



## CASE STUDY Texas Township Fire & Rescue



### Texas (MI) Township Fire & Rescue Leverage Technology to Address Staffing Challenges

"Finding people to work on Michigan's first responder frontlines is harder than it has ever been, according to veterans in the emergency service industry," [this ABC news source reports](#). Many contributing factors are outside the control of fire and EMS leaders, such as pandemic burnout, keeping up with an increasing population to serve, and finding time for the stringent training and recertification requirements. Staffing shortages in the fire and rescue service have broad and serious impacts, such as slower response to fires and emergency patient care. However, in spite of these challenges, there is one area that fire and EMS leaders do have control over to help their thinly stretched teams, which is **adding technology to remove many manual, time-consuming administrative processes, and provide mobile technology to simplify job requirements for their staff.**

#### About Texas Township Fire & Rescue

Texas Township Fire & Rescue Department, located about two hours west of Detroit, Michigan, faces the same challenges as many small to medium municipalities in servicing a community's fire and EMS needs with volunteer and paid-on-call staff. The area has been expanding in population and transforming from a rural farming community to a white-collar, vacation community that offers appealing tax rates for large vacation homes. Texas Township F&R operates on a staff of six full-time firefighters and a Chief, plus a full-time administrative Captain. The rest of the 17 staff are paid-on-call members who have other full-time or part-time jobs.

#### Training From Home With Online Options

Matthew Dawson, the Training Officer at Texas Township F&R, said that implementing the [Vector LMS Training Management platform](#) has saved him a lot of administrative time in managing the department's training program, and made it easier for their 17 paid-on-call personnel to fit in their training requirements since they can "complete an online training course from their home with one hand while holding their baby in the other."

Matthew, who has served at Texas Township F&R for over a decade, is in charge of the training records, lesson plans, and training SOGs/SOPs for the agency. He implemented the LMS Training Management System in 2019 to keep all the training records and policies in one place, as well as assign and track all their training and policy acknowledgements. With Vector's EMS online courses that are approved by CAPCE and the state of Michigan, as well as the NFPA training to meet their ISO requirements, Matthew can deliver online training for their staff to take when it fits into their schedules, as well as assign and track all of their own custom training. The LMS Training Management system makes it easy to track all their required training and license expirations, and ensure every hour of training is accounted for and no one falls behind.

## A Better Tool for Training Management

Before implementing Vector's LMS Training Management System, the agency was using an RMS to track their training hours, but it didn't have the ability to assign, deliver, and track the training, nor the dashboards and comprehensive reporting to show who was behind on what. Vector's online course library has over 2,800 courses for public safety, OSHA, HR, leadership and more to complement Texas Township's custom training.

"Prior to implementing the LMS Training Management System, I'd have to sort through a filing cabinet and manually count hours to figure out where personnel were at in their training requirements," said Matthew. "Training attendance was down and it was common for someone to tell me a week out about a required training they needed."

Now, Matthew can easily see exactly what each person needs and ensure everyone is getting the required hours without having to scramble to fit in last minute training. He has replaced some of the in-person EMS trainings with the online courses to make it easier for his busy paid-on-call staff, and assigns three courses each quarter that are refreshers for what the first responders might be facing, like the RSV season.

## Consolidating and Replacing Multiple Software Programs

"We were able to consolidate and replace multiple software programs with the LMS Training Management System," Matthew explained. "Anything and everything training related now goes in the system. It's our complete training record for all required training, OSHA training, plus electives that our training committee have deemed important. We use the LMS digital bulletin board on the home page to post announcements, inspirational videos, and resource links, and use the LMS calendar to manage training signups."

## Making Maintenance Work Orders Easy

In 2021, Texas Township F&R took another step toward digitizing and automating manual processes by implementing Vector's Check It asset management system. Prior to Check It, they relied on pen and paper systems, and what people remembered, to manage all their engines and heavy-duty equipment maintenance. Now their drivers can use their phones to do their checks and easily create a maintenance ticket from the program if something doesn't pass. They use QR codes to scan and update inventory counts and can use Check It to place a reorder ticket. "Check It makes work orders easy," said Matthew.

## Promoting a Positive Workforce Culture Helps Attract and Retain Staff

Texas Township F&R, like many public safety agencies, operates on a lean staff, but they have leveraged technology to let it do more of the work and allow them more time to focus on other areas. In addition to their training and asset management programs, Texas Township F&R also implemented Guardian Tracking in 2020 to help "collect more positive behaviors." Guardian Tracking is a performance management and early intervention solution that helps transform the culture within agencies by equipping personnel with a process for consistent feedback and positive recognition, and helps identify personnel in need of intervention before an adverse event takes place. Now supervisors and peers are equipped with a simple tool to provide systematic feedback and recognition to help catch more of the positive acts that might otherwise go unnoticed.

Firefighters and medics who do not receive consistent feedback or know how they contribute to the "big picture" are more likely to suffer burnout and seek employment elsewhere. This proactive approach to create a workforce culture that attracts and retains first responders is just one more example of the impressive steps Texas Township F&R have taken to address the staffing challenges agencies across Michigan, and the entire country, are facing.