

State of Delaware Office of Auditor of Accounts



Delaware Volunteer Fire Service 2018 Annual Report

Released in conjunction with the Delaware Volunteer Firefighter's Association Annual Conference
September 2018

For more information on the Delaware Volunteer Firefighter's Association, go to www.dvfassn.com.

R. Thomas Wagner, Jr., CFE, CGFM, CICA
Auditor of Accounts





**STATE OF DELAWARE
OFFICE OF AUDITOR OF ACCOUNTS**

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September 11, 2018

Mr. Richard Perillo
President
Delaware Volunteer Firefighter's Association
122 South Bradford Street
P.O. Box 1849
Dover, DE 19903

Ms. Lynn Warner
President
Ladies Auxiliary Association
Delaware Volunteer Firefighter's Association
122 South Bradford Street
P.O. Box 1849
Dover, DE 19903

Dear Mr. Perillo and Ms. Warner:

Once again I am very pleased to present the Delaware Volunteer Fire Service Annual Report. Delaware's volunteer fire service program is, and always has been, a tremendous asset to Delawareans. The program demonstrates the pride and support of many volunteers, both the firefighters and the auxiliary members.

A volunteer's time includes fire responses, training, public education efforts, vehicle maintenance, station upkeep, and many other contributions. As the following report details, these volunteers not only sacrifice their time and energy, but they also save the State taxpayers a significant amount of money. My Office estimates a savings of more than \$ 218,000,000 for the State's fiscal year ending June 30, 2018.

These individuals voluntarily put their lives on the line to provide the citizens of Delaware with a safer and more secure community. I would like to express my deep appreciation for the men and women providing these services to their respective communities.

Sincerely yours,

R. Thomas Wagner, Jr., CFE, CGFM, CICA
Auditor of Accounts

Background

The State of Delaware has 60 volunteer fire companies, 21 substations and 3 ambulance stations with approximately 6,000 volunteers serving as firefighters, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT), or support members (e.g. life, auxiliary, juniors, cadets, and social).¹

The State of Delaware offers a variety of benefits to recognize volunteer firefighters, auxiliary members, and EMTs for the sacrifices they make through their volunteer services. The benefits include:

- a \$400 tax credit on State personal income taxes each year;
- membership in the Delaware Blood Bank;
- participation in a pension plan;²
- worker’s compensation for disabilities received in the line of duty;
- a special “Delaware Volunteer Firefighter’s License Plate” for personal vehicles; and
- membership in the Delaware Federal Credit Union.

In the unfortunate event that a service member suffers a death in the line of duty, further benefits include:

- reimbursement for funeral expenses, up to \$7,000;
- life insurance payments of \$150,000 for deaths in the line of duty; and
- reimbursement for college tuition expenses for dependent children.



Motor Vehicle Accident – March 22, 2018
Photo courtesy of the Lewes Fire Department website

¹ Obtained from the Delaware Volunteer Firefighter Association, Executive Manager

² To receive a pension, the individual must have reached age 60 and have a minimum of ten years in the pension plan.

**It would cost \$218,514,543 to replace Delaware’s
Volunteer Fire Service with an Employed Statewide
Fire Service:**



Residential Fire – January 8, 2018
Photo courtesy of Milton Fire Department website

Projected Costs of Employed Statewide Fire Service:

Salary and Fringe Benefits ³		\$	217,852,700
Equipment Purchases and Maintenance ³			19,438,651
Building Purchases and Maintenance ⁴			20,128,296
Fuel and Utilities ⁴			3,815,982
Insurance Premiums ⁴			4,264,368
Employee Apparatus ⁴			<u>3,038,070</u>
 Total Projected Cost		\$	<u>268,538,068</u>
 Less Current Revenue Sources:			
Grant-in-Aid ⁵	\$	(4,550,889)	
Fire Insurance ⁶		(27,074,549)	
Ambulance Taxes and Levies ⁷		(7,724,432)	
County Subsidies ⁸		(8,673,655)	
State Contribution to DVFA fund ⁹		<u>(2,000,000)</u>	
Subtotal			<u>\$ (50,023,525)</u>
 Total Cost Avoidance		\$	<u>218,514,543</u>

³ See page 7 for details

⁴ See page 9 for details

⁵ Obtained from the Fiscal Year 2018 Grant-in-Aid Bill, excluding Wilmington

⁶ Obtained from the Office of the State Treasurer, excluding Wilmington

⁷ Obtained from the Office of the State Treasurer and the Delaware Fire Prevention Commission, excluding Wilmington

⁸ Obtained from the Fiscal Year 2017 Budget for each County

⁹ Obtained from Delaware Public Employees' System Annual Financial Report Fiscal Year 2017, Volunteer Fire Fund Employer Contributions

Property Tax would increase by \$9.54 per \$1,000 of assessed property value for each household for an Employed Statewide Fire Service:



Motor Vehicle Crash – September 1, 2017
 Photo courtesy of Dover Fire Department website

Projected Costs of Employed Statewide Fire Service per \$1,000 of assessed property value:

Salary and Fringe Benefits		9.42
Equipment Purchases and Maintenance		0.85
Buildings Purchases and Maintenance		0.88
Fuel and Utilities		0.17
Insurance Premiums		0.19
Employee Apparatus		0.13
		<hr/>
Total Projected Cost		11.64
		<hr/>
Less Current Revenue Sources:		
Grant-in-Aid	(0.20)	
Fire Insurance	(1.18)	
Ambulance Taxes and Levies	(0.34)	
County Subsidies	(0.38)	
Subtotal		(2.10)
		<hr/>
Net Increase in Property Tax		9.54
		<hr/>

Detailed Cost Savings Calculations



Seaford House Fire – November 30, 2017
 Photo courtesy of the Georgetown Fire Company websites

Cost for a Non-Volunteer Fire Department

The basis for this analysis is the paid City of Wilmington Fire Department (WFD). The following statistics were used in the analysis:

Population of the City of Wilmington ¹⁰	71,106
Current number of Wilmington Fire Stations ¹¹	7
Population served per Station (Wilmington Population/Fire Stations)	10,158
Current number of paid firefighters ¹²	161
Estimated employees per Station (Number of firefighters/Number of fire stations)	23
Average salary and fringe benefits for current WFD employees ¹³	\$ 111,725

¹⁰ Obtained from the US Census website at www.census.gov/quickfacts

¹¹ Obtained from the Fiscal Year 2017 Grant-in-Aid Bill

¹² Obtained from the City of Wilmington. This figure includes five civilian positions.

¹³ Total Salary and Fringe Benefit information provided by the City of Wilmington

State Demographics

State population ¹⁴ (excluding Wilmington)	890,833
Assessed property value ¹⁵ (excluding Wilmington)	\$ 22,921,460,644
Number of volunteer stations	84
Total employees needed (23 per station)	1,932

Salary and Fringe Benefits

Salary and fringe benefits were calculated by multiplying the average salary and fringe benefits for current WFD employees, \$111,725 by the total employees needed, 1,932. The total estimate is \$215,852,700.

Equipment

Equipment purchases were calculated using the following information:

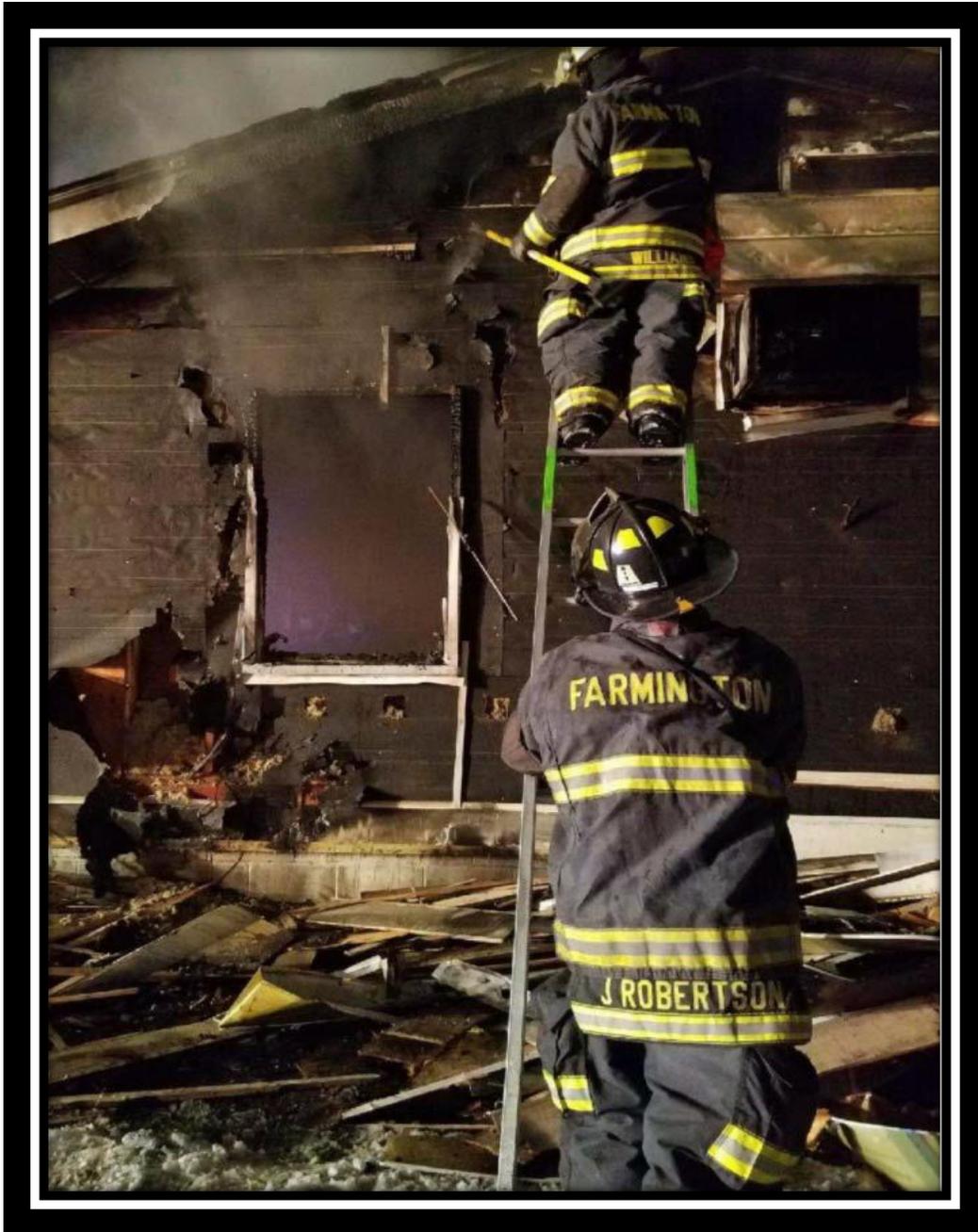
Equipment Type	Estimated Cost Equipment Type	Est. Life (Years)	Replacement Per Year*	Annual Replacement Cost
Fire Engine	700,000	18	4	2,800,000
Ambulance	215,000	7	12	2,580,000
Brush Truck	100,000	13	6	600,000
Rescue Truck	850,000	20	4	3,400,000
Aerial Truck	1,000,000	20	2	2,000,000 **
Tanker	400,000	20	2	800,000 **
Utility Vehicle	50,000	9	9	450,000
Pumper Tanker	600,000	18	2	1,200,000 **
Equipment Total				13,830,000
Plus Maintenance				5,608,651
Grand Total				<u>\$ 19,438,651</u>

*Averages were truncated to whole numbers.

**Aerial trucks, tankers, and pumper tankers are required by approximately half of the companies for specialized needs.

¹⁴ Obtained from www.census.gov/quickfacts

¹⁵ Obtained from the State Department of Education



House Fire – January 9, 2018
Photo courtesy of Farmington Volunteer Fire Company website

Buildings and Maintenance

Building purchases and annual maintenance were estimated at \$20,128,296 per year. Buildings were estimated to have a life expectancy of 20 years.

Fuel and Utilities

Fuel and Utilities were estimated at \$3,815,982 per year. The fuel and utilities were estimated based on annual reports submitted by the fire companies.

Insurance Premiums

Insurance Premiums were estimated at \$4,264,368 based on annual reports submitted by the fire companies.

Employee Apparatus

Employee apparatus was estimated to be \$15,725 per firefighter, with an estimated life expectancy of 10 years. The statewide equivalent for 1,972 firefighters is \$3,038,070 annually.



House Fire – December 31, 2017
Photo courtesy of Hartly Volunteer Fire Company website

Volunteer Fire Service and Ambulance Training



Ice Rescue Training – January 2, 2018
Photo courtesy of Goodwill Fire Company website

The Delaware State Fire School, under the guidance of the State Fire Prevention Commission, provides fire, rescue, emergency medical training, and public fire safety education to the fire and rescue service, as well as to industry and citizens of our State.¹⁶ Instructors conduct training sessions in both classroom settings and simulated facilities using actual conditions at three regional training centers, one located in each county.

During Fiscal Year 2018, the Delaware State Fire School trained 10,139 students in Fire and Rescue and 5,557 in Emergency Medical Services.¹⁷

¹⁶ Obtained from <http://statefireschool.delaware.gov/fromdirector.shtml>, Letter from the Director, Robert Newman

¹⁷ Obtained From the Delaware State Fire School.



Training with Camden-Wyoming Fire Company – March 10, 2018
Photo Courtesy of the Magnolia Volunteer Fire Company website

Thankfully, no firefighters were lost in the line of duty through June 30, 2018. This is a direct reflection on the quality of training provided to firefighters and other fire service volunteers.

**Report Fraud, Waste, and Abuse
in Delaware State Government
1-800-55-FRAUD**
