



ANNUAL REPORT 2025



Cottage Grove Volunteer Fire Department

www.cottagegrovefire.org

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MESSAGE FROM CHIEF ARCHIBALD

Dear Community Members, Community Leaders, and Fire Department Staff,

Another year has concluded with the Cottage Grove Volunteer Fire Department responding to 387 calls for service—a 5% increase over 2024. This report provides an overview of our department's staffing, emergency response data, and key accomplishments from the past year.

Our Dedicated Team Established in 1929, our department remains volunteer-led, with staffing provided 24/7, 365 days a year. We are currently powered by 41 active members and one honorary member from the Village and Town of Cottage Grove, as well as the Town of Pleasant Springs. For nearly a century, our staff has embodied a deep commitment to community safety and professional emergency response.

Improved ISO Ratings In 2025, an ISO audit reflected the high caliber of our fire protection systems. While the Village maintained its excellent **ISO 3 rating**, we are proud to announce that the Townships of Cottage Grove and Pleasant Springs improved from a 5/10 to an **ISO 4/10 rating**. These ratings measure our suppression capabilities and prevention efforts; higher scores not only signify a safer community but also help lower property insurance premiums for our residents.

Recruitment & Training In 2025, we launched a formal Explorer Program for youth ages 16-18, offering a dual-credit pathway for students to earn college credits in fire service while in high school. While our roster saw a net neutral change this year—recruiting nine new members to offset nine departures—our recruitment and retention efforts remain a top priority through annual mailers and community drives.

Divisional Impact Our five divisions—Maintenance, Public Education, Personnel/Records, Training/Safety, and Fire Inspections—ensure we operate at peak efficiency:

- **Training:** Our staff completed over 2,965 hours of training in 2025.
- **Public Education:** We continue to host station tours and fire prevention demonstrations for local schools and childcare facilities.
- **Inspections:** Our team successfully inspected all businesses across our three primary jurisdictions.

Closing Gratitude I want to extend my sincere thanks to our staff for their tireless dedication. If you see our volunteers in the community, please take a moment to thank them for their service. I also want to recognize the local employers who grant our volunteers the flexibility to leave work and respond to emergencies. It has been an honor to serve as your Chief since 2018, and I look forward to our continued partnership with our municipal leaders and residents.

Fire Chief Nick Archibald

DEPARTMENT OVERVIEW

Our Service Area & Community Impact The Cottage Grove Volunteer Fire Department proudly serves the Town of Cottage Grove, the Town of Pleasant Springs, and the Village of Cottage Grove. Our jurisdiction covers 48 square miles and a population of approximately 15,000 residents. As our community experiences rapid growth, our coverage area has expanded to include over 350 commercial properties. This includes complex structures such as a 3.1-million-square-foot warehouse, ten buildings exceeding three stories, and the largest hazardous materials generator in Dane County. We also provide protection for four schools, four assisted living facilities, 20 miles of Interstate, and the ATC electrical power routing station.

Facilities & Equipment The Department operates out of a single station, housing a comprehensive fleet: a ladder truck, two engines, two tenders, a squad, a rapid response/brush truck, and a command car. We also maintain a UTV and a vintage parade truck, both funded entirely through community donations. While our municipal partners fund our core operations and equipment, our roots remain in the community; our very first engine was purchased by residents in 1911, leading to our official state recognition in 1929.

Mutual Aid & Regional Leadership; Beyond our primary jurisdiction, we provide automatic aid to 23 surrounding departments, including Truax Field and the Dane County Regional Airport. Our department's influence extends beyond our borders; we were instrumental in establishing uniform accountability and Rapid Intervention Team (RIT) programs within Dane County.

A Legacy of Volunteer Service & Community Commitment: Since our founding, the Department has been staffed entirely by dedicated volunteers. These members receive stipends for training and maintenance, and beginning in 2026, will receive stipends for incident response. We place a premium on safety and professionalism, offering training weekly under the guidance of a certified Emergency Services Instructor. Our members are honored to serve and remain humbled by the continued support of our families, neighbors, and municipal leaders.



RISK MANAGEMENT STATEMENT

"The Cottage Grove Fire Department will respond with the assumption that we can save lives, property and the environment. We will risk our lives to save a savable life. We will risk our lives in a calculated manner to save property. We will not risk our lives to save those lives, property or the environment that are unsavable."

DEPARTMENT MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission shall be accomplished through quality SERVICE delivery as follows:

SAFETY: for the community we protect and the personnel that protects it

EDUICATION: through programs for our residents and youth

RESPONSIVENESS: to the suggestions, influences, appeals or efforts of others

VISION: from the past, to the present, and into the future

INSPECTIONS: investigations and pre-incident plans

COMMITMENT: to our community, our families, ourselves and each other

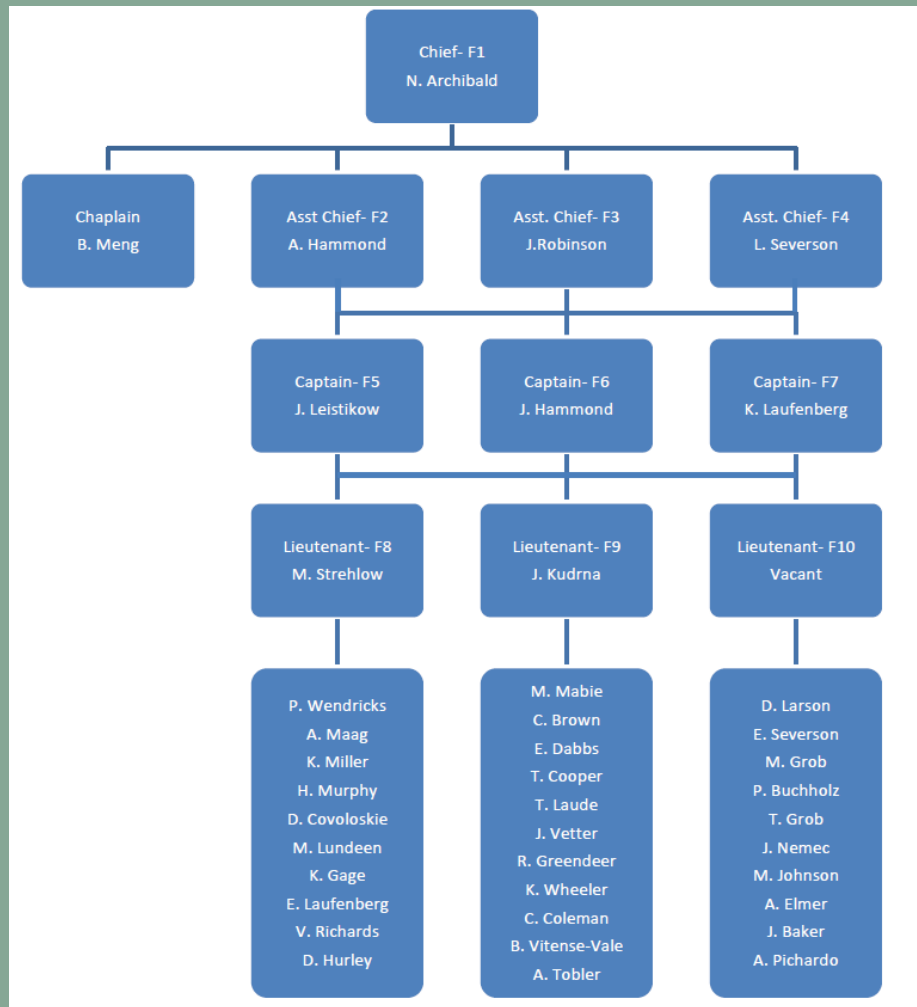
EMPATHY: for all

The fulfillment of our mission begins with training and pre-incident planning. All our volunteer firefighters are, at a minimum, certified at the WI Entry Level Firefighter level. Most of our Department members are certified at Firefighter I or II levels. Staffing also includes certified: Fire Instructors, Fire Inspectors, Safety Officers, Wildland Firefighters, Hazardous Material Technicians, Ice Water Rescue Technicians, and Apparatus Engineers through State and Federal Programs and the National Fire Academy. Our training division provides regular opportunities for members to advance their skills in fire- fighting and rescue operations.

DEPARTMENT GOALS AND INITIATIVES

- **Provide a productive and safe training environment for firefighters by performing and ensuring an ongoing evaluation of the CGFD training program.**
 - Review any Instructor Training needs
 - Maintain an Annual and Monthly Training Schedule
 - Craft training courses with schedules, objectives, and goals
 - Ensure adequate documentation and details of training records
 - Develop and plan training with partner agencies (EMS, LE, and other Fire)
 - Monitor personnel for attendance monthly
 - Provide member orientation and probationary training
- **Provide effective community outreach, hazard assessments, and planning by evaluating the Fire Inspection Program.**
 - Review any Inspector Training needs
 - Conduct inspection ordinance reviews with municipalities
 - Ensure effective outreach and communication related to fire prevention, emergencies, and general department information through PIO/social media
 - Update Pre-Plan Information in Records Management System
- **Ensure effective response with minimum staffing/responder turnout to all calls.**
 - Evaluate Responder Turnout
 - Assess Weekends and Holidays responses
 - Assess Department needs, member availability, and future planning
- **Ensure adequate and timely response to all emergency calls.**
 - Evaluate Call Response time and Response Data
 - Utilize MDTs to assess needed improvements
 - Review response matrix and adjust if necessary
- **Ensure staff have access to all equipment and PPE they need to complete and perform their duties safely and to the best of their ability.**
 - Assess Equipment and PPE needs
 - Evaluate current capital budget evaluation and predictions
 - Completion of biannual gear inspections to determine gear needs
- **Ensure that the Health and Safety of members are continuously accounted for.**
 - Promote regular gear washing to limit carcinogen exposure
 - Ensure newly active members complete required health screenings
 - Promote Annual Physicals
 - Ensure timely use of Defusings and Debriefings post incident by trained members and professionals
 - Ensure that members always have access to EAP resources and that resource information is always posted
- **Ensure that all members receive fair and equal treatment, and all members and prospective members feel welcomed, included, supported, and valued.**
 - Ensure each company has unit cohesion
 - Continuing recruitment and retention efforts
- **Ensure that all response incidents are properly documented by responding staff.**
 - Ensure a consistent approach to documentation and data entry
 - Provide appropriate training to applicable staff

DEPARTMENT ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



F1 Chief- ALL

F2 Assistant Chief- Administration (Budget/Records Management, Policy)

F3 Assistant Chief- Operations (Performance/Efficiency Assessments, Safety)

F4 Assistant Chief- Assets (Apparatus/Equipment/Personnel Management, Training)

F5 Captain- Training (Mandatory, Make-Up, Officer, etc.)

F6 Captain- Planning (Emergency Action Plans, Plan Review/Inspection Coordinator, Honor Guard Events, etc.)

F7 Captain- Prevention/Safety (Pre-Plans, Investigations/Inspections, Safety)

F8 Lieutenant- Personnel/Special Events (Explorers, Honor Guard, Orientation, Public Events, etc.)

F9 Lieutenant- Public Information/Education (Social Media, Website, Inquiry Response)

F10 Lieutenant- Vacant

DEPARTMENT STAFF



Nick Archibald
Fire Chief
LOS 18.70 years



April Hammond
Assistant Chief
LOS 24.67 years



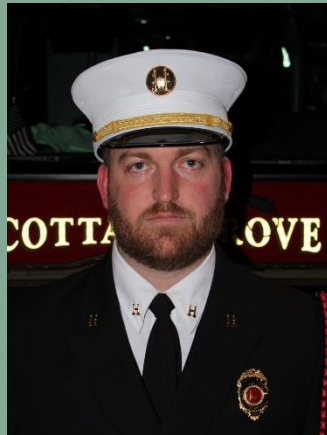
Jess Robinson
Assistant Chief
LOS 15.93 years



Lance Severson
Assistant Chief
LOS 24.67 years



Justin Leistikow
Captain
LOS 6.28 years



Josh Hammond
Captain
LOS 18.29 years



Kevin Laufenberg
Captain
LOS 18.70 years



Mitch Strehlow
Lieutenant
LOS 6.52 years



Jason Kudrna
Lieutenant
LOS 10.19 years



Brad Meng
Chaplain
LOS 0.65 years



Joel Hammond
Active Honorary
LOS 47.19



Joseph Baker
Firefighter
LOS 4.61 years



Cole Brown
Firefighter
LOS 9.77 years



Patrick Buchholz
Driver/Operator
LOS 1.78 years



Cadance Coleman
Firefighter
LOS 3.10 years



Trevor Cooper
Firefighter
LOS 5.44 years



Dawson Covoloskie
Firefighter
LOS 3.77 years



Emma Dabbs
Firefighter
LOS 4.86 years



Angela Elmer
Firefighter
LOS 4.35 years



Kennedy Gage
Firefighter
2.10 Years



Ryan Greendeer
Firefighter
LOS 4.77 years



Mike Grob
Driver/Operator
LOS 6.28 years



Thomas Grob
Firefighter
LOS 7.33 years



Dane Hurley
Firefighter
LOS 0.26 years



Morgan Johnson
Firefighter
LOS 3.44 years



Dennis Larson
Firefighter
LOS 36.93 years



Tom Laude
Firefighter
LOS 5.94 years



Michael Lundeen
Firefighter
LOS 2.77 years



Arlin Maag
Firefighter
LOS 15.35 Years



Matt Mabie
Firefighter
LOS 25.19 years



Katie Miller
Firefighter
LOS 7.85 years



Hristiyan Murphy
Firefighter
LOS 2.70 years



Joe Nemeec
Firefighter
LOS 3.19 years



Alvaro Pichardo
Firefighter
LOS 0.36 years



Vincent Richards
Firefighter
LOS 0.43 years



Erik Severson
Driver/Operator
LOS 29.79 years



Amanda Tobler
Firefighter
LOS 0.26 years



Jake Vetter
Firefighter
LOS 3.94 years



Brandon Vitense-Vale
Firefighter
LOS 0.26 years



Paul Wendricks
Firefighter
LOS 27.95 years



Kyle Wheeler
Firefighter
LOS 3.52



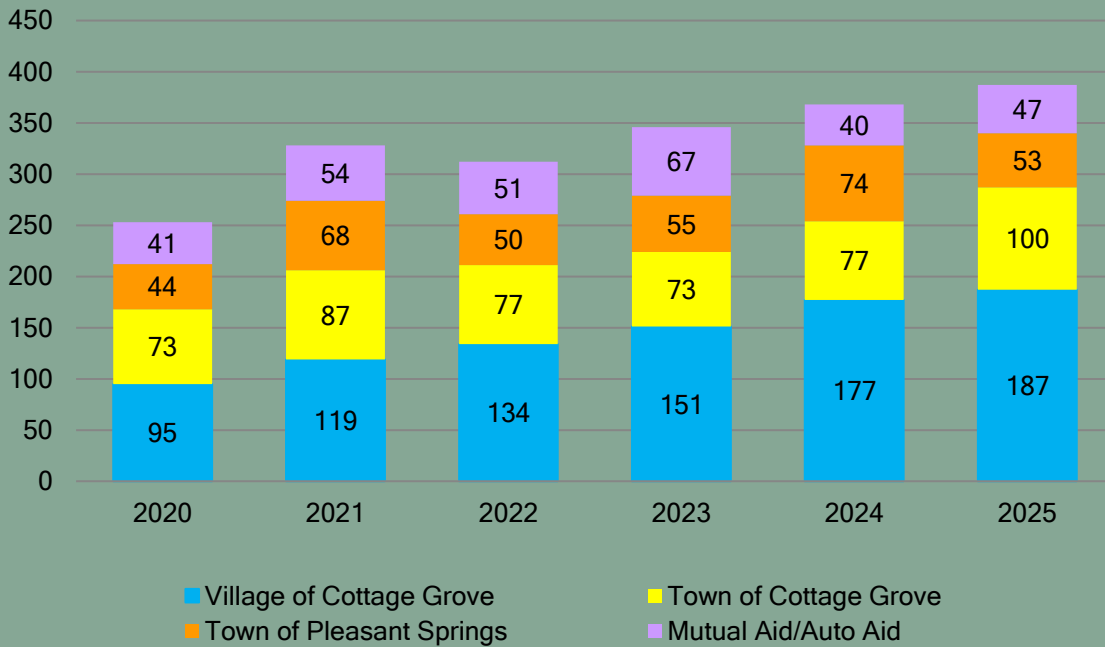
Evan Laufenberg
Explorer
LOS 0.65 years

CALL DATA AND ANALYSIS

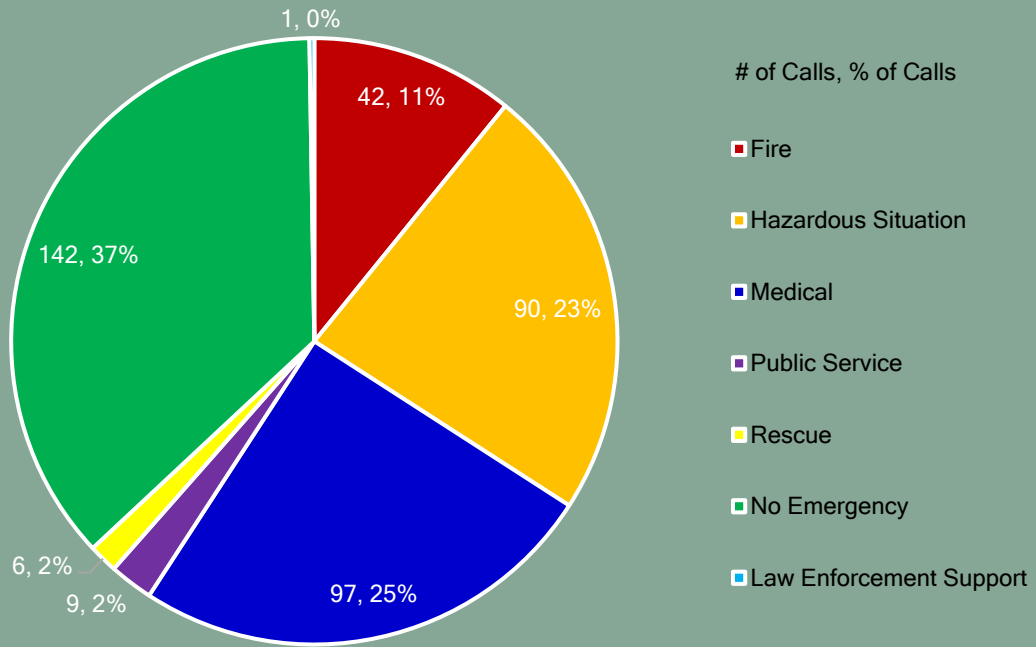
Total Runs by Year



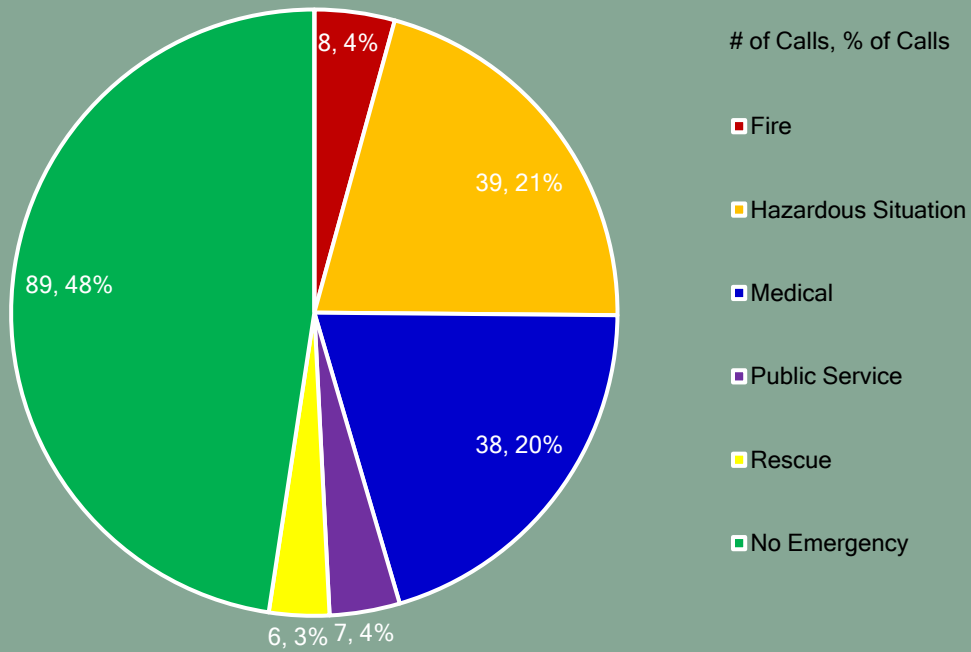
Runs by Area



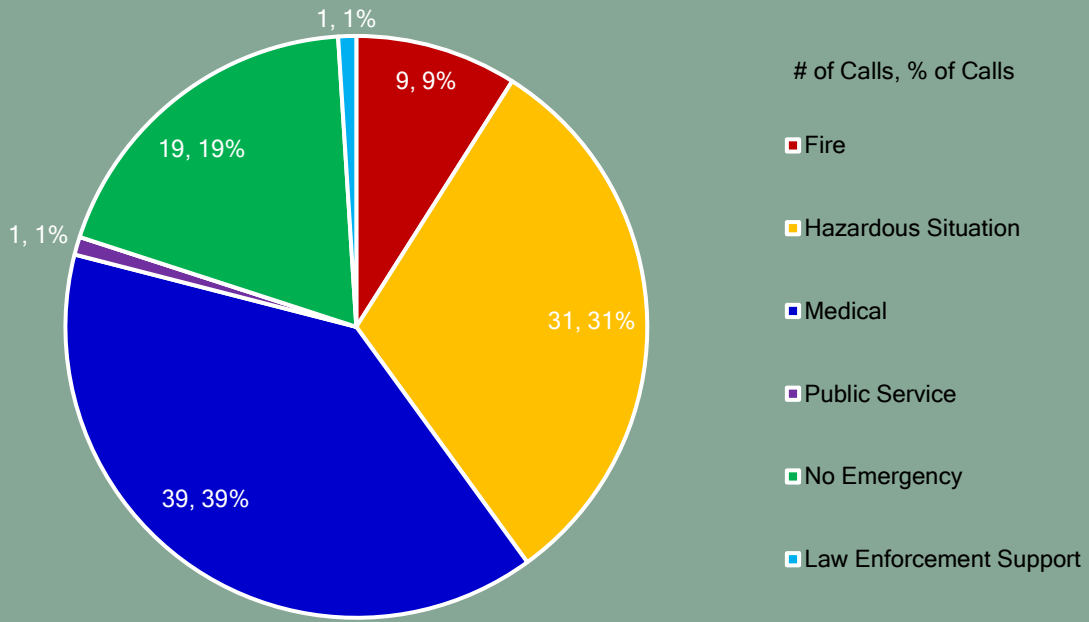
2025 Call Types - All



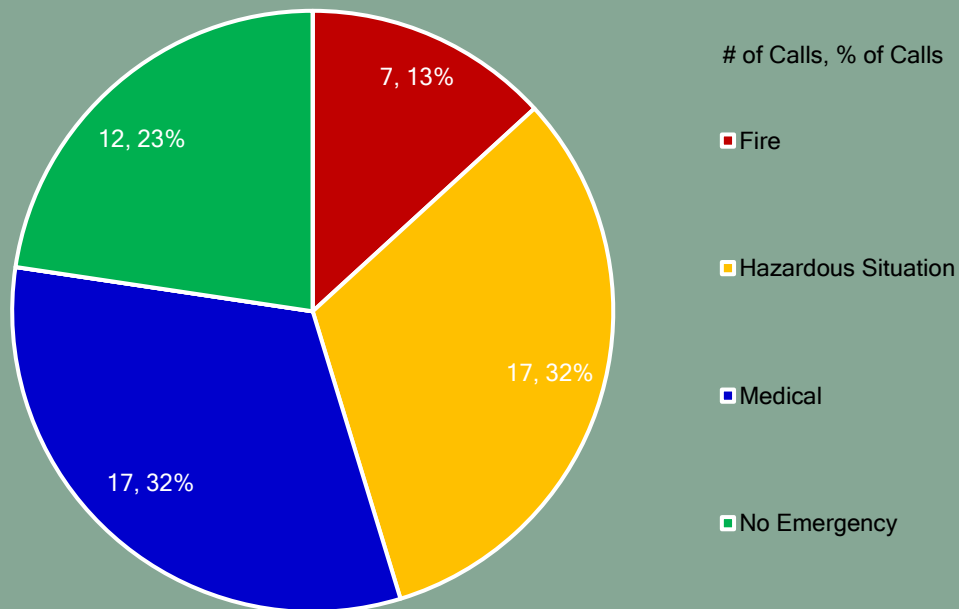
2025 Call Types - Village of Cottage Grove



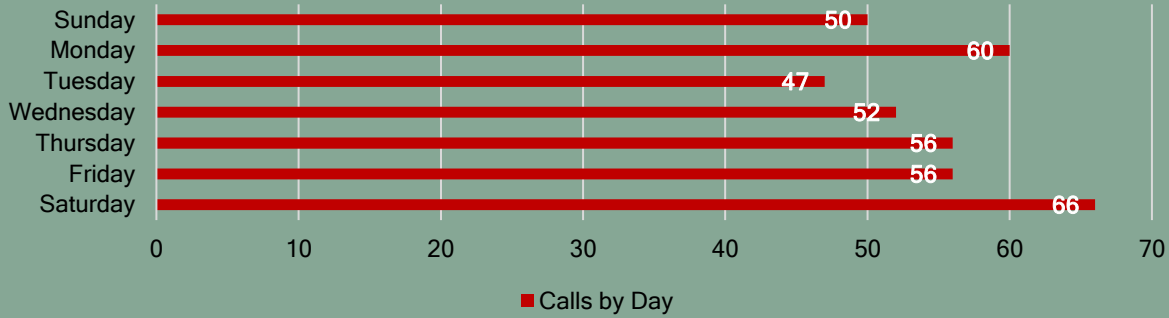
2025 Call Types - Town of Cottage Grove



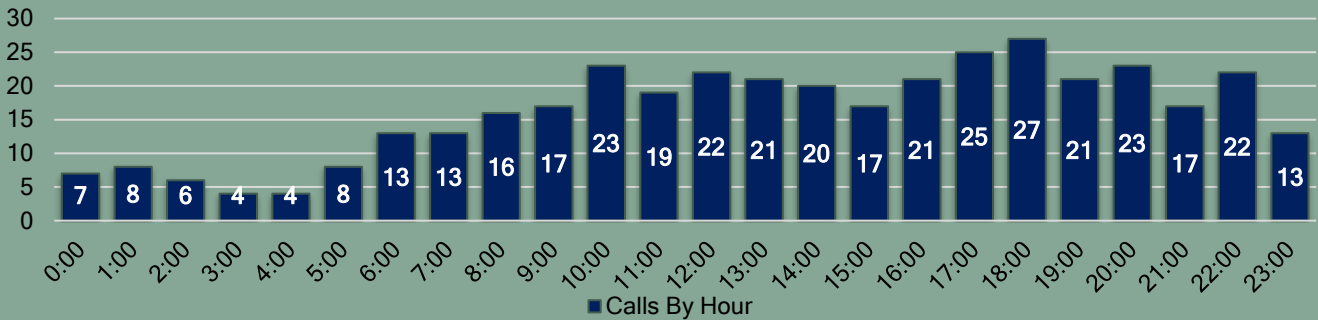
2025 Call Types - Town of Pleasant Springs



2025 Calls by Day



2025 Calls By Hour



2025 Response Time Averages

The Cottage Grove Fire Department prioritizes safety by utilizing non-emergent responses unless dispatch information indicates a threat to life, serious injury, or significant property damage. Recognizing that emergency responses inherently increase risk to both first responders and the public, we carefully balance that risk against the potential benefits of a faster arrival. This decision-making process continues from initial notification through arrival, with personnel adjusting response levels based on real-time updates.

The following data includes both emergent and non-emergent responses.

	Average Turnout Time 1 st Apparatus	Average Travel Time 1 st Apparatus	Average TOTAL Response Time 1 st Apparatus ALL call types	Average TOTAL Engine Response Time for Confirmed Fire	Average TOTAL Response Time for ALL Apparatus ALL Call types
VCG	00:27	5:23	5:53	9:19 *(4)	7:37
TCG	00:29	5:14	5:55	10:58 *(1)	8:21
TPS	00:57	7:59	8:46	NA *(0)	10:36

*Total number of Structure fire types reported in 2025 (includes cooking fires contained to a container and fires extinguished prior to arrival.)
 Note: Times are dependent on Dispatch accuracy and Dispatch manual entry. NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments (a best practice standard) recommends a response time of 9 minutes in urban areas, 10 minutes in suburban areas, and 14 minutes in rural areas for structural firefighting responses.

FIRE PREVENTION

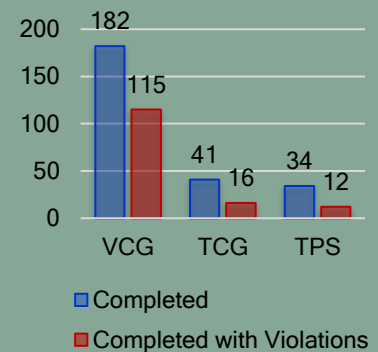
The Cottage Grove Fire Department is committed to safeguarding our residents, business owners, and visitors through proactive education and hazard reduction. Our prevention team possesses an elite level of technical expertise, featuring eight Certified Fire Inspectors and three trained inspectors. Among our staff, five members are Licensed Fire Detection, Prevention, and Suppression Inspectors, one is a licensed Commercial Building Inspector, and others hold Journeyman licenses in Sprinkler Fitting and HVAC. This background in professional trades provides our department with a distinct advantage in fire inspections, prevention strategies, and arson investigations. In 2025, our partner municipalities updated their local ordinances regarding inspection frequency. The Town and Village of Cottage Grove now conduct formal inspections once per year, with additional follow-ups performed as necessary to ensure continued safety.

Development & Plan Review Throughout 2025, our inspectors played a vital role in community growth, reviewing numerous commercial building plans and conducting initial walkthroughs at new construction sites. The department remains committed to collaborating with municipal leaders to provide expert input on future development proposals.

Inspection & Compliance Our team completed **400** fire inspections this year to ensure adherence to SPS 314, NFPA, and local fire code requirements. These inspections occur annually in the Village and Town of Cottage Grove, and twice per year in the Town of Pleasant Springs. When violations were identified, our inspectors focused on providing property owners with the education and follow-up necessary to achieve full compliance.

Data & Pre-Planning By maintaining meticulous occupancy records, our inspectors ensure that our emergency response teams have the most accurate information available for effective pre-planning and scene safety.

2025 Fire Inspections



Community Outreach & Fire Prevention Week In October 2025, the Fire Department hosted its annual Open House in coordination with Fire Prevention Week. As the nation's longest-running public health observance—commemorated since 1922 in honor of the Great Chicago Fire—this week serves as our premier opportunity for community engagement. This year's event featured a powerful live fire demonstration hosted by the National Fire Sprinkler Association, alongside station tours and risk-reduction education.

Year-Round Engagement Our commitment to the community extends well beyond October. In 2025, the department was a visible presence at several local events, including Marketplace Dayz, Community Night Out, Touch-a-Truck, and Christmas in the Grove.

Furthermore, our staff prioritized youth safety through regular fire drills and educational visits to local schools and childcare facilities. While these events are often festive, they serve a serious purpose: empowering our residents with the proactive knowledge and tools necessary to plan for and prevent critical incidents.

TRAINING

In 2025, the Cottage Grove Fire Department conducted **120** in-house training classes and six Madison College certification courses. Combined with various specialized and online programs, staff completed a total of **2,965** training hours. Our annual training schedule, developed each December, prioritizes fire and rescue strategies. To stay proactive, the Department continuously adapts to advanced techniques by reviewing target hazards, water supply and movement, fireground tactics, ICS, firefighter safety, and RIT operations. In 2025, the Training Division provided training on:

- Search and Rescue
- Ground Ladders
- Ropes & Knots
- Firefighter Survival
- Fireground Tactics
- Wildland Live Fire Training
- Rural Water Movement
- Turbo Draft Training
- Exterior Fireground Operations
- Municipal Water Movement
- Hose Advancement and Hose Loads
- Vertical Ventilation
- Incident Command
- Radio Communications
- Accountability
- SCBA Awareness
- RIT Training
- ATV/UTV Training
- Air Consumption Drills
- Aerial Ladder Training
- Technical Rescues
- CPR Training
- Annual Facepiece Fit Testing
- Driver Operator Training/EVOC



Staff members also pursued external development through specialized seminars and hands-on regional training. Highlights included Rural Water Operations in Oregon, Live Fire training in Stoughton, and Ice Rescue training with the Marshall Fire Department. Additionally, members completed advanced certifications in Peer Support, Crisis Intervention, Fire Investigation, and Advanced ASIM with Dane County.

Throughout these sessions, our members demonstrated exceptional professionalism and dedication. Their commitment to the fire service is especially commendable as they balanced these rigorous requirements alongside their professional, personal, and family obligations.

Course/Certification	No. Completed in 2025
WI State Firefighter I/Hazmat Operations	1
W State Firefighter II	1
WI State Pump Operator	3
WI State Fire Inspector I	1
WI State Fire Instructor I	2
WI State Fire Officer I	2
Pro-Board Fire Officer IV	1
Ice Rescue	4
Advanced ASIM	6
Advanced CISD	4

RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION

The Cottage Grove Fire Department, like 80% of communities across the nation, relies on volunteers to answer the call. If you are at least 18 years of age, reside and/or work in the Town or Village of Cottage Grove and have an interest in learning more, please call the Department's non-emergency number (608-839-4343 ext. 13), and a member will contact you to answer any questions and provide you with additional information. You can visit the Cottage Grove Fire Department website at www.cottagegrovefire.org for more information or to apply.

The Cottage Grove Fire Department will supply you with your own personal protective equipment and the necessary training. The community will provide you with the work. Because the Department is fully volunteer, it is important the Training Program and modules correlate and provide a direct balance with a member's family and home life. All training is paid for by the Department. Training evolutions are scheduled on the first, third, and fourth Tuesday evenings of the month. Additional training and make-ups are often scheduled on the fifth Tuesday. Members also complete training and truck checks on scheduled Sunday mornings.

In addition to Department training evolutions, new members are required to complete basic firefighting or driver-operator courses through MATC or provide documentation of completed courses. The Cottage Grove Fire Department will pay for any course fees and provide necessary textbooks.

We are pleased to announce that applications are now open for our Fire Explorer Program. This initiative is designed for high school students ages 16-18 who are interested in volunteering or pursuing a career in public safety. Participants will receive classroom instruction in CPR, emergency communications, general fire suppression, rescue operations, and EMS education. Explorers can participate in the Madison College Next-Gen Program, coordinated directly through their local high school. Admission is competitive and limited to a select number of candidates each year. Selection is based on academic standing (grades), career goals and interests, background investigation and medical screening, and current program availability

Note: Applicants under the age of 18 must provide written consent from a parent or legal guardian to participate.



NEWS AND UPDATES

The Fire Department is pleased to announce the upcoming arrival of a new Fire Vent roof prop, scheduled for delivery in Spring 2026. This vital training tool was made possible through a 2024 **Ascendium** grant, supplemented by community donations and proceeds from local events like the **annual festival**. This prop offers diverse training scenarios including ventilation, forcible entry, firefighter survival, and rapid intervention.



Image: FireVent



Each year, the Hydrite team collaborates closely with the Fire Department to provide site-specific plant tours, specialized training, and updated pre-plans. Their technical expertise is an invaluable resource for our members. In 2025, **Hydrite** furthered this partnership with a significant donation of hazardous materials (HazMat) spill response equipment. These supplies will enhance our ability to manage spill-related incidents rapidly and effectively, benefiting safety efforts throughout our immediate community and across Dane County.

The Fire Department successfully acquired and installed a new track system for our UTV, thanks to a generous \$2,500 donation from the **Utica Nora Rockdale Trailblazers Snowmobile Club** and a private donor. These contributions covered the total cost of the equipment and installation. With this upgrade, our team can now access remote terrain with ease, significantly improving our response times for wildfires and off-road rescues. We are deeply grateful for this support, which ensures our personnel have the specialized equipment needed to serve the community effectively.



2025 COTTAGE GROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT AWARDS

Responder of the Year: Patrick Buchholz

Captain's Award: Joe Nemec

Top Call Percentages:

FO: Nick Archibald	73%
FF2/FF1: Emma Dabbs	50%
ELFF/DO: Patrick Buchholz	58%

Most Training Attended:

FO: April Hammond	206.25 hours
FF2/FF1: Hristiyan Murphy	206.25 hours
ELFF/DO: Patrick Buchholz	84.75 hours

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

FIRE DEPARTMENT CONTACTS

Chief - Nick Archibald

Chief@CottageGroveFire.org

NArchibald@CottageGroveFire.org

Public Information - Jason Kudrna

JKudrna@CottageGroveFire.org

Training Division - Justin Leistikow

JLeistikow@CottageGroveFire.org

Fire Prevention- Josh Hammond

Inspections@CottageGroveFire.org

JHammond@CottageGroveFire.org

Public Education/Events- Mitch Strehlow

MStrehlow@CottageGroveFire.org

Festival Chairman - Kevin Laufenberg

Festival@CottageGroveFire.org



988
SUICIDE
& CRISIS
LIFELINE

There is hope



Talk with us. If you or someone you know needs support now, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org



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