

HIGHLANDS COUNTY BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Tuesday, May 20, 2025

10:00 AM

600 S. Commerce Ave. Sebring, FL 33870

A Special Meeting of the Highlands County Board of County Commissioners for the purpose of holding a Workshop to consider the Fire Assessment

(Please turn off pagers and cell phones)

1. MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

2. INVOCATION:

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

4. FIRE ASSESSMENT WORKSHOP

4.A *Highlands County Fire Rescue Presentation*

Dustin Fitch, Deputy Chief Highlands County Fire Rescue

None

[HCFR Assessment Workshop Presentation.pdf](#)

4.B *Workshop to consider a re-allocation of the Institutional Category within the Fire Assessment Study conducted in 2024.*

Sandi Neubarth, Director of Infrastructure & Capital Projects, Accenture Tanya

Cannady, Business Services Director Highlands County BOCC

No fiscal impact

[Statement of Issue for fire assessment workshop 5-20-25.pdf](#)

[Highlands County Workshop 5-20-25.pdf](#)

5. PUBLIC COMMENTS

6. ADJOURN

Any person who decides to appeal any decision made by this Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida, in public hearing or meeting is hereby advised that he or she will need a record of the proceedings, and that, for such purpose, he or she may need to ensure that a verbatim record of the proceedings is made, which record will include the testimony and evidence upon which such appeal is to be based.

The Board of County Commissioners of Highlands County, Florida, does not discriminate upon the basis of any individual's disability status. This non-discrimination policy involves every aspect of the Board's functions, including one's access to, participation, employment or treatment in its programs or activities. "Anyone requiring reasonable

accommodation as provided for in the Americans With Disabilities Act or Section 286.26 Florida Statutes should contact Human Resources, ADA Coordinator at: 863-402-6509 (voice), or via Florida Rely Service 711, or by e-mail: hrmanager@highlandsfl.gov." Requests for CART or interpreter services should be made as soon as possible but no later than 48 hours in advance to permit coordination of the service.

Please note our new website address: www.highlandsfl.gov/

Any invocation that may be offered before the official start of the Commission meeting shall be the voluntary offering of a private citizen, to and for the benefit of the Commission. The views or beliefs expressed by the invocation speaker have not been previously reviewed or approved by the Commission, and the Commission is not allowed by law to endorse the religious beliefs or views of this, or any other speaker.

**HIGHLANDS COUNTY
COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**

DATE OF ACTION REQUEST: May 20, 2025

PRESENTER: Dustin Fitch, Deputy Chief Highlands County Fire Rescue

SUBJECT/TITLE: Highlands County Fire Rescue Presentation

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

RECOMMENDED ACTION

None

FISCAL IMPACT

None

Attachments: [HCFR Assessment Workshop Presentation.pdf](#)



**HCFR
THE PAST
THE PRESENT
THE FUTURE**

HCFR

EMS SERVICE

(2019 TO PRESENT)



Billed
Transports

69,551

Net Collections
to Date

\$25,429,572

Net Collection
Percentage

72.8%

CURRENT ROLLING 12-MONTH SNAPSHOTS

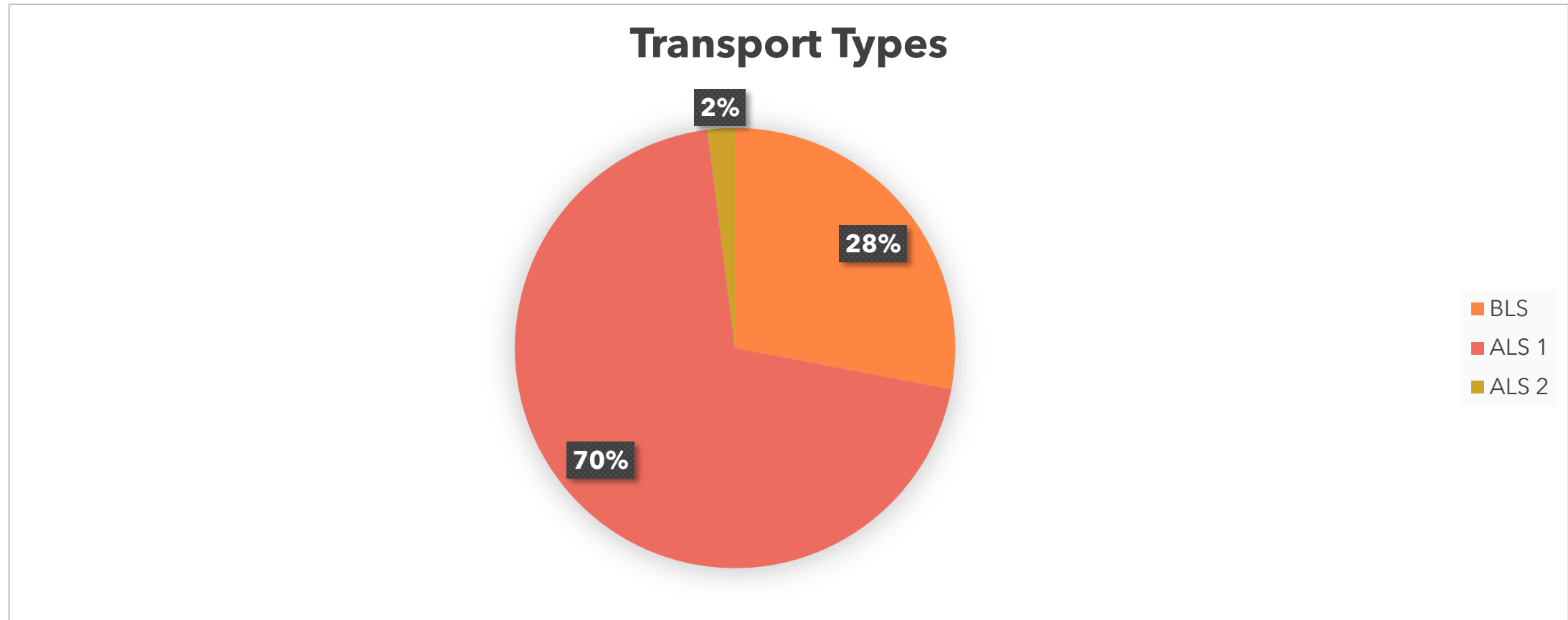
EMS | MC



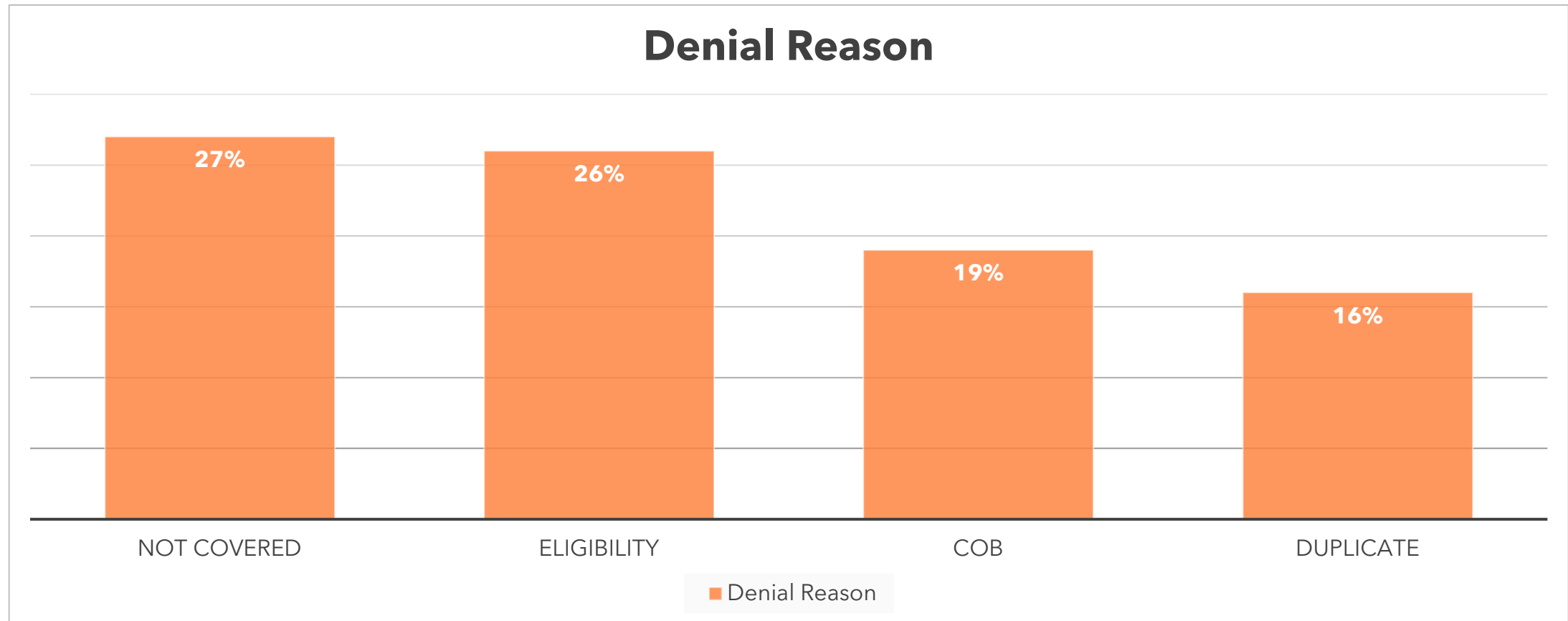
CURRENT CASH PER TRANSPORT COLLECTION

\$422.05

RUN MIX BREAKDOWN



TOP REASONS FOR CLAIM DENIALS

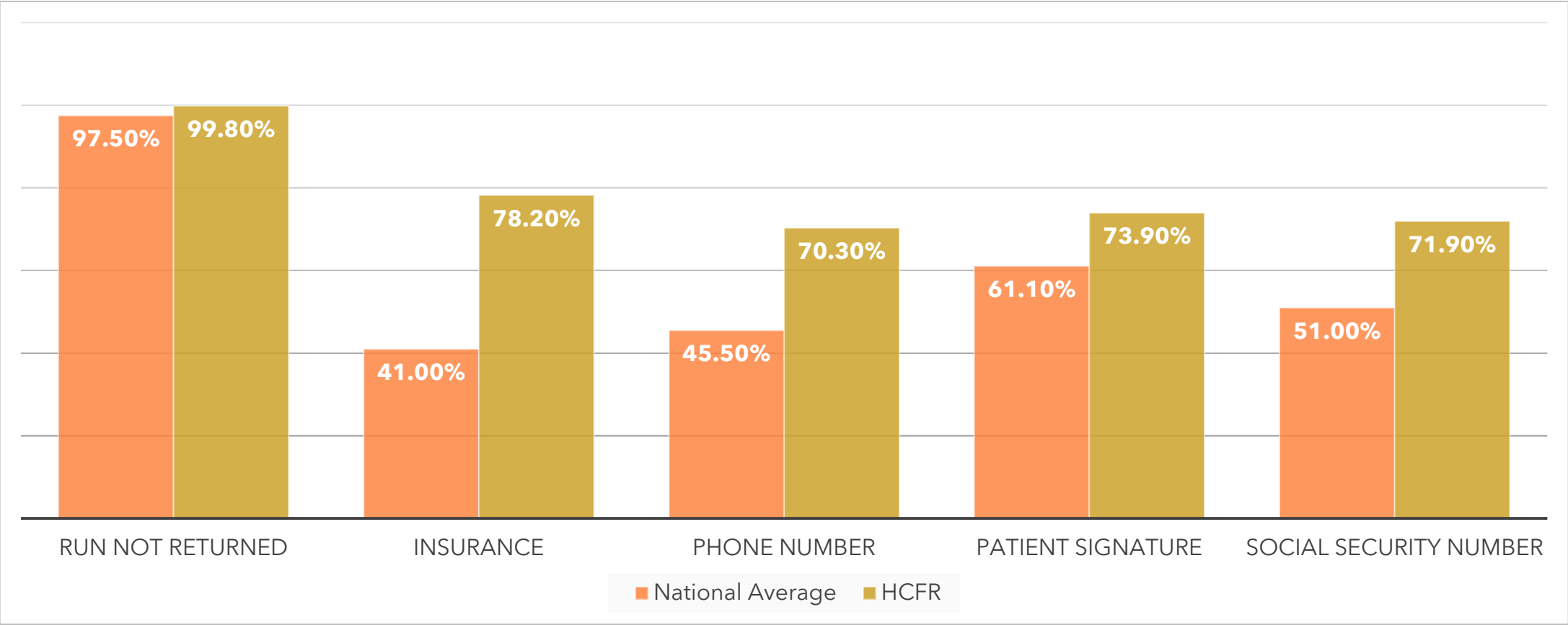


EMS TRANSPORTS RETURNED FOR ERROR

28 of 14,075

Ambulance Transports

HOW DO WE STACK UP TO THE NATIONAL AVERAGE?



HCFR FIRE SERVICE

1999
Interlocal
Agreement



2016
Fire Consolidation
Committee



2018
Implementation
Plan

2018
Funding Plan



2024
Second Study of
Funding



The Future

1999 Interlocal Agreement

1999 INTERLOCAL AGREEMENT

- On September 7, 1999, Highlands County and the Town of Lake Placid entered into an interlocal agreement for the county's provision of providing fire service coverage.
- Fire service coverage at the time of the agreement consisted of volunteer service only. This service standard is still applicable to today's provided services.
- The agreement also conveyed to the county the equipment and the deed to the fire station property.
- The deed conveyance also contains a reverting clause in the event the fire station is moved to a different area of the Town.

2016

Fire Consolidation Committee

2016 FORMATION OF A FIRE CONSOLIDATION COMMITTEE

- Highlands County formed a committee to begin assessing and determining the best way to provide fire service coverage to its residents after many of the volunteer chiefs began publicly stating they were unable to answer fire calls in a timely manner due to lack of volunteer firefighters.
- Committee members consisted of volunteer firefighters, Highlands County Fire Services, EMS, and county staff. Members met over a year to produce a plan.
- In May of 2018, the committee presented their findings with 3 plan options for the fire service of Highlands County.

2018 Implementation Plan

20

- 20

2018 Funding Plan

2018 FUNDING THE PLAN

- June 19, 2018, the Board of County Commissioners heard the results of a study performed by GSG group and numerous public speakers.
- Commissioners heavily modified the funding mechanism that GSG presented.
- The result was a plan of implementation funded at 60% of the needed funding to get the county fire service implemented.
- Zero sources of funding were created to provide capital improvements.
- Highlands County Fire Rescue was officially created October 1, 2018, with the funding source as adopted.



2024

Second Study of Funding

2024 SECOND FUNDING STUDY

- Assessment studies are recommended to be performed every 3-5 years.
- A second study was performed late in year 5, and rate schedules were updated for Highlands County Fire Rescue.
- The results of the study were once again heavily discussed, the end result was a funding level of 83.75% and a 20-year capital apparatus replacement plan funded at 50%.



The Future

THE FUTURE

- Studies on future rates and service need projections.
- Station placement and potential construction options on existing county fire stations.
- Increased in-service apparatus and placement needs based on real data to meet growing demands.
- Becoming an integral part of the strategic planning of the county.
- Helping set the standard for safety of special events held in the county.
- Bridging the gap of public misinformation regarding service levels, needs and standards of Highlands County Fire Rescue.





T H A N K Y O U

**HIGHLANDS COUNTY
COUNTY COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM**

DATE OF ACTION REQUEST: May 20, 2025

PRESENTER: Sandi Neubarth, Director of Infrastructure & Capital Projects,
Accenture Tanya Cannady, Business Services Director Highlands County
BOCC

SUBJECT/TITLE: Workshop to consider a re-allocation of the Institutional Category
within the Fire Assessment Study conducted in 2024.

STATEMENT OF ISSUE

RECOMMENDED ACTION

None

FISCAL IMPACT

No fiscal impact

Attachments: [Statement of Issue for fire assessment workshop 5-20-25.pdf](#)

Attachments: [Highlands County Workshop 5-20-25.pdf](#)

After the fire assessment rates were adopted in July 2024 for the fiscal year 2024-2025, the Board requested that the consultant perform an analysis of the Institutional Rate Category, specific to fire call data for nursing homes and churches. The current Institutional fire assessment rate is \$0.3329 per sq ft. and wholly exempt institutional buildings are \$0.09 per sq. ft.



HIGHLANDS COUNTY FIRE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

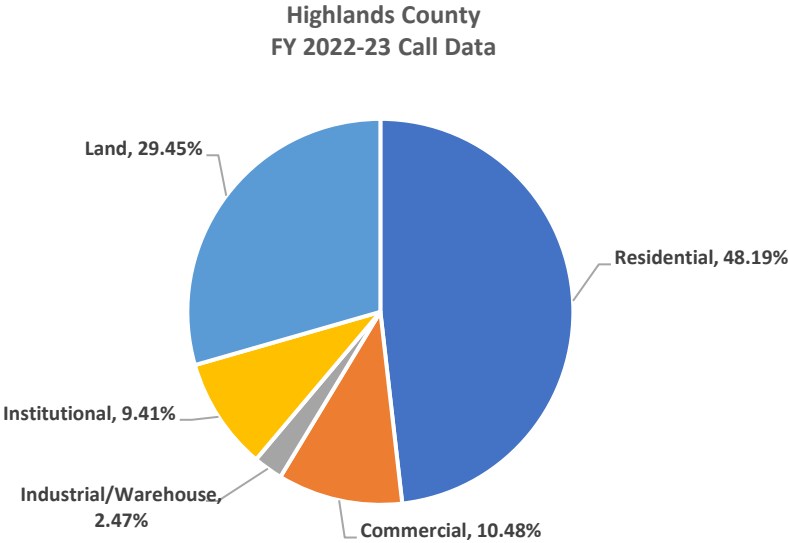
MAY 20, 2025

OVERVIEW FIRE ASSESSMENT PROGRAM

- Study conducted 2017
 - Implemented in 2018
- FY 2024-25 Update

	# Incidents	Average Call Duration	Weighting Factor	Weighted Calls	Percentage Weighted Calls
Residential	808	27.61	1.00	808.00	48.19%
Commercial	139	34.91	1.26	175.71	10.48%
Industrial/Warehouse	28	40.89	1.48	41.46	2.47%
Institutional	131	33.25	1.20	157.75	9.41%
Land	194	70.28	2.55	493.77	29.45%
Total	1300			1676.69	100.00%

- Total 5-Year Average Assessable Costs -- \$14,802,410
- **FY 2024-25 Adopted Rates**
 - Estimated Gross Revenue -- \$11,006,596
 - 83.93% of total O&M Assessable Budget \$10,625,968
 - 50% of Capital Assessable Budget -- \$2,088,221
- **Exemptions**
 - Government Parcels – 100% exemption
 - Buy-down -- \$829,540
 - Wholly Tax Exempt Institutional Buildings - \$0.0900 sq. ft.
 - Buy-down -- \$358,863
 - Agricultural Exemption – 100% exemption
 - Vacant agricultural land parcels
 - Non-residential buildings on agricultural parcels
 - Buy-down -- \$250,000
- **Net Realized Revenue -- \$9.5 Million**



FY 24-25 Adopted Rates

Residential Property Use Category		Rate Per Square Foot
Residential		\$0.0657
Non-Residential Property Use Categories		Rate Per Square Foot
Commercial		\$0.2250
Industrial/Warehouse		\$0.0364
Institutional		\$0.3329
Vacant Land Property Use Category		Rate per Parcel
Vacant Land		\$52.99

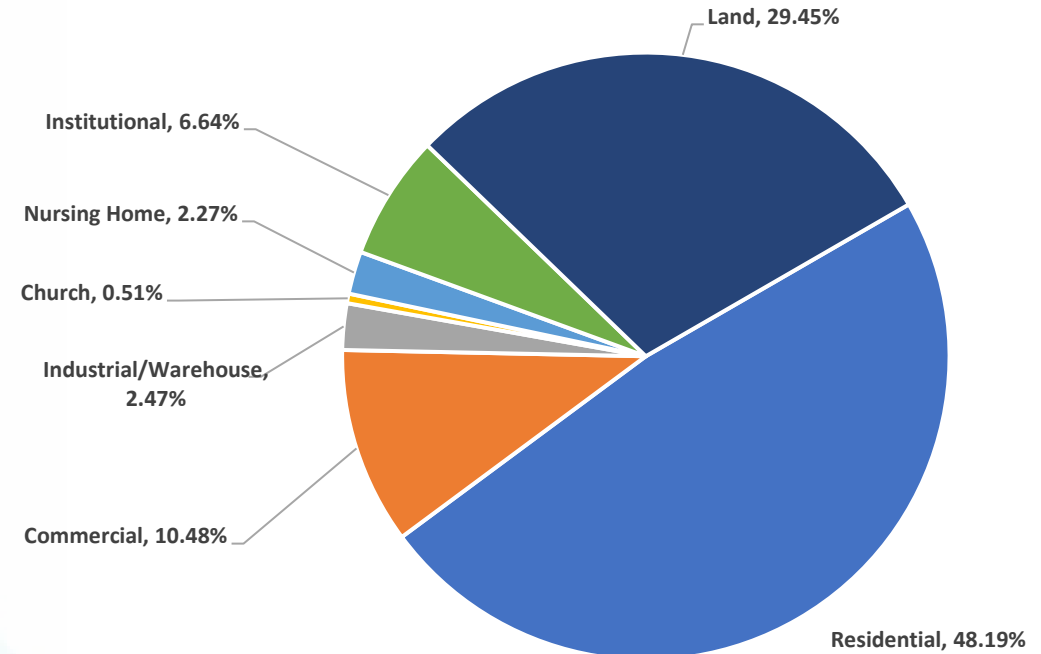
POLICY DIRECTION

- Review Institutional Rate Category – 9.41%
- Determine if data supports additional rate categories
 - Church
 - Nursing Home
 - Institutional

	# Incidents	Average Call Duration	Weighting Factor	Weighted Calls	Percentage Weighted Calls	Square Footage
Church	12	19.50	0.706	8.48	0.51%	742,329
Nursing Home	49	21.43	0.776	38.02	2.27%	289,039
Institutional	70	43.89	1.589	111.25	6.64%	2,658,495
Total	131			157.75	9.41%	3,689,864

	# Incidents	Average Call Duration	Weighting Factor	Weighted Calls	Percentage Weighted Calls
Residential	808	27.61	1.00	808.00	48.19%
Commercial	139	34.91	1.26	175.71	10.48%
Industrial/Warehouse	28	40.89	1.48	41.46	2.47%
Church	12	19.50	0.706	8.48	0.51%
Nursing Home	49	21.43	0.776	38.02	2.27%
Institutional	70	43.89	1.589	111.25	6.64%
Land	194	70.28	2.55	493.77	29.45%
Total	1300			1676.69	100.00%

Highlands County
FY 2022-23 Call Data



RATE SCENARIOS

Category	Updated Rates	FY 24-25 Adopted Rates	Difference	% Change
Residential	\$0.0657	\$0.0657	\$0.0000	0.00%
Commercial	\$0.2250	\$0.2250	\$0.0000	0.00%
Industrial/Warehouse	\$0.0364	\$0.0364	\$0.0000	0.00%
Nursing Home	\$0.8636	\$0.3329	\$0.5307	159.42%
Church	\$0.0751	\$0.3329	(\$0.2578)	-77.44%
Institutional	\$0.2748	\$0.3329	(\$0.0581)	-17.45%
Vacant Land	\$52.99	\$52.9900	\$0.0000	0.00%
Gross Revenue	\$11,006,596			
Government Buy-Down	\$780,607	\$829,540	\$48,933	
Ag Exemption	\$250,271	\$250,271	\$0	
Net Revenue	\$9,975,718	\$9,567,922	\$407,795	

Questions?