# Orleans County Fire & EMS Strategic Planning Report

**Final Report Presentation to Key Stakeholders**

**July 23, 2026**

# The MRI Approach



# The MRI Goal

***To work in partnership with a wide range of stakeholders to create a report that becomes a useful guide and a resource that shapes a vision for the success of the organizations that comprise the Orleans County Fire and EMS Services as they approach the challenges and transitions of the future.***

**Fire/EMS Collaborative Taskforce Opportunity**

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# Thank you

- Justin Niederhofer –Orleans Emergency Management
- Orleans Emergency Management
- Each of the Fire Departments
- Local Village and Municipal Leaders
- Sheriff Bourke
- Mercy EMS




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# Purpose of the Study

- Support Volunteers:  retain and strengthen the volunteer system
- Conduct a comprehensive review of Orleans County Fire & EMS Operations
- Improve Safety
- Improve EMS delivery




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# Strengths of Orleans County

- Dedicated volunteers
- Strong community support
- Dedicated leadership
- Strong fire service tradition of service
- Departments already working together
- Good apparatus fleet
- Excellent mutual aid culture



***This study recommends building upon these strengths***

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# Why Was the Study Needed?

- Increasing call volume
- Volunteer availability
- Volunteer recruitment
- EMS demands
- Training requirements
- Increasing costs
- Changing regulations & expectations

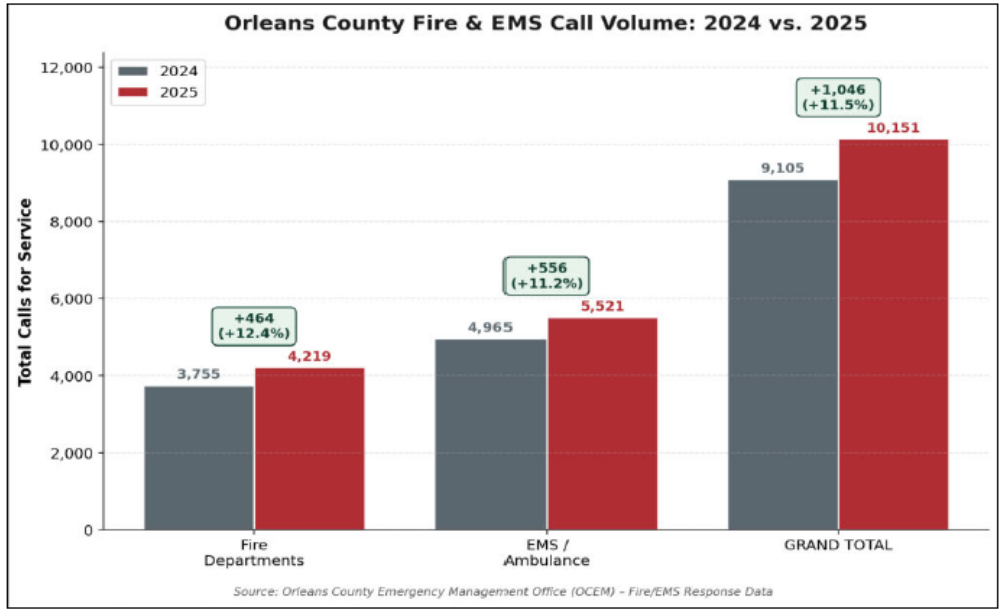



Figure II-40: Orleans Emergency Management Call Volume Analysis 2024 vs 2025

***These are challenges facing volunteer fire departments nationwide –not just here in Orleans County***

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# Current Fire & EMS Environment

- Recruitment & retention challenges.
- Aging of current work force
- Increasing EMS workload
- Growing reliance on countywide mutual aid
- Rising apparatus replacement costs
- Increased pressure on local budgets
- Increased training requirements

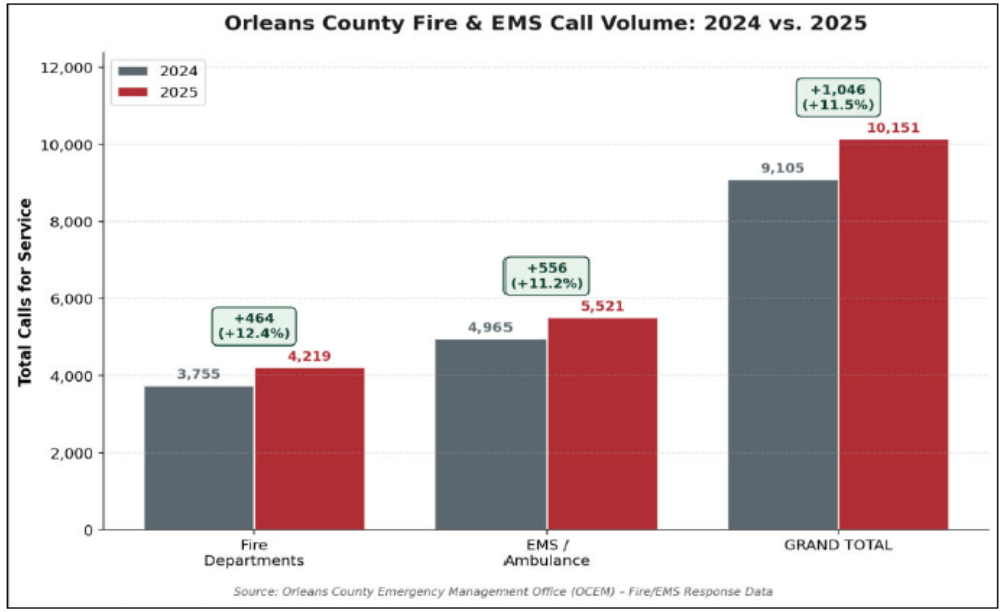



Figure II-40: Orleans Emergency Management Call Volume Analysis 2024 vs 2025

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# What is working well?

- Mutual aid
- Core of dedicated volunteers
- Countywide communications
- Relationships between departments




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# Identified Risks



1. Declining and inconsistent volunteer availability.
2. EMS-dominated call volume overwhelming traditional fire service models.
3. Daytime response gaps and no-response incidents
4. Aging facilities and apparatus constraints
5. EMS System capacity and coverage strain.
6. Limited interior staffing
7. Increasing training requirements

***All of the systems are under increasing pressure***

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# Staffing & Volunteer Challenges

**The Vanishing Volunteer**

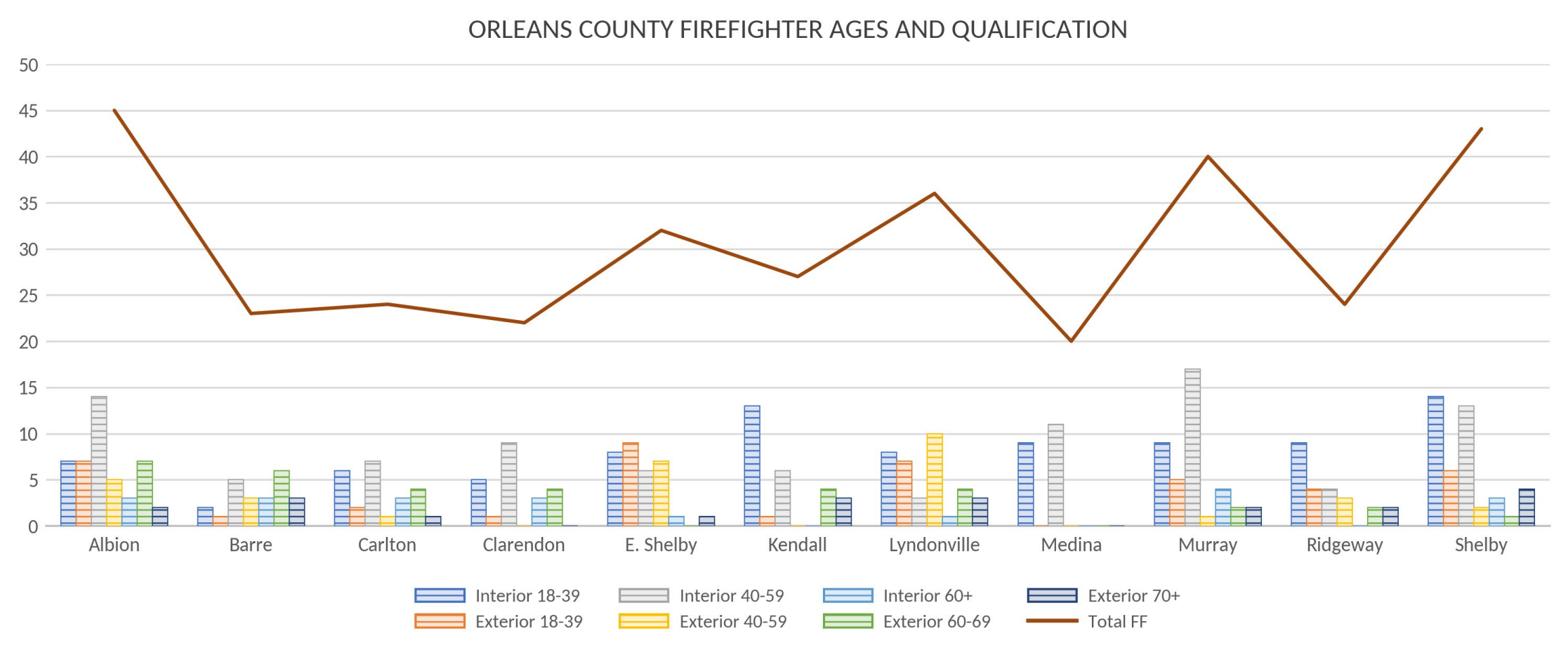
- Fewer available responders
- Aging membership
- Inactive members on rosters
- Limited interior-qualified FF's
- Limited EMS certified personnel
- Daytime/weekday hours impacted the most.

**Impacts**

- Longer response times
- Increased mutual aid dependence
- Reduced interior FF capability
- Increased FF & civilian risks

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# Staffing Challenges




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# EMS System Challenges

- EMS now drives most incident activity
- Longer transport times reduce availability – limited facilities in the county to transport to.
- Dropped calls and coverage gaps reported
- Fire Department increasingly serves as EMS first responders
- Resource demands continue to increase.

***The current EMS system is functional but under increasing strain***

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# EMS Mapping

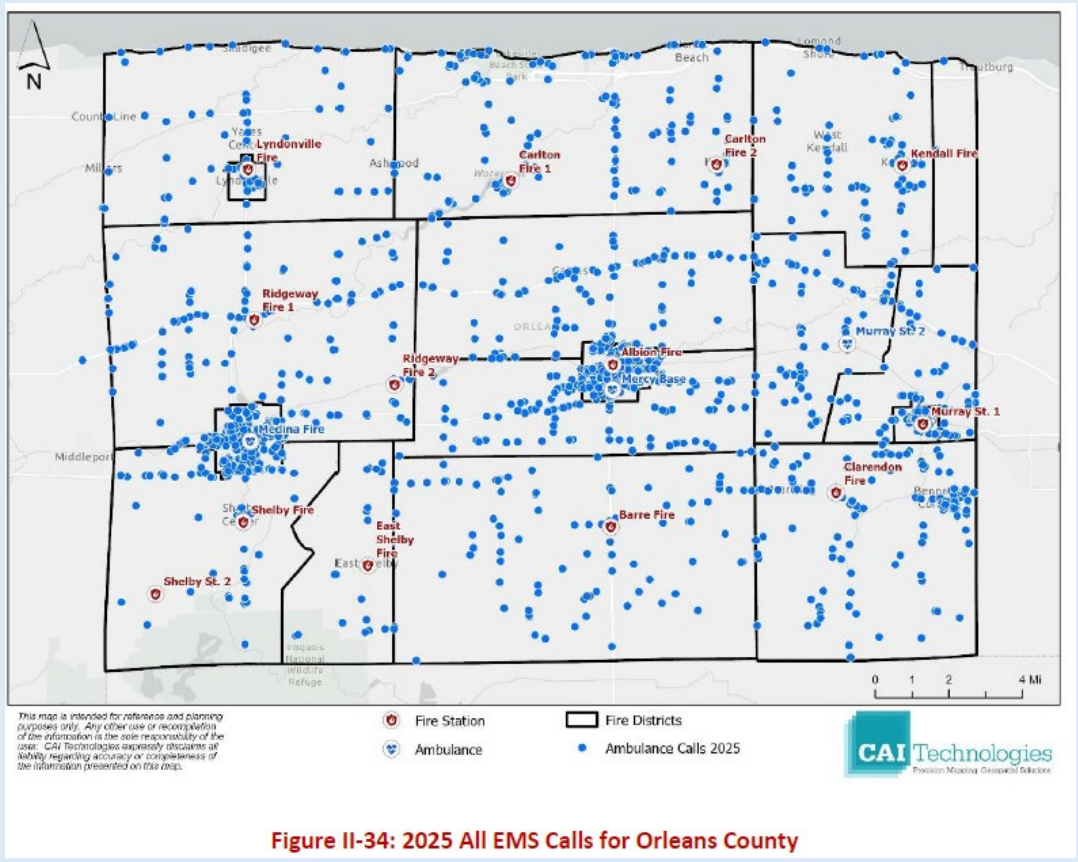



Figure II-34: 2025 All EMS Calls for Orleans County

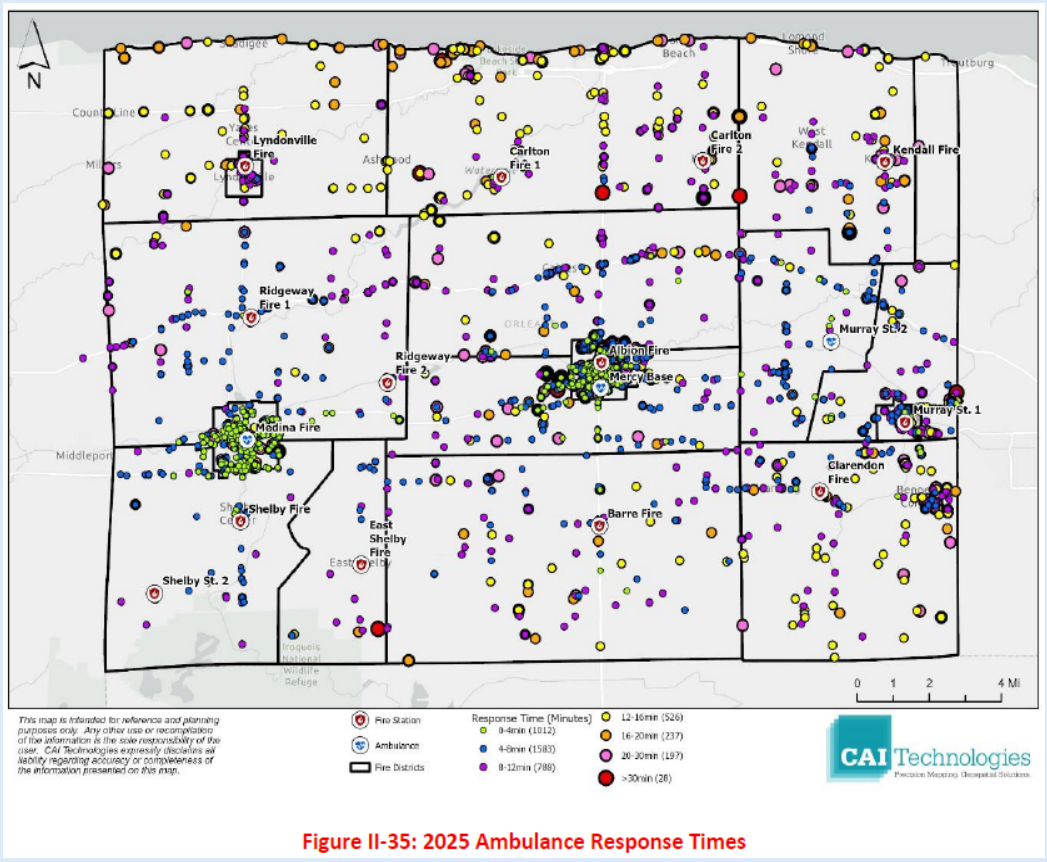



Figure II-35: 2025 Ambulance Response Times

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# EMS Call Challenges for Volunteers

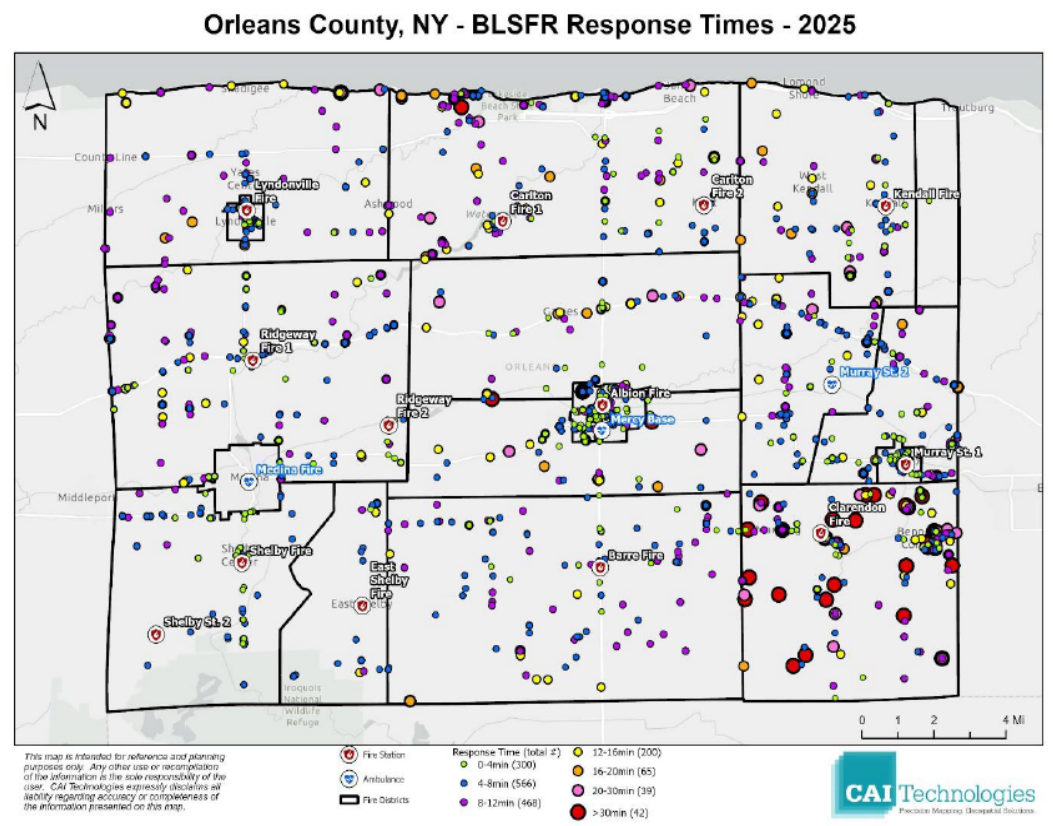



Figure II-38: Orleans County BLSFR Response Times

- Delay of EMS Units coupled with delayed first responders.
- Not primary function of the current volunteer fire departments.

# NFPA 1720 Benchmark Comparison

- **Why does it matter?**
  - **NFPA 1720 is the nationally recognized benchmark for volunteer fire service deployment.**

- Findings:
  - Many departments struggle to consistently achieve staffing and response benchmarks.
  - Current conditions create operational and potential liability risks.
  - Effective response force cannot be guaranteed during all periods of the day.

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# NFPA 1720 COMPLIANCE: PERSONNEL, RESPONSE & TRAINING

## VOLUNTEER & COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS

## 90% PERFORMANCE TARGET

Meeting Assembly times to be assembly times

### DEMAND ZONES:

| URBAN | SUBURBAN | RURAL | REMOTE |
|---|---|---|---|
| >1000 people/sq. mile | 500-1000 people/sq. mile | <500 people/sq. mile | Scattered/Isolated areas |
| 15 Personnel | 10 Personnel | 6 Personnel | 4 Personnel |
| 9 MINUTES | 10 MINUTES | 14 MINUTES | PER LOCAL AHJ |

### THE CLOCK BREAKDOWN: RESPONSE TIME COMPONENTS

**DISPATCH TRIGGER**
notification delivered, clock starts

**TURNOUT TIME**
personnel react, travel to station/ apparatus

**TRAVEL TIME**
apparatus en route

**ON-SCENE ASSEMBLY**
minimum staffing arrives, clock stops

### TRAINING & OPERATIONAL MANDATES

**FIREFIGHTER I MINIMUM**
Personnel must be certified to Firefighter I level prior to initial interior suppression operations.

**24 HOURS ANNUAL TRAINING**
Volunteer members must complete minimum 24 hours tactical training annually.

**2-IN / 2-OUT SAFETY RULE**
Interior attack cannot begin without 4 trained members present (2 inside for attack, 2 outside for rescue/RIC).

*Minimum staffing numbers include automatic aid agreements. All times are 90th percentile benchmarks.

# Consequences of Inaction

- Continued decline in volunteers.
- Increased response delays
- Greater dependence on mutual aid.
- Reduced firefighter safety
- Increased risk to citizens
- Difficulty maintaining service expectations
- Continued degradation of the system reliability over the next decade.



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# Highest Priority Recommendations

1. Transition toward combination/regional staffing
2. Align planning with NFPA 1720
3. Strengthen regional fire & EMS coordination
4. Increase stability for EMS first response
5. Improve recruitment, retention, and training
6. Address daytime staffing gaps
7. Implement long-term facilities and apparatus planning
8. Improve performance measurement and data collection

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# Countywide Operational Improvements

- Establish countywide performance benchmarks
- Implement closest-unit dispatch model
- Formalize automatic aid & mutual aid agreements
- Standardize operating procedures
- Improve EMS-Fire integration
- Enhance countywide data collection and reporting

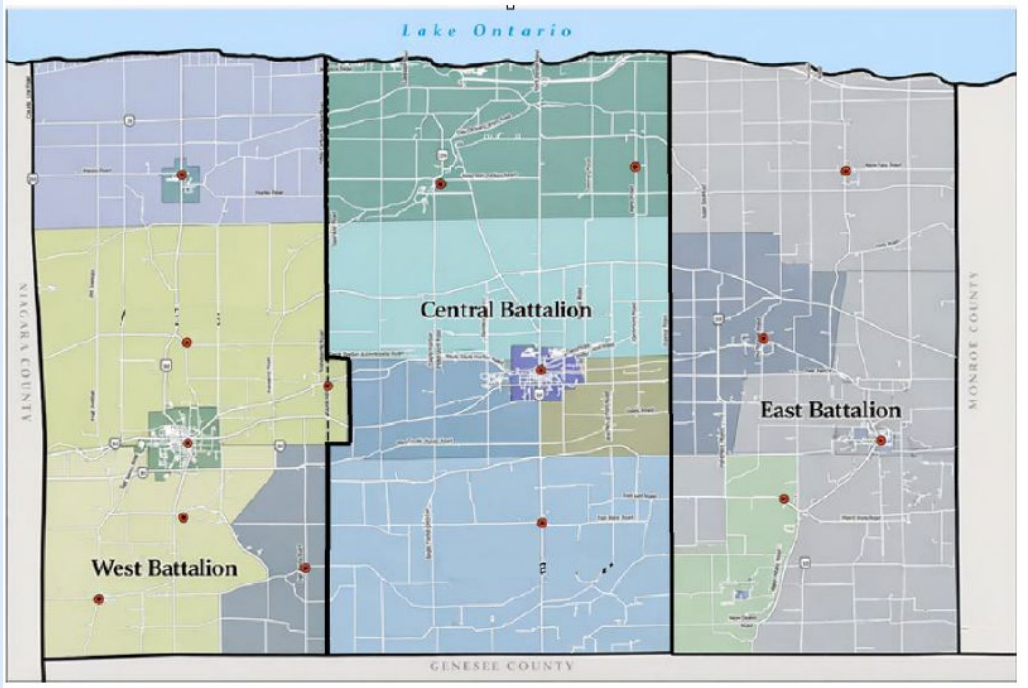



Figure IV-1: Orleans County Battalion Map

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# Regional Cooperation

- Enhance the foundational work you have done at increasing regional efforts:
  - Purchasing & Planning
  - Training
  - Automatic Aid
  - Shared specialty resources

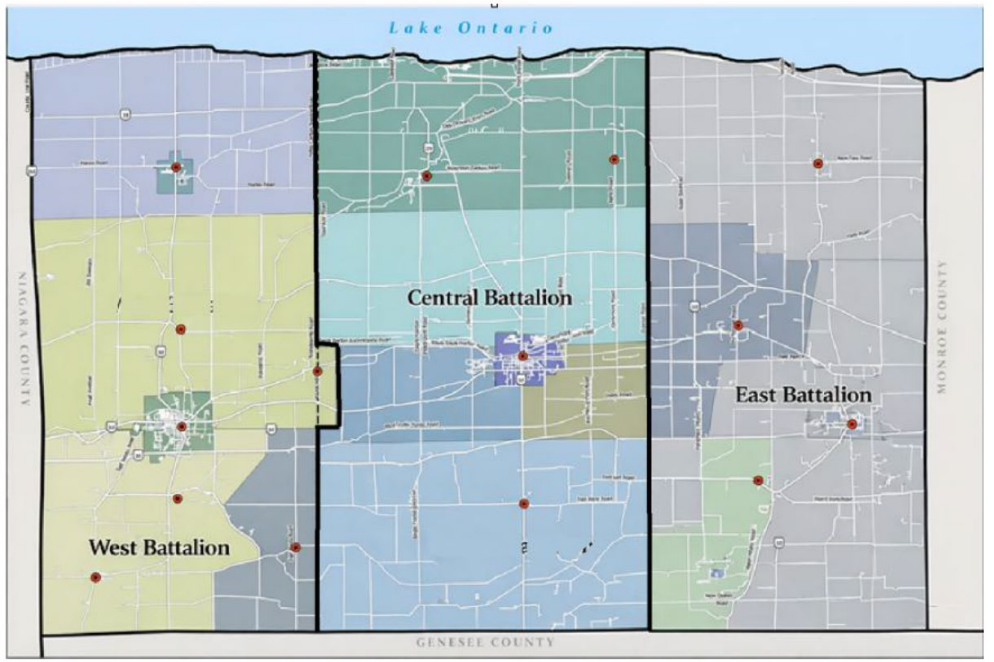



Figure IV-1: Orleans County Battalion Map

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# Next Steps

- Begin discussions on implementation of recommendations
- Form working groups for continued collaboration
- Explore grant and funding opportunities
- Prioritize tasks and develop a timeline
- Clarify self insurance law and coverage

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# Key Takeaways

The system is functioning today, but warning signs are clear.

Workforce sustainability is the single greatest threat to future service delivery.

Action taken now will be significantly less costly than responding to a future system failure.

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# Thank you!




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