

Town of Coventry

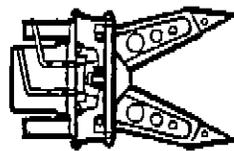


Fire

Rescue



EMS



Fire - Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Study

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The attached report; Fire, Rescue and Emergency Medical Services Study, Town of Coventry, Connecticut has been prepared by A. N. Patrizz, Associates in response to the Request for Proposal issued by the Town of Coventry on June 5, 1995.

The Town's Request for Proposal provided a set of goals which served as the foundation for our study. Section 1 of this Report, titled: Project Overview and Town Profile, discusses these goals and our methodology for addressing them.

Working toward these established goals, we evaluated the existing Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Service (EMS) Delivery Systems operating in the Town as they presently exist and provided recommendations for changes in policy, administration, facilities and equipment which would result in improvements to these delivery systems. The intent is that the study recommendations will be used by Town Management to form a Fire Protection/EMS Master Plan or Plan of Development which could then be used in conjunction with the overall Town of Coventry, Plan of Development to guide future evolution of these important Town emergency services.

Section 1 provides a basic profile of demographic and land use features. This information helps create a picture of what the Town's general population trend looks like and the type of citizen living in Coventry. The land use information shows the typically rural nature of the town. A projection for future growth is the most important aspect of this section as it lends some insight into the future growth capabilities of Coventry based on current land use and existing zoning policies. In summary, Coventry has a tremendous potential to develop both in population size and commercial property usage. Careful review of the impact of future growth within the town on fire protection and EMS services will be needed to ensure that these services can be maintained at an effective level. Planning and Zoning policy changes are recommended to address this concern.

Section 1 also refers to a Survey of Citizens Attitudes conducted recently as part of an update to the Town of Coventry Plan of Development (Master Plan). This survey showed that 1) town residents were very pleased with current fire protection and ambulance services, 2) that they placed a strong emphasis on these services being maintained at a high level and 3) they indicated that these services were high in priority among all town services and programs. It would appear from these results that Coventry residents are ready to support fire protection and EMS service enhancements.

Section 2 - Station Location Evaluation was performed to assess the current and future needs of the fire protection/EMS facilities in Town. The primary goals were to determine an optimum location for the proposed new Coventry Volunteer Fireman's Association (CVFA) fire station, to analyze areas of town which may be better served by additional satellite facilities and to address any major capital needs of the existing stations.

Conclusions of this evaluation were that the existing CVFA facility was generally deficient in general location, siting on the property and building construction/layout and that it lacked flexibility to effectively correct these problems. It is recommended that this facility be abandoned and a new main or central station be constructed on Route 31 (Main Street) somewhere between Ripley Hill Road and Route 275. In addition, to optimize the service level objectives established, a satellite station should be constructed on the west side of Coventry Lake in the vicinity of Judd and South Roads. The study found that the two North Coventry Fire Department (NCFD) facilities are situated properly to provide optimum coverage for the north end of town. A recommendation is made to consider plans to add one bay onto the Route 31 North Coventry facility to accommodate the future placement of a ladder truck. Several recommendations relative to better space utilization in these facilities to improve operational effectiveness are provided.

Section 3 - Equipment Needs Assessment looked at the major fire fighting and EMS equipment which is presently in-service in the CVFA and NCFD and the ability of that equipment to meet service level objectives. This assessment determined where this equipment should be located within the town to optimize performance levels, balance service demands and minimize equipment cost. A schedule for replacement of the major apparatus is provided.

This evaluation also concluded that the purchase of a ladder truck should not be a priority at this time. The nature of the target hazards in town and the mutual-aid accessibility of aerial apparatus from surrounding communities minimizes the need for the Town to purchase a ladder truck at this time. This may be recommended at some time in the future to improve the insurance grading of the town following higher priority actions in this area which are discussed in Section 5.

Section 4 - Organizational Needs Assessment looked at the fire protection and EMS organizations in Town and provides recommendations designed to streamline the two departments and enhance their operations.

One general observation made by the consultants during the study was that Coventry is fortunate to have dedicated volunteer organizations providing fire protection and EMS service within the Town. Our assessment did not attempt to "pit" one organization against the other or rate each one relative to the other. To do so would have no benefit and could actually be counter-productive to the goals of this Town effort.

Recommendations are offered in this section which if implemented in whole or in part, will improve the overall effectiveness and efficiency of the current organizations.

A number of the recommendations deal with the need to develop and implement policies, procedures and support functions which will provide a sound foundation upon which the organization(s) can function in a consistent and legally recognized manner. For example, one recommendation suggests the development of a legal agreement/contract between the Town and the fire departments for fire protection and rescue services as one currently does not exist. This may present liability concerns in the event of a lawsuit brought on by activities of the departments.

Another group of recommendations deal with the provision of basic fire suppression services. One example is the need to develop a documented, organized water supply plan for delivering needed water to any postulated fire scene within the town. Water supply is critical to fire suppression activities and is needed to support rescue and exposure protection operations. These activities are baseline fire ground activities and must be adequately carried out to meet the primary fire suppression delivery system goals; that being the saving of lives and reduction of property loss. Improvement in the water supply planning for Coventry is a key recommendation.

There is a list of similar recommendations which will collectively support the improvement of Coventry's fire and EMS services. Consideration should be given to the hiring of part or full time staff in the Town organization or fire department organization to pursue the implementation and on-going maintenance of these new policies, programs and support functions.

Section 5 - Insurance Services Office (ISO) Evaluation provided a review of the current ISO grading of Coventry and explored cost beneficial methods to improve the grading. Coventry is currently rated by ISO as a Class 9 community on a 1 to 10 rating scale (with 1 best and 10 considered unprotected). The last ISO evaluation of the Town was conducted in 1985. The goal of this evaluation was to determine if a rural town like Coventry, with limited resources available for improvement of it's fire protection services and no conventional water supply (a key ISO rating component), could realize any significant benefit in the town insurance grading by implementing changes.

The evaluation indicates that Coventry can in fact have a fairly significant impact in this area for relatively little investment. By implementing a plan to improve the water delivery methods (as discussed above) to meet a minimum performance level specified by ISO for rural communities, Coventry could achieve insurance class rating changes which could result in upwards of one quarter of a million dollars (conservatively) of annual insurance premium saving for the community. This is just for residential property and the savings on commercial property would be in addition to this number. This is an area which warrants serious consideration by the Town.

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In final summation, we would like to briefly discuss the issue of consolidation. During the course of this study, A. N. Patrizz, Jr., Associates became acutely aware of the sensitive nature of the issue of consolidating the two private fire departments in Coventry. We have made no formal recommendation on this issue. Instead, we have structured the report to show where improvements in the operations of the departments could be made as the organizations exist today and attempted to show where benefit may be realized if improvement was pursued in a consolidated manner. The merits and overall benefits of proceeding "as-is" with two departments or as a consolidated Town department must be evaluated internally by those involved with fire, rescue and EMS services in Coventry. The decision on the "best " way to proceed organizationally must ultimately be made through a consensus of those individuals.

As noted earlier in this summary, we have concluded that Coventry is fortunate to have two talented and dedicated private fire/EMS organizations providing service within its boundaries. It is equally fortunate to have a town management group which realizes the importance of these services to the citizens and has taken the initiative to begin planning for the successful provision of emergency services into the future.

As a result, A. N. Patrizz, Jr., Associates is confident that whichever decision is made, Coventry will succeed in improving fire, rescue and ambulance services for the protection of it's citizens and property owners. It is our hope that the results of this study will provide direction and insight to guide Coventry in this improvement effort.