

ATHENS FIRE DEPARTMENT

ANNUAL REPORT

2023

Submitted By:

CHIEF

ROBERT RYMER

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CITY OF ATHENS FIRE DEPARTMENT

MISSION AND VISION STATEMENTS



MISSION:

TO CREATE A SAFER COMMUNITY THROUGH, PREVENTION, EDUCATION, AND EMERGENCY RESPONSE.

VISION:

TO BE A LEADING ORGANIZATION ENTRUSTED TO PROVIDE EXCEPTIONAL PUBLIC SERVICE FOR OUR VALUED MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY, BY

*IMPLEMENTING THE HIGHEST LEVEL OF TRAINING,
PREPARATION, EDUCATION, AND STAFFING.*

AS DEVELOPED BY THE DEPARTMENT EMPLOYEES DECEMBER 2022

VALUES AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

DEDICATION...

...TO OURSELVES, TO OUR FELLOW EMPLOYEES, TO OUR COMMUNITY AND COUNTRY, TO OUR PROFESSION- THE ONES WHO HAVE SERVED BEFORE US, AND THE ONES YET TO SERVE.

INTEGRITY...

...TO ALWAYS DO THE RIGHT THING; TO REMAIN HONEST AND MORALLY ETHICAL IN ALL REGARDS.

PROFESSIONALISM...

...TO ALWAYS PRESENT THE BEST OF CONDUCT, BEARING, RESPECT, AND JUDGMENT TO FELLOW EMPLOYEES AND MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES.

RESPECT...

...FOR ONE ANOTHER, FOR OUR PROFESSION, FOR OUR COMMUNITY WHICH WE SERVE, FOR OUR COUNTRY, AND FOR THOSE WITH WHOM WE DISAGREE.

DEPENDABILITY...

...TO BE COUNTED ON BY OUR FELLOW FIREFIGHTERS, OUR FAMILY, AND OUR COMMUNITY TO KNOW OUR JOB, REMAIN STEADFAST, AND PERFORM TO THE BEST OF OUR ABILITY; TO IMPROVE OUR PROFESSION FOR THOSE WHO FOLLOW.



Firefighters participate in the annual Wellness-Fitness assessment.



Firefighters Carpenter and Shust Graduate FF2 at OFA.

FF Lott OFA Graduation

INTRODUCTION

The Athens Fire Department is committed to serving the City of Athens and Ohio University with a highly dedicated work force providing responses to fire and other emergencies. The Department's goal is to utilize the department's expertise, training, experience, and resources to protect, rescue, or assist in any way possible those who call upon the Department.

The Athens Fire Department is a dynamic organization with the primary responsibility of protection of life and property from fire and other emergencies within the confines of the municipality limits. The fire department interacts with various city departments, which includes: Police, Code Enforcement, Engineering and Public Works, Human Resources, and the Auditor. The department also works in conjunction with Athens County Emergency Medical Services (ACEMS), Athens County Emergency Management Agency (ACEMA), Ohio University, Ohio Department Natural Resources, Local Emergency Planning Committee, State Fire Marshal's Office, Federal and State Environmental Protection Agencies, Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, ATF, FBI, and other fire departments in Athens County.

In the year 2023, the Athens Fire Department responded to 1268 emergency calls; this is an increase of nearly 10%% from the previous year. The estimated incident loss was \$17,248. The total 2023 allocated budget was \$4,268,232. Total expenditures were \$4,216,624. The Ohio University continued its contribution of \$50,000 annually for the purchase of fire apparatuses. This MOU will continue until 2025.

Firefighters completed over 6,500 hours of training in various fields of response. Two firefighters completed Firefighter 2 basic fire training at the Ohio Fire Academy. Four firefighters completed Swiftwater Operations training.

More than 9,500 community members were contacted through various methods of fire prevention and education delivery. This does not include Public Service Announcements through local news articles which are viewed by over 27,000 subscribers.

Construction of a new fire headquarters on Stimson Ave. began in June of 2023, with an estimated completion date of late summer of 2024. This station will replace the existing structure located on Columbus Rd. Planning for a public safety training center is currently underway. This much needed facility will be located on Kenny Drive, and will be available for all area public safety agencies.

The department's first strategic plan was completed in May of 2023, with much assistance from internal and external stakeholders. The three to five-year plan will determine the direction the department will move to improve its capabilities and services to the community.

The Ohio Fire Chief's Association began conducting the first staffing study since 1997. The study should be complete by early spring of 2024. The purpose of the study is to help determine the number of personnel required to provide adequate response to our community. The study will be made available to the public upon completion.

To combat work related injuries and illnesses, a Wellness Fitness program was established in 2023 for all fire personnel. While it is not mandatory, firefighters are encouraged to participate in the program which assesses physical abilities, stamina, and health. The goal is to improve the program over time and monitor a firefighter's health throughout their career.

Approximately \$760,000 in grants were awarded to the department from various agencies for staffing and equipment.

Staffing and Response

The authorized staffing level of the Athens Fire Department in 2023 began with: (1) Chief (1) Captain (6) Lieutenants (15) Firefighters and a full-time administrative secretary. Due to a staffing grant awarded by the State of Ohio, council was able to increase staffing levels, and add three more firefighter positions. These positions are due to sunset with future retirements, but should decrease future overtime costs incurred through turnover. Firefighters are on duty 24 hours a day 365 days a year. The department has three shifts, each shift works 24 hours on duty and 48 hours off duty with a minimum of two firefighters assigned to each station. A fire department organizational chart is included in the appendix. Four firefighters retired. Six firefighters were hired to fill open positions. Six of the current staff are eligible to retire in 2024.

The department has two stations, Headquarters, located at 61 Columbus Road and Station II at 454 Richland Avenue. These stations house two front-line engines, brush/utility truck, a tower/ladder truck, a water rescue unit, and a heavy rescue. There are also two reserve engines, one located at each station. The age of the fire apparatuses range from 2000 to 2020. The next engine to be replaced is a 2004 Sutphen. The projected date of replacement is 2027.

Both fire stations are more than 50 years old, and need upgrade and continual repair. Some cosmetic upgrades are planned for station 2 in 2024. The new HQ facility should be completed by late summer of 2024.

The Department's demand for service has nearly tripled in the last thirty years. The Department provides services that include, but are not limited to the following:

Skill	Level
Fire Suppression	Advanced
Wildland Fire Suppression	Basic
Fire Inspection	Level 2
Emergency Services	CPR/First Aid
High Angle Rescue	Technician
Confined Space Rescue	Technician
USAR/Collapse	Operations
Water Rescue	Technician
Ice Rescue	Operations
Trench Rescue	Technician
Hazardous Materials	Operations
Fire Prevention & Education	N/A
Community Outreach	N/A
Plan Review	N/A
Elevator Rescue	Basic
Vehicle Rescue Operations	Technician
Other hazards (CO, gas leaks, etc.)	N/A

The Department has mutual aid agreements with all Athens County Fire departments and is part of the Ohio Emergency Response System (OERS), a statewide mutual aid program, which includes the Region 7 USAR (Urban Search and Rescue). Region 7 covers emergency response to 11 counties in Southern Ohio. The Department gave or received 88 mutual aid responses in 2023. This is a 16% decrease over 2022.

The incident loss for 2023 was approximately \$17,248. This is a significant decrease from 2022. The number of structure fire responses decreased from 2022 for a total of 23. On Thanksgiving Day, the department provided mutual aid response to the largest fatal fire in Athens County history, on Rainbow Lake Rd. Five family members perished in the fire. Fire inspections, fire prevention, training, fire pre-planning, and in-house maintenance occupied much of the firefighters' time during a normal work day. The data collected from pre-planning was added to the *Active911* response program. There are over 700 buildings in Athens requiring preplanning.

Department Involvement

1. All fire suppression within the city limits.
2. Technical Rescues of various types and complexities.
3. Hazardous materials response (Operational Level).
4. Fire inspections.
5. Fire and life safety education (All age groups).
6. Maintenance and repair of self-contained breathing apparatus.
7. Maintaining past and present records, to include digital conversion.
8. Investigation of all fires.
9. Performing minor maintenance on both stations and all trucks.
10. Maintaining hydrant information, minor maintenance and flushing of hydrants.
11. Training of firefighters and officers on existing and new information.
12. Providing the public with information on various fire codes and fire related subjects.
13. 911 Continuing Technical Advisory Committee.
14. Local Emergency Planning Committee.
15. Plan review of new and existing structures.
16. Pre-Fire planning.
17. The Athens County Firefighters Association.
18. The Athens County Fire Chief's Association.
19. The Ohio Fire Chief's Association
20. Mutual Aid Response to outlying Fire Departments.
21. Bomb and Suspected Bomb Response.
22. Planning Commission Input.
23. Southeast Ohio Fire Chief's Association.
24. Tri-County fire program advisory committee.
25. River Rescue and Flood Events.
26. Anti-Terrorism Planning and Response.
27. Ohio Fire Response System-Statewide Mutual Aid.
28. Wellhead Protection Planning.
29. Hazard Mitigation Planning.
30. Strike Team 7 Regional Urban Search and Rescue (USAR 7).

- 31. National Incident Management System (NIMS) Compliant as of 2007.
- 32. Grant Writing and Administration of Grants.
- 33. Athens County Healthcare Coalition
- 34. Ohio Task Force 1 – Federal Response Team

2023 GOALS



- Promote and conduct more hands-on fire extinguisher classes to the public. (Incomplete)
- Establish and conduct a fire safety program for off-campus housing. (On going)
- Complete a strategic plan for department. (Complete)
- Establish plans and procedures with EPW to improve ISO rating for 2025. (On going)
- Construct equipment storage building at training grounds. (On going)
- Continue to update Department’s Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies. (On going)
- Complete all Mandatory Testing of Equipment and Apparatus. (Complete)
- Complete Inspections of 25% of all businesses in the city. (Incomplete)
- Hire four firefighter positions. (Complete)
- Begin construction of a new Headquarters facility. (On going)
- Hire interns to conduct hydrant

maintenance. (Complete)

- Establish a reserve firefighter program. (Incomplete)
- Conduct a current staffing analysis to determine proper staffing levels. (On going)
- Construct search maze and saving your own building at training center. (On going)

TRAINING

Even with the difficulties presented in 2023 due to low staffing levels caused by turnover, the Athens Fire Department still accomplished over 6,500 hours of documented training to meet the requirements set forth by the Ohio Department of Public Safety, Division of EMS in regard

to continuing education for Firefighter Certification and Fire Safety Inspector Certification. This includes all-hands trainings, department trainings, shift drills, multiple pre-plan reviews and building tours, cross-training, training sessions during meetings, and countless hours of impromptu shift trainings and in-service sessions. Over 300 hours of officer development training was conducted. This also includes individual training obtained through partner organizations. Three firefighters completed Firefighter 2 training at the Ohio Fire Academy. Four firefighters completed swift water operations. Four firefighters completed Certified Fire Safety Inspector class.

Many styles of training from the past are still in use today. The standard department training that takes place on each shift is most common, whereas all-hands training is infrequent due to the complexity of the training sessions and the need to accommodate many different schedules. Cross-training with other agencies will take place whenever possible, and officer developed shift drills occur monthly at the discretion of the company officers.

2023 Department Training

January

Ladder/Aerial training

February

CPR/FA

Rope Rescue

March

Hose/Nozzles

Building Construction

Elevators/High Rise (RAVFD)

April

Rope Rescue/Patient Packaging (Hocking EMS)

OU Airport Response (Albany VFD)

HAZMAT Refresher

May

Swiftwater

Hose and Nozzle Operations

June

Rope Rescue Technician

RIT Ops/Search and Rescue

July

Fire Safety Inspector

August

Fire Officer Development

September

Emergency Vehicle Ops

Water Movement Ops (multiple VFDs)

Shoring Ops (Chillicothe VAFD)

October

Live Fire Training (Wellston)

November

Vehicle Extrication Tech (multi-agency)

December

Hose/Nozzles

NIMS 300

2023 Shift Drills

Shift drill training continues to be part of the Athens Fire Department training program with its popularity stemming from the ownership created by our own officers and firefighters creating the training session based on the observations made on emergency scenes and through discussion.



Live Fire training at Wellston Training facility

January

MAYDAY Procedures

February

SCBA Donning/Rapid Turnout Time

March

PT Packaging/Victim removal

April

Boat Deployment Operations

May

Bunker Gear Inspections

June

Pump Operations

July

Hose Deployment

August

Extrication Tool Ops and Maintenance

September

Aerial Operations

October

Air Bags/Lifting

November

Fire Apparatus Placement on Scene

December

Cold Weather Ops

2023 Cross Training

Cross training events with other agencies continued in 2023. A few large training events were accomplished in 2023. Firefighters from four different fire departments participated in water movement operations at the Quidel Facility in September. In September and November, departments from Region 7 conducted technical rescue training in Chillicothe and Athens. Some events included:

- Water movement (The Plains, Richland, Chauncey, Waterloo, and Athens)
- Elevator and High-Rise Operations (Richland and Athens)
- OU Airport Response (Albany, Richland, and Athens)
- Shoring Operations (USAR) (Chillicothe, Portsmouth, Chillicothe VA, Nelsonville, Athens, Hocking EMS)
- Vehicle/Machinery Technical rescue (Athens, Chillicothe, Chillicothe VA)



Proposed 2024 Training

January

NIMS 400

February

Engine Company Operations
Ice Rescue

March

Confined Space Tech
Live Fire Training

April

Swift Water/Surface Water Rescue
Bailey's Trail response

May

Aerial Operations

June

HAZMAT Technician

July

RIT/Search and Rescue

August

Wildland Fire/Urban Interface

September

Trench Rescue

October

Live Fire Training

November

Vehicle Extrication

December

Leadership Cross Training



2024 Training Goals

With the hopes that the staffing operations will return to normal in 2023, there are two main goals to get back on track with specialized and operational training. The first goal is to provide initial technical rescue training for newer members of the department, as well refresher training for other members is one goal. The second goal is to establish a search and rescuer/RIT training facility. The facility will be used to train firefighters throughout the region on search and rescue, and firefighter rescue techniques.

We will have multiple new firefighters on their probationary period, most of which at different stages, and new firefighters getting hired which will need to attend the Ohio Fire Academy to achieve their Firefighter 2 Certificate. Training our probationary firefighters is one of our most important tasks, and this year there will require a lot of emphasis on doing just that. Along with training our probationary firefighters, we are going to continue cross trainings with our mutual aid departments, and continue to build on the complexity of those trainings every year. We will continue to hone our skills on the six technical rescue disciplines that we must know to perform our job adequately. Our focus will be in Confined Space, Trench Rescue, and HazMat Technician levels. We will have 6 firefighters attending Indiana Swift Water Rescue in South Bend Indiana at the Indiana River Rescue School. This is one of the premier Swift Water Rescue schools in the country and is very valuable training for our department. Additionally, this year we will conduct another live fire training at the Wellston Training Academy. We will have a training tower at our new fire station that will be completed this year, which will allow us to perform more aerial operations and high-rise operations trainings with our members and mutual aid departments. Most of our technician level classes are taught by Crash Course Village which is a top-notch training organization, with Pro-Board certification, which is extremely valuable to our department.

FIRE SAFETY EDUCATION

The fire department relies on public events and social media for the delivery of the majority of its messaging. Athens Fire Department provided some type of fire/life safety education to more than 6,100 individuals from various communities in 2024. This does not include the use of our variable message board located at HQ, nor the outreach through Public Service Announcements in local and social media outlets.

Due to the restructure of Athens City School District, and because of the addition of third-graders to the FPW instruction, a record high of 1115 students were instructed. Another 155 were educated throughout other school districts. Approximately 130 people were instructed in CPR and First Aid.

Newspaper Articles

The fire department, in conjunction with the Athens Messenger, published 23 articles. The paper is viewed by nearly 30,000 subscribers. Below is a list of some of the articles.

- Use time change weekend to ensure Fire Safety.
- Stay safe on the Fourth of July by practicing firework safety
- Lawn safety tips and safe work practices
- Fire hydrant flushing, a practical annual task for fire departments
- Lawn equipment safety
- Turn the clock, change your batteries
- Fire safety for older adults like Chief Rymer
- Kitchen fire safety
- When it floods, play it safe
- May is motorcycle safety month
- Fire safety in the work place
- Fire prevention week
- Protect yourself against CO
- Free CO detectors
- Help first responders help you
- Emergency lights go right

Social Media

In an effort to provide further outreach to the public, the Athens Fire Department created a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, and Instagram. This year the department ran an *Escape from Your Home* PSA at the Athena Grand Movie Theatre for two months. The FB page currently has 4,700 followers. This is an increase of 600 from last year. Four new videos were added to our YouTube Channel, with a total of 1512 views for 2023. Efforts will be made in 2024 to improve the Fire Department page on the City of Athens website, and other social media avenues.

The *Athens Ohio Fire Department* YouTube channel was created in 2020 to deliver fire education to younger children that could not be reached through normal school talks. To-date, 12 videos have been created, garnering nearly 3,500 views, and 53 subscribers. Four new videos were added in 2023. Our social media platforms are expanding, and efforts are being made to garner more followers to spread our fire/life safety message.

Additional points of interest

- Four banners with fire prevention messaging were displayed throughout the city at various times of year.
- Our new LED message board, located at Fire Headquarters, was used to display various messages to those passing by. Approximately 4,700 vehicles drive by the station each day.
- The department distributed 26 smoke and 31 Carbon Monoxide detectors to the community this year, with four installations. The fire department has teamed with Athens Red Cross to install smoke detectors to homes throughout Athens County.



In total, more than 11,000 community members received personal fire education, or fire prevention materials in 2023 through various events, consisting of more than 2800 hours of contact. This does not include outreach through the Athena Grande or newspaper articles. Some of the events include: Homecoming Parade, Trunk-or-Treat, Lake Snowden Kids' Day, Senior Safety Day, Pet Palooza, Market on State Trunk-or-Treat, Athens Library Touch-a-Truck, and York Township Fire Safety Day.

2023 FIRE INSPECTIONS

The Athens Fire Department spent over 250 personnel hours, performing commercial and life safety inspections, occupancy inspections, plan reviews, tests of fire safety systems, mobile vendors, and investigating complaints, and building pre-planning. Life Safety inspections include new business inspections. The department also conducted occupancy inspections of bars in the uptown area during a high-event weekends.

There are approximately 900 commercial properties which need to be inspected annually. More concentration was focused on preplans for university buildings and businesses. In conjunction with fire inspections, pre-plans for many of the buildings will be established.

In December 2018, Athens City Council adopted Ordinance 0-145-18, permitting a fire inspection fee schedule. Inspection fees generated approximately \$2,200. One of the goals of the inspection fees is to help fund a Community Risk Reduction (CRR) officer position that can perform daily inspections, preplans, and fire prevention tasks.

MAINTENANCE

Firefighters perform much of the maintenance on the fire apparatus, equipment and fire stations. Vehicle repairs and technical maintenance for vehicles is performed by city mechanics. The on-duty shifts spend many hours maintaining, and cleaning the various areas of the stations and equipment. In 2023, fire fighters as a shift logged over 3,650 personnel hours cleaning and maintaining the stations. They logged over 3,460 personnel hours maintaining the trucks and equipment. With the help of an intern, the department logged approximately 700 hours of hydrant maintenance. Approximately 540 hydrants of the 835 within the city were flowed. Over 400 were repainted.

The Department’s oldest, active pumper is 20-years old. It is scheduled to be replaced in 2025. The overall maintenance cost for the Department’s vehicles in 2023 was approximately \$52,000. The largest expense incurred was repairs to the ladder truck.

The maintenance cost for the stations decreased significantly. This should be a growing trend with the new HQ; however, station 2 maintenance costs are expected to increase as the building approaches 60 years of age.

GRANTS

In 2023, the department was awarded nearly \$760,000 for equipment and personnel. This brings the overall total for the last five years to \$946,057 (see below). The Department applied for ten grants in the year 2023 from various agencies, and was awarded eight requests.

• \$51,000	HQ Exhaust Removal	AFG 2018
• \$27,156	Extrication Tools	Ohio BWC 2019
• \$40,000	Rescue training and equipment	Ohio EMA 2019
• \$32,011	Mobile radios	Ohio SFM 2019
• \$5,000	Water Rescue PPE	Enbridge 2020
• \$15,000	Rescue equipment	Ohio EMA 2020
• \$15,700	Water Rescue Equipment	Firehouse Subs 2021
• \$1,320	MARCS User Fees	Ohio SFM 2021
• \$33,680	MARCS Radios and Fees	Ohio SFM 2022
• \$37,900	Extrication Tools/Boat Equip.	Ohio BWC 2022/23
• \$106,954	Hose and Nozzle Replacement	AFG 2023
• \$68,000	Firefighter Retention – ARPA	Ohio EMA 2023

- \$10,000 Confined Space Equipment Ohio SFM 2023
- \$14,843 Gear Washer and Dryer Ohio BWC (FEEG) 2023
- \$2,100 Electric Vent Fan Ohio BWC (SIG) 2023
- \$460,393 FF Recruitment/Retention Ohio EMA 2023
- \$25,000 Rescue All-Terrain Vehicle ACGP/ORCA 2023



Hose and Nozzles purchased with FEMA-AFG Grant.

FIRE DEPARTMENT AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

- 1) *Training:* New regulations from state and federal levels require more hours be devoted to training firefighters. Technical Rescues, Hazardous Materials Training, Basic and Advanced firefighter training, Incident Command Training, Building Construction Classes, and Firefighter Safety, are some of the classes where training requirements have increased therefore requiring more of the firefighters' time to be allocated towards achieving these training goals and requirements. Per ISO and NFPA standards, an Athens firefighter should conduct a minimum of 110 hours of training annually. This time allocated to training, along with a continual increase in responses, decreases the amount of time available for other duties such as: inspections, hydrant and equipment maintenance. The lack of a dedicated training facility requires firefighters to be trained at other facilities or acquired buildings.

Recommendation: A properly constructed and equipped training facility is needed. This facility will help improve the skills of public safety personnel, and decrease home owners' insurance. Increased staffing would allow more tasks to be completed, and allow more training to be conducted.

- 2) *Emergency Responses:* Continued growth in the City of Athens further extends the department's response times, creates larger fire loads, and increases responses. Since 1997 the city has added more than 12,200,000 square feet of structures. Calls have nearly tripled in this time. In 2020, the city annexed approximately 25 more acres for the construction of four large apartment buildings, with an approximate footprint of 200,000 square feet. With the addition of new commercial structures in these areas, it will bring additional traffic, increasing response times. An additional 300,000 square feet of construction is planned for construction in 2024.

Recommendation: The introduction of a pre-emptive traffic control system throughout the city may be a low cost solution to improve response times. Relocating fire HQ to a more centralized location may be another; however, these may only be short-term solutions. Continued growth will also increase the workload on firefighters. Larger buildings require more firefighters to extinguish fires, as could be seen during the 2014 Union St. fire. Efforts should be made to prepare for the continued expansion by increasing the workforce to ten on-duty, and the number of stations to three.

- 3) *Life-Safety Inspections:* The increase in commercial properties, requiring inspections utilizes more of the department's time. At present there are over 900 businesses in the City. The National Fire Protection Association requires all commercial properties be inspected and preplanned annually. Increased run volume, duties, and required training make it very difficult, if not impossible, to perform the necessary inspections. Furthermore, the Insurance Services Office requires departments annually conduct a pre-fire plan for all buildings except 1-4 family dwellings. A CRR officer should be assigned

to a 40-hour schedule. The CRR would conduct daily inspections, plan reviews, and pre-plans of all necessary buildings. While there are over 900 businesses within the city, the number of structures requiring pre-planning is slightly less than that.

Recommendation: A CRR Officer position should be created to manage the fire prevention and educational programs. This position would help prevent fires through fire inspections, pre-fire planning, fire education, fire investigations, and a continual analysis of risks throughout the community. Proper scheduling will also allow a more readily available, properly trained officer on duty during emergencies. The implementation of the CRR officer will help improve the city's ISO rating within three years. A Reserve Fire Fighter program could also help alleviate this problem. The current inspection fee schedule should help fund these positions. At a minimum of \$50 per initial inspection, for required life safety inspections, the approximate revenue generation would be \$45,000. Re-inspections, as well as new construction inspections, could generate another \$10-15,000.

- 4) *Staffing:* Six fire fighters are eligible to retire in 2024. Failure to replace fire fighters who leave the department in a timely manner increases life-safety risks due to reduced staffing levels. Three firefighters are currently being hired to prepare for some of these expected retirements. This should decrease the amount of backfill costs when the firefighters retire. A 1997 staffing study recommended a minimum of 24 firefighters to extinguish a dorm fire. NFPA 1710 recommends four person engine companies, and 15 firefighters on scene in the first eight minutes of a two-story residential fire. A staffing study is currently being conducted to determine how many personnel are needed to affectively protect the city.

Recommendation: In the interest of safety and initial response capability, the minimum on duty staffing should be no less than four firefighters per station, and an on duty command officer. While this does not meet NFPA standards, it does improve safety above the current status. An internal analysis will be conducted on the organizational structure of the department. This will also allow the ability to respond with a ladder and pumper from Headquarters, as well as efficiently distribute duties so the required workload can be better accomplished.

- 5) *Cooking Fires:* According to the United States Fire Administration, the national average of cooking fires is 34%. In the City of Athens, approximately 60% of all building fires are cooking fires. Much of these fires are caused by unattended cooking, and involve on campus buildings with alarm systems. Many students are not educated about proper cooking procedures, which increases the call volume, while decreasing their safety.

Recommendation: Implement a public safety education and prevention program for all Ohio University freshmen students. The program should consist of a minimum of four hours of instruction in fire safety topics such as fire extinguisher use and cooking fires. A \$50 per semester student fee is recommended to increase staffing and offset costs of the program. A student fee will assist in increasing staffing levels, and improving the

safety of the community. The student fee was approved by OU Student Senate in the spring of 2023 and presented to OU Administration. To-date, the fee has yet to be implemented.

- 6) *Non-Sprinklered Buildings*: Multi-story residential buildings without sprinkler systems should be retrofitted to include sprinklers. Evidence of a multi-family building fire lacking sprinklers was seen in the 2017 fire at Carriage Hill Apartments. Had sprinklers been present, the fire could have been limited to one apartment. Instead the building was a total loss.

Recommendation - The City should have a more aggressive sprinkler ordinance for all new and renovated construction. In 2001, the city of Athens adopted a smoke detector ordinance requiring sealed battery detectors in all rental units, due to a double fatality. This ordinance has proven to be very effective, and has made the city safer.

- 7) *Increased Occupancy Inspections* - In 2023, numerous warnings and at least three citations were issued to uptown bars for blocked egresses and overcrowding. This is a re-occurring issue. Currently, occupancy inspections are normally conducted during high event weekends, or upon calls of complaints. Periodic fire education with bar owners and their staff, coupled with recently implemented punitive actions have improved some of the overcrowding issues; however, a continual presence for spot inspections would help eliminate this hazard.

Recommendation – A more consistent presence is needed for places of assembly, such as nightclubs and bars located uptown. Increasing staffing would assist in this endeavor. A community risk reduction officer, and reserve firefighter program may be another solution.

- 8) *Fire Stations* - Station 2 needs major expansion and renovation. Response times are increasing, due to city expansion. Preparations should be made for further department and jurisdiction expansion. With the continual expansion of the city toward the South and West of Athens, planning should be considered for a third station on Kenny Dr.

Recommendation – Upon completion of the Headquarters replacement project, efforts should be made to remodel and expand station two. Further planning should be conducted for a future station location on Kenny Drive.

- 9) *Hocking River Responses* - The department has responded to seven water rescue incidents since 2014, with two confirmed drownings. Many of these calls are concentrated around the low head dam near White's Mill. The ever-changing hydraulics are a continual concern. Boaters are often found traversing the waterway when the river level rises.

Recommendation - Three options to help alleviate the concern are: 1) The installation of a public boat slip downstream from the dam, along with public education and promotion; 2) An engineered low head dam, which would prohibit the use by watercrafts, and

provide better water level control; 3) The installation of an additional dam near the eastern portion of the city limits, could promote recreational use of the river during safer times of the year.

The current general fund is not able to bear the full cost, or even a significant part of the above recommendations; therefore, an alternative source of funding must be considered. The recommendations cited above can only be achieved through a collective effort from all stakeholders throughout our community. Viable solutions to improve the fire department and the safety of the community should be a collective effort.

2024 GOALS

- Promote and conduct more hands-on fire extinguisher classes to the public.
- Establish and conduct a fire safety program for off-campus housing.
- Establish plans and procedures with EPW to improve ISO rating for 2025.
- Construct equipment storage building at training grounds.
- Obtain funding for a regional, live-burn training facility on Kenny Drive.
- Continue to update Department's Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and Policies.
- Complete all Mandatory Testing of Equipment and Apparatus.
- Move into new Headquarters facility.
- Hire an intern to conduct hydrant maintenance.
- Establish a reserve firefighter program.
- Determine a plan to implement recommended staffing levels recommended by the staffing study.
- Construct search maze and saving your own building at training center.
- Establish a Wellness-Fitness program with Ohio University and Ohio Health.
- Assign and complete recommendations of recent strategic plan.

STRATEGIC PLAN

The departments first strategic plan was conducted in 2023 by an external company. Various stakeholders, involving department members, community members, other agencies, and Ohio University, participated in the process. The plan provided guidance for the organization to where it should concentrate its efforts, toward the tasks of most importance for the stakeholders. The plan is a continually changing and all tasks have a proposed schedule of three to five years. The priorities determined by the stakeholders are as follows:

- Ensuring maximum safety for firefighters
- Adequate staffing, apparatus, and equipment for emergency response
- Ensuring a high level of competence/training of personnel
- Professionalism of department personnel

- Ensuring that firefighters are adequately compensated to maintain retention/experience
- Expedient response times to emergencies
- Providing a comprehensive community risk reduction program that includes enforcing fire codes and providing public education/community involved prevention programs
 - Community involvement and presence at schools, community events, neighborhood activities, etc.
- Ensuring AFD provides the most effective, evidence-based emergency medical services



Pinning ceremony for new Lieutenants and Firefighters.

SUMMARY

In 2023, the Athens Fire Department responded to 1268 calls for service; this is a 10% increase from 2022. Responses to Ohio University buildings increased to 45 percent. The number of structure fire responses, decreased to 21. This is partly contributed to the recently established automatic mutual aid policy for Athens County. Cooking fires remained the number one cause of residential fires with an average of 70 percent. Property loss to an estimated \$17, 248. Rescue incidents continue to make up over nine percent of all runs; the majority being motor vehicle accidents, and elevator entrapments. While the number of responses increased to a new record in 2023, the average number of responses have nearly quadrupled in the last 30 years., and the city jurisdiction has increased nearly 30% in size by area, and more than doubled in building square footage.

Other demands on the firefighters' time have increased over the last few years. Training requirements have steadily increased over the last several years, many classes now require multiple days to complete. To give an example, each technical rescue discipline requires a 4-5 day training session. The fire department currently provides response for six rescue disciplines. Maintenance of newer more complex equipment and trucks require more checkout time to keep equipment online. Administrative duties require a minimum of 20 personnel hours per week of the shift officers' time to complete.

Modernized construction methods have changed how fires are now mitigated, and decreased collapse times. Studies have shown engineered truss systems often found in new construction, fail much quicker when exposed to fire. With the numerous fields of study required of each member, a great deal of training time is not only required, but necessary to ensure proficiency. Each Athens firefighter is required to conduct approximately 110 hours of training annually, per NFPA and ISO standards. These new standards and programs add more work, additional cost and require additional time from the department to complete.

There is a continual increase in demand for services through: inspections and maintenance; training requirements; increased mutual aid responses; and technical rescue responsibilities for a multi-county area called Region 7. The department has become saturated with non-emergency operations, which may hamper operational capabilities of the current staffing during emergency situations. Currently, this situation results in rotating tasks so that some effort is achieved; however, this is not conducive to providing the best service or safety.

In 1996, the City of Athens hired a consulting firm to evaluate fire protection within the City. This study is known as the Fitzpatrick Study. In 1999, a Community Assessment committee was formed to evaluate the response capabilities of the department. Both evaluations provided the same outcomes.

Two of the main areas evaluated were staffing levels and response times of the department. It was apparent to the Fitzpatrick group: 1) the Athens Fire Department was severely understaffed and 2) the average response time for much of the city was beyond the national standards. Since the study was done in 1996 we have had a decrease in the workforce, while more than doubling the number of runs, and increasing the overall size of the city by 33%.

The current staffing level falls far short of the Fitzpatrick recommendation of ten firefighters on duty, and is lower than staffing levels in the 1970's and 1980's. The Fire Department is the only full-time professional fire department in Athens County. A new staffing study and strategic plan was conducted in 2023. The purpose of the studies will give a current analysis of the staffing situation and direction of the department.

The Police Department has the ability to draw from OUPD, Athens County Sheriff's Department, and the State Patrol, which are all professional law enforcement agencies. The

Athens Fire Department provides a high level of fire and emergency response to both the City and University.

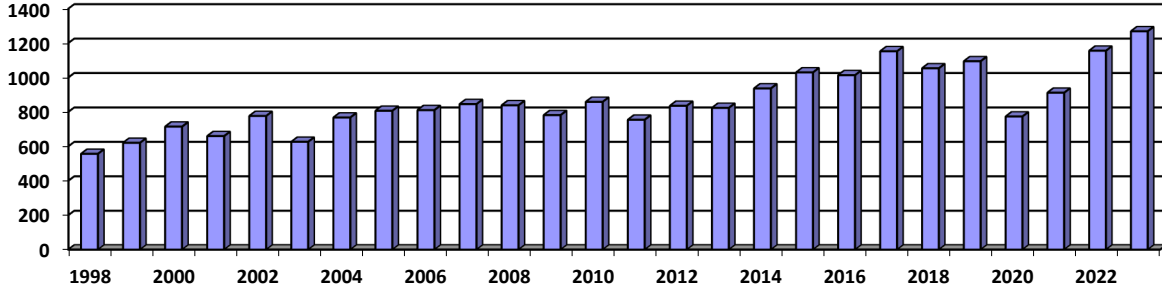
The Athens Fire Department must rely upon outlying volunteers for any help that may be needed. The increased cross training with these agencies proved beneficial at the Union St. and Carriage Hill fires; however, in most cases these departments do not have the time and resources to keep up the level of training necessary, or cannot respond within a timely manner to help in life safety situations. Most must respond from their places of work, to their stations to retrieve apparatuses and equipment, then to the scene. This often takes valuable time that could be used to mitigate the situation and/or save lives. Many volunteer agencies have a minimum of 36 hours of basic fire training, and have lower staffing levels than Athens. Due to State required training regulations, volunteer fire fighters are on the decline, often having difficulty providing proper response for their own areas. Staffing levels need to be increased to provide safer, more efficient response to the community.

A grading of the City's fire protection ability was conducted by the Insurance Services Office (ISO) in February 2020. The grading established remains at four (4) out of ten, with one (1) being the best rating. The greatest deficiencies found were in training, the number of response personnel, and water supply. The better the rating, the lower the homeowner's insurance rating. The EPW Director and Fire Chief will establish a plan to improve the City's ISO grading before the next grading period in 2025.

2023 FIRE STATISTICS

NUMBER OF FIRE RUNS FROM 1998 TO 2023

1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
556	620	714	659	776	626	767	806	810	845	838	781	858	754	835	823	936	1029	1013	1152	1053	1094	773	911	1155	1268



TOTAL NUMBER OF FIRE RUNS:	1268
MUTUAL AID RESPONSES:	RECEIVED-----50 GIVEN-----38
AVERAGE RESPONSE TIME FOR ALL RUNS: Minutes *	5:12
STATION TWO CLOSED	4
CIVILIAN FIRE INJURIES	2
FIREFIGHTER INJURIES	3
FIRE INCIDENT FATALITIES	0
RESCUE INCIDENT FATALITIES	0

* From time of call to time of first truck arrival at scene.

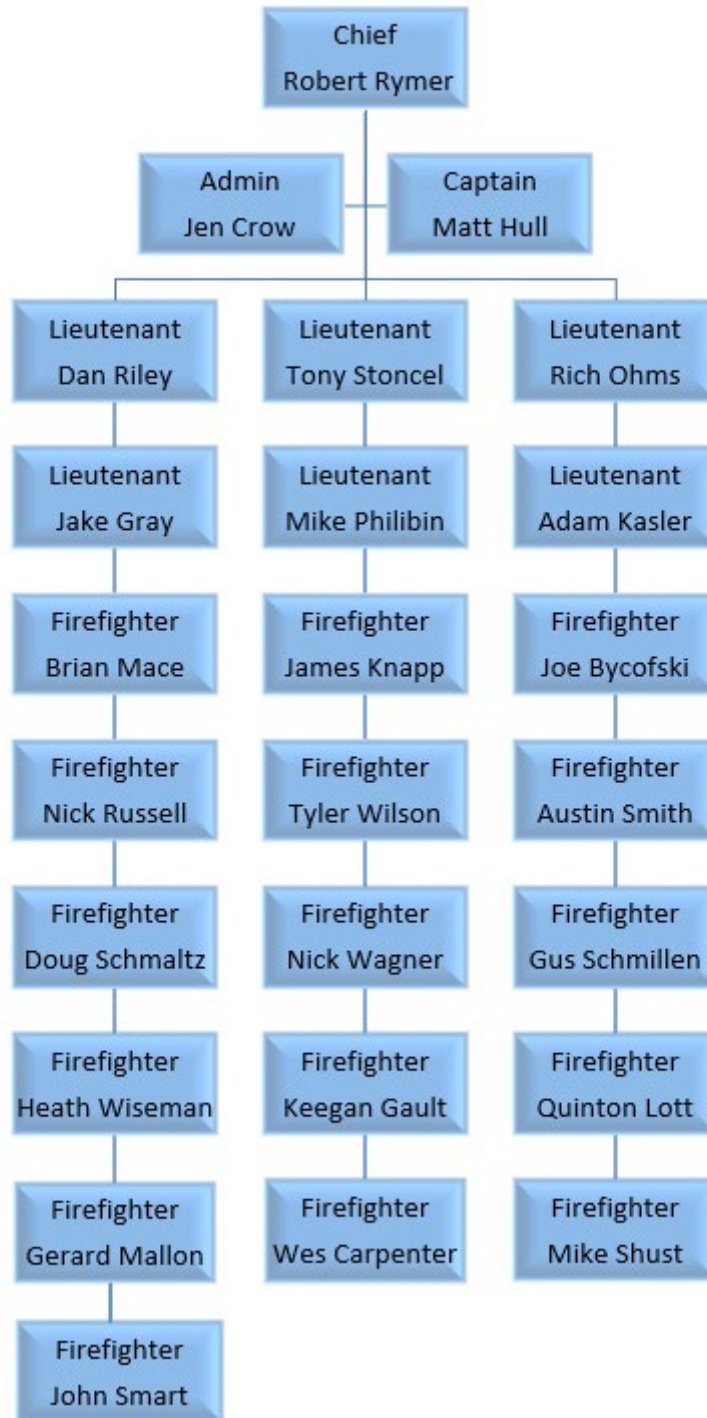
TOTAL LOSS

Incident Loss in Thousands of Dollars

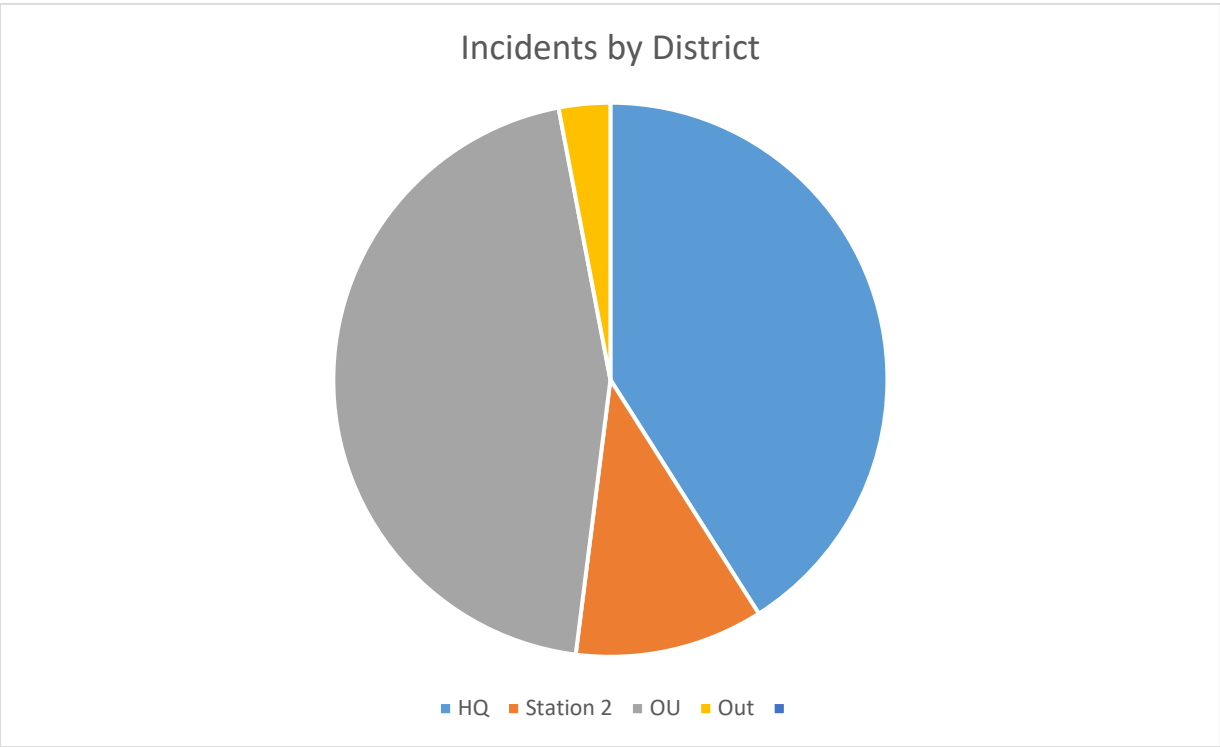
1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
\$224	\$1,340	\$343	\$245	\$589	\$445	\$429	\$81	\$213	\$529	\$225	\$209	\$70	\$620	\$988	\$1130	\$3350	\$400	\$380	\$2808	\$626	\$365	\$118	\$643	\$366	\$17

Athens Fire Department

2023 Organizational Chart



Appendix A
Alarm
Data

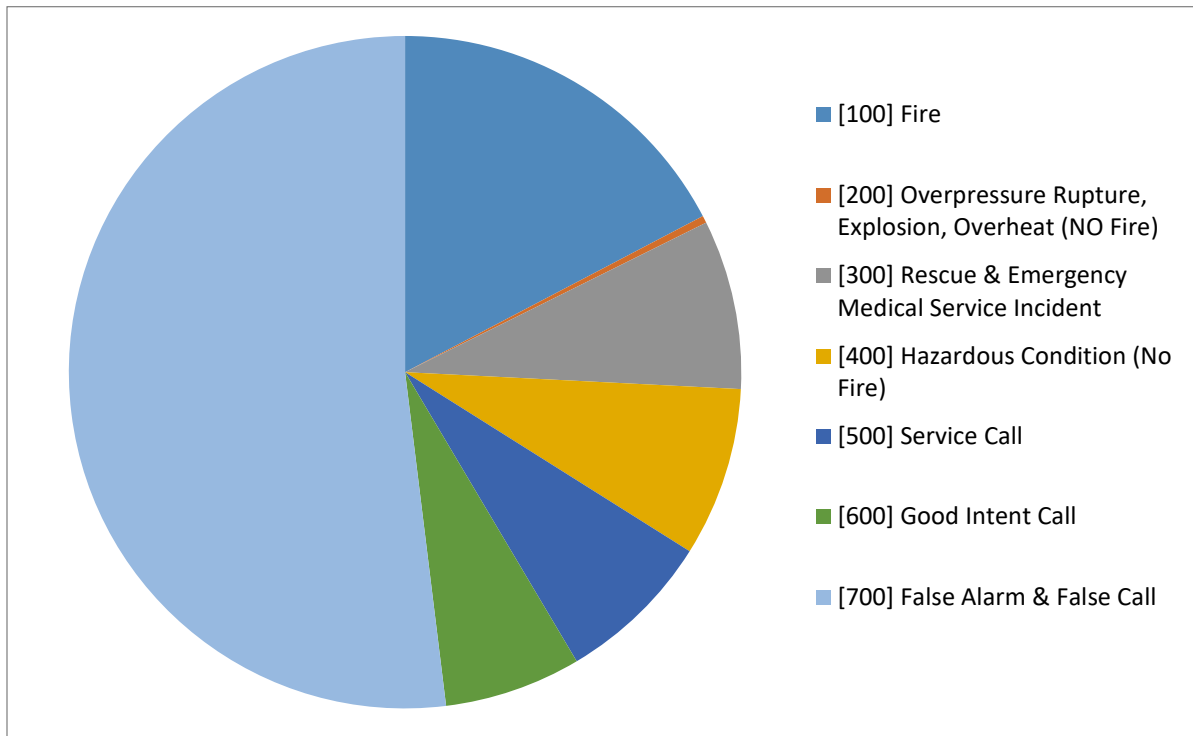


2023

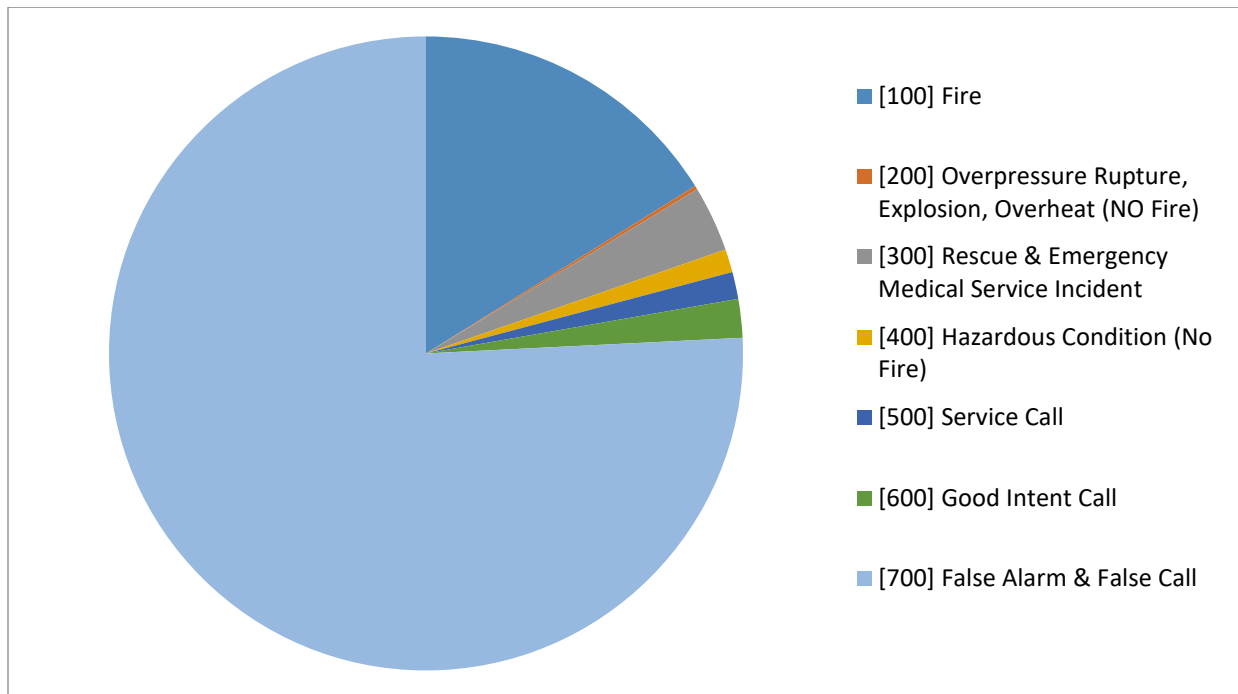
District	Pct of Incidents
1 Headquarters	41.00 %
2 Station II	11.00%
3 Ohio University	45.00 %
OUT Out Of District	3.00%

Total Incident Count: **1268**

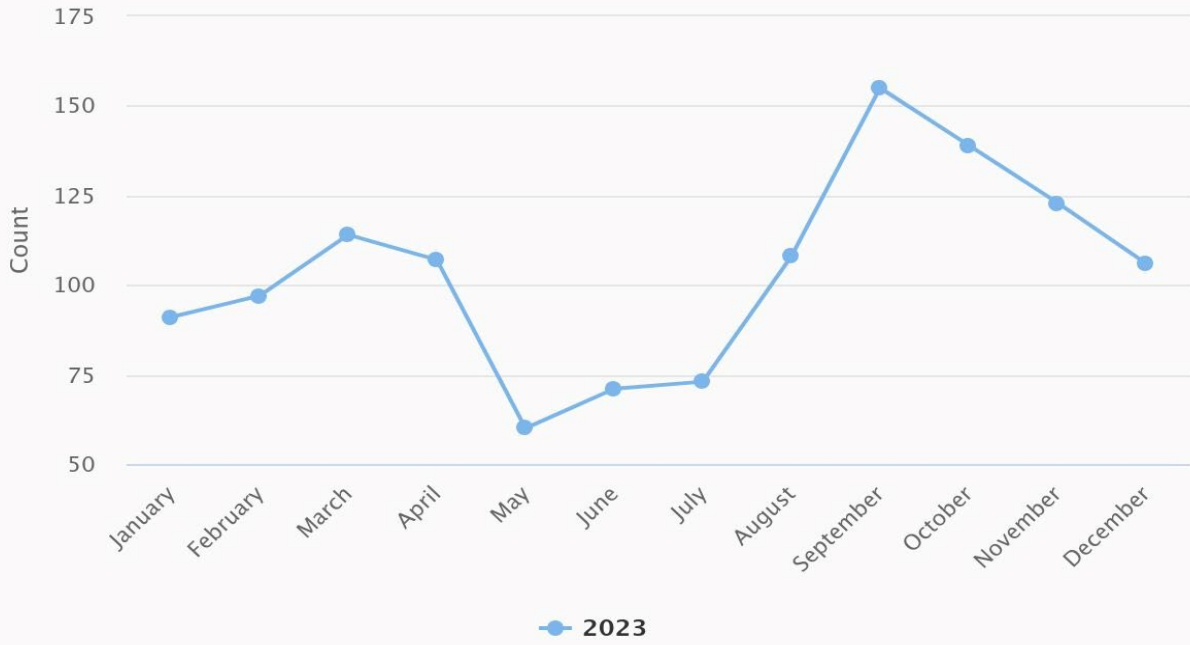
Incident by Type Overall



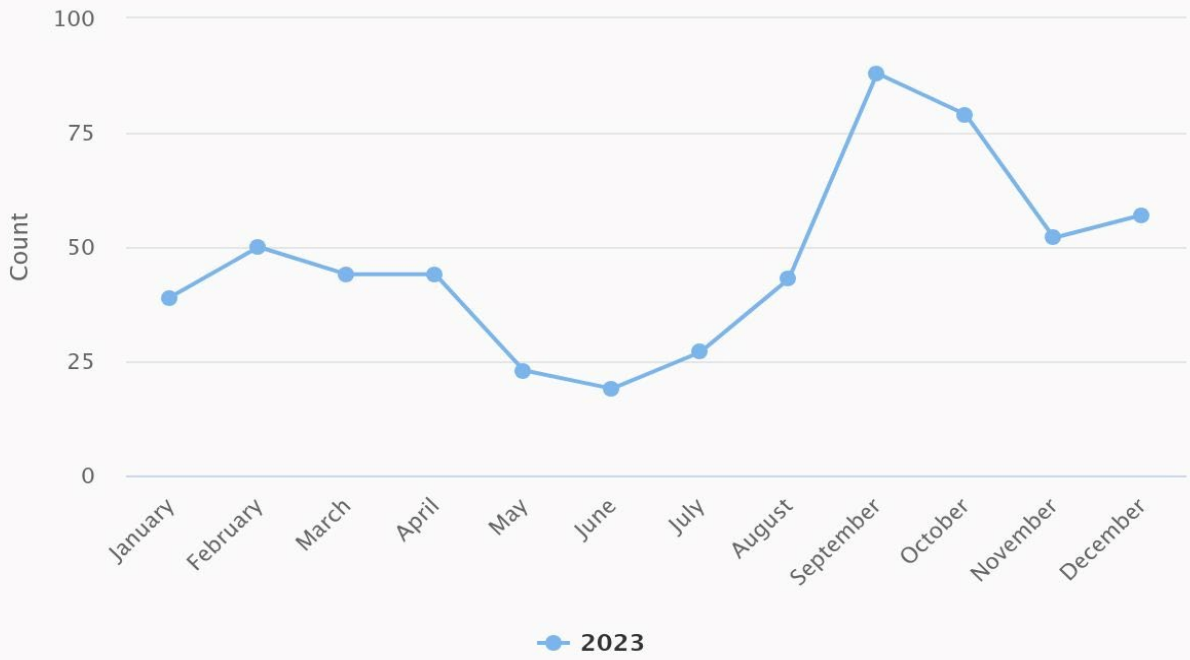
Incident by Type OU



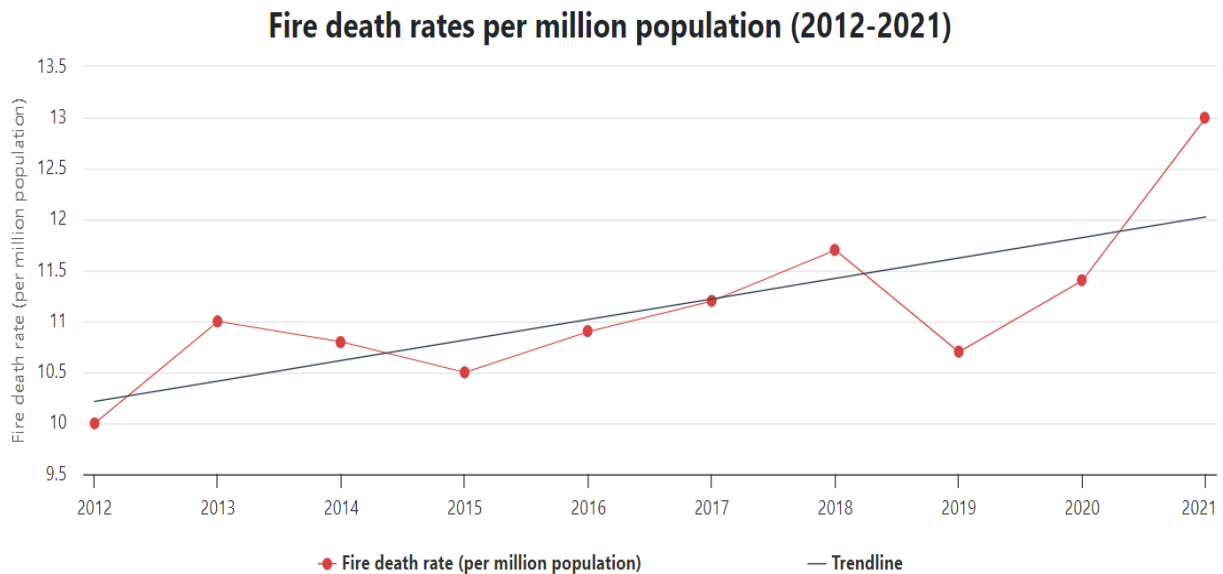
All city run counts count by Month



District 3 - OU count by Month



Appendix B
State and National
Fire Statistics



➤ **3790** civilian home fire fatalities reported by U.S. news media in 2022.

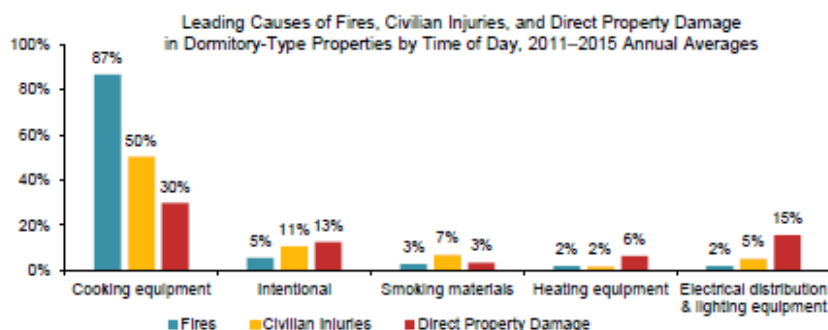
➤ **94** fatalities occurred in **Ohio**, during 2023 ranking it 5th in the nation for number of losses. This is a fire death rate of eight deaths per million population



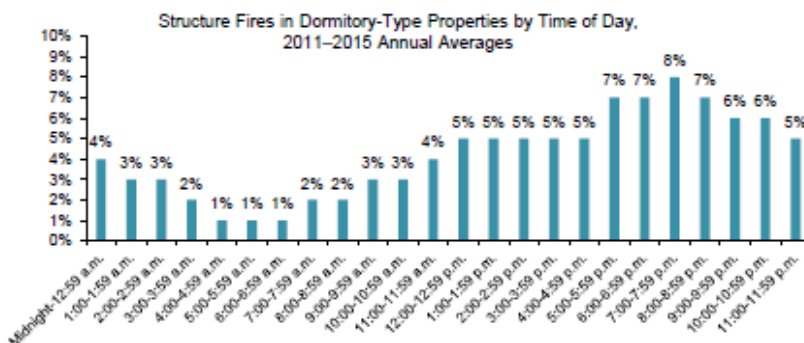
FACT SHEET » RESEARCH

Dormitory, Fraternity, Sorority, and Barrack Structure Fires

In 2011–2015, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated annual average of 4,100 structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks. These fires caused annual averages of 35 civilian injuries and cost \$14 million in direct property damage.



- ▶ Most fires started in the kitchen or cooking area.
- ▶ 87% of the reported structure fires involved cooking equipment. The majority of fires were reported as contained or confined to cooking equipment.
- ▶ Structure fires in dormitories, fraternities, sororities, and barracks are more common during the hours between 5 p.m. and 9 p.m. and on weekends.



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Source: NFPA Research: www.nfpa.org/research
Contact information: 617-984-7451 or research@nfpa.org



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FACT SHEET » RESEARCH

An Overview of the U.S. Fire Problem

In 2016, U.S. fire departments responded to an estimated 1,342,000 fires. These fires caused 3,390 civilian deaths and 14,650 civilian injuries. In the same year, 69 firefighters were fatally injured and 62,085 firefighters experienced non-fatal injuries while on duty.

The 2016 fire statistics (except those for firefighter fatalities) are projections derived from NFPA's annual fire department survey. The 2,769 departments that responded to the sample survey protect 132 million people, or 41% of the total U.S. population.

On average, U.S. fire departments responded to:

- ▶ A fire every 24 seconds
- ▶ A structure fire every 66 seconds
- ▶ A home fire every 90 seconds
- ▶ An outside or unclassified fire every 48 seconds
- ▶ A highway vehicle fire every 182 seconds

On average, fire claimed nine lives every day.

Highway vehicle fires caused 8% of the civilian fire deaths.

In 2016, the 280 deaths caused by car, truck, and related vehicle fires was almost two times the 150 deaths resulting from non-residential structure fires.

Three of every five road vehicle fire deaths resulted from fires caused by collisions or overturns.

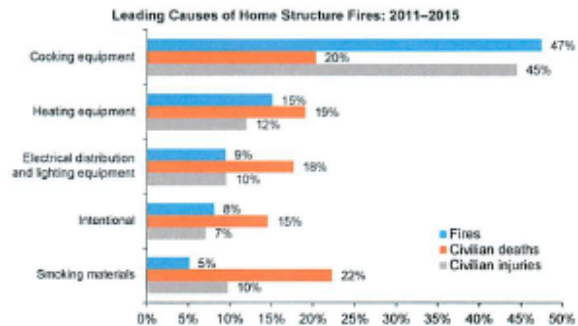
In most years, roughly half (49%) of all reported fires were outside or unclassified types of fires.

Brush, grass, or forest fires accounted for 22% of these fires; 13% were outside rubbish fires, 7% were outside fire involving property of value, and 8% were unclassified or other non-structure, non-vehicle fires.

Home Structure Fires

In 2016, home structure fires caused 81% of the civilian fire deaths and 73% of the civilian fire injuries. (Homes include one- and two-family homes, apartments, townhouses, row houses, and manufactured homes.)

The graph below shows how the leading causes vary depending on whether the interest is in fires, deaths, or injuries.



Cooking is the leading cause of home fires and home fire injuries and the second leading cause of home fire deaths.

Unattended cooking is the leading factor contributing to these fires. Frying poses the greatest risk of fire.

More than half of all cooking fire injuries occurred when people tried to fight the fire themselves.

Smoking has been the leading cause of home fire deaths for decades.



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FACT SHEET » RESEARCH *(continued)*

Heating equipment was involved in one of every five home fire deaths.

Heating equipment ranked second in reported home fires and home fire injuries, and third in home fire deaths. Portable and fixed space heaters, including wood stoves, are involved in more fires than central heat. These fires are also more likely to result in death than central heating fires.

Intentional fires were the fourth leading cause of home fires.

Intentional fire setting was blamed for 8% of home fires, 15% of home fire deaths, and 7% of home fire injuries. According to FBI statistics, nearly one out of every three people arrested for arson in recent years were under 18.

Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was the third leading cause of home fires.

This category includes fixed wiring, meters, switches, receptacles, outlets, cords and plugs, and lighting equipment. Electrical distribution or lighting equipment was involved in 9% of home fires, 10% of fire injuries, and 18% of home fire deaths.

Electrical factors can play a role in any fire involving equipment powered by electricity. Electrical failures were factors in 13% of home fires.

Almost all U.S. homes have at least one smoke alarm, but three of every five home fire deaths resulted from fires in homes with no smoke alarms or none that worked.

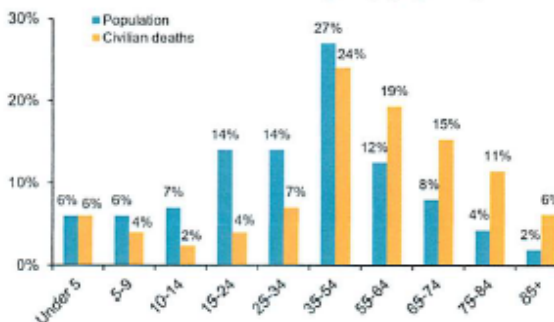
People who are under the influence of alcohol, drugs, or medications, have disabilities, or are very close to where the fire started, may not be able to act on a smoke alarm's warning. Nuisance alarms are the leading reason for disabling smoke alarms.

Sprinklers decrease the fire death rate per 1,000 reported home fires by about 81%.

NFPA's Fire Sprinkler Initiative™: Bringing Safety Home is a nationwide effort to encourage the use of home fire sprinklers and the adoption of fire sprinkler requirements for new construction.

See www.firesprinklerinitiative.org.

Home Structure Fire Civilian Deaths and Injuries, by Age Group: 2011-2015



Compared to their share of the population, older adults were more likely to die in home fires than people in other age groups.

States with the highest fire death rates tend to have higher percentages of:

- ▶ Adults who did not finish high school
- ▶ African American or Native American residents
- ▶ Smokers
- ▶ Households living in poverty
- ▶ People living in rural areas

Source: NFPA Research: www.nfpa.org/research
Contact Information: 617-984-7450 or research@nfpa.org



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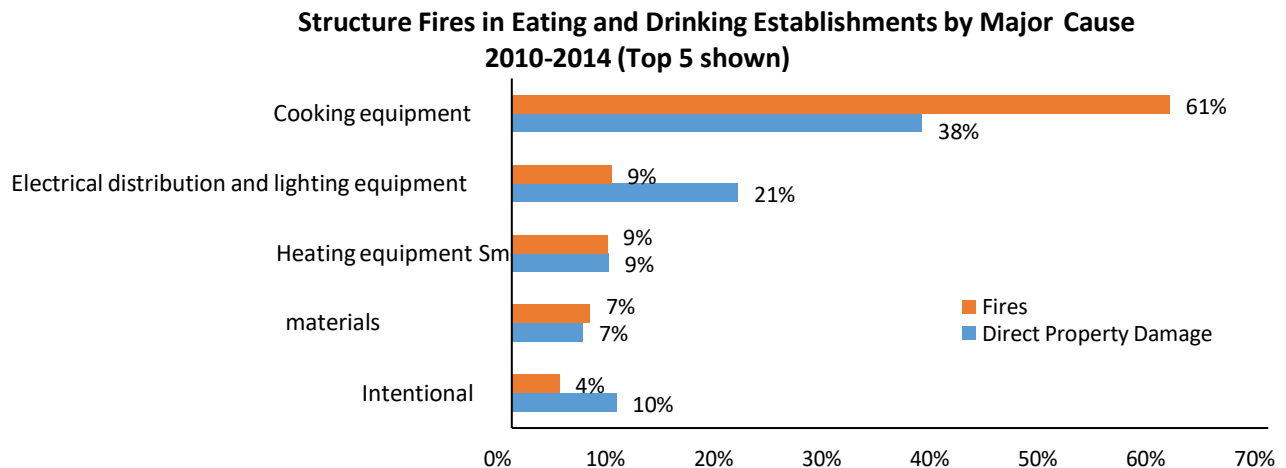
RESEARCH

Structure Fires in Eating and Drinking Establishments Fact Sheet

During 2010-2014, an estimated average of 7,410 structure fires in eating and drinking establishments were reported to U.S. fire departments each year. These fires resulted in associated annual losses of:

- Three civilian deaths
- 110 civilian injuries
- \$165 million in property damage

Cooking equipment was the leading cause of fires in these properties, accounting for three out of five fires (61%) and 38% of direct property damage. Electrical distribution and lighting equipment was responsible for 9% of fires, but 21% of direct property damage, while heating equipment was responsible for 9% of fires and 9% of direct property damage. Smoking materials caused 7% of fires and 7% of direct property damage. Four percent of fires had an intentional cause, but these fires caused 10% of direct property damage.



- Deep fryers were involved in one of five fires (21%) and ranges or cooktops were involved in 14% of fires.
- Two-thirds (68%) of fires in eating and drinking establishments were small and did not spread beyond the object of origin.
- Cooking materials were the item first ignited in 43% of the fires in eating and drinking establishments.
- Failure to clean was a factor in 22% of the fires in these properties.