

AUSTIN FIRE DEPARTMENT ANNUAL REPORT 2017



OUR MISSION GOES BEYOND OUR NAME

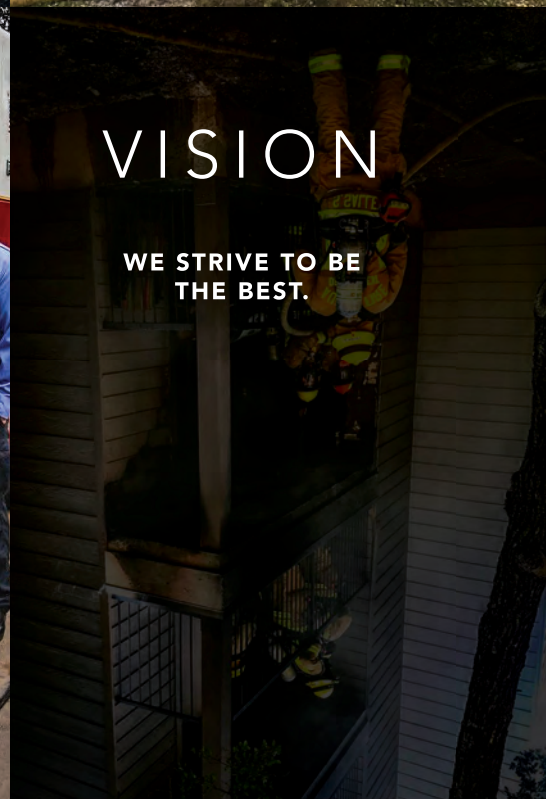
MISSION

THE AUSTIN FIRE
DEPARTMENT IS
COMMITTED TO CREATING
SAFER COMMUNITIES
THROUGH PREVENTION,
PREPAREDNESS, AND
EFFECTIVE EMERGENCY
RESPONSE.



VISION

WE STRIVE TO BE
THE BEST.



MESSAGE FROM THE CHIEF

**"THE MORE THINGS
CHANGE, THE MORE THEY
STAY THE SAME."**

—Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr,
noted French critic, journalist,
and novelist.



Photo Credit: Korey Howell

In 2017, the Austin Fire Department (AFD) continued its tradition of more than 100 years of exceptional service to the citizens of Austin. Consider all the history of those years and how much things have changed...and yet, remain the same. The core values of our department—Loyalty, Duty, Respect, Selfless Service, Honor, Integrity, and Personal Courage—never go out of style. The 1,200 men and women of the Austin Fire Department provide top-notch service on a daily basis, proving time and time again how "our mission goes beyond our name"!

One of our biggest accomplishments last year was the merger of Emergency Services District 4 (ESD4) into the Austin Fire Department. This was a first for our department and now sets the stage for a true regional service delivery model that will better serve the citizens of both Austin and Travis County.

We also had several of our members selected to serve on national committees—including the National Council on Public Safety Unmanned Aerial Systems (a nod to our Robotics Emergency Deployment {RED} Team)—and the International Association of Fire Chiefs' Wildland Policy Committee, cementing our leadership in these areas. And, for the first time ever, we secured a five-year Collective Bargaining Agreement (CBA) with the Austin Firefighters' Association/Local 975; the longest tenure of any previous agreement was three years.

Of course, there were challenges last year, too. Our community, region, and industry are constantly changing and we must rise to those challenges. But we are ready, willing, and excited to do so. The same perseverance, humility, strength, and character the members of this department demonstrate every day in upholding the high standards we set for ourselves are why we continue to be a leader in the fire service. The highlights in this report show just some of the ways we honor, uphold, and respect those standards.

On behalf of all of us at the Austin Fire Department, thank you for the opportunity to serve you!

**RHODA MAE KERR
FIRE CHIEF**



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BUDGET

For FY17, our approved budget was \$189,013,831, an increase of \$10,159,533 from our FY16 budget. The increase allowed us to improve service delivery to both the citizens of Austin and department personnel. Our final staff totals for FY17 were 1,151 firefighters and 106 civilians.

\$178,854,298

\$189,013,831

'16

'17



COST-SAVING MEASURES/ACCOMPLISHMENTS

In AFD's continuing efforts to cut uniform overtime cost, 24 uniform members in all staff sections were re-assigned to Operations, projecting \$2.8 million in savings.

Administrative Services added an **INVENTORY MANAGER** in 2017 who is responsible for tracking all of the department's resources including tools, equipment, bunker gear, vehicles, etc. The goal of this position is loss prevention and reduction, which currently costs the department thousands of dollars each year.



EQUIPMENT COSTS

Tower Renovation
\$1.8M

Chainsaws
\$400-1,200

Traffic Cones
\$15/EA

Clean-Up Equipment
\$100-250

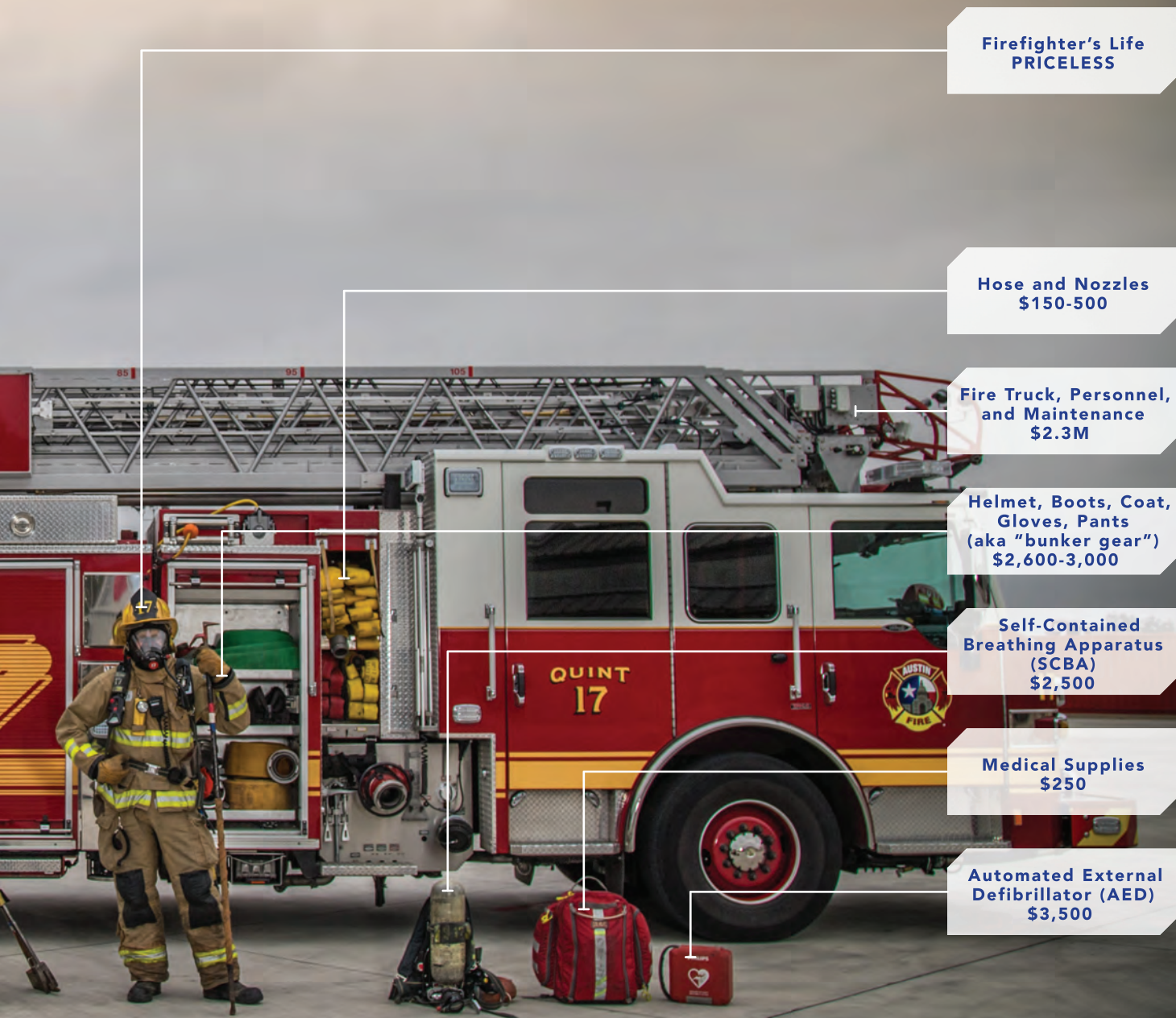
Chemicals
\$10-20

**Positive Pressure
Ventilation Fan**
\$6,000

**Rapid Intervention
Team Pack**
\$2,500

Vehicle Rescue Tools
\$12-15,000

EQUIPMENT COSTS





PREVENTION

AS LEADERS IN THE WILDFIRE SECTOR,

several of our members serve on various local, state, and national committees, helping forge the path for other departments across the country to support and address wildfire issues in their communities.

The Austin Fire Department's Wildfire Division adopted the inaugural Austin/Travis County wildfire evacuation plan for the city of Austin and surrounding county. We are also working with city leaders on the adoption of a Wildland Urban Interface Code for our area, scheduled to be complete in 2018.

Wildfire moved from utilizing a workforce of available, off-duty firefighters on overtime to full-time, temporary employees, ensuring a consistent and reliable work flow for our fuel mitigation projects. This change doubled the work capacity at just two-thirds the cost, resulting in a direct reduction in potential loss from wildfire to more public and private lands, and the structures that exist there.

WE PROVIDED ASSISTANCE IN VARIOUS WAYS TO OTHER SECTIONS THROUGHOUT THE DEPARTMENT, INCLUDING:

- ★ **LEVERAGED OUR EQUIPMENT**—such as the Type VII engines/Utility Task Vehicles—for Prevention activities (i.e., fire standbys and fire watch at public events), increasing revenue generated to the City;
- ★ **PROVIDED PERSONNEL** to assist Community Outreach with smoke alarm installations;
- ★ **WILDFIRE-SPECIFIC TRAINING** for cadet classes, as well as continuing education for active personnel; and
- ★ **OPERATIONS' RESPONSE SUPPORT** on wildfire-related incidents and Special Operations' analysis of hazardous mitigations as related to wildfire evacuations.



PREVENTION

INSPECTIONS

Our 19 Prevention Inspectors completed 21,726 inspections, with 20,418 violations found and corrected. That breakdown includes:

MAINTENANCE
(Existing Buildings)
7,892

TECHNICAL
(New Construction)
9,895

SPECIAL EVENTS
(i.e., SXSW, ACL, F1, etc.)
3,939

The workload of inspections per inspector has risen by 45 percent during the last five years (from 15,317 in 2012 to 22,223 in 2017). Even though seven additional positions have been added during this same time, the workload continues to exceed the corresponding staffing increase. Not all inspections can be performed in the prescribed timeframe due to limited resources and a high turnover of staff, reducing incumbent knowledge and increasing time that must be diverted from doing inspections to training new staff.

OUR ENGINEERS

reviewed 10,060 submittals, processed 2,580 above-ground HazMat permits on file, and performed 352 (286 Engineers, 67 Spec Ops) Hazardous Materials inspections. The submittals include:

- ★ Site Development plans: 1,460
- ★ Building Construction permit plans: 2,563
- ★ Fire Protection System plans: 3,659
- ★ Alternate Methods of Compliance reports: 23
- ★ Development Assistance Center site plans: 1,342
- ★ Preliminary construction plans: 63
- ★ Residential construction plans reviewed for fire flow analysis: 950



PREVENTION

ARSON INVESTIGATIONS

Our Arson Investigators, who are also licensed peace officers, conducted 282 investigations, with 74 fires determined to be accidental, 135 intentionally set (37 arrests and 31 issued citations), 16 non-fire investigations, and 57 undetermined. For fires determined to be arson, we cleared 68 cases by arrest or citation (50.3 percent), more than twice the national average of 21 percent. Our Accelerant Detection K9s have been deployed on 59 different fire investigation scenes and can sniff out the potential use of 18 different accelerants.





PREPAREDNESS

REFURBISHED FIRE STATIONS

AFD made significant progress last year on completing the Fire Station Deferred Maintenance Project, in which six fire stations have been renovated and made more energy efficient. The City of Austin's Building Services Department managed the project, and relied heavily on firefighter input to improve the functionality, appearance, and livability of the stations. We hope to continue using this cost-effective model to refurbish and update the rest of our fire stations on a more regular, consistent basis.

NEW DESIGNS FOR NEW APPARATUS

The AFD Apparatus Committee is specifying smaller apparatus to better fit in some of our smaller fire stations while navigating increasingly narrow Austin streets. This approach resulted in AFD purchasing less expensive, better-handling apparatus with fewer blind spots and reduced maintenance costs. In 2017, we purchased five of these apparatus; with a reduction in the purchase price of each unit by \$35,000, we stand to yield as much as \$500,000 in savings during the next three years, presuming we add a total of 15 pumpers (including these five) to our fleet during that time.

FLEET LIAISON ENSURES QUALITY CONTROL

An Operations' Support Lieutenant was assigned to the Fleet Service Center #6 as a liaison between that department and AFD. As a result, the coordination of repairs to fire apparatus greatly improved, problem reporting became more accurate and comprehensive, fire crews were kept updated on the status of repairs to their units, and AFD's reserve fleet could be maintained in peak operational readiness to fill in when necessary.



PREPAREDNESS

SMOKE ALARM INSTALLS

When people think of the Austin Fire Department, they likely picture a fire truck pulling up at a house fire and the firefighters doing what they can to help. But that's not all we do! Our Community Outreach Division works tirelessly behind the scenes, before the emergency ever occurs, to make our community safer, one home at a time.

One way that happens is in our efforts toward fire safety educational outreach and free smoke alarms to the citizens of Austin. Nationally, approximately 50 percent of residential fire deaths occur in homes without a single working smoke alarm. Through our Community Outreach Division, we're doing our part to change this statistic by installing more than 2,400 new smoke alarms throughout Austin in 2017. A working smoke alarm is the cheapest life insurance money can buy and gives a family precious time to escape a house fire. Those who don't have working alarms—or can't afford them—can participate in our free program by calling (512) 974-0299.

In 2017, we were selected to participate in a program sponsored by the world-renowned John Hopkins University (JHU) as part of a Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) grant. AFD's smoke alarm program was selected based on our strong commitment towards fire prevention and willingness to share our data (i.e., demographics, total alarms installed, and program marketing) with the university. Only two other programs were invited to participate (Rochester, New York, and Los Angeles, California). Once the data has been gathered, JHU will produce a "lessons learned" guide that will be available to other fire departments around the country, helping them develop and better support similar programs, increasing the presence of smoke alarms in every city, and developing a targeted referral program for high-risk families. In return for our participation, and as part of the grant deliverables, we received a donation of 560 smoke alarms, which resulted in us saving approximately \$6,300 by not having to purchase those items (560 x \$11.24 per item).

Getting the alarms is one thing; getting them installed takes an entirely different set of logistics. That's why our Community Outreach and Operations' personnel partnered with the Central Texas chapter of the American Red Cross on three separate occasions in 2017 to do hyper-local, grassroots marketing: going door-to-door in high-risk and/or previously fire-affected neighborhoods to personally install those alarms in homes that needed them. During these events, the Red Cross provided a maximum of three smoke alarms per home, with AFD supplementing additional ones as needed. This partnership resulted in approximately \$11,431 in savings (339 homes visited x three smoke alarms per home x \$11.24 per item).



PREPAREDNESS

CROSS-TRAINING ENSURES SUPPORT AND EFFICIENCY

Human Resources (HR) and Payroll successfully merged under a single supervisor and manager in 2017, facilitating cross-training and leveraging a larger pool of workers across the two functional areas. HR personnel are now assisting Payroll when the time to enter timesheets is delayed, shortened, or there are special circumstances (such as state-requested deployments or Federal backfill). This change also supports Payroll personnel who may be assisting HR on big projects such as cadet hiring and benefits enrollment.



CADET CLASSES 121 AND 122

More than 3,800 individuals submitted a Candidate Interest Card through our website, JoinAFD.com, in 2017. We started two concurrent cadet classes while under a Consent Decree from the Department of Justice, allowing us to begin reducing our vacancy rate (which dramatically affects the amount of overtime we pay). Class 121 (38 cadets) started March 20 and graduated on September 29, while Class 122 (made up of 14 qualified firefighters from ESD4), started on July 24 and graduated on October 27.





RESPONSE/SERVICE

HISTORIC MERGER AGREEMENT FOR REGIONAL FIRE SERVICE RESPONSE

In 2017, we responded to 86,636 incidents from 46 fire stations within the city, divided into eight battalions on three identical shifts. Working towards our goal of a regional fire response model, the City of Austin and Emergency Services District (ESD) 4 agreed to a contract for service in Summer 2017—the first time such an agreement had taken place with AFD assuming control of all ESD4 fire stations and firefighting personnel (who were accepted into our modified Training Academy) effective October 27, 2017. The merging of two very different workforces was quite complicated, but, due to AFD's Finance section and their creative thinking, we were able to find common ground and a budget that was cost neutral for the City of Austin and the citizens we serve. AFD has since been providing services to all of ESD4's coverage areas and continues to operate out of two of the district's existing fire stations 4200 City Park Road and 14312 Hunters Bend Road—bringing the number of AFD stations to 48.

NEW BREATHING APPARATUS

AFD purchased 485 new Scott X3 AirPaks—which come with a 15-year parts warranty—and performed a department-wide swap in just one week. In addition, all firefighters were outfitted with new, high-temperature face pieces, which are designed to resist heat better than previous models...an important factor in our business!



A DEPENDENCE ON BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

Business Technology faced many challenges last year, trying to convert out-of-date legacy systems and applications to newer, more responsive technology platforms...all while trying to minimize the disruption to a 24/7/365 business. Their dedication to making the transition as smooth as possible and being available after-hours allowed the department's workforce—who depend immensely on those tools—to continue using them while the team developed new solutions.

RESPONSE/SERVICE

AIRPORT RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING (ARFF)

We increased staffing, response, and inspection capabilities at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA) by:

- ★ Increasing ARFF certification of members, providing needed redundancy;
- ★ Assigning a Prevention Lieutenant exclusively to ABIA;
- ★ Establishing ABIA response policies that cover pre-assignments for aircraft incidents on and off airport grounds, thereby enhancing command and control;
- ★ Establishing monthly multi-agency response drills to prepare for aircraft emergencies, now a model for other airports across the United States; and
- ★ Designing and implementing a new alarm activation procedure that is exclusively for ABIA Terminal Alarm activations. This procedure utilizes a common radio channel, allowing for direct communications between ABIA and AFD incident commanders.

STRUCTURAL COLLAPSE GRANT AWARD

We secured \$131,637 in grant funding from the Homeland Security Grant Program to replace one of two structural collapse shoring caches. These new tools greatly increase our Special Operations units' ability to mitigate unique incidents both in Austin and the surrounding 10-county Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) region.

We also purchased and deployed heavy lift struts and heavy vehicle stabilization equipment to complement the heavy vehicle stabilization and extrication "train-the-trainer" courses some of our members received last year. This equipment and training will go to support incidents involving large vehicles and machines often found on the main thoroughfares and constructions sites in the city of Austin and Travis County. All of this equipment and training is also available to our CAPCOG partners in the associated 10-county region.



RESPONSE/SERVICE

NATIONAL FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM (NFIRS) IMPROVED

Administrative support personnel assumed responsibility for quality control on the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) data, which is important because accurate incident reporting provides us with the data needed to assess performance measures, keep legal records of incidents, conduct community risk analyses and allocate resources efficiently, and track important fire-related trends. NFIRS was formerly monitored by uniform personnel, but in 2017, the program was transferred to civilian staff. The transition included a business process review, modifications to reporting procedures, and re-designed training on data entry for firefighters. Since we use this NFIRS data for a variety of performance measures, this improvement ensures the data going in is just as good as the data coming out.





DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

EMERGENCY SERVICES

OPERATIONS

The Operations' Division provides emergency and non-emergency services 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, to the citizens of Austin. We offer an all-hazards response that includes fire suppression, advanced life support medical treatment, special rescue capabilities, hazardous material mitigation, and wildland firefighting, while also providing significant contributions to the department's Fire Prevention and Community Outreach efforts. This division is the largest and most recognizable facet of the Austin Fire Department. Operations is managed by three division chiefs, each of which is responsible for a specific 24-hour shift ("A", "B", or "C"). Battalion chiefs on each shift supervise all of the personnel, stations, and incidents within their geographic area of responsibility. More than 67 percent of our calls each year are medical in nature. As first responders, our firefighters are licensed Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT) who can begin administering treatment to an individual before an ambulance arrives.

Through the years, we have continued to expand the services we provide within the community. Some examples include:

- ★ Promotion of Life-Safety Initiatives
- ★ In-Service Inspections Program
- ★ Hydrant Maintenance
- ★ Smoke Alarm Installations
- ★ Community Ambassadors
- ★ In-Service Training
- ★ Specialized Equipment Response



DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

SUPPORT SERVICES

RECRUITING

Responsible for introducing civil service employment opportunities at AFD to the community—attracting, cultivating, and maintaining pipelines of diverse applicants through strategic outreach efforts and mentoring programs. We present firefighting as a career option to qualified members from under-represented minority and female demographic groups.

EDUCATION SERVICES

Prepares cadets to be entry-level firefighters. Develops and coordinates professional development, as well as in-service and continuing education training for current firefighters.

MEDICAL OPERATIONS (MED OPS)

Provides initial medical training and continuing education for all uniformed personnel; procures and maintains emergency care equipment, such as Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and glucose monitoring devices; oversees AFD's commitment to quality medical care standards through a coordinated effort with the Office of the Medical Director (OMD); and enhances our partnership with Austin/Travis County Emergency Medical Services.

PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS (PSO)

Handles all policy issues for—and complaints to—the department, conducts investigations involving alleged misconduct of members, and serves as the department's legal liaison with the Civil Service Commission.



DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

SUPPORT SERVICES

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Assists firefighters when they have been injured on the job. Staff ensure that paperwork is filed correctly, follow-up treatment for injuries is received, and that our personnel get proper care for those injuries. Working in conjunction with the Safety Office and the Wellness Center, this section helps firefighters receive appropriate medical intervention, resulting in a return to full-duty status as quickly as possible.

WELLNESS

The AFD Wellness Center is dedicated to the health and well-being of Austin firefighters and Austin/Travis County EMS medics. Through the Center, all firefighters receive annual physical exams, helping to positively impact the physical and mental health of our members primarily through early detection and intervention. Injured firefighters also receive rehabilitation services provided by Center staff. AFD is one of only a handful of fire departments in the country to have its own Wellness Center.

SAFETY

Works to reduce firefighter injuries through on-scene monitoring and interventions at emergency incidents. The Safety Office responds to all firefighter injury events, assisting personnel with seeking and receiving appropriate medical treatment, and serves as their liaison to Workers' Compensation. This office also conducts the initial investigation into firefighter injuries and vehicle collisions.



DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

HOMELAND SECURITY, SPEC OPS, AND LOGISTICS



HOMELAND SECURITY

We have two Austin Fire Department Lieutenants assigned to the Austin Regional Intelligence Center (ARIC) and the FBI's Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF). This allows for greater collaboration among local, state, and national agencies in identifying threat trends that could impact our area.

SPECIAL OPERATIONS (SPEC OPS)

Responds to incidents in the City of Austin and surrounding 10-county Capital Area Council of Governments (CAPCOG) region, requiring personnel with specialized training and equipment to resolve unique issues. AFD Spec Ops provides service in four general areas: hazardous materials, water rescue, technical rescue, and structural collapse. The Special Operations/Homeland Security office manages the equipping, training, and support of the Spec Ops mission.

AIRPORT RESCUE AND FIREFIGHTING (ARFF)

Provides rescue, fire protection, and emergency medical services for all facilities, employees, passengers, and visitors at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (ABIA). In addition to emergency response, ARFF provides fire-safety inspections to facilities, fuel farms, and aircraft re-fueler vehicles.

FACILITIES

Responsible for the design, construction, and renovation of all AFD facilities. Also handles routine building maintenance, and facility equipment repairs or replacement for AFD.

WAREHOUSE

Serves as the warehouse and distribution group for critical materials to all fire stations, firefighters, and business units.

OPS SUPPORT

Maintains, repairs, and adapts equipment used at emergency scenes. Serves as liaison with the City of Austin's Fleet department, which is responsible for purchasing and maintaining our fire apparatus and staff vehicles.

AIR SHOPS

Maintains and repairs breathing apparatus, and refills and distributes air bottles and oxygen cylinders to fire stations and at emergency incidents.

COMMUNICATIONS

Provides 24/7 dispatching and technical support to the Operations' division.

DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

PREVENTION AND PREPAREDNESS SERVICES

WILDFIRE MITIGATION/ MANAGEMENT

Focuses on preventing wildfires through cooperation and participation in the City's planning process and programs; public education and fuel (vegetation) management; and provides assistance and oversight during prescriptive burns. Also conducts fire training, community education programs, and plans vegetation management programs. Coordinates with City and regional partners, exploring cooperative purchasing agreements and standardizing regional equipment.

PREVENTION

An essential component in the overall fire suppression effort, it includes the Fire Marshal's Office. Conducts and coordinates fire- and life-safety inspections of existing properties. Engineers review site plans, building plans, and fire protection system plans for new and renovated structures within the city of Austin. Also inspects properties that store hazardous materials and verifies compliance with certain requirements before issuing hazmat permits. Issues several other types of permits, including Temporary Change of Use, Fireworks, Tents, and Open Burning.

ENGINEERING

Reviews plans for compliance with the International Fire Code/International Building Code, local amendments, the City of Austin Fire Protection Criteria Manual, and NFPA Standards. Also involved in the testing and inspection process for compliance with all applicable codes and standards.

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Consists of Public Education and Community Relations. Public Education engages our community in the pursuit of life safety and fire prevention. Community Relations delivers innovative outreach efforts driven by evolving community needs.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Coordinates emergency preparations for large-scale events (Austin City Limits, SXSW, Formula 1, etc.). Also conducts Mobile Vendor Vehicle annual inspections as well as Public Assembly permit inspections for bars and other large venues.

INVESTIGATIONS

Investigates the origin, cause, and circumstances of a fire in order to determine whether it was accidental or criminal in nature.



DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

FINANCE

Develops department budget, produces financial information and reports, establishes contracts for services and goods, and manages accounts payable. Ensures appropriate allocation, utilization, and control of City resources in compliance with department, city, state, and federal financial policies.

HUMAN RESOURCES

Oversees department hiring, compensation, benefits, employee relations, and payroll.

BUSINESS TECHNOLOGY

Manages business software applications for the department, including operational, database, virtual collaboration, and reporting systems. Offers project management and business analysis services. Coordinates support for desktop computers, notebooks, and printers.

ADMINISTRATION AND EXECUTIVE SUPPORT

Provides administrative support to the Office of the Fire Chief, executive staff, and all department sections. Liaisons with other city departments, City Hall, and the public on issues such as requests for information, announced initiatives, and resource coordination.

FIRE CHIEF/CHIEF OF STAFF DIRECT REPORTS

PHYSICIAN AND PSYCHOLOGISTS

On-site medical and behavioral health support for employees.

LEGAL COUNSEL

Provides legal guidance and law interpretation.

PUBLIC INFORMATION AND MARKETING

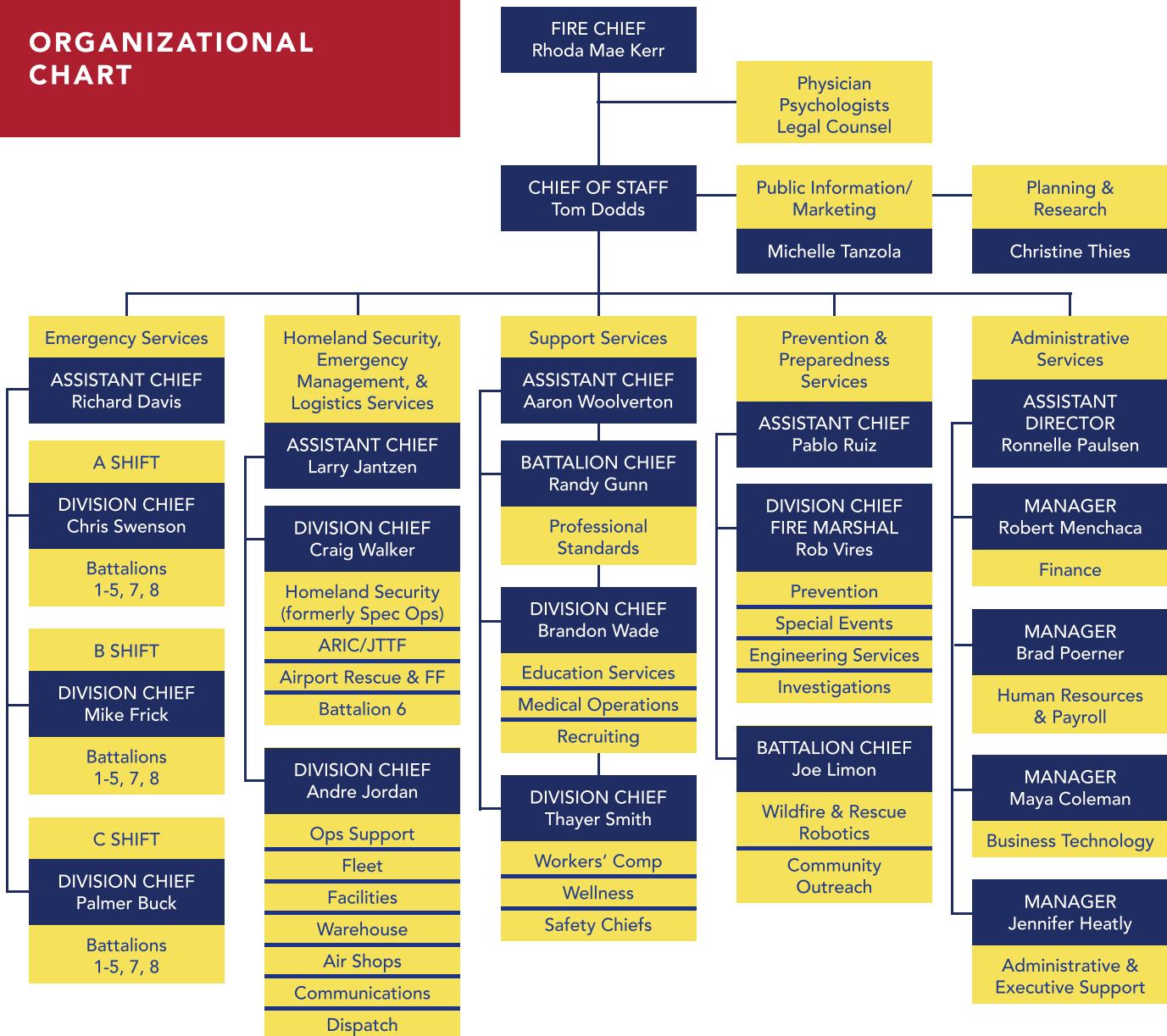
Handles media relations, intellectual property, branding, social media, and marketing, as well as web design/development/support and photography/videography services.

PLANNING AND RESEARCH

Provides planning and analytic support to AFD and, to a limited extent, surrounding Emergency Service Districts and other City departments. Delivers information and guidance on performance measures reporting, response time analyses, development of Standards of Coverage, and annexations.

DEPARTMENT DIVISIONS

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART











4201 Ed Bluestein Blvd., Austin, TX 78721
512 974 0130 ★ FirePIO@austintexas.gov
www.austinfiredepartment.org

 facebook.com/AustinFireDepartment
 twitter.com/AustinFireDept
 youtube.com/user/AustinFireDepartment
 flickr.com/photos/AustinFireDepartment
 instagram.com/AustinFireDept

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