



Montclair FMBA Local 20
551 Valley Rd, Ste 199
Upper Montclair, NJ 07043

Press Release 02/17/2026 – Montclair Firefighters FMBA Local 20

Looming Staffing Cuts Endanger Montclair

Montclair Firefighters were notified February 6, 2026 that the town has ordered Fire Chief Robert Duncan to lower the daily minimum staffing from 16 on-duty members down to 14 on duty members effective March 5, 2026 This will very likely result in one of the responding vehicles being placed out of service temporarily and one or more of it's members to be reassigned.

What does this mean for the public?

The number of personnel responding to emergencies will be reduced, the number of fire department apparatus (vehicles) responding will be reduced and as a result thousands of dollars of tax payer funded equipment will be side-lined while the public waits for help.

How did we end up here?

Since 2017 the ranks of the Montclair Fire Department have been reduced through attrition and an unwillingness of the town to replenish firefighters as veteran members retire. This left the department severely depleted (in the realm of a 20% reduction). When the new Town Manager (Stephen Marks) was appointed, a study of the fire department was commissioned to determine adequate staffing, station locations, and several other factors that impact the operations of the MFD. The study results were returned to the town in January 2026 with many recommendations. The study showed a pointed need for additional staffing, an increased training needs, and additional staff for the fire prevention bureau among many others areas in need of improvement. The town said in a memo to the department that a hybrid of the study results would be applied in order to reduce staffing, cut down on overtime and ultimately “brown-out” a (truck) company when staffing falls below 16 members. The memo cited increased employee healthcare insurance costs as the primary driver for the reductions. This comes on the heels of the town already forcing a healthcare insurance change on all town employees that went into effect January 1, 2026.



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Cost impact to the public (as quoted by the Township Finance Committee)

\$750,000-\$1,000,000

**The reported cost savings
broken down...**

Total Estimated Savings: \$1,000,000
Residential Portion (85%): \$850,000
Number of Households: 9,605
Savings Per Household Per Year: \$88.49
Savings Per Month: \$7.37
Savings Per Day: \$0.24
\$0.24 per day...

Impacts to the public

Members of the public will experience an increase in response times because fewer apparatus and personnel will be responsible for the same amount of work or more. There will be a reduction in the ability of on-duty firefighting staff to complete essential tasks in a timely manner during emergency responses. All of this will result in a decrease to the township's public safety.

What can the public do?

Members of the public can contact their ward councilor, councilor at-large, mayor, deputy mayor, and/or Township Manager and demand a top-notch properly-staffed fire department. They can join our members and community supporters at the Township Council Meeting on February 24th, and share your concerns for "The most urgent priorities of restoring and right-sizing staffing" - quote from NJ Community Solutions LLC report

Members of the Montclair Community can follow along for updates and further information by visiting their social media pages @MontclairFirefightersFoundation on Facebook and Instagram