



CITYGATE
ASSOCIATES

Fire Services Review

PRELIMINARY RESULTS BRIEFING

Big Bear Fire Authority

January 21, 2026



Fire Services Policy Choices

- **No federal/state laws or regulations** mandating fire service **staffing levels, response performance, or outcomes**
- **Level of service** provided is a **local policy decision**
 - Communities have the level of service they can **afford** or which they **choose to fund**
 - Level of service provided **may not be** the level of service desired

Scope of Work

- Review of the adequacy of the fire services partnership including:
 - **Services** delivered
 - Operating and capital **costs**
 - Cost **apportionment**
 - **Governance** under the JPA agreement

Outcome Goals *to Risks* Drive Deployment

- The **goal of fire service deployment** is to deliver **desired outcomes**
- Typical **urban/suburban** community desired outcomes:
 - **Prevent death** and/or **permanent impairment** from medical emergencies where possible
 - Confine building fires to the **room** or **compartment of origin**
- **Delivering desired outcomes** is a function of **adequate staffing, training, apparatus type(s), and response time**

Deployment Strategies

- **Fire service deployment** is essentially about the **speed** and **weight** of response
 - **Speed** refers to *single*, neighborhood-based first response units to mitigate routine-to-moderate emergencies to deliver the desired outcome
 - **Weight** refers to *multiple-unit* responses (First Alarm) needed to control more serious emergencies for the outcome desired
- **Specialty units** are deployed in addition to / in lieu of engines, squads, and ladder trucks **to mitigate special hazards**

Risks to be Protected

- CSD – largely housing with small commercial
 - Large residential population
 - Substantial wildland interface and wildland areas
 - Light industrial and small aviation airport
- Fire District – in addition to housing and light commercial
 - Substantial wildland interface and wildland areas
 - Numerous hotels
 - Two ski resorts
 - Boating
- Combined: very high tourism at times, winter weather
- 48–60 percent of area housing was built prior to 1979

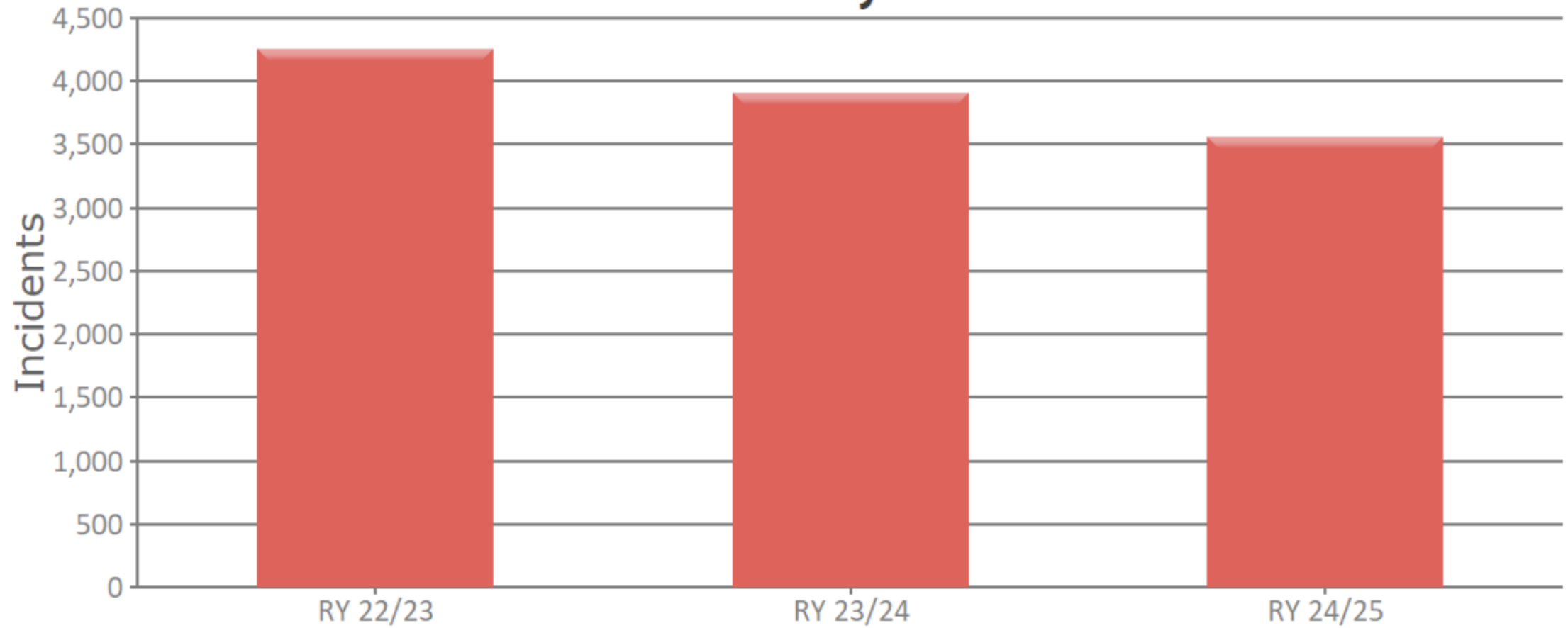
Deployment Metrics Summary

SOC Assessment Summary

- Service **demand** in 24/25: 3,567 incidents including cancellations
 - 67.98% EMS (2,425)
 - 1.74% Fire (62)
 - 30.28% other (1,080)
 - Slight decrease in demand from 23/24 and 22/23
- **Simultaneous incident** activity (two or more): 33%
 - Rate is *increasing in 24/25*
 - Most occur in Station 281's area in Big Bear Lake

Total Incident Volume Change (RY 22/23 – 24/25)

Number of Incidents by Year - All Years



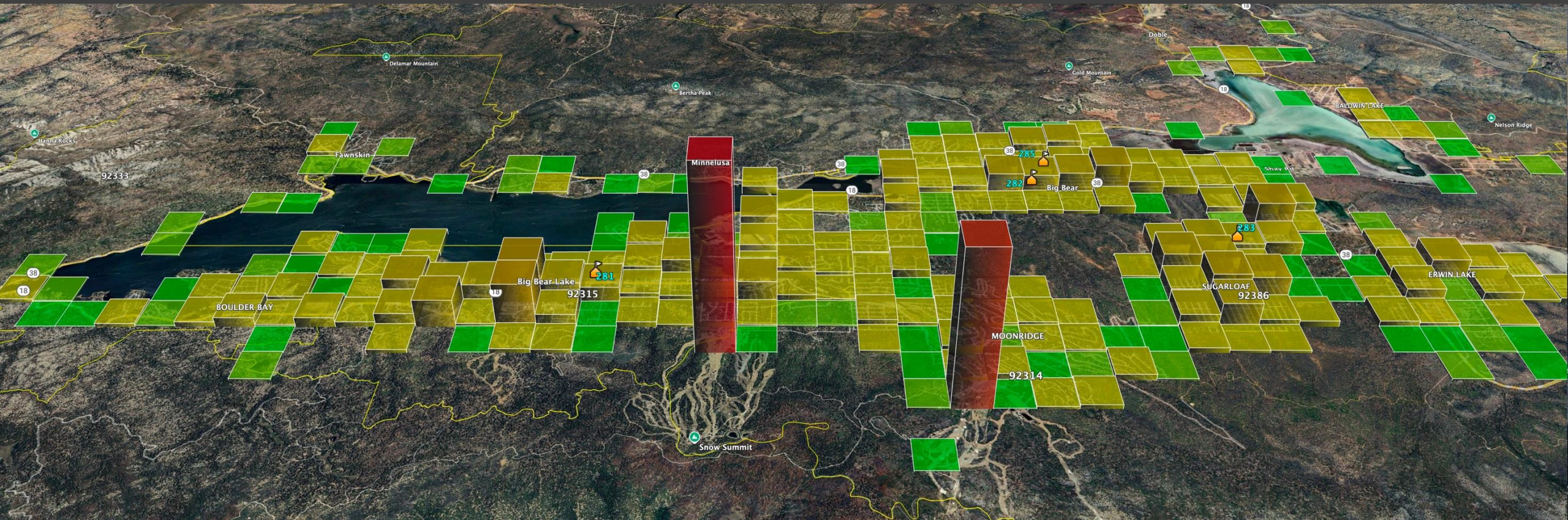
Response Times – 90% of Fire/EMS Incidents (no “Other”)

Station	RY 22/23	RY 23/24	RY 24/25	Overall
Station 281 Big Bear Lake	10:58	10:22	10:29	10:36
BBL Total	1,338	1,299	1,195	3,832
Station 282 Big Bear City	12:07 (1,037)	11:54 (896)	11:08 (841)	11:48 (2,774)
Station 283 Sugarloaf	11:26 (251)	11:00 (265)	09:15 (271)	10:33 (787)
CSD Total	1,288	1,161	1,112	3,561
Department-Wide	11:29 (2,626)	11:03 (2,460)	10:32 (2,307)	11:04 (7,393)

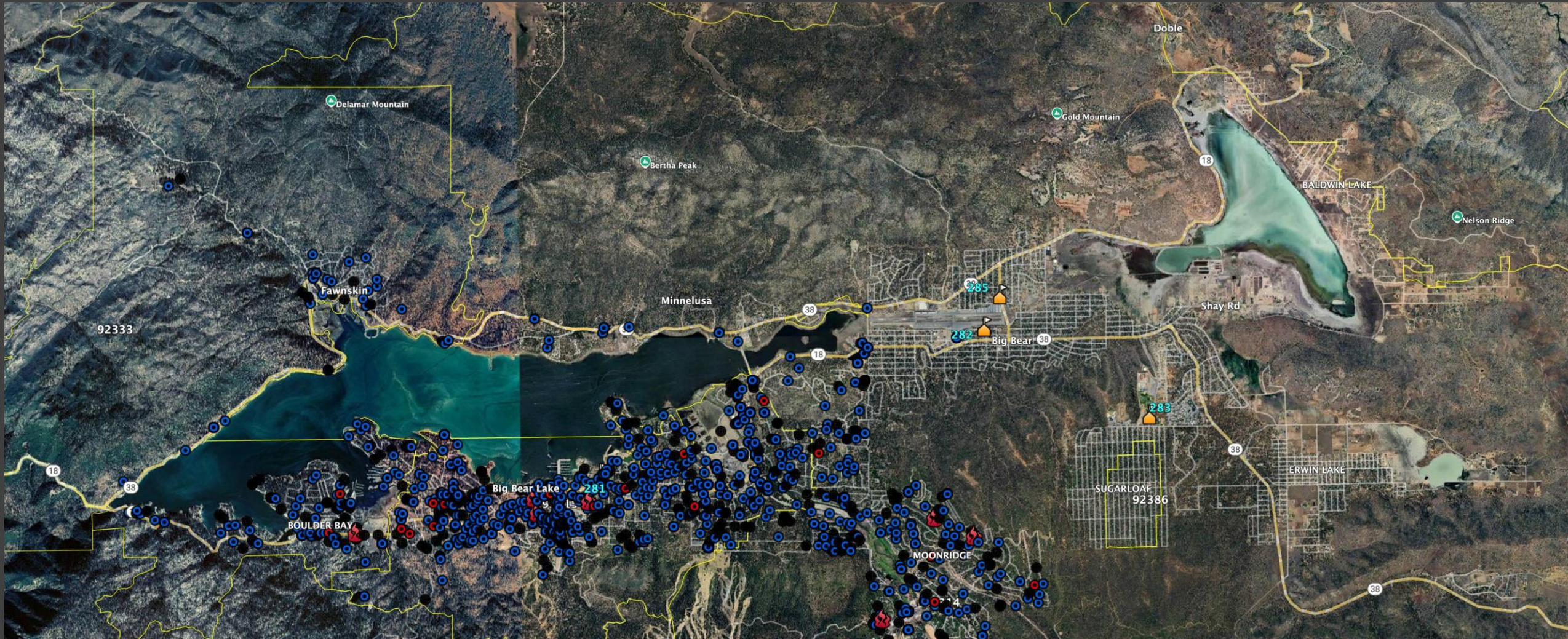
Unique Incident Summary

- **Ski Resorts** in 24/25
 - Snow Summitt: 227 incidents
 - Bear Mountain: 164 incidents
 - Total: 391—**11%** of the annual total
- **Non-Permanent Residents** – staff counts using ambulance billing zip code
 - In FY 2024, 914 transports were *visitors*, **34%** of the *annual total*

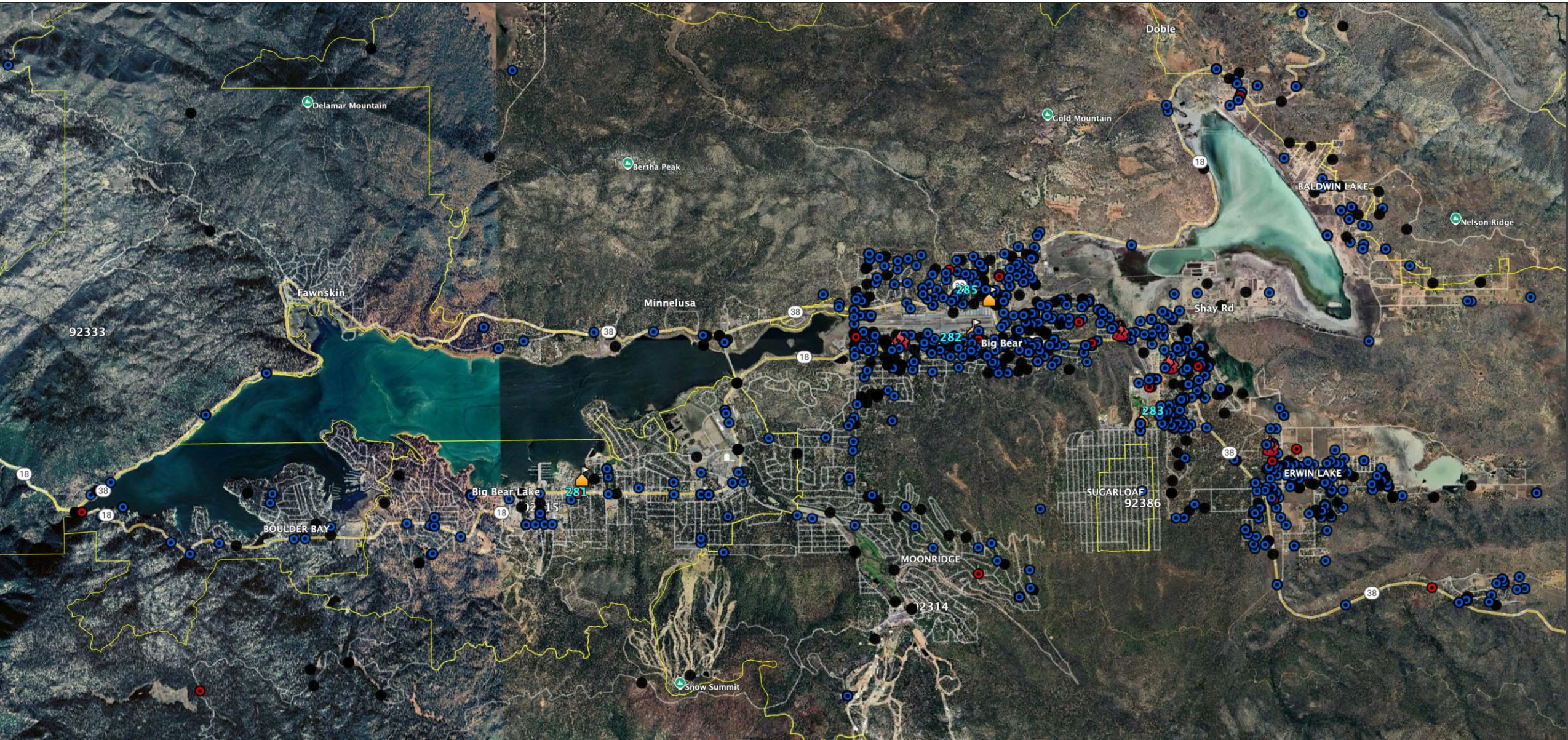
Incident Volume by height



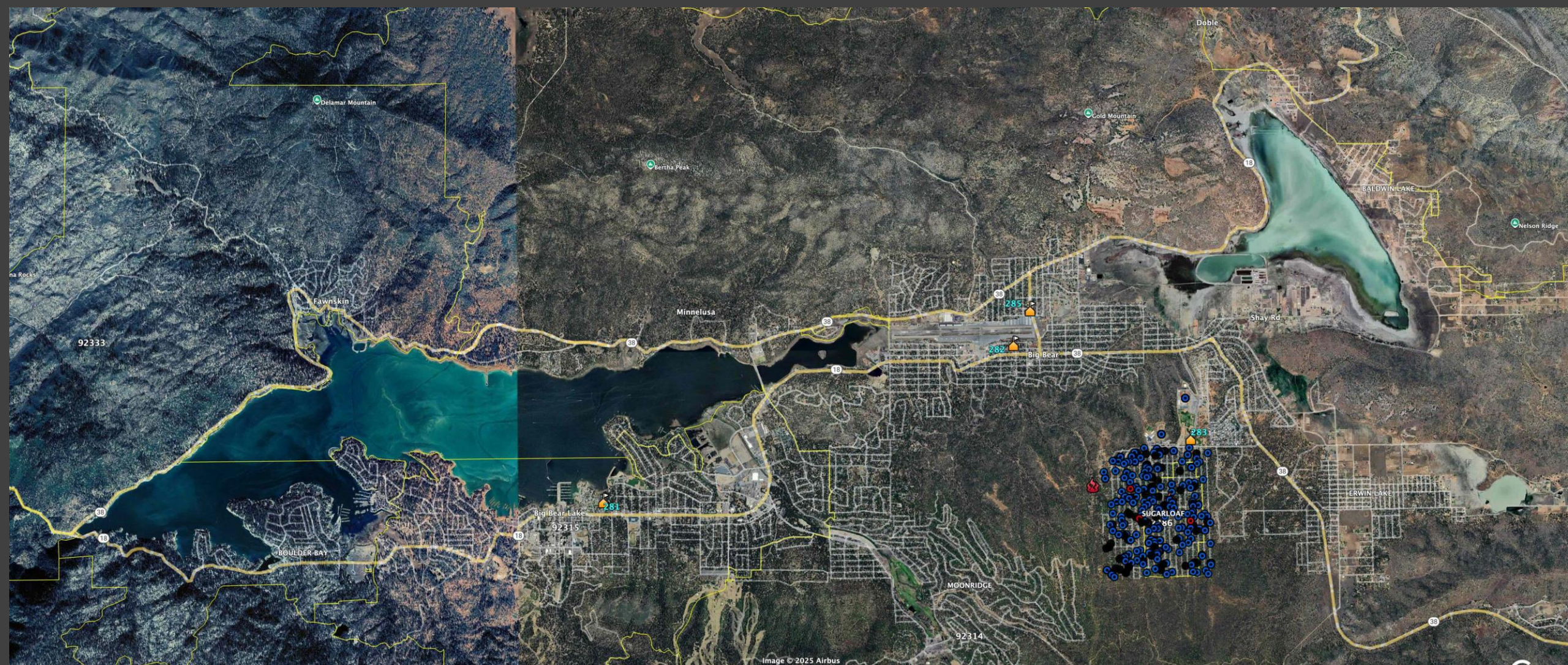
Big Bear Lake – Station 281 Response Locations



Big Bear City – Station 282 Response Locations



Sugarloaf– Station 283 Response Locations



Staffing Challenges

- Only 3 fire crews on duty totaling 9 personnel
- 1 Battalion Chief for incident command
- Ambulance crews are no longer firefighters
- Best practice standards, and the critical tasks at just a single-family house fire, require 15–16 total crew members within 11:30 minutes of call receipt at 9-1-1 for positive outcomes
- The Fire Authority *has both a speed of response and weight of response challenge*

Headquarters Organization Summary

Headquarters Structure Overview

- Potential single points of failure in business, payroll, IT, Fire Chief; some cross-training and procedures exist
- The JPA was built as an independent agency
- To support line operations, there are necessary FTE personnel for management, training, oversight, prevention, and logistics
- The lean organization is also sizable for just three fire stations
- Policies, practices, and records are to best practices
- Staff very knowledgeable and transparent to Citygate
- The current number of line fire/EMS positions cannot decrease if the Fire Authority is to remain independent

JPA Personnel Position Count

	2023-2024	2024-2025
JOB CLASSIFICATIONS	FTE ACTUAL	FTE BUDGET
OPERATIONS		
BATTALION CHIEF	3.0	3
FIRE CAPTAIN	9.0	9
FIRE ENGINEER	9.0	9
FIRE FIGHTER	12.0	12
FLIGHT NURSE	1.0	1
FLIGHT PARAMEDIC	4.5	4
AMBULANCE OPERATOR	15.0	15
FIRE MECHANIC	1.0	1
FIRE PREVENTION		
FIRE INSPECTOR	1.0	1
FIRE PREVENTION ADMINISTRATIVE	1.0	1
ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT STAFF		
BOARD SECRETARY	0.50	0.5
FACILITIES & SYSTEMS MANAGER	1.00	1
HUMAN RESOURCES COORDINATOR	1.00	1
ACCOUNTING TECHNICIAN	1.00	1
EXECUTIVE STAFF		
FIRE CHIEF	1.0	1
ASSISTANT FIRE CHIEF/FIRE MARSHALL	1.0	0
DIRECTOR OF BUSINESS SERVICES	1.0	1
TOTAL FTE	63.0	62.0

Line personnel: 50.5

Headquarters: 11.5 (18.5%)

Total 62

JPA Agreement

JPA Agreement Findings

- One of the least detailed JPA's we have ever seen
- Was never updated between its formation
 - Lacks cost, deployment, and fiscal policies, including reserves
 - Lacks structure for either agency to spend more
- Atypical board including all the partner elected officials
- No role for City Manager and CSD General Manager
- Uncommon for a small JPA to not leverage the general government support services of its partner agencies

JPA Finance Formula

7. Financial Provisions.

7.1 Initial Advance. Upon the execution of this Agreement, each Party shall forthwith advance to the Authority the sum set forth below as initial start-up funding for the Authority for use until the adoption of the initial budget and payment of invoices as provided below. These amounts shall be applied as advances toward a Party's contribution for the initial budget.

Big Bear City Community Services District	\$ 185,750.00
Big Bear Lake Fire Protection District	\$ 185,750.00

7.2 Funding. For subsequent years, each Party shall make a contribution to the Authority to pay that Party's proportionate share of expenses under the annual budget, approved by the Board, and any other expenses of the Authority based on the percentages in the table set forth below.

Big Bear City Community Services District	Fifty Percent (50%)
Big Bear Lake Fire Protection District	Fifty Percent (50%)

Any Party may contribute staff or personnel time to the Authority when approved by the Authority and the Parties, and that Party shall receive credit towards any such annual contributions to the Authority based on the actual costs of the contributed staff or personnel time.

7.3 Capital Purchases. Notwithstanding Section 7.2 above, the Parties may agree to a different proportion of funding contributions required from the Parties for capital purchases when equity so requires.

- 50/50 unrealistic and not sustainable over time
- No shared support staff contribution from partners
- No policy to reflect tax revenue differences

Budget and Cost Sharing Review

Typical Cost-Sharing Practices

- Usually at least a two-or-more-part formula
 - Generic headquarters 50/50
 - HQ units of work – prevention, or unique needs by one partner
 - Line staffing units – FTEs, stations, incidents
- Clear policies for how one partner can increase service at its own expense

Most Common Formula Tests In Fire JPA's

Call Volume	Number	Percentage
CSD Stat 2+3	1686	49.82%
FPD - Stat 1	1698	50.18%
Total	3384	100.00%
Population 2025		
CSD	12,520	70.69%
FPD	5,192	29.31%
Total	17,712	100.00%

Recommendations

Preliminary Observations and Recommendations

- Reconfigure Fire Authority Board to include two FPD seats, two CSD seats, and one at-large seat
- Current revenues do not support the addition of staffing or services
- Major changes are needed to agreement and operating policies—cost share, deployment, and fiscal policies
- Ability for each agency to spend more for higher service levels
- Consider cost benefit of City and CSD general support services

Potential Choices

- Determine feasibility of both partners folding into County Fire
- Remain in current partnership and update JPA agreement



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Questions

