



BRANFORD FIRE DEPARTMENT  
45 NORTH MAIN STREET  
BRANFORD, CONNECTICUT 06405  
OFFICE OF FIRE CHIEF/EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR



February 28, 2023

All Members,  
M.P. Rice Hose Co. 2  
Short Beach Hose Hook and Ladder Co. 4  
Indian Neck, Pine Orchard Co. 9  
Stony Creek Rescue Fire Co. 5

Dear Volunteer Members,

I am writing to be transparent and clear about future staffing and how it could affect you. I, the Department, the Commission, and our community greatly appreciate you. Your hard work and dedication are noticed, respected, and commendable. There are no plans to eliminate our volunteers, but unfortunately, realities must be planned for and addressed.

- Department call volume continues to rise, with a record 6,415 calls for service last year.
- The community is growing. Several significant building projects throughout town have, or will add, hundreds of housing units, with more planned. These have combined to increase call volume and delay response times due to traffic.
- Volunteer membership has dwindled to critical levels. We have 52 members, including explorers, cadets, and fire police. Only 27 interior-certified members leave less than seven per company; 12 interior-certified members are necessary for a minimally reliable response.
- A lack of volunteer response has forced us to hire more staff and add automatic aid to maintain our current ISO rating. Even with these measures, we are frequently left without coverage and understaffed at critical times.

The reasons for dwindling membership are many and too detailed to address in this brief letter; it's a nationwide problem and only getting worse. Training, certification, physicals, and OSHA requirements are burdensome, but the law does not differentiate between paid and volunteer firefighters.

We must adapt and begin to do things differently than we have. That is why I've asked your officers to have all companies act as one. When practical, all available members should attempt to staff the volunteer unit that is announced first on an alarm. Once that unit is staffed, additional available members should staff the following engine. Carrying your gear with you and using Active 911 are great ways to be more efficient. We are providing gear bags to assist. The minimum crew size for in-town responses is one driver/operator and one interior firefighter; obviously, three would be better and preferred. This standard gives the Incident Commander confidence that they have a competent, capable crew that may be assigned a task.

We are also actively pursuing additional career staff to bolster our force and add reliability. Because Station 9 is currently the only other station that can accommodate additional staff and meets our goal of reducing response times to a more significant portion of town, they will be assigned there. We are budgeting to begin daytime-only staffing, Monday through Friday, 8:00-18:00, beginning July 1st. In the future, we intend to staff this station full-time once funding is made available. This will take time, and I want you to hear directly from me what is happening. Members of Company 9 should continue to respond as they have; any operational changes resulting from this plan are still being worked out and will be discussed with Company leadership at the appropriate

time. Beyond that, future plans include a new station on the east side of Town staffed with career members. A comprehensive plan is being prepared and will be disseminated upon completion. I realize this will upset some members, and I understand the frustration, but the criticality of the situation dictates these actions. Our continued ability to recruit, train, and retain volunteer membership is critical to maintaining the status quo. We remain committed to supporting you in every way, but we have a duty to ensure appropriate service levels and meet the community's needs.

Yours in service,

Chief Mahoney