

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

BELLINGHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

2020 – the year we wish we could forget, but probably never will. It marked a year of loss for BFD with the tragic deaths of former Chief Roger Christiansen and active Firefighter/Ladder Operator Brian Cain. 2020 also brought to us the COVID 19 pandemic that changed the way we live and work. While 2020 saw a reduction in emergency medical calls, every one of them became more complicated and cumbersome to deal with.

Here at BFD, COVID changed the way that we prepare for calls, the equipment we use, how we dispatch calls, conduct trainings, and inspections. There was no division of the department that was not affected by these changes. Thanks to diligent work by our infection control experts, we were able to adopt several changes very early that allowed us to make it through the year with no work related COVID cases amongst our employees.

On a positive note – 2020 brought 17 new career firefighters and 10 new volunteer firefighters to the organization. The career members were to fill new positions gained in the 2020 budget and to cover attrition. We also continued updating our fleet; ordering another new fire engine and continued to lead the County's paramedic training program starting a new class of paramedics in January.

Check out the division reports for more information on what your fire department has been up to the last year. We look forward to continuing to serve and living up to our mission of Helping People Every Day!

Fire Chief, Bill Hewett



OPERATIONS DIVISION

The Operations Division is the “Boots on the Ground” part of the Department that is responsible for providing the direct fire and emergency medical services to the residence and visitors to the City of Bellingham and Whatcom County Fire District 8. Our 140 full time employees plus 16 in the communications division, along with 20 volunteer firefighters with District 8 staff our 9 stations. 32 personnel are on duty daily to respond to the over 21,000 annual emergency calls. Seven fire engines, eight ambulances, 3 medic units, a ladder truck, and a fire boat are available to respond.

In addition, along with the rest of the world, we responded and adapted to the worldwide pandemic. The Department quickly implemented new infectious disease procedures and protocols, bought new PPE, and restricted access to our stations to insure we were response ready. These fast actions resulted in no work related Covid 19 infections to our employees and allowed us to maintain full staffing throughout the year. In addition, our incident management team helped staff Whatcom County’s Emergency Management Operations Center for most of the year.

While the day to day operations were ongoing, the operations division had several well deserved retirements in 2020. These led to several promotions and the hiring and training of 13 new firefighters. To help support operations, through a Department of Ecology Grant, the Department replaced our aging portable radios. In addition, we put a new fire engine in service and placed orders for two community paramedic vans and a second engine. The continuous updating of our equipment and apparatus will help us ensure that we are prepared to *Help People Everyday* in the years to come.



Assistant Chief, Dave Parker

LIFE SAFETY DIVISION

The Life Safety Division leads the fire department's fire and injury prevention efforts through a variety of proactive, risk reduction programs. These activities include safety inspections, construction plan review of new buildings and subdivisions, public education, fire code enforcement, and fire investigations. The division is staffed by five members – a Division Chief/Fire Marshal, a Senior Fire Inspector, two Fire Inspectors, and a Fire Permit Technician.

Development and construction activities remained strong in Bellingham 2020 despite the COVID-19 pandemic. After a brief interlude to determine how to safely continue working amid the pandemic, the local construction industry hit full stride again in late-Spring and has not slowed. Final construction valuation figures for 2020 were on par with 2016-2017 annual figures at \$188M in total valuation. This represents a 26% decrease from the City's high-water mark of \$257M, which was established in 2019. We continue to see a noticeable shift towards larger, more complex buildings and infill housing projects.

During the brief slowdown in new construction, Life Safety Division fire inspectors took the opportunity to perform fire access inspections at Bellingham's 130 largest apartment buildings and complexes throughout the City. Each apartment building with 25 or more dwelling units received a fire access inspection. In addition, inspectors partnered with the Bellingham School District to ensure that each school received a fire access inspection. These exterior inspections focused on suitable addressing, fire lane marking, access to sprinkler and fire alarms systems, and functional building access keys to ensure that our crews can respond to fire and EMS calls as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Roughly 80% of the Life Safety Division's 2020 work hours were dedicated to new construction plan reviews and associated inspections. Staff conducted 2,300 plan reviews and 1,250 construction inspections of buildings and life safety systems. To meet this demand while continuing to enhance safety elsewhere in our City, the Life Safety Division is actively pursuing an increase to its current staffing model, which has been in place since 2006.

COVID-19 had a dramatic effect on our department's public education activities during 2020. With safety measures in place to limit the spread of infection, in-person public education events were discontinued. We hope to resume 2nd grade fire safety presentations, independent and assisted living facility fire safety presentations, fire station tours, and community safety fairs in the near future.

Life Safety Division staff members look forward to keeping our City safe and vibrant in 2021 and the years to come!

Fire Marshal, Ron Richard



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES DIVISION

The Bellingham Fire Department EMS Division is proud of what we have accomplished as an organization during 2020. Under the most strained and taxing of circumstances our Firefighter-EMTs, Firefighter-Paramedics, staff, dispatchers, and loved-one's responded to the demands of the CoVID-19 health crisis while maintaining regular agency operations.

The work of our Exposure Control Group, led by Captain Jason Garat, positioned BFD to rapidly adapt to the challenges presented by responding to a global health crisis. Our protocols, policies and procedures were adopted and modeled by most Whatcom County Fire and EMS agencies. Kristia Peschka's navigation of supply chain intricacies built a stockpile of PPE which allowed us to maintain our proven pandemic response model throughout the year. The ability of our crews and staff to implement major changes to our daily operations and station-life is a testament to the character and resiliency of the BFD workgroup. At the beginning of 2020 the State of Washington granted our Community Paramedic (CPM) program "pilot" status based on our innovative and permissive protocols and practices. Paramedic Aaron Wolven was a key player assisting the move of the Drop-in Center to Bellingham High School to lessen the chance of CoVID-19 spread in that shelter and provide a safe space for one of our most vulnerable populations. Captain Frank addressed City Council to provide updates on progress of the CPM office and plans for that program.

Captain Stevenson once again provided his skill and talents to our 2020 Paramedic training class. The 2020 cohort included members of neighboring agencies resultant of the cooperative efforts of Labor and Management of both BFD and North Whatcom Fire Rescue. The strength and success of our medic training program is undoubtedly linked to the talents and abilities of our seasoned BFD Paramedics and the many talented individuals who provide time, instruction, and preceptorship to our students. In July, our Supervising Physician, Dr. Emily Junck moved to Alaska. We thank her for her many contributions to the BFD during her tenure, and welcome Dr. Ralph Weiche as her replacement. Dr. Weiche is an established Emergency Room Physician at St. Joseph's Hospital and BFD looks forward a long-lasting partnership ahead.

Chris Hughes was instrumental in implementation of Code Stat which allows us to measure and improve CPR performance following cardiac arrests. Paramedic Joe Bertels and the CPR Training Group revived the High-Performance CPR project rolling out a program that will be adopted by all Whatcom County EMS Agencies. Early data is showing this program will dramatically impact survivability and outcomes of cardiac arrest patients.

2020 marks the beginning of coordinated county-wide EMT-B training through EMS Connect and development of a three (3) year coordinated training plan for Whatcom County. We also negotiated a ten (10) year contract for ALS equipment, and BLS power gurneys, between Whatcom County and the Stryker Corporation and accepted delivery of two (2) new ALS ambulances from Braun Northwest. The two new apparatus were made response ready through the efforts of Paramedic Trow and Paramedic Fisher.

As we enter 2021 the BFD EMS Division renews its commitment to provide compassionate and expert care to those we are called to assist, and we look forward to creating positive and meaningful impacts in the lives of the people we serve.

As 2020 closes, the BFD EMS Division looks forward to addressing the challenges 2021 and renews its commitment to provide the exceptional care, service, and professionalism our community has come to expect from the Bellingham Fire Department.



Division Chief, Scott Ryckman

TRAINING DIVISION

The Bellingham Fire Department Training Division works to enhance firefighter safety and performance through frequent, high quality training based on current industry standards. We strive to meet all Local, State, and Federal Fire Service training requirements. We are dedicated to providing exceptional Emergency Services to our community while ensuring that our firefighters perform at a high level, avoid injury, and return home safely after each shift. We coordinate and facilitate daily, monthly, quarterly, and annual training to prepare our firefighters for challenges faced in the line of duty. This training is provided through educational classes, scenario based training, and multi-company operations. The COVID Pandemic presented numerous challenges to our organization in 2020, but our Fire Department Administration, Operations Leadership Team, and our line firefighters remained committed to prioritizing safety while serving our community with compassion and skill.

The BFD Training Division provided support to Whatcom Unified at the beginning of the COVID response. Captain Tim VanderMey was assigned to the Operations Group as Food Security Group Supervisor, providing support to Whatcom County Food Banks in adjusting their normal operations to safely distribute food to the community during the pandemic. Upon completion of this assignment, he returned to his normal duties developing and delivering quarterly training to our firefighters. Captain VanderMey worked with the Training Officers from South Whatcom Regional Fire Authority and North Whatcom Fire and Rescue to share training and facilitate Multi-Company/Multi-Agency drills. He also worked closely with Firefighter/Paramedics Joe Bertels and Tyler Nielsen to provide EMT training to include High Performance CPR, and he supported Firefighter/Engine Operator Jason VanDyken in delivering Fire Engine Pump Training as part of the BFD Engine Operator Qualification Program.

The BFD Training Division provides training and support for the Whatcom County Fire District #8 Volunteer Firefighter Program. Captain Jeff Heinrichs is the Program Coordinator, and he oversees the Volunteer Firefighter Recruit Academy, EMT Certification Course, and Shift Ready Training Period, and ongoing training for each Volunteer. There were twenty Volunteer Firefighter Candidates that joined the program in 2020. Twelve are working in the Program and four have been hired as professional firefighters. Ten of our Volunteer Firefighters have been hired into the professional ranks over the past two years.

Training Captains VanderMey and Heinrichs both represented the Bellingham Fire Department at the Whatcom County Training Officers meetings.

With many new members added to the group, they worked together to collaborate in planning for the future training needs of Whatcom County Fire agencies.

Captain Eric Postma joined the Training Division this year and has made a tremendous contribution serving as the Drill Master for two Recruit Academies and supporting our Probationary Firefighter Program. Thirteen new firefighters joined the Bellingham Fire Department in 2020, and all of our department members work hard to support them as they learn to stay safe and perform at a high level in service of our community. Captain Postma also facilitated the Officer Academy, provided support to our Probationary Captain Program, and has been contributing to the Officer Development Program as well.

Each of the Bellingham Fire Department Training Captains did an outstanding job of keeping our members safe while meeting the training needs of the organization in the midst of the COVID Pandemic.

We look forward to 2021 as we plan to build on our Recruit/Probationary Firefighter Program, Engine Operator Program, Boat Operator Program, Ladder Operator Program, Officer Development Program, and more.

Division Chief, Ryan Provencher



COMMUNICATIONS DIVISION

Our Communications Division and the Prospect Communications Center provides County-wide Fire and Emergency Medical System Dispatch services to all Fire and Emergency Medical agencies in Whatcom County. Our 14 Fire/EMS Dispatchers and 1 Fire/EMS Dispatch Supervisor provide call triage and lifesaving Fire/Medical instructions to 911 callers while dispatching emergency Fire/EMS units and monitoring several emergency radio frequencies. In 2020 we processed 49,638 calls resulting in 31,938 CAD incidents.

When thinking of a way to summarize 2020 it would be easy to say our year was about reacting to the Worldwide Pandemic. We did of course continually orient toward new and unique challenges presented by this reality and uncertainty, however one aspect that is often overlooked is the stress and strain this constant change and uncertainty places on a group of people dedicated to serving our community in their worst moments. The women and men that make up Prospect continually oriented to new, changing, and uncertain times with professionalism, poise and resiliency and I could not be more proud of them.

We responded to challenges presented by the Pandemic through a variety of methods. Working with Whatcom County Medic 1 and our supervising physician we developed a screening tool to assist with early identification of potential COVID patients to act as an early warning for emergency responders. We implemented a new protocol to capture data and assist with developing different models of response in the event our Fire/EMS system becomes overloaded with COVID related 911 calls. New isolation and decontamination procedures were put into place. We also developed several different models to address staffing shortages should COVID infections among our dispatchers present a staffing challenge. These are highlights although certainly not an exhaustive list of the unique challenges faced, and solutions enacted during the year of 2020.

Division Chief, Dan McDermott

While a Worldwide Pandemic will likely define a generation and change the way we provide service into the future, we still had our normal deliverables to address as well. In collaboration with MSO Ryckman, MSO Boyko, and our supervising physician, along with the expertise of our Analyst Chris Hughes we identified system efficiencies that reduced ALS call load by nearly 1000 calls per year which is approaching the equivalent of $\frac{1}{2}$ of an ALS unit. Working with Division Chief Provencher, Captain VanderMey, and Radio Shop Bill Haynes we remodeled the programing of BFD's radios some of which includes a visual unit indicator for firefighters in distress. Through this year we identified critical infrastructure needing replacement and developed a plan that is currently being implemented to address this. This project involved collaboration and cooperation with What-Comm, IT, Net-Ops, Finance, Purchasing, EMS Administration, Radio Shop, and numerous outside vendors.

Of course, no year-end summary for Prospect would be complete without talking about the incredible women and men that serve our community as Prospect Dispatchers. In 2020 our dispatchers have delivered babies on 911 calls, been recognized as hometown heroes by the Hotel Bellwether, home schooled their children in response to school closures while working full time, adapted to new COVID dispatch tools, adjusted to new equipment, assisted with the development of new procedures and protocols, oriented to new policies for balancing calls, and adjusted their work schedules to continue our mission all to name a few.

The women and men that make up Prospect are proud to serve our community and will always be there should the need arise.



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION

The City of Bellingham's Department of Emergency Management works closely with City departments, neighborhoods, and local jurisdictions to prepare for, respond to, mitigate, and recover from natural or manmade disasters. In a disaster, traditional 9-1-1 and First Responder capabilities such as fire, police, medics, and utility personnel will be overwhelmed and unable to immediately assist individuals. The Department of Emergency Management helps the City and surrounding community prepare for and respond to these events.

The Office of Emergency Management welcomed a new position in 2020. Liz Coogan joined the office as the Plans Coordinator in February, shortly before the COVID-19 pandemic hit Whatcom County. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically impacted the activities of the Office of Emergency Management in 2020.

When the first positive case of COVID-19 was identified in Whatcom County in March, all previously planned work for the office was set aside to respond. Initial response activities included business continuity planning for City operations, as well as emergency communications about the status of the pandemic and protective actions to be implemented by citizens, businesses, and local, state, and federal government to protect the health and safety of our community.

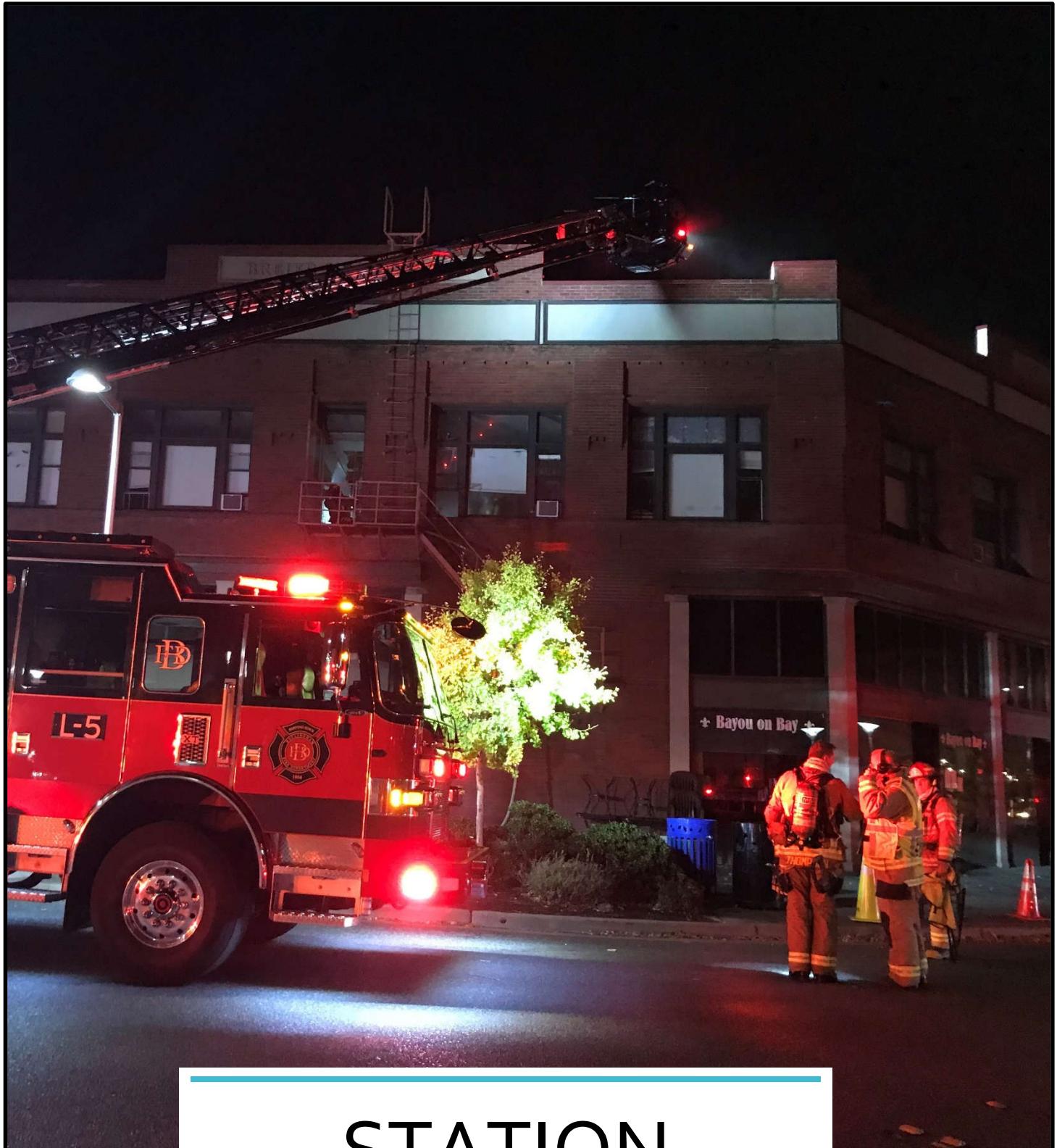
Whatcom Unified Command was stood up in March of 2020 in partnership between the City of Bellingham, Whatcom County, and the Lummi Nation.

Employees from almost all City departments were deployed to work out of the Emergency Operations Center in support of Whatcom Unified Command. In 2020, City employees invested a total of 14,575.62 hours to the local COVID response. Other community partners also devoted staff time and resources to Whatcom Unified Command including Whatcom County and the other incorporated cities within the county, the Port of Bellingham, Western Washington University, Bellingham School District, BP Refinery, North Sound Accountable Community of Health, and many volunteers.

Office of Emergency Management staff spent the remainder 2020 fully devoted to the Whatcom Unified Command COVID response in the Planning Section and Volunteer Branch. Whatcom Unified Command response actions in 2020 included support for local food banks, the provision of childcare for essential workers in partnership with Bellingham School District and the YMCA, relocation of Bellingham's Drop-In Center for people experiencing homelessness to allow for social distancing, the designation and operation of a community isolation and quarantine facility, community-wide COVID testing, and planning for the delivery of COVID vaccine.

Office of Emergency Management





STATION INFORMATION

STATION 1

1800 BROADWAY

BATTALION 1

ENGINE 1

AID 1

EMS 1

EMS 110

MSO

4,927 INCIDENTS IN

2020



STATION 2

1590 HARRIS AVE

ENGINE 2

AID 2

1,903 INCIDENTS IN

2020

STATION 3

1111 BILLY FRANK JR ST

ENGINE 3
AID 3
MEDIC 3

6,208 INCIDENTS IN 2020



STATION 4

2306 YEW ST

ENGINE 4
AID 4

*2,758 INCIDENTS IN
2020*



STATION 5

3315 NORTHWEST AVE

LADDER 5
AID 5

2,433 INCIDENTS IN 2020

MEDIC 10

858 E SMITH RD

MEDIC 10

2,428 INCIDENTS IN
2020



STATION 6

4060 DEEMER ROAD

ENGINE 6

AID 6

MEDIC 6

*4,925 INCIDENTS IN
2020 INCLUDING
The Salish Star*



SALISH STAR

STATION 31

752 MARINE DRIVE

ENGINE 31

AID 31

1,298 INCIDENTS IN

2020



STATION 34

2600 MCKENZIE ROAD

ENGINE 34

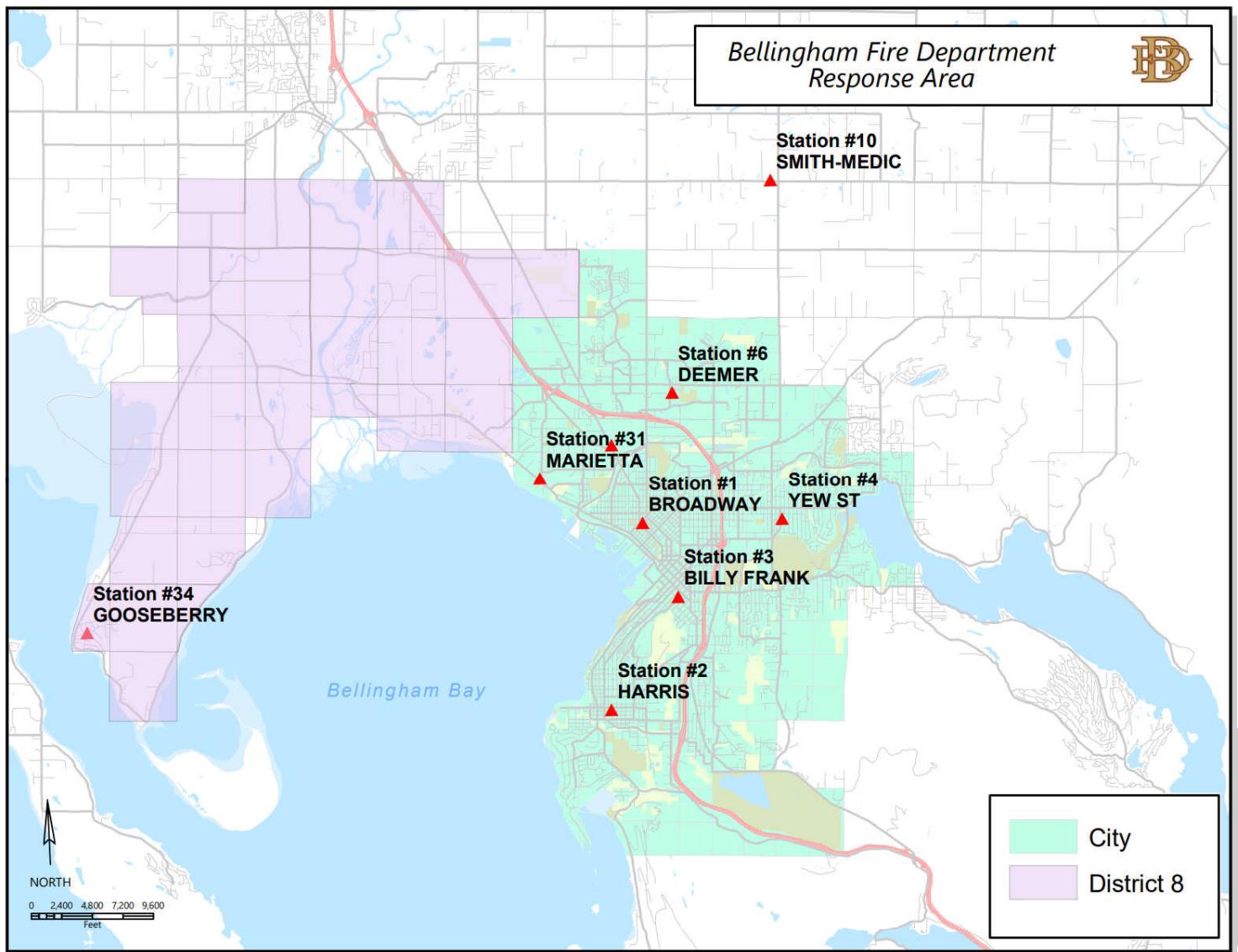
AID 34

846 INCIDENTS IN 2020

2020 INCIDENT DATA

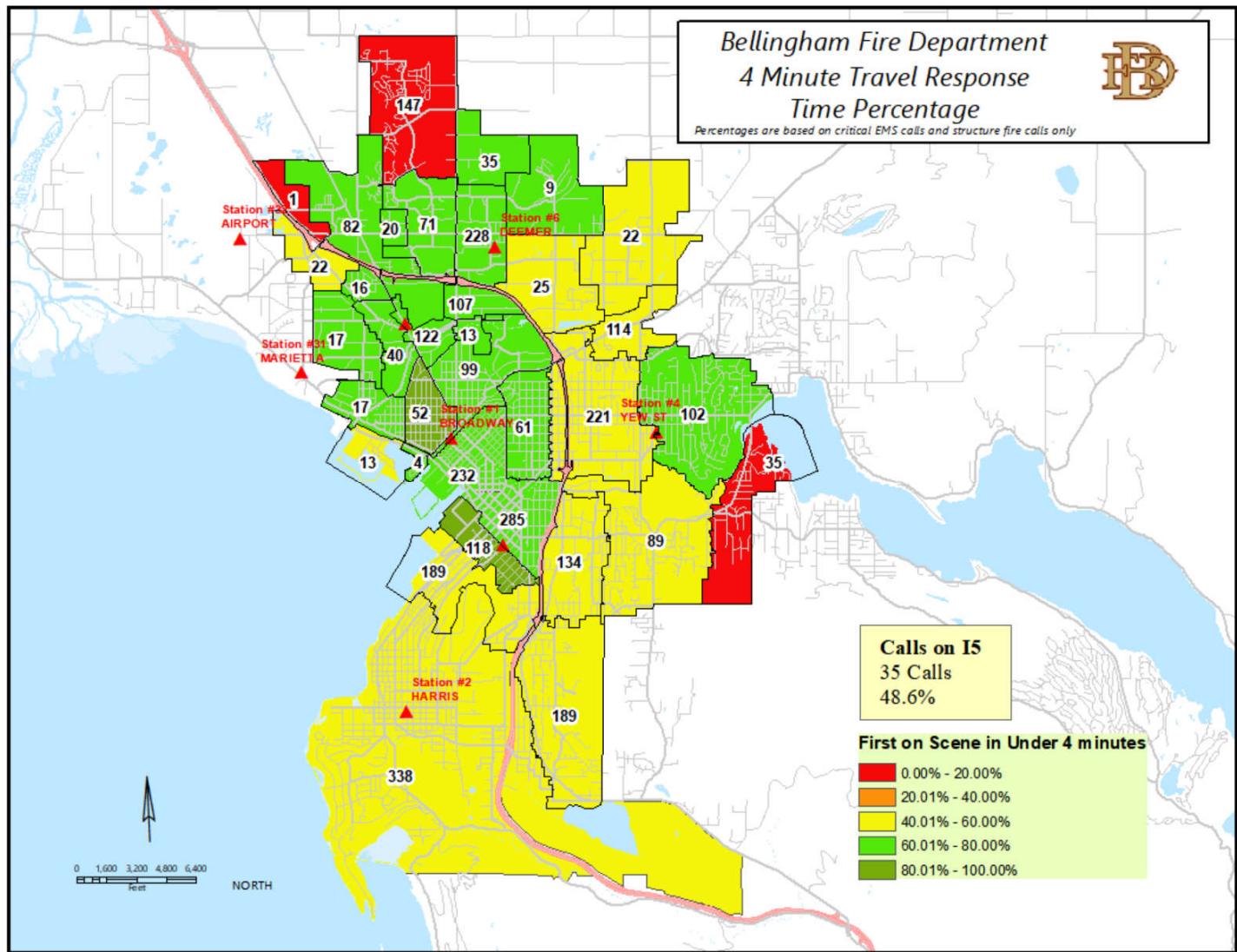


FIRE RESPONSE AREA



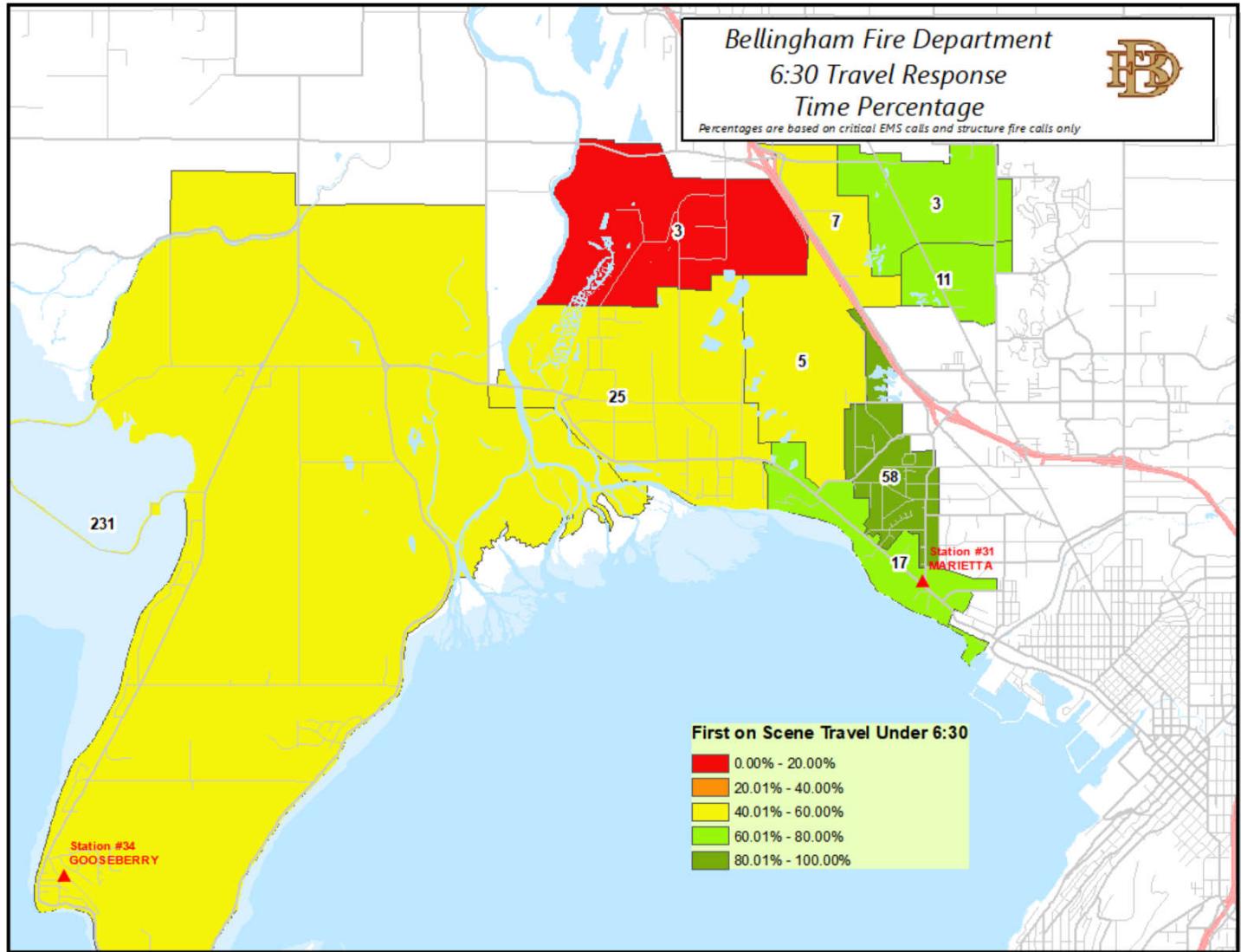
BELLINGHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT

4 MINUTE TRAVEL RESPONSE TIME PERCENTAGE



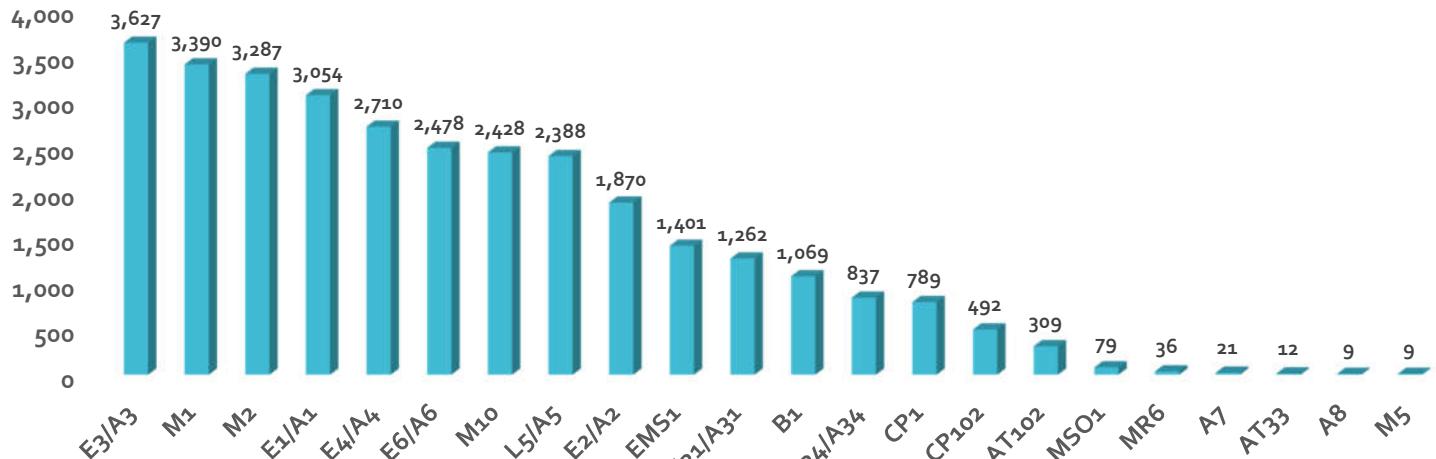
WHATCOM FIRE DISTRICT 8

6.5 MINUTE TRAVEL RESPONSE TIME PERCENTAGE



RESPONSES PER APPARATUS

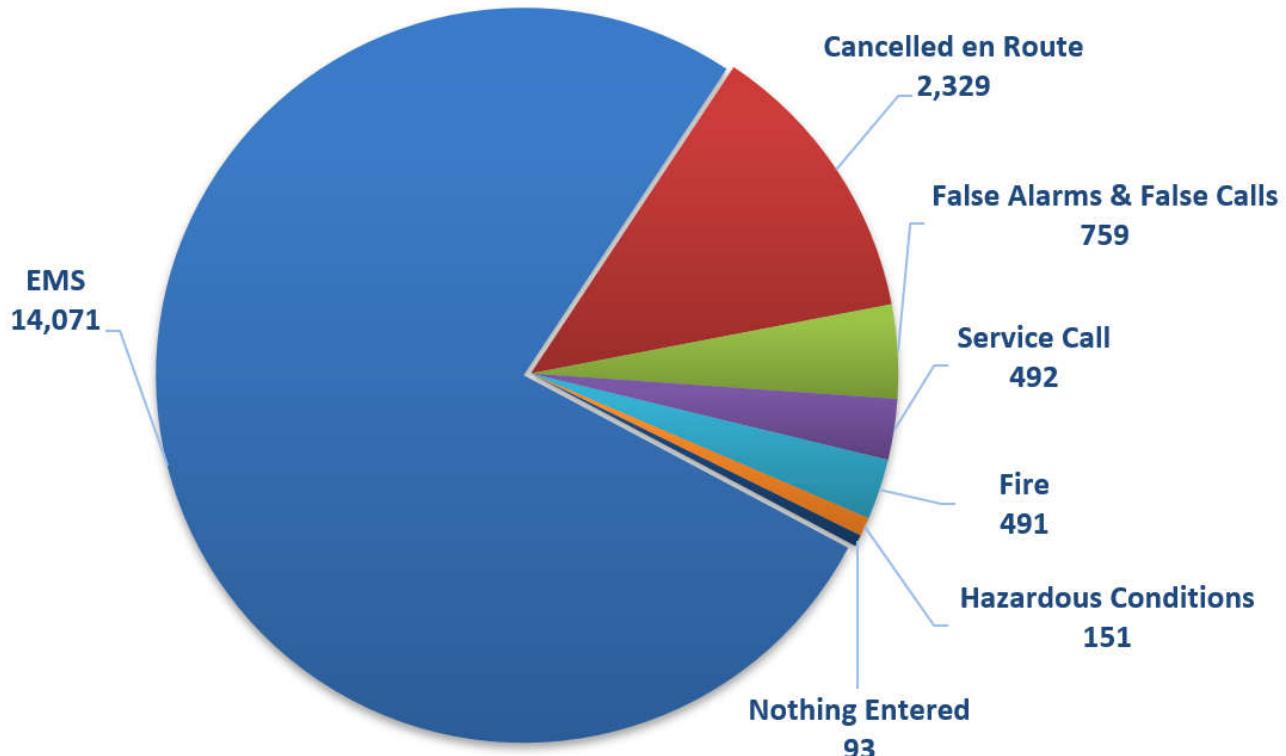
Number of Responses Per Apparatus/Company



INCIDENTS BY TYPE



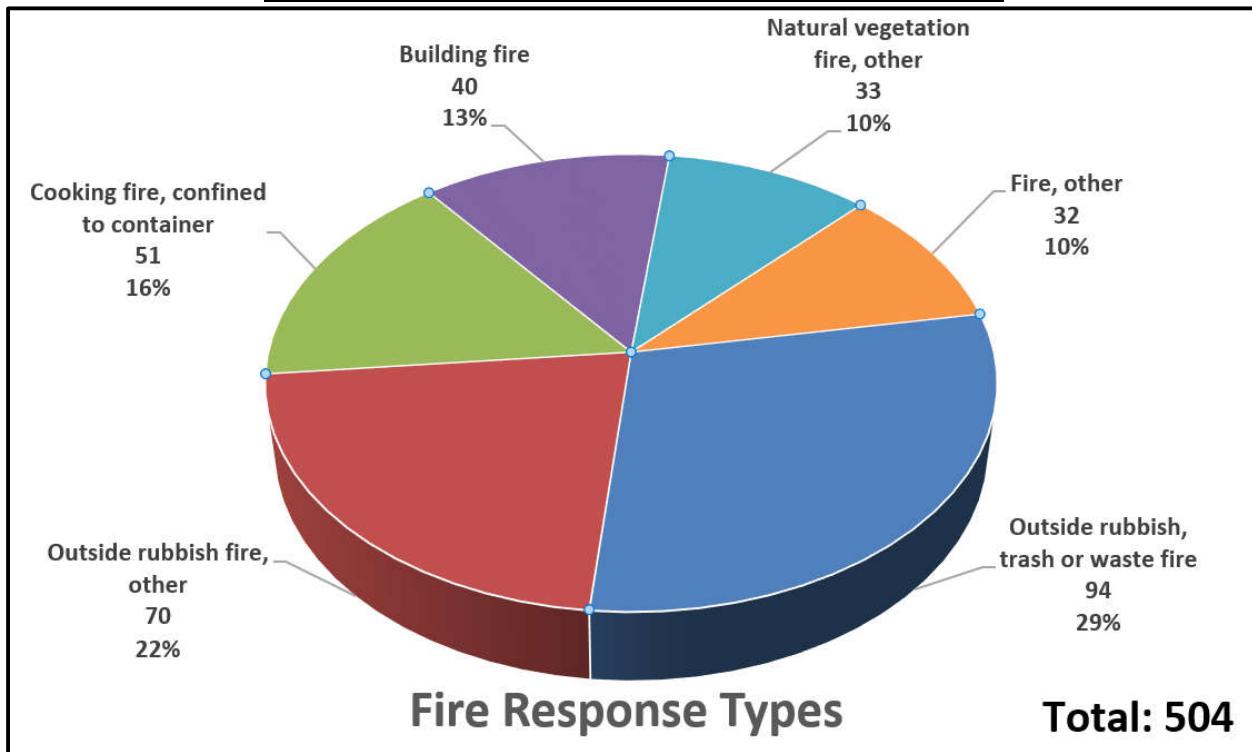
Total: 18,793



EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS

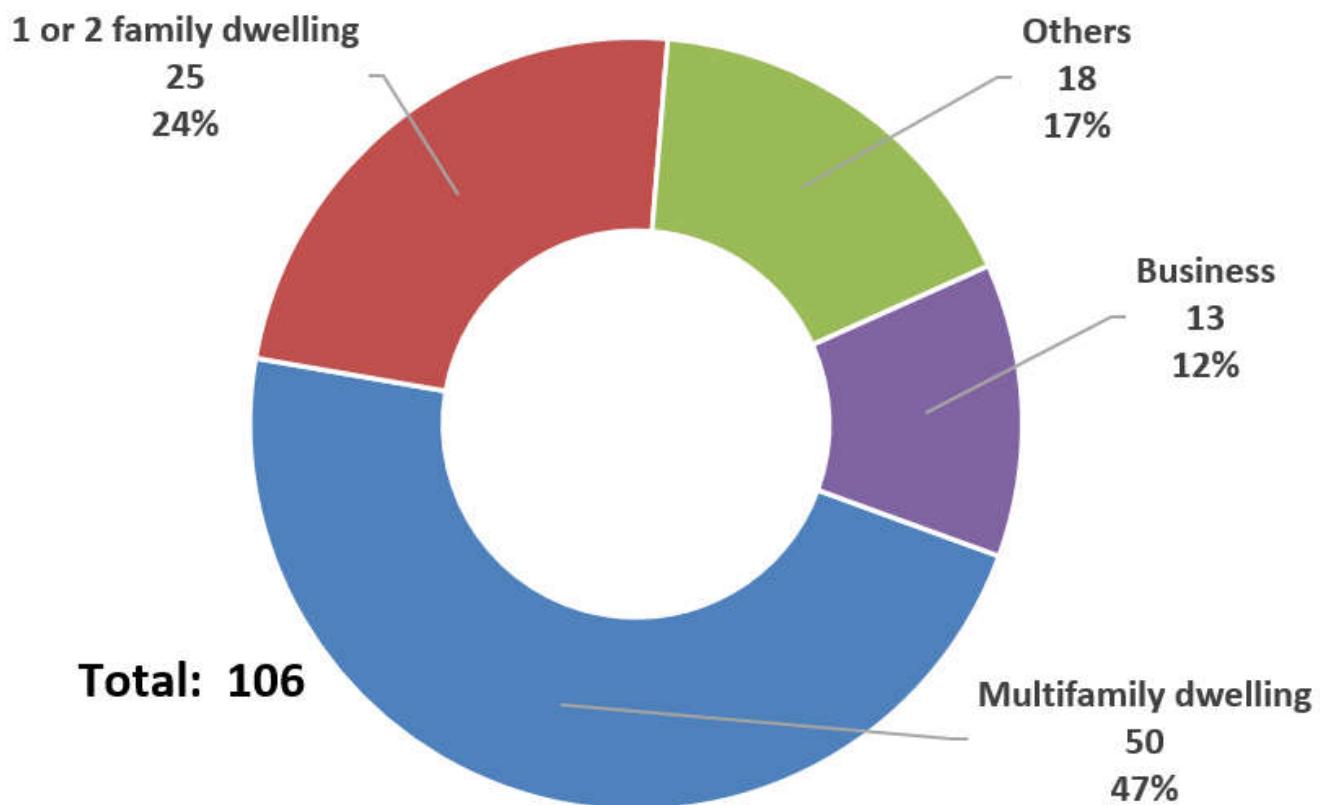


FIRE RESPONSE TYPES



BUILDING FIRES BY OCCUPANCY TYPE

Building Fires by Occupancy Type



TURNOUT TIME BY COMPANY

TIME FROM DISPATCH TO ENROUTE

Apparatus	Median Times	90%	Average
AT102	01:18	02:56	01:21
E1/A1	01:49	03:00	01:47
E2/A2	01:49	02:43	01:39
E3/A3	01:18	02:26	01:21
E4/A4	01:41	02:41	01:38
E6/A6	01:48	02:53	01:47
E31/A31	02:12	03:22	02:04
E34/A34	01:58	03:19	02:00
L5/A5	01:55	03:08	01:52

TIME FROM ENROUTE TO SCENE

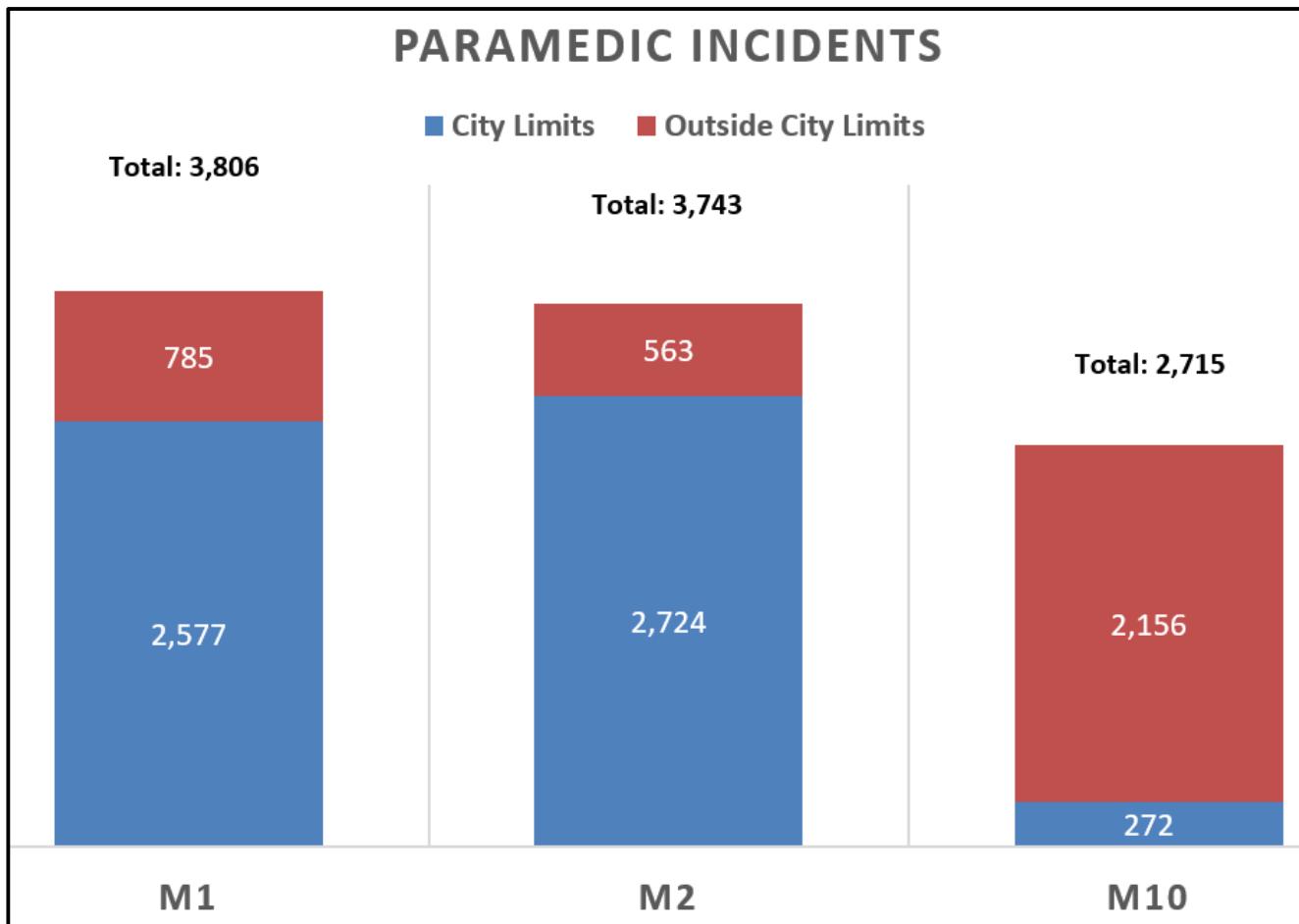
Apparatus	Median Time	90%	Average in
	In First Due	In First Due	First Due
	Area	Area	Area
AT102	05:23	06:43	04:35
E1/A1	02:58	05:14	03:31
E2/A2	03:29	07:45	04:35
E3/A3	02:59	05:50	03:47
E4/A4	03:31	06:21	04:07
L5/A5	03:12	05:22	03:43
E6/A6	03:12	05:57	03:53
E31/A31	03:53	08:38	05:30
E34/A34	05:27	09:30	06:08

EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS

EMS



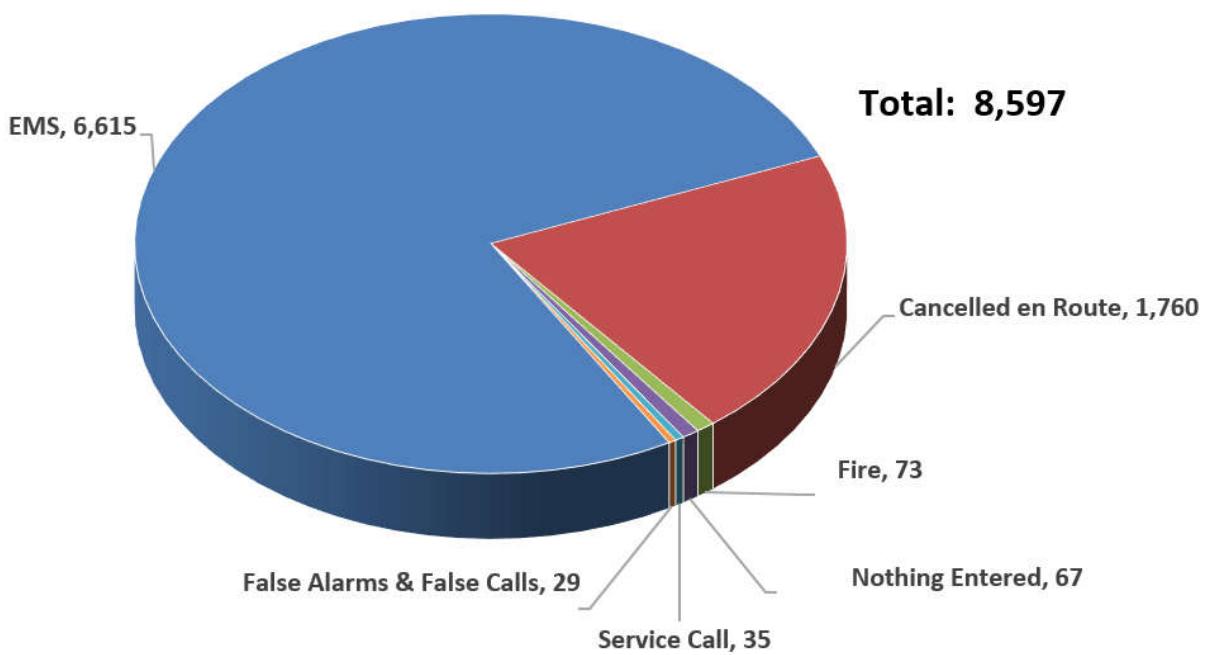
PARAMEDIC INCIDENTS



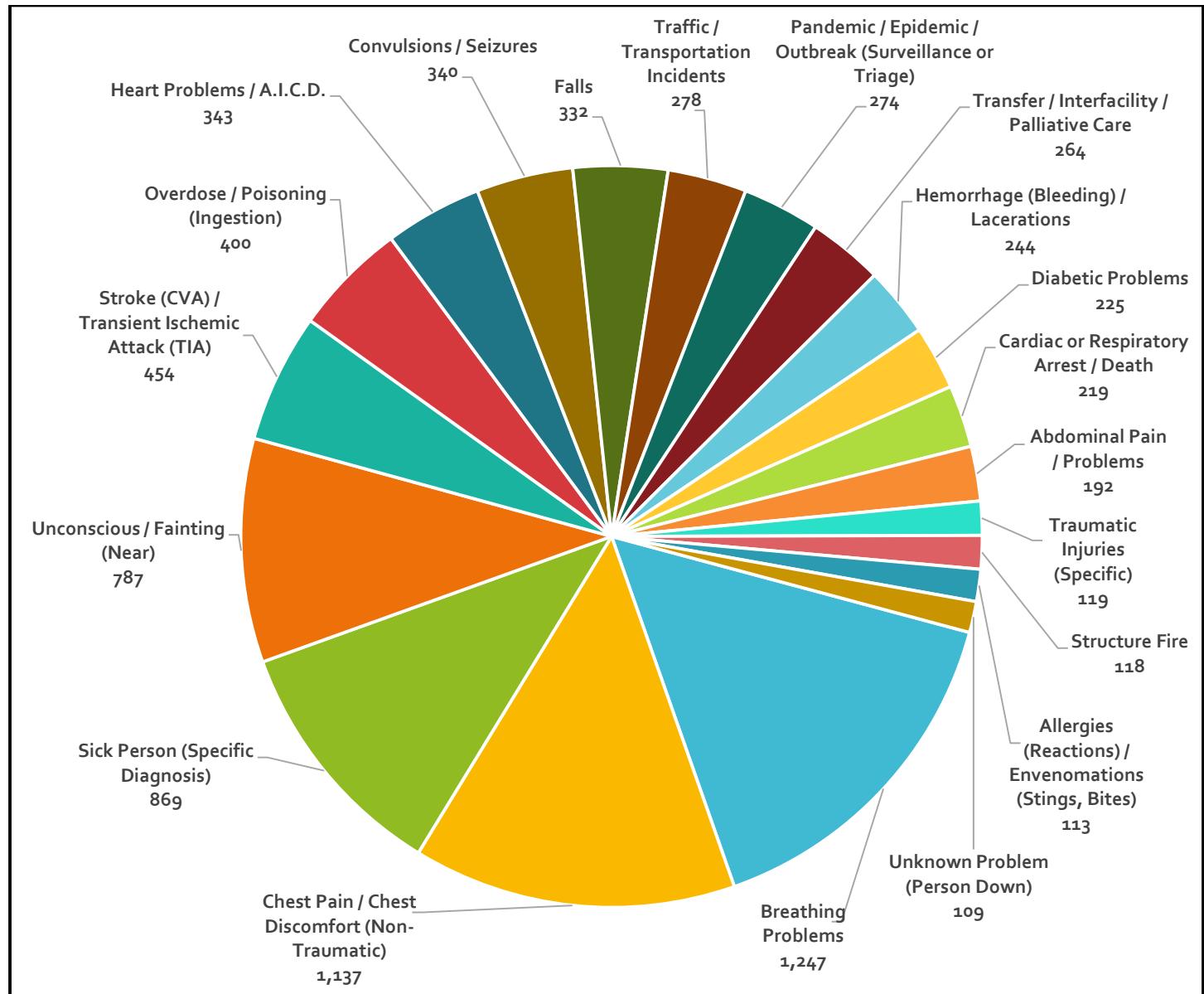
PARAMEDIC INCIDENTS BY TYPE



Incidents by Type



PARAMEDIC RESPONSE SUMMARY



MEDIC RESPONSE TIMES

TIME FROM DISPATCH TO ENROUTE

Apparatus	Median Times	90%	Average
M1	01:14	02:32	01:19
M2	01:28	02:46	01:31
M10	01:29	02:54	01:34
EMS1	01:10	03:03	01:21

TIME FROM ENROUTE TO SCENE

Apparatus	Median Time In City Limits	90% In City Limits	Average in City Limits	Median Time	90%	Average
				Outside Response Area	Outside Response Area	Outside Response Area
M1	05:13	08:36	05:27	09:46	18:53	11:01
M2	05:02	09:07	05:35	12:46	20:46	13:12
M10	07:21	11:34	07:49	13:39	23:08	14:35
EMS1	05:07	09:46	06:07	14:50	23:59	15:00