

NORTHEAST KINGDOM CONSORTIUM REGIONAL FIRE SERVICES FEASIBILITY STUDY



May 27, 2021

Barnet – Concord – Danville – Groton – Lyndon
St. Johnsbury – Waterford



MRI OVERVIEW & LOGISTICS

- MRI is a New Hampshire based – New England focused Corporation that specializes in public safety. Over more than 20 years we have completed more than 175 similar projects.
- Presenters:
 - Brian Duggan, Director of Fire Services
 - David Houghton, Project Manager
- Questions will be answered using the chat feature. Irene Nagle will monitor chat . Questions will be answered at the end of our presentation.



OUR GOAL



To create a report that becomes a useful guide and a resource that shapes a vision for the success of the study communities Fire and EMS services as these organizations approach the challenges and transitions of the future.



OVERVIEW OF THE CONSORTIUM

- ▶ Developed based on pressure to maintain the expected level of fire services.
- ▶ 4% growth expected by 2030

	Pop - 2010
Barnet	1564
Concord	1284
Danville	2206
Groton	984
Lyndon	5799
St. Johnsbury	7244
Waterford	1444
Total Population	20525

	2018	2019	2020
Barnet	155	161	145
		4%	-10%
Concord	153	147	130
		-4%	-11%
Danville	61	80	63
		13%	-28%
Groton	293	250	278
		-15%	10%
Lyndon	219	213	179
		-3%	-16%
St. Johnsbury	1233	1333	1013
		-8%	-26%
Waterford	93	120	156
		29%	39%
Year Totals	2207	2304	1964
Difference		6%	-17%

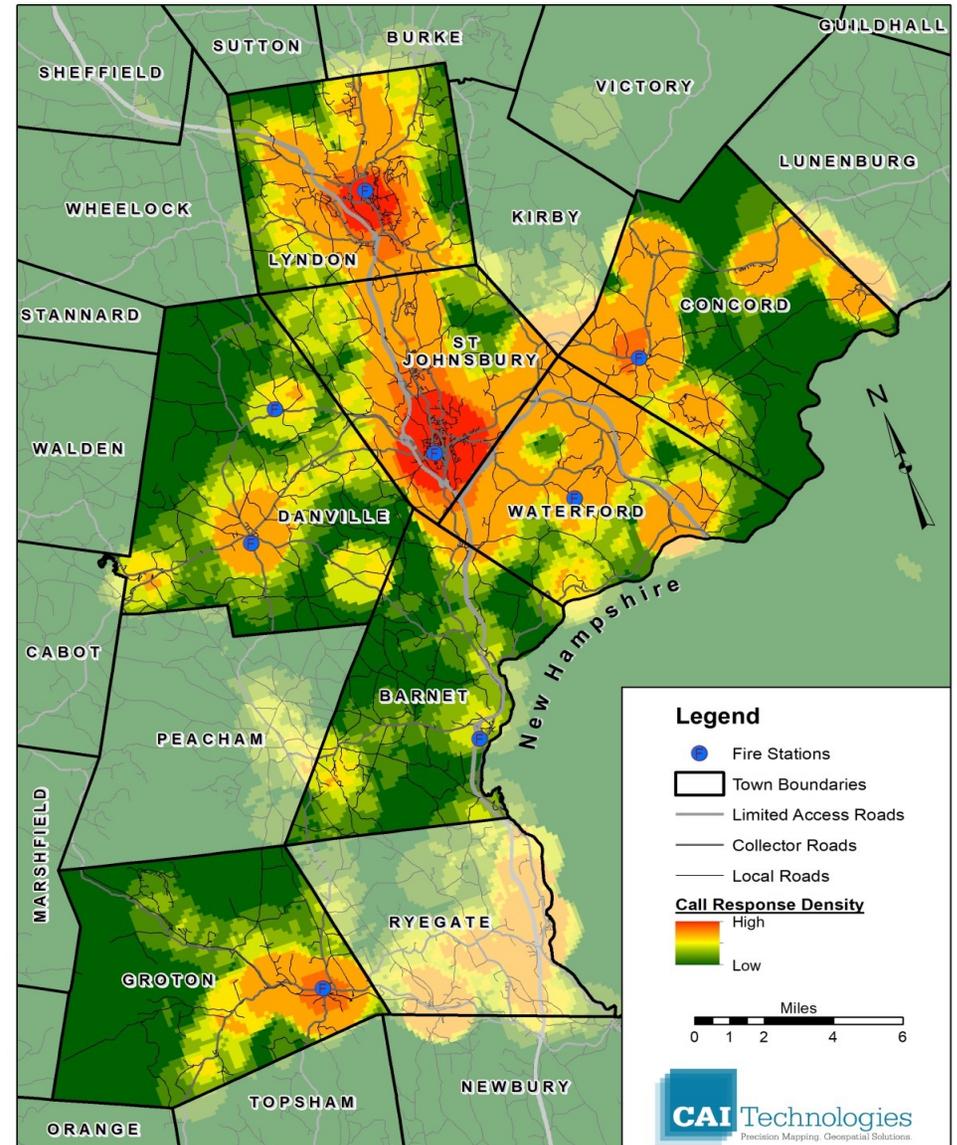
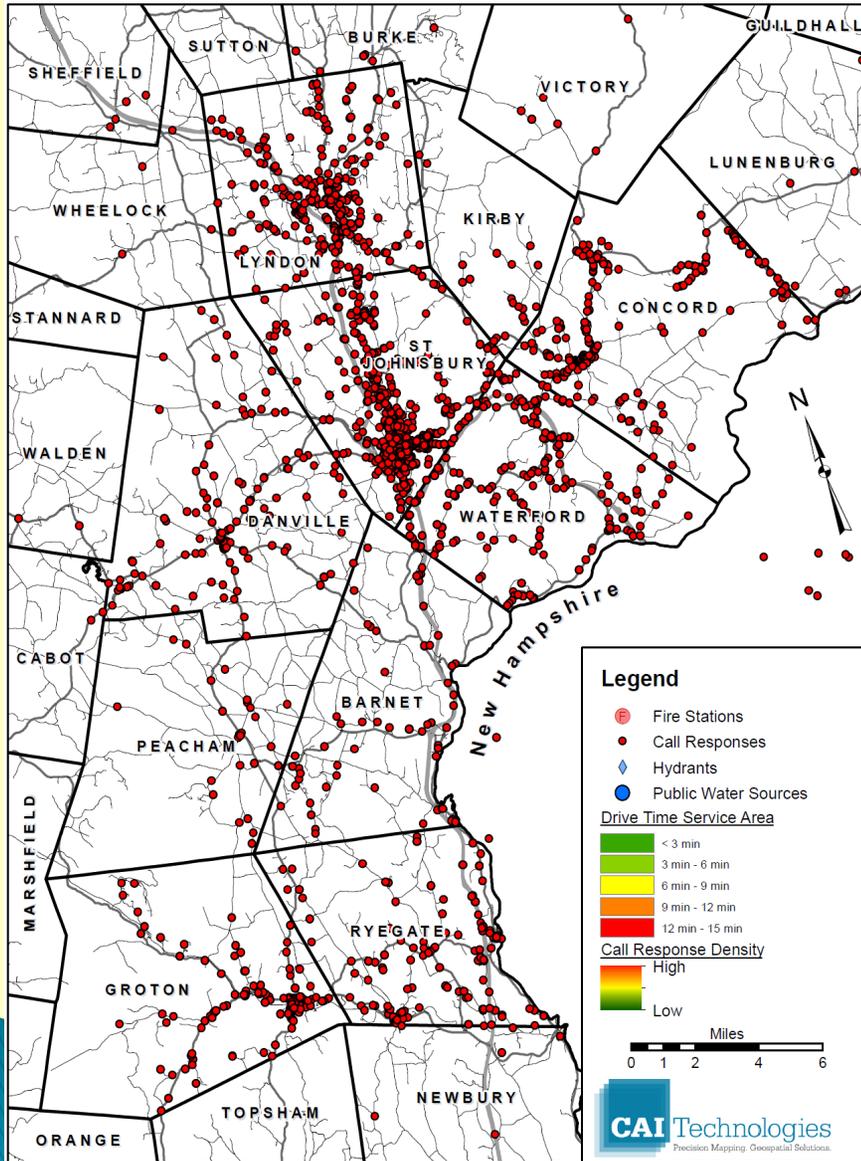


LEVEL OF SERVICE

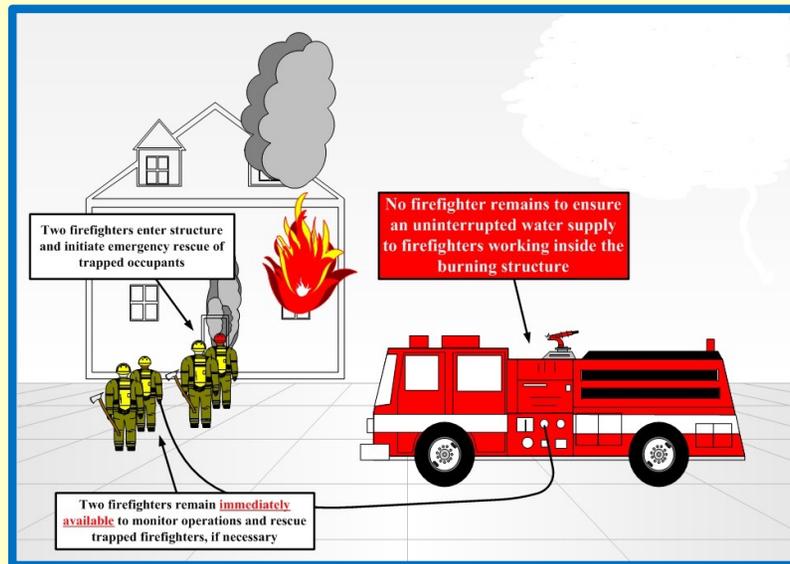
	2020		2019		2018	
	Minutes	# Incidents in calculation	Minutes	# Incidents in calculation	Minutes	# Incidents in calculation
Barnet	34	13	23	8	22	8
Concord	19	97	19	125	20	122
Danville	16	60	15	70	14	55
Groton	16	162	18	117	14	167
Lyndon	13	169	14	205	11	215
St. Johnsbury	5	975	5	1261	5	1102
Waterford	17	125	21	90	18	73
Total	120		114		104	
Average	17		16		15	
Average w/o St. Johnsbury	19		18		17	



INCIDENT DISTRIBUTION



OPERATIONAL SAFETY



CRITICAL TASK	NEEDED PERSONNEL
Incident Command	1
Continuous Water Supply/Pump Operator	1
Fire Attack via Two Handlines	4
Hydrant Hook-Up, Forcible Entry, Utilities	2
Primary Search and Rescue	2
Ground Ladders and Ventilation	2
Aerial Operator (if Aerial is Used)	1
Establishment of an IRIT (Initial Rapid Intervention Team)	2
Effective Response Force	14/15

SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED (PAGE 55)

- **Rapidly diminishing volunteer pool for fire operations, part of a nationwide trend. The cost associated with addressing this issue will be the biggest challenge ahead for all the stakeholders, both internal and external.**
- **Emerging generational differences that often produce a lack of understanding on both sides**



SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- The time commitment required for certifications and continued training
- Tapping into the high school aged students and the ability to market the fire service.



SEVEN MOST CRITICAL CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED

- What level of fire and EMS service will providers need to maintain in the future.
- The skill set required in today's high-tech environment will need to be adapted to.
- The need to train in the new work force prior to the active members aging out.



OVERVIEW OF RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ *The report contains 49 recommendations, in the following slides we will highlight ten of those recommendations.*
- ▶ *Please refer to the consolidated listing of recommendation contained in the report and published as a separate document for a listing of all recommendations.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ *Each department should conduct a thorough Community Risk Assessment and use the assessment as a tool to move the department into the future. Over the next year, plan should be developed to utilizes strengths to pursue opportunities and address weaknesses while mitigating threats. This should be an ongoing process that has member involvement and is moved forward by the officer core.*



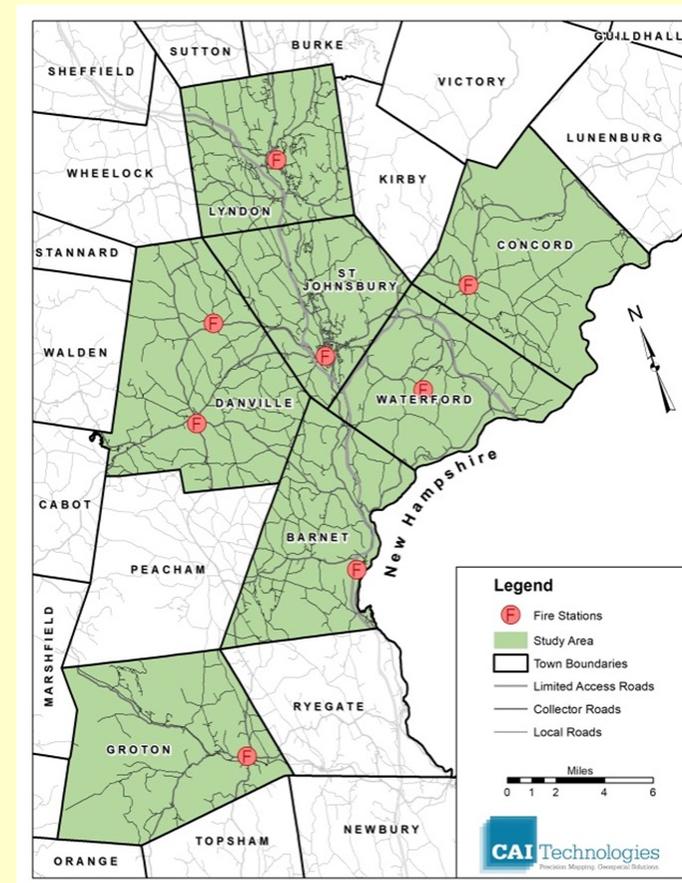
TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Each community within the Consortium should be asked to identify an appropriate service level/Standard of Cover and if service gaps exist these gaps should be quantified and addressed through a collaborative effort by the Consortium.*
- *Every effort should be made to preserve the primary responder role of on-call personnel and expand membership within each individual Fire Department.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- A manual of standard operational procedures or guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) to consistently guide fire and EMS operations throughout the area should be developed and implemented.



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Towns either individually or jointly should apply for a federal SAFER grant for on-call recruitment and retention. This grant should be utilized to develop a comprehensive marketing program to attract new members, and provide incentives for the retention of those personnel, such as tuition reimbursement, health care benefits, tax abatements, etc. This competitive grant requires a lot of time and dedication to write and to be successful to obtain.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Fire Chief within each community should develop a social media presence and involve other members of the department in this endeavor. The use of social media like Facebook and Twitter are what the younger generation use and a very active social media account can reach out to this group of people for hiring.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Each department should identify and prioritize its most critical equipment, training and/or operational needs, and apply annually to the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) program. This should include making applications for apparatus capital replacement projects that will otherwise be funded through the town's capital budget and at town meeting.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Working collaboratively the Consortium should explore the feasibility of developing a pilot program to implement a regional-based Mobile Integrated Healthcare (MIH) program. The purchase of needed equipment could be accomplished through a lease in arrears. Utilizing this fiscal strategy, the first payment for vehicles or equipment would be one year after delivery enabling revenue to accumulate from MIH services. This program could be incrementally be expanded based on the proven success of the pilot program.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *In consultation and cooperation with its neighboring departments, all Fire Departments should enter into formal automatic aid agreements that specifies the number and types of resources that should be dispatched immediately to various types of reported emergencies, such as structure fires. These recommendations should be based upon a community-wide risk management process and/or pre-fire/incident plan.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Fire Departments in the Consortium should set a realistic goal of recruiting at least 6 to 8 new members over the next three years, and simultaneously set a goal of increasing the overall force by a minimum of 10%. These personnel should be required to be properly trained and certified to the Firefighter I/II level, and preferably to the minimum of EMR level.*



TEN MOST IMPORTANT RECOMMENDATIONS

- *The Consortium fire departments should ensure that all department members are trained certified to the minimal NIMS level required for their duties/responsibilities and ranks. In addition to the basic I-100/I-700 training mandated; it is MRI's recommendation that all officers should be trained to the ICS-300 level. All chief level officers should be trained to the ICS-400 level..*



IMPLICATIONS OF NOT TAKING ACTION

“Fire and EMS are in a crisis – right now. Simply put, the number of volunteer firefighters has fallen dramatically over the decades.”

- There is a crisis that is slowly building and has been for a considerable period.
- The reason that many stakeholders; municipal leaders, and the general public; do not see “evidence” is the long tradition in both the fire and EMS services of “getting the job done”.



CREATING AN ECONOMY OF SCALE

Working collaboratively Communities should explore the feasibility of standardizing many of the tools and equipment utilized by the Consortium fire and EMS providers to allow for cost savings generated through group purchasing arrangements.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- The fire and EMS service organizations are, for the most part, well-equipped, well-managed, and appear to be well-trained. When they arrive on the scene of an emergency, their personnel perform their duties very well and can be counted upon to complete assignments given to them.
- Most fire companies have a dedicated core group of members who are trying to make their organization one that provides dependable, high quality, emergency services to the municipalities that it serves.

They should be commended for their efforts and given the support they need to continue to try to be successful.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- The continuing trend of declining volunteerism will create simultaneous challenges that will stretch the provision of emergency services in many communities even farther. This will require a serious and objective look at the benefits that can be realized by consolidations or mergers of companies that are struggling into a new, stronger organization.
- Looking ahead, planned growth of the fire and EMS delivery system throughout the area is essential to provide a consistent service level to the diverse communities that make up the Northeast Kingdom, while keeping pace with increased demands for service caused by continued development.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

- Change in the way fire and EMS services are delivered in the area is inevitable.
- Most of the stakeholders agree that the need for a different model is quickly approaching.
- It is our sincere hope that this report and the accompanying appendices will be used as a road map for improving the delivery of fire and emergency medical services throughout the Northeast Kingdom.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

The citizens of the Northeast Kingdom should feel confident that the fire and EMS organizations that proudly and faithfully serve the area are professional public safety organizations that are continuing to try their best to provide a high-quality level of service to the community 24/7/365.

We continue to be impressed with the dedication and commitment of the members of the departments.



FEASIBILITY STUDY

- Should be viewed as a roadmap for the future direction of the fire and rescue services over the next decade.
- Includes a SWOT analysis.
- Identifies timelines, critical tasks, and considers potential barriers to implementation.
- Living document that needs to be evaluated in an ongoing manner and updated, as necessary.



ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- The team has developed 7 phases (steps) that should be considered moving forward (pages 91 - 109).
- Each Phase has a timeline that can be adjusted.
- Budgeting was developed using current costs and will need to be adjusted as the program develops.
- Phases begin now and run to July 2026.



ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- Total cost of all phases (using current figures) is \$1,573,741.28
- Each phase has outlined a Community cost based on a hybrid calculation.
- Other methods of calculating community costs sharing have been provided.



ROAD MAP TO THE FUTURE

- The future is what each community decides it is our hope to create an ongoing conversation that leads to service level based action.
- What services do they want to have and at what cost.
- An evaluation will need to be done now and as changes are made a continuous evaluation will need to be conducted to assure the goals are being met.



The Seven Phases

- **Phase 1- Start May 2021 - SOP development, Inventory, Water Supply, Auto Aide, purchasing, Part time coordinator. COST = 9,412.00**
- **Phase 2 – Start July 2022 - Pilot program of town sharing staff. Expand individual and shared training, Props, Develop Specialty teams, Officer training, Grant Applications. COST= 23,500.00**



The Seven Phases cont..

- **Phase 3 – Start January 2023- Expand Coordinator role, Create a Regional Rapid Reponse Force.
Cost = 130,281.60**
- **Phase 4 – Start January 2024- Add - Create a Fire District or Association. Cost = 126,536.00**



The Seven Phases cont..

- **Phase 5 – Start July 2024-** Increase Rapid Response Force to 2 fulltime staff. Cost = 248,985.60
- **Phase 6 – Start July 2025-** Increase Rapid Response Force to 24 hour coverage and Coordinator to 40 hour days . Cost = 433,072.16
- **Phase 7 – Start July 2026-** Increase Rapid Response Force to 3 on duty 24/7. Cost = 601,953.92



THE CHALLENGE AHEAD

- Making the transition in service delivery from “old” way of doing business to a “new” and improved.
- Transitioning from a volunteer system to a more combination one.
- Integrating the independent entities into a singular, more centric and cohesive organization.
- Steadily increasing requests for service in a rapidly growing community.
- Long term development of the consolidated service delivery system, its officers, firefighters, paramedics and EMTs.



FINAL THOUGHTS

- Each of the 49 recommendations should be given careful consideration.
- View each recommendation as a goal.
- Approach the recommendations strategically & systematically to develop short- and long-term goals.
- Recognize each accomplishment.



QUESTIONS?



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