



HUMBOLDT COUNTY FIRE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION ANNUAL REPORT 2017



Cover Page Story

Firefighters from Humboldt County Form Strike Team to Help Southern California Neighbors

In early December of 2017, a five fire engine strike team, made up of 20 local Humboldt County firefighters was formed and sent down to help battle the Thomas Fire in Ventura County. Engines were sent from the Arcata Fire District and the Blue Lake, Briceland, Fortuna, and Miranda volunteer fire departments. The trained crews that responded were able to make a difference in the struggle to save homes and lives in the face of one of the largest and most destructive wildfires in modern California history.

Ferndale firefighter, Terry O'Reilly remembers getting a wakeup call at 1:30 a.m., being on the road an hour later, and getting to the Ventura County fairgrounds at about 6:00 that evening. In Ventura County, scrub brush, avocado trees, and orange groves are common – a completely different landscape than crews from Humboldt had experienced. It was a sudden and drastic change in firefighting conditions that presented an additional challenge for the responding strike team.

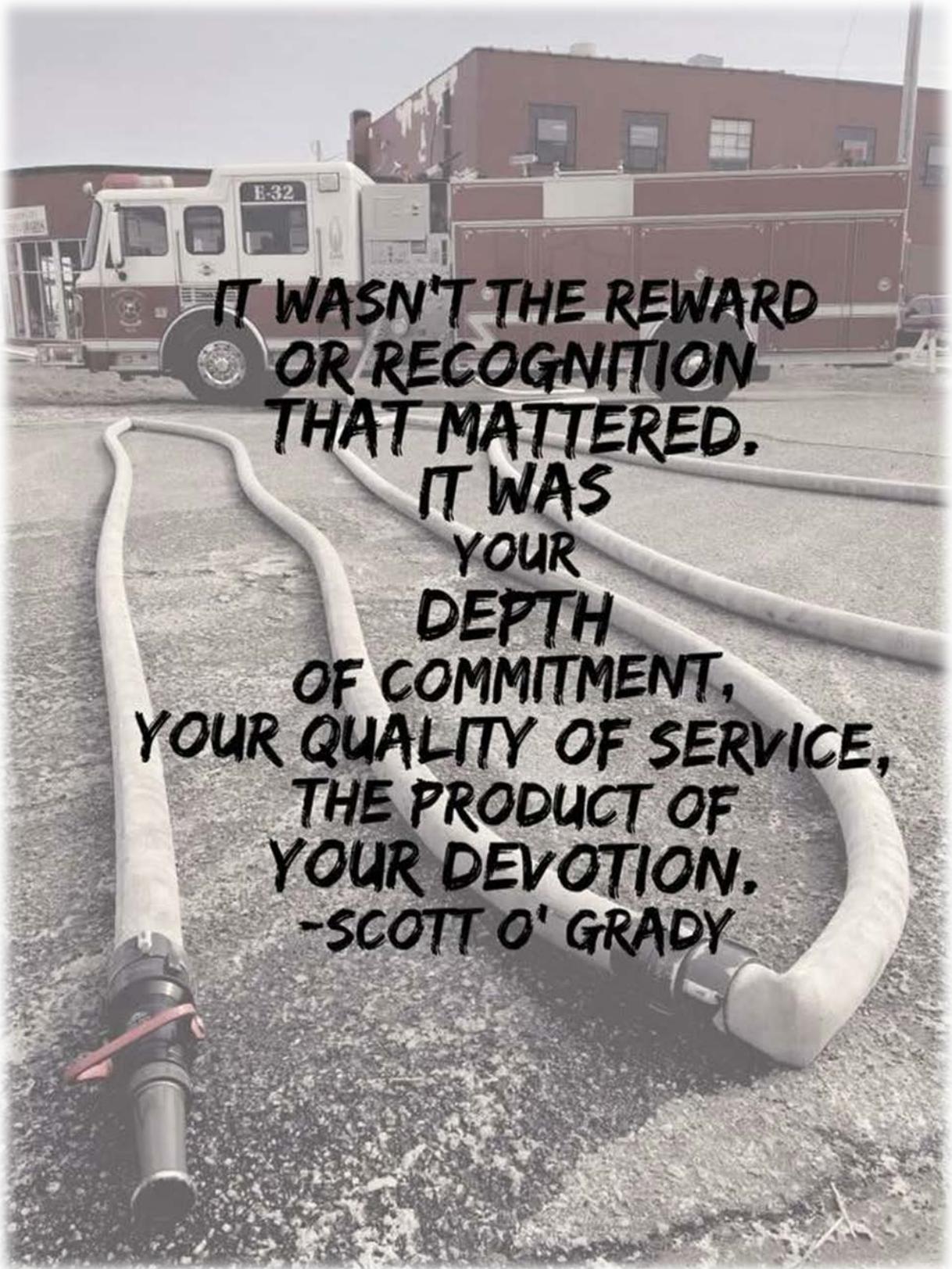
They spent alternating 24 hour shifts patrolling for hotspots, digging fire lines, laying hose lines to protect homes from embers and, in some cases, battled flames when they got too close to structures. Firefighting conditions were tricky – high winds drove embers well ahead of the main fire front and kicked up hotspots into major blazes. An abundance of dense and dry vegetation fueled the flames and burned hot and fast, hindering suppression efforts.

Members of the strike team reported drastic fluctuations in temperature and the associated fire behavior. Terry O'Reilly recalls:

“One night it was bitter cold – icicles formed on one of the leaking engines. The next morning, the wind picked up and the temperature rose dramatically. That ‘little glow’ over the ridge became a raging monster that worked its way downhill and against the wind, igniting bush after bush and throwing embers far downwind.”

The strike team from Humboldt was working on nearby slopes protecting structures when they heard on the radio about the entrapment and eventual death of 33-year-old firefighter Cory Iverson from San Diego. They thought they might be called in to help but fresh crews arrived on the scene and were sent in to find him. The reality of the danger involved in fighting fire was driven home that day. All of the local firefighters returned to Humboldt County unharmed with a renewed respect for the importance of maintaining safety on the fire line. The experience they gained will serve our local communities well if, or rather when, wildfire strikes closer to home.

In Memory



**IT WASN'T THE REWARD
OR RECOGNITION
THAT MATTERED.
IT WAS
YOUR
DEPTH
OF COMMITMENT,
YOUR QUALITY OF SERVICE,
THE PRODUCT OF
YOUR DEVOTION.
-SCOTT O' GRADY**

Allen Masterson – Arcata Fire Protection District

Allen passed away on July 1, 2017. Allen served as a volunteer firefighter for several years with the Arcata Volunteer Fire Department. Allen was the last surviving member of the 1949 crew whose names are inscribed on the dedication plaque at the Arcata Fire Station.



Doug Edgmon- Fortuna Fire Protection District (1920 – 2017)

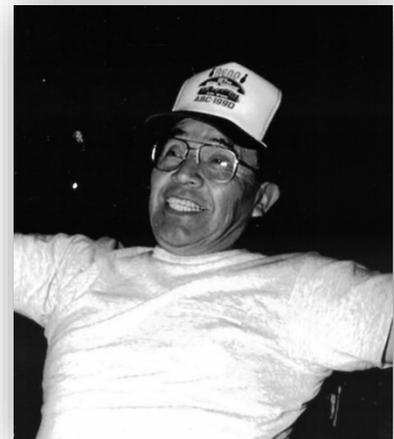
Doug served the Fortuna Fire Protection District as fire commissioner from 1958 through 2003 and from 2005 through 2007 with many of those years of service as Chairman of the Board. Doug was instrumental in the building of two fire stations currently in operation within the fire district starting with the station in Campton Heights in 1967 and the Main Station on Fortuna Blvd. in 1998.



Doug joined the fire department as a firefighter in 1967, becoming a charter member of the newly formed Company #5 designated to staff the new fire station in Campton Heights. It was commonplace to see Doug running the block-long distance from the Campton Heights Market, which he owned and operated, to the fire station in his white apron anytime the fire siren would sound. Doug retired as a firefighter in 1998 after serving 31 years, continuing as a fire commissioner for the district.

Sandy Natt – Fortuna Fire Protection District (1934 – 2017)

Sandy became a member of Company 5 of the Fortuna Volunteer Fire Department in November 1977. He served a total of 6 years, going exempt in 1983.



To: Humboldt County Board of Supervisors

An overview of 2017 Humboldt County Fire Services

This was a year of very interesting changes and improvements for Humboldt County fire departments. This past year, a large majority of the fire departments in Humboldt County experienced increases in calls for service. Calls, ranging from fires to public service calls to calls for medical assistance, have all increased. This shows that the communities, citizens, and visitors of this county are relying more on the fire service than ever before. Most of the fire services in Humboldt are all-volunteer and funded by property taxes, special assessments, and fundraising. As the call volumes go up, the costs to the departments increase. We were fortunate to receive voter approved funds for public safety through Measure Z again this year. This year, the Chiefs' Association undertook the task of providing eight volunteer departments with building kits for structures to house their apparatus. This endeavor proved to be an interesting mission. The engineering of the ground on which the stations will be placed, the structures themselves, and the task of putting it all together is an arduous one. However, with the help of the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrative Office (CAO), we are carrying that funding over and will soon be ordering kits for departments. Funding for fire hose was provided, as well as for the purchase of structural and wildland personal protective equipment (PPE). Funds were also provided through Measure Z to assist with dispatch fees and countywide planning assistance from the Local Agency Formation Commission and County Planning and Building and Public Works to address fire and rescue service sustainability. It is my goal and the goal of the Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association to continue to request Measure Z funding to further improve our area fire departments. This will allow all of our friends and family to enjoy rural areas and receive assistance and safe, timely response from the departments spread around our county if needed.

Last year was a disastrous year for wildfires in Southern California and for our Sonoma and Mendocino County neighbors. Humboldt County departments were able to form strike teams and respond to assist in the incidents. They were tasked with structure protection, hot spot mop up, and general fire suppression duties. Our county departments are testament to the community that we live in; we assist as needed, where needed. The citizens of this county voted Measure Z in to assist with public service/fire service and, by doing so, have also assisted in helping the State to protect lives and property.

The Chiefs' Association would like to thank the Board of Supervisors for their continued support of the Firefighters of Humboldt County. Without this support, we would not have the current level of fire service provided today.

Sincerely,

Jeff Robison, President

Humboldt County Fire Chiefs' Association

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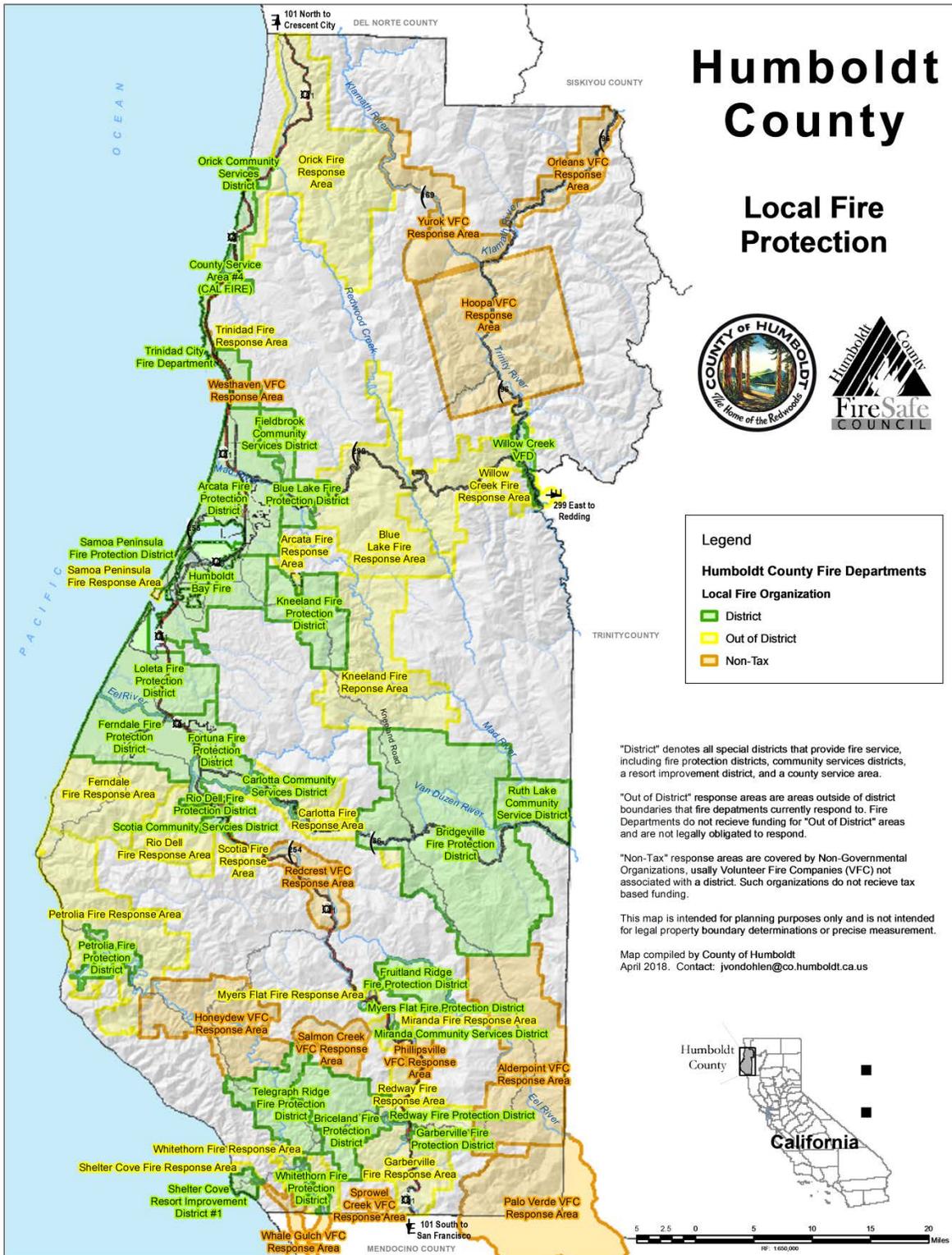
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Acronyms

ALS	Advanced Life Support
ARFF	Aircraft Rescue Firefighting
AFFF	Aqueous Film-Forming Foam
AED	Automated External Defibrillator
BLS	Basic Life Support
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
CSD	Community Services District
CAFS	Compressed Air Foam System
CAD	Computer Aided Dispatch
EMS	Emergency Medical Service
EMT	Emergency Medical Technician
EMT-I	Emergency Medical Technician-Intermediate
FFP	Federal Fire Policy
FPD	Fire Protection District
GPM	Gallons per minute
LAFCo	Local Agency Formation Committee
NFPA	National Fire Protection Association
OES	Office of Emergency Services
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
SCBA	Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus
TRT	Technical Rescue Team
USAR	Urban Search and Rescue
VFC	Volunteer Fire Company
VFD	Volunteer Fire Department

Humboldt County

Local Fire Protection



Legend

Humboldt County Fire Departments

Local Fire Organization

- District
- Out of District
- Non-Tax

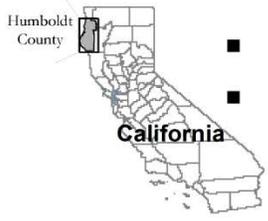
"District" denotes all special districts that provide fire service, including fire protection districts, community services districts, a resort improvement district, and a county service area.

"Out of District" response areas are areas outside of district boundaries that fire departments currently respond to. Fire Departments do not receive funding for "Out of District" areas and are not legally obligated to respond.

"Non-Tax" response areas are covered by Non-Governmental Organizations, usually Volunteer Fire Companies (VFC) not associated with a district. Such organizations do not receive tax based funding.

This map is intended for planning purposes only and is not intended for legal property boundary determinations or precise measurement.

Map compiled by County of Humboldt
 April 2018. Contact: jvondohlen@co.humboldt.ca.us



2017 Annual Report Introduction

This report documents fire and emergency response provided by the local, state, and federal fire service as well as details about emergency medical services, technical rescue, and disaster response groups. A summary is provided on the role played by the fire chiefs' associations in Humboldt County followed by a page dedicated to each local service provider. Local service provider pages are organized by Humboldt County Supervisorial District.

The map on the previous page illustrates where and what type of local fire protection is provided throughout Humboldt County. The special districts that deliver fire services are identified in the map legend as "District" and are shown on the map in green. These districts were formed to provide services within a specific jurisdictional boundary and are supported by revenue from a combination of taxes, fees, grants and fundraising. Many of these jurisdictional boundaries were created as far back as the 1930's. Since that time, neighborhoods, scattered subdivisions, and rural residential development have emerged outside of district boundaries. This newer development requires year-round fire protection and emergency services, which it receives in a variety of ways.

Department vs. Company

In this Report, with a few exceptions, fire service providers associated with a special district are labeled "Volunteer Fire Department", meaning they receive some tax or fee revenue gathered from within a mapped boundary. Those that do not receive tax revenue and are funded primarily through fundraisers and donations are labeled "Volunteer Fire Company".

There are still many areas outside the boundaries of an established district that receive fire protection from district resources. This type of service, which is often referred to as "goodwill service", is identified in the map legend as "Out of District" and is shown on the map in yellow. District fire departments provide service to these areas even though they are under no obligation to do so and, in most cases, receive no compensation for their service, other than donations. This practice can put a strain on already limited resources. Furthermore, property owners within the district may question why the services funded through their taxes are benefiting out of district residents, particularly if they pay a special tax or benefit assessment specifically for fire protection. Thanks to funding from the Public Safety/Essential Services Measure Z sales tax, services have been supported for the large Out of District area between the Blue Lake, Willow Creek, and Kneeland fire protection districts. It is not known for how much longer that support will last.

Many areas outside the boundaries of an established district receive fire protection from a volunteer fire company that is not affiliated with a district. These volunteer fire companies receive no tax revenue and for that reason are identified on the map legend as "Non-Tax" and

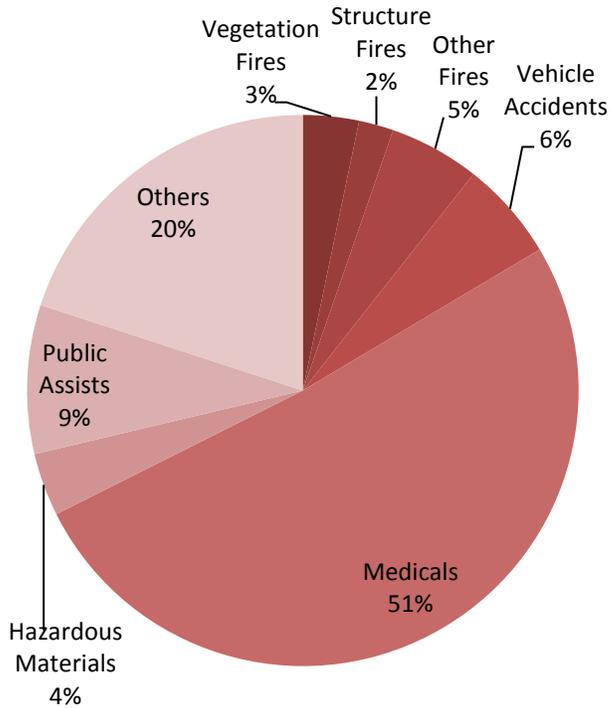
are illustrated on the map in orange. The survival of these fire companies depends on revenue generated from community donations, fundraisers, and grants. Some communities are more supportive of their local fire companies than others and support can fluctuate dramatically depending on local economic conditions.

The following pages provide graphic illustrations of types of responses provided during the 2017 calendar year. There are two pie charts—one for local agencies and one for state and federal agencies—which illustrate total 2017 fire service responses with percentages for each recorded category. It is interesting to note that, for local agency fire service calls, 51 percent are medical emergency dispatches. This underscores the fact that most of the local fire departments and companies provide “all-risk” protection which includes much more than fire response.

Volunteer hours contributed by all local service providers is also summarized by various categories including time spent responding to incidents, training, maintaining equipment and facilities, and fundraising. A total of 108,391 volunteer hours were reported in 2017. This is likely an underestimate of what is actually contributed by the over 700 volunteers who support the network of active local fire departments, fire companies, and technical rescue groups in Humboldt County (569 of these are volunteer firefighters).

A review of the challenges and needs identified by service providers indicates that volunteer recruitment is a growing issue and many departments are struggling to maintain a sufficient roster to meet demands. The next most common need is for facilities to safely store and secure apparatus and equipment. Other issues that were commonly brought up included general equipment needs, funding, fire apparatus, and training and development.

Local Agency Incident Responses



Total Responses: 14,937

2017

Volunteer Hours Humboldt County Fire and Technical Rescue Services:

Incidents: **38,140**

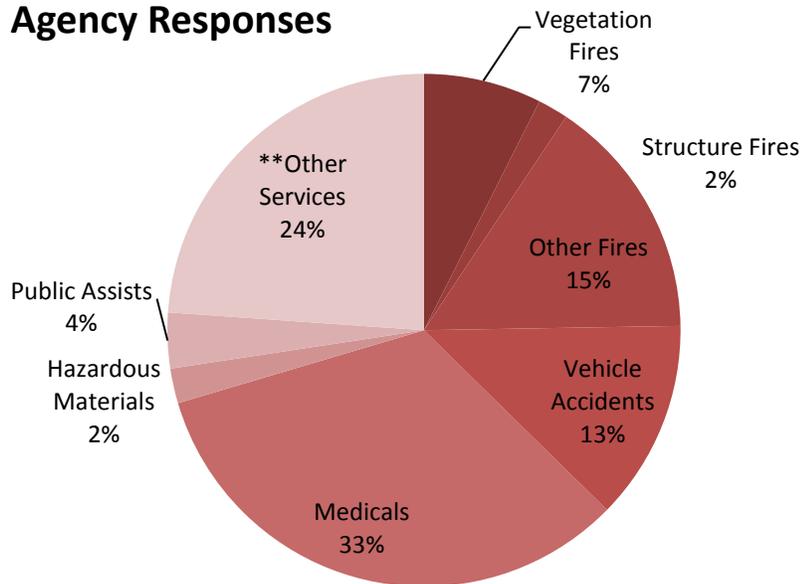
Training: **40,873**

Maintenance: **11,828**

Fundraising: **17,550**

Total Hours: 108,391

State & Federal Agency Responses



Total Responses: 2,194

**Other Services for State & Federal Responses include the following Incident types: Prescribed Fire; Search & Rescue; Law Enforcement; Emergency Standby; and Miscellaneous.