

COMMUNITY AND SPACE NEEDS ANALYSIS

FOR THE

DALTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



August 2026



MISSION CIT
Critical Immersive Training

Photo Credit: Dalton Fire District



Community & Space Needs Analysis
Dalton Fire Department

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INTRODUCTION

MissionCIT, LLC was contracted by the Dalton, Massachusetts Fire District to conduct a needs assessment for the district. A prior strategic plan was developed for the district and is attached to this document. During this assessment the organization's strategic plan was reviewed and utilized to develop a needs assessment with positive direction for the organization. The Dalton Fire Department has undergone some significant changes over the last several years, particularly with the transition to a combination system. The Dalton Fire District has previously looked at purchasing different properties/buildings and relocating the fire station due to its recognized size limitations.

MissionCIT is pleased to have been able to work with such great leaders and staff of the Dalton Fire Department to develop the attached community and space needs analysis. Per the Request for Proposal, this included a community needs and requirements assessment, departmental analysis, and existing facility analysis & space planning or expansion options to determine the current and future needs of the fire station/fire district.

As of the writing of this report, the Dalton Fire District voters approved the purchase of an adjacent property to the current fire station. When present for the onsite visit, it was communicated that if approved, the adjacent property may be used for an expansion of the current fire station.

We would like to particularly recognize the following individuals for their input and efforts in this process.

Interim Fire Chief Ryan Foley
Administrative Deputy Chief Charlotte Crane
Prudential Commission Member Dennis Croughwell
All the men and women of the Dalton Fire Department present during the onsite visit.
Heather Widlund – SMC GIS

We would also like to thank the participants of the internal and external surveys, the latter of which included other local government officials and the public.

The Dalton Fire Department remains in a state of transition and change. The leadership has worked extremely hard to meet the challenges of a changing organization. The leadership is committed to the safety and welfare of the public and all of the members of the organization. The Dalton Fire District is continuing to make changes and improvements as they transition to a mature combination system. This report reflects the state of the current fire station, current needs, and future needs as of June 2026.



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PROJECT GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

Community Needs and Requirements Assessment

Analyze the community's geographic area, building construction, density, accessibility, traffic patterns, zoning, permits, environmental considerations, and projected community growth and demographics, using data and projections to determine requirements.

Departmental Analysis

Review organizational structure, strategic plans, and staffing analysis and suggest changes to improve efficiency and quality of service.

Existing Facility Analysis & Space Planning or Expansion Options

Identify current limitations including vehicle capacity, meeting/training spaces, office and living quarters, and overall storage capacity in order to:

- Evaluate the feasibility of expanding the current facility
- Provide square footage requirements based on projected usage
- Develop cost estimates for renovation, expansion, or new construction



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

MissionCIT was contracted by the Dalton Fire District to complete an analysis of the Dalton Fire Department. The focus was particularly to perform a community needs assessment, a departmental analysis, and an assessment and review of the existing fire station. The Dalton Fire Department currently operates out of a single station located near the center of town. The Dalton Fire Department has a total of 25 personnel assigned to fire and EMS operations as of the writing of this report. This is broken down into a full-time Fire Chief, 9 career personnel and 15 call firefighters. Career staffing is spread across four shifts or platoons, each commanded by a lieutenant. Fire apparatus and one EMS unit (Ambulance) are staffed on a 24-hour basis with a minimum of two career personnel. The Dalton Fire Department utilizes staff call-back, automatic, and mutual aid to augment assembling the required effective response force to mitigate various incidents to which it responds.

The Dalton Fire Department provides fire responses from one squad/engine, two engines, one brush truck, one utility vehicle, one Ladder Truck, and one advanced life support (ALS) ambulance. The fire department provides a response to all other hazards and types of emergencies. The service demands of this community are numerous for the department and include EMS, fire, wilderness rescue, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and other non-emergency responses. The structural risks are common to a northeast community and include large apartment buildings, old mills, and residential housing. The residential housing includes single-family homes; manufactured homes; townhouses and duplexes; apartment houses; garden-style apartments; taxpayer (public) buildings; low rise apartments; and strip mall structures. The age of many structures, multiple changes of occupancy use, and renovations potentially increase fire risks. The response time and staffing components described in this document are designed to report on the current level of service provided by the Dalton Fire Department compared to the best national practices. These components provide incident data and relevant information to be utilized for future planning and self-review of service levels for continued improvement designed to meet community expectations and mitigate emergencies effectively and efficiently.

The Dalton Fire Department has always operated out of the one fire station. Housed in the fire station are two engines, a squad/engine, one ambulance, one forestry truck, one utility truck, 2 ATVs, and a quad. In the previous year and prior to the beginning of the analysis, the Dalton Fire Department handled 1445 calls for service, of which 75 percent were EMS calls. The remaining calls included fire, rescue, and misc. emergency calls. One component of this report is the completion of a Risk Assessment of the Community. The risk assessment of the community contemplates many factors that can cause and enhance risk in a community. The risk analysis conducted by MissionCIT for Dalton considers the impact of each risk factor and defines methods to reduce that risk. The



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risk reduction recommendations include the probability of the event, consequences to the community, and impact on the organization, in this case the Dalton Fire Department.

Factors that are discussed are:

- Population and demographics
- Climate and the environment
- Buildings located in the town (the built upon environment)
- Transportation
- Targeted building/occupancy hazard
- Fire- and EMS-related risks
- Incident call volume and demand

MissionCIT measured and reported on these risks individually and as a whole. Other significant components of this report are an analysis of the current deployment of resources and the performance of these resources in terms of response times in the Dalton first due response area. Current staffing levels and patterns, department resiliency (ability to handle more than one incident), critical tasking elements for specific incident responses, and assembling adequate staffing were also evaluated. MissionCIT has provided recommendations where applicable to improve service delivery and for future planning purposes.

In summation, a comprehensive risk assessment and review of deployable assets are critical aspects. First, these reviews will assist the Dalton Fire Department in quantifying the risks that it faces. Second, the Dalton Fire Department will be better equipped to determine if the current response resources are sufficiently staffed, equipped, trained, and positioned. By examining the factors that drive service needs, a connection can be made to assembling an effective response force and response capabilities needed to adequately address the existing risks. Although it can reasonably be anticipated that the Dalton Fire Department's call volume will continue to gradually increase each year as the town grows and develops, at the present time the department appears able to handle its normal call volume the majority of the time. With the resources the department currently deploys, the department can handle most of the single unit requests for service that it receives without the need for outside assistance. However, the Dalton Fire Department relies heavily on its call-back firefighters, along with automatic and mutual aid that responds from locations that are often unstaffed and with moderate to long distances, to assemble an effective response force for building fires. Thus, it is important to assemble an effective response force in a timely manner.

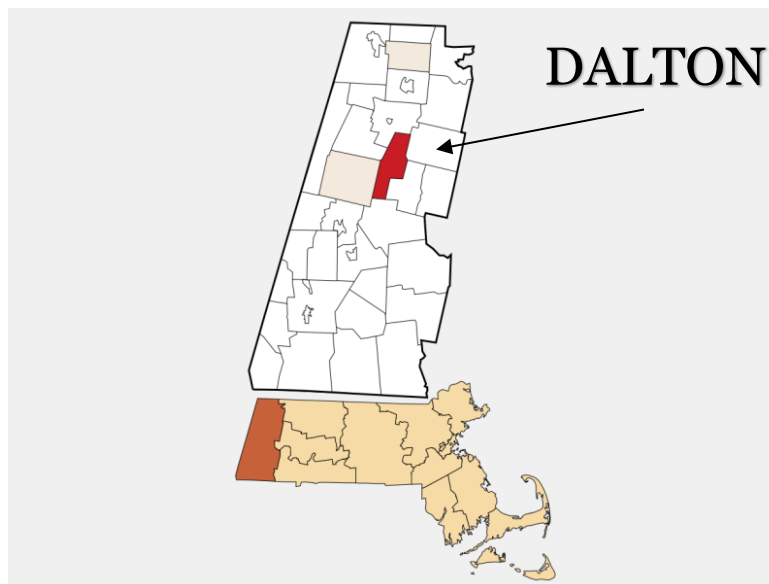


THE COMMUNITY

Fire District Demographics

The Dalton Fire Department's first due area covers an area of approximately 21.9 square miles in Dalton, Massachusetts. The Dalton Fire Department also provides significant mutual aid to several surrounding towns including Hinsdale, Peru, Windsor, and Middlefield. The permanent resident population of the fire district is approximately 6,220. However, due to the significant number of daytime employees at the local manufacturing plants that produce currency paper, the population of the district can easily reach 8,000 at any given time during the week. The Town of Dalton's overall resident population has decreased slightly since 2000. Its growth rate from 2010 to 2020 was just slightly lower than the growth rate for the closest larger city known as Pittsfield. The median age for the Town of Dalton is 49.7 years old. According to the 2020 census, the Town of Dalton had a median household income of \$47,891.

The following figure illustrates the Town of Dalton in relationship to Berkshire County and the contiguous towns.



Community Growth

The growth within the Town of Dalton and the Dalton Fire District involves primarily the construction of single-family dwellings. There is some multi-family housing that has been constructed. There are some very high-density developments in the first due response district known as the River Run Apartments, several apartments on high street, and the Pine Grove Apartments. Both development and the population is stagnant. The population has been decreasing for several years according to census data.



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One of the reasons for the stagnant building is the town's location and distance to places containing the basic needs. Pittsfield, MA contains multiple shopping areas where most Dalton residents go to obtain regular goods and services. Dalton contains state forest lands, farmlands that are protected, the Appalachian trail, and rail lines.



THE DALTON FIRE AND RESCUE SYSTEM

History

The Dalton Fire District was officially formed in 1884 as a special district within the State of Massachusetts. Firefighting was provided completely by volunteer Firefighters until approximately 2011. In 2011, Firefighting and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) started a new direction that included the introduction of some full and part time paid staffing, leading to today's combination fire department model. As part of the original and current fire district, Dalton Water Department is also managed by the Dalton Fire District. The day-to-day functions and control of the career and call personnel remain under the Dalton Fire District and the Dalton Fire Chief. Due to the EMS workload, two career Firefighter/EMT's were hired around 2011 to respond to weekday emergency calls as well as assist in coverage with the Dalton Fire Department's first due response district. Paramedics were introduced into the response model in 2022.

In 2021, the career Firefighter/EMT/Paramedics were working 16-hour shifts. The number of full-time Firefighter/EMT/Paramedics on staff in subsequent years are as follows: 2022-8, 2023-8, 2024-10, 2025-10. In 2022, there was a separation of the Fire Association and the Dalton Fire Department. The Dalton Fire District moved to hire additional career personnel to be able to provide 2 career firefighter staffing 24/7. Since then, a total of 10 career Lieutenant/Firefighter/EMT/ Paramedics have been employed consistently. The Dalton Fire Department currently has 6 per diem firefighters and 15 call personnel that are compensated hourly and paid per call. The department currently also has 3 Paramedics, and a 4th is currently in training.

Current Fire Station

The Dalton Fire Department currently provides services from one fire station that is located at 20 Flansburg Avenue, Dalton. The fire station is two stories over about a third of the footprint of the building and the remaining area is single story. The building is 9,420 square feet in size and was originally constructed in 1958 and later added onto in 2007. The finished building area is listed as 8,988 square feet. The basement area also adds to that, although at the time of this report writing, the basement area was only partially finished. The Dalton Fire Department utilizes 8,988 square feet of the fire station or 100 percent of the facility on the ground floor, which includes 4,020 square feet for apparatus storage and response area. There are several current plumbing issues and structural concerns throughout the ladder apparatus bay.

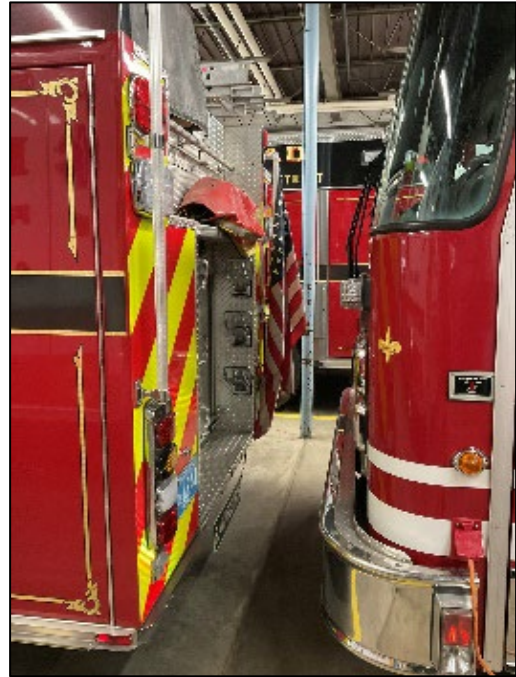
The remaining square footage is being utilized for dormitories, bathroom, day room/kitchen, and storage areas. Firefighters personal protective gear and other relevant supplies and equipment are located on the ground floor. The second floor encompasses the remaining 5,400 square feet where the combination training/meeting



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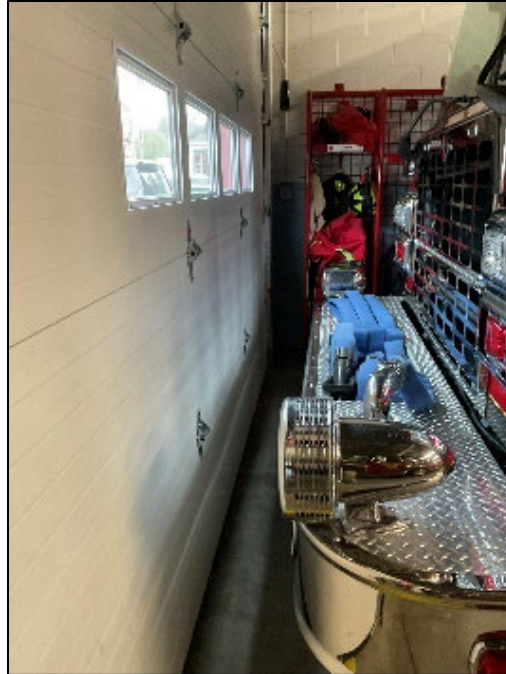
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room and kitchen are located. The ground floor apparatus storage and response houses two engine apparatus, one squad/engine apparatus, one 75-foot aerial apparatus, one ALS ambulance, two ATV's, one Quad, and one forestry apparatus. An exterior parking is utilized to locate one utility apparatus and one response trailer that do not fit inside the current fire station.





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Current Organizational Structure

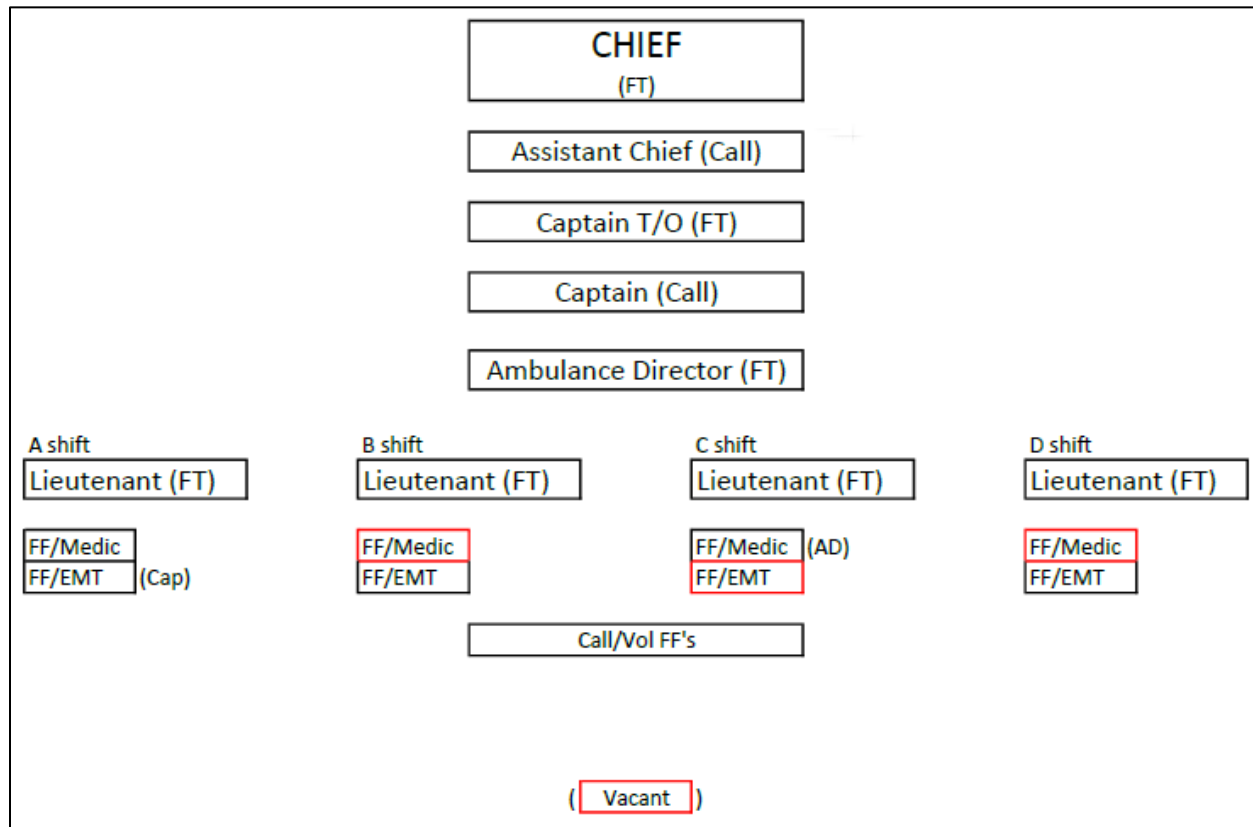
The Dalton Fire Department is a combination staffed organization. As of this report writing, the head of the organization is the Interim Fire Chief who reports to the Dalton Fire District Board. The Board is composed of elected members who are responsible for overall policy and financial management of the district. The fire chief is the head of the fire department and serves as the senior leadership. He has developed the current strategic plans and addresses town-wide fire and emergency medical services service delivery and service level issues. There is also an Assistant Chief to address and handle administrative issues and planning. The remaining fire department staff is assigned to operations.

The following figure illustrates the current organizational chart for the Dalton Fire Department.



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Figure 1: Dalton Fire Department Organizational Structure



Services Provided

The Dalton Fire Department currently provides a wide range of services to include fire suppression, EMS basic life support, EMS advanced life support transport, vehicle extrication, technical rescue, hazardous materials, and wildland mitigation and response, fire prevention, and code enforcement services.

Apparatus

The Dalton Fire Department operates with 11 response apparatus. The fire and EMS apparatus within the district includes a mix of custom and commercial fire apparatus. The custom vehicles include the fire apparatus and one new used ladder truck, both of which are well-maintained. The EMS transport (Ambulance) is in good condition. The department has a full-time Captain who also operates as the training officer.

The Dalton Fire Department operates the following fleet:

- 2 Engines – 2013 KME and a 1996 Spartan/Darley Pumper
- 1 Aerials – 1997 Spartan Aerial Innovation
- 1 Ambulance – 2024 Ford F450 Road Rescue
- 1 Squad – 2019 Toyne Spartan Rescue Pumper



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- 1 Brush Truck – 1993 International
- 1 ATV's QUAD (CanAm Outlander)
- 1 Utility Vehicle – John Deere
- 1 Utility Truck – 2019 Silverado 2500
- 1 Fire Chief Vehicle





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To ensure that the fleet is current, the Dalton Fire District evaluates any recommendation replacement by the fire chief. The district has been actively working to maintain this process and retain an up-to-date, ready fleet. Currently, the district has no known apparatus on order. The procurement, maintenance, and eventual replacement of response vehicles is one of the largest expenses incurred in sustaining a community's fire-rescue department. While it is the personnel of the Dalton Fire Department who provide emergency services within the community, the department's fleet of response vehicles is essential to operational success. Reliable vehicles are needed to deliver responders and the equipment/materials they employ to the scene of dispatched emergencies within the town. Replacement of fire-rescue response vehicles is a necessary part of fire department budgeting that should reflect careful planning. A well-planned and documented emergency vehicle replacement plan ensures ongoing preservation of a safe, reliable, and operationally capable response fleet.

A plan must also schedule future capital outlay in a manner that is affordable to the community. NFPA 1901, Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus, serves as a guide to the manufacturers that build fire apparatus and the fire departments that purchase them. The document is updated every five years, using input from the public/stakeholders through a formal review process. The committee membership is made up of representatives from the fire service, manufacturers, consultants, and special interest groups. The committee monitors various issues and problems that occur with fire apparatus and attempts to develop standards that address those issues. A primary interest of the committee over the past years has been improving firefighter safety and reducing fire apparatus crashes. With respect to recommended vehicle service life, the following excerpt is noteworthy: "It is recommended that apparatus greater than 15 years old that have been properly maintained and that are still in serviceable condition be placed in reserve status and upgraded in accordance with NFPA 1912, Standard for Fire Apparatus Refurbishing (2016), to incorporate as many features as possible of the current fire apparatus standard. This will ensure that, while the apparatus might not



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totally comply with the current edition of the automotive fire apparatus standards, many improvements and upgrades required by the recent versions of the standards are available to the firefighters who use the apparatus.” The impetus for these recommended service life thresholds is continual advances in occupant safety. Despite good stewardship and maintenance of emergency vehicles in sound operating condition, there are many advances in occupant safety, such as fully enclosed cabs, enhanced rollover protection and air bags, three-point restraints, antilock brakes, higher visibility, cab noise abatement/hearing protection, and a host of other improvements as reflected in each revision of NFPA 1901.

The current replacement schedule for Dalton Fire Department first response fire and EMS apparatus is as follows:

- Fire apparatus: Every 20 years
- EMS apparatus: Every 5 years
- Forestry/brush unit: None defined

Staffing

Staffing the Dalton Fire Department includes both paid and call personnel. The Fire Station is staffed with 2 career personnel on a 24/7 basis. The station is also staffed on weekdays with the Fire Chief, a Captain, a Lieutenant and 1 Firefighter/EMT/Paramedic. The Career Captain reports directly to the Fire Chief. Call fire and EMS personnel respond to the station or an emergency scene to assist the career personnel. They report to and take directions from the career Lieutenant, Captain, or Fire Chief. Per diem and call EMS personnel (BLS and ALS) also assist in providing staffing for EMS (Ambulance) incidents and supplementing the career staffing. As of the visit by MissionCIT, the Dalton Fire Department was in the process of evaluating the current and future needs of the EMS system. The career staffing is divided up across four shifts operating on a 24 hour on/24 hours off/24 hours on/5 days off or 48-hour work schedule. Each shift consists of a minimum of full-time personnel and is supplemented with per diem staffing at the Dalton Fire Station. There is one Lieutenant per shift and one rotating captain on one of the four shifts. The call Captain also acts as the Fleet Manager.

Staffing for fire calls and EMS continues to remain a hotly debated topic among firefighters and leadership. MissionCIT has developed metrics it follows and recommends that communities consider when making recommendations regarding staffing and deployment of fire resources. We have determined that Dalton would be classified as a combination fire department that would be covered under the recommended staffing standard known as NFPA 1750, previously known as NFPA 1720. This standard addresses the recommended staffing and initial responses to fire suppression operations, emergency medical services, special operations, and fire prevention activities. The response is broken down into four types of occupancies that are all contained in the Dalton Fire Department’s first due response district. The staffing



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requirements are further broken down by low hazard, medium hazard, and high hazard responses. The staffing needed to accomplish the critical tasks for each specific hazard are determined to be required number of firefighters to conduct firefighting operations. The firefighting staffing for each of these occupancies is detailed in NFPA 1750 (2026 edition), section 5.2.4 under deployment.

While NFPA 1750 and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) provide guidelines as to the level of staffing and response of personnel, the acceptance of these agency documents varies from state to state, and department to department. Providing adequate staffing for these environments utilizes many factors. While there are many benchmarks that communities and management utilize in justifying certain staffing levels, there are certain considerations that are data driven and reached through national consensus that serve this purpose as well. Conducting a fire risk assessment and the expectations of the community are factors that will drive the critical tasks needed to be completed on the fireground. In addition to metrics, staffing is also linked to station location, what type of apparatus is responding, that is, the combination of engine, ladder, ambulance, or specialty piece.

These combined factors help to determine what level of fire and EMS service is going to be delivered in terms of staffing, response time, and resources. Linked to these components of staffing and deployment are critical factors that drive various levels and models from which fire and EMS departments staff and deploy. These factors are Fire Risk and Vulnerability of the Community, fire protection systems, and societal challenges due to demographics and population. The Fire Risk and Vulnerability of the Community and fire protection systems are broken down into a high-, medium-, or low-hazard depending on factors such as the life and building content hazard and the potential fire flow and the staffing and apparatus types required to mitigate an emergency in the specific property.

The societal challenges due to demographics and population effect firefighting operations due to several factors: call demand and workload, types of calls to which units are responding, location of the calls, and if more than one call occurs at the same time. These same factors also affect demand for EMS, particularly population increase and the use of hospital emergency departments more frequently as many uninsured or underinsured patients rely on emergency services for their primary and emergent care, utilizing pre-hospital EMS transport systems as their entry point. Another factor that influences this is the location of the fire station and travel times from the fire station.

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards, Insurance Services Office (ISO), and OSHA requirements all provide guidance on what is acceptable in the areas of:

1. Crew Availability – The availability of crews in the department that can utilize cross-trained EMS staff to perform fire suppression.



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2. Innovations in Staffing and Deployable Apparatus – The fire department’s ability and willingness to develop and deploy innovative apparatus (combining two apparatus functions into one to maximize available staffing, as an example).
3. Community Expectations – Measuring, understanding, and meeting community expectations.

Law and Regulations

NFPA 1750 and Four-Person Staffing Users of NFPA standards should consult applicable federal, state, and local laws and regulations. NFPA does not, by the publication of its codes, standards, recommended practices, and guides, intend to urge action that is not in compliance with applicable laws, and these documents may not be construed as doing so.

NFPA 1750 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations, and fire prevention activities to the Public by Career, Combination, and Volunteer Fire Departments details staffing levels for fire departments in terms of fire, EMS, and special operation incidents. According to NFPA 1750, fire departments should base their capabilities on a formal community risk assessment, as discussed in this report, and take into consideration:

- Life hazard to the population protected.
- Provisions for safe and effective firefighting performance conditions for the firefighters.
- Potential property loss.
- Nature, configuration, hazards, and internal protection of the properties involved.
- Types of fireground tactics and evolutions employed as standard procedure, type of apparatus used, and results expected to be obtained at the fire scene.

This staffing configuration of NFPA 1750 is designed to ensure a fire department can complete the critical tasking necessary on building fires and other emergency incidents simultaneously rather than consecutively and efficiently assemble an effective response force. OSHA Code of Federal Regulations, NFPA 1500, and Two-In/Two-Out suggest that the Dalton Fire Department should respond to structural fires with five, six, or seven firefighters, depending on staffing levels at the moment of the call for a building fire. The Dalton Fire Department must provide the minimum number of firefighters on the initial response in order to comply with OSHA CFR 1910.134, and NFPA 1500 regarding two in/two-out rules and a rapid intervention team (RIT). OSHA CFR 1910.134 states “Procedures for interior structural firefighting. The employer shall ensure that: (i) At least two employees enter the IDLH atmosphere and remain in visual or voice contact with one another at all times; (ii) At least two employees are located



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outside the IDLH atmosphere; and (iii) All employees engaged in interior structural firefighting use SCBAs.”

According to the standard, one of the two individuals located outside the IDLH atmosphere may be assigned to an additional role, such as incident commander in charge of the emergency or safety officer, so long as this individual is able to perform assistance or rescue activities without jeopardizing the safety or health of any firefighter working at the incident. NFPA 1500 has similar language as OSHA CFR 1910.134 to address the issue of two-in/two-out by stating the initial stages of the incident where only one crew is operating in the hazardous area of a working structural fire, a minimum of four individuals shall be required consisting of two members working as a crew in the hazardous area and two standby members present outside this hazard area available for assistance or rescue at emergency operations where entry into the danger area is required.

In order to meet CFR 1910.134 and NFPA 1500, Dalton Fire Department must utilize two personnel to commit to an interior fire attack while two firefighters remain out of the hazardous area or immediately dangerous to life and health (IDLH) area to form the IRIT, while attack lines are charged and a continuous water supply is established. However, NFPA 1500 allows for fewer than four personnel under specific circumstances. It states: “Initial attack operations shall be organized to ensure that if on arrival at the emergency scene, initial attack personnel find an imminent life-threatening situation where immediate action could prevent the loss of life or serious injury, such action shall be permitted with fewer than four personnel.” 28 CFR 1910.134 also states that nothing in section (g) is meant to preclude firefighters from performing emergency rescue activities before an entire team has assembled. Ultimately, on-duty fire department staffing is a local government decision. The Dalton Fire Department utilizes a cross-staffing model for staffing its engine, ladder, and ambulance companies. The reality is that Dalton Fire Department relies heavily on the assistance of automatic aid companies, and given its nature of cross-staffing units, unit reliability can vary from incident to incident.

Emergency medical service (EMS) operations are an important component of the comprehensive emergency services delivery system in any community. Together with the delivery of EMS and fire services, it forms the backbone of the community’s overall public safety net. As will be noted in several sections of this report, the Dalton Fire Department, like many, if not most fire departments, respond to significantly more emergency medical incidents and low acuity incidents than actual fires or other types of emergency incidents. The EMS component of the emergency services delivery system is more heavily regulated than the fire side.

In addition to NFPA Standard 1750, Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, Special Operations, and fire prevention activities to the Career, Combination, and Volunteer Fire Departments (2026 Edition),



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NFPA 450 Guidelines for Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and Systems, (2009 edition), provides a template for local stakeholders to evaluate EMS operations and to make improvements based on that evaluation. The State of Massachusetts Department of Public Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services, and the Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 111C regulate EMS (Ambulance) agencies. As a percentage of overall incidents responded to by the emergency agencies in most communities, it could be argued that EMS incidents constitute the greatest number of “true” emergencies, where intervention by trained personnel does truly make a difference, sometimes literally between life and death. Berkshire Medical Center provides the Medical Director and is in close contact with Dalton Fire Department.

The public safety answering point (PSAP) located in Dalton also utilizes the NFPA standards and guidelines when it dispatches emergency medical service incidents. The Dalton Fire Department utilizes this terminology to determine the staffing of the incident, which in turn determines the response levels, from hot (lights and siren) to cold (non-emergency response). It also determines how the Dalton Fire Department staffs the ambulance once the incident is received and whether a paramedic is required. Dalton Fire Department responds with two personnel on the ambulance, one EMT and one EMT or paramedic. The engine/squad will be added in cases of a serious call type or motor vehicle accident or vehicle extrication or additional needed staffing for the incident.



CALL FIREFIGHTER RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Dalton Fire District is currently in a state of change as it has transitioned from a once completely call organization into a combination staffed organization over the last 11 years. The call system provided all responses prior to the hiring of career staff for the fire station. The call system once had 30 or more call personnel that is now down to 15 call firefighters. The call system still provides additional staffing responses to EMS and fire incidents. The call personnel are expected to communicate with the Fire Chief and/or Captain or Lieutenant when they are in station or at an emergency incident. In addition, they are expected to participate in training that occurs at the station when available. The call personnel are expected to respond to calls if they are available or if there is any significant incident.

This change in the call response system has been somewhat confusing and disappointing in the opinion of the call members. Through interview sessions facilitated by MissionCIT, it was revealed that some members do not feel that they can attend training with any frequency due to personal time constraints. In addition, because the career staff automatically respond to every incident without waiting for call personnel, the call personnel typically respond to the station only to wait for the career staffing to return. This has caused concerns within the ranks. Even with the transition to combination staffing, the call response to incidents has remained stable although more call firefighters are desired.



FIRE AND EMS RESPONSE METHODOLOGIES

Fire, rescue, and EMS incidents, and the fire department's ability to respond to, manage, and mitigate them effectively, efficiently, and safely, are mission-critical components of the emergency services delivery system. Nationwide, fire departments are responding to more EMS calls and fewer fire calls, particularly fire calls that result in active firefighting operations by responders. This is well documented in both national statistical data, as well as in other MissionCIT fire studies. Dalton's experience is consistent with these trends. Nationally, improved building construction, code enforcement, automatic sprinkler systems, and aggressive public education programs have contributed to a decrease in serious fires and, more importantly, fire deaths among civilians.

These trends and improvements in the overall fire protection system are notwithstanding, as fires still do occur and the largest percentage occur in residential occupancies placing the civilian population at risk. Although fires occur less frequently than they did several decades ago, when they occur today, they grow much quicker and burn more intensely than they did in the past. This is due to building construction features, more flammable interior finishes and furniture, and in the case of localities such as Dalton with older buildings, multiple renovations that have led to hidden voids and spaces that act as channels for fire and smoke.



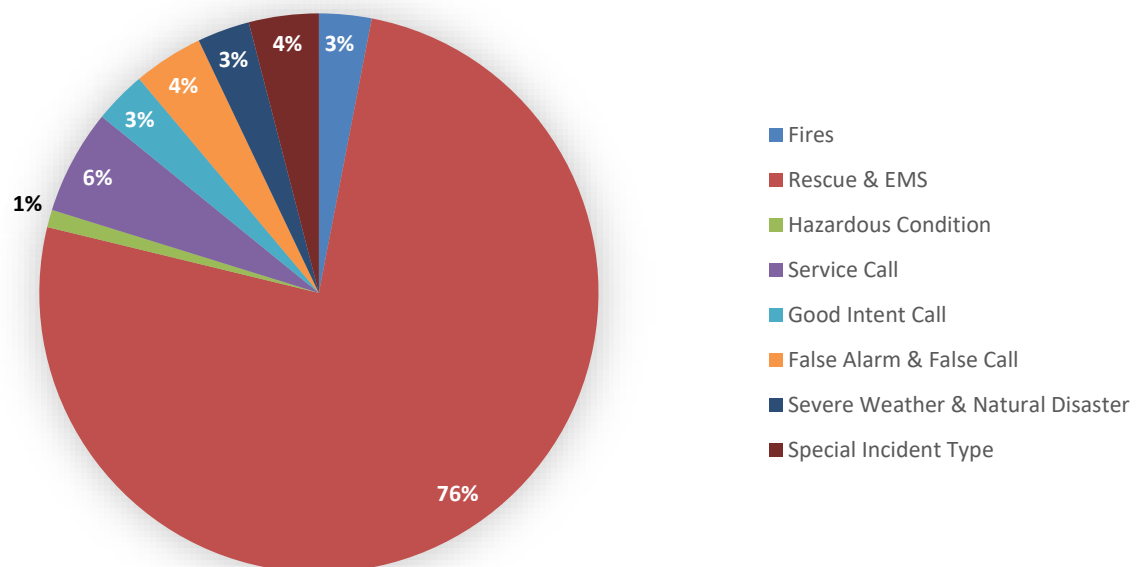
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COMMUNITY RISKS

Some of the highest community risks are the lack of access to water in non-hydranted areas. Extensive mutual aid incidents when responding to the volunteer fire department areas of Windsor, Hindsdale, Peru, and Cheshire also pose limited risks. Transient populations can add significant community risks. In Dalton, the transient population includes a large regional school district and a sharp increase in the workforce of greater than 1,500 per day. Dalton borders the City of Pittsfield to the West that contributes to increases in traffic as well. Nearby Pittsfield contains the local hospital known as the Berkshire Medical Center that the Dalton EMS (Ambulance) transports to.

During the MissionCIT data analysis study period of January 1, 2021 to June 1, 2026, the Dalton Fire Department responded to an average of 1,320 calls for service each year. The following figure details the call types and totals for these types of fire-related risks in 2025:

Figure 2: Call Type Totals, 2025



Key takeaways from this data are:

- Fire calls for the study period totaled 3 percent of all calls.
- False alarm calls were the largest category of fire calls and made-up 4 percent of all calls.



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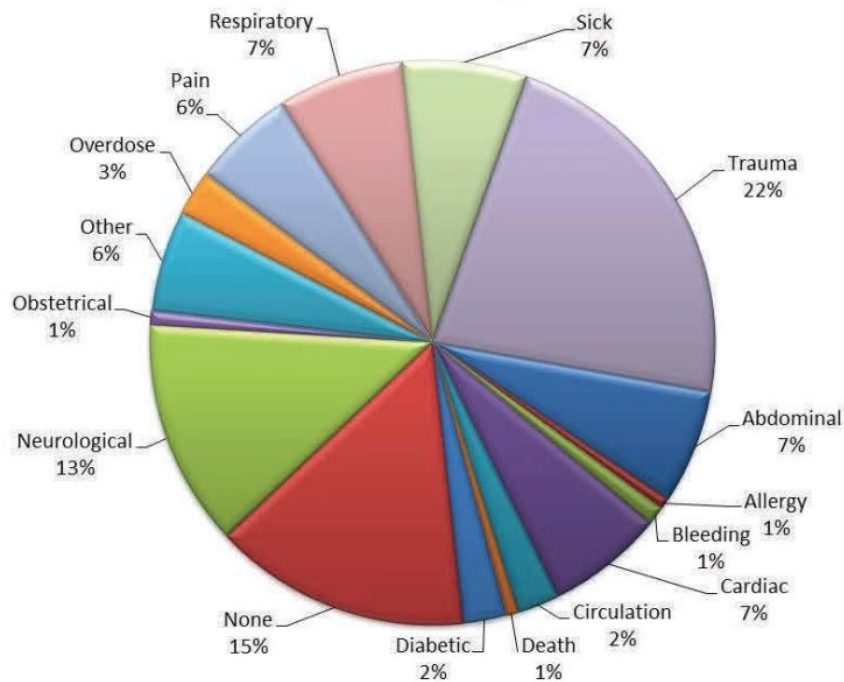
- Service calls made up 6 percent of the total calls. These could be further broken down and often require the most time for firefighters to be on scene for.

EMS-Related Risk

As with fire risks, an indication of the community's pre-hospital emergency medical risk is the type and number of EMS calls to which the fire department responds. During the MissionCIT data analysis study period of January 1, 2025, to December 31, 2025, the Dalton Fire Department responded to 1,084 EMS (Ambulance) related calls for service.

The following figure outlines the call type and totals for the types of EMS incidents. The key risk takeaways from this data are the sheer call volume and the different types of incidents that personnel respond to. Each incident requires multiple parts including responding, patient contact and assessment, patient movement, transporting the patient, and then cleaning the ambulance and decontamination. Each phase contains a level of risk to the responders and can be minimized by the actions and precautions taken to lower the risk. The data does not provide the true picture to be able to further break down and categorize the exact level of risk for each type of incident.

Figure 3: Call Type Totals for Major EMS Categories, 2025



Risk Categorization and Classification

A comprehensive risk assessment is a critical aspect that can assist the Dalton Fire Department in quantifying the risks that it faces in the town. The risks that the Dalton Fire Department faces can be natural or man-made and are compounded with the age of



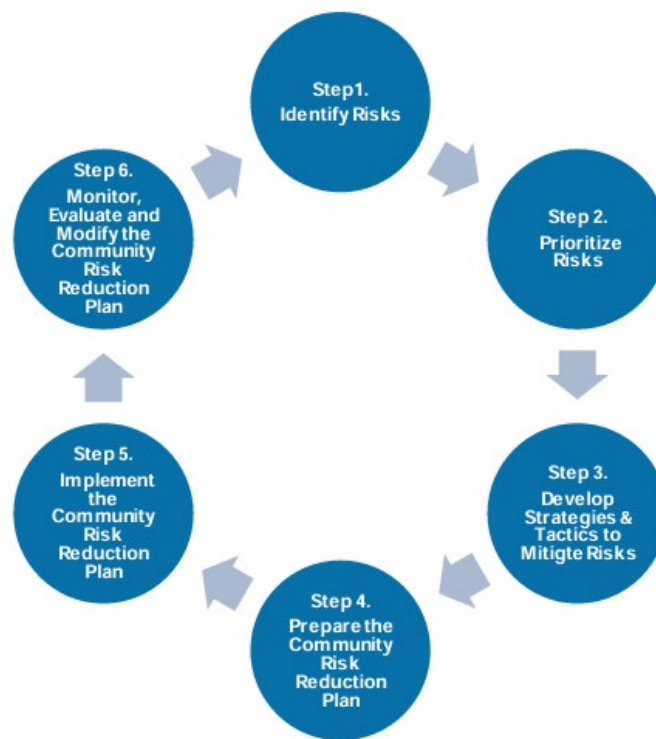
Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

the structures contained within the town. MissionCIT evaluated and categorized current risks the department faces and is providing recommendations to enable the department to be better equipped. We determined if the current response resources are sufficiently staffed, equipped, trained, and positioned. In this component, the factors that drive the service needs are examined and then linked directly to discussions regarding contemplating the response capabilities needed to adequately address the existing risks.

The 6 steps below were utilized to evaluate the community risks for Dalton and categorized as Low, Moderate, or High. The risk analysis considered the impact of each risk to the organization and evaluates risk.

Figure 4: Steps to Evaluate Community Risk¹



Community Risks

- Limited water access in non-hydranted areas: **HIGH RISK**
- Mutual aid dependence on larger or outlying incidents: **MEDIUM RISK**
- Daytime population and traffic increases raise service demand: **MEDIUM RISK**
- Older and mixed-use buildings increase fire spread risk: **MEDIUM RISK**
- EMS drives most calls, straining resources: **HIGH RISK**
- Call overlap and low staffing increase operational pressure: **HIGH RISK**

¹ Components of a CRR plan. Vision 20/20 Project: Community Risk Reduction.
<https://riskreduction.strategicfire.org/components-of-crr-plan>



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Fire and EMS Demand Challenges

The fire and EMS risk in terms of numbers and types of incidents is important when analyzing a community's risk, as outlined above. Analyzing where the fire and EMS incidents occur, and the demand density of fire and EMS incidents, determines adequate fire management zone resource assignment and deployment.



DISPATCH/COMMUNICATIONS

The Town of Dalton operates an Emergency Communications Center (ECC) out of the basement of the Dalton Town Hall. This function operates out of a small space that includes two dispatch consoles and a computer server/storage area. The ECC is responsible for receiving emergency and non-emergency calls for service and handling emergency and non-emergency radio traffic for the Dalton Fire and Police Departments. The dispatch center receives calls for a total of 3 towns. Operationally, the primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP) for the town is located in the Dalton Dispatch Center. A 911 call is received in the dispatch center, processed, and the Dalton Fire Department is dispatched. For EMS calls, the Dalton PSAP dispatch software program designed to prioritize EMS calls, recommends the most appropriate response resources, and provides the call-taker with pre-arrival instructions for life-threatening situations.

Dalton does receive transferred 911 calls from other local towns via telephone. In these cases, the Dalton dispatcher may communicate with the actual caller and gather information about the incident including the nature of the complaint, the address, and other pertinent incident information to enable the dispatcher to dispatch the appropriate agencies. Once the dispatcher receives any follow-up phone calls with additional information, the responding unit(s) will be updated. The Dalton ECC has a staffing complement of one dispatcher on duty. All shifts (eight hours, day and evening) are typically staffed with one dispatcher. The on-duty dispatcher(s) is/are responsible for call-taking and dispatching functions for police, fire, and EMS incidents for 3 towns.





TRAINING

The Dalton Fire Department has had a somewhat inconsistent training program over the last few years for various reasons, including the transition to combination staffing and a lack of a consistent training officer. However, they are in the process of seeking and appointing a training officer with the hopes of improving the training program for all personnel. This is outlined in the Dalton Fire Department 1-year strategic plan.

There are training requirements for full-time firefighters. They are required to attend the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy (MFA) and obtain their Pro-board FF1 and FF2 either before or after hire. On-call members are required to be CPR and first responder certified and trained in specific fire ground tasks prior to being allowed to perform such duties. Interior firefighters are required to be FF1 and FF2 trained. In addition, there is a minimum training attendance requirement. The prudential committee is also currently looking to have minimum training requirements that would benefit the call firefighters who would then receive a tax break.



FUNDING

The Dalton Fire Department operated on an annual budget of approximately \$1.7 million for the 2025-2026 fiscal year. The 2026-2027 budget was just approved for \$1.8 million, an increase of 7 percent. The primary funding comes from the Dalton Fire District. Approximately 79% of its operating budget comes from property taxes levied within the district. The current millage rate within the Dalton Fire District is 1.48 mills. The remaining 21% of its budget revenue comes from EMS transport fee revenue received. The EMS (Ambulance) billing is being handled by a third-party billing company and is managed by the ambulance director. The current collection rate is unknown. The district has approximately \$50,000 in contingency funds. There is a stabilization fund for large purchases. There is no funding from the town for fire apparatus, however the forest warden provides \$5,000 a year and forestry equipment.

The personnel costs within the budget for salaries, wages and benefits account for 75% of the total expenditures for 2025. This percentage is somewhat lower than what is normally seen in fire departments with career staffing. Normally, personnel costs can account for between 75-85% of a department's operating budget.



ISO RATING

Background

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) is a not-for-profit company that rates the ability of fire departments across the country to respond to and be able to handle the fire risks within their community.



The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria used in reviewing the fire prevention and fire suppression capabilities of individual communities or fire protection areas. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire protection system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPC®). The FSRS lists many items (facilities and practices) that a community should have to fight fires effectively. The schedule is performance based and assigns credit points for each item. Using the credit points and various formulas, a total score is calculated on a scale of 0 to 105.5².

To receive certain PPC ratings, a community must meet minimum criteria. After a community meets those criteria, the PPC rating depends on the community's score on the point scale. The FSRS considers three main areas of a community's fire suppression system: emergency communications, fire department (including operational considerations), and water supply. In addition, it includes a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation. Each component is graded on a point system after an evaluation. After the points are totaled, a divergence is used to end up with the final score to determine the class that the fire department is awarded. Classes range between a Class 1, which represents the best scoring classification, and Class 10, which indicates that no fire department is available².

Emergency communications

A maximum of 10 points of a community's overall score is based on how well the fire department receives and dispatches fire alarms. An ISO field representative evaluates:

- the emergency reporting system
- the communications center, including the number of telecommunicators
- computer-aided dispatch (CAD) facilities
- the dispatch circuits and how the center notifies firefighters about the location of the emergency²

² Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) Overview. Verisk. <https://www.isomitigation.com/ppc/fsrs/>



Fire department

A maximum of 50 points of the overall score is based on the fire department. An ISO representative reviews the distribution of fire departments throughout the area and checks that the fire department tests its pumps regularly and inventories each engine and ladder company's equipment according to NFPA 1901. They also review the fire department's records to determine factors such as:

- type and extent of training provided to fire company personnel
- number of people who participate in training
- firefighter response to emergencies
- maintenance and testing of the fire department's equipment²

Water supply

A maximum of 40 points of the overall score is based on the community's water supply. This part of the survey focuses on whether the community has sufficient water supply for fire suppression beyond daily maximum consumption. An ISO representative surveys all components of the water supply system. They also review fire hydrant inspections and frequency of flow testing. Finally, they count the number of fire hydrants that are no more than 1,000 feet from the representative locations².

Community risk reduction

The Community Risk Reduction section of the FSRS offers a maximum of 5.5 points, resulting in 105.5 total points available in the FSRS. The inclusion of this section for "extra points" allows recognition for those communities that employ effective fire prevention practices, without unduly affecting those who have not yet adopted such measures. The addition of Community Risk Reduction gives incentives to those communities who strive proactively to reduce fire severity through a structured program of fire prevention activities².

The areas of community risk reduction evaluated in this section include:

- fire prevention
- fire safety education
- fire investigation

Currently, the Dalton Fire Department is rated as Class 5 as of 2017. This rating applies to any property located within 5 road miles of a recognized fire station. A lower rating applies to those properties located beyond 1,000 feet of a fire hydrant but within 5 road miles of a fire station. Those areas of the Dalton Fire Department's response district located outside of a 5-road mile area of a fire station are rated as a Class 10.



Community & Space Needs Analysis

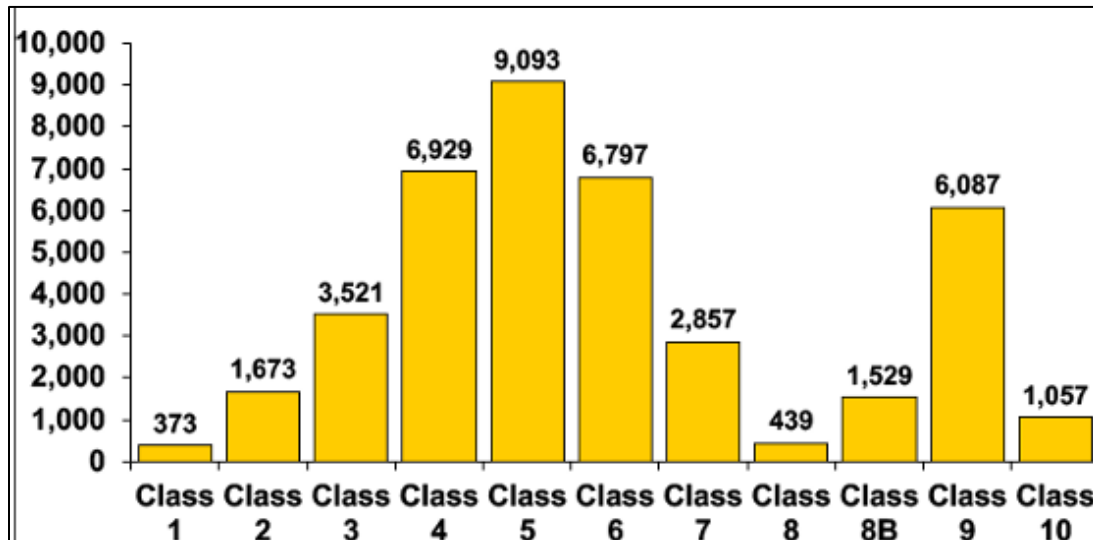
Dalton Fire Department

The Dalton Fire Department's point total from 2017 was only 1.99 points away from being rated as a Class 4 department. The areas from the 2017 rating that indicated the most opportunity for improvement include the following:

- Deployment Analysis – Includes the number and proximity of fire station(s) to the risks
- Company Personnel – Includes the number of personnel responding to incidents
- Training – Includes the availability of a training facility and the frequency and amount of training for personnel

There is an additional opportunity for improvement in the Emergency Communications area, but currently, this function is not under the direct control or oversight of the Dalton Fire Department.

Figure 5: Nationwide ISO Ratings for Fire Departments



Source: ISO Public Protection Classifications Nationwide

The Dalton Fire Department currently provides fire safety inspections for various services performed. All current officers are trained as fire prevention officers. The administrative Deputy Fire Chief also conducts oil burner inspections. The list of inspections and permit fee schedules can be found in Appendix 6. The current efforts to provide inspections are a key area of community risk reduction efforts. These efforts can be further expanded when additional staffing is added to the department to further divide the workload and ensure that routine inspections are conducted/completed.

There are also other areas that have contributed community risk reduction efforts including various preventive programs that have been successful in educating the public in areas including AED, Stop the Bleed, Fire Prevention, and Fire Extinguisher trainings.



Adopting the Five “E’s” of Community Risk Reduction

National best practices suggest that Community Risk Reduction Programs should include the Five E’s of Emergency Response: Education, Enforcement, Engineering, Economic Incentives, and Emergency Response.

Figure 6: Five E's of Community Risk Reduction



Education can influence behavior by increasing awareness and providing information and knowledge with the intention of producing a desired behavior.³

Engineering applies to changes in the physical environment. Modifying a product or environment to prevent or mitigate injury, death, or destruction of property is an engineering tactic. Changes are often the result of advances in technology.³

Enforcement applies to reducing risks (hazards) through the legislative process of strengthening and adoption of applicable laws. This includes enforcing those laws through various inspection programs or methods, and, in some cases, imposing penalties for non-compliance.³

Economic Incentives encourage or influence individuals and organizations to make certain choices or behave in specific ways. Incentives can influence behavior either negatively or positively. Negative economic incentives result in monetary punishment for “inappropriate” behavior or making certain choices. Fines, citations, and tickets are examples of negative incentives intended to discourage people from choosing unsafe behaviors. Positive economic incentives reward people for behaving in a certain manner or making certain choices. Free smoke alarms are one example. Sales, coupons, and discounts are examples used to persuade people to do business. In one U.S. community,

³ *Strategies & Tactics*. Vision 20/20 Project: Community Risk Reduction.
<https://riskreduction.strategicfire.org/develop-mitigation-strategies-tactics/strategies-tactics/>



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local government uses positive incentives by offering a one-time reduction in property taxes for retrofitting a home with a fire sprinkler system.³

Emergency Response is the deployment of fire departments, EMS providers, and law enforcement agencies emergency response capabilities to mitigate risk. A community must consider the ability to provide adequate emergency services when developing a Community Risk Reduction Plan. Communities can only mitigate some risks by enhancing current capabilities, or by adding new emergency response resources. The most effective risk-reduction strategies are those that apply a broad-based approach utilizing a combination of prevention and mitigation strategies. Using multiple interventions can prevent incidents from occurring, and when prevention fails, can reduce or mitigate the impact of an event.³



WORKLOAD

In 2021, the Dalton Fire Department responded to 1,233 calls for service. Approximately 67.88% of the call totals were for Rescue and Emergency Medical Services incidents. This total represented a 19% increase in calls from 2020.

The Dalton Fire Department ambulance responded 837 times in 2021, which was a 21.9% increase over ambulance runs in 2020. In 2022, the Dalton Fire Department responded to 1,297 calls for service and ambulance runs totaled

940. The calls for service represents an increase of approximately 5% over 2021 totals or an increase of approximately 23.9% over the last two years. In 2023, the Dalton Fire Department responded to 1,625 calls for service and in 2024, the total calls for service were 1,001. The Dalton Fire Department responded to 1,445 total calls in 2025. Over the past 5 years, the call load within the Dalton Fire Department's district trends upward, but at a slightly slower pace than previous studies projected.



If an average workload trend of 5% increase per year continued over the next five years, the fire district would be responding to approximately 1700 calls for service in 2027. If a more aggressive annual increase of 9% was seen, the fire district would be responding to almost 2,100 calls for service in 2027.

A review of the response data from 2021 and 2022 (year to date) indicates approximately a 9-10% call concurrency rate. That means that 9-10% of the time, an additional call is dispatched within 30 minutes of the prior call. Currently, due to the volume of responses of the Dalton Fire Department, this number is less than 150 times a year. The rate does not indicate severity of the first or second call, or how long the call lasts. It can be a measure of resources not being available in their primary response area to respond to an additional call, and that resources may have to be dispatched from other, outlying stations. The call concurrency rate should be monitored by the Dalton Fire Department to see if it increases. If this rate continues to increase, along with the overall call volume, that might be an indication of the need for additional resources or stations to respond. As is typical in most integrated fire/EMS organizations, EMS calls are the largest call type. Over 75% of the total annual workload of the department occurred from EMS incidents in 2025.



HEALTH, SAFETY, AND WELLNESS

The MissionCIT team evaluated several aspects of firefighter health, safety, and wellness, beginning with a review of any existing programs or initiatives. There were no cancer prevention programs or initiatives noted during our on-site visit. When conducting an evaluation of the fire station, the first item that was noticed was the lack of a diesel exhaust source capture system. There was no system installed and no immediate plans to install a system. The lack of a system is a concern because diesel emissions contain harmful contaminants that have been linked to several types of cancer. The lack of a system inhibits diesel emissions to settle on all surfaces throughout the fire station including firefighting turnout gear. The ventilation system for the fire station also is not capable of adequately and quickly removing diesel emissions to protect firefighters from contaminants.

The current fire station also poses various tripping hazards due to fire equipment being stored throughout the apparatus floor and in between the apparatus in the fire station. A general lack of storage areas poses unnecessary risks for firefighters. The only shower in the fire station is located in the far apparatus bay. This location does not comply with various recommended standard practices including NFPA 1500 that define that station living areas must have separation between the apparatus bays. There was also no decontamination area noted anywhere in the fire station. The decontamination area is needed to provide firefighters and EMS personnel with an area to remove firefighting gear including uniforms and be able to self-decontaminate as required in the various cancer prevention documents and standards.

The MissionCIT study team noted also a fitness and workout area in the basement of the fire station, which appeared to still be under construction. When asked, the area was reported to be a work in progress. No formal fitness and wellness program are currently in effect for firefighters.

Firefighting gear is issued to individuals of the department and the department is also issuing individual SCBA masks to its firefighters.





INTERNAL MEMBER SURVEY SUMMARIES

The following are the results of the Strengths, Opportunity, Weakness, and Challenges that were asked to the interim fire chief:

- Strength – EMS
- Opportunity – Upgrade facility
- Weakness – Staffing, manpower
- Challenges – Funding, space, staffing-recruitment, retention

The following are the results of the Internal Member survey. A full breakdown of all the data can be found in Appendix 4.

- *Workforce* – Mixed career, volunteer, and combination personnel with experience ranging from new members to 15+ years.
- *Key Themes* – Training is inconsistent, communication varies, morale is mixed, safety is generally positive, and leadership confidence is divided.
- *Top Issues* – Staffing shortages, aging facilities, apparatus replacement needs, training gaps, communication issues, and leadership accountability.
- *Strategic Goals* – Increase staffing, improve training, upgrade facilities, implement leadership standards, and develop capital plans.
- *Opportunities* – Recruitment programs, community outreach, regional training partnerships, and standardized evaluations.
- *Facilities* – Main station built in the late 1950s, rated in fair condition with space and modernization limitations.
- *Apparatus* – Fleet condition ranges from good to poor, with older units still in service and limited long-term replacement planning.



FIRE STATION ASSESSMENT AND SPACE ANALYSIS

As part of its contract with MissionCIT, the Dalton Fire District requested a non-engineering assessment of the current fire station while the team was on-site. The District is evaluating whether to pursue a complete renovation of the existing facility or construct a new station. MissionCIT visited the site on May 6, 2026, and completed the assessment summarized below.

Exterior Tour

The Dalton Fire Station is located at 20 Flansburg Avenue in downtown Dalton on a 0.3663-acre parcel. According to the Town of Dalton's Property Information System, the building was constructed in 1958 and includes 9,420 square feet of gross building area, with 8,988 square feet listed as finished space.

The building is primarily concrete construction with brick veneer exterior walls. Steel bar joists support the second-floor areas. The roof is gable construction with asphalt shingles. In 2007, the building was expanded with the addition of an apparatus bay.

During the on-site assessment, visible brick and structural members appeared to be in good condition. The roof was not viewed directly; however, no signs of water intrusion were observed during the interior inspection.

The existing building occupies most of the available lot, which significantly limits on-site expansion options as described below:

- Rear/east – no available room for expansion.
- Front/west – expansion is not feasible because the area is needed for apparatus response from the truck bays.
- Right/south – expansion is constrained by shared parking with a local restaurant and a multi-story building.
- Left/north – the only viable on-site expansion area is a small parking lot adjacent to the station.

North of the parking lot is a two-story multi-family dwelling with adjacent yards. The Town's Property Information System identifies that parcel as 0.1869 acres. According to interviews with the Fire Chief, the Fire District is currently in the process of attempting to acquire this property for potential expansion or other uses in the future.

The driving surfaces around the building were predominantly asphalt with a small amount of concrete at the station's apparatus bays, entry points and exit points. The asphalt is in fair condition and should be considered for replacement in the next 12 – 18 months.



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*Small Parking Lot at Alpha/Bravo Corner
(north side of the building)*



*Partial View of Front Pad
(west side of the building)*



*Rear of Building at Charlie/Delta Corner
(east side of the building)*



Interior Assessment

The MissionCIT assessment team was given an interior tour of the facility by the Fire Chief and on-duty fire personnel. The tour was informative and provided valuable insight into the spaces currently in use. Overall, the building interior is in fair condition and reflects nearly 70 years of continuous service. The tour also indicated that several existing spaces are undersized for their current functions.

The main entrance to the facility is a single door on the west side of the building adjacent to the apparatus bays. In many communities the fire station is a central hub for the community by providing meeting space, hosting fundraisers and dinners, and providing risk reduction programs like cardio-pulmonary resuscitation (CPR) training. The current entry way has been refurbished with new tile and paint. However, due to the layout and original construction of the building it is small, narrow, and potentially difficult for the public to find its way to the offices. Also, it is not controlled (secure). Any future renovation or rebuilding should consider the enhancement of the main entry way to help the public into and out of the facility, as well as providing security for the employees working in the building.

Areas and spaces on the first floor include:

- The administrative office
- The Fire Chief's office
- Sleeping quarters for the full-time personnel (3 per shift)
- Hallways and corridors to connect the spaces
- Men's restroom/janitorial area (combined space)
- Women's restroom
- Full time personnel's office space and watch area
- Apparatus bays with limited storage space
- Shower area (single shower in the apparatus bays)
- Stairwell access to the second-floor spaces

Areas and spaces on the second floor include:

- Multi-purpose room (currently set up for public meetings, a small dayroom area, and three offices)
- Kitchen

Administrative and Fire Chief's Offices

The Administrative offices are the most public offices on the first floor. The offices have been updated and are in good condition. As can be seen in the photos below, the administrative office is heated and cooled by a split HVAC unit. The station's aging and undersized boiler needs assistance in maintaining the required climate in the interior spaces in the colder seasons and the air conditioning provided by the split unit is



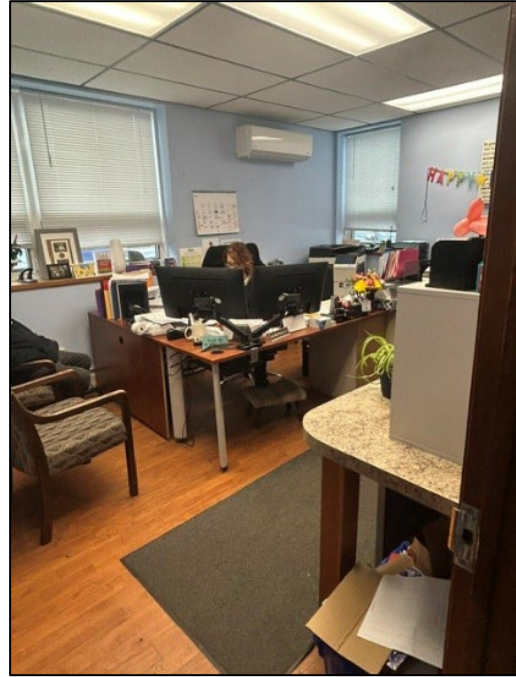
Community & Space Needs Analysis

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necessary for the warmer parts of the year. Storage is also a concern for the administrative office. The walls and ceilings in the office are in good shape and have been well maintained. The Fire Chief's office is well maintained but suffers from the same storage challenges as the Administrative office.



Administrative Office



Administrative Office Work/Storage Area



Administrative Office Work/Storage Area



Administrative Office Storage Area



Community & Space Needs Analysis Dalton Fire Department



Fire Chief's Office

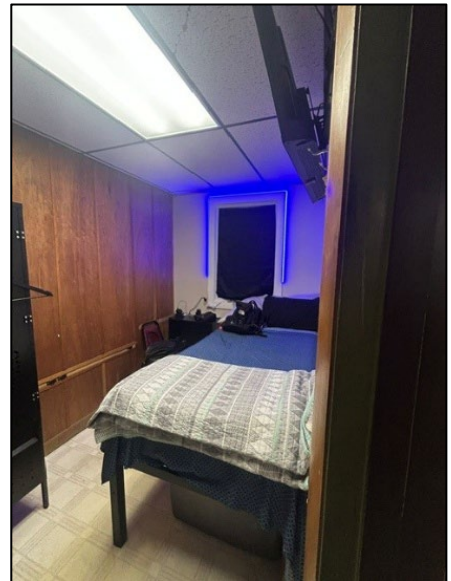
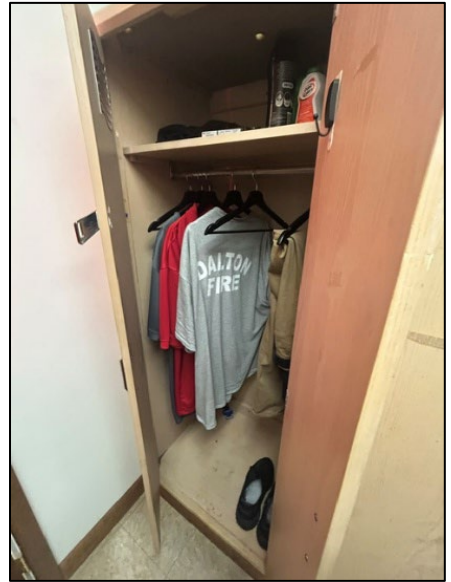
Sleeping Quarters for Full Time Employees

The station provides individual sleeping quarters for the District's full-time duty crews; however, these areas appear to have been added or adapted after the original construction of the facility rather than designed as part of a comprehensive living-quarters plan. The sleeping rooms are small, constrained, and not ideally located for efficient response because access to the apparatus bays is indirect. Each room observed included a twin bed and locker storage, and the available locker capacity appears sufficient for up to six firefighters. While the provision of individual rooms is a positive feature for privacy and rest, the overall layout, size, and support infrastructure do not meet the expectations of a modern 24-hour fire station environment.

Shower and restroom access is another significant limitation. No dedicated shower facilities were observed within or immediately adjacent to the sleeping quarters; the only shower identified was a single shower located in the apparatus bay area. This arrangement is not ideal for privacy, firefighter health, or contamination-control practices. Future improvements should consider properly sized individual sleeping rooms, direct and efficient access to the apparatus bays, integrated station alerting, adequate electrical service and charging locations, private restroom and shower facilities, and clear separation between clean living areas and operational or contaminated zones.

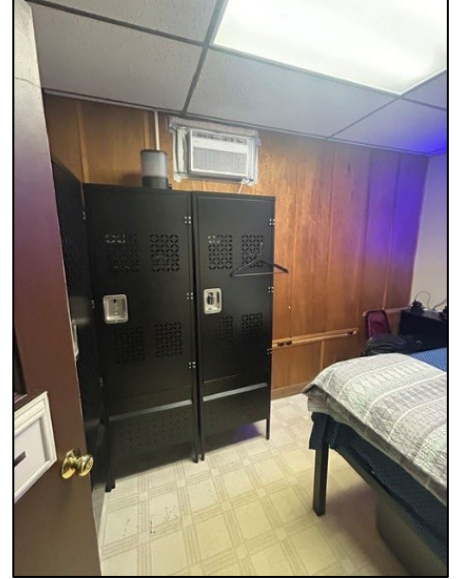
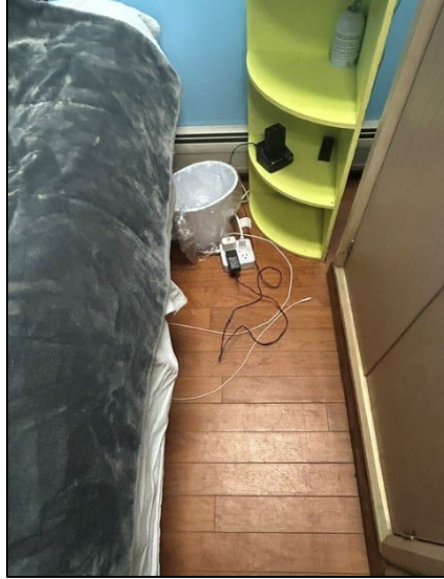


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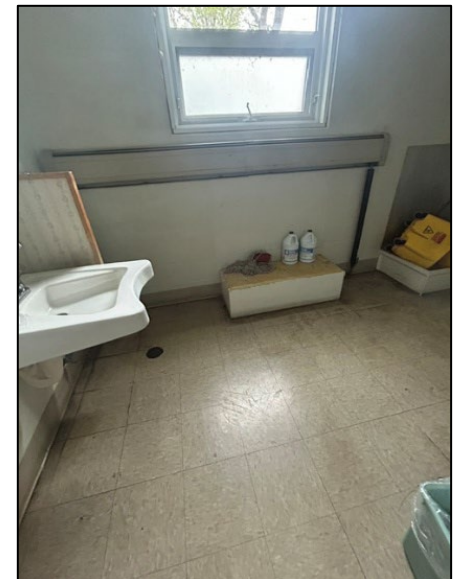
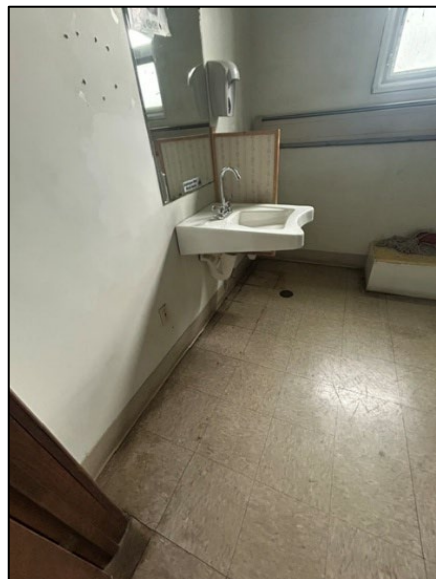


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Restrooms

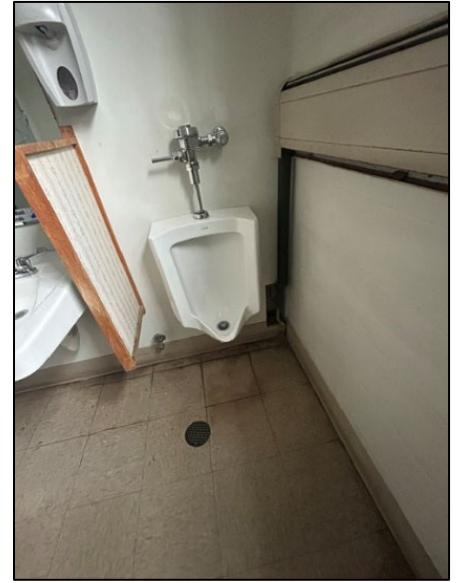
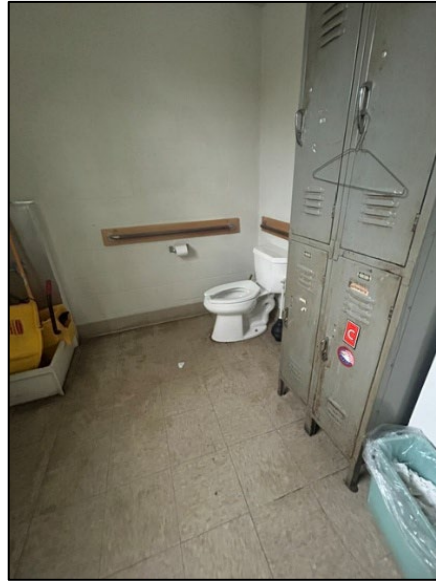
Men and women's restroom facilities are provided on the first floor of the station. Both spaces appear to be in need of renovation due to the age and condition of the finishes and fixtures. The men's restroom also functions as a janitorial support area and includes a mop sink, urinal, toilet, hand sink, and limited supply storage. The women's restroom is in better overall condition and is configured solely for restroom use; however, the fixtures are aging and should be evaluated for replacement as part of any future renovation. Both restrooms provide limited privacy and do not appear to meet the expectations of a modern 24-hour fire station. Future improvements should consider private-use restroom and shower facilities that better support firefighter health, privacy, accessibility, and operational needs.





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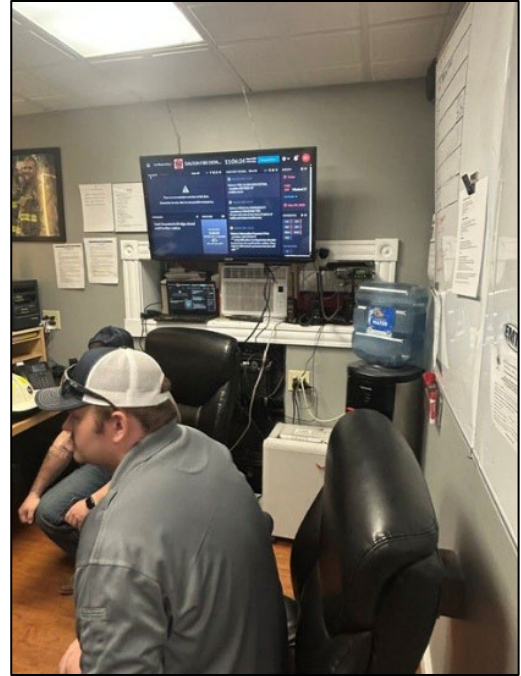


Paid Crew Day Office and Watch Room

The paid crew day office and watch room is located with a clear view of the main entrance, which is beneficial for monitoring public access and greeting visitors who have business with the Fire District. However, the space is limited and appears to be fully utilized, with shelving, counters, and work surfaces already occupied. Based on the current layout, paid crew members appear to spend a significant amount of non-response time in this room because the only other readily available first-floor spaces are the sleeping quarters, restrooms, and apparatus bays. The dayroom function appears to be located on the second floor within a corner of the district's multi-purpose room. Any future renovation or replacement project should consider a more functional floor plan that better supports daily crew activities, improves separation between living and operational areas, and maintains efficient access to the apparatus bays for emergency response.



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Apparatus Bays

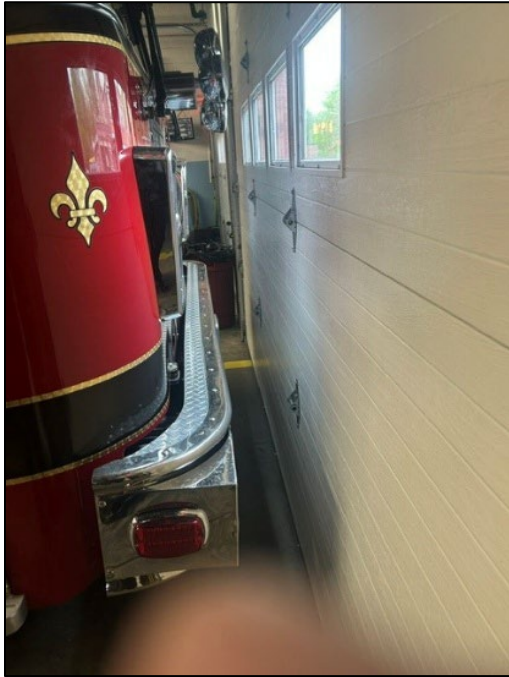
The facility's four apparatus bays are configured as "back-in" bays due to the size and layout constraints of the site. Modern fire stations generally favor a "drive-through" design, which improves operational safety by allowing apparatus and other vehicles to enter and exit the bays while moving forward. At this facility, the close proximity of the bay exit to Flansburg Avenue requires personnel to stop traffic so apparatus can safely back into the bays. This condition exposes both apparatus and personnel to roadway hazards, including the risk of being struck by passing vehicles.

Overall, the apparatus bays are in good condition. As noted earlier in this report, the run-out area between the bays and the street is paved with asphalt and is in fair to good condition; however, several areas show signs of pothole formation. This type of deterioration is common in climates like Dalton's, where heavy equipment movement, repeated turning motions, freeze-thaw cycles, and ice-control chemicals accelerate wear on driving surfaces. Future construction or major site improvements should consider alternative paving materials, such as concrete, to extend the service life of the driveway.

Inside the apparatus bays, the assessment team noted the same space and storage limitations found throughout the facility. When the station was built in 1958, fire apparatus were significantly smaller than those used in today's fire service, particularly ladder trucks and other aerial apparatus. Departments operating from undersized stations often must tailor new apparatus specifications to ensure the vehicle will fit within the existing building. As a result, the apparatus selected may not fully meet the community's modern operational needs because of performance limitations driven by building size restrictions.



Community & Space Needs Analysis Dalton Fire Department



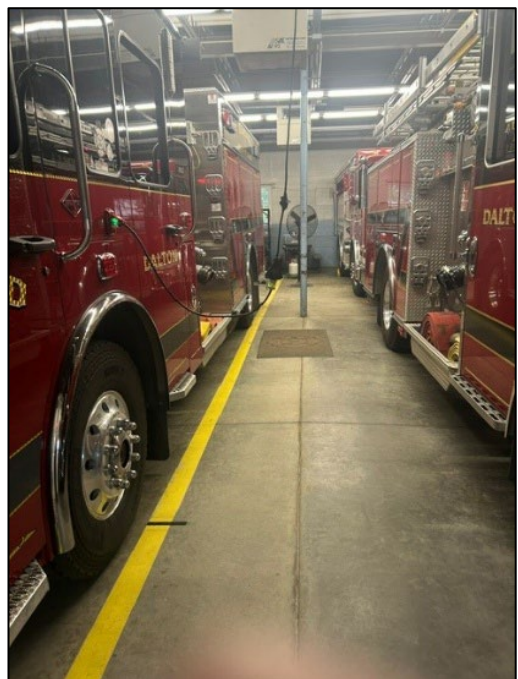
*Very Limited Clearance of
Apparatus Bumper to Bay Doors*



*Very Limited Clearance
Between Apparatus in the Bays*



*Very Limited Clearance of Apparatus
Tailboard to Cabinets in Bay*



Center Aisle Space in Apparatus Bays



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The apparatus bays also serve as the storage area for firefighters' personal protective equipment (PPE). While this was common practice in older fire stations, current firefighter health and safety research has identified significant concerns associated with this arrangement. Firefighters experience higher rates of many types of cancer than the general population, and exposure to smoke, gases, and combustion byproducts encountered during emergency operations is a contributing occupational risk. The apparatus bay is a particular area of concern because firefighters and equipment may be exposed to carcinogens from diesel and gasoline exhaust generated by apparatus and small equipment.

Modern firefighter health and safety standards recommend smoke filtration and exhaust removal systems for apparatus housed within a station. They also recommend that PPE be stored outside the apparatus bay in a dedicated, separated area to reduce contamination from exhaust byproducts. The current Dalton facility does not have a substantial smoke filtration or exhaust system, and firefighters' PPE is stored in close proximity to the apparatus. The assessment team further found that the existing station does not have an acceptable space for dedicated PPE/gear storage and dressing. These critical firefighter safety concerns should be addressed in any future renovation or new fire station construction.





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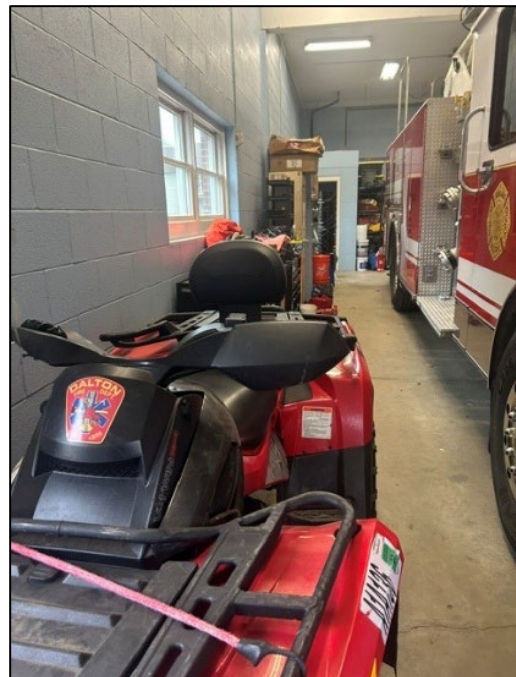


Close Clearance of PPE Racks to Apparatus

The assessment also found that the apparatus bays are utilized to store additional equipment, supplies, and materials, such as surplus fire hose, that is used by the fire department. The added storage adds to the congestion in the apparatus bays and all the items stored are subjected to the same hazards as was found in the PPE/gear.



*Spare UTV, Fire Hose and Other
Equipment in Apparatus Bay*



*Spare UTVs, and Other Equipment
Stored in Apparatus Bay*



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*Storage Cabinet in the Rear of the
Apparatus Bay*



*Cleaning Supplies, Storage, and Work
Area off of the Apparatus Bays*

The assessment team noted that the department had taken steps at some point to increase safety in the apparatus bays by installing a traffic signal system which indicates when it is safe to exit the bays. This system utilizes red and green light signals, similar to a traffic light found on the roadway system, to let apparatus driver/operators know when the doors are fully opened and the way is clear to proceed out to the street. The facility also contains a gear extractor for members to use to properly clean their turnout gear which helps reduce exposure to carcinogens after fires.



*Traffic Style Signal System Controlling
Safe Exits from the Apparatus Bays*



Gear Extractor and Gear Dryer in Apparatus Bay



Shower Area

The facility's sole shower is in the apparatus bays. This shower serves as both the decontamination/cleanup area and station shower. Personnel must change clothing and redress in the rear of one of the apparatus bays. Future improvements should consider private-use shower facilities that better support firefighter health, privacy, accessibility, and operational needs.



Crew Shower Stall in Apparatus Bay

Hallways, Corridors, and Stairwells

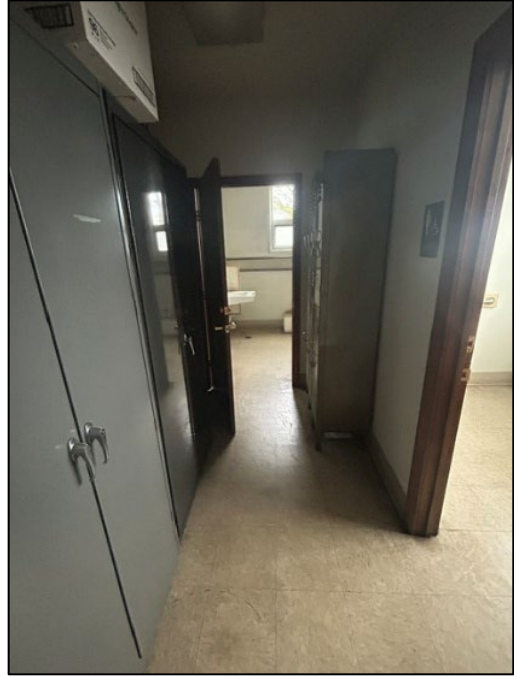
The facility's corridors, hallways, and stairwells provide the primary circulation paths between interior spaces. These areas are narrow and appear to provide only minimal clearance for movement through the building. The stairwells include long, poorly lit, straight runs of stairs, and no accessible route to the second floor was observed. This is a significant limitation because the District Board holds public meetings in the second-floor multi-purpose room. Future renovation or replacement should address interior circulation, improve public wayfinding, and provide accessible routes to public meeting spaces and other areas intended for community use.



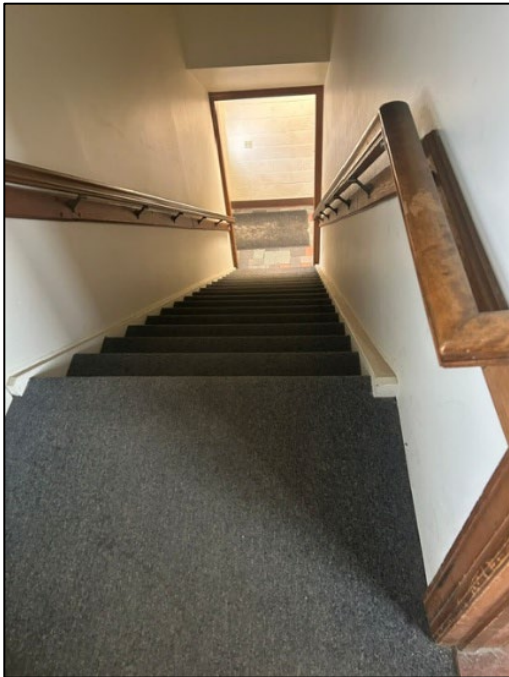
Community & Space Needs Analysis Dalton Fire Department



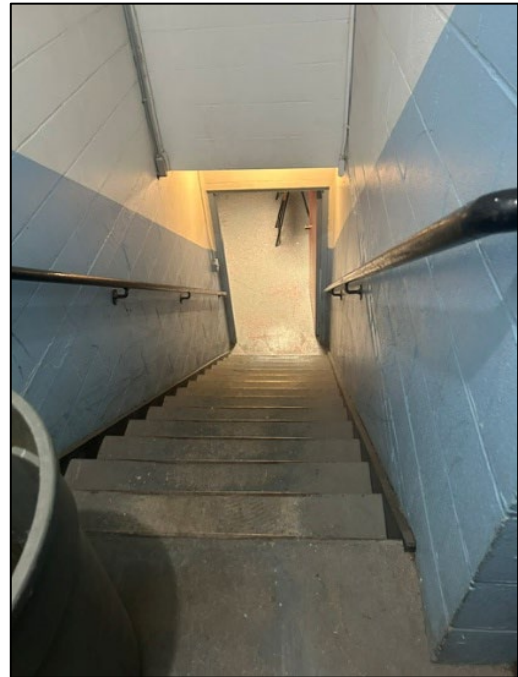
Exit Corridor – 1st Floor



Corridor to Restrooms



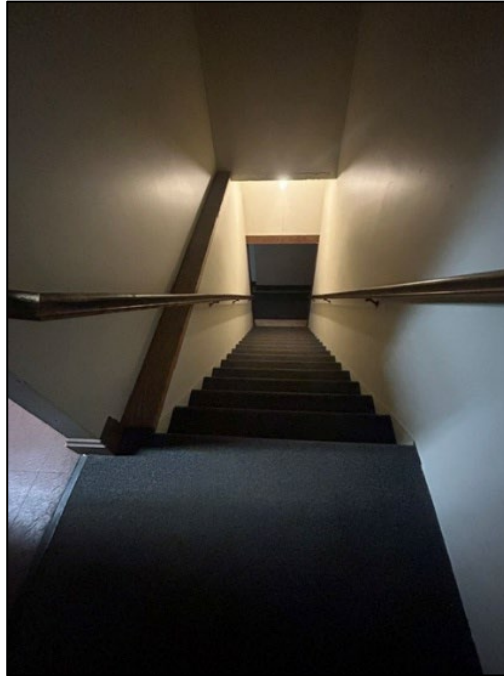
*Stairwell to Multi-Purpose Room
(view from 2nd floor)*



Stairwell to Basement (view from 1st floor)



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*Rear Stairwell to Multi-Purpose
Room (view from 2nd floor)*

Multi-Purpose Room (2nd Floor)

The assessment team found that the District has a multi-purpose room located on the second floor above the administrative offices portion of the facility. The multi-purpose room is a large, open, space and contains the following:

1. A conference area that serves as the Fire Boards public meeting space.
2. A dayroom type area with a television and seating for the firefighters.
3. Office space with two desks and accompanying furniture.

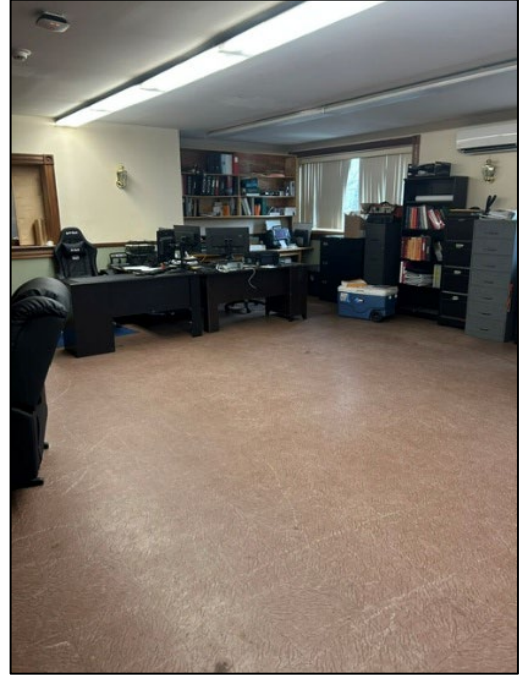
There are no walls or partitions between the various spaces. The room is in need of renovation with many cosmetic issues. However, the floor and ceiling appeared to be sound based on the walk-through review conducted by the study team. Any future renovation or rebuild should consider the ability to isolate the uses currently in the multi-purpose room from one another.



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Multi-Purpose Room (2nd Floor)



Office Spaces in Multi-Purpose Room (2nd Floor)



Office Spaces in Multi-Purpose Room (2nd Floor)

Kitchen (2nd Floor)

The facility's only kitchen is located on the second floor and is significantly undersized for current station needs. The first floor does not include a dedicated kitchen or food-preparation area; personnel instead rely on a microwave in the watch room as a limited



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makeshift option. The second-floor kitchen appears aged and was likely intended to support community events or activities in the adjacent multi-purpose room. The space provides limited food preparation area, minimal cupboard and pantry storage, poor lighting, and worn finishes and equipment. The assessment team found that the kitchen is in need of comprehensive renovation; however, the existing facility provides limited space to accommodate meaningful expansion or modernization. Future renovation or replacement should consider a properly sized kitchen, dining, and dayroom arrangement located within the clean-living area and readily accessible to on-duty personnel.



Kitchen as Viewed from the Hallway



Kitchen Sink and Drying Area



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Commercial Range Under the Hood in Kitchen



Kitchen Pantry and Storage



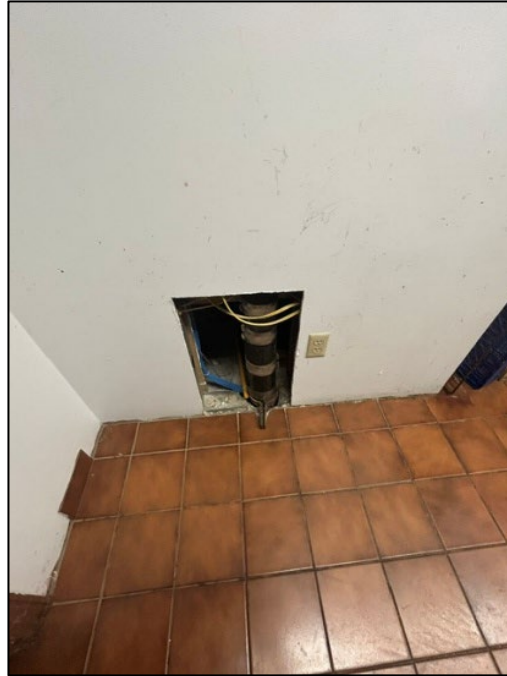
Kitchen Pantry and Storage



Refrigerator with Pot and Pan Storage in Kitchen



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Hole in Wall Due to Drain Line Repair in Kitchen

Basement

The facility has a partial basement below the administrative office area. This space is currently used as both a physical training area for personnel and a storage area. The workout area appears to have been adapted for this use rather than designed as a dedicated fitness space. The space is compact, and the exercise equipment is arranged within the limited area available. The low ceiling height likely restricts the use of free weights and other training equipment.

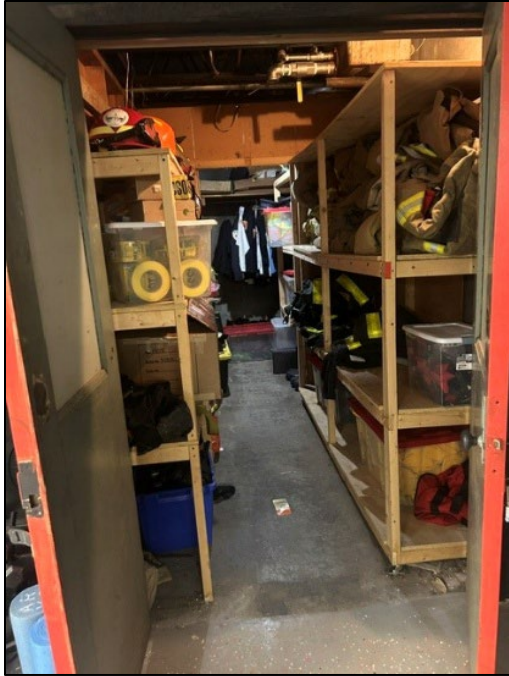
The basement storage area is also small and constrained. The space does not have a finished ceiling, leaving the steel bar joists for the first floor exposed. The door leading to the storage room is labeled as a fire door; however, it is damaged and does not fully close.

Physical fitness is an important component of a fire department's ability to provide service safely and effectively. Any future renovation or replacement should consider a properly designed physical training area that supports both full-time personnel and all other members of the department.

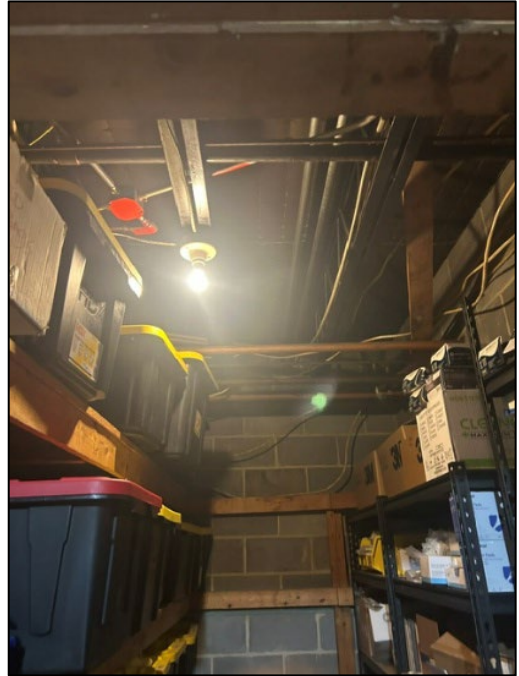


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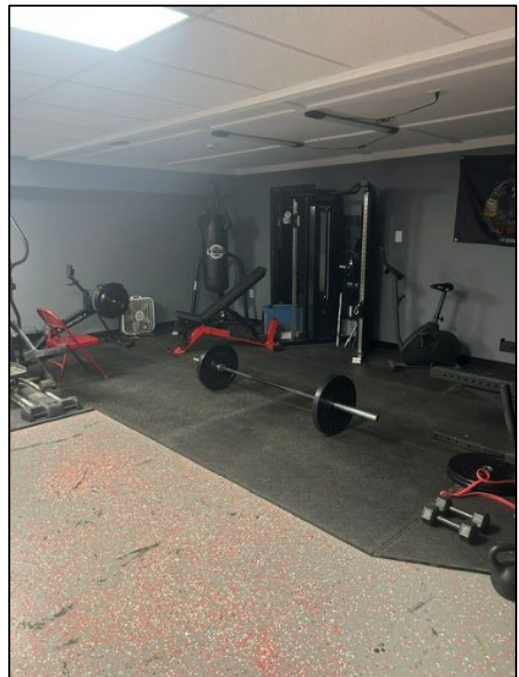
Storage in the Basement Space



Storage in the Basement Space



Damaged Fire Door in Basement Space



Physical Training Area in Basement Space



Conclusion

Based on the observations made during the on-site assessment, the Dalton Fire Station remains serviceable but is increasingly constrained by its age, original design, limited site area, and the operational demands of a modern fire service. While several portions of the building have been maintained and remain in fair to good condition, the station presents notable limitations related to apparatus movement, storage, firefighter health and safety, living quarters, restroom and shower facilities, public access, accessibility, and overall space configuration. These issues are not isolated deficiencies; rather, they reflect the challenges of adapting a nearly 70-year-old facility to current expectations for emergency response, employee safety, community use, and long-term operational resiliency.

Any future decision should weigh the cost and feasibility of renovating the existing station against the benefits of constructing a new facility designed specifically for current and future fire department operations. If renovation remains under consideration, additional engineering, code, accessibility, environmental, and cost evaluations should be completed to determine whether the existing structure and site can reasonably support the required improvements. If replacement is pursued, the District should prioritize a facility that provides adequate apparatus space, separated clean and contaminated zones, modern living and support areas, safe site circulation, accessible public areas, and sufficient flexibility to meet the community's needs over the coming decades.

Recommendations

Based on the observations documented in this assessment, the following recommendations should be considered as part of any future renovation, expansion, or replacement of the Dalton Fire Station:

1. **Evaluate renovation versus replacement feasibility.** Complete additional engineering, code, accessibility, environmental, and cost evaluations to determine whether the existing building and site can reasonably support the improvements required for long-term fire department operations.
2. **Improve site circulation and apparatus safety.** Address the limitations created by back-in apparatus bays, the close proximity to Flansburg Avenue, and the need for personnel to manage traffic during apparatus movements. Future planning should consider safer apparatus access, improved apron/driveway surfaces, and more durable paving materials such as concrete in high-use areas.
3. **Provide adequate apparatus bay space.** Ensure that any renovation or replacement accommodates modern fire apparatus without requiring vehicle specifications to be limited by building size constraints.
4. **Separate clean and contaminated zones.** Establish clear separation between living, administrative, public, and operational areas, with particular



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attention to isolating apparatus bays, contaminated equipment, and turnout gear from clean living and workspaces.

5. **Create dedicated PPE and gear storage.** Relocate firefighters' PPE from the apparatus bays to a dedicated, ventilated, and separated storage and dressing area that supports firefighter health and contamination-control practices.
6. **Install or upgrade exhaust-removal and air-filtration systems.** Provide appropriate systems to reduce exposure to diesel and gasoline exhaust within apparatus and equipment areas.
7. **Modernize sleeping quarters and crew support spaces.** Provide properly sized individual sleeping rooms, efficient response routes to the apparatus bays, integrated station alerting, adequate electrical service, and functional first-floor dayroom/work areas for on-duty personnel.
8. **Improve restroom, shower, and decontamination facilities.** Replace the current single apparatus-bay shower arrangement with private-use restroom and shower facilities that support privacy, accessibility, firefighter health, and post-incident cleanup needs.
9. **Upgrade the main public entrance.** Improve wayfinding, circulation, controlled access, and security at the main entryway while maintaining appropriate public access to District services and meetings.
10. **Address accessibility and interior circulation.** Improve narrow corridors, stairways, lighting, and public access routes, including accessible access to meeting spaces and other areas intended for community use.
11. **Renovate or reconfigure the second-floor multi-purpose room.** Separate the current meeting, dayroom, and office functions to reduce competing uses and improve functionality.
12. **Provide an appropriately sized kitchen, dining, and dayroom area.** Locate these spaces within the clean-living area and ensure they are readily accessible to on-duty personnel.
13. **Increase functional storage capacity.** Provide dedicated storage for equipment, supplies, hose, and other materials to reduce congestion in apparatus bays, basement storage areas, and other constrained spaces while improving operational organization.
14. **Improve basement safety and code compliance.** Evaluate the basement for fire separation, door operation, egress, lighting, ventilation, ceiling height, and other applicable building and life-safety requirements before continuing or expanding its use for storage, fitness, or other personnel-support functions.
15. **Provide an appropriate physical training area.** Consider relocating or redesigning the current basement workout area to provide sufficient space, ceiling clearance, ventilation, lighting, equipment layout, and safety features for firefighter physical fitness activities.
16. **Plan for long-term flexibility.** Ensure that any future facility solution provides sufficient capacity and adaptability to meet evolving fire department operations, staffing, equipment, community use, and safety requirements over the coming decades.



PLANNING FOR RENOVATED OR NEW FIRE STATION

This section outlines the recommended space and facility requirements for a modern fire station intended to support a community of approximately 6,500 residents. The recommended station should function as a rapid response emergency operations base, a safe 24-hour workplace, a training facility, and a visible civic asset. For planning purposes, the station is assumed to house one primary engine company, one primary medical response unit (ambulance), one primary aerial device, and additional capacity for additional emergency response vehicles, administrative functions, firefighter living quarters, equipment storage, decontamination, and community-facing services, while keeping the overall building program appropriately scaled for a smaller service population.

Planning assumptions used by MissionCIT for this analysis and program include:

- Service population – approximately 6,500 residents, with allowance for future population growth, seasonal demand, mutual aid activity, and increased call volume.
- Operational model – one staffed station with 24-hour response capability and space for volunteer, part-time, or full-time staffing models.
- Apparatus – six drive-through apparatus bays are recommended, with room for an engine, rescue/utility vehicle, ambulance or support vehicle, and limited future expansion.
- Staffing capacity – recommended sleeping and living accommodations for 3 to 5 on-duty personnel per shift, with flexible design for gender-inclusive and privacy-focused use.
- Facility life cycle – planned as a long-term public safety asset with expansion capacity, durable materials, and resilience features.

Recommended Building Size

A fire station serving a community of 6,500 people should generally be planned in the range of 16,000 to 18,000 square feet, depending on staffing model, apparatus count, training needs, community-use areas, and whether emergency medical services are housed in the same facility. A practical target for budgeting is approximately 18,000 square feet, with the site arranged to support future expansion of apparatus bays, storage, and living areas if call volume or staffing increases.



Table 1: Functional Space Program

Functional Area	Recommended Space	Purpose
Apparatus bays	4,000-6,000 sq. ft.	Drive-through storage for engine, rescue/utility vehicle, ambulance or support vehicle, and equipment staging
Decontamination and turnout gear	700-1,000 sq. ft.	Dedicated zones for gear storage, cleaning, PPE laundry, and separation from clean living areas
Living quarters	2,400-3200 sq. ft.	Dorm rooms, restrooms, showers, kitchen, dining, dayroom, and quiet areas for 24-hour staffing
Administrative areas	1,200-2,000 sq. ft.	Offices, report writing, records, watch desk, and secure public reception
Training and community room	1,200-2,000 sq. ft.	Firefighter training, public education, emergency operations support, and community meetings
Fitness and wellness	400-700 sq. ft.	Physical fitness, injury prevention, and wellness programming
Storage and support	1,200-2,000 sq. ft.	EMS supplies, hose storage, tools, maintenance, janitorial, mechanical, electrical, and IT spaces

Key Facility Requirements

1. Apparatus and Response Areas

The apparatus bay should be the operational core of the station. A six-bay, drive-through configuration is recommended where site conditions allow, because it reduces backing movements and improves response safety. This is not an option on the current site of the Dalton fire station. Bays should include adequate clear height, durable flooring, trench drains where appropriate, compressed air, shore power, exhaust capture or ventilation, hose and equipment storage, and direct access to dedicated, isolated turnout gear and decontamination areas.

2. Health, Safety, and Contamination Control

The station should be organized into hot, transition, and clean zones. Apparatus bays, gear storage, decontamination, and equipment washing should be separated from offices, sleeping rooms, kitchen, dining, and dayroom areas. Design strategies should include a dedicated PPE storage room, gear extractor and drying area, handwashing and shower access near the return path from calls, and air separation between the apparatus bay and living areas. These measures support modern fire service health practices related to diesel exhaust, carcinogen exposure, and infection control.



3. Living and Staffing Areas

Living quarters should support long shifts while maintaining privacy, rest, and readiness. Individual dorm rooms or small bunk rooms are preferred over open dormitories. Restrooms and showers should be designed as gender-inclusive or private-use facilities. The kitchen, dining area, dayroom, laundry, and outdoor patio or secure yard should be located in the clean zone and connected by a direct, efficient path to the apparatus bay for rapid turnout.

4. Administrative and Public Interface

The station should include a public lobby, accessible restroom, secure reception or watch desk, administrative offices, report-writing space, and records storage. Public access should be controlled so visitors can receive assistance without entering operational or living areas. If the town expects the station to host public education, CPR classes, emergency management briefings, or civic meetings, a multipurpose training room should be included near the public entry.

5. Site Requirements

The preferred site should provide safe emergency vehicle access to major response routes, clear sight lines, adequate front apron depth, separate visitor and staff parking, and pedestrian routes that do not cross the emergency response path. A site of approximately 1.5 to 2.5 acres is recommended for a smaller community station, depending on stormwater requirements, training yard needs, setbacks, fuel storage, generator placement, and future expansion. The site should also allow secure outdoor storage, a backup generator, communications equipment, and space for future apparatus or emergency medical services growth. There has been some discussion in the recent past about creating a combined public safety facility with both fire and police stations contained in the same building or complex. Based on site conditions with the current Dalton fire station this concept deserves additional consideration and discussion.

Design Standards and Best Practices

The station should be designed to comply with applicable local building codes, accessibility requirements, fire and life-safety codes, and occupational health and safety practices. Planning should consider nationally recognized fire service guidance from the NFPA and other agencies related to firefighter health, safety, deployment, infection control, protective clothing care, and emergency response operations. Information from the following list was used in the preparation of this report and the list provides a good starting point of standards to evaluate:

1. National Fire Protection Association. *NFPA 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program*. 2021 edition. Contains



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- valuable guidance and information regarding occupational safety, health, wellness, and risk-management considerations for fire station planning.
2. National Fire Protection Association. *NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments*. 2020 edition. Contains valuable guidance on deployment, staffing, response performance, and service-level planning concepts which ultimately affect station design.
 3. National Fire Protection Association. *NFPA 1581: Standard on Fire Department Infection Control Program*. 2022 edition. Used to support recommendations for infection control, separation of clean and contaminated areas, and protection of members in working and living environments.
 4. National Fire Protection Association. *NFPA 1851: Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting*. 2020 edition. Used to inform turnout gear storage, cleaning, decontamination, inspection, and maintenance space needs.
 5. U.S. Fire Administration. *Safety and Health Considerations for the Design of Fire and Emergency Medical Services Stations*. Used to inform health, safety, firefighter wellness, contamination-control, and station design best-practice recommendations.
 6. International Association of Fire Fighters. *Fire Station Design: Best Practices to Reduce Exposures*. Used to support the hot, warm, and cold zone approach for reducing exposure to diesel exhaust, fireground contaminants, and cross-contamination in fire stations.

The final program should be validated through a formal needs assessment, call-volume analysis, response-time mapping, staffing study, and apparatus inventory.

Recommendations

1. Complete a fire department needs assessment that confirms staffing, apparatus, call volume, mutual aid, and emergency medical service requirements.
2. Select a site that optimizes response time, provides safe apparatus movement, and allows expansion.
3. Develop a detailed room-by-room space program before architectural design begins.
4. Separate contaminated operational areas from clean living and administrative areas.
5. Include flexible training and community spaces to increase the civic value of the facility.
6. Plan for resilience through backup power, durable materials, storm protection, secure communications, and future technology needs.



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Conclusion

A fire station for a community of 6,500 people should be planned as a flexible, safe, and expandable public safety facility rather than simply a garage for fire apparatus. A planning range of 16,000 to 18,000 square feet, with an initial target of about 18,000 square feet, provides a reasonable basis for early budgeting and design. The highest priorities are rapid response, firefighter health and wellness, contamination control, gender-inclusive living areas, community access, and long-term adaptability.



FINAL CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS BASED ON PROJECT PARAMETERS

Community Needs and Requirements Assessment

Analyze the community's geographic area, building construction, density, accessibility, traffic patterns, zoning, permits, environmental considerations, and projected community growth and demographics, using data and projections to determine requirements.

Introduction

This assessment evaluates the community conditions and service demands that shape fire protection and emergency medical service requirements in Dalton, Massachusetts. The town's geography, demographics, built environment, transportation network, and environmental conditions were evaluated so that fire and EMS resources can be aligned with current risks and future service demands. Dalton covers approximately 21.9 square miles and functions as a transitional community between the more urbanized Pittsfield area and the rural portions of Berkshire County. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's quick facts and population data as well as data from the American Community Survey (ACS), the town's population was 6,330 at the 2020 Census, with recent estimates indicating a modest decline to approximately 6,157 by 2025. At the same time, Dalton has an aging population, with approximately 27.9 percent of residents age 65 or older, a factor with direct implications for EMS demand, fall-related incidents, chronic medical calls, and access needs. The analysis indicates that Dalton's needs are defined less by rapid growth than by service complexity, aging demographics, mixed occupancies, transportation and access constraints, and seasonal environmental hazards.

At the same time, Dalton's built environment includes a combination of residential neighborhoods, mixed-use areas, institutional occupancies, industrial properties, and older structures that require continued attention to fire prevention, inspections, code enforcement, and pre-incident planning.

Geographic and roadway conditions, including dispersed development patterns, winter weather, flooding exposure, and travel constraints, reinforce the need for dependable local response capability and resilient deployment planning. Based on these findings, the report concludes that Dalton should prioritize reliable staffing and response availability, strong EMS readiness, sustained apparatus replacement planning, continued risk-reduction efforts, and the use of incident and response performance data to guide future decisions.

Community Profile and Planning Context

Dalton's service environment reflects a combination of residential neighborhoods, mixed-use village areas, industrial properties, institutional occupancies, and outlying



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lower-density areas. The town developed historically along the East Branch of the Housatonic River and major roadway corridors, and it remains closely connected to Pittsfield for employment, commerce, and regional travel. Local development patterns include single-family housing as the dominant residential form, a high owner-occupancy rate, and a modest population density of roughly 287 residents per square mile. Response travel is influenced and elongated by local street networks, regional through-traffic, seasonal weather conditions common to the Berkshires, and the need to serve both compact developed areas and lower-density sections of town.

For fire and EMS planning purposes, Dalton's risk profile should be evaluated through several lenses: occupancy type, age distribution, transportation access, environmental hazards, and development activity. The town's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan indicates the need to consider severe weather, flooding, and other natural hazard exposures in community planning. In addition, local building and fire permitting processes indicate ongoing activity requiring code enforcement, inspections, and life-safety oversight. Although recent population trends suggest limited overall growth, the combination of an older resident base, existing industrial and commercial occupancies, and the need to maintain reliable response capability across the full-service area supports a formal evaluation of staffing, apparatus deployment, EMS readiness, prevention activity, and long-range capital needs.

Geographic Area and Response Environment

Dalton occupies approximately 21.9 square miles in central Berkshire County and lies immediately east of Pittsfield, placing it in a mixed urban-rural response environment. The town's developed areas are concentrated in the village center and along established roadway corridors, while other portions of the community include lower-density residential areas, wooded land, stream corridors, and outlying properties that can increase travel distance and complicate access. Public mapping resources and topographic references indicate that Dalton sits at an elevation of roughly 1,100 feet and includes varied terrain typical of the Berkshires, with changes in grade that can affect apparatus travel, winter road conditions, and access to remote or hillside locations.

The response environment is shaped by a road network centered on Main Street and other primary local connectors, including Hinsdale Road, Dalton Division Road, Depot Street, East Housatonic Street, Grange Hall Road, and additional collector streets that distribute traffic through residential, commercial, and industrial areas. The East Branch of the Housatonic River and associated tributaries influence development patterns and create locations where flooding, drainage issues, or roadway disruption may affect incident access or prolong response times. Because Dalton functions as both a standalone community and a corridor for local travel tied to Pittsfield and surrounding towns, fire and EMS planning should account for routine commuter traffic, commercial vehicle movement, school-area activity, and seasonal weather conditions that can degrade roadway performance.



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From an operational standpoint, Dalton's geographic area requires the department to maintain reliable coverage for both concentrated call areas and more dispersed properties with longer approach times. Response performance may be influenced by topography, road width, driveway length, winter snow and ice, and the location of occupancies near waterways or in less accessible sections of town. These conditions support the need for a deployment model that emphasizes travel-time awareness, mutual-aid coordination where appropriate, and pre-incident planning for locations with limited turnaround space, grade challenges, or hazard exposure. For EMS, the same geographic factors reinforce the importance of rapid access capability, route familiarity, and planning for patient removal in locations where terrain, distance from the roadway, or weather conditions may delay transport operations. The nearest hospital for EMS to transport patients is in Pittsfield and is approximately 10 minutes from the center of Dalton.

Building Construction, Occupancy Types, and Fire Risk

Dalton's built environment includes a predominance of one- and two-family residential structures, supported by smaller numbers of multifamily buildings, commercial occupancies, municipal and educational facilities, houses of worship, and industrial properties. The largest industry in Dalton is the Crane Currency Company which produces banknote paper. The company's facilities span across the Town and are built along the banks of the Housatonic River. Due to the highly specialized and sensitive nature of banknote and currency paper, the company maintains very high security measures at its facilities which can pose an issue to access for responding fire and EMS crews.

Zoning and planning records from the Town of Dalton indicate that the community includes multiple residential districts as well as industrial zoning, reinforcing the need for a fire and EMS system that can operate effectively across a range of occupancy types. In practical terms, the town's building stock presents a mix of life-safety challenges, from routine residential alarms and medical assist calls in neighborhood settings to higher-consequence incidents involving mixed-use structures, assembly spaces, institutional occupancies, and commercial or industrial buildings with specialized hazards. Information available from the fire department also indicates several block buildings of office and mercantile space, four major paper mills and some other manufacturers, one lumber yard and building supply building, four schools, five churches, and a number of other businesses and restaurants.

As in many Berkshire County communities, a meaningful share of Dalton's structure inventory consists of older buildings that include legacy construction features such as heavy timbers, concealed void spaces, multiple additions completed over time, and updated occupancies within originally residential or mill-related structures. Older homes and mixed-use buildings may present increased risks associated with balloon-frame or lightweight renovation components, limited compartmentation, aging



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electrical systems, and more complex interior layouts. These characteristics can accelerate vertical fire spread, delay detection, complicate search and rescue, and increase the importance of early intervention, thorough size-up, and pre-incident familiarity with target hazards.

Fire risk in Dalton should therefore be assessed not only by call volume, but by consequence potential within the community's occupancies. Residential properties remain the most consistent source of day-to-day incident demand, but higher-risk occupancies warrant focused prevention and preparedness efforts. These include schools, senior housing, municipal buildings, assembly occupancies, mixed commercial-residential buildings, and industrial sites where fuel load, machinery, storage arrangements, or process hazards may increase incident complexity. The presence of ongoing building permitting and local development review activity also indicates the need for sustained code enforcement, construction oversight, and inspection capacity. For planning purposes, these conditions support a balanced fire protection strategy that combines residential risk reduction, targeted inspections, pre-fire planning for critical occupancies, and suppression capability appropriate for both ordinary structure fires and lower-frequency, higher-impact incidents.

Demographics and EMS Demand Implications

Dalton's demographic profile has direct implications for emergency medical services demand. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the town's estimated population was 6,157 in 2025, representing a modest decline from 6,330 in 2020 and continuing a longer-term pattern of gradual population loss. At the same time, the community is older than both Berkshire County and the Commonwealth overall. Recent Census and ACS-based profiles place Dalton's median age at approximately 49.7 years, and 27.9 percent of residents are age 65 or older. The town also includes approximately 2,907 households with an average household size of 2.13 persons, suggesting a substantial share of smaller households and older residents living either alone or in two-person households.

For EMS planning, the most important demographic characteristic in Dalton is the concentration of older adults. The Massachusetts Healthy Aging Community Profile identifies Dalton as an age-friendly community and reports that residents age 60 and older make up approximately 28.6 percent of the population. The same profile notes minimal transit availability, elevated rates of certain age-associated conditions, and a measurable incidence of falls among older residents. In addition, approximately one-third of residents age 65 and older live alone. These factors are significant because they are commonly associated with higher rates of 911 utilization for falls, lift assists, cardiac and respiratory complaints, medication-related events, and welfare checks, particularly when mobility limitations or limited transportation reduce access to routine care.



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The operational implication is that EMS demand in Dalton is likely to remain stable or increase in complexity even if the total population remains flat or declines modestly. An older population typically generates a disproportionate share of emergency medical responses, and that trend is reinforced by Dalton's age structure, household composition, and limited transit context. Planning should therefore account not only for incident volume, but also for call acuity, patient lifting and movement needs, time-on-task for medical incidents, and the potential need for stronger coordination with regional transport resources, hospitals, and community-based aging services. Over time, these demographic conditions support continued emphasis on EMS staffing reliability, medical training, patient access capability, and prevention-oriented initiatives aimed at reducing falls, improving wellness checks, and strengthening connections between emergency response and community health resources.

Traffic Patterns, Accessibility, and Response Constraints

Dalton's transportation environment is defined by a combination of local streets, primary connector roads, and regional travel flows that link the town to Pittsfield and neighboring Berkshire County communities. Traffic count resources maintained by the Berkshire Regional Planning Commission and the Massachusetts Department of Transportation confirm that roadway activity is concentrated on principal corridors such as Main Street and related connecting routes, where daily travel demand is shaped by commuter movements, commercial activity, school traffic, and local service trips. For fire and EMS operations, this means that response performance depends not only on station location and travel distance, but also on how effectively apparatus and ambulances can move through routine congestion points, commercial nodes, and roadway segments with limited passing opportunities or constrained width.

Accessibility in Dalton is also affected by seasonal weather and hazard conditions that are common in the Berkshires. The town's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies flooding, severe storms, and winter weather as recurring concerns, all of which can reduce roadway reliability or temporarily disrupt access to incident locations. Snow and ice can slow apparatus travel, narrow effective roadway width, and complicate driveway access or patient removal. Heavy rainfall and drainage problems may create localized flooding near streams, culverts, and low-lying roadway segments, particularly where the East Branch of the Housatonic River and its tributaries influence transportation corridors. In practical terms, these conditions increase the importance of route familiarity, all-weather response planning, and close attention to roads or properties that may become difficult to reach during adverse conditions.

Response constraints in Dalton should therefore be evaluated as a combination of physical access limitations and travel-time variability. Narrow streets, longer driveways, hillside properties, winter surface conditions, school-area traffic, and corridor congestion can all affect how quickly fire and EMS units arrive and how efficiently patients are transported from the scene. These issues are especially important for EMS,



where delays can extend total unit commitment time and reduce system availability for subsequent calls. Planning implications include maintaining strong knowledge of alternate routes, identifying response bottlenecks through pre-incident review, ensuring apparatus and ambulance deployment is calibrated to the town's most active corridors, and coordinating with highway, public works, and regional partners when weather or road conditions threaten access continuity.

Environmental Hazards and Seasonal Risk Factors

Dalton's environmental risk profile is shaped primarily by inland flooding, severe winter weather, storms with high winds, and temperature extremes. The Town of Dalton's 2024 Hazard Mitigation Plan identifies flooding, snowstorms, high winds, and extreme temperatures as principal natural hazards affecting the community, while also recognizing the need to consider climate-related changes that may intensify precipitation, strain drainage infrastructure, and increase the frequency of weather-related disruptions. These hazards are especially important for fire and EMS planning because they can simultaneously increase incident demand, reduce access reliability, and place additional pressure on staffing, apparatus deployment, and coordination with regional partners.

Seasonal conditions in Dalton create distinct operational demands across the year. Winter weather can slow apparatus travel, narrow streets and driveways, increase slip-and-fall injuries, and complicate patient removal or water supply operations during structure fires. In warmer months and transitional seasons, heavy rainfall and saturated ground can contribute to localized flooding, culvert problems, and roadway washout concerns, particularly near stream corridors and low-lying areas connected to the East Branch of the Housatonic River. Severe thunderstorms and wind events may also produce utility interruptions, debris-blocked roads, and scattered service calls across multiple locations. In addition, wooded land and changing seasonal vegetation patterns create at least some need to monitor brush and outside-fire potential, even if Dalton does not face the same wildfire profile as more heavily forested or drought-prone regions.

From a planning perspective, these environmental hazards support the need for an all-season response model that emphasizes resilience as well as routine emergency service delivery. Fire and EMS planning should account for weather-related surges in call volume, the possibility of concurrent incidents during storm events, and the need to maintain access to vulnerable populations and critical facilities under adverse conditions. The 2024 hazard mitigation process also identified community actions such as culvert upgrades, shelter-readiness improvements, backup power needs, and improved resident communication, all of which have direct relevance to emergency response continuity. For the fire and EMS system, this means maintaining readiness for flood-related access issues, winter travel constraints, utility failures, and climate-



sensitive infrastructure stress while coordinating closely with emergency management, public works, utilities, and neighboring jurisdictions.

Projected Service Requirements and Recommendations

Based on Dalton's geographic characteristics, aging population, mixed occupancy profile, transportation constraints, and environmental hazards, the town's fire and EMS system should be planned for stable to increasing service complexity over the next several years. Even if overall population growth remains limited, the concentration of older adults, the need to protect residential and mixed-use occupancies, and the recurring influence of winter weather and flooding suggest that emergency demand will continue to require dependable local response capacity. Projected service requirements therefore include sustained emergency medical readiness, reliable initial fire suppression capability, continued code enforcement and inspection activity, and the ability to manage concurrent incidents or prolonged operations during adverse conditions.

Recommendations for Dalton should emphasize three broad objectives: maintaining dependable response coverage, strengthening EMS capability, and reducing community risk through prevention and preparedness. First, the community should support a staffing model that ensures predictable response for both fire and EMS incidents across all periods of the day, with particular attention to daytime availability and simultaneous call coverage. Second, the department should continue or expand pre-incident planning, inspection, and public education efforts focused on higher-risk occupancies, older structures, senior residents, and weather-related hazards. Third, long-range planning should incorporate apparatus replacement scheduling, data-driven review of response performance, and ongoing coordination with mutual-aid partners so that the system remains resilient as call complexity evolves. These recommendations are consistent with the current structure of the Dalton Fire District, which operates from one station with a roster of approximately 40 members and all-hazards responsibilities.

Apparatus, Staffing, and Deployment Considerations

Dalton Fire District currently operates from a single station and reports a roster of approximately 40 members, including command staff and line officers. Public department information also indicates a front-line apparatus inventory that includes multiple pumpers, a ladder or truck function, utility and off-road support units, and ambulance capability. For planning purposes, this resource profile is appropriate for a community of Dalton's size, but its effectiveness depends heavily on personnel availability, apparatus reliability, and the ability to place the right combination of resources on the road quickly. Because Dalton combines suburban-density areas, older structures, industrial occupancies, and outlying access challenges, deployment planning should focus on ensuring that the first-arriving units can begin both EMS and fireground operations promptly while additional help is assembled through on-duty personnel, call-back staffing, or mutual aid as needed.



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Staffing and deployment decisions should be informed by the realities of a one-station, mixed-availability department rather than by apparatus count alone. National guidance found in the National Fire Protection Association Standards distinguishes between career and volunteer deployment models, but in either case the core planning issue is whether enough trained personnel arrive soon enough to perform critical tasks safely and effectively. In Dalton's case, that means evaluating turnout reliability, daytime staffing levels, EMS crew availability, and the speed with which a full effective response force can be assembled for structure fires or high-acuity medical incidents. Meaningful recommendations on the benchmarks for each of these items can be found in NFPA Standard 1700, Guide to Structural Firefighting, NFPA 1710, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments and NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments. Using the benchmarks provided in the Standards, staffing gaps or predictable delays can be identified and options to address the issues may include expanding scheduled duty coverage, improving callback systems, strengthening automatic-aid arrangements, or refining dispatch and run-card assignments so that resources are matched more consistently to incident risk.

Apparatus planning should likewise balance operational capability with lifecycle management. Dalton's inventory appears to provide the essential range of fire suppression, EMS, and support resources needed for local response, but some units are older and may warrant continued monitoring for reliability, maintenance cost, and replacement timing. A formal capital plan should identify target replacement windows for engines, ambulance units, and specialty vehicles; prioritize front-line response reliability; and account for the demands of winter operation, road conditions, and mutual-aid compatibility. As part of that planning process, the department should also continue to evaluate whether current apparatus assignments and deployment patterns best support its highest-frequency call types, particularly EMS incidents and first-alarm responses in areas with longer travel or access constraints.

Conclusion and Planning Priorities

This assessment indicates that Dalton's fire and EMS planning needs are driven less by rapid population growth than by service complexity, aging demographics, mixed occupancies, access constraints, and seasonal hazards. The town requires a response system that is dependable, adaptable, and resilient under both routine and adverse conditions. Fire protection planning should continue to emphasize reliable suppression capability, inspections, code enforcement, and pre-incident preparedness for higher-risk occupancies. EMS planning should remain closely aligned with the needs of an older population, including patient access challenges, lifting and movement demands, and the likelihood of sustained medical call volume even in a stable or declining population environment.



The principal planning priorities emerging from this assessment are to preserve dependable staffing and response availability, maintain a sustainable apparatus replacement strategy, strengthen EMS readiness, and continue risk-reduction efforts through inspections, public education, and hazard-focused planning. In addition, Dalton should use incident data and response performance measures to guide future operational decisions and capital investments. By taking a measured, data-informed approach, the community can ensure that its fire and EMS system remains aligned with local conditions and capable of protecting residents, businesses, and critical facilities over time.

Recommendations

Based on the community profile, response environment, demographic trends, occupancy mix, transportation constraints, environmental hazards, and current deployment considerations described in this assessment, Dalton should pursue the following recommendations to align fire and EMS resources with local risk and service demand.

1. **Maintain dependable response staffing and availability.** Dalton should evaluate staffing reliability by time of day, especially daytime and simultaneous-call coverage, and consider additional scheduled duty coverage, improved callback procedures, automatic-aid refinements, or other measures where response gaps are identified.
2. **Strengthen EMS readiness for an aging population.** Given the town's high share of older residents, EMS planning should emphasize fall response, lift-assist capability, chronic medical conditions, patient movement, welfare checks, and coordination with aging-services and healthcare partners.
3. **Expand targeted fire prevention and risk-reduction activity.** Inspection, code enforcement, public education, and pre-incident planning should focus on older structures, senior housing, schools, assembly occupancies, mixed-use buildings, municipal facilities, and industrial sites.
4. **Develop and maintain pre-incident plans for high-risk and complex occupancies.** The department should prioritize facilities with access limitations, specialized hazards, large occupant loads, industrial processes, security controls, or unusual construction features.
5. **Improve access and travel-time awareness.** Dalton should identify response bottlenecks, difficult driveways, narrow roads, hillside access issues, school-area congestion, flood-prone corridors, and winter travel challenges, then incorporate those findings into dispatch information, route planning, and mutual-aid coordination.
6. **Prepare for seasonal and weather-related surge conditions.** Fire, EMS, emergency management, public works, utilities, and regional partners should coordinate plans for snowstorms, flooding, wind events, utility outages, shelter operations, and concurrent incidents during severe weather.



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7. **Adopt a formal apparatus and capital replacement plan.** The town should document the age, condition, maintenance cost, replacement window, and operational role of engines, ambulance units, support vehicles, and specialty apparatus to ensure long-term fleet reliability.
8. **Use incident and response data to guide decisions.** Dalton should regularly review call volume, incident type, turnout time, travel time, overlapping calls, EMS transport duration, mutual-aid use, and high-frequency locations to support staffing, prevention, training, and capital planning decisions.
9. **Maintain strong mutual-aid and regional coordination.** Because Dalton operates from a single station and must be prepared for higher-consequence incidents, the department should continue refining automatic-aid arrangements, run cards, communications protocols, and joint training with neighboring agencies.
10. **Connect prevention programs to community vulnerability.** Public education should include senior fall prevention, smoke and carbon monoxide alarm awareness, emergency preparedness, winter safety, safe heating practices, and outreach to residents with limited mobility or transportation access.

Departmental Analysis

Review organizational structure, strategic plans, and staffing analysis and suggest changes to improve efficiency and quality of service.

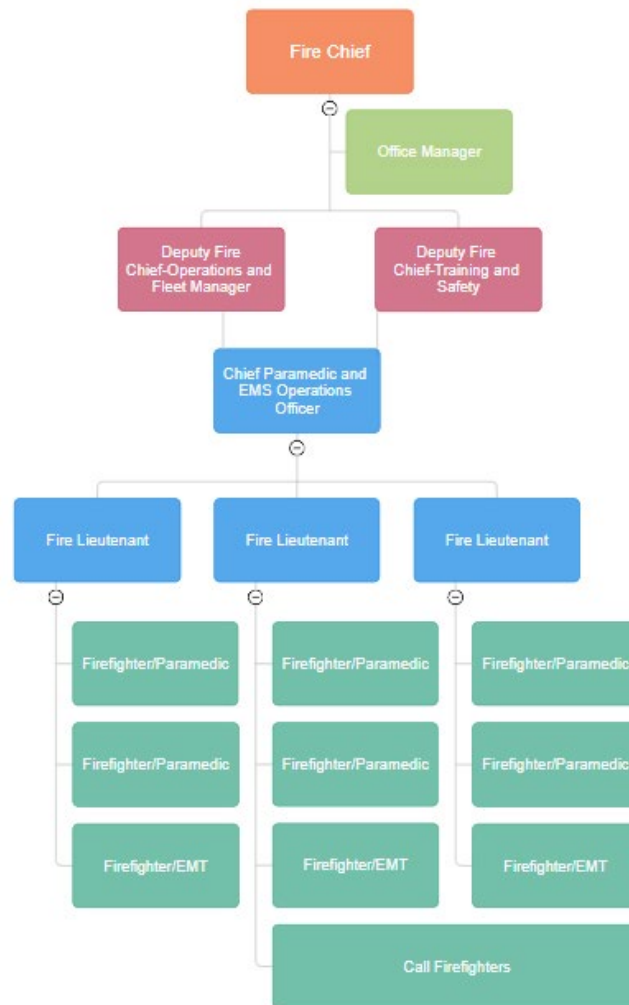
Analysis of Organizational Structure

The current structure of the Dalton Fire Department was thoroughly reviewed and compared to other similar size departments. The recommendation is to update the current organizational structure to reflect current trends of other similarly sized combination departments. This is necessary to establish a clear and concise chain of command that instills accountability. The recommended Organizational Structure would be:



Community & Space Needs Analysis Dalton Fire Department

Figure 7: Recommended Fire Department Organizational Structure



Analysis of Dalton Fire Departments Strategic Plans-1, 5, and 10 years

The Plans are attached to this report in Appendix 3.

Strategic Plan-1 Year Recommendations

The items contained in the document are excellent short-term goals. The document should be further broken down by priorities. The MissionCIT team further believes that the Personnel, Training, and Certification Section should be the first priority. Recruiting, retaining, and the training of personnel should be the first step in establishing structure within the department. This should include significant training to ensure department readiness in operating the recently acquired ladder truck.

The second priority should be to continue to enhance and update the current SOPs to reflect the current needs, challenges, and operations of the department. Continually



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reviewing and updating these documents will reduce liability to the fire district in the event of a firefighter injury from any incident including apparatus accidents, fireground injuries, or a general lack of following established State and local Standards.

Strategic Plan-5 Year Recommendations

The items contained in this document are all necessary to improve the various programs contained in the 1 Year Strategic Plan. Specifically, the document contains various types of training that the MissionCIT team believe should be moved into the 1 year plan. An example of this would be officer development that is needed now as the department continues to transition to meet the current demands of the Dalton Fire Department. The department should expand on the apparatus and equipment needs defined in the plan. The department's current equipment and apparatus age breakdown are as follows:

- Turnout Gear (30 sets) - 2020, (7 sets) - 2022, (11 sets) - 2024, (4 sets) – 2026
- SCBA (26 packs) – 2022
- Forestry PPE – 2024
- Apparatus:
 - Engine 2 – 1996
 - Truck 1 – 1998
 - Engine 3 – 2013
 - Squad 1 – 2019
 - Ambulance – 2025

All of the replacement apparatus and equipment should be prioritized based on the current and future needs and priorities.

Strategic Plan-10 Year Recommendations

The items contained in this document are an expansion of the 5-year strategic plan. Although it is very difficult for a fire department to develop a plan 10 years out, it is necessary to overcome financial and budgeting challenges.

Staffing Analysis and Recommendations

After extensive analysis of the department's current staffing, MissionCIT provides the following recommendations. The recommendations should be implemented over the next 5 years to address several key areas that include the continued decline of call personnel from 30 five years ago to the current number of 15. We predict this number will continue to decline over the next 5 years. This is consistent with the national decline of volunteer/call firefighters throughout the United States. To combat this, we recommend that the Dalton Fire District continues to look for creative ways to retain their current call firefighters. We also recommend that Dalton continue to increase the career staffing each year. Ensuring a career Firefighter/Paramedic is on duty 100 percent of the time will be successful in gaining the max revenue in ambulance billing to offset the staffing and budgetary expenses. The current command structure has undergone significant challenges in the past few years. We believe this will be stabilized



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once a permanent long-term fire chief appointment is made. Once this process is completed the rank structure should be updated to reflect the current needs of the department. One recommendation is to have 2 Deputy Fire Chiefs, each with a set of responsibilities to assist the fire chief in evening the workload.

We also recommend changing the current ambulance director and appointing a Chief Paramedic to be the administrator over the quickly growing and demanding EMS (Ambulance) division. At one time, the department had 2 ambulances.

The department should consider reverting back to 2 ambulances, staffed by the Chief Paramedic and other career personnel, for several reasons:

- Ensure an ambulance is available at all times even when the first one is on a call or out for maintenance,
- Increase and possibly expand the EMS capabilities to increase calls and associated revenue and offset expenses.

Lastly, the number of on duty career staffing will need to be increased in the next 5 years to offset the loss of call personnel and ensure adequate staffing is responding to all emergencies. A minimum of 4 career staffing on duty is projected to be needed within the next 5 years: a lieutenant and a combination of 3 Firefighter/Paramedics/EMT's. This staffing model is necessary to staff the Ambulance effectively and ensure there is also a fire response available anytime. This should be phased in beginning next fiscal year.

Existing Facility Analysis & Space Planning or Expansion Options

Identify current limitations including vehicle capacity, meeting/training spaces, office and living quarters, and overall storage capacity in order to:

- Evaluate the feasibility of expanding the current facility
- Provide square footage requirements based on projected usage
- Develop cost estimates for renovation, expansion, or new construction

Background

Fire stations must be designed and constructed to accommodate current and forecast future trends in fire service vehicle type and manufactured dimensions. The Dalton Fire Department station was not constructed to accommodate 24/7 staffing, although some improvements to the fire station have been made over the last several years to accommodate the career staffing that have been hired. Three bunkroom areas were changed at the fire station from what appears to be closet areas to individual dormitories. A facility must contain several functional areas to accommodate 24-hour staffing.



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For personnel, fire station facilities must have provisions for space and amenities for administrative work, training, physical fitness, laundering, meal preparation, and personal hygiene/comfort, and – when a fire department is committed to minimize “turnout time” – bunking facilities. Design details and construction materials and methods should embrace a goal of building a facility that can perform in an uninterrupted manner despite prevailing climatic conditions and/or disruption of utilities. Personnel-oriented needs in fire station facilities must permit performance of daily duties in support of response operations.

Fire Station vehicle areas also must contain sufficiently sized bay doors, circulation space between garaged vehicles, departure and return aprons of adequate length and turn geometry to ensure safe response, and floor drains and oil separators to satisfy environmental concerns. Station vehicle bay areas should also consider future tactical vehicles that may need to be added to the fleet to address forecasted response challenges, even if this consideration merely incorporates civil design that ensures adequate parcel space for additional bays to be constructed in the future. Programmatic details, like the provision of an emergency generator connected to automatic transfer switching, even going as far as providing tertiary redundancy of power supply via a “piggyback” roll-up generator with manual transfer (should the primary generator fail), provide effective safeguards that permit the fire department to function fully during local emergencies when response activity predictably peaks.

Personnel and occupant safety are key elements of effective station design. This begins with small details like the quality of finish on bay floors and nonslip treads on stairwell steps to decrease fall hazards, or use of hands-free plumbing fixtures and easily disinfected surfaces/countertops to promote infection control. It continues with installation of specialized equipment such as an exhaust recovery system to capture and remove cancer-causing byproducts of diesel fuel exhaust emissions. A design should thoughtfully incorporate best practices for achieving a safe and hygienic work environment. Ergonomic layout and corresponding space adjacencies in a fire station should seek to limit the travel distances between occupied crew areas to the apparatus bays. Likewise, it should carefully consider complementary adjacencies, like lavatories/showers in proximity of bunk rooms, and desired segregations, like break rooms or fitness areas that are remote from sleeping quarters. Furnishings, fixtures, and equipment selections should provide thoughtful consideration of the around-the-clock occupancy systems to fire facilities. Durability is essential, given the accelerated wear and life cycle of systems and goods in facilities that are constantly occupied and operational.

In conclusion, providing sound community fire protection requires achieving effective service area coverage, satisfying prevailing community goals and national best practices for predicted response travel times, and having facilities that can support mission-critical personnel and vehicle-oriented requirements and needs. Additionally, depending on a fire department’s scope of services, size, and complexity, other facilities



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may be necessary to support emergency communications, personnel training, fleet and essential equipment maintenance and repair, and supply storage and distribution.

National standards such as NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness Program, outlines standards that transfer to facilities such as infection control, personnel and equipment decontamination, cancer prevention, storage of protective clothing and employee fitness. NFPA 1851, Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensembles for Structural Firefighting and Proximity Fire Fighting, further delineates laundering standards for protective clothing and station wear. Laundry areas in fire facilities continue to evolve and are being separated from living areas to reduce contamination. Factors such as wastewater removal and air flow also need to be considered in a facility design.

Renovation

Estimated costs to renovate the existing fire station include: adding on 2 additional apparatus bays; cleaning and painting the walls and apparatus floor; installing new apparatus bay doors; removing and installing a new heating system; adding on the second floor above all of the current and additional apparatus bays; installing a diesel emission source capture system; renovating all bathrooms and adding a shower facility; modernizing the training/meeting room, kitchen, offices, ready room, kitchenette; and installing mini splits in all function/office areas on the first and second floors.

Cost Estimate – \$375.00 per square foot

Total Square Feet Estimated to be renovated (adding 2 additional apparatus bays and adding a second floor to all apparatus bays) – 16,140 sq. ft.

Total Cost – **\$6,052,500.00**

Construct New Fire Station

Estimated costs to demolish the current fire station and construct a new station include: 6 drive through bays; a larger second floor; male and female separate dormitories and bathrooms equipped with showers; a training/meeting room; Fire Chief's Office, Deputy Chief's Office, Chief Paramedic's Office, Captains Office, Lieutenant's Office; Ready Room; Decontamination Room; Kitchen; Storage Rooms; diesel emissions source capture system throughout; workshop area, and exercise space. All areas would meet or exceed current fire codes and safety devices including sprinklers.

Cost Estimate – \$350.00 per square foot.

Total Square Feet to construct – 18,000 sq. ft.

Total Cost – **\$6,300,000.00**



Final Recommendation

Although the estimated costs to construct a new fire station are more than renovating the current fire station, the recommendation is to demolish the current fire station and construct a new fire station. Constructing a new fire station will enable all career, per diem, and call firefighters and staff to be part of the future and include all of the national recommendations for a safe and efficient fire station for the next 50 years.

Figure 8: Fire Station that Models Recommendations





Appendix 1: Project Parameters from Request for Proposals

I. Introduction

The Dalton Fire District invites proposals from professional architectural, engineering, and similarly qualified firms to conduct a thorough and objective needs assessment of the Dalton Fire Department to serve the District and community for the next 5-20 years. The proposed assessment is intended to evaluate the needs and expectations of the community related to fire and EMS services, the department's organizational structure and staffing requirements, and facility requirements to meet those needs in accordance with stakeholder input.

II. Background

The Dalton Fire Department (DFD) serves the Dalton Fire District with Fire and ALS level EMS response. The DFD also provides mutual aid services to surrounding towns. In the 2025 calendar year, the DFD employed 10 fulltime firefighter/EMTs and another 15-20 call members who responded to approximately 1200 calls (90% EMS calls).

The current DFD facility is located on Flansburg Avenue but has both space and accessibility limitations due to the age of the building. The number of calls, especially EMS calls, continues to rise in town and the surrounding area, and the department has, within the past five years, begun staffing shifts 24/7. This study will identify the needs of the community, the expected trends of the number and nature of calls, and the needs of the department and provide actionable recommendations to address those needs.

III. Scope of Work

The selected firm will be responsible for the following:

1. Community Needs and Requirements Assessment

Analyze the community's geographic area, building construction, density, accessibility, traffic patterns, zoning, permits, environmental considerations, and projected community growth and demographics, using data and projections to determine requirements.

2. Departmental Analysis

Review organizational structure, strategic plans, and staffing analysis and suggest changes to improve efficiency and quality of service.

3. Existing Facility Analysis & Space Planning or Expansion Options

Identify current limitations including vehicle capacity, meeting/training spaces, office and living quarters, and overall storage capacity in order to:

- Evaluate the feasibility of expanding the current facility
- Provide square footage requirements based on projected usage
- Develop cost estimates for renovation, expansion, or new construction



Appendix 2: Recommended Square Footage per Firefighter in a Fire Station

There is no single fixed square-foot-per-firefighter rule in U.S. fire station design, however; NFPA 1500 and other planning guides provide minimum space requirements and zoning principles that help ensure adequate living, operational, and safety space for each firefighter.

NFPA 1500 — the Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health, and Wellness — emphasizes that fire stations must provide sufficient space for living quarters, fitness, training, and operational areas, while minimizing exposure to hazard. It does not specify a fixed square footage per firefighter, but it does require:

- **Minimum living space** per firefighter, based on the number of personnel and the size of the station.
- **Separation of zones:** living quarters, operational areas (apparatus bay, decontamination), and administrative/public areas.
- **Air curtains or airlocks** between living and operational zones to reduce contaminant exposure.
- **Fitness and training areas** accessible to all personnel.

Planning and design guides (e.g., USFA/IFSTA, Wainfleet) suggest that station size should be based on needs assessment and operational requirements, not just headcount. For example:

- **Living zone** (bunk rooms, kitchen, dayroom, fitness) should be designed to support the crew's health and well-being, with space for rest, meals, and recreation.
- **Operational zone** (apparatus bay, decontamination) must allow for quick, safe access to vehicles and equipment.
- **Administrative/public zone** should be proportionate to the station's size and staffing.

Typical Design Approach

While exact square footage varies by station size and department needs, many modern career fire stations aim for at least 1,000–1,500 square feet per firefighter in the living/operational combined area, depending on the number of personnel, equipment, and training needs. This ensures compliance with NFPA 1500 and provides room for safety features, equipment storage, and operational efficiency.



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Dalton Fire Department

Appendix 3: Dalton Fire Department Strategic Plans

1-Year Strategic Plan (Short-Term Goals)

*** Assessment and stabilization ** Operational Readiness*

- Update risk assessment and pre-plan for locations within town
 - Establish a review cycle & process for these plans
- Update and create Standard Operating Policies/Procedures (SOPs)
 - Establish a review cycle & process for SOPs
- Evaluate NFPA compliance for apparatus, equipment, and PPE
- Review / update mutual aid agreements

Personnel, Training & Certification

- Implement annual training schedules for both fire and EMS personnel
- Begin a recruit training program for new recruits
- Recruit 5–10 part-time or volunteer firefighters/EMTs
- Recruit 2–3 per diem paramedics
- Plan and launch a Junior Fire Fighter Program
- Develop a career ladder within the chain of command
- Develop recruitment campaigns

Community Engagement

- Launch a Public Education campaign (fire prevention, CPR, first aid)

Infrastructure & Equipment

- Place ladder truck into service
- Purchase additional, 36' or taller ground ladders
- Plan for infrastructure improvements:
 - Survey needs of the department and staff
 - Have engineering evaluate the feasibility and cost of improvements
 - Implement a plan to begin those improvements

5-Year Strategic Plan (Mid-Term Goals)

Operational Readiness

- Pursue / explore additional grant funding opportunities
- Improve ISO class rating

Infrastructure & Equipment

- Replace ambulance



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- Continue implementation to upgrade station facilities (e.g., bunk rooms, training space)
- Replace 20 sets of turnout gear with grant funding
- Explore feasibility of adding second/backup ambulance at BLS level, and appropriate staff
- Integrate digital pre-plans
- Begin planning for SCBA replacement

Personnel, Training & Certification

- Offer tuition reimbursement for fire science or paramedic programs
- Certify personnel in RIT
- Build out the training building
- Partner with regional departments for joint training exercises
- Establish officer development / certification guidelines
- Improve cancer prevention practices

Community Engagement

- Plan and implement Fire & Life Safety classes for school and senior center

10-Year Strategic Plan (Long-Term Vision)

Infrastructure & Equipment

- Explore regionalization and compilation of resources to reduce response times in surrounding areas
- Implement green energy solutions (solar panels, consider EV apparatus)
- Replace ambulance
- Replace 15 sets of turnout gear with grant funding
- Plan for apparatus replacement
- Diversify revenue streams to support operation of department

Personnel, Training & Certification

- Certify personnel in technical rescue and/or hazmat operations
- Establish a succession plan for leadership roles
- Offer mental health and wellness programs for responders
- Explore offering EMT training internally

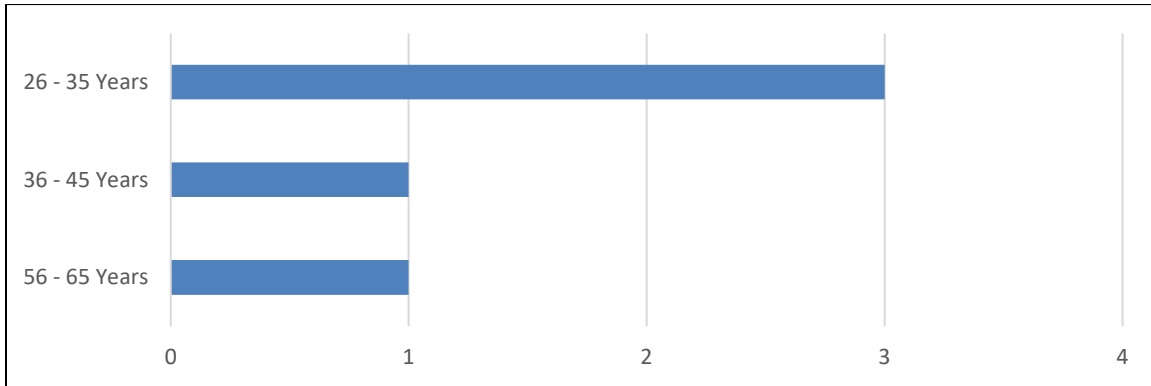


Community & Space Needs Analysis

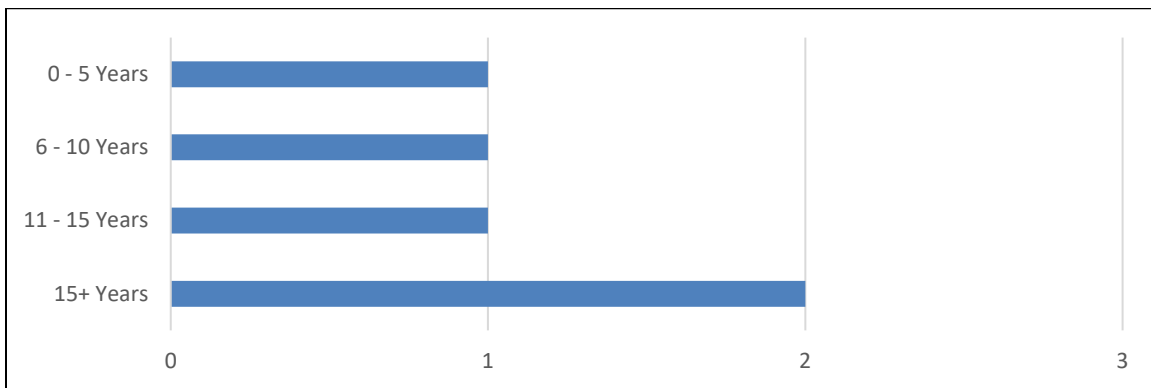
Dalton Fire Department

Appendix 4: Internal Member Survey Data

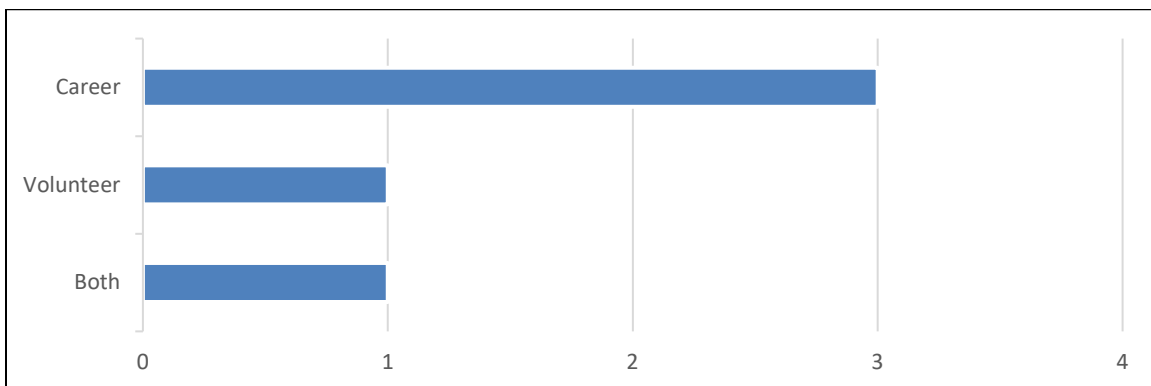
Question 1: Please indicate your age range.



Question 2: Please identify your total number of years of experience (paid and volunteer) in the fire service.



Question 3: In which capacity do you serve your department?

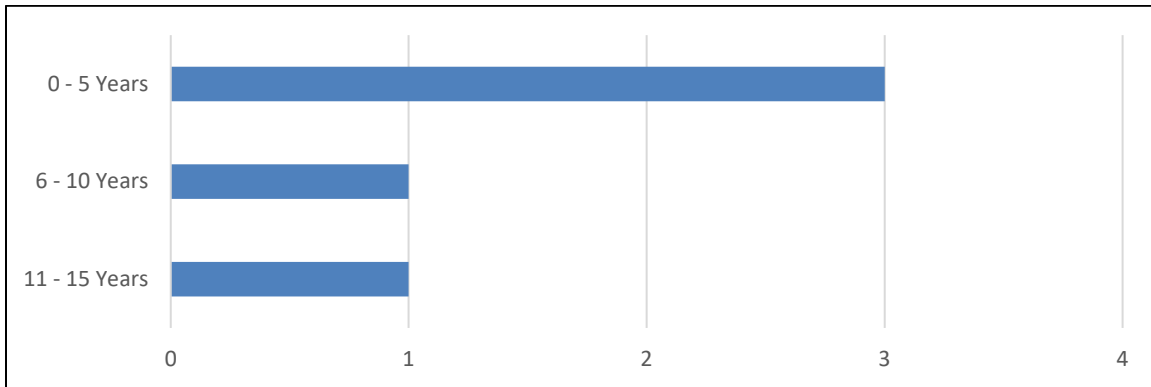




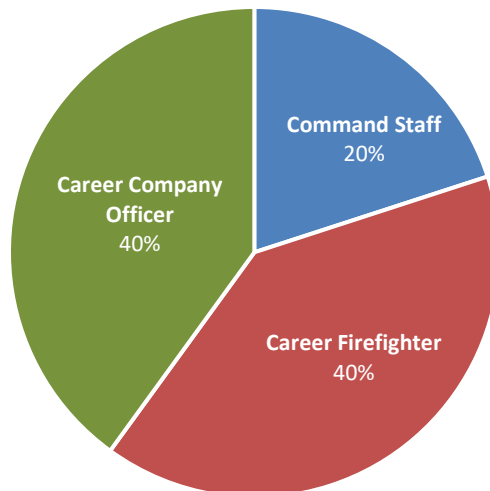
Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 4: How many years have been a member of the department?



Question 5: Which one of the following best describes your current position?

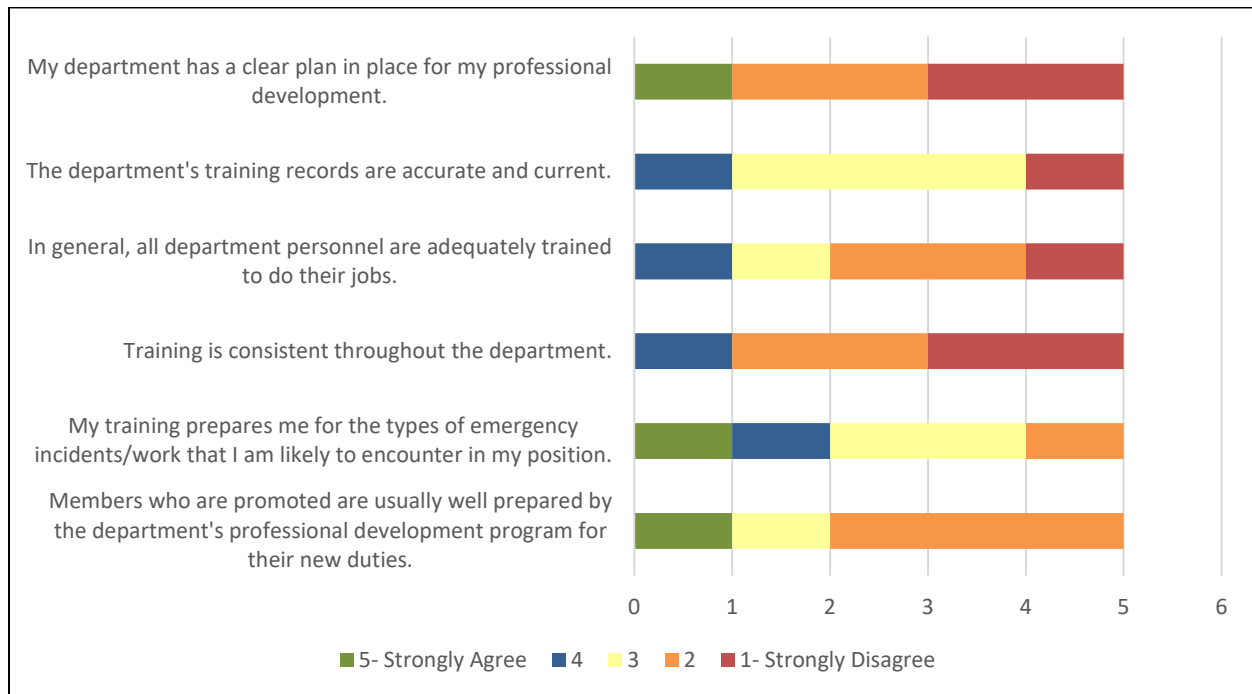




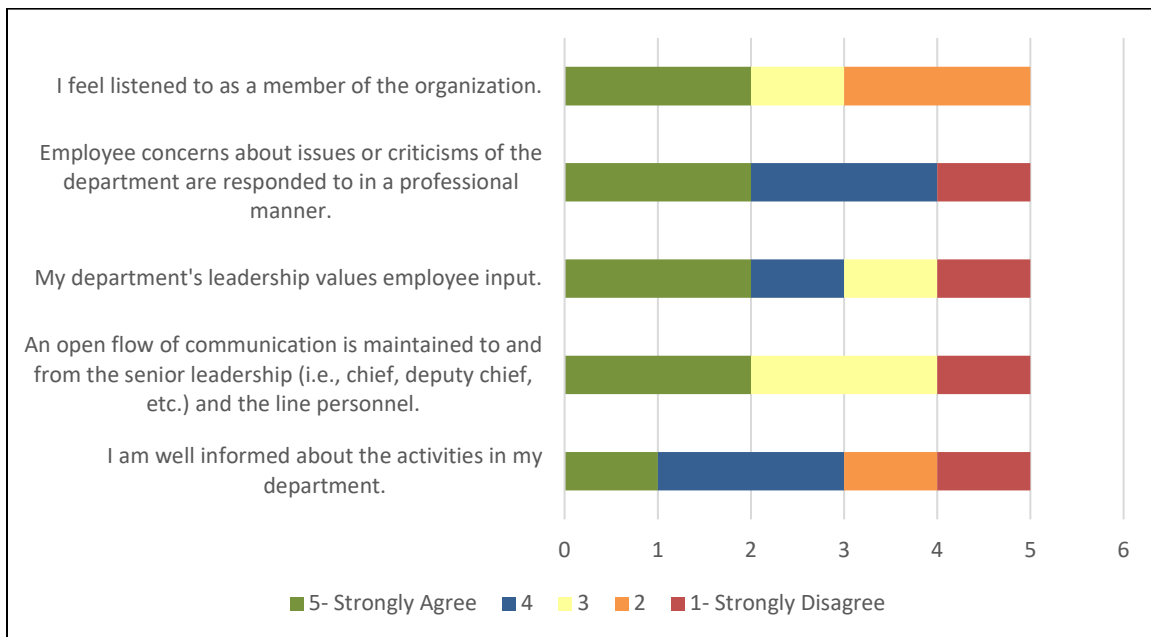
Community & Space Needs Analysis

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Question 6: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's Training and Professional Development Program:



Question 7: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's level of Communications:

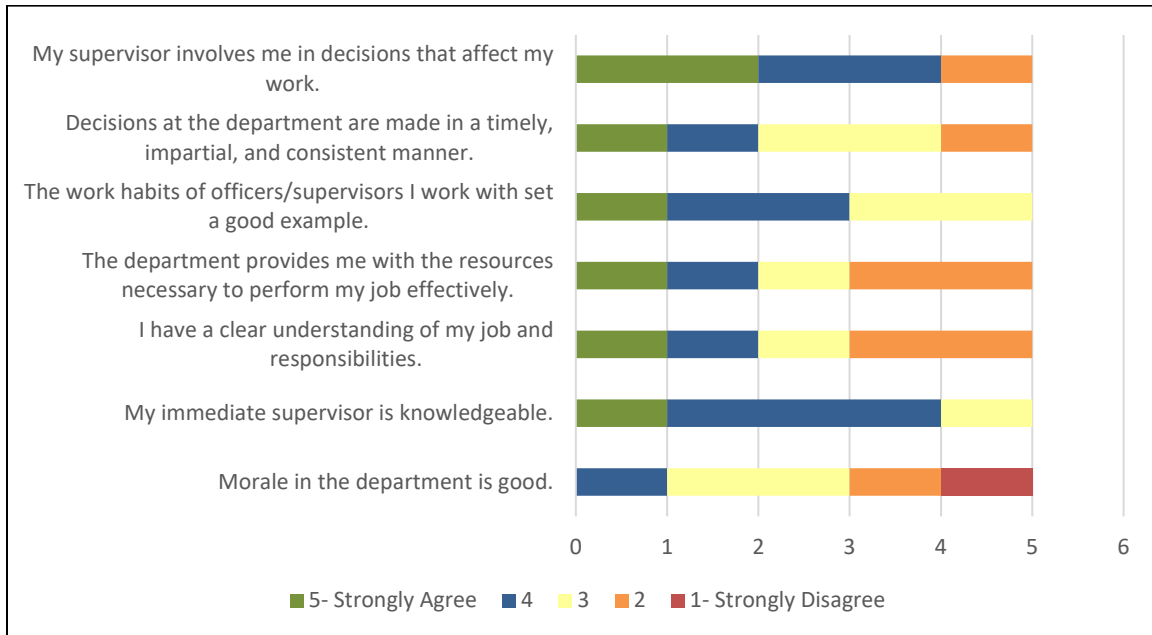




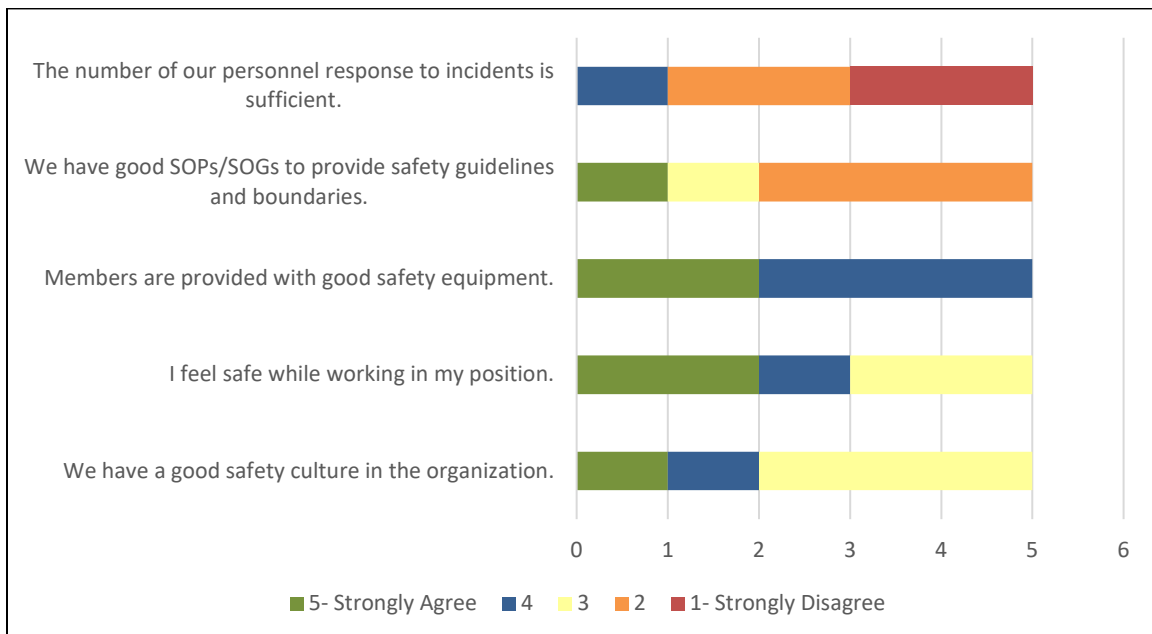
Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 8: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's Work Environment:



Question 9: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's approach to Safety:

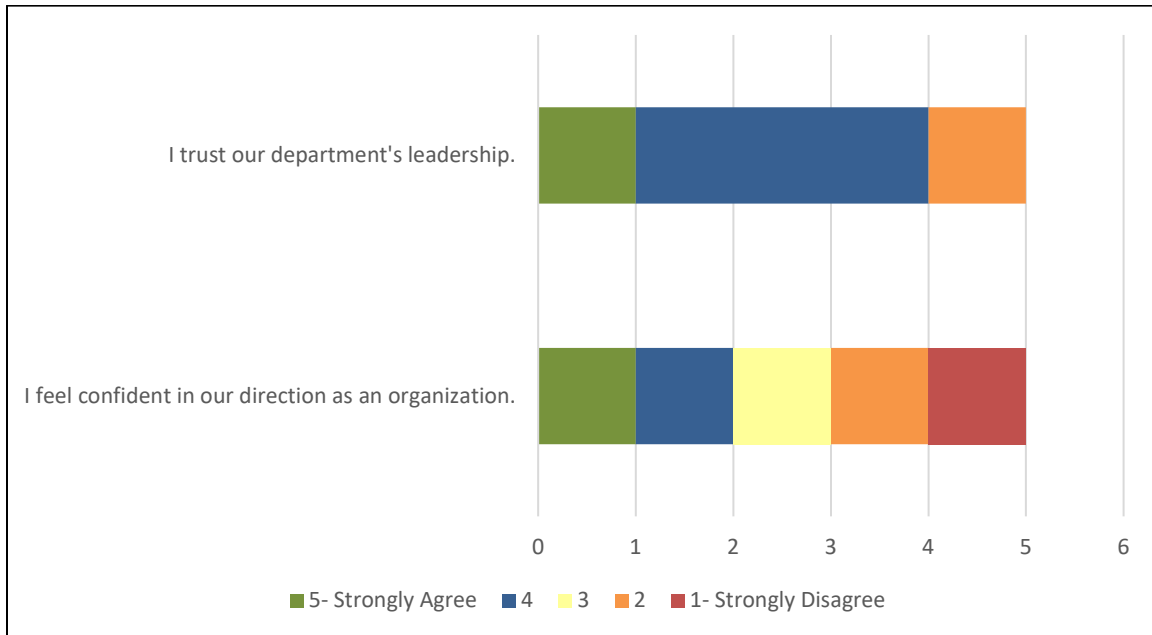




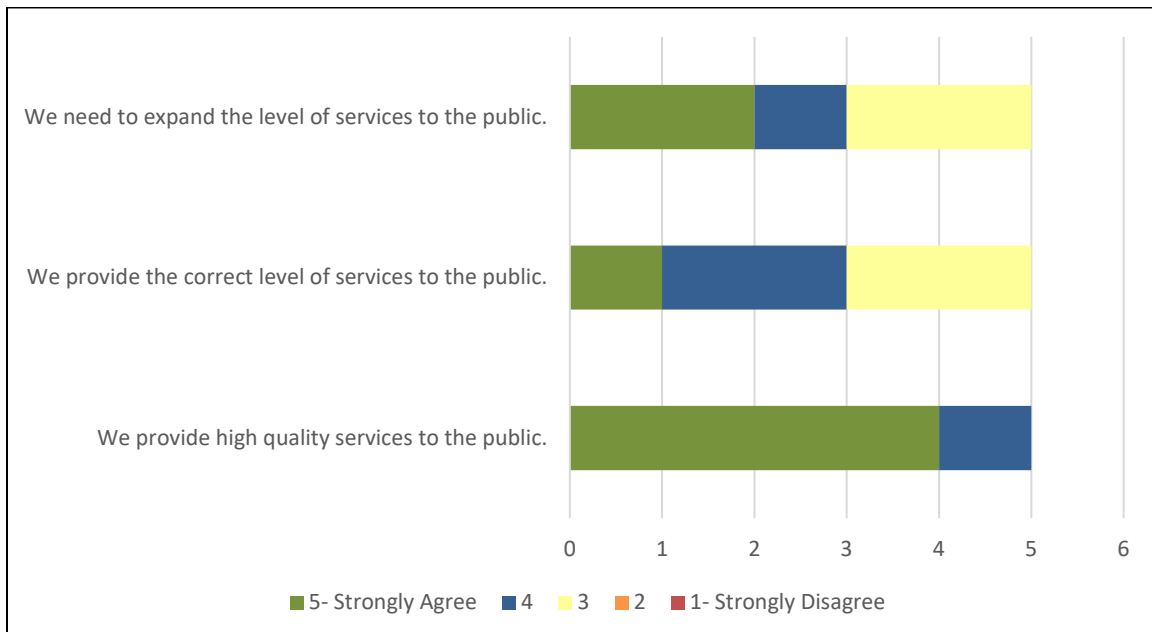
Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 10: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's Leadership/Direction:



Question 11: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's Service Delivery:

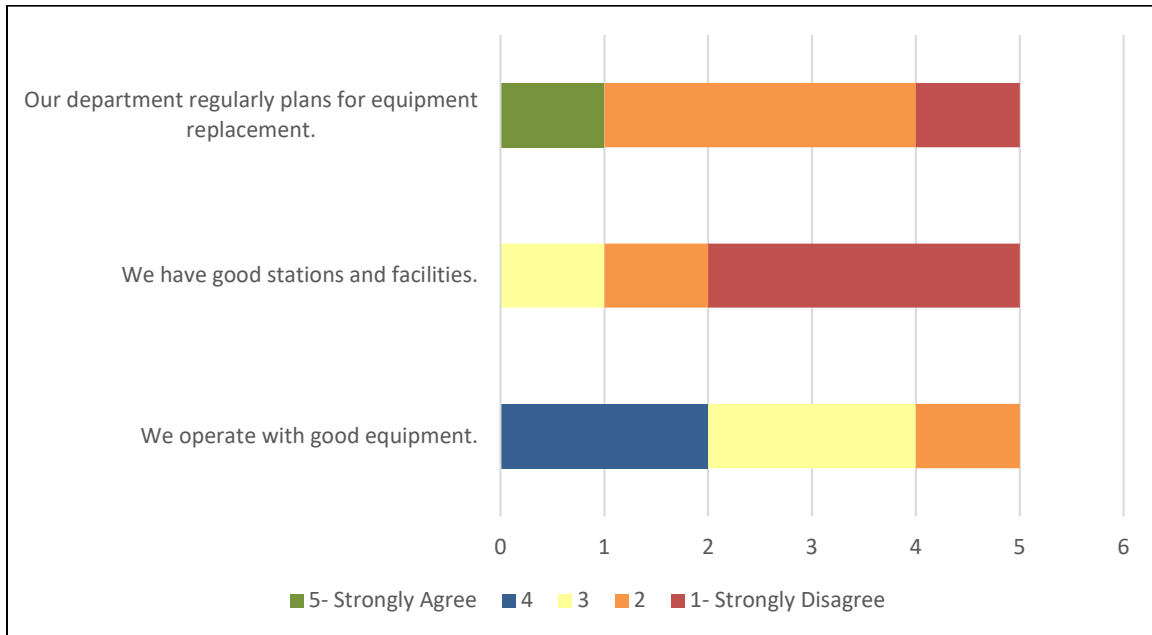




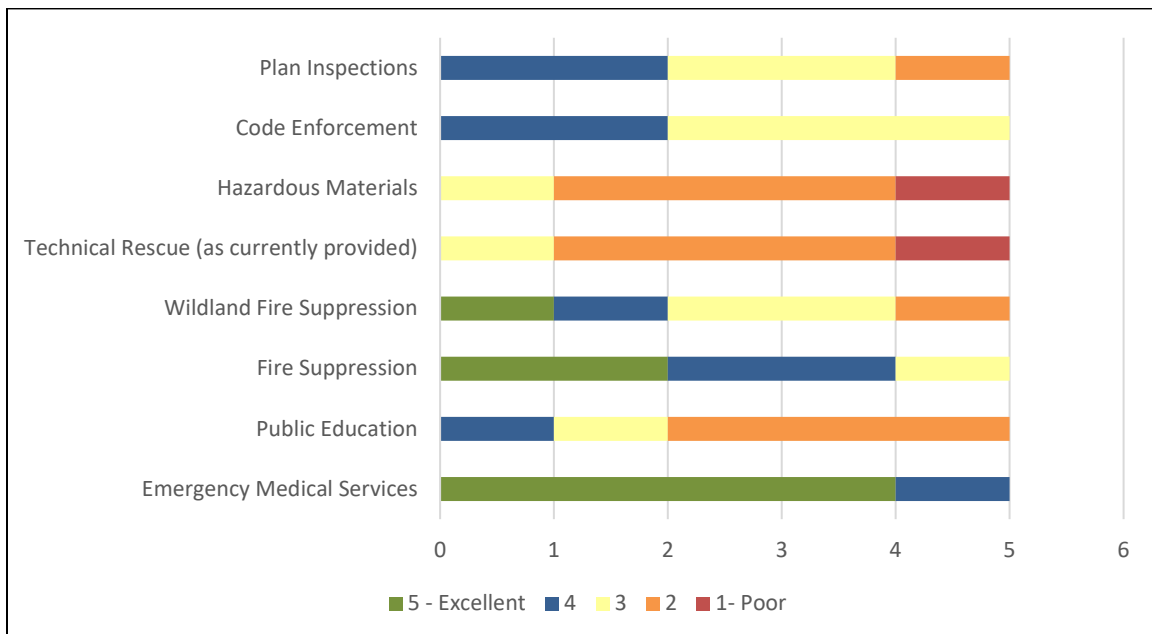
Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 12: Please describe your level of agreement with the following statements related to your department's Equipment/Facilities:



Question 13: Please rate your appraisal of how well the following services are delivered by your department:

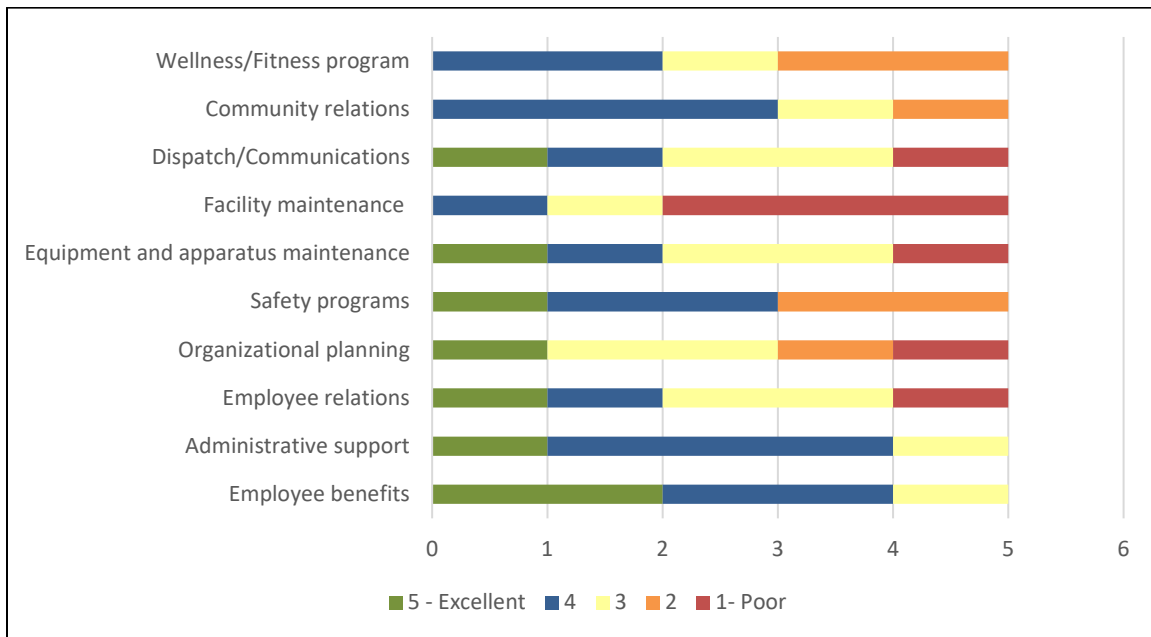




Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 14: Please rate your appraisal of the following features of your department:



Question 15: List the top 3 issues you feel need to be addressed within the department.

- Fire station livability, apparatus replacement, department staffing
- Communication, facilities, training
- Update station, update equipment, install ventilation system in apparatus bay
- Capital planning, station improvements to meet needs of department, department culture
- Building is not up to fire house standards. Employee retention, staffing levels

Question 16: List 3-5 goals that you think the department should have.

- Staff numbers; better pay; education/ fitness standards; apparatus replacement schedule
- Improve training; Upgrade facilities; Improve recruitment; Standardized expected qualifications for all firefighters; Increase response requirements for volunteers
- Hire a permanent chief, update commissioners, update our training facility to meet current standards
- Develop a capital plan, decide what needs to be done regarding the station, develop and implement a clear organized training plan
- Increased staffing levels, 24 hr coverage, better quarters.



Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Question 17: List 3-5 new opportunities that you think the department should explore.

- N/A
- Training, Community outreach, Regionalization
- Outreach program to recruit, junior personnel, strengthen public relations, pursue interdepartmental training opportunities
- Junior Firefighter Program, Community education and engagement, MFA trainings
- New building, more staff, accountability for officer

Please provide any additional comments that should be considered for developing a successful organizational strategic plan.

- Unfortunately the members of our fire commissioners aren't firemen and don't understand the job which directly impacts the fire department negatively.
- I think things have started to improve significantly with our new chief. But I think there are a lot of issues that can't be fixed overnight. I also have a problem with officers not having any clear requirements. If you want to be an officer, you need to have minimum requirements or at least be working towards them. I think we should also have employee reviews every year at every level so people can know what they need to improve on. There's a lot of talent on this department that needs better direction and leadership from their officers.
- I think a number of these issues/goals are being addressed, but it has been a tumultuous 5 years at the department - we need to make some plans and stick to them for a prolonged time while making minor adjustments as needed (but we can't continue to make drastic changes without allowing enough time for them to produce any significant effect)
- N/a



Community & Space Needs Analysis
Dalton Fire Department

Appendix 5: CAI Property Card

GENERAL PROPERTY INFORMATION		BUILDING EXTERIOR
LOCATION: 20 FLANSBURGH AVE ACRES: 0.3663 PARCEL ID: 109-265 LAND USE CODE: 985 CONDO COMPLEX: OWNER: DALTON FIRE DISTRICT CO - OWNER: MAILING ADDRESS: 20 FLANSBURGH AVE DALTON, MA 01226 ZONING: R3 PATRIOT ACCOUNT #: 1136		BUILDING STYLE: FIRE STAT UNITS: 0 YEAR BUILT: 1958 FRAME: CONCRETE EXTERIOR WALL COVER: BRICK VENR ROOF STYLE: GABLE ROOF COVER: ASPHALT SH
SALE INFORMATION		BUILDING INTERIOR
SALE DATE: 2/6/1963 BOOK & PAGE: 0688-0387 SALE PRICE: SALE DESCRIPTION: SELLER:		INTERIOR WALL: DRYWALL FLOOR COVER: CONCRETE HEAT TYPE: FORCED H/W FUEL TYPE: OIL PERCENT A/C: 0 # OF ROOMS: 0 # OF BEDROOMS: 0 # OF FULL BATHS: 0 # OF HALF BATHS: 3 # OF ADDITIONAL FIXTURES: 4 # OF KITCHENS: 2 # OF FIREPLACES: 0 # OF METAL FIREPLACES: 0 # OF BASEMENT GARAGES: 0
PRINCIPAL BUILDING AREAS		
GROSS BUILDING AREA: 9,420 FINISHED BUILDING AREA: 8,988 BASEMENT AREA: 1,800 # OF PRINCIPAL BUILDINGS: 1		
ASSESSED VALUES		
LAND: 91,600 YARD: 10,600 BUILDING: 811,300 TOTAL: \$913,500		
SKETCH		PHOTO

www.cai-tech.com

This information is believed to be correct but is subject to change and is not warranted.

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Property Information - Dalton, MA



Community & Space Needs Analysis

Dalton Fire Department

Appendix 6: Dalton Fire Permit Fee Schedule

Inspection/Permit	
Detail Fire / EMS \$50 per hour 4 hr min. After 4 hrs it is 8 hrs. Night, weekend, or holiday \$65 per hr	
Quarterly Inspection	\$50
Annual Inspection	\$50
Liquor License (304)	\$50
Real Estate Transaction (26F & 26F1/2)	\$50
Demolition	\$50 + \$10 for each additional housing unit
Fire Alarm System (Modification or Repair)	\$50
Sprinkler System (Modification or Repair)	\$50
Propane Tanks	\$50
Oil Burners	\$50
Tank Removals or Fill in Place	\$50
Fireworks & Blasting	\$100 plus detail
Hot Work (Cutting and Welding)	\$50
Tank Trucks	\$50



Community & Space Needs Analysis
Dalton Fire Department

Storage Permits (Explosives & Black Powder) per 200 lbs stored \$50

Storage Permits (Flammable Liquids) \$50

~~Burning Permits~~ ~~\$50~~

Other Permits & Inspections \$50

Plan Review

Sprinkler System \$50

Plan Review

\$0.75 per \$1,000 of construction cost Minimum \$40, Maximum \$4,000
\$0.50 per \$1,000 of construction cost Minimum \$40, Maximum \$4,000

Effective July 1, 2023