



Fire Department Services

The Fire Department provides a wide range of services to the community, including:

- » Education and fire prevention
- » Community code enforcement
- » Emergency Medical Response
- » Building, fire and life safety inspections
- » Community EMT/Mobile Integrated Healthcare
- » Fire suppression
- » Technical rescue
- » Hazardous materials response
- » Emergency management and disaster preparedness

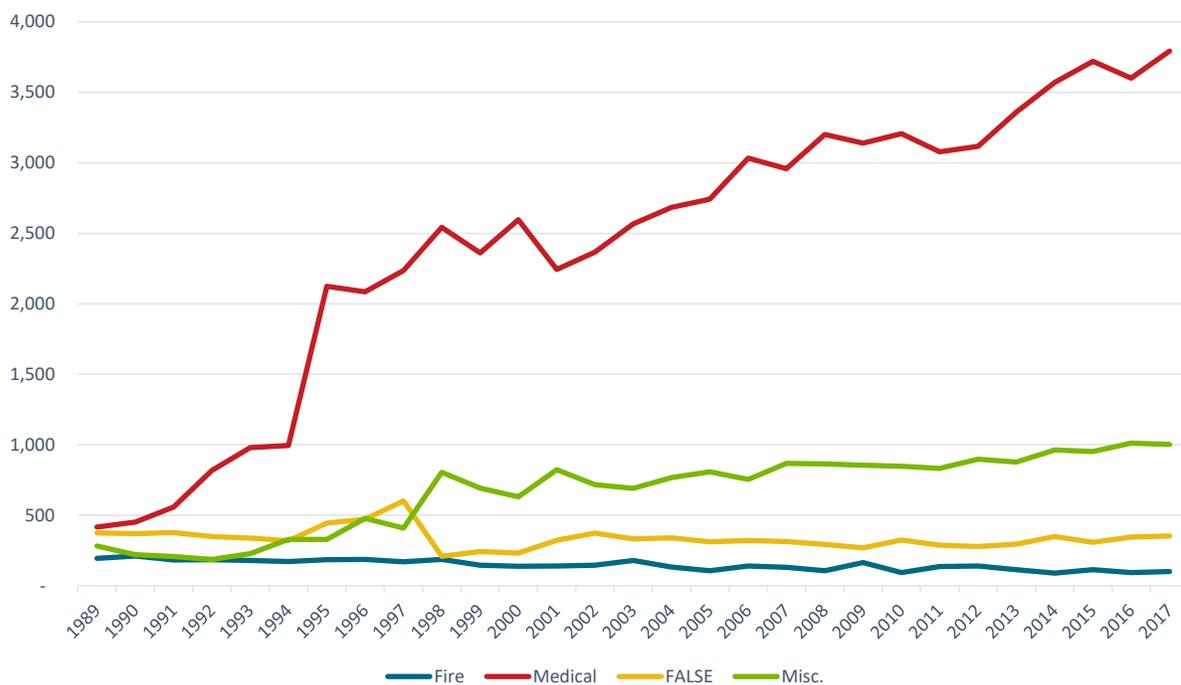
Resources and the Demand

Current Procedures/Practices

The department responds to a growing number of calls currently in excess of 5,200 calls for service annually. Calls ranging from emergency and non-emergency medical response, structure fires, to car accidents, and fire alarms. Emergency responses are handled by the on duty staff with robust call back, auto aid and mutual aid agreements to cover additional demand. The fire department responds out of two state of the art fire stations and has a diverse fleet consisting of 3 engines, 1 ladder, 2 Light Rescues, 1 boat, 1 RAMP vehicle, an ATV for wildland along with various support vehicles.

Over the last 20 years, the city has supported a combination model of staffing using both career and part time members. The transition of the volunteer firefighters to a part time duty crew resource coupled with the additional career staff allows for a more predictable level of staffing and enhances firefighter safety.

Figure 7-2. Volume of Service Calls since 1989



The fire department is directed by a full-time fire chief who serves as the city's Emergency Management Coordinator. There is a full time Deputy Chief of Operations, and Assistant Chief of Training and EMS and an Assistant Chief of Prevention who serves as the Fire Marshal. Currently, a full time career staff of 27 firefighters working 24 hour shifts coupled with a 25 part-time duty crew firefighters provide the staffing to address the demands for service. The department is divided into four divisions; Prevention, Suppression EMS/Community Health Management, and Emergency Management.

Community Risk Reduction

Fires cause loss to both life and property. Fires also result in long term losses for the community. For example, if a burned business chooses to relocate elsewhere, local jobs are lost.

Fires cause a community disruption if fire destroys a public building such as a school. It follows that limiting fire loss has both a safety and financial impact on the community. For these reasons, fire prevention has been a major focus of the Fire Department over the past decade. Programs have been developed which:

- » Provide education to residents and business owners about fire prevention
- » Aggressively inspect multi-family, institutional, commercial and industrial buildings to address fire and safety hazards
- » Promote fire sprinkling and smoke detectors

A proportional relationship exists between fire loss and the time between the onset of a fire and the response to the fire. The mission to minimize fire loss requires both early detection and rapid effective response.

The economical delivery of quality services is the goal of all city departments. While the number of calls for service has increased, the number of major fires has decreased and is coincident with the attention to fire prevention.

Fire Sprinklers

Fire sprinkler systems are the most efficient means to reduce the loss of life and property. Fire sprinklers also protect firefighters during response. Consequently, a major goal of the city is to promote fire sprinkler systems for all commercial, industrial, institutional and multi-family buildings. Fire sprinklers are required for new construction by the State Building Code, based on occupancy, classification of use, building construction and building size.

The State Fire Code establishes design standards for the actual sprinkler systems.

The State Building Code has been modified over the years to better address health and safety in buildings. New buildings and building additions must be constructed to new standards. There are many existing buildings in St. Louis Park that were constructed prior to newer standards for sprinklers and the cost of retrofitting sprinkler systems to existing buildings can be burdensome for some building owners.

To address this, the city council adopted a Special Assessment Program to allow sprinkler systems to be paid for over a 10 year period. This program is offered to eligible applicants at attractive interest rates. Initiated in 1994, this program continues to be popular with over \$600,000 in special sprinkler assessments issued since 2004.

Economical fire sprinkler technology is also available to make one and two family residential properties safer. The Fire Department is exploring ways to encourage retrofitting existing homes and new homes with fire sprinkler devices.

A community where all buildings are sprinkled will have minimum to zero fire loss.

Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are an inexpensive way to save property and lives. Smoke alarms are now required in all sleeping rooms, hallways outside of sleeping rooms and on each floor of all new construction. Other ordinances require smoke alarms to be provided in older multi-family buildings. The presence of working smoke alarms in all buildings which house people would greatly enhance safety in the community. The Fire Department has initiated many programs to inform the public about how smoke alarms save lives and property.

Prevention Priorities

1. Continue to evaluate historical trends, inspection records and at risk populations to ensure education and prevention efforts are reaching the right audience.
2. Consider high risk areas within the community where prevention education could add value.
3. Survey customers for feedback to reinforce positive interactions with the community.
4. Continually evaluate the needs for each program including staffing, budgetary impacts, volunteers and grant programs.

Fire Inspections for Buildings

The Fire Department inspects all commercial, industrial, multi-family and institutional buildings to identify and correct fire and safety hazards. Single family houses are inspected for housing code deficiencies by the department of Inspections at the time of sale. The effectiveness of the inspections can be measured by the co-relationship between correcting such deficiencies as non-working smoke alarms, improper storage of flammable materials, hazardous wiring and the decreases in frequency and severity of fires. Fire Department Inspections in collaboration with Building Department Inspections prioritize high risk occupancies, senior facilities and change of use occupancies to ensure they continue to meet the city goals of health and safety.

Medical Emergencies and Rescue Operations

Emergency medical calls continue to climb as our population both increases and ages. Future approaches to emergency medical response will include more of a community health management approach. New response models designed which direct the right resource at the right time for the right cost are propelling the fire department into a more integral role in overall community health. The Fire Department staff are all trained to the level of Nationally Registered EMT, some staff are Nationally Registered Paramedic and a growing number are certified as Community EMT's. The Fire Department works under medical direction and provides a variety of interventions including naloxone, nebulization, beta antagonist, glucose, and epinephrine, cardiac resuscitation and defibrillation.

Emergency Management

Under Emergency Management, the city developed an All Hazard Emergency Disaster Plan (Plan) to prepare the community to meet any emergency that may occur from man-made, natural causes or domestic terrorism. The Emergency Operations Plan, which is continually reviewed and updated in response to ever changing situations and statutory requirements, is designed to save lives and property, minimize damage and restore the needs of the community in the event of disaster.

The City Manager, who is also Director of Emergency Management, works with the Mayor and Council to ensure that the needs of the community are met, with the Fire Chief coordinating the emergency operation. This includes issuing orders and using facilities such as

hospitals and schools if necessary for the ultimate good of the community. The plan also recognizes the potential roles of Minnesota Homeland Security and Federal Emergency Management, the National Guard, Red Cross, Salvation Army, Hennepin County Emergency Management and health and medical services in the event of such an emergency.

Hazardous Material Storage

The Fire Department keeps data related to the storage of hazardous materials within the community. Fire Department personnel work closely with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) to control chemical and petroleum product leaks that may occur. The fire department staff is trained regularly on pipeline and rail car safety and collaborates with both county and state emergency management.

The fire department issues permits for placement and removal of flammable storage tanks.

Arson

The Fire Department investigates fires to determine cause. If the cause is found to be arson, the Fire Department works with police to prosecute any identified arsonist. Prosecution has been found to be the best tool against arson. Juvenile arson can represent a problem for the community. Addressing juvenile problems with new approaches, including asset building and restorative justice, are now considered as alternatives to other punishment.

Senior needs

Senior housing creates one of the largest demands for medical emergency service of any land use due to decreased mobility and increased frailty of this group of citizens. The disproportionate medical service demands of this particular land use have caused some concern when evaluating department budget constraints. Increased density of senior populations, particularly those requiring skilled services, will place greater demands on resources.

Fire Department Goals and Strategies

- 1. Build a resilient St Louis Park through an emphasis on prevention and community risk reduction.**



Strategies

- A. Continue as an active participant to advance racial equity within St. Louis Park by training and the continued use of tools to ensure consistency and effectiveness in providing the best service in the most equitable way.

- 2. Protect the community and maintain a healthy, safe environment for city residents and businesses.**



Strategies

- A. Continue to provide leadership, mentorship and accountability that is flexible to meet changing community needs, focused on developing and preparing new leaders for the future while maintaining accountability to the community.
- B. Maintain sufficient emergency response equipment, apparatus and staffing levels to ensure community protection, provide for firefighter safety and wellbeing and plan for changes in demand for service.
- C. Continue to respond to and address health issues in the community. Pilot cost saving projects in the rapidly growing field of mobile integrated healthcare. Improve access to health care for all residents, lower the costs, and use the appropriate care for the type of call.
- D. Use all-hazards approach to emergency management and crisis in order to be prepared for any variety of incidents and disasters. Plan and prepare to be able to provide appropriate response and be resilience when the community is most vulnerable.

- 3. Encourage and promote cost-effectiveness and efficiency in our service delivery and eliminate redundancy when appropriate.**



Strategies

- A. Training- Provide oversight and management for all Fire Department training and educational programs to ensure that the local, state, and federal mandates are met.
- B. Revenue Enhancement- Identify and implement available sources of revenue in order to fund operational and structural improvements, and to lessen the burden on taxpayers. Seek to capture additional revenues through the expansion of contract services, enhanced reimbursable services and development of new value-added services for other public and private sector entities.
- C. Technology- Continue to leverage technology in fire services to help keep our community and staff safe.

- 4. Continue to build relationships within the community and promote neighborhood involvement and partnerships to promote a safe and healthy community.**



Strategies

- A. Collaborate and cooperate in a positive manner with the community as a whole. Continue to capitalize on employing the abundance of healthcare resources in our service to the community.