

HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF THE BIG SKY FIRE DEPARTMENT

1969

Big Sky was a very rural and rugged area before commercial and residential development arrived. Local residents were few but hardy and for the most part had taken care of themselves since this area was originally settled. This began to change in 1969 with the start of a development of Lone Mountain into a ski area.

1971

Local community members formed what became the Gallatin Canyon Volunteer Fire Department. Funding was scarce and their equipment was either donated or purchased used from other departments with money raised locally by department members.

1979

Two Gallatin Canyon Rural Fire Districts were formed; one each for the Gallatin County and Madison County portions of Big Sky. While being separate governmental entities, the district was operated as if it was one and the regular funding from property mill levies helped to better support department operations. When it was later found that running the two districts together as one was actually improper, formal action was taken in 1994 to create the single Gallatin Canyon Consolidated Rural Fire District that spread across both counties.

1986

The McBride Family donated land in Westfork Meadows for the current Fire Station 1 to be built. Local tradesman performed much of the station construction and the station has had several additions since that time to accommodate growth, including one being completed in 2019. This allowed the department to move from a nearby smaller building that was converted to a home.

Emergency medical services originally came by way of a private ambulance service from Bozeman, so it would be a long wait for help to arrive. An attempt to address this was made in 1986, when a full time Emergency Medical Technician was hired. Unfortunately, this person only remained only 5 months and for the next 7 years, volunteers continued to be the sole source of manpower.

1991-1994

With the formation of what was later to be known as the Big Sky Resort Area District (BSRAD) in 1992, a stable source of funding became available to strengthen operations. It was decided to create an ambulance service and in 1993, the Gallatin Canyon Volunteer Fire Department hired retired St. Paul, Minnesota Fire Department Battalion Chief Robert Stober to be the first paid paramedic. By 1994, Stober had become the first paid Fire Chief of GCCRFD.

1997

In 1997, Fire Station 2 was constructed on land donated by Boyne USA across Highway 64 from Big Sky Resort so that there was better fire department coverage on the mountain.

2003-2004

Upon the retirement of Fire Chief Stober in 2003, Fire Chief Jason Revisky took the helm and continued the guide the department's two shifts of career members, who worked in Station 1 during the daytime hours and responded from their homes at night, supported by volunteer members throughout.

This was also during one of the most impressive growth periods in Big Sky and the department's emergency incident volume jumped drastically. Over time, the number of community members available for volunteering with the department declined as pressures from the incident volume grew. This necessitated the steady addition of more career members in order to provide adequate services.

2005-2008

A 2005 study of the department's operations recommended that at least 4 Firefighter/EMTs or Firefighter/Paramedics should be on duty in Fire Station 1 at any given time with the ultimate goal of 7 people per shift due to the anticipated growth. In 2008, BSFD sought to increase its operating mill levy for the first time, hoping to hire enough career members to meet the needs outlined in the study. Voters did not approve the request and BSFD continued to work diligently for the community while searching for a solution to the manpower shortages.

2009

To better reflect the community that was being served, the Gallatin Canyon Consolidated Rural Fire District was renamed the Big Sky Fire Department in 2009.

2011

In early 2011, Chief Revisky resigned and for the first time in its history, the department brought in leadership from outside of the organization. After utilizing a consulting firm to assist with the search process, William Farhat was appointed the 9th Fire Chief of BSFD in September of 2011.

One month later, BSFD moved to have three shifts of career Firefighters on duty in Station 1 at all times, along with the Fire Chief and the Administrative Assistant. This drastically reduced the amount of time it took for a BSFD unit to be responding to a call, but there were still usually only two to three career members on duty and a dwindling number of volunteers, who were responding to less than 5% of the incidents. This led to periods where there would be emergency incidents with a dangerously low number of responders or no response from BSFD at all.

2012-2013

In 2012, BSFD again approached the community with a request for a mill levy increase. The goal was to add 5 additional career members to improve the safety of department operations and improve service delivery. This would not only increase the number of people on duty; it would also lead to a larger amount of people off duty career members who lived in the community and could respond during emergencies. This mill levy was approved and 5 Firefighter/EMTs and 1 Firefighter/Paramedic were hired (one of these positions was to fill an existing vacancy) in 2013.

2014

During the same period, the department began to compensate the volunteer members, making them on-call employees. While not increasing the number of on-call employees, it helped those who sacrificed their personal time to serve our community, so they were not financially burdened for their efforts.

2015

In 2015, the department was able to demonstrate to the BSRAD how the growth in development had been overwhelming the Fire Chief and Office Administrator's positions with land use permits, pre-construction safety reviews, subdivision and final plat reviews as well as numerous requests for information and consultation. In response, BSRAD approved the funding of a Deputy Fire Chief of Operations position, which was tasked with overseeing operations and training, freeing the Fire Chief to fulfill his other responsibilities.

2016

In 2016, the department used internal funding to hire a 15th career Firefighter and an Administrative Assistant. In that same year, a master planning process was completed with the assistance of Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI). It identified that there were several opportunities for improvement regarding response times and adequate staffing for emergency incidents. The Board of Trustees formally adopted the master plan in order to address current issues and prepare for future needs of the Big Sky community.

2017

From this master plan, a comprehensive strategic plan was developed for both operational and fire station improvements. For operations, the strategic plan added 9 career Firefighters, 3 Battalion Chiefs, a Deputy Chief of Community Risk Management, a Captain for Community Risk Management and a full time Training Captain. With the assistance of BSRAD and funding from a Federal Emergency Management Agency Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response grant, the 3 Battalion Chief positions were added in 2017.

In the Fall of 2017, BSFD placed a mill levy request before voters to not only fund the strategic plan's remaining positions but to also remodel Fire Station 1 and creating sleeping facilities in Fire Station 2 so that it could have 24 hour staffing for the first time. This request was approved, setting the first phase of station remodeling projects in motion.

As BSFD evolved and developed to meet the needs of the community, employee training has had to become more refined and formal, necessitating the on-call members to participate in additional mandatory training so their skills were adequate and that they could operate safely, especially in the firefighting positions. This required more frequent training, which required a greater time commitment by them. With these increases, our on-call firefighting staff was unable to keep up with training and their roles were reduced to an exterior, non-combat firefighting role in early 2017.

2018

The first phase of the mill levy's staffing increase started in 2018 with hiring of 2 Firefighters and the Deputy Chief of Community Risk Management.

Even with the 2017 reduction in their firefighting role, it was difficult for the on-call firefighters to participate in a manner that kept them safe and they had not been able to put in the time to be effective members of BSFD. Out of concern for safety, BSFD ended the on-call firefighter program in 2018, bringing 47 years of volunteer/on-call firefighting to a close. On-call Emergency Medical Technicians remained as a vital component of BSFD's ambulance operations.

2019

The station remodeling projects were completed in 2019 and the full time Training Captain will be added to assure that the staff performance remained at a high level. An update to the 2016 Master Plan and a Standards of Cover document will be completed in 2019, which will help BSFD prepare for the exponential growth continuing to be seen in the community.

FUTURE

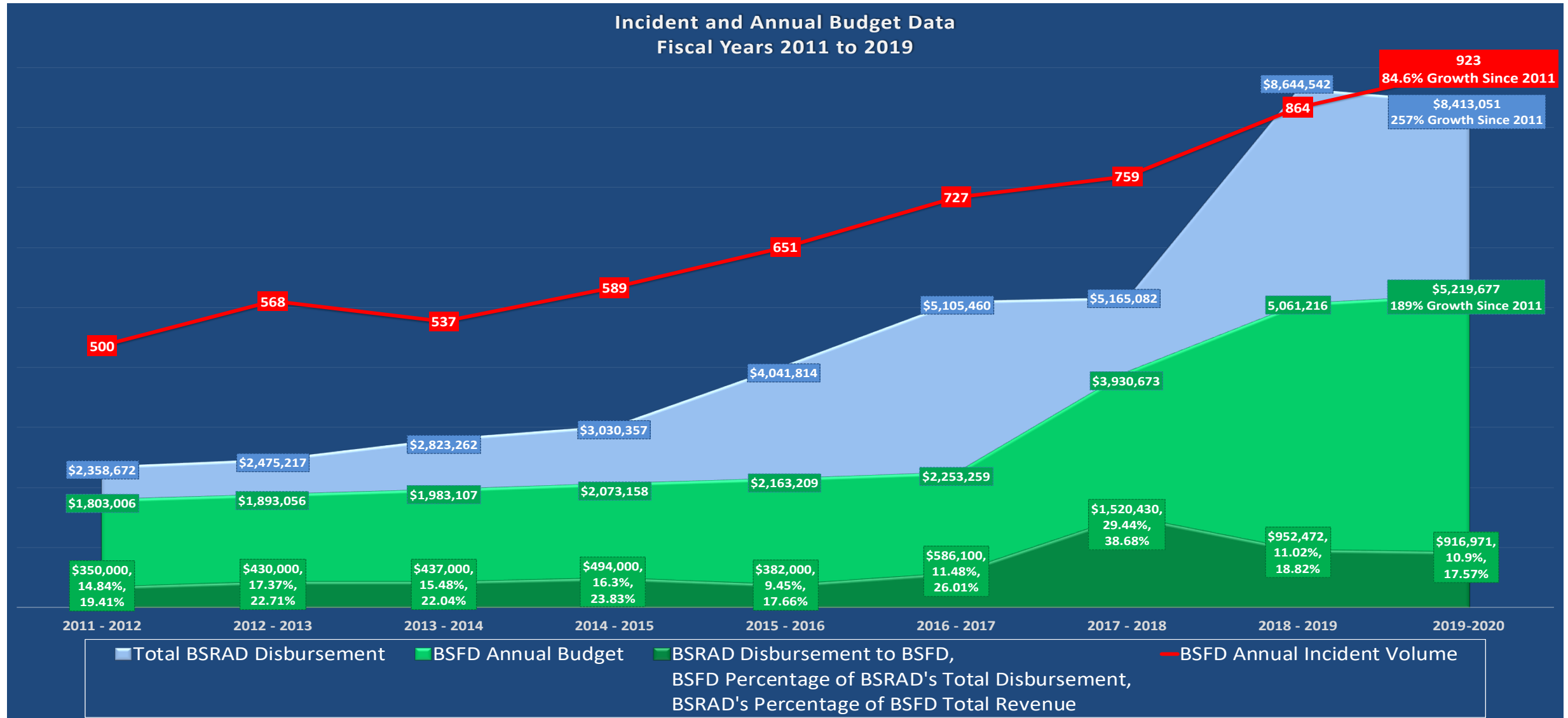
Future hiring phases from the 2017 mill levy will bring the total operational career staff to 9 per shift, which will be operating from both fire stations, as well as the Captain being assigned to the Community Risk Bureau. The administrative staff would include 7 employees, for a total of 34 career members along with our on-call staff.

BSFD has grown along with the Big Sky community and strives to always reflect our motto of "Only Our Best Will Do" and endeavors to meet our mission statement:

"The Big Sky Fire Department is dedicated to the preservation of life and property by striving to do our best in fire suppression, rescue services and emergency medical responses. We accomplish this by promoting fire safety and by highly training our firefighters, emergency medical technicians and paramedics."

RESPONSE HISTORY 2011-2019

BSFD's incident responses have grown 84.6% since 2011 and its budget has grown, with the assistance of the two mill levy increases and BSRAD, by 189%. During that same time period, BSRAD's distributions to the various entities in the community have grown 257%, demonstrating the explosive growth of the community.

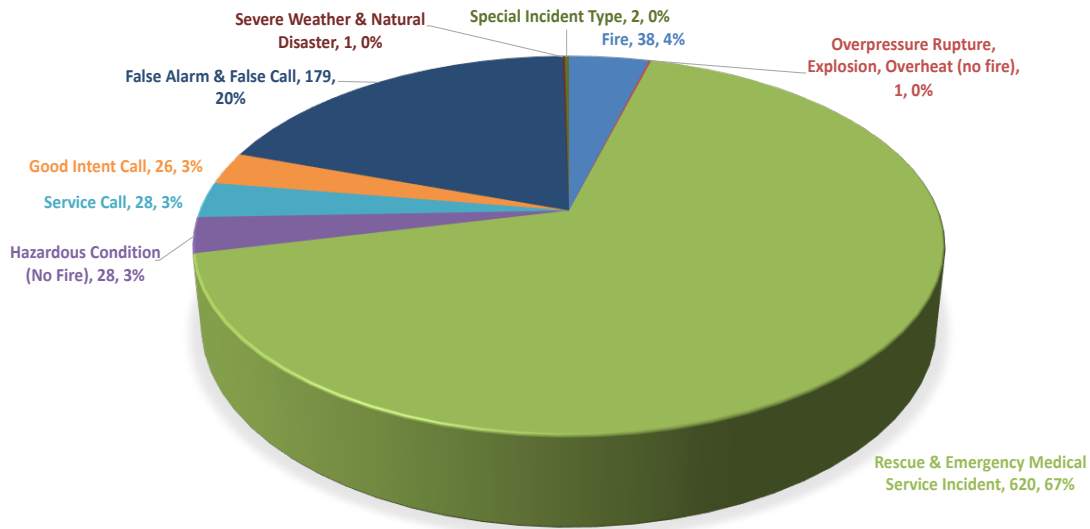


2018-2019 INCIDENT RESPONSES

Fiscal year 2018-2019 had 923 responses, which was a 6.8% overall increase over the previous year.

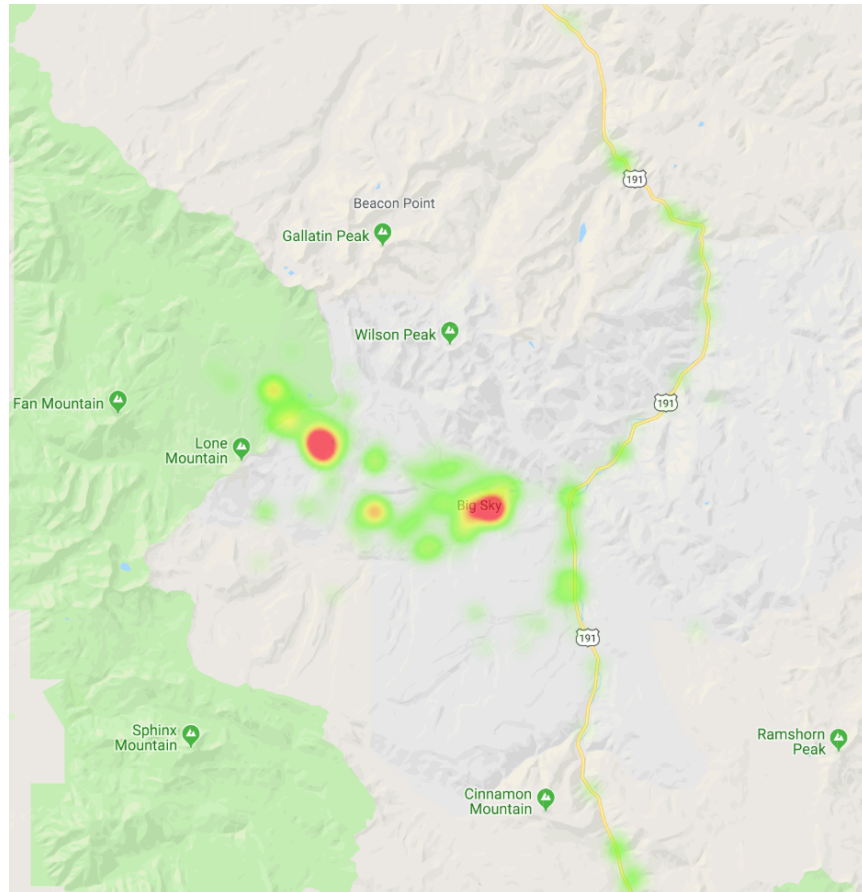
INCIDENT TYPE SUMMARY

Our incident percentages stayed roughly the same, with Rescue and Emergency Medical Responses remaining to be 69% of our overall volume. Of the 17 fires BSFD responded to, 5 of them resulted in structure and content losses, which totaled \$67,001.

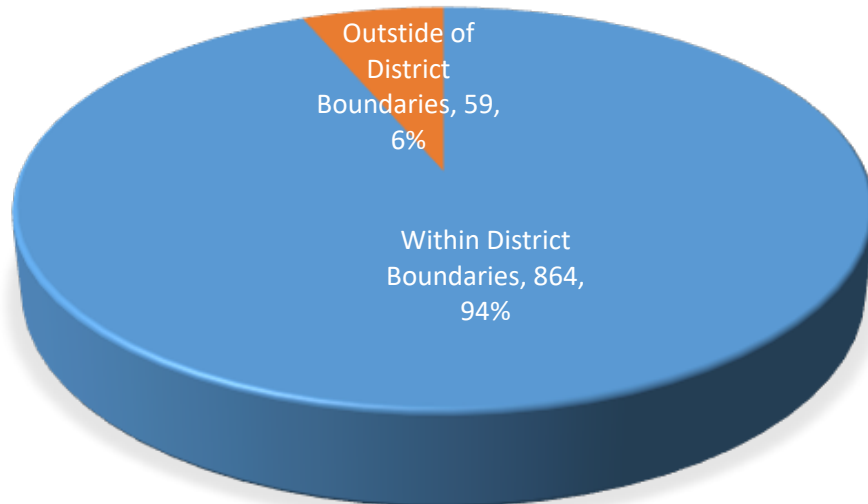


INCIDENT TYPE HISTORY	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Fire	30	25	20	26	17	22	38
Rescue & Emergency Medical Service Incident	343	347	407	466	528	585	620
Hazardous Condition	21	12	21	19	24	33	29
Service Call	24	11	19	20	22	36	28
Good Intent Call	56	54	70	67	66	37	26
False Alarm or False Call	93	87	86	82	107	144	179
Special Incident	1	0	1	2	4	7	3
Annual Totals	568	536	624	682	768	864	923
Overlapping Incidents	98	71	110	106	141	275	283
Overlapping Incident Percentage	17.3%	13.2%	17.6%	15.5%	18.4%	31.8%	30.7%

INCIDENT LOCATIONS

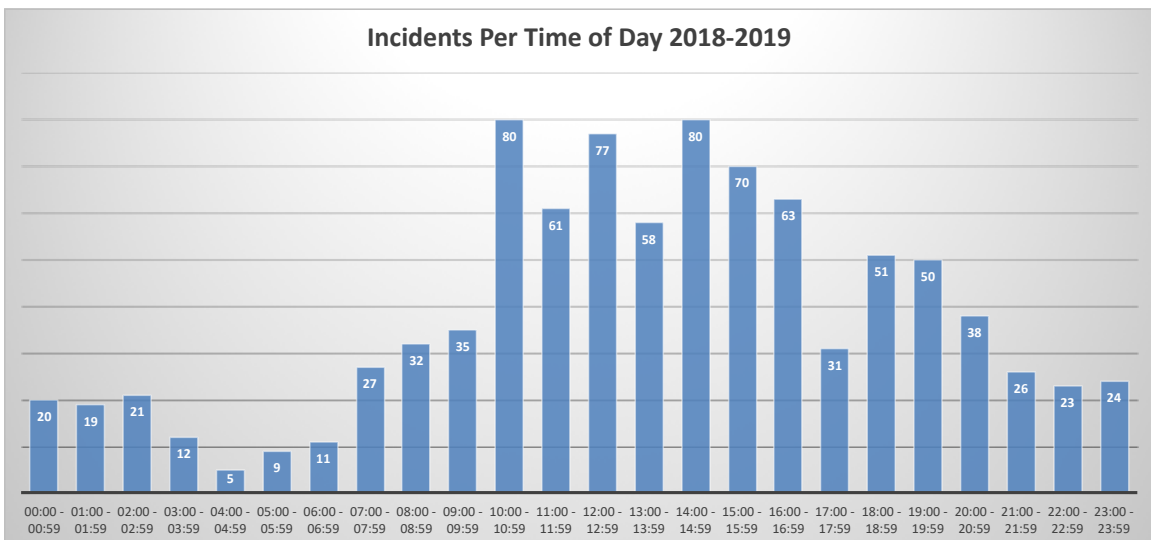
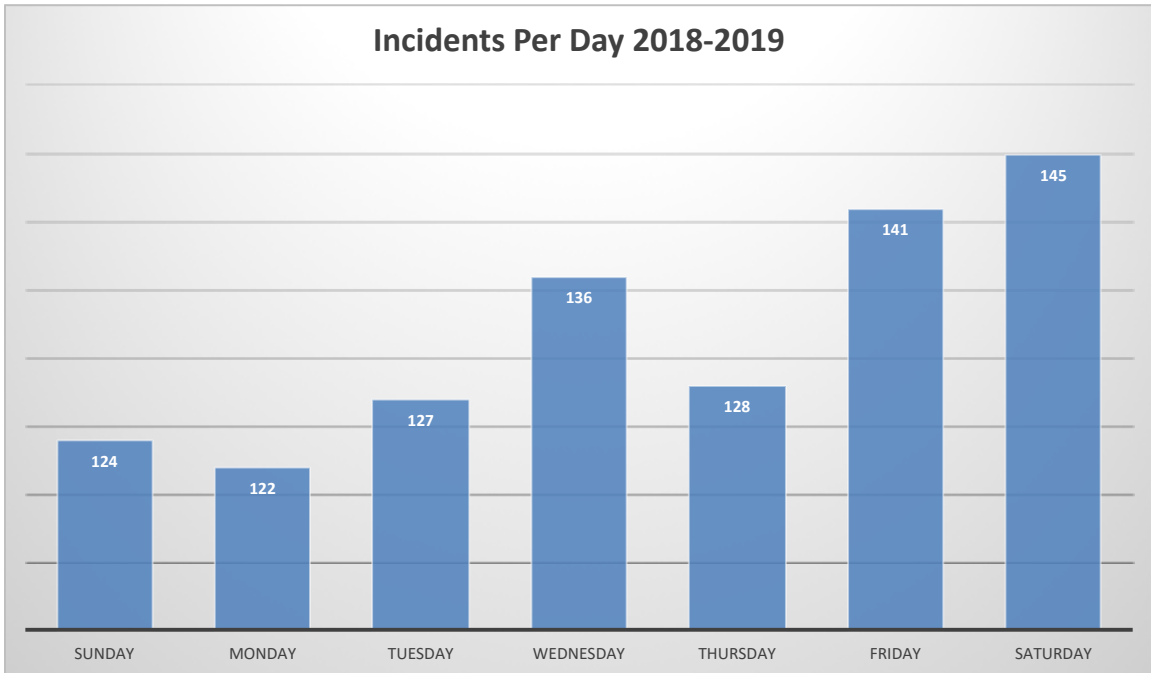


OUT OF DISTRICT RESPONSES



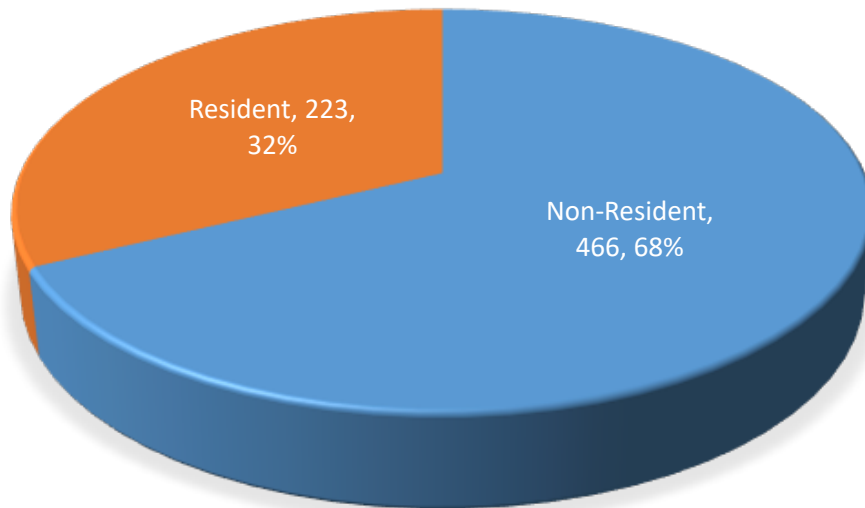
OCCURRENCE TIMES

While life threatening emergency incidents can occur at any time, the charts below outline how incidents fall throughout the day (note that the below times are using a 24 hour clock). For the year, 46% of the calls occurred on Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and 67% occurred during the 10 hour period between 10 am to 8 pm.



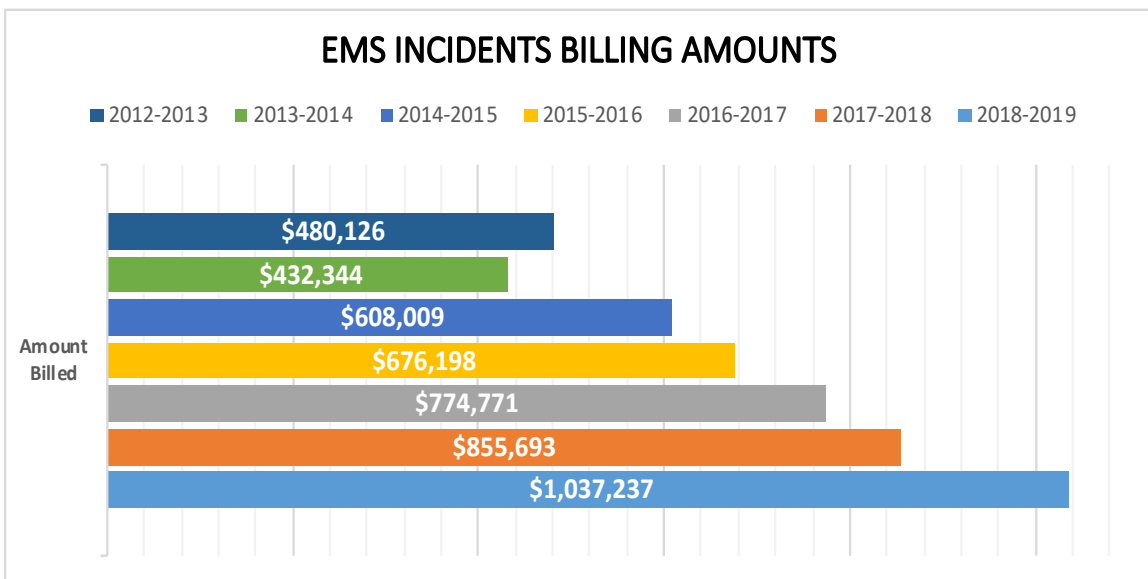
RESIDENT TO NON-RESIDENT SERVICE USAGE RATIO

In addition to being the largest part of BSFD's emergency response profile, Emergency Medical Services are also the services most utilized by non-residents, as shown below. This year, the percentage non-resident patients was 67%, which is slightly lower than the 71% seen in 2016-2017.



EMS INCIDENT BILLING REVENUE

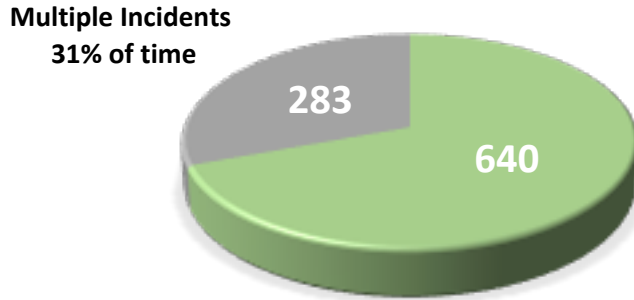
Of the \$1,037,237 (21.2% increase) that was billed for EMS incidents this fiscal year, \$599,624 was collected for a strong 57.81% gross collection rate.



MULTIPLE INCIDENTS OCCURRING AT THE SAME TIME

For the second year in a row, BSFD is responding to 2 or more incidents a high 31% of the time, which is double the rate seen in the years before 2018. This ratio increases during peak tourism periods to over 65% of the time.

OVERLAPPING INCIDENTS 2018-2019



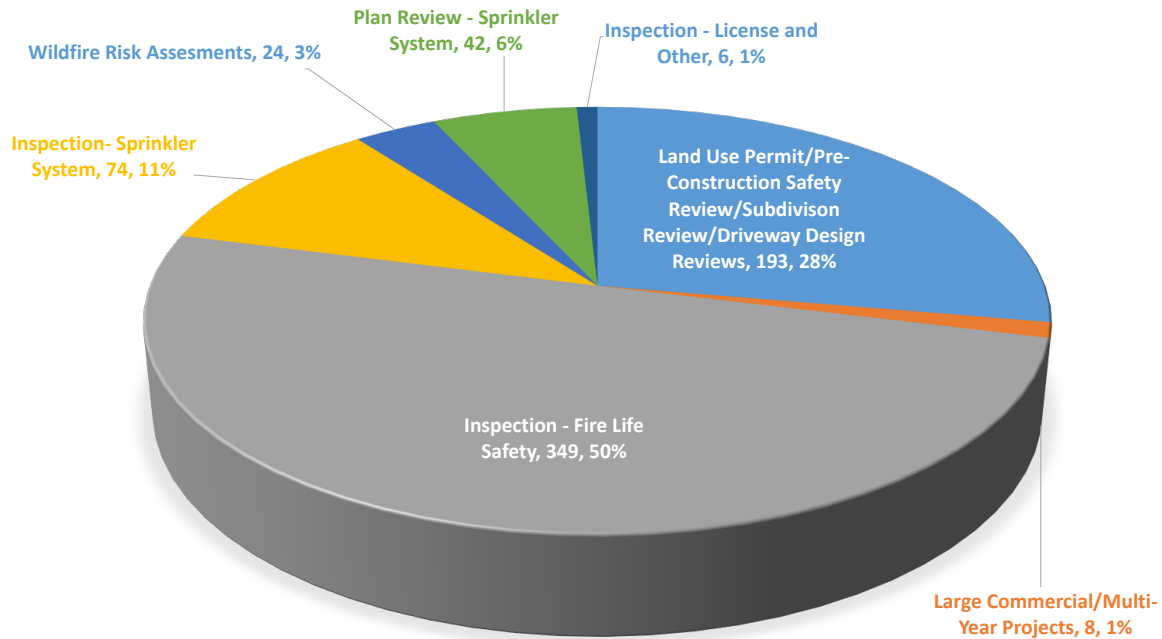
With mutual aid assistance from the Yellowstone Club Fire Department taking over 20 minutes to respond (with 2-3 firefighters per request), and other agencies responding from well over 45 minutes for away, BSFD remains at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to responding to emergencies when there is a large incident or more than one incident occurring at the same time as it must rely on the resources at hand to address them in a timely manner, which is not possible to do effectively or safely.

NON-EMERGENCY ACTIVITIES

FIRE PREVENTION

Fire prevention activities historically were found throughout the department's operations, but with the creation of the Community Risk Management (CRM) Bureau in 2018, these efforts are now led by Deputy Chief Dustin Tetrault. BSFD career members perform annual Fire Life Safety inspections in all commercial structures, which not only help keep the occupants safe but they also provide crucial information and familiarization for firefighters in advance of an emergency. The majority of the remaining duties are done by the CRM Bureau with assistance from the Fire Chief.

The following is a graphical representation of the current year's activities, which is a huge 37% increase over last year's activity levels.



What is not captured well in the above is the huge risk posed by the 1400 short-term rental properties in Big Sky, which constitute 28% of all of the community's structures. While not possible now, it is expected that inspections will be required in these businesses and will create a very large service need.

PUBLIC EDUCATION AND EVENTS

Department members engage in numerous Public Education and Events opportunities throughout the year. All activities are geared to help keep the department in tune with citizen's needs while sharing community safety messages as much as possible.

Each Spring, BSFD meets with local and federal wildfire management and response partners to share and prepare for the coming fire season. This includes the work done with the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to prepare for a response outside of the fire district's boundaries, if needed.

The Fire Chief and Deputy Chief of CRM are a regular speakers at various public meetings and homeowners associations' annual meetings. BSFD firefighters also teach fire safety at the Big Sky School District and Morningstar Learning Center as well as other childcare / educational groups each Fall.

The department provides training in First Aid and CPR throughout the year. BSFD participated in Gallatin Heart Rescue, an initiative to train community members in a

simplified form of CPR. This program has already saved lives across the county and has become a model for other parts of the country and is now part of a larger, statewide effort.

Related to the above is BSFD's support of the Big Sky Owners Association's AED program, where AEDs have been placed throughout public areas in the community. BSFD members train the employees of businesses where AEDs are placed as well as taking care of monthly maintenance and state reporting needs.

The Big Sky Kids/Eagle Mount event is where children who are cancer patients and their families are invited to have a private pancake breakfast with firefighters as a part of an overall week of activities for them.

BSFD is also active in community by providing standby emergency medical services during public sports and community events as well as during the Fourth of July celebration.

Another impact of the new CRM Bureau is the addition of other activities, such as helping the Big Sky Community Food Bank and the Big Sky Wildfire Preparedness Education Day.

CRM also obtained a \$5000 grant to fund a Community HOA Hazardous Fuels Chipping Day, where 19 properties constituting 50 acres were treated and thus hazards were reduced. BSFD hopes to expand this program greatly by pursuing a much larger Western Fuels Grant to fund additional opportunities.

New for September of 2019 will be the Big Sky Fire Safe Building Summit, where national experts will speak to not only the property management mitigation strategies but also the proper construction techniques need to keep Big Sky safer during wildland fire events.

DEPARTMENT TRAINING

A very important aspect of emergency services delivery is the amount of training needed to provide the necessary skills during incident responses. Battalion Chief Seth Barker supervises Fire Service training and Battalion Chief Stephen Pruiett supervises Emergency Medical Services training. Together, they will continue to oversee the new Training Captain in the delivery of education. This also includes new employee operational orientation and training.

BSFD is proud to offer state of the art and industry leading training that makes our department one of the best at what we do. It also meets or exceeds state and federal requirements for fire services and emergency medical service personnel.

APPARATUS AND EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS

Firefighter/Paramedic and Maintenance Coordinator Greg Clark has been joined by Firefighter/EMT Adam DuComb to oversee the department's Apparatus and Equipment Maintenance and Repair program. In addition to the apparatus and equipment checks made by the firefighters during their shifts, larger maintenance and repair needs are handled by Firefighters Clark and DuComb or referred to a qualified emergency vehicle technicians.

In addition to the 3 structure engines, 2 wildland engines, 4 ambulances, 1 ladder truck, 2 water tenders and 6 utility vehicles, the program also deals with the numerous other pieces of equipment, including chainsaws, extrication tools, compressors, generators, radios, etc.

This arrangement allows the department to save money on smaller issues by doing the work in-house while having strong oversight on the larger needs that are done elsewhere.

New for 2019, a fourth ambulance has been purchased with BSRAD and BSFD funds and placed into service. This allows the department to have a reserve unit in order to keep 3 ambulances available at all times, which has become an operational requirement given the increase in incidents.