsville have approximately 145 volunteer firefighters, fire police officers and ambulance personnel. The fire service in the region is 100% volunteer, while Rothsville Fire Company Ambulance is staffed by paid personnel Monday-Friday, 6am-6pm, and staffed by volunteers during the rest of the time. Warwick Ambulance is staffed by paid staffing, with a few volunteer transport drivers. Northwest EMS, located in Brickerville, is also staffed by paid personnel.



(Lititz firefighters at the 2022 9/11 ceremony)

Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers

We continue to look for ways to recruit new volunteers, but while that is important, we feel retaining our trained and experienced volunteers is our top priority. We received thirteen new volunteers at the four fire companies in 2022, including four firefighters, six junior firefighters, one fire police officer, and two ambulance personnel. Unfortunately, we lost a few volunteers this past year as well, due to family commitments, moving out of the area, retirements, or just lack of participation.

All volunteers are rewarded with gift cards upon successful completion of certified training classes which helps them become more productive members of our organizations. The gift cards, funded in the WESC budget and ranging in value from \$25 - \$150, are a token of thanks for their commitment to improve their skills while spending time away from their families. WESC purchased \$5,000 worth of gift cards last year to award the volunteers, plus an additional \$500 worth of gift cards from Whiff Roasters was donated.

Lititz Fire Company also provided gift cards to their members for participating in standby activities during community events. These events, while valuable to the energy and excitement of the community, also have a negative impact on the ability of the volunteer fire company to access their fire station and respond in a timely manner. Firefighters are asked to volunteer their time by standing by at the fire station to assure adequate staffing and quick response for services in the event of an emergency.

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All volunteers, who met the approved criteria, were also eligible to apply for a \$200 earned income tax credit from the municipality in which they reside. Warwick Township funded 53 tax credits for a total of \$10,600, and Lititz Borough paid 8 tax credits for \$1,600. Sixty-one volunteers received the tax credit, while nearly the same number did not apply for the credit. We are still looking for way to encourage more participation.

New Apparatus

Brunnerville Fire Company placed into service their new-to-them Rescue truck that was bought from the Lititz Fire Company in 2021. This vehicle carries vehicle rescue equipment, technical rescue supplies, firefighting support equipment, and personnel.



(Brunnerville Fire Company Rescue)

Warwick Ambulance and Rothsville Fire Company Ambulance both placed a new ambulance in service in 2022.



(New Rothsville Fire Company Ambulance)

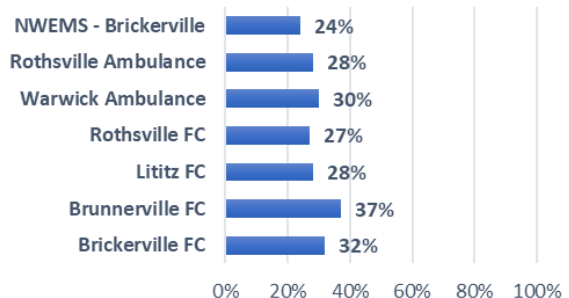


(New Warwick Ambulance)

Fund Drives

While those who contribute support the local emergency services well, the level of support from the community is still low. The business community and rental units are consistently the lowest supporters every year. Efforts to improve on these numbers will be studied in 2023 because it is our goal to be supported by everyone in the community, however, we realize this is not realistic without a dedicated fire tax.

Fund Drive / Membership Support in 2022



Monthly Activities

The fire companies each have a business meeting on the last Monday of each month. The other Monday nights will find the volunteers at each fire company gathering for weekly training exercises, usually lasting at least two hours. These trainings may

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involve pumping and operating the fire trucks, advancing fire hoses, vehicle and technical rescue skills review, raising ladders for working or rescuing, and so much more.

Behind the Scenes

There are a lot of activities done behind the scenes during the year to support the fire companies that most WESC volunteers never see.

When the firefighters leave the scene of a fire, work is just beginning for the Fire Commissioner. Follow-up discussions with insurance companies, fire cause investigations with the PA State Police Fire Marshals, media requests for information about the incidents, restoration company representatives attempting to secure work, and follow-up phone calls with the impacted property owners to assure that incident reports contain all the required information.

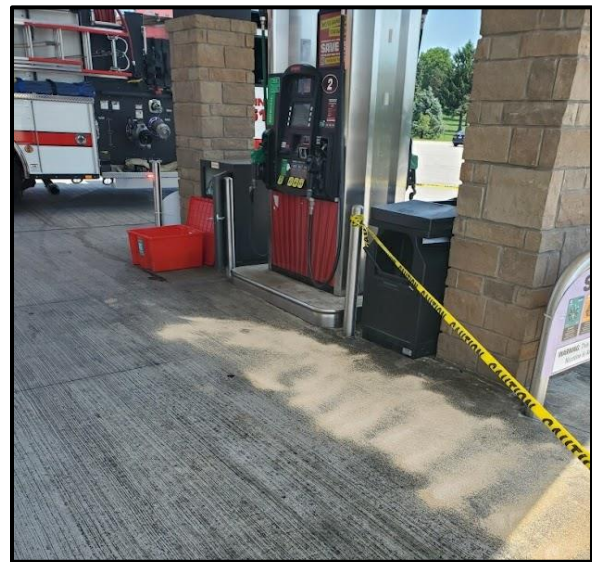


(PSP Fire Marshal searching for a cause at a recent house fire in Lititz Borough)

When incidents occur, knowing that we have the right units being dispatched and responding as expected is critical. Updating box alarms and reviewing the results are a constant need to assure our community receives the best level of service.

The fire apparatus needs to meet annual maintenance requirements, including inspection, pump tests, hose tests, ladder tests, etc. WESC supports the fire companies in coordinating these efforts as needed.

Accidental or intentional spills, such as fluid leaks from vehicles after an accident or because of a mechanical issue, needs to be reported to the municipality for MS4 documentation and properly cleaned up to protect the environment.



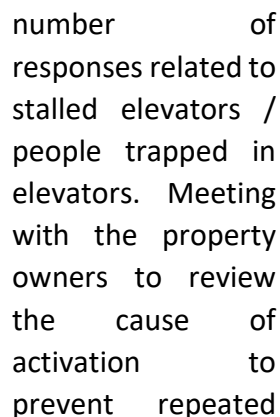
(Gasoline spill at Sheetz that entered a storm drain)

Rural water supply consists of fire engines drafting water out of creeks and ponds (instead of using hydrants); to partner with property owners, conversations ahead of a fire takes place to assure their awareness of our needs and cooperation from them to access their property to reach the water supply.

When new developments or commercial properties are being designed and presented to the municipalities for approval, many fine details to support firefighting operations are discussed as part of that process. A review of

the plans includes fire department vehicle access, sufficient public water supply for firefighting purposes, fire suppression system (sprinklers), Knox Box locations are identified and reviewed, naming of the streets so that they don't mimic existing streets names (which leads to confusion during emergencies), and numbering of the properties to keep it simple for first responders. It might not seem like much, but assuring the ability to respond quickly and effectively after construction is completed makes a huge difference in our successful operations.

Automatic fire detection systems and suppression systems help protect properties against fire. Unfortunately, many times these systems activate as false alarms. A recent upward trend is the increased



Promoting the efforts of the volunteer fire companies and ambulances, to support their fund drives, as well as to recruit new members is important. Local newspapers help us by running ads with information and photos provided by WESC.



In 2022, a complete review of the fire districts was completed by Insurance Services Office (ISO). WESC worked on behalf of the fire companies to supply training records, equipment and apparatus maintenance records, personnel records, and more. The ISO rating changed from a municipality-based rating to a fire district-based rating. The ISO rating also grades the municipal water supply and hydrants, and the local 9-1-1 dispatching center.

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Community Fire Safety

WESC has had an increase in the number of requests in recent years to provide fire safety training to staff at local schools, day cares, and other businesses. This training includes general fire safety topics, evacuation information, and how to use fire extinguishers. In 2022, over a dozen classes were held showing close to 700 adults and children how to use a fire extinguisher.



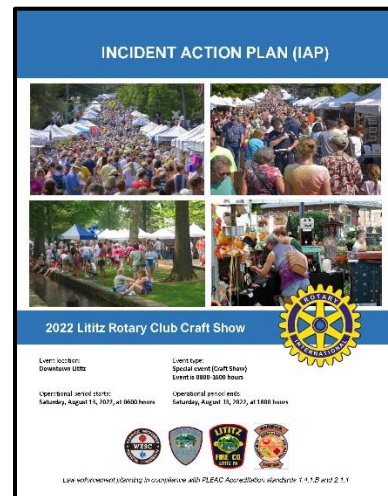
(Fire extinguisher training prop)

By providing this education, this important life skill will help keep our community safer. The training that WESC provides in the community to schools, daycares, and businesses results in income for our community smoke detector program. All proceeds go to support this effort to provide smoke detectors to anyone in need.

WESC also supported local businesses with meeting their required annual certifications by attending evacuation drills and site visits to learn about hazardous materials kept onsite and how to handle uncontrolled releases of those materials. WESC also coordinated and led all the fire prevention programs in the schools in the community. In 2022, we directly instructed over 1,500 children about fire safety.

Emergency Management

Each municipality is required by the state to appoint an emergency management coordinator. In our community, the emergency management role assists in safety planning of public events, such as the 4th of July fireworks and parade, the Rotary Club Craft Show, the Fire and Ice Festival, and more. We coordinate the efforts of the event organizers, police department, fire company, and ambulance to make sure those visiting our community are kept as safe as possible.



Emergency Management is also tasked with mitigating, preparing, responding, and recovering from emergencies in the community. Keeping the municipal Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs) and our Notification and Resource Manuals (NARMs) current at all times is critical to the success of being properly prepared.

Moving Forward

With the addition of the WESC Deputy Fire Commissioner in 2023, we anticipate increasing our ability to improve fire safety, funding of the volunteer fire companies, and

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recruitment and retention of new volunteers. We plan to create better partnerships with our business leaders by completing site visits to update our preplan records, verifying keys in the Knox Boxes,



providing fire safety training to their employees, discussing with management about the need to consistently contribute to the fire companies and ambulances, and more. The information that we collect from the businesses about their properties will increase our knowledge of their operations and structures, which leads to reducing on-scene time at incidents, ultimately saving the volunteers' time. Training staff about fire safety and proper use of a fire extinguisher will lead to safer work environments and prevent large fire losses.

Communicating with business owners to help them learn more about the fire alarm systems in their buildings, and how to prevent false alarms, is vital to retaining volunteers and respecting their time.

Teaching children about fire prevention keeps our homes, people, and community safer. Making a positive impact on young children will hopefully result in an increased recruitment of volunteers as they become old enough to join the fire companies.



Assisting daycare owners and preschool teachers with learning more about fire safety and how to keep the children under their oversight safer is also important to us.

Another way to increase fire and life safety in our community is to improve our efforts to inspect for operating smoke detectors while at incidents. We will verify the presence of a smoke detector on every floor, test to make sure batteries work, and review the operations and age of the detector(s) with the property owner.

We need to have adequate and sufficient emergency vehicles and equipment to respond to calls for help in the community. It is necessary that we continually review the apparatus replacement plan and schedule that was adopted in 2020. Costs of vehicles have skyrocketed in recent years, while staffing levels have slowly decreased. We need to work together to reduce duplication of unnecessary vehicles and equipment. Vehicles that are well maintained and taken care of should be able to remain in service for many years and shouldn't be replaced just "because we want a new one" mindset. Working together regionally to assure sufficient resources will save everyone

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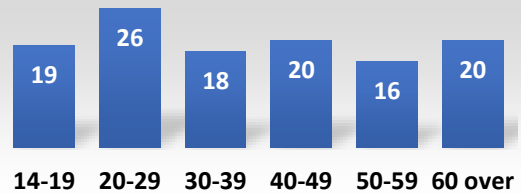
money – the fire companies, the residents, the municipalities, etc.

Relying on volunteers to staff the fire trucks saves our community millions of dollars each year. However, we know that the day will come that paid staffing will need to be reviewed as an option. Finding creative ways to recruit and retain our volunteers is critical to keeping costs down for our community. Watching trends, following statistics, and predicting future needs of the local fire service will be a priority for WESC at all times.

One characteristic of a volunteer firefighter that makes it hard to predict the future staffing levels is the unknown age of retirement or resignation. Some volunteers step aside at a young age to commit time to their growing families. Some leave the service due to job changes or moving out of the area. Some of the “senior” volunteers stay active well beyond the “normal age of retirement” – 65. Currently, there are 20 volunteers over the age of 60 responding to fire calls in the WESC region.

Working with the Deputy Fire Commissioner and the Emergency Services Assistant, we will enhance the support of the volunteers by preparing and positioning WESC to take on more administrative and operational tasks that the volunteers don’t want to do or don’t have the time to do. This allows the volunteers to do what they signed up for – responding to fire calls and attending the necessary training classes to improve their skills. Providing more assistance to the volunteer ambulance leaders is another request asked of WESC.

Age Ranges of Active WESC Fire Company Volunteers



The addition of the Deputy Fire Commissioner in 2023 will provide a second command-level individual to assist at incidents to ensure adequate command and control of the fireground. Another benefit is the consistent presence of a WESC leader in the region to be prepared to handle significant events.

I would like to thank the elected officials, municipal employees, and all first responders for their support of WESC and my role as Fire Commissioner. This report is just a brief review of our efforts in 2022, but so much more was accomplished. I will continue to work hard to serve the emergency services and our community as we move forward providing the best fire and emergency medical services that we can.

Respectfully submitted,

Duane Ober
WESC Fire Commissioner