

CITY OF MILTON FIRE DEPARTMENT



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

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As for nearly everyone, 2021 was another challenging year for the City of Milton Fire Department. The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic continued to affect most of our operations, has presented many challenges and forced us to alter department operations to limit risks to personnel and the public. Related alterations to response protocols have led to a dramatic reduction in total emergency response activity. Despite these many challenges, the department remains well positioned to manage the challenges of the future.

EMERGENCY RESPONSE ACTIVITY

This year, due largely to changes made in response protocols driven by the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to experience a reduction in the overall number of emergency responses. Even with this reduction, 2021 presented several challenging incidents, requiring more resources than the response of the on-duty initial alarm assignment. The total number of emergency calls decreased by 5.68%, to 1,162 calls, from 1,232 the previous year.

Rescue calls, consistently the largest portion of our total call load, increased slightly this year, now totaling 884 calls, amounting to 76% of our total emergency activity. This represents over a 2.3% increase in Rescue calls from 862 in 2020. Rescue calls include: medical emergencies such as strokes, heart attacks, traumatic injuries, falls, etc.; vehicle accidents, including those that involve entrapment, requiring forcible extrication with specialized rescue equipment such as the “Jaws of Life”; as well as other rescue calls like a child locked in a vehicle, elderly who have fallen and need help back into bed (lift assist), and even the occasional animal rescue. In 2021 we responded to 532 medical rescues, 220 vehicle accidents, and 132 other rescue calls. While the number of medical rescues decreased by over 16%, vehicle accidents increased by nearly 35% and the number of other rescues more than doubled, increasing by over 106%. This reflects a dramatic increase in the number of “lift assist” type calls that we have been receiving.

Fire calls, while a smaller portion of our total emergency activity, remain our department’s primary responsibility, and are actually the segment of our responsibility that requires the greatest resources in terms of equipment, training and personnel. Although many fire related incidents are quickly handled by the on-duty crew, we must always respond with the capacity to rapidly bring the full capabilities of the department to bear to effect rescue, protect exposures, and quickly bring a well-developed working structure fire under control. As we can never know when the next “big one” will occur, we must constantly maintain the readiness necessary to manage that incident. This includes continuous training of personnel and maintenance of vehicles and equipment to ensure that all are ready at a moment’s notice. The number of fire related calls decreased, down 39 calls, from 268 in 2020. This year we responded to 229 fire related calls, amounting to 20% of our total responses. These included 50 structure fires, 8 vehicle fires, 7 brush or wildland fires, 112 activated fire alarms or good intent calls, and 52 other fire related calls, such as illegal burning. Activated fire alarms decreased by almost 16%, while all other categories decreased only slightly. Structure fires decreased by over 12%. Most of these fires were outside of our jurisdiction, where we responded under a mutual aid agreement.

Our smallest category of emergency response, hazardous condition calls, this year again made up only 4% of our total emergency activity, but represents potentially the most dangerous aspect of our operations, to both our members and the public. These include: natural and liquefied petroleum (LP) gas incidents; electrical problems such as downed power lines, arcing lines, and transformer fires; fuel leaks and spills; and, all other hazardous conditions such as chemical

releases, train derailments, building collapse, and terrorist acts. These incidents potentially involve very dangerous conditions, present almost endless complexity, and often require responders to initiate operations with very little information, in a very dynamic environment. This year, the number of hazardous condition calls decreased by almost 52%, from 102 in 2020. In 2021 the department responded to 49 hazardous condition calls, including 18 natural gas incidents, 12 electrical incidents, 2 fuel leaks or spills, and 17 other hazardous condition calls.

On 73 occasions last year, our department was dispatched to one emergency call while one or more units were already assigned to a previous call (concurrent calls), a decrease from the 102 concurrent calls the previous year. This still means that over 6.3% of our emergency calls were received while our department was already responding to, or on the scene of a prior emergency. On one occasion we were dispatched to three simultaneous calls during the same period. Five of these concurrent calls occurred in conjunction with mutual aid provided to another jurisdiction. On one occasion a subsequent call was handled by a mutual aid agency providing temporary standby coverage to our district. In every case, an appropriate response was made without undue delay, and no calls have gone unanswered. On 19 occasions Engine 23 was required to respond to a medical emergency in place of Rescue 23, which was managing a previous call. Each of these incidents commits our entire on-duty response capability, leaving no units available to respond to any type of call until one other unit had completed its current assignment and become available to respond to a subsequent call.

While changes in response protocols brought about by the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic have resulted in a marked reduction in the total number of emergency calls, with a corresponding reduction in the number of concurrent calls, there remain a number of occasions in which our department is not available to adequately respond to a fire call or other emergency. On at least two occasions last year, our department was forced to respond to a fire incident with less than the designated crew complement necessary to properly manage the incident. In each case, personnel managed to handle the incident without undue difficulties until additional staffing could be freed up or mutual aid resources could arrive. Every time Engine 23 is required to respond to a fire call with less than its normal crew complement of four firefighters, extreme safety concerns and operational limitations occur, hindering our ability to address the immediate demands on the fireground. Under state law, with less than four personnel on the scene, personnel are limited to exterior operations, unable to initiate the aggressive interior operations which allow us to consistently limit fire growth.

In 2021 several significant incidents occurred that presented unique challenges to the members of our department. Three incidents involved vehicle accidents where the vehicle ran into a building. Two of these vehicles ended up inside the building. The department also responded to four different water rescue calls during the course of the year. Two involved boat collisions, one involved a medical emergency at a beach upriver, and one involved a disabled vessel in distress in Blackwater Bay. On May 13, a car pulled up in front of the station and was found to contain a patient with a gunshot wound. Milton Police and EMS were both requested as patient care was provided by department EMTs. On June 6 we were requested to help remove a child's arm from the floor mat cleaner at a local carwash. Extrication was completed safely, and the boy was able to return home. Most other noteworthy calls involved working structure fires, two of these being within our jurisdiction, and the rest outside of the city while providing mutual aid.

On the evening of April 4, our department was dispatched to fire on Hamilton Bridge Road, just outside the city limits involving a recreational vehicle parked between two houses. The RV was fully-involved, and the fire had spread to the two nearby structures – a single family home and a small garage on the adjoining property. Engine 23's crew worked in coordination with other responding departments to quickly bring this rapidly growing fire under control. Thirteen days later we responded to a working fire on Keyser Lane in Pea Ridge to assist Pace Fire Department in extinguishing the fire in this single-family home.

On the evening of May 4, we were dispatched to a residential structure fire with possible entrapment on Chaffin Street. Engine 23 arrived to find heavy smoke showing and initiated a fast interior attack. Rapidly deteriorating conditions forced the interior crew to back out while mutual aid companies deployed additional hose lines to support a defensive operation. After several minutes of combined exterior attacks, conditions had improved enough to allow reentry, and this fire was quickly brought under control. All occupants had evacuated the structure prior to our arrival, and no injuries were sustained in this operation.

On the afternoon of Saturday, May 22, we were requested as part of a second alarm to a working fire at the former Santa Rosa Motel on US Highway 90 in Pace. Engine 23 arrived to assist several other local departments in fighting this aggressive fire which had spread rapidly throughout this old, abandoned building. After over forty minutes of aggressive firefighting operations this fire was finally brought under control.

Late on the night of Sunday, July 4, Engine 23 was requested on second alarm to a working residential structure fire Pebble Ridge Drive off Avalon Blvd. Firefighting operations continued for nearly an hour to bring this fire under control. The home was rendered uninhabitable and a family of four was displaced.

Very early on the morning of Monday, July 26 a fire was observed in a mobile home on Ridgeway Blvd. The bridge on Hamilton Bridge Road was out, delaying the second-due response from Pace Fire Department, so Engine 23 was requested to respond to the fully involved fire. The fire was brought under control within roughly 15 minutes.

On the afternoon of Thursday, September 16, we were dispatched to a residential structure fire on Ashton Woods Circle. Callers reported heavy smoke coming from the structures. Additional information reported multiple dogs possibly trapped within the house. Chief 23 arrived to find heavy fire burning through a bedroom window on the front of the house. The main body of the fire was quickly knocked down with a hose stream through the window, and the initial entry crew quickly followed up through the front door with a quick attack to quickly bring the fire under control and conduct a primary search. Mutual aid companies arrived, assisting in overhaul and conducting secondary search. Sadly, one of the dogs was located within the house during the secondary search, all other dogs having escaped through a back door left open as the sole occupant evacuated the house.

On the evening of Monday, October 4 lightning struck a home on San Ramon Drive, off Ward Basin Road, causing the fire alarm to activate. East Milton Fire Department responded initially to an "activated residential fire alarm" and arrived to find smoke coming from the eaves of this large, two-story home. The call was upgraded to a structure fire and we were requested as part of the second alarm. The fire was confined within the attic of a portion of the home and was finally brought under control after more than an hour and a half of active firefighting operations.

MUTUAL AID

Maintenance of effective mutual aid agreements remains a critical element in our overall ability to effectively protect our community. While we are able to manage the vast majority of emergency calls with on-duty personnel, certain types of incidents, such as working structure fires, require additional resources to adequately manage the situation. In these circumstances, we rely on the support of surrounding fire departments to assemble a coordinated response structure. Under pre-designated “Box Alarms,” mutual aid resources are automatically dispatched to certain types of calls based on the nature and location of the incident. During calendar year 2021 our department provided mutual aid to surrounding departments on 55 occasions, and received mutual aid on 17 occasions, amounting to 4.7% and 1.5% of total activity, respectively. The number of incidents in which mutual aid was provided by our department increased slightly, from 53 in 2020. Four of these involved water rescue calls on the Blackwater River outside of the city limits. 18 of these calls involved working structure fires where personnel and resources from our department were involved in active firefighting operations. The number of incidents in which mutual aid was received from other departments remained unchanged from the prior year.

COVID-19 PANDEMIC

In 2008, in response to the world-wide Avian Flu Pandemic, under our role as primary emergency management agency for the City of Milton, the department developed a Pandemic Annex to the City of Milton Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan. This plan has provided the guidance for the City of Milton’s response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. In keeping with the guidance provided by this plan, and local, state and federal agencies, the department has implemented a number of changes to response protocols and non-essential services to protect both our own members and the public. In coordination with the Florida Fire Chiefs Association, Florida Department of Health, Santa Rosa County Emergency Management and the Santa Rosa County Firefighters’ Association, access restrictions to department facilities were implemented and the majority of non-essential public interactions, including station tours and similar public education activities, were suspended. At the direction of Santa Rosa County Emergency Medical Director Dr. Kim Landry, the department implemented enhanced personnel protective measures and adjusted response orders to suspend most responses to long-term care facilities and reduce the number of medical emergency calls to which we respond to include only those calls which present an immediate threat to life. These adjustments have led to a substantial reduction in overall emergency response activity, but also greatly reduced our exposures to potentially infected individuals and the potential risk to our patients. While these adjustments would have never been anticipated apart from the pandemic, it has been determined by all agencies involved that these changes have had no adverse impact on patient outcomes. Most agencies have determined to permanently maintain these adjustments.

VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT

Our fleet of emergency apparatus is in generally good shape but has continued to suffer several maintenance issues over the past year. Our first-due engine spent six weeks out of at an out-of-town maintenance facility for repairs. As a consequence, we spent many weeks relying on our reserve apparatus to sustain our operations. Our rescue vehicle experienced an oil leak and was out of service for repairs for two weeks. Despite these equipment lapses, we were able to maintain our normal level of service in the city at all times. Specifications for a new front-line fire engine were developed and purchase was approved in November, with delivery expected in early 2023. This new apparatus will be a Pierce Sabre triple-combination pumper from Ten-8 Fire Apparatus of Defuniak Springs. When the new engine arrives, our current first-due engine, a 2012 E-One, will be moved to second-due status, and our second-due, a 1998, E-One, will be moved to reserve status.

Our existing air cylinders in both our station and mobile cascade systems were hydrostatically tested, and all breathing air equipment was tested and serviced. The composite breathing air cylinders that we utilize for our Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) have a 15-year life cycle. 12 of our 41 SCBA cylinders went out of service last year and were retired from service. 15 additional cylinders went out of service in March of this year and were replaced with new cylinders. The remaining 14 cylinders will go out of date in 2026. Our existing fleet of MSA FireHawk Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus range in age from 8 to 15 years old, and compatible units are no longer available for purchase. As new units are purchased with the new fire engine, they will necessarily be a new, current model. This will necessitate replacement of individually issued facepieces to each member that are compatible with new units, and replacement of front-line in-service units on Rescue and second-due engine to remain operational with a compatible fleet of SCBA. Existing SCBA will soon no longer be supported by the manufacturer. We plan to replace all cylinders over the next two years and all current SCBA next year with new, modern fully code-compliant models.

In February, we were awarded a Firefighter Cancer Decontamination Equipment Grant from the Florida Division of State Fire Marshal that provided a 75% match toward the purchase of a Ready Rack Gear Extractor-Washer. This appliance allows us to effectively clean all routine contaminants from our turnout gear, thereby greatly reducing the risk that members will be exposed to cancer-causing contaminants from their protective gear.

PERSONNEL

Over the course of the past year, we have had two resignations. The first vacancy was filled with the hiring of Kody Grimes. The second resignation, in September, has left us with a vacancy in the “Floater” position that remains to be filled.

This year represented the last year of the prevailing three-year collective bargaining agreement between the City of Milton and the Milton Professional Firefighters – Local 2944. After very cordial negotiations, terms for a successor agreement were accepted and ratified, providing an agreement for the next three years.

TRAINING

As always, training remains a vital part of the fire department's normal activity. With the wide array of situations to which the department is called to respond, it is imperative that all members of the department remain current and proficient in all areas of firefighting, basic life support, technical rescue, hazardous materials, etc. In accordance with the department's annual training calendar, each member undergoes a minimum of 20 hours of in-service training each month. In addition to this company training, many members have participated in additional specialized training.

Department-wide hands-on extrication training was conducted again on November 4 at the Milton Iron and Metal Company yard in East Milton, allowing members from all three shifts to work together while enhancing their skills at performing complicated techniques in the use of shoring equipment, hand tools and hydraulic extrication equipment to remove an entrapped victim from a vehicle.

All personnel attended a 4-hour Suicide Awareness and Prevention Class presented by Fire Chaplain William Wright. All officers completed training in Sexual Harassment in the Workplace and Diversity in the Workplace.

Lieutenant Steve Maddox completed courses in *Fire Chemistry, Principles of Management, Legal Issues in the Fire Service, Fire Behavior and Combustion*, and earned his Associates of Science Degree in Fire Science from Florida State College at Jacksonville. Firefighter/EMT Stephen Steele completed courses in *Speech Communication, Applied Ethics, Building Construction in the Fire Service, Company Officer, Private Fire Protection Systems 1, Intro to Humanities, Fire Prevention, Fire Chemistry and Fire Department Occupational Safety*. Firefighter/EMT Jesse Floyd completed courses in *Applied Ethics, Fire Chemistry, Fire Department Occupational Safety, Fire Service Course Design, the Art of Reading Smoke*, and *ICS 300*. Firefighters Michael VanWhy and Jason Plank attended *Fire Service Hydraulics*. Jason Plank also completed courses in *Apparatus Operations and Company Officer*.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

While internal training is a crucial element of department operations, external public education remains a very important element of the department's overall fire prevention program. The department attempts to offer a diversified public education program in an effort to reach all age groups throughout the community. The pandemic forced us to curtail nearly all of our public education activities by mid-March. During 2021 the fire department conducted only one school program, reaching 92 students, two fire extinguisher classes, reaching 50 persons and four other programs, reaching 580 people, for a total of 7 programs reaching 722 people.

FIRE PREVENTION AND LIFE SAFETY

The City of Milton Fire Department is also responsible for enforcement of the Florida Fire Prevention Code and Life Safety Code. Chief Reble serves as Life Safety Officer and Fire Official for the City of Milton, inspecting new businesses and reviewing all new commercial developments for code compliance and permitting. Despite the impacts of the pandemic, business and development activities continued, and inspections and permitting continued at an accelerated pace. This year Chief Reble conducted 43 Life Safety inspections, 16 Follow-up inspections, 27 Construction related inspections, and 60 plan reviews, totaling 146 inspections and reviews, a increase of 40 over the previous year.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

The City of Milton Fire Department has maintained a long tradition of active community involvement. The impacts of the ongoing pandemic, and its associated curtailment of many public gatherings, however, has severely limited our capacity to engage in community events. Despite this, we did continue with a few long-standing traditions. Engine 23 and Rescue 23 participated in the annual Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Parade in January, carried the Milton High Panther in the Homecoming Parade in November, led the start of Big Brothers/Big Sisters' Fenner Memorial Bike Ride, participated in the Santa Rosa County Veteran's Day Parade and again delivered Santa Claus at the end of the annual Milton Christmas Parade in December. Marine 23 again led the Blackwater Pyrates' Lighted Christmas Boat Parade on the Blackwater River in December.

INTO THE FUTURE

2021 presented many unexpected challenges to the fire department. The work of the past several years, however, had put our department in a very strong position to meet these many challenges. We remain confident of our ability to meet the demands of serving and protecting the residents of Milton. We are very well positioned to meet the challenges of the future. We must continue to closely monitor department staffing needs in order to ensure that we will remain always ready to provide the high level of service that our citizens have come to consistently expect from our department. We will also continue to monitor and prepare for the effects of future growth, including the development of multi-story properties that further drive the need for additional equipment and personnel.

Our fleet of equipment is in good shape to meet the continued demands of protecting the lives and property of our citizens well into the future. Our fire station facility is well-suited to serve our current needs for many years to come. With the pending development of a new integrated training facility, we eagerly anticipate opportunities to continue to enhance our skills and operational capabilities to provide an even higher level of service to our community. We will continue to examine all aspects of our operations to ensure that we remain at the highest readiness to meet the demands of any emergency that we may encounter. We look forward to continuing our tradition of dedicated service to our community.

**City of Milton Fire Department
Always Ready ... Always There**

CITY OF MILTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

MONTHLY ACTIVITY REPORT

CALENDAR YEAR 2021

ACTIVITY REPORT

ALARM RESPONSES

FIRE CALLS

TYPE:	Vehicle Fire	Structure Fire	Brush Fire	Alarm*	Other**	Total
TOTAL:	8	50	7	112	52	229
	*	Includes false and unintentional alarms, smoke scares, good intent, etc.				
	**	Includes fire investigations, unauthorized burns, etc.				

RESCUE CALLS

TYPE:	Medical Response	Vehicle Accident / Extrication	Other	Total
TOTAL:	532	220	132	884

HAZARDOUS CONDITION CALLS

TYPE:	Natural Gas*	Electrical Problems**	Fuel Leak/Spill	Other	Total
TOTAL:	18	12	2	17	49
	*	Includes gas leaks, smell of gas, etc.			
	**	Includes downed power lines, transformer fires, arcing wires, etc.			

MUTUAL AID TOTAL: GIVEN:	55	4.73%	RECEIVED:	17	1.46%
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TOTAL CALLS FOR	CALENDAR YEAR 2021	1162
TOTAL CALLS FOR	CALENDAR YEAR 2020	1232
	PERCENTAGE INCREASE:	-5.68%

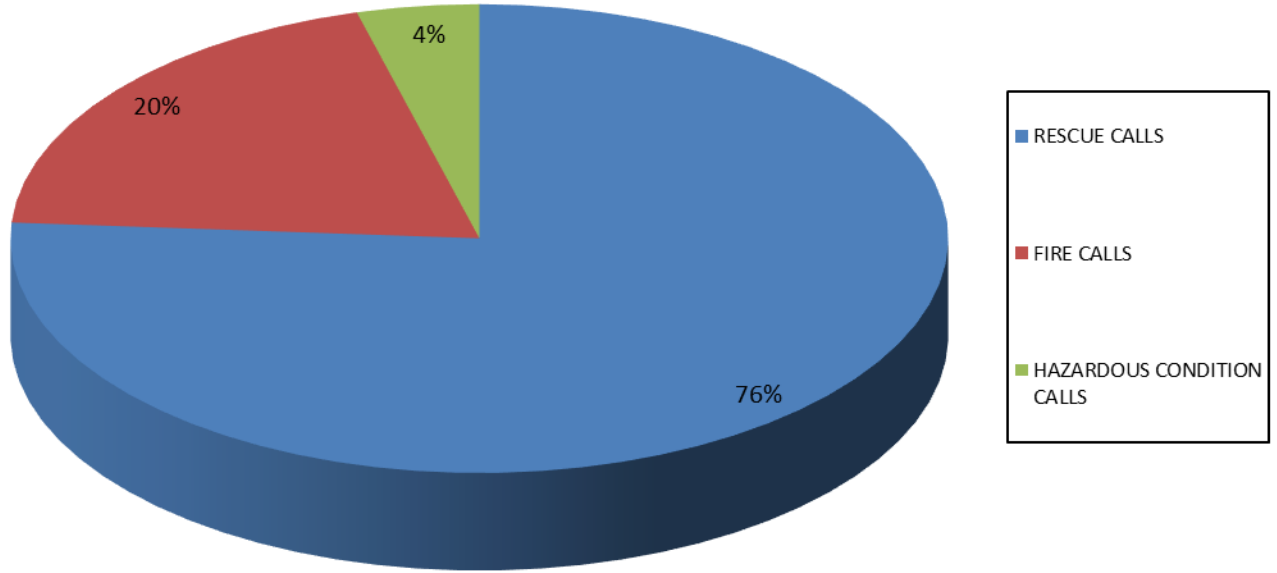
PUBLIC EDUCATION

TYPE OF PROGRAM:	School Class	Extinguisher Demo	Fire Drill	Other	Total
Number Conducted:	1	2	0	4	7
Number Attending:	92	50	0	580	722

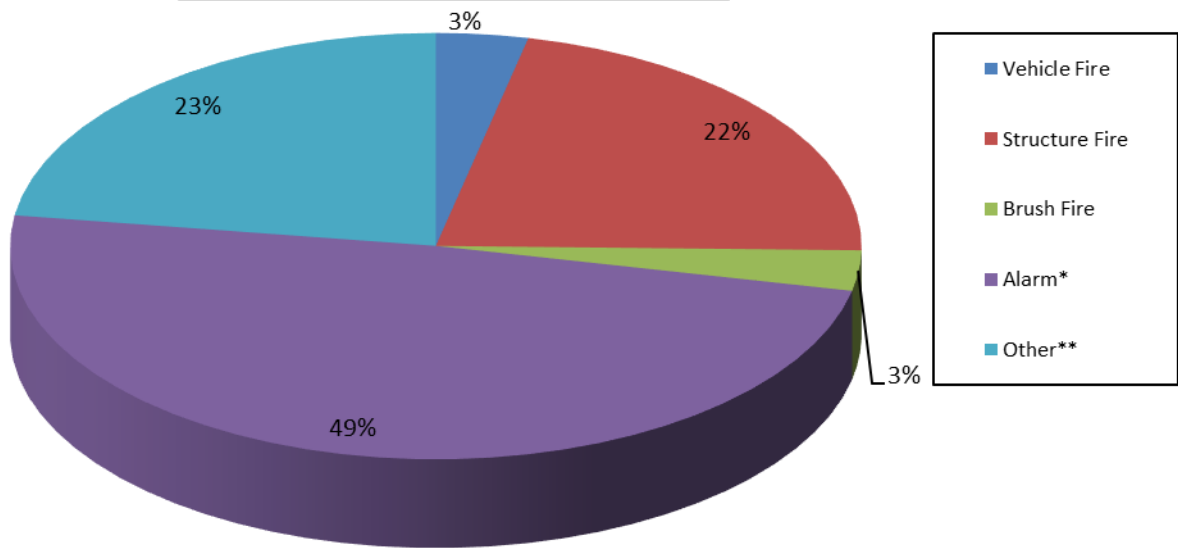
LIFE SAFETY

TYPE:	Life Safety Insp	Follow-up	Construction	Pre-plan	Plan Review	Total
Number:	43	16	27	0	60	146

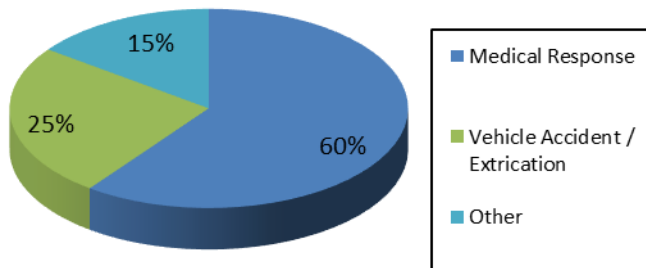
EMERGENCY RESPONSES CALENDAR YEAR 2021



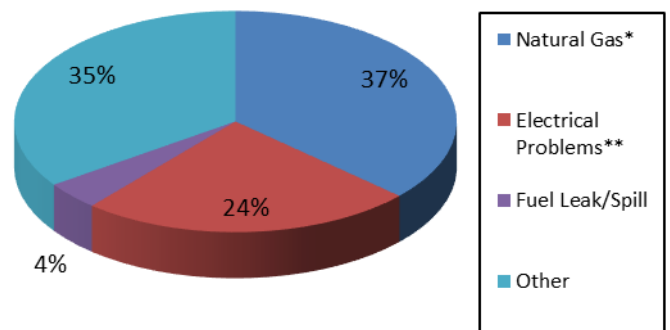
FIRE CALLS



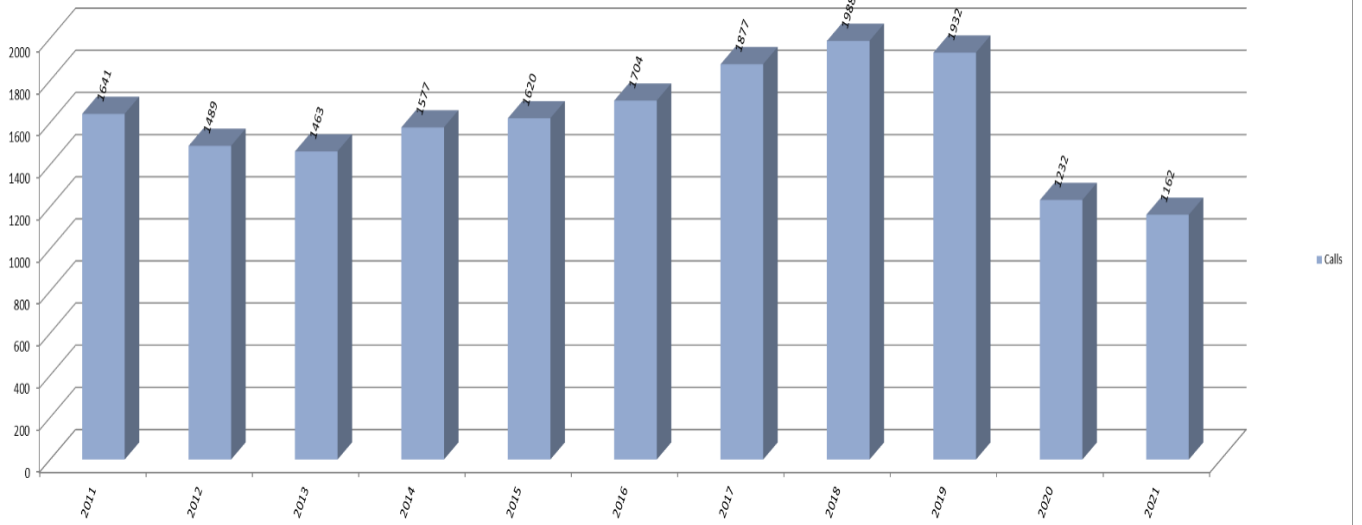
RESCUE CALLS



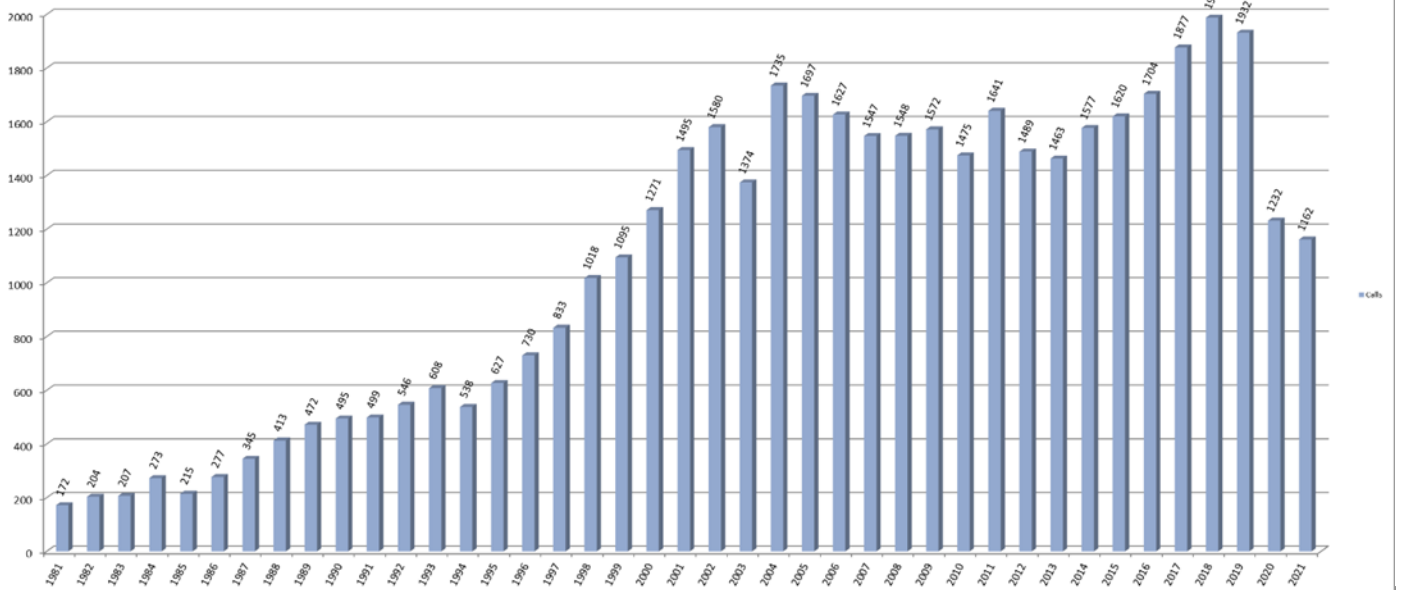
HAZARDOUS CONDITIONS



Emergency Calls 2011 - 2021



Emergency Calls 1980 - 2021



Annual Cost Comparison

