



City of Worcester

FIRE

Department



2024
ANNUAL REPORT

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A MESSAGE FROM THE
CHIEF'S OFFICE

Welcome to the City of Worcester Fire Department's 2024 Annual Report

As I reflect on this past year, I am filled with pride for the extraordinary efforts of our department. Our members have responded to numerous challenging incidents, employing our established tactics with precision and effectiveness. In several cases, they were able to achieve knockdown of heavy fire within minutes of arrival—an incredible testament to their skill and commitment.

This year also marked a significant milestone with the completion of the first revision of our Command System. It has now become an integral part of our operations, enhancing our effectiveness, efficiency, and safety on the fireground. Our Prevention Division has kept pace with the record level of development in our community, expanding its public education outreach and ensuring that fire safety remains a priority for all.

Our Training Division successfully trained another class of recruits, preparing the next generation of firefighters while also providing the entire department with essential proficiency training, including live burns and Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) training. These efforts are critical in ensuring that our members remain at their highest level of performance.

Through all of this, our members have demonstrated incredible resilience in the face of change. The demands placed on them have been substantial, but they have risen to the occasion time and time again, performing admirably and heroically in service to the residents of our community.

Thank you to each and every member of the department for your dedication, bravery, and hard work. It is an honor to lead this department.

Gary Arpin
Assistant Chief

Martin Dyer
Fire Chief

Adam Roche
Assistant Chief



MISSION

The Worcester Fire Department is dedicated to professionally serving the citizens and protecting lives and property in our community. We accomplish this mission through fire suppression, emergency response, prevention, and community risk reduction.

VISION

The Worcester Fire Department aspires to be the premier provider of fire and rescue services in the country.

VALUES

Professionalism - Worcester Firefighters shall be competent, accountable, safe, committed, and respectful.

Integrity - Worcester Firefighters shall conduct themselves ethically and morally and have the courage to do the right thing.

Compassion - Worcester Firefighters shall treat everyone with respect, kindness, and empathy.

Dedication - Worcester Firefighters shall serve the Worcester Community with enthusiasm and devotion.

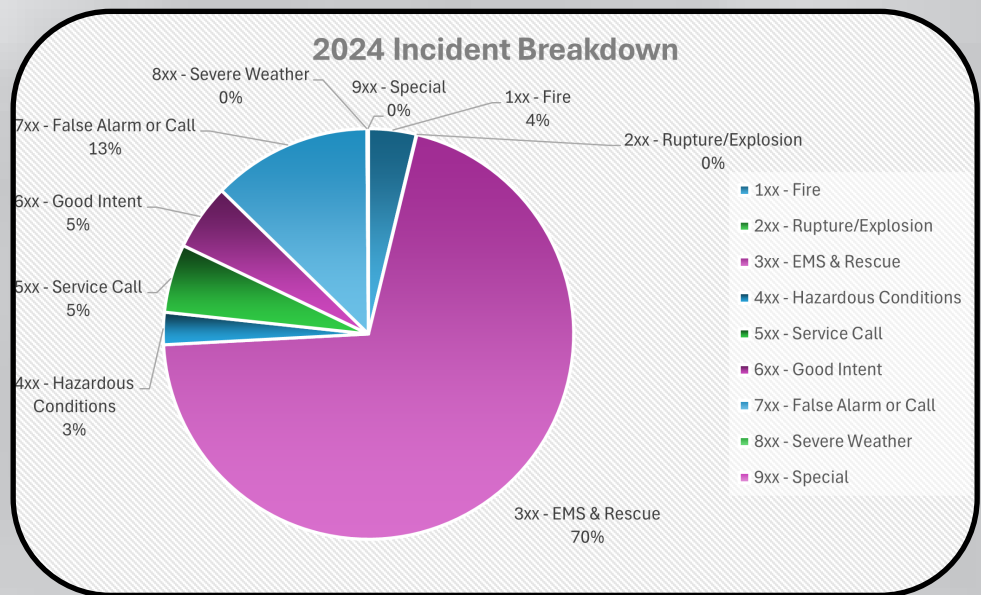
OPERATIONS

Assistant Chief Gary Arpin

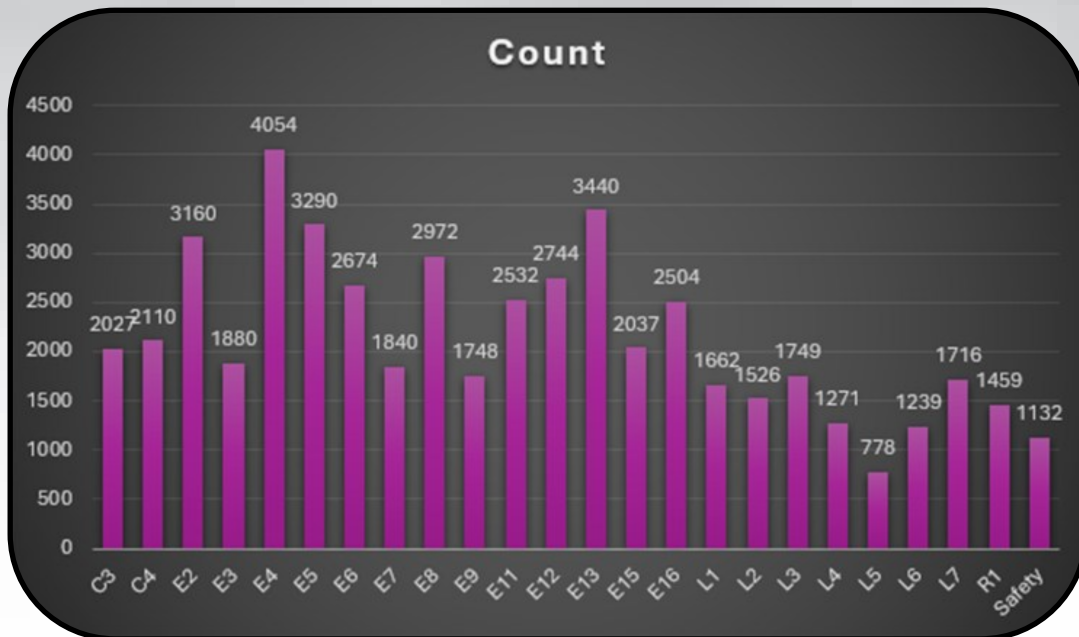
The Operations Division is the largest division of the Department. Members of the Operations Division respond to emergency calls for service every day of the year. The Division also engages in continuous training throughout the year to maintain skills for the “high risk, low frequency” events, including structure fires. This Division has 4 Deputy Chiefs, 8 District Chiefs, 21 Captains, 71 Lieutenants, and 308 Firefighters spread across four working groups that rotate 24-hour shifts. The Operations Division serves the City using 21 front-line apparatus that respond out of 10 stations situated across the City.

2024 Total Incidents

The Operations Division answered 33,914 calls for service in 2024. Of all calls, 19% were fire-related, 76% were EMS calls, and 6% were special/other types of calls.



Breakdown of all 2024 Incidents by Incident Primary Type



Total number of Incidents in 2024 for each Apparatus

OPERATIONS

Assistant Chief Gary Arpin

Deputy Chiefs, Car 2

The members of the Operations Division responded to numerous calls for emergency service throughout calendar year 2024. Their quick response times coupled with fast and proficient application of water along with firefighting tactics illustrate a well-trained, dedicated professional fire department.

Fires were fought in single family residences, apartment buildings, and hotels. Vehicle fires were extinguished on roadways, highways, and inside a large parking garage. The Department also faced railcar fires along with multiple large brush fires throughout the year.

Members encountered lithium-ion battery fires, including a laptop which was submitted to the Consumer Product Safety Commission to initiate a product recall.

When not responding to emergency incidents, members conducted various trainings (such as the multi-agency ASHER drill at South High), performed in-service familiarizations and school exit drills, and participated in numerous community events.

The City's increasing population and density leads to a direct increase in the number of calls for service. Rigorous training and preparation will ensure the Department's overall readiness as our response types continue to change. Drier climates lead to more brush fires; the prevalence of energy storage means a higher frequency of lithium-ion fires. Modern building and furniture materials decrease the amount of time before flashover, placing significant importance on a quick response time and rapid application of water to enable the Department to effectively and efficiently contain structure fires and mitigate extended losses.



OPERATIONS

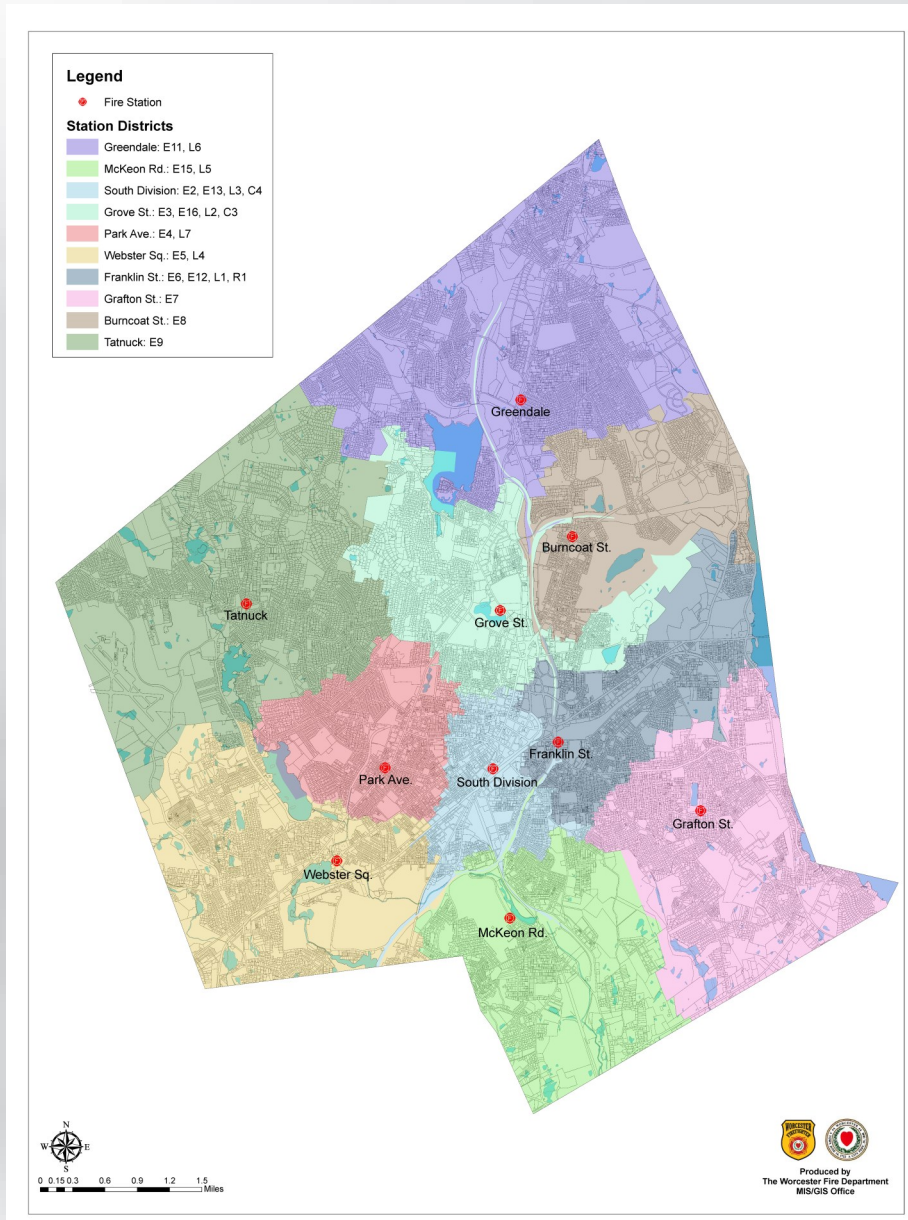
FIRE STATIONS & RESPONSE AREAS

The Department serves over 35 square miles of urban residential and commercial properties. From the dense City core to the outlying suburban neighborhoods and across each of the City's seven hills, each station responds to a unique combination of response types, populations, and structures.

The City has seen rapid growth over the last decade, recently topping 200,000 residents. This continued growth challenges the Fire Department to provide professional fire protection services ever more effectively and efficiently.

The Operations Division conducts periodic inspections of particular properties in their district to ensure a complete picture of their response area is captured prior to any emergencies.

Ongoing, year-round trainings (either at the individual company level or full-scale live burn scenarios with the Training Division) provide practice, expertise, and operational readiness to quickly act in any emergency situation the department encounters on a daily basis.



Fire stations are positioned to provide efficient coverage across the City, which is divided into a North and South District. Each district is commanded by a District Chief who oversees operations at larger-scale incidents.

North Stations: Greendale, Burncoat, Grove St, Tatnuck, Franklin St

South Stations: South Division, Park Ave, Grafton St, Webster Sq, McKeon Rd

TRAINING

District Chief Terrence Baudin

The Training Division develops educational curriculum and resources for practical, hands-on training for the department. The Division processes the entire candidate hiring process, including the administration of a 13- to 16-week recruit academy. The Division is staffed by a District Chief, two Captains, one Lieutenant, and one Firefighter.

Training by the Numbers

- Conducted a 13-week Recruit Academy with 22 Recruits graduating.
- Completed 75 Recruit Candidate Investigations for Recruit Class 2025-01.
- Designed and delivered 75 live fire scenarios to the Operations Division. Companies were faced with fire and smoke conditions to simulate conditions in a structure fire.
- Dozens of deputy-led multi-company drills year round.

Major Accomplishments

- Delivered training for firefighters preparing them for advancing to the rank of lieutenant.
- Developed and monitored a 12-month Training Calendar ensuring universal training drills being performed by the Operations Division.
- Developed and monitored 6 Standards Drills to measure proficiency in firefighting tactics.



TRAINING

District Chief Terrence Baudin

Partnerships

- Along with the Special Operations Division, the Training Division developed and delivered the annual Hazardous Materials Refresher Training, concentrating on fighting Lithium battery fires.
- The Training Division partnered with Worcester EMS to provide Medical Emergency Situational Awareness Training and delivered the First Responder refresher to WFD personnel, concentrating on Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) events.
- The training facility was used as a regional training center for several different departments. The towns of Westborough, Southborough, Hopkinton, Rutland, Oakham, Paxton, and West Boylston, along with the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services and Massachusetts State Police all used our facility to train during the year.
- The Training Division developed and delivered firefighter rescue training off-site using donated space from the Worcester Housing Authority.



- The Training Division and FIU, with WPD, Worcester EMS, and Emergency Communications, collaborated to deliver ASHER training to all partnering agencies.



SPECIAL OPERATIONS

District Chief Thomas Coyle

The Special Operations Division is staffed by one District Chief and is responsible for coordinating specialized responses within the City and mutual aid to neighboring communities. Special Operations ensures that specialized equipment and meters are ready for deployment by maintaining their calibration and trainings. This division arranged the following 2024 ceremonial events: the promotion and award ceremony, the dedication of the Lt. Menard Memorial, and the Worcester Cold Storage & Warehouse Fire 25th anniversary.

Dive Team

The Dive Team performed 10 training drills in 2024 including deep water dives, pool dives, black water (zero visibility), and ice dives. In September, the Dive Team partnered with the District 8 Dive Team to practice with side-scanning sonars to increase efficiency and operational safety and fostering inter-agency collaboration. The Dive Team was activated 10 times, rescuing 8 individuals on the surface and recovering one victim.

Technical Rescue Team

The Technical Rescue Team held 19 drills across five different training scenarios. With the assistance of the City's Cemetery Services Division, the Team practiced trench rescue techniques. Individual members of the team were also activated for a variety of regional responses, including those in District 7 and one response to District 8 to assist with an extended slope collapse incident.

Spotlight: FF Jean-Paul Breaux

Firefighter JP Breaux was activated as part of the Massachusetts FEMA Urban Search and Rescue task force response to North Carolina in the wake of Hurricane Helene. He was a valuable member of the team and we are proud of his representation of the Department.



HAZMAT Response

The Department developed procedures, conducted trainings, and purchased equipment to address the growing concern Lithium battery fires, all of which will be implemented in early 2025.

The Department replaced a number of outdated hazardous gas meters on Rescue 1, allowing us to lower maintenance costs and increase the reliability and confidence of the meters used to detect the most minute quantities of hazardous gases.

The Department responded to 228 Carbon Monoxide alarm activations, 265 natural gas calls, and seven reports of hazardous conditions. The state HAZMAT team was activated twice this year for incidents in the City.

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

Assistant Chief Adam Roche

The Administration and Support Division is responsible for the Administrative Office, Fire Prevention, and the Maintenance Division. The Assistant Chief of Administration and Support oversees these divisions and leads all budget, personnel, and grant responsibilities. The Administrative Office provides critical and varied background support that allows the Department to operate effectively and efficiently. The Administrative Office is staffed by four civilians: one Supervisor of Administration, one Accountant, one Supervisor of Payrolls, and one Data Analyst.

Payroll

The Department welcomed a new Supervisor of Payrolls in August of this year: Monica Carman. She brings knowledge of payroll processes and a strong HR background. Pay is processed weekly for over 450 WFD members across line, staff, and civilian employees. The Administrative Office is responsible for all HR functions for the department, processing transfers, promotions, out of grades, and leaves of absence. With the execution of the union contract, retros were processed for all applicable members this year. The Administrative Office has been in close discussion with Human Resources to ensure our needs will be met when the City moves to Workday for HR/payroll functions.

Data Analysis and IT Support

The Department provided support to the Department of Innovation and Technology (DoIT) to aid in the rollout of the City's Work From Anywhere program which provided laptops to most City employees to increase ease of remote work and overall cybersecurity. Significant work has gone into the initial configuration of First Due. As part of the First Due RMS project, the Administrative Office has performed a comprehensive assessment of our existing data to ensure the best information is brought to the new RMS without leaving critical legacy data behind. Conversations with DoIT are ongoing to sunset existing City-developed applications.

ADMINISTRATION AND SUPPORT

Assistant Chief Adam Roche

Project Management

The Department signed a contract with First Due as the new Records Management System (RMS); they have a suite of modules that is replacing many of the applications we currently use. The program soft launched in November with modules rolling out in the first half of 2025.

The South Division project, led by the City's Department of Public Facilities, is progressing into the design phase with significant input and suggestions from the Department. The Administrative Office organized the Department's Promotion and Award Ceremony earlier this fall, congratulating newly-promoted officers and recognizing outstanding acts of Department members.

Accounts Payable

Running the Fire Department requires constant communication with vendors to ensure supplies and services are received and that invoices are paid. This year, the department paid almost 1,700 invoices and created almost 150 vendor purchase orders. We billed customers for 776 details and 309 master boxes.

Maintenance and Facilities

The Maintenance Division is comprised of three employees in the Shop (the Chief Mechanic and two Mechanics) and a Plant Engineer that manages the twelve Fire Department buildings.

The Shop diagnoses and repairs the twenty-one frontline apparatus, spare and reserve apparatus, and dozens of staff vehicles. For larger repairs, they coordinate the delivery and/or pickup of apparatus to the necessary vendors. Combined with the trend of increasing technological complexity of fire apparatus, repairs were significantly more expensive and involved third-party expertise.

When adding the total square footage of all stations and buildings maintained by the Department, the result is an area as large as two DCU Centers. The complexities of managing these aging and specialized buildings is a daunting challenge. In 2024, a Facility Maintenance Request Tracker was created and added to the Department's SharePoint page to ease in the management and increase the transparency of requests for repair. Members can check the status of their requests, and duplicate requests decreased. In partnership with the Department of Sustainability and Resilience, new HVAC systems were installed in many offices and fire stations.

WFD apparatus and buildings are used year round and 24 hours a day. This exceptional wear and tear poses challenges in maintenance and upkeep. However, the Department received funding in FY25 for station maintenance, upgrades, and repairs.

FIRE PREVENTION

District Chief Scott Armstrong

The Fire Prevention Division encompasses several units: Licensing, SARA, Public Education, Fire Investigation, Code Enforcement, and Engineering. The Division is managed by one District Chief and one Captain who oversee six Lieutenants, eleven Firefighters, one Fire Protection Engineer, one Radio Systems Technician, and one Principal Clerk.

Licensing

Licensing works side-by-side with other Fire Prevention units to meet the needs of residents and the business community. Staffed by two Firefighters, they who have completed over 300 Liquor License Inspections, over 200 Food Truck Inspections, and almost 600 License Renewals (auto repair, body shop, paint facilities; gas station fuel storage) with countless hours of customer service to achieve compliance.

SARA

Operated by one Lieutenant, the unit works with external agencies to ensure updated and enhanced safety measures are obtained, shared, and implemented for facilities storing, using, or processing hazardous materials. The unit continues to enhance the safety and preparedness of the members of the Operations Division assigned to respond to these facilities through familiarization, walkthroughs, and inspections.

- The lieutenant coordinated a simulated chemical release drill with a Worcester-based chemical facility, Emergency Planning Committee, and the State's Hazardous Materials Response Team. A new training prop used for the drill was built and modified with the assistance of our Maintenance Division to deliver a realistic response to the training scenario.
- Developed and implemented the Hazardous Materials plan for the new Doherty Memorial High School.
- Worked closely with the development and planning teams on the UMass nine-story New England Research Building to meet targeted deadlines and scheduled state agency inspections and testing.

FIRE PREVENTION

Public Education

Led by one Lieutenant and one Firefighter, the unit has expanded the curriculum to meet the evolving needs of the residents and demands of a growing city. Our educators have interacted with almost 18,000 residents, instructed over 5,000 students and 260 senior citizens, and completed 15 Senior Citizen private residential Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detector safety visits.

A Fire Extinguisher Training Program for businesses and City employees was introduced in 2024. One hundred and fifty employees received practical training on how to select, operate, and extinguish a small fire over four training sessions.

Spotlight: Senior Residential Facility Exit Drill Training Program

A Senior Residential Facility Exit Drill Training Program was developed and delivered to over 100 senior citizens. One of these trainings was held in November; WFD companies later responded to a working stove fire at the location. Facility staff informed us that, because of this training, 90% of the residents self-evacuated upon activation of the fire alarm system and staff had a list of residents in need of assistance available for the first-arriving fire companies.



Above: Fire extinguisher training administered to DPW&P employees.

Left: The Department participated in the Mill Swan Spree Day last school year.

FIRE PREVENTION

Fire Investigation

Managed by two Lieutenants who have investigated over 200 fire-related incidents which displaced almost 500 residents. Hard work, in-depth investigation, and endless hours resulted in the arrest and conviction of a known arsonist with pending charges for two additional fires.

The unit has launched the Department's Youth Fire Prevention Initiative (YFPI). The program is staffed by a six-member team who have completed numerous hours of training to achieve appropriate credentials. Since the launch, fourteen Youth Firesetting Incidents have been documented and appropriate referrals have been processed. The YFPI team also participates in the statewide initiative through the Office of the State Fire Marshall.

In partnership with the Worcester Public Schools, the unit manages the Handle with Care Program, established to mitigate trauma exposures for our City's youth and was brought forth through a collaboration with the Worcester District Attorney's Office. Since inception, over two dozen referrals for displaced youths have been submitted to ensure they received the wraparound services they need.

Code Enforcement

Managed by two Lieutenants who oversee the daily operations of the office, investigate and resolve code compliance issues, and schedule property inspections. The unit processes dozens of code compliance issues and conducts approximately sixty property inspections per week.

A Construction Site Compliance Inspector (in accordance with NFPA 241) was established after the construction site fire at the New Doherty Memorial High School project. This inspector ensures the standards for safeguarding construction, alteration, and demolition operations are maintained. The primary purpose of NFPA 241 is to mitigate the risk of fire and ensure the safety of both workers and the public. Almost 300 Construction Safety and Hot Works evaluations have been conducted. This inspector also conducted 150 Lodging House inspections.

FIRE PREVENTION

Engineering

The rapid growth and development in the City has necessitated the reevaluation of the Engineering Unit to meet increasing demands.

The Engineering Unit is made up of one Captain, one Fire Protection Engineer, one Radio Systems Technician, and one Principal Clerk; the Clerk was assigned to work directly with the Engineer to enhance customer communication, track the permitting process, and ensure requirements are completed for final inspections. The Human Resources Department assisted in the hiring of two seasonal interns who were able to process over three hundred applications each week. To further meet the rising demand, the Department is hiring a full-time Fire Plans Examiner. In 2024, the unit completed 1,101 plan reviews and over 400 site inspections.

To increase the efficiency of the unit, the Department purchased industry-standard software and a digital plans review table to enhance and expedite the plans review process. This technology allows the submission, storage, and sharing of digital plans.

Spotlight: Developer's Roundtable Discussion

In May, Chief Dyer, Chief Roche, Chief Arpin, and the Engineering unit participated in a Construction and Real Estate Roundtable presentation with the Worcester Regional Chamber of Commerce to present on issues commonly faced with projects and to build a stronger relationship with the business community.

The business community found value from the presentation. At the request of a developer, another presentation was delivered in July to members of their construction group.

SAFETY

District Chief Michael Papagni

The Safety Division consists of a District Chief, four Captains, and one firefighter dedicated to the safety, health, and wellness of all Worcester Fire Department members. As Incident Safety Officers, Safety Captains respond to all major incidents with the mission of providing for firefighter safety, including at fires, all accidents on highways, elevator entrapments, gas emergencies, and many other hazardous incidents that could jeopardize the safety and lives of our personnel. The Safety Division responded to over 1,100 incidents in 2024.

Focusing on fostering safety and health before emergencies happen has been a priority of the Safety Division. The following are a few examples of this year's initiatives to enhance firefighter safety:

- Driver Training to reduce apparatus accidents and make responses to emergencies safer for ourselves and others on City streets.
- Highway response training using the latest research available to ensure our firefighters are positioned correctly and able to help those in need on busy highways.
- Hydrostatic testing of all SCBA bottles used by firefighters for breathing air and special operations.
- Conducting department-wide annual Air Consumption Evolutions with a 100% success rate.
- Working with Training Division and Incident Commanders through live burn training to strengthen the WFD Incident Command System, sample and configure First Due's Command Module, and fully integrate Incident Safety Officers within the new systems.

The Safety Division has been vigilant in ensuring firefighters are remaining health by providing resources and information necessary to reduce exposure to carcinogens in our workspace. Several programs reduced firefighter exposure to toxins and created a healthier work environment: annual turnout gear inspections, gear washing, maintenance of extractors, a hood exchange program at fire scenes, and the construction and distribution of gear drying racks.

Safety by the Numbers

- Highway responses: 221
- Gas emergencies: 251
- Elevator responses: 157
- Air consumption evolutions: 362
- Hydrostatic tests: 427



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

In 2025, the Worcester Fire Department is looking forward to...

- A spring Recruit Academy is planned for twenty-two recruits.
- The Training Division will deliver a Thermal Imager training course to the Operations Division.
- The Training Division will continue to develop and monitor Standards Drills to measure proficiency in firefighting tactics.
- Testing has already begun with intensive vetting of PFAS-free gear that will keep our firefighters safe in fires and reduce exposure to toxic PFAS chemicals. Other policies and information will be distributed and implemented in a multifaceted effort to reduce carcinogen exposure.
- Incident Safety Officer Training is being developed to provide even more officers with the knowledge and awareness to keep our firefighters safer at emergency incidents.
- The Safety Division will continue to evaluate the needs for mental health resources for the department and put in place the awareness, policies, and practices that will grow the resilience of our firefighters.
- The Department will continue the rollout of First Due throughout the spring; optimization will continue throughout the year.
- The Department continues to provide information to and collaborate with the Human Resources Department to assist with Workday's configuration.
- The South Division project will continue through schematic design as a vision for the state-of-the-art station is finalized.

