

# Middleton Fire Department Operational Budget FY26

Priority #1 Request - Four Additional  
Full-Time Firefighters

Fire Department Request Priority #1 – Four Additional Full-Time Firefighters

General Information

Funding Package Name \*

Additional 4 Full Time Firefighters65

Department \*

Fire

Description \*

The Middleton Fire Department will be requesting additional funding for 4 additional full time firefighters.142

Justification Type

Public Safety Enhancements XPopulation Growth XPersonnel Requests (Add. Pay/Benefits) XCommunity Enhancement X

Justification Details

-Help improve shift strength.  
-Help to staff additional apparatus such as additional ambulance for back to back emergency calls.  
-Help to improve man power during significant incident such as motor vehicle crashed and structures fires.  
-Will help to accomplish the 2 in, 2 out fire safety standard.  
-Help to reduce the reliance on mutual aid ambulances on back to back emergencies.  
-Help to offset/decrease call department activity, including the need to fill call shifts with overtime.

Expenses 5 ^

Identify each expense item by selecting accounts by Account ID or name from the dropdown. You can also manually add itemizations if needed.

		FY2026		
Expense Items	Account ID	Quantity	Unit Cost	Value
SALARIES & WAGES	0010-2-220-0-1-0...			\$333,360.00
SALARIES & WAGES Itemization	0010-2-220-0-1-0...	4	\$83,340.00	\$333,360.00
OVERTIME	0010-2-220-0-1-0...			\$104,504.00
OVERTIME Itemization	0010-2-220-0-1-0...	4	\$26,126.00	\$104,504.00
CLOTHING ALLOWANCE	0010-2-220-0-1-0...			\$4,000.00
CLOTHING ALLOWANCE Itemization	0010-2-220-0-1-0...	4	\$1,000.00	\$4,000.00
SPECIAL EXPENSE	0010-2-220-0-1-0...			\$6,000.00
SPECIAL EXPENSE Itemization	0010-2-220-0-1-0...	4	\$1,500.00	\$6,000.00
HOSE, GEAR, TIRES, ETC.	0010-2-220-0-1-0...			\$12,000.00
HOSE, GEAR, TIRES, ETC. Itemization	0010-2-220-0-1-0...	4	\$3,000.00	\$12,000.00
Totals Expenses				\$459,864.00

## Supplemental Budget Request Breakdown

### 4 Additional Firefighters- \$459,864

- \$333,360 SALARIES & WAGES
  - This amount would include the annual base salary and any contractual stipends for 4 firefighters. This would further break down to \$83,340 per firefighter.
- \$104,504 OVERTIME
  - This amount is the average overtime budgeted for 4 firefighters. This would further breakdown to \$26,126 per firefighter.
- \$4,000 CLOTHING ALLOWANCE
  - This amount it what would need to be budgeted contractually for 4 firefighters clothing allowances. Each firefighter would receive \$1,000 in clothing allowance.
- \$6,000 SPECIAL EXPENSES
  - This amount is what would need to be budgeted for 4 firefighters to have new hire medical exams done. This would further break down to \$1,500 per firefighter.
- \$12,000 HOSE, GEAR, TIRES
  - This amount is what would need to be budgeted for 4 new sets of gear. This would further break down to \$3,000 per set of new gear.

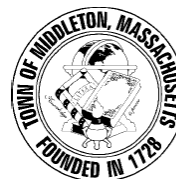
This breakdown does not include any costs for health insurance for any new employee.





**Douglas K. LeColst**  
Fire Chief

# Town of Middleton Fire Headquarters



4 Lake Street, Middleton, MA 01949  
Telephone: (978) 774-2466 Fax: (978) 774-0709  
[www.midfire.com](http://www.midfire.com)

December 17, 2024

Attached for your review is the supplemental budget request for the Middleton Fire Department for FY26. Over the past year, the fire department has worked hard to deliver a high-quality service to both the citizens and visitors of Middleton. Our community has evolved over the years, resulting in changing demands for fire department services. Our department is committed to providing the highest quality of services possible with the available funding.

Multiple compelling reasons exist for adding four full-time equivalent firefighter/Paramedic positions. These positions have been discussed for numerous years, and this is the right time to proceed with them. The key reasons for adding these positions include improving shift strength, ensuring continuity of operations, and counteracting decreased callback activity.

The current department shift strength varies from three to five members. This variation is due mainly to the availability of part-time members (call department), who are responsible for filling 2-24 hour shifts per day. Should these members be unavailable, one of the part-time shifts is filled at overtime with a full-time department member. This practice does lead to an increase in overtime costs.

One reason for the inconsistency in filling part-time shifts is that most part-time members also work elsewhere as full-time firefighters. Because of this, their full-time job will always be their priority, meaning that these members may not wish to work a less desirable shift at Middleton Fire because they will most likely have to do the same at their full-time employment.

Another justification for hiring additional full-time members involves the recent agreement between the Town and the full-time firefighters regarding a hold policy. This necessary policy helps to avoid instances when there are less than three firefighters on duty at any given time, which unfortunately has occurred on a handful of occasions. This staffing practice is hazardous and, unfortunately, puts many individuals' safety at risk. As part of this agreement, when a full-time member is held, they are compensated at a higher hourly rate and also receive additional vacation time (up to forty-eight hours per year). This agreement, while necessary, will ultimately lead to higher costs for the Town. Hiring additional full-time members will reduce the need to utilize this agreement.

If successful in this request, the department will add one additional firefighter to each group, thus consisting of four full-time firefighters per shift. The department would then rely on the part-time members to fill only one shift instead of two. This will help to reduce the reliance on the part-time staff.

### **Improved Continuity of Operations:**

Having a sufficient number of personnel at the scene of an emergency is essential for effective fire department operations. For scenarios with less than five members on duty, combined with the decrease in callback activity (which will cover later), this can lead to unsafe conditions. The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) states that the first arriving fire unit must have at least two firefighters outside waiting, while there are two firefighters inside a burning building (also known as the “two/in/two out” rule). Having fewer than five members on duty makes the department non-compliant with this standard.

Having fewer than five members on duty also affects how the department responds to additional emergency calls. If the station has insufficient personnel, the department must often rely on mutual aid resources to handle the second emergency call. Not only does this lead to an increase in response times for the ambulance, but it also leads to a potential loss in ambulance revenue, as the transporting ambulance service bills for the services rendered.

### **Counteract Decreased Callback Activity:**

Over the years, the department has experienced a consistent decrease in callback participation. Callback is when a member responds to the station while off duty to staff additional fire apparatus or to answer additional emergency calls. There are multiple reasons for the decrease in participation:

- **Residents vs. Non-Residents:** Over the years, the department has seen a steady shift in members who reside in Town versus those who live out of Town. Twenty-five years ago, almost 100% of the members lived in Middleton. Fast forward to today, and roughly 13% of the population lives in Middleton. The biggest reason for this change is that those individuals who want to work in this profession cannot afford to live in this community. This trend is problematic because members who respond to the station for callback must be at the station within minutes.
- **Significant Shift Availability:** Members are presented with significant opportunities to work station duty. Those members who choose to work these shifts are less likely to return to the station for additional emergencies when off-duty due to the significant amount of hours already spent there.
- **Busier lifestyles and limited availability:** People tend to have busier lifestyles compared to years past. Furthermore, today's younger generations tend to place a higher emphasis on quality of life.

For the reasons noted, I feel that adding four additional full-time firefighters will help address the various issues that the department is currently facing.

Thank you in advance for considering the step forward for the fire department and the community.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas K. LeColst", with a stylized flourish at the end.

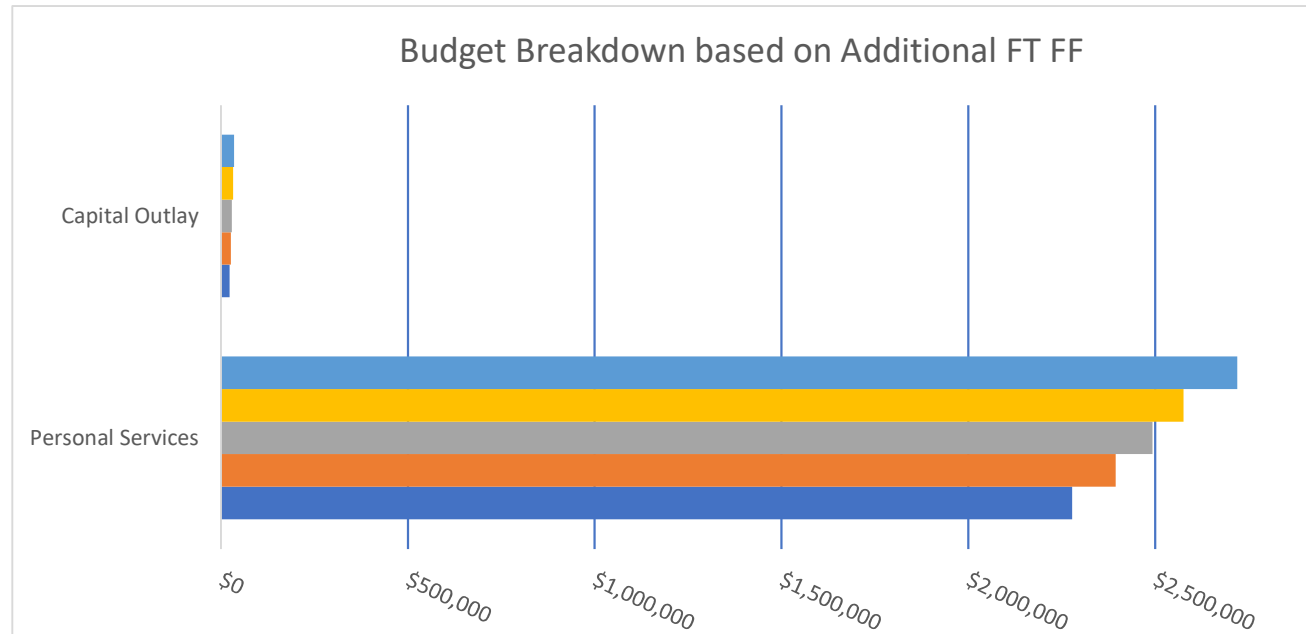
Douglas K. LeColst  
Chief of Department

### **Essential Functions of a Full-Time Firefighter**

- Perform various emergency functions, such as fire suppression, Emergency Medical Services, and hazardous materials mitigation.
- Assist with fire prevention activities and public education such as inspections and school evacuation drills.
- Driver and operate fire, rescue, and EMS apparatus
- Study street and occupancy locations within the community
- Participate in routine training exercises related to both fire and medical scenarios
- Perform routine maintenance on apparatus, equipment, and facilities
- Clean and sanitize equipment as needed
- Perform other duties as assigned

### Addition of Full-Time Firefighters

	No Changes	1 FT FF	2 FT FF	3 FT FF	4 FT FF
Personal Services	\$2,278,287	\$2,394,677	\$2,493,040	\$2,575,997	\$2,720,151
Capital Outlay	\$23,500	\$26,500	\$29,500	\$32,500	\$35,500
	\$2,301,787	\$2,421,177	\$2,522,540	\$2,608,497	\$2,755,651
<b>Difference</b>		\$119,390	\$220,753	\$306,710	\$453,864
<b>Total</b>		<b>\$119,390</b>	<b>\$220,753</b>	<b>\$306,710</b>	<b>\$453,864</b>







# Town of Middleton Fire Headquarters



Douglas K. LeColst  
Fire Chief

4 Lake Street, Middleton, MA 01949  
Telephone: (978) 774-2466 Fax: (978) 774-0709  
[www.midfire.com](http://www.midfire.com)

TO: Justin Sultzbach, Town Administrator

FROM: Douglas LeColst, Fire Chief 

DATE: July 18, 2024

SUBJECT: Fire Department Staffing

As a follow-up from our recent in-person meeting, below you will find a summary outlining my ongoing concerns regarding the staffing situation and our department's ability to successfully answer emergency calls.

## **Fire Department staffing issues:**

The fire department continues to have difficulties filling shifts and answering emergency calls. While the optimum staffing level consists of 5 members on duty, (3 full-time and 2 part-time), there have been numerous instances where we have fallen below that threshold. Below you will find staffing levels for the first half of July 2024:

- 5 Members on duty: 14 shifts
- 4 Members on duty: 11 shifts
- 3 members on duty: 8 shifts
- 2 Members on duty: 2 partial shifts (total of 6 hours)
- 1 Member on duty: 4 hours

As mentioned in previous public meetings, staffing levels of 3 members or less puts a significant strain on the department's ability to successfully perform both fire and Emergency Medical Services operations. This issue is further compounded by the lack of off-duty participation by members of the department. Below you will find callback statistics for the first half of July 2024:

- 61 requests for callback participation (i.e. ambulance coverage, commercial fire alarm activations, and simultaneous emergencies)
- 39 of those requests went unfilled (zero off-duty response) – 64%

## **Staffing Dynamics: Residents vs. Non-Residents**

The following breakdown illustrates the numbers involving department members who reside in and out of town.

### **Member count:**

14 - Full-time members (including Chief and Administrative Assistant)

23 - Part-time members (Call Department)

**37 – Total count**

### **Members who reside in Middleton:**

5 – Full-time members (including the Chief) that reside in Middleton

1 – Part-time members that reside in Middleton

**6 – Total number of members that reside in Middleton**

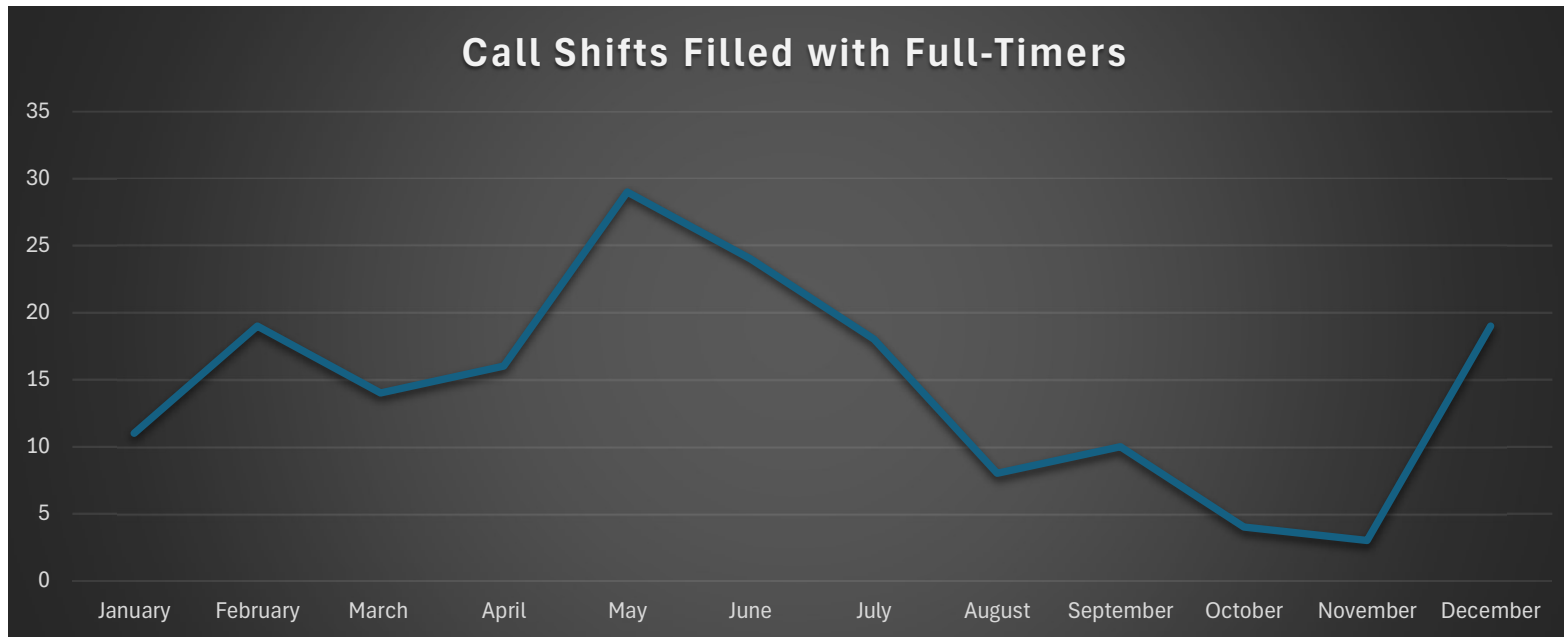
**16% - Percentage of members that reside in Middleton**

As previously mentioned, these numbers make it extremely difficult for members to respond to the station while off-duty to staff additional apparatus during emergent situations.

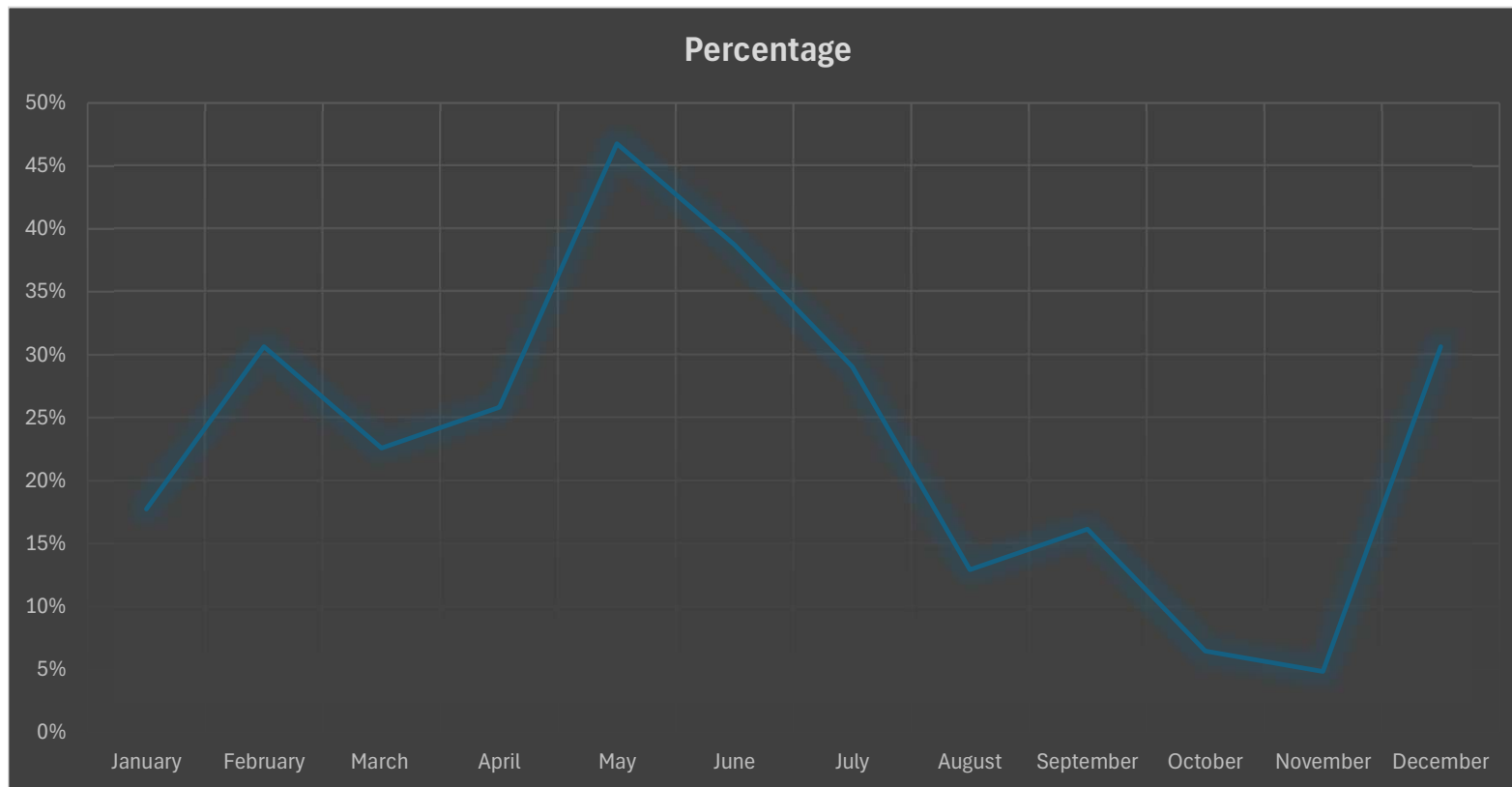
## Call Shifts Filled by Full-Timer by Month for CY2024

	Call Shifts Filled with Full-Timers	Percentage	Hours	
January	11	18%	122	62
February	19	31%	230	58
March	14	23%	164	62
April	16	26%	188	60
May	29	47%	344	62
June	24	39%	292	60
July	18	29%	232	62
August	8	13%	104	62
September	10	16%	124	60
October	4	6%	52	62
November	3	5%	34	60
December	19	31%	230	62
<b>Average/month</b>	<b>16.6</b>	<b>28%</b>	<b>2116</b>	

*Note: Decreased numbers for the months of August through November were due to a temporary policy change in filling part-time shifts with overtime.*



Call Shifts Filled by Full-Timer by Month for CY2024

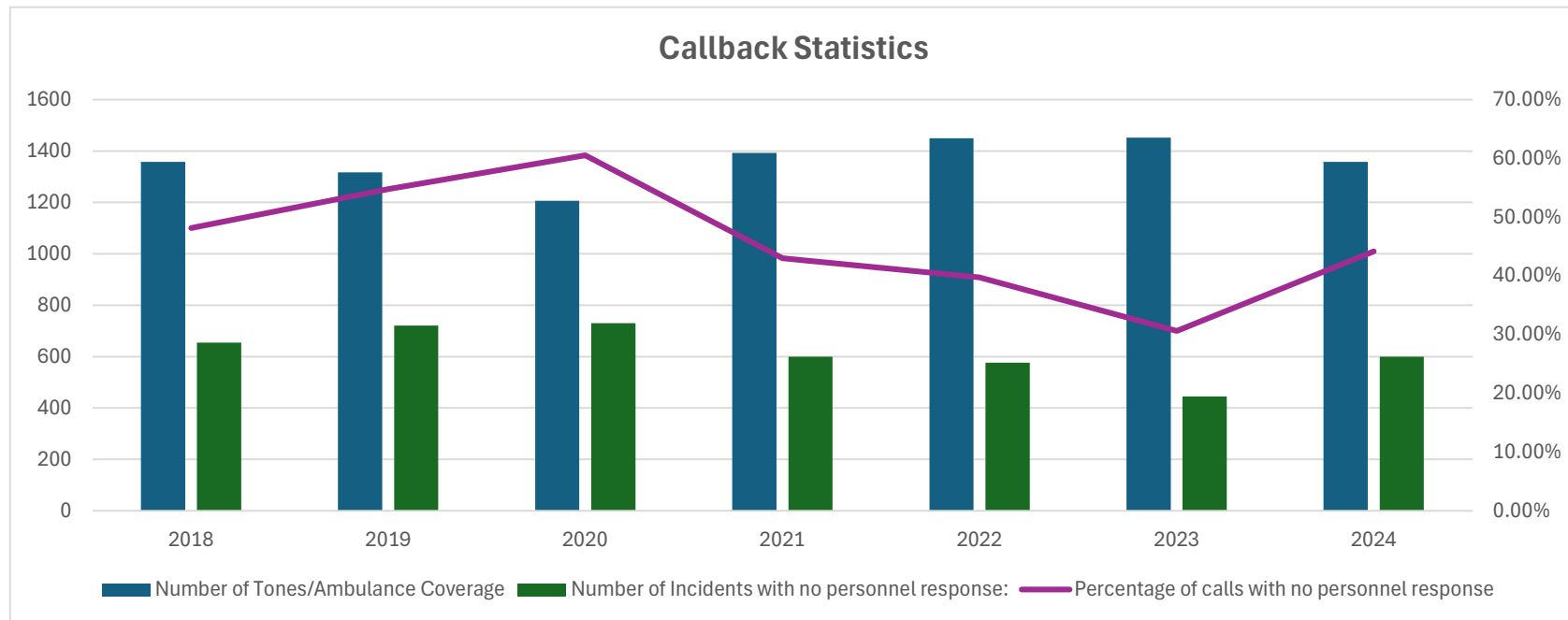


## Callback Statistics for CY2024

An "All Tone" is sounded when there is a need for additional personnel at the scene or to cover the station during an emergency

Ambulance Coverage is utilized when the ambulance transports out of town. The station is filled on a one-for-one basis.

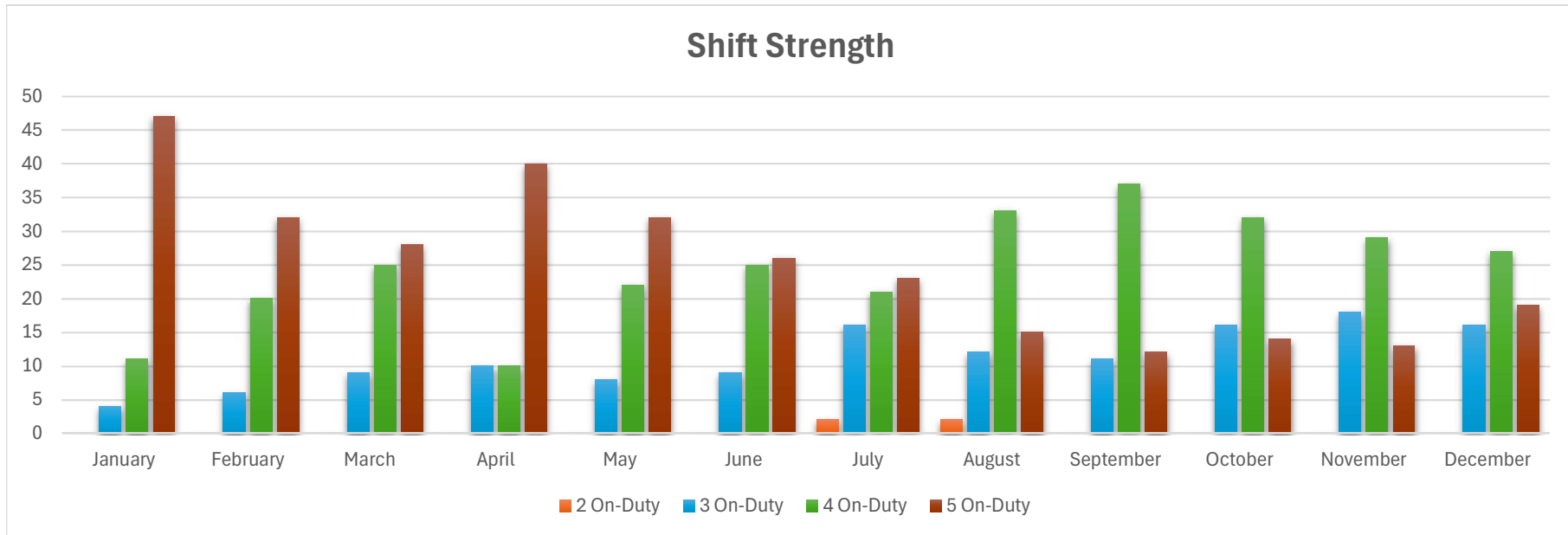
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Number of Tones/Ambulance Coverage	1358	1317	1206	1393	1450	1452	1358
Number of Incidents with no personnel response:	654	721	730	599	576	445	600
Percentage of calls with no personnel response	48.16%	54.75%	60.53%	43.00%	39.73%	30.65%	44.18%
Average Callback per member:	3.33%	3.38%	3.27%	4.35%	3.88%	4.35%	3.76%



## Shift Strength Breakdown by Month for CY2024

	2 On-Duty	Percentage 2OD	3 On-Duty	Percentage 3OD	4 On-Duty	Percentage 4OD	5 On-Duty	Percentage 5OD	Total Shifts
January	0	0.00%	4	6.45%	11	17.74%	47	75.81%	62
February	0	0.00%	6	10.34%	20	34.48%	32	55.17%	58
March	0	0.00%	9	14.52%	25	40.32%	28	45.16%	62
April	0	0.00%	10	16.67%	10	16.67%	40	66.67%	60
May	0	0.00%	8	12.90%	22	35.48%	32	51.61%	62
June	0	0.00%	9	15.00%	25	41.67%	26	43.33%	60
July	2	3.23%	16	25.81%	21	33.87%	23	37.10%	62
August	2	3.23%	12	19.35%	33	53.23%	15	24.19%	62
September	0	0.00%	11	18.33%	37	61.67%	12	20.00%	60
October	0	0.00%	16	25.81%	32	51.61%	14	22.58%	62
November	0	0.00%	18	30.00%	29	48.33%	13	21.67%	60
December	0	0.00%	16	25.81%	27	43.55%	19	30.65%	62

**Average**      **0.54%**      **18.42%**      **39.89%**      **41.16%**      100.00%



***Sudden decrease in 5 on-duty starting in August can be attributed to full time member being out on long-term disability***



## Simultaneous Emergency Calls for CY2024

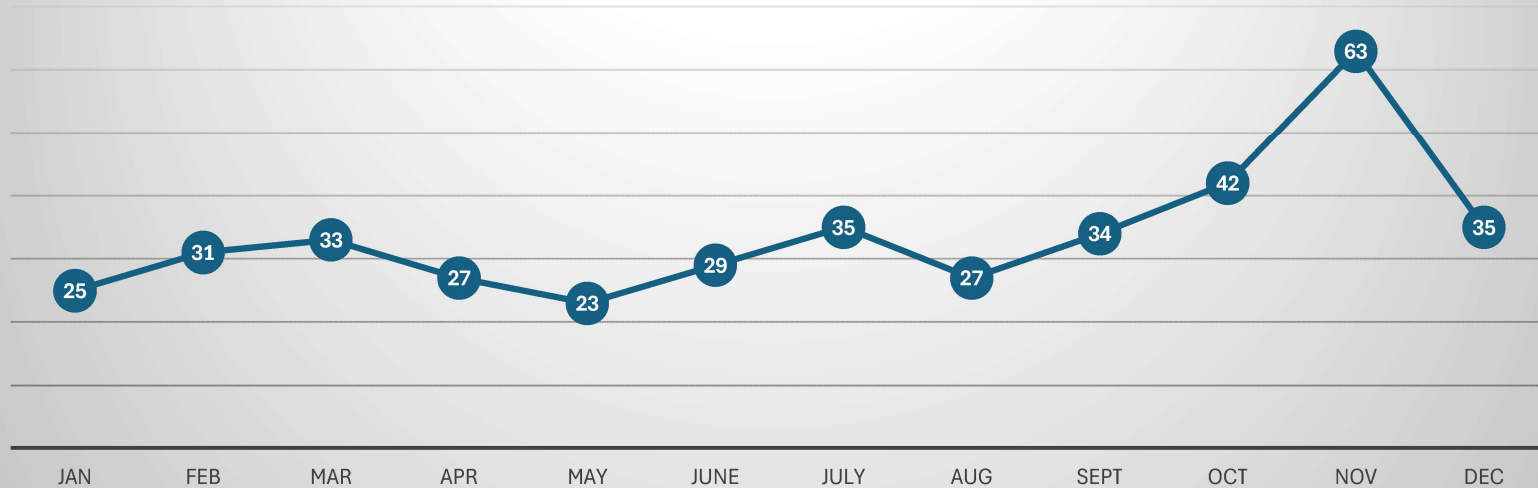
Month	Total Simultaneous Calls
Jan	25
Feb	31
Mar	33
Apr	27
May	23
June	29
July	35
Aug	27
Sept	34
Oct	42
Nov	63
Dec	35
<b>Total</b>	<b>404</b>

*When a simultaneous emergency call occurs (absent off-duty response) staffing levels are significantly impacted:*

**Medical Calls:** 1 to 3 members (2 other members are occupied on initial medical call)

**Fire Calls:** 0 to 1 members depending on the fire incident type

### Total Simultaneous Calls



## Staffing Summary with Financial Impact

For the past few years, the goal has been to have 5 members on duty. This allows a better delivery of care, including the ability to better handle back-to-back emergency calls.

Below you will find the staffing breakdown for 2024 (Through December 15)

1%	Average number of shifts that had 2 members on duty
18%	Average number of shifts that had 3 members on duty
40%	Average number of shifts that had 4 members on duty
41%	Average number of shifts that had 5 members on duty
59%	Average number of shifts that were covered with less than the desirable number of 5 members per shift
\$ 112,465	Average amount of money that was spent in overtime to fill 1 part-time position (2116 hours) This still resulted in an average of 18% of the shifts only having 3 members on duty.
\$ 51,967	Average money that would have been spent had these shifts been filled with a part-time person. This still would have resulted in 18% of the shifts only having 3 members on duty.
\$ 60,498	Difference in money spent to have full-time person working part-time shift

Weekend Shift with Less Than 5 Members On-Duty

	Friday		Saturday		Sunday	
January	3	38%	4	50%	3	38%
February	4	50%	6	75%	4	50%
March	5	50%	6	60%	10	100%
April	1	13%	4	50%	4	50%
May	6	60%	6	75%	4	50%
June	8	100%	8	80%	8	80%
July	7	88%	6	75%	6	75%
August	7	70%	8	80%	7	88%
September	5	63%	7	88%	9	90%
October	7	88%	8	100%	6	75%
November	6	60%	10	100%	6	75%
December	8	100%	6	75%	8	80%
<b>Total</b>	<b>67</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>79</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>71%</b>

