



EMERGENCY  
SERVICES

# CY 2024 ANNUAL REPORT

*Reflecting Progress,  
Inspiring the Future*

March 2025





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# From the Director

## Reflecting Progress, Inspiring the Future

The Orange County Emergency Services Department takes pride in fostering a diverse and innovative culture that is dedicated to serving both residents and visitors of Orange County. Our mission focuses on serving and protecting lives and property with integrity, compassion, and respect. The success of this mission relies on each team member embracing our common purpose.

As I reflect on our achievements, I am filled with a sense of pride and gratitude in presenting the Annual Report for 2024. This report showcases our dedicated efforts, the progress we've made, and the challenges we overcame in our commitment to serving the community.

These achievements stand as a testament to our incredible team of over 150 dedicated professionals and countless partners. Their unwavering commitment and courage in the face of adversity make us who we are, and we are immensely grateful for their sacrifices that help make Orange County a better place to live, work, learn, and enjoy.

Looking ahead, we are steadfast in our commitment to continuous improvement, the adoption of innovative practices, and enhancements to our service delivery. We appreciate your ongoing support and trust, and we look forward to working together to create a safer and more resilient Orange County.

With heartfelt gratitude,

*W. Kirby Saunders*

**KIRBY SAUNDERS**  
DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES



# Our History

The first mention of ambulance services in the Orange County archives was in 1942, when the Board of County Commissioners discussed making a payment for transport to Walker's Funeral Home in Chapel Hill. Until the late 1960s, local funeral homes were providing ambulance services throughout Orange County. After two unsuccessful attempts to establish local "rescue squads," Orange County contracted with a private fee-for-service ambulance provider to serve the area. In response, a group of dedicated community volunteers established the Orange County Rescue Squad, Inc., which began providing free services in July 1968. Initially based out of the former Strum service station and dispatched by the Orange County Sheriff's Office, this 40-member all-volunteer team served all of Orange County.



As the demand for Emergency Medical Services grew, the South Orange Rescue Squad was formed in 1971 to improve services in the southern region of Orange and northern Chatham County. In the same year, the Orange County Rescue Squad inaugurated a station in Efland. With the support of county funding, they hired their first paid "ambulance attendants," WC Dawkins and Wayne Phillips. In 1973, the New Hope community established the New Hope Rescue Squad, which began its operations from the basement of the New Hope Improvement Association building, now known as the New Hope Fire Department. By the early 1980s, more than 90 volunteers were providing Emergency Medical Services throughout Orange County. Additionally, there were a total of nine paid EMS providers serving the community. Cumilla White, a Cedar Grove native and the first black female paid EMS provider in Orange County, was among the initial group of EMS pioneers hired in 1980.

In the late 1970s and early 1980s, Orange County also began implementing a three-digit emergency number, now known as 911, to manage emergency calls. Before this change, residents used a specific seven-digit number depending on their location. Thanks to grant funding from the Johnson Foundation, a proposal was put forward to create a central dispatch center that would serve the Sheriff's Office, alongside the police departments of Chapel Hill, Carrboro, and Hillsborough, the four volunteer rescue squads, and the seven rural fire departments in the county. This significant transition was led by Bobby Baker, Orange County's first Emergency Services Director.



On April 5, 1982, the Orange County Board of County Commissioners approved funding for the acquisition of land to establish a new centralized emergency communications center, relocating it from the Old Chapel Hill Police Department Building. The Orange County Communications Center officially opened on January 16, 1983, at 1914 New Hope Church Road. The department continued to expand, and in 1988, Orange County appointed Phillip "Nick" Waters as its Emergency Management Director. A visionary leader, Waters advanced the department by hiring the county's first fire marshal, advancing "enhanced" 911, and by implementing an Initial Response Vehicle (IRV) EMS program in the late 1990s among many other achievements.

In response to a decrease in volunteers, the merged Orange County Rescue Squad realized it could no longer fulfill service demands. As of July 1, 2003, the County assumed responsibility for delivering primary EMS services, taking on the nine remaining squad employees. Meanwhile, squad volunteers continued their efforts until December 2008, when the organization officially dissolved. South Orange Rescue Squad has continued to operate now and still provides EMS and technical rescue services.

In 2009, the "Emergency Management Department" moved to its current location on Meadowlands Drive and changed its name to Orange County Emergency Services, which better reflected our diverse mission. Today, the department operates eight EMS stations and employs over 150 professionals across five functional areas, operating as a comprehensive public safety agency. In 2023, we proudly marked a significant milestone with the groundbreaking of the Efland EMS Station, our first newly constructed standalone EMS station. This modern facility is designed to improve our response capabilities and equip our team with the necessary resources to serve the community effectively and efficiently. The new station symbolizes not only the physical expansion of our services but also our unwavering commitment to ensuring the safety and well-being of future Orange County residents and visitors for years to come.





## Vision

**Empowering community resiliency by ensuring the highest quality of service through an innovative, equitable, and collaborative emergency services system.**

## Mission

**The Emergency Services Department provides services to the community that prevent and minimize loss of life, pain, suffering, property, and environmental damage from medical emergencies, fires, and natural and man-made disasters.**

**We accomplish our mission through a diverse, competent and professional workforce, robust and integrated relationships with our response partners, and engagement with a prepared and resilient community.**

## Values

**Integrity | Equity | Respect | Compassion | Courage**

# Senior Leadership



## **LYISA MAY**

DIVISION CHIEF, BUSINESS SERVICES

Leads the Business Services Division, all accounting and financial functions, personnel support, recruitment and engagement, EMS pre-billing, uniforms and procurement of department supplies.



## **KIMBERLY WOODWARD**

DIVISION CHIEF, EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Leads the Emergency Medical Services Division including the components of clinical quality and compliance, professional development and community planning and risk reduction EMS initiatives.



## **SARAH PICKHARDT**

DIVISION CHIEF, EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Leads the Emergency Management Division and Orange County's mission to reduce the impacts from natural, human-caused, and technological hazards in addition to all logistical-support functions of the department.



## **CHRISTOPHER WARD**

DIVISION CHIEF, PUBLIC SAFETY COMMUNICATIONS

Leads the Public Safety Communications Division, ensuring uninterrupted emergency (911) and non-emergency answering/dispatching services to all of Orange County.



## **CHRISTOPHER PENDERGRASS**

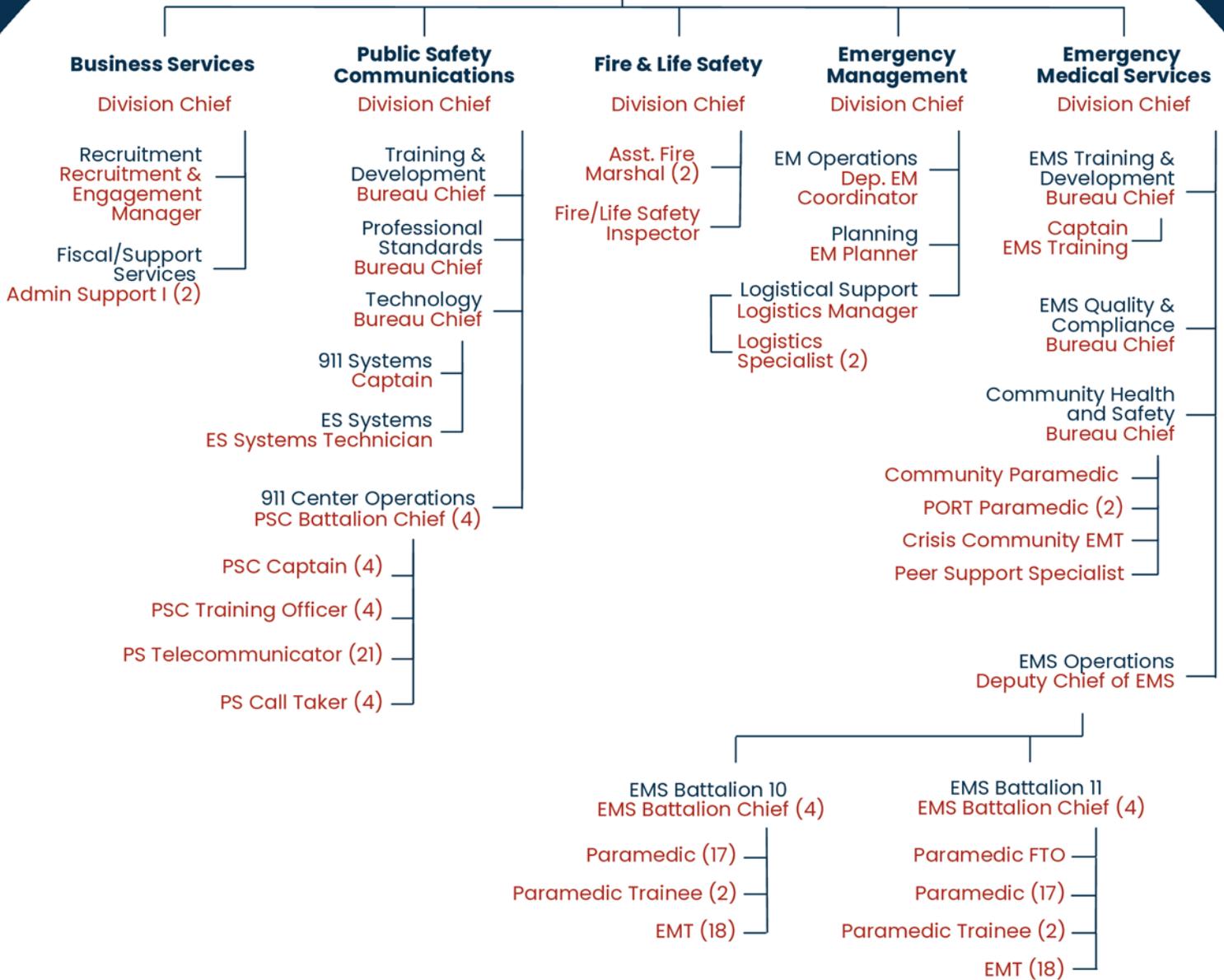
INTERIM DIVISION CHIEF, FIRE & LIFE SAFETY

Leads the Fire & Life Safety Division and Orange County's mission to reduce the risk from fires. Oversees the enforcement of the fire code, origin and cause investigations, and community education.

# 2024 Orange County Emergency Services

Emergency Services Director

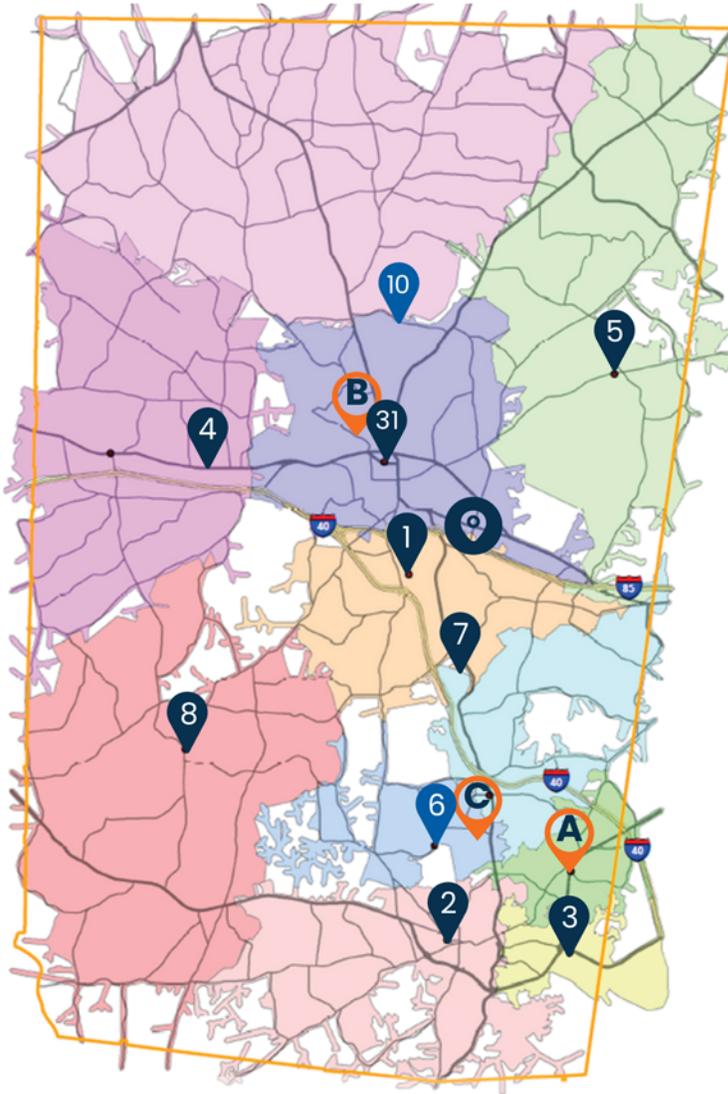
Office of the Medical Director



**911 Center Operations**  
 (4) 12 hour shifts  
 1 Primary PSAP  
 1 Backup PSAP

**EMS Field Operations**  
 (4) 24 hour shifts  
 (2) 12 hour shifts  
 2 Battalions  
 10 Stations

# ES Stations and Facilities



- ES Headquarters, 911 Center  
510 Meadowlands Drive
- Medic 1  
352 College Park Rd.  
Hillsborough
- Medic 2  
301 W. Main Street  
Carrboro
- Medic 3  
1003 Hamilton Rd.  
Chapel Hill
- Medic 4 (April 2025)  
3800 US Hwy. 70  
Efland
- Medic 5  
5501 St. Marys Rd.  
Hillsborough
- Medic 6 | EMS 11  
1411 Homstead Rd.  
Carrboro
- Medic 7 | BLS 32  
4700 NC-86  
Chapel Hill, NC
- Medic 8  
6800 Orange Grove Rd  
Hillsborough
- EMS 10 - Battalion Chief  
835 Phelps Rd.  
Hillsborough
- BLS 31  
304 Revere Rd.  
Hillsborough

## Future/Planned

- Planned Joint Fire-EMS Station 2027  
Formosa Lane  
Chapel Hill, NC
- Planned ES Headquarters/EMS Station 2027-2028  
600 NC-86  
Hillsborough, NC
- Future EMS Station and Hub 2030-2031  
Homstead Rd.  
Chapel Hill, NC



# Business Services

The Business Services Division is responsible for managing the essential administrative functions within the department. Alongside overseeing the department's financial services, including budgeting, accounting, and procurement, the division also advances our recruitment and engagement initiatives.

## 2024 Highlights

- Streamlined hiring processes
- Revised orientation process for new hires
- Ran eleven hiring processes
- Conducted three recruitment events
- Continued Step Compensation Plan
- Improved Retention Rate by 6%

## 2025 Goals

- Achieve and maintain an 84% retention rate
- Continue to build broad community relationships
- Develop 5-Year Departmental business plan
- Conduct review of EMS fees
- Run three consolidated hiring processes

**151**

ES Full-Time Employees

**36**

New Recruits

**\$17.6M**

Annual Operating Budget

GENERAL FUND **\$12.2M** 70%

FEES **\$5.3M** 30%

90% PERSONNEL 10% OPS

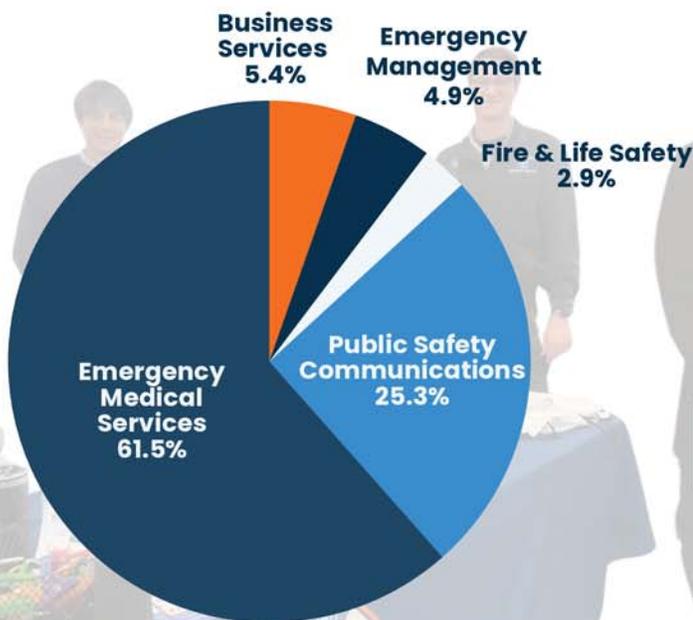
ANNUAL OPERATING EXPENDITURES

**80%**

Average Retention Rate

**\$62k**

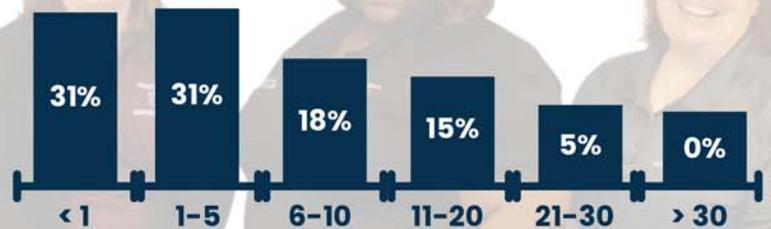
Median Base Salary



## Budget Distribution

Orange County Emergency Services

## Years of Service



Longest Length of Active Service

**29.5 Years**

**f** 5,027 FOLLOWERS

**481** NEW

**87.8K** REACH

10

# Emergency Management

The Emergency Management Division oversees disaster preparedness, response, and recovery in the county. It enhances community resilience, develops response capabilities, provides logistical support, manages the County's Emergency Operations Center, and coordinates state and federal assistance. Additionally, the division oversees all logistical support functions for the department.

## 2024 Highlights

- Eight activations of the County EOC
- Supported 17 local incidents
- Trained community members in disaster preparedness
- Completed Brandywine flood mitigation project (*FEMA Funded*)

## 2025 Goals

- Revise Countywide Emergency Operations Plan and Eno-Haw Regional Hazard Mitigation Plan
- Revise Mass Casualty Incident (MCI) Response Plan, train and equip response personnel
- Continue to build resiliency through delivery of community education

**8**  
EOC Activations

**132**  
Resources Deployed

**255**  
Responders Trained

New Preparedness and Recovery Grant Funding Obtained

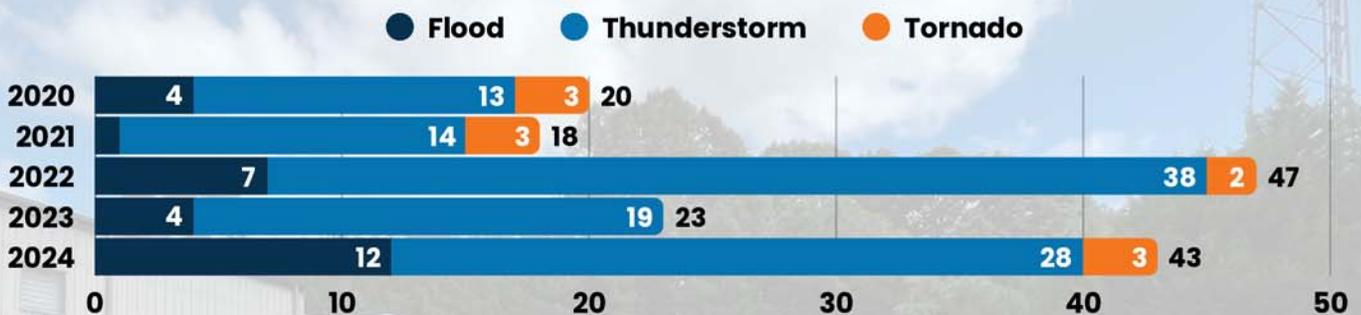
**196**  
Public OC Alerts

**20%**  
Increase in OC Alerts Registrations

**870**  
Community Members Trained or Engaged

**\$400k**

## 5-year Severe Weather Warnings



**26%**  
Reduction in Vehicle Idle Time

**\$7.7M**  
Assets/Supplies Managed

**86%**  
ES Vehicles Equipped with Telematic Device

# Emergency Medical Services

The Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Division provides Advanced and Basic Life Support pre-hospital care and Community Paramedic Services to all of Orange County 24 hours a day. In 2024, the EMS Division added the Post-Overdose Response Team or PORT to provide medication assisted therapy to those suffering from Opioid Use Disorder (OUD).

## 2024 Highlights

- Improved pain management by 6%
- PORT Team established with 83% success in connecting individuals to recovery pathways
- Improved blind airway insertion success rate by 8%

## 2025 Goals

- Strive towards 90% first pass success rate for blind airway insertions
- Expand access to medication for opioid use disorder
- Increase offering of verbal de-escalation and non-physical intervention strategies

**20,936**

Total EMS Incidents

**821**

Community Paramedic Contacts

**378k**

Miles Traveled

**16,822**

Total OCEMS Responses

**↓ 10%**

Reduction in Utilization of Lights and Sirens

**45**

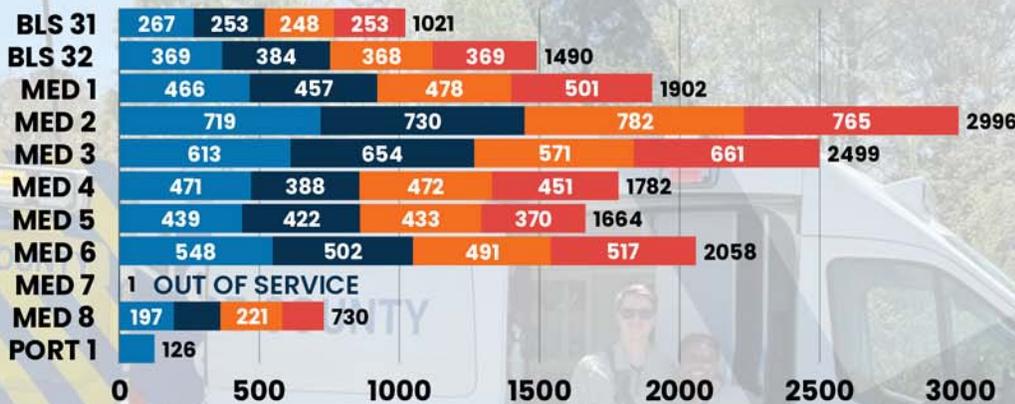
Cardiac Arrest Saves

**11,666**

Total Patients Transported

## 2024 Volume by Unit by Shift

● A Shift ● B Shift ● C Shift ● D Shift



(24hr Unit)  
Most Transports

**MEDIC 2**  
(Carrboro)

(12hr Unit)  
Most Transports

**BLS 32**  
(Southside BLS)

Busiest Shift

**A Shift**  
(Avg. 44 calls per shift)

Avg. Dispatched to Enroute  
(minutes:seconds)

Average Enroute to Arrive  
(minutes:seconds)

A Shift  
1:10

9:05

B Shift  
1:10

9:18

C Shift  
1:06

8:59

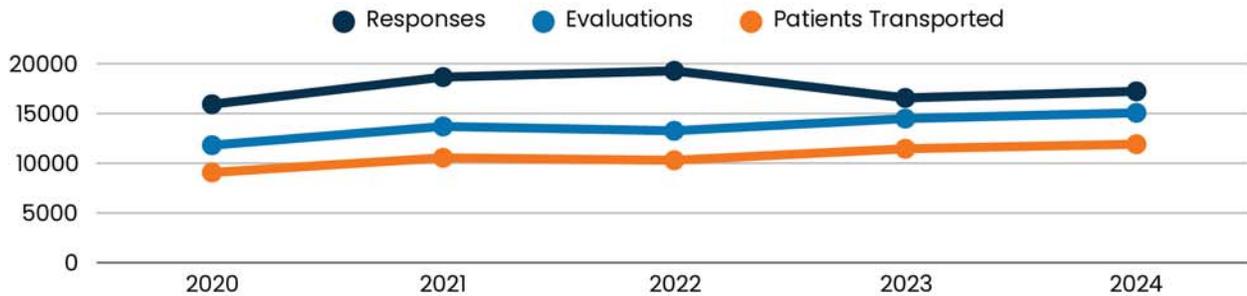
D Shift  
1:12

9:13

# Emergency Medical Services EMS System

The Orange County EMS system operates through an extensive network of partners, which includes Emergency Medical Dispatchers from the Public Safety Communications Division, local fire departments delivering first-responder services, the South Orange Rescue Squad, various law enforcement agencies, and the broader community. EMS clinical care is overseen by our Chief Medical Officer, Dr. Joseph Grover, a Board Certified Emergency Medicine Physician. Over the past two years, the growth in our EMS volume has stabilized, maintaining an annual increase of 1% to 2%.

## 5-Year EMS Comparison



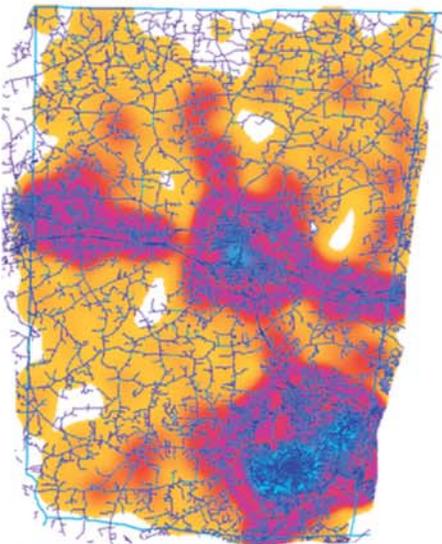
## Top Dispatch Reason



## Patient Disposition

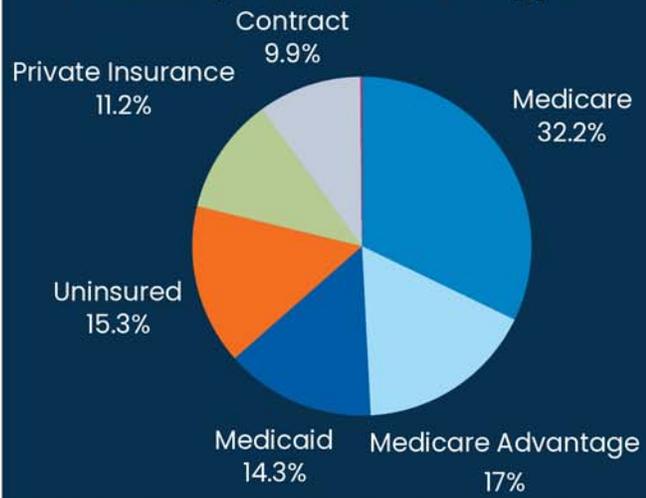


## 5-Year Call Locations



\*Darker indicates higher volume

## 2024 by Insurance Type



# Fire & Life Safety

The Fire & Life Safety Division works to reduce fire risks through collaboration with partners and County personnel. It enforces the North Carolina Fire Code via plan reviews, permits, and inspections, conducts educational campaigns, and investigates fires in unincorporated Orange County. The division provides free smoke alarms, fire extinguisher training, and engages with high risk communities.

## 2024 Highlights

- Increased smoke alarm installations in the most vulnerable/at risk communities
- Continued to provide targeted fire prevention and education
- Implemented technology to improve the efficiency of fire investigations

## 2025 Goals

- Reclassify an FTE position to create an entry level Fire-Life Safety Inspector
- Decrease turn around time for plan reviews
- Develop 5-Year Strategic Business Plan
- Assist fire departments with strategic planning
- Reassess permit fee schedule

26

Fire Investigations

37

Public Education Events

92

High-Risk Residents Provided Education

6

Public Fire Related Injuries

68%

Permits and Inspections in Town of Hillsborough

45

New Smoke Alarms Installed

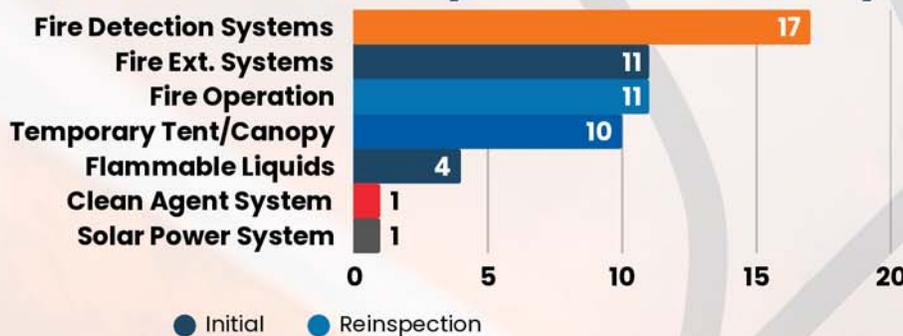
92

High-Risk Residents Provided Education

0

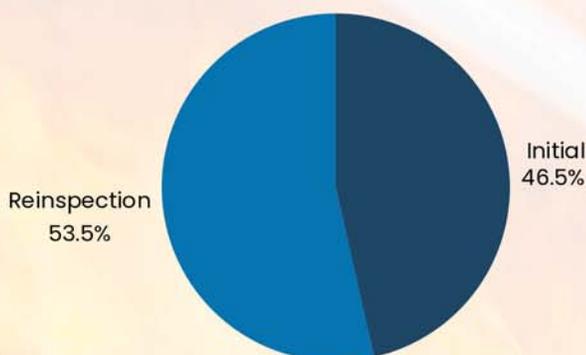
Fire Related Deaths (5-Year Average Remains at 1)

## Permits and Inspection Activity



97

Plan Reviews Conducted



1,031

Total Number of Permits and Inspections

# Public Safety Communications

The Public Safety Communications Division is Orange County's central hub for emergency response, housing the 911 center and associated support staff. It manages emergency and non-emergency calls, assisting over 17 public safety agencies to respond effectively to various situations. The center connects residents with necessary resources and support for urgent and non-urgent matters.

## 2024 Highlights

- Initiated the replacement of the Computer Aided Dispatch software (13 years old)
- Implemented interface with alarm monitoring companies
- Initiated the replacement of the Fire/EMS paging network

## 2025 Goals

- Continue CAD replacement project
- Leverage technology to diversify the PSAP backup plan
- Drive quality improvement measures
- Continue efforts to improve Fire/EMS paging and expansion of 800mhz public safety radio network

**81,466**

Non-emergency Calls Answered

**97%**

9-1-1 Calls Answered  
In 10 Seconds or Less

*\*Standard is 90% in < 10 seconds*

**90,709**

911 Calls Answered

**44,888**

IIAED Protocols Used

**77,860**

Incidents Dispatched

### Top 5 Call Types

1. Traffic Violation
2. Public Service
3. Alarm (Law)
4. Traffic Incident
5. Disturbance/Nuisance

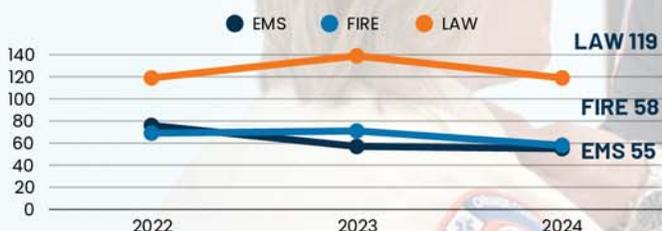
## 3-Year Comparison



## Dispatch by Discipline



## Avg. Time to Dispatch (sec)



911 Calls Received by  
Wireless/Cell Phone



# POST-OVERDOSE RESPONSE TEAM (PORT)

In July 2024, we launched the EMS Post-Overdose Response Team (PORT), aimed at connecting individuals who have suffered an opioid overdose, as well as those currently dealing with or at risk of opioid use disorder, to vital resources and support. Based within our EMS Community Health and Safety Bureau, the team operates daily and consists of specially trained paramedics along with a certified Peer Support Specialist.

## Compassionate Support

The team is mobile across Orange County, ready to provide support for a variety of needs. They offer a compassionate individual to talk to, access to essential harm reduction resources like naloxone, direct on-site treatment for eligible individuals with medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD), as well as transportation to treatment facilities and help in connecting with community treatment providers.

## Early Success

While the team has only been operational for half a year, early indications are that the team is making a profound impact. PORT reached an **83% rate of success** in connecting individuals to recovery support providers. With the average wait time of approximately 7-10 days to be seen by a treatment provider, PORT is able to initiate and continue medication-assisted therapy during this period.

In the final six months of 2024, the team evaluated 102 individuals (with 26 coming from direct scene responses), offered medication-assisted treatment to 13 individuals, and linked another 13 individuals to treatment providers. The team receives referrals from various sources, including EMS field staff, the Criminal Justice Resource Department, and self-referrals.

## Impact of Opioid Settlement Funds

*The PORT Program is supported largely by the Board of County Commissioners through a \$224,020 grant from the Opioid Settlement Fund. Additional support is made possible from Alliance Health, Orange County's Local Management Entity/Managed Care Organization (LME/MCO). More information on the Opioid Settlement Fund, including a full list of funded programs, visit [www.orangecountync.gov](http://www.orangecountync.gov)*

## Contact

**PORT Community Paramedics**  
Call or Text 919-407-2654

**PORT Peer Support Specialist**  
Call or Text 919-407-9707

**Confidential Email**  
[EMS\\_PORT@orangecountync.gov](mailto:EMS_PORT@orangecountync.gov)

All services provided by PORT are **free** of charge, **non-coercive, individual-focused**, and always conducted with emphasis on **respect** and **confidentiality** of the individual.



# CRISIS ASSISTANCE RESPONSE AND ENGAGEMENT

Launched in May 2024, the Crisis Assistance Response and Engagement (CARE) Team is a 2-year pilot program serving the Town of Chapel Hill.

## Holistic Individualized Care

The CARE Team offers remote or on-site assistance and incident follow-up for non-emergent calls related to behavioral and mental health, substance use, and intellectual developmental disabilities that do not require law enforcement involvement. This three-member mobile team, comprising a Crisis Counselor, a Peer Support Specialist, and an OCES Community EMT, is complemented by a Crisis Counselor embedded within the 911 Center. Available Monday through Friday (excluding major holidays), the team provides harm reduction supplies, mental health support, referrals to other support services, and transportation if necessary.

## Chapel Hill Police Crisis Unit

For over 50 years, the Chapel Hill Police Department's Crisis Unit has set a national standard for excellence. This unit functions under a co-response model, where counselors and peer support specialists collaborate with law enforcement to assist both officers and individuals in crisis. They provide support for survivors of domestic or sexual violence, crime victims, those facing psychiatric emergencies, runaway youth, hostage or barricaded individuals, people experiencing stalking or harassment, and individuals without shelter. The CARE team, an extension of the crisis unit, provides remote or on-scene response and follow-up to behavioral & mental health, substance use, and intellectual developmental disability related calls that are non-emergent.



## Partnership with Chapel Hill Police

*The CARE initiative is a 2-year pilot program in partnership between the Chapel Hill Police Department and Orange County. The pilot project is made possible with support from the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and Alliance Health. The UNC School of Government's Criminal Justice Innovation Lab is also contracted to evaluate the program's impact on the community and opportunities for expansion to all of Orange County.*

## Contact

**Chapel Hill Police Crisis Unit**  
(919) 968-2806

**If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health or other emergency, please call 9-1-1.**

\*Photo Credit: Town of Chapel Hill



# ORANGE COUNTY, NC TROPICAL STORM HELENE RESPONSE

From September 24 to 27, Tropical Storm Helene caused significant destruction across western North Carolina. In the aftermath, Orange County answered the call with the most extensive mutual aid response ever recorded in the County's history.



## TOTAL SUPPORT BY THE NUMBERS

**25**  
State Missions

**103**  
Persons

**165**  
Assets

### OCES Personnel

Hannah Tuckman  
Kyle Ronn  
Kim Woodward  
Andrew Ovendon  
Chasidy Kearns  
Leo Kates  
Neil Damle  
Delina Medina  
Avery Soular  
Macey Peercy  
Elisabeth Gonka  
Camille Honeycutt  
Karla Gacia  
Robert Schumann  
Paris Laws  
Kirby Saunders

### Areas Supported

State Emergency Ops. Center  
*ESF 8 Desk*  
*EMAC/Mutual Aid*  
  
Buncombe County EOC  
  
Buncombe Co. Shelter  
  
Yancy County EOC  
  
Town of Black Mountain

### Coordination

As the need increased, the OCES EM Division enhanced its coordination efforts, serving as a vital link across all jurisdictions in Orange County. The OCEOC and our ES logistics team made certain that all deployed personnel received essential supplies, including cots, water, and meals ready to eat.



## State Medical Support Shelter

Ten of our newest EMTs and Paramedics, led by Bureau Chief Chasidy Kearns, were deployed to provide medical support at a state medical support shelter in Buncombe County, NC.

# HELENE RESPONSE LASTING IMPACTS

Prior to the onset of severe impacts, Hannah Tuckman (pictured middle), EM Planner, joined an Incident Management Team to support a state shelter in Buncombe County as water levels began to rise. She subsequently transitioned to the Buncombe County Emergency Operations Center, where she was recognized for reshaping the mass care operation during the crisis.



## Town of Black Mountain, NC

Director Kirby Saunders led a 6-person Incident Management Team for 7 days in the Town of Black Mountain (Buncombe Co), assisting the town to restore critical community lifelines, organize the response, and plot the course towards recovery.

# Significant Events or Incidents

## ADDRESSING THE IMPACTS OF OPIOIDS

On April 27, 2024, ES staff collaborated with County Commissioners, Opioid Advisory Committee members, community partners, and local residents to hold the inaugural Opioid Settlement Funding Community Meeting. This event saw a strong turnout and offered an overview of the opioid crisis, details about the settlement funding, as well as panel presentations and activities designed to gather community input on key priorities to combat this devastating epidemic.



ORANGE COUNTY  
**OCES**  
EMERGENCY SERVICES

## PRIDE MONTH

In June 2024, OCES proudly celebrated Pride Month by wearing "Pride" themed uniform shirts, showcasing our solidarity with the LGBTQ community. This voluntary initiative was completely self-funded by staff. A total of 73 shirts were purchased, raising \$743 for the LGBTQ Center of Durham, which provides vital resources for LGBTQ individuals and families. We are proud to stand united with the LGBTQ community, ensuring everyone feels seen, heard, and valued.

## DANGEROUS HEAT

In July 2024, Orange County faced dangerously high temperatures, prompting the activation of cooling centers. This quick action was vital for protecting vulnerable groups, like the elderly, those with health issues, and those living unsheltered. Although the official warning was short, the elevated temperatures persisted throughout much of summer. Residents were urged to stay hydrated and limit outdoor activities.

### Dangerous Heat Today

July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2024

Excessive Heat Warning in Effect!

- Heat Index values of 105 to around 110 are expected today!
- Stay alert for signs of heat-related illnesses and take action immediately!
- This level of heat can affect anyone without effective cooling or adequate hydration!



 Heat Stroke is an EMERGENCY! Call 911

Raleigh, NC  
 National Weather Service  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

Drink plenty of water, stay in an air-conditioned room, stay out of the sun, and check on relatives and neighbors.

# Significant Events or Incidents

## TROPICAL STORM DEBBY

On August 6, 2024, Orange County declared a State of Emergency due to Tropical Storm Debby's expected impact. The storm, which made landfall as a Category 1 hurricane in Florida's Big Bend region, was predicted to bring over 6 inches of rain and damaging winds. However, it weakened faster than expected, leading to only minor power outages despite significant rainfall in eastern North Carolina.



## ALSTON ESCAPE

On August 14, 2024, OCES provided incident management, public alert and warning, and communication support to local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies in the coordinated search for the escaped detainee, Ramone Alston. Alston was in the custody of the NC Department of Adult Corrections when he escaped at UNC Hillsborough Hospital. The incident and subsequent multi-day statewide manhunt gained national media attention. Alstons was captured in Kannapolis, NC.

## 2024 GENERAL ELECTION

On November 5, 2024, the OCES Emergency Management Division and the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) were activated to support the 2024 General Election. Collaborating closely with the Board of Elections, the EOC actively monitored for potential disruptions, misinformation, or any impacts on infrastructure. Its mission was to safeguard this fundamental, Constitutionally protected right to vote. Throughout the early voting and canvassing phases, the EOC maintained a vigilant monitoring position.







**2023  
AWARDS  
PROGRAM**  
MARCH 13, 2024

# 2024 EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR



**James Johnson**  
**EMS Battalion Chief**

Chief Johnson is a dependable leader dedicated to our department's mission, those he leads, and the community he serves. His commitment is integral to his character and is evident in his daily interactions.

A standout aspect of James's leadership is his ability to create a positive atmosphere. He uplifts those around him through encouraging words and thoughtful gestures, ensuring everyone feels valued. His compassion fosters an environment where individuals can express themselves and pursue their goals.

In 2024 alone, Johnson oversaw the development of 31 new EMS providers in his dual role as FTEP Coordinator, a role he held for many years. Displaying an almost personal interest in their success, 97% of the new providers completed their precepting process under his leadership.

James Johnson exemplifies our values and inspires others with his dedication, positivity, compassion, and humility, positively affecting both the workplace and the wider community.

# 2024 Retirements



## **LARRY BLANCHARD**

*PSC BATTALION CHIEF*

**24 YEARS**

On April 1, 2024, Battalion Chief Larry Blanchard concluded his service with Orange County. With 24 dedicated years in public safety communications, Larry, a Boston native, was known for his distinctive radio voice that instilled confidence and security in those he served. Over the course of his career in Orange County, he held multiple positions, ultimately rising to the rank of Battalion Chief prior to his retirement.

# Congratulations

## **MARY ANNE AVERETTE**

*PSC BATTALION CHIEF*

**27 YEARS**

On December 1, 2024, Battalion Chief Mary Anne Averette wrapped up her remarkable tenure with Orange County. With 27 years of devoted service in public safety communications, she earned the affectionate title of the "Queen of Communications" from many. Throughout her extensive career in Orange County, Mary Anne mentored, coached, and nurtured countless new telecommunicators. Her colleagues recall her lively spirit, always seeking opportunities to celebrate and inspire her team to achieve greater heights.



# 2024 Promotions



**KELLY PENNY**  
*PSC BATTALION CHIEF*



**BRANDON CARTHEN**  
*EMS BATTALION CHIEF*



**JOSHUA ALSTON**  
*PSC CAPTAIN*



**OLIVIA NEAL**  
*PSC CAPTAIN*



**ZACH GANT**  
*EMS CAPTAIN  
TRAINING OFFICER*



**KERRI MUMFORD**  
*PSC TRAINING OFFICER*



**NOLAND SODERLUND**  
*PSC TRAINING OFFICER*

## 2024 Paramedic Academy Graduates

Dane Rossman    Reagan Fernandez    Lloyd Adler-Johnson    Riley Picken

# 2024 New Team Members





# 2024 Holiday Luncheon Revived

We were thrilled to bring back one of our cherished traditions: hosting our annual holiday luncheon for our response and community partners. This potluck-style gathering offers us a fantastic chance to show our appreciation to the many partners who play a vital role in our mission's success. Leaders from the Town of Black Mountain joined us in recognizing and honoring their dedication and resilience during Hurricane Helene. We were also pleased to present the **Order of the Long Leaf Pine** to retired ES Director Dinah Jeffries. State Representative Renee Price was there to help us celebrate Jeffries' impressive 37 years of service to Orange County and the State of North Carolina.

# 2024 Major Investments

## CAD

### COMPUTER AIDED DISPATCH REPLACEMENT

In 2024, ES launched the Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) replacement project. This vital initiative seeks to update the software that has been operational since 2013. With the current system being outdated and lacking vendor support, securing a replacement solution was essential for ensuring high-quality public safety communication services.

Following years of research, the Orange County BOCC granted a service contract to Hexagon AB in late 2024. This investment, totaling nearly \$3 million, will receive partial funding from the NC 911 Board.

As the central software component for all public safety services, the Hexagon CAD product will offer the latest technology to serve for years to come.

The project is also being implemented alongside a new Records Management Solution for the Orange County Sheriff's Office.

## EMS

### NEW EMS STATION & MEDICAL EXAMINERS QUARTERS

After several months of delays beyond Orange County's control, we are excited to announce the opening of the county's first newly constructed standalone EMS station, set for Spring 2025.

Located at 3700 Hwy. 70 West in the Efland community, this station will house an ALS ambulance and an EMS Battalion Chief.

Once it becomes operational, this new facility will replace the existing station on Mt. Willing Road, which is situated about a mile away. Notably, the Mt. Willing station, once known as the Efland Unit of the Orange County Rescue Squad, was the county's original EMS station back in the late 1990s.

The approximately 5,400 sq. ft. facility features a contemporary design, office space, private bunk rooms, a fitness area, and room for up to two ambulances.

## COMM

### RADIO COMMUNICATIONS PROJECT

In 2018, Orange County initiated a technical engineering report to identify ways to improve communication for first responders. Fast forward to 2023, we took significant steps by designating \$3 million for communication infrastructure across all K-12 public schools in the county. By 2024, Phase 1 of the installations was successfully completed in 15 out of 31 facilities, with full completion anticipated by the end of 2025.

This investment guarantees seamless communication for responders within our schools and sets the stage for future enhancements in radio communication.

Looking ahead to 2027, we plan to allocate nearly \$23 million to expand the VIPER 800MHz network, overseen by the State, across four new tower locations. As Orange County continues to expand, ensuring dependable communications for first responders will be vital.

The image shows the Phillip Nick Waters Orange County Emergency Services Center, a two-story brick building with large windows. In the foreground, several white emergency vehicles are parked, including a fire truck with a "510" sign and a "510" sign on the side. The text "PHILLIP NICK WATERS ORANGE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES CENTER" is prominently displayed on the building's facade.

PHILLIP NICK WATERS  
ORANGE COUNTY  
EMERGENCY SERVICES CENTER

*A Prepared, Coordinated and Integrated  
Emergency Services System*

**ORANGE COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES**

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***Integrity | Equity | Respect | Compassion | Courage***