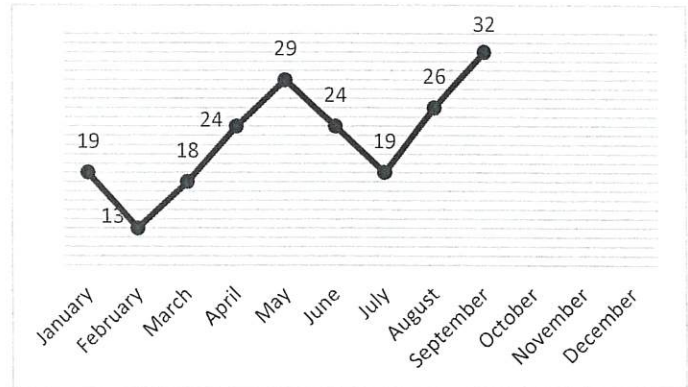


City of Houston, Alaska  
Fire Department



To: Honorable Mayor and Houston City Council  
 From: Christian Hartley, Fire Chief *CH*  
 Thru: Mayor Virgie Thompson *VT*  
 Subj: Fire Chief's Report – October 2021

Fire – Local	8	Fire – Aid	5
Rescue	4	Comm Service	4
EMS	10	Landing Zones	1
<b>TOTAL CALLS -</b>		<b>32</b>	
<b>CALLS TO DATE – 2021</b>			<b>204</b>



September was an extremely busy month, and a very successful one for us. We consistently had lower-than-normal responders answering calls due to hunting season and COVID-19 restrictions. This was a situation felt by every other fire department in the Mat-Su as well. We also spent a lot of September working to prevent future fires by reaching out to youths and adults.

Recent fires of note include a residential fire in Willow that our apparatus was the second firefighting apparatus on scene and assisted in knocking the blaze down to a manageable size, the Larae Rd fire mentioned at the last council meeting which remains under investigation by the State of Alaska Fire Marshal's Office due to circumstances discovered during our initial investigation, and an alleged arson in Meadow Lakes in which a resident attempted to evade law enforcement officers by igniting the home on fire. There were no injuries in either of the latter fires, but the Willow fire did have one firefighter sustain minor injuries to a leg as well as the civilian fatality. Another residential fire up in Willow with no injuries involved the homeowner making firestarters with wood chips. While melting wax, the candle was left unattended and ignited a fire in the garage that the resident discovered shortly after and notified 9-1-1 immediately. That early notification allowed for a quick response and extinguishment, saving the home and limiting the damage to the garage to smoke and heat.



*A recent fire in Willow fully involved*



*Larae Rd fire remains under investigation*

But it wasn't just fires. Houston also experienced several vehicle incidents such as a driver having a diabetic emergency and thankfully slowly driving into the ditch near Rel Street where they were provided with emergency medical care and made a full recovery. Another accident within 48 hours only one curve away from that site involved a young driver striking a moose on a blind corner and being knocked unconscious while the car continued to drive another quarter mile until it struck trees extremely hard and that driver sustained serious injuries. They were transported without incident and despite the amount of injuries was returned home the next day.



*Lt Russell extinguishing fire in a crawl space*

We also hosted a multijurisdictional apparatus operator course. As a result of this class, there are now 9 new engineers for Houston, Talkeetna, and West Lakes.

I would like to take this opportunity to also make note of the city's expanded citizen communication outreach. In 2018, our city invested in Nixle which is a way to send messages to people who sign up to receive them. This system saw its very first use actually with a 2018 Little Susitna River flood advisory. That alert was sent to 2,826 text message and 1,296 email recipients on August 6, 2018.

People slowly signed up as we sent out important updates and alerts up until November when we experienced the 2018 Southcentral Earthquake. Those alert about shelters and power outage updates was received by 2,931 text and 1,353 email recipients. The messaging was very effective in Houston being updated on important matters to the level that Houston was the only municipality to not receive complaints about our communication. The Nixle alerting proved itself in a time of disaster, and immediately we started getting phone calls from other cities and boroughs in Alaska. Alaska State Troopers also began pursuing Nixle at that time and have since implemented it for their agency.

The Nixle alert on last Monday about the city's election day sent 4,446 text messages, 6,665 emails, and 439 app push notifications. These app notifications are a recent addition to the Nixle platform. This shows just how popular Nixle has become and how effective it can be to send out messages about emergencies, disasters, road closures, and events like elections.



*Preschooler getting hands-on with fire hose*



*"Thank You" poster made by preschool class*



*Engineers being trained in recent course*

It is extremely easy to sign up to receive Nixles from City of Houston by texting HOUSTONAK to 888777, and then you can sign up for any ZIP codes you want to receive alerts for. The most common for our area are 99694 (Houston), 99652 (Big Lake), 99688 (Willow), and 99623 (regional physical address ZIP code).

**This council meeting happens to be the end of Fire Prevention Week. Did you check your smoke alarms yet?**

**Learn the Sounds of Fire Safety**

**firepreventionweek.org**

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