

# BELLINGHAM FIRE DEPARTMENT



2015 Annual Report

*Helping People Every Day*





**Bill Newbold, Fire Chief**

In 2015 we welcomed several new members to our administrative team. Anna Engel, who had been assisting our department under contract, accepted full time employment as an office assistant. We hired Paul Gazdik as the City's Emergency Manager following a nationwide search, and are pleased to have him working in our Joint Emergency Coordination Center, side by side with our County counterparts in Emergency Management. Jeff Van Loo also joined the department in 2015, filling the position of accounting technician. All three new members, Anna, Paul and Jeff, have fit in well with our department and we are glad they selected The Bellingham Fire Department for fulltime employment.

Along with our new staff, we also hired eight firefighters. The testing was rigorous, and from well over 600 applicants we were able to select eight candidates from the very best. We are excited to have join us: TJ Bryner, Hunter Elliott, Keith Hill, Travis Campeau Krueger, Dustin Michaelis, Dan Murphy, Cody Shepherd and Aaron Solowski. All eight successfully completed our in-house firefighter recruit academy and are now on the fire trucks, beginning a lifelong career in the fire service, proudly serving your community.

Salish Star - On August 5<sup>th</sup>, Bellingham Mayor Kelli Linville christened our new fire Boat, the Salish Star. The name was provided by Benjamin Wasserman, a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student, through involvement in our schools to have students recommend names for the new fire boat. Now fully in service, the Salish Star provides fire suppression capabilities in addition to Homeland Security surveillance measures and providing assistance to the U.S. Coast Guard. Also relating to new programs in 2015, we secured funding

by City Council and with Mayor Kelli's support, to fully implement our Community Paramedic program. The program continued as a pilot program throughout 2015, with the new position approved for 2016. This program will help provide capacity in our Emergency Medical Services (EMS) system by helping to manage complex patient medical conditions that frequently result in non-emergent use of 911 and associated resources.

Speaking of EMS, Fire Department members along with City staff having been working closely with Whatcom County officials and other EMS stakeholders in addressing the future funding needs of our countywide Advanced Life Support (ALS) paramedic service. The overarching goal is to provide continued stable funding for our current level of service and the anticipated future demands. In Whatcom County we are fortunate to have one of the most successful and highly skilled ALS systems in the nation, and we aim to continue the extraordinary level of service you expect and to continuously improve through training, service delivery, program initiatives and system efficiencies.

Operationally, we responded to a number of structure fires this year, both residential and commercial, and fortunately had no fatal incidents and only a few with injuries. Some incidents proved to be very complex, such as a hazardous materials incident at the Whatcom County Disposal of Toxics facility, a contained fire at Western Washington University, and a natural gas leak in the Lettered Streets neighborhood. Bellingham Fire Department, along with other local fire agencies, also provided personnel and apparatus in a mutual aid response to a large wildland fire in Newhalem.

We continued to be diligent with our operating budget as we wrapped up 2015 and moved into 2016, operating under our two-year biennium budget. We are fortunate to have sustained many of our programs, commissioned a new fire boat and achieved the Community Paramedic position. We also received federal grant awards for the purchase of a community paramedic vehicle, and for the purchase of extrication equipment, commonly referred to as the jaws of life. There are still however, a number of programs we wish to provide and will continue to seek a means by which to accomplish. These include greater public interaction through fire prevention activities and public education. We are getting more involved in the neighborhoods through association meetings, community events and our annual open houses. Our firefighters are out in the community, aside from 911 emergency calls, walking the street and visiting businesses and occupancies to continue with building familiarization and public engagement. Stop us and say Hi, we look forward to meeting you.

Helping people every day." It is a mission the Bellingham Fire Department ran with in 2015. More than 120 professional firefighters, who also act as EMT's and paramedics, provide around the clock protection and care while staffing one command vehicle, six fire engines, three Advanced Life Support (ALS) ambulances, and one Emergency Medical Services (EMS) supervisory vehicle. Additionally, this same staff can "cross-staff" two ladder trucks and six Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulances. Our crews responded to more than 42 calls per day, almost 300 calls per week, and 15,531 calls for 2014.



With an ever increasing call volume and limited resources, we placed ourselves at the forefront of innovation again by conducting a pilot program that strived to decrease the amount of times that 911 is utilized by high-intensity users. For many reasons, over the course of months and years, some in our population default to frequently using 911 as an answer to non-emergent incidents. This frequent use taxes BFD's resources and can make them unavailable for higher acuity emergencies. To decrease this type of 911 usage, BFD utilized one of our paramedics to create relationships with many social agencies in our community. This Community Paramedic then redirects citizens in need of social services to the proper agencies that can do the most good for the individual. These efforts have decreased 911 calls and have saved our medical system from conducting and paying for unnecessary medical exams and treatments. In 2016, we look to partner with other agencies to help us fund this necessary function.

In May, a fireboat returned as a protectorate of our marinas, local maritime industry, and our coastal waters. We partnered with the Bellingham School District to name our newest fire apparatus: the Salish Star. This twin-engine catamaran motors at speeds above 30 knots, can operate in only 22 inches of water, can pump 3,200 gallons per minute, can detect radiation, and has the ability to operate with 'night vision.' She was put through her paces in June and our dedicated boat crews from Station 5 trained diligently through November when she was officially placed in service.

We ran a Company Officer academy in the early Winter. For three months, our current firefighters learned how to work as effective leaders within BFD. Strategy and Tactics, Personnel Management, Report Writing, Labor Law, and numerous other subjects were studied. Immediately after this academy ended, sixteen of our firefighters took a promotional exam for Captain. We promoted a Fire Captain and an EMS Captain from these exams.

In the late Fall, after two years of temporary staffing reductions due to retirements and departures, BFD was able to hire eight new professional firefighter/EMT's. After rounds of testing and interviews, these firefighters, many of whom came from other local fire agencies, went through a twelve week academy that ended in November. This large class is the next in line of excellent Bellingham firefighters.

In 2015, by focusing on the value and safety of people as we strive for excellence in providing service to our neighborhoods and community, the Operations Division of the Bellingham Fire Department met our mission of 'Helping People Every Day.'

Assistant Fire Chief, Rob Kintzele





Assistant Fire Chief, Bill Hewett



The Planning and Community Preparedness section of the Fire Department works on long-range planning, community outreach, life safety, emergency management and communications. During 2015 we continued to expand our engagement in the community by working with our Neighborhood Associations and becoming more accessible through social media.

2015 also brought us a new emergency manager, Paul Gazdik, who has increased our City government's ability to be prepared and respond to large scale disaster while also increasing preparedness among our citizens.

The department continues to engage in a strategic planning process with hopes to have a completed plan in early 2016. In addition to the strategic plan we have engaged in several capital facility planning processes for the department and city-wide.

For a list of 2015 accomplishments, check out the division reports from our Life Safety and Communications Divisions as well as the report from the Office of Emergency Management.

Our fire and life safety risk management strategy consists of public education, fire investigation, and inspection services. The public education services involve the education of our youth through fire station visits and school presentations. The educational messages center on: my friend the firefighter, stop drop and roll, crawl low under smoke, smoke alarm and escape planning, and play safe, be safe. This year we provided education to nearly 1,606 youths. Another 600 contacts were made at various community and club presentations.

Fire Marshal, Jason Napier



By State Law, all fires in the jurisdiction must be provided with a fire cause. Engine company fire captains identify the cause of most fires. The responsibility to identify the cause of suspicious or complicated fire scenes are transferred to our certified fire investigators with support and coordination with the Bellingham Police Department.



This year the Division investigated 13 fire scenes including a multi-million dollar fire on the Western Washington University campus. Our inspection services are broken into two different categories and include Development Services and Life Safety categories. The Development Services category includes plan review and inspection services for building and fire construction permits. The staff costs necessary to perform these services are paid by construction permit revenues. Permit activity remained strong through 2015 and we were provided with a temporary fire inspector to ensure that our performance and customer service levels did not deteriorate.

The City launched a new permit software program at the end of the year. Our fire department customers were the first to use the online portal to apply, make payments, and schedule inspections for fire department permit types. The Life Safety category includes free routine inspection services for our commercial business community. Inspection services are provided by the members of both the Operations & Life Safety Divisions. 2015 included a significant risk-reduction milestone for Squalicum Harbor Gate 3 occupants. The Port of Bellingham completed the upgrade to the standpipe system which will allow the future installation of fire sprinkler systems within the multi-occupancy boathouses.

In 2015, the Training Division coordinated approximately 30,000 hours of training for the Bellingham Fire Department and Whatcom County Fire District #8. This included training in Fire Behavior, EMS, Physical Fitness, Apparatus Operations, Firefighter Survival, Forcible Entry, Surface Water Rescue, Adverse Terrain, Aircraft Rescue and Fire Fighting, Aerial Apparatus Operations, Hazardous Materials, Motor Vehicle Extrication, Violent Incident Response, Mass Casualty Incidents, Strategy and Tactics, Marine Firefighting, High Rise Operations, and many other topics throughout the year.

Division Chief, Ryan Provencher



The Training Division was also involved in:

- ◇ Hiring and training of entry level firefighters for Bellingham Fire Department.
- ◇ Hiring and training of entry level and lateral part-time paid firefighters for Whatcom County Fire District #8.
- ◇ Oversight of Training Groups developing and delivering training.
- ◇ Facilitation of live fire multi-company/multi-agency operations drills at Britton Loop.
- ◇ Facilitation of multi-company/multi-agency live fire training at Maple Ridge.
- ◇ Company Officer training.
- ◇ Arranging for assessors to participate in various promotional processes throughout Washington State.
- ◇ Oversight of the Company Officer Academy.
- ◇ Coordination of Bellingham Fire's Company Officer Promotional Exam.
- ◇ Creation of the Company Officer Development Program
- ◇ Coordination of SCBA Mask Fit Testing.
- ◇ Development of Violent Incident and MCI programs.
- ◇ Development of the Whatcom County Fire/EMS Training Manual.
- ◇ Development of updated PPE Management Program.
- ◇ Development of plan to improve radio communications.
- ◇ Developing a standardized approach to Residential Structure Fires.
- ◇ Updating firefighter Rehab procedures.
- ◇ Updating the Firefighter Functional Capacity Evolution.
- ◇ Grant writing for physical fitness equipment.
- ◇ Bellingham Fire Department Safety Committee.
- ◇ Whatcom County Training Officers Association.
- ◇ Whatcom County EMS Education Committee.
- ◇ Emergency Response.





The Communications Division and the Prospect Communications Center provide County wide Fire and EMS emergency dispatch services to 14 Fire and Emergency Medical Service Agencies. Twelve Fire/EMS Dispatchers and one Communications Operations Officer provide around the clock lifesaving emergency fire/medical instructions and triage to 911 callers, while monitoring several emergency radio frequencies.

In 2015 Prospect dispatched 30,482 Fire/EMS emergency incidents, an increase of 2,444 incidents of 8% over 2014's 30,482 calls.

Radio communication improvements for 2015 include the addition of new radio frequencies (Fire 1, Fire 2 and Fire 3) on Squalicum Mountain to improve emergency communications in Western and Northern Whatcom County.

We continue to improve our data collection and reporting, in our effort to strengthen our quality assurance programs with the goal of constant improvement of our delivery of Emergency Fire/EMS Dispatching.

Prospect and our Law Enforcement Dispatch partner, What-Comm, issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for replacement of the 1990's era Fire/EMS/Police Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) System. The CAD System is the heart of our 911 system and essential for command and control of Whatcom County's Emergency Response. The RFP returned a higher than anticipated cost. We have selected Versaterm as our vendor to enter into scoping and to work towards a contract that will be on budget. We anticipate the new CAD system to go live in April 2017.

Division Chief, Rob Wilson





During the 2015 year, the City of Bellingham Office of Emergency Management continued to foster a strong partnership with Whatcom County Sheriff's Office- Division of Emergency Management. This year's focus for Whatcom Unified Emergency Management is planning and training as it saw the finalization of the All Hazards Mitigation Plan and the participation in a week long full scale exercise with British Petroleum. With the continued focus on making the Whatcom Unified Coordination Center the state of the art facility it is, our office was awarded a Community Contribution Grant from the Lummi Nation. This grant allowed us to purchase digital clocks to be placed throughout the facility, something that was sorely needed. Also in 2015 we saw the office hire Paul Gazdik as its new Emergency Management Coordinator. Gazdik hopes to continue to promote preparedness to the community as a whole and is excited to engage and interact with the citizens of Bellingham. Lastly our office helped in the creation and implementation of an active shooter drill with Western Washington University. This drill gave law enforcement and fire personnel the opportunity to walk through their operations during an event like this, and fostered future planning, training and exercise activities down the road.



Emergency Manager, Paul Gazdik







# STATION INFORMATION



## STATION 1

10,676 Responses in 2015

1800 Broadway



Battalion 1, EMS 1, Medic 1, Medic 2, Aid 1, Engine 1

## STATION 2

1,724 Responses in 2015

1590 Harris



Aid 2, Engine 2, Ladder 2

## STATION 3

3,051 Responses in 2015

1111 Billy Frank Jr. Street



Engine 3, Aid 3

## STATION 4

2,514 Responses in 2015

2306 Yew Street



Engine 4, Aid 4

**STATION 5**

**1,998 Responses in 2015**

**3314 Northwest Avenue**



**Engine 5, Aid 5, Marine 5**

**Marine 5**

**In Service November 2015**

**722 Coho Way**



**Salish Star**

**STATION 6**

**1,998 Responses in 2015**

**4060 Deemer Road**



Ladder 6, Engine 6, Aid 6

**Medic 10**

**1858 E. Smith Road**

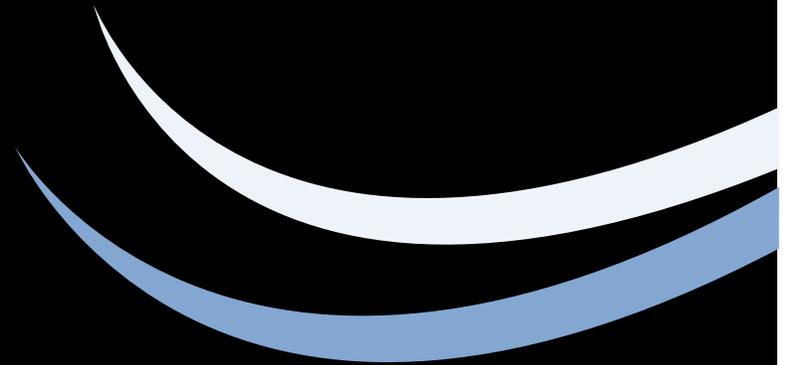
**2,537 Responses in 2015**



Medic 10



## 2015 INCIDENT DATA



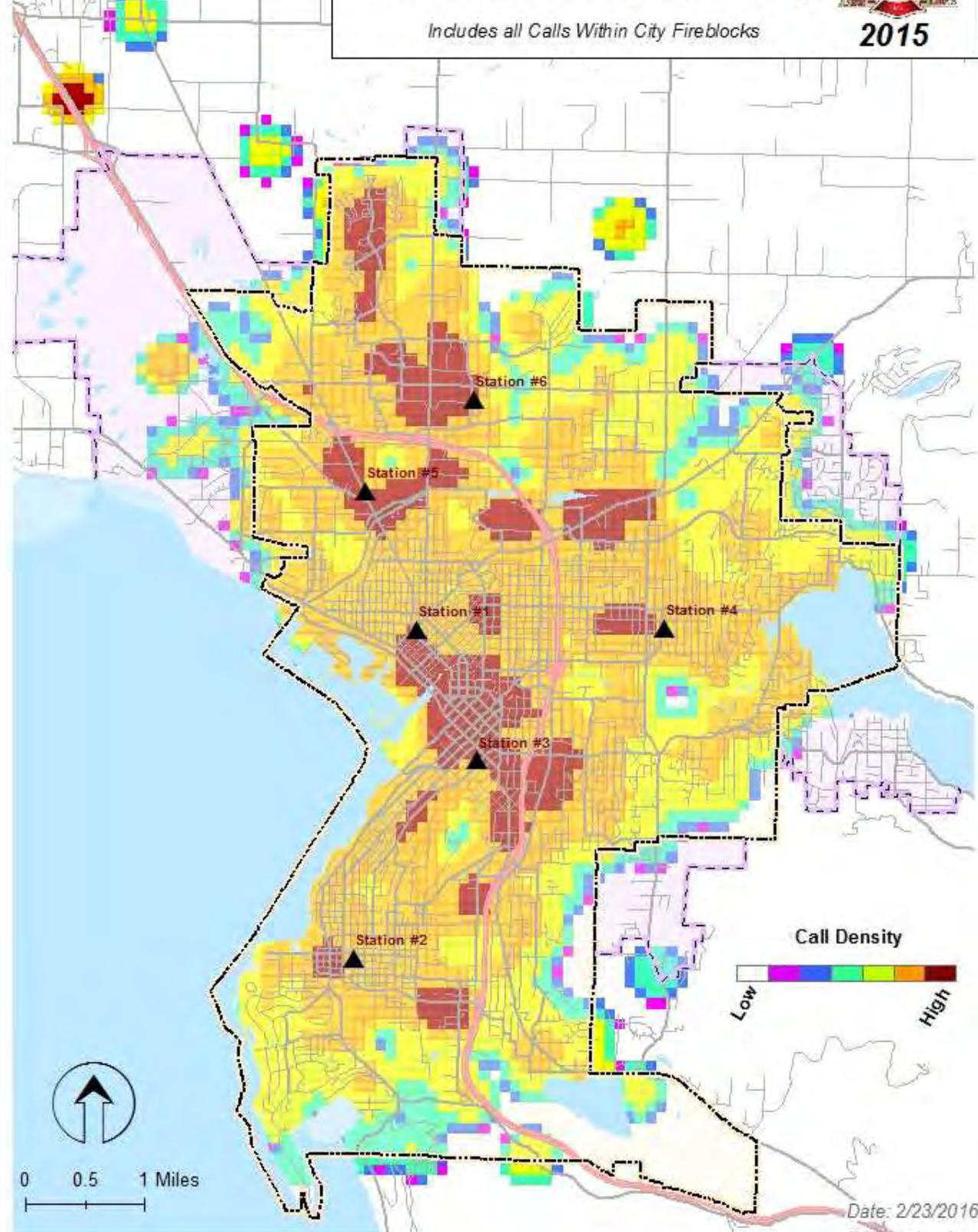


# 2015 Incident Heat Map

Includes all Calls Within City Fireblocks



2015



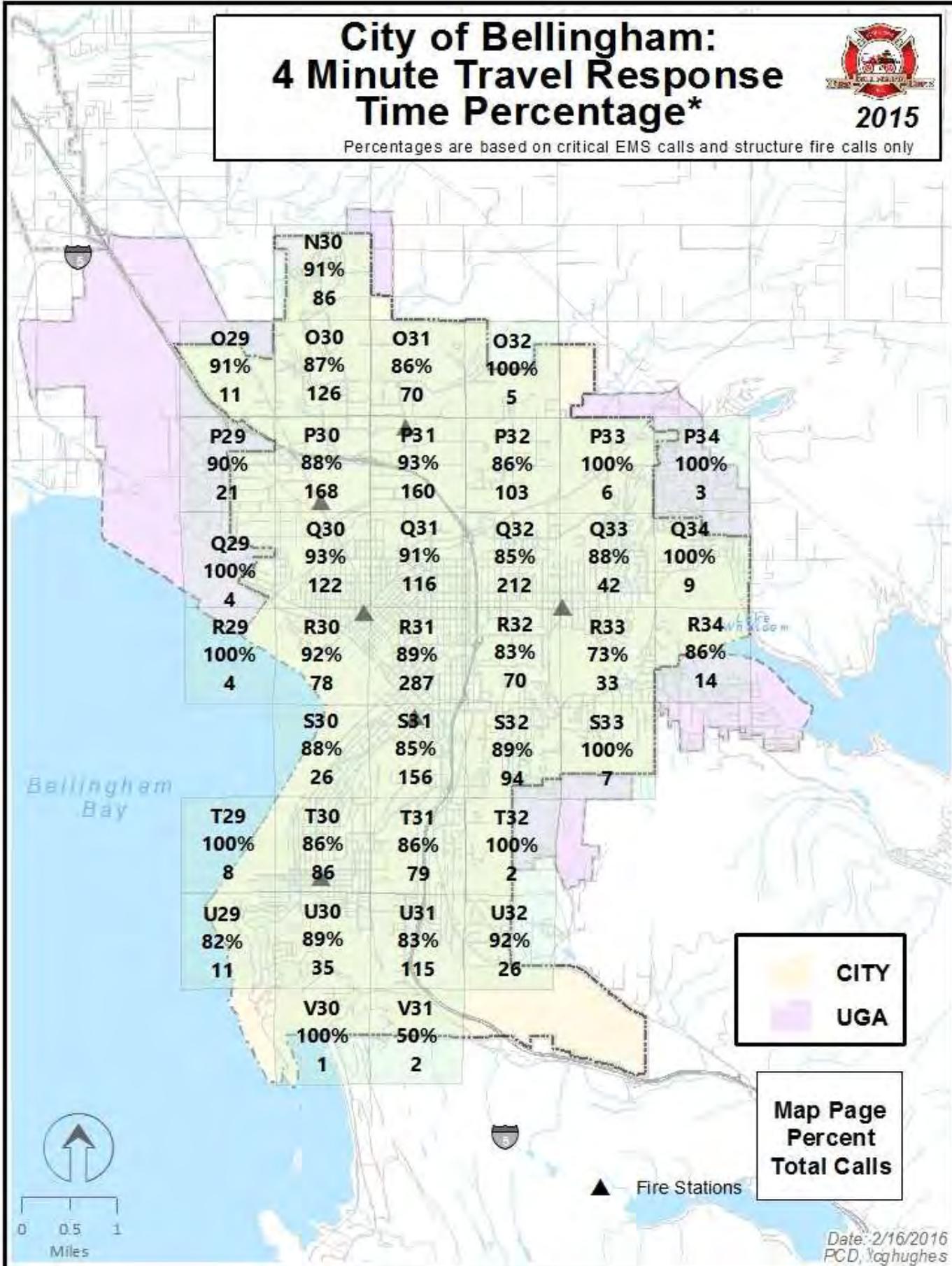
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PCD, cghughes

# City of Bellingham: 4 Minute Travel Response Time Percentage\*



2015

Percentages are based on critical EMS calls and structure fire calls only

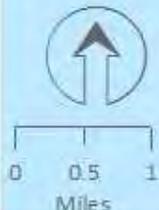


**CITY**  
**UGA**

**Map Page**  
**Percent**  
**Total Calls**

▲ Fire Stations

Date: 2/16/2016  
PCD, Ycg hughes



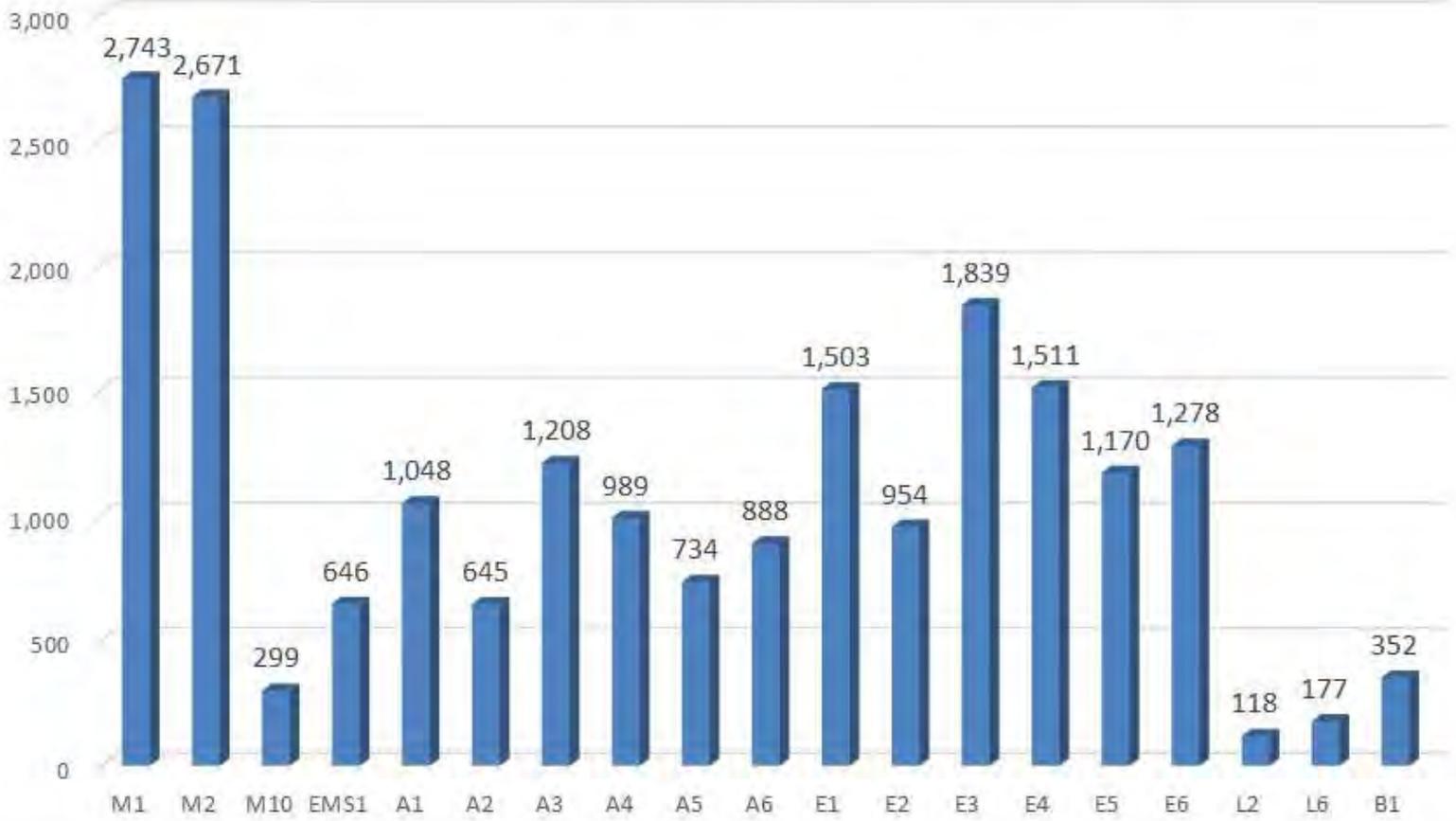


## EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS ~ Fire



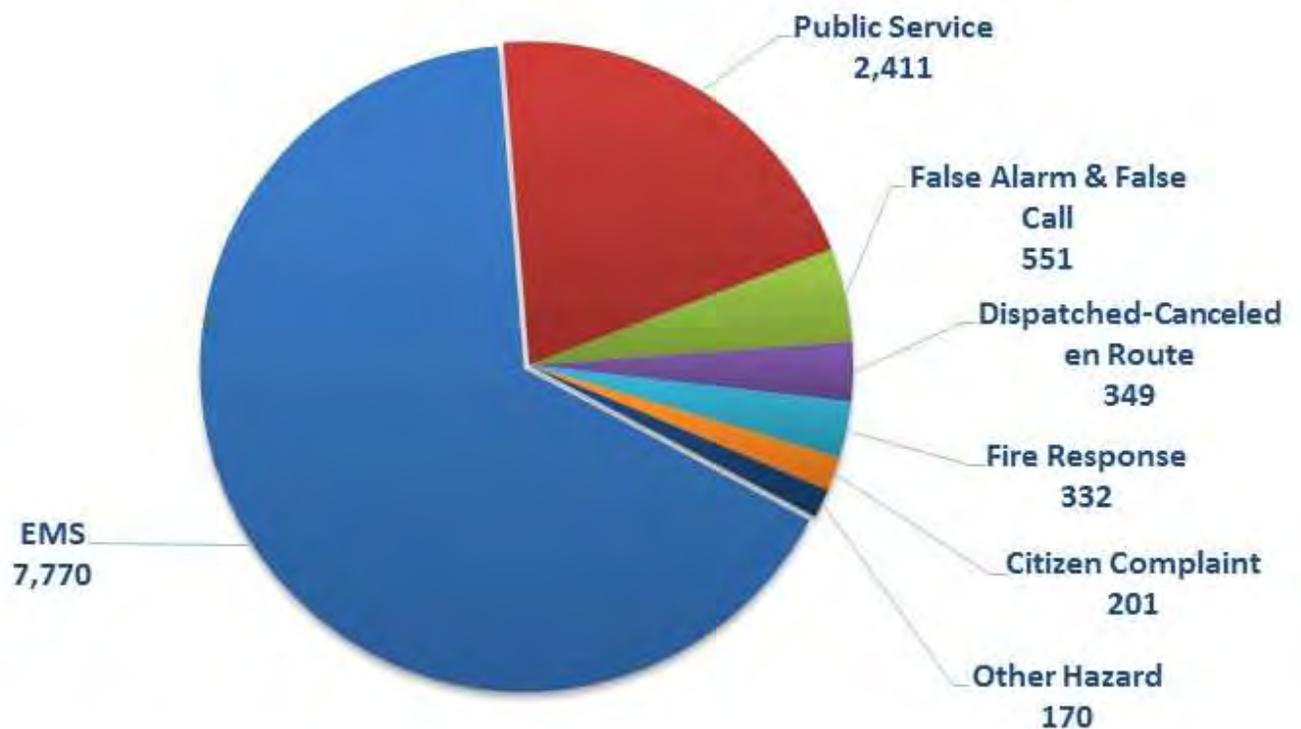


# Number of Responses Per Apparatus within Bellingham City Limits

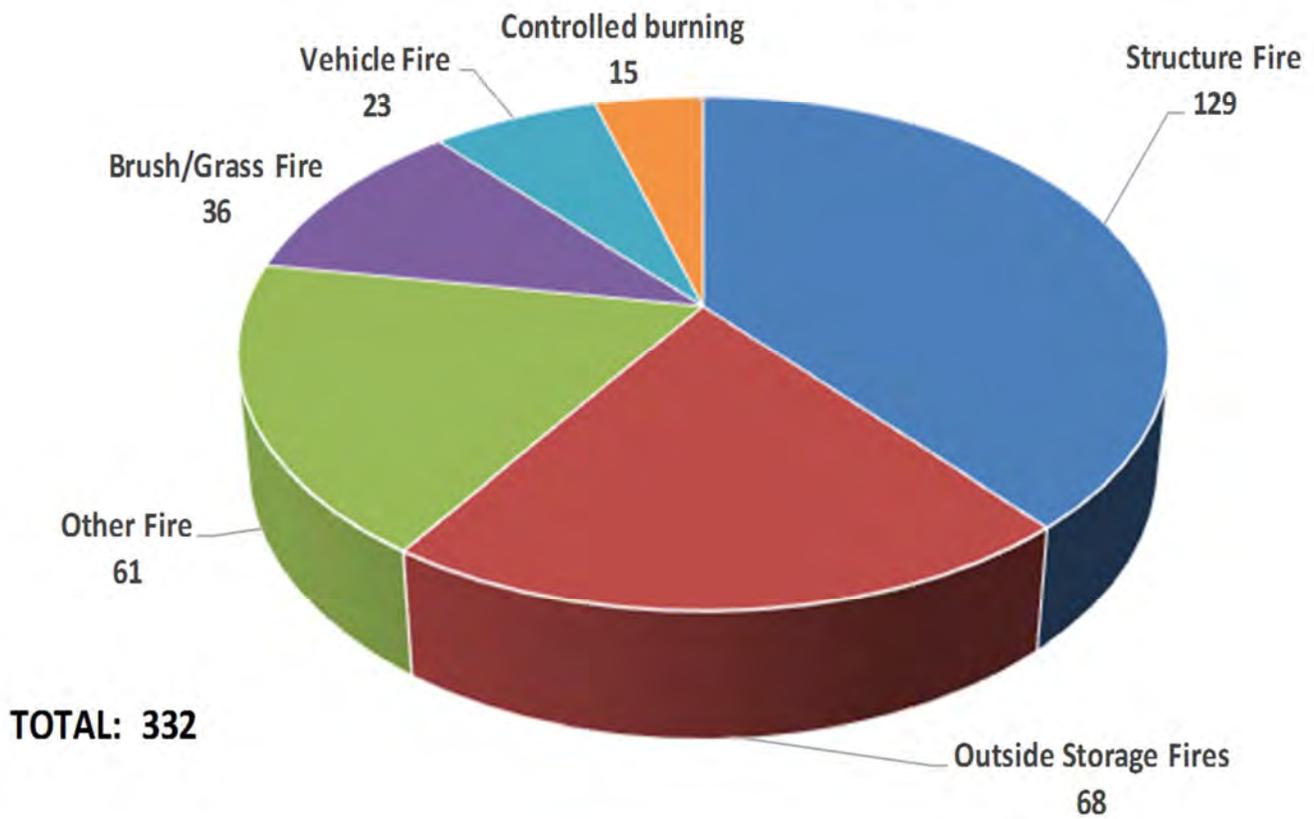




## Incidents by Type

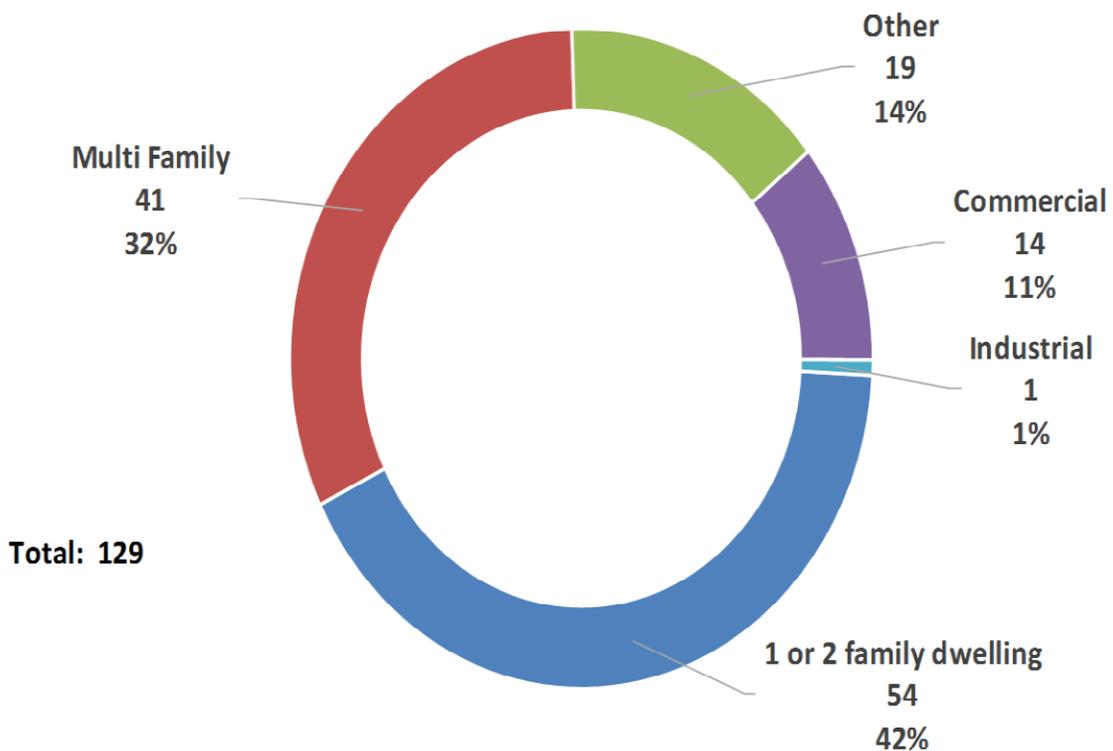


# Fire Response Types





## Building Fires by Occupancy Type



## Turnout Time by Unit

Apparatus	Median Times	90%	Average
E1	0:01:00	0:03:00	0:01:24
E2	0:01:00	0:02:00	0:01:34
E3	0:01:00	0:02:00	0:01:27
E4	0:01:00	0:02:00	0:01:16
E5	0:01:00	0:02:00	0:01:13
E6	0:01:00	0:02:40	0:01:25

### *Time from Dispatch Enroute*

## Travel Time

Apparatus	Median Time In City Limits	90% In City Limits	Average in City Limits	90% Outside City Limits
E1	0:03:00	0:06:00	0:04:02	NA
E2	0:03:00	0:06:12	0:04:17	NA
E3	0:03:00	0:06:00	0:03:44	NA
E4	0:04:00	0:07:00	0:04:30	NA
E5	0:03:00	0:07:00	0:04:16	NA
E6	0:03:00	0:06:00	0:04:19	NA

### *Response Time (Turnout Time + Travel Time)*

90% of the time Bellingham Fire Department has a 1st unit response of 7:33 minutes or less. The Median response time is 4:57.





## EMERGENCY RESPONSE STATISTICS ~ EMS

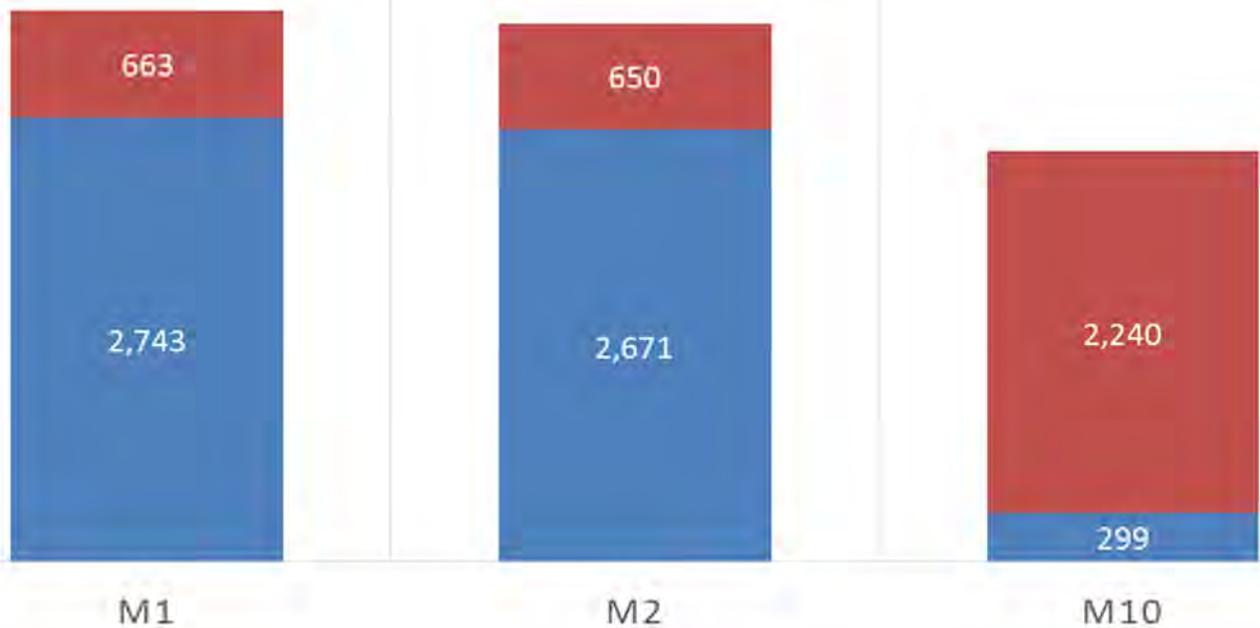




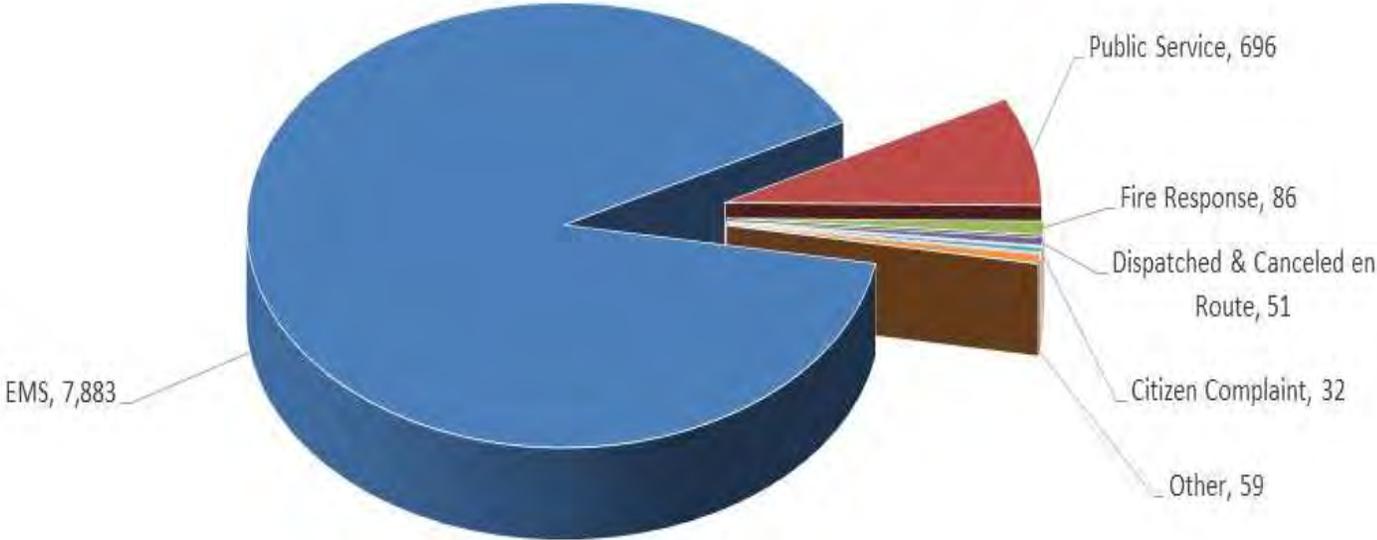


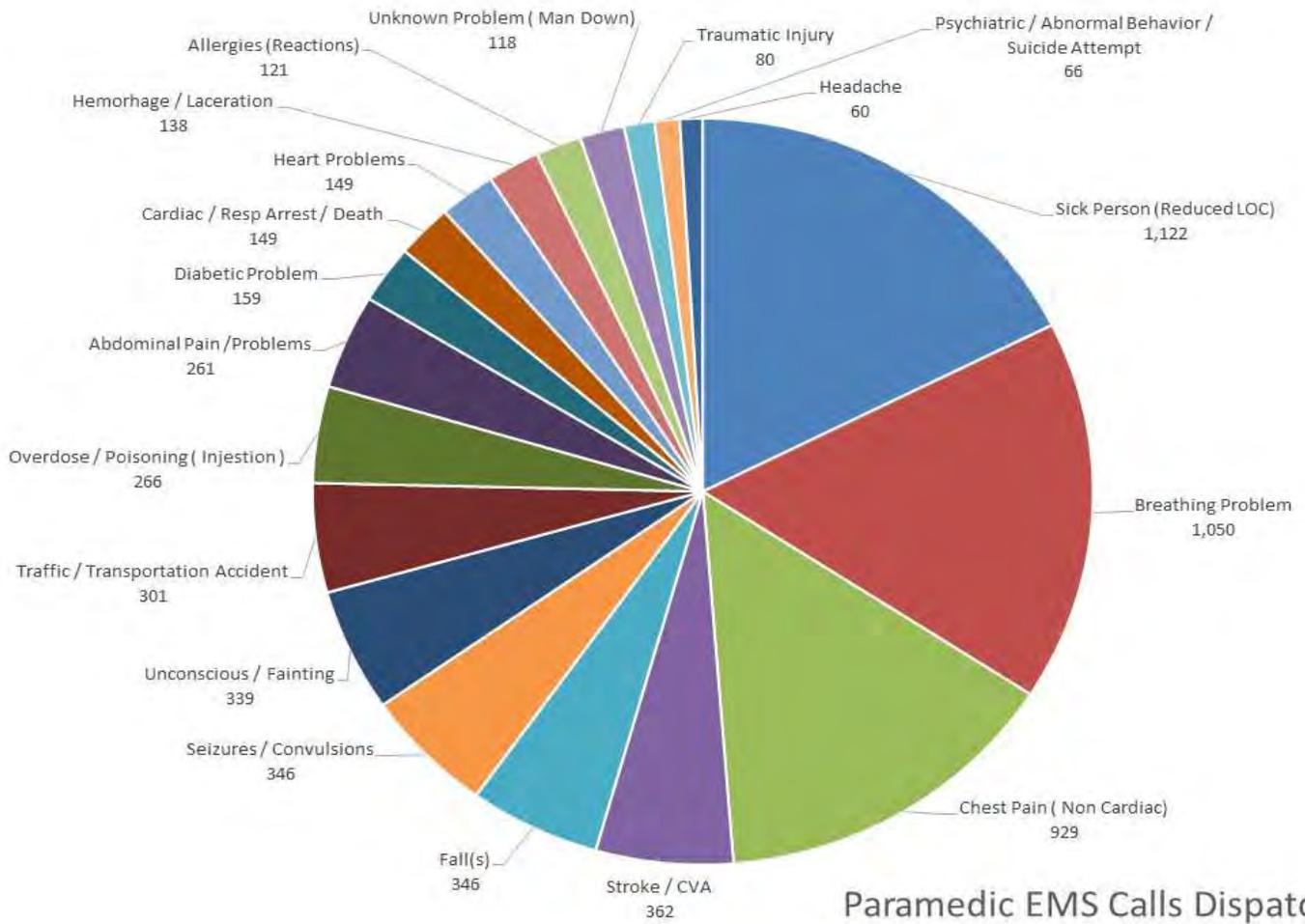
## PARAMEDIC INCIDENTS

■ City Limits ■ Outside City Limits



# Paramedic Incidents by Type





Paramedic EMS Calls Dispatched



## Turnout Time by Unit

Apparatus	Median Times	90%	Average
EMS1	0:01:00	0:03:00	0:01:16
M1	0:01:00	0:02:20	0:01:09
M2	0:01:00	0:02:17	0:01:11
M10	0:01:00	0:02:25	0:01:16

### *Time from Dispatch Enroute*

### Travel Time

Apparatus	Median Time In City Limits	90% In City Limits	Average in City Limits	Median Time Outside City Limits	90% Outside City Limits	Average Outside City Limits
EMS1	0:04:00	0:08:00	0:05:04	0:09:00	0:20:10	0:11:50
M1	0:05:58	0:10:00	0:06:15	0:09:00	0:21:04	0:12:24
M2	0:05:25	0:09:16	0:05:59	0:08:59	0:19:39	0:11:59
M10	0:04:26	0:11:00	0:05:05	0:11:33	0:21:35	0:13:23

### *Response Time (Turnout Time + Travel Time)*

90% of the time Whatcom Medic One has a 1st unit response of 7:28 minutes or less within Bellingham City limits.. The Median response time is 4:56 minutes or less inside City limits.

90% of the time Whatcom Medic One has a unit response of 13:01 minutes or less outside Bellingham City limits. The median response time is 6:26 minutes or less outside City limits.



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