

### **Q1: Why doesn't Chilliwack have as many full-time firefighters as other similar-sized cities?**

**A1:** Based on population, Chilliwack is similar in size to Delta, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Maple Ridge, North Vancouver (District), and Prince George. There are 3 main reasons why Chilliwack requires fewer full-time firefighters than these 6 similar-sized communities:

1. These fire departments respond to significantly more medical incidents than we do **and/or**
2. These cities lack a single concentrated urban growth boundary that generates most of their incidents **and/or**
3. They lack the generous composite (full-time and POC) staffing we enjoy.

Our effective community risk reduction programs include extensive public education programs that reduce fire frequency, and a sprinkler bylaw instituted in 2007 that reduces the overall severity of structure fires.

There are no industry-wide standards for composite fire department staffing based only on city population. Many community risk factors must be considered when determining how many full-time firefighters Chilliwack requires to provide safe, effective, and efficient fire and life safety services. Modern, progressive fire departments like ours use integrated risk management methods that consider the risks and hazards located within the city, the city's geography, the staffing model in use (career, volunteer, or composite), and the volume and types of incidents the fire department responds to each year.

In 2000, our fire department created an annually reviewed firefighter hiring plan to address the current and future staffing needs for our growing community. At that time, we employed 11 full-time firefighters. We currently employ 44 full-time firefighters and 135 paid on-call (POC) firefighters. Our current hiring plan provides for 48 full-time firefighters by 2027.

As Chilliwack grows and our calls for service increase, we expect we may need to hire additional firefighters and purchase additional apparatus. In 2023, we are on track to increase our total calls for service by 100, less than a 0.5% increase.

Our safe, effective, and efficient composite fire department takes an evidence-based approach to staffing using a community risk assessment (CRA), which then forms the basis for our community risk reduction (CRR) strategies. **See FAQ 'What is a community risk assessment (CRA) and what are community risk reduction (CRR) strategies?'** for more details.



**Q2: How does the Chilliwack Fire Department (CFD) determine how many full-time firefighters are needed?**

**A2:** The CFD has had a full-time and POC staffing plan for more than 20 years. This progressive and evidence-based plan is one of our highest priority department goals. Each year, we update the plan based on several factors, including the city’s growth projections, our community risk management assessments and strategies, operational needs identified through our performance measures for safety, effectiveness, and efficiency, and a detailed analysis of our calls for service. We present this information to Mayor & Council for their discussion and support each year.

There are three different ways a fire department can be staffed. A **volunteer** fire department is staffed only with volunteer or paid on-call (POC) firefighters. A **composite** fire department is staffed with both career (full-time) and volunteer (POC) firefighters. A **career** fire department is staffed only with full-time firefighters.

Chilliwack’s composite public fire protection system employs 175 dedicated and well-trained firefighters who proudly serve our community. We are staffed with 44 full-time and 135 paid on-call (POC) firefighters and officers. This **composite** staffing model allows us to quickly increase our emergency response capabilities when they are most needed and, combined with our unique geography and focus on fire-related incidents, has resulted in our fire department becoming one of the most safe, effective, and efficient fire departments in BC.

Incident data analysis confirms that our two full-time crews respond to an average of 12 incidents in 24 hours, or 6 incidents per shift. Since we respond to far fewer incidents than other similar-sized cities, we require fewer full-time firefighters.

Today, many BC fire departments respond primarily to medical aid calls in support of the BC Emergency Health Services (BCEHS) paramedics. In 2022, medical aid incidents accounted for more than 50% of the total incidents responded to by the fire departments in Delta, Kamloops, Nanaimo, Maple Ridge, North Vancouver, and Prince George.

In Chilliwack, we respond to fewer than 20% medical aid calls because previous Mayors and councils did not hire more firefighters to take on the work of the paramedics, who are funded by the BC Ministry of Health. See FAQ *‘Why do Chilliwack firefighters respond to fewer medical aid calls than firefighters in other similar-sized cities?’* for more details.



**Q3: How does the Chilliwack Fire Department (CFD) determine which fire halls are staffed with full-time firefighters?**

**A3:** In Chilliwack, our geography allows us to focus our full-time firefighters where they are needed most often. Over the past 10 years, our calls for service confirm that on average 85% of our incidents and structure fires consistently occur within our city's concentrated north-south urban growth corridor. This area is protected 24/7/365 by the 44 full-time firefighters who staff the Firehall 1 (Downtown) and Firehall 4 (Sardis) geographic response zones. These firefighters receive 24/7/365 support from our 135 paid on-call firefighters who operate from each of the six strategically located firehalls throughout the city.

Incident data confirms that our two full-time crews respond to an average of 12 incidents in 24 hours, or 6 incidents per shift. We safely, effectively, and very efficiently manage these incidents with our existing full-time and POC firefighters. Our full-time firefighters are located where most of our incidents occur. Based on the above information, at this time we cannot justify staffing our rural firehalls for the remaining 15% of calls and structure fires.

We continuously monitor our incident response to ensure we adjust our resources as needed to respond to, and mitigate, these incidents. In addition, we regularly update our community risk assessment and community risk reduction strategies to plan for, and deliver, effective fire and life safety programs.

The CFD has a progressive, evidence-based composite staffing plan that will see the number of full-time firefighters increase to 48 by 2027. Our calls for service will determine the need for more full-time and POC firefighters and additional apparatus in our existing firehalls.

