

Town of Oxford

701 Main Street, Oxford, Maine 04270

Paul Hewey, Fire/Rescue Chief

*Shawn Cordwell,
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Fire/Rescue Department

www.Oxfordmaine.org

I want to thank all the citizens of the town of Oxford for their continuing support to the department(s). I also want to say thank you to the members of the Fire/Rescue, and the Fire-Police for their hard work and willingness to move forward during the ongoing changes within the department during the COVID-19 Pandemic. It is difficult to do my duties as the chief of the department without the help of all members of the department and the sacrifices you have endured and seen. Thank you!

The department has had its share of hurdles to overcome this past year, and are continuing to work very hard to find ways to move forward. EMS and Fire staffing shortages is one of them. This isn't just an Oxford Fire/Rescue issue, this is everywhere. Having members stay home due to (+) positive Covid tests or close contacts has made scheduling staff another hurdle. When this happens staff may be already working at their other Fire/EMS services and not be available to come in on the short notice. Working with Town Manager, Mr. Garland, we have written a federal grant to help alleviate the situation. If awarded it would allow us to hire eight full-time firefighters/Paramedics. We had to increase payroll across the board to assist with retention and recruitment issues which is another hurdle to overcome.

The current ladder truck, now sitting at 30 years old, again with the cost of replacement of the water pump in the area of 30-40 thousand, it was decided to apply for a federal grant to replace the apparatus with a brand new one, using the (AFG) The Assistance to Firefighters Grants Program through FEMA.gov. February 12th, 2021 I submitted for a replacement ladder truck for \$1.7million. October 6th, 2021, we did receive a letter from AFG that we were denied at this time for the cost of replacement. Since then, we have hired a grant writer to assist the department. With information provide we have changed direction to use AFG for assist with staffing which was submitted January 2022. The department will reapply for a ladder when AFG reopens later this year.

Oxford Fire/Rescue's calls for service have increased over the last couple of years. As you may be aware in 2020 the department ended the year with 839 calls for service, of which 636 of them were EMS related. 2021 the department saw a dramatic increase ending the year with 1119 calls for service, of which 911 of them were EMS related. With most Fire/EMS departments being shorthanded, we are seeing more mutual aid calls for service to the surrounding departments. 105 times Oxford Fire/Rescue received mutual aid from other communities. 106 times Oxford Fire/Rescue provided mutual aid to other communities. The department is assisting other departments as far as Auburn Fire, Casco Fire/Rescue, Harrison Fire/Rescue, West Paris Fire, Turner Fire, plus the local departments such as Poland Fire/Rescue, Mechanic Falls Fire/Rescue, Norway Fire, Paris Fire. Oxford Fire/Rescue is also assisting other ambulance services such as the city of Auburn and covering a few calls for service for PACE Ambulance. All EMS services are busy and getting busier.

One change you will see in the FY 22/23 budget is both operating budgets for fire and rescue are now combined instead of being separate. The departments operate as one already (has for many years) and this will be an added benefit as we can share resources and lower costs to the taxpayer.

Respectfully Submitted, Paul Hewey; Chief