



# OFFICE OF THE CITY AUDITOR COLORADO SPRINGS, COLORADO

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## 23-14 City of Colorado Springs Fire Department Sworn Overtime Trends

July 2023

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this audit was to review City of Colorado Springs Fire Department (CSFD) overtime trends for sworn staff assigned to line positions in Fire Stations throughout the City.

### **Highlights**

We conclude overall, causes of overtime trends were due to CSFD unfilled sworn positions and insufficient personnel in the required specialized ranks to meet minimum staffing requirements. The focus of our audit was sworn line staffing. Sworn line personnel refer to the trained and certified firefighter employees of all ranks who work in the fire stations and respond to emergency incidents.

Data presented in this report will show that staffing headcounts were consistently less than the approved budgeted positions, see page 2. Required specialized positions were significantly understaffed, see page 3. Increased overtime costs were somewhat offset by salary savings of open positions as shown on page 4 of this report. We identified one observation and one commendable practice during our review.

As of 2022, CSFD operated 23 Fire Stations, with 23 engine companies, 6 truck companies, 1 heavy rescue unit and 1 hazardous materials team. Under the minimum staffing model, each engine company required one officer, one driver engineer, one paramedic and one firefighter. If scheduled staff were not available to meet minimum staffing requirements for a shift, qualified staff were required to work overtime to maintain the minimum staffing model. Paramedic, driver engineer, and officer positions could be filled by non-promoted personnel certified to 'act' in these positions.

Firefighters were hired from CSFD's training academy and must progress through the ranks to be eligible for higher level positions such as driver engineer, paramedic, and officer. Progression from entry level to driver engineer, paramedic or officer ranks required completion of the initial probation year along with additional certifications, training, and promotion.

We noted that CSFD sworn overtime consistently exceeded budgeted overtime. However, this budget variance was offset by salary savings from vacant sworn positions, civilian salary savings, and underspending in other categories. As a result, CSFD was generally within overall total approved budget.

### **Management Response**

CSFD was in agreement with our recommendations.

### **Recommendations**

1. CSFD should:

- Determine the desired number of overtime shifts to obtain the optimal mix of straight time and overtime.
- Report to City Administration on the impact of the initiatives on sworn overtime for 2023.

### **Commendable Practice**

CSFD implemented several initiatives in 2022 that, over time, should increase the available staff in driver engineer, paramedic and officer ranks.

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# 23-14 CITY OF COLORADO SPRINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT SWORN OVERTIME TRENDS

This audit reviewed CSFD staffing and overtime data for the 11 year period 2012 to 2022. To perform trend analysis, we obtained the following data:

- Approved budgeted sworn staff positions by rank
- Actual sworn personnel by rank
- Minimum required staffing by rank
- Overtime
- Absences for sworn staff

## ACTUAL HEADCOUNT COMPARED TO APPROVED BUDGETED HEADCOUNT:

CSFD was generally below approved budgeted headcount. When firefighters completed the academy and joined the line, headcount briefly exceeded approved budgets. Then, due to separations and retirements, the headcount fell below approved budgeted amounts.

Approved Budgeted Headcount vs Actual Headcount

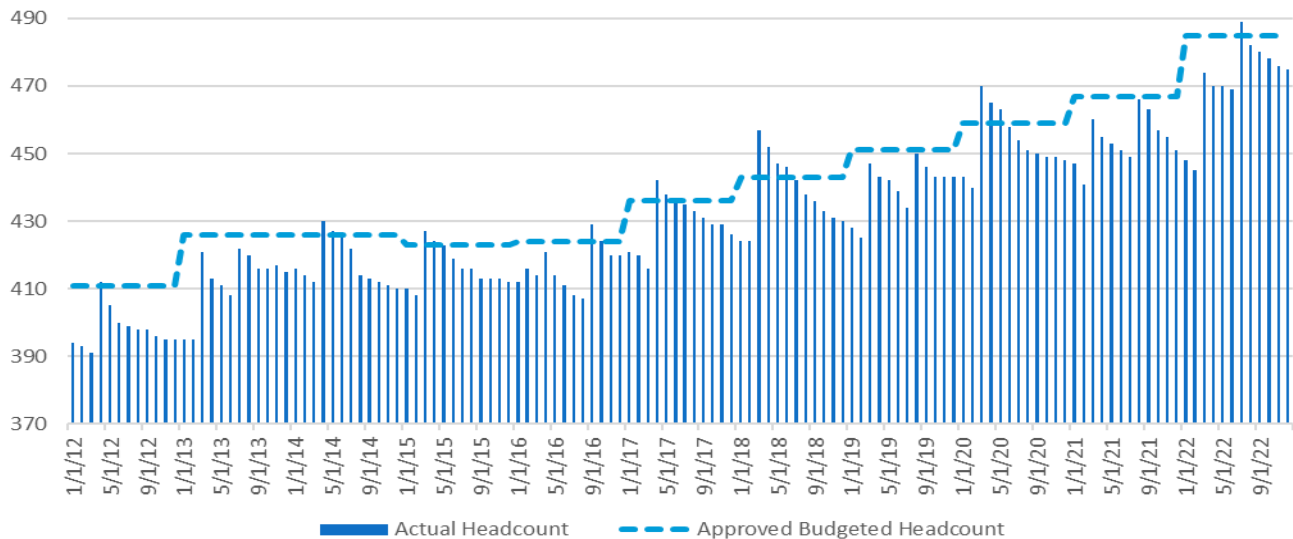


Chart sources: Actual headcount—City Finance module. Approved budgeted headcount—annual published budget.

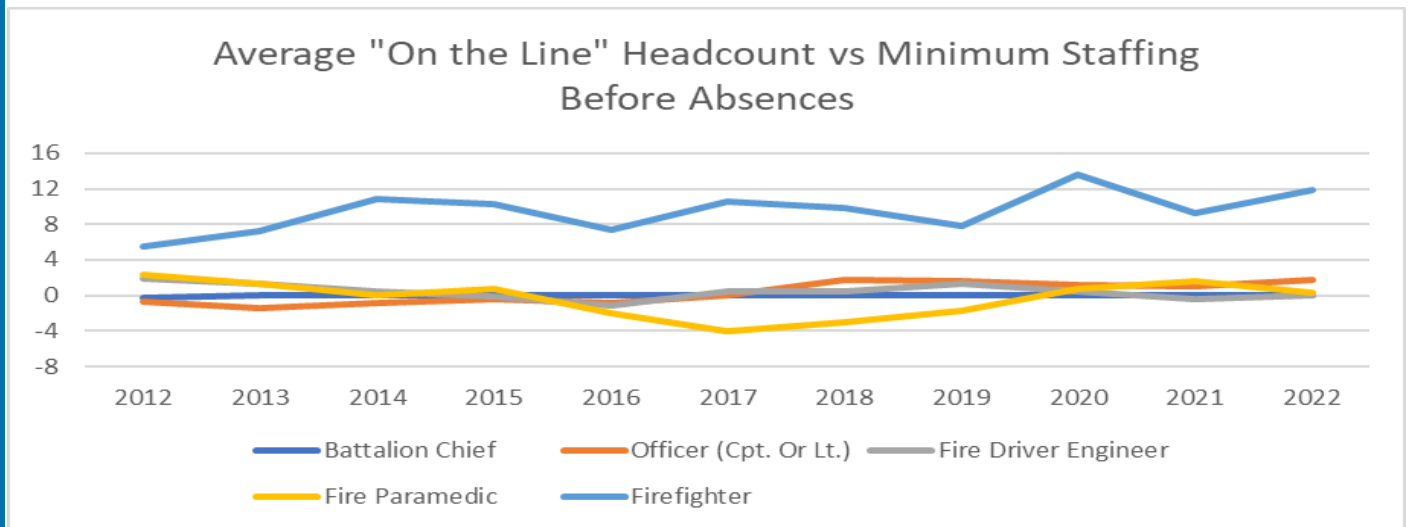
Approved budgeted CSFD sworn headcount increased from staffing of 412 in 2012 to 485 in 2022 or 73 staff over the 10 year period. During this period three new fire stations opened. Sworn fire personnel were also utilized for 'staff' non-line 40 hour per week positions.

## ON THE LINE HEADCOUNT COMPARED TO MINIMUM STAFFING BEFORE ABSENCES:

Only sworn line personnel were included in the next set of analytics. Fire station minimum staffing requires the proper mix of ranks and staffing to properly respond to calls. Certain ranks such as firefighter appear to have sufficient staff, before absences, to adhere to minimum staffing requirements. Other ranks such as paramedics, driver engineer, and officer generally, did not have enough staff. When a fire station did not have enough staff in the needed rank, CSFD required personnel to work extra shifts which in turn caused overtime.

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In the chart below, zero line is equivalent to minimum staffing.

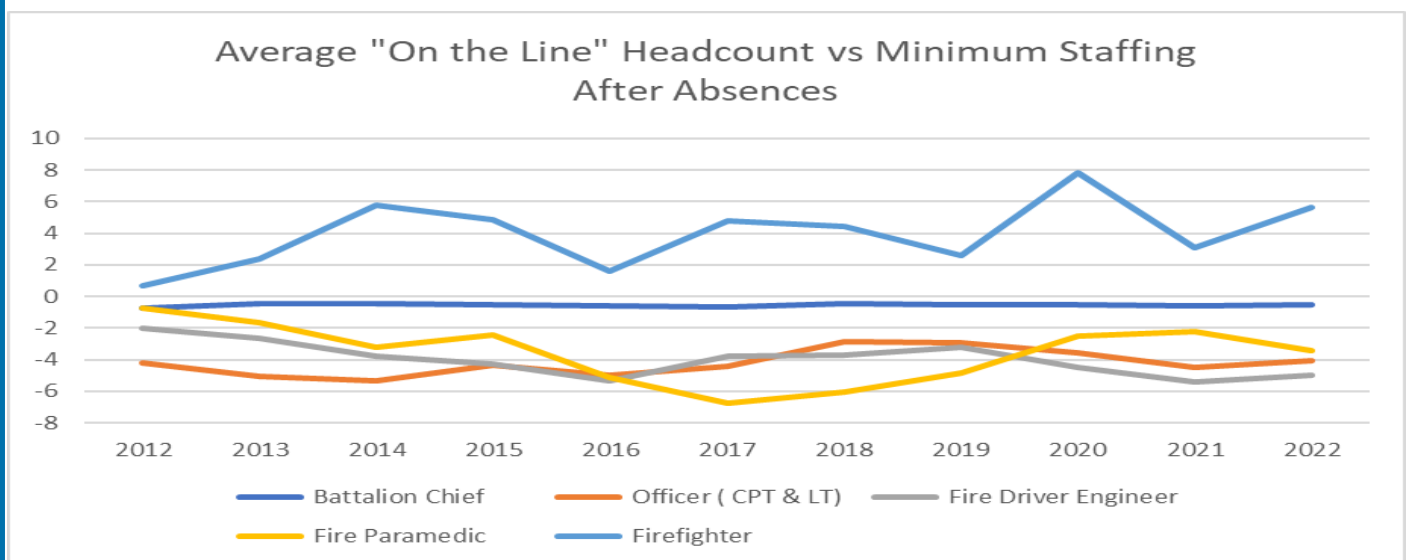


Source: On Line headcount from City Finance report. Minimum staffing provided by CSFD.

## STAFFING IMPACTS AFTER ABSENCES BY RANK ARE CONSIDERED:

Absences included, but were not limited to, vacation, sick, family sick, workers compensation, and jury duty. Absence time and labor codes were reviewed and removed from the data set to determine actual available staff by rank as compared to minimum staffing requirements.

After considering absences by rank, officers, driver engineers, and paramedics did not have the necessary staff to meet minimum staffing requirements and therefore incurred overtime to boost those ranks to needed staffing requirements. In the chart below, zero is equivalent to minimum staffing needs after accounting for absences.



Source: Absences from City Finance time and labor report. Actual headcount by rank from City Finance report.

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Due to the impacts of the COVID emergency, CSFD indicated the years 2020-2021 were not typical in terms of absences and calls for service.

### CSFD BUDGET TO ACTUAL SALARIES:

Table below shows variances for CSFD sworn fire staff salaries and overtime. Net variance includes under budget or (over budget) in total. Salaries are budgeted to actual approved headcount. Salary savings occur primarily due to CSFD actual headcount under approved headcount.

BUDGET vs ACTUAL VARIANCE (presented in 000's) FOR SWORN FIRE STAFF											
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
<b>SALARIES</b>	\$ 1,315	\$ (524)	\$ 881	\$ 766	\$ 306	\$ 1,203	\$ 1,320	\$ 771	\$ 583	\$ 1,477	\$ 1,980
<b>OVERTIME</b>	\$ (986)	\$ (458)	\$ (478)	\$ (341)	\$ (1,346)	\$ (1,671)	\$ (2,071)	\$ (1,499)	\$ 507	\$ (3,007)	\$ (2,659)
<b>NET</b>											
<b>VARIANCE</b>	\$ 329	\$ (982)	\$ 403	\$ 425	\$ (1,040)	\$ (468)	\$ (751)	\$ (728)	\$ 1,090	\$ (1,530)	\$ (679)

Source: City of Colorado Springs annual budget and financial reports.

The table below shows the overall budget to actual variances for the CSFD budget.

BUDGET vs ACTUAL VARIANCE (presented in 000's) FOR SWORN AND CIVILIAN STAFF												
	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	
<b>Civilian Salary and OT</b>	\$ 381	\$ 1,939	\$ 92	\$ 159	\$ 180	\$ 204	\$ 137	\$ (26)	\$ 414	\$ 406	\$ 261	
<b>Sworn Salary and OT</b>	\$ 329	\$ (982)	\$ 403	\$ 424	\$ (1,040)	\$ (468)	\$ (751)	\$ (728)	\$ 1,090	\$ (1,531)	\$ (679)	
<b>All Other</b>	\$ 287	\$ 298	\$ (301)	\$ 156	\$ 347	\$ 301	\$ 148	\$ 96	\$ 175	\$ 1,649	\$ 574	
<b>Net Variance</b>	\$ 997	\$ 1,255	\$ 194	\$ 739	\$ (513)	\$ 37	\$ (466)	\$ (658)	\$ 1,679	\$ 524	\$ 156	

Source: City of Colorado Springs annual budget and financial reports.

We would like to recognize and thank the Colorado Springs Fire Department staff for their support and cooperation during this review. Fire department staff demonstrated an appetite for continuous improvements in staffing effectively.

The Office of City Auditor plans additional trending and analysis of CSFD staffing and overtime in 2024. We will follow up on actions taken and impact from our recommendation and CSFD 2022 initiatives noted on page 5 of this report.

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### **Observation 1**

Overall, total CSFD headcount was less than the approved budgeted headcount from 2012 to 2022.

Actual numbers of Paramedics were consistently below authorized levels since 2012. (See 1st graph on page 3.) Employees in the driver engineer rank were less than authorized levels over the last five years.

When absences were considered, available staffing was not sufficient to meet minimum staffing requirements for all ranks other than firefighter. (See 2nd graph on page 3).

CSFD management believes the initiatives noted in our Commendable Practice below have addressed gaps in minimum staffing by rank. CSFD management indicates that overtime has declined in 2023, subsequent to our audit period.

### **Management Response**

CSFD concurs with the Observations as well as the Recommendations. CSFD will establish a methodology to determine the optimal mix of overtime and straight time. In addition, CSFD will generate a report in 1Q 2024 demonstrating the impact of the initiatives expressed in the Commendable Practice section of the Audit.

### **Recommendation**

CSFD should:

- Determine the desired number of overtime shifts to obtain the optimal mix of straight time and overtime.
- Report to City Administration on the impact of the initiatives on sworn overtime for 2023.

### **Commendable Practice**

CSFD implemented several initiatives in 2022 that, over time, should increase the available staff in driver engineer, paramedic and officer ranks.

Beginning in 2022, CSFD firefighters were required to select a track for advancement to driver engineer or paramedic.

Enhanced staffing allowed a certain number of hirebacks per shift to be filled by employees in Acting roles, thereby reducing the number of overtime hires.

Additionally, sworn personnel were allowed to volunteer for overtime shifts under a program referred to as SMART shift. This program allowed employees to select specific dates in which they would work overtime. This initiative was intended to provide employees with more control over when mandatory overtime was worked.

This audit was conducted in conformance with the International Standards for the Professional Practice of Internal Auditing, a part of the Professional Practices Framework promulgated by the Institute of Internal Auditors.