

History of Versailles Volunteer Fire Department

By: Erin Shaffer, Versailles Council Member

To read a more in-depth history of our Village's Volunteer Fire Department, please visit the Fire Department on the Village of Versailles website.

According to Fire Department resources, the first known volunteer fire protection started as bucket brigade using Swamp Creek as the water supply sometime prior to March of 1871. In the years that followed and leading into current times, council, the fire department volunteers, and community volunteers continue to work together to provide the best possible fire protection and education for our community. Did you know the Fire Department hosts a bike rodeo for our local youth, manages the Grand Parade for the Poultry Days festival, hosts girl scout and boy scout groups, and educates Versailles Elementary School students on fire safety during fire prevention week every October (10/5/2025 – 10/11/2025), each year?

In 1892 the fire department consisted of 16 members, the village was at or less than 60 homes, and fighting fires was a very manual and complex process. Today, we have 23 volunteer members on the fire department, 1100 homes in the Village, and 615 homes in Wayne Township. The Versailles Fire District area covers 44.5 square miles and includes all of the Village of Versailles, Wayne Township, 25% of Richland Township, and 25% of York Township totaling 7,511 residents. While firefighting equipment makes fighting fires safer, better, and faster, homes and buildings are much larger than they were before and require more robust firefighting equipment to accommodate their expansive length, width, and height.

The department's location started out in the town hall building (located on the corner of Center St. and Main St.), then moved to the South Center St. location in 1975, and finally to its current location on Baker Rd. since 2008. These moves have allowed the department to purchase much needed equipment to continue to protect our homes and businesses.

Each year the fire department responds to approximately 135 calls for service and provides approximately 28 mutual aid calls to assist other departments. Our current fire department consists of two fire engines, one tanker/pumper, one brush truck, and an air compressor trailer. An aerial ladder truck is currently on order to replace a 1998 tanker truck and is set to arrive in the second half of 2026. The Village has been saving money for the past several years to go towards the purchase of this truck that will be crucial to protect life and property for the large industrial, agricultural, and residential buildings in our fire districts. The average life-cycle of fire trucks for the Versailles Fire Dept. is thirty (30) years as we are very mindful of taxpayer dollars and take exceptionally good care of these vehicles that we all rely on to answer the call when needed.

Did you know a brand-new fire engine can take three (3) years to be delivered from the date it is ordered? These trucks are designed specifically for the needs of the department and a lot of planning goes into each new truck order/purchase. Depending on the type of new truck, engine, tanker, pumper, etc., the cost can range from \$750,000 to \$2,500,000 depending on its intended use and purpose. The aerial ladder truck that is currently on order had its order placed in late 2023.

We present this history to you, the taxpayer, to help paint the picture of the long and storied history of the Versailles Fire Department and the role that it serves each and every one of us. We ask for your continued support of the Versailles Fire Dept. levy on the Village of Versailles and Wayne Township election ballot November 4th to help continue the legacy, dedication, and sacrifice of many to help protect us and assist us in times of emergency need.

History of Versailles EMS

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Our Village Emergency Medical Service started in 1974, located in a garage bay in Town Hall at the corner of Center St. and Main. In September of that year with its pagers, 2-way radios, Norton life squad, and 26-member team, the Versailles Life Squad announced they were ready to begin service. In May of 1975 the Versailles Life Squad was awarded the State of Ohio Certification from the Director of the Ohio Department of Health for their new Emergency Ambulance System.

By July of 1976, 13 members were full Paramedics. It's helpful to know the difference between Paramedic and EMT (Emergency Medical Technician). A Paramedic can intubate and administer IVs, also known as Advanced Life Support or ALS. An EMT can provide Basic Life Support or BLS. They support foundational emergency care, CPR, administer oxygen, manage shock, deliver babies, just to name a few. All Paramedics must first qualify as an EMT.

In 1986 the Versailles Life Squad moved to 200 W Main Street. In 2008, the operation moved to its current location at 320 Baker Road. In 2007 the former Versailles Life Squad was acquired by the Village of Versailles and renamed Versailles EMS. The Versailles EMS employees at the Baker Road location are onsite and ready to roll as soon as possible, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The 24/7 operation necessity for the EMS service was part of the design with this location that includes sleeping quarters, a living room, kitchen, showers, laundry, and other such amenities to essentially live on-station while they are on duty. EMS personnel are very dedicated to their profession and deeply care for the community they serve. At this time, the majority of Versailles EMS employees are part-time with currently four full-time employees.

Our current roster is 21 employees with 11 Paramedics, 1 Advanced EMT, 9 EMTs. They serve approximately 4900 residents including those in the Village of Versailles, Wayne Township, and the Village of Russia in Shelby County. The Versailles EMS operates two ambulance units, with only one unit on duty at a time. With the current and projected funding of the department, two EMS personnel are on-station and on-duty at a time. It takes two EMS personnel to operate and go out on requests for service. The second ambulance unit is there as a back-up in which it is rotated periodically as the primary to ensure that both units are ready to go at a moments notice. Ambulances do have mechanical issues from time-to-time and need to go in for periodic oil changes and service just like your personal vehicle does and it is necessary to have that second unit ready to go anytime. The department also has a crash truck that is used for patient extrication from off-road locations and for other various duties by both the EMS and Fire Dept. A new ambulance is currently on order and is expected to be delivered in the first half of 2026. The average life-span of an ambulance in our operations is 10-15 years. The new ambulance, will replace a 2012 model at a cost of just under \$320,000.

If you have had first-hand experiences around our EMS personnel, you know their first thought and priority is for the patient, everything else is secondary to that. EMS folks are extremely dedicated and driven to save lives and helps those who are in most need of assistance. If you see one of our EMS employees out and about, they enjoy conversations and getting to know the people in the communities they serve. Feel free to stop by talk to them or ask to see inside of the ambulance the next time you are at a football game or Poultry Days.

We present this history to you, the taxpayer, to help paint the picture of the long and storied history of the Versailles EMS Department and the role that it serves each and every one of us. We ask for your continued support of the Versailles EMS levy on the Village of Versailles and Wayne Township election ballot November 4th to help continue the legacy, dedication, and sacrifice of many to help protect us and assist us in times of emergency need.