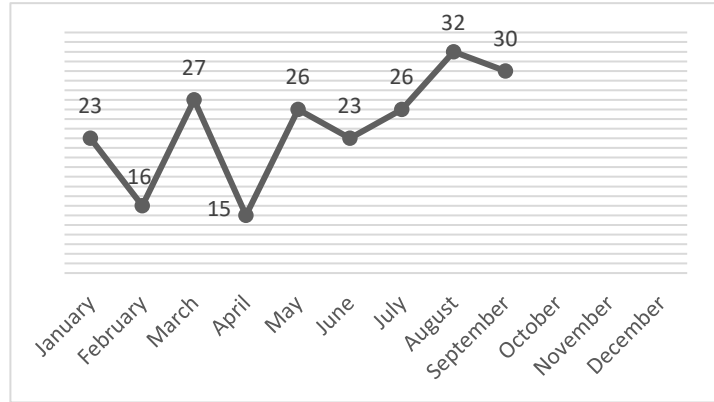




To: Honorable Mayor and Houston City Council
 From: Christian Hartley, Fire Chief *CH*
 Thru: Mayor's Office
 Subj: Fire Chief's Report – September 2023

Fire – Local	7	Fire – Aid	4
Rescue	2	Comm Service	2
EMS	14	Hazardous Mat.	3
TOTAL CALLS -		30	
CALLS TO DATE – 2022			218

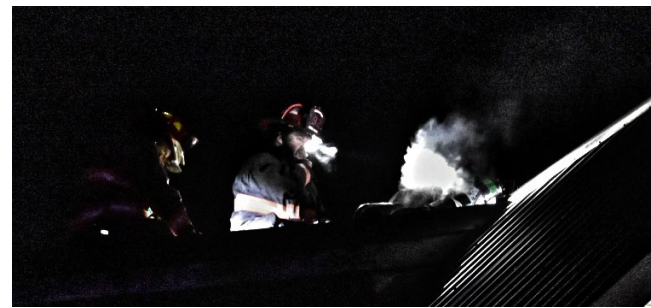


Houston averaged one call per day for the month of September, which is appropriate for this time of year as people start increasing use of heaters, wood stoves, and electricity. Some of the local calls included a semi-truck that caught fire that the driver was able to keep at bay until we arrived, a motorcycle that struck a moose literally head-on with very minor injuries, multiple carbon monoxide alarms, minor flooding at the start of the month, and everything in between.



River water over Little John Drive

There was a chimney fire on Gaunt Lane in which the family noticed the fire and did the right thing: immediately evacuate the home and call 9-1-1. Firefighters were able to limit the fire to the stack and limit damage to the areas affected by heat from the chimney.



Lieutenant Russell extinguisher a chimney fire on Gaunt Lane

A repeating problem in our city is the misuse of public lands by vehicles designed for road use. An example was a pickup that got stuck in the mud next to Little Su River near the day parking area. After consulting with the Public Works Director, we have moved the rocks back and blocked access to that area. This is because since it was opened there have been multiple vehicles stuck and a lot of damage from people mud bogging in an area designed to prevent bank erosion during floods



Truck stuck in mud at Little Susitna River day use area



Large structure fire in Big Lake, photo found online



Vehicle accident on Parks Highway near Zero Lake Road

and to improve salmon habitat.

One of our firefighters, Lisa Johansen, stepped up this month while I was away for a few weeks to teach fire extinguisher safety to students at Houston High School with help from Firefighter Seth Beard. Firefighters were also on site for a fireworks display at the high school last month. We look forward to increased activities at the high school and have started discussions with the principal to possibly start teaching safety classes at the school.

One issue with potential serious impact was addressed by coordinating between ourselves, the school, and MatCom public safety dispatch. When the school swapped function as the new school was built, the addresses remained for the footprints of the school. So, on some dispatching software it was showing a physical address that it connected with Houston High School (because of previous history) and would show the location as Houston High School. But the call was at the old high school site which is now Houston Middle School. Nobody was endangered or harmed by the delay to the call that brought this to our attention, and it has now been fixed. It's a good reminder that no matter how well you plan something and how thorough you are, there can be tertiary impacts that you never thought about.

We have applied for several grants related to wildfire mitigation that, if approved, we can partner with the Roads Department to make our community safer. The recent firebreak along the section line south of Fire Station 9-2 is one such improvement – it allows fire department access to area that may catch fire and limit the spread. More of these firebreaks would be a good thing but need funding. It was an excellent use of the excavator that the Fire Department received for free from JBER though surplus.