



HOLMEN AREA FIRE DEPARTMENT

2025 Annual Report



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LETTER FROM THE CHIEF

To the Holmen Area Fire Department Board of Directors, Holmen Area Fire Commission, and the Boards, Administration, and Citizens of the Village of Holmen and Town of Holland:

I am pleased to present the Holmen Area Fire Department's 2025 Annual Report, which summarizes our service delivery, and key accomplishments over the past year.

Throughout 2025, our personnel remained committed to protecting life, property, and the environment through fire suppression, emergency medical services, fire prevention, public education, and training. Specifically, we strengthened our training program by implementing a department-wide plan focused on improving consistency, enhancing operational readiness, and aligning training with evolving service demands.

This report highlights our performance in incident response, training, fire inspections, and community outreach; while also reflecting the strong partnerships we maintain with our municipalities, automatic aid partners, and allied agencies.

As our communities continue to grow, the department remains focused on meeting current service demands while proactively planning for the future to ensure sustained operational readiness and long-term success.

I appreciate the continued support of our Board, Commission, municipal leadership, and the citizens we proudly serve. I am proud to lead this organization. I am confident in its direction.

Respectfully,
Ryan Ostreng
Fire Chief, Holmen Area Fire Department



ABOUT HAFD

Located in northern La Crosse County, Wisconsin, the Holmen Volunteer Fire Department was established on April 22, 1921, under the leadership of August Anderson, the department's first elected Fire Chief.

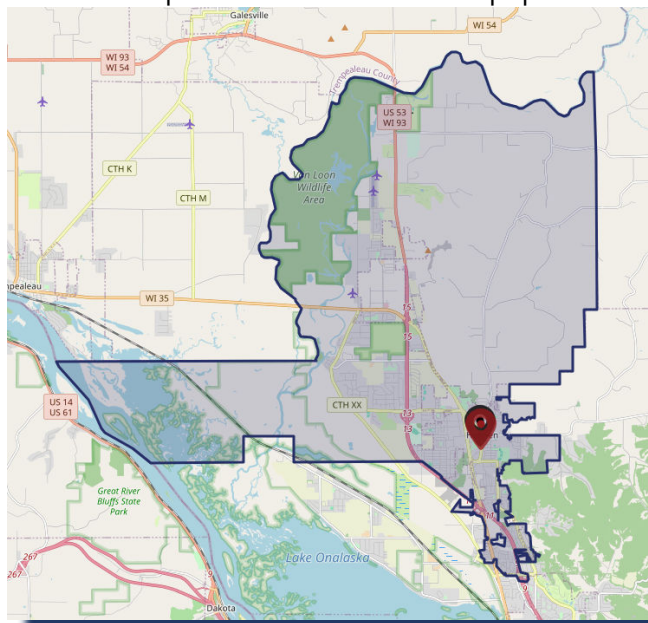
In 1954, the Village of Holmen sought financial assistance from the Town of Holland and the Town of Onalaska to purchase a new pumper. This partnership marked the introduction of the "AREA" concept and led to the renaming of the organization as the Holmen Area Fire Department (HAFD).



HAFD further expanded its services in 1979 with the establishment of a medical First Responder program, becoming one of the early fire departments in Wisconsin to provide both fire suppression and medical response services.

The department responded to 668 calls for service in 2014, the same year it started a transition toward a career staffing model. On March 7, 2014, HAFD hired its first full-time employee with the appointment of Fire Chief John Gaarder.

Today, HAFD operates as an association between the Village of Holmen and the Town of Holland. HAFD is an all-risk, all-hazards organization providing fire suppression, emergency medical services, and rescue operations to an estimated population of 17,000 residents across approximately 55 square miles.

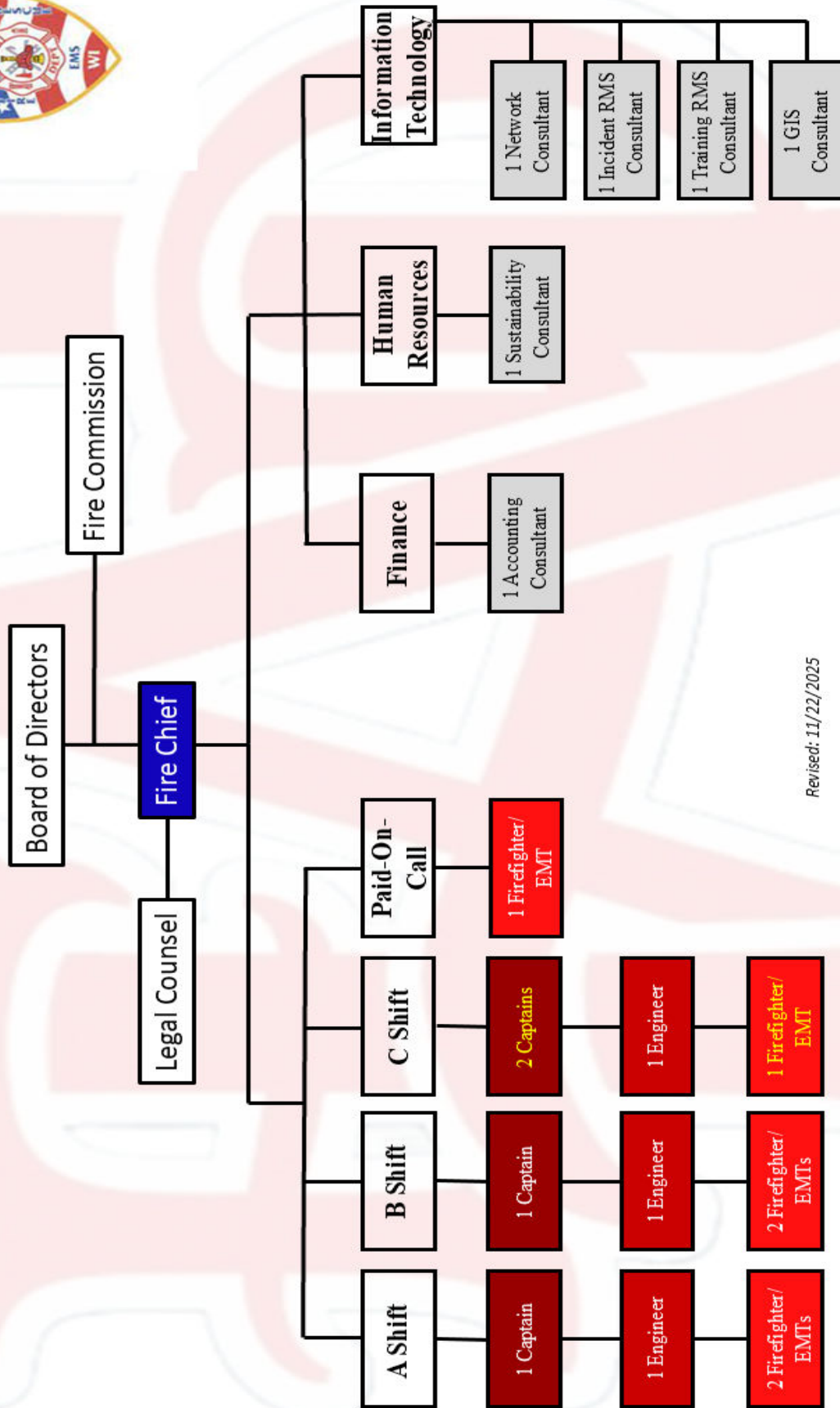


The department responds from a single fire station located in the Village of Holmen and staffs 24-hour operations with 12 career firefighter/EMTs (four personnel per shift), a full-time Fire Chief and one paid-on-call member.

In 2025, the Holmen Area Fire Department responded to 1,370 requests for service, marking a record number of emergency responses in one year and reflecting the continued growth in service demand within the district.

ORGANIZATION CHART

Holmen Area Fire Department Organizational Chart



Revised: 11/22/2025

GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Board of Directors

The Holmen Area Fire Department is governed by a four-member Board of Directors consisting of elected officials from the Village of Holmen and the Town of Holland. The Board serves as the Department's primary policy-making body and is responsible for financial oversight, control of property, contract negotiations, and providing strategic policy direction.

2025 Board of Directors

Patrick Barlow

Director & President
Village of Holmen

Travis Elam

Director & Secretary
Village of Holmen

Jeff Herlitzke

Director & Treasurer
Town of Holland

Rick Hauser

Director
Town of Holland

Doug Jorstad

Alternate Director
Village of Holmen

Bob Stuppi

Alternate Director
Town of Holland

The Holmen Area Fire Board meets on a monthly bases, with additional special meetings scheduled as needed. In 2025, the Board met 12 times with no additional special meetings called.

GOVERNING AUTHORITY

Fire Commission

The Holmen Area Fire Department Fire Commission is composed of five members appointed by the Village of Holmen Board President and the Town of Holland Board Chair. The Fire Commission's role is specific to staffing matters and includes responsibility for recruitment, hiring, promotion, and discipline of the Fire Chief and sworn firefighters.

2025 Fire Commissioners

James Bushman

Commissioner #1
Village of Holmen

Neal Forde

Commissioner #2
Village of Holmen

John Miller

Commissioner #3 & Secretary
Town of Holland

Barry Ploessl

Commissioner #4 & Chair
Village of Holmen

Patrick Brockman

Commissioner #5 & Vice Chair
Town of Holland

The Holmen Area Fire Commission is required to meet once per year after May 1, with additional meetings scheduled as needed in accordance with Wisconsin State Statutes. In 2025, the Board met four times.

DEPARTMENT STAFF

Career Staff

Chief

- **Ryan Ostreng** — Appointed April 2, 2023 (*Total Service: 2.8 years*)

Captains

- **Frank Garrow** — Appointed January 4, 2011 (*Total Service: 15.0 years*)
- **Jeremy Cook** — Appointed November 3, 2014 (*Total Service: 11.2 years*)
- **Mike Lavery** — Appointed March 7, 2021 (*Paid-on-Call Appointed April 24, 2019 | Total Service: 6.7 years*)
- **Nicholas Meinertz** — Appointed April 9, 2024 (*Total Service: 1.7 years*)

Engineers

- **Tony Kropelin** — Appointed November 2, 2017 (*Paid-on-Call Appointed January 1, 2017 | Total Service: 9.0 years*)
- **Troy Brindle** — Appointed March 14, 2018 (*Paid-on-Call Appointed March 14, 2018 | Total Service: 7.8 years*)
- **Travis Wills** — Appointed May 3, 2023 (*Total Service: 2.7 years*)

Firefighter / EMTs

- **Myranda Antony** — Appointed June 12, 2023 (*Paid-on-Call since May 15, 2018 | Total Service: 7.6 years*)
- **Zachary Schneeberger** — Appointed February 16, 2023 (*Paid-on-Call since February 16, 2023 | Total Service: 2.9 years*)
- **Davis Wilson** — Appointed August 9, 2023 (*Total Service: 2.4 years*)
- **Caden Douglas** — Appointed March 18, 2024 (*Total Service: 1.8 years*)
- **Emmaline Zabel** — Appointed May 22, 2025 (*Total Service: 0.6 years*)

Paid-On-Call Staff

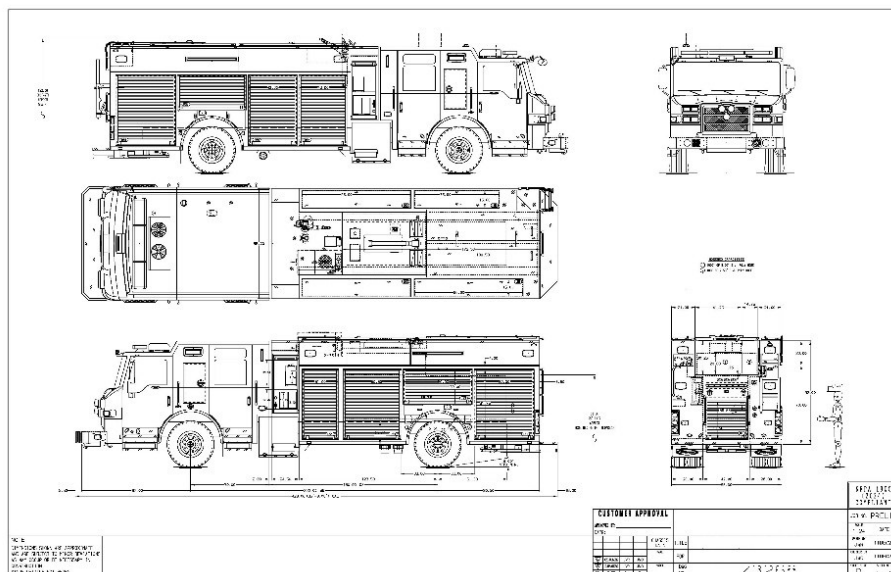
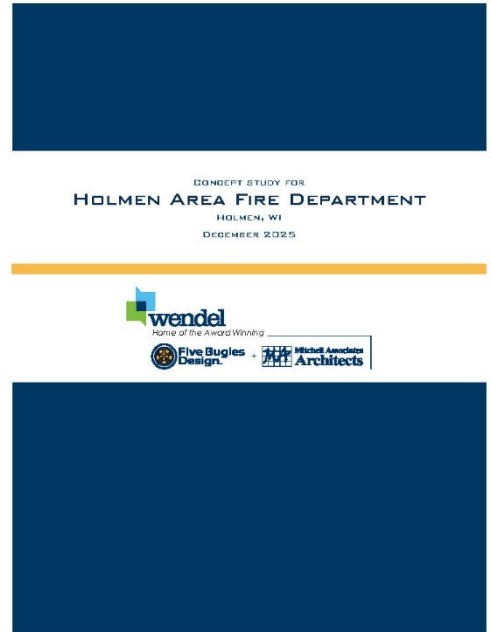
- **Phillip Davies**, Paid-On-Call Firefighter/EMT — Appointed November 15, 2015 (*Total Service: 10.1 years*)

ADMINISTRATION

The Fire Chief is the Administrative Division for the Holmen Area Fire Department. This division is responsible for managing the core organizational functions that support the department's overall mission, ensuring efficient, accountable, and compliant operations. This includes policy development, strategic planning, and coordination with the Fire Board and Fire Commission, along with comprehensive record keeping and regulatory compliance reporting. The division also leads the preparation of annual reports and maintains documentation necessary to support transparency and informed decision-making.

In addition, the Administrative Division oversees financial management, human resources, and internal systems that sustain daily operations and long-term planning. This includes budget development, cost tracking, purchasing, and long-range capital planning such as rotational vehicle replacement. The division also manages personnel processes, information technology systems, training and safety oversight, and administrative support for fire prevention activities, ensuring the department remains operationally ready, properly resourced, and aligned with applicable standards and expectations.

Major Administrative Division projects for 2025 included the completion of a facility needs assessment and station location analysis, and starting specifications for HAFDs next fire pumper



OPERATIONS

The Operations Division is the front-line component of the Holmen Area Fire Department, responsible for all emergency response services and maintaining constant readiness. It manages incidents including fires, medical emergencies, rescues, hazardous materials events, and other calls for service, coordinating operations under the Incident Command System to ensure safe and effective outcomes.

This division also oversees daily staffing, apparatus and equipment readiness, and company-level training to maintain operational proficiency. Led by the Fire Chief, it prioritizes response performance, firefighter safety, and service reliability while supporting and coordinating with training, prevention, and administrative functions.

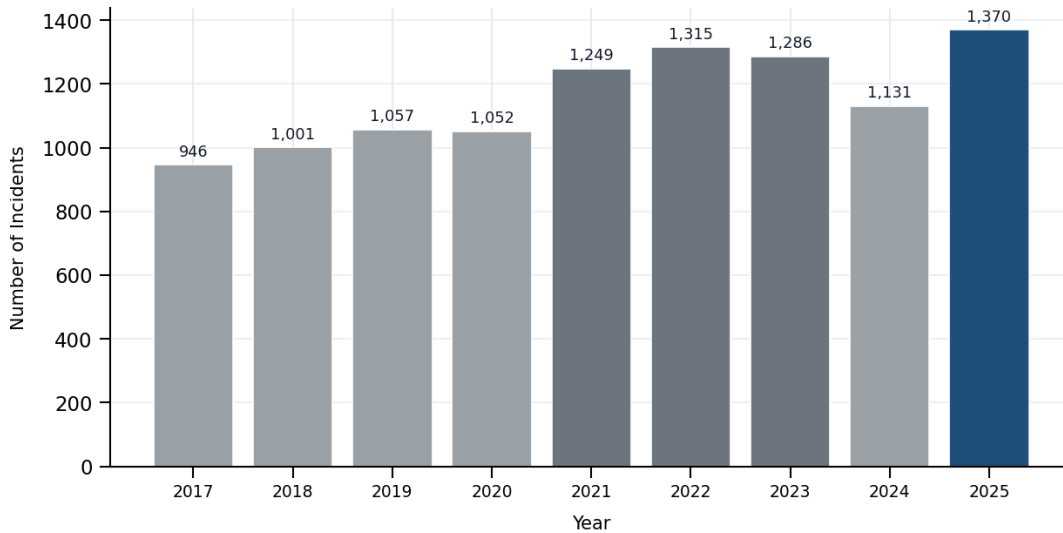
HAFD's 12 career firefighter/EMTs are organized into three shifts operating on a 48 on-shift/96 off-shift schedule. Each shift is composed of one fire company that includes one Captain, one Engineer, and two firefighters. To enhance medical response coverage, the four-person company is split into a two-person engine and a two-person light rescue.



INCIDENT STATISTICS

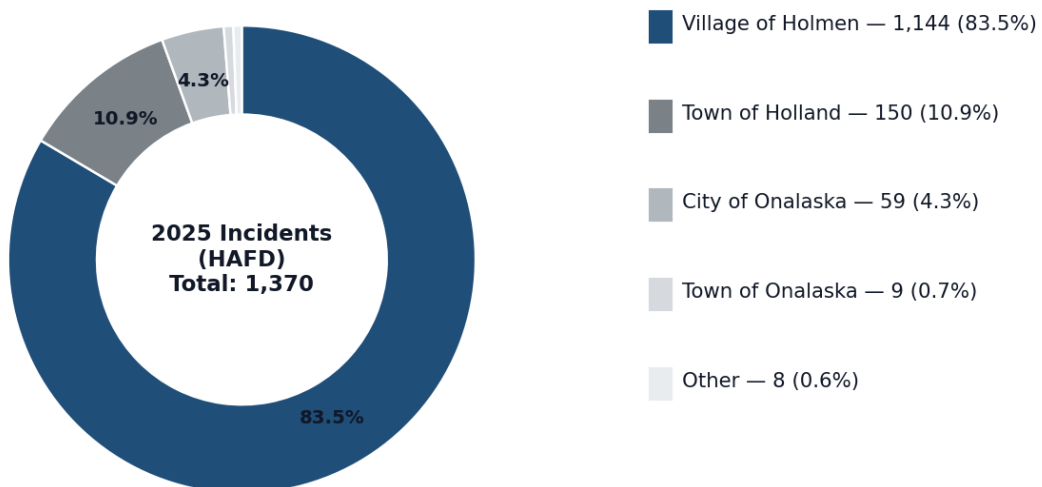
The Holmen Area Fire Department responded to a total of 1,370 incidents in 2025, which is an all-time high for the department. HAFD has experienced a 4.7% average annual growth rate in the number of incidents since 2017 as it keeps pace with the needs of our growing communities we serve.

HAFD Call Volume by Year (2017-2025)



Approximately 84% of all 2025 emergency incidents occurred within the Village of Holmen, with an additional 11% within the Town of Holland. Combined, these two jurisdictions within the HAFD fire district accounted for over 94% of total incident activity. Remaining incidents consisted of automatic-aid and mutual-aid response into neighboring jurisdictions.

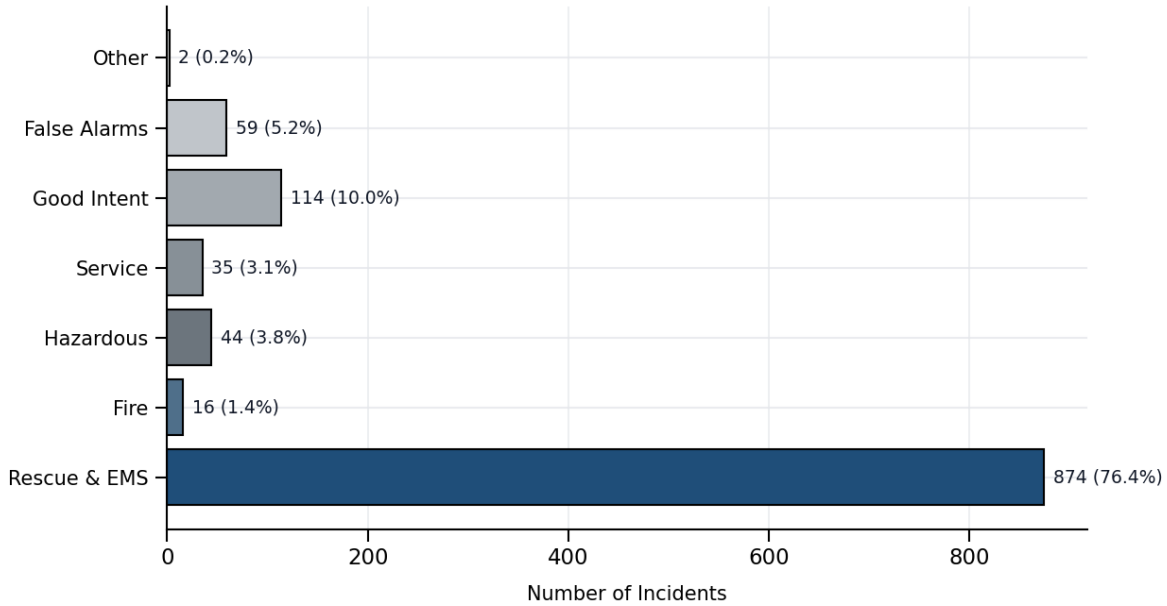
Incident Distribution by Municipality



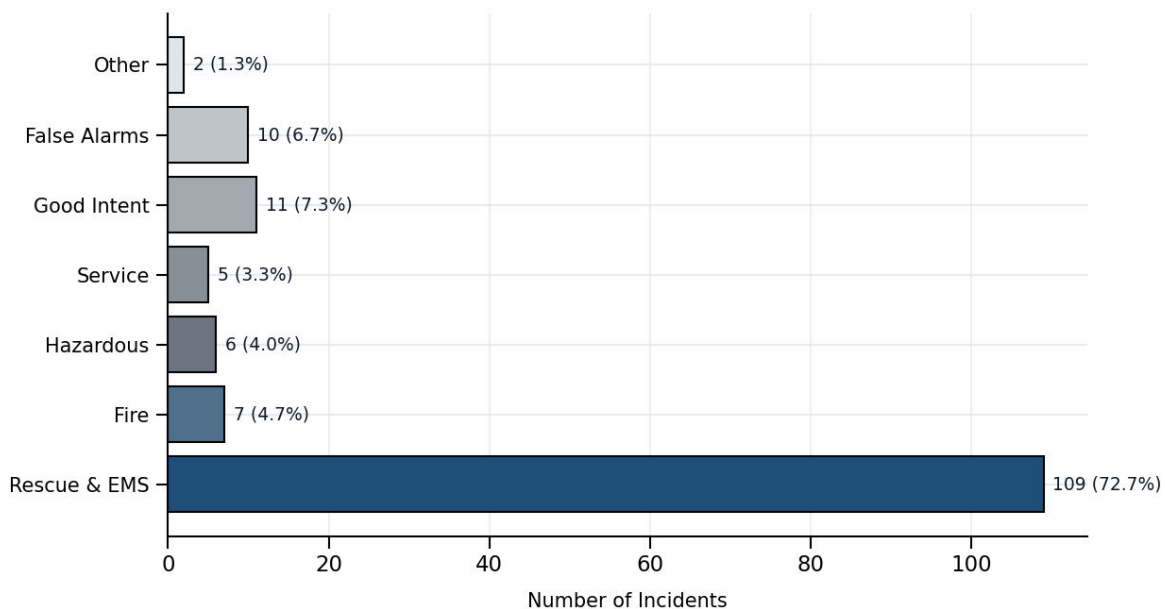
INCIDENT STATISTICS

Incident activity reflected a combination of emergency medical responses, fire incidents, service calls, and other response types, consistent with the department's role as the primary emergency service provider for the Village of Holmen and Town of Holland. The majority of 2025 emergency incident volume related to EMS and rescue services, followed by good-intent calls, and the false alarms.

Village of Holmen - 2025 Incident Type Breakdown



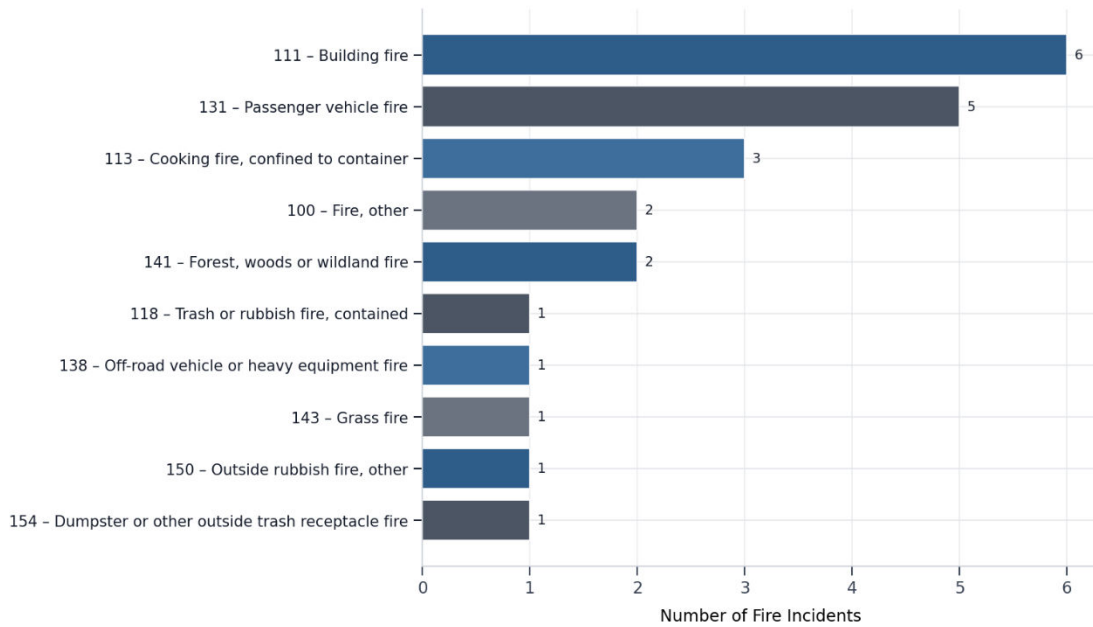
Town of Holland - 2025 Incident Type Breakdown



INCIDENT STATISTICS

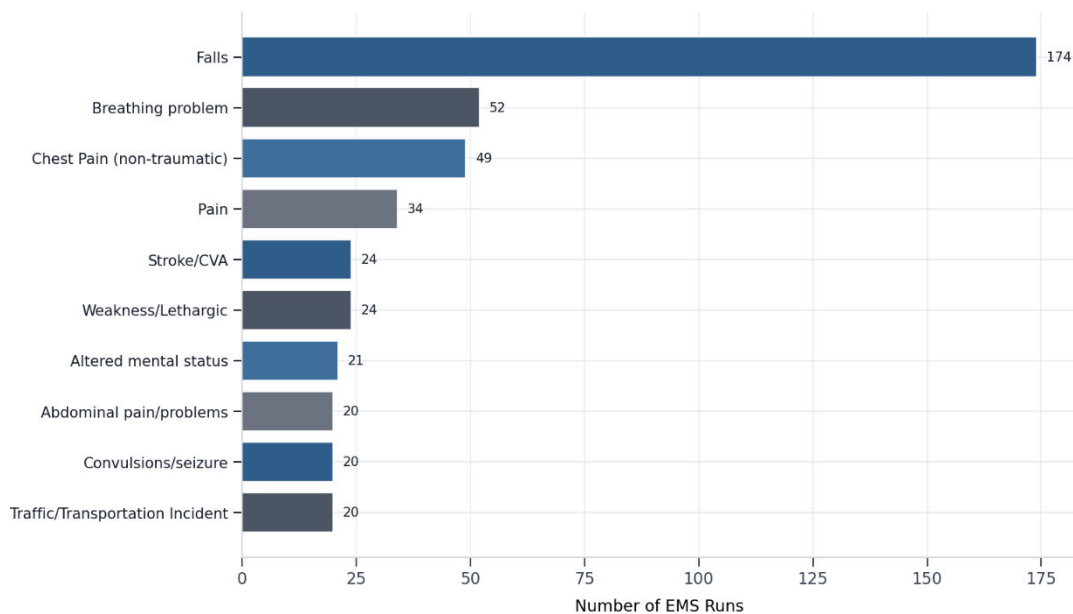
The distribution of fire incidents by type highlights the primary drivers for Holmen Area Fire Department 2025 response activity. This distribution underscores the importance of prevention efforts, code compliance, and public education in reducing the most frequent incident types while maintaining readiness for less common events.

HAFD 2025 - Fire Incidents by Type (Village of Holmen & Town of Holland)

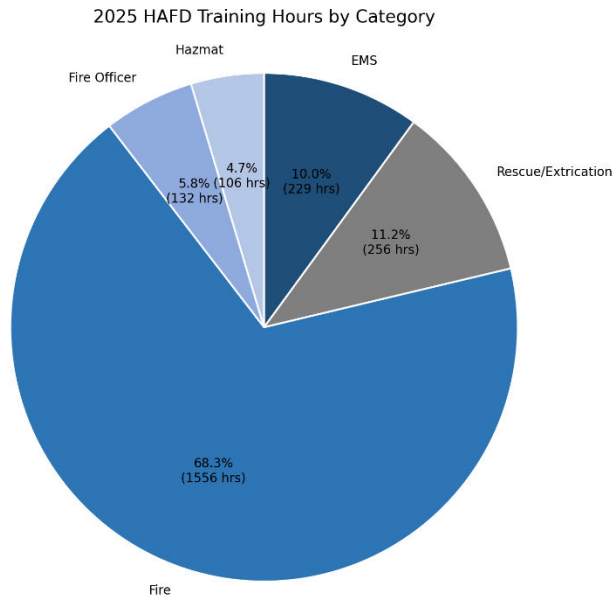


The top 10 EMS dispatch reasons for 2025 reflect the community's most common medical service needs and guide operational priorities. Understanding these trends supports targeted training, and resource deployment aimed at improving patient outcomes and managing system demand.

HAFD 2025 - Top 10 EMS Dispatch Reasons



TRAINING



Training remained a major focus of departmental operations in 2025. Holmen Area Fire Department staff members conducted more than 2,270 hours of training across fire suppression, EMS, rescue/extrication, fire officer development, and hazardous materials response. Training emphasized both core operational readiness and specialized technical skills.

Training Highlights

The Regional Emergency All Climate Training Center (REACT) delivered a 2-day hazardous materials response course, including hazard recognition through gas monitoring. The Holmen Area Fire Department hosted the training with the Onalaska Fire Department attending the training. Additional training highlights included:

- Two members received State Fire Inspector Certification.
- Extrication Training at Runde Metal Recycling
- Car Fire Training at Runde Metal Recycling
- Water Rescue and patient stabilization training at Holmen Municipal Pool
- Boat Training on the Black River
- Slope Evacuation / Rope Rescue at Deerwood Park
- Fire Investigator Training in collaboration with Onalaska
- PIT Crew EMS Training with the Holmen Police Department
- Two members participated in a Rural Disaster Drill with neighboring fire departments and Emplify Health by Gundersen
- Sports Injuries Training with Emplify Health by Gundersen Athletic Training
- Dual Sequential Defibrillator Training with Tri State Ambulance



COLLABORATION



In 2025, the Holmen Area Fire Department (HAFD) and the Onalaska Fire Department (OFD) identified opportunities to strengthen collaboration. As automatic aid partners, joint training was a logical and effective priority. Combined training improves how both agencies operate together by building familiarity with equipment, procedures, command structures, and communication practices. This results in faster, more coordinated incident management and a consistent approach to tactics, terminology, and expectations.

HAFD will continue to pursue joint training opportunities with OFD to further strengthen interoperability, enhance operational readiness, and support a seamless regional response system.



FIRE PREVENTION

Fire prevention is a core function of the fire service focused on reducing the likelihood and impact of fires before emergencies occur. It combines fire inspections, code enforcement, and public education to identify hazards, ensure compliance with fire and life safety codes, and promote safer behaviors within the community. Fire inspections address risks within buildings by identifying and correcting unsafe conditions, while public education helps residents and businesses understand how fires start and how to prevent them through everyday actions.

The Fire Prevention Division is overseen by the Fire Chief and represents a proactive, integrated effort to reduce community risk before incidents occur. By ensuring buildings meet safety requirements and equipping the public with knowledge to prevent fires, these activities work together to reduce the frequency and severity of emergencies while improving overall life safety within the community.

Fire Inspections

During calendar year 2025, the Holmen Area Fire Department completed a comprehensive fire inspection program covering 204 distinct occupancies, resulting in 828 total inspections.

Inspection activities included:

- Routine fire safety inspections
- Re-inspections and follow-up visits
- Consultation inspections
- Fire protection system acceptance inspections (alarm and sprinkler systems)
- Fire prevention reviews



Inspections were conducted across a broad range of occupancy types, including educational facilities, multi-family residential buildings, assisted living facilities, commercial and industrial occupancies, childcare centers, places of assembly, and municipal buildings.

Captain Frank Garrow coordinated the fire company-based inspection program. Company Officers were assigned inspection districts, and inspections were performed by trained shift personnel throughout the year. Inspection time was tracked to document workload and resource impact. Inspection duration varied from brief routine visits to multi-hour system evaluations depending on

FIRE PREVENTION

occupancy size and complexity. Common deficiencies identified included electrical clearance issues, storage hazards, exit signage outages, blocked egress, outdated fire extinguisher inspections, outdated fire system inspections. Re-inspections were conducted as needed to verify corrective action and ensure compliance.

Fire Protection System Compliance Tracking

Since 2021, the Holmen Area Fire Department has utilized Brycer's Compliance Engine, a web-based platform that centralizes fire protection system inspection, testing, and maintenance reporting across the district. The system provides electronic report submission and validation, automated compliance tracking, and structured notifications, supported by a complete digital audit trail. Tracked systems include sprinkler and alarm systems, hood suppression systems, standpipes, smoke control systems, private hydrants, fire pumps, spray booths, emergency generators, special suppression systems, fire assemblies, and emergency responder radio coverage systems.



The platform has reduced administrative workload by eliminating manual tracking and improving efficiency in managing reports and deficiencies. It enhances consistency through standardized NFPA-aligned reporting, provides real-time visibility into compliance status, and automates notifications to contractors and property owners. This supports consistent enforcement, risk-based prioritization, and a comprehensive view of community compliance. The system is funded through contractor filing fees and is provided at no direct cost to the department.

Public Education

The Holmen Area Fire Department (HAFD) completed 44 public education and community risk reduction activities in 2025, with a total investment of 91 personnel hours. These efforts support the department's mission of reducing preventable emergencies through proactive education, outreach, and community engagement.

HAFD maintained a broad and consistent outreach approach, including school and daycare programs, community events, fire station tours, senior outreach, Fire Prevention Week activities, and ongoing social media messaging. Digital outreach, primarily through Facebook enabled timely

FIRE PREVENTION

communication on key safety topics such as smoke/CO alarm awareness, severe weather, fire danger conditions, and seasonal risks, helping reinforce safe behaviors year-round.

A major focus was youth and school-based education, where firefighters delivered age-appropriate fire safety instruction and hands-on engagement across multiple educational settings. Fire Prevention Week served as the department's most concentrated effort, featuring multiple school visits and a renewed fire station public open house, resulting in community participation.



HAFD

also strengthened community relationships through public events, parades, National Night Out, and local gatherings, increasing visibility and trust. Targeted outreach to senior and vulnerable populations ensured that critical safety information was tailored to higher-risk groups.

Partnerships with organizations such as the American Red Cross, schools, and local agencies expanded program reach and effectiveness, particularly through initiatives like smoke and CO alarm installations.

American Red Cross SOUND THE ALARM Save a Life

FREE SMOKE ALARMS & CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS* INSTALLATIONS

We'll be in your neighborhood
April 12th, 2025

MAKE AN APPOINTMENT TODAY: Call **888-376-4056**

Scan

*Up to 3 smoke alarms per home and 1 CO detector per home with fuel burning appliance or attached garage

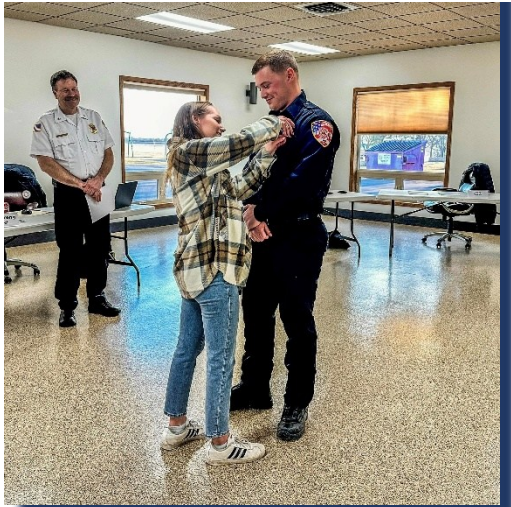
HIGHLIGHTS

Personnel Highlights

The Holmen Area Fire Department experienced several notable personnel milestones and recognitions during 2025, reflecting ongoing workforce development and professional performance.

Appointments & Status Changes

March 18, 2025 – Caden Douglas successfully completed probationary firefighter status.



April 10, 2025 – Nicholas Meinertz successfully completed probationary firefighter status.



April 22, 2025 – Emma Zabel began employment as a probationary Firefighter/EMT.

HIGHLIGHTS

Personnel Recognition

August 29, 2025 – Travis Wills, Michael Lavery, Caden Douglas, and Zach Schneeberger received formal recognition from Tri-State Ambulance / Gundersen Health System for outstanding teamwork and on-scene support during a successful cardiac event save.



Community Support, Partnerships & Donations – 2025

The Holmen Area Fire Department benefited from significant community support and external partnerships during 2025. These contributions enhanced the department's ability to provide compassionate emergency response and improve patient care outcomes.

Community Donations & Program Support

- **March 21, 2025 – The La Crosse Area Community Foundation and Reach A Child** donated "Reach Bags" to the Holmen Area Fire Department. These backpacks, filled with new children's books, are intended to help comfort children during crisis situations by providing a positive distraction during emergency response incidents.



HIGHLIGHTS

Community-Supported Medical Equipment Fundraising

- **August 11, 2025** – The department officially recognized and thanked many organizations for successfully giving \$30,197.40 in community donations to support the purchase of a cardiac monitor, enhancing emergency medical response capabilities.

The following organizations and community partners contributed to this fundraising effort:

- Emplify Health by Gundersen
- Christen Farm Nursery
- Holmen Youth Volleyball
- HD Tavern
- WI Terrazzo
- Kwik Trip
- Holmen Area Foundation
- Mayo Clinic Health System
- Altra Federal Credit Union
- Holmen Knights of Columbus
- Sandy Haag – Green Bay Packer Quilt Raffel

These partnerships and donations reflect strong community engagement and support for the department's mission, and directly contributed to improved patient care, responder effectiveness, and service deliver





www.holmenfire.com