

2025 Annual Report

Bracebridge Fire Department



BRACEBRIDGE
The Heart of Muskoka

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR OF EMERGENCY SERVICES/FIRE CHIEF

Mayor Maloney and Members of Bracebridge Council,

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the firefighters and staff who serve the community with dedication, professionalism, and commitment.

Throughout 2025, the Department continued to evolve to meet the needs of our community. Our members responded to a wide range of emergency incidents while maintaining a strong focus on fire prevention, inspections, training, and public education. These efforts are critical to reducing risk and ensuring the safety of residents, businesses, and visitors in Bracebridge.



The ice storm at the end of March 2025 was a significant event that tested the Town's preparedness and response capabilities. Firefighters and support staff worked tirelessly to ensure public safety, assist those in need, and coordinate with other emergency services during this challenging event. The Department's response during the ice storm demonstrated the dedication, adaptability, and professionalism of our team under extraordinary circumstances.

In addition to emergency response, the Department continued to advance the priorities identified in the Fire Master Plan. With the support of Council and Town leadership, we implemented key initiatives to improve operational readiness, enhance firefighter safety, and strengthen service delivery. Investments in fleet, equipment, and training, along with internal process improvements, have ensured the Department remains prepared for both routine calls and unexpected emergencies.

As we look to the year ahead, the Department will continue to focus on innovation, collaboration with emergency service partners, and fostering strong relationships with the community we serve. This report reflects our ongoing commitment to providing reliable, high-quality fire and emergency services to the Bracebridge community.

I extend my sincere thanks to Mayor Maloney, Members of Council, Town staff, and all members of the Bracebridge Fire Department for their dedication and support. It is an honour to serve alongside such a committed team.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Plested". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kevin Plested

Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief

Primary goals and mission of the Bracebridge Fire Department

The goals and mission of the Bracebridge Fire Department are to provide fire protection services through a range of programs designed to protect the lives and property of residents and visitors from the adverse effects of fires or exposure to dangerous conditions created by man or nature:

- To the municipality;
- To those municipalities requiring assistance through authorized emergency fire service plans and programs (mutual aid) activities; and
- To those municipalities that are provided fire protection by the Fire Department via authorized agreement.





Three lines of defence

Overall, the Department operates under the methodology of the “Three Lines of Defence” to promote public safety:



Public Fire and Life Safety Education



Fire Safety Standards and Code Enforcement



Emergency Response



Organization of the Department

**Emergency
Response**

**Fire Prevention
and Public
Education**

**Emergency
Planning**

Administration

**Logistics
Communications**

Physical Assets

**Training and
Education**

2025 Department Highlights

Full Time Staff Changes

There were several full-time staffing changes over the course of 2025. Kevin Plested, who had previously been the Department's Fire Prevention Officer became the Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief, Jonathan Taylor moved into the role of Fire Prevention Officer from Fire Inspection and Compliance Officer and the Department welcomed Brad Jackson onto the full time team as Fire Inspection and Compliance Officer. Brad had been a Volunteer Firefighter with the Department for 19 years and was with the Town's Public Works Department for 10 years.



Partnership with the Salvation Army South Muskoka Ministries

The Bracebridge Fire Department and the Salvation Army South Muskoka Ministries have a long-standing partnership in supporting those less fortunate in our community both through the annual food drive and emergency response.

Due to the significant winter storm that occurred in early December 2024, the annual food drive was postponed until March 2025. The food drive was back on schedule in December 2025 with a renewed partnership with the local Royal LePage office and the Rotary Club of Bracebridge. The Fire Department is pleased to continue to work with these community partners in supporting the residents of Bracebridge.



Firehouse Subs Partnership

The Bracebridge Fire Department was named a 2025 grant recipient by Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation of Canada®, receiving \$25,425 to increase lifesaving capabilities in Bracebridge. The grant was used to purchase a Bullseye Digital Fire Extinguisher Training System, Dry Chemical Digital Laser Extinguisher and Accessories for the Department and will ensure the community is better prepared for emergencies. The Department was presented with a giant cheque at the Firehouse Subs Grand Opening in Bracebridge on July 26, 2025. The Firehouse Subs in Bracebridge also features antique and retired equipment as well as several historical photos from the Bracebridge Fire Department.



Ontario Fire Protection Grant

This new Provincial grant program supports cancer prevention efforts by municipal fire departments across Ontario by assisting fire departments acquire critical equipment to enhance firefighter health and safety, and minor infrastructure at the local level. Funds are allocated proportionate to the number of active fire stations in a municipality. In 2025, Bracebridge was awarded \$16,822.00 to initiate a Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Exchange Program as part of the Department’s overall Cancer Prevention Program. Through the grant funding, the Department was able to purchase 30 particulate blocking hoods, two sets of bunker gear, four pairs of firefighting boots and 32 pairs of gloves.

The Chaplain’s Platoon Agreement

2025 marked the first time the Bracebridge Fire Department officially had Chaplain services available for its members. The Chaplain’s Platoon will provide chaplaincy services for Firefighters and Chief Officers. This support may include station visits, regular check-ins, support for critical incidents including readiness to lead or support debriefs, support to any firefighter after a critical incident including navigating further help and ceremony support or prayers for awards, graduations, memorial events, etc.

Ontario Municipal Fire Prevention Officers Association Grant (OMFPOA)

The Department was granted \$1,000.00 from the OMFPOA for fire prevention educational signage. Signage purchased included large instructional sign boards to use as teaching aids for the new fire extinguisher training. Additional purchases using this grant funding will continue into 2026.

Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council - Certification Grant

This grant provides select provincial fire departments with funding to support the purchase of firefighter training and educational equipment to assist with the certification requirements as part of O.Reg.343/22 (Firefighter Certification). The Department was granted \$1,637.24 to be used towards the purchase of technology offered only through the Best Buy Business program. The Department purchased a tablet to add to its inventory of existing tablets that are used for training, firefighter exams and for the new First Due software program.

Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council - Safe Community Project Zero

Safe Community Project Zero provides selected fire departments in Enbridge Gas Ontario's service area with free combination smoke/carbon monoxide alarms for distribution to individuals in their community, with a focus on those who are deemed high-risk. This may include the elderly, people with disabilities or those with financial challenges. The Bracebridge Fire Department was a 2025 recipient of Project Zero and received 198 Kidde DETECT combination smoke/CO alarms with a 10-year battery. The approximate retail value of the alarms is \$19,200.00.



Co-op Placement Program

In 2025, the Fire Department had the privilege of hosting four secondary school co-op students, Kayden Brown, Christion Buttineau, Andrew Beaton and Addison Howarth, as part of the Department's commitment to fostering the next generation of emergency services professionals. As part of their placements, students participated in hands-on activities in various areas of the Department including administration, operations, training, fire prevention and public education. Students worked closely with both full-time staff and Volunteer Firefighters including response to emergency calls with the appropriate supervision.



Emergency Event: Ice Storm

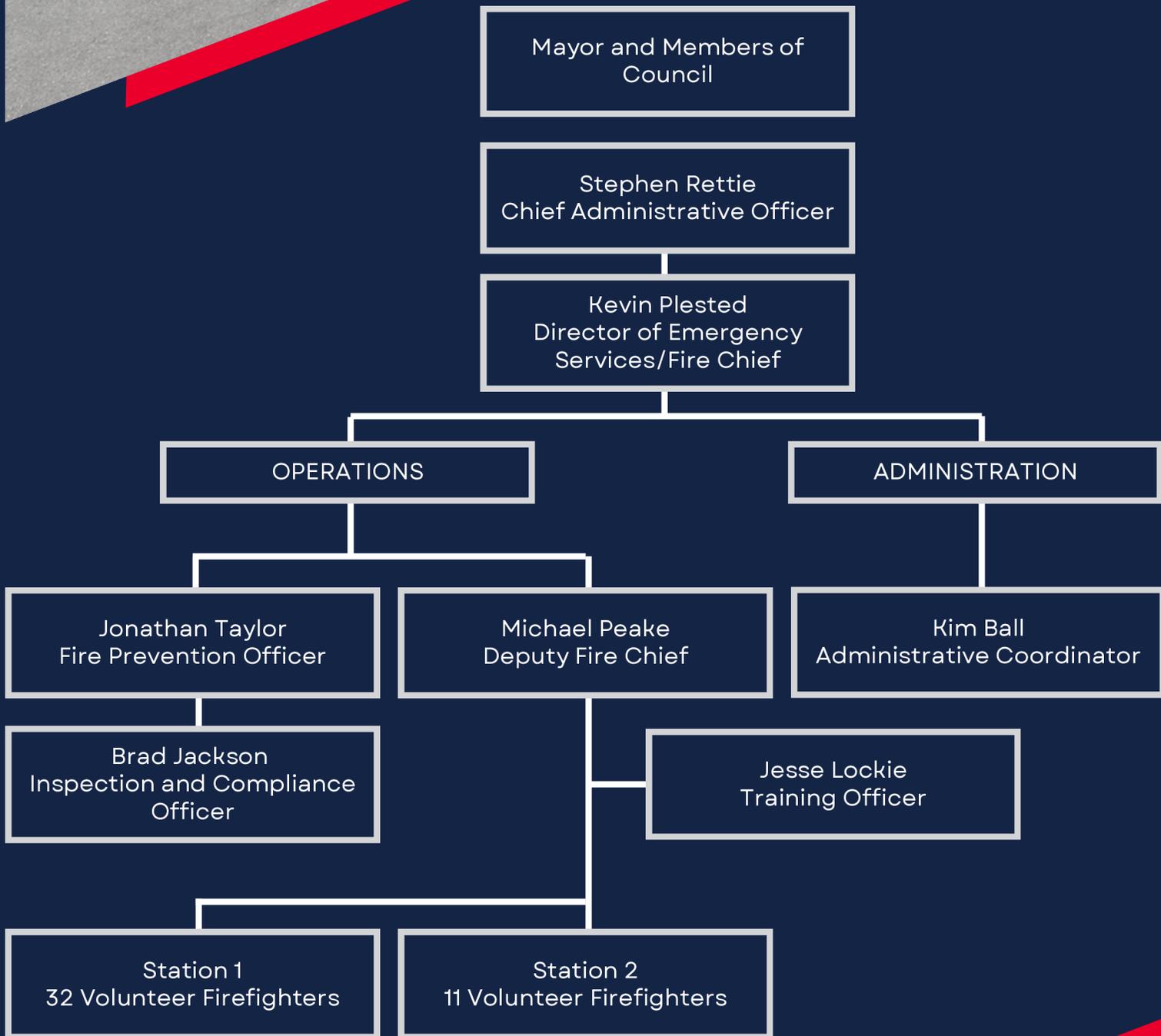
Between March 28 and 30, 2025, a powerful storm system brought two extended periods of freezing rain to the central and eastern regions of Ontario. Some areas, including Muskoka, experienced up to 35 hours of freezing rain with ice accretion reaching 25 mm or more, causing hazardous conditions and widespread damage.

On March 30, 2025, the Town of Bracebridge Acting Director of Public Works declared a Significant Weather Event due to the hazardous conditions resulting from the storm. Later that day, the District of Muskoka declared a State of Emergency. Over the next two weeks, the Town would work in collaboration with numerous municipal, utility, non-government organizations (NGO) and provincial partners to oversee support for residents, start the clean-up and clearing of municipal infrastructure and provide access for utilities in their effort to restore power to the community. The response and recovery efforts greatly impacted the Fire Department. Volunteer Firefighters performed the following services:

- Emergency responses including fires, downed power lines and carbon monoxide calls from improper generator use - 56 calls; and
- Wellness checks to homes on approximately 90 roads.



Organizational Chart



Station 1

Platoon 1

Adam Goodale (Captain)
Don Giroux (Acting Captain)
Jeff Attwell
Paul Beaton
Jason Campbell
Devin Garon
James Heslinga
Alfie Napper
Ryan Patenaude

Platoon 3

Frank Mazzuca (Captain)
Rod Elliott (Acting Captain)
Matt Balfe
Max Davis
Shayne Dowling
Kate Kennedy
Scott Kinsman
Steve Larsen
Matt Planeta

Station 2

Platoon 5

Jeremy O'Brien (Station Captain)
Aaron Robbins (Acting Captain)
Kyle Bartlett
Emerson Blackman
Mike Kelly
Josh Kuehni

Platoon 2

Steve Saunders (Captain)
Jesse Lockie (Captain)
Kelsie Austin
Nathan Austin
Dan Carty
Amanda Flynn
Kyle Kuzmyk
Matt Lynett

Platoon 4

Mike Holotuk (Captain)
Rose Jackson (Acting Captain)
Mike Baldwin
Justin Corbett
Brad Jackson
Dan Kearns
Ryan Kennedy
Emma Taylor
Jonathan Taylor

Platoon 6

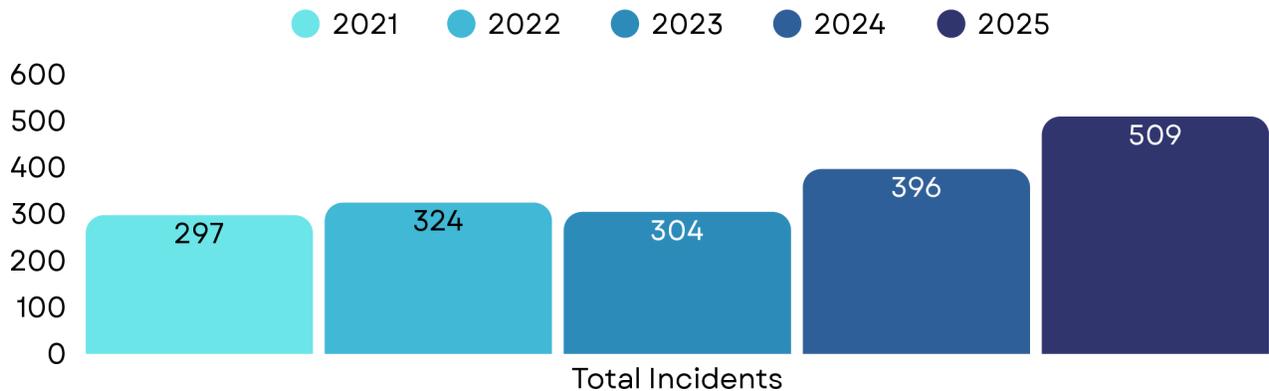
Kevin Lambert (Captain)
Adam Dubreuil
Mike Ducharme
Billy Mann
Jackson Schmidt

Moving On

Thank you to Dwight Brown, Steven Hooper, Michael Cartwright and Marty Pomerleau for their dedication and years of service.

Emergency Response

The Bracebridge Fire Department saw a significant rise in emergency responses in 2025, attending a total of 509 incidents. This exceeded the previous record of 396 incidents in 2024, representing an increase of approximately 28.5 per cent. The ongoing growth in call volume reflects increasing service demands and added operational pressures on the department.



The year was marked by two notable weather-related events, which together accounted for 80 incidents, or 17.6 per cent of the Department's total responses, over just seven days. During the ice storm from March 28 to 31, 2025, firefighters responded to 56 incidents and continued to manage elevated call volumes and storm-related demands, including wellness checks, into early April. A second, less severe summer storm on July 24 and 25 resulted in 34 emergency responses over two days.

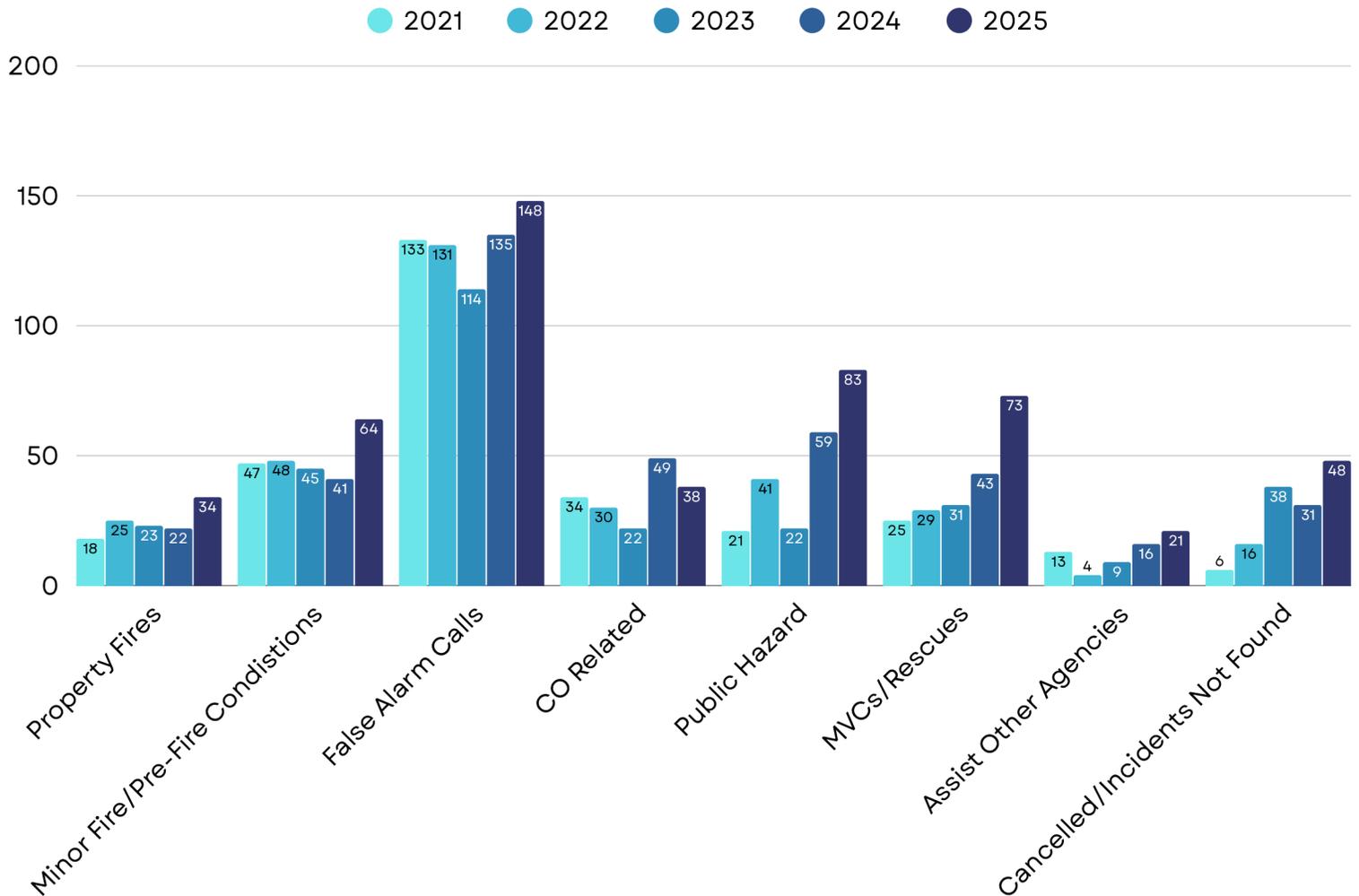
Structure fires causing severe damage or total loss also increased significantly, rising from nine incidents in 2024 to 20 in 2025. Investigations found no common factors pointing to a single preventative measure. Tragically, one of these fires resulted in a fatality, underscoring the vital importance of ongoing public education and messaging regarding working smoke alarms, which remain the most effective life-saving measure in residential fires.

Increases were observed across nearly all other response types, with the exception of carbon monoxide incidents, which decreased by 22.4 per cent. Responses to motor vehicle collisions rose sharply by 69.8 per cent, minor or pre-fire conditions increased by 56.1 per cent, and false alarm calls grew marginally by 9.6 per cent.

Bracebridge is not alone in experiencing these trends, as neighboring fire departments have also reported significant increases in emergency response volumes. These patterns highlight the continued importance of collaboration and preparedness through automatic and mutual aid agreements across jurisdictions.

Emergency Response

The chart below shows a five-year comparison of the Department's responses:



- **Property Fires:** residential, commercial and industrial structures, vehicle, and wildland fires.
- **Minor Fire/Pre-Fire Conditions:** minor cooking incidents, open air burning, garbage bin fires.
- **False Alarm Calls:** fire alarm equipment malfunctions, accidental activations, malicious or perceived emergencies.
- **Carbon Monoxide (CO) Related:** actual incidents with CO readings, as well as false alarm.
- **Public Hazard:** natural gas and propane leaks, hydro lines down on trees or across roadways.
- **MVCs/Rescues:** vehicle accidents, including those requiring extrication, water/ice, elevator and similar rescues.
- **Assist Other Agencies:** assistance to Muskoka Paramedics or OPP with gaining entry to residences or welfare checks in residences where breathing apparatus may be required. Mutual aid involves sending resources to assist a neighbouring community's fire department.
- **Cancelled/Incidents not found** calls cancelled by other agencies or incidents not located.

Fire Prevention

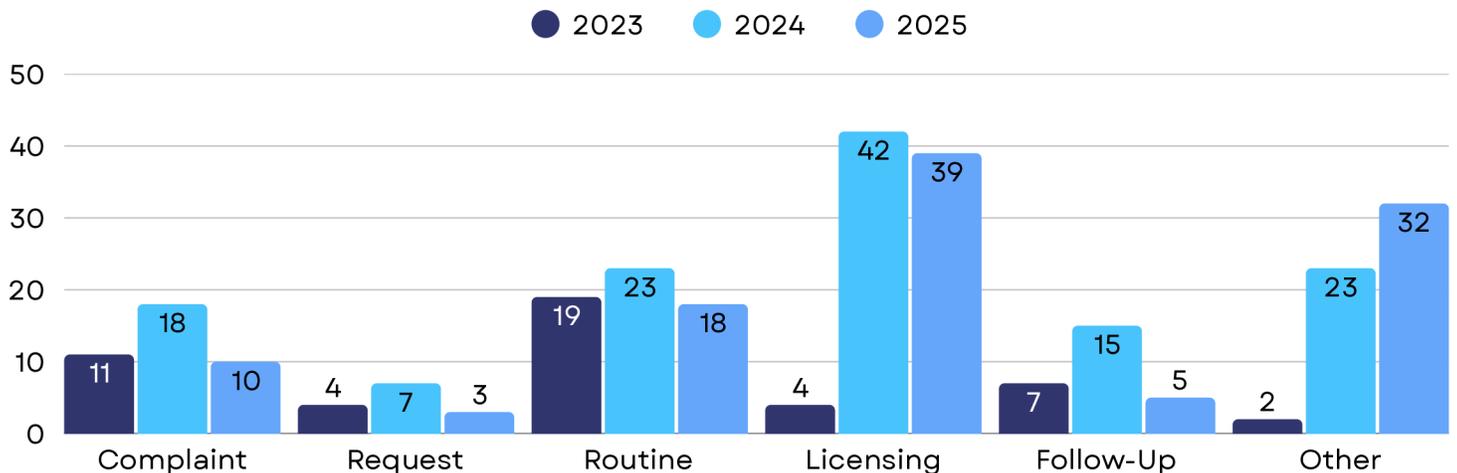
The Fire Prevention and Public Education branch continues to build on the momentum of last year's increase in the number of inspections and the hours staff devoted to public education initiatives and activities. It was a challenging year, marked by internal promotions within the Department that resulted in the branch being short-staffed for much of the first half of the year. With the mid-year hiring of Brad Jackson into the Fire Inspection and Compliance Officer position, the branch was returned to full complement, and he quickly integrated into the role. Brad's current focus is on Short-Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) inspections, smoke and CO alarm assistance and compliance as well as coordinating our public education initiatives.



Fire Inspections

The Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, and Ontario Regulation 365/13 (O. Reg. 365/13) requires that fire safety assessments and inspections, if necessary, be undertaken as directed by the Fire Marshal for: (1) every building for which a fire safety complaint is received; and (2) every building for which a request for assistance to comply with the Fire Code is received and the involvement of the Chief Fire Official is required.

In 2025, 107 inspections were completed representing a slight decrease from the previous year, primarily due to staffing changes and training of personnel in their new roles. Despite this, there was an increase in smoke and carbon monoxide alarm checks, and this upward trend is expected to continue in 2026 with the additional Ontario Fire Code requirements related to CO alarm installations.



STRA Inspections

With the continuation of required Short-Term Rental Accommodation (STRA) inspections and on-site assessments, previously identified deficiencies remained compliant throughout the year. In 2025, staff conducted 11 new STRA inspections, and all identified deficiencies were fully corrected by the operators. Notably, eight STRAs were not re-inspected as the operators reported they were no longer in operation.

While the primary focus of this year's STRA re-inspections was to ensure that safety devices remained properly installed and operational, staff also took the opportunity to educate STRA operators on their responsibilities for testing and documenting smoke and CO alarms as well as fire extinguishers. Proper documentation of these tests and inspections was a key focus during re-occurring STRA fire inspections in 2025, with the majority of operators demonstrating compliance.

The branch continued to benefit from both established and newly developed partnerships with community support agencies that assist our most vulnerable residents. Individuals with disabilities, mobility challenges, mental health concerns, changes in medication, or sub-standard housing are often in greatest need of support. Staff will continue to strengthen these relationships and develop programs aimed at providing assistance and improving safety for these residents.



Fire Investigations

The Bracebridge Fire Department Establishing and Regulating By-Law 2025-012 states “The Fire Department will investigate all fires within the Town of Bracebridge with the intent to determine cause for the purposes of developing public education programs accordingly.” With a 122 percent increase from 9 fires that caused damage to structural components of the building in 2024, to 20 fires in 2025, the Fire Prevention branch was involved in multiple Origin, Cause and Circumstance Fire Investigations.

Fire Prevention staff made determinations based on circumstances of the scene to complete a full investigation of a fire, or simply just document the scene. Of the 20 fires in 2025, Fire Prevention staff Investigated 13 fires, documented 5 fires while the remaining 3 did not meet investigation thresholds. Prevention staff worked closely with community and Government partners throughout these investigations, resulting in The Office of the Fire Marshall being notified of 6 fires, attending and leading the investigation of 2 - including our one fatal fire.

While no definite pattern from these 20 fires was established, Fire Prevention staff utilized information and statistics gathered to assist in the delivery of fire prevention programs throughout 2025 and beyond.



Public Education

Public Education initiatives continued to expand in 2025, supported by new partnerships with local businesses and organizations that reinforced the important work of the Fire Prevention branch. Fire safety messaging was delivered through a combination of traditional and innovative outreach methods, resulting in 478.5 documented staff and volunteer firefighter hours dedicated to public education activities. These efforts reached an estimated 7,465 community members and visitors throughout the year.

Several new initiatives were introduced to expand the distribution of public education materials within the community, requiring minimal staff time. Through a partnership with the South Muskoka Memorial Hospital Auxiliary, fire safety-themed colouring books were made available to children waiting in the emergency department. In addition, fire safety-themed bandanas were provided to the Muskoka OSPCA for use on pets available for adoption or going home with a new family. This pet initiative was later highlighted in a Fire Marshal's Public Fire Safety Council newsletter.

Public Education programs are designed to engage a wide range of audiences, with particular attention given to rural areas and identified at-risk properties or populations. Throughout 2025, the Department utilized banners and pop-up signage at various locations across the community and participated in numerous public events, allowing firefighters to engage directly with residents of all ages and provide one-on-one fire and life safety education.



- Vankoughnet Family Day Event
- Muskoka Pioneer Power Annual Show
- Bracebridge 150 Community Showcase and Celebration
- Santa's Village Hero Day
- Wood Lake Regatta
- Bracebridge Fall Fair & Horse Show (Junior Firefighter Challenge)
- Canada Day Celebration
- Festival of Lights

- Santa Claus Parade
- Muskoka Pride Parade
- So Long Summer Splash (hosted by the BFD)
- Northern Pass to Conquer Cancer
- See Muskoka Through Our Eyes Annual Powwow
- Muskoka Arts and Crafts Summer Show
- Fire House Subs Grand Opening
- Halloween Trick or Treating
- Multiple School Events



Smoke/CO Alarm Door-to-Door Campaign

The 2025 Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Alarm Door-to-Door Campaign continued to emphasize quality engagement over quantity. Continuing with a deliberate focus on meaningful interactions, firefighters were encouraged to spend additional time speaking with residents, involve children whenever possible, and broaden discussions beyond smoke and CO alarms to include general home fire safety.

Residents were also reminded that in-home follow-up visits could be requested. This approach resulted in an increase in smoke/co alarm checks, with Fire Prevention staff completing visits at more than 20 households. Following a year with a higher-than-normal number of structure fires, the campaign maintained a geographic focus on older neighbourhoods where many homes were constructed prior to the implementation of smoke alarm requirements. Fire safety information was left at every residence, regardless of whether direct contact was made with the homeowner.



Test Your Smoke Alarm Day & Fire Prevention Week

On September 28, 2025, the Bracebridge Fire Department participated in Santa's Village Hero Day while also supporting the Ontario Fire Marshal's Saved by the Beep campaign, formally known as Test Your Smoke Alarm Day. The initiative was supported by the Office of the Ontario Fire Marshal, with Fire Protection Advisor Brittany Costoff joining members of the Fire Department to share smoke alarm safety messaging with the public.

Saved by the Beep is a critical public safety initiative that encourages residents to test and maintain their smoke alarms, understand alarm safety, and develop home fire escape plans. Members of the Fire Prevention Team partnered with Moose FM, providing fire safety facts, addressing common misconceptions, and sharing real-world experiences during a two-hour live segment. Additional community support was provided by local businesses, including Domino's Pizza and McDonald's, which supplied coupons for children who successfully answered fire safety questions.

Fire Prevention Week followed shortly thereafter, focusing on the theme "Charge into Fire Safety: Lithium-Ion Batteries in Your Home." As lithium-ion battery-related fires continue to increase across Ontario, education efforts concentrated on safe charging practices, purchasing certified batteries, and proper disposal of depleted or damaged batteries. To further raise awareness, the Fire Prevention branch participated in Mayor Rick Maloney's Abridged podcast to discuss this emerging fire safety concern.

Both initiatives were promoted through Town of Bracebridge and Bracebridge Fire Department social media channels, media and radio interviews, fire safety displays in municipal facilities, distribution of information through rural community mailboxes, and select in-person outreach events.



Emergency Planning

In 2025, significant effort was dedicated to the response and recovery of the Ice Storm that hit the area at the end of March. The Town's Emergency Control Group (ECG), along with several staff from all Town Departments shifted to support the residents of Bracebridge and to protect public infrastructure.

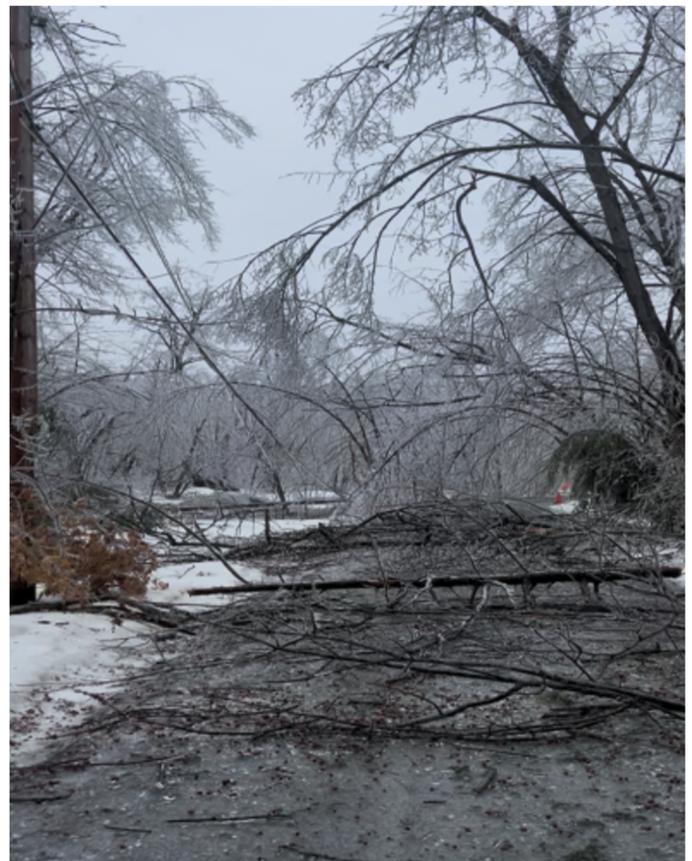
As with any significant emergency event, lessons can be learned to be better prepared for future events through strengthening partnerships, and re-examining mitigation plans. The Town's Community Emergency Management Coordinator (Deputy Fire Chief) brought an After-Action Report forward to General Committee on July 2, 2025. The Report provided a synopsis and timeline of the emergency event, and a summary of recommendations from a professionally facilitated debrief that was conducted with internal and external stakeholders. In addition, the motion of the report provided staff with direction to apply for the Municipal Ice Storm Assistance (MISA) Program through the Province.

Annual training conducted in the fall for the ECG was designed to provide a structured forum to review, discuss, and enhance understanding of Emergency Social Services (ESS). The training placed particular emphasis on the roles and responsibilities associated with the establishment, operation, and management of evacuation and reception centres during emergency events.

A number of external agencies were invited to participate, creating a valuable opportunity for multi-agency collaboration. This cross-sector engagement enabled participants to share experiences, raise operational concerns, and identify gaps or opportunities for improvement within existing emergency response frameworks.

In addition to this annual training, several Town of Bracebridge staff members took the initiative to further strengthen their knowledge and competencies in Emergency Management by completing additional specialized training courses in 2025:

- Emergency Information Officer (EIO200), two attendees
- Basic Emergency Management (EM200), three attendees
- Community Emergency Management Coordinator (CEMC), one attendee



Emergency Planning

In addition to ongoing planning initiatives, several important updates were completed within the appendices of the Town's Emergency Response Plan. Most notably, the Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment (HIRA) was reviewed and updated to ensure that potential risks and hazards facing the community are accurately identified and appropriately prioritized. The Critical Infrastructure (CI) inventory was also comprehensively reviewed and updated to reflect current assets essential to community safety, continuity of operations, and service delivery.

Furthermore, a thorough review and enhancement of the Emergency Communications Guide was undertaken. This update added greater depth and clarity to existing procedures, incorporating detailed, step-by-step guidance to support effective communication during emergency events. These improvements strengthen the municipality's ability to respond efficiently, coordinate across departments and agencies, and maintain clear and reliable communication with stakeholders and the public during emergencies.



Emergency Preparedness Public Education Summary

In 2025, the Town's Emergency Information Officer (EIO) (Communications Coordinator) created additional web-based resources by improving the Emergency Preparedness section of the Town's website by adding hazard specific pages, matching the Town's HIRA. New hazard specific pages added in 2025 include Cybersecurity, Extreme Cold, Extreme Heat and Severe Storms. This site and related pages provide easy links to include in social media posts for residents to find more information before, during and after emergencies.



The social media strategy for emergency preparedness public education includes regular engagement around the Alert Muskoka emergency notification app, and timely information regarding the emergencies identified in the Town's HIRA. When an event is occurring, such as an Extreme Heat event, residents would normally see a cycle of preparedness posts, response to incident posts (such as cooling stations) and then post-incident messages about what they can do to prepare for the future, i.e. remember to re-stock your emergency kit etc. During an incident, the Town endeavors to provide timely information to the public on a scheduled basis. This was the case during the 2025 Ice Storm in which the EIO worked with the Mayor to produce daily video updates that would be issued along with daily media releases.



Administration

2025 Business Plan Projects

Project FD-01: Fire Station 2 - Advance development readiness, including pre-qualification and RFP documents

Staff will continue to formalize all aspects of the pre-qualification process and associated RFP to ensure the project is shovel ready.

Lead: Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief

2025 Budgetary impact - Nil

Update: District of Muskoka engaged to assist with procurement documents. Project on schedule as outlined in the Long Term Capital Plan.

ONGOING

Project FD-02: Water Rescue - Implement Training Plan for In-house Instructors for Mandatory Water Rescue Course

Working towards the second layer of mandatory certification that includes technical rescue disciplines included within the Fire Department's Establishing and Regulating By-law, staff will develop the capacity to deliver the required certification subjects and levels by training program leads. These project leads will instruct each subject under a "Learning Contract" (Lesson Plan Package) provided by the Ontario Fire College.

Lead: Training Officer and Director of Emergency Services/Fire Chief

2025 Budgetary impact - \$7,000

COMPLETE



2025 Business Plan Projects

Project FD-03: Emergency Plan Review and Update (including HIRA and CI methodology)

Implement updates to the Town's Emergency Plan and revise the HIRA and CI to reflect the most current methodology. Work with an external consultant to facilitate a validation review.

Lead: Deputy Fire Chief

2025 Budgetary impact - \$1,800
Update: As outlined in Memo FDM001-25, this project has been extended to a two-year project due to reduced staff capacity and the anticipation of several updates being required. The \$1,800 expense for external validation review was cancelled due to financial pressures related to the Ice Storm on this budget area.
Expected completion - Q3, 2026

Project FD-04: First Due Software - Phase 1 Implementation

Work with the vendor and IT Services to implement the first phase modules including: Occupancy Management and Pre-Incident Planning, Inspections, Personnel Management, Assets and Inventory, Messenger. Purchase associated tablets x 4.

Lead: Administrative Coordinator and Fire Prevention Officer

2025 Budgetary impact - \$17,000

Update: Tablets have been purchased, and software implementation is underway with vendor support. Prevention staff have begun to utilize the software for inspections resulting in operational efficiencies.

COMPLETE

Logistics Communications

An area of focus on Logistics Communications was created late in 2023 with the updated Establishing and Regulating By-Law to oversee the dispatching and technology services for the Department.

Dispatching is provided under contract by the Muskoka Ambulance Communications Service (ACS), located in Bracebridge. They play a vital coordinating role not only for ambulance services in Muskoka but also in supporting local fire departments. While its primary responsibility is taking 911 calls and dispatching ambulances, Muskoka ACS also fully dispatches incidents for three other local fire departments ensuring that firefighting resources are alerted promptly when emergencies arise.

As outlined in Staff Report FD008-24, a review of the Department's radio system identified opportunities to enhance rural coverage and improve on-scene firefighter coordination. Reliable radio communications are critical on the fireground, enabling crews to operate safely and effectively in dynamic and hazardous environments. The purchase of four vehicle-installed repeaters allows portable radios to leverage the increased power output and elevated antenna height of apparatus, significantly improving communication range and reliability.

Additional interoperability enhancements were implemented in 2025 through a change to the digital radio technology standard used on the Department's towers. This upgrade allows neighbouring fire departments to communicate easily on the Department's radio system during mutual aid responses. Collectively, these improvements represent a continued investment in firefighter safety and the effectiveness of emergency operations.



Physical Assets



The Department responds out of two stations.

- Fire Station 1 at 225 Taylor Road is the headquarters/primary station that houses six full-time staff and four Platoons; and
- Fire Station 2 at 3448 HWY 118 East that has two platoons.

The Department's fleet consists of:

- Two pumper trucks;
- One 2500 gallon water tanker;
- Two 1500 gallon water tankers;
- One rescue truck;
- One ladder truck;
- Two 4X4 rapid response pickup trucks;
- Two 4x4 utility pickup trucks;
- One Fire Chief SUV and;
- One fire boat that is berthed on Lake Muskoka during the ice-out months.

2025 Equipment Upgrades and Lifecycle Replacements

- Five sets of structural bunker gear were purchased to replace expired bunker gear. Bunker gear has a 10-year service life from the manufacture date.
- One Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) adding to the new total of 25 SCBA's
- Two sets of Protective Wildfire Coveralls
- 16 new 45mm hoses
- 11 new 65mm hoses
- One Oceanid Inflatable Rescue Craft
- One MARSARS Rope & Reel
- Two Mustang Ice Commander water rescue suits
- A larger decontamination washer, provided at no-cost from the manufacturer due to issues with the previously procured model, was installed in the equipment wash bay requiring a new 100 Amp sub-panel



Training and Education



Regular Training

Regular departmental training occurs on Monday evenings from 7 to 9 p.m. In 2025, fire department personnel spent a total of 3,664 staff hours training over 77 sessions.

Subjects included:

- Pre-fire planning;
- Post incident analysis review (PIAR);
- Forcible entry;
- Structural search;
- Fire hose deployment;
- Patient removal;
- Firefighter survival;
- Rapid intervention teams (RIT);
- Rapid intervention team (RIT) cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR);
- Water Rescue Swimming test preparation;
- Surface water rescue;
- Ice water rescue;
- Emergency vehicle driver training;
- Apparatus placement;
- Rural water supply;
- Portable pump operations;
- Apparatus pump operations;
- Live fire suppression;
- Multi storey hose operations;
- Hose testing;
- Health and safety;
- WHMIS;
- Ground ladders;
- First Aid/CPR/AED recertification;
- Hazardous materials/emergency response guide;
- Self-contained breathing apparatus;
- Personal protective equipment inspections;
- Proper protective equipment decontamination;
- Radio communications;
- Vehicle extrication;
- Fire boat operations;
- Smoke alarm education;
- Carbon monoxide awareness.
- Lithium-ion battery awareness;
- Wildland fire operations (SP103);
- Elevator rescue;
- Fire Alarm and Detection Systems; and
- Fire origin and cause determination;



Specialized Training

Additional fire certification courses that were completed in 2025 through fire Regional Training Centres and in-house training include:

- Mobile Live Fire Training Unit (twenty-three members)
- NFPA 1002 Pump Operator (eight members)
- NFPA 1021 Fire Officer Level 2 (seven members)
- NFPA 1521 Fire Safety Officer (two members)
- NFPA 1041 Fire Instructor Level 1 (two members)
- NFPA 1006 Surface Water Rescue Operations/Technician (three members)
- NFPA 1006 Ice Water Rescue Operations/ Technician (three members)
- NFPA 1006 Common Passenger Vehicle Operations/Technician (one member)
- NFPA 1035 Fire and Life Safety Educator Level 1 (eight members)
- NFPA 1035 Public Information Officer (two members)
- NFPA 1031 Fire Inspector Level 1 (two members)
- Fire Legislation 101 (one member)
- Courtroom Procedures (one member)
- Fire Code Part 3&5 (three members)
- NFPA 1033 Fire Investigator (one member)
- Elevator Rescue (two members)
- DZ license through in house training (three members)



Mandatory Certification

As of July 1, 2022, the Office of the Fire Marshal established mandatory certification requirements for Ontario fire departments. Most certification standards must be achieved by 2026, with technical rescue disciplines required by 2028.

Firefighters are required to be certified to NFPA 1001 Firefighter Level 1 and 2, and Fire Officers must achieve NFPA Fire Officer Level 1 by 2026. Additionally, certain members are required to obtain certifications aligned with their roles, including NFPA 1521 Incident Safety Officer, NFPA 1002 Pump Operator, and NFPA 1035 Fire and Life Safety Educator. Currently, all Department members are meeting the required certifications for the 2026 deadline.

By 2028, technical rescue certifications must be obtained by firefighters to comply with the mandatory requirements for the Bracebridge Fire Department's level of service as defined in the Establishing and Regulating Bylaw. Certification to NFPA 1006 Surface Water and Ice Water Rescue will be a key focus over the next few years. Presently, while firefighters are currently trained to provide the service, three members are certified in both Surface and Ice Water Rescue to assist as training leads. The Department plans to expand this number in the coming year, which will support the development of an in-house training program or collaboration with neighbouring Muskoka fire departments to offer future NFPA 1006 Surface and Ice Water Rescue courses.



Conclusion

2025 was a year of growth, challenges, and achievements for the Bracebridge Fire Department. Our members responded to a record 509 incidents, including structure fires, motor vehicle collisions, public hazards, and rescues. The winter ice storm tested the Department's preparedness and coordination, and our firefighters and staff rose to the occasion, providing critical support to residents and visitors during severe weather conditions.

Beyond emergency response, the Department continued to strengthen fire prevention and public education efforts. Through STRA inspections, community programs, and campaigns such as Saved by the Beep, thousands of residents were reached with important safety information. Training and professional development also remained a priority, with personnel completing hundreds of hours in specialized certifications and skills to ensure operational readiness and firefighter safety.

Looking ahead to 2026, the Bracebridge Fire Department will continue to focus on innovation, operational excellence, and strong community partnerships. With continued support from Council, Town staff, and our dedicated Volunteer Firefighters, we remain committed to providing professional, reliable, and compassionate fire and emergency services to everyone who lives, works, and visits in Bracebridge.

