



# LaSalle Fire Service Annual Report 2020



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# MISSION STATEMENT



**Our Mission is guided by commitment to our core values:**

**RESPECT**

**INTEGRITY**

**TEAMWORK**

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Without question, eclipsing any other events or accomplishments in 2020, the year will be remembered globally as the year impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. As with all other municipal operations, the pandemic also had significant impacts on the operations of the LaSalle Fire Service. The senior command team in the fire service also hold the dual role and responsibilities as Emergency Management Coordinators for the municipality. The on-going and somewhat predictable impacts of high water levels and springtime overland flooding, combined with the onset and rapid escalation of the global pandemic in the first quarter of the year, challenged the resources and capabilities of the entire municipal administrative team, including the fire service leadership team. Effective and long-term response to provide required and appropriate municipal support to these events necessitated deviation from intended departmental work plans in some cases.

In terms of traditional fire service activity, emergency response calls declined slightly, totaling four hundred and four (404) as compared to four hundred and thirty-three in the previous year. This decrease of approximately 7% is at least partially attributable to the effects of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, with many businesses and services closed or operating at reduced capacity, recreational travel and leisure activities reduced, and much of the workforce working from home. Total estimated dollar loss from fires was correspondingly lower in 2020, at approximately \$650,000.00. The majority of the loss was attributed to two fires in single family homes, and a fire in a barn operating as a business. Several vehicle fires, and outdoor fires resulting in minor losses, account for the remainder of the annual fire loss total. There were no fire fatalities in 2020, and only one minor burn injury reported.

A large measure of the credit for consistently maintaining relatively low instances of structure fires and personal injuries or deaths resulting from fires, is attributable to our aggressive and proactive approach to public fire safety education, and fire safety inspection programs, with a focus on making residents and building owners aware of their obligations for family and fire safety, and assisting them in preventing preventable fires. The importance of these programs aimed at influencing public behavior and awareness in relation to fire safety cannot be overstated or overlooked. These combined activities assist in maintaining a sustainable level of required emergency response activity.

In addition to emergency response activity, those other important and traditional public service functions continued to be provided, with necessary modifications and restrictions in order to protect the health and safety of the public as well as our staff, while complying with the pandemic orders and restrictions. Public fire safety education and community engagement was conducted on an on-going basis through our social media channels and various remote formats, including the production of a series of fire safety videos. Required fire prevention and inspection activity continued in modified formats to reduce personal contact, and some non-essential activity was temporarily suspended, or completed virtually.

Firefighter training was also impacted by the ever-changing pandemic restrictions and recommended best practices. The use of on-line training was expanded, and essential in-person training was modified to be conducted in a safe manner. Basic recruit training and essential skills maintenance training continued to be provided in small groups and modified formats. With careful planning and the extraordinary efforts of the Training Officer and other involved staff, our 2019 recruit class was able to complete all requirements for Firefighter I level certification, and a modified graduation ceremony was conducted to celebrate their accomplishments, and their progression from Recruit status to Intermediate level firefighters. Although external training opportunities for officers and specialty qualifications was essentially suspended province-wide for the majority of the year, our staff worked diligently within the applicable restrictions to continue to maintain their level of professional readiness, and to provide the high level of service expected by our residents. Despite the unprecedented challenges presented by the pandemic restrictions, we were able to provide a total of eighty-two (82) training sessions for our staff at various curriculum levels, totaling nearly 3400 person-hours of “in-house” training within the department.

Administratively, a number of projects were initiated or completed throughout the year. In August of 2019 Council adopted the Fire Protection Services Master Plan to guide future decision making for the provision of fire protection services. In early 2020, Council subsequently approved a detailed Implementation Strategy, which provides a funding strategy and prioritized implementation of all recommendations over a planning horizon of approximately 10 years. A significant first stage of the implementation strategy was the move to a minimum of two full-time suppression firefighters on-duty at all times. To accomplish this improved emergency response capability, three additional full-time firefighters were hired at the beginning of 2020, and the selection process was conducted late in 2020 to recommend the remaining required three firefighters to commence in early 2021.

In addition to this important service level enhancement, progress continued to be made on the implementation of other priority recommendations. Six of the twelve Council recommendations have been implemented, in addition to twelve of the thirty-four Operational recommendations. Nine additional recommendations are in progress at various stages of completion. The remaining recommendations have been assigned mid-term or long-term implementation targets.

The overall departmental budget for operating costs for service delivery remained consistent with previous years, with a slight budget increase to accommodate annual labour and inflationary increases. Final operating costs for 2020 came in under budget estimates, due primarily to lack of travel and cancelled training opportunities resulting from pandemic restrictions. Major capital budget allocations for 2020 included the replacement of all self-contained breathing apparatus (air packs that supply safe breathing air to firefighters), and the main rescue pumper replacement.

The new rescue pumper functions as a fully capable structure fire pumper truck, it also carries the primary heavy rescue equipment for motor vehicle accidents and other technical rescue incidents. This new addition to the fleet is a custom-built vehicle, based on our own extensive specification, to ensure it will meet the specific needs of our fire service over the expected lifespan of this apparatus. An in-house committee conducted extensive research and devoted considerable time and effort to develop exacting specifications to custom design every aspect of the new vehicle to suit the needs and operational requirements particular to our department. With the arrival of this new replacement unit in our fleet, the previous pumper/rescue/tanker vehicle remains in service as a reserve unit, and as a tanker truck when required. The 1995 pumper that had been serving as a reserve unit was donated to the pre-service firefighter training program at St. Clair College.

Professional development, human resource planning, and hiring/promotional processes continue to be a significant administrative activity. Of particular note related to professional development, the Deputy Fire Chief completed several years of study with the local government program at Western University, and graduated with a Graduate Level Honours Diploma in Public Administration.

In terms of staffing development, three new full-time firefighter positions were filled in February, which initiated the training and certifications processes for the individuals in those positions. The recruitment and hiring process to replace vacant volunteer/paid-on-call firefighter positions that began in January had been temporarily suspended in early spring due to the restrictions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. The process was able to safely resume in June and six successful candidates began serving the community as paid-on-call firefighters in August. A promotional process was also

conducted to backfill a volunteer company officer position that was vacated during the recent full-time firefighter hiring process.

In July the Fire Chief announced his intention to retire in the spring of 2021 after a thirty-five-year career with the Sandwich West Twp./Town of LaSalle Fire Service. Council subsequently supported the recommendation to appoint the current Deputy Chief Ed Thiessen as the incoming Fire Chief upon the retirement of the incumbent. This period of notice provided the necessary time for an orderly transition of leadership, and to begin the required processes to fill the Deputy Fire Chief position.

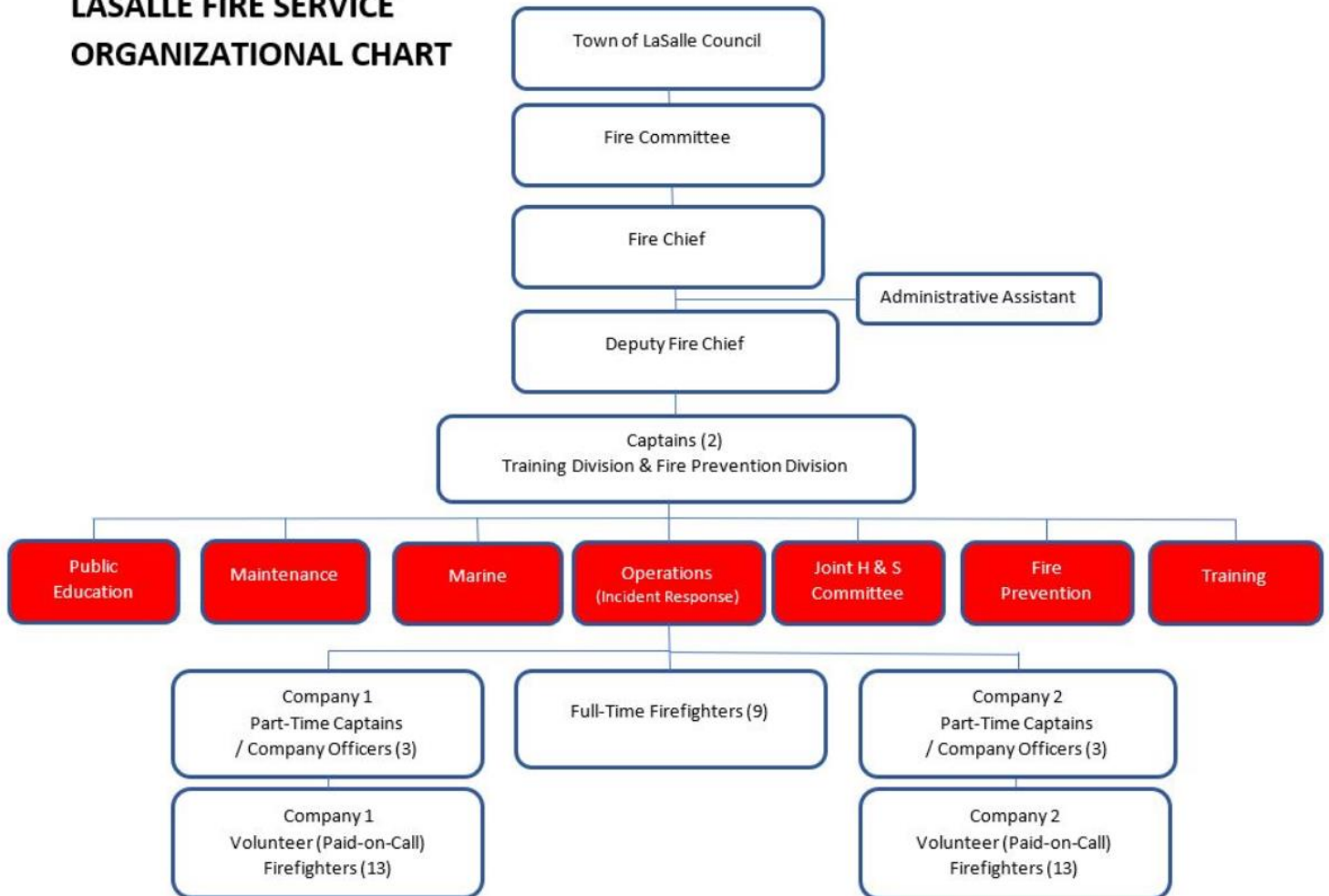
# LFS STAFF ORGANIZATION

ADMINISTRATION	
<b>FIRE CHIEF – D. SUTTON</b>	<b>DEPUTY FIRE CHIEF – E. THIESSEN</b>
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT – S. NANTAIS</b>	<b>CAPTAIN/FPO – M. WILEY</b>
<b>TRAINING OFFICER – J. PRICE</b>	

FULL-TIME FIREFIGHTERS	
K. SEMANDE	C. LUSSIER
R. MOORE	C. THIBERT
R. CURTIS	J. TOUSIGNANT
B. BARTLETT	J. MACNEIL
L. MELOCHE	

VOLUNTEER /PAID-ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS	
COMPANY 1	COMPANY 2
CAPTAIN M. SEGUIN	CAPTAIN J. GRIFFITH
CAPTAIN C. SEGUIN	CAPTAIN L. THIESSEN
CAPTAIN J. SHINKAR	CAPTAIN M. BONDY
J. CHAUVIN	G. LEGOOD
P. HOMENICK	T. CLARKE
C. CARR	M. CARLONE
M. O'BRIGHT	B. THOMAN
C. FECTEAU	B. TAYOR
R. O'NEILL	L. MELOCHE
J. MACNEIL	M. DAY
J. BLANCHETTE	J. HARRIS
A. HANSEN	K. CANT
K. DUFOUR	L. PANEK

## LASALLE FIRE SERVICE ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## PERSONNEL CHANGES

- 3 Full-time firefighter promotions – B. Bartlett, J. MacNeil, L. Meloche
- Training Instructor promoted to Training Officer – J. Price
- 1 Volunteer (paid-on-call) firefighter promoted to Captain – C. Seguin
- 2 Volunteer (paid-on-call) Firefighters resigned
- 6 Volunteer (paid-on-call) Firefighters hired

## CONTINUING EDUCATION INITIATIVES & CONFERENCES

E. Thiessen	OAFC Labour Relations Seminar Jan 27-31, 2020 Western University - Graduate Diploma in Public Administration, June 8-12, 2020
S. Nantais	University of Victoria, Public Relations Diploma
M. Wiley	Ontario Building Code - General Legal/Process
Justin Price	R2MR Train the Trainer, January 20-24, 2020 Blue Card Command Program – October 2020 Blue Card Instructor Program – October 2020
K. Semande	NFPA 1521 Incident Safety Officer – January 2020
R. Moore C. Thibert L. Meloche	High Angle certification – various courses throughout 2020
C. Seguin	R2MR Train the Trainer, January 20-24, 2020

# PUBLIC EDUCATION

2020 PUBLIC EDUCATION EVENTS			
Event Type	Audience	Subject Matter	Approximate Attendance
Community Event	Adults	Hometown Hockey – Vollmer Complex	300
Community Event	Families	Truck or Treat – Vollmer Complex	100
Fire Prevention Week School Program	Primary Grade - Children	Age appropriate fire safe behaviours & hazards	700
Sponsored Event	Adults	Enbridge Gas & Fire Safety Council “Project Zero” campaign	240

Public fire safety education continues to be an important focus of the LaSalle Fire Service. Encouraging and promoting fire safe behaviors and an awareness of potential fire hazards is a proven method of reducing the incidence of accidental fires, particularly in homes and residential buildings that all too often result in burn injuries and fire-related fatalities. Our team is pleased to report that 2020 was another fire-safe year in LaSalle, with no fire fatalities or serious burn injuries resulting from structure fires.

A wide variety of public education programs continue to be delivered throughout the community by our emergency response personnel. These interactive programs typically include presentations by firefighters at organized events to various targeted audiences, as well as hosting numerous

various groups of children for visits and educational programs at the fire station, and public education displays at municipal venues such as events at the Vollmer Recreation Complex, the public library branch, and community festivals. In early 2020, the global pandemic forced a pause on all in-person



FIRE  
PREVENTION  
WEEK 2020

October 4-10

'Serving Up  
Fire Safety  
In The  
Kitchen'



public education programming; however, staff were able to adapt to the changing circumstances and provide most of the same materials and services virtually. Our previously developed social media channels and established following provided a platform to reach many of our residents with important and timely fire safety messaging.

Fire safety programs specifically designed for seniors, older adults and adults with mobility limitations, and/or living in multi-residential buildings have been developed and delivered by appointment when public health measures determine these programs can safely be conducted.

The hallmark of our public education program has traditionally been our Fire Prevention Week activities. The theme for the international Fire Prevention Week in October 2020 was “Serving Up Fire Safety in the Kitchen”. While traditional interactive school visits with the children and young adults were not possible, our staff developed a series of nine creative, fun and informative short videos to deliver targeted messaging on kitchen fire safety, as well as other fire safety tips and messages developed specifically to address concerns in our municipality. The information and was provided to the schools for use in their programs, was posted daily on social media, and the videos remain available on our website to be utilized on an on-going basis.

Our efforts in educating elementary school students are validated in part by testimonials and examples of children influencing the fire safety behaviors of parents and reacting appropriately to potential emergency situations. In addition to fire safety programs provided by the department, our members and the LaSalle Firefighter’s Association continue to be active in the community on a volunteer basis supporting numerous organizations and making positive contributions to the quality of life in the community.

# FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITY

## 2020 FIRE PREVENTION ACTIVITY SUMMARY

ACTIVITY TYPE	FREQUENCY
Routine Inspection	14
Complaint/Request Inspection	13
Licencing/Legislative Inspection	0
Occupancy Inspection	11
Re-Inspection for Compliance	18
Fireworks Permit	2
In-service inspection for Smoke & Carbon Monoxide Alarm Compliance (Suppression)	143
Fire Investigations	6
New Construction Plans Review	8
Fire Safety Plan Review & Approval	4
File Search Requests	6
Training & Professional Development Course/Symposium	3
Court Prosecution/Appeal	0
Fire Marshal Orders Issued	1
Provincial Offence Notices Issued	6

Basic public fire protection in Ontario is regulated by the *Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997*, as amended. The legislation establishes minimum requirements including a community risk assessment, a smoke alarm program with home escape planning, public education program, and fire safety inspections, to meet the needs and circumstances of the community. LaSalle Fire Service continues to meet, or at times exceed, the minimum requirements of the legislation with a proactive public education program, fire safety inspections, and code enforcement. As part of the Fire Protection

Services Master Plan project, an updated comprehensive Community Risk Assessment was completed by the consultant and approved by Council in 2019. This updated risk assessment is intended to guide decision making regarding appropriate fire protection service levels based on identified risks over the next several years. It is important that the community risk assessment be reviewed and updated on a regular basis to remain current as relevant factors such as development, traffic patterns, and demographics in the municipality change and evolve over time.

All fire department staff contribute to the success of our aggressive smoke alarm, and carbon monoxide alarm program. Compliance with requirements for smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm legislation is confirmed whenever practical in all residences attended by the fire service during emergency response activity and calls for service. In 2020, 437 smoke alarms were inspected in 143 homes, resulting in the replacement or installation of 52 smoke alarms, and the replacement of 53 batteries. In cases of faulty alarms, or non-compliance with smoke alarm and carbon monoxide legislation, options include installation of a loaner alarm until the required device can be replaced, invoicing for units that are installed, and issuing Provincial Offence tickets, when required.

In addition to our ongoing smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm programs, we also had an opportunity in 2020 to partner with Enbridge Gas and the Fire Safety Council in their “Project Zero” campaign. As a community partner with a particular focus on fuel safety and carbon monoxide awareness, the goal of their public campaign is to reduce preventable instances of residential carbon monoxide poisoning. In a joint campaign, Enbridge provided LaSalle Fire Service with a quantity of quality combination smoke and carbon monoxide alarms to be distributed to our



most vulnerable populations in the community to ensure early warning in the residence in the event of a carbon monoxide or fire emergency. Our staff worked with various community partners to provide, and in some cases install these life-saving devices at no charge to our vulnerable residents.

In addition to our fire prevention programs for single family detached residences, our fire prevention officer completed a total of 56 fire safety inspections in 2020 in multi-residential, assembly, and commercial buildings. All complaints and requests for inspections were completed as required, however alternate and virtual means of conducting fire prevention activity were employed as appropriate due to changing pandemic restrictions, limiting non-essential site visits. The objectives of our proactive inspection program are to educate building owners and occupants, provide fire safety advice, and assist in successfully resolving various fire code violations to achieve compliance. Enforcement activity, including Fire Marshal Orders, Provincial Offence Notices, and charges in relation to Ontario Fire Code and municipal by-law violations, is conducted when required. These fire safety inspections are critical to promote public safety in the community and to reduce the potential for fire-related injuries and deaths resulting from preventable fires.

The Fire Prevention division is also responsible for conducting investigations to determine the cause and origin of all reported fires. In addition to education, inspection and enforcement activities, and fire investigations, the Fire Prevention division is also responsible to review fire safety plans required by businesses and residential facilities and issue approval, conduct plans reviews for fire safety components of new buildings, coordinate pre-planning activities to familiarize emergency response personnel with risks and layout features of various buildings, process and approve permits for fireworks displays, and ensure compliance with annual legislative requirements for all care facilities, schools and licenced day care facilities. A fire prevention representative from the fire service also participates with other municipal officials on the Special Events Resource Team, to review plans for any festivals or events proposed to be hosted at municipal venues. This participation helps ensure compliance with established codes and standards for the safety of all participants, and also helps to ensure adequate emergency plans are in place for the proposed event. Routine duties also require the Fire Prevention Officer's attendance at numerous meetings, events and on-going professional development sessions.

LaSalle Fire Service has traditionally maintained a very effective and proactive overall fire prevention program. Steadily increasing development and diversity in additional building stock, continually expanding regulatory requirements, and increasing demand for services, continues to challenge the ability to maintain the previous level of effectiveness. The department continues to meet the minimum legislated requirements for fire prevention activity; however, we continue to struggle with

the capacity to maintain important proactive programs recommended in our growing community, such as pre-incident planning, and routine or periodic fire safety inspections in residential and assembly buildings.

These pressures on the Fire Prevention Division were recognized in the recently completed Fire Protection Services Master Plan, and recommendations were made to sustain current service levels and provide additional capacity to keep pace with growth and recommended service levels and programs, consistent with recognized industry standards. In the short term, modest increases in full-time firefighter staffing levels will provide some additional capacity to assist with basic level fire prevention duties. Over the next several years however, the additional staffing provisions included in the approved Implementation Strategy for the Fire Protection Services Master Plan will be critical to maintaining an adequate level of service in this important functional area. Although often overlooked and/or misunderstood, a well-resourced and effective fire prevention program can significantly reduce the human and property-related costs of fire suppression and emergency response activity to preventable incidents.

# TRAINING ACTIVITY

## DEPARTMENTAL TRAINING ACTIVITY - 2020

LEVEL OF TRAINING	NUMBER OF SESSIONS	ACTIVITY	CUMULATIVE HOURS
<b>Recruit</b>	15	NFPA Firefighter I & Firefighter II certification Basic firefighting, rescue, medical assist skills	404
<b>General</b>	53	Skills maintenance, advanced skills, legislative requirements, annual certifications/re-certifications, online learning	2855
<b>Officers</b>	14	Incident Command, leadership, pre-plan familiarizations, departmental planning & administration	127

Firefighter training continues to be a critical element of competent service delivery for LaSalle Fire Service. Despite the ever-changing restrictions and uncertain conditions presented by the global pandemic for much of the year, a total of eighty-two



(82) training sessions were conducted “in-house” within the department at various levels in 2020, totaling nearly 3800 hours, just slightly reduced from typical annual training activity totals. All personnel understand the importance of learning and maintaining critical skills, in order to provide effective response to our community when required, including during a prolonged public health emergency.

While training requirements vary among staff depending on positions and established levels, the average firefighter receives approximately 120 hours of internally delivered training annually, in addition to external courses.

In addition to training delivered by our own staff, the training division also coordinates and facilitates course availability and registrations for various on-line programs for all staff, and officer-level, and specialized courses by qualified third-party providers; as well as courses taken by staff at the Ontario Fire College. There were several officer-level courses, and specialized courses scheduled in 2020 to certify our personnel to provide advanced courses with the department, however all in-person courses outside our own department were cancelled for the year.



There are several concurrent levels of training provided within the department to meet the needs of personnel at various stages of experience and responsibility. As an established policy approved by Council, LaSalle Fire Service has traditionally trained and certified all firefighters in accordance with the standards set out by the Office of the Fire Marshal using the NFPA Standard for Firefighter Professional Qualifications and curriculum, as the basic foundation of our training program. The recruit or entry level program includes “Firefighter Level I and Level II” training, delivered in a blended format of on-line self-directed study, as well as classroom theory, and hands-on practical training sessions. Following the completion of the basic Firefighter Level I training, recruits are honored with a graduation ceremony where the department proudly comes together to acknowledge their achievements in completing the probationary period of attaining the most basic skills, and



welcome our newest members to the team.

Despite the significant challenges presented by the pandemic and associated limitations and modifications necessary, we were able to host 2 modified graduation ceremonies in small groups in December 2020 to honor and welcome those members who joined our ranks in the previous year.

In addition, the second phase of the recruit program also includes driver training and fire pumper operations courses, and a basic hazardous material curriculum. Upon completion of each level of required training, independent written and skills testing are arranged through the Office of the Fire Marshal for verification and final certification. The period required to complete this basic level program and achieve certification to Firefighter Level II within the department has typically been two to three years. The training officer, working with the leadership team, has recently developed a streamlined recruit training program designed to expedite the delivery of all necessary components of recruit training from entry into the department up to General Level status within approximately two years.

Upon completion of the basic Firefighter I & II recruit level, firefighters continue regular, on-going “general” level training twice monthly, including more advanced proficiency of firefighting skills and specialized or technical



training. Areas of training include auto extrication, hazardous materials, ice & water rescue, medical first responder, confined space, marine operations, etc. They are also eligible for officer level courses as required by the department. The officer level training program includes NFPA Instructor I, and Fire Officer Level I certifications, and Incident Command courses provided externally through the Ontario Fire College or partnerships with third party providers; as well as, monthly sessions within the department.

Implementation of a recently established company officer development program is ongoing for current and new volunteer Captains, subject to annual course availability and budget considerations. The program is consistent with recognized provincial standards and department needs. It should be noted that training programs for Officer development were the most severely impacted by the pandemic-related suspension of all training at the Ontario Fire College, and the lack of program availability throughout the province. It can be anticipated that when officer-level training resumes, there will be a significant backlog of candidates requiring course availability.

Through the regional collaboration of local fire services and training divisions, opportunities are routinely sought to share resources and enhance the ability to provide general training opportunities,

as well as officer-level training and specialized programs locally. One example of this collaboration is the jointly purchased Mobile Live Fire Training Unit which allows several area users the ability to conduct live-fire training at our own facility on an on-going basis, greatly enhancing the proficiency of our personnel at all levels, and is a major component of our training program.

Although not possible in 2020 due to the pandemic, other examples of collaboration and joint course sharing for advanced level credentialed courses are planned once public health circumstances permit scheduling of such opportunities.

## **EXAMPLES OF IN-HOUSE ONGOING TRAINING CONDUCTED**

- Recruit training – on-line study, FF I and FF II practical sessions & instructor sign-offs, exam preparation & exams
- Live Fire training
- Ice Rescue
- Equipment familiarization
- Communications
- Pump Operations
- Fire-ground operations
- RIT/Self Rescue
- Auto Extrication
- Search & Rescue operations
- SCBA endurance drills
- Personal protective equipment, physical agility with SCBA, respiratory program - mask fit testing
- Emergency Vehicle Operator driver course
- Officer Level Training – pre-planning, incident command, building familiarization, scene assessment
- Health & safety training, policies and Operational Guideline training and on-line training through LaSalle Systems 24/7 and Target Solutions

## **SPECIALIZED TRAINING CONDUCTED**

- Base Hospital program Train the trainer – CPR/Defib. Annual training
- Mental health Peer Support training provided by regional coalition
- High Angle Rescue
- NFPA 1006 – Ice Rescue Technician Level
- Aerial tower operation training – tower crew
- Various Officer level NFPA courses
- Marine Operations

# RESPONSE ACTIVITY

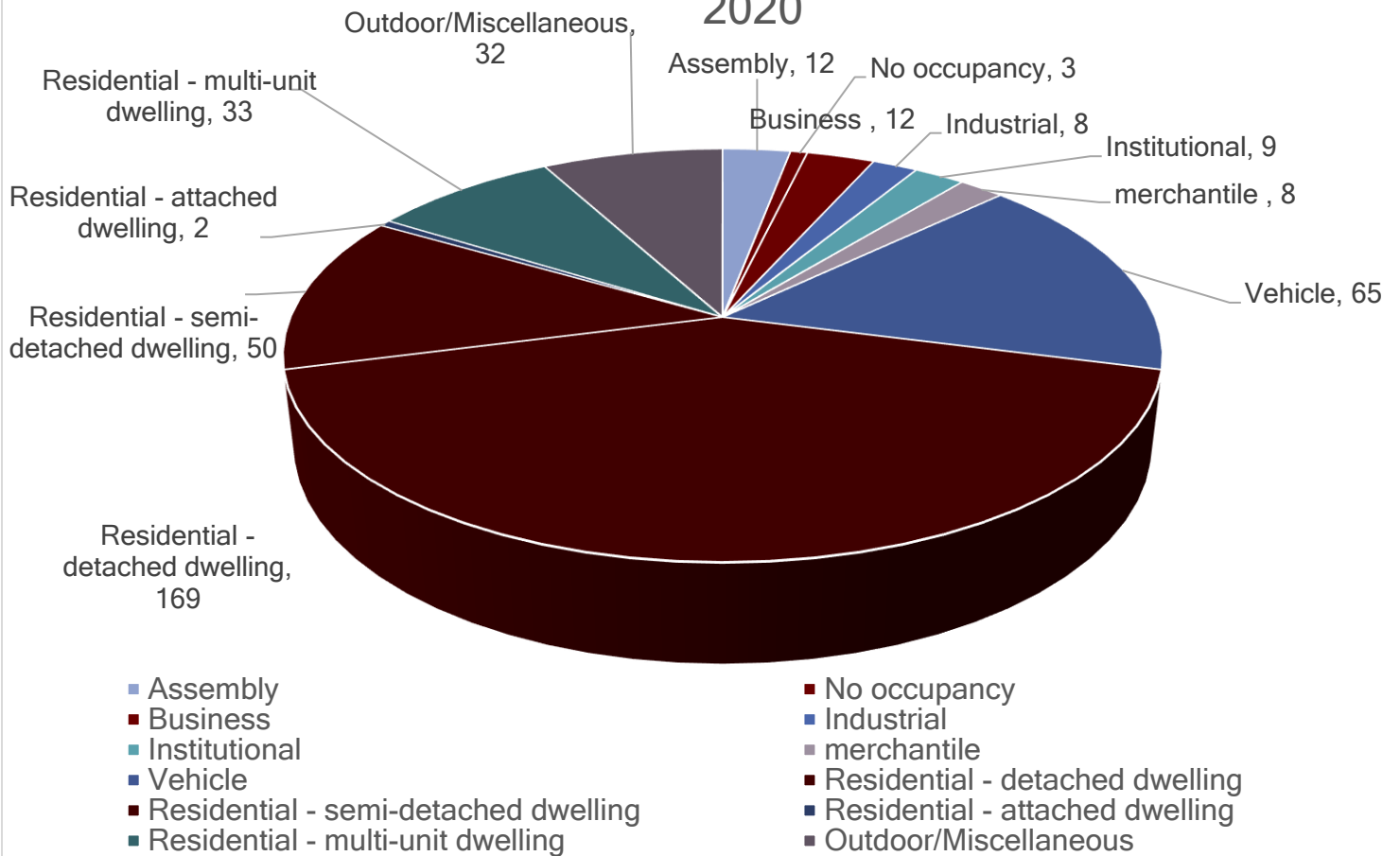
LaSalle Fire Service responded to 403 calls for service in 2020, which resulted in approximately \$648,000 in fire loss. Contrary to the recent year-over-year trend of increasing calls for service, this total call volume represents a slight decrease in calls for service in 2020, most likely attributed to the



general decrease in activity of all forms in the community as a result of the pandemic. Calls for service are distributed across all property types, as indicated in the chart below. While the majority of activity, and the majority of dollar loss due to structure fires has traditionally been attributed to single

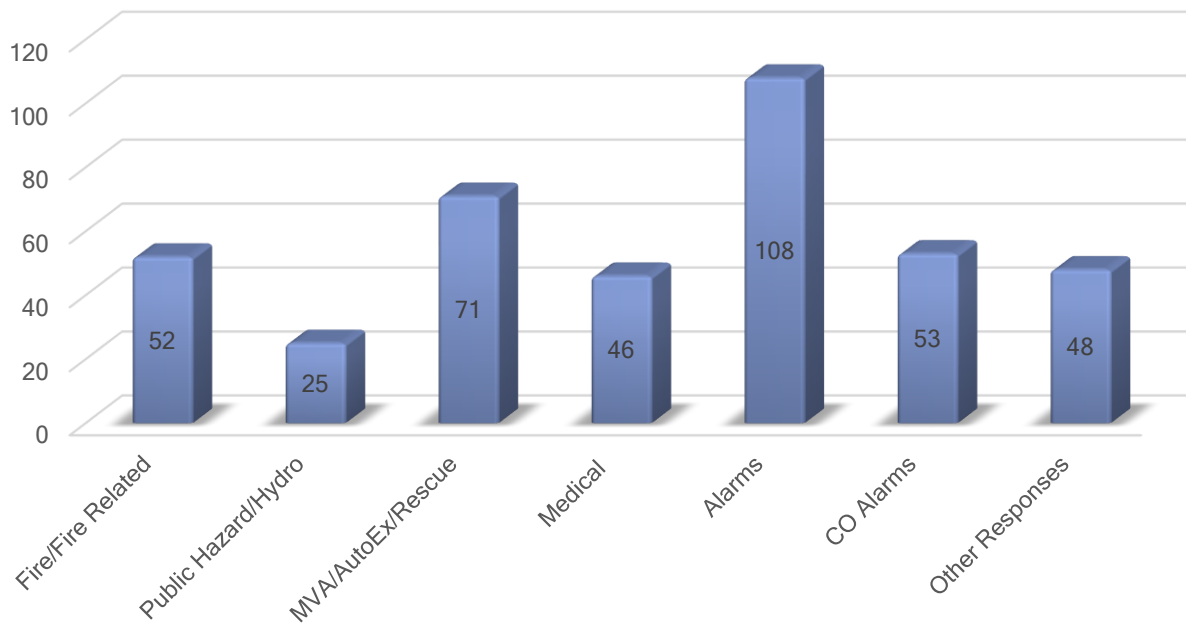
family homes, recent statistics reflect the changing building stock in the community, and include increasing numbers of calls for service in multi-residential, assembly and commercial buildings. Calls for service in these larger and more complex buildings often require more personnel, additional equipment, and may result in higher dollar loss values resulting from fire incidents. The recently completed Community Risk Assessment and Fire Protection Services Master Plan address these concerns in the recommendations recently adopted by municipal Council to ensure an adequate level of fire protection and services to meet the needs of on-going development in our community.

## Distribution of Responses by Building Classification 2020

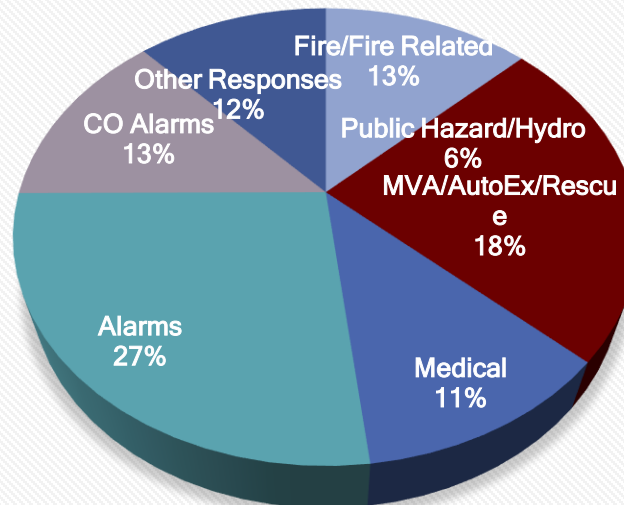


In addition to fire suppression and related responses, LaSalle Fire Service also provides emergency response services that include auto extrication, tiered medical assistance response, ice & water rescue, hazardous materials response, and limited technical rescue capabilities. A breakdown of response activity by general response category, and geographical area of the municipality, is also provided below.

## 2020 Response Activity



## Response Activity by % - 2020

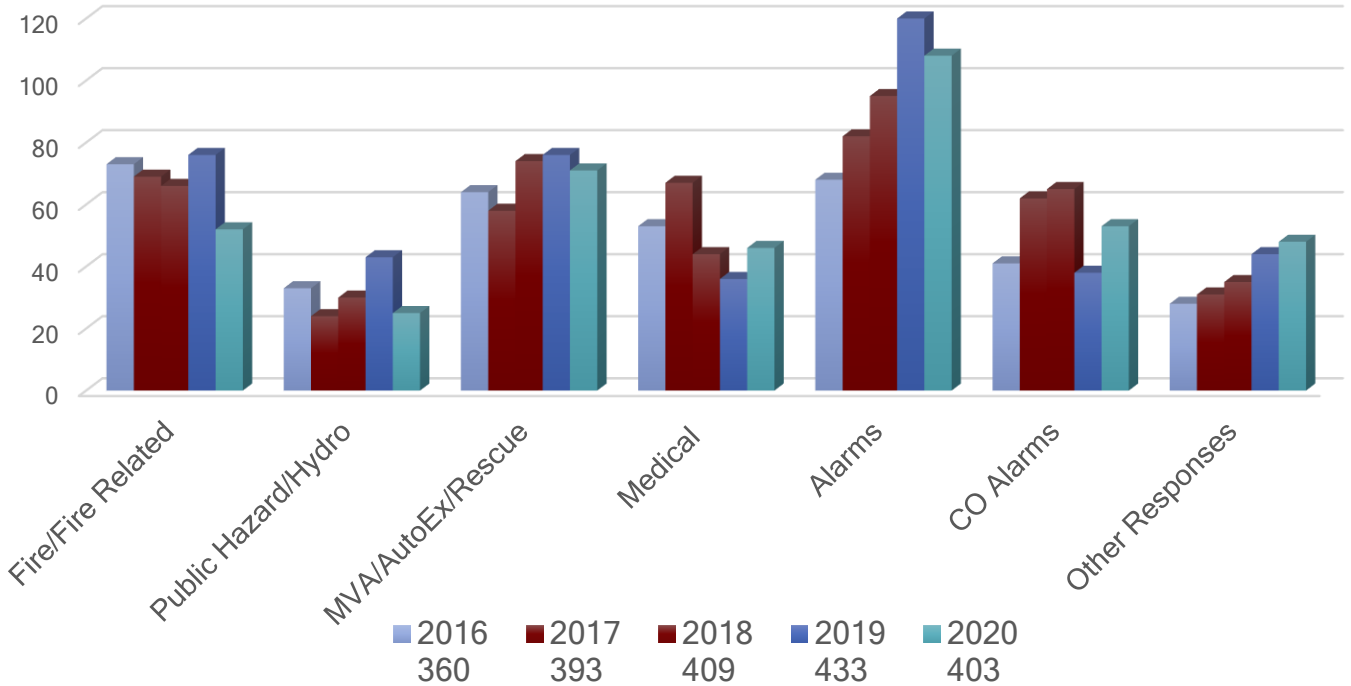


Fire/Fire Related  
Medical  
Other Responses

Public Hazard/Hydro  
Alarms

MVA/AutoEx/Rescue  
CO Alarms

### Response Activity - % of Total Call Volume 5 Year Comparison



Aside from a slight reduction in overall call volume, the distribution of response activity remained relatively consistent in the 2020 calendar year. Minor shifts in the types of calls for service can likely be attributed to some degree to the broader societal shifts brought about by the pandemic, such as businesses being closed, more residents working from home, and less commuting.

The significant number of responses under the broad category of “Alarms” is partially attributable to continued growth and development in the municipality and should not be interpreted as a disproportionate amount of “nuisance” or “false” alarms. Response to alarms includes both commercial alarms in assembly and multi-residential buildings such as condo buildings, as well as smoke alarm incidents in single family homes. As new commercial, assembly and multi-residential buildings continue to be added to the municipal building stock, corresponding responses for alarm activations continue to increase. Newer technology and building trends also had a corresponding impact on responses to smoke alarms and monitored alarm systems in single family homes. Periodic enhancements to code requirements continue to provide for increased levels of safety in new

construction. New homes are required to have interconnected alarms in all sleeping areas and levels of the home. Combined with the trend locally toward larger homes, it is not uncommon to have between 8 and 12 interconnected smoke alarms in a single-family residence. The technology is designed to sound an alarm when any component of the system malfunctions; as well as, at end of life of each device. A portion of the call volume for Alarms is for non-emergency attendance at homes for malfunctioning alarms, to assist in restoring active fire protection of the interconnected system. The recently approved increase in full-time staffing will allow most of these responses to be attended by on-duty staff.

It must also be noted that although this response category is classified as *“Alarms”*, there should not be an assumption that these responses are all for *“false alarms”*. Occasionally unsubstantiated false alarms or nuisance alarms do occur; however, the Town’s False Alarm by-law provides an effective means to control nuisance false alarms. In many cases the alarm is activated by smoke or overheating caused by mechanical or accidental human sources. In these cases the end result is often a relatively minor outcome such as an overheated power bar, or motor, or a pot left unattended on a stove, so the incident is successfully resolved due to the early warning of the working smoke alarm, and recorded as an *“Alarm”* call. It is important to bear in mind that in these cases the alarm functioned exactly as intended and alerted residents and the fire service, thereby avoiding a potential structure fire.

Similarly with carbon monoxide alarms, the department responds numerous incidents each year where a carbon monoxide alarm has activated due to a small leak in a natural gas line, a gas appliance being inadvertently left on, or a vehicle idling for long periods with fumes entering the living area. While a seemingly minor incident is identified and corrected through the early warning provided by the alarm sounding, a serious and potentially life-threatening outcome may have been prevented. For these reasons, a significant number of responses to *“Alarm”* calls is both expected and ultimately beneficial.

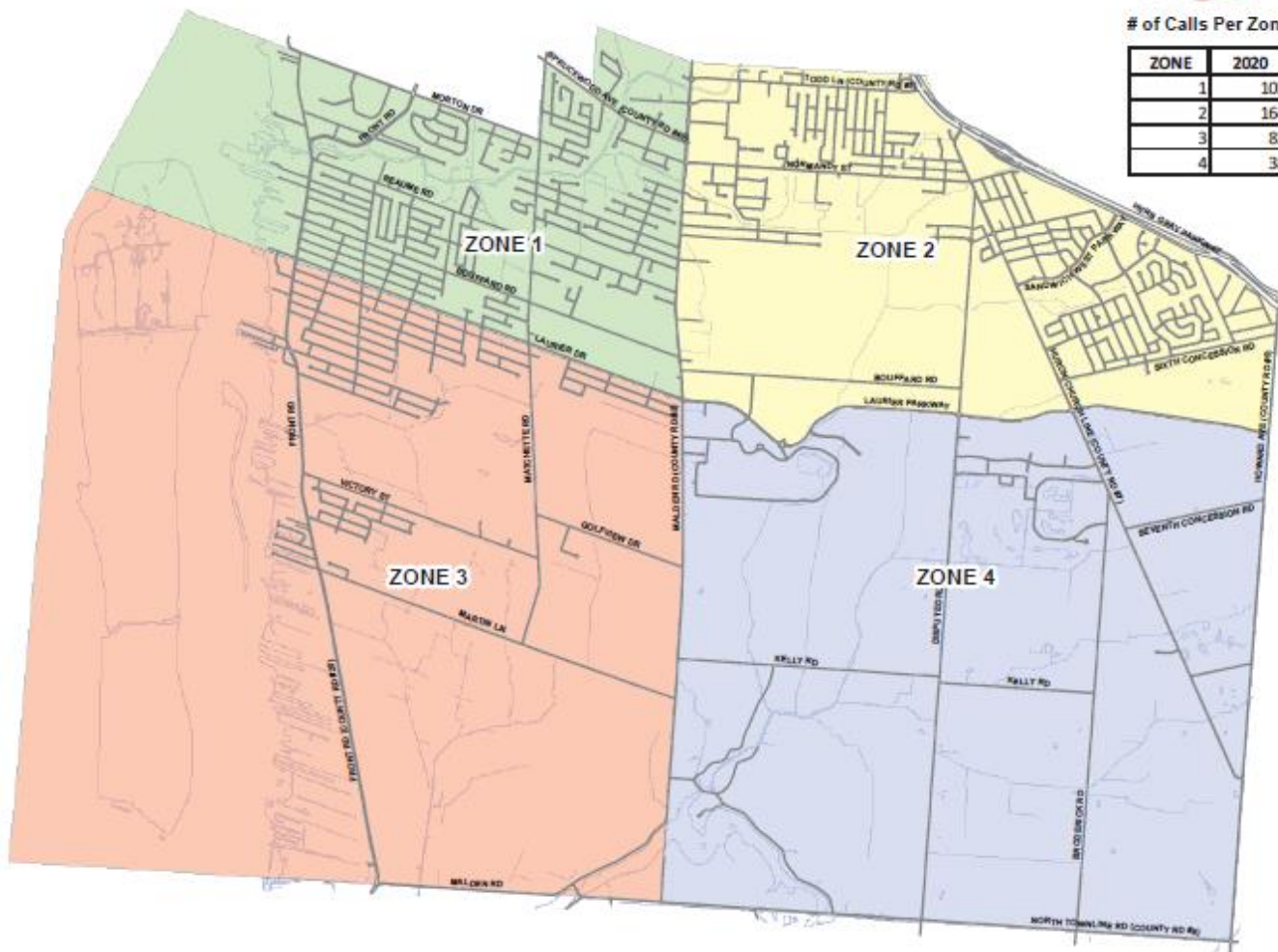
## 2020 CALLS FOR SERVICE DISTRIBUTION BY GEOGRAPHICAL AREA

LaSalle Fire Service



# of Calls Per Zone

ZONE	2020
1	103
2	164
3	82
4	38



## EMERGENCY RESPONSE PERFORMANCE BENCHMARKS

The recently approved Fire Protection Master Plan proposed specific benchmarks for emergency response performance, based on relevant industry standards and best practices. Given the size and population distribution of the municipality and our composite response model, the recommended performance benchmarks that were adopted by Council as the service delivery target for the municipality, recognizes both an urban component for areas with a population density of 1000 persons per square mile, and a suburban component for areas with less than 1000 persons per square mile. The tables below provide summary of current response performance in comparison with intended targets. The information presented is based on the best available data; however, there are anomalies within the data collection capabilities that may have minor impacts on the accuracy of some data. Further commentary accompanies the tables to assist in interpretation.

**Table 1: Response Times Profile - 2020**

Adopted Response Standard Components	Target Criteria	LaSalle Average	Area 1 Average	Area 2 Average	Area 3 Average	Area 4 Average
Alarm Processing Time (Dispatch)	1:00 – 1:30	01:02	01:01	01:00	01:06	01:02
Turnout Time	1:20	01:06	01:10	01:02	01:04	01:13
Travel Time Initial Response - Urban Depth of Response -Suburban (turnout + travel time)	4:00 8:00	04:44 05:50	04:23 05:33	03:26 04:28	06:25 07:29	07:00 08:13
Total Response Time (Apparatus & 10 initial personnel)	10:00 suburban 80% of calls	06:52	06:34	05:28	08:35	09:15
Initial Personnel (on arrival of first unit)	4 in 4 min. Urban 10 in 10 min. Suburban	3.7	3.9	3.2	4.5	3.8

**Table 1 – Data Interpretation Notes:**

- Data includes only emergency responses
- Response data represents **Average** (50<sup>th</sup> percentile) times, meaning that the 80<sup>th</sup> and 90<sup>th</sup> percentile target times of the adopted standard would be longer than the average
- The Urban designation applies to all of Area 1, and significant portions of Areas 2 and 3

**Table 2: Current Emergency Response Performance - Structure Fires and Fire-Related Responses**

Adopted Response Standard Performance Criteria	Compliance Criteria	LaSalle Average	Area 1	Area 2	Area 3	Area 4
<b>FIRST RESPONSE</b> First Unit <b>AND</b> 4 personnel on scene within 4 minutes	Urban (1000+/sq. mi.) 90%	10%	15%	19%	11%	0%
<b>DEPTH OF RESPONSE</b> First Unit <b>AND</b> 10 personnel on scene within 10 Minutes	Suburban (-1000/sq. mi) 80%	30%	25%	19%	44%	33%
Number of Emergency Calls		56	20	21	9	6

**Table 2 – Data Interpretation Notes:**

- Data includes only emergency responses
- Data does not include “Alarm” responses. While responses for activated fire alarm systems in residential, multi-residential, assembly and commercial buildings would typically be included in this analysis, the records management system currently in use also includes in this category numerous non-emergency responses for accidental or malfunctioning residential smoke alarms.
- Data may include a few emergency responses that were downgraded by first arriving personnel on arrival and confirming non-emergency conditions or sufficient personnel for the incident. In these cases, subsequent personnel may have been cancelled prior to the applicable benchmark criteria being met. The instances where this occurred, while not significant would primarily affect areas 1 and 2, where the first arriving unit is on scene sooner. The records management system is not capable of filtering for these calls.

- This data demonstrates the combined impact of our two primary challenges; travel time for responding fire apparatus, and travel delays for paid-on-call personnel responding in personal vehicles. The performance criteria for compliance with the adopted Standards requires **both** the first apparatus **and** sufficient personnel, to arrive at the scene of an incident within accepted response times, to satisfy the standard for an effective response to the emergency. As the data from Table 1 confirms, responses in areas 1 and 2 require less travel time for the responding fire apparatus, however paid-on-call staff are challenged in reaching the incident scene within the target benchmark times. In areas 3 and 4, the current station location challenges target travel times, although particularly in area 3 a somewhat greater percentage of paid-on-call responders are able to reach the incident within accepted target times.
- The recent increase in on-duty full-time firefighters toward a minimum of two at all times, has shown modest improvement in the *First Response* component of the target standards of personnel on scene with the first arriving apparatus. Continued implementation of the recommendations of the Fire Protection Services Master Plan pertaining to station locations and staffing are aimed at addressing the emergency response challenges to provide improved service delivery, and to achieve the target criteria of the adapted response performance benchmarks.

# ADMINISTRATION

## FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES MASTER PLAN

At the direction of Council, a comprehensive Community Risk Assessment and Fire Protection Services Master Plan were completed in 2018, and adopted by Council in August of 2019 as the strategic planning framework for the delivery of fire protection services within the Town of LaSalle the next ten-year community planning horizon. The findings and recommendations of the Fire Protection Services Master Plan are based on referenced applicable standard and best practices and have been informed by a Community Risk Assessment that was developed as a companion document to assess the existing fire risk within the community. Together, these documents present a comprehensive analysis of the existing fire risks within the community, and the existing fire protection capabilities of the LaSalle Fire Service.

The Fire Protection Services Master Plan provides options and recommendations to assist Council in developing both short-term and long-term planning strategies for the responsible delivery of fire protection and related services, based on the current and future needs of the community. Implementation of the recommendations will allow Council to clearly establish and communicate the level of fire protection services to be provided to the community, including, where applicable, proposed performance measures for ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the services to be provided. A key theme of the report and recommendations is the continued implementation of proactive strategies that reduce fire risk through public education, and enhanced fire safety inspections and code enforcement; as well as, addressing adequate emergency response capability. The report provided 34 operational recommendations, including administrative processes and operational enhancements across all functional areas, largely within the scope of the fire chief and fire administration for implementation, and 12 Council Recommendations that require the consideration of Council, primarily in relation to the establishment of levels of service and associated staffing implications, and modernization of the current emergency response model.

Upon adopting the consultant's report and recommendations, Council directed the Fire Chief to develop an implementation plan for Council's approval. A comprehensive implementation plan, including a responsible funding model based on annual budget allocation, was approved by Council early in 2020. The approved implementation plan strategically prioritizes the recommendations as

short-term, mid-term, or long-term initiatives, and provides for the implementation of all recommendations over a ten-year cycle.

The first critical benchmark of the implementation plan was realized with the addition of six additional full-time suppression firefighters, to achieve a new minimum level of service of at least two firefighters on duty at all times. Hiring and initial training processes were conducted to bring three new full-time personnel on in early 2020, and an additional three in January 2021. This enhancement in full-time staff will assist to improve our *first response* capabilities at emergency incidents and provide additional support for ongoing fire prevention and public education initiatives.

Fire service administration continues to work toward implementation of all recommendations of the Fire Protection Services Master Plan. Six of the twelve Council recommendations have now been implemented, in addition to twelve of the thirty-four Operational recommendations. Nine additional recommendations are in progress at various stages of completion. The remaining recommendations have been assigned mid-term or long-term implementation targets.

Among the major outstanding Council recommendations targeted in the approved implementation plan as a priority in the near term is the establishment of a two-station response model. A satellite second station in the western urban area of the municipality will improve emergency response capabilities throughout the community. The transition to an improved two-station response model is identified as a priority project of the fire service leadership team.

## FLEET REPLACEMENT

In early October 2020, a new custom-designed Rescue Pumper was delivered to LaSalle Fire Service. This first-response apparatus replaces a 2003 pumper/tanker vehicle as the primary heavy rescue response vehicle. Designed to meet the specific needs of our fire service over its expected lifespan, this vehicle is based on our own extensive specification, combining a fully capable structure fire pumper, with compartments configured to accommodate to our heavy rescue tools and equipment for initial response to motor vehicle collisions and technical rescue incidents. This newest addition to our fleet significantly increases the safety and efficiency of our crews and takes advantage of the latest available technology. We must gratefully acknowledge the considerable time, effort, and extensive research by a devoted in-house committee to develop the exacting specifications to suit the needs and operational requirements particular to our department to make this project successful.

With this new vehicle in service as a first-response unit, the vehicle it replaced remains in service as a reserve unit and a water tanker vehicle.

In addition to the new rescue pumper, one of the two “Command” utility SUV vehicles was also replaced in 2020 as provided in the capital asset replacement schedule, with the second command vehicle approved in the capital budget to be replaced in early 2021. The replacement of this vehicle will complete the replacement cycle of all fleet vehicles within the last 10 years, with the exception of the specialized aerial tower apparatus, scheduled for replacement in approximately 2025. The mobile fleet therefore is in good condition and complies with all applicable standards and annual certifications.

Another important and extensive capital equipment replacement occurred in 2020 with the scheduled replacement of all self-contained breathing apparatus. Industry as well as applicable health and safety standards guide the recommended replacement of this vital equipment. Through internal consultation with our team, and coordination with vendors and partners in the industry, LaSalle Fire Service was able to realize considerable savings in this capital purchase of the product that best suited our needs and the health and safety of our personnel.

## **RECORDS MANAGEMENT**

While the activity and restrictions created by response to the pandemic created new and unique challenges in many functional areas of our operation, the pause in some areas also created an opportunity for our administrative staff to complete an extensive project in our records management area. With the assistance of the Towns records management clerk and a re-assigned staff member our administrative team was able to complete the transition of departmental files to a master file system consistent with records management conventions of the municipality. This system will also standardize record retention, archiving, etc. to established municipal policies and departmental needs.

## MENTAL WELLNESS AND PEER SUPPORT

Staff wellness continues to be a priority in maintaining a healthy and resilient workplace. Occupational stress and related illnesses are disproportionately prevalent among first responders, and significant effort has been made across the emergency services spectrum in recent years to increase available supports for first responders to maintain a healthy level of resilience and reduce the debilitating effects of various types of stress injuries. LaSalle Fire Service has been active in supporting the needs of our personnel and maintains a peer support team of individuals trained by an expert clinician, through a collaborative regional approach for consistency and familiarity among all local first responder agencies.

In addition to internal health and wellness initiatives, LaSalle Fire Service is also an active participant in the Windsor Essex First Responder Coalition of emergency services from the region to support mental health among first responders by building resilience, reducing stigma, and promoting mental wellbeing. This regional group was formed via grant funding by the Ministry of Labour and continues to operate through the local Canadian Mental Health Association. The coalition also supports and promotes other support services for mental health among first responder organizations.

## EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

The fire service administrative team is also responsible for leading the emergency management planning group for the municipality. The value of previous training and mock exercises in maintaining the preparedness of our municipal team for external emergency incidents cannot be overstated. That level of preparedness was surely tested with the events of 2020. As our established Municipal Control Group was meeting regularly and dealing with the threats and effects of high water levels in the community and preparing for imminent flooding events, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic began to become evident. Our emergency management team quickly transitioned to prepare for the individual and combined effects of both threats on our municipality, and rapid closure and suspension of services to protect our staff and residents from the emerging public health crisis. On March 22, 2020, Mayor Bondy advised the Provincial Emergency Operations Center (PEOC) of the declaration of an Emergency in the Town of LaSalle in response to both flooding and COVID-19 concerns.

Together with the CAO and the senior municipal management team, the LaSalle Fire Service leadership team in the roles of Emergency Management Coordinators devoted inordinate amounts of

time and resources to assist in the municipal responses to these ever-changing conditions. Although challenging for all involved, the municipal staff were familiar with their emergency management roles and responsibilities, and regardless of unprecedented external circumstances, contributed exceptionally to a responsible and well-balanced municipal response. In a sustained effort, beyond anyone's expectations, our Municipal Control Group continues to effectively manage the municipality's response to the changing and evolving operational and human resources effects on the Town's operations.

At an administrative level, the emergency planning function for the fire service administration continues to expand. In addition to the current unprecedented operational demands, increasing regulatory requirements; as well as, staff training to ensure an adequate level of preparedness, and the increasing frequency and duration of emergency incidents have all contributed to an increasing proportion of time devoted to emergency planning duties in addition to fire service administrative workload. Traditionally an additional related responsibility, municipal emergency management continues to evolve as an essential municipal administrative function.

To assist with some of the training and regulatory burden, Council approved the introduction of a third-party emergency planning platform in 2020. "Get Ready Solutions" was launched with the Town's emergency planning Municipal Control Group in early 2020, with on-line training programs being introduced gradually throughout the year. Due to the on-going emergency management activities of the global pandemic, a scaled back version of a municipal emergency exercise was arranged with the vendor in the fall to familiarize staff with the functionality and capabilities of the technology platform. More robust use of the platform and capabilities are anticipated in 2021. This comprehensive program will centralize and standardize all aspects of the emergency management program including training, record-keeping, operational workflows, and annual compliance verifications.

## **LEADERSHIP TRANSITION**

Having lead the department since 2011, the fire chief announced in July his intention to retire in the spring of 2021, after a thirty-five-year career with the Sandwich West Township/Town of LaSalle Fire Service. Council subsequently supported the chief's recommendation to appoint current Deputy Chief Ed Thiessen as the incoming fire chief upon the retirement of the incumbent. This period of notice provided the necessary time for an orderly transition of leadership, and to begin the required processes to fill the deputy fire chief position.

I am confident that this transition of senior leadership will ensure LaSalle Fire Service remains committed to responsible forward planning, and continuous improvement in order to maintain an appropriate level of service, and to meet the changing needs of the community. The new leadership team will continue to engage with and be accountable and responsive to our residents and members of Council.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Dave Sutton', written in a cursive style.

Fire Chief

Dave Sutton,  
Fire Chief / CEMC