

2025 BILLINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT Annual Report



BILLINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT

2025 SUMMARY

In 2025, the Billings Fire Department provided emergency and non-emergency services to the residents and visitors of the City of Billings and the Billings Urban Fire Service Area (BUFSA). The department continues to experience a high volume of emergency medical responses while delivering fire suppression, rescue services, fire prevention, community risk reduction, and all-hazards emergency response around the clock.

Total Call Count: 17,914

EMS Responses: 10,517

Fire Responses: 352

Other Responses: 7,045

Number of Stations: 8

Apparatus: 50

BFD/9-1-1 Personnel: 183

Population Served: 122,173

Challenges

- **Staffing Station 8**
- **Construction & Staffing Station 9**
- **Facility Improvement Maintenance**
- **Alternative Revenue to Address Property Tax Changes**

Service Area ISO Rating 2/10

(Fire Protection Classification Rating)

91.46 sq miles - Response Area

46.41 sq miles - City Limits

43.76 sq miles - BUFSA

1.29 sq miles - Landfill



MESSAGE FROM FIRE CHIEF MATT HOPPEL

It is an honor to serve as Fire Chief of the Billings Fire Department, having assumed this role in April under the leadership and guidance of past Chief Pepper Valdez. I am grateful for the foundation he built and for the opportunity to continue advancing the mission, values, and high standards that define this department. I look forward to building on that legacy while working alongside our dedicated members and community partners to meet the evolving needs of the City of Billings.

The City of Billings continues to grow and change, and with that growth comes increasing demand for reliable, professional emergency services. In 2025, the Billings Fire Department remained focused on protecting life, property, and the environment while responsibly managing the resources entrusted to us by the community

Throughout the past year, our firefighters, officers, dispatchers, and support staff again responded to thousands of calls for service across the city and the Billings Urban Fire Service Area. Operating from 8 fire stations and supported by our consolidated City/County 911 Communications Center, our personnel delivered fire suppression, emergency medical care, rescue services, fire prevention, and all-hazards response around the clock. Even as call volume, staffing pressures, and operational complexity continued to rise, our members met these challenges with professionalism, adaptability, and unwavering dedication.

In 2025, changes in property tax structure and valuation had a direct impact on the public safety budget, in turn, the funding available for fire and emergency services. While these changes provided some stabilization for essential operations, they also required careful prioritization and disciplined fiscal management. The Department worked closely with city leadership to preserve core life-safety services while responsibly planning for future staffing, training, equipment, and facility needs.

What stands out most from this past year is the resilience of our people. Despite budget shortfalls, increased call volume, and evolving expectations, the men and women of this department consistently rose to the occasion, supporting one another, maintaining high standards, and never allowing service to our community to suffer. I am extremely proud of their commitment, professionalism, and determination in the face of challenge.

As we look ahead, sustainable funding and continued progress toward best-practice service levels will remain essential to ensuring safe response times, firefighter safety, and community risk reduction. Through thoughtful planning, transparency, and continued partnership with city leadership and our citizens, we are committed to building a stronger, more resilient organization for the future.

On behalf of the Billings Fire Department, thank you for your trust, your partnership, and the opportunity to serve this community every day.



Fire Chief
Matt Hoppel





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ADMINISTRATION

The Administrative Division of the Billings Fire Department provides the leadership, oversight, and organizational support necessary to sustain effective and accountable emergency services. This division manages the department's core business functions, including budget development and financial oversight; policy development and distribution; the Office of Professional Standards; personnel administration for records and correspondence; health and risk management; and coordination of fleet and facilities maintenance.

Fire Chief Matt Hoppel
Assistant Fire Chief of EMS Jason Banfield
Assistant Fire Chief of Operations Kevin Bentz

Fire Marshal Jaime Fender

Training Chief Bryan Francis

Battalion Chief Darrek Mitchell-A Shift
Battalion Chief Chis Lowe-B Shift
Battalion Chief Rick Schauer-C Shift
Battalion Chief Jason Lyon-Swing Shift

911 Communications Manager-Justin Jagers

EMS Coordinator-Cameron McCamley
Chief of Staff-Sara Naylor
Admin Support II-Mary Hofer
Admin Support II Bureau/911 Center-Travis Hunt

Led by the Fire Chief and supported by Assistant Chiefs, fire suppression and prevention command staff, and administrative personnel, the Administrative Division ensures compliance with city policies, regulatory requirements, and strategic priorities while actively pursuing grant funding, alternative revenue, cost procurement opportunities, and operational efficiencies.

Through close coordination with City leadership, the division supports transparency, fiscal responsibility, and long-term planning to meet the community's evolving needs.

BILLINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT

The Billings Fire Department has proudly served the community since 1883, providing fire suppression, emergency medical services, rescue operations, fire prevention, and public safety education.

MISSION

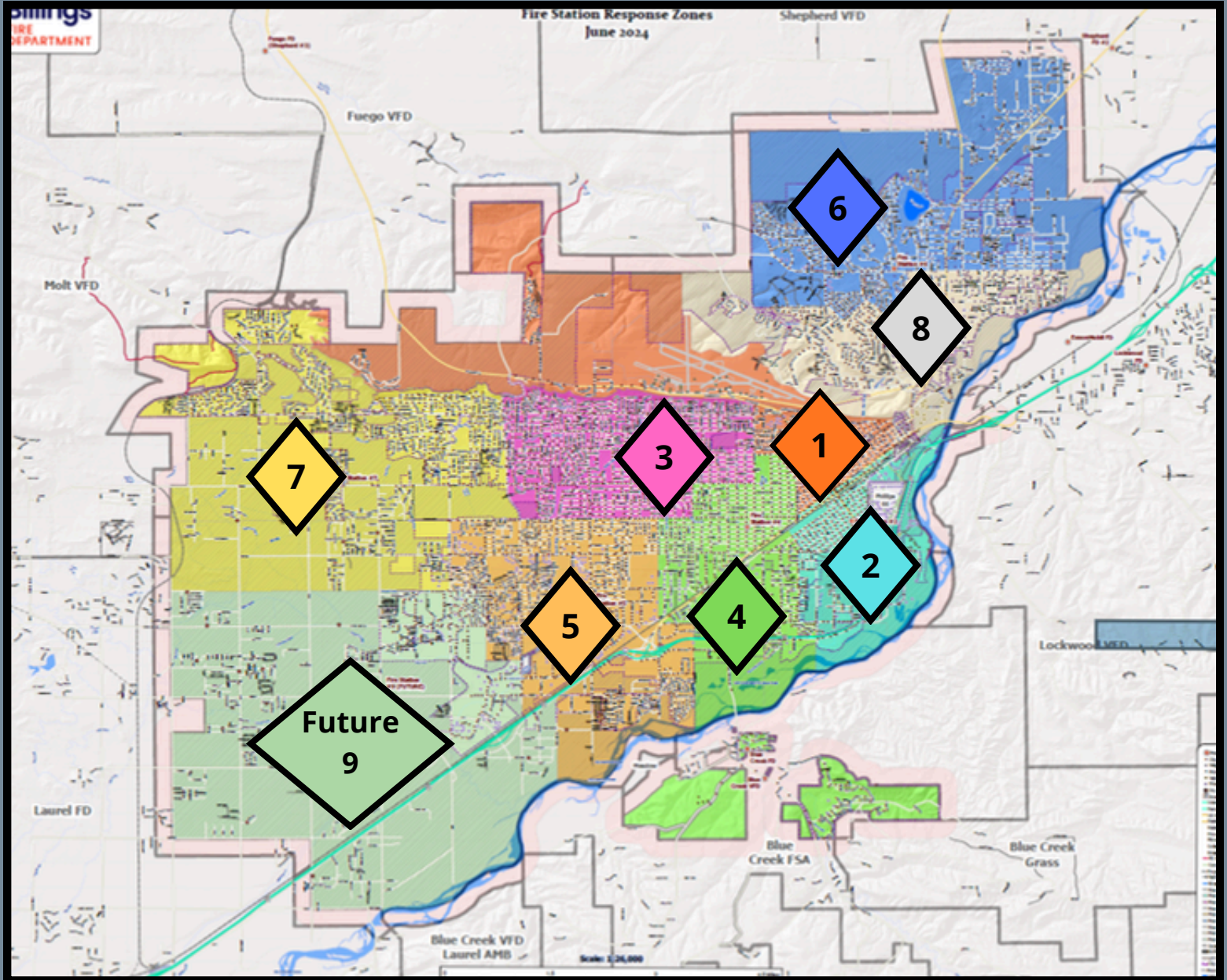
The Billings Fire Department is dedicated to utilizing the latest education, methods, and technology in providing outstanding emergency services.

VISION

The Billings Fire Department aspires to be the finest provider of emergency services.



BILLINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT



FIRE STATION RESPONSE ZONES

BUDGET/FINANCIAL SUMMARY

The Billings Fire Department operates within an adopted annual budget that supports emergency response operations, personnel, training, equipment, and facilities necessary to serve the City of Billings and the Billings Urban Fire Service Area (BUFSA). The budget is structured to maintain reliable service delivery while responsibly managing public resources.

Approved FY 2025 Operating Budget	
Administration	\$1,959,145.00
Prevention/Investigation	\$918,440.00
Training	\$644,002.00
Equipment/Maintenance	\$2,750,798.48
Suppression	\$18,790,241.16
9-1-1 Center	\$4,147,777.10
Communication Equipment	\$92,741.00
TOTAL OPERATING BUDGET	\$29,303,144.74

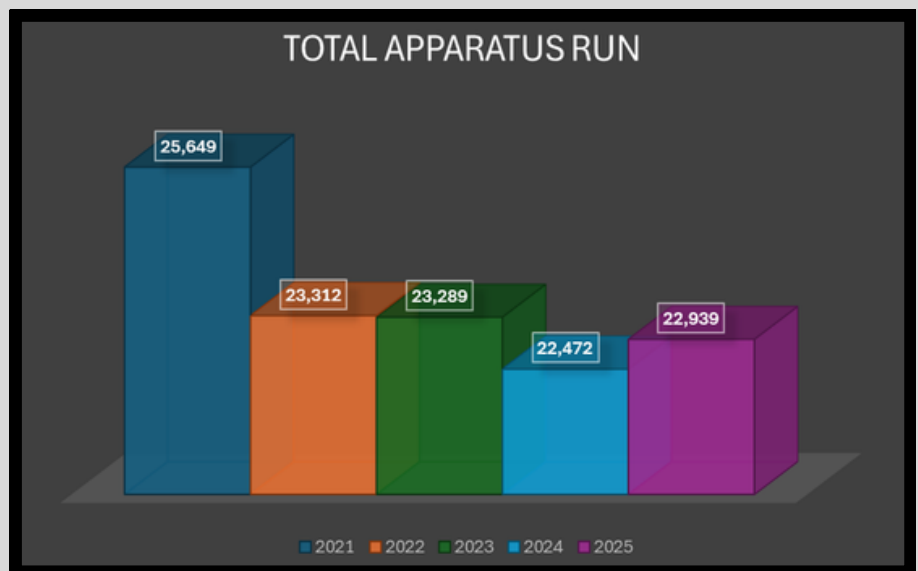
A significant portion of the department’s budget is dedicated to personnel costs, reflecting the staffing required to provide 24-hour emergency coverage. Additional funding supports apparatus maintenance and replacement, medical and firefighter equipment, facility operations, training, and ongoing operational needs.

OPERATIONS, APPARATUS & EQUIPMENT

The Operations Division of the Billings Fire Department coordinates personnel, resources, and response strategies to support continuous emergency services throughout the city.



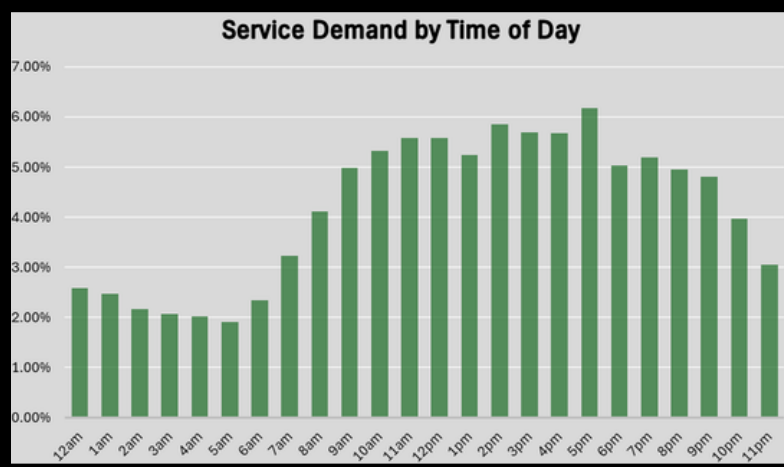
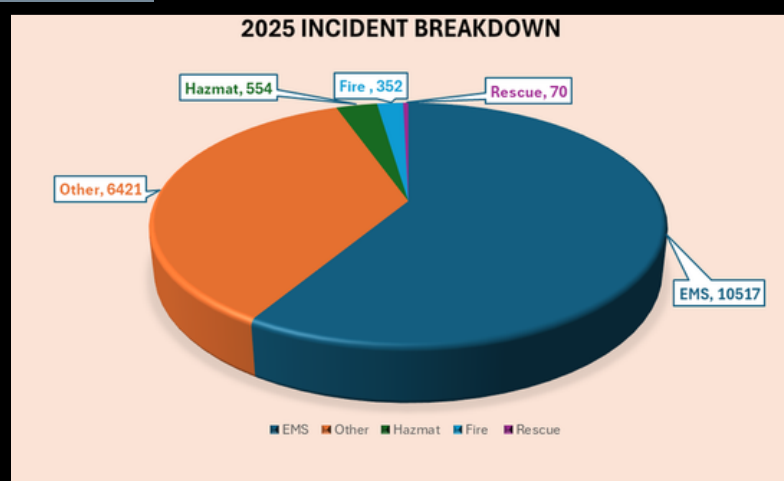
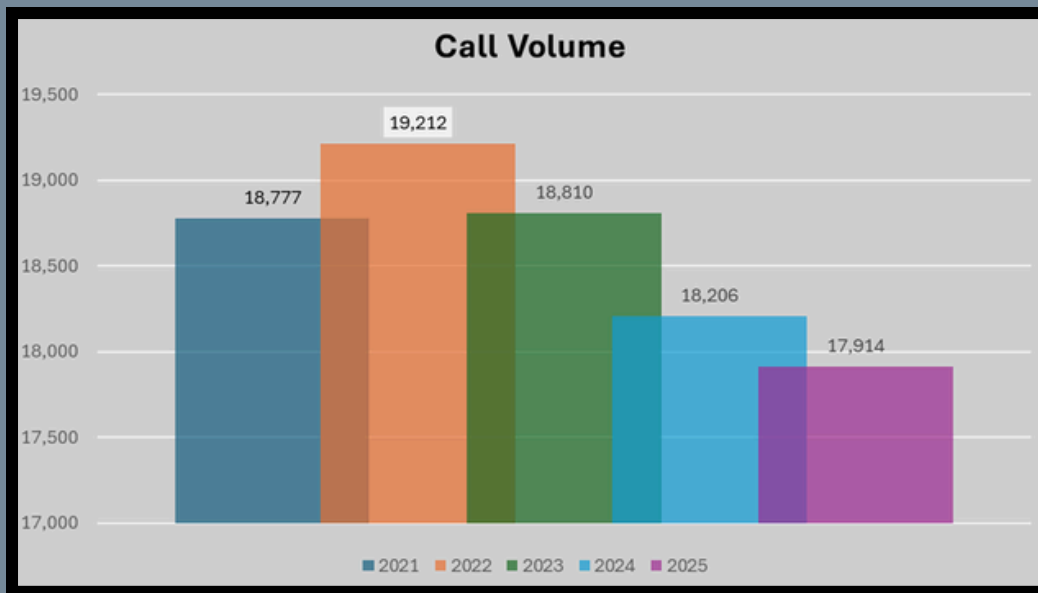
This includes the effective deployment of a diverse fleet of apparatus and specialized equipment used for fire suppression, emergency medical response, technical rescue, and all-hazards incidents.



Through ongoing oversight, maintenance, and strategic investment in apparatus and equipment, BFD ensures crews are prepared to respond safely, efficiently, and reliably to the evolving needs of the Billings community.

INCIDENT ACTIVITY/CALL VOLUME

During 2025, the Billings Fire Department responded to a high volume of incidents, including emergency medical calls, fire suppression, alarms, rescues, and public service requests. All emergency calls are processed through the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system, which captures critical information and ensures appropriate resources are dispatched efficiently.



The department utilizes nationally recognized Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocols to screen and prioritize medical calls, allowing ambulances to be assigned to lower-acuity incidents while keeping fire suppression resources available for high-acuity and life-threatening emergencies.

RESPONSE TIMES

The Billings Fire Department is committed to providing timely emergency response to protect life and property throughout the Billings community and the Billings Urban Fire Service Area (BUFSA).



**Station 1 Average
Response Time:**

6:04

Incident Count:

2,614

**Apparatus: Engine 1;
Truck 1
Personnel: 7**

Station 1 serves as Headquarters to all 8 Fire Stations housing Fire Administration and Fire Prevention Bureau

**Station 2 Average
Response Time:**

5:36

Incident Count:

2,086

**Apparatus: Engine 2
Personnel: 3**



Station 2 is known as the Maverick Fire Station and home to our Technical Rescue Team.

RESPONSE TIMES

Response time—measured from dispatch to the arrival of the first unit, is a key service indicator evaluated against NFPA standards calling for a four-minute first unit arrival and an eight-minute full effective response.

**Station 3 Average
Response Time:**

7:11

Incident Count:

2,154

**Apparatus: Engine 3
Personnel: 3**



Station 3 covers “Mid-Town” Billings.
Moved to this location in 1965.



**Station 4 Average
Response Time:**

6:39

Incident Count:

2,100

**Apparatus: Engine 4
Personnel: 3**

Station 4 is home to BFDs self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) management group, known as the Air Team.

RESPONSE TIMES

Response times are affected by traffic, weather, and community growth. The Billings Fire Department operates strategically located stations to support timely emergency response throughout the community.



Station 5 houses the BFD Hazardous Materials Team.

Station 5 Average Response Time:

7:58

Incident Count:

3,596

Apparatus: Engine 5;

Squad 2

Personnel: 5

Station 6 Average Response Time:

6:41

Incident Count:

1,718

Apparatus: Engine 6

Personnel: 3



Station 6 serves the north-east community known as the Billings Heights

RESPONSE TIMES

Timely response is critical to reducing risk and improving outcomes by enabling early fire suppression, rapid medical care, scene control, and coordination with partner agencies.

**Station 7 Average
Response Time:**

8:45

Incident Count:

1,513

**Apparatus: Engine 7
Personnel: 3**



Station 7 has a run area of over an estimated 30 sq. miles including West End Billings



**Station 8 Average
Response Time:**

6:27

Incident Count:

1,411

**Apparatus: Squad 1
Personnel: 2**

Station 8 houses the BFD Medical Response team, allowing quick response to neighborhoods in the Heights/Downtown

EMS

The Billings Fire Department provides emergency medical services as a primary component of its response to incidents throughout the City of Billings and the Billings Urban Fire Service Area (BUFSA). EMS responses account for a significant portion of the department's overall call volume, making timely medical care a critical service to the community.



Total EMS Calls-10,517



CPRs-123



OB Calls-8



Overdose-106



Intubations-55



Fire Department personnel are trained to provide emergency medical care and frequently arrive as the first responders on scene. Crews assess patients, initiate medical care when appropriate, and work closely with local ambulance services to ensure coordinated and efficient patient care.

FIRE SUPPRESSION

The Billings Fire Department provides fire suppression services to protect life, property, and critical infrastructure throughout the City of Billings. Suppression responses include structure fires, wildland, and grass fires, vehicle fires, and other incidents requiring rapid fire control and hazard mitigation.



Total Fires-352



**Grass/Outside
Rubbish-104**



Building Fire-58



**Dumpster/Outside
Trash-26**

Fire suppression operations are supported by strategically located fire stations, trained personnel, and a diverse fleet of apparatus designed to meet the needs of the community. Crews operate using established tactics, coordinated command, and ongoing training to ensure safe and effective incident management

TECHNICAL RESCUE

The Billings Fire Department Technical Rescue Team is comprised of 36 Rescue Technicians, all trained to NFPA 1006 National Rescue Technician I and II standards. Team members are cross trained across all technical rescue disciplines, ensuring a high level of operational readiness for complex and high-risk incidents.

All 36 technicians are trained in water rescue, trench rescue, structural collapse, confined space rescue, and heavy extrication, high- and steep-angle rim rescue and swift water rescue. Currently, 20 of the 36 technicians are trained in swift water rescue, with the remaining technicians trained in all other core disciplines.

70-Total Rescue

4-Water Rescue

**5-High-Angle
Rescue**



Throughout the year, the team conducted extensive training and hosted several advanced rescue courses. The department hosted a CMC Rope Rescue Level 1–2 Technician course, which included eight Billings Fire Department members and twelve external participants. A CMC REMS Rescue course was also hosted, with one BFD member attending, along with a full-team technical rescue drill conducted at the Water Treatment Plant to reinforce multi-discipline response capabilities. We also sent one BFD member to SPRAT (Society of Professional Rope Access Technicians) class with Par Montana Refinery.

The Technical Rescue Team maintains a strong partnership with CMC, which has expanded training opportunities for both the department and regional partners. Through this collaboration, BFD is able to host technician-level and REMS (Rope Emergency Management Systems) courses and provide advanced training opportunities for surrounding agencies. This partnership ensures technicians remain aligned with current best practices, modern equipment, and evolving rescue techniques. Future collaboration may include hosting a confined space course, and a tower rescue technician course, further enhancing regional training capabilities.

In addition to team-specific training, Technical Rescue Team members play a key role in department-wide education. Team technicians conduct monthly training sessions for the entire department, ensuring personnel maintain familiarity with rescue standards, safety considerations, and operational expectations. This year, the team also spent six full days training new recruits, focusing on rescue fundamentals, technician standards, and department expectations.



**9-Extrication
from Vehicle**

HAZMAT

The Billings Hazmat Team participated in a number of events throughout 2025. They began the year traveling to Florida to assist with the Florida Hazmat Symposium Team competition. As evaluators, they evaluated competitors based upon the competencies in NFPA 470 Chapter 10 "Hazardous Materials Technician" in a series of scenarios that tested teams from across the US. After the competition they attended the Hazmat Symposium, where they brought back new training topics, updated knowledge of new and emerging threats in the Hazmat industry.



554 Hazmat Calls



Team members also mitigated a number of hazmat incidents around the community involving commercial processes to antique firefighting chemicals that remain present in our community. The most common response involves Carbon Monoxide that is colorless, odorless and requires monitoring equipment to detect its presence. There is also no shortage of fuel related issues plaguing the community ranging from traditional fossil fuels to an increase of EV's which are becoming more and more common in the community.



49 Carbon Monoxide

In June, 9 team members, along with members from 5 other state hazmat teams traveled to the Security and Emergency Response Training Center (SERTC) in Pueblo Colorado, for Tank Car Specialist training. The facility has the ability to train members on a live scale train derailment to provide the skills and abilities necessary to operate effectively at these high consequence incidents.

In June Techs were asked to assist the FBI, and Billings bomb techs with safe rendering techniques of dirty bombs. Techs also assisted the CST (Civil Support Team) with stadium sweeps during high profile gatherings around the state. As 2026 begins there are a number of new and exciting opportunities the team is looking forward to being involved in.



**272 Power Lines
Down**

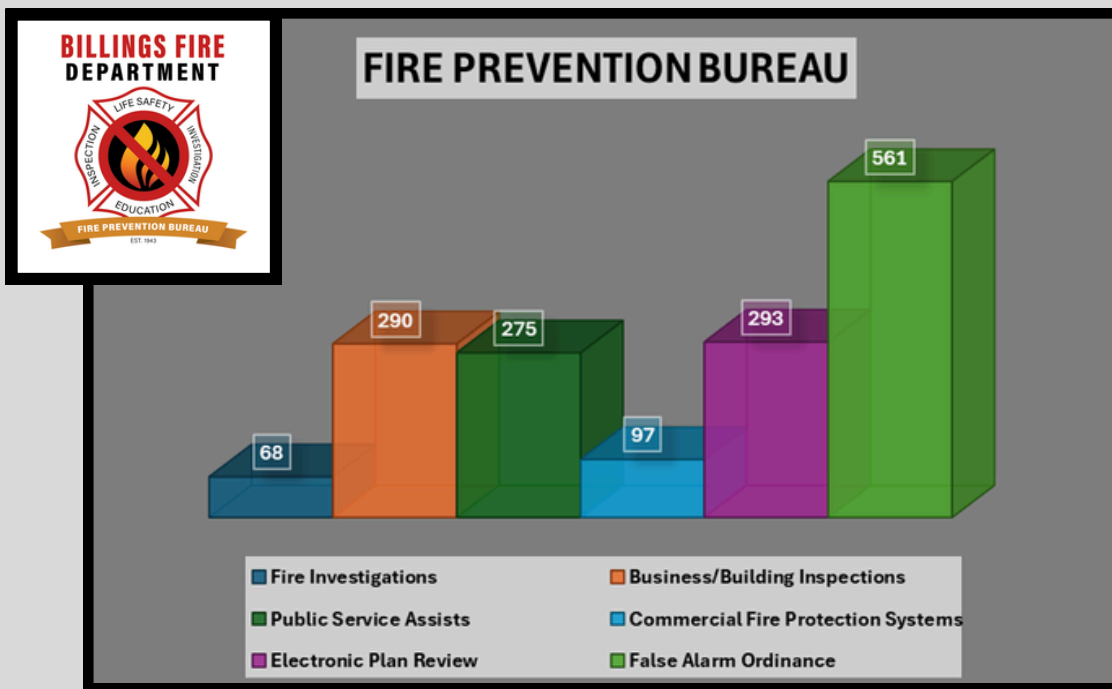


138 Gas Leak

FIRE PREVENTION BUREAU

The Fire Prevention Bureau works to reduce fire risk through inspections, code enforcement, origin and cause fire investigations, and public education. These efforts focus on identifying hazards, enhancing life safety, and preventing emergencies before they occur.

The Bureau conducts inspections of commercial occupancies, new construction, and special events, and works closely with property owners and community partners to promote fire-safe practices.



Public education remains a core function of the Bureau; members routinely participate in school programs, community events, station tours, and safety outreach to educate residents on fire safety and emergency preparedness.



TRAINING

Training is a foundational component of the Billings Fire Department's mission and plays a vital role in maintaining a highly skilled, adaptable, and safety-focused workforce. Through a comprehensive training program that spans fire suppression, emergency medical services, technical rescue, and support functions, the department ensures personnel at all levels are prepared to meet the evolving demands of emergency response.

Training within BFD is delivered through a balanced approach that includes classroom instruction, hands-on skills training, scenario-based exercises, and ongoing continuing education. These efforts support operational readiness, promote responder safety, and reinforce consistent, high-quality service delivery across the organization.

**OFFICER DEVELOPMENT-160 HOURS
8 GRADUATED - 4WEEKS**

**RECRUIT ACADEMY (560 HOURS)
10 GRADUATED - 14 WEEKS**

**L-380-40 HOURS
GRADUATED 11**



**ENGINEER DEVELOPMENT-80 HOURS
6 GRADUATED - 2 WEEKS**

**BATTALION CHIEF DEVELOPMENT-80 HOURS
10 CANDIDATES-2 WEEKS**

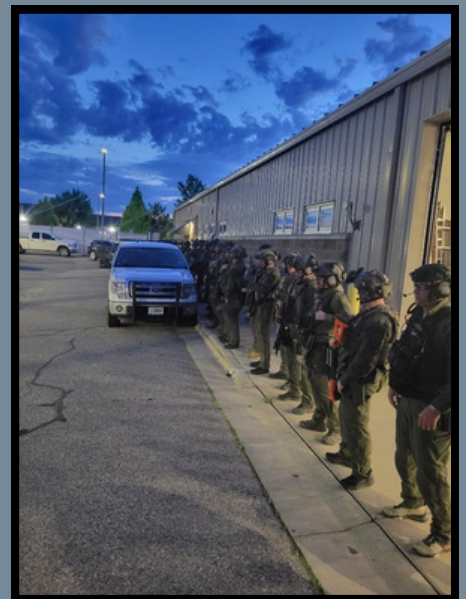
By emphasizing continuous professional development, adherence to state and national standards, and practical application in realistic training environments, the Billings Fire Department strengthens its ability to respond effectively to everyday incidents as well as complex, high-risk emergencies—ultimately enhancing outcomes for both responders and the community they serve.

SWAT MEDIC

The Billings Fire Department provides advanced medical support through its partnership with the Billings Police Department via the SWAT Medic Team. Fire Department paramedics assigned to this team are specially selected and trained to operate in high-threat, law-enforcement environments, delivering Tactical Emergency Casualty Care (TECC) to officers, suspects, and civilians during high-risk warrants, barricaded subjects, hostage incidents, and other critical events.



Embedded SWAT medics work directly alongside tactical operators, providing immediate point-of-injury care, rapid triage, and coordinated casualty extraction while maintaining scene safety and operational integrity. Ongoing joint training, scenario-based exercises, and shared operational protocols ensure the team remains mission-ready, reinforcing responder safety and improving survivability outcomes during the City of Billings' most complex and dangerous incidents.



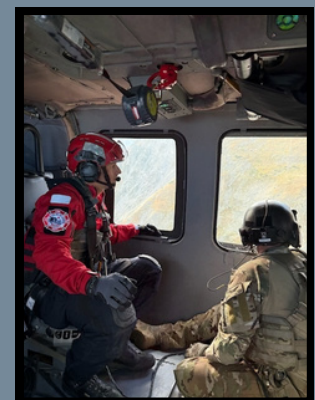
NATIONAL GUARD

The Billings Fire Department maintains a highly integrated Search and Rescue (SAR) partnership with the Army National Guard to support complex and high-risk rescue operations across Yellowstone County and the surrounding region.



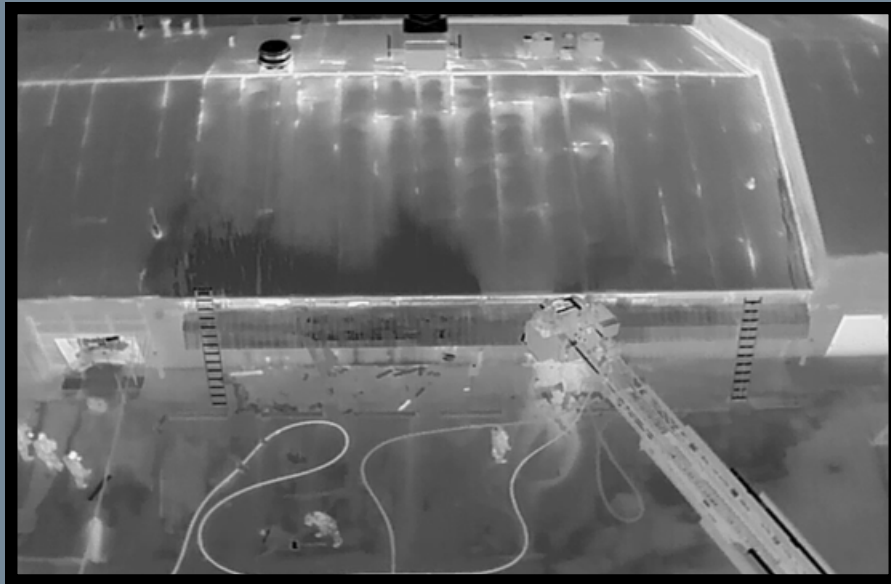
This program combines the Fire Department's all-hazards response capabilities including technical rescue, wildland operations, water and ice rescue, hazardous materials response, and advanced EMS—with the National Guard's specialized aviation assets, hoist and short-haul capabilities, night-vision operations, and personnel trained for austere and remote environments.

Joint planning, interoperable communications, and recurring multi-agency training exercises ensure seamless integration during real-world missions such as high-angle rescues in the Rimrocks, wilderness searches, flood and severe weather incidents, and large-scale disasters. This partnership significantly expands regional rescue capacity, shortens response times to hard-to-reach locations, and exemplifies a coordinated state and local approach to life-saving operations under the Incident Command System.

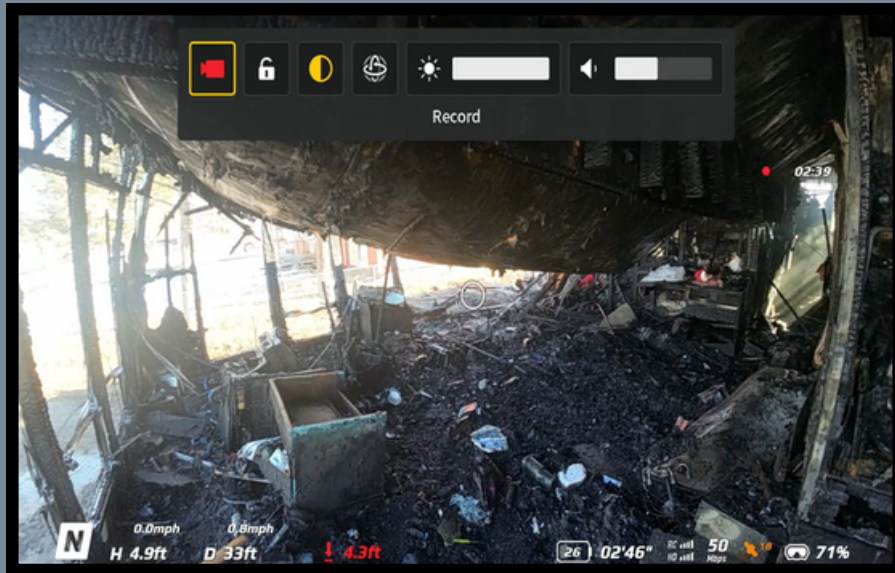


DRONE PROGRAM

The Billings Fire Department Drone Program provides a critical operational capability that supports emergency response, firefighter safety, and situational awareness across a wide range of incidents. Established in 2020 through a State Homeland Security Grant, the program has matured into a reliable public safety resource integrated into fire suppression, rescue operations, incident planning, and community engagement.



Thermal camera view from a drone at a commercial building fire



Inside a structurally unstable building to investigate the cause of a fire

In 2025, the BFD Drone Team responded to 18 calls for service, completed 16 training missions, logged more than 75 flight hours, and added two new aircraft to enhance rapid deployment and interior operations. The program continues to deliver operational value while adapting to increasing incident complexity, evolving regulatory requirements, and the need for long-term planning to sustain this capability for the citizens of Billings.



CRISIS RESPONSE UNIT (CRU)

SUPPORTING COMMUNITY-BASED MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH OUTREACH

The Crisis Response Unit (CRU) was established in response to identify gaps in mental health, substance use, and physical healthcare services in Yellowstone County. Data from the Community Health Needs Assessment and local high-utilizer studies highlighted a growing population with unmet behavioral and physical health needs who frequently interacted with emergency and law enforcement systems without requiring traditional emergency medical intervention.

In response, the CRU was developed as a collaborative, community-focused program designed to meet individuals where they are. CRU provides on-scene assessment, de-escalation, education, and connection to appropriate resources. Although long-term sustainability was limited by funding constraints and restrictive reimbursement models within the State of Montana, the program demonstrated measurable impact during its operation, including a strong partnership with Rimrock Foundation.

During its implementation, the CRU reduced reliance on law enforcement response, improved access to mental health services, and enhanced case management for high-utilizer patients. Its impact continues today through sustained referral pathways and ongoing collaboration among community partners.

Goals

- Expanding access to mental health, substance use, and physical healthcare services for underserved and high-risk populations
- Assisting with post-hospital discharge planning, chronic disease management, and follow-up care to reduce gaps across care settings
- Proactively addressing non-emergent needs to decrease unnecessary 911 calls, emergency department visits, and hospital readmissions
- Improving coordination among pre-hospital providers, clinical teams, social services, and community organizations
- Providing education, harm reduction strategies, and preventative outreach that support long-term health and safety

Operational Impact

Crisis Response EMTs support the Billings Fire Department by responding to select calls that do not require emergency medical treatment or transport. Their role centers on patient-focused assessment, education, and referral to appropriate community resources, by addressing non-emergent situations through communication and coordinated follow-up,

Crisis Response EMTs reduce unnecessary demand on emergency response units, allowing frontline crews to remain available for high-acuity incidents. This model strengthens community trust, improves patient outcomes, and enhances system efficiency across the BFD service area. Most importantly, it aligns emergency services with modern public health principles.

BILLINGS CITY/COUNTY 9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Billings City/County 9-1-1 Communications Center experienced a demanding and productive year in 2025, dispatching **239,520** public safety assets to calls for service across the city and county. The center continues to grow in both capacity and capability and is currently staffed by 30 full-time dispatch professionals, five supervisors, and one public safety technician who collectively provide around-the-clock support to first responders and the community.



For more than a year, Assistant Manager Priscilla Martinez served as the sole administrative leader of the center, overseeing both daily operations and long-term administrative responsibilities during a period of transition. In May 2025, Justin Jagers was hired as 9-1-1 Manager, providing additional leadership support and allowing for a renewed focus on strategic initiatives, staff development, and operational improvements.

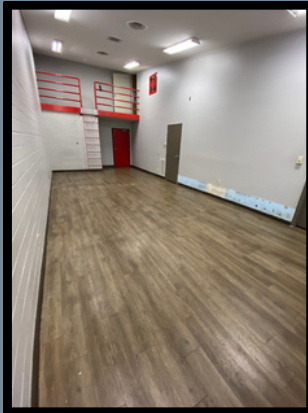
- **146,974 Incidents Created**
- **596 Public Records Request**
- **656 Average Calls Per Day**
- **239,462 Total Phone Calls**

During the year, the center successfully completed two major technology upgrades that significantly enhanced operational capability. An upgrade to the VESTA 9-1-1 phone system improved the center's ability to manage emergency and non-emergency calls, text-to-911 communications, advanced location services, and automated call transcription. Additionally, the installation of a new NICE recording platform consolidated phone, radio, and computer-aided dispatch recordings into a single system, improving efficiency, quality assurance, and evidentiary retrieval.

Through these advancements and the continued dedication of its staff, the Communications Center remains committed to being the first voice heard in a crisis and ensuring the right resources are dispatched as quickly and effectively as possible.

STATION 5 REMODEL & GRANT FUNDING

In 2025, The Billings Fire Department was awarded \$280,000.00 through the Lowe's Hometowns program to support the renovation of Fire Station 5. Lowe's Hometowns is the company's largest community impact initiative, committing more than \$100 million over five years to restore and rebuild critical community spaces, including first responder facilities. Through this generous investment, BFD was able to complete significant upgrades to the kitchen, bathrooms, and sleep quarters at Station 5-one of the City's busiest fire stations. These improvements enhance functionality, safety, and comfort for personnel.



2025 Awarded Grants

- West End Walmart-Safety Squad-\$500
- Tractor Supply-Safety Squad-\$500
- Heights Walmart-Safety Squad-\$500
- P66-Safety Squad-\$24,500
- State Farm- CMC Rope Rescue Class-\$1000
- First Interstate Bank- AutoPulse-\$2500
- Scheels-Safety Squad-\$2750
- Billings Community Foundation- Safety Squad-\$500

FACILITIES

- **Fire Station 2 Boiler Project:**

We are in the process of demoing the existing 1964 boiler, near piping, expansion tank, and old heat exchanger. We will install two (2) new boilers, new system pumps, and an expansion tank. Two boilers will add redundancy to the system. We are also installing Reliable Controls for machine operating tracking. This project was budgeted in the FY26 budget.

- **Fire Station 1 Project Planning:**

Station 1 requires comprehensive renovation to replace failing infrastructure and improve functionality. This project has been identified in the Capital Improvement Plan for FY27.

- **Overall State of Facilities Plan:**

An ongoing facilities improvement plan that identifies preventative maintenance to save on costs for major projects due to a lack of identified ongoing maintenance.

In 2025, the Billings Fire Department saw a significant reduction in overhead garage door failures. Previously averaging 2-3 failure calls per month, the department experienced just one door-related issue in 2025. Routine quarterly inspections and servicing of openers and components have improved reliability, disruptions, and supported overall apparatus readiness. The preventive maintenance program has proven effective.



**Presented By:
Chief Matt Hoppel**

**Prepared By:
Mary Hofer**

