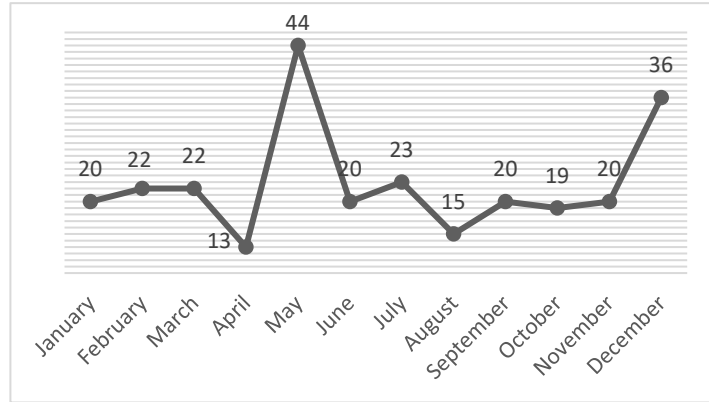




To: Honorable Mayor and Houston City Council
 From: Christian Hartley, Fire Chief *CH*
 Thru: Mayor's Office
 Subj: Fire Chief's Report – January 2023

Fire – Local	8	Fire – Aid	12
Rescue	3	Comm Service	5
EMS	8	Haz Mat	0
TOTAL CALLS -		36	
CALLS TO DATE – 2022			274



December was an extremely busy month for the entire city for all the reasons you already know, and those reasons worsen the normal stresses of firefighting. Extreme cold can quickly damage components of vehicles, and we experienced this in December at a fire in -27F weather when the gaskets in the exhaust system of one of the fire trucks froze and as a result the truck lost all compression, which a diesel motor must have to run. Fleet Maintenance from the Mat-Su Borough responded to the scene and were able to limp the truck to their facility where repairs were made, and the truck returned to service in under 48 hours.



Fire trucks at a fatality fire in Houston

Another minor damage incidence occurred to a different fire truck a few days later while responding to a structure fire in Willow when a 14 feet aluminum ladder that had fallen from someone's vehicle was abandoned in the road. PT91 struck the ladder at full speed due to no warning or way to evade it without endangering other commuters on the road. One wheel received a small chip in the rim and the tire was scratched but not deep enough to take the tire out of service. After a quick inspection, the truck continued to the fire and aided Willow in -24F weather on a structure fire.



Damaged ladder retrieved after being struck by fire truck

There are ways to combat the freezing weather, and one of them is a trailers heater used

by West Lakes Fire Department. It responded to the Houston fire to thaw equipment and personnel to sustain operations and prevent damage and injury. We thank West Lakes for having and bringing this trailer.

Houston suffered a civilian death in a structure fire in December. This person is only the second person in the history of the city to die in a fire. We cannot stress enough the importance of working smoke alarms to give you an early notification to exit the home before the heat, smoke, and gases overcome you.

High winds also wreaked havoc in Houston, though not to the extent of the Matanuska Valley. Trees in power lines routinely took out electricity for entire neighborhoods or often communities. This is a repeating problem with the number of beetle-killed trees in our region and the increasing number of high winds. The only solution shy of clear cutting all the dead trees from the right of way and beyond it by 100 feet is to protect the power lines by burying them, but this is not considered economically viable by MEA in many discussions that have been held over the past decade. But until there is some sort of protection of our electrical grid from wind-blown beetle-killed trees, these incidents will only increase. Power failure in winter can be as deadly as wildfire in summer, and both are a risk in the windy Mat-Su. Another solution is important and should be a discussion occurring now.



Wind-blown tree fallen into power lines on Dodge Dr



Trailer heater to thaw crews and equipment in extreme freezing weather