



CITY OF PRIOR LAKE

Full-Time Fire Department



In 2023, the City of Prior Lake will transition from a paid-on-call to a full-time Fire Department. This is necessary to better response times, provide a safer environment, and enhance public education.

Members of the community who are paid-on-call firefighters respond to emergency calls, like car accidents, medical assistance, and fires. Our firefighters respond to calls over a 74 square mile area in Prior Lake, Credit River, and Spring Lake Township, providing services to over 37,000 people. City leaders from all three communities are working together to develop a plan to move forward with a full-time department.

The proposed department would add 12 full-time firefighters to provide 24/7 emergency response. The Department already has a full-time Fire Chief and Assistant Fire Chief along with paid-on-call firefighters who will continue to support the Department.

Why does the City need a full-time Fire Department?

Recruitment and Retention

Emergency calls occur at all hours which is difficult for paid-on-call firefighters with full-time employment and families. The Department budgets for 50 paid-on-call firefighters but only 33 positions are currently filled. The most recent hiring process saw only four applications and, in the end, none were able to serve. Over the past five years, 27 firefighters retired or resigned and only 19 were hired to replace them.



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Response Times

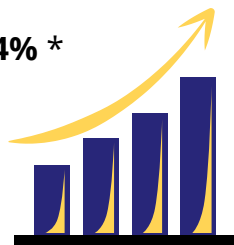
A fire can engulf a home in less than five minutes. After eight minutes, the chance of surviving a heart attack is reduced by 60 percent.

Paid-on-call firefighters get paged for emergencies and respond from wherever they are, they could be at home, work, shopping, etc., traveling to the fire station adds critical minutes to response times. Travel time to the station adds almost six minutes to each call response. Full time firefighters, on duty 24/7, will be on the scene much faster to aid in saving lives and limiting property loss.

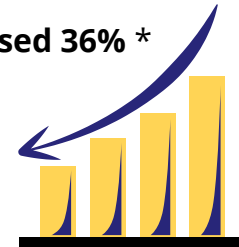
Growth

As the population grows, so does the demand for services. Calls have increased by 44 percent over the past five years, especially medical calls. What worked in the year 2000 simply cannot meet the needs of a larger community in 2022 and beyond. With a service area population projected to be over 49,000 by 2040, the Department needs to be prepared to meet the needs of a growing community.

Calls have increased 44% *



Staffing has decreased 36% *



*Data collected from 2017-2022

Enhanced Safety Programs

Currently many requests for public education visits go unanswered due to staffing challenges. Full-time staff will be readily available for fire prevention and education giving our community a better understanding of fire safety. Full-time staff will also develop a life safety inspection and pre-plan program of high occupancy facilities and commercial buildings. This program will give our firefighters better working knowledge of target hazards in and around properties to work more efficiently and safely.

How will this be funded?

Funding for the transition to a full-time Department will be a blend of general fund tax levy and contracts with Credit River and Spring Lake Township. The City has applied for a federal grant to help staffing costs for the first three years.