

2023

Palo Alto Fire Department Annual Report



CHIEF'S MESSAGE



After several years of unprecedented challenges, 2023 allowed the Palo Alto Fire Department to make tremendous progress in achieving many of our strategic plan goals and focus on recruitment, hiring, training, and operations. Our dedicated workforce continues to demonstrate a commitment to our mission and values.

The 2023 Annual Report focuses on our performance, special projects, and staff recognition for their service. Some of the highlights in the 2023 report are the following:

- There were 9,368 calls for service in 2023, a 9% increase from 2022 and a similar increase from 2021 to 2022.
- Three firefighters attended paramedic school as part of a two-year pilot program. All three students became certified paramedics in 2023. They attended paramedic school while continuing to work part-time, and two of them accomplished this goal while they were on probation.
- In 2022, we faced some of the worst staffing shortages in our department's history. In 2023, our team emphasized recruitment and hiring to help us get back to pre-pandemic levels. Eight new Palo Alto Firefighters were hired in 2023, but we still have a lot of work to do. We will enhance our recruitment and marketing efforts to continue our pursuit of a diverse pool of firefighter candidates.
- ROSC is the resumption of sustained perfusing cardiac activity associated with significant respiratory effort after cardiac arrest. The Palo Alto Fire Department's ROSC rate is 45%, much higher than the California State average of 25%.
- Santa Clara County Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) completed a fire service review highlighting some of our achievements and identifying many operational challenges.
- One of the men's restrooms at Fire Station 6 was converted into a women's locker room to help achieve gender equity goals.

I am excited about our progress in 2024 and the opportunities before us. There are still several challenges to overcome, but we will continue to work towards completing the goals in our strategic plan (2019-2024) with an enhanced focus on recruitment, community risk reduction, and firefighter safety, operations, and wellness. I would like to thank the PAFD team, their families, our partners, and Palo Alto leadership for their dedication and support.

We always strive to meet our performance standards in emergency response and prevention. We also aim to prioritize safety, diversity, equity, and firefighter wellness to foster a healthy department and serve this community with compassion and pride.

Take Care,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'CARL', written over a horizontal line.

MISSION

We are a professional team of individuals dedicated to safeguarding and enriching the lives of anyone, anytime, anywhere with compassion and pride.

VALUES

The men and women of the Palo Alto Fire Department commit to the following values in serving our communities and each other:

Integrity

We serve our community and support each other with respect and honesty. We approach our commitment with Dignity and Courage. We are accountable through our every-day actions and communication.

Innovation

We creatively integrate tradition with technology acknowledging the wealth of resources available in our community and department to improve health, safety and welfare.

Professionalism

We are dedicated to providing quality service in the delivery of a cost effective and superior service. Our attitude, appearance, knowledge, skills and abilities are reflective of our commitment to excellence.

Diversity

The members of our department exemplify diversity on multiple levels. Our skills, backgrounds and experiences allow us to effectively respond to the vast range of emergencies and outreach opportunities.

Compassion

We exist to serve our communities and support each other with empathy, sincerity and respect.

Education

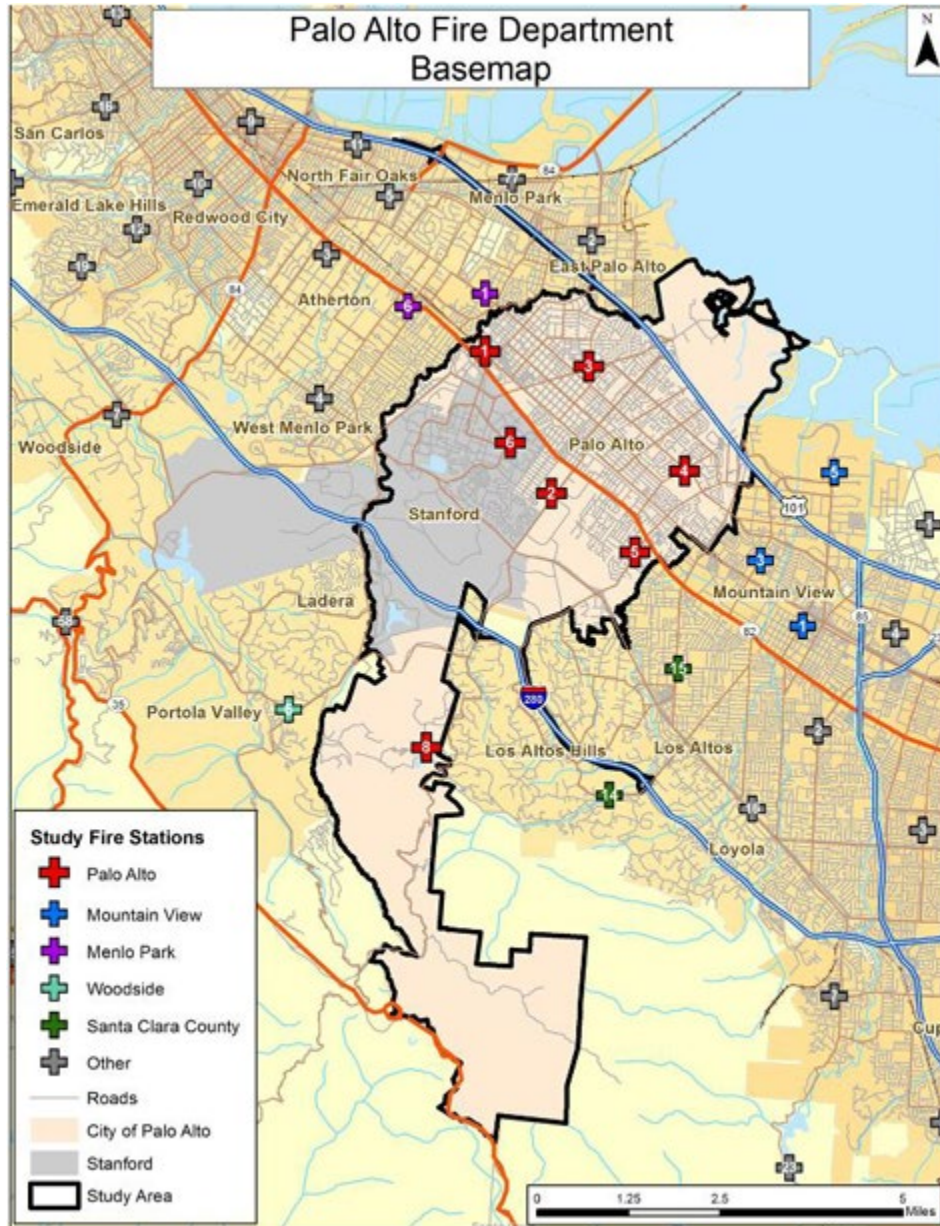
We strive to continually improve ourselves and our skills to increase our own safety and better protect the communities we serve. We strive to stay abreast of the latest developments in emergency response. We provide educational opportunities through community outreach to help increase knowledge of preparedness and personal, family and home safety.



SERVICE AREA

The Palo Alto Fire Department serves an area of approximately 38.7 square miles including 12.8 square miles of Stanford University Campus. Stanford University contracts with the PAFD to provide fire and EMS response to campus and the surrounding area.

There are seven fire stations placed throughout the City and Stanford. All are staffed 24/7, with the exception of Fire Station 8 in the Palo Alto Nature Preserve which is staffed seasonally by PAFD and Santa Clara County Fire personnel.



FIRE STATIONS

Fire Station 1 (Downtown)

301 Alma Ave, Palo Alto, CA
Built in 1965



Fire Station 2 (Mayfield)

2675 Hanover St, Palo Alto, CA
Built in 1965



Fire Station 3 (Rinconada Park)

799 Embarcadero Rd, Palo Alto, CA
Built in 2021



Fire Station 4 (Mitchell Park)

3600 Middlefield Rd, Palo Alto, CA
Built in 1953



Fire Station 5 (Barron Park)

600 Arastradero, Palo Alto, CA
Built in 1967



Fire Station 6 (Stanford University)

711 Serra Ave, Stanford, CA
Built in 1972



Fire Station 8 (Foothills Nature Preserve)

11799 Page Mill Rd, Los Altos Hills, CA
Built in 1986

Only Staffed during Summer



CALLS FOR SERVICE

In Calendar Year 2023, the Palo Alto Fire Department responded to a total of 9,368 calls for service and 18,026 unit movements, or how many units responded to the 9,368 calls. Most calls for service require more than one unit to respond.

Year	Calls for Service	Unit Movements
2021	7,625	14,873
2022	8,578	16,958
2023	9,272	18,026

Rescue and Emergency Medical Incidents make up 62% of all calls for service. These calls include heart attacks, strokes, injuries and other emergency medical situations, including motor vehicle accidents, and any auto extrication or technical rescues.



Good Intent Calls (15%): Good Intent calls capture incidents where there may have been an emergency, but it turned out to be non-emergent or nothing at all. For example, someone could smell smoke and call 9-1-1, but after firefighters arrive and investigate, they may find that the odor was from burnt popcorn down the hall.

False Alarms and False Calls (13%): These are primarily alarms that are automatically triggered during construction or other non-emergency causes such as steam from a shower, dust, insects, or smoke from cooking. This category also covers situations where someone negligently triggered a fire alarm or made an intentionally false report.





Service Calls (8%): These calls are for situations where the department is providing a service, but it's not an emergency. This can include clean up calls for smoke removal, water evacuations or other hazards; assisting with falls in the home; people trapped in an elevator or elevator overrides.

Fires (1.4%): This covers any fire where smoke and flames are present, such as small dumpster fires, residential fires, commercial fires or wildfires. There were 133 fires in 2023, and although it makes up a small percentage of the overall incidents, they are the most time consuming and resource intensive. Large fires typically require all the resources in the City, including automatic aid from neighboring fire departments.

Hazardous Materials and Others (1%): Most of these are utilities related, such as a natural gas leak, wiring problem, powerlines down, but it also includes gasoline, diesel, or oil spills, chemical releases or other biological hazards.



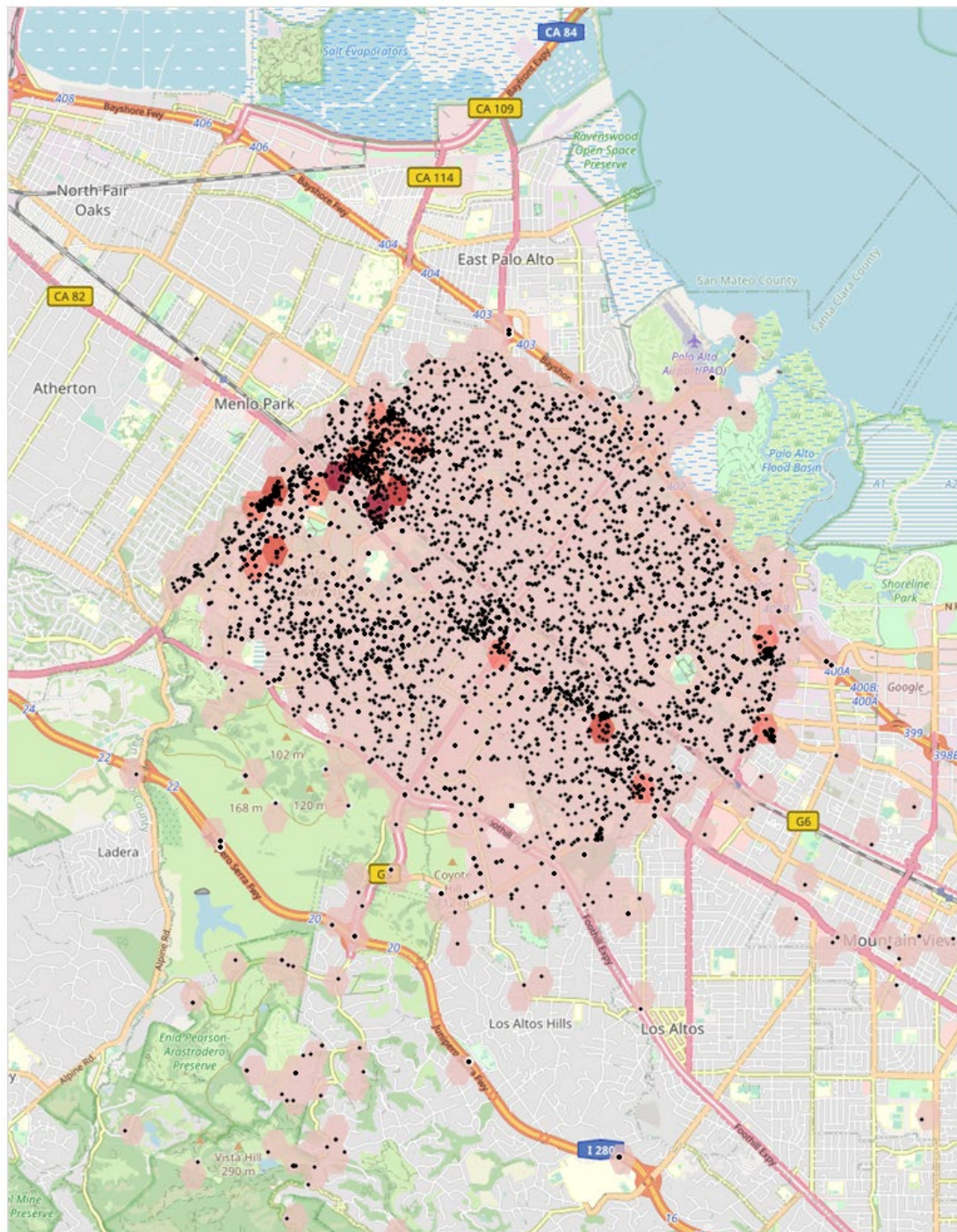
RESPONSE TIMES

The time it takes from the 9-1-1 call to the time a fire crew arrives on scene is the primary measurement of performance for Emergency Response Service. The standard is to arrive within 8 minutes 90% of the time, and for EMS calls, to have a paramedic ambulance arrive within 12 minutes.

Three unique time segments are included when evaluating an agency's response performance. The first is the time it takes for the dispatcher to answer the 911 call and notify the agency (call processing); the second is the time it takes for the agency to receive the call and go en-route to the call (turnout time); and third is the time it takes for the unit to drive to the incident (travel time). All three segments combined make up the **total response time**. For this evaluation, the unit type was not discriminated against, and the first arriving unit was used to determine the total response time.

EMS	2022	2023
Percent of a first responder arriving on scene to EMS calls within 8 minutes or less 90% of the time	81%	81%
Percent of an ambulance arriving on scene to EMS calls within 12 minutes or less 90% of the time	89%	88%
Fire		
Percent of first a responder arriving on scene to Fire calls within 8 minutes or less 90% of the time	73%	70%

MAP OF CALL LOCATIONS



MUTUAL AID

The Palo Alto Fire Department provides resources to neighboring jurisdictions in the case of an emergency or fire station coverage when their own resources are depleted. The assistance is reciprocated from partnering fire departments which is outlined in the Santa Clara County Mutual Aid Plan or automatic-aid agreements.

Mutual Aid Provided		
Agency	2022	2023
Santa Clara County Fire	106	97
Mountain View Fire	48	26
Menlo Park	3	9
All Others	5	1
<i>All Fire Mutual and Auto Aid Provided</i>	162	133

Mutual Aid Received		
Agency	2022	2023
Mountain View Fire	71	45
Menlo Park Fire	29	43
Santa Clara County Fire	21	14
Sunnyvale Fire	0	2
Santa Clara City Fire	0	1
Woodside Fire	2	1
<i>All Fire Mutual and Auto Aid Provided</i>	123	106
Santa Clara County Ambulance	185	220



EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES AND PROGRAMS

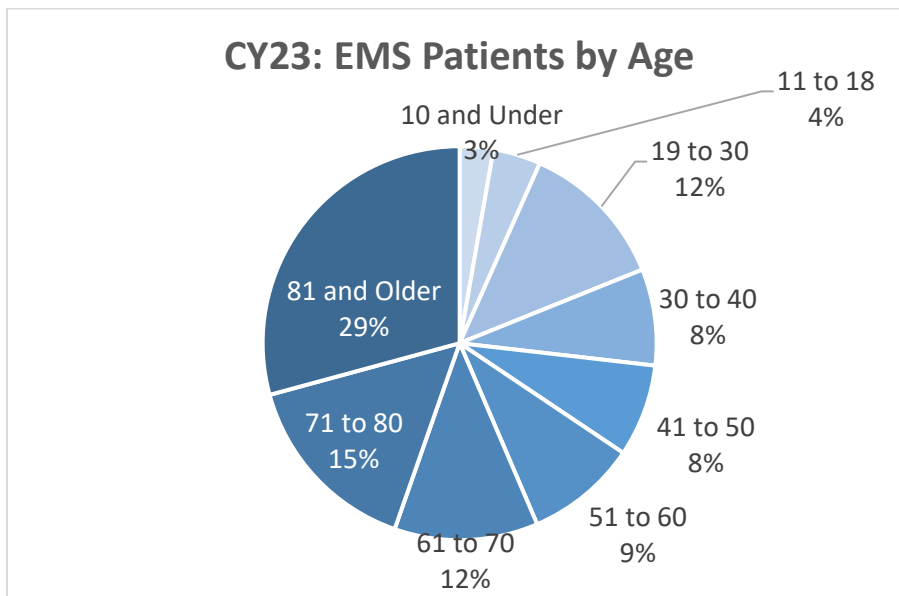
AMBULANCE TRANSPORTS AND PATIENTS

Palo Alto is the only Fire Department in the County that operates an ambulance transport service. In 2023 there were a total of 3,949 transports to the hospital from calls originating in Palo Alto or Stanford. When all of the PAFD ambulance units are busy, Santa Clara County will offer mutual aid and send one of their ambulances. In 2023, Santa Clara County transported on 81 incidents from Palo Alto or Stanford.

Palo Alto Patients Transported		
Agency	2022	2023
Palo Alto Fire	3,744	3,868
Santa Clara County	86	81



The majority of patients provided emergency medical services are above the age of 60, making up 56% of all patients.



CARDIAC ARRESTS

There were a total of 68 full cardiac arrest incidents in 2023. PAFD fire crews are trained multiple times yearly on High Performance Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation Techniques (HPCPR). This County standard requires a team of 5 people, with specific roles for all personnel on scene. Each Firefighter performs HPCPR for no more than two minutes before another team member takes over for the compression quality to remain consistent.

High Performance CPR was performed on 68 cardiac arrest patients. 30 of the patients achieved a return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC). ROSC is the resumption of sustained perfusing cardiac activity associated with significant respiratory effort after cardiac arrest. The Palo Alto Fire Department's ROSC rate is 45%, much higher than the California State average of 25%.

Return of Spontaneous Circulation (ROSC)

HPCPR Performed	68
Number of Patients with ROSC	30
PAFD ROSC Rate	45%
CA State Average	25%

PALO ALTO FIREMED PROGRAM



The Department launched a new savings program for ambulance transport services, called Palo Alto FireMed. Even with medical insurance, an emergency ambulance ride can cost between \$250-700. The Palo Alto FireMed Program for residents and businesses makes sure participants are not stuck with a bill during an emergency. Palo Alto FireMed is convenient and cost-effective, covering unlimited ambulance rides per household for a low cost of \$8 per month, which is only \$96 a year. The Department had 214 new enrolled residents in 2023, many of whom have

saved on copays. Residents interested in enrolling should check out the Palo Alto FireMed Program Website by scanning the QR Code or going to cityofpaloalto.org/firemed.



PARAMEDIC TRAINING PROGRAM

In 2022 the Department supported three firefighters to complete certification and training to become Paramedics. All three firefighters successfully graduated the certification program in 2023 and are serving as paramedics for the Department.



FIRE PREVENTION

The Fire Prevention team ensures that all life and safety codes are being accurately implemented with new construction, remodeling projects, and commercial development. The team also conducts annual building and hazardous materials safety inspections.

California state requires annual inspections on certain public buildings with high capacities, such as schools, hospitals, research facilities, places of worship, entertainment centers, etc. These are tracked and reported to the State annually. In 2023, due to staffing shortages, only 26% of required buildings were inspected. In 2024, Fire Prevention is adding two additional Fire Inspectors that will be solely dedicated to completing State mandated inspections.

State Mandated Building Inspections		
	2022	2023
Number of Buildings	532	532
Inspections Completed	344	137
Percentage Complete	65%	26%



The total number of facilities in Palo Alto that store hazardous materials grows annually. The fire code requires that these facilities adhere to strict safety measures and requires an annual inspection. Hazmat facilities are tracked and inspected annually. In 2023 due to staffing shortages, only 12% of facilities were inspected.

Hazardous Materials Inspections		
	2022	2023
Number of HazMat Facilities	950	1093
HazMat Inspections Completed	194	132
Percentage Complete	20%	12%

The Fire Prevention Division conducts inspections in the Wildland/Urban Interface and construction projects. Prevention personnel issues permits and approves development plans throughout the year. The development and construction volume continues increase in numbers. Inspectors are also responsible for investigating the cause of fires, and in 2023, there were 56 Fire Investigations.

Other Inspections and Investigations		
	2022	2023
Wildland/Urban Interface	141	110
Construction Inspections	7,376	6,643
Fire Permits	402	744
Plan Review	2,610	3,346
Fire Investigations*	-	56

**Data for 2022 is not reliable, new data collection systems are being set up to ensure data and reporting quality.*

TECHNOLOGY IMPROVEMENTS

New software systems were purchased in 2023 and are in the works to go live in 2024. The State mandated inspection program will have its own digital fire inspection record keeping and billing system that provides detail tracking and preserves important inspection findings and corrections.

FIRE STATION 4

Fire Station 4, at 3600 Middlefield Road, was built in 1953 and no longer meets the current needs of the Fire Department. City Council included the replacement of Fire Station No. 4 in the Infrastructure Plan approved in June 2014.

This project will provide a new facility built to current essential services standards with a high likelihood of being fully operational during and after a major disaster such as a significant earthquake.



On November 8, 2023 the Palo Alto Architectural Review Board approved the final design plan and the architect is currently making progress with obtaining a building permit.

The new fire station building will include the following:

- Captain's Office and public restrooms
- Emergency Operations Center (EOC)/Training room
- Two drive-through apparatus bays and a stand-by apparatus bay
- Firefighter living quarters

The new Fire Station 4 will be designed for LEED Silver certification and meet City adopted building code standards by having an all-electric design for new construction.



TRAINING

Training is a critical component of ensuring firefighters are ready and equipped with the best firefighting and rescue techniques to minimize the impact of any emergency; every firefighter averaged 285 hours of training in 2023.

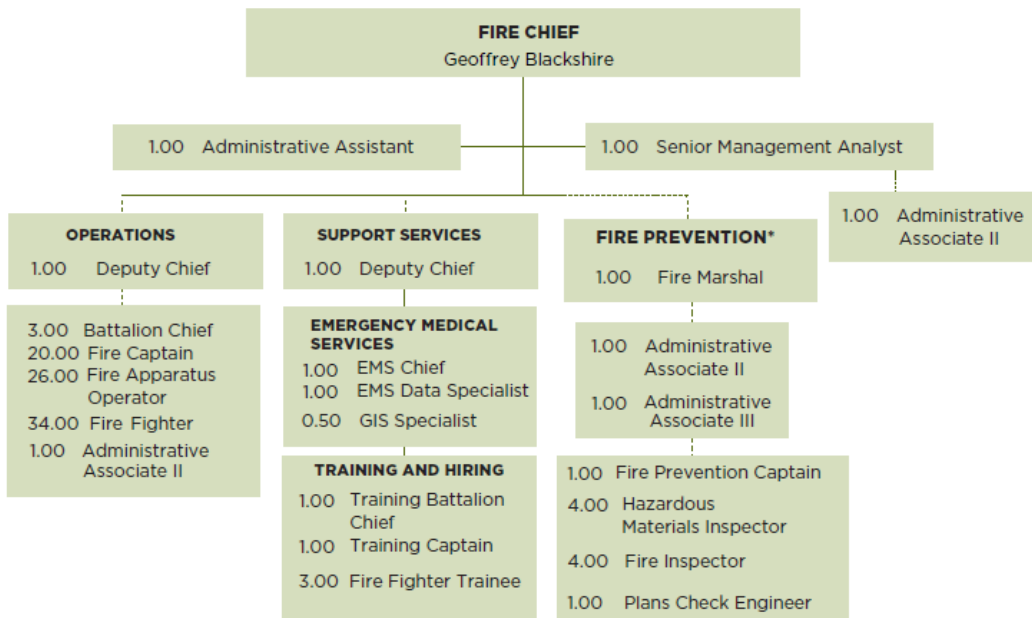
Twenty-Six training courses were provided this year with topics such as Fire Engine and Truck Driving, Fire Investigation, Rope Rescue Awareness and Operations, Confined Space and Trench Rescue, and training to rescue lost or trapped firefighters. Eleven Special Operations drills were hosted, as well as County-wide wildfire drills.



THE PEOPLE OF THE PALO ALTO FIRE DEPARTMENT

The 111 people that make up the Department serve the community with a great deal of pride and an attitude of excellence. The Department has 83 operations staff that are the firefighters, apparatus operators and fire captains that work in the stations and provide the direct services to the community.

In the Fire Prevention Bureau, there are 9 fire inspectors and managers to ensure buildings and facilities are up to code and adhere to all new laws that prevent instances of fires and reduce the impact of fires if they occur. The remaining 19 employees make up Fire Administration and include executive managers and support staff.



NEW RECRUITS

It can take more than a year from the time a job announcement is posted before an entry level firefighter begins work on a fire engine or ambulance. Candidates complete a rigorous selection process including a physical fitness exam, mental health screening, and background check. Once a candidate is hired, they complete an intensive 21-week fire academy.

In February, the Department held one of the largest Joint Fire Academies with a total of 13 new firefighters hired. Eight remain with the PAFD today.



Since the 2019 Civil Grand Jury of Santa Clara County Report, "Why Aren't There More Female Firefighters in Santa Clara County" the Department has made additional efforts to recruit and retain female firefighters. In 2019, women made up only five percent (5%) of firefighters working at PAFD. As of this report, the Department has 9 Female Sworn Employees, making up a total of 10% of all sworn employees. Three of the 11 new hires in 2023 were women, however only one successfully completed the probationary period.



Mitchel Barnett

Hometown: Santa Cruz, CA
Hobbies: Rock climbing, water sports, camping, outdoor recreation.



Kevin Moon

Hometown: San Jose, CA
Hobbies: Golf, football, time with family and friends



Lauren Racioppi

Hometown: San Carlos, CA
Hobbies: Hiking, snowboarding, wake boarding, outdoor sports



Keith Hatfield

Hometown: Redwood City, CA
Hobbies: Metal fabrication, mountain biking, boating, spending time with friends and family



Samuel Muzzi

Hometown: Sunnyvale, CA
Hobbies: restoring old cars, time with family



Jake Smirnov

Hometown: Santa Clara, CA
Hobbies: hiking, golf, marathon running, time with family and friends

NEW RECRUITS CONTINUED



Nicholas Souza

Hometown: Danville, CA
Hobbies: fishing, hiking, health and wellness fitness, golfing, cooking



Scott Woodfin Jr.

Hometown: Fremont, CA
Hobbies: Sports, hiking, time with family and dog Daisy

OTHER NEW STAFF

The Department welcomed additional new staff amongst Fire Administration.



Madison Crowe
Administrative Associate II



James Duran
EMS Director



Robin Ellner
Administrative Associate III



Denise King Raub
Hourly Training Specialist



Nia Serbin
Administrative Assistant

PROMOTIONS



William Dale
Training Battalion Chief



Mike Espeland
HazMat Inspector



Tamara Jasso
Fire Marshal

PROMOTIONS CONTINUED



Stephen Lindsey
Deputy Fire Chief



Jon Matsumoto
HazMat Inspector



Marc Muzzi
Battalion Chief

RETIREMENTS



Brian Baggot
Training Battalion Chief
23 Years of Service



Barry Marchisio
Fire Captain
40 Years of Service



Mike Northup
Apparatus Operator
23 Years of Service



Kimberly Roderick
EMS Chief
17 Years of Service



Eric Shill
Fire Inspector
21 Years of Service



Kevin Wilcox
Apparatus Operator
28 Years of Service



Mark VonAppen
Fire Captain
25 Years of Service