



EL CERRITO-KENSINGTON FIRE DEPARTMENT

10900 San Pablo Avenue ▪ El Cerrito ▪ CA ▪ 94530

(510) 215-4450 ▪ FAX (510) 232-4917

www.el-cerrito.org



DATE: July 29, 2026

TO: David Aranda: General Manager

FROM: Eric Saylor: Fire Chief

RE: **Fire Chief's Report for the August 2026 Kensington Community Services District**

Fire Prevention

Second-round vegetation-management and defensible-space inspections for Kensington properties will begin in August. Fire Prevention personnel will revisit properties that require follow-up and verify that hazards identified during the first inspection cycle have been corrected. Residents who received a notice should complete the listed work before the reinspection date and continue maintaining their property through the remainder of fire season.

These inspections are intended to reduce the likelihood that wind-driven embers or surface fire will reach a home, improve access for emergency apparatus, and create safer operating space for firefighters. Typical corrective work may include removing dead vegetation and combustible debris, maintaining separation between plants, trimming vegetation away from roofs and chimneys, and keeping driveways, streets, and address markings clear.

Operations / Mutual Aid

Fire season is already active across the Pacific Northwest. At the time this report was prepared, the Northwest Geographic Area remained at Preparedness Level 5, with extensive large-fire activity and incident management teams assigned throughout Oregon and Washington. The El Cerrito-Kensington Fire Department has already deployed two specialty members to assist with fires in those states.

Every deployment provides immediate help to the affected jurisdiction while strengthening our own readiness. Personnel assigned to specialty or incident-management overhead positions work within large, complex interagency organizations and return with current practices, professional relationships, and real-world experience that cannot be fully duplicated in a classroom.

Through repeated assignments, advanced training, and national qualifications, several of our firefighters have developed national-level expertise in specialized wildland disciplines. That expertise strengthens our communications, logistics, planning, leadership, and ability to manage a major wildfire or other complex disaster at home. We will continue to support qualified deployments while maintaining local staffing and response coverage.



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Red Flag Days: Wind Changes the Risk

A Red Flag Warning means that weather and fuel conditions can support rapid fire growth. Every Red Flag Day deserves attention, but wind is often the factor that transforms a manageable ignition into a fast-moving regional emergency. Strong winds increase the rate of spread, push embers far ahead of the main fire, topple trees and power lines, reduce visibility, create new ignitions, and sharply reduce the time available for suppression and evacuation.

For residents, the distinction matters. A Red Flag Day with lighter winds remains a priority because fuels are dry and any ignition can grow. A Red Flag Day with forecast strong winds requires a much higher level of readiness because the fire may move faster than resources can contain it and faster than roads can absorb an evacuation.

The chart below presents selected catastrophic, wind-driven California fires from the last decade. Official reports do not consistently publish incident-wide average wind speeds, so the chart uses documented critical-period gusts at or near each incident. The values come from different weather stations and analytical methods and should be treated as representative, not directly comparable.

**Selected Catastrophic California Wildfires
Documented Critical-Period Wind Gusts (2017-2025)**

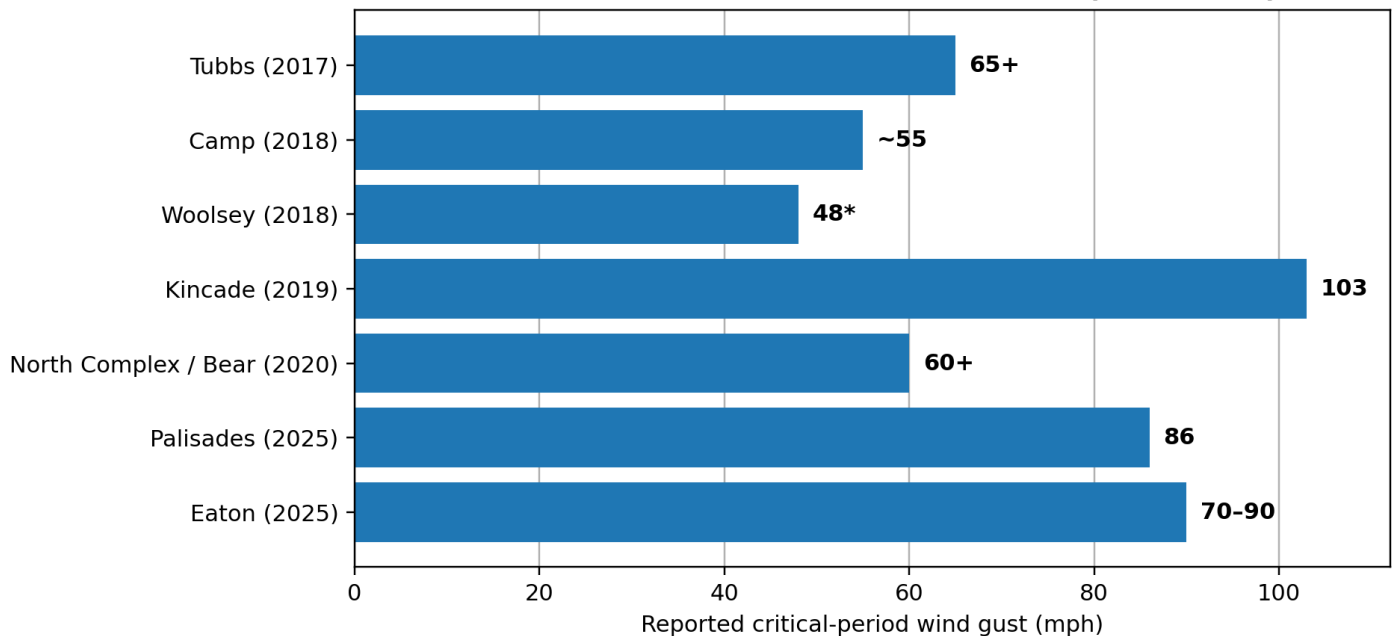


Chart note: Values are selected observed, analyzed, or reported gusts—not incident-wide averages. “Major fire” has no single official definition. *Woolsey: 48 mph was observed at Cheseboro during rapid fire expansion; the same after-action review anticipated mountain gusts of 50–70 mph.

WIND DOES NOT CREATE A SINGLE DISASTER THRESHOLD

The repeated pattern is clear: as winds increase, fire spread accelerates and the margin for successful suppression and evacuation narrows.

Mission: Protect Lives and Property

Integrity Accountability Teamwork Respect Professionalism



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Aerial Firefighting in the East Bay Hills

Much of the open-space terrain east of El Cerrito and Kensington is steep, heavily vegetated, and difficult for ground crews to access. These parklands cross multiple fire-protection responsibility areas and are protected through coordinated local, regional, park-district, and state mutual aid. When a fire starts in remote terrain, aircraft may be requested or dispatched early, depending on the exact location, resource availability, daylight, visibility, and weather.

Under suitable conditions, helicopters and fixed-wing aircraft can drop water or retardant to slow a fire, cool active edges, reinforce ridgelines, and buy critical time for ground crews. This is an effective component of the East Bay Hills response model and can help prevent a remote fire from reaching neighborhoods.

Aerial firefighting is never guaranteed. High winds, turbulence, smoke, terrain, visibility, and aircraft-specific operating limitations can reduce aircraft effectiveness or force missions to stop. Official reviews of the 2025 Palisades and Eaton fires documented extreme winds that severely limited or grounded aerial operations. For local planning, forecast ridge-top gusts approaching or exceeding 50 mph should be treated as a serious escalation indicator—not as a universal aircraft cutoff. The operational decision will always depend on real-time conditions and the capabilities of the assigned aircraft.

How the Response Model Works

1	2	3
EARLY DETECTION + DISPATCH	AIR SUPPORT WHEN CONDITIONS ALLOW	GROUND ATTACK + COMMUNITY PROTECTION
Local units, park resources, mutual-aid partners, and air-resource requests are coordinated as quickly as conditions warrant.	Aircraft can slow fire spread, reinforce ridges and flanks, and buy time for crews to reach difficult terrain.	Ground crews contain the fire, protect structures, support evacuation, and hold the fire away from neighborhoods.

HIGH WIND CAN REMOVE THE AERIAL ADVANTAGE AT THE SAME TIME FIRE SPREAD ACCELERATES

That combination—faster fire movement, more long-range spotting, reduced visibility, and fewer aerial options—is what makes extreme-wind Red Flag events uniquely dangerous.

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Leave-Early Planning for Extreme-Wind Events

Because extreme wind can accelerate fire spread and reduce aerial options, the Department should continue developing a leave-early recommendation framework for the most evacuation-constrained areas of Kensington and El Cerrito. The framework would be considered when a Red Flag Warning is paired with forecast extreme winds, particularly when ridge-top gusts approach or exceed 50 mph.

A leave-early recommendation would not be an Evacuation Warning or an Evacuation Order, and it would not replace either. It would be a preparedness message encouraging residents who need additional time—or who prefer to avoid the risks of smoke, power outages, falling trees, and traffic congestion—to relocate before a fire starts. Priority audiences would include people with mobility, medical, sensory, or transportation needs; households with children; and residents moving pets.

CAL FIRE defines an Evacuation Warning as a potential threat and directs people who require additional time and those with pets or livestock to leave immediately. The same principle supports advance planning on forecast extreme-wind days: residents should not wait for conditions to become dangerous before acting.

RED FLAG DAY	Monitor forecasts and official messages. Complete preparations, keep vehicles fueled, and be ready to leave without delay if a fire starts.
RED FLAG + EXTREME WIND FORECAST	Residents who need more time should consider relocating early. The Department may issue leave-early preparedness guidance for identified high-risk areas.
EVACUATION WARNING / ORDER OR UNSAFE CONDITIONS	Leave immediately and follow official routes and instructions. Do not wait for an order when fire, smoke, falling trees, or blocked access already makes remaining unsafe.

Resident Readiness Checklist

- Enroll in the Contra Costa Community Warning System and monitor National Weather Service and official Fire Department messaging.
- Keep vehicles fueled, devices charged, and medications, go-bags, documents, and pet supplies ready.
- Know at least two routes out of the neighborhood; park facing out and keep narrow streets clear for emergency apparatus.
- Leave immediately when warned—or sooner if conditions feel unsafe. Do not wait for an Evacuation Order when fire or smoke is already threatening your location.

LEAVE EARLY IS A PREPAREDNESS OPTION

It is not a substitute for following an official Evacuation Warning or Evacuation Order.

Selected Sources and Chart Methodology

National Interagency Fire Center, National Fire News (July 29, 2026); Sonoma County, 2017 Wildfires After-Action Report and 2019 Kincade Fire After-Action Report; NOAA/National Weather Service, November 2018 Camp Fire Service Assessment; Los Angeles County, After Action Review of the Woolsey Fire Incident and January 2025 Alert and Evacuation Systems Review; California Board of Forestry and Fire Protection, North Complex Fire case study; Los Angeles Fire Department, Palisades Fire After-Action Review; CAL FIRE evacuation terminology; East Bay Regional Park District, Wildfire Hazard Reduction and Resource Management Plan; National Wildfire Coordinating Group, Basic Air Operations. Chart values represent selected critical-period gusts and are not incident-wide averages.

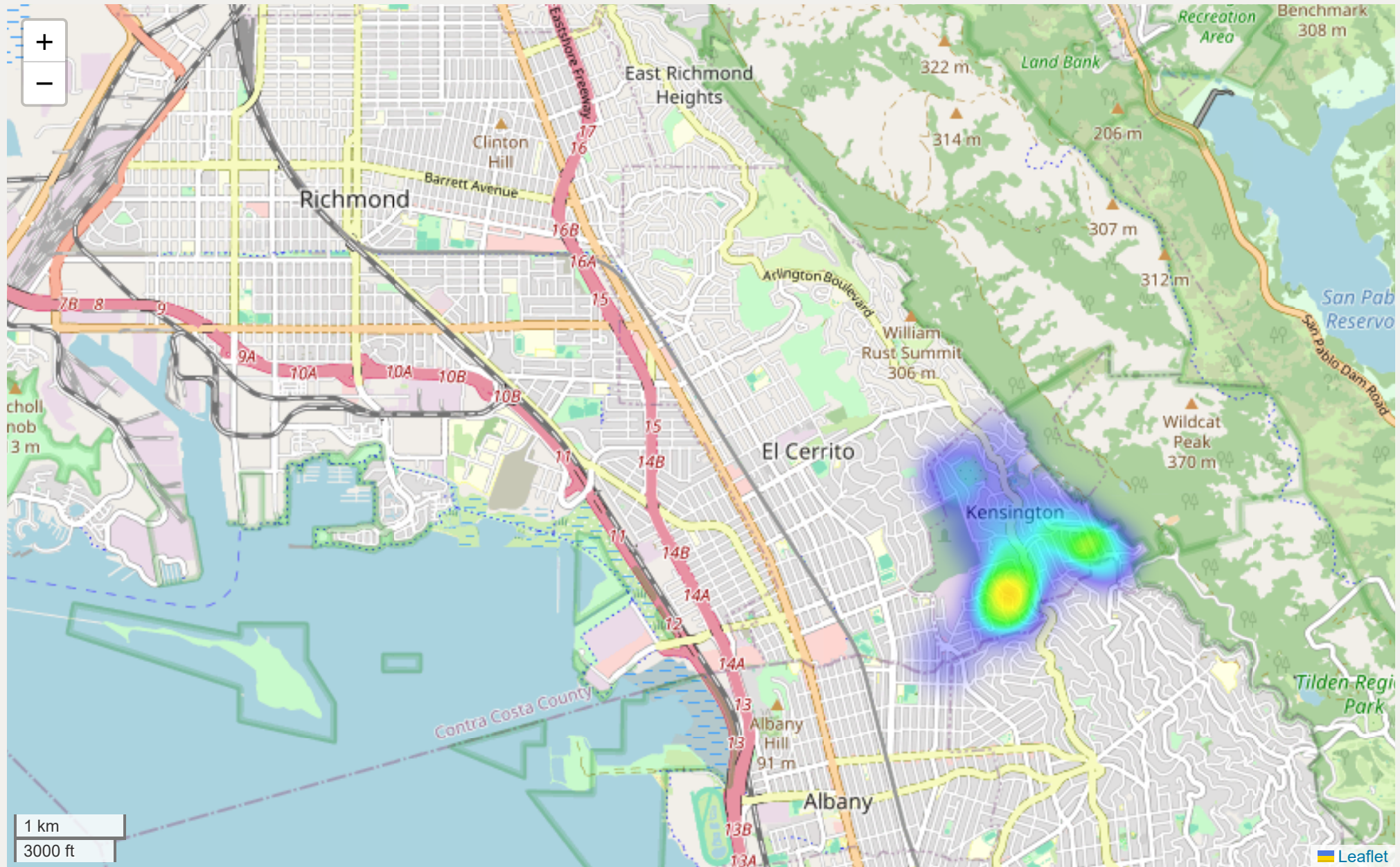
Mission: Protect Lives and Property

Integrity Accountability Teamwork Respect Professionalism

Scene Locations of Fire Incidents

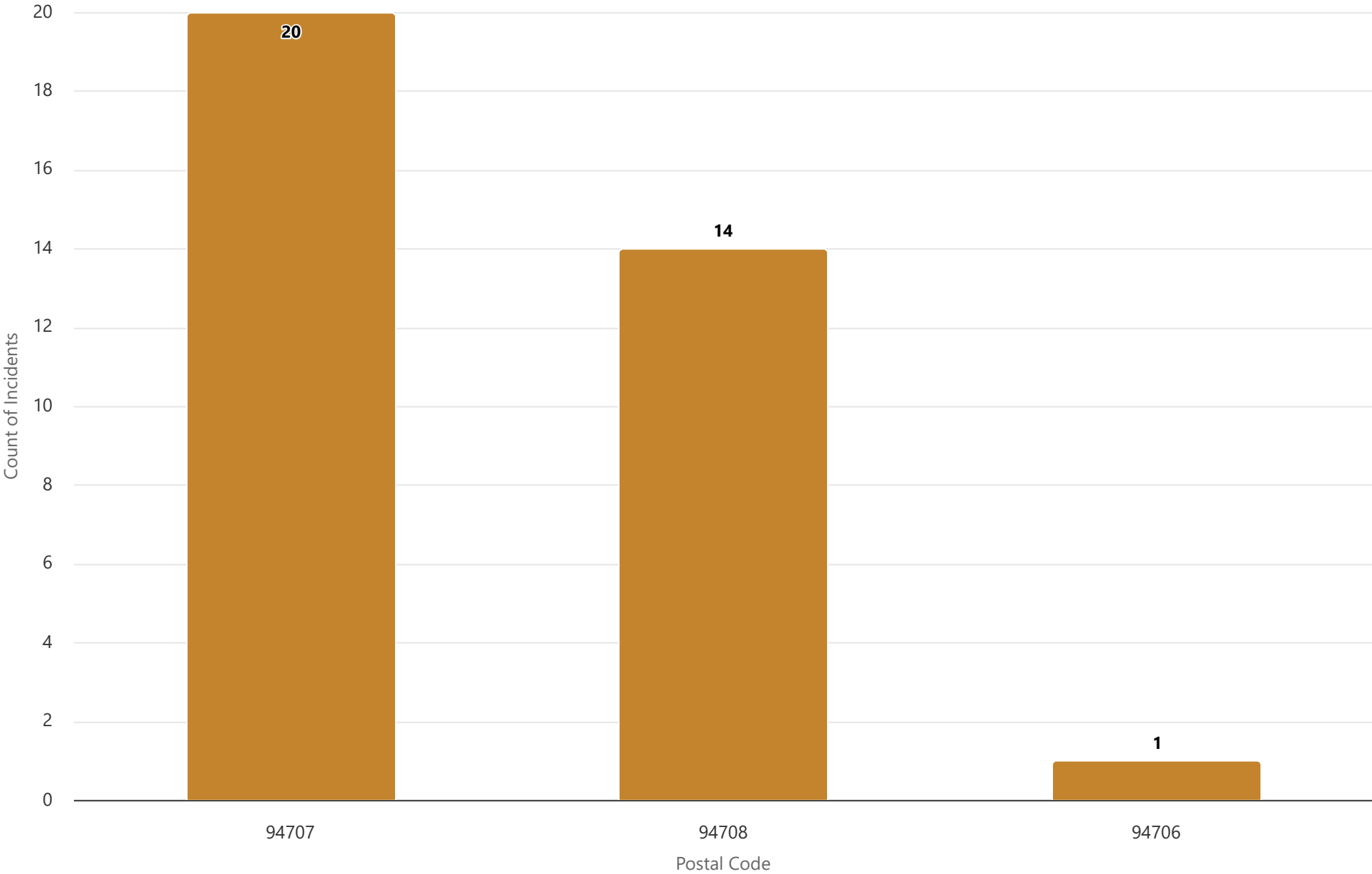
Item #12a

N = 35 Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



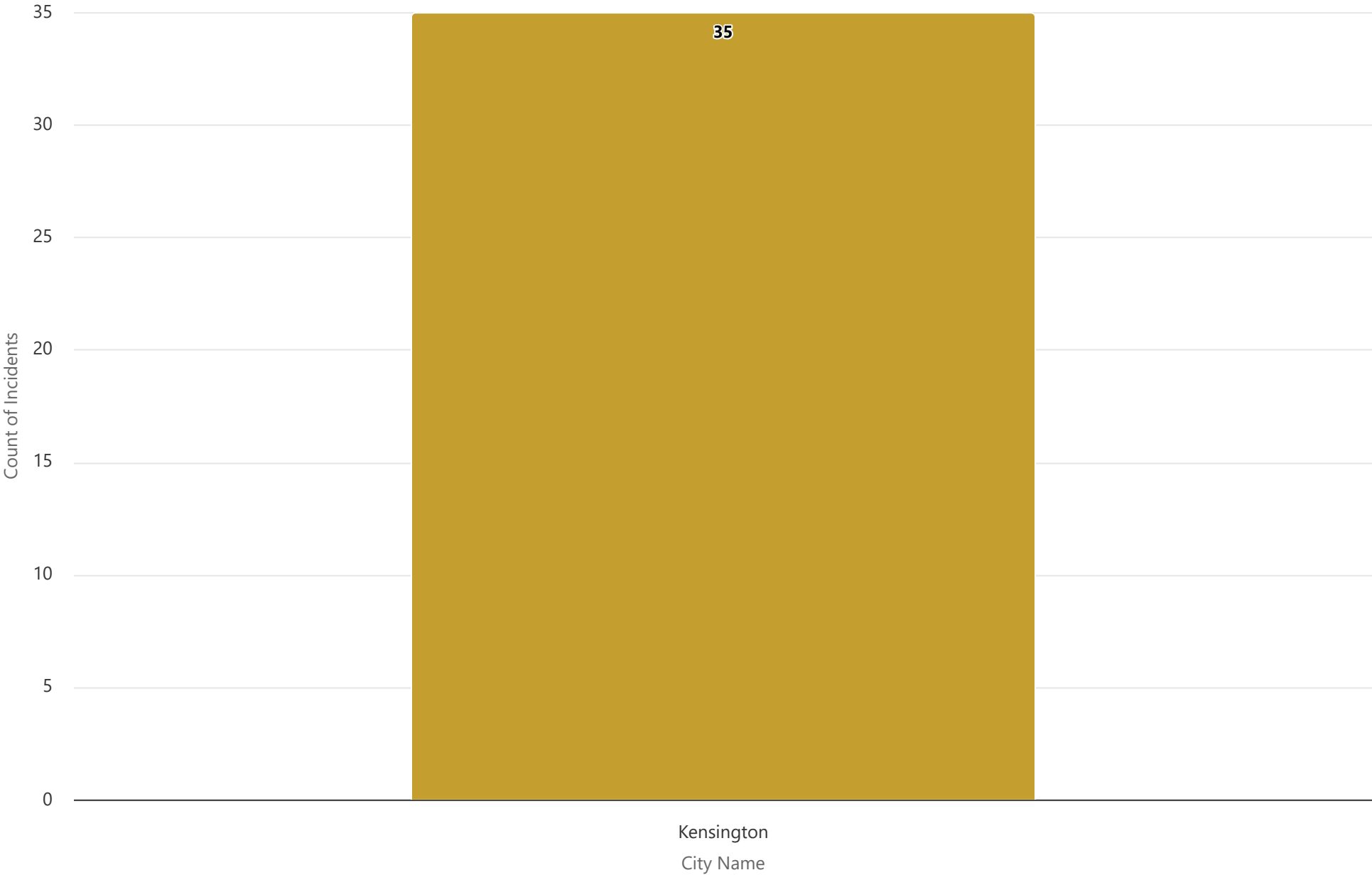
Incidents by Postal Code

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



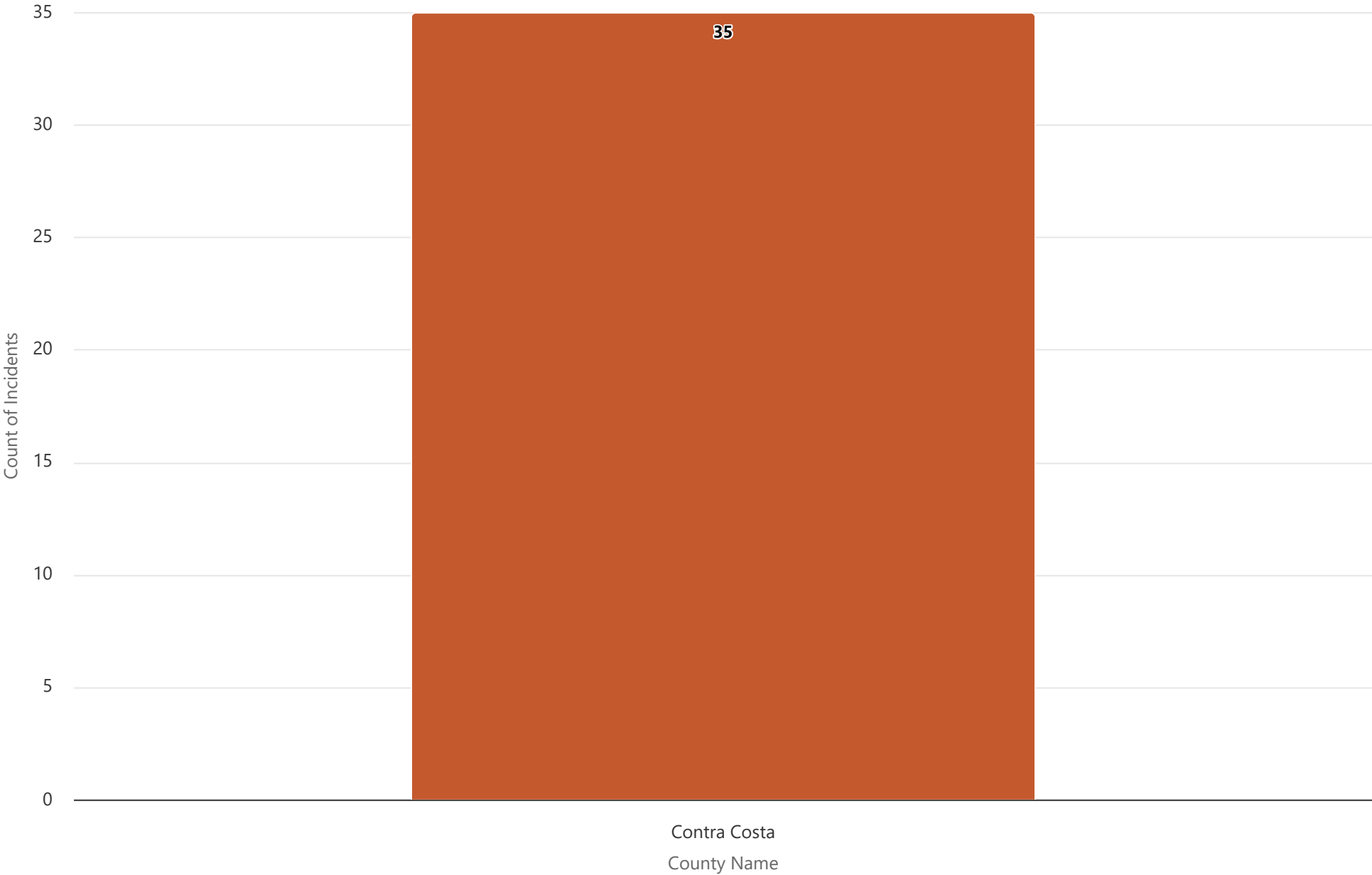
Incidents by City Name (Top 15)

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



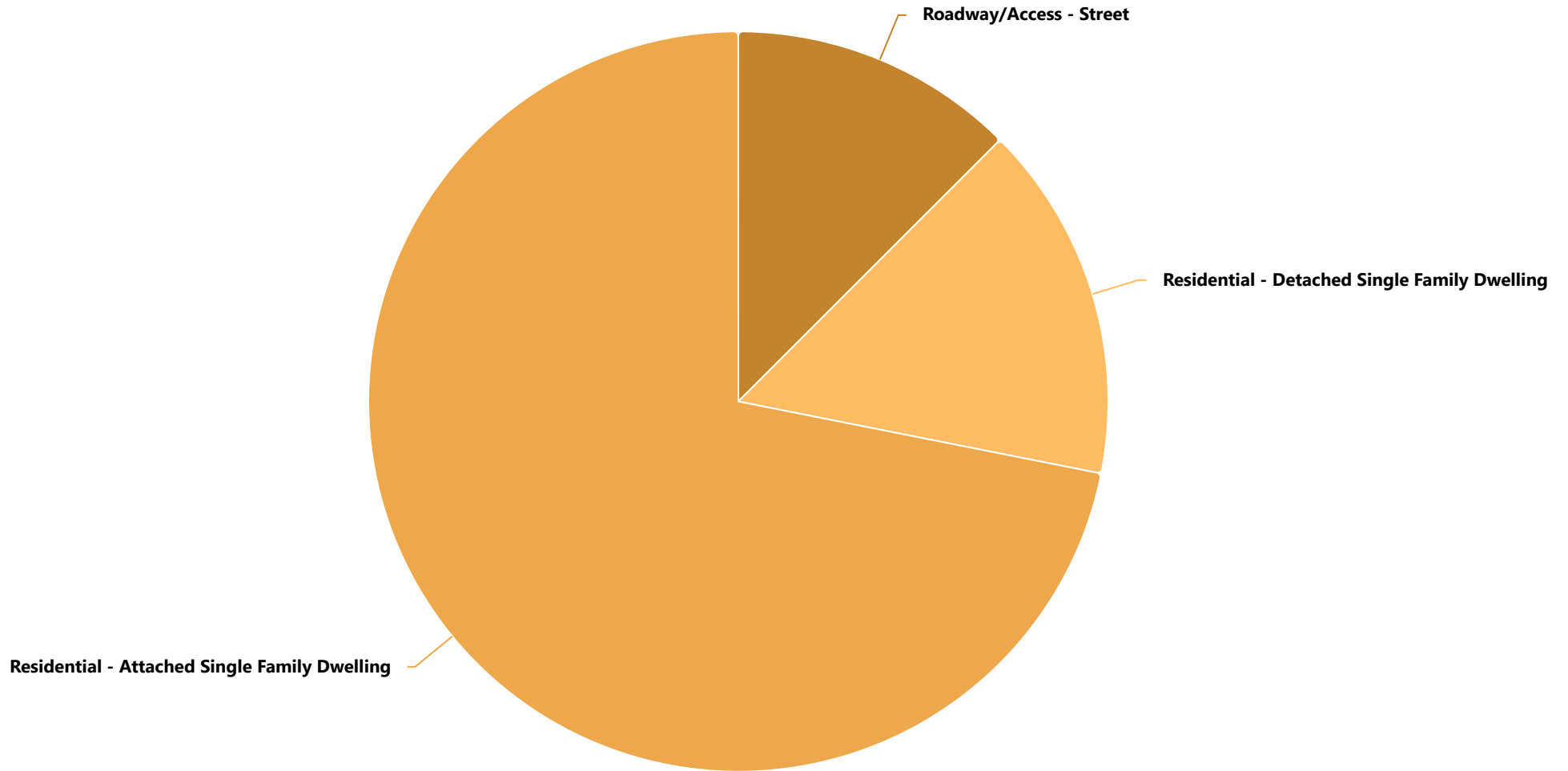
Incidents by County Name (Top 15)

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



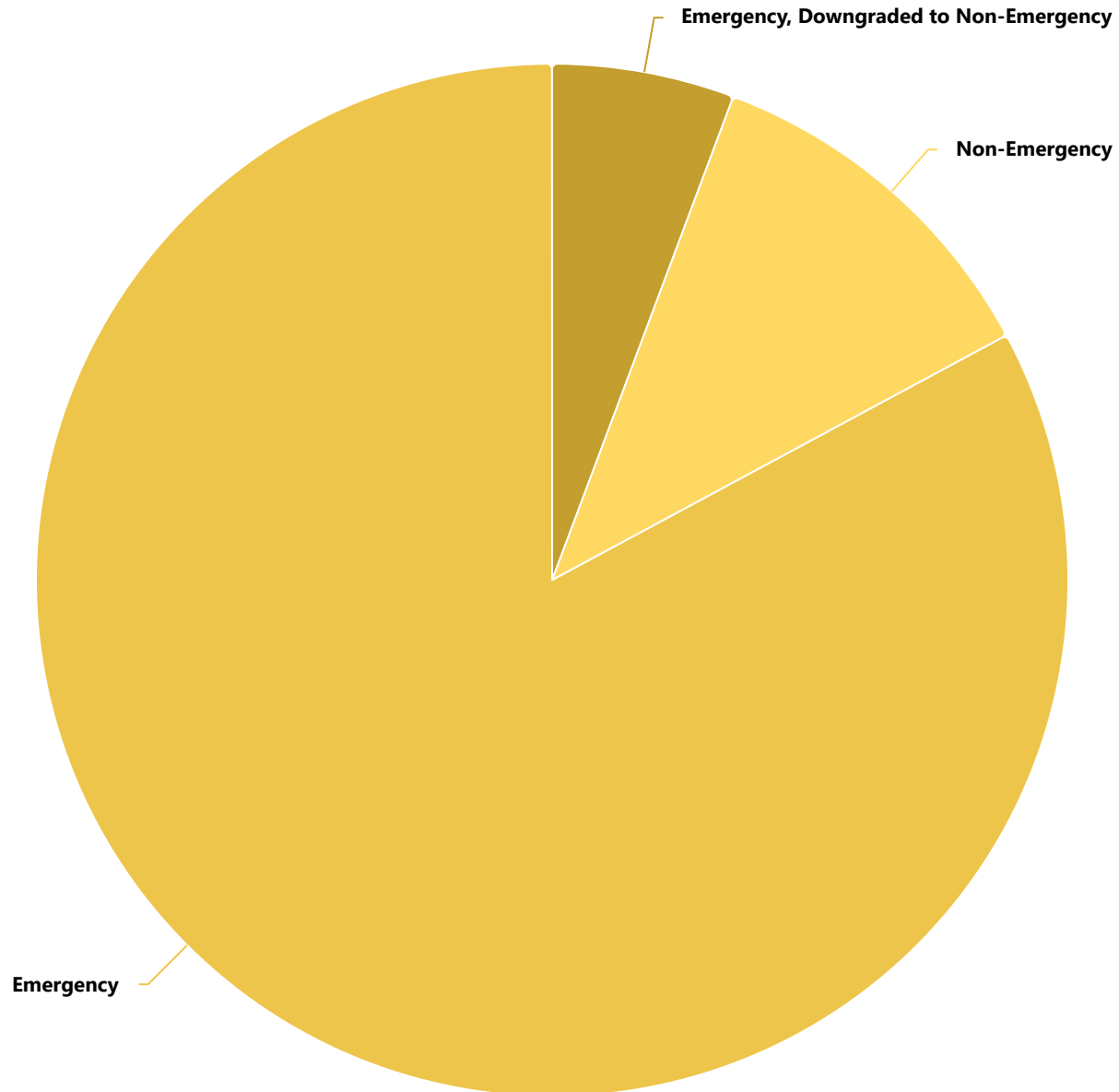
Incidents by Location Use Category

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Incidents by Response Mode To Scene

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Incidents by District/Zone

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

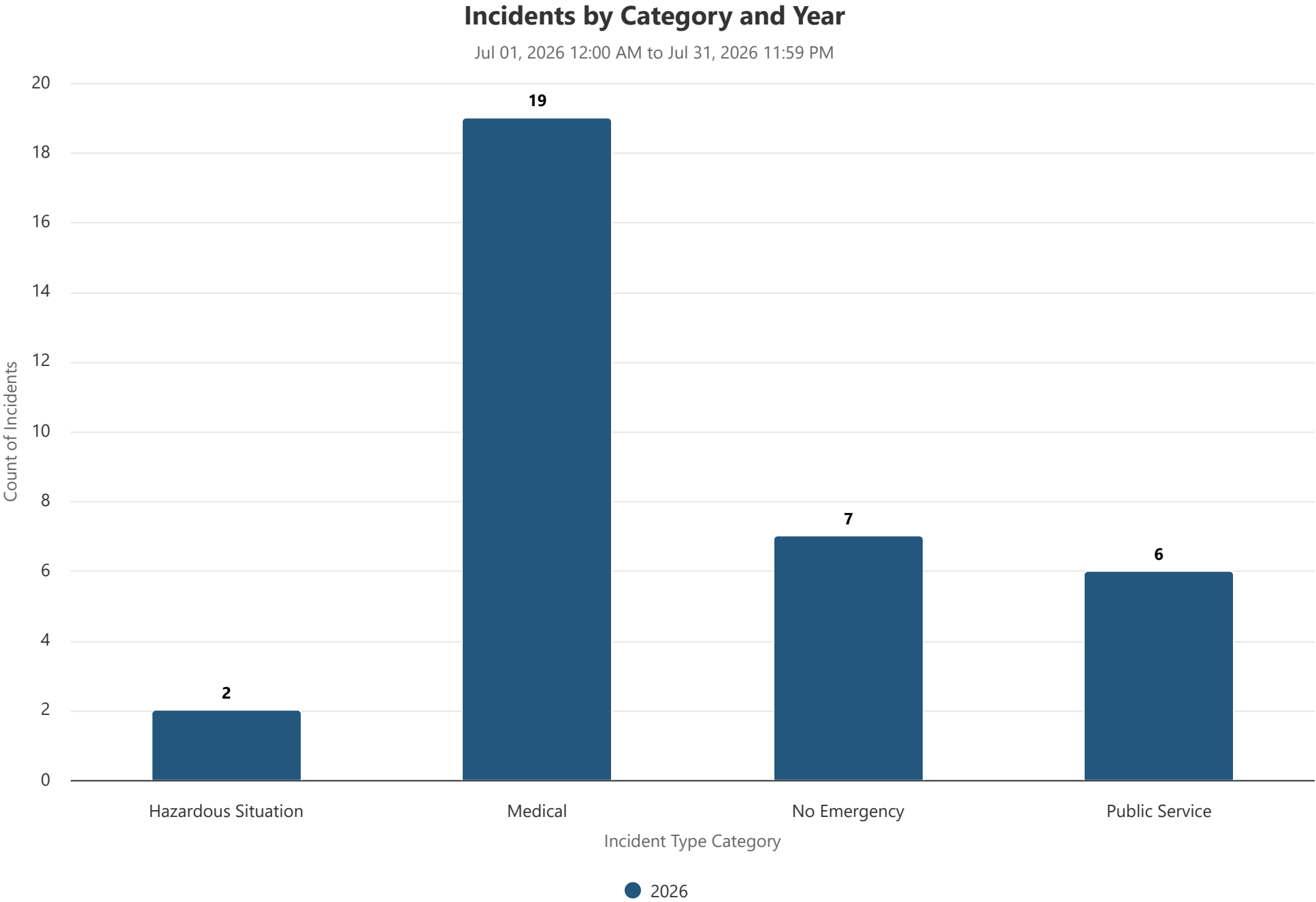
Values

There are no results to display

Incidents by District/Zone and Month

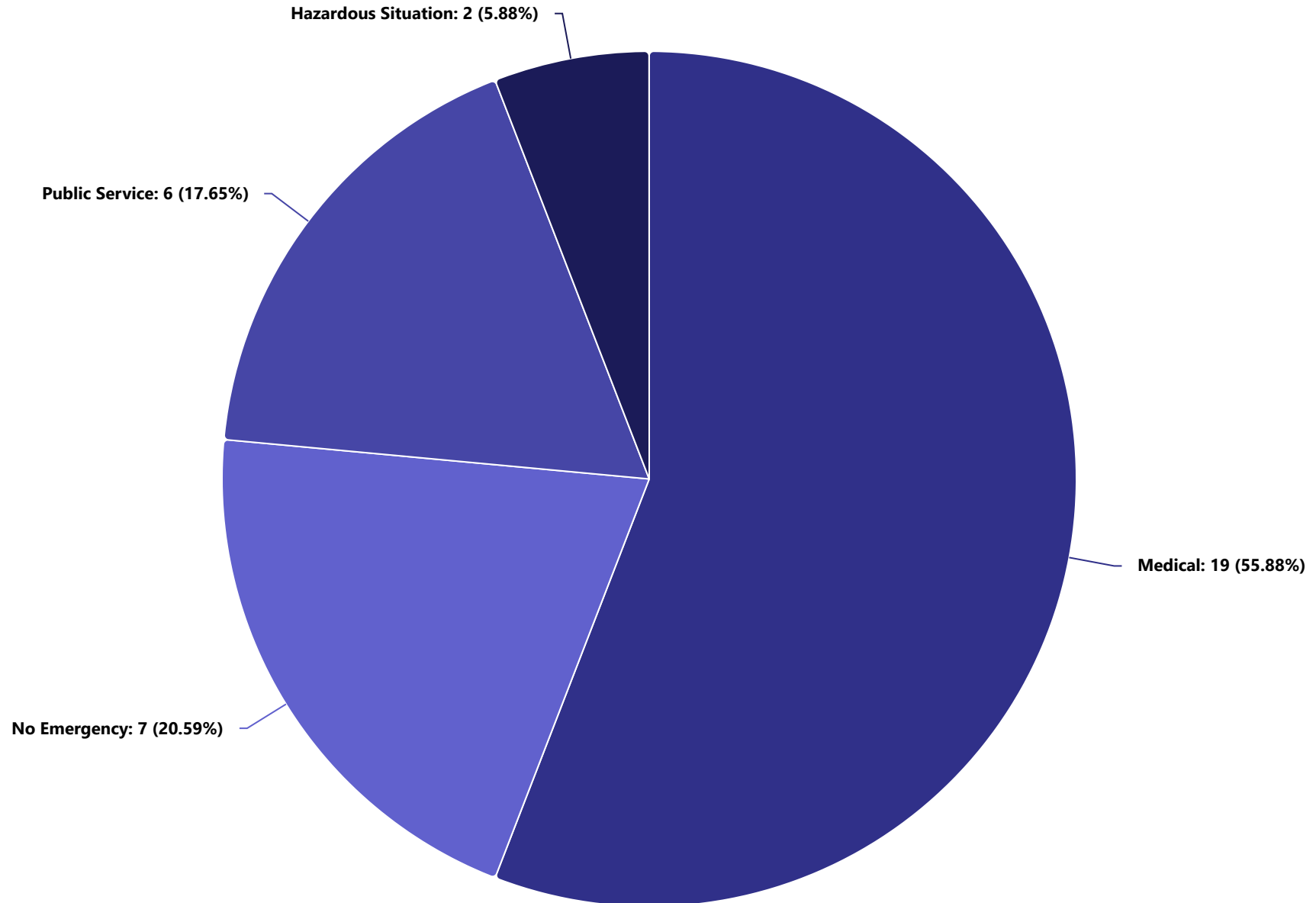
Jan 01, 2025 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

	2026							2026		2025		
Incident Location Zone Number (itfilIncident.008)	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Grand Total - Current	% of Total Incidents - Current	Grand Total - Previous	% of Total Incidents - Previous	YTD % Change
55	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	100.00%	0	N/A	N/A
Grand Total	0	2	0	0	1	0	0	3	100.00%	0	100.00%	N/A



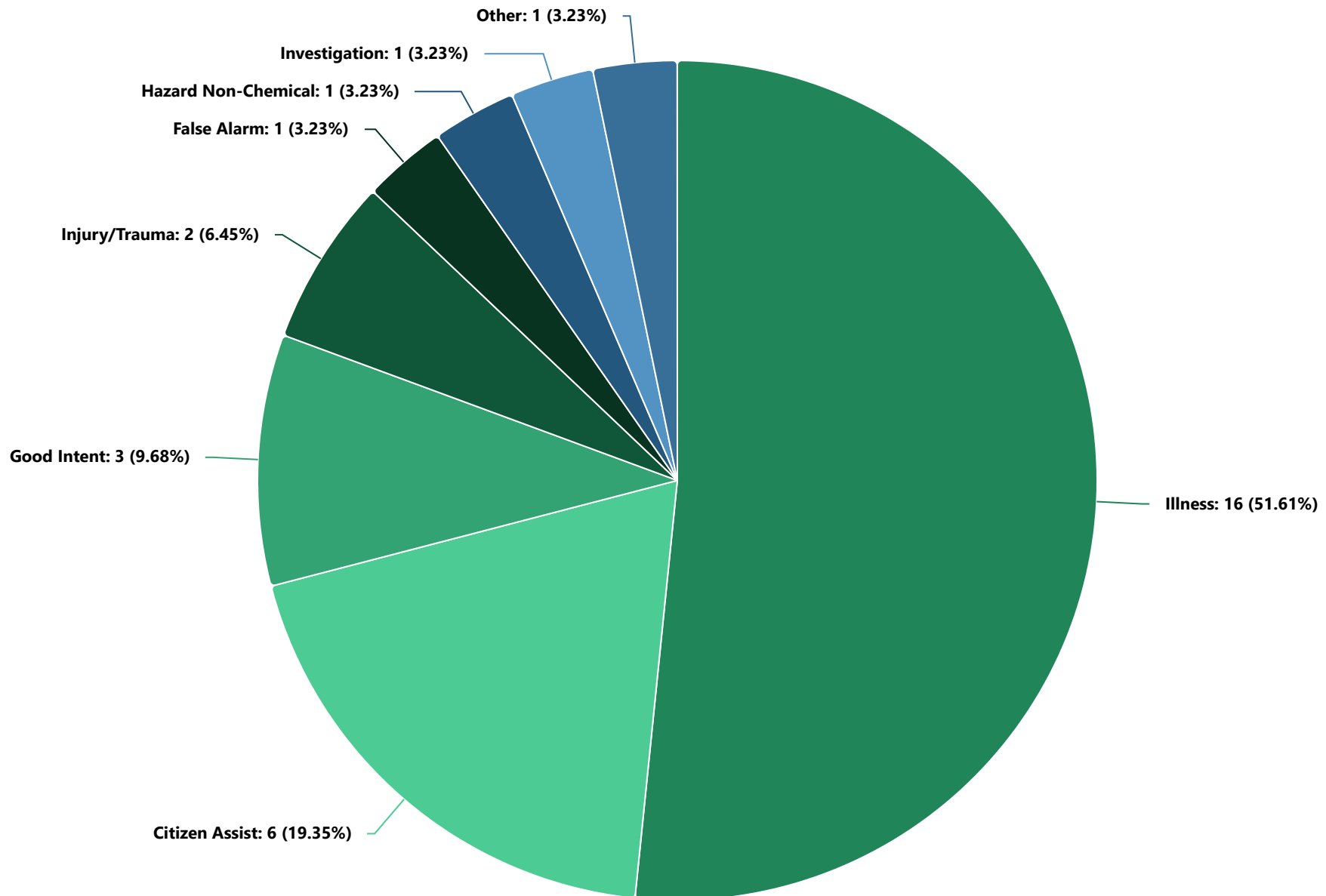
Incidents by Category

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Incidents by Type

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



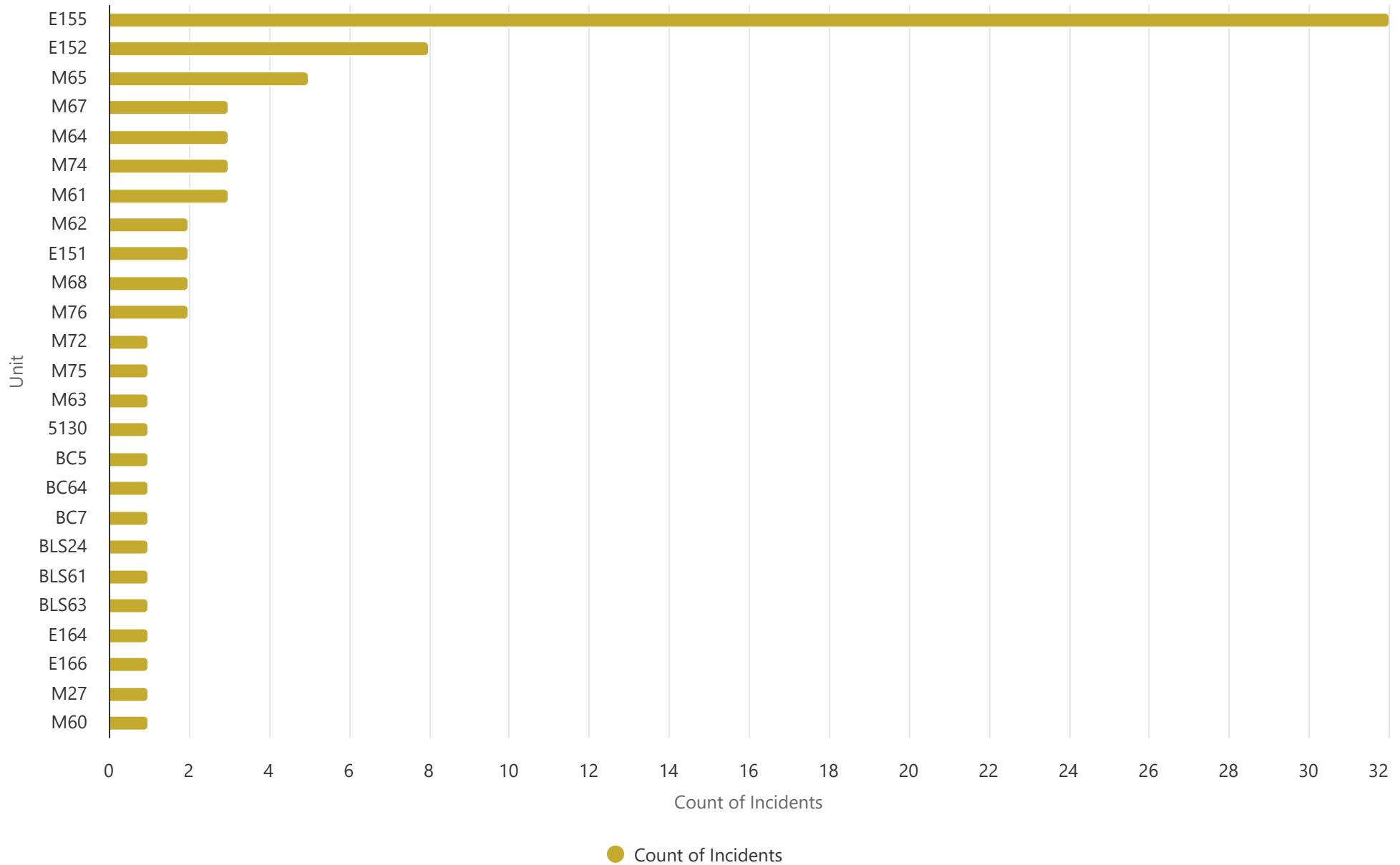
Incidents by Category and Month

Jan 01, 2025 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

Incident Type Primary Category 1 (filIncident.03)	2026							2026		2025		YTD % Change
	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Grand Total - Current	% of Total Incidents - Current	Grand Total - Previous	% of Total Incidents - Previous	
fire	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0.00%	0	N/A	N/A
hazardous situation	0	2	5	2	4	4	2	19	9.00%	0	N/A	N/A
medical	0	16	16	18	12	13	19	94	44.00%	0	N/A	N/A
no emergency	0	5	7	11	5	9	7	44	21.00%	0	N/A	N/A
public service	0	6	15	7	7	11	6	52	25.00%	0	N/A	N/A
rescue	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2	1.00%	0	N/A	N/A
Grand Total	0	30	43	39	28	38	34	212	100.00%	0	100.00%	N/A

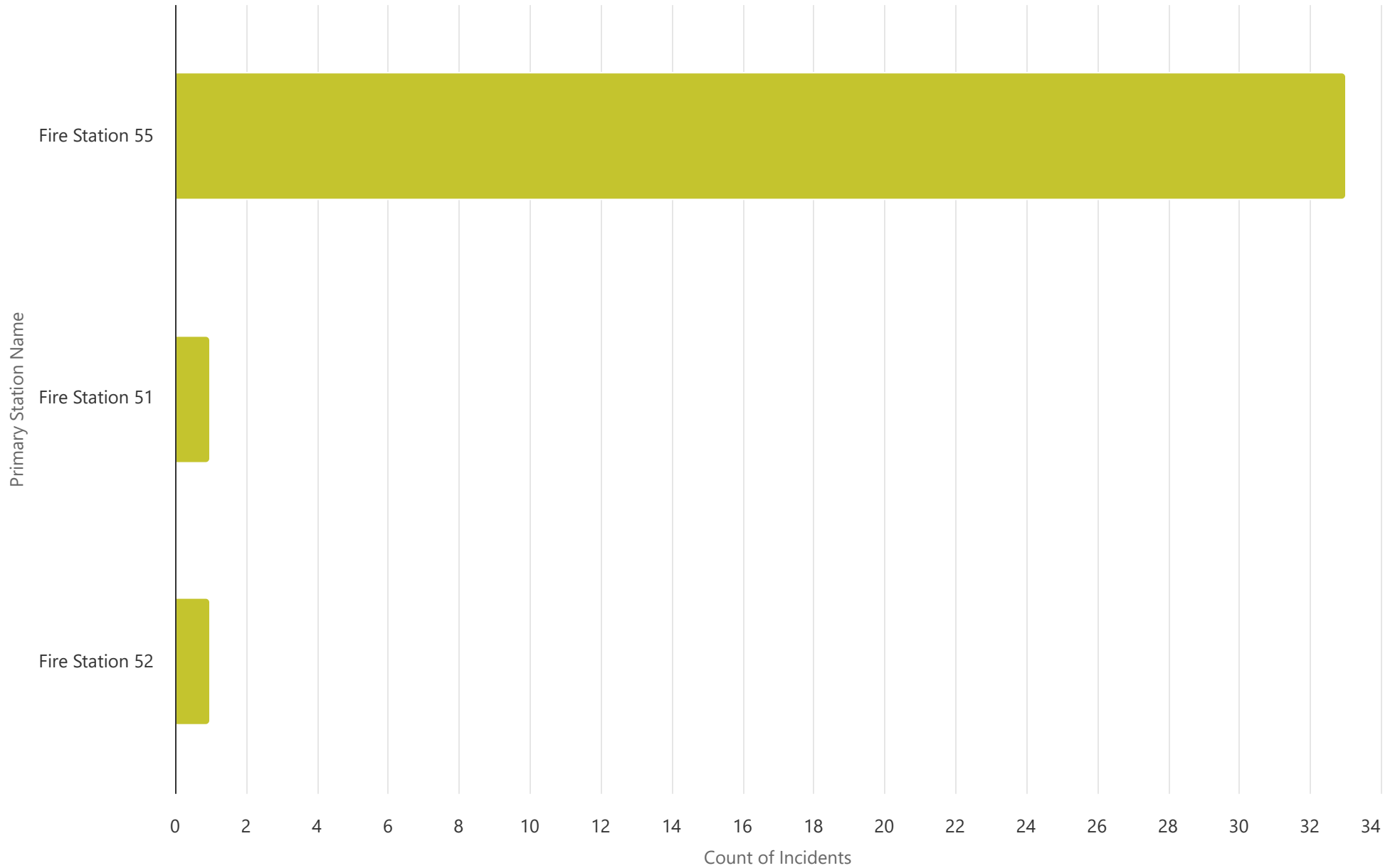
Incidents by Apparatus Resource ID (Top 40)

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Incidents by Primary Station Name

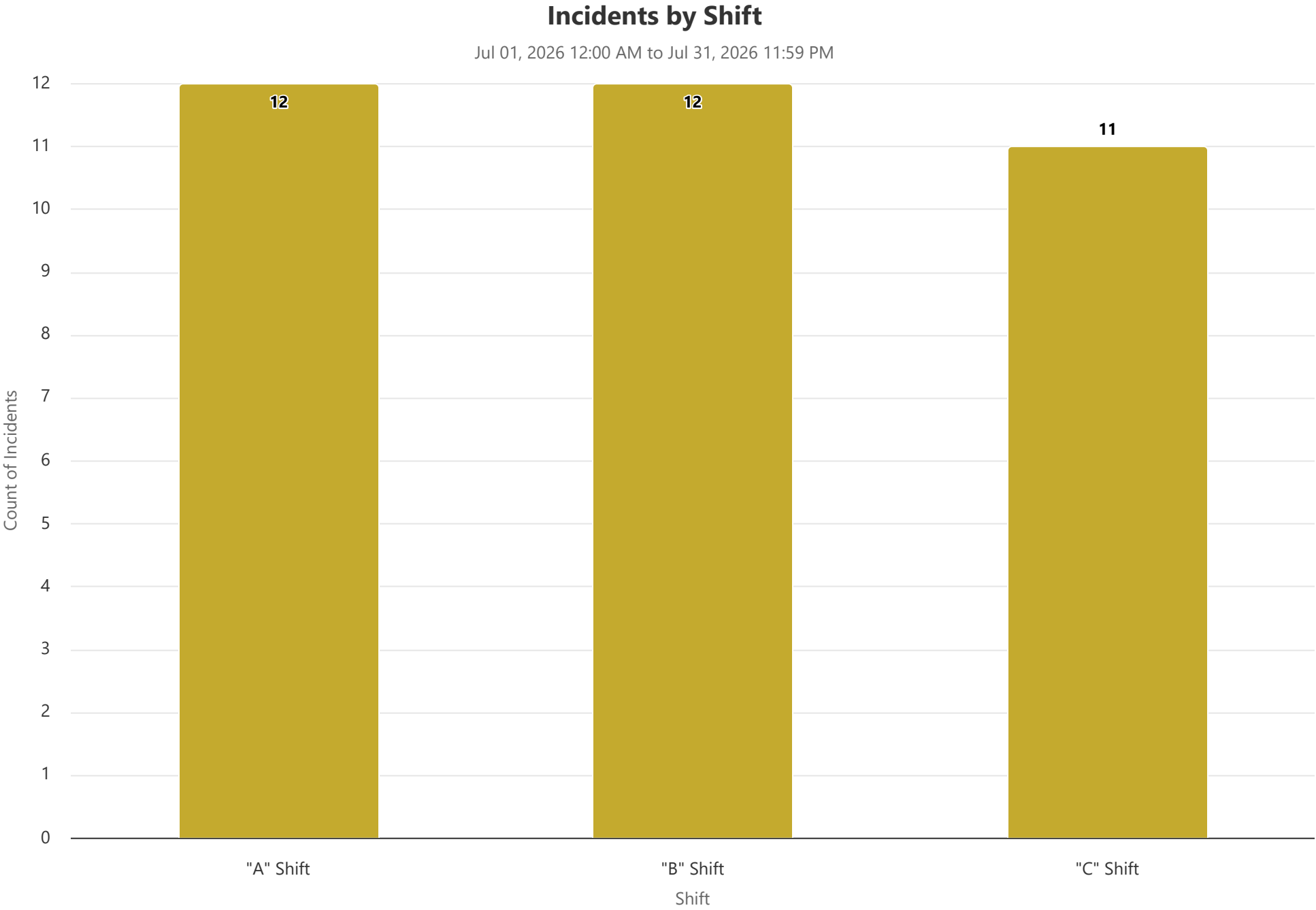
Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Station Summary Report

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

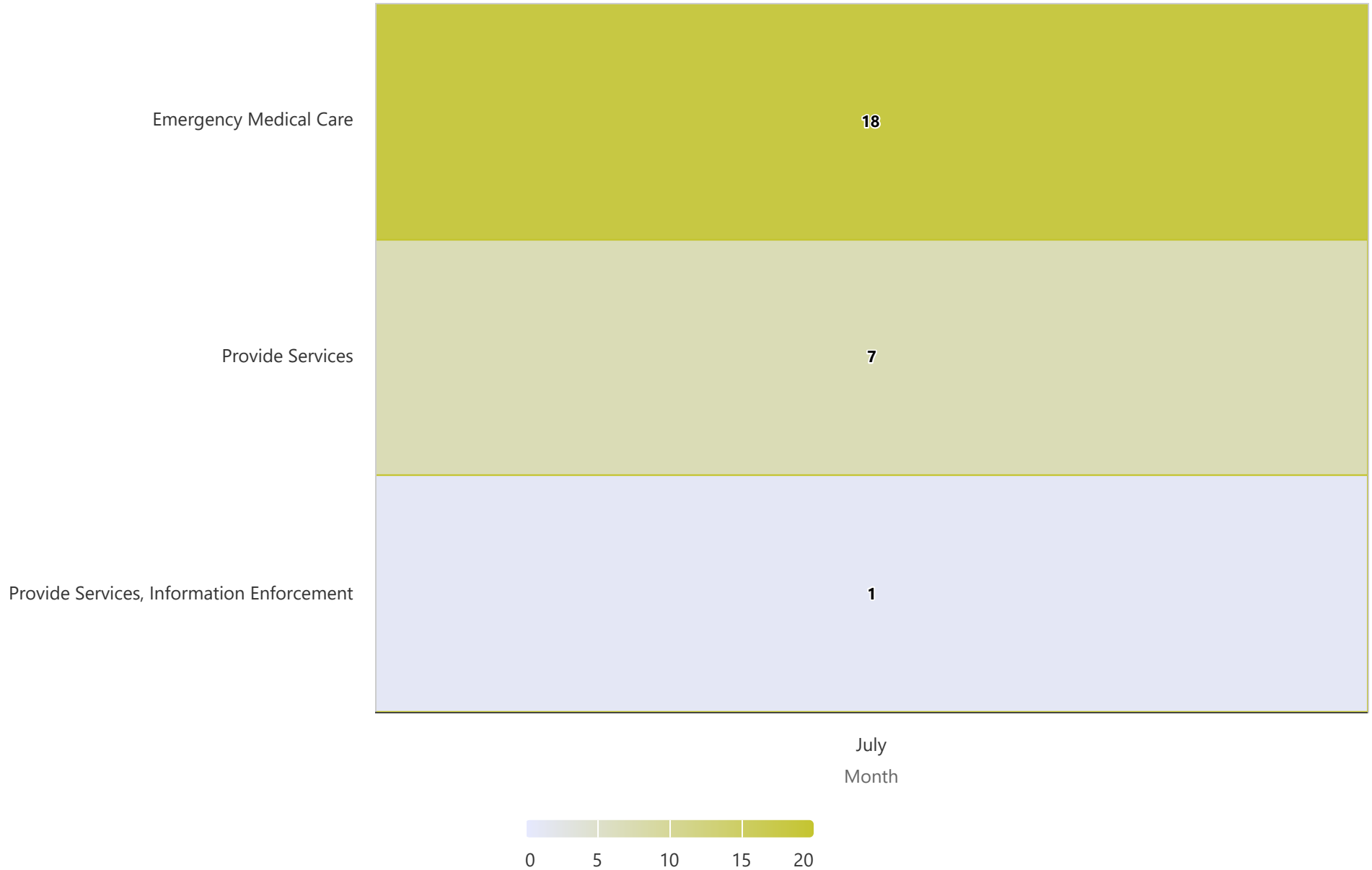
Station	EMS Incidents	Fire Incidents	Other Incidents	Total Incidents	% of Total Incidents	Station Reliability	90th Percentile Response Time (PSAP to Arrival)
Fire Station 55	19	0	14	33	94.29%	96.97%	00:21:40
Fire Station 51	0	0	1	1	2.86%	100.00%	00:07:12
Fire Station 52	0	0	1	1	2.86%	100.00%	00:11:07
Overall	19	0	16	35	100.00%	97.14%	00:21:40



Primary Action Taken Categories by Month

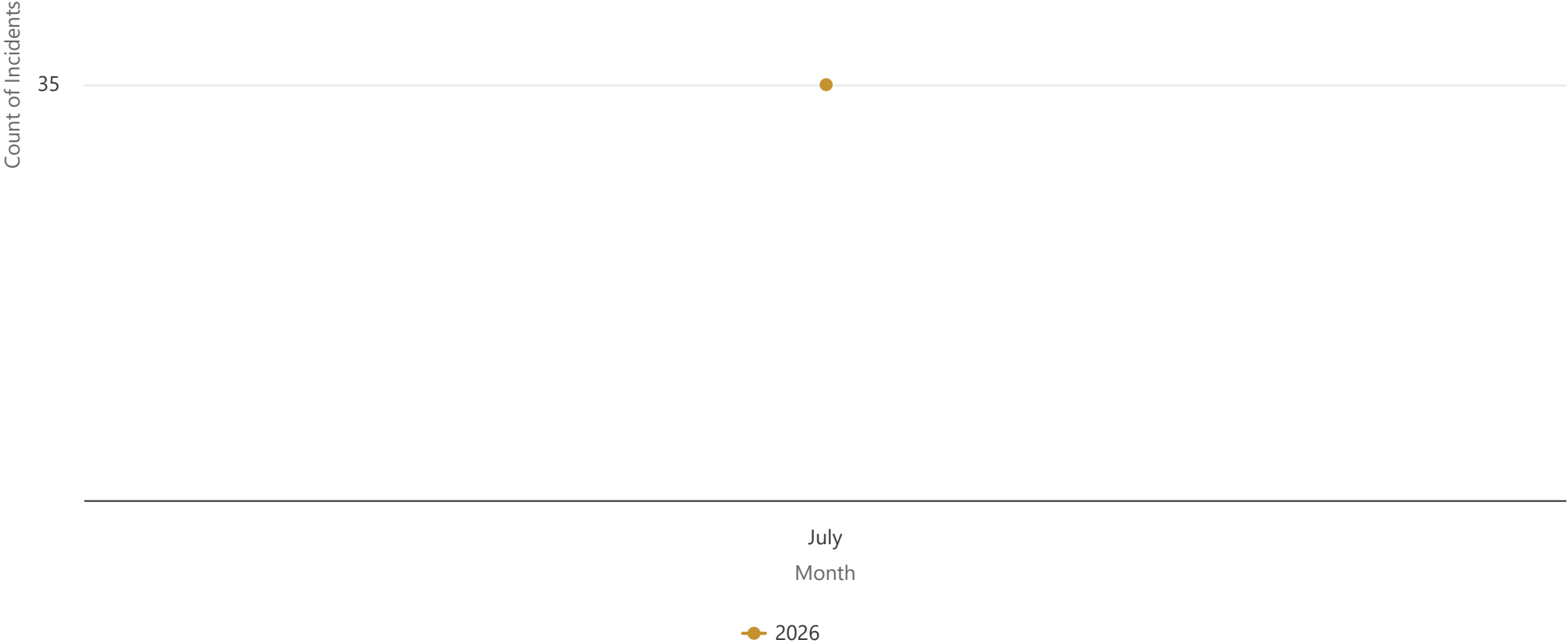
Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

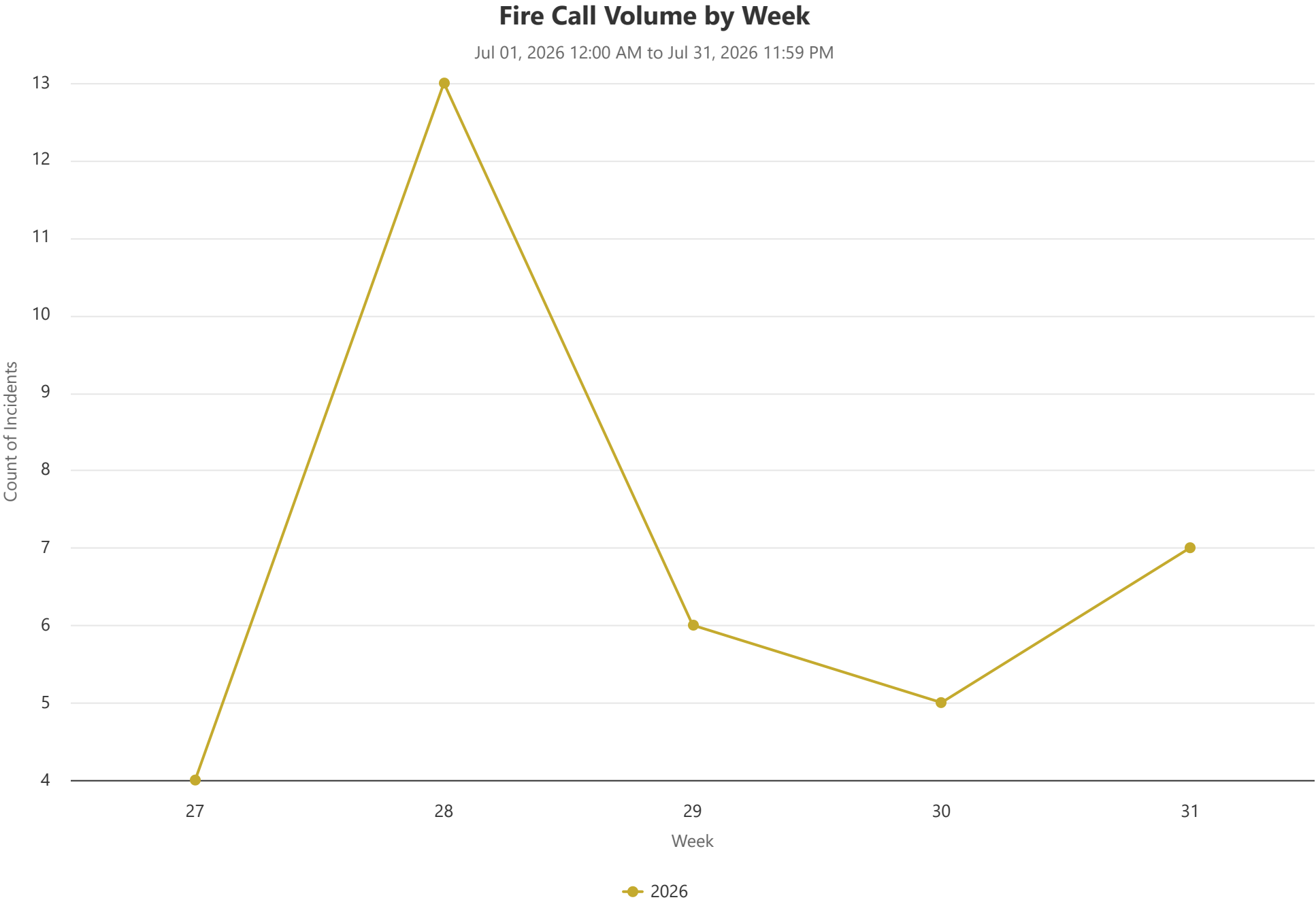
Primary Action Taken Categories



Fire Call Volume by Month

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM





Fire Call Volume by Day

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

Upper Control/Average/Lower Control

Incident Count

0

Jul 6Jul 8Jul 10Jul 12Jul 15Jul 20Jul 25Jul 29Jul 30

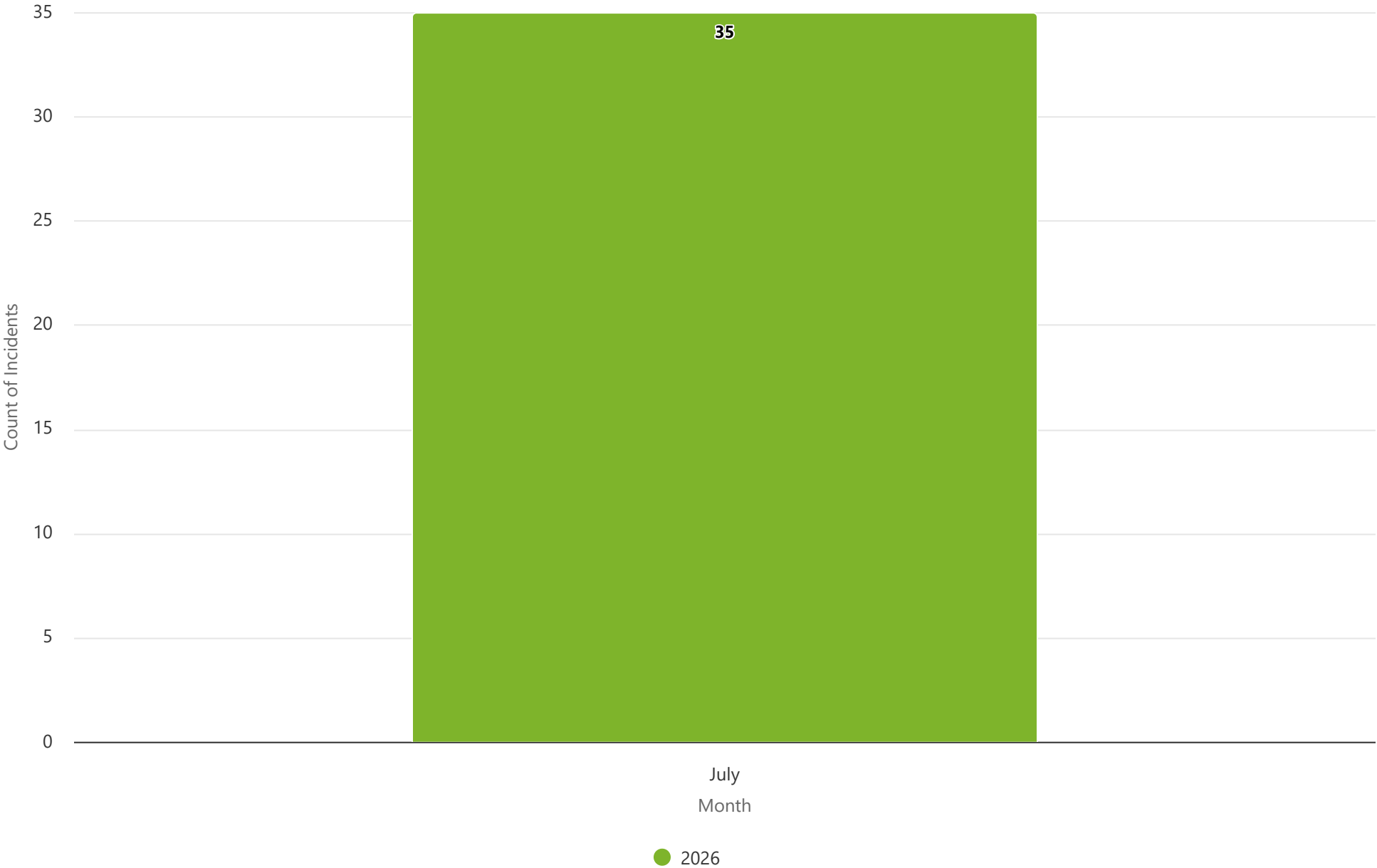
Incident Date



Series 1

Incidents by Month

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM



Incidents by Day and Hour

Jul 01, 2026 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

Day of Week	Sunday	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0		
	Monday	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	0	0	
	Tuesday	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	1	
	Wednesday	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	
	Thursday	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Friday	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	
	Saturday	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	
			0000	0100	0200	0300	0400	0500	0600	0700	0800	0900	1000	1100	1200	1300	1400	1500	1600	1700	1800	1900	2000	2100	2200
		Hour of Day																							

Monthly Call Volume Year over Year

Jan 01, 2025 12:00 AM to Jul 31, 2026 11:59 PM

Incident Month Name	2026		2025		YTD % Change
	Grand Total - Current	% of Total Incidents - Current	Grand Total - Previous	% of Total Incidents - Previous	
february	30	14.00%	0	N/A	N/A
march	43	20.00%	0	N/A	N/A
april	39	18.00%	0	N/A	N/A
may	29	13.00%	0		N/A
june	39	18.00%	0		N/A
july	35	16.00%	0	N/A	N/A
Grand Total	215	100.00%	0	100.00%	N/A

Pin Color Legend