



6. Fire Services

WHAT IS THE SERVICE?

The goal of Fire Services is to protect the life and property of citizens and businesses from fire and other hazards. The three primary fire safety activities provided in communities in support of these objectives are:

- ▶ Public education and fire prevention
- ▶ Fire safety standards and enforcement
- ▶ Emergency response

In some municipalities, depending on response agreements between Fire Services, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), and hospital protocols, responses to medical calls can also be a significant activity.

OMBI municipalities vary significantly in their geography and urbanization, with some municipalities containing both urban and rural areas. In Ontario, municipalities use full-time, volunteer or composite (a mix of full-time and volunteer) staffing models.

To improve the comparability of the information in this report, separate urban and rural results have been provided where appropriate. Urban areas have been defined as those served by full-time firefighters stationed with their vehicles on a continuous basis.

Rural areas are typically served by volunteer firefighters who are engaged in other professions but are on call to respond to emergencies as they arise. The one notable OMBI exception to this is the City of Thunder Bay, which uses full-time firefighters to serve both urban and rural areas. Where this report provides separate rural and urban data, Thunder Bay's results have been summarized entirely as 'urban' to improve the comparability with other municipalities served by full-time firefighters.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES?

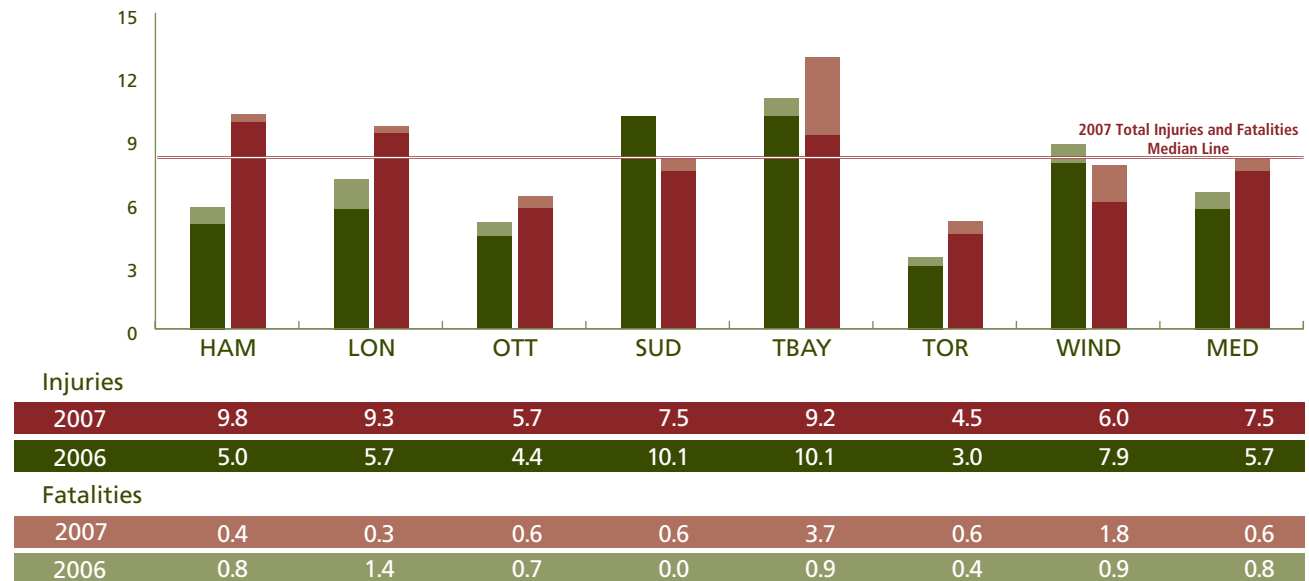
Issues facing the delivery of Fire Services include:

- ▶ Complex response demands - different types of emergencies, such as chemical spills, motor vehicle accidents, blackouts, floods and storms, and the knowledge requirements and provision of appropriate training and equipment to do so
- ▶ Compatibility of different communications systems with other emergency responders such as emergency medical services and police
- ▶ Human resources - recruitment and retention of volunteer firefighters

WHAT ARE THE RESULTS?

How many injuries and fatalities resulted from residential fires?

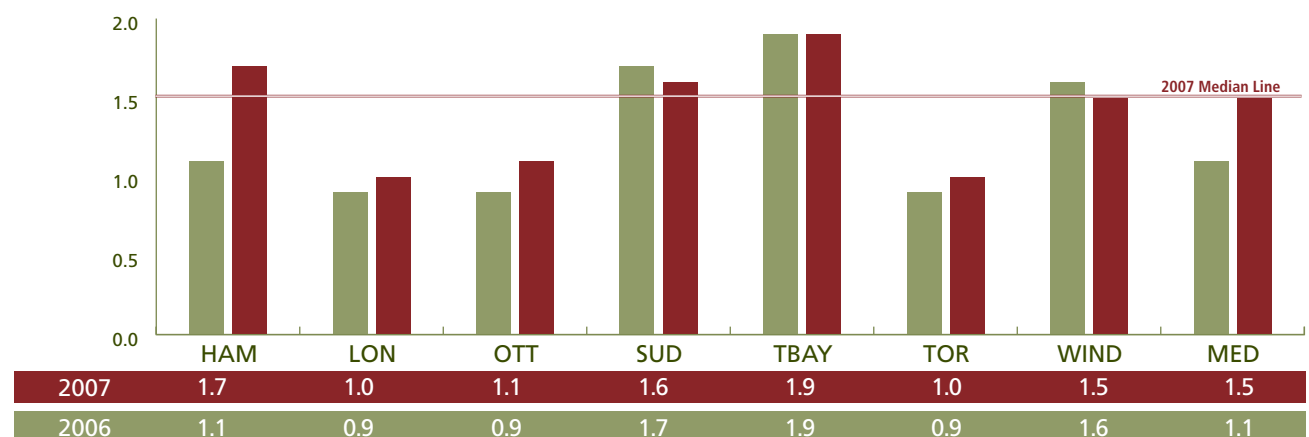
FIG. 6.1 Residential Fire-Related Injuries and Fatalities per 100,000 Population



One of the primary goals of fire services is to prevent and protect citizens from fire-related injuries. Figure 6.1 provides results for the rate of fire-related injuries and fire-related fatalities and illustrates the total for both injuries and fatalities per 100,000 population.

How many fires result in property losses?

FIG. 6.2 Rate of Residential Structural Fires with Losses per 1,000 Households



Towards the objective of preventing fire-related property loss, figure 6.2 shows the incidence of residential fires involving property loss per 1,000 households.

What is the cost of fire services for each vehicle hour?

FIG. 6.3 Fire Operating Cost per In-Service Vehicle Hour

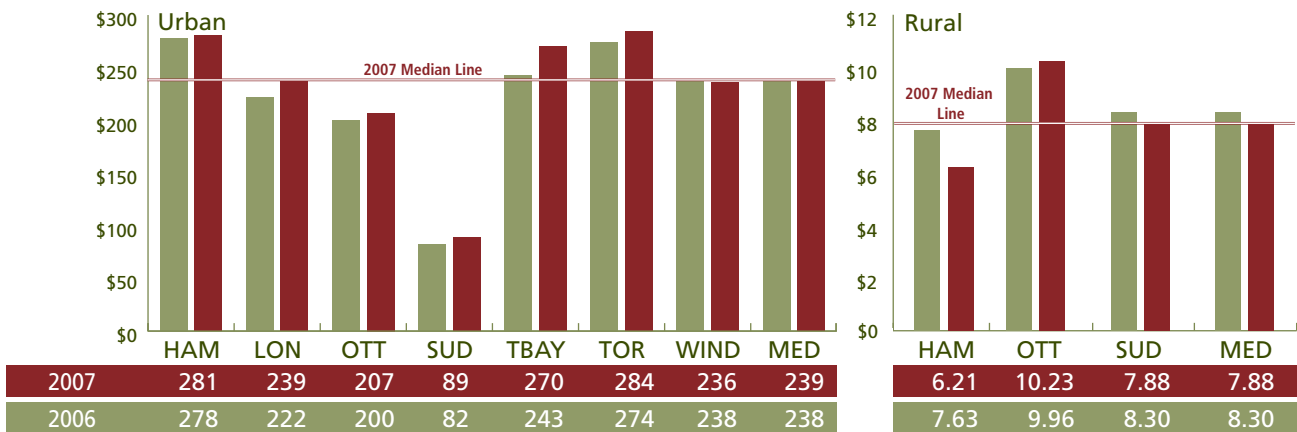


Figure 6.3 illustrates the cost per hour to have a front-line fire vehicle available to respond to emergency calls in the urban and rural areas of municipalities.

In order to respond to emergencies, each municipality has a different mix of vehicle types and staffing models, reflecting its fire and community risks. The key front-line fire vehicles for emergency response are pumpers, aerials, water tankers, rescue units, and bush trucks.

In urban areas, Sudbury’s costs are significantly lower because of specialized equipment such as bush trucks and water tankers that are located in some of their fire stations to combat forest fires. These vehicles are in-service, but unlike other vehicles do not have fully dedicated staff (leading to lower costs), and instead utilize firefighters from other fire vehicles, should the need for their use arise.

The cost per vehicle hour for rural areas served by volunteer firefighters tends to be much lower than urban areas served by full-time firefighters because volunteer firefighters are paid only for the hours in which they are actively responding to emergencies.

WHAT SHOULD YOU CONSIDER WHEN REVIEWING THESE RESULTS?

Each municipality's results are influenced to varying degrees by a number of factors, including:

- ▶ The nature and extent of fire risks - the type of building construction or occupancy (apartment dwellings vs. single family homes vs. institutions such as hospitals)
- ▶ Geography - topography, road congestion, fire station locations, and travel distances from those stations
- ▶ Fire prevention and education efforts - enforcement of the fire code, and presence of working smoke alarms
- ▶ Differences in collective agreements – differences in what stage of multi-year agreements municipalities are at and also differences in agreements about how many staff are required on a fire vehicle

For more information about the results, contact the Municipality's representative listed in Appendix F, page 94.