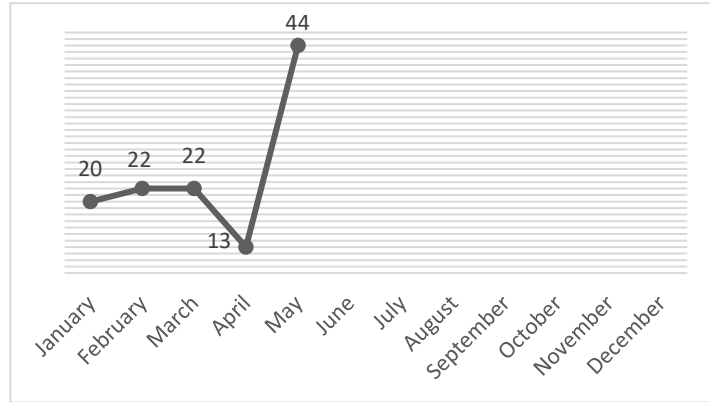




To: Honorable Mayor and Houston City Council
 From: Christian Hartley, Fire Chief *CH*
 Thru: Mayor Virgie Thompson
 Subj: Fire Chief's Report – June 2022

Fire – Local	9	Fire – Aid	19
Rescue	0	Comm Service	3
EMS	11	Haz Mat	2
TOTAL CALLS -		44	
CALLS TO DATE – 2022			121



May was one of the busiest months we have ever day operationally since we began tracking things, and I cannot express my expression for the dedication of our crews loudly enough. In fact, prior to 2010 there were entire years that could pass with fewer than the 44 calls we experienced in May. Your firefighters stood up to meet the challenge head-on in every incident. There were several calls that we were extremely proud of the results, such as preventing Willow Townsite from burning down, and other calls that broke hearts. But at the end of every call the crew remained ready and willing to tackle the next one.



Aerial photo of Willow Townsite Fire

Some calls were more challenging than others, such as the abandoned vehicle lit on fire on Zero Lake Road in the ad hoc shooting range that is on Forestry land north of city maintenance. Because the road is not maintained, apparatus had a delayed response time to get to scene. The fire was limited in its spread to wildland, but the entire Zero Lake Road area is scary to all of us with the population of trees killed by Spruce Bark Beetle infestation and black spruce. But as long as illegal and illicit activities occur up that logging trail, all we can do is prepare.



Firefighters preventing fires by chipping wood

A fire just before the issuance of the current burn permit restriction is a perfect example of why this suspension is necessary. The person did just about everything right – they had water on site and next to them, they were sitting in a chair monitoring the fire, and they kept the fire at less than 3 feet in diameter. It was a soda box full of cardboard being burned. But a single gust of wind hit, spread the embers on dry grass nearby, and that ran in the wind. When we extinguished the

fire, the person lost a snowmachine, a travel trailer, and a vehicle in addition to damage to the property itself. Luckily he was uninjured and crews stopped the fire before it got into a patch of black spruce rees nearby.

A wildfire in Caswell saw two of our ATVs deployed to move equipment and personnel. This shows the importance of being prepared for every emergency. It also further demonstrates the importance of people to have water on site of any scene where a fire may ignite, whether accidental or intentional.

Of course, we participated with West Lakes Fire Department with our joint Community Wildfire Preparedness Day event. It was very well attended, and the city woodchipper was used with much appreciation. It is difficult to identify exactly how many fires we prevented by providing an alternative disposal method for trees and limbs, but there was well over 80 cubic yards worth chipped up. As expected, the wood chips were claimed and gone before the end of the weekend.

We will be providing crews on June 4 Little Susitna River Classic cleanup to be ready for any incidents that occur there. I hope to provide a report on Thursday for this event.



Firefighters fight fire in midst of garbage at Zero Lake Rd



Houston firefighter Alma Hartley at Caswell wildland fire



Houston and Willow FDs, LifeMed, and Alaska State Troopers at a vehicle collision call



Houston FD and Mat-Su Borough EMS gave ambulance tour to ETT students at Houston Jr. Sr. High School