



**PO-MAR-LIN
FIRE COMPANY
Strategic Plan
2021- 2026**

Executive Summary

The Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company is pleased to present its 2021-2026 Strategic Plan. The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to clearly define the mission and goals of the Fire Company while developing a guide for continued excellent service as we prepare to meet the many challenges and opportunities in providing emergency services during the next five years.

This Strategic Plan will serve as a living document and a work in progress, subject to change under evolving circumstances. It was developed using a Community-Driven Strategic Planning process that included input from representative groups composed of members of the Fire Company (internal stakeholders) and from the community at large (external stakeholders); as well as ongoing discussions, collaborations and input from Fire Company administration, line officers and township officials. The Strategic Plan is written in accordance with the guidelines set forth by the Center for Public Safety Excellence - Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual 9th edition.

Seven major areas of critical concern are addressed in this Strategic Plan:

1. Recruitment & Retention
2. Financial Outlook
3. Professional Development
4. Internal & External Communications
5. Facility Improvements
6. Consolidation/Closure/Decommission
7. Apparatus & Equipment

Using a S.W.O.T. (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis methodology, each of the above seven areas were analyzed and specific Tasks identified to address challenges and opportunities for improvement to further improve our ability to deliver life and property saving services to our community.

The Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company is committed to maintaining public trust through the highest levels of responsibility and accountability. We will remain fiscally responsible in our decision-making, treat every resident with the utmost dignity and respect, ensure our equipment is always in superior working order and ready to respond, and continue to perform our profession to the best of our abilities.

Stephen Nuse, President

Jason Griffith, Fire Chief

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	Page 2
Table of Contents.....	Page 3
Acknowledgements.....	Page 4
Fire Company History.....	Page 5
Strategic Planning Process.....	Page 8
Response Area Characteristics.....	Page 11
Demographic Information.....	Page 16
Schools and Educational Facilities.....	Page 18
Development and Redevelopment.....	Page 21
Incident Response History Analysis.....	Page 26
Service Demand History Analysis.....	Page 28
Response Time History Analysis.....	Page 29
Financial History.....	Page 33
Mission, Core Values, and Vision Statements.....	Page 34
External Stakeholder Outreach Survey Results.....	Page 36
Internal Stakeholder Member Survey Results.....	Page 39
SWOT Analysis Results.....	Page 42
Critical Issues Action Plans.....	Page 46
Annual Review Policy.....	Page 55
Conclusion.....	Page 56

Acknowledgements

The Fire Company would like to thank the members of the Strategic Planning Committee for their efforts in completing this document that will chart the way forward for the organization over the next few years. The committee members met multiple times and put in additional hours of their own time in an effort to produce a plan that will serve both the Fire Company and the community well for years to come.

Strategic Plan Committee Members

Jeffrey Groves – Trustee, Chairman

Stephen Nuse – Fire Company President

Jason Griffith – Fire Chief

Christine Griffith – Recording Secretary

John Weer – Trustee, Fire Company Member

Ivan Dowling – Fire Company Member

Jordan Marzolf, Vice President, Fire Company Member

Susan Elks, Community Representative

Rick DeGroot, Facilitator – The Rodgers Group, LLC

Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company History

Organized in 1840 but gone from written records by 1845, Unionville Fire Company was the first organized fire company in the Unionville area. More than 100 years later, tragedy spurred organization of a new fire company, with a woman perishing in a house fire in the village in 1949. Within a month a group of 97 people had met and created the original charter for Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company, so named for the municipalities served.

To get the new fire company underway, a committee was formed to search for a fire truck, and the first official fundraising event, a horse show on the property of Mrs. John B. Hannum, was held. The fundraising efforts were supplemented by a donation from Robert Kleberg of King Ranch to cover the cost of a 1934 Hahn fire truck. For years to come, the truck was housed at various locations throughout the Unionville area. Fundraising and local community support have continued to be consistent themes throughout the history of Po-Mar-Lin.

Po-Mar-Lin responded to its first fire on December 25, 1951, a small grass fire. The first significant effort was assisting Kennett Fire Company with a fire at Connors Drug Store, at the corner of State and Union streets in Kennett Square. In 1952 Po-Mar-Lin settled at its permanent location with construction of the first fire house on land purchased from Walter Hoopes. A second fire truck was purchased in 1954, and a formal parade and housing was held to celebrate.

Early fundraising efforts included Saturday evening dances, but shifted to the Strawberry Festival, held each summer from 1956 to 1985, and the Ox Roast, held from 1957 into the 1980s. The Ox Roast was a key source of revenue for the fire company, particularly with the donation of beef from King Ranch. Both events were enjoyed by community members across the decades, ending when the financial return was not great enough to warrant the time invested by volunteers. Fundraising has continued in various forms across the decades, seeking to balance support for the fire company with the investment of volunteer time.

The late 1950s saw new equipment purchased, and modernization in the form of a phone system for residents to call in case of an emergency, which rang in four locations near the fire house. Upon someone answering a call for assistance, they would go to the fire house to blow the siren, calling in the volunteers. The first fatality at a fire in the history of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company occurred in 1958, with the death of a child in a fire on a Cannery Road property.

A Ladies Auxiliary was added to the fire company in 1962, providing critical support at fire scenes and through fundraising activities. Modernization continued throughout the 1960s and early 1970s, including a building addition, purchase of new trucks, and purchase of a base station and home monitors to better alert firefighters, particularly for overnight

alarms. In 1969 Po-Mar-Lin voted to join the developing Chester County Fire Board, which went live in 1971 to provide centralized dispatching.

Fire company officers worked with local township supervisors in 1975 to develop a plan for ongoing financial support. Townships would donate to the fire company out of their general fund, with the funding going toward capital expenses, such as fire apparatus. Operating expenses would be covered through volunteer effort, either by fundraising efforts (such as bingo nights) and services (such as filling swimming pools). This plan remained largely in place into the early 2000s.

In March of 1976, a snowstorm and confusion over the location of a fire contributed to the second fatality at a fire in the history of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company, the outcome every firefighter or emergency response personnel works to prevent. Every emergency response call carries the potential of that outcome, and that weight is in turn carried by the individuals that choose to serve their community in these roles, whether paid or volunteer.

The late 1970s saw advancements in personal protective gear for firefighters and firefighting techniques. Mutual aid was becoming a normal activity, and the Southern Chester County Fire Chiefs Association was formed in 1978 to coordinate training, purchasing, and response. Po-Mar-Lin updated equipment and planned construction of an additional engine room, with Assistant Chief Roy Harris serving as the building committee chairman.

The darkest potential outcome of volunteer firefighter service came to Po-Mar-Lin on May 25, 1982. Six fire company members were filling the engine truck with water at a fire pond located adjacent to Route 82 when the engine was struck head on by a passing motorist. Assistant Chief Roy Harris was fatally injured. Two members suffered critical injuries, and the remaining three suffered injuries requiring hospital care.

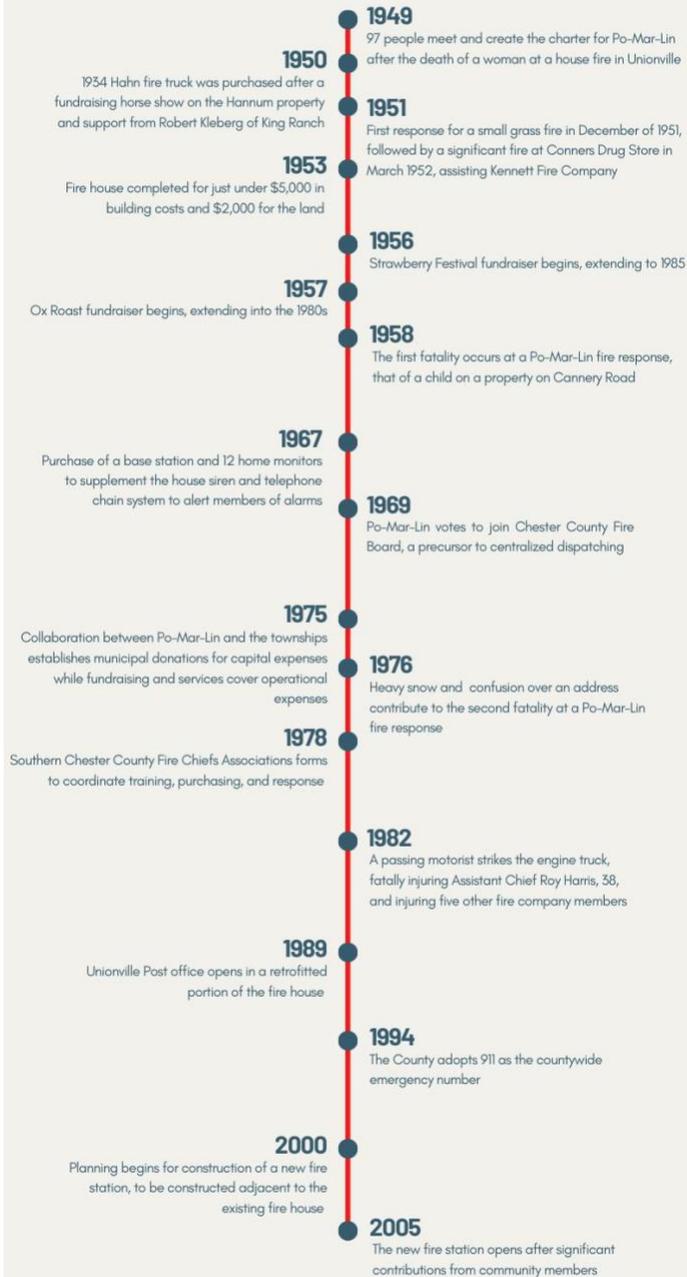
Today the fire pond has been filled in, replaced by parking for the URA baseball and softball fields, and many may stand at the location and be unaware of the loss of life and injuries suffered in service to community. Family members, fellow firefighters, and friends carry the weight however, and endure the sacrifice that at times results from emergency response service.

Change came to Po-Mar-Lin throughout the 1980s, with long-time fundraising efforts ending, new equipment purchased, and the retrofit of a portion of the fire house to serve as the Unionville Post Office. Chester County switched to 911 as the countywide emergency number in January 1994.

By 2000 it was clear that the original fire house needed to be replaced, and a major fund drive was initiated to construct a modern fire station. The new station, located adjacent to the original, was completed in 2005 through the support of many organizations and individuals.

A HISTORY OF **PO-MAR-LIN**

EQUIPMENT, FACILITIES, FUNDRAISING, AND
RESPONSE - DRIVEN BY AND FOR PEOPLE



Strategic Planning Process

The task of managing the operation of a modern fire company has evolved considerably from prior years when the local fire chief was mainly concerned with the next fire or emergency response. Fire call volume was manageable and there were usually plenty of local volunteer members to lend a hand when an emergency struck a fellow resident. Administrative responsibilities were minimal and could easily be handled by the chief or a small group of administrative members.

Today, the management of a fire company is filled with challenges posed by increases in the volume of fire and rescue service demands. While previous-era fire companies were mainly tasked with fighting fires, today's fire agencies respond to a wide variety of incidents including fires, motor vehicle crashes, hazardous materials spills, and technical rescue incidents including confined space emergencies, trench rescues, high angle rescues, and swift water emergencies. The list continues to expand and fire organizations need to be prepared to handle these emergencies in their service areas.

To keep up with the training and certification requirements of this ever-expanding role, today's firefighters are constantly upgrading their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Mandatory regulatory requirements also put a strain on membership, especially given the time constraints that volunteer firefighters are faced with, including two-income families, child-care duties, limited family time, and scant free time to volunteer their services to the community.

In late 2020, the leadership of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company decided that there was a need to formally chart the organization's way forward. The need to identify the financial and demographic challenges facing the Fire Company and to plan for the future was evident. Between 1970 and 2000, the Po-Mar-Lin response area developed significantly with the eastern portion of the area becoming suburbanized while the western portions remained more rural in nature. The framework of financial support, and needed resources for adequate response, have changed and continue to change. The diversity and expanse of the response area, along with changing response demands and a population that is still growing moderately informed the Fire Company's decision to plan for the future.

In 2009, the Fire Company had developed a five-year plan to address the needs of the organization, however the plan was somewhat limited in scope to addressing projected financial impacts. This effort resulted in plan presented to the four municipalities that the Fire Company services and resulted in the municipalities instituting a fire tax to resolve much of the identified financial issues. The 2009 plan, however, did not examine the projected needs of the organization regarding operations, administration, training, and staffing.

The path chosen by the Fire Company leadership recently was to develop and adopt a comprehensive five-year strategic plan that will conduct a full review of all aspects of the operations of the Fire Company. The plan is intended to address all of the organizational and administrative challenges to the agency and to plan for the future. The plan will chart the way forward for the organization and help to provide excellent and consistent service to the communities that we serve.

The process used followed a format that has been successfully used by many fire organizations in the past. Strategic Planning Committee was formed consisting of key leadership personnel from the Fire Company and rank and file members. We also recruited a community resident who has considerable experience in strategic planning, as well as to provide a non-member community perspective. An outside consultant was also used to facilitate the process.

The Process:

After a kick-off meeting was held to introduce the committee to the process, assignments were made to establish current baselines. Members of the committee collected information such as area served, population, area characteristics (including the types of residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial structures to be protected), critical infrastructure such as public water and sewage systems, utility services (including electric, communications, and natural gas service), the roadway network including bridges that may have weight and height restrictions, and areas of potential development or redevelopment. Historical emergency response data including the type and volume of calls for service, response time, and staffing levels performance were also documented and analyzed to establish current baseline performance.

An internal survey was developed and made available to all fire company members to obtain feedback and solicit areas of concern regarding operations and administration. This valuable information was collected and summarized in a report form. External surveys were also developed and circulated among community members including members of the local governing bodies, church and service group leaders, and the general public. Again, the results were summarized in report form. Both the internal and external survey results were used to further establish baselines regarding community expectations and satisfaction.

The committee conducted a S.W.O.T (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) Analysis where the members explored each of these areas to uncover areas of critical concern. Seven major areas of critical concern were identified:

- Recruitment & Retention
- Financial Outlook
- Professional Development
- Internal & External Communications
- Facility Improvements

- Consolidation/Closure/Decommission
- Apparatus & Equipment

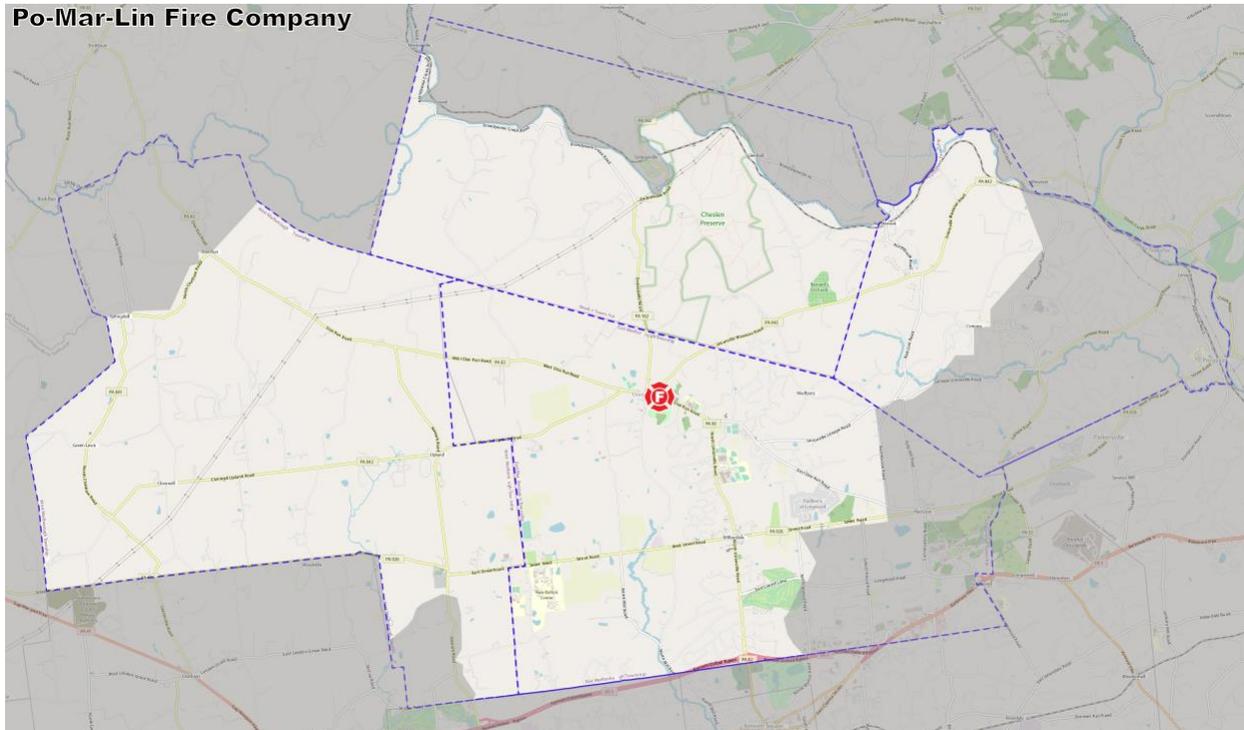
Sub-groups were assigned to explore each area and develop action plans to address needs. The resulting action plans form the basis for the Five-Year Strategic Plan.



Response Area Characteristics

Community Risk Profile

An objective analysis of fire protection needs would be incomplete without examining the major factors that drive fire suppression and specialized rescue requirements. These include the physical and demographic characteristics of the area, service demand levels, and emergency incident history of the fire company. An examination of these key factors assists in making specific observations about the scope and complexity of the fire and rescue challenges faced daily. Such an examination will result in a community risk profile that the fire company can use to make informed and objective decisions regarding staffing and organization, as well as fire apparatus, equipment, and facilities purchases.



Community Characteristics – Po-Mar-Lin Fire Response District

The fire response district is situated in the central portion of Chester County and is located approximately equidistant from Philadelphia and Wilmington, Delaware. The district is made up of portions of four municipalities: East Marlborough Township, West Marlborough Township, Newlin Township and Pocopson Township. The eastern portion of the district has developed into a suburban community with several single family housing developments, while the western portion remains largely rural with large expanses of

open space and farmland. Commercial development is concentrated in the central village of Unionville and at Willowdale (intersection of Route 82/Unionville Road and Route 926/Street Road).

A limited area of commercial development in the response district exists along the Route 1 corridor at the southern border of the district. A larger area of commercial development along Route 1 lies in East Marlborough Township, just outside the district, along with the sprawling campus of the historic Longwood Gardens. According to the United States Census, the four municipalities that have portions within the response area have an estimated (2016) combined population of 14,279. The total land area of four municipalities is 53.06 square miles. The Po-Mar-Lin response district covers about 31.7 square miles total, with an estimated population of about 7,200 residents with daytime population increase by 50%.

Occupancy Risk Assessment

The type and configuration of the occupancies protected within the first response district vary from small single-family homes in clustered developments to large agricultural buildings. There are a few moderately sized apartment buildings and townhouse communities, but virtually no large multi-family apartment or townhouse complexes currently within the district. The area has, however, seen a trend towards the construction of very large (more than 7,000 square feet) single family homes, especially in the western portions of the fire coverage area. Commercial and institutional uses range from small commercial spaces located in clustered office and mercantile centers to the New Bolton Center, a large academic veterinary school located on a 700-acre campus.

To complete a risk hazard assessment of the commercial and institutional uses within the fire response district, an occupancy risk analysis was performed examining more than 80 locations. The method applied to this assessment used a model developed by Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) that identifies specific target hazard occupancies. Factors include:

- Number of occupants/life hazards
- Building construction and configuration
- Impact of loss of use (including economic, cultural, and historic) to the community
- Number of stories
- Presence of automatic fire suppression/detection systems
- Overall size (square footage)
- Number of fire hydrants or static water sources nearby
- Level of content hazard
- Building usage

Each occupancy received a rating score of significant, high, moderate, or low based on these factors. Occupancy types assigned a higher score are considered to be a more critical hazard than those receiving a lower score. Of the properties examined, there were no occupancies rated as significant hazards. There were 18 properties that were rated as high hazard occupancies, and 36 properties rated as moderate hazards, with the balance of properties rated as low hazard. Notable high hazard occupancies include the three Unionville-Chadds Ford School District public school buildings and the district school bus garage, the campuses of three private schools, the New Bolton Center, a large private daycare/pre-school, six places of worship, several high value agricultural and equestrian facilities, and three large restaurant and event gathering spaces. The fire station of the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company is also included due to its high protective value to the community.

Of the high value agricultural and equestrian facilities located in the district, the value of the livestock and contents of the buildings far outweigh the assessed value of the properties in some instances. Some of the animals housed in these occupancies are valued in the millions and many are irreplaceable for their breeding value.

Moderate hazard occupancies include several government buildings and public works garages, four restaurants, several auto repair garages and gas stations, woodworking and furniture repair shops, an indoor ice arena, a public wastewater treatment plant, and several moderately sized barns and agricultural buildings. Low hazard buildings generally include smaller commercial, office, small restaurant, and mercantile spaces, many of which are located in attached single-story shopping center-style buildings.

Roadway Network Assessment

An assessment of the street system including the configuration and condition of the roadways serves as an excellent predictor of the rescue and emergency medical service demands placed on the local fire company. Along with varying weather conditions and traffic levels, the frequency of demand for rescue, EMS emergency medical services and collision clean up services at vehicle collisions and accidents establishes the need for availability of rescue response. A high percentage of the emergency responses made by the fire company are for rescue and EMS incidents, many of which are for vehicle-related accidents. Rescue responses might also include the extrication of trapped persons as a result of motor vehicle collisions and many other types of incidents such as rescues of persons from vehicles that have left the roadway and entered a stream or pond following a motor vehicle crash, and low-angle rope rescues of injured persons who may have need to be extricated from a vehicle down an embankment

The roadway system in the fire response district consists of more than 116 miles roadways, mostly secondary roadways. There is a small section of high-speed divided four-lane highway along the southern boundary of the district that accounts for a significant number of annual rescue responses. The majority of the secondary

roadways that traverse the district are two-lane, sometimes narrow, soft-shouldered roadways that often are unforgiving when vehicles unintendedly leave the roadway. In 2005, a new roundabout replaced a dangerous intersection at Unionville Road and West Doe Run Road, which has resulted in a decrease in vehicle accidents in this area.

A few of the roadways in the western portion of the district are unpaved hard-packed gravel. Many roadways in the district are narrow, hilly, and twisting with blind curves, open drainage ditches and poor sight distances. There are also several narrow bridges, some with open-grate road surfaces. Such conditions may contribute to vehicle accidents, especially in poor weather. Another transportation characteristic that could impact the ability of the fire company to protect property is the extended length and narrow cartway/clearance of some private driveways, a condition seen more often in the western portion of the district. Driveways of this nature pose an access challenge for large fire apparatus. In some instances, these narrow access roads are more than a quarter mile long.

Utilities Assessment

Within Po-Mar-Lin's 31.7 square miles of coverage area, there is a multitude of different utilities that the Fire Company and the residents and property owners use on a daily basis. The types of utilities found in the coverage area are a range of natural water sources (ponds, creeks, rivers, etc.), manmade water sources (water mains, sewers, retention ponds, etc.), transcontinental pipelines, natural gas service lines, underground and above ground communications lines, and above and underground electrical service lines. All utilities are part of the critical infrastructure of the area that serves the residents and business property owners who live and work in the response district every day.

In regard to water sources, the fire company is continually training on how to maximize the usage of these critical resources. The fire and rescue primary response area has an inventory of about 90 fire hydrants, primarily in the coverage areas located in East Marlborough and Pocopson Townships. The hydrants within the coverage area are public fire hydrants serviced by Aqua Pennsylvania, and privately owned hydrant systems such as on the campus of the New Bolton Center. For the portion of the response area located in Newlin and West Marlborough Townships, there are few fire hydrants and more of a reliance on the use of natural water sources. The Fire Company is continually training to utilize all types of water sources in the coverage area to be as proficient as possible.

Another major utility in the coverage area is the electrical distribution system provided by PECO. The areas covered by the Fire Company are serviced by PECO Electric, through above ground service lines and underground service lines. There are also high voltage transfer/transformer stations located in the response territory with four substations found at major facilities and along roadways. If an emergency arises regarding the electrical supply, the Fire Company is adequately trained and prepared to protect the lives and properties of residents and business owners within the coverage area and mitigate any dangers that might arise.

Another major utility serviced by PECO within the fire protection district is the natural gas service. Approximately 30% of the response district has access to natural gas service lines, especially in the areas of East Marlborough and Pocopson Townships. For those who do not have natural gas service provided by PECO, there are above ground and underground privately owned/rented propane tanks that are used on individual properties to provide gas services.

A major utility in the response area of the Fire Company is the interstate natural gas transmission pipeline owned and operated by Williams Gas Pipeline/Transco that through parts of East Marlborough and West Marlborough Townships. The route of the pipeline runs mainly alongside major transportation routes such as Route 1, Route 926, and Route 82. The pipeline also runs through property easements that are located near private residences. The Fire Company keeps an open line of communication with Williams Gas Pipeline representatives to ensure that actions plans are in place in case of a pipeline emergency.

Another utility are the above ground and underground communications lines that are primarily serviced by Verizon and Comcast, providing telephone and internet services to property owners. Even though these utilities are considered a low fire and emergency risks, they are still vitally important to businesses, schools, and residents.

Lastly, another utility is the sewage transfer and disposal system. East Marlborough Township operates a public sewer collection and disposal system that serves a portion of residences and business owners in the eastern half of the Township. In parts of the response district without public sewer access, property owners are reliant on on-site septic systems that are privately owned and maintained.

Even though there is a large variety of utilities within in the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company fire protection area, there is a strong focus within the agency on training and preparing personal on how to deal with utility emergencies. The Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company is dedicated to assuring that relations with all utility providers are open and clearly structured, and that relevant information is communicated within the fire company and to property owners.

Demographic Information of the Response District

Population

Growth in the four townships that the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company services has remained at a low but steady rate of increase except for West Marlborough Township which has shown virtually no population change over the previous ten-year period. Estimated growth for the combined Po-Mar-Lin service area during the time period was 6.07 percent. The estimated population density for the response area is 228 persons per square mile.

East Marlborough, Newlin, Pocopson, West Marlborough Townships and Estimate for Po-Mar-Lin Service Area

	Population April 2, 2010*	Population Estimate July 1, 2015**	Population Estimate July 1, 2019
East Marlborough	7,026	7,264	7,548
Newlin	1,285	1,354	1,347
Pocopson	4,582	4,846	4,829
West Marlborough	814	816	815
Total	13,707	14,280	14,539
Estimate for PML Service Area***	6,818	7,103	7,232

*U.S. Census 2010 Census; **U.S. Census American Community Survey; data accessed December 2020.

***Based on land area – 49.7% of the four townships is within the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company service area.

Population Growth

Forecasted population in the area over the next two decades is also expected to see only modest increases with West Marlborough (31 residents, +3.7 %), Pocopson (736, 14.54%) and Newlin Townships (241 residents, 15.12%) each showing only modest increases. East Marlborough Township is forecasted to see the largest increase with more than 2,000 additional residents (+25.98%) by 2040. The forecasted increase estimate for the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company service area is 1501 additional residents, an almost 26% increase for the twenty-year period.

East Marlborough, Newlin, Pocopson, West Marlborough Townships and Estimate for Po-Mar-Lin Service Area

	Population Forecast 2020*	Population Forecast 2030*	Population Forecast 2040*
East Marlborough	7,850	8,986	9,890
Newlin	1,415	1,534	1,629
Pocopson	5,060	5,471	5,796
West Marlborough	830	847	861
Total	15,155	16,838	18,176
Estimate for PML Service Area**	7,532	8,368	9,033

*Forecasts by the Delaware Valley Regional Planning Commission, adopted July 2016; accessed December 2020.

**Based on land area – 49.7% of the four townships is within the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company service area.

Household Income

There are an estimated 4,647 households located in the four townships serviced by the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company. Estimated mean household incomes in each of the four townships place the area well above the Chester County average of \$100,214 (+75.66%), making the fire area service one of the wealthiest in the county.

East Marlborough, Newlin, Pocopson, West Marlborough Townships

	Total Households*	Median Income* (dollars)	Mean Income* (dollars)
East Marlborough	2,822	\$124,079	\$165,429
Newlin	456	\$136,429	\$221,189
Pocopson	990	\$143,382	\$206,779
West Marlborough	379	\$83,417	\$120,391
Total	4,647	N/A	\$176,037

**U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 – 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; accessed December 2020.*

Housing Units

Total housing units in the four townships within the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company service area was 4,107. This number represents all types of dwelling units including single family, attached townhouses and apartment units, however the vast majority of dwellings are single family homes.

East Marlborough, Newlin, Pocopson, West Marlborough Townships

	Total Housing Units*	Detached Housing Units*
East Marlborough	2,949	2,318
Newlin	477	437
Pocopson	1,094	1,001
West Marlborough	443	351
Total	4,963	4,107

**U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 – 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates; accessed January 2021.*

Housing Sales

The median sales prices for housing units within the townships ranged from a high of \$700,000 in Newlin Township to a low of \$475,000 in West Marlborough Township. The average sales price within the four townships served in the Po-Mar-Lin coverage area was \$534,000 however these figures may be distorted by the relatively low number of home sales in Newlin and West Marlborough Townships.

East Marlborough, Newlin, Pocopson, West Marlborough Townships

	Total Number of Sales*	Median Sales Price* (dollars)
East Marlborough	139	\$428,000
Newlin	15	\$700,000
Pocopson	35	\$535,000
West Marlborough	2	\$475,000

**Chester County Planning Commission, 2020 Housing Report: Annual Survey of Housing in Chester County; accessed December 2020.*

Schools and Educational Facilities

Educational Facilities

The Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company fire coverage area has many high value occupancies. One category in particular are the educational facilities within the PML coverage area. With educational facilities comes a verity of risks, threats, and infrastructure challenges. The educational facilitates and the demographic of each facility are noted below:

Unionville-Chadds Ford School District -

Unionville High School:

The Unionville High School is a large complex consisting of a three story main educational building (holding the District Office, classrooms, auditorium, gymnasium, wood working shop, and cafeteria) and extensive athletic fields. Building and site components that pose challenges to the fire department are HVAC systems, sprinkler systems (not all areas have sprinklers), fire alarms systems, large commercial electrical supplies, natural gas supply, chemical storage areas, challenging traffic access/egress issues, and a height/high angle challenge with the auditorium. The High School is grades 9th -12th and has about 1375 students and 145 faculty/staff located within the building daily.

Patton Middle School:

The Patton Middle School consists of a two story building (holding offices, classrooms, gymnasium, and cafeteria) and extensive athletic fields. The middle school's infrastructure includes many of the same mechanical systems and challenges as the High School. The middle school is grades 6th through 8th and has a daily population of about 1000 students, and 140 faculty/staff.

Unionville Elementary:

The Unionville Elementary School was built in 1921 and has had many renovations and editions added over the years. The Elementary School consists of a two story building (holding offices, classrooms, gymnasium, auditorium and cafeteria), and athletic fields. As with the High School and Middle School, the school's infrastructure includes many of the same mechanical systems and challenges. The school is grades K through 5th and has a daily population of about 315 students and 70 faculty/staff.

Other Unionville-Chadds Ford Facilities:

Other areas of the school district property are the maintenance shop, which has about 15 employees working out of that building. Also, there is the transportation building which consists of offices, mechanics' garage, fuel storage, and a large fleet of busses and transportation vehicles stored on site. The transportation building is a two story building and has a daily population of about 70 employees. Also located on school district property is an older barn structure that is currently vacant.

Upland County Day School

Upland is a private education center which teaches student from Pre-K 3 through 9th grade. The campus consists of classrooms, offices, a gymnasium, athletic fields, and other mechanical systems such as fire alarms, HVAC, and electrical. There is not one central building, rather the campus consists of individual smaller buildings with some fire department access challenges. The school has about 175 student and 45 faculty/staff.

University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine (New Bolton Center Hospital)

Penn Vet's New Bolton Center campus is located on 700 acres in East Marlborough and West Marlborough Townships. New Bolton Center is world-renowned for its large animal hospital and research centers. The hospital experiences about 4,900 patient visits/year offers, provides emergency/critical care 24/7/365, offers field service for clients in 30-mile radius, and staffs 36 board-certified specialists. The campus consists of roughly 70 structures with a total of approximately 450,000 square feet of building space. There are about 320 employees and 50 students representing a diverse

population on site daily. There are two dormitories on campus with one having an occupancy of ten students and the other one with a maximum capacity of 45 students.

Special hazards associated with the campus are oxygen storage, a 2000 gallon liquid nitrogen tank, two large chlorine tanks, a 3,000 gallon above ground storage tank, a hazardous materials storage shed, small amounts of radioactive materials, two pesticide storage areas, biohazard areas, and four large hay storage barns. Fire protection systems associated with the campus entails seven wet sprinkler systems, five dry sprinkler systems, and 23 fire alarm systems, which are all monitored 24/7/365 on site and through a central monitoring alarm company.

Conclusion:

In Po-Mar-Lin's first due emergency coverage area, there are six educational facilities which all present a wide variety of hazards, special hazards, and fire service challenges. Although the PML fire coverage area is largely residential, the education facilities' daytime population adds about 2,900 students and 800 faculty and staff, which significantly impacts the PML coverage area with respect to traffic accidents, fire alarms, and other calls for service.



Development & Redevelopment

Existing Land Use

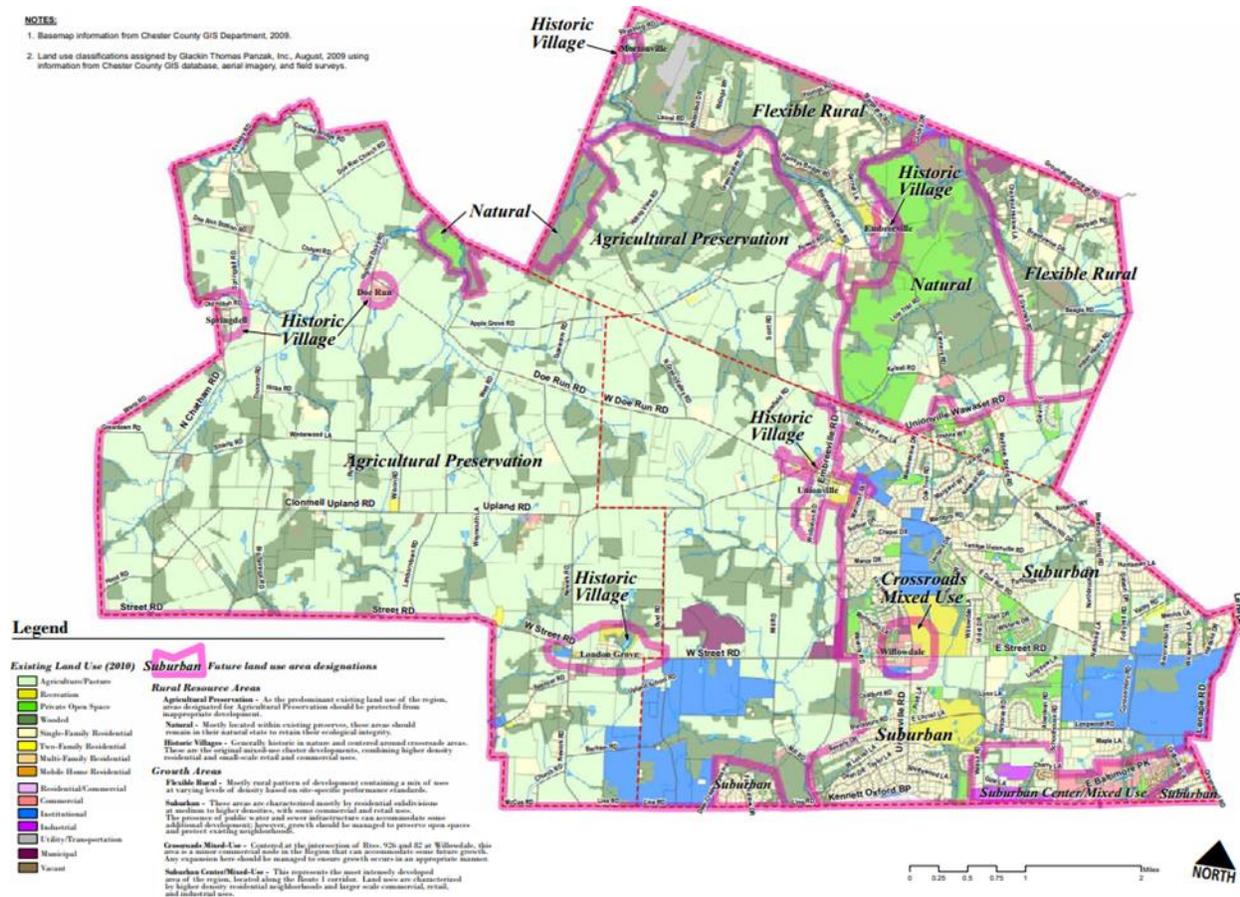
Much of the Po-Mar-Lin service area is already developed or encumbered in a manner that would prevent significant future development. Single family residential covers much of the developed area, with limited areas of multi-family residential development and commercial uses. Institutional uses are significant in the service area, with three Unionville-Chadds Ford school buildings and supporting uses such as athletic fields and bus garages, six places of worship, and the New Bolton Center.

Other uses of note include the lands and buildings of ChesLen Preserve, The Laurels Preserve, and Brandywine Red Clay Alliance. Each property has extensive recreational trails. There are significant areas of preserved lands, in which the ability to further develop the land has been deed restricted. These lands present themselves in a variety of ways, such as inclusion in homeowners association open space, private land that has a conservation easement, and agricultural lands that have been restricted from significant future development through an agricultural easement.



NOTES:

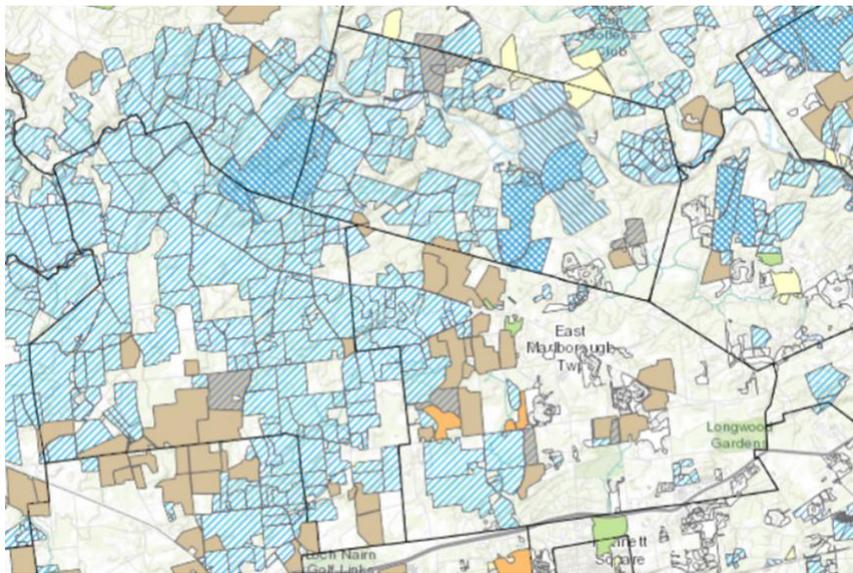
1. Basemap information from Chester County GIS Department, 2008.
2. Land use classifications assigned by Glavin Thomas Parzak, Inc., August, 2009 using information from Chester County GIS database, aerial imagery, and field surveys.



Within the service area in the Unionville Area Region, the predominant existing land uses are agricultural, residential, institutional, and wooded, with more limited areas of open space, recreational, and commercial uses. Unionville Area Regional Comprehensive Plan, 2011, Future Land Use (future land uses overlaying existing land



The portion of Pocopson Township within the service area has significant areas of agricultural uses (dark green), open space (light green), and residential uses (beige). There are limited areas of commercial, such as Northbrook Market (red) and multifamily (yellow). The Chester County Prison and Pocopson Home properties are depicted in blue and are immediately beyond the service area. Pocopson Township Existing Land Use as of 2013, depicted in the 2014



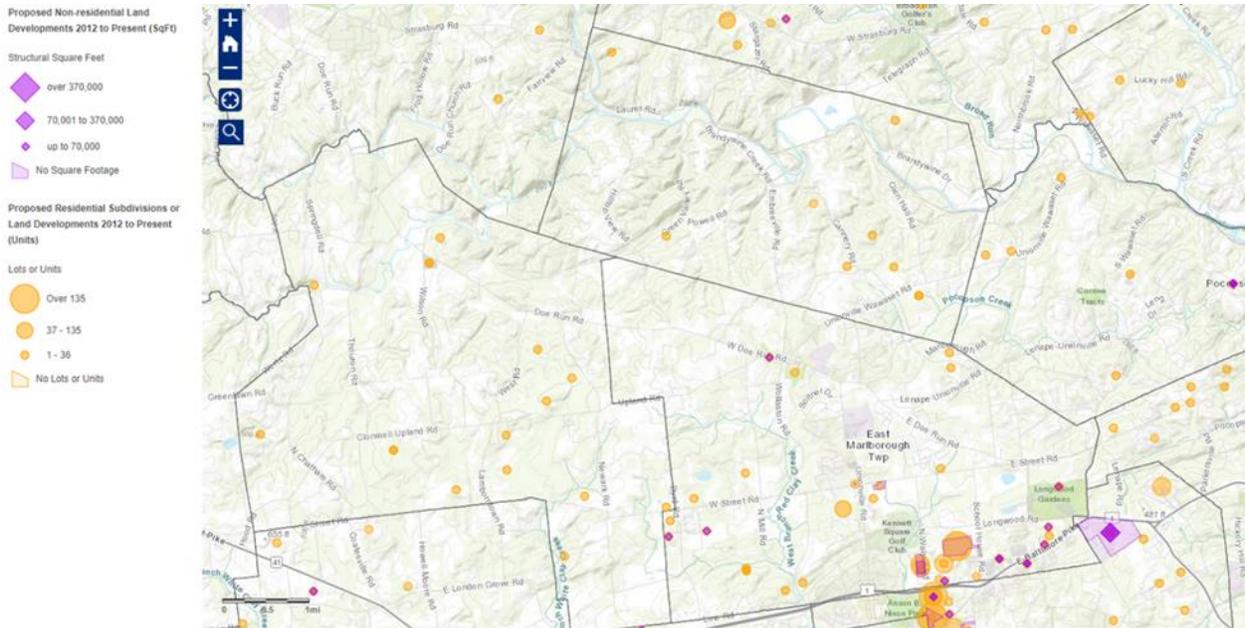
Protected open space as of December 2019 is depicted through various colors and hatching on the above map. Within the service area lands have most often been preserved through land trusts (blue hatching) or agricultural easements (brown), with some homeowner's association open space (white), local parks and open space (light green and yellow), and managed lands (orange).

Future Land Use

Given the extent of developed and preserved land, there are limited opportunities for new development and redevelopment that would change uses or population projections at a significant scale in the Po-Mar-Lin service area. The Unionville area remains a desirable one for residential uses, given the quality of the school district and proximity to many amenities, and so developers are likely to continue to take advantage of the opportunities presented to them. Recent development within the service area includes Unionville Walk, a 42-unit single family housing development that is approaching build-out as of early 2021.

The Unionville Walk residential development is one of the largest projects to be built in the past decade within the service area, reflecting the limited areas available for new development and area townships' future land use designations and zoning. Residential development should certainly be anticipated to continue, although this is most likely on a small scale given the lack of larger parcels available for development. There is a block of developable land in the eastern portion of Newlin Township/western portion of Pocopson Township that permits residential development. Should those areas be developed at permitted densities, they could add a significant number of residential units to the service area. There are no known development plans for these parcels at this time.

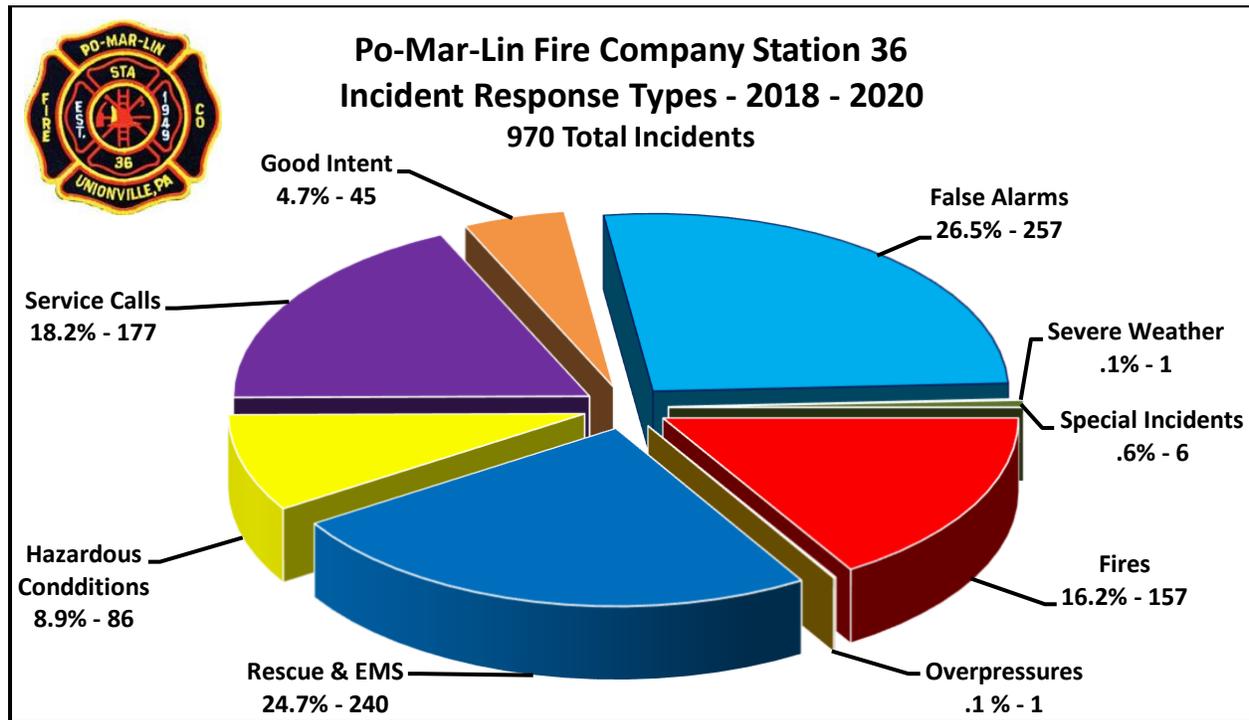
Notably, much of the future growth for the four townships is planned for areas beyond the Po-Mar-Lin service area, although in some cases the growth is planned for areas almost immediately adjacent to the service area. The Route 1 corridor in East Marlborough Township and roads connecting into Route 1 or Kennett Square (Schoolhouse Road and Walnut Road) are zoned for higher intensity uses than the remainder of East Marlborough, and recent development of residences and commercial uses reflects this zoning. Growth is also significant in Kennett Square Borough and the areas of Kennett Township adjacent to the Borough, which places the growth in close proximity to the Po-Mar-Lin service area. This growth includes residential uses of varying intensities (from single family to multi-family apartment complexes) and commercial/institutional development. In Pocopson Township the growth is focused on the northeast portion of the Township, along the eastern portions of Route 52 and Route 926. Population growth and redevelopment potential in these area does not significantly impact the Po-Mar-Lin service area, but certainly is a consideration regarding provision of mutual aid and increased traffic moving through the service area.



Proposed land developments and subdivisions from 2012 to 2020 are depicted on this map, with residential in orange and non-residential in purple. The size of the legend item is informed by the scale of the proposal; the 42-unit Unionville Walk residential development is the largest within the service area. Residential proposals have often been for less than five lots. Note the various proposals along the Route 1 corridor.



Incident Response History Analysis



Members of the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company responded to 970 total incidents during the three-year period from January 1st, 2018 to December 31st, 2020:

Fires (157 incidents – 16.2%) – Fires accounted for a significant percentage of fire company responses during the analysis period. This category includes all types of fires including fires in structures, motor vehicle fires, and all types of outside fires occurring in brush, grass, trash, and rubbish.

Overpressures, Ruptures, Explosion, Overheat (No Fire) – (1 incident – 0.1%) – This category includes all types of overpressure events from steam, air or gases, and chemical reactions, all types of explosions including bombs, munitions, fireworks, and dust, and ruptures caused by excessive heat where no ensuing fire is found.

Rescue and Emergency Medical Services (240 incidents – 24.7%) – This category accounted for the second highest number of responses, and includes all types of emergency medical and rescue responses including rendering basic first medical aid and assisting local EMS providers, all types of personal rescues such as motor vehicle accidents with injuries, motor vehicle accident victim extrications, and extrication of

persons trapped in building collapses, trench/below grade rescues, confined space rescues, water rescues, emergency lock-ins, high angle rescues, and extrication of victims entrapped in machinery.

Hazardous Conditions (86 incidents – 8.9%) – This category includes all types of emergency responses that require the fire company to take actions to protect life and property from hazards other than fire. These include natural gas, LPG, and steam leaks, electrical hazards, structural collapse hazards, flammable liquid and hazardous material releases, biological, radiological, and explosive hazards, smoke and odor removal, and all other types of imminent hazards to the public and property other than fire.

Service Calls (177 incidents – 18.2%) – This category covers all types of service-related emergencies and non-emergencies that the fire department responds to including in-station standbys, calls dispatched and cancelled prior to fire unit arrival, aircraft medical evacuation standbys, animal rescues, and other non-emergency public service type calls.

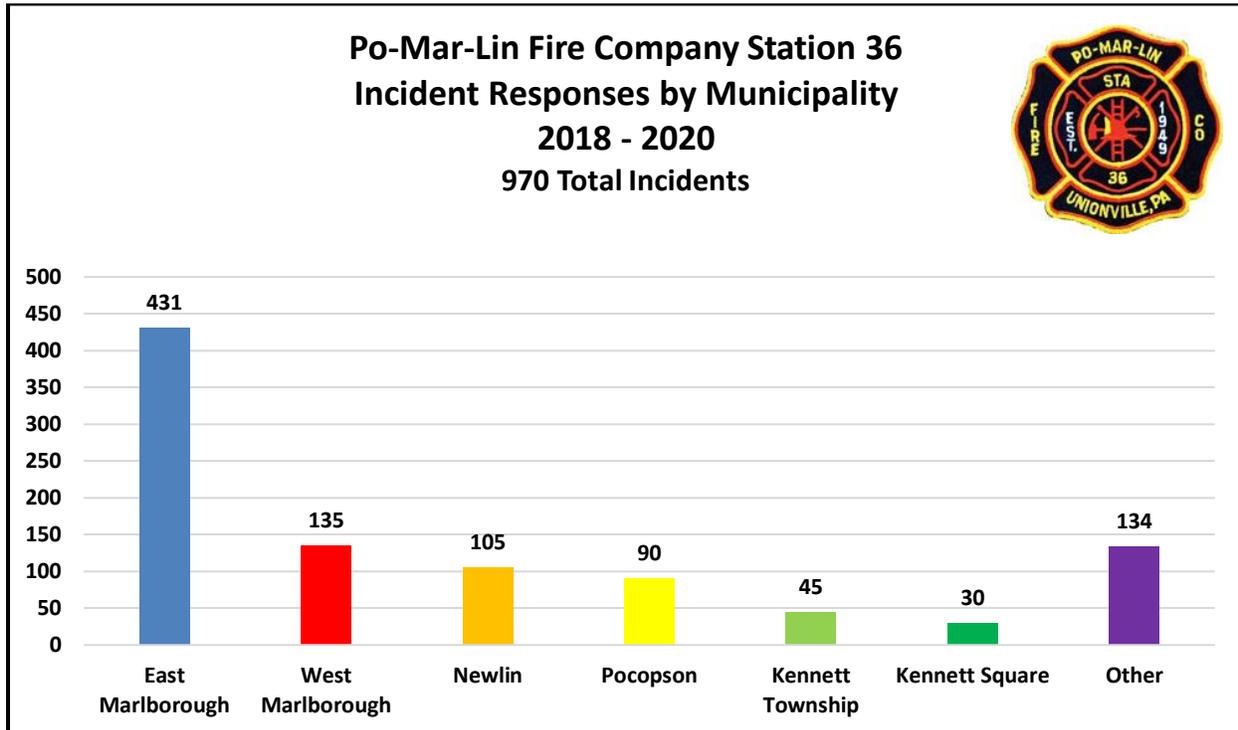
Good Intent Calls (45 incidents – 4.7%) – This category includes calls dispatched and cancelled prior to fire unit arrival, wrong location or no incident found, steam or other gas mistaken for smoke, honest mistakes, and all other types of non-malicious calls for the fire company to investigate.

False Alarm or False Calls (257 incidents – 26.5%) – This category accounted for the largest portion of fire department responses during the analysis period and includes all types of emergency responses to investigate activations of fire, smoke, and carbon monoxide detections systems, fire alarm and fire sprinkler system activations where no fire, smoke or carbon monoxide was found.

Severe Weather and Natural Disasters (1 incident – 0.1%) – This category includes calls for the fire company to assess damages to property because of earthquake, flood, and wind storms including hurricanes, tornados, lightning strikes, and other natural disasters. The category excludes incidents where other services, such as rescue, firefighting, and damage control are performed.

Special Type of Incident (6 incidents – 6%) – This category includes all other types of incidents that are reported to and are investigated by the fire company including all types of citizen complaints of code or ordinance violations.

Service Demand History Analysis



Incident responses to individual municipalities show that the majority of incident responses over the three-year analysis period went to the four municipalities within the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company primary response area, as would be anticipated. Responses to Kennett Township and Kennett Square accounted for a notable percent of responses. Responses to other area municipalities also accounted for a substantial percent of overall responses:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------|--------|
| • East Marlborough Township | 431 incidents | 44.43% |
| • West Marlborough Township | 135 incidents | 13.91% |
| • Newlin Township | 105 incidents | 10.82% |
| • Pocopson Township | 90 incidents | 9.27% |
| • Kennett Township | 45 incidents | 4.63% |
| • Kennett Square | 30 incidents | 3.09% |
| • Other Area Municipalities | 134 incidents | 13.81% |

A significant number of responses were for mutual aid assistance to other municipalities outside of the Fire Company response coverage area. This is in line with Chester County guidelines where neighboring fire companies render mutual assistance should a major emergency occur within any municipality. The concept of mutual aid is intended to be equitable in that fire companies both provide and received assistance. During the

study period, the Fire Company provided Mutual Aid assistance to municipalities outside of the Fire Company primary response area in 209 incidents, while receiving Mutual Aid assistance in 152 incidents.

Response Time History Analysis

One measure that is often used to gauge the effectiveness of a fire response agency is the analysis of total response time to emergency incidents. The ability of an agency to mobilize the appropriate personnel and equipment to the scene of an emergency in a timely manner is critical to the success of the organization and ultimately to the safety of the community. Fire emergency response time is measured from the time the 9-1-1 call is received to the moment when the first unit arrives on the scene. Mobilization time (also described as total response time) is composed of three main components:

- Alarm processing time, which is the time a call is received at the 911 center to the time of dispatch.
- Turnout time, which is the time it takes volunteer responders to travel to the fire station, don their protective gear, and begin responding in the emergency response vehicles.
- Travel time, which is the time it takes from the emergency response vehicle responding from the fire station to arrival on the scene.

Fire service best practices recommend that fire departments should track their total response times to ensure that resources are delivered to the scene of emergencies in a consistent and timely manner. The standard most often applied to volunteer fire companies when determining what the benchmark is for total response time to structure fires is NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments – 2020 Edition. The standard recommends that emergency alarm processing times be completed within 90 seconds, 90 percent of the time. Fire company total response time (including turnout time and travel time) is recommended to be 14 minutes in 80% of all reported structure fire incidents for a mostly rural fire protection district such as covered by the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company. Fractal response times (number of minutes by a performance percentage of time) are used in the standard rather than average response times because they better illustrate how well the agency is meeting the benchmark standard.

Analysis of the emergency response times was accomplished using data provided by the Emergency Reporting software used to track fire and rescue incidents covering the three-year period 2018 through 2020. However, the format the data was presented in made the breakdown of response times into fractal response times difficult because the data was

provided as a summary of response times by call type rather than individual response times for each individual call for service.

Despite this limitation, an average total response time was arrived at by separating out the non-emergency service type calls for service and only tallying true emergencies, including all types of fires and rescues. While average response times do not present the most accurate performance measurement for response time goals under the NFPA standard, they do provide a measurement that can be tracked over a period of time. Alarm processing data was excluded from the study because the fire company does not have control over alarm processing functions, as they are provided by the Chester County Emergency Communications Center. Incident response times were further broken down into three categories: all types of emergencies, structure fires, and rescues and EMS calls.

2018	Turnout	Arrival	Total Response Time	Operational On Scene Time
All Types	5 min. 26 sec.	12 min. 14 sec.	17 min. 40 sec.	29 min. 50 sec.
Fires	6 min. 11 sec.	13 min. 24 sec.	19 min. 35 sec.	33 min. 24 sec.
Rescues	4 min. 20 sec.	9 min. 47 sec.	14 min. 48 sec.	42 min. 34 sec.

2019	Turnout	Arrival	Total Response Time	Operational On Scene Time
All Types	4 min. 9 sec.	10 min. 3 sec.	14 min. 12 sec.	30 min. 29 sec.
Fires	5 min. 12 sec.	7 min. 34 sec.	12 min. 46 sec.	34 min. 52 sec.
Rescues	2 min. 46 sec.	7 min. 26 sec.	10 min. 2 sec.	23 min. 8 sec.

2020	Turnout	Arrival	Total Response Time	Operational On Scene Time
All Types	4 min. 16 sec.	9 min. 52 sec.	14 min. 8 sec.	26 min. 17 sec.
Fires	4 min. 25 sec.	13 min. 14 sec.	17 min. 14 sec.	29 min. 18 sec.
Rescues	3 min. 44 sec.	8 min. 16 sec.	12 min. 0 sec.	28 min. 49 sec.

3 Year Average	Turnout	Arrival	Total Response Time	Operational On Scene Time
All Types	4 min. 37 sec.	10 min. 43 sec.	15 min. 20 sec.	28 min. 52 sec.
Fires	5 min. 16 sec.	11 min. 24 sec.	16 min. 40 sec.	32 min. 31 sec.
Rescues	3 min. 37 sec.	8 min. 30 sec.	12 min. 7 sec.	30 min. 50 sec.

Analysis of the available data showed that average total response time for all types of emergency calls during the three-year study period was 15 minutes 20 seconds. Average total response time to all types of fires over the study period was 16 minutes 40 seconds. Average total response time to rescue and EMS calls over the study period was 12 minutes 7 seconds. Average response times are limited in that they only identify that one-half of the calls are below the average while the other half of the calls are above the average.

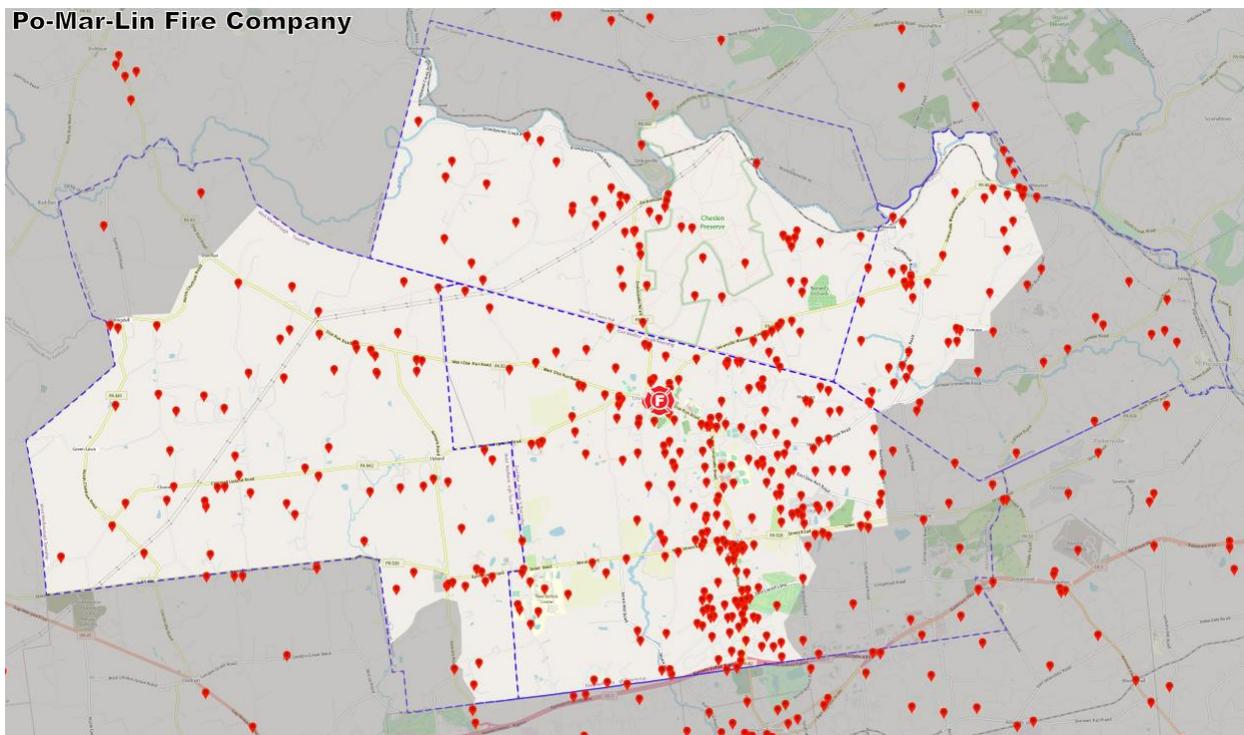
An analysis was also made to track average fire company operational on scene time for each type of incident. For all types of emergencies, average operational on scene time was 28 minutes 52 seconds. For all types of fire incidents, the average operational on scene time was 32 minutes 31 seconds, and for all types of rescue and EMS incidents, the average operational time was 30 minutes 50 seconds.

Further analysis of the response times for all types of fires showed that many of the responses were to building fires outside the primary service area, resulting in response time averages that were longer due to the greater travel times required for apparatus to arrive on-scene in other area municipalities. Additional analysis was made to separate building fire responses that were made to locations within the four municipalities that comprise the majority of the fire company's primary response area: West Marlborough, East Marlborough, Newlin and Pocopson Townships.

Building Fire Responses to Primary Response Area Municipalities				
	Turnout	Arrival	Total Response Time	Operational On Scene Time
2018	5 min. 9 sec.	9 min. 13 sec.	14 min. 21 sec.	36 min. 59 sec.
2019	5 min. 57 sec.	10 min. 59 sec.	16 min. 36 sec.	27 min. 6 sec.
2020	5 min. 16 sec.	7 min. 51 sec.	13 min. 7 sec.	98 min. 12 sec.
3 Year	5 min. 27 sec.	9 min. 21 sec.	14 min. 48 sec.	63 min. 4 sec.

Average total average response time to building fires in the primary response district for the three- year study period was 14 minutes 48 seconds which falls just outside of the NFPA recommended benchmark of 14 minutes in 80% of all structure fire incidents.

The operational on scene time for each type of emergency incident was also tracked which showed that the average operational on scene time for all types of emergencies was 28 minutes 52 seconds, for all types of fire incidents it was 32 minutes 31 seconds, and for rescue and EMS incidents it was 30 minutes 50 seconds. Again, operational times for structural fire incidents that occurred within the four primary coverage area municipalities were analyzed and it was found that during the study period the average structure fire incident required 63 minutes 4 seconds of operational on-scene time.



The above map shows the service demand history within the Po-Mar-Lin fire response district for the three-year study period. Each pin represents an incident location during that time frame. It shows that the majority of responses are concentrated within the central portion of East Marlborough Township. It also illustrates that the fire company makes numerous responses outside the fire district, including to neighboring municipalities.

Financial History

Since its formation in 1949 Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company's income was primarily in the form of various fundraising efforts from its members. Municipal funding that was received was mainly used for apparatus purchases, with other operational costs being covered through fundraising and service charges.

In 2011 the fire company met with local municipalities and provided a comprehensive analysis of its financial situation. Across the four townships (East Marlborough, West Marlborough, Newlin and Pocopson) included in the response district there is an assessed property value of 302 million dollars. Meeting with the four municipalities resulted in an "emergency services tax" (Fire Tax) of roughly \$50/household which would provide a "**sustainable income**" for the foreseeable future for the fire company. This funding plan also led to increased funding for other neighboring fire companies, which has provided some needed income for the increasing cost of 24/7 life and property coverage. This plan allowed for all townships to pay based on population, assessed property value, and other needs, thus ending the strain of fundraising activities. This plan also allowed the fire company to better concentrate on training and recruitment of firefighters and fire safety education. In some cases, the stable funding also allowed for placement of career personnel, which helped with daytime responses and the increased number of services being expected of fire companies.

In 2016-17 the Kennett Fire and EMS Regional Commission was formed, which included six local municipalities (Kennett Square Borough, and the townships of Kennett, East Marlborough, Newlin, Pennsbury and Pocopson). The idea was that each municipality would forward their collected tax dollars to the Commission and they would in turn dispense the tax dollars to each of the three fire and EMS companies. This new Commission based system resulted in a considerable decrease in funding for Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company, starting in 2018. This funding decrease was the result of the funding formula developed by the Kennett Regional Commission, and since implementation has put a strain on Po-Mar-Lin's budget and its ability to sustainably meet the needs of the Fire Company. These needs include but are not limited to building improvements and maintenance, fire apparatus replacement, keeping up with increases in insurances, utilities, fire apparatus repair and maintenance, and fire safety equipment for firefighters.

Looking forward and considering decreasing volunteer service, the need for paid firefighters in the near future may be required, which will require additional funding. Recent funding increases by the Kennett Regional Commission have helped but have been minor. Much more funding will be needed to sustain the level of service required by the local community and surrounding mutual aid areas.

Mission, Core Values & Vision Statements

To improve the quality of life of the residents and visitors within the Po-Mar-Lin Fire District and mutual-aid districts by providing protection of life and property threatened by medical emergencies, fires, accidents, and severe weather conditions. Our services of fire suppression, rescue, and fire safety education will be pursued with determination and resolve and deployed in an innovative and cost-effective manner.

Our quality of service will be achieved and maintained by strict adherence to the values and principles of:

Respect

We will maintain respect and compassion for all those in need of services regardless of age, race, gender, sexuality, religion, national origin, or economic status.

Commitment

We will treat every call for assistance as though the citizens we serve were evaluating our personal and professional reputations.

Teamwork

We will conduct ourselves in such a manner as to promote harmony, loyalty, trust, cooperation, and a spirit of pride among our fellow members.

Education

We will encourage an atmosphere of learning, training, skill development and constant striving to innovate and improve.

Efficiency

We must provide a quality level of emergency response based upon proactive and sound economic and efficient practices commensurate to the risks posed and the service expectations.

Safety

We will commit to a comprehensive health and safety program that recognizes the hazards of our profession and to policies that protect the health and encourage the well-being of our members.

Vision Statement:

The officers and members of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company provide an exceptional level of emergency service that consistently protects the health and safety of the people who live, work, and engage in the community, along with their property and valued assets.



External Stakeholder Outreach Survey Results

Utilizing their website, social media and email, Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company sent out a survey to the surrounding community to ask for insight on their provided services. The fire company received sixty-two responses in total, with 75.6% of respondents stating they are a homeowner in one of the townships the fire company provides fire services to.

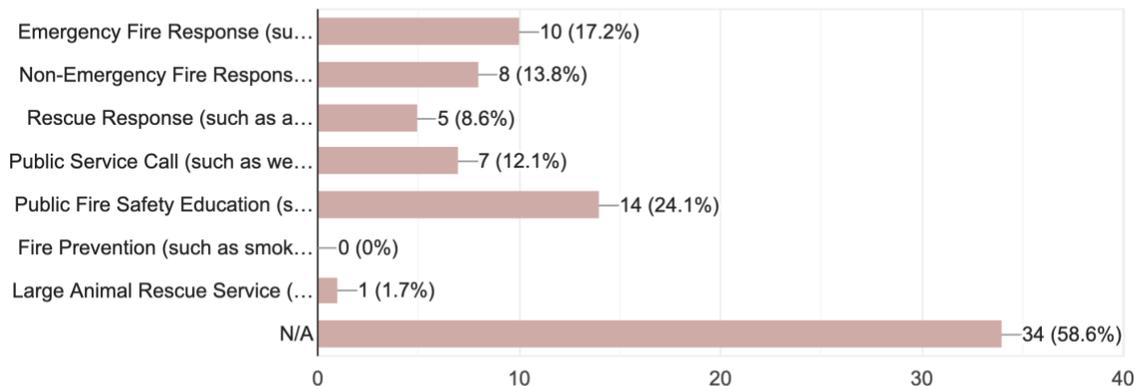
When asked to rank services offered by the fire company in order of importance, the community responded the following:

1. Fire Suppression
2. Public Services- accidents, trees and wires, etc.
3. Fire Safety and Education
4. Large Animal Rescue

Responses identifying community need for interaction are shown in the graph below. It is notable that the large majority of those responding have never needed the fire company's services.

Please mark the types of interaction you have had with the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company (please mark all that apply).

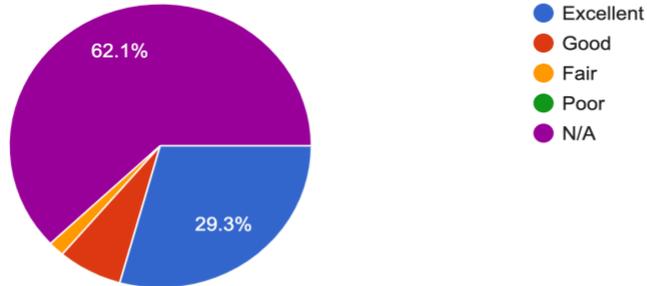
58 responses



Since January 2019, 81% of respondents have not needed the fire company's services, 17% have needed services on one to three occasions and one percent has needed the fire company's services more than six times. When asked about timeliness, quality of services and the overall experience with the fire company, the community respondents identified areas of excellence, good and fair.

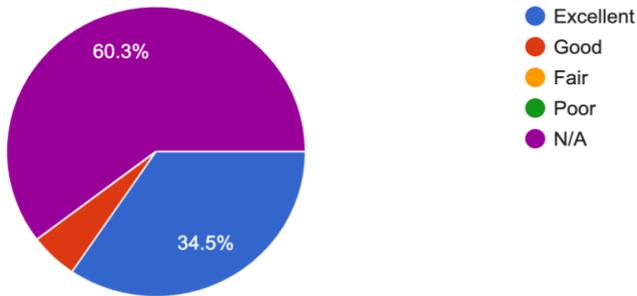
Thinking about your most recent interaction, please indicate how you would rate the timeliness of RESPONSE.

58 responses



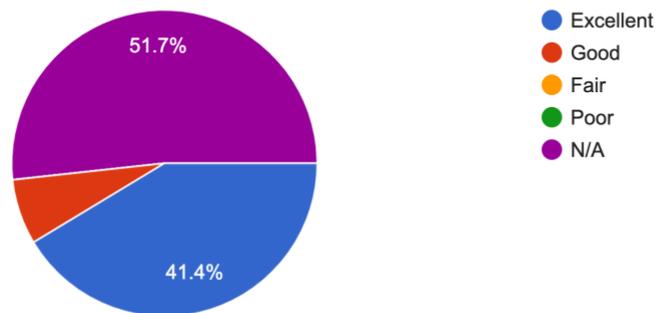
Thinking about your most recent interaction, please indicate how you would rate the QUALITY of service.

58 responses



How would you rate your overall experience with Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company personnel and services?

58 responses



The survey asked the community to identify what they perceive are the fire company's strengths and weaknesses. With equal majority responses, 23 each, the community identified the fire company's facilities and equipment as strengths. 21 responses identified community engagement as another. It is important to note that the fire company hosts an annual Open House, this event was brought back in 2018. Additionally, volunteers attend the Unionville Community Fair, Willowdale Steeplechase, Unionville Elementary School Star Day, as well as other school and equestrian events in the community. The community identified staffing levels, 10 responses, as a weakness, as well as community communication and recruitment and retention. The fire company's new building did not have a sign until November 2020. This took a lot of work and lengthy interaction with the township, as well the Historical Architecture Review Board to bring this sign to life to be able to interact with the community from the physical building. Prior to this, community communication has relied on sending out Fund Drive letters, utilizing the website and social media, with a heavy emphasis on the fire company's Facebook Page.

The final question asked the community to identify the most effective means of communication, responses are as follows:

1. Social Media - Facebook, Instagram, Website
2. Community Events- Open House, Unionville Community Fair
3. Partner Collaboration- School Visits, Tours
4. Print Media

The fire company is continuing to look for ways to improve and continue to strengthen the company for the present day, as well as the future. The responses of the community are taken seriously and will be used to help the organization continue to evolve and grow.

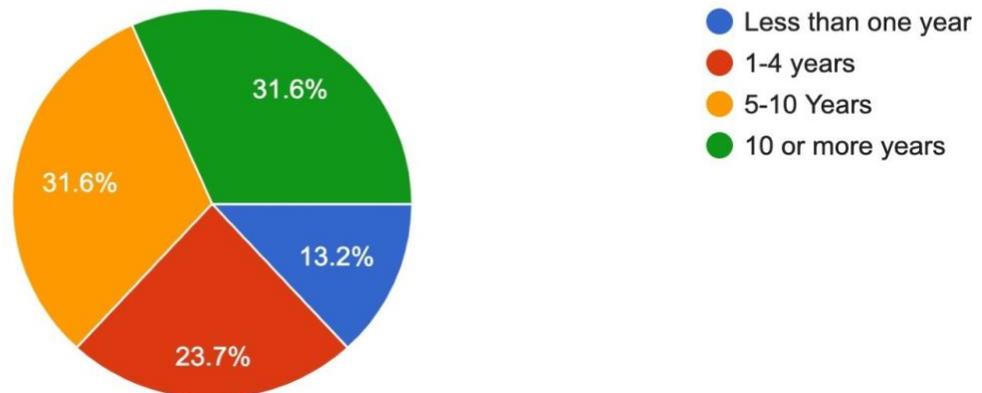


Internal Stakeholder Survey Results

The members of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company were asked to provide their input through a ten-question survey. Thirty-eight members who operate in various ways through the company, including active firefighters, administrative members, members who make calls occasionally and members who would function under an auxiliary or social member category, responded. Of the thirty-eight who responded there was a wide range with respect to years of membership represented (see graph below), though more than 60% of responses came from members who have been a member for five or more years. The remaining nine questions asked members if they would recommend Po-Mar-Lin to family and friends, if they perceive any challenges in the application process, and why they like being a member. Additionally, members were asked what would encourage them to spend more time at the firehouse, thoughts about a duty crew program, what inhibits their ability to be at the firehouse more often, and any other feedback they might have to help the company grow and move forward.

1. How long have you been a member of Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company?

38 responses



The majority of members, 90%, reported that they would recommend the fire company to their family friends. Of the 10% who said they would not, the responses on why not were similar, stating that differing personalities can make it tough. One member simply stated the firehouse is their space to be away from their family and friends. When asked about if they perceive there are any challenges to the application process, 29 (76%) members felt there are not, while nine (24%) members felt there are. When asked to explain the challenges, common responses included the background checks, reflecting that we need to find a way to assist applicants in completing their clearances. Additionally, some felt the process takes too long, while others would like to see some sort of interview process,

as we are often voting on applicants we don't know and who do not come up in the month waiting period, making this a "blind process".

Members would like to see us at more events in the community to gain members and be able to talk about the application process, and even be more active on social media and the website with the application process. By being better with the outreach we can get people interested and give them a reason to want to become a volunteer. One member reported that our "challenges" are good challenges, that mandating background checks allows us to know and understand what we are potentially getting in a volunteer. Members see a need to be more creative and in the public eye to recruit new members. Others noted that having the time to talk to the community about the different volunteer opportunities available will increase the chance of recruiting new members from outside of current social circles and families.

When asked what they enjoy most about being a member of Po-Mar-Lin, the most common responses included giving back to the community in a selfless manner and the relationships that have been built at the firehouse. These relationships were described as a support friendship, even family-like relationships that members value. Members also appreciate the meaningful training and equipment the company provides, the experiences they have had and will continue to have, and the Junior Program in which Po-Mar-Lin takes great pride.

The membership responded to questions about a duty crew program and spending more time at the firehouse with responses that went hand in hand. A duty crew program is signing up and scheduling volunteers to be on call at the firehouse or nearby for a certain block of time, ensuring that members will be able to respond quickly in the event of a call. This can look different from firehouse to firehouse and is catered to meet the needs of each individual station and surrounding community. In 38 responses, the most common responses were an updated kitchen with a working stove, an updated lounge/tv room, and a duty crew program. Members noted wanting upgraded workout equipment in a more accessible/safe space. Members reported wanting to have more activities or social events to be together, giving them a reason to be at the station. Members included food, compensation sponsors, and Wi-Fi as reasons to be at the station. Members reported the attitudes of members, both new and veterans, as a need for change so they could come up more often. Members also would like to see more training, more calls, and less complaining over things in which we have no control.

Members reported the two main reasons they are unable to spend more time at the firehouse include work schedules and family schedules. Our members hold various jobs during the day, creating a challenge to make daytime calls in addition to having members

at different stages in their lives, some just out of high school, some in college, others with young families, and others with families that include grown children and grandchildren. As a company Po-Mar-Lin recognizes the importance of family, both in and out of the firehouse.

Finally, members were asked to share anything they felt was important. Responses ranged from better utilizing social media and ensuring all members, new and veteran, feel welcomed at the firehouse. Members stated they would like to see the company offer more means to volunteer so members could be recruited for other roles, not just riding the trucks, while also changing the culture of the building to have more tolerable mindsets, willing to do the less desirable tasks such as cleaning. When given the opportunity to share ideas, there were responses that included seeking out community donations and benefactors to help with the longevity and sustainability of the company. Responses supported the that it is important to continue to train and to make meaningful relationships with the community, as we want to welcome the community in, not shut them out.

Statements such as respecting each other, and appropriate conduct was another theme throughout the responses. Finally, a response that captures the sentiments of others and summarizes the importance of membership: “Every department is only as strong as its membership and to build strong membership you need to make every member feel like they are part of the solution. We need to build relationships outside the firehouse itself. We need to help each other at home, in school and at work. As a group we can accomplish anything but as a bunch of individuals we will surely struggle.”



S.W.O.T. Analysis

PML Strategic Planning Process SWOT Analysis Critical Issue Identification

Following a work session where the committee members conducted an analysis of current fire company operational and administrative functions, seven critical issue areas were identified to address in this Strategic Plan:

Recruitment and Retention

- **Membership** – trained, experienced, and supportive personnel.
- **Junior Program** – strong participation by community youth.
- **Member Benefits** – membership is provided with important perks.
- **Succession Planning** – clear path for individuals to rise in the operational ranks.
- **Octorara H.S.P.S.A.** – fire company & school district program participation.
- **Demographics** – Affluence of community affects recruitment & retention rates.
- **Generational Differences** – diversity of cultural and demographic contrasts in membership may cause friction/cliques between members.
- **New Member Onboarding Process** – lack of an assigned mentor to guide/encourage new members through the probationary process.
- **Station Upgrades** – improvements to incentivize personnel to spend more time at the fire station to bolster response staffing.
- **Duty Crew Program** – explore the implementation of a formal duty crew program to bolster response staffing during certain hours.
- **Membership Support** – explore the implementation of a formal mentoring program for all new members & members seeking operational and administrative promotions.
- **On-line Presence Improvements** – explore improvements to the current fire company website and Facebook page.
- **Recruitment and Retention** – explore improvements to the current program to attract and retain new fire company administrative and operational members.
- **Administrative Role Expansion** – explore developing new administrative members in expanding roles to assist with current administrative needs.
- **Training Support** – explore methods to assist members with obtaining additional levels of training and certification.
- **Live-In Program** – explore the feasibility of starting in live-in member program to bolster daytime staffing.
- **High Cost of Living** – high expense of housing, rent, etc., in an affluent area may serve as a disincentive for recruitment and retention of fire company members.
- **Aging Membership** – average age of active membership continues to rise.

- **Membership Burnout** – managing the expectations of membership and the time demands placed on volunteer membership.
- **Health Concerns** – managing emerging physical and mental health issues in the fire service and how they affect fire company membership.

Financial Outlook

- **Fiscal Responsibility** – strong history of responsible spending practices.
- **Equipment and Facility** – state-of-the-art apparatus, equipment, newer fire station.
- **Financial Outlook** – inequities in current funding formula.
- **Municipal Relationship** – constant requirement to educate government officials of four municipalities on fire company needs.
- **Funding Formula Reassessment** – explore the possibility of renegotiating the current funding formula from the Commission to a more equitable model.
- **Loss/Reduction of Funding** – funding inequities are resulting in a downward trend in allocation of municipal annual contributions.
- **High Cost of Apparatus and Equipment** – reduced funding eating into the capitol fund account may affect the timely replacement/upgrade of apparatus and equipment.

Professional Development

- **History** – proud of legacy left by previous and current members.
- **Training** – company commitment to in-house & outside agency training.
- **Succession Planning** – clear path for individuals to rise in the operational ranks.
- **Egos/Cliques** – perception by some members that they are blocked from certain activities or ranks because of their association/lack of association with members.
- **Succession Planning** – lack of focus on administrative positions.
- **Administrative Weaknesses** – lack of training/mentoring of future administrative members.
- **Membership Support** – explore the implementation of a formal mentoring program for all new members & members seeking operational and administrative promotions.
- **Administrative Role Expansion** – explore developing new administrative members in expanding roles to assist with current administrative needs.
- **Training Support** – explore methods to assist members with obtaining additional levels of training and certification.
- **Membership Burnout** – managing the expectations of membership and the time demands placed on volunteer membership.

Apparatus and Equipment

- **Equipment & Facility** – state-of-the-art apparatus, equipment, newer fire station.
- **Fiscal Responsibility** – strong history of responsible spending practices.
- **Financial Outlook** – inequities in current funding formula.
- **Municipal Relationship** – constant requirement to educate government officials of four municipalities on fire company needs.
- **Organizational Focus** – lack of a coordinated plan towards improvements.
- **Funding Formula Reassessment** – explore the possibility of renegotiating the current funding formula from the Commission to a more equitable model.
- **Loss/Reduction of Funding** – funding inequities are resulting in a downward trend in allocation of municipal annual contributions.
- **High Cost of Apparatus & Equipment** – reduced funding eating into the capitol fund account may affect the timely replacement/upgrade of apparatus and equipment.
- **Evolving Service Needs** – managing public expectations of the expanding emergency services role of the fire company in the community.

Internal and External Communications

- **Community Outreach** – events, open house, fire prevention programs.
- **Community Image** – positive support from the community.
- **Supportive Community** – enjoys the respect of the community.
- **Egos/Cliques** – perception by some members that they are blocked from certain activities or ranks because of their association/lack of association with members.
- **Public Perception** – lack of public awareness of fire company volunteer status and capabilities.
- **Municipal Relationship** – constant requirement to educate government officials of four municipalities on fire company needs.
- **Code Enforcement Relations** – difficulties in communicating with third-party code enforcement agency personnel in four municipalities.
- **Internal and External Communications** – difficulties in focusing a clear and official message to fire company members and the community.
- **Outdated Fire Company Website** – on-line presence is lacking, focus shifting to Facebook page.
- **Organizational Focus** – lack of a coordinated plan towards improvements.
- **Corporate Sponsorship** – seek opportunities to partner with local companies and organizations.
- **Public Information Officer** – explore the appointment of an individual focused on communicating with the public and local business officials.
- **On-line Presence Improvements** – explore improvements to the current fire company website and Facebook page.

- **Member Relations Internal** and external influencers may cause damage to the positive culture of the fire company.
- **Evolving Service Needs** – managing public expectations of the expanding emergency services role of the fire company in the community.

Facility Improvements

- **Equipment and Facility** – state-of-the-art apparatus, equipment, newer fire station.
- **Centralized Location** – fire station located in geographic center of district.
- **Station Upgrades** – improvements to incentivize personnel to spend more time at the fire station to bolster response staffing.
- **Live-In Program** – explore the feasibility of starting in live-in member program to bolster daytime staffing.



Critical Issue Action Plan: Internal and External Communications

Goal: To communicate more effectively internally with the Fire Company membership and externally, including other companies and the community.

Objective Statement: The Fire Company will identify ways to communicate effectively, with direct and clear communication to all with which we interact.

Task: In an effort to create clear, direct communication with the community and surrounding neighbors, the Fire Company will create a schedule for posting on social media and the fire company website.

Assignment: Christine Griffith & Steve Nuse

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: December 1, 2022

Task: The Fire Company will update the History page on the company website.

Assignment:

Date Assigned: August 1, 2021

Due Date: November 1, 2021 **Complete**

10/15/2021

Task: The Fire Company will update the information on how to become a volunteer on the company website.

Assignment: Daniel Westphal

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: April 1st, 2022

Task: The Fire Company will update the Home Page at least once a month to engage the public and communicate company needs/ongoings.

Assignment: Stephen Nuse

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: First update by 15th of each month

Task: The Fire Company will identify ways to build and strengthen the relationship between the company and the equine community to form meaningful connections.

Assignment: Ivan Dowling

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: Recurring

Task: Strengthen the Fire Company's relationship with the Kennett Fire & EMS Regional Commission

Assignment: Fire Chief & Board Appointed Representative

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021 **Due Date:** Monthly engagements

Task: Maintain relationship with West Marlborough Township officials by communicating monthly.

Assignment: Board Appointed Representative

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021 **Due Date:** Contact made monthly by 30th of month

Task: Explore feasibility of an administrative Public Information Officer.

Assignment: Stephen Nuse

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** July 1, 2022



Critical Issue Action Plan: Facility Improvements

Goal: Upgrade current facility to enhance needed functional space for all members of the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company.

Objective Statement: The Fire Company will seek professional building planning services to provide a comprehensive facility upgrade/improvement plan.

Task: Explore the feasibility of modernizing the current fire house functional spaces such as, but not limited to, the kitchen/dining area, sleeping quarters, and engine room areas for better working and living areas.

Assignment: Executive Board

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: August 1, 2022

Task: Work with current mechanical contractors to assess the current building HVAC, heater/boilers, electrical systems, lighting, and outside grounds areas for future upgrades to meet aging equipment concerns and modernize to more energy efficient technology.

Assignment: Trustees

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: April 1, 2022



Critical Issue Action Plan: Recruitment and Retention

Goal: Enhance the current member recruitment and retention program to attract and retain new members.

Objective Statement: The Fire Company seeks to explore innovative methods and policies that will attract new members and retain existing core membership.

Task: Explore succession planning and training opportunities for seeking and developing emerging leaders for all operational and administrative leadership positions with the Fire Company.

Assignment: Jordan Marzolf & Steve Nuse

Date Assigned: January 1 2022

Due Date: July 2022

Task: Explore the feasibility and value of re-structuring administrative positions within the Fire Company to include assistant positions in key leadership roles.

Assignment: Steve Nuse, John Weer, & Bill Crouse

Date Assigned: January 1 2022

Due Date: October 2022

Task: Explore the feasibility of adding certain member amenities to the fire station to encourage more members to spend time at the facility.

Assignment: Steve Nuse, Jordan Marzolf, & Jason Griffith

Date Assigned: December 1 2021

Due Date: March 2022

Task: Explore the need for a part-time paid administrative support person.

Assignment: Jordan Marzolf, Steve Nuse & Tina Nuse

Date Assigned: January 2022

Due Date: May 2022

Task: Explore the feasibility of starting a live-in member program.

Assignment: Jason Griffith, Steve Nuse & Jacob Labonte

Date Assigned: January 2021

Due Date: December 2022

Task: Explore the feasibility of implementing a member health and wellness program.

Assignment: Ivan Dowling & Christine Griffith

Date Assigned: October 1, 2021

Due Date: January 1, 2024

Task: Explore the feasibility of utilizing East Marlborough Township Public Works employees as weekday fire response personnel.

Assignment: Jeff Groves & John Weer

Date Assigned: January 2022

Due Date: July 1, 2022

Critical Issue Action Plan: Financial Outlook

Goal: Obtain municipal support to provide Po-Mar-Lin sustainable funding.

Objective Statement: Po-Mar-Lin will pursue sustainable funding from the municipalities it serves to include capital and operation costs for the future of the fire company and the greater Unionville community.

Task: Explore the viability of obtaining municipal based funding that is sustainable for current and future building improvements.

Assignment: Jeff Groves, Steve Nuse, Jason Griffith

Date Assigned: January 1, 2021 **Due Date:** June 1, 2023

Task: Explore the viability of obtaining municipal based funding that is sustainable for current and future apparatus replacement.

Assignment: Jeff Groves, Steve Nuse & Jason Griffith

Date Assigned: January 1, 2021 **Due Date:** November 1, 2022

Task: Explore the viability of obtaining municipal based funding that is sustainable for current and future operational costs which will ultimately include part-time and full-time salaried staffing.

Assignment: Jeff Groves, Steve Nuse & Jason Griffith

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021 **Due Date:** June 1, 2022

Task: Explore methods for supplemental funding from the greater Unionville community for specific fire department projects.

Assignment: Executive Board

Date Assigned: 08/01/2021 **Due Date:** Ongoing

Task: Continually research alternative funding mechanisms such as grant funding and low interest loans.

Assignment: Executive Board

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** Ongoing

Task: Investigate working with the Kennett Regional Fire and EMS Commission to resolve funding shortfalls under the current funding formulas.

Assignment: President, Fire Chief or Designee

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: Ongoing

Critical Issue Action Plan: Professional Development

Goal: Improve the level of training and professional development programs available to all fire company members.

Objective Statement: Ensure that all fire company members receive the appropriate level of training and professional development to aid them in carrying out their current and projected future operational and administrative responsibilities.

Task: Evaluate the current training and professional development program for fire company members including operational and administrative position members.

Assignment: Jason Griffith, Fire Chief & Steve Nuse, President

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** December 31, 2022

Task: Identify the desired levels of training for each individual operational and administrative position within the fire company.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Operations), Executive Board (Administration)

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** July 2022

Task: Explore and develop a mentoring program for all operational and administrative positions within the fire company.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Fire Chief), Executive Board (President)

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** September 1, 2022

Task: Explore appointing a training officer solely responsible for developing and presenting a fire company-level ongoing training program.

Assignment: Jason Griffith

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022 **Due Date:** March 1, 2022

Task: Evaluate the current inventory of training materials and props to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the fire company.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Operational)

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: December 31, 2022

Task: Explore joint training opportunities with the fire company's mutual aid agencies.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Operational)

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: Ongoing, Continuous

Task: Develop a driver/operator orientation training and annual refresher and requalification program.

Assignment: Board of Foremen & Chief Engineer

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: Ongoing, Continuous

Task: Develop an orientation training and mentoring program for onboarding new members.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Operations), Executive Board (Administration)

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: July 1, 2022

Task: Explore developing a succession planning process that identifies and nurtures potential candidates for promotional opportunities.

Assignment: Board of Foremen (Operations), Executive Board (Administration)

Date Assigned: January 1, 2021

Due Date: January 1, 2023

Critical Issue Action Plan: Apparatus and Equipment

Goal: To provide both the Po-Mar-Lin members and the greater Unionville community with state of the art, modern, and dependable firefighting apparatus.

Objective Statement: Po-Mar-Lin will explore ways to capitalize on its existing apparatus replacement plan and policies.

Task: Work with municipalities to provide sustainable funding for Po-Mar-Lin's current apparatus replacement plan, considering the projected high cost and annual inflationary rates within the fire apparatus manufacturing industry.

Assignment: Executive Board

Date Assigned: January 1, 2022

Due Date: Ongoing

Task: Update the current apparatus replacement plan matrix for the purposes of providing the most recent fire apparatus acquisitions which will be the working document for seeking sustainable funding.

Assignment: Jeff Groves

Date Assigned: November 1, 2021

Due Date: December 31, 2021



Periodic Review Policy

Periodic review of the action plans is critical to moving forward the goals and objectives of the Fire Company's strategic plan. The Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company is committed to conducting an annual review of the action plans to gauge progress and to make any adjustments needed.

The Fire Company President will be responsible for calling an annual meeting in the month of January each year of all members of the Strategic Planning Committee to review progress on the action plans.

The committee will publish an annual addendum to this document outlining the results and recommendations of the committee following the annual meeting of the committee.



Conclusion

Strategic planning is an ongoing process that continues long after the information gathering phase and finalization of this document. This Strategic Plan has created a framework that will guide the Po-Mar-Lin Fire Company's policies and operations for the next five years and help ensure that organization continues to provide high quality and reliable service to the community while at the same time ensuring the effective use of community resources and funds.

The Strategic Planning Committee would like to recognize the men and women of the fire company, community officials and staff, partnering agencies and organizations, and the Unionville community for their input and participation.



