



The Peotone Fire Protection District's personnel crisis is worsening due to an extreme shortage of available part-time firefighters/EMTs and paramedics.

Our promise to you is a simple one: When you need emergency assistance, qualified first responders will be there quickly to help because that's the only thing that matters. Yet, delivering on that promise for you is becoming increasingly difficult due to a staffing crisis that, if unaddressed, will only get worse over time.

Here are the facts:

- Fire departments across the country are suffering from a labor crisis. There just aren't enough fully qualified and trained fire fighters to go around. Peotone feels this crisis worse than most. Reliance on part-time personnel has left the Peotone station under-staffed far too frequently.
- Every day, it is our objective to staff the 24-hour shifts with a minimum of four firefighters/EMTs and two paramedics. But part-time personnel are becoming less and less available and we do not have the authority to order them to work. Although we offer part-timers opportunities to work, many decide not to on a regular basis. After all, they ultimately decide when and where they will work, and they may be working at other departments or doing whatever else is necessary to support their families. Fully staffing our station, therefore, is a daily—and significant—challenge.
- For instance, last July, a second ambulance was not available to answer emergency medical calls **58 percent** of the time. Additionally, the District's engine was down **25 percent** of the time due to lack of available personnel to staff it. *
- The crisis isn't new. In 2018 there were staffing shortages ranging from 8 to 11 days per month. **In 2019 our station was understaffed for 70 days, or 19 percent of the time.** *
- Making matters worse, the pool of available staff members to fill shifts is shrinking fast. We've trained and hired 145 personnel to serve as part time firefighters and paramedics since 2015. Currently, due to attrition, that pool has just 23 available part time employees. * And again, the part timers, while greatly appreciated, do not tend to work here on a consistent basis.
- While the district does receive support from its mutual aid partners on some calls, the status quo is unsustainable and leaves the residents we are sworn to serve with less than adequate service. This needs to change now.

* source: Peotone Fire Protection District personnel data



Consolidation is the most immediate and cost-effective solution to the District's personnel crisis

A referendum question will appear on the ballot in the November general election that, if approved by a simple majority of voters, would consolidate the Peotone Fire Protection District with the Manhattan Fire Protection District. The referendum question reads as follows:

“Shall the Peotone Fire Protection District dissolve and be consolidated into the Manhattan Fire Protection District?”

Here are the facts:

- A consolidation will place qualified, full-time employees at the Peotone station and provide predictable, reliable staffing every day on every shift.
- A consolidation will allow for the hiring of full-time personnel whose sole commitment is serving Peotone and the rest of the new district. Shifts will be comprised of full-time and part-time staff. The consolidation would guarantee that every shift has minimum staffing because full time personnel are duty-bound to cover shifts.
- Consolidating with the Manhattan Fire Protection District (MFPD) will place us on more solid financial footing so we can invest in resources like training, equipment, facilities and technology to support our men and women and the work they do.
- A partnership with MFPD is already delivering meaningful, tangible results. In order to address the personnel crisis, the PFPD approached the MFPD in August 2020 to discuss a potential cost-sharing initiative. That resulted in an intergovernmental agreement where both districts share administrative and personnel costs.
- The agreement, which expires in April 30, 2023, has delivered significant payroll/salary savings because there is one command staff overseeing both districts instead of two.
- Sharing resources has bolstered response capability to both communities.
- While the decision about what direction the PFPD fire takes is up to the voters, the status quo will leave us less able to respond fully when you need us most. Every day is a struggle to deliver on that promise. This problem will only worsen unless the community decides to change course.