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## Wheeling Fire Department Has Busiest Year on Record

In 2019, the Wheeling Fire Department responded to more calls for service in its 150-year history— breaking its 2018 record by more than 300 calls.

The department previously hit a record-breaking year in 2018 with 6,885 calls for services. Prior to that, the record was 6,880 – set in 2015. In 2019, a total of **7,204** calls for service were recorded, up by 4.5%.

“2019 brought on many new challenges to the WFD. We continue to see an increase in emergency medical calls and project that number to increase over time. The department battled two of the largest fires our city has experienced in decades, responded to several crashes on various roadways in the area with police and responded to more drug overdose calls. Nonetheless, our firefighters/paramedics remain dedicated and committed to serving our city,” said Fire Chief Larry Helms.

Medical/rescue calls were up about 3.5%. This is still because of the on-going drug addiction epidemic and an aging population. Of the 7,204 total calls for service – 65% are medical related.

Calls are categorized by the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) Code Guide. A breakdown of the 2019 calls are as follows:

**Fire:** 127  
**Overpressure, Explosion or overheat (no fire):** 47  
**Rescue/EMS/Medical:** 4,621  
**Hazardous Condition/No Fire:** 201  
**Service Calls:** 776  
**Good Intent Call:** 526  
**False Alarm/False Call:** 816  
**Severe Weather/Natural Disaster:** 7  
**Special Incident Type:** 4

Total fire calls were up about 22%, as were false fire/medical alarm calls by 14%. The Wheeling Fire Department does have a plan in place to reduce the amount of false medical. City Council passed an ordinance in late 2019 giving the department permission to bill those who have multiple false medical alarms. This program is still in the developmental stage.

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