

Selectmen's Meeting May 4th, 2020

CALL VOLUME –

March to April 15

EMS – basic life support	42
EMS – advanced life support	4
Fire – total	11
Motor vehicle accidents	3
Mutual aid given	9
Mutual aid received	2
Mutual aid EMS transports	1
Inspections	8
Open air burning inspections	295

Total Fire Department responses 375

RESPONSES/INSPECTIONS – March to Present

The fire department responded to a total of 375 calls for service during this time period, although the number of emergent calls has decreased. With many people now at home, our open-air burning inspections have increased dramatically, with a total of 295 inspections done during March and April. Since the COVID-19 outbreak, we have responded to five EMS calls for patients with symptoms consistent with the Coronavirus; EMS personnel wore appropriate personal protective equipment while interacting with patients. We also responded to several mutual aid calls, including building fires in Berlin and Clinton, and brush fires and motor vehicle crashes in West Boylston. We also responded as part of a tanker task force to Northbridge for a large multiple alarm fire at a firewood facility. Tanker 1 and Car 1 responded as part of the District 8 task force and worked at the fire scene in Northbridge for a day.

The Fire Marshal's Office has suspended any in home inspections related to purchase and sale of a house. A temporary order is in place that allows a home to be sold without a 26F inspection to test smoke and carbon monoxide detectors. As stated in the temporary order, the seller has up to 90 days after the purchase and sale to have the inspection done; this eliminates the risk of having a staff member enter a home. Inspections are still allowed on new construction, with approval by the local fire chief. We have performed a few inspections on Morgan Circle and Cheryl's Way on newly constructed, unoccupied homes.

COVID-19 RELATED ACTIONS

The fire department is working to keep up to date with all the changes in Department of Public Health and Office of Emergency Medical Services regulations regarding response to COVID-19 related calls. The dispatch center has been supplied with a questionnaire that they ask anyone who calls 911 to do a pre-screening so that responders are aware of the type of call they responding to and don the appropriate personal protective equipment. The department has put additional standard operating guidelines in place specific to COVID-19 related calls in terms of minimizing the number of EMTs or responders who have contact with a potentially infected patient, along with increased decontamination procedures with the ambulance and other related equipment. The department is working with the local Board of Health and MEMA to maintain an adequate supply of personal protective equipment. We have also received some generous donations from members of the community of masks, eye protection and some disposable suits. We have requests in through MEMA for additional surgical masks, hand sanitizer, and disposable gowns. Our current policy is for all EMTs to wear surgical masks on all calls, regardless of whether the caller answers positive to the questionnaire asked by the dispatchers, to ensure the safety of staff members. When responding to a known COVID-19 home, EMTs are asked to further protect themselves by wearing disposable gowns and utilizing N95 masks if needed, along with minimizing the number of EMTs who have contact with the patient. OEMS has released a new protocol which states that an EMT can evaluate the COVID-19 patient at home, and if the patient meets certain criteria, they can remain at home and not be transported to the hospital. EMTs are required to contact the emergency room and speak to a physician to obtain permission to have the patient stay at home.

Chief Flanagan has daily scheduled calls with DPH and MEMA regarding COVID-19 updates and takes part in a weekly conference call with the governor's office, DPH, MEMA and OEMS. Chief Flanagan is also working with the Town Administrator and other District 8 fire chiefs to come up with local and regional options if we have staff members who might need to be quarantined due to the virus. One option locally is to use the Flagg House, the former YouInc facility on Elmwood Place, to house employees who may be exposed. Do date, we have not had anyone exposed.

There are two COVID-19 test centers set up that are dedicated to testing either symptomatic or asymptomatic first responders, military, and healthcare workers. Those testing sites are located at Gillette Stadium and the Big E; and all testing is done free of charge for any first responder. All department members have been made aware that testing is available to them; one member was sent for testing, and the test results came back negative.

FY 2021 GRANTS

Chief Flanagan checked in with the FEMA representative regarding the Assistance to Firefighter Grants, given all of the attention spent on COVID-19 response. According to the FEMA representative, the AFG grant process is on-going, although all grant review is being done remotely. Award notifications should be out in the July/August timeframe as all of the grant money is to be awarded by the end of September. We have two grants pending, one for new self-contained breathing apparatus and one for a replacement engine.

AMBULANCE BILLING

As of two weeks ago, Coastal Medical Billing has taken over our ambulance billing services. Lt. Bradford and Chief Flanagan had finalized all the required paperwork and software updates with AmbuPro, our electronic patient care report software system. All of February and March bills were submitted to Coastal Medical Billing without any errors.