



# Lake Country Fire & Rescue

## Staffing Request

September 2022



## Executive Summary

Most would consider fire and emergency medical services a fundamental and basic form of government. When one of our constituents calls 9-1-1, they expect a group of well-trained professionals to show up and handle their emergency.

Nationally, the fire service has a long-standing history of providing a low-cost solution to public safety. This has traditionally been accomplished through creative staffing models utilizing internship programs, paid-on-call/part-time staffing programs, and volunteers. Lake Country Fire and Rescue's (LCFR) current operations rely heavily on the aforementioned models. LCFR can no longer fulfill the organization's staffing requirements by utilizing low-cost staffing models. LCFR relies on low-cost staffing to fill 50% of the daily schedule. The struggles of these free and low-cost staffing models have been documented for decades and the current labor market has escalated this problem into a crisis.

Fire department staffing has been discussed for more than 4 decades. This topic is not unique to the Lake Country area. It is being discussed both regionally and nationally. Additionally, lack of fire department staffing was the driving force for consolidating fire/EMS organizations in Waukesha County over the past 22+ years. More specifically, LCFR was formed because of a dwindling pool of staff, especially the low-cost resources.

Staffing requirements for LCFR are guided by several national standards and organizations. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the American Heart Association (AHA) use evidence-based research to define best practices. These best practices, in addition to call volume and citizen expectations, creates the foundation for which our staffing is based on. NFPA standard 1710 specifically addresses staffing. Secondly, the AHA, in conjunction with the National Emergency Medical Reporting System, establishes the recommended response times to medical emergencies. Both organizations have a direct impact on the health and well-being of both life and property.

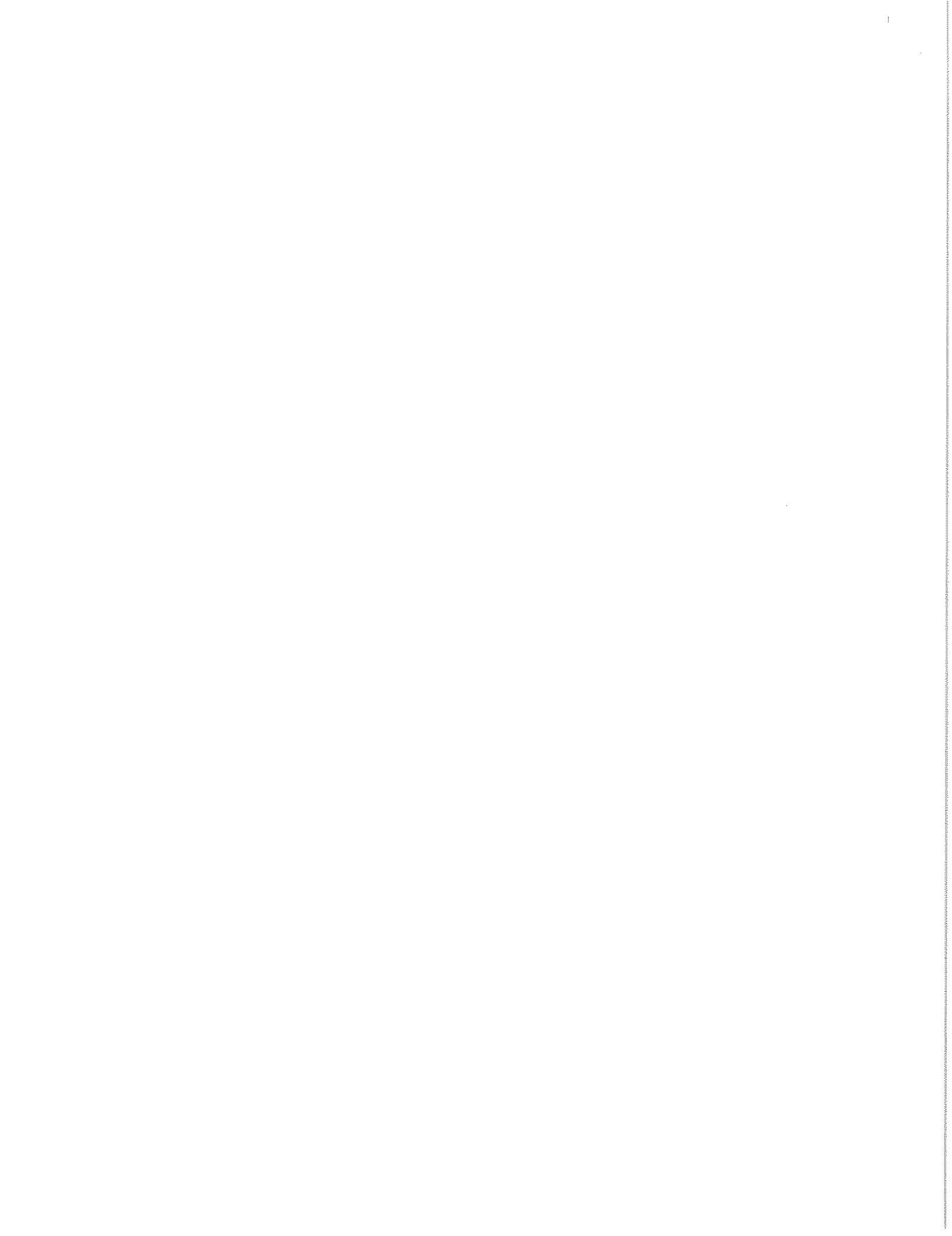
Having identified a crisis and acknowledging the national standards, a committee, consisting of 3 fire board members and LCFR chiefs, met to develop a safe, achievable, and responsible plan. This plan aids in overcoming many of the challenges we are facing while improving our adherence to the national standards. Throughout numerous meetings, deficiencies were identified, and solutions were drafted to responsibly navigate these challenges. This document defines the problem, proposes "The Need", and offers funding options.

Respectfully,



Matthew Fennig - Fire Chief

[Refer to the appendix for a diagram showing the history and evolution of LCFR](#)

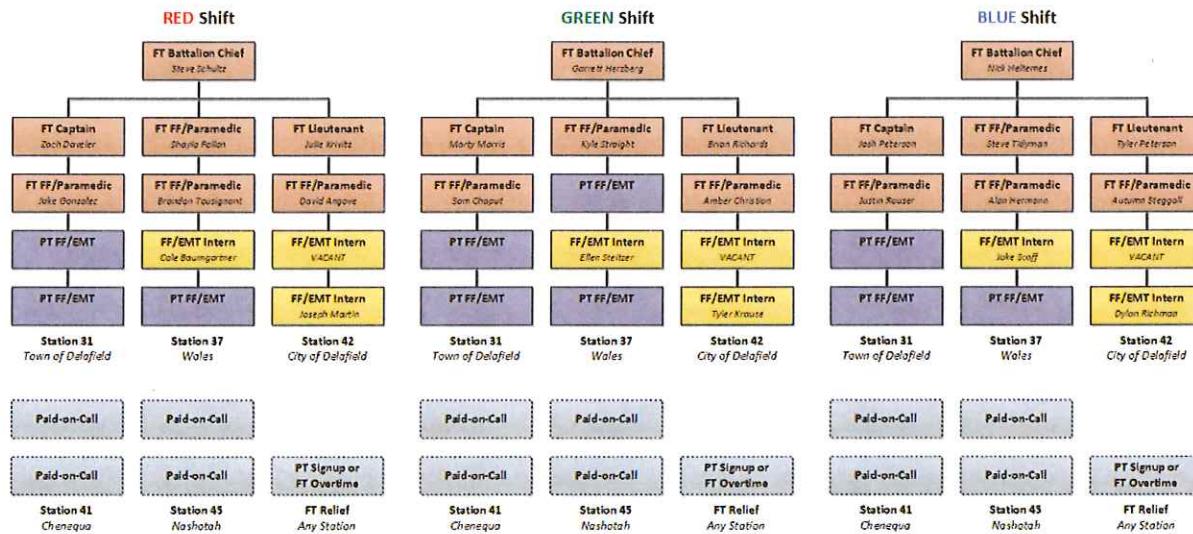


## The Crisis:

The chart below demonstrates LCFR's staffing model for the current year, 2022. Please take note of the boxes in purple and yellow. These boxes highlight the "low-cost" employees mentioned in the executive summary. As you can see, these boxes account for approximately 50% of the daily staffing (the gray boxes at the bottom reflect auxiliary/support staff which are not counted in the required/optimal staffing). Having to fill this many daily positions, given the current labor market, is challenging and often impossible.



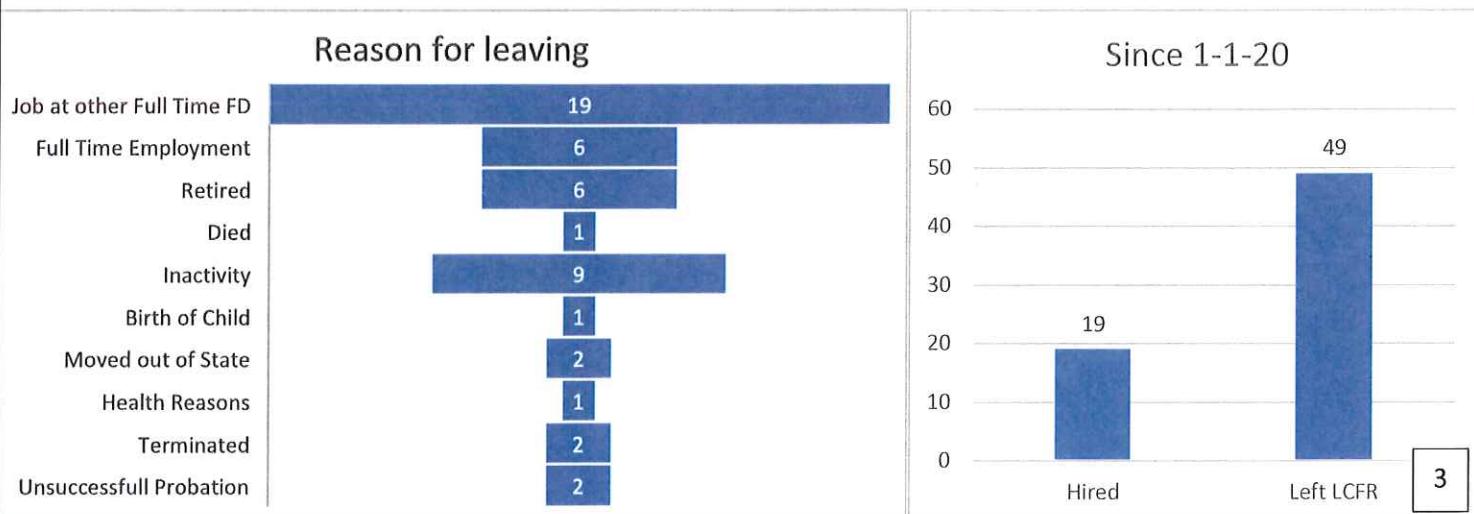
### LCFR Operational Staffing Plan - 2022



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Additionally, because of changes to law drafted by the Department of Labor (DOL), the Intern Program was converted to paid positions. The DOL now requires each intern be paid minimum wage. What was once a low-cost, nearly free solution has now become a strain on the budget.

Also, as the labor pool continues to decline, employee retention is becoming a problem. The compounding retention problem in conjunction with the smaller labor pool, is demonstrated in the charts below.





LCFR is losing staff at a nearly 5:1 ratio. That equates to an 80% burn rate. These numbers are consistent with like-sized combination (full-time and part-time) fire departments who function using a low-cost staffing model. Also, approximately 81% of the organization's "active" part-time staff are actively seeking full-time employment elsewhere.

As mentioned earlier, LCFR is not alone. In late 2021 and early 2022, there was a paradigm shift in hiring practices by larger fire departments. Those organizations are reducing the minimum requirements for entry level positions. These changes will likely force LCFR to lose multiple part-time members to these southeastern Wisconsin fire departments.

Unfortunately, over the recent months (mid 2022), LCFR was forced to operate with only 8 daily staff members. To maximize safe and efficient coverage for all 79 square miles, utilizing the 8 personnel, command staff were forced to make difficult decisions. These decisions included closing down one of LCFR's 3 fire stations. In 2022, LCFR saw a drastic increase in response times secondary to the staffing shortages.

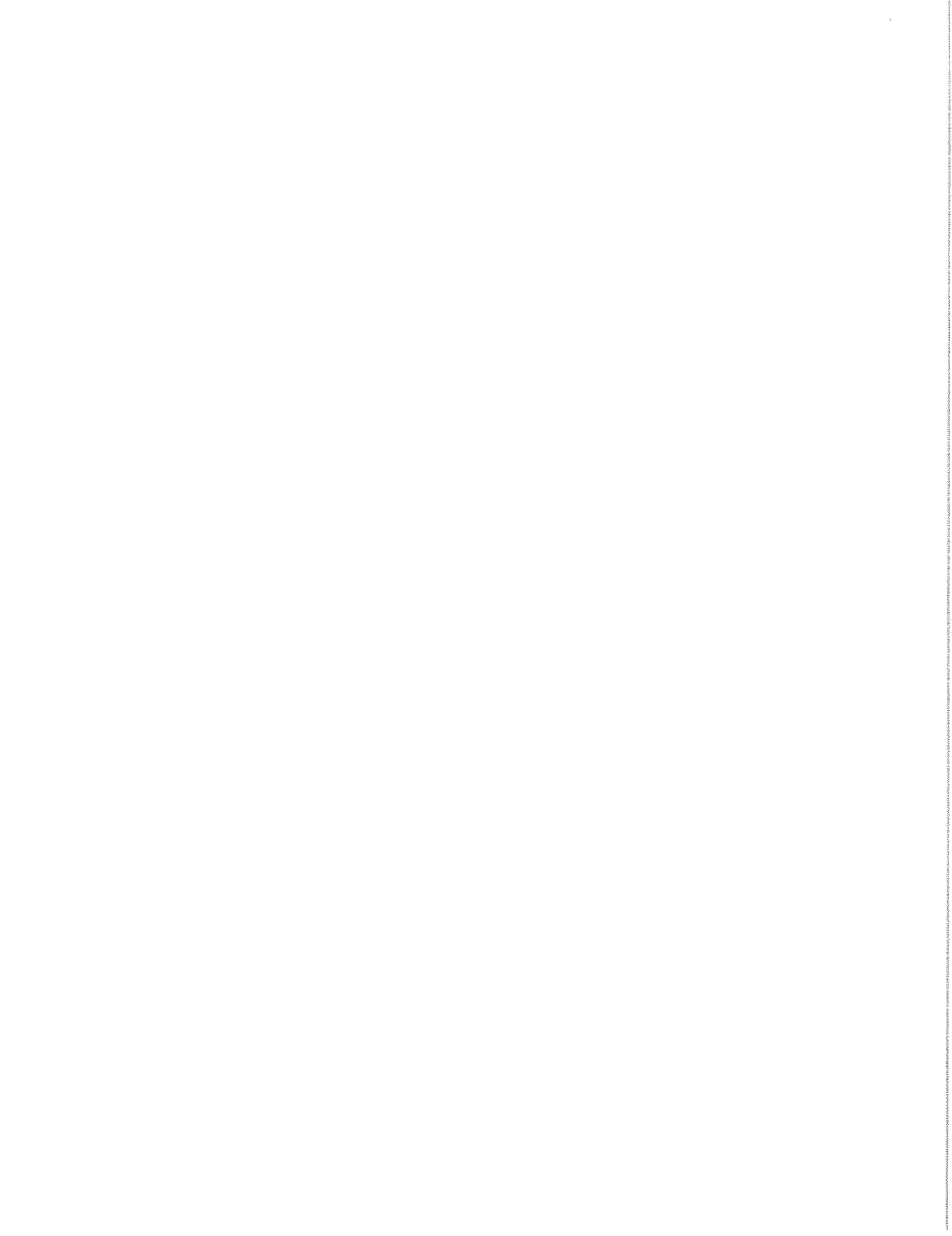
Month	# of Days a station was closed	Which station was closed
July	13	City of Delafield
August	12	City of Delafield

Response Times	
2021 – No Stations Closed	8:04 min
2022 – With Stations Closed/Staffing shortage	10:23 min
Difference	2:19 min or 28% increase

Because of limitations on levy limits, LCFR cannot simply hire more staff. LCFR communities are restricted to an annual budget increase based on Consumer Price Index (CPI) +2%. Given current market conditions and inflation, it would take LCFR 8.24 years to hire one full-time employee, using this funding formula. See the chart below for the proposed CPI +2% abbreviated budget for 2023.

2023 Budget – CPI +2%	
Levied Amount (amount paid by the communities)	\$2,200,000
CPI +2% (amount the budget can increase)	\$110,000
Where is the \$110,000 being allocated?	
Health Insurance/WRS Increase (7%)	\$31,875
Fuel Increase	\$15,000
2% Cost of Living Wage Increase	\$47,999
Amount Remaining	\$15,126
Cost of 1 FTE (includes benefits)	\$124,706
Years to hire 1 additional FTE	8.24

Additionally, if LCFR adheres to the CPI +2% model, there are no funds remaining to keep other programs afloat because every remaining penny will be spent on securing more staff. These programs include Community Risk Reduction, fire prevention, firefighter health and wellness, and dive/ice rescue. These programs are not only great resources for our communities but also aid in retaining staff.

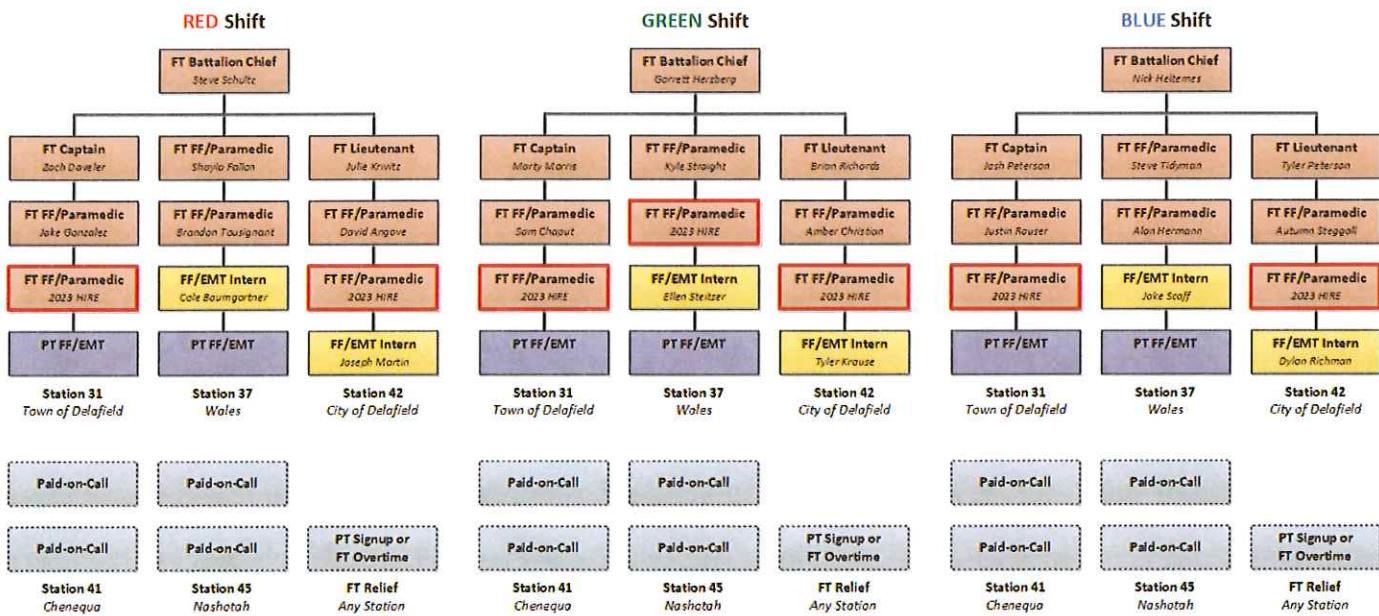


# The Need:

The chart below shows LCFR's proposal for 2023. This proposal includes adding 7 full-time staff members. Adding 7 full-time employees eliminates the need to rely heavily on part-time employees. When comparing this model to the model above, you note 1-2 fewer purple boxes (low-cost solution) under each colored shift.

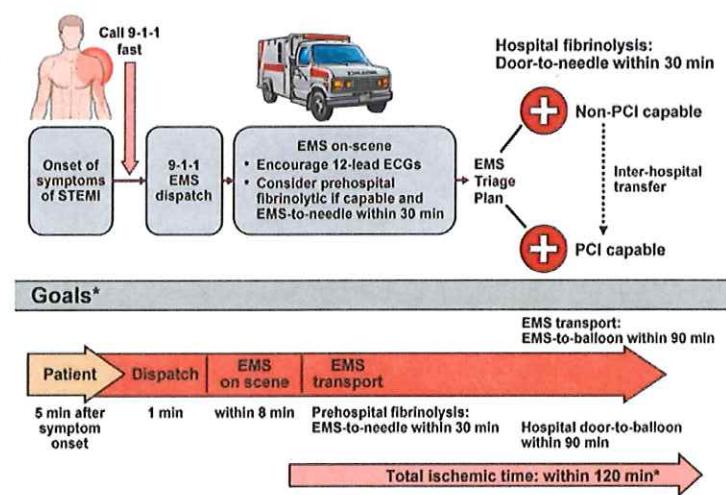
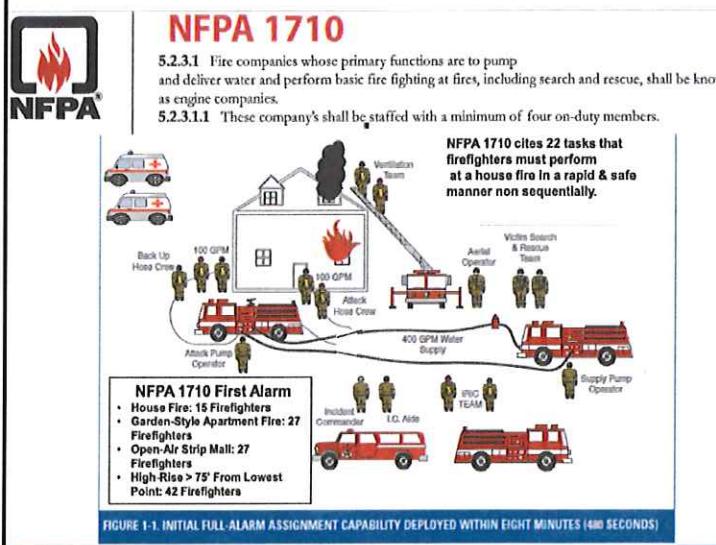


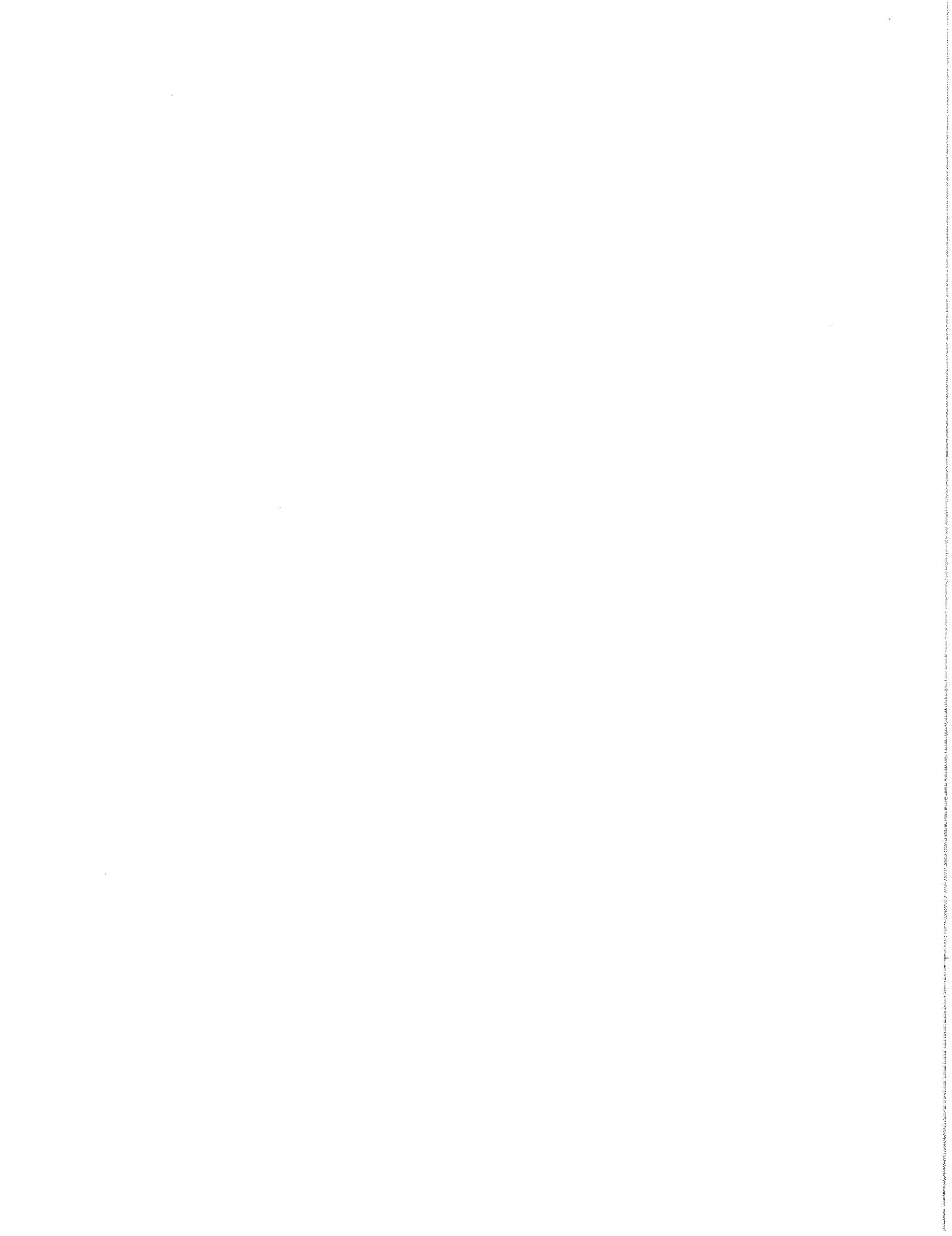
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The 2023 staffing model moves LCFR towards meeting the standards set by the NFPA and AHA.





## Phased In Approach

Year	Staffing Requests	Cost	Incremental Impact to the Budget (compared to the 2022 budget)
2023	7 FF/Medics	\$923,234	\$923,234
2024	3 FF/Medics, 3 Lieutenants, 1 Mechanic	\$969,317	\$1,892,551
2025	6 FF/Medics, HR Professional	\$914,877	\$2,807,428
2026	3 FF/Medics	\$550,000	\$3,357,428

LCFR is recommending a “phased-in” approach. This approach model allows LCFR to responsibly hire the needed full-time employees and spread the costs over 4 years.

[Refer to the Appendix for the staffing plan for 2024-2026](#)

## Funding Options:

There are 3 funding options available to the communities. Each community can select the option that best fits their need. The first funding option is called “Fire Fee”. Each community that chooses this option adds a “fee per parcel” on the tax bill. This fee is charged by the community to each parcel owner, like garbage collection. There would be no impact on the community’s ability to collect state aid. No voter approval is required.

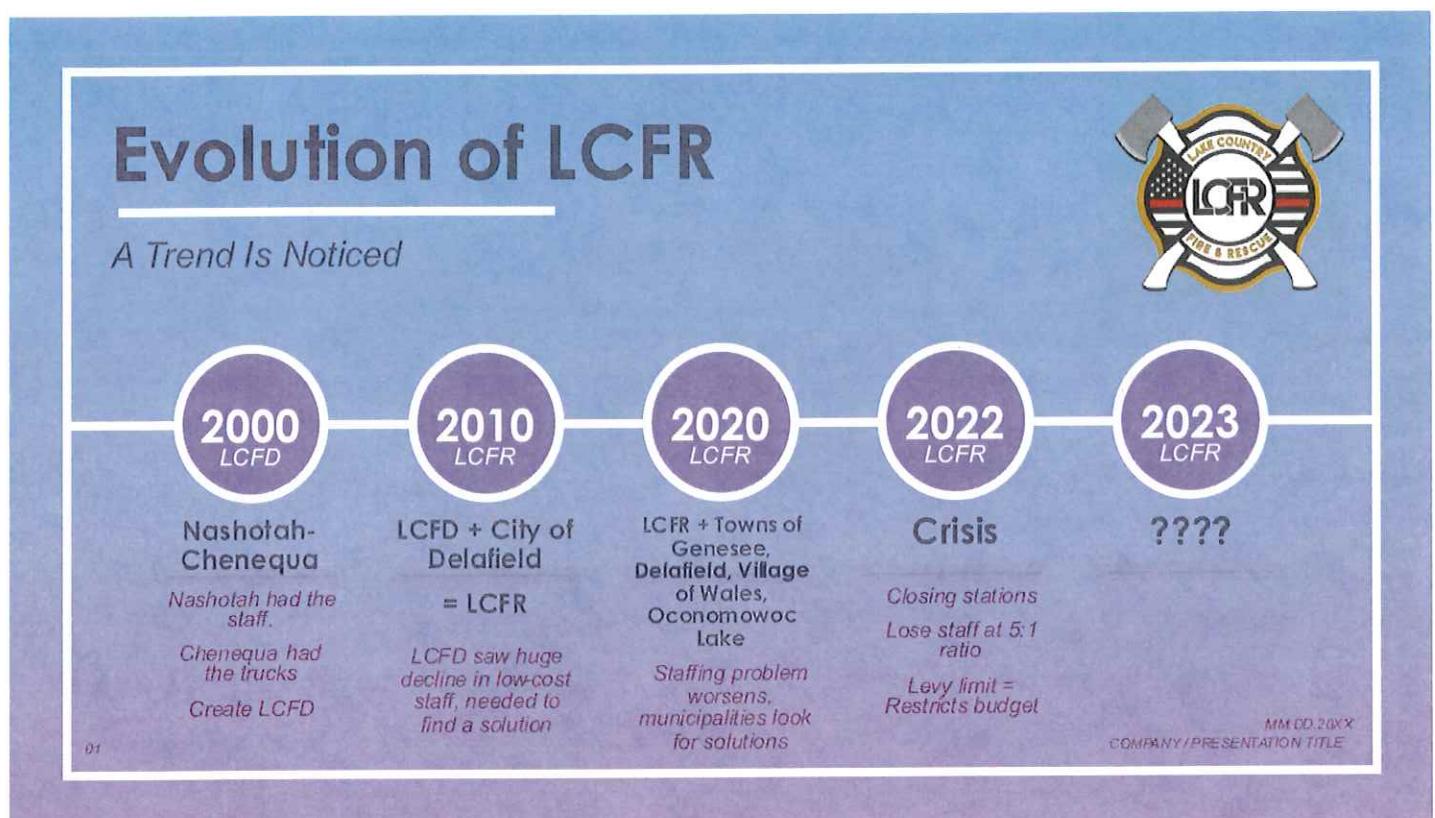
The second option is called “Equalized Value”. This funding option allows the 7 owner communities to exceed the CPI +2% levy cap. Each community that chooses this option will lose access to their portion of state aid. This option can be chosen by the elected officials, without voter approval.

The last option is called “Referendum”. This funding option allows voters to vote in support of or in opposition to the requested dollar amount (amount TBD). This option does not allow for a phased in approach, nor does it take inflation or other economic variables into consideration. A referendum is the most expensive option as it locks in the community to paying their full share starting in year one. This becomes problematic because LCFR cannot responsibly hire ALL needed staff in the first 2-3 years, after a referendum is approved. This is directly related to the shortage in the labor pool for protective services.

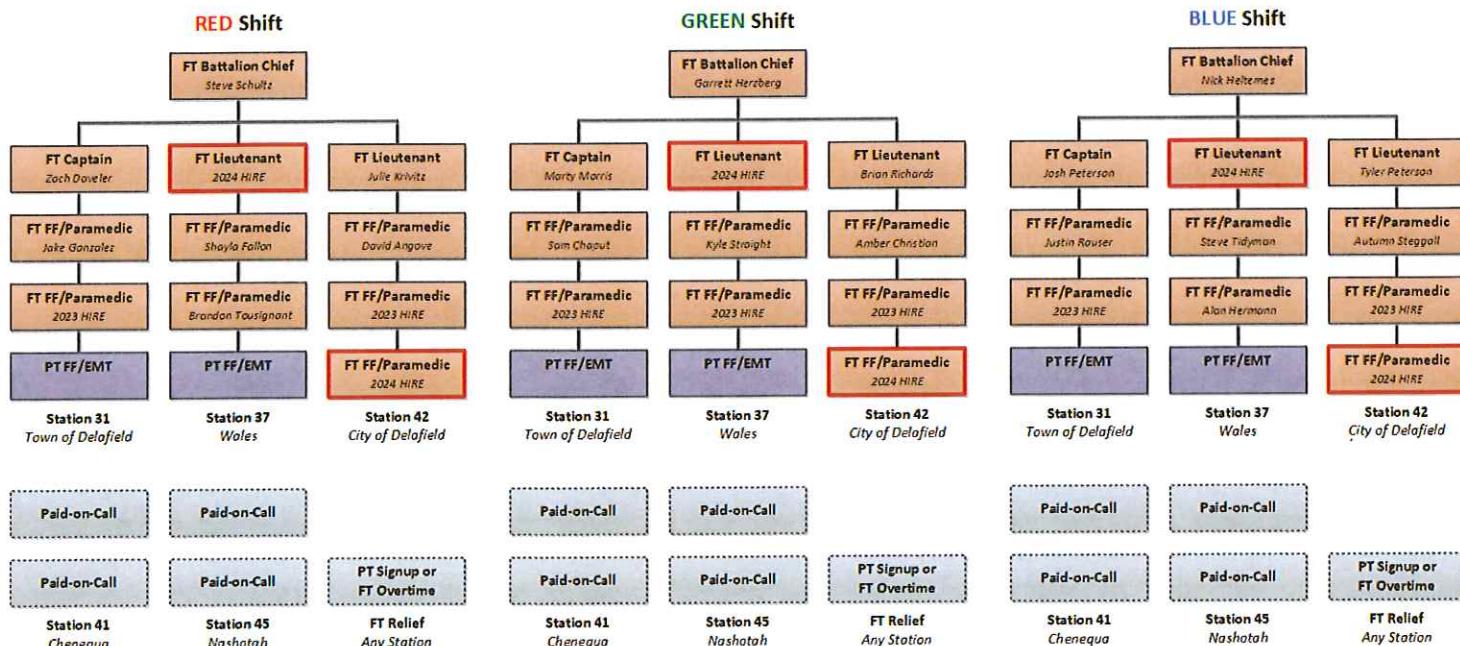
Fire Fee	Equalized Value	Referendum
•Fee issued per parcel	•Communities can exceed levy	•Voter approval needed
•Similar to garbage fee	•Lose state aid/revenue sharing	•Difficult to “future proof”
•Charged by the community, not LCFR	•No impact on transportation aid	•Approved amount is set in stone
•No impact to state aid	•No voter approval needed	•Large up-front expense
•No voter approval needed		•Difficult to phase in

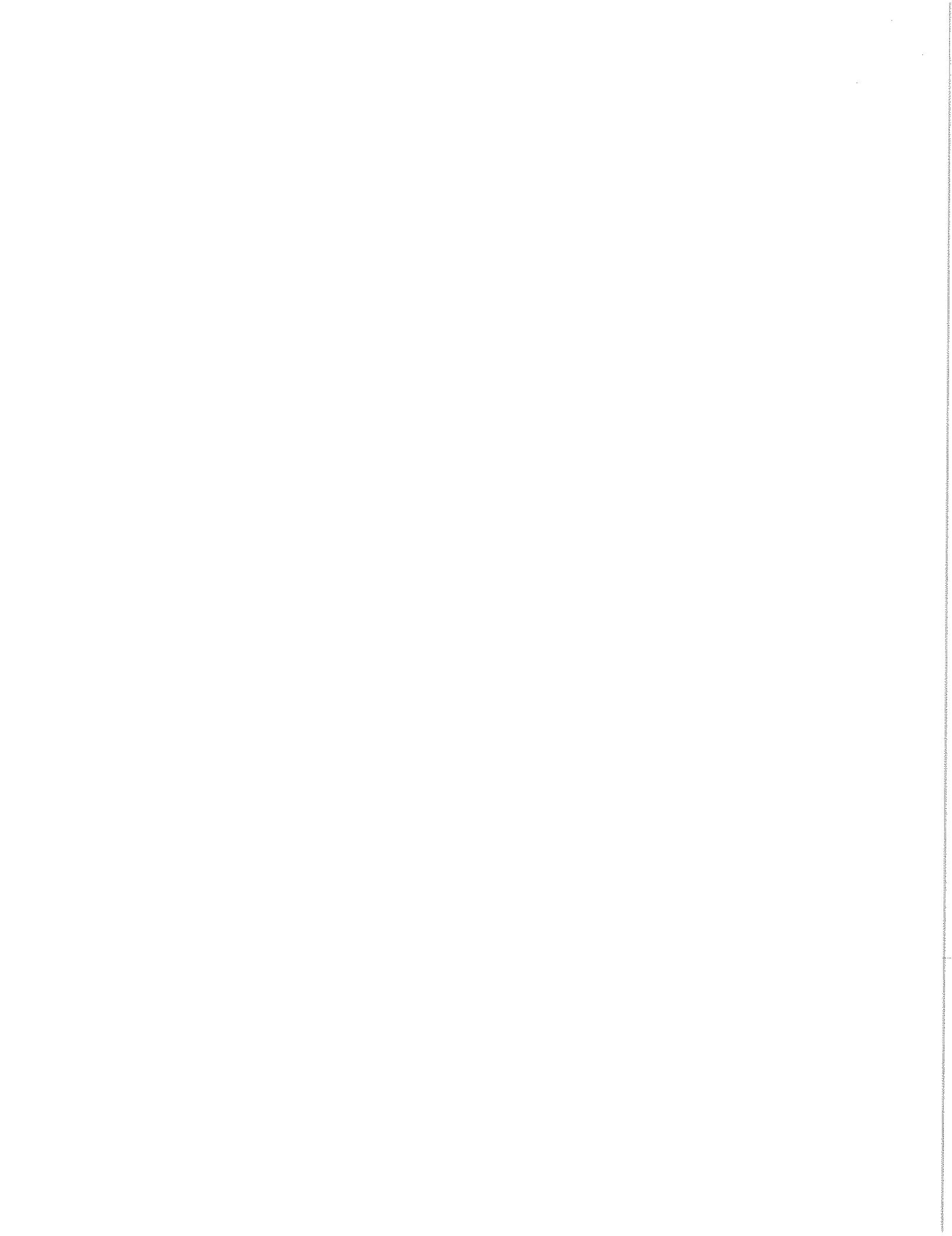


## Appendix:



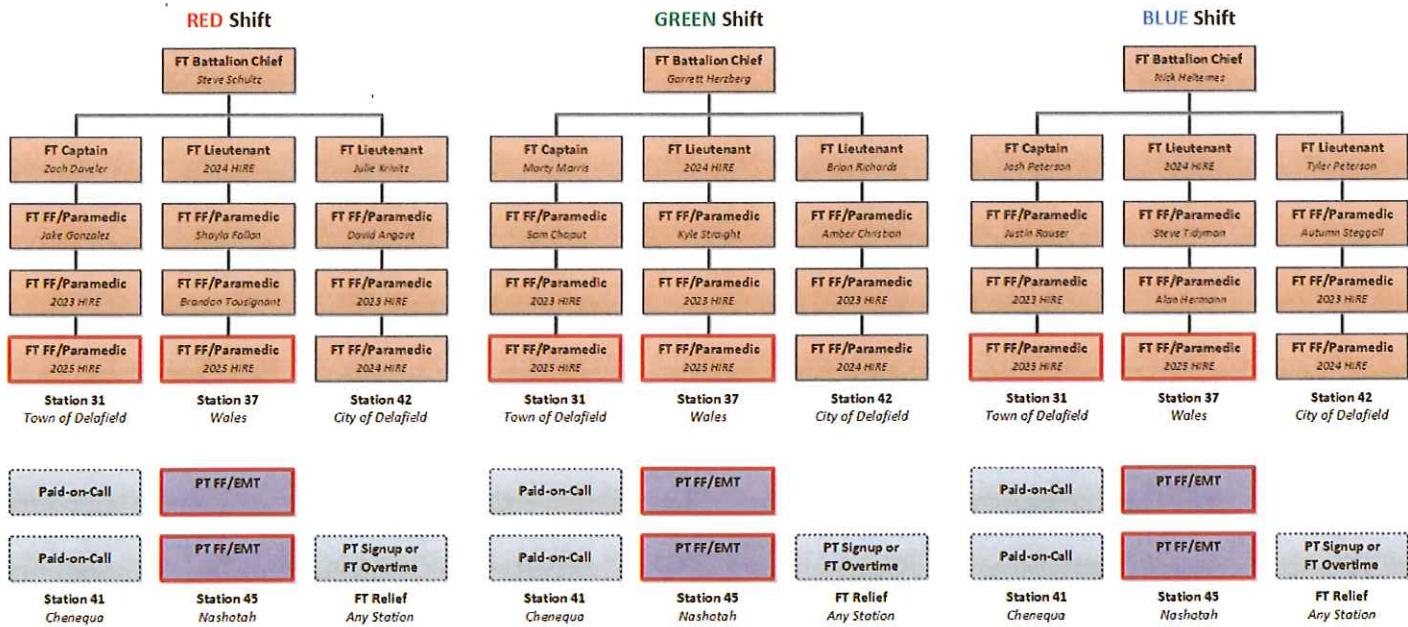
## LCFR Operational Staffing Plan - 2024







# LCFR Operational Staffing Plan – 2025



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# LCFR Operational Staffing Plan – 2026

