



2/20/2025

To: Jackson Baures, Public Health Division Manager

From: Ralph Sartain, Fire Chief

Agency: Ashland Fire & Rescue

RE: 2024 Ambulance Service Area 3 (ASA) & Annual Report

Dear Jackson,

Ashland Fire & Rescue (AF&R) strives to provide the community with the best available all-hazard emergency response, non-emergency response, emergency medical services (EMS), prevention, public education, emergency management, community emergency response team (CERT), weed abatement, and wildfire reduction services in Southern Oregon. It has been my honor and privilege to lead this exemplary staff of dedicated professionals who have risen to the challenges.

We are pleased to present our 2024 Ambulance Service Area (ASA) Report for ASA 3. We are excited to demonstrate our staff's commitment to our constituents. We are incredibly grateful for the overwhelming support we receive from our community, the city council, and our city administration. We look forward to sharing what we accomplished and what we look forward to for the coming year.

Ashland Fire & Rescue is dedicated to our core values of professionalism, compassion, integrity, teamwork, and community. We look forward to serving and protecting our community, ASA 3, our regional partners, and the hundreds of thousands of visitors who visit our region annually. As my final report to you on behalf of Ashland Fire and Rescue, thank you for all you do to improve EMS.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Ralph Sartain* MO, IAAL-CFI, NAFL-CFEI

**Fire Chief**

**Ashland Fire & Rescue**

*Established in 1887, Ashland Fire & Rescue provides twenty-four-hour service and responds to over 5,900 calls each year in an area that exceeds 600 square miles.*



## **2024 REVISITED:**

### **ASA Assignment:**

Ashland Fire & Rescue (AF&R) successfully applied for and was re-assigned a contract with Jackson County in 2023 to provide ambulance transport services for Ambulance Service Area 3 (ASA).

This re-assignment of ASA 3 allowed AF&R to continue to provide ambulance service to the citizens of Ashland, the surrounding communities, and visitors of south Jackson County, as we have done since 1996.

In 2024, we met or exceeded annual reporting requirements on all ASA contract benchmarks. We additionally completed our CMS Ambulance audit to assist in cost recovery at the national level. AF&R hopes this audit will increase the necessary reimbursement to fire based ambulance service, allowing us to keep our following ASA fees flat except for the GEMT/CMS Inflation factor. Our current service fees are as follows: (GEMT/CMS Inflation factor for 2025 is 2.6%)

Advanced Life Support Transport \$1,551 + 40.3 (CMS) = \$1,591.33

Basic Life Support Transport  $\$1,351 + 35.13 \text{ (CMS)} = \$1,386.13$

Mileage  $\$23.30 + 0.61 \text{ (CMS)} = \$23.91$

Treat and Release  $\$448 + 11.65 \text{ (CMS)} = \$459.65$

### **Significant Changes in 2024:**

Realizing the increased call volume and the stress it put on the system, AF&R created the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division in 2023. This division's primary task is the dedicated resource delivery of EMS services, commonly called single-role EMS, to the patrons of ASA 3.

The division was initially brought online in phases in June and October 2023. After completing the October hiring process, we provided four dedicated EMS responders (7) days a week and for 10 hours per day during peak hours, reducing our need for additional assistance resources while increasing the availability of our firefighters for the community.

Part of our re-assignment was a commitment to the County Commissioners to continue to examine and increase the performance of the EMS program. In keeping with our promise to the Commissioners and the Community in April of 2024, Ashland Fire & Rescue launched the next phase of our single-role program. Adding an additional four single-role EMS providers to the system and changing our coverage from 10 hours per day to 7 am to midnight every day, leaving midnight to 7 am being covered by our dual role side.

### **Mutual Aid:**

AF&R maintains automatic/mutual aid agreements with all fire and EMS providers in Jackson County. In addition, AF&R has mutual aid agreements with agencies in Josephine, Douglas, and Klamath Counties, as well as Northern California Emergency Medical Services (NOR/CAL EMS).

AF&R updated its mutual aid agreement with Mercy Flights in 2024, and we additionally entered an IGA with the Oregon State Fire Marshals Office (OSFM) to host a Type 3 fire engine, which OSFM will provide. Our requirement for this new piece of equipment was to continue to support our neighboring agencies, neighboring

counties, state deployments, and, if necessary, out-of-state deployments. This is a continuation of our commitment to service to our regional partners.

### **Community Service:**

Our Fire Marshal is tasked with community protection, public education, and community risk reduction as just a few of their primary responsibilities. Additional programs we offer include:

- **School Programs- K through 5th**

AF&R teaches a variety of fire safety and injury/illness prevention classes to each K-5 class yearly. The classes instructed include "Compression Only" CPR classes for all 7th-grade students.

- **Southern Oregon University**

AF&R continues to provide training to the residence hall supervisors. Topics include EMS emergencies, fire emergencies, extinguisher training, and injury/illness prevention.

- **Internship and Rider/Observer Program**

AF&R provides field internships to EMT Basic and Paramedic students through Rogue Community College, Umpqua Community College, and College of the Siskiyou's. We have continued to strengthen our program with Oregon Health Sciences Nursing (ICAN) where the student nurses follow selected patients through their semester taking care of this population's needs. The individual is then transferred to the next group of ICAN students upon arrival at AF&R. We also provide a rider/observer program for the Rogue Valley's local high schools and the interested public.

- **CERT – Community Emergency Response Team**

The spring and fall CERT basic training programs occurred in 2024 bringing additionally trained emergency responders to our community. The Fire Life Safety Specialist is responsible for overseeing CERT, assisting in teaching community programs, conducting code enforcement, and providing a response to citizen complaints. Our department paramedics teach most of the medical-related topics to our new CERT members.

- **Smoke Alarm Installations:**

50+ smoke alarms were added in our community to families or individuals who did not have a working or even an existing smoke alarm.

- **Medical Stand-by**

AF&R continues to support the community at sporting events within the City. The department provides a Paramedic staffed ambulance free of charge to all Southern Oregon University and Ashland High School football games.

- **Active Shooter Hostile Event Response (ASHER)/Stop the Bleed**

We continue providing active shooter and stop-the-bleed training to local businesses and community groups in 2024. Additionally, we continue to be training in ASHER protocols with our local law enforcement partners.

- **Sensory Bag Program (Frazier Bags)**

AF&R partnered with Michelle Frazier of Fire District 3's Community Care Program, to begin carrying Frazier Bags to provide tools to aid in the assessment and relationship building of patients with special needs.

- **Wildfire Community Risk Reduction**

In 2024, AF&R hired a new Wildfire Risk Reduction Specialist for our Ashland Wildfire Mitigation Project, which was funded by a FEMA Pre-disaster Mitigation grant. Two more wood shake roofs were replaced in 2024 as part of the grant, bringing the total to 13 roofs replaced so far, and 170 properties were mitigated to improve their defensible space.

As part of the CWDG Grant for Ashland's CWPP Update, a high-resolution LiDAR scan was performed across the entire City in March, and it is being utilized to update the City's wildfire risk assessment. City staff and contractors, partnering educational institutions staff and graduate students, and Management Advisory Committee members have invested over 1,800 hours throughout 2024 in developing the new CWPP. So far, dozens of meetings, a handful of peer workshops, one public Defensible Space class, and two tabletop exercises have been held. The new CWPP will be presented to Ashland City Council in May 2025.

The Wildfire Risk Assessment Program (WRAP) adopted new software to assess structures to improve resident engagement and develop metrics to enhance Wildfire and CRR division program efforts. Over 3,000 cumulative volunteer hours were

contributed through CERT and WRAP, and four (4) volunteers qualified for the bronze Presidential Volunteer Service award in 2024.

Ashland Fire & Rescue hosted two free Green Debris Drop-Off Day events on April 27th and May 11th, 2024, in partnership with Recology Ashland and the Rogue Valley Fire Prevention Co-Op. Two hundred sixty (260) vehicles dropped off 365 cubic yards of vegetation between the two events. Three Firewise USA communities received updated community risk assessments, and one new 140+ parcel Firewise USA community was formally recognized on the north side of Ashland. We responded to a mass tree die off by thinning dead and dying trees surrounding the community. Over 450 acres of work was done using a helicopter, with over 40% of the cost offset by turning potential wildfire fuel into needed wood products.

Over 125 acres of controlled burning was accomplished by the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest under the Ashland Forest Resiliency Project to reintroduce the long absent role of burning to maintain healthy and safer forests.

The Wildfire Risk Assessment Program (WRAP) members into CERT for consolidation of resources and volunteer organization. Twenty-eight students completed WRAP training. There was over 2500+ hours of cumulative volunteer hours through CERT and WRAP and 20 new volunteers were added to CERT.

- **Southern Oregon Fire Ecology Education**

One way we have supported the needs of students is by development of a local fire science curriculum called *Southern Oregon Fire Ecology Education*. We have engaged over 10 organizations for development of local fire science curriculum and provided 3 teacher trainings in 2024 with our partner organizations which include Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative, Lomakatsi Restoration Project, Science Works, Southern Oregon Educational Service District, The Nature Conservancy, the EPA, BLM and US Forest Service. Another training course will be held this year in February and in the fall.

- **Smokewise Ashland**

On May 18th, in collaboration with Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative and Science Works Hands-on Museum, AF&R participated in 'Sparking Action' a Community Preparedness Day event at Science Works. Staff supplied and taught DIY air filter classes as part of our Smokewise Ashland program funded by a Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network grant, and had staff and volunteers host an information table.

- **Grant Funding and Capacity for Community Risk Reduction**

We are pleased to be partnered with local and state partners on two EPA grant projects, one grant is for development and sharing of fire ecology and smoke education for K-12<sup>th</sup> grade students and, a second project is to monitor air quality and for providing low-cost air cleaning solutions in places where students play and learn. A third grant from the Fire Adapted Communities Learning Network is helping our community be more ready for smoke through the Smokewise Ashland program.

### **Mercy Collaboration**

AF&R continued our support of a grant with Mercy Flights through the Ashland Hospital Foundation to administer Community Care Paramedicine (CCPM) in the Ashland/Talent area.

This grant provides funding for one Mercy CCPM to administer care to our community. We continue to look for ways to be mutually beneficial partners with Mercy Flights.

### **Equipment Donations:**



Our 2011 Ford F550 Ambulance was donated to the Amahoro Children's Hospital in Uganda. This is the only ambulance of its kind in the region and will serve the hospital for years to come.



Our 2003 Pierce International 7500 was traded to the Applegate Valley Fire District once we received the Type 3 from OSFM. Our current Type 3 was traded with Applegate for a set of new battery powered hydraulic tools which are in service on our primary fire engine.



Our 2007 Ford F550 Type 6 brush engine was donated to the Monitor Rural Fire Department which is made up of 20 active volunteers. This is the only Type 6 brush engine in their fleet.

## New Deliveries:

**Heavy Brush 1:** AF&R took delivery of (1) new 2024 Rosenbauer Type 3 Heavy Brush Engine. This engine was received on a grant from funds of HB762 to increase vehicle response capabilities throughout the state. We are grateful to participate in the program with the Oregon State Fire Marshals Office to house this piece of equipment.



## Brush 2:



2024 F550

brush engine used as primary out of fire station 2.

**Medic 2:**

Medic 2 was delivered from Braun Northwest August of 2024 and is on the Chassis of a Dodge Ram 3500



**Our Existing Fleet:**

Our unit identifiers changed in 2023 as we launched the single-role program. Our single-role EMS providers respond out of our designated call sign Medic Units, while our dual-role firefighters respond out of our Squad designated units.

Our current fleet of ambulances is an ever-evolving system with many moving parts and pieces. The following is our current fleet of ambulances and their current location in our system:

**Medic 1**



Medic 1 is a 2024 F550 Braun and replaced a 2011 Ambulance which was donated to the Children’s hospital in Uganda.

## Medic 2



Medic 2 is a 2023 Dodge Ram 3500.

## Squad 1



Squad 1 is a 2022 Lifeline Ambulance .

## Squad 2



Squad 2 is a 2018 Lifeline ambulance.

## Squad 102



Squad 102 is our reserve at Station 2 and is a 2016 Lifeline Ambulance.

### BC1



2023 Battalion Chief 1 (BC1) is our command-and-control vehicle which can be used as a single source resource to respond to medical calls if no other units are available in our system.

### Engine 1

This 2023 Pierce Saber was added to our fleet as the primary fire engine out of Station 1. Our Type 1 Engines are ALS-capable, meaning they carry the same lifesaving equipment as our ambulances; they cannot transport patients.



### Engine 2



We affectionately refer to Engine 2 and Engine 101 as the twins purchased in 2014. They are identical Type 1 Pierce Fire Pumpers.

## Engine 101

This reserve engine will be replaced in 2028/2029 with the delivery of our first aerial apparatus, which was ordered in December 2024 by Pierce Manufacturing. We are extremely grateful to the City Council and City Management for moving this



purchase forward for a budgeted replacement at no additional cost to the community.

## Brush 1

This vehicle is used as our primary brush engine at Fire Station One. During the winter, it serves double duty as a quick response to areas where our primary fire engines cannot traverse.



## Stryker Gurney and Load System



We have replaced or upgraded our fleet's power loads and gurneys to the Stryker system. This means all our ambulances, from first out to our reserves, are equipped with the same equipment, thus reducing the possibility of an accidental injury or unfamiliarity

with a system that is not used that often. The power load is designed to reduce the potential of a work-related injury by using motors to lift patients, keeping the staff from straining or being injured if they have poor lifting mechanics.

## **Training:**

Our Division Chief of Training and EMS (TO) is tasked with supervising our single-role EMS providers and ensuring the completion of all state-mandated training on the fire and EMS sides of the organization. The TO is additionally tasked with running all fire and EMS academies and ensuring we are abiding by Jackson County Standing EMS orders by monitoring and quality-assuring our reports.

## **Specialty Teams**



AF&R maintains a core group of Paramedics trained as Technical Rescuers. In addition, each department member receives basic Rope Rescue training, which allows our Paramedics to offer "reach and treat" capabilities when operating in steep terrain and prior to the technical rescue team's arrival.

AF&R also provides the only regional response-trained trench rescue team in Southern Oregon.

AF&R completed our DPSST/NFPA recertification, and Ashland Fire & Rescue is accredited through December 2026. With the addition of the TO and staff members obtaining the required additional training, AF&R is now able to increase its availability to provide self-training and accreditation by adding NFPA Fire Officer I, NFPA Fire Officer II, and NFPA Fire Instructor I, Fire Inspector I and II, Apparatus Operator and Fire Investigator to our list of accredited classes. These additions help demonstrate that AF&R's continued training meets or exceeds the state requirements for continuing education.

AF&R maintains a cadre of trained instructors in critical care areas of knowledge such as advanced cardiac life support, pediatric advanced life support, and CPR. All new employees must attend an in-house academy for four weeks, complete training in Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC), and attain their NFPA Driver certification during their probationary year.

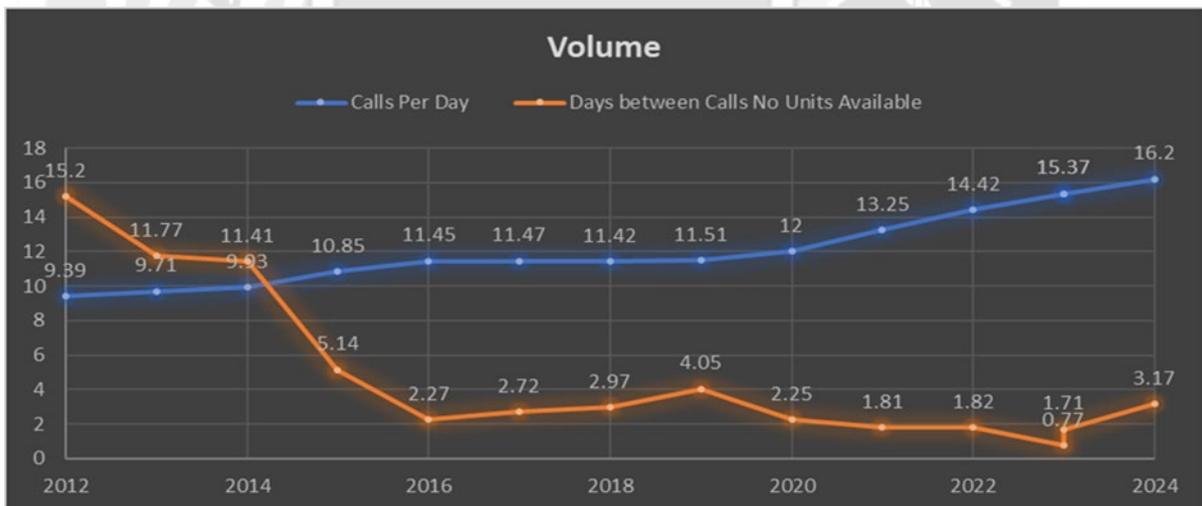
## **The Data:**

The following charts contain quite a bit of information, but this next chart is the most important to the community and the effectiveness of AF&R's EMS system.

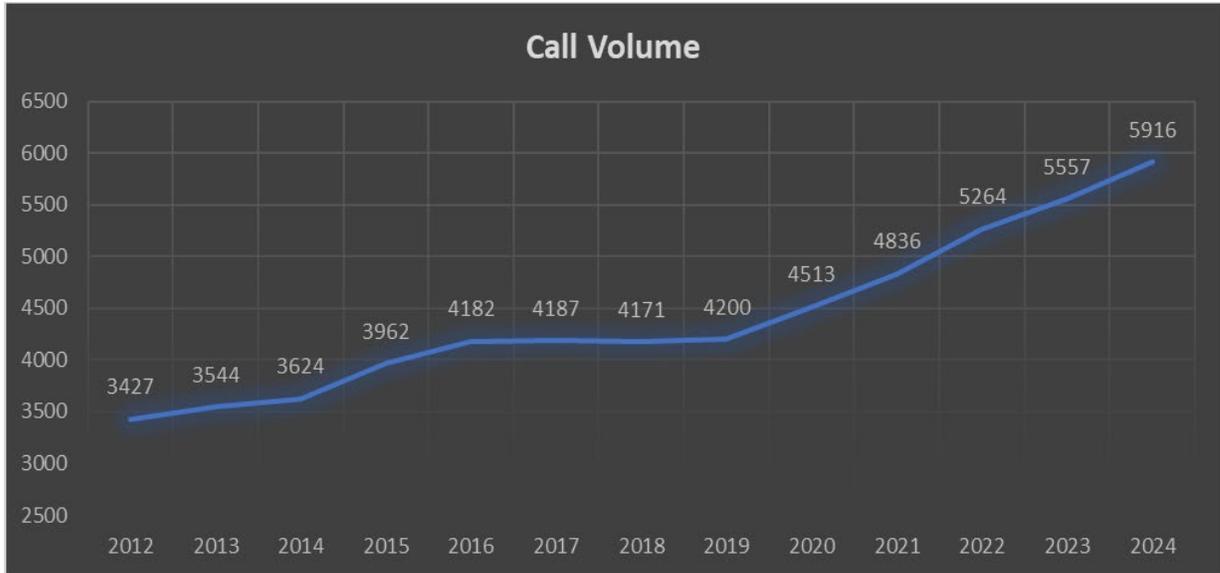
AF&R closed out 2024, averaging 16.2 calls for service per day. As all of our EMS systems continue to get busier, calls for service can be delayed as there are no units to respond. In 2012, AF&R would have this occur once every 15.2 days when our call volume averaged 9.39 Calls per day.

This chart has two very significant data points. The first is the cross-over from 2014 to 2016, which shows that the staffing model and call volume could no longer be maintained. The second is July 2023, when AF&R averaged .77 days between calls for service when no unit was available. July 2023 was significant as this is when we deployed our first Single-Role EMS Unit. By December, this trajectory continued positively upward as we increased our time between no units available to once every 1.71 days.

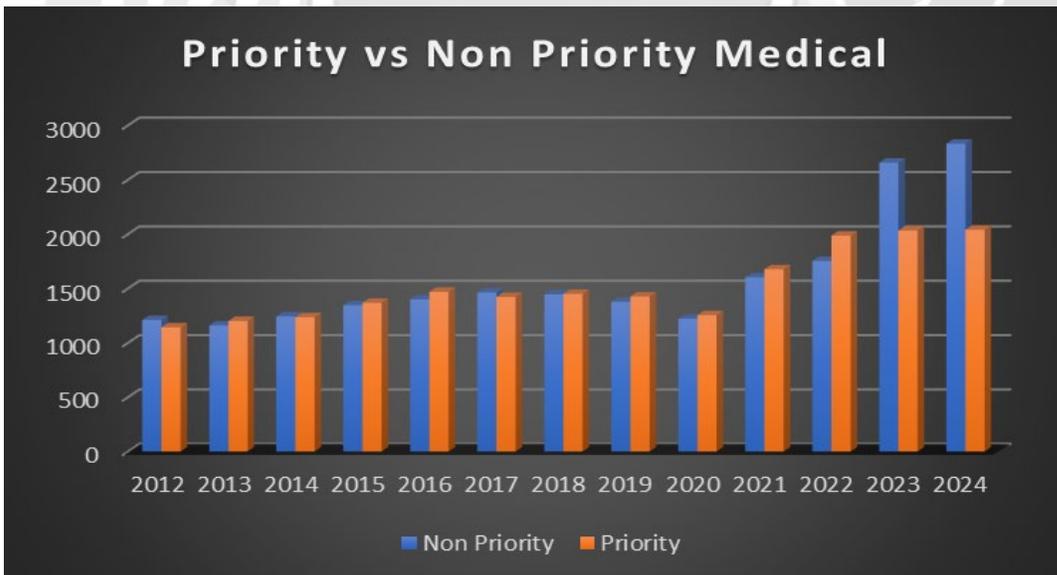
After staying true to our promise and staffing the Single-Role program, we closed 2024 out by increasing the time between no units available to 3.17 days. The data demonstrates that the business plan and Single-Role model are working, as discussed with our City Management, Council, and Budget Committee. Following the business plan and adding single-role staff will allow our firefighting force to remain in Ashland while deploying a robust EMS system to meet community needs.



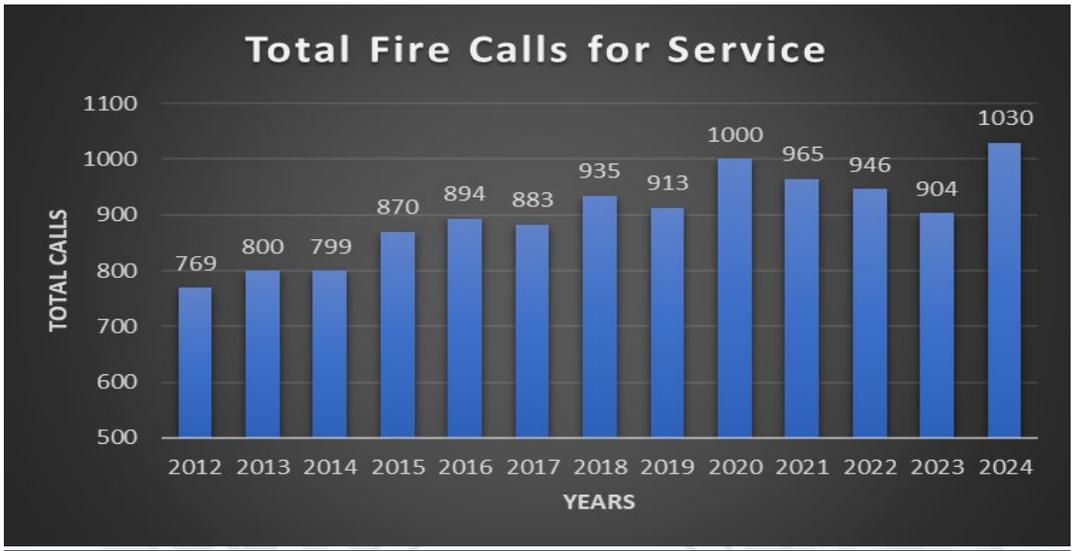
The information is provided through data collection from Emergency Communications of Southern Oregon (ECSO), our dispatch center. As a standalone data collection point and to strive for complete information transparency, we use the information provided to our data dashboard from ECSO versus our own software. We finished 2024 with 5,916 calls for service, up 5.7% from last year.



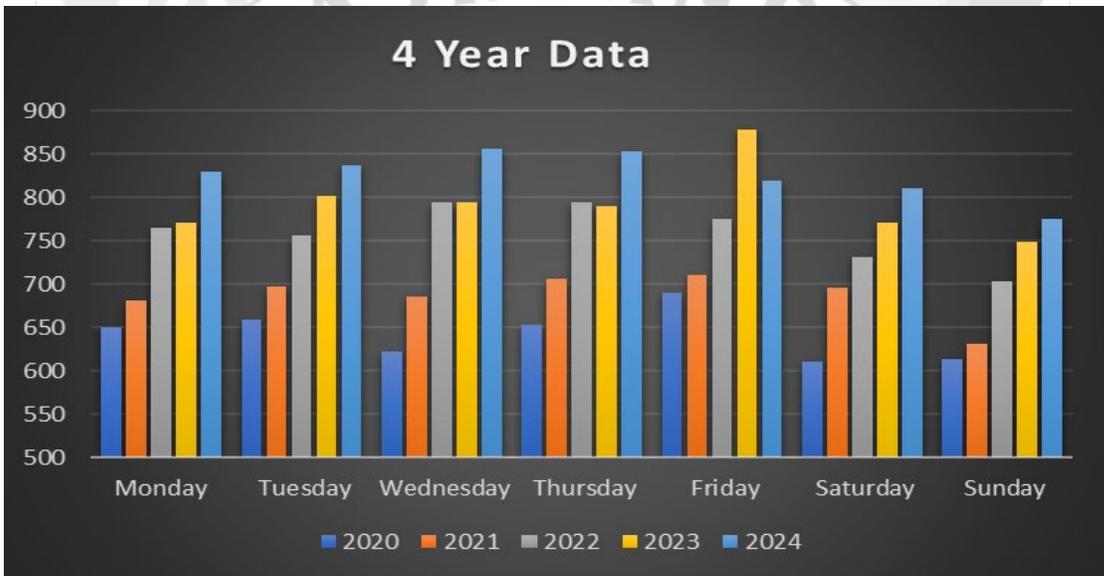
2024 we responded to 2,832 medical non-priority calls and 2,041 medical priority calls.



2024 our total fire calls increased from 904 in 2023 to 1,030.



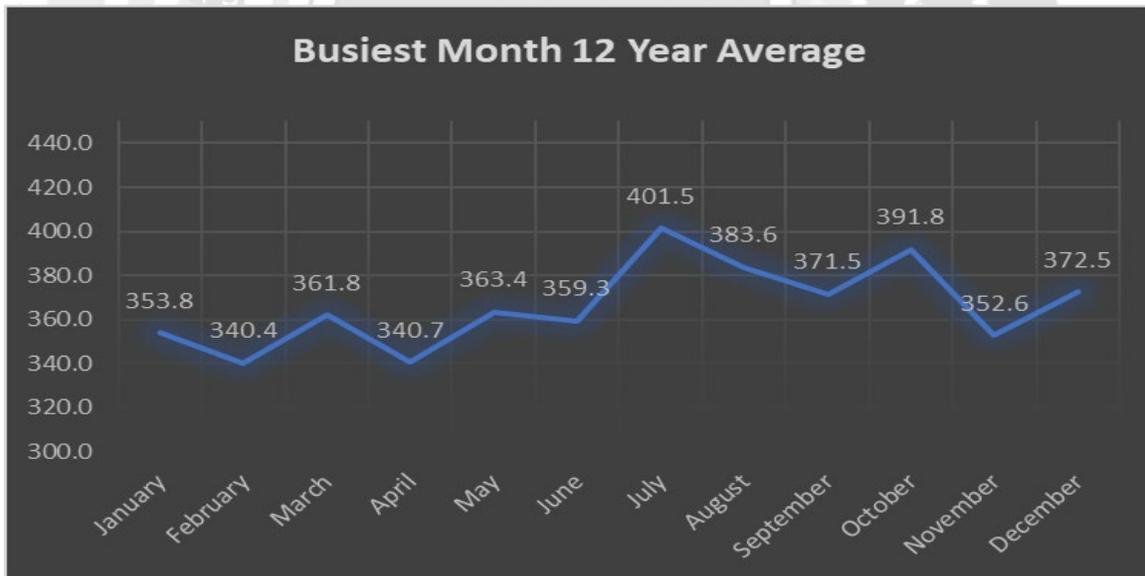
Throughout 2024, our busiest day of the week was Wednesday when we responded to 857 calls for service. Our 4-year average shows that Monday is our busiest day of the week, with a 4-year average of 739.6 calls, followed by Friday with 651.5 calls. Our slowest day of the week remains Sunday, where in 2024, we responded to 775 calls with a 598.8 4-year average.



2024, our busiest month was July when we responded to 530 calls for service.



Our 12 year average continues to show July as our busiest month:



AF&R is spending more time on the road. This translates to added wear on our ambulance fleet, necessitating their replacement sooner. In 2024, we transported 40.8% of the time to Ashland Community Hospital, down from 2020, when it was 56.2 %.

Our primary destination hospital is now Rogue Regional, where in 2024, we transported 41.6 % of the time, an increase from 2020 when we transported 38.1%. In 2024, AF&R transported to Providence Medford Medical 6.3 % of the time, up from 2020, when it was 3.4 %.

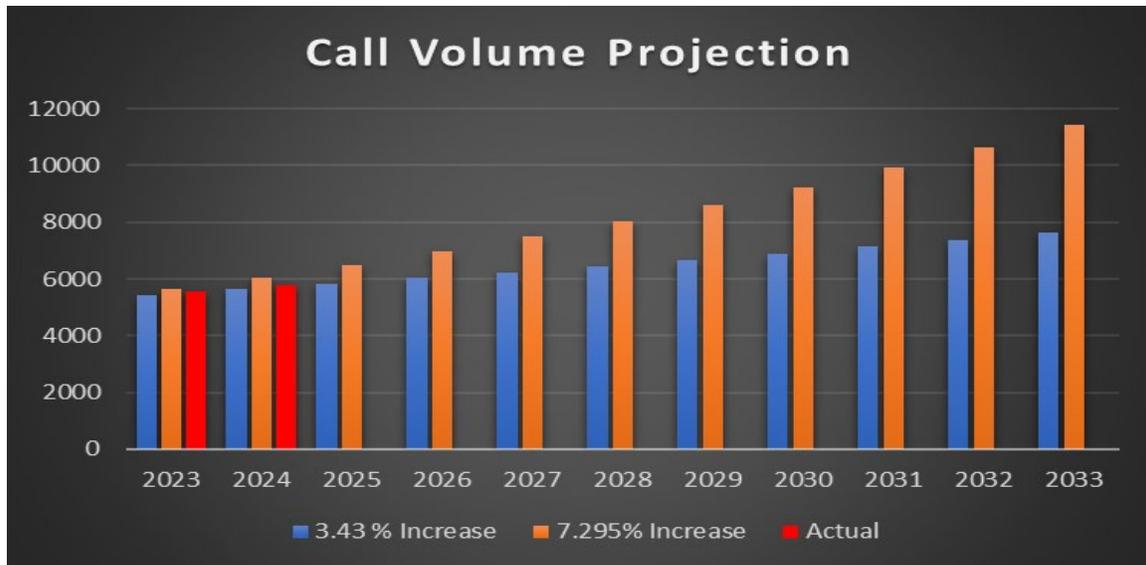
AF&R continues to notice the largest increase in transports to 3 Rivers Campus in Grants Pass, 5 % of the time, and an increase in transports to our alternate destinations, from 1.1 % in 2020 to 6.2 % in 2024.



To determine the proper placement of our single-role practitioners, we analyzed the data to determine where and what hours we are busiest and where they will make the most impact. The following chart shows that while call volume is increasing, the call bell curve over twelve years has remained the same.



When we built out our call volume projects for our business model, we chose a high and a low trend based on historical data. After 2024, we were trending towards the high side of our chart. This is our projected call volume for the next eight years, both at the low and high call volume projections.



**The Future:**

**Challenges:**

AF&R, along with the private ambulance providers and the ambulance associations, are watching the Veterans Administration and the Insurance industry in their quest to remove their payment profile to that of the government's Medicare/Medicaid reimbursement rates. It began with the No Surprise Act, which targeted air ambulance providers and exempted ground ambulance service. These insurance providers are now focusing on the EMS system's ground side. If this passes, it will be a catastrophic blow to private ambulance service providers and detrimental to fire-based EMS transport systems. It will force many more fire agencies to become transport-capable, leaving the remote areas unprotected or minimally protected by private ambulance providers in the world of EMS.

We enjoyed our collaborative approach with the other fire agencies, private ambulance providers, and the county to revise the ASA language and enhance the availability of different EMS best practices nationwide in Jackson County. We recognize a need for different recruiting methods as the country's shortage of

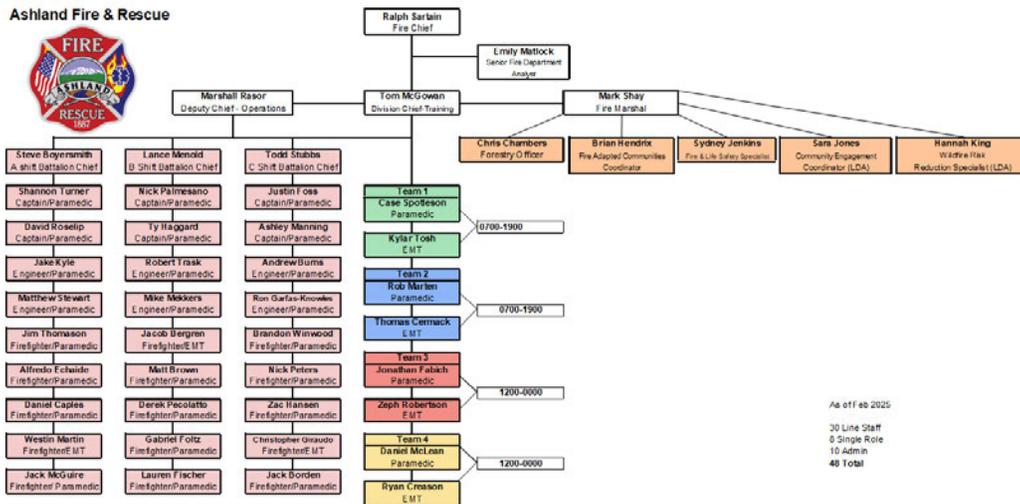
paramedics is increasing. Also, with supply chain issues, we realize an increase in all service costs and equipment costs and an extended delivery time for major purchases such as ambulances, gurneys, and cardiac monitors.

With continued staffing issues at the hospitals and extended wait times for patient transfers, we are reducing the availability of ambulances in the system, which is increasing the wait time for first responders on the scene waiting for ambulances to arrive for transport.

We look forward to the new ASA plan, which will allow for alternative transport/system dispatch means to ensure we are sending the right resource at the right time to the right calls.

An additional area that may pose a challenge will be the change to the current OSHA Fire Brigade Standard, first adopted by OSHA in 1980. The standard is under review, and significant changes have been requested to OSHA requirements in preventive health care, station design, emergency response vehicles, and more. The comment period for the proposed rule change was completed in 2024.

## Organization Chart 2024



## Closing:

Many positive achievements have come out of Ashland Fire & Rescue with our city manager, current city council, budget committee, and Ashland Fire members. We

look forward to being an integral part of the community and ASA 3 as we work to improve and move forward continually, answering our mission statement, which is:

***“AF&R is dedicated to protecting lives, property, and the environment. By delivering fire suppression, emergency medical, disaster management, fire prevention and public education services by professionally trained, dedicated personnel, we strive to achieve the highest quality of public service to our customers.”***

-Respectfully submitted-

***Ralph Sartain***, MO, IAAI-CFI, NAFI-CFEI

Fire Chief

Ashland Fire & Rescue

