

MEDICINE HAT FIRE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



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Photo courtesy of Bill Haney

MESSAGE FROM THE FIRE CHIEF

I am pleased to present the 2024 Year in Review, highlighting the achievements and performance of Medicine Hat Fire & Emergency Services (MHFES).

This report includes information on the many services MHFES provides, showcasing the dedication and resilience of our team across all branches: 911 communications, suppression, community safety, training and logistics, and administration.

Our department's mission is to provide the highest level of protection and prevention for our residents, businesses, and visitors. We are continually adapting to uphold the quality of life and public safety in our community.

I am extremely proud of the work our team has accomplished in 2024. Our team is driven by our core values and our resident's first focus.

The year was both challenging and rewarding for our MHFES team as homelessness, substance use disorders and mental health continue to impact our community and communities across Canada. Together with community partners, we remain focused on community safety. We are committed to building on relationships and supporting the efforts of partners to prioritize issues, develop solutions, and bring people together to support the needs of those most vulnerable.

Throughout 2024, our firefighters participated in intensive training programs, keeping up-to-date with the latest firefighting techniques, medical protocols, and technological advancements. Their commitment to continuous improvement is reflected in our response times, which not only meet but surpass established standards and remain well below national averages.

In 2024, MHFES responded to 4,721 calls for service and attended a wide range of incidents, including residential fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials situations, motor vehicle accidents, and



community risk reduction initiatives.

We have also taken a stronger role in public education, focusing on preventative measures to reduce risks before emergencies occur. Through an increased effort of in-person presentations at schools and organizations, community partnerships, door-to-door campaigns, and enhanced online messaging and reporting, we are proactively working to mitigate the potentially devastating impacts that emergencies can have on individuals and the community.

Stay safe,

Chad Eakins, Fire Chief and Director

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Photo courtesy of Bill Haney

LAND

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The City of Medicine Hat acknowledges that we live and work on treaty territory. The City pays respect to all Indigenous Peoples and honours their past, present and future. We recognize and respect their cultural heritages and relationships to the land.

Medicine Hat is situated on:

- Treaty 7 and neighbour to Treaty 4 territory.
- Traditional lands of the Siksika (Blackfoot), Kainai (Blood), Piikani (Peigan), Stoney Nakoda, and Tsuut'ina (Sarcee) as well as the Cree, Sioux, and the Saulteaux bands of the Ojibwa peoples.
- Homelands of the Métis Nation.

YOUR

MEDICINE HAT FIRE & EMERGENCY SERVICES

Medicine Hat Fire & Emergency Services (MHFES) is an all-hazards emergency response organization, employing 114 people and 1 Chaplain across three fire stations and our 911 Communications center. We serve the City of Medicine Hat and surrounding areas, protecting lives, property, and the environment from the effects of fire, medical emergencies, motor vehicle accidents, hazardous materials, and more.

At MHFES, we prioritize the health and safety of our residents and staff. Through proactive education, prevention initiatives, and strong community partnerships, we are dedicated to raising awareness, keeping our community informed, and ensuring preparedness for an emergency.

Our vision is to ensure Medicine Hat is a safe and vibrant city by delivering world-class fire and emergency services. We are committed to upholding our core values - accountability, integrity, respect, professionalism, caring, and teamwork, as they provide the foundation for everything we do.

We are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year. MHFES is here to protect and serve the residents of Medicine Hat when it matters the most.





MISSION

To provide optimum protection and prevention for our residents, businesses, and visitors.

We are continually adapting to uphold the quality of life and public safety in our community.



VISION

To remain a progressive and innovative service that ensures a safe community through access to, and delivery of comprehensive public safety services.



VALUES

Accountability
Integrity
Respect
Professionalism
Caring
Teamwork

MHFES WORK ACTIVITIES

Administration & Finance
Analytics
Awards & Recognition
Business Inspections
Communications & Dispatch
Community Engagement
Education Events
Emergency Planning
Emergency Response
Incident Command
Fire Code Enforcement
Fire Suppression
Fire Prevention
Home Safety Inspections
Health & Safety
Human Resources
Incident Command
Investigations
Labour Relations
Life Safety Checks
Media Interviews
Outreach & Recruitment
Partnerships
Policy & Planning
Procurement
Professional Development
Public Consultations
Public Information
Public Education
Public Order
Reporting
Succession Planning
Social Media
Surface Ice/ Water Rescue
Special Operations
Technology
Training
Website Maintenance

OUR 2024 LEADERSHIP TEAM



Chad Eakins, Fire Chief and Director
Director



Douglas Gill, Deputy Chief
Operations



Garnet Decker, Assistant Deputy Chief
Community Safety, Training & Logistics



Jaci Fox, Manager, Strategy & Analytics
Technology, Project Management, Reporting and Analytics



Stacy Smith, Superintendent of 911
911 Operations

SERVING MEDICINE HAT

With three fire stations across the city of Medicine Hat, MHFES helps to ensure a safe community for all of our residents. A fully-equipped Communication Center as well as a fully redundant back-up Communication Center ensures seamless emergency response.



Medicine Hat Fire & Emergency Services

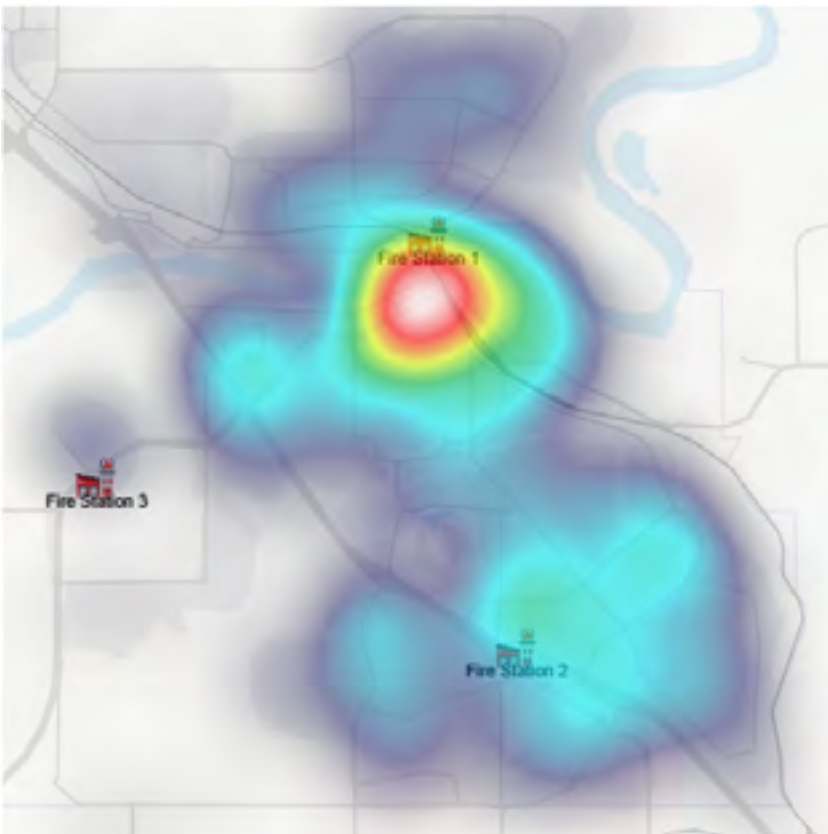
SERVES AN ESTIMATED:

 **66,381**
residents

 **28,689**
residences

 **119.7**
km²

INCIDENT DISTRIBUTION



Medicine Hat Fire and Emergency Services operates with two distinct fire response modes when attending incidents: Fire "RED" and Fire "GREEN".

Fire "RED" Response

A fire "RED" response signifies a fire emergency requiring immediate action, where fire apparatus responds with lights and sirens. This response will also trigger the use of traffic preemption software that will give the right of way to emergency vehicles by overriding the traffic signal to provide a green light for passage through controlled intersections.

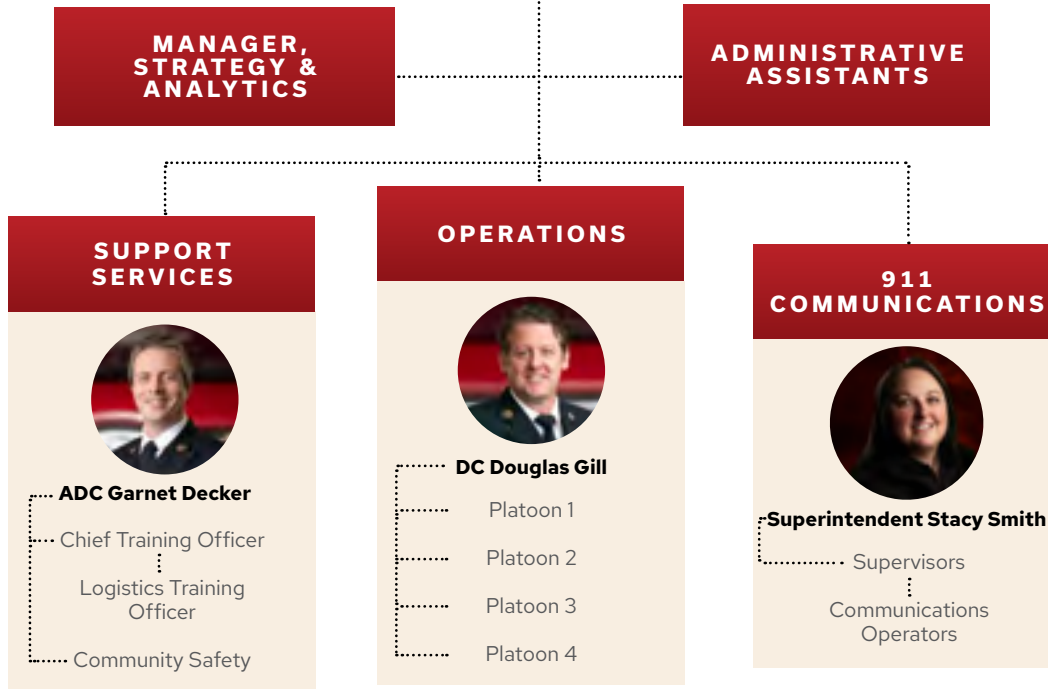
Fire "GREEN" Response

A fire "GREEN" response signifies a fire emergency requiring action, where fire apparatus responds without lights and sirens.

OUR PEOPLE



Fire Chief and Director Chad Eakins



114 TOTAL PERSONNEL COUNT IN 2024

- 3 | Chiefs
- 2 | Manager and Superintendent
- 2 | Administrative Assistants
- 80 | Operations
- 2 | 911 Operations Supervisors
- 18 | 911 Communication Operators
- 2 | Training and Logistics
- 5 | Community Safety

RETIREMENTS

In 2024, MHFES honoured the retirement of a Platoon Chief who achieved the milestone of **26 years of commitment** to our community. We extend our sincere appreciation and gratitude to this dedicated member for his service to the City of Medicine Hat.

MILESTONES

Many of our members reached significant milestones in their years of service to the community. **Well done!**

- **20** years of service, 12 members
- **15** years of service, 2 members
- **10** years of service, 3 members
- **30** year Canadian 1st Bar, 1 member
- **32** year Silver Alberta Bar, 3 members
- **22** year Bronze Alberta Bar, 5 members
- **12** year Alberta Medal, 11 members



PROMOTIONS

Six of our officers received promotions to new substantive ranks and positions. Well deserved, we look forward to your positive contributions and leading change. **Well done!**

- **1** Platoon Chief
- **1** Captain
- **1** Lieutenant
- **1** Qualified Officer
- **2** 911 Operations Supervisors



2024

BY THE NUMBERS



2,464

emergency incidents



6:09

emergency response time to structure fires

Council approved response time is 06:20 for First Engine on Scene for Structure Fires 90% of the time.

We responded in 06:15 90% of the time to all 1,245 emergency incidents with hot response.



4,721
incidents

Life Safety Checks	1734	36.7%
Alarms	654	13.9%
Medical First Response	457	9.0%
Inspections	412	8.7%
Hazmat	366	7.8%
Public Service	284	6.0%
Motor Vehicle	256	5.4%
Fire Other	257	5.4%
Investigative Mode	140	3.0%
Fire Investigation	58	1.2%
Public Education	53	1.1%
Structure Fire Residential	43	1.0%
Rescue	27	0.6%
Structure Fire Non-Residential	6	0.1%
Mutual Aid	4	0.1%

RESPONSE DATA

All time is calculated in seconds and based on the 90th percentile in its individual metric.

First Truck on Scene

	Council Approved Target Response	2022	2023	2024
Total Response Time	6:20	6:24	6:20	6:15
Travel Time	4:30	4:45	4:47	4:43
Turnout Time	1:20	1:28	1:28	1:28
Alert Time	0:30			

MHFES strives to respond with the first arriving Engine Company within 6:20, 90% of the time (90th percentile performance). This Council approved response time target for first arriving engines is based on the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standards, tenability for occupants in burning buildings, and time to collapse when fire impinging on structural floor members.

Full Alarm Assignment

	Council Approved Target Response	2022	2023	2024
Total Response Time	12:20	10:38	10:39	10:40
Travel Time	11:00	9:06	9:16	9:00
Turnout Time	01:20	1:38	1:31	2:00
Alert Time	0:30			

MHFES strives to place two engine companies and one ladder company on scene in 12:20, 90% of the time (90th percentile performance).

Total Response Time:
Notification of emergency to 'at scene'.

Travel Time:
En route to 'at scene'.

Turnout Time:
Notification of emergency to beginning point of travel time.

Alert Time:
Time call is received to time units are alerted.



Fire Life Safety Checks and Inspections

- **2146** annual



Alarms Checked / Installed

- **292** smoke alarms checked
- **46** smoke alarms installed
- **51** batteries replaced/fire alarms discovered not working



Medical First Response Calls

- **427**



Outdoor Fires

- **142** outside fires
- **55** encampment fires

TOP 5 CODE VIOLATIONS

FIRE EXTINGUISHER - 275 unsatisfactory

Fire extinguishers must be serviced annually to ensure they are in proper working condition and ready for use in an emergency.

FIRE HAZARDS - 121 unsatisfactory

Common fire hazards include using extension cords as permanent wiring and improper storage of combustible materials, which can obstruct exits and increase fire risk.

FIRE SEPARATIONS - 71 unsatisfactory

Fire separations are designed to compartmentalize buildings which slow the spread the fire; damage to these barriers compromises safety and allows fire to spread more rapidly.

EMERGENCY PLANNING - 63 unsatisfactory

Businesses and buildings must have an up-to-date fire safety plan, and staff should be properly trained on fire procedures to ensure a safe and effective response during an emergency.

EXIT LIGHTING - 210 unsatisfactory

Exit and emergency lighting must be operational at all times; malfunctioning or non-working lights can prevent safe evacuation during an emergency.



TOP 5 CAUSES OF FIRES

COOKING

Never leave cooking unattended – stand by your pan! Keep things that can catch fire away from the cooking area, including loose fitting clothing.

SMOKING

Fires are easily started by smoker's materials that are carelessly discarded. If you smoke, smoke outside and safely dispose of your cigarette butts – never in planter boxes and never dispose from your balcony.

ARSON

Preventing arson starts with vigilance. Keep your property well-lit and ensure doors, windows, and garages are secured. Store flammable materials in safe, locked areas. Report suspicious activity to local authorities immediately and engage with your community to promote awareness and education.

ELECTRICAL DISTRIBUTION EQUIPMENT

Faulty or overloaded electrical systems can cause fires. Avoid overloading outlets and power bars. Use surge protectors, and ensure electrical cords are in good condition—not frayed or damaged. Unplug small appliances when not in use to reduce fire risk.

HEATING EQUIPMENT

Keep anything that can burn at least 3 ft. away from heating equipment, such as space heaters, fireplaces, and furnaces. Never leave space heaters unattended and always turn them off before going to bed or leaving a room.

911

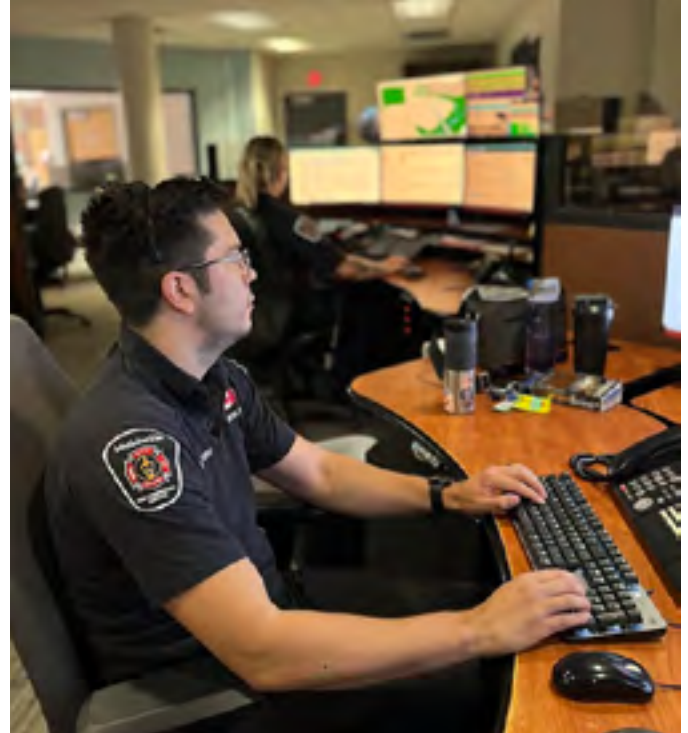
COMMUNICATIONS

The 911 Communications branch handles emergency and non-emergency call-taking, dispatching and incident management support. Known as the first-first responder, for the residents in Medicine Hat, the Town of Redcliff, and the County of Forty Mile. Communications staff handle calls for fire and emergency services, police, special transit, and after-hours utilities, and is the first point of contact for triaging EMS incidents.

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

Medicine Hat Fire and Emergency Services formed a new partnership with HALO Air Ambulance to strengthen southern Alberta's emergency response capabilities. As HALO's official flight-following team, the 911 Communications Centre ensures every mission is tracked in real-time, providing oversight that prioritizes safety and swift action.

Flight-following is a critical function that involves monitoring the real-time location, flight status, and environmental conditions of an aircraft, ensuring timely responses to any unforeseen issues. This support is vital for HALO, which responds to emergencies ranging from medical scene calls and patient transfers to aerial fire reconnaissance and search and rescue operations.



INCOMING AND OUTGOING

Incoming Calls	110,842
Outgoing Calls	23,972

TYPES OF INCIDENTS

MHPS	34,048
Special Transit	15,278
MHFES	2,464
Utilities	1,361
HALO	333
Rural Fire	116

SPECIAL PROJECTS

911 Staffing

Restructuring 911 operations optimized staffing levels during peak times, adding stability and consistency to ensure the highest level of service for our residents. This included the promotion of two '911 Operations Supervisors'.

SUPPRESSION

Our fire suppression crews respond to a wide range of emergencies across the city, including fire suppression, vehicle extrication, hazardous materials incidents, ice and water rescues, medical emergencies, technical rescues, life safety checks, and more. There are 80 firefighters spread across the city at three fire stations: Station 1 on Parkview Dr. NE, Station 2 on Trans Canada Way SE, and Station 3 located at the airport.



80 seconds

Time it takes for a firefighter to **gear up** and be on the road.



TOP 6 FIRE EMERGENCY RESPONSES

Fire Alarms	654
Medical First Response	427
Hazmat	366
Public Service	284
Destructive Fire	257
Motor Vehicle Collision	256

HIGHLIGHTS



FireFit success on the world stage

Known as “the toughest two minutes in sports,” the FireFit Championships test firefighters’ endurance, strength, and agility through a series of high-intensity tasks that mirror real-life emergency situations. In 2024, local firefighters demonstrated their skills on the global stage, earning third place in the Male 40-49 Relay at the 2024 World Firefighter Challenge Championships in Nashville on October 26, 2024.



TRAINING & **LOGISTICS**

The Training and Logistics branch maintains firefighter readiness by overseeing skills maintenance, implementing new technical advancements, and promoting health and safety. Career development through leadership and supervisory training is also supported through this branch.



11,811 hours
of **skills maintenance training**



1,960 hours
technical/leadership training

HIGHLIGHTS

Thermal Imaging Cameras

Training and Logistics acquired thermal imagers to improve firefighter safety and efficiency during emergency responses. Thermal imaging cameras detect heat signatures which allows firefighters to locate individuals in low-visibility conditions, identify hidden fire spread, and assist with search and rescue operations. This technology also pinpoints hot spots during fire suppression to reduce rekindling risks and facilitate navigation through smoke-filled environments.



COMMUNITY SAFETY

The Community Safety branch strengthens public safety and preparedness through fire inspections, fire investigations, home safety assessments, and educational outreach. The team works to prevent emergencies by engaging with residents, businesses, and community partners to promote fire awareness and risk reduction.



SPECIAL PROJECTS

The MAN VAN

The City of Medicine Hat welcomed Canada's first mobile men's health clinic, the MAN VAN, to Fire Station 2 on November 19, 2024. The Clinic provided on-the-spot Prostate-Specific Antigen (PSA) blood tests to 97 local men. All available appointments were filled quickly and given the strong response; additional dates will be scheduled in 2025.



PROPERTY SAVED AND LOST



\$85.62M

worth of property and infrastructure caught in fire



\$83.29M

was protected and saved by MHFES



\$2.33M

was lost as a result of fire



58

fire investigations in 2024

High School Programming

The Community Safety branch has partnered with two local high schools to deliver a course on arson and fire behaviour to Grade 10, 11, and 12 students. This initiative deepens classroom learning while also introducing students to the diverse career opportunities within fire and emergency services.

Car Seat Clinics

In partnership with Alberta Health Services, MHFES hosts Car Seat Clinics to provide parents and caregivers hands-on instruction on the proper installation of child safety seats.

PUBLIC EDUCATION IN THE COMMUNITY

MHFES recognizes that community safety begins with prevention. Through proactive education and engagement, our goal is to reduce incidents before they occur. Public education and fire prevention efforts are central to our goal of building an informed, prepared, and resilient community.

With the addition of a dedicated Fire and Life Safety Educator in 2024, MHFES will continue to increase its ability to deliver targeted education initiatives to residents both in-person and online. These initiatives include programs, events, and presentations designed for diverse audiences, including youth, adults, seniors, new Canadians, businesses, and community organizations.



PROGRAMS AND CAMPAIGNS

After the Fire

The After the Fire program is a door-to-door campaign conducted in neighborhoods following a fire incident. MHFES connects with residents to offer support, answer questions about the fire, and share important fire safety information. During these visits, MHFES checks smoke alarms, provides safety recommendations, and helps residents take proactive steps to protect their homes.

6 After the Fire responses

- **271** residences visited
- **105** homes had direct contact
- **166** homes received educational material
- **19** smoke alarms were provided to residents
- **72** smoke alarms were deemed satisfactory
- **50** smoke alarms found unsatisfactory



Fire Prevention Week

The theme for Fire Prevention Week 2024 was "Smoke Alarms: Make them work for you!" From October 6-12, MHFES visited 21 schools across the community, delivering presentations to students from kindergarten to grade six. These sessions emphasized the critical importance of maintaining functional smoke and carbon monoxide alarms in the home. As part of the week's activities, two local students were awarded unique opportunities: one grade 6 student became the Fire Chief for the Day, (special thanks to our partners at Gravity Sports), while a grade 2 student enjoyed a home visit from 'Sparky the Fire Dog' along with a safety prize pack.

Steps to Safety

Steps to Safety is a new program developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) specifically for older adults, focusing on fire safety and fall prevention. Reaching this demographic requires a variety of approaches, including virtual presentations, in-person discussions, static displays, and the distribution of educational materials.

Youth Firesetter Intervention Referral and Education Services

The Youth Firesetter Intervention program pairs youth firesetters and their families with specially trained firefighters. Trained Community Safety members and firefighters build trust and understanding with the children, educating them about the potential consequences of their actions in a supportive environment.



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Throughout **2024**
we provided **fire prevention education** to:

5,122

Pre-kindergarten to grade 6

159

high school students

449

adults

50

seniors

85

new Canadians



CHALLENGES

WE ARE FACING

While there are many highlights from 2024 to celebrate, there were also challenges faced by MHFES and our community.

Increase in vacant, encampments, and homelessness

Like many communities across Alberta, Medicine Hat has seen an increase in vacant properties, encampments, and homelessness. These challenges have contributed to a rise in emergency calls in 2024, including fires in vacant structures, encampments and outdoor fires. Medicine Hat Fire Services responded to these incidents prioritizing both safety and compassion while addressing these emergencies.

Opioid Epidemic

Alberta overall has been dealing with an opioid epidemic leading to an increase in overdose-related emergency calls. Medicine Hat Fire Services responded to many overdose calls in 2024. Firefighters are trained to administer naloxone, an opioid overdose reversal medication.

Lithium-ion Batteries

Lithium-ion batteries present significant challenges to Fire Services due to their unique properties and potential hazards. These batteries are powering our lives and are commonly found in smartphones, laptops, power tools, kitchen appliances, electric vehicles, and renewable energy systems. They can ignite and burn in extremely high temperatures and release toxic gases, posing explosion risks when exposed to heat or damage. Firefighters must manage the volatility of lithium-ion batteries.

LOOKING

AHEAD

As we look ahead to 2025, MHFES is preparing for another impactful year, with new initiatives focused on advancing fire prevention, community engagement, and public education.

Expanding High School Education

MHFES is planning to bring forensics, fire investigation, the chemistry of fire, and training in 911 call-taking and dispatching skills, to more high schools, offering students hands-on experience in emergency services.

125th Anniversary Celebration

To commemorate 125 years of service in 2025, MHFES will host two community open houses, a historical photo exhibit at the Esplanade, a Firefighter's Gala, along with other initiatives to honour the rich history and the dedication of past and present members.

First Responder Academy

In collaboration with the Medicine Hat Catholic Board of Education and the Medicine Hat Police Service, MHFES will launch the First Responder Academy, offering students an immersive learning experience in firefighting, emergency medical response, and public safety careers.

OUR PARTNERS




PROUD TO PROTECT MEDICINE HAT AND SURROUNDING AREA

2024 YEAR IN REVIEW 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW 2024 YEAR IN REVIEW



CONNECT WITH US

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