

# LEE TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

507 South Nine Mile Road, Midland, MI 48640

**(989) 832-8512 Station**

Daryl J. Amrozowicz, Chief

(989) 615-0645

Contact Numbers

**(989) 633-9242 Fax**

James Bass, Deputy Chief

(989) 698-6756

August 28, 2022

Dear Lee Township Resident/Concerned Citizen:

I've been asked to share information with you about our fire department and its current needs, and I appreciate this opportunity to share our fire department's status. Sometimes one needs to know history to understand where we are. This is very true when considering where the Lee Township Fire Department is in its present state what it was when we started.

In 1980, the Lee Township Board was approached to form a fire department to respond to house fires, car wrecks, and medical emergencies in the local area. The first Lee Township Fire Station was built in 1983, nearly forty years ago. The original structure was built of block construction, fire resistant, but not energy efficient. This structure was designed to meet the immediate needs of starting and housing a fire department. It had three bays housing two pumpers and a rescue van, a meeting room, one bathroom and a mechanical room. Shortly after I joined the fire department in December of 1984, we still had the same vehicles, but we soon added a brush/grass unit and a tanker. The van was replaced with a much-needed walk-around rescue and so five vehicles were tightly compacted into what was designed for three. In those early years, as memory serves, we were running less than 100 calls per year covering the same two townships we currently serve plus a sliver of Porter Township back then.

In 1998 an addition was built onto the front of the building of pole construction. This essentially doubled the size of the building – with three more bays (albeit in front of the original bays) and a new meeting area. This allowed for the remodel of the original meeting room to include a kitchen area, one office and an additional bathroom with showers. This provided much needed relief, but the fire service keeps changing. We now have two pumpers, a tanker, a brush truck, a medium duty medical rescue/fire company service truck and a medical rescue truck. Three of our trucks need replacement. We have an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) submitted to FEMA to replace the 37-year-old rescue truck and for Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA). We are currently looking to purchase a new apparatus to combine the tanker (24 years old) and oldest pumper (29 years old) into one truck to serve the township for the next 20-30 years.

When we were established, there were no regulations on rescue agencies, apparatus or personnel. Now in addition to meeting all of the requirements, rules and regulations to be a fire department, we are required to be a licensed EMS non-transporting agency with the state at a Medical First Responder (MFR) level. Two of our current six apparatuses (the two previously mentioned medical rescue trucks) are licensed at this same level with all of the necessary medical equipment. At least one person on either of these apparatuses must be licensed at the Medical First Responder level or higher. We have 5 MFR, 4 EMT and 4 Paramedic licensed personnel currently. The run volume has changed significantly. In 2009, we had 454 runs and last year, 2021, we responded to 649. The breakdown of these calls are as follows: 55% were medical, 26% were traffic related (crashes, trees/wires over road, etc.) and only 19% were fires of all types (structure, woods, fields, vehicle, fire alarms); 65% were in Lee Township, 27% in Greendale Township and 8% were calls in which we gave mutual aid to other departments.

If you were to consider the fire station as a family home, the original station was much like a starter home, small and fits the immediate needs, but not able to grow a family. As more apparatuses arrived, an addition was built to cover the immediate needs, but the ability of the house to effectively serve the changing roles and operations of the fire department was not addressed. As we look forward, we still have immediate needs that need to be addressed, but there also must be some long-range planning.

#### Immediate needs:

- 1) Adequate abilities to provide protection of our most valuable assets, our personnel. When we started almost 40 years ago, we never heard of PFAS (a specific carcinogen that has been in the news lately) or other carcinogens in the fire service. Now because of carcinogens, the best practice is to “shower within the hour” of getting out of the fire scene. When one considers the necessity of placing the apparatuses back into service, we need to be able to shower at the station. We are shedding the carcinogens wherever we travel with our turnout gear and/or the clothing worn underneath. Currently this means our kitchen area and both bathrooms will be contaminated with carcinogens when we use the present showers. PFAS came to light as an agent in AFFF, the foam used to fight Class B (flammable liquid) fires. We have no AFFF foam, however, there are PFAS chemicals used in our firefighting protective gear. We do have and use Class A (ordinary combustibles) foam. This foam has NO PFAS and is safe for the environment. We have been using Class A foam for several years in structure fires as well as wildland fires.
- 2) Adequate training room. The current training/meeting room is over what used to be the outside apron of the station. As one would expect, the apron slants away from the structure and so the entire room is not level. There are additional needs to upgrade A/V equipment and other technologies to the room and station.
- 3) Adequate office space. All six of our current officers share the single office. There is no space to leave a project in process as others need to use that same space. Furthermore, we need to provide for ordinary, common-sense privacy and confidentiality. I have no questions about the integrity of our current officers, but we need to consider the future and not place anyone in a situation to know about something that they otherwise wouldn't have known about.

- 4) Adequate cooling and ventilation. There is no air conditioning. This was not a problem when the station was only occupied a few hours each month. Now the station is occupied more frequently and it is not comfortable in the office where our secretary spends hours putting the run information in to the reporting software so that they can be sent as required by the state and federal governments. Other officers would like to use office space rather than their home. The apparatus bay has an existing exhaust fan that was acceptable practice when it was installed. However, were we to do much remodeling of the current station, we would need to retrofit a more efficient exhaust removal system due to the carcinogens in vehicle exhaust.
- 5) Building maintenance. Without a clear vision of the future of the station, knowing that we have a need for a new station, we need to make wise financial decisions with regards to the current station. If we cannot find a new location to build, we need to demolish the current building and construct a new one on this location. It would be fool-hearty to put a new roof on the station, add air conditioning, remodel rooms or attempt to otherwise modify the current building if its future is demolition. We will continue to maintain the building to keep it weathertight, but this is an ongoing issue.

Long-range planning:

- 1) What will the fire service look like in 30 years? Great question, and if I had the ability to know that, I would be called by every fire department in the US. But what I see is an ever-increasing demand for more services without a known revenue stream to pay for them. The fire service has always been good at adapting and adopting equipment, practices and procedures, and making home-made and shop-built equipment when possible. Sometimes that isn't possible with liability concerns, but when it is, we have utilized our local talents for several projects.
- 2) We should have a fitness area to help our personnel keep or get into "shape."
- 3) We should be prepared to house personnel, whether full-time or part-time. We should be prepared to be able to better facilitate personnel and citizens in our station during natural disasters.
- 4) We should have adequate abilities to house apparatuses and better traffic flow into and out of the building.
- 5) Our station should be welcoming to those seeking an opportunity to join us in serving you.

We need to make a decision now – do we build or do we attempt to modify a building that is outdated, inefficient, and unable to have any further additional space added to it? If we commit to building, can we find a place that will be big enough to fulfill our known needs now and serve into the future with expanding needs that are already in sight (better decontamination of our personnel and equipment to start with)? Without the site, a building cannot be designed. Without the design, we cannot estimate the costs. Without the cost estimate, we cannot seek grant funding, our desired source for funding this necessary project. Please rest assured that I do my best to ensure that every single penny you provide for us is spent as an investment in the safety of our personnel and their ability to efficiently extinguish fires, respond to medical emergencies and/or traffic incidents. We do not spend money on the latest "gadget."

In reflecting on a couple of the questions that were asked at the August board meeting, I believe that some may have the mistaken idea that we are looking for room to house the new fire apparatus. This is not the case. Any apparatus that we buy will fit into the current station, and the new station will be built to house the biggest fire apparatus that we could conceivably need into the future. However, I hope that you have seen that the station is more than a barn to house apparatuses, but a place that the department personnel use to prepare to respond to your emergencies, live out of as necessary during times of longer-term emergencies such as flooding and storms, prepare necessary documents, make reports, and otherwise conduct the business of the fire department as we are currently doing – every single day. We also look to continue to serve our community into the future, whatever and however that may look like.

Thank you for taking the time to read this information. In an effort to be as completely transparent as possible and to give you, the public that we serve an opportunity to see the needs for yourselves, I will be available at the fire station on the following dates and times, subject to emergencies:

Wednesday, September 14	noon to 4 pm
Thursday, September 15	8 am to noon
Thursday, September 22	6 pm to 9 pm
Monday, September 26	10 am to 4 pm
Thursday, September 29	6pm to 9 pm
Saturday, October 1	10 am to 2 pm

Please feel free to stop by at any time listed above. The door will either be propped open or unlocked, again shy of emergencies. If you cannot make one of these times, please feel free to call or text me at (989) 615-0645 and I will try to find a time that works into both of our schedules.

I would also be remiss if I did not state that we are always looking for new firefighters and/or MFR personnel. In 2009 we had 27 active personnel; we currently have 16 active personnel. If you have any interest in joining us to help your community, please feel free to contact me and we would be happy to talk to you and get you an application. We do perform background checks and we also provide the training at no cost to those who are members of the department.

Sincerely,

Daryl J. Amrozowicz, BA, EMT-P. I/C  
Chief, Lee Township Fire Department