

CITY OF
WILMINGTON
FIRE DEPARTMENT
Serving and Protecting Wilmington since 1897



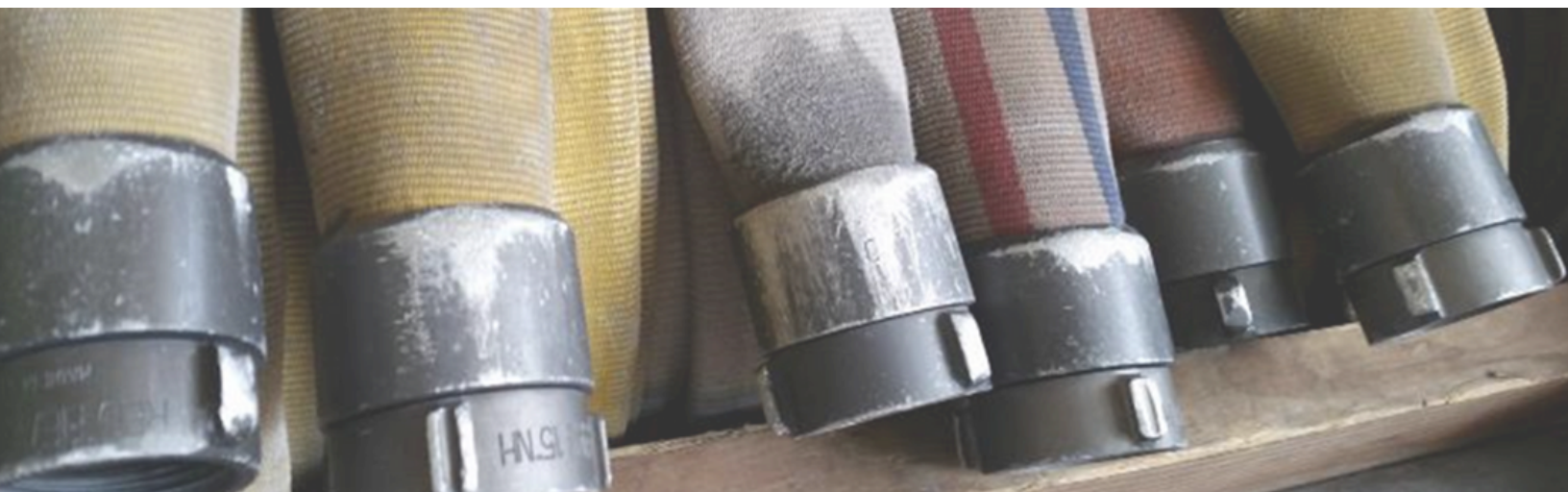
ANNUAL REPORT

2023

(910) 341-7846 | 801 MARKET ST | WILMINGTON, NC 28401

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WHO WE ARE

For more than 125 years, the innovative and courageous men and women of the Wilmington Fire Department (WFD) have worked to keep residents, businesses, and visitors safe. Much has changed since horse drawn steamers ran the streets of our city, but the one thing that hasn't changed is our members' commitment to service above all else.



WFD provides fire suppression and first response emergency medical services (EMS) within the City of Wilmington, North Carolina. The department employs nearly 200 highly trained firefighters spread across 3 shifts and 9 stations.

WFD is internationally accredited by the Center for Public Safety Excellence. There are only 284 accredited agencies in the world. 11% of the U.S. is protected by an accredited fire agency. The department also holds an ISO Class 1 designation. This number is a rating determined by a third-party on a 1-10 scale, with 1 being the best possible and 10 being the worst, meant to score a department's ability to protect the community. Our ISO 1 ranking put us in the top 1% of fire departments nationwide.

There are several divisions within the department including the Office of the Fire Chief, Administrative Services, Support Services, Operations, Training and Safety, and Fire Marshal's Office.

This document summarizes the department's accomplishments in 2023, sheds light on the opportunity for growth and development, and provides a clear picture of the services offered.

SERVICE AREA

The City of Wilmington, incorporated in 1739, is situated between the Cape Fear River and the Atlantic Ocean in Southeastern North Carolina. Wilmington is the county seat of New Hanover County. As the eighth largest city in the state, Wilmington has more than 123,000 residents and covers 53 square miles. Wilmington is an urban center with a thriving 50-block historical downtown district and is a terminus for Interstate 40 and other



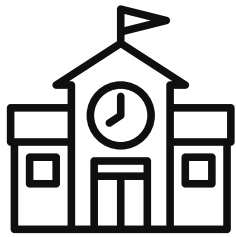
major roadways, contributing to additional non-resident traffic, business-related travel, or vacationers. Wilmington is also the home to the University of North Carolina Wilmington, Novant Health with its medical center and hospital, and the North Carolina Ports. It's also important to note that Wilmington is home to a bustling film industry.

SERVICE AREA, CONT'D

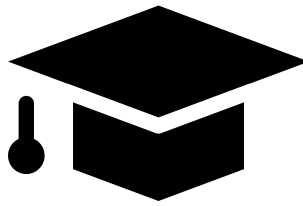
53
SQUARE MILES

123,000
POPULATION

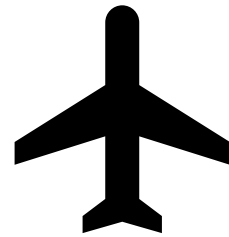
\$23.7 MIL
ANNUAL BUDGET



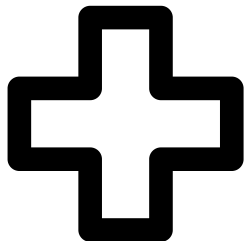
37
SCHOOLS



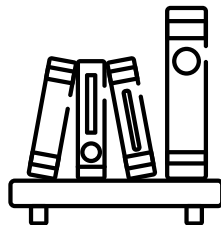
3
COLLEGES



1
AIRPORT



2
HOSPITALS



4
LIBRARIES



54,000
HOUSING UNITS

CHIEF'S MESSAGE

It is with great pride that I share with you the 2023 Wilmington Fire Department Annual Report. On the pages of this report, you will gain a broad perspective of the many services and programs our members provide to our community, region, and state. I hope you find this report to be interesting and informative. Thank you for taking the time to review it.

2023 was a record year for the WFD as call volume increased by more than 41% from 2022, resulting in nearly 18,000 calls for service. Once again, the men and women of the WFD have risen to the challenge of providing excellence through service. Words cannot express my gratitude for the unwavering dedication and passion for service that our members demonstrate each day.

The WFD experienced several successes and accomplishments in 2023. In the spring, a new custom engine was put in service downtown and a new high-water vehicle was delivered that will soon go into service. Over the summer, two Junior Fire Academies were held and a new 2.0 program was implemented to mentor high school students considering a career with the WFD. Our Training Division implemented a company officer certificate program which gives aspiring company officers an alternative to promotional eligibility without a college degree. Two very important positions were added to the staff: a chief deputy fire marshal and a full-time fire and life safety educator which has significantly improved our education and prevention efforts. In the fall, we broke ground on a new Station 6 in the Riverlights community, placed an order for a new engine, implemented a new records management system, and debuted a documentary celebrating our first 125 years as a career organization!

In addition to the members of the WFD, I would like to thank Mayor Saffo and the City Council for their continued commitment to public safety. None of our accomplishments would be possible without their support and dedication to protecting the citizens of Wilmington.

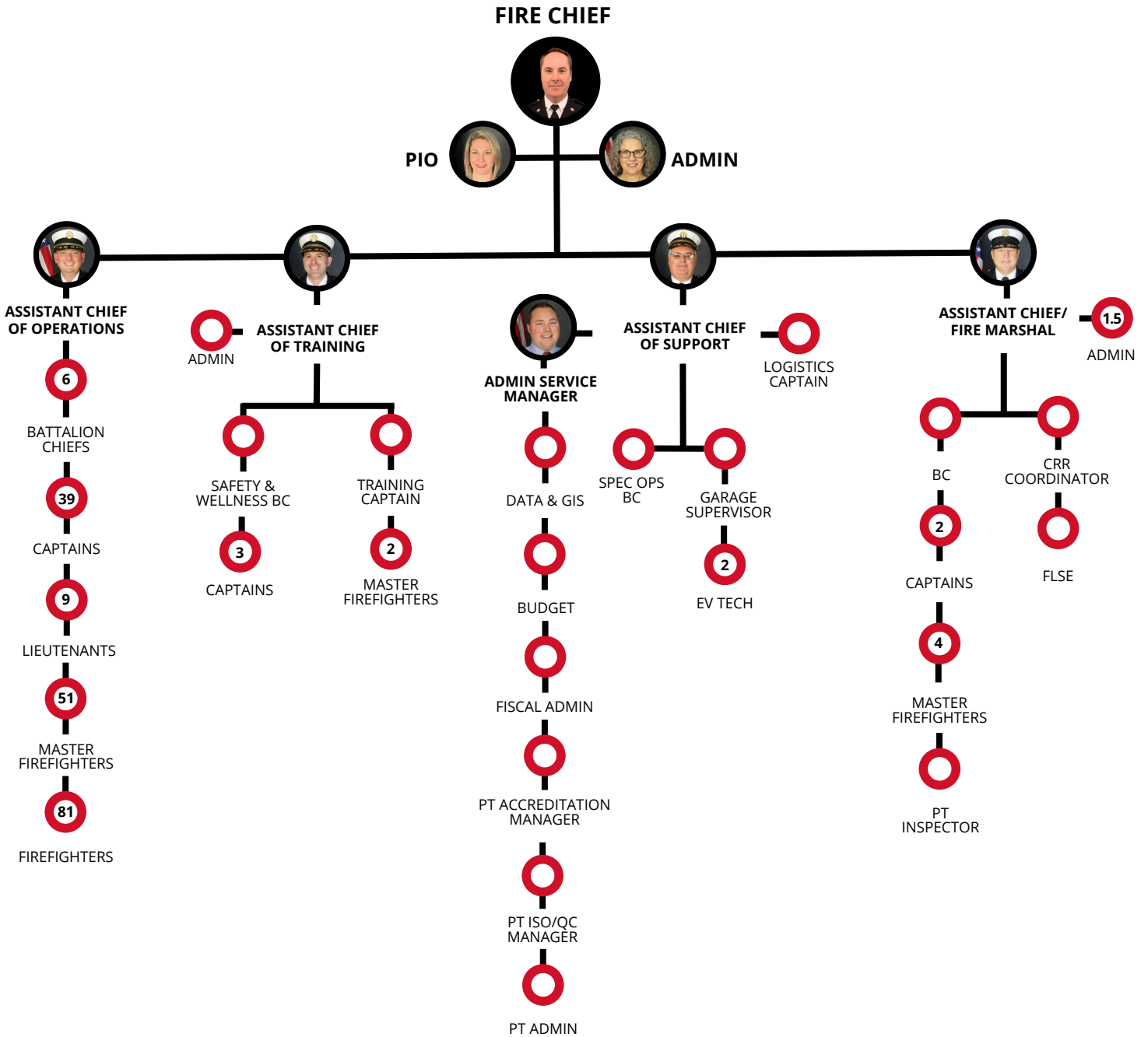
It is an honor and privilege to not only serve as Fire Chief, but to be a part of the WFD family. I am very proud of what we were able to accomplish in 2023 and I look forward to all the continued successes 2024 will bring.



**FIRE CHIEF
J. STEVE MASON**



ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



*Pictured: Senior Staff

MISSION, VISION, & VALUES

OUR MISSION

To provide the most talented and effective fire service organization to respond to the needs of our community through emergency services and proactive risk reduction.

OUR VISION

"Excellence through Service"

OUR CORE VALUES



Accountable

Ownership for one's thinking, actions and results, and a willingness to hold others to the same from a genuine desire to do the right thing.



Disciplined

A steadfast and intentional approach to greatness in our service to the community and ourselves.



Honorable

Actions carried out with dignity consistent with the highest degree of integrity and ethics.



United

People of different backgrounds, cultures, and generations working together with a shared selfless purpose.

STATION LOCATIONS



LOCATIONS

Headquarters
801 Market St.

Station 2
3403 Park Ave.

Station 3
114 Cinema Dr.

Station 5
680 Shipyard Blvd.

Future Station 6
Riverlights Community

Station 7
3230 S College Rd.

Station 8
601 Eastwood Rd.

Station 9
1201 Military Cutoff Rd.

Station 10
6102 Oleander Dr.

Station 15
3335 Masonboro Loop Rd.

Fire Marshal's Office
115 N Third St.

Training/Logistics
3100 Hurst St.

2023 SUCCESSES

The WFD experienced a number of successes and accomplishments in 2023. Some of them have been highlighted below. Each occurred through the collaboration of the divisions of the department, from the Operations Division and Fire Marshal's Office to Support Services and Administration.



Hired a full time Fire and Life Safety Educator to facilitate programing



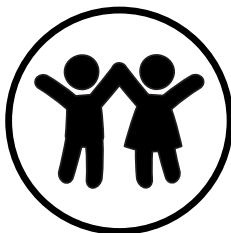
Added third Crisis Response Facility Dog to Mental Health Program



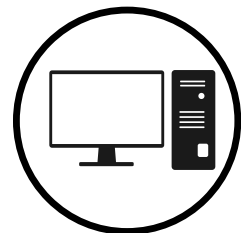
Debuted documentary, commemorating 125 years of being a career department



Broke ground on new Riverlights Fire Station, new Station 6



Held two Junior Fire Academies and launched JFA 2.0 to mentor high school students



Launched new RMS system, EPR Fireworks, facilitating better data management

OPERATIONS

AVERAGE
TRAVEL
TIME

3 **52**
MINS SECS

2023
**TOTAL CALLS
FOR SERVICE**

17,971



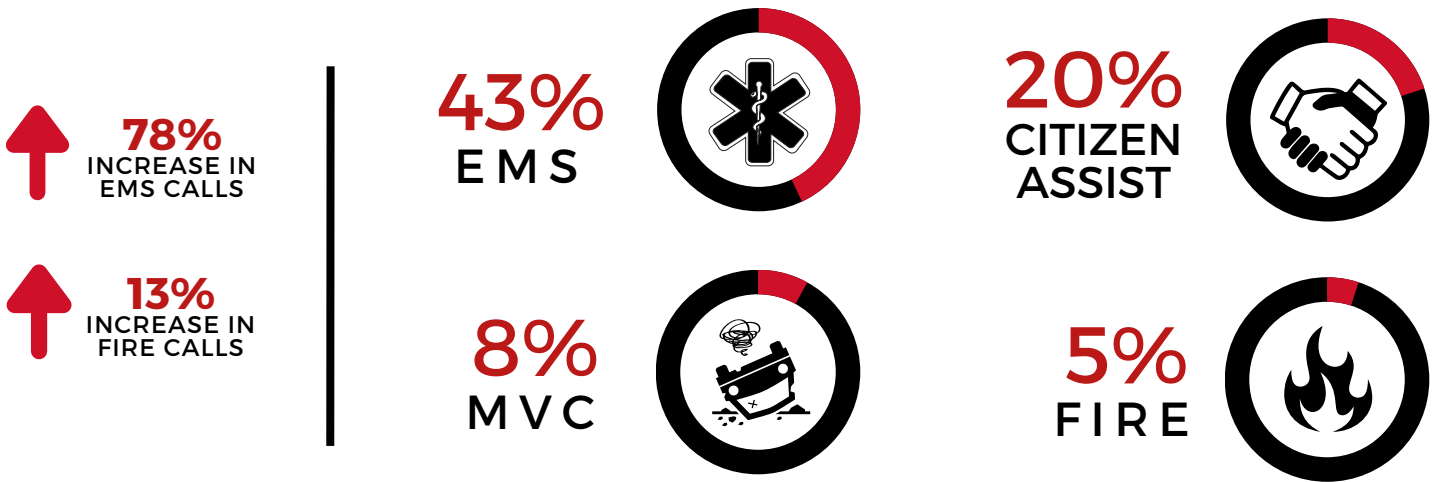
123
**STRUCTURE
FIRES**

\$2.1
BILLION
**TOTAL PROPERTY
VALUE SAVED**

38
**LIFE-SAVING
EXTRICATIONS**

The Operations Division is dedicated to delivering the highest level of service possible, in both emergency and non-emergency situations. The department responds to motor vehicle accidents, rescue situations, hazardous material incidents, water rescues, and specialized fire and EMS emergencies.

The Operations Division is made up of **189** firefighters spread across **3** shifts, **9** fire stations, and **16** fire companies. The primary responsibility of the division is to respond to calls for service. In addition, the operational shifts consistently perform training to sharpen their skills and physical fitness to stay in shape, logging nearly **33,421** hours of physical fitness training last year. The shifts executed **6,427** fire hydrant inspections and tested more than **53,380** feet of fire hose. In 2023, operations also provided coverage for **14** Live Nation Concerts, **16** Wilmington Convention Center events, **8** Port City Concerts, and **5** large scale festivals.

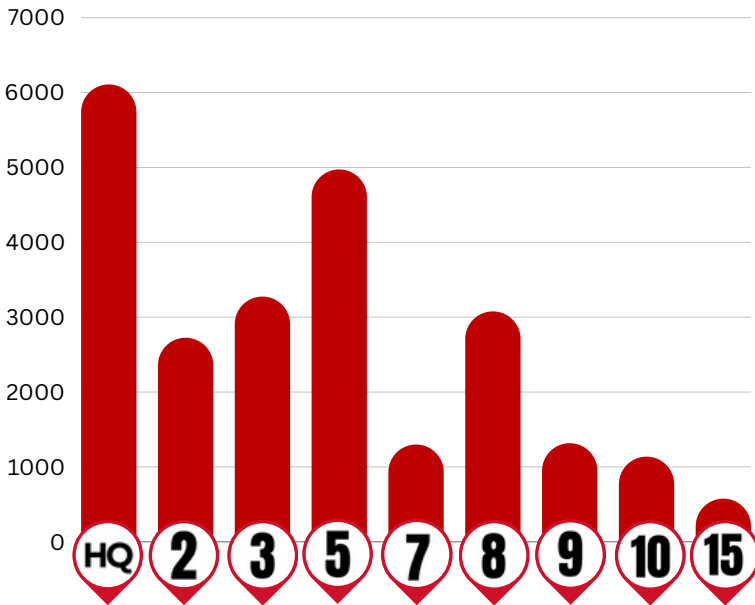


WFD APPARATUS

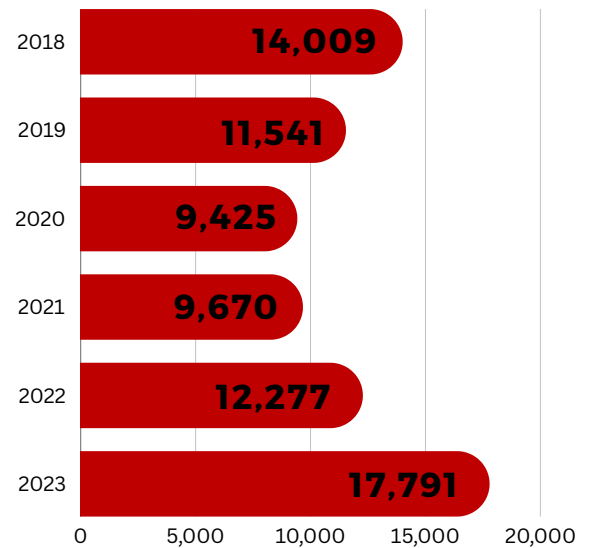
ENGINE COMPANIES	8	MARINE UNIT	3
TRUCK COMPANIES	4	DIVE UNIT	1
RESCUE COMPANY	1	HAZMAT UNIT	1
SQUAD COMPANIES	3	FOAM UNIT	1
BATTALION COMMAND	2	TECH RESCUE UNIT	1
SAFETY	1	AIR/LIGHT UNIT	1

CALL VOLUMES

EMERGENCY CALLS PER STATION

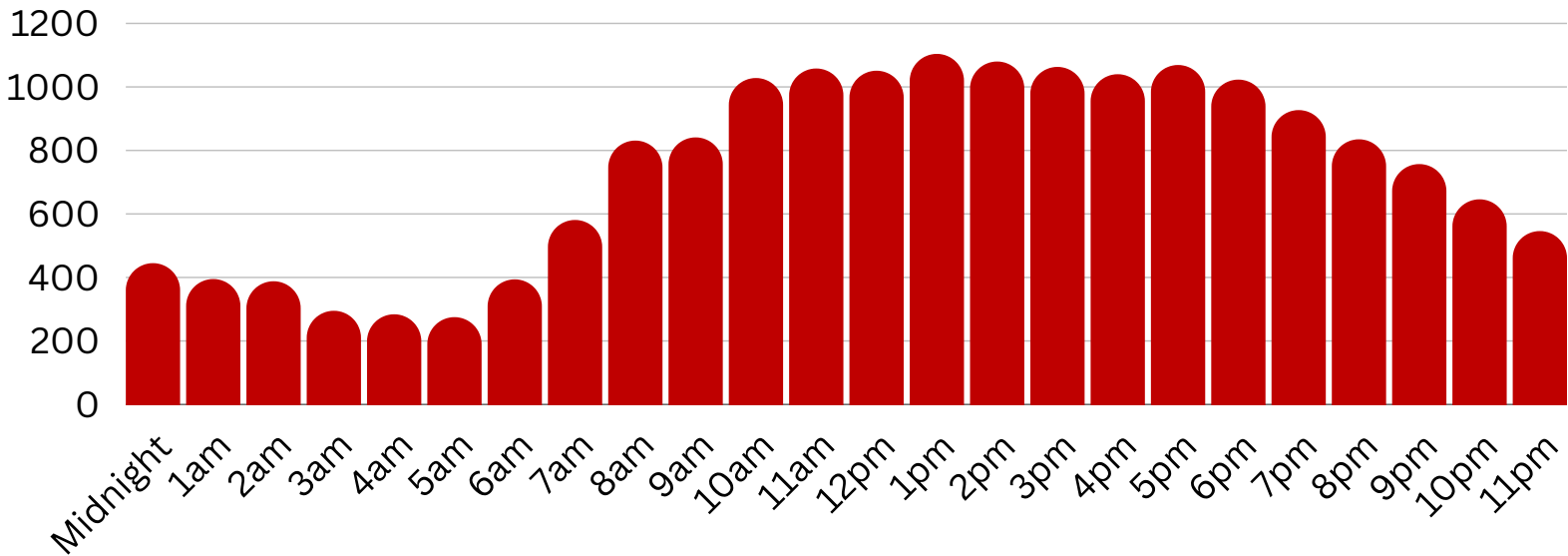


TOTAL CALL VOLUME BY YEAR*



*In 2018, we implemented a complete overhaul of the response plan, reducing unnecessary responding companies and reworking the automatic alarm response policy. This resulted in the significant decrease in responses the following year. The following years, COVID contributed to a further decrease. 2023 was the first year we saw a return to normal business after COVID and the reintroduction of some of the calls previously eliminated.

RESPONSES BY HOUR OF THE DAY



SPECIAL OPERATIONS

TECH RESCUE | MARINE/DIVE | HAZMAT

Along with traditional firefighting, WFD has several teams of firefighters who are cross-trained to serve in multiple roles when an emergency arises.

The WFD's Special Operations Division includes the department's Technical Rescue, Marine/Dive Rescue, and Hazardous Materials Response Teams. Each of these teams are comprised of department members who have received advanced and specialized technical training in their respective Special Operations discipline.

Additionally, each team has specialized incident response apparatus and equipment to respond to and safely mitigate a Special Operations incident. The teams are managed by the Department's Battalion Chief of Special Operations who oversees the budgeting, equipment, and specialized training needs for all Special Operations team members.



SPECIAL OPS RESPONSES BY THE NUMBERS

63
**TECH
RESCUE**



6
**MARINE
DIVE**



248
**HAZARDOUS
MATERIALS**



MAJOR ACTIVATIONS

- The Technical Rescue Team utilized a stokes basket and rigging to rescue a motorcycle rider who had fallen 30' over the side of an overpass after a motor vehicle accident.
- The Technical Rescue Team utilized a stokes basket and rigging to remove a patient that had suffered a medical emergency from a lower interior deck of the USS North Carolina.
- The HazMat Team responded to Columbus County for an overturned fuel tanker with 4,500 gallons of gasoline and 500 gallons of diesel fuel onboard.
- The Marine/Dive Rescue Team responded to a vessel that had partially capsized due to heavy rainfall. Members secured the vessel and removed the portable fuel tank to prevent a potential fuel spill into the river.

TRAINING

The Training Division is responsible for the coordination and delivery of training to department personnel. Division staff provide instruction in all disciplines of the fire service, including a recruit academy, firefighting strategy and tactics, incident management, EMS continuing education hours, technical rescue, water rescue, hazardous materials, professional development, driver operator training, and live fire exercises. In addition, the division performs service testing on all apparatus and proficiency drills for all companies.

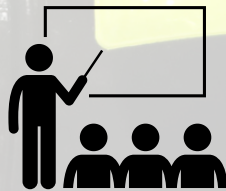
In 2023, the division worked diligently to complete a department-wide hose deployment training. In coordination with Human Resources and the Promotional and Hiring Committees, the Training Division held promotional processes for Master Firefighter, Lieutenant, and Fire Marshal Battalion Chief, and coordinated the 2023 Recruit Academy.

**TOTAL DEPARTMENT
TRAINING HOURS
85,561**

2023 ACADEMY



16
RECRUITS



1,048
CLASSROOM
HOURS



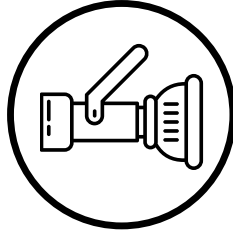
128
PT HOURS

DIVISION



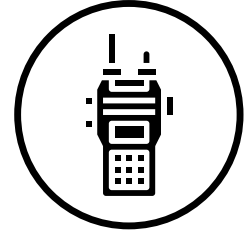
3

PROMOTIONAL
PROCESSES



1

DEPARTMENT-WIDE
HOSE DEPLOYMENT
TRAINING



73

INCIDENT COMMAND
CERTIFICATIONS



HUMAN RESOURCES

Human Resources supports the department's workforce by providing a variety of personnel services including recruitment coordination and administration, applicant screenings, promotional processes, personnel action processing and employee support.

In 2023, WFD accepted **174** applications for the position of firefighter recruit. From that pool of applicants, the department hired a total of **17** employees for the recruit academy.

207
UNIFORMED
POSITIONS



19
CIVILIAN
POSITIONS





PAWS4PEOPLE

In 2023, WFD added a third dog and firefighter handler to its Crisis Response Facility Dog Program. The department works with *paws4people foundation* to station dogs with firefighters to assist with stress de-escalation, lower anxiety, and reduced long-term effects of PTSD for the firefighters and the patients we come in contact with. In addition to the three facility dogs, after a particularly bad call, *paws4people* will send a K9 Crisis Response Team with a litter of puppies to the station to provide de-escalation.

- Activated K9 Crisis Response Team 14 times
- Added a third dog to the WFD program, AXEL and Handler Captain Eric Moon, and additional Primary Handler Master Firefighter Tyler Howell
- Started training 4 additional primary handlers to supplement program

WFD also partners with *paws4people* by providing "noise confidence training" for new puppies. In 2023, WFD hosted 23 of these trainings.

& WELLNESS

The Safety, Health, and Wellness division is designed to better promote initiatives that improve the lives of personnel. The Battalion Chief position is multi-faceted and encompasses assisting the Training Division and Logistics, running several committees, managing the shift safety officers, and working on ways to promote an overall culture of wellness. The Fire Service is an honorable career, but comes with many challenges, several of which involve the firefighter's physical wellness and mental health. WFD believes it is the department's duty to ensure our first responders are prepared for whatever they may be called to, both physically and mentally.

SAFETY

The Chief of Safety, Health and Wellness oversaw testing of all ground ladders and aerial apparatus. Additionally, a Safety captain was assigned to each health and wellness committee.



96
STATION
INSPECTIONS



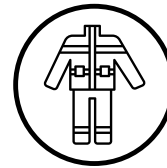
20
SCBA AIR
SAMPLE TESTS



190
PHYSICAL
AGILITY TESTS



206
MASK FIT
TESTS



380
TURNOUT GEAR
INSPECTIONS

HEALTH & WELLNESS

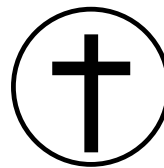
The Battalion Chief of Safety, Health and Wellness maintained the six-person Physical Fitness and Nutrition Team and the Mental Health and Wellness Team to assist with strategic goals and needs of the department. In 2023, the department finalized the addition of Crisis Response Facility Dogs to all three of our operational shifts and added a few more peer support team members to the roster.



12
SUICIDE
PREVENTION
TEAM MEMBERS



14
PEER SUPPORT
TEAM MEMBERS



5
CHAPLAIN
PROGRAM
MEMBERS



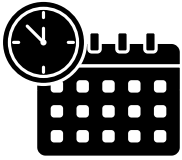
3
CRISIS
RESPONSE
FACILITY DOGS

FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

The Office of the Fire Marshal conducts all fire and life safety code enforcement activities through building plan examination and on-site inspections. Our inspectors are trained and certified through a national certification process to determine code violations and offer violation remedies. Inspectors follow state code and local ordinances to ensure that public buildings are safe for occupancy, and in the event of an emergency, occupants can safely escape.

In 2023, the Fire Marshal's Office completed a total of **8,127** inspections.

INSPECTIONS BY TYPE



5,223
SCHEDULED

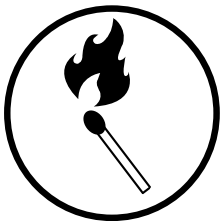


1,403
CONSTRUCTION/
PERMIT



1,501
PLAN REVIEW

In addition to code enforcement responsibilities, the Fire Marshal's Office is also responsible for investigations. Each year, numerous fire-related incidents occur. WFD's staff of investigators responded to **70** fires in 2023 to determine the origin and cause of the fire. This number was down from **81** fires in 2022.



10
INTENTIONAL



57
ACCIDENTAL



3
UNDETERMINED/
STILL UNDER INVESTIGATION



COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

Also housed within the Fire Marshal's Office is our Community Risk Reduction Coordinator. The focus is to harness the 5 E's of prevention: Enforcement, Engineering, Emergency Response, Economic Incentive, and Education to eliminate actions and conditions that contribute to unintentional injuries and deaths, reduce preventable calls for service, and to improve overall quality of life for Wilmington's residents and firefighters.

In 2023, there were 14 strategic programs in prioritized zones throughout the city. Additionally, our Child Passenger Safety program continues to succeed in supporting area residents. The aim of the program is to educate parents on safety in and around cars, limiting injuries and death among our littlest residents.

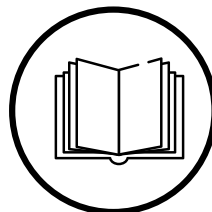
The CRR Coordinator also facilitated hundreds of educational programs and thousands of public contacts, including the continuation of successful program Empower Wilmington.



OUTREACH BY THE NUMBERS



12,574
PUBLIC CONTACTS



183
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS



101
SMOKE ALARM INSTALLS



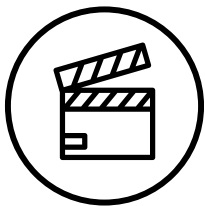
359
CAR SEAT INSPECTIONS

PUBLIC INFORMATION

The Office of Public Information manages the department's reputation and key issues of importance to the community. The PIO facilitates internal and external communications through the use of newsletters, social media, videos, press releases, and the department's website, while also handling public and community relations.

2023 was a busy year for the Public Information Division. There were several external facing events including Junior Fire Academies, Citizens Fire Academies, the 9/11 Ceremony, Awards and Promotions Ceremony, and Recruit Graduation. The PIO produced, shot, and edited, and then debuted a documentary film to celebrate the 125th anniversary of the organization becoming an all-career department.

Additionally, the PIO facilitated more than 50 interviews or press conferences, resulting in nearly a quarter of a million dollars-worth of airtime. The PIO also saw continued success of both internal and external communication, growing the Facebook audience by 6%, Instagram audience by 20%, and YouTube subscribers by 47%. In addition, the external facing newsletter subscriber base grew to nearly 300 subscribers, a 29% increase from last year.



Debuted WFD documentary, commemorating 125 years of being a career department



Launched JFA 2.0 to further engage past JFA participants



Held two Junior Fire Academies to aid in recruiting high school students to the fire service



DOCUMENTARY

2023 marked a special anniversary for the WFD. Though the fire service in Wilmington existed long before, the department became a career organization on December 1, 1897. In celebration of 125 years of being an all career organization, the department debuted a documentary.

The film, titled **125 Years: Bridging Tradition and Progress**, premiered in October at Thalian Hall. The 30-minute film explores the themes of tradition and progress through the lens of technology and training. It can be viewed on the WFD YouTube page.



2023 RETIREES



Battalion Chief JJ Norwood
25 Years of Service



Captain Carl Cliver
29 Years of Service



Captain Michael Kraft
22 Years of Service



Captain Chuck Bower
22 Years of Service

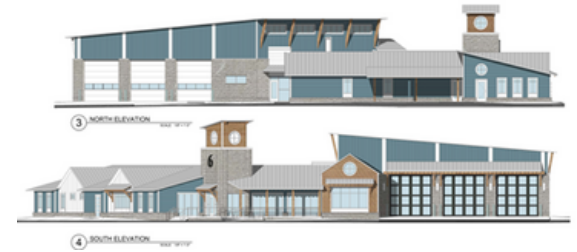


Firefighter Sarah Kendrick
18 Years of Service

RIVERLIGHTS STATION

The City of Wilmington hosted a groundbreaking ceremony for a new fire station in the Riverlights area in August. It will be the new Fire Station 6. This will be the City's first fire station constructed in a residential neighborhood and it has been designed with consideration of the Riverlights Community Design Guidelines. It will serve the Riverlights community, a portion of Independence Boulevard, and the Echo Farms community.

Construction started in the fall. The station is estimated to be complete by Fall 2024.



WFD FALLEN FIREFIGHTERS MEMORIAL



The Wilmington Fallen Firefighters Memorial was constructed to honor **8** of Wilmington's bravest who lost their lives in the line of duty and the **343** NYC firefighters who perished during the tragic events of September 11, 2001. This memorial serves as a place of reflection and respect to all firefighters that have made the ultimate sacrifice.

The centerpiece of the memorial is a steel artifact recovered from the rubble of the World Trade Center in New York City. Surrounding this somber piece of American History are individual monuments honoring Wilmington's fallen firefighters including garden spots, restful benches, and shade trees.

The Wilmington Fallen Firefighters Memorial is located at WFD Fire Station 2 at Empie Park. The memorial is open to the public and visitors are welcome to come and honor those who gave their lives while serving our community and nation.

Station 2 | 3403 Park Avenue | Wilmington, NC 28401

LOOKING FORWARD

Part of being an accredited organization is the commitment to continuous improvement. The WFD constantly performs self-analysis and looks for ways to further innovate the fire service and the services we offer the public. As we look to 2024, the department has set many goals. Some of the most prominent are listed below.



Opening new Riverlights Fire Station, adding a company & 15 positions



Department getting reaccredited by the CPSE in the spring



Launching Future Firefighters Academy to recruit and keep JFA students engaged



Taking delivery of a new fire engine



Placing new high water vehicle in service

We hope this document has helped inform you of the ways the WFD works day in and day out to serve you and the community. If you have any questions or concerns about what you have read here, please feel free to reach out.

LIKE
FOLLOW
APPLY

