

Creation and Oversight of Norwich's Volunteer Fire Departments

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Issue

Provide a brief overview of (1) any legislation establishing volunteer fire departments in Norwich, and (2) state oversight of volunteer fire departments.

Summary

Of the [five volunteer fire departments](#) located in Norwich (the Yantic, Occum, Taftville, East Great Plains, and Laurel Hill fire departments), it appears that only the Yantic fire department was created through state legislation (in 1847). The other four volunteer fire departments in Norwich appear to have independently incorporated as non-stock corporations that provide fire protection services under an agreement (contract) with the city. No department is a special taxing district.

Volunteer fire departments that do not operate as special taxing districts are generally regulated by the local municipality, as part of the fire protection contract they enter into. Volunteer fire departments are subject to limited state oversight with respect to their firefighting services. While the state sets certain standards for regulated fire services (such as on firefighters' training, healthcare, pensions, and compensation), whether a fire department is subject to state standards depends on specific circumstances, such as (1) whether its firefighters are considered municipal employees, (2) whether the department is deemed a political subdivision of the state, (3) the number of hours a volunteer department serves each week, and (4) whether volunteers are compensated. In practice, it appears that generally, volunteer fire departments are not covered by most of the state laws and regulations on fire services.

Norwich Fire Departments' State Filings and 1847 Legislation

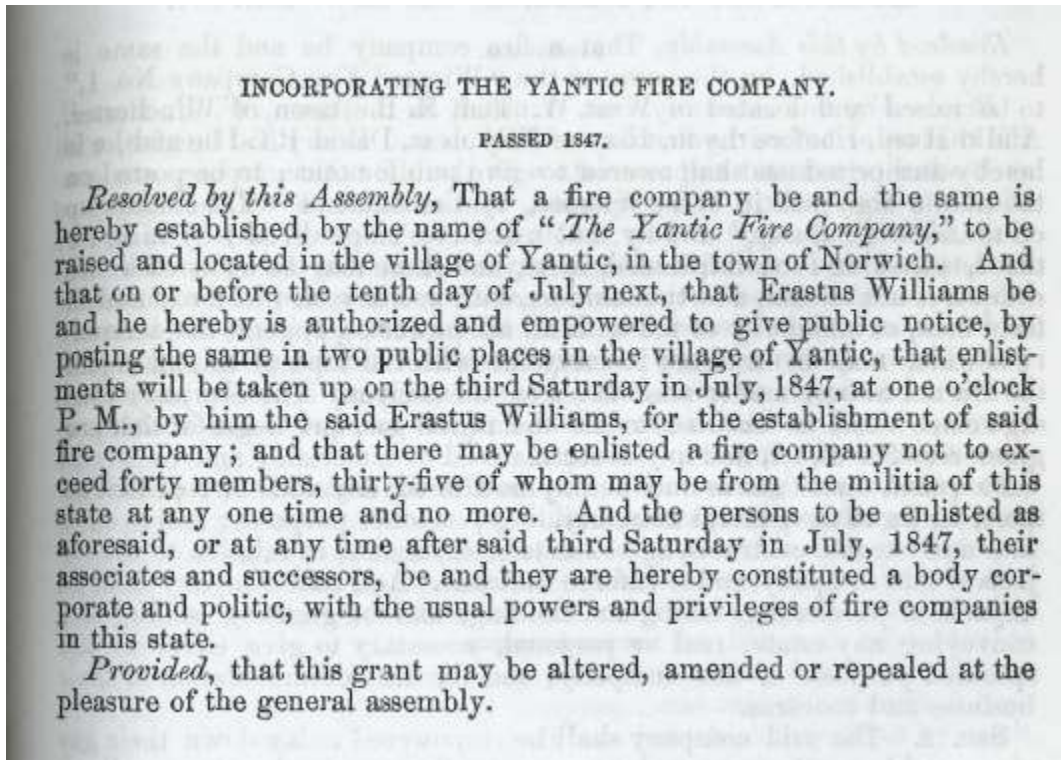
Using the Secretary of the State's (SOTS) business records search, we compiled the following table showing each fire department's name, listed formation date, and organization type.

Table 1: Norwich Fire Departments

Business Name	Year Formed	Business Type
East Great Plain Volunteer Fire Co., Inc.	1953	Non-Stock
Laurel Hill Volunteer Fire Company	1949	Non-Stock
Occum Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.	1966	Non-Stock
Taftville Fire Company, No. 2, Inc.	1920	Non-Stock
Yantic Fire Engine Company	1884 (this appears to be the year of its first filing, not its incorporation)	Special Chartered (see below)

Yantic Fire Engine Company

The Yantic fire department is a special charter corporation, which means it was created by a special act of the legislature. The legislature incorporated the Yantic Fire Engine Company in 1847 and it appears that it filed its first report with SOTS in 1884. The Legislative Library did not find any subsequent legislation related to the 1847 legislation. This is the text of the incorporating legislation:



State Oversight of Volunteer Fire Departments

Generally, volunteer fire departments are regulated by the municipality that contracts, or otherwise arranges, for their services. While the state provides recommendations and training opportunities to volunteer fire departments, it generally does not require compliance with set standards. A limited number of state requirements apply to volunteer fire departments. For example, these departments are required to maintain their equipment in conformity with certain national standards ([CGS § 7-310a](#)). State law also provides certain benefits and protections to volunteer departments, such as certain liability immunity and indemnification ([CGS §§ 7-311 & 7-313c](#)) and Workers' Compensation eligibility ([CGS § 7-314a et seq.](#)).

Related Bills From Current Legislative Session

[HB 5276](#) (2026) would require volunteer fire departments and volunteer ambulance companies to comply with the state's Occupational Safety and Health Act (Conn-OSHA) as employers unless they are regulated by the federal OSHA law. In effect, this would require volunteer fire department firefighters to complete certain training and submit to inspections.

[sHB 5460](#) (2026) would, among other things, require the Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection (DESPP), by July 1, 2027, to create a registry of all career and volunteer firefighters to verify their training, credentials, and program eligibility.

Further Information

[Special Act 21-12](#) required the Office of Policy and Management (OPM) to conduct a study of obstacles to merging or consolidating fire districts or departments. On January 12, 2022, OPM published its [final report](#), which among other things, includes a summary of the obstacles and the costs and benefits of consolidating of fire districts or departments and recommendations for improving services.

In May of 2025, the comptroller published a [special examination](#) on the status of the firefighter profession in Connecticut. The report addresses firefighter recruitment and retention, as well as providing an overview of firefighting services across the state, based on a survey sent to each department. According to the report, volunteer fire departments make up 61% of fire departments in Connecticut, and 88 municipalities have only a volunteer department.

For more information on laws relating to firefighters and fire departments, please see [this DESPP webpage](#).

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