

Initiative To Create: Kendall County Emergency Services District (ESD) No. 1



Presented by: Friends of Kendall County ESD No. 1

on behalf of Bergheim Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD)

February 2025

Agenda

- Sounding the Alarm
- Staffing concerns
- Funding shortfalls
- What is an ESD?
- What will it cost?
- Questions







Sounding the Alarm



Demand for emergency services in our area surpassed BVFD's capacity

Why Now?

-  **Staffing** – current 100% volunteer staffing does not support 24/7/365 coverage
-  **Funding** – donation-based funding does not cover expenses



Frequently asked question:
If I call 911, are there Volunteers at the Bergheim Fire Station waiting to respond?



Short answer:
No





Staffing is Insufficient



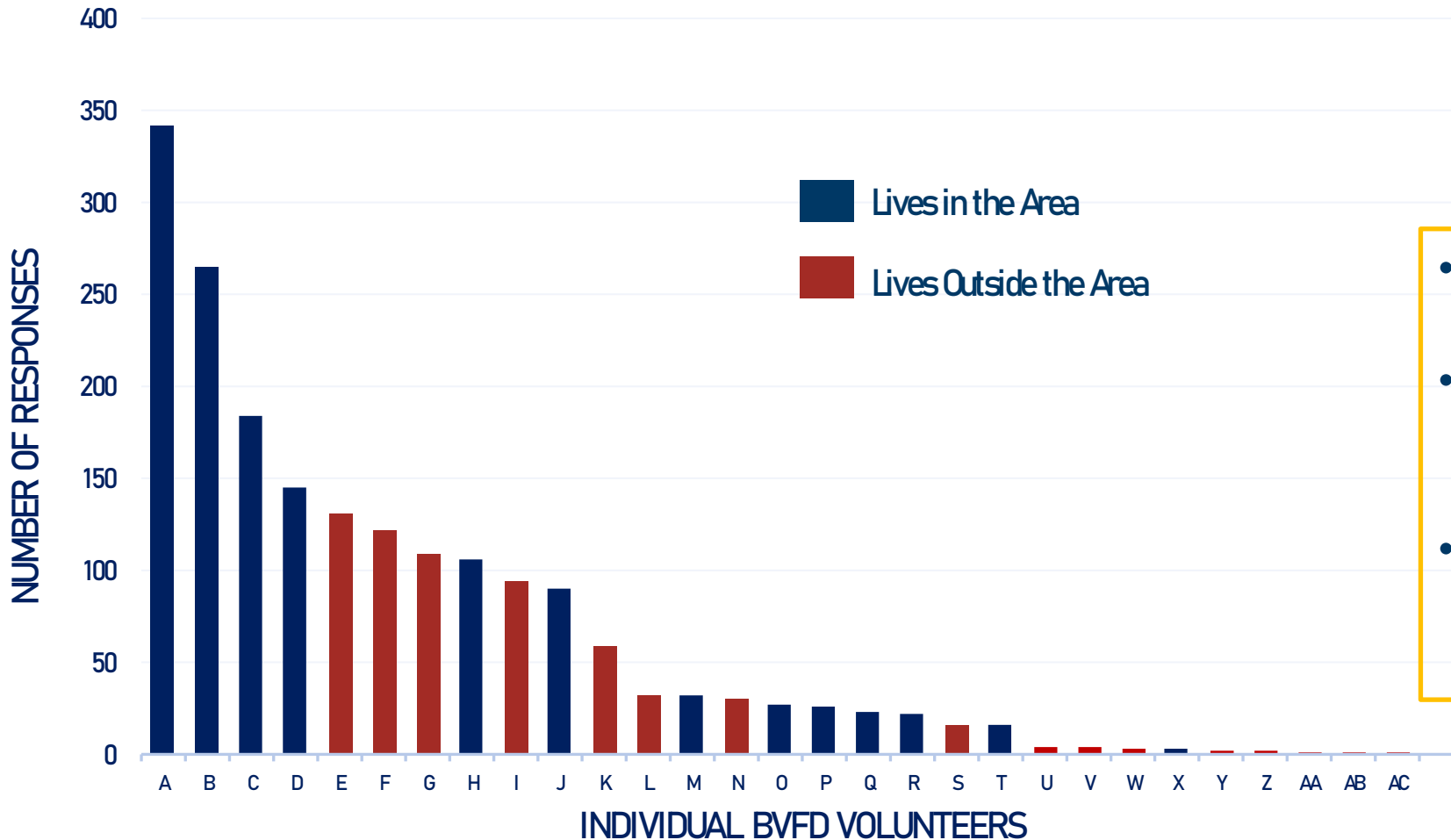
Facts about the Bergheim Volunteer Fire Department Staffing

- Current staffing is **100% Volunteer**
- Difficult to find Volunteers who live near Bergheim
- Most Volunteers live out of the area & have significant travel times
- **4** Volunteer Firefighter First Responders are responsible for **over 50%** of emergency responses (3 are retired senior citizens)

Current 100% Volunteer staffing is not sustainable

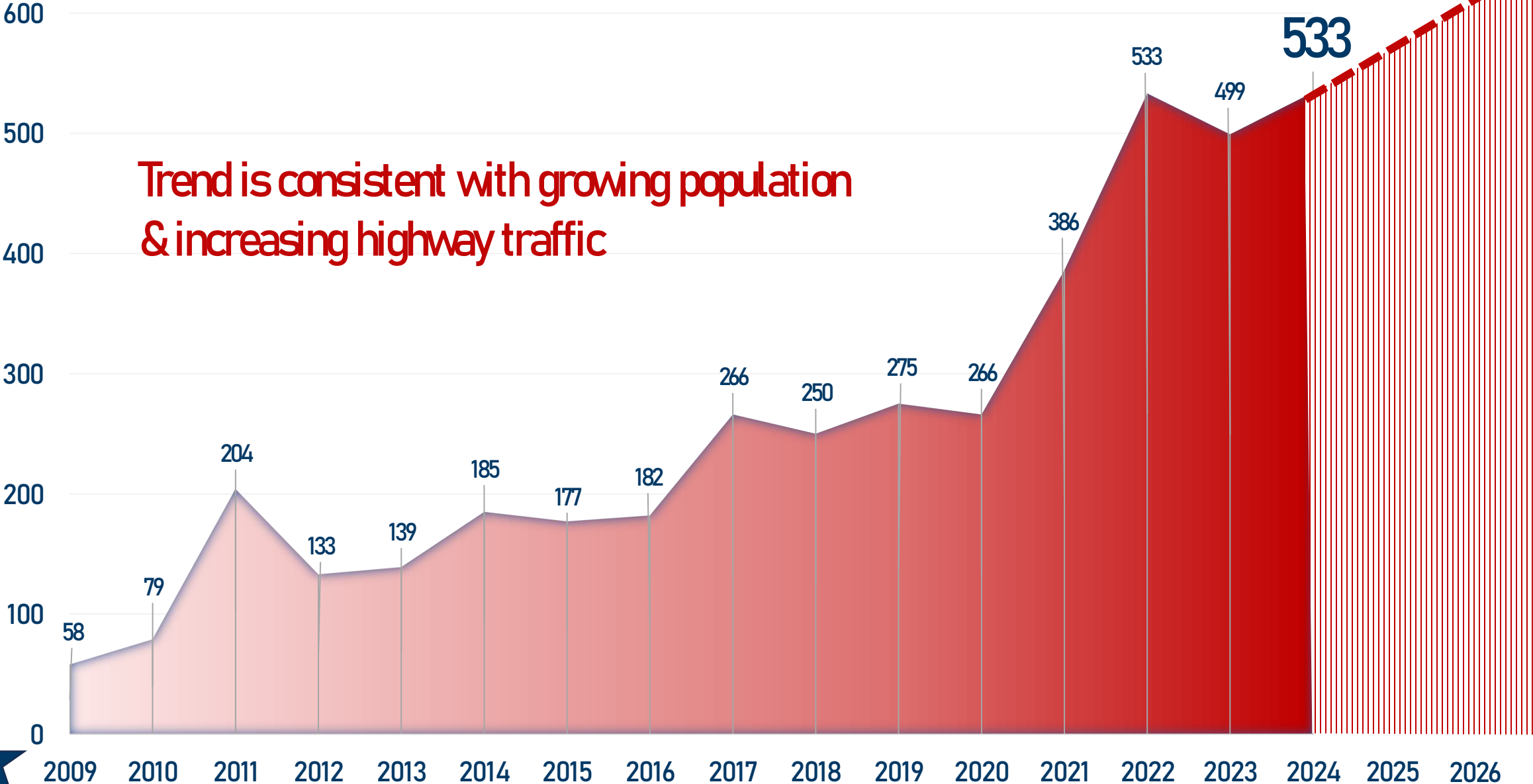


Number of Responses per Volunteer



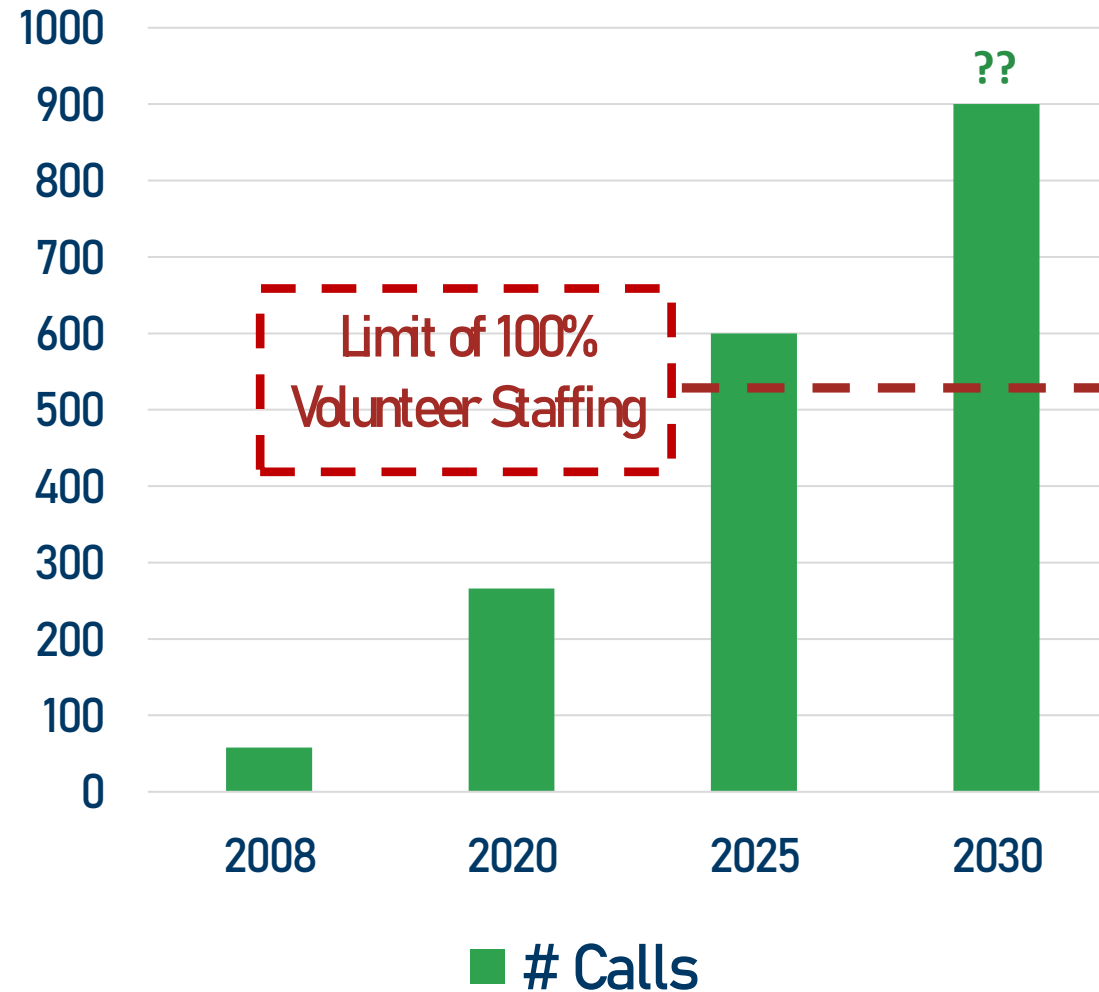
- 533 total responses in 2024
- 50% of all responses are made by only 4 volunteers (your neighbors)
- 84% of all responses are covered by only 10 volunteers (only 6 of those live in the response area)

ANNUAL NUMBER OF RESPONSES

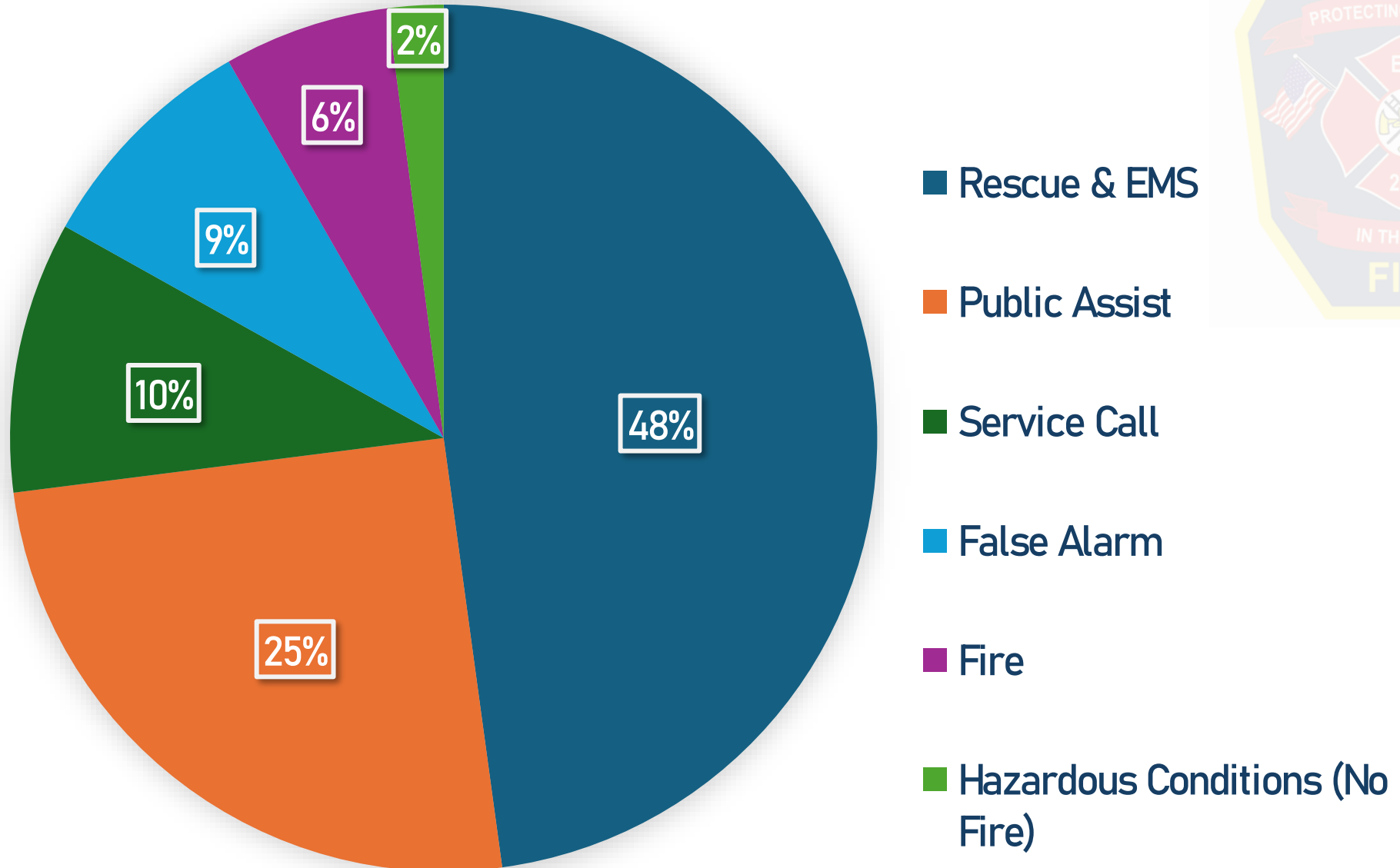


100% Volunteer Staffing is Not Scalable / Reliable to Meet Needs

911 Calls Dispatched to BVFD



Responses by Type





Frequently asked question:
Doesn't Kendall County fund all emergency services?



Short answer:
No, they provide some funding towards operating expenses





Funding is Unreliable



Facts about the Bergheim Volunteer Fire Department Funding

- Expense of operating the department exceeds donations- shortfall is growing
- Majority (2/3rd) of funding for operating expenses comes from private donations; difficult to forecast
- Kendall County provides funding for 1/3rd of the total cost of operations
- Operating budget will continue to increase as the area continues to grow

What Now?

Solutions for Staffing

- Adopt & fund 24/7/365 coverage staffing
- Volunteer program will provide additional support to paid personnel (Boerne FD model)

Solutions for Funding

- Secure funding for the operational & staffing needs of the department
- Ensure funding source is sufficient & reliable

What is an ESD?

ESDs allow for locally controlled taxation to fund locally managed emergency services



Emergency Service Districts (ESDs) are **local political subdivisions** of the State of Texas that may provide a range of emergency services (Chapter 775 of Health and Safety)

- ESDs are governed by a board of five commissioners who must meet certain voter and/or taxpayer qualifications within the service area
- ESDs are primarily funded by an ad valorem (property) tax that, under the State of Texas Constitution, cannot exceed **\$0.10 per \$100** of assessed property value

ESDs are the typical funding mechanism for fire departments that are not funded through municipalities in the State of Texas

- Texas currently has 356 established ESDs
- The BVFD service area is surrounded by ESDs in Bandera, Bexar, Comal, and Kerr counties
- County governments are not required to fund emergency services

What does it cost?

Per the Texas Constitution the maximum amount of ad valorem tax rate to fund for an ESD is 10 cents per \$100 of valuation

- The appointed ESD Board will set the rate that will be between 1 cent and 10 cents per \$100 assessed property value
- The median ESD tax rate in Texas is 7.8 cents per \$100 property value
- Maximum ESD tax bill would be \$500 annual tax for a property assessed at \$500,000



What will the rate be?

Per the Texas Constitution the maximum amount of ad valorem tax rate to fund for an ESD is 10 cents per \$100 of valuation

- Once the ESD measure passes, the Commissioners Court will appoint five Bergheim citizens to serve on the Board of Emergency Services Commissioners to manage the ESD
- Appointed ESD Board will set the initial tax rate
- The rate that is established by the ESD board will not change without voter approval
- Following the establishment of the the ESD Board, it's estimated that the new staffing model would be in place by late 2025/early 2026



What would you get with an ESD?



Staffing



If I call 911 is there someone at the Bergheim Fire Station waiting to respond?



Your Bergheim fire station will be staffed **24/7/365** with professionally trained Firefighter First Responders, in addition to the volunteer staff



What would you get with an ESD?



Funding

- Bergheim Fire Department will have a stable, predictable budget for operating expenses
- Once the ESD is in place and all operational changes have been implemented, the ISO rating of the BVFD will be reassessed - improvements in this rating could lead to reduced insurance rates for properties within the ESD boundaries

- Funds collected for the ESD can ONLY be used for emergency services
- ESD funds can ONLY be used in the Bergheim service area – they CANNOT be transferred or re-allocated elsewhere



Questions?

APPENDIX

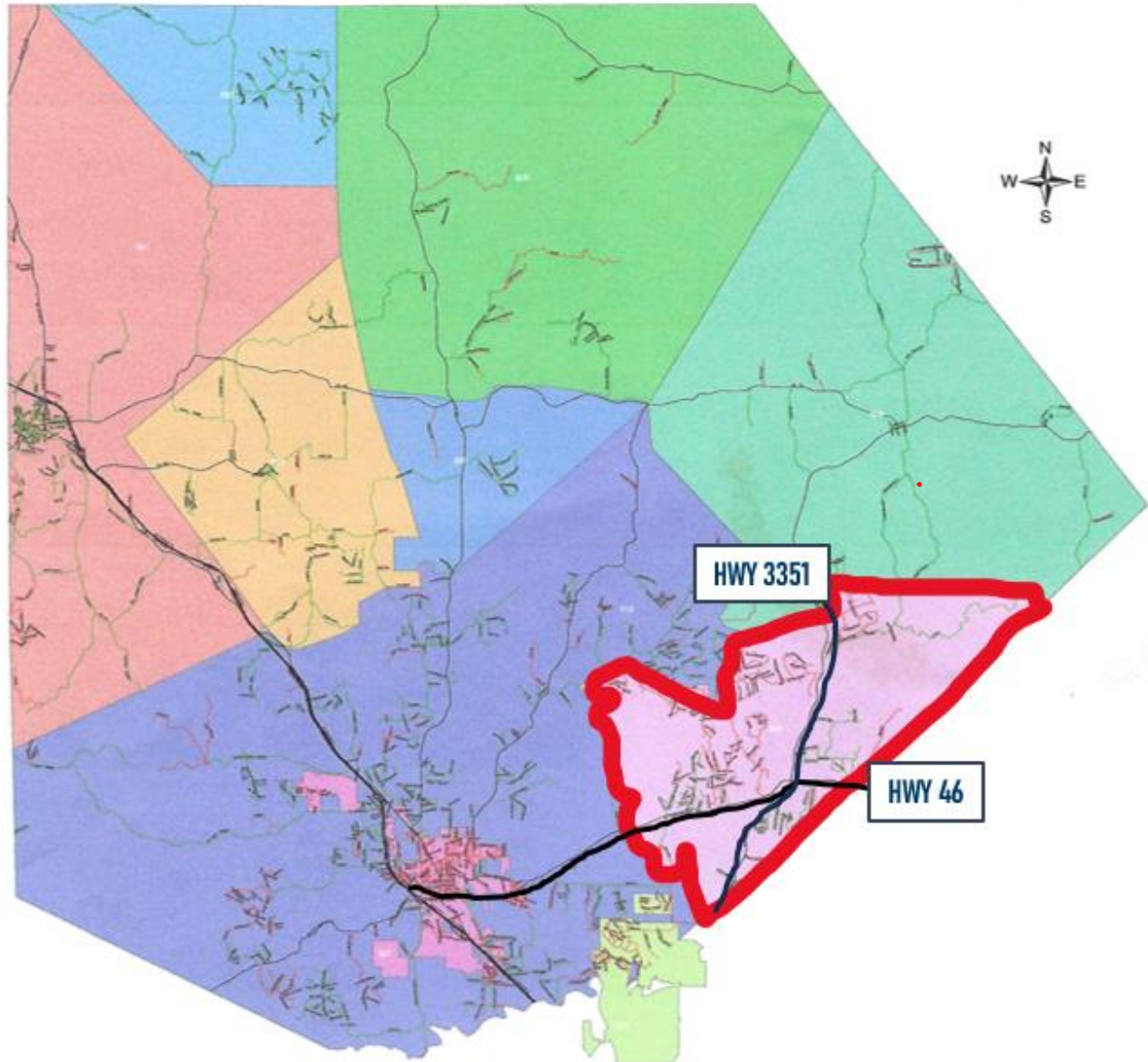
Additional Reference Materials

- Service Area
- Strategic Considerations
- FAQs



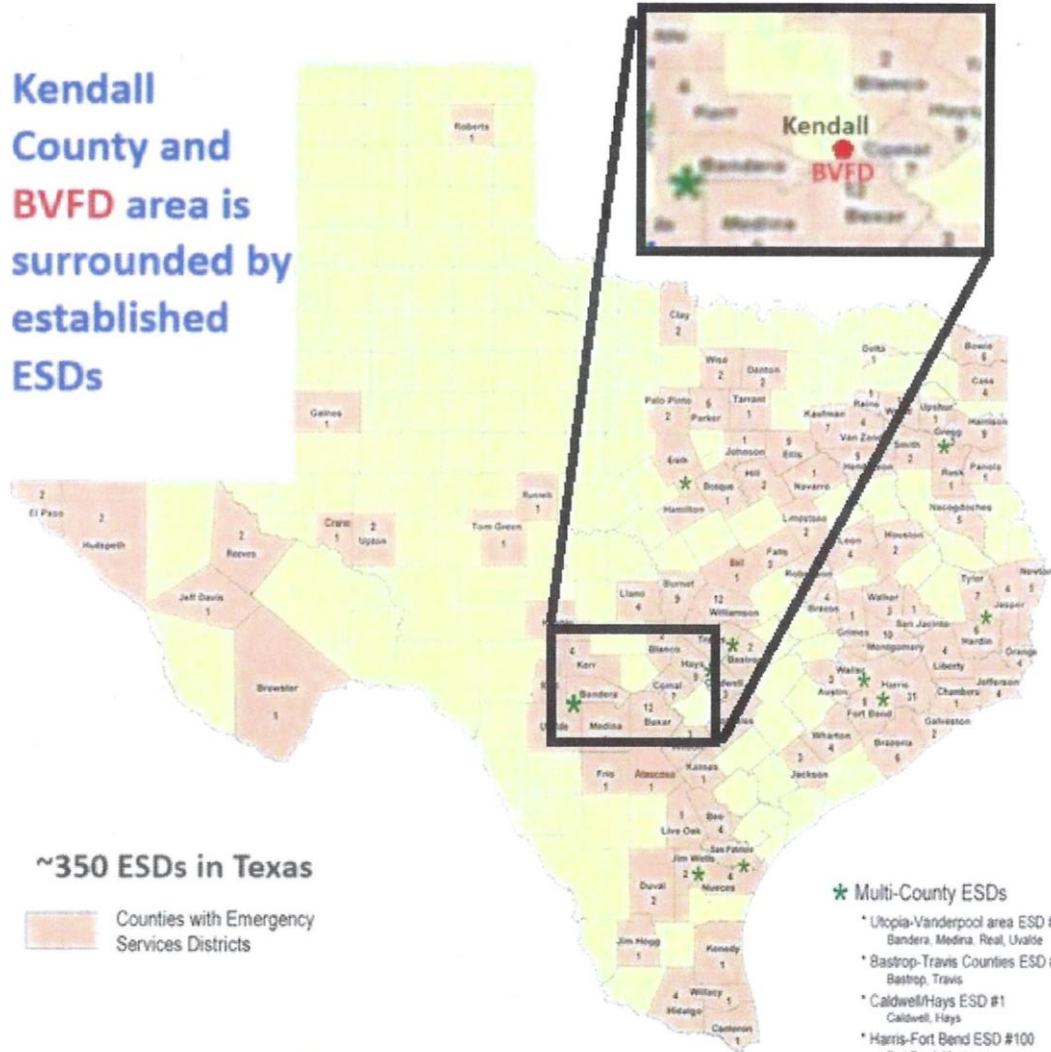
Bergheim VFD Service Area (Kendall County, TX)

- 58 square miles
- 3,000+ homes, ranches, and businesses
- Rapid growth in the area is predicted to continue

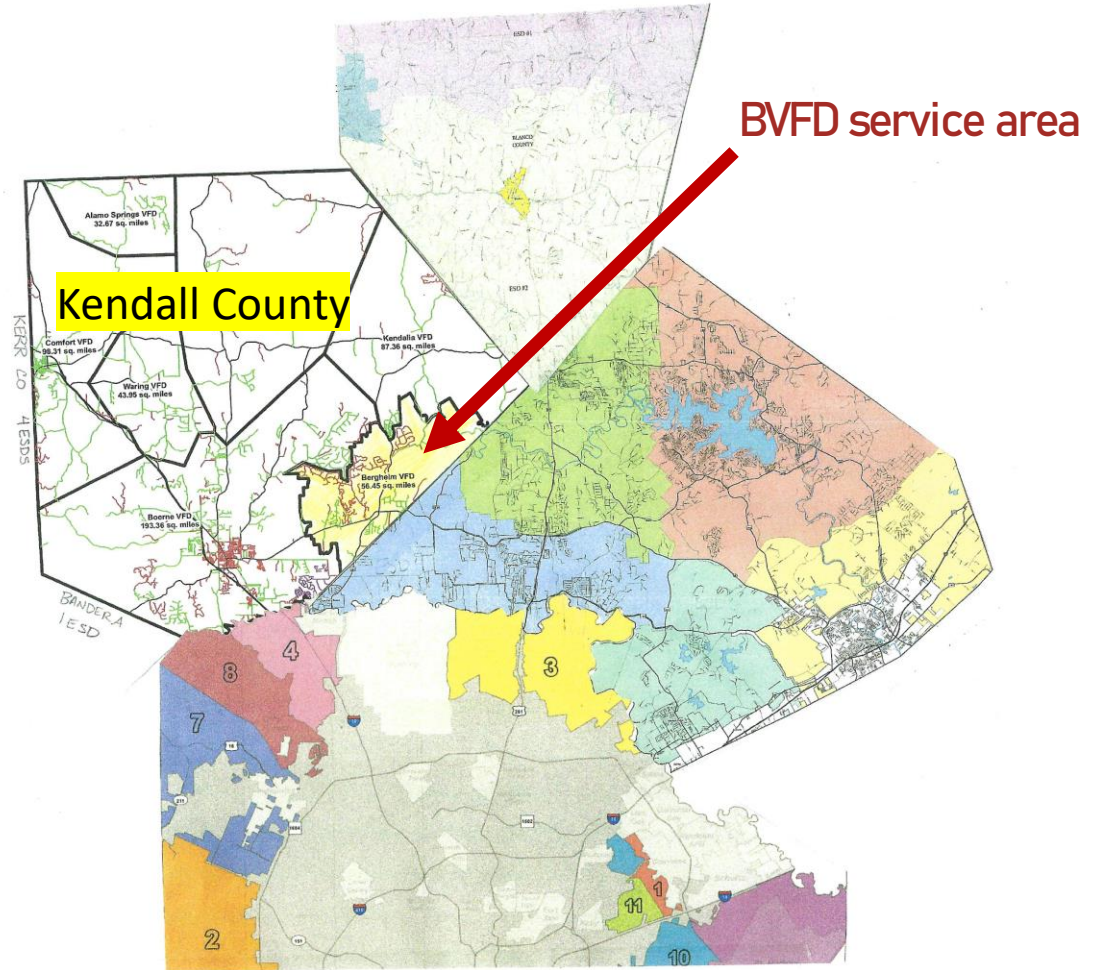


Number of Emergency Services Districts by County

Kendall County and BVFD area is surrounded by established ESDs



Kendall County and BVFD service area is surrounded by ESDs



BVFD Service Area Attributes



BVFD Service Area Metrics		
Area	58 square miles	8.8% of Kendall Co.
Length (North/South)	11 miles	
Width (East/West)	5 miles	
Major Highways	25 miles	Hwy 46; Hwy 3351
Residential Developments	12	
Homes	3,100 +	15% of Kendall Co.
Commercial Buildings	???	
Population	8,000	16% of Kendall Co.
Population Over 65	20%	
Population Growth - Projected	over 3%	

- Significant growth continues
- Suburban - not Rural; dense population
- Unique needs within Kendall County

Community Questions/Concerns	Facts
Why can't BVFD just scale to address future needs of our service area	Volunteer model will not scale - 500+ calls in 2024 performed by Volunteers. Highly dependent on a handful of people for service Most residents do not volunteer to make donations for operations
BVFD focus is fire suppression. Why so many calls	Most calls are Rescue. See chart on calls by type
My current KC property taxes pay for ambulance service (EMS). Why do we need an ESD to fund fire department	Both County and BVFD provide EMS services. County funds 1/3 of BVFD operations – the rest is voluntary donations/fundraising
The ESD model has not been well accepted in Texas	ESDs are widely accepted - 365 in Texas – see ESD Map
Our neighboring counties do not use the ESD model	ESDs exist in Comal, Bandera & Behr Counties – see ESD Map
An ESD is a one size fits all model	ESD is very adaptable from 100% paid to 100% volunteer with hybrid models possible...BVFD recommends hybrid model
Tax rates for an ESD only go up, they never go down	ESD rates often decrease with growth - Comal county experience
ESD taxes can increase each year without controls	ESD tax increase capped at 3.5% per year. ESD tax cannot exceed 10cents/\$100 of individual property value. ESD tax rate is recalculated every year. (Constitutional)
Wouldn't a county-wide ESD be better	County wide ESDs are not common because of wide variance in needs between rural and suburban areas. Less control of how monies are allocated.
An ESD is not accountable to the community	ESD Board comprised of ESD area residents
The capabilities of your emergency services provider do not impact your homeowners' insurance	ISO score can lower costs; carrier specific

Community Questions/Concerns

Why would I volunteer to pay more taxes

Facts

The status quo for BVFD is no longer sustainable.

Staffing - The all-Volunteer staffing model is already stretched. Key personnel are suffering burn-out. Maintaining responsiveness and quality of emergency services is becoming increasingly difficult

Funding - BVFD Funding is primarily from voluntary donations, is falling short of operating expenses. The shortfall is growing, meaning cash reserves are being depleted. No funds are available for large capital items.

Kendall County currently contributes funds that represent approx. 1/3 of BVFD's operating expenses. BVFD requests for additional funding have been denied

Some form of increased taxation to support emergency services in the growing suburban areas of Kendall County are inevitable. KC is exploring alternatives for providing emergency services. Funding for this initiative will likely come from either a new County-wide sales tax, or a County-wide ESD.

We need to address the staffing & funding issue now. These issues will not go away. We can't continue to just kick the can down the road

Keep tax dollars dedicated only for emergency services

Keep tax dollars local

Maintaining responsiveness and quality of emergency services is dependent upon sufficient, consistent, reliable funding. The ESD model is the best alternative.

Community Questions/Concerns

Facts

How much money does BVFD need. How will ESD tax revenues be used

24/7/365 Staffing model

Capital Reserves (facilities, apparatus, equipment, repairs/replacements)