



# BEAVERCREEK TOWNSHIP FIRE DEPARTMENT

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## **FIRE DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATION: RUNNING A 24-HOUR PER DAY RESPONSE AGENCY**

The Beavercreek Township Fire Department shares the challenges of many similar suburban fire departments in creating an organizational system that meets its many requirements. Fire Departments are complex organizations, which often have two distinct divisions within the organization: a 24-hour per day emergency response division and a traditional 8-hour per day business office. This combination, with its conflicting roles and responsibilities, results in a rather unique, industry specific organizational form.

Emergency responses, by the very critical need for a timely resolution to protect life, health or property, require a very rigid organization, or command, structure. The fire service has developed a “para-military” form of organization for emergency operations. This form creates a very specific chain-of-command for the effective resolution of emergencies. This hierarchal form allows for the rapid translation of a strategic plan for dealing with an incident into the tasks necessary to affect the plan and mitigate that incident. This organizational form has been so successful in serving the fire service that it, and its associated Incident Command System (ICS), are the basis for the newly created National Incident Management System (NIMS) that the Federal government is requiring all State and Local agencies use for emergency incidents (from natural disasters to terrorist attacks).

Ohio state law requires that every township fire department, including Beavercreek, have a Fire Chief, appointed by the Board of Township Trustees. The Fire Chief is responsible for applying Township policy to the fire department. Immediately below the Fire Chief is the traditional fire service division between “line” and “staff”. The “line” or operations side (on the left in the organization chart) of the organization is the round-the-clock emergency response division. While the “staff” or administrative division (on the right in the organization chart) provides business and support services so that operations crews can perform their jobs. In Beavercreek these divisions are each headed by a Deputy Chief who is responsible for that division’s goals and objectives. In addition to the normal administrative functions filled by the Chief and his Deputies, we also provide support to major or multiple incidents. We frequently respond to emergencies outside of normal business hours to provide on-scene incident management or manage reserve crews when the regular shift commander is committed.

The Operations Division is the “boots-on-the-ground” side of the organization. The firefighter/paramedics of this division provide the emergency response capability of the organization. The Operations Division is primarily responsible for four things:

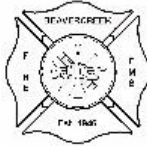
equipment preparation and basic maintenance, training, emergency response and incident demobilization.

This division is sub-divided into three identical platoons, each working every third day. This schedule, an industry standard known as 24-48 (24 hours worked, followed by 48 hours off), provides around-the-clock protection. A Battalion Chief, who is responsible for the day-to-day running of the shift, manages each platoon. Because the fire department protects approximately 50 square miles of Beavercreek City and Township, our emergency resources are located at four fire stations, strategically placed around the City and Township. Each platoon has a crew assigned to each station and those crews are each managed by a Lieutenant. Lieutenants are the core managers of the department; they ensure that all required daily activities are completed and make sure that their crews are taken care of. Additionally, they are an integral part of the daily operations, actively participating in fire suppression and emergency medical care. Each crew's size varies with the apparatus staffed at each station, as well as time off due to scheduled leave, sick leave, long-term injuries and special assignments. The crews themselves are made up of firefighters who are cross-trained as emergency medical technicians-most of whom are paramedics. These highly trained employees may be full time or part time, but all do the same job. They regularly respond to medical emergencies, fires, hazardous conditions, auto accidents and good intent calls.

The Administration Division provides the support services necessary for the Operations crews to do their job. This staff works standard business hours, based upon a forty-hour workweek. They provide logistical and material support to the Operations division by managing purchasing, billing, budget, human resources, payroll and strategic planning. The employees of this division are all civilian (i.e. they do not perform firefighting functions), who either work full or part time. One specialized fire service function, fire prevention, falls in the Administrative Division. The fire prevention staff: review construction drawings, perform fire safety inspections, and investigate the cause and origin of fires.

Because the "line" and "staff" functions are so different within the fire service structure, one of the challenges in developing fire department managers is ensuring that they experience as many different areas of the department as possible. This is especially difficult with minimum staffing levels where it is not practical to have employees filling duplicate roles. One of the long-term goals of increased staffing is to create up to four positions to train and give experience to officers to aid in their development. These positions include one each in fire prevention, suppression, emergency medical services, and administration. By moving officers through these different roles, they will become familiar with the organization as a whole, and how the different areas inter-relate.

The Beavercreek Township Fire Department uses a proven fire service organization structure to ensure that it meets the needs and demands that the community places on it. The complex structure is stable enough to provide long-term management, yet flexible enough to meet new demands and challenges.



# Beavercreek Township Fire Department Organizational Structure 1 August 2005

