





# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Fire Marshal's Office Team

**Robert B. Bishop**
Chief Fire Marshal

**Matthew Chapman**
Deputy Fire Marshal

**Ryan Downs**
Fire Investigator / Inspector

**Jennifer Hood**
Administrative Assistant
Fire Investigator / Inspector



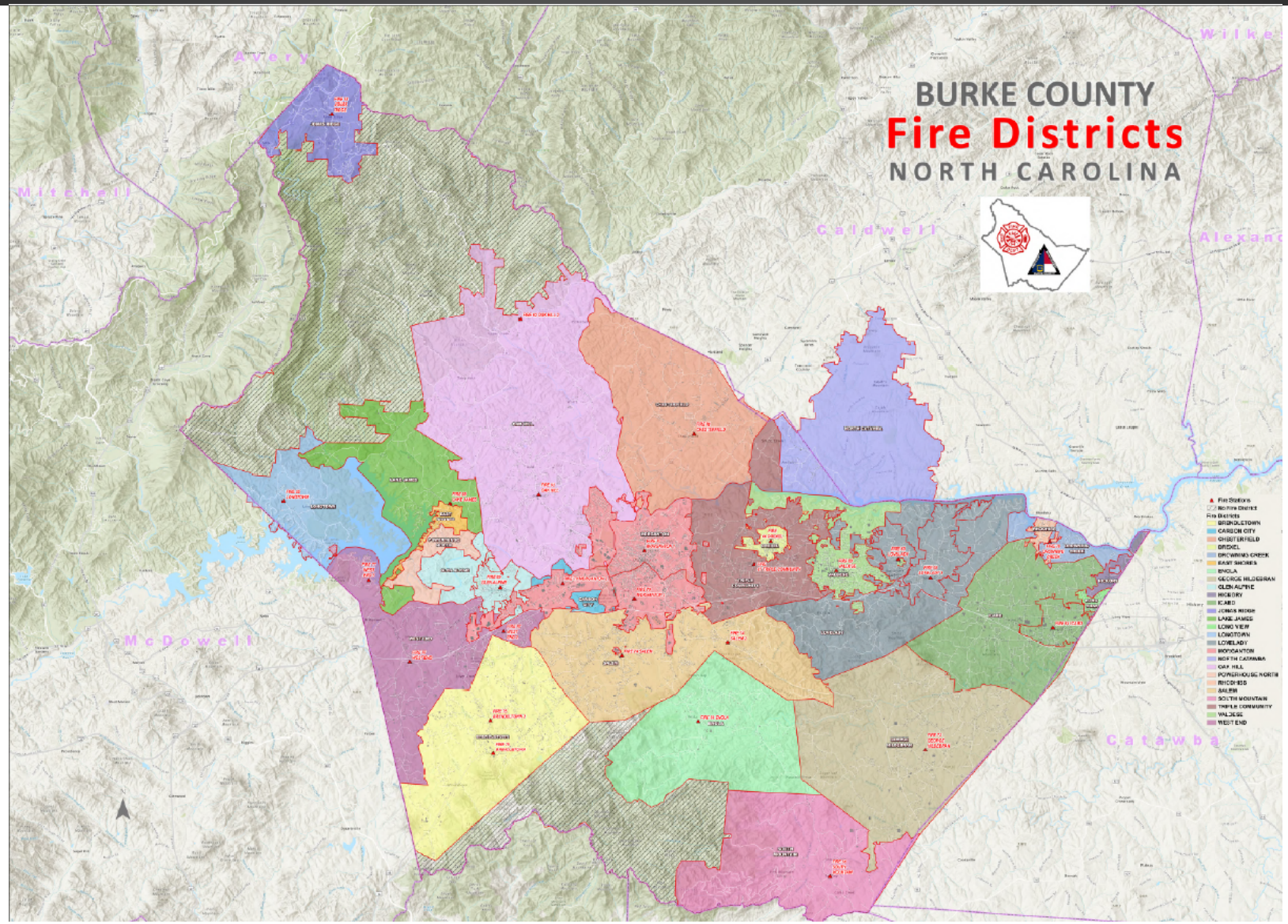



# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Responsibilities Breakdown

### Types of Incidents or Activities

- Fire / Arson Investigations
- Fire Injury & Fatality Investigations
- Explosion Investigations
- Hazardous Materials Response
- Commercial Fire Inspections
- Public / Private School Inspections
- Operational & Construction Permitting
- Foster Home Inspections
- Building Plan Reviews
- Fire & Life Safety Plan Reviews
- Fire Protection System Reviews
- Fire Prevention Programs
- Fire / Safety Training Programs for Businesses


BURKE COUNTY
Fire Districts
NORTH CAROLINA
Avery
Mitchell
Caldwell
McDowell
Catawba





# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Day-To-Day Operations

The daily operation of the Fire Marshal's Office consists of performing fire and life safety inspections for commercial occupancies in Burke County. The office also processes and issues occupancy permits, performs building plan and fire/life safety reviews, site visits, community outreach, and responds to emergency calls for service.

The Fire Marshal's Office is also responsible for determining origin and cause investigations for incendiary fires, investigating fires with injuries or fatalities, open burning complaints, and other applicable fire or explosion incidents when requested.

Fire scene processing often includes examination, collection, and transfer of fire scene evidence to the NC State Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab for examination.

Additionally, the office serves as a liaison between County Administration and:

- 19 Burke County Fire Departments
- 3 Out-of-County Fire Departments (w/ territory in Burke County)
- Burke County REACT (Traffic Control Team)







# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Fire Marshal Team
## Annual Continuing Education

**Requirements per employee, all listed certification types are affiliated with or reciprocate with other listed certifications:**

| Hours | Type |
|---|---|
| 40 | Fire Investigations |
| 24 | Fire Inspector |
| 10 | Fire Life Safety Educator |
| 36 | Firefighter I/II |
| 12 | Haz-Mat |
| 12 | Rescue |
| 36 | Emergency Medical Technician |

**Total Hours Per Team Member – 170 Hours**

# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

**Public Safety Study**

Deficiencies identified during the comprehensive public safety study performed by NC Fire Chief Consulting determined multiple areas in day-to-day operations that could use improvement for the Fire Marshal's Office and Emergency Management.

In the early months of 2025, the Public Safety team met and discussed options to decrease employee fatigue, enhance the county's capabilities to serve and protect its citizens and visitors, and reduce the number of fire injuries and accidental commercial fires by improving the existing fire inspection program.

The implementation of these changes can be associated with each of the 5 Focus Areas of the Commissioners' Strategic Plan.

**Changes Suggested by the Consultant Study & Implemented**

- Separation of the Fire Marshal's Office & Emergency Management Divisions *(Established Office of the Fire Marshal)*
- Implementation of a modern Records Management System platform for fire inspections and fire investigations
- Reclassify one existing FTE to the Fire Marshal's Office to increase the department's capabilities

# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Where We Were

**For approximately 15 years, 3 employees performed:**

- Emergency Management responses for approximately 514 square miles (including waterways)
- Commercial & Foster Home Inspections
- Building Plan Review, Fire & Life Safety Reviews
- Permit Processing, Invoice Collection
- Structure, Vehicle, & Outside Fire Investigations
- Wilderness, Urban, & Water Rescues, Medical Carry outs
- Fire Marshal / Emergency Management Outreach
- Haz-Mat Incident Response

The combination of both divisions made it impossible to maintain efficiency with duties and statutory requirements for fire inspections due to extensive call volume. Often, inspections would have to be abandoned to respond to extended Emergency Management incidents for a duration of typically 4 to 10 hours per incident.

Following an evaluation by the NC Office of State Fire Marshal in 2023/2024, our office was near being placed on probation by the State Fire Marshal due to the extensive number of overdue commercial inspections in Burke County.

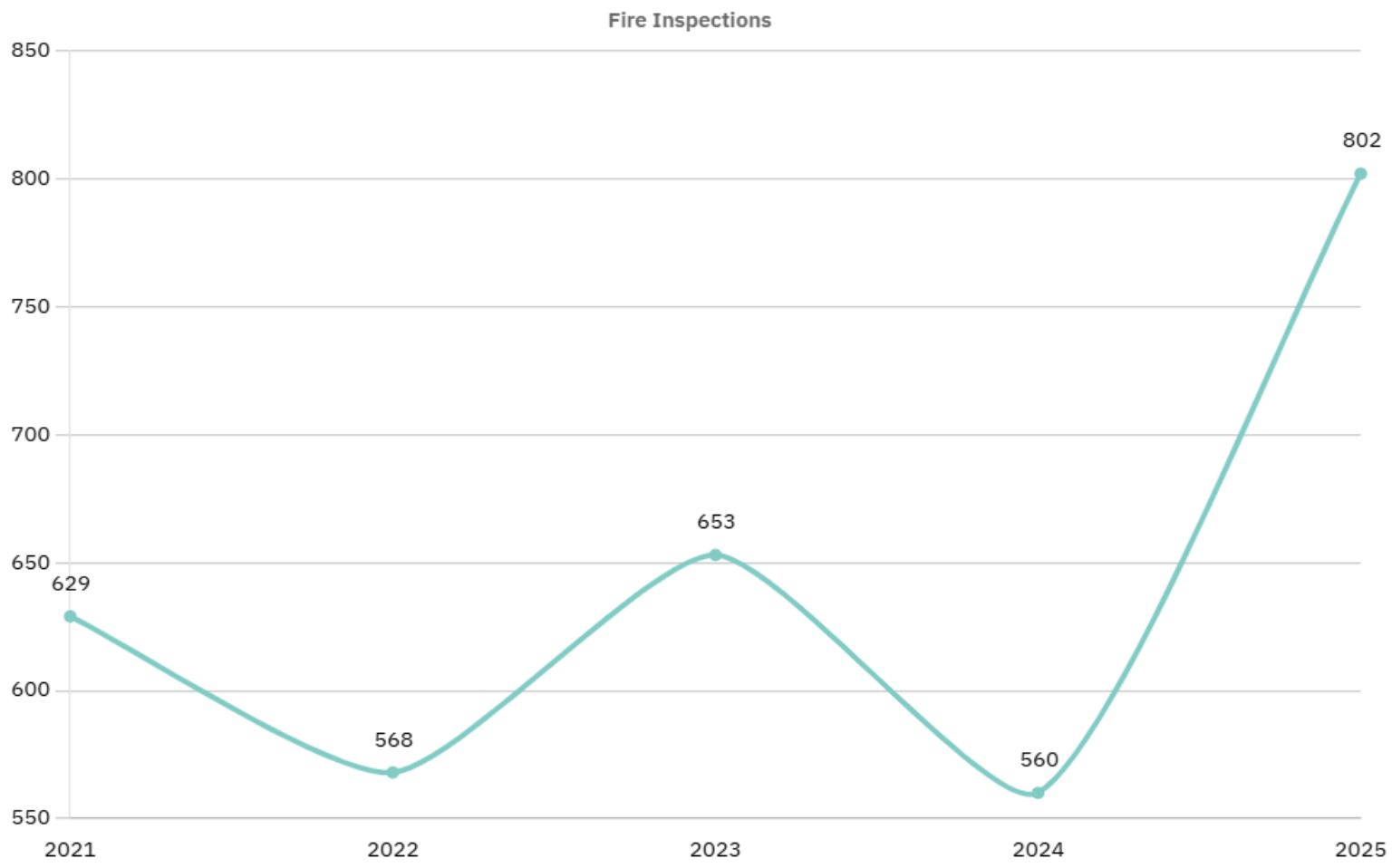
# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Public Safety Consultants Study

**In 2024, NC Fire Chief Consulting performed a cross-functional strategic review of public safety operations for Burke County Government at the request of County Administration.**

**This study identified and recommended the following for the Fire Marshal's Office:**

- Increasing staffing levels to gain compliance with required fire inspections set forth by the NC General Statute, National Fire Protection Association, and the NC Office of State Fire Marshal
- Reorganization of the Fire Marshal's Office & Emergency Management Divisions due to the current and increasing workload and dual responsibilities of team members
- Implementing a modern Records Management System for Fire Inspections, Fire Investigations, Permitting, and Invoicing



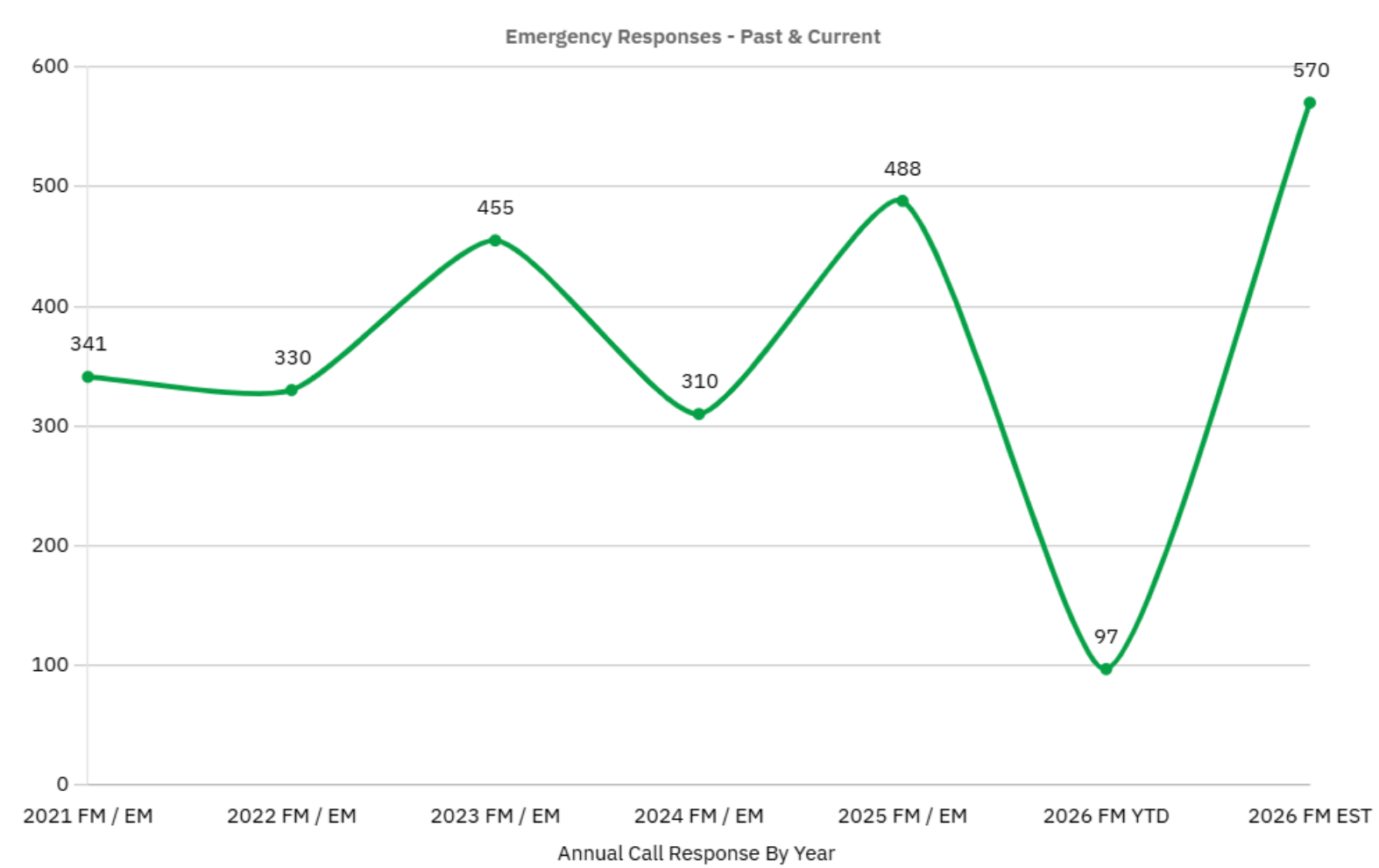

**This line graph represents the last 5 years of annual fire inspections performed and includes 6 months of operation in the year 2025 under the recommended changes detailed by a comprehensive study.**

**During the onset of restructuring in March 2025, the department was at approximately 15% of annual inspections being completed. Upon ending the 2025 year, the department's completed inspection rate had dramatically increased to 64.97%.**

# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Where We Are Now

- Office of the Fire Marshal Established
- Chief Fire Marshal Selected
- Deputy Fire Marshal Selected
- Fire Inspector Selected
- Completed reclassification of one Full-Time Employee position to the Fire Marshal's Office *(Administrative Assistant); this employee also possesses Fire Inspector & Investigator certification*
- Implemented new Records Management Software Platform for Fire Inspection, Fire Investigation, Permitting, Plan Review, Incident, and Invoice tracking
- Increased annual fire inspections completed from 15% to nearly 65% within 6 months of reorganization and implementation of the Consulting Study recommendations.
- Implemented a Quality Assurance component for our fire inspection program to evaluate time management, effectiveness, stability, workflow, and customer service experiences




**This line graph represents annual emergency call responses for the Fire Marshal's Office since 2021. These responses would have included a mixture of both incident types, shown to the right of this graph, broken down by division type. Also included is a 2026 year-to-date total, with an estimated annual total based on the current 2026 year-to-date call volume. It should be noted that even with the separation of the Fire Marshal's Office from Emergency Management, there are various types of incidents that require a response from both agencies.**

**After the reorganization of both departments, the Fire Marshal's Office's primary duties for emergency response are indicated to the right of this line graph. These duties and response totals do not include fire inspections, permitting, building/plan reviews, commercial site visits, phase 1 assessments, training sessions held for businesses and the public, community relations events, or other fire code-related inspections.**

# BURKE COUNTY FIRE MARSHAL'S OFFICE

## Emergency Responses By Division

### Fire Marshal

- Structure, Vehicle, Outside Fire Investigations
- Fire Injury & Fatality Investigations
- Explosion Investigations
- Fire Code Complaints
- Haz-Mat Incidents
- FD Requests for Support
- Public Threats
- Mass Casualty Incidents

### Emergency Management

- Urban Search & Rescue
- Wilderness Search & Rescue
- Water Rescue Incidents
- Haz-Mat Incidents
- DP8 Asset Deployment
- Local EM Asset Deployment
- Incident Management Team (Support)
- Public Threats
- Mass Casualty Incidents