

# Strategic Planning for ESDs

**Mike Montgomery**  
Klein Fire Department



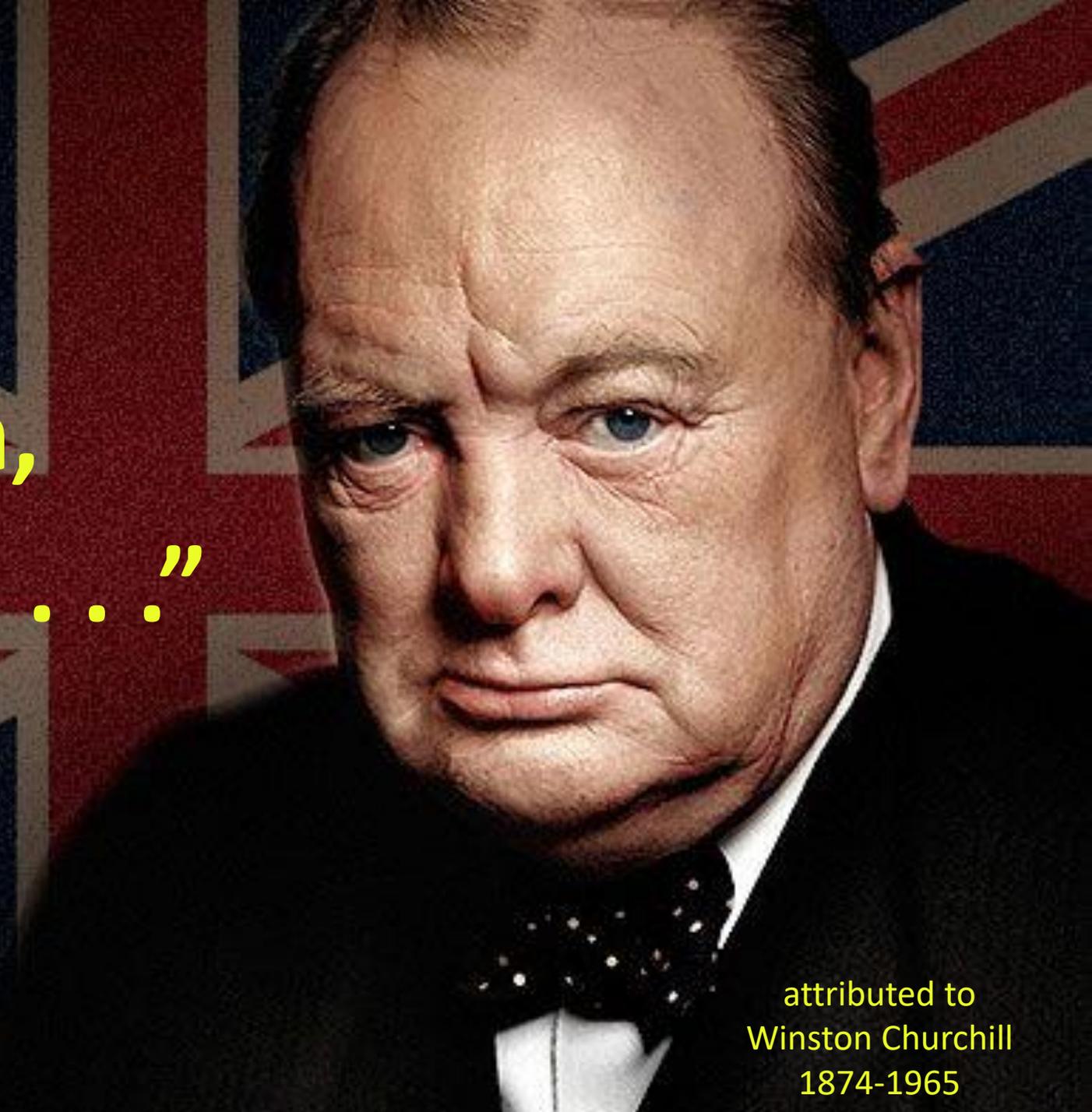
**The information presented today is for  
informational and educational purposes only.**

It does not represent or replace jurisdictional policy.

It is not intended as legal or financial advice.

You are strongly advised to seek legal counsel,  
financial guidance and jurisdictional authorization  
before taking any official action.

**“He Who is  
Failing to Plan,  
is Planning to Fail . . .”**



attributed to  
Winston Churchill  
1874-1965

“The fire service  
represents the world’s  
best crisis managers ...  
... as a profession, we  
have done a poor job in  
the area of planning.”



attributed to  
Jack Snook, ESCI

# These are challenging times for ESDs

## As an ESD, you need ...

- **Transformational thinking**
- **Strategic priorities**
- **A compelling story**

As an ESD Commissioner or Chief...

You need

“transformational  
thinking”

# Changing role of emergency services

## REACTIVE



- Respond to failures
- Discuss past actions
- Plan from history

## PROACTIVE



- Respond to needs
- Discuss trends
- Plan for today

## PREDICTIVE



- Anticipate opportunities
- Discuss future needs
- Plan for expectations

Source: adapted from "Event Management: Reactive, Proactive or Predictive?". Larry Dragich, 2012

As an ESD Commissioner or Chief ...

You need to identify

“strategic priorities”

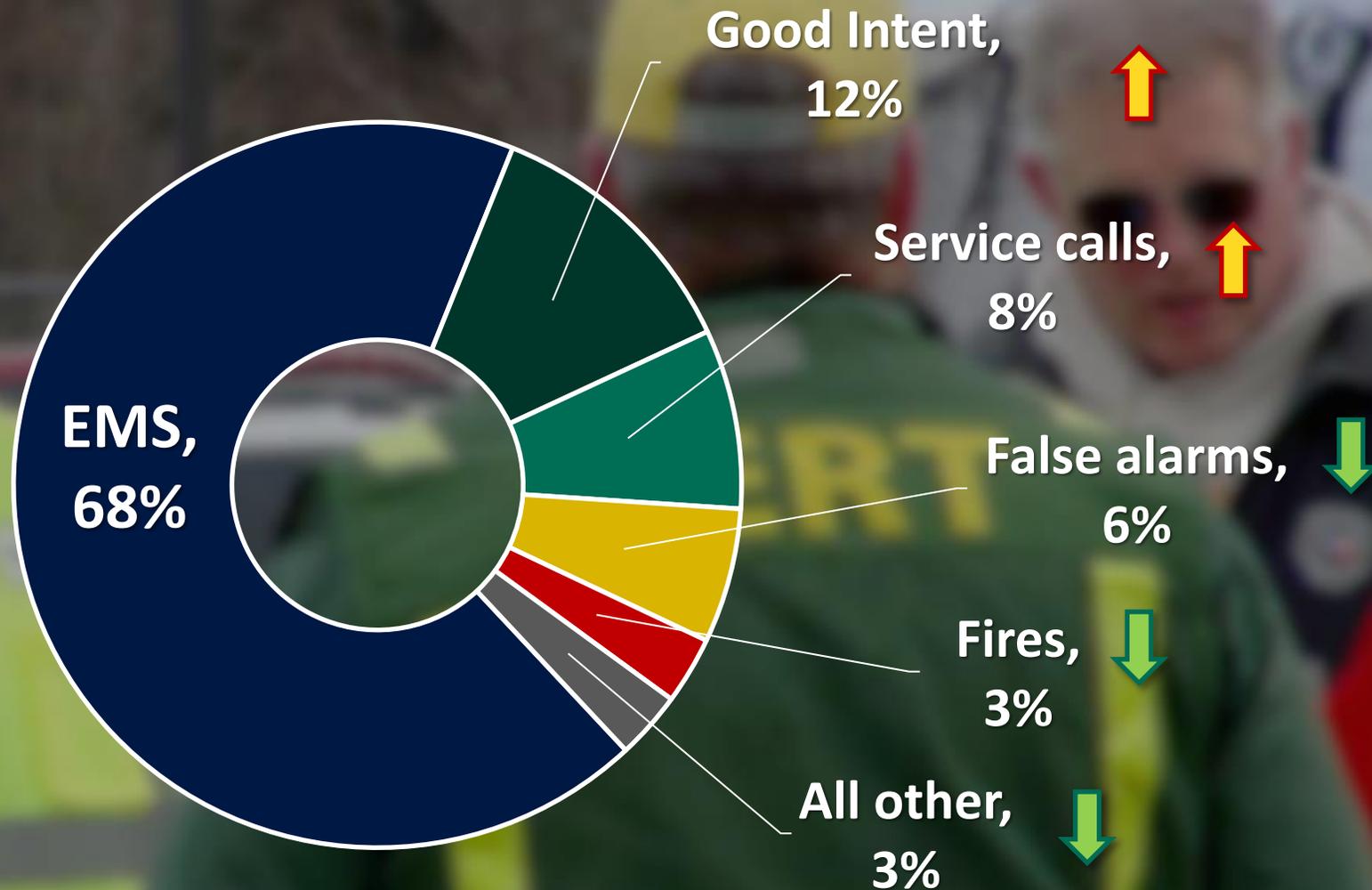
**In 2011, Texas burned 3,801,000 acres  
and lost 7,206 structures in wildfires**



**In 2015-2017, historic flooding displaced over 1 million people and caused 137 deaths**



# In 2020, over 96 % of all Texas FD responses were not for fires



**As an ESD Commissioner or Chief ...**

**What keeps you  
up at night ?**

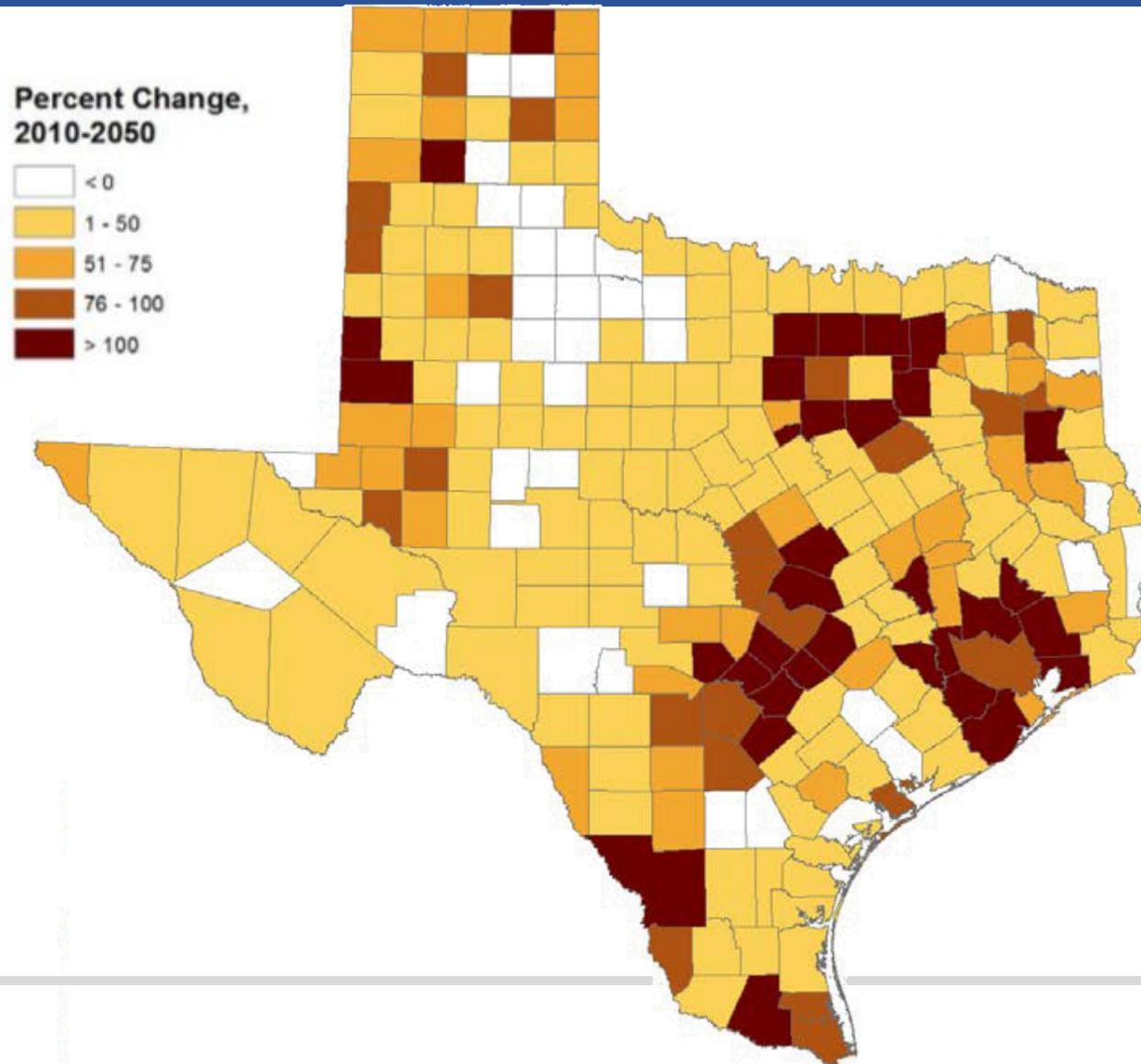
# What keeps you up at night ?

- Growth / Development
- Staffing
- Funding



Artwork from the Fire, Smoke, and Guts Portfolio ©by Paul Combs, <http://artstudioseven.com/>

# Community Development



- Residential
- Multi-family
- Commercial
- Institutional
- Big Box
- Special Purpose

A photograph of firefighters at a scene with a fire truck and smoke. The firefighters are wearing brown turnout gear and helmets. One firefighter's helmet has the number 97 and the name CEVER. The fire truck is red with yellow and black reflective stripes. The license plate is 137-8001. The scene is filled with thick white smoke.

24 / 7

coverage

# Tx Fire Department Profile

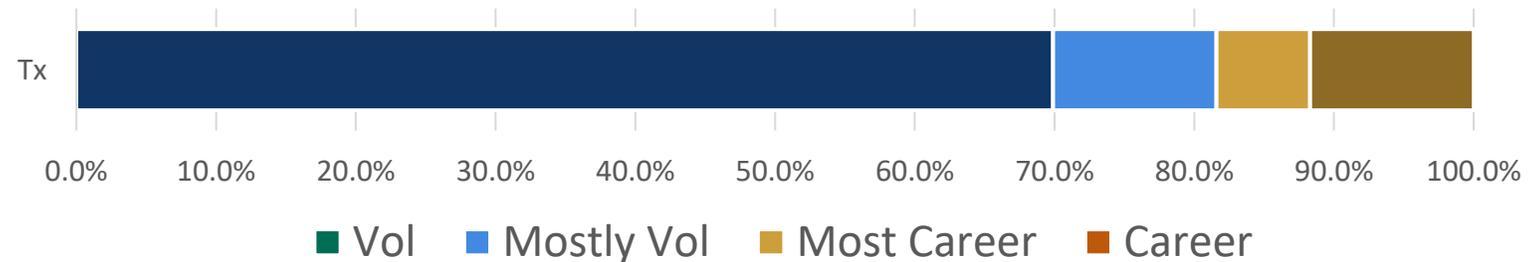
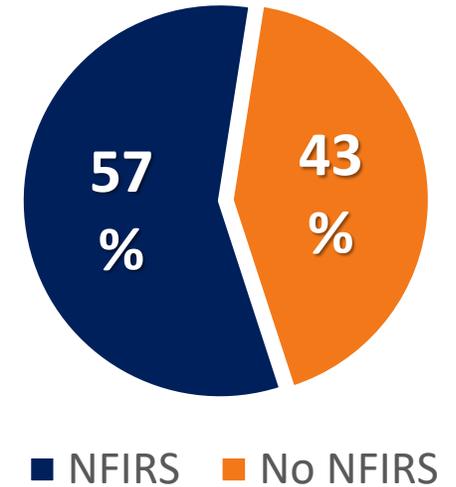
↑ • 1,519 registered fire departments

↑ • 1,063 all volunteer

↓ • 178 mostly volunteer

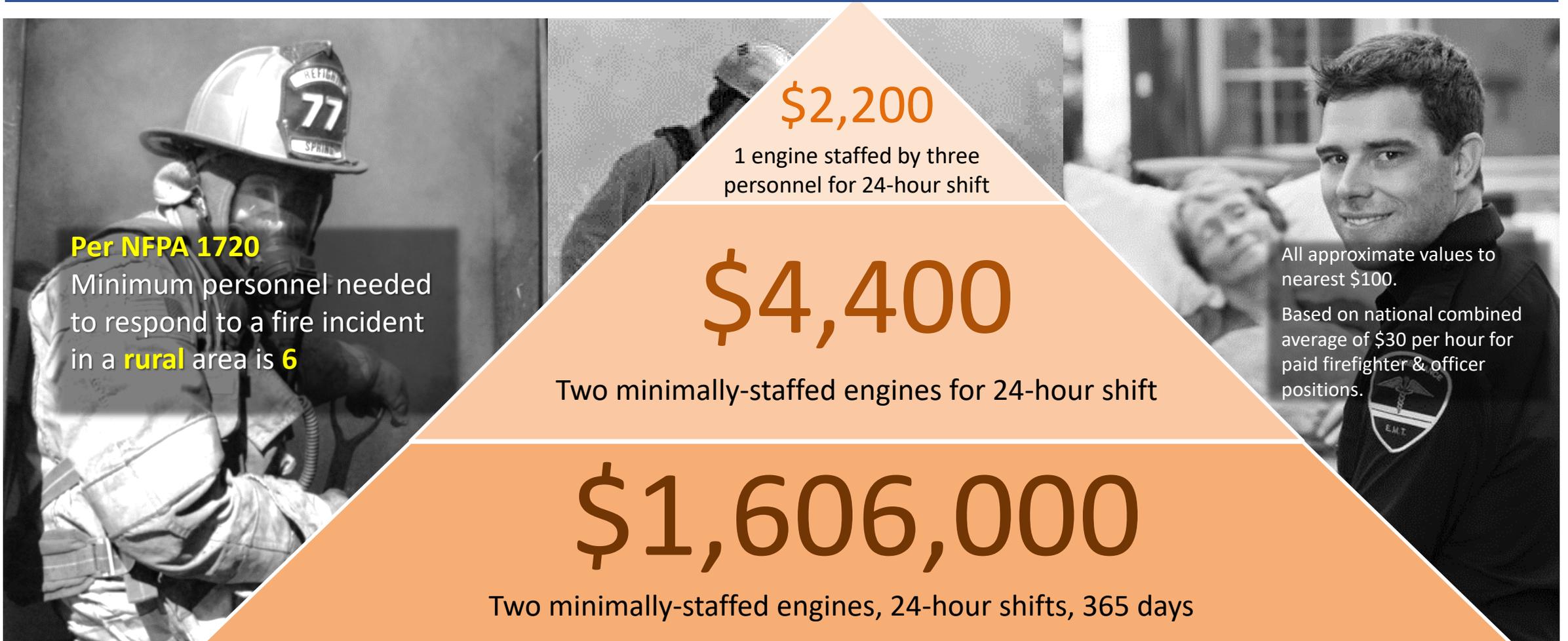
↑ • 102 mostly career

↑ • 177 all career

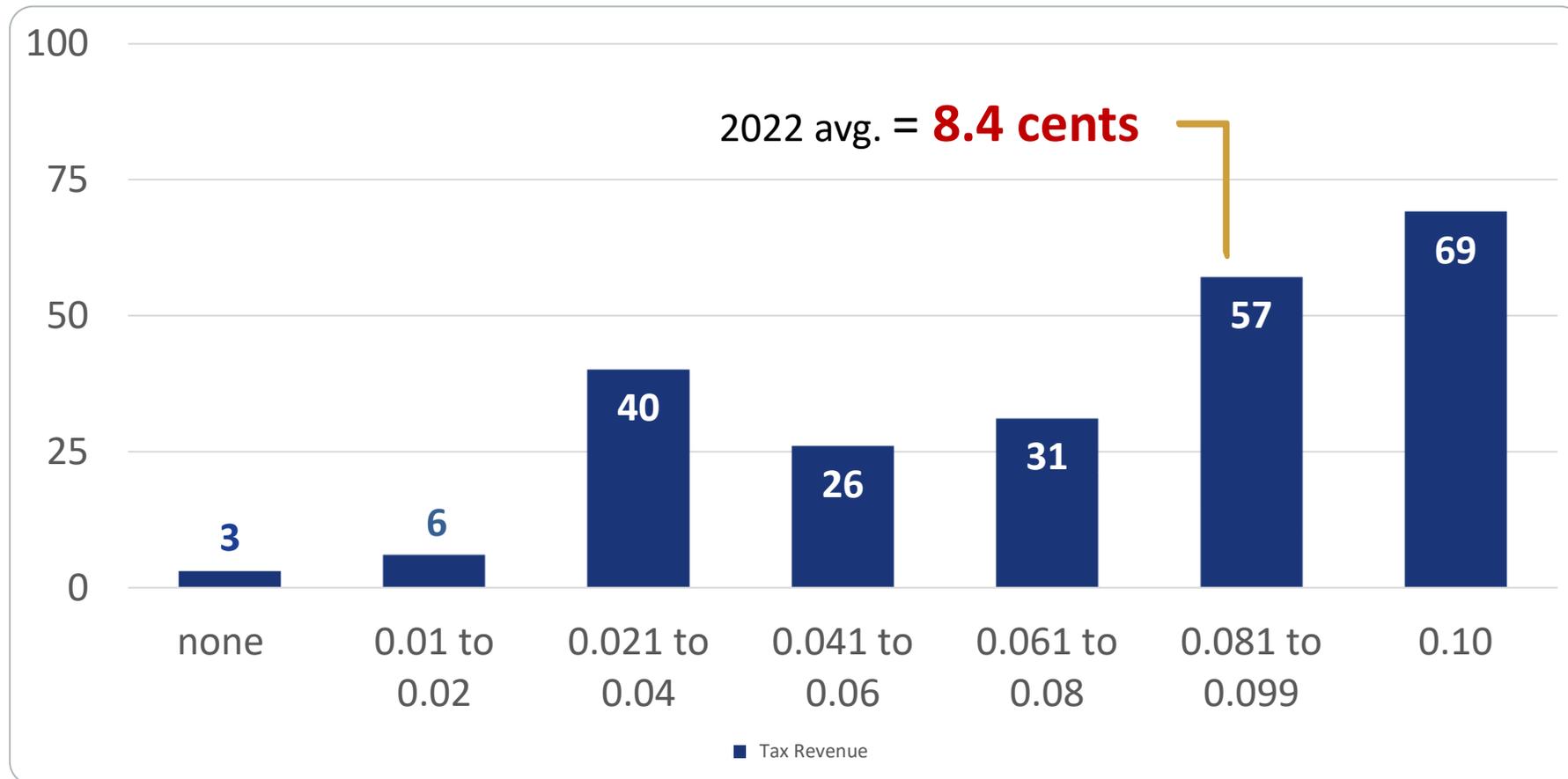


Source: USFA State fire loss/fire department profiles, 2022

# Funding: the Value of the Volunteer

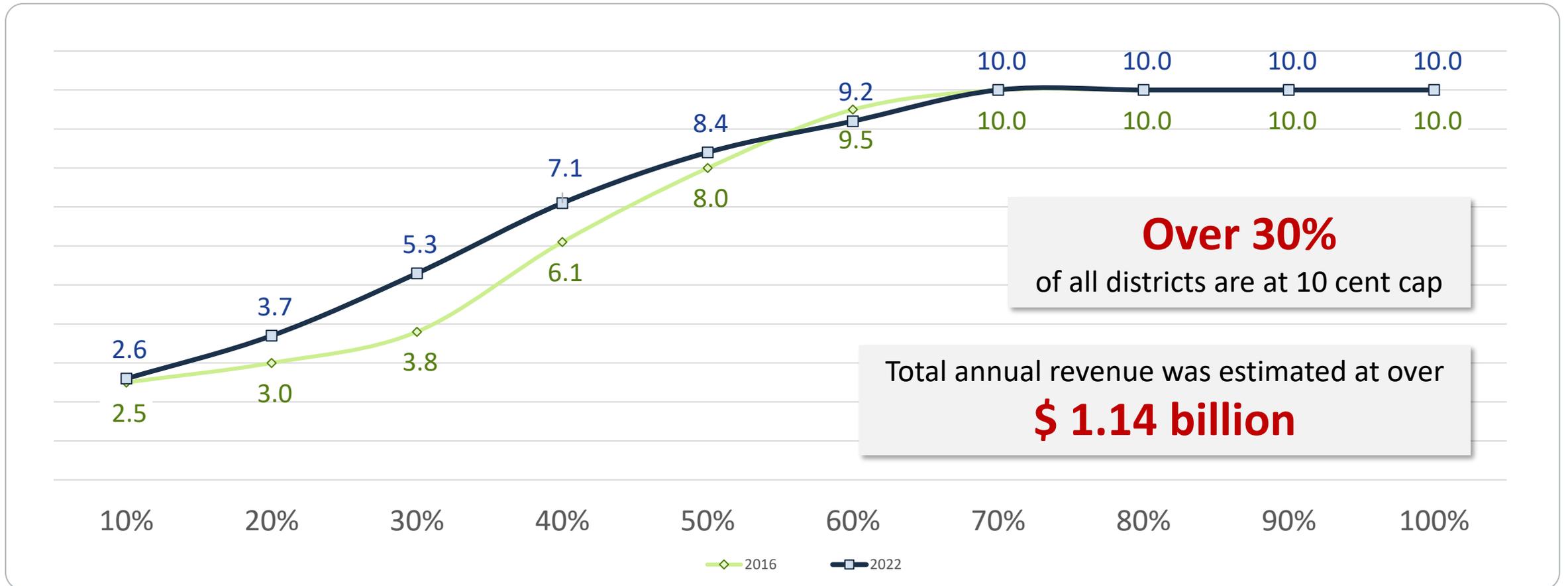


# ESD Property Tax Rates, 2022 reported



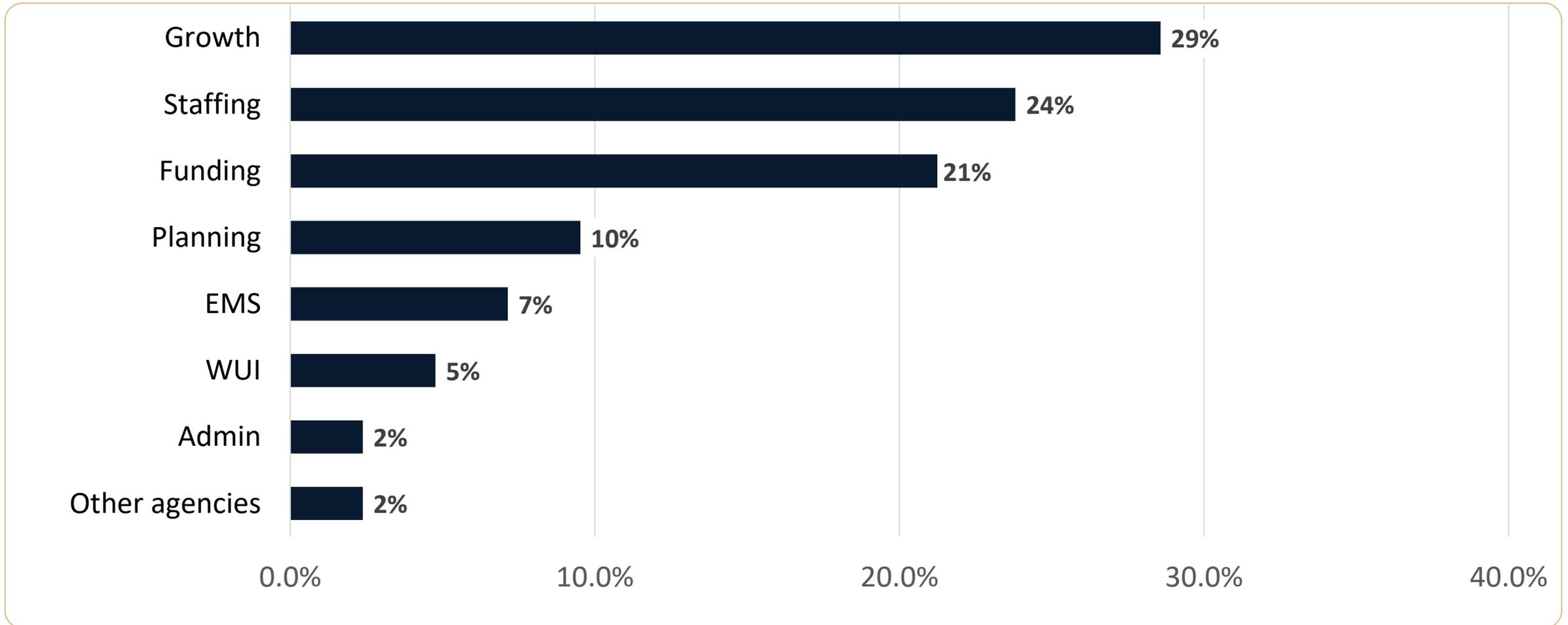
Source: Tax Rates and Levies, Texas Department of Emergency Management, 2023

# ESD Property Tax Rate estimate, 2022

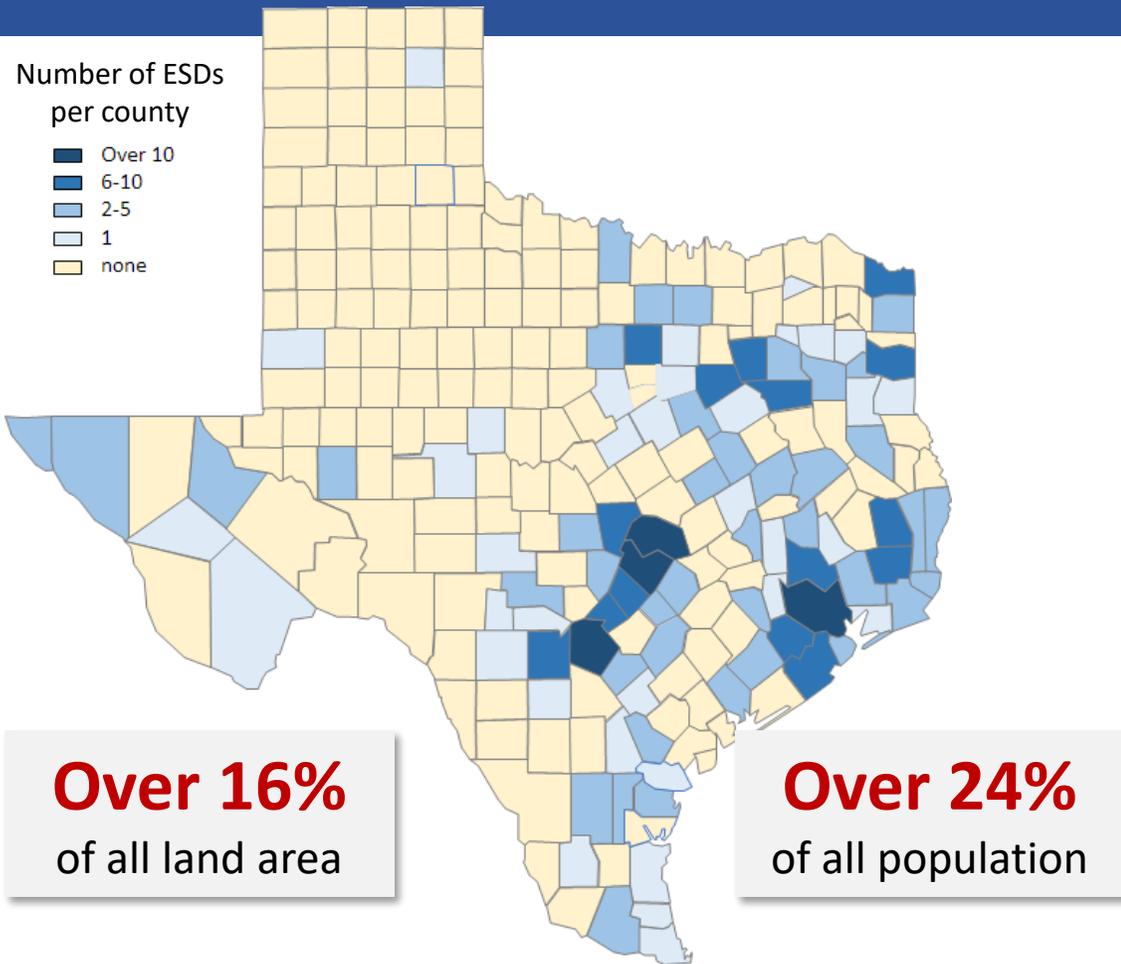


Source: Tax Rates and Levies, Texas Department of Emergency Management, 2023

# Most critical issues



# ESDs as reported



- 340** districts
- 232** reported to TDEM **68%**
- 109** provide fire only **47%**
- 30** provide EMS only **13%**
- 93** provide both fire and EMS **40%**
- 179** reported population **52%**
- 181** reported service area **53%**
- 114** collect sales tax **49%**

Source: SAFE-D and Texas Department of Emergency Management, 2023

As an ESD Commissioner or Chief ...

You need a  
“compelling story”

# The ESD Advantage



# The Fire Dept Advantage



Photo Source: The Gainesville Times, Scott Rogers, © 2015

# The ESD Advantage



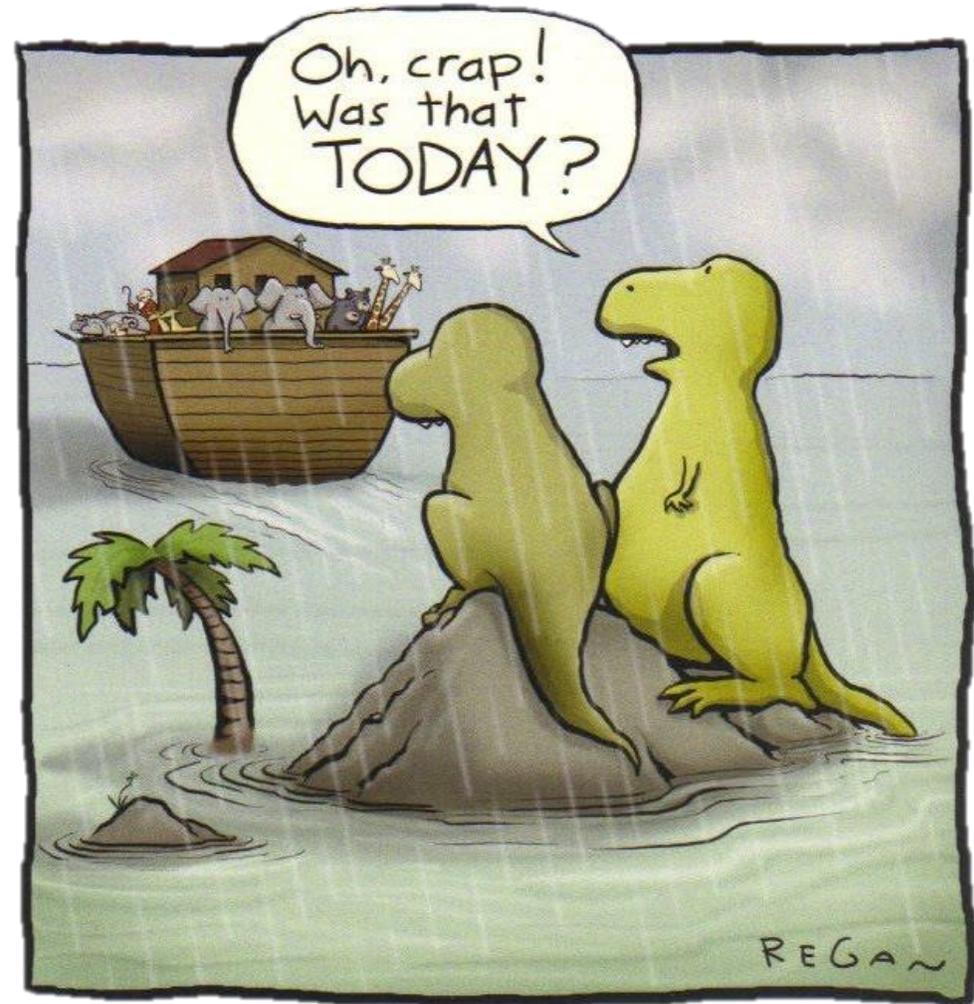
Photo Source: The Klamath Falls News, © 2018

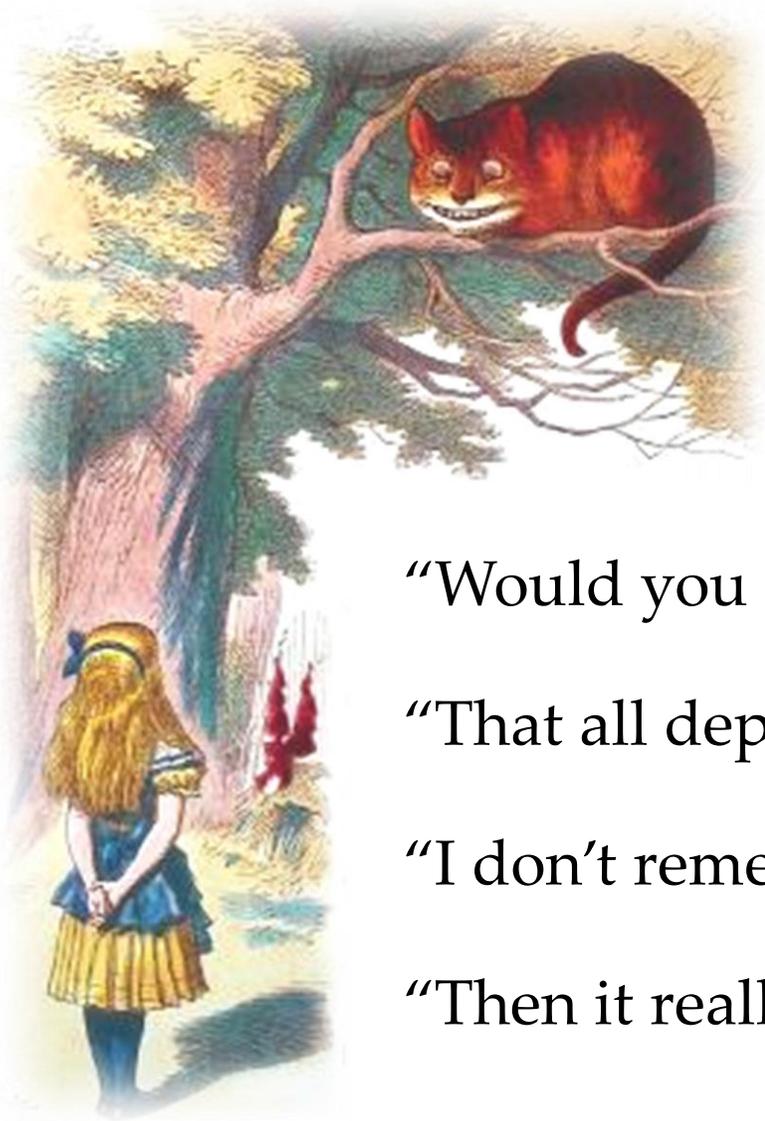
**As a Commissioner or a Chief ...**

**You need to  
be able to identify  
“strategic priorities”**

# Catalysts for change

- **Crisis management**
- **Significant change**
- **External requirement**
- **Planned process**





# Begin with the end in mind

“Would you tell me, please, which way I ought to go from here?”

“That all depends on where you want to get to,” said the Cat.

“I don’t remember where ---” said Alice.

“Then it really doesn’t matter which way you go,” said the Cat.

Source: *“Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland”*, Lewis Carroll. 1865.

# Four Basic Questions

Where are we today?

Where do we need to be?

How will we get there?

How will we sustain it?

## Assess

- Purpose
- Environment
- Needs
- SWOT

## Define

- Vision
- Mission
- Values
- Themes

## Plan

- Initiatives
- Goals
- Objectives
- Action Plans

## Execute

- Capacity
- Finances
- Leadership
- Results

# What Kind of Plan do I Need?

- **Agency Assessment**
- **Long Range Plan**
- **Strategic Plan**
- **Standard of Cover**
- **Financial Plan**
- **Operational Plan**



# Types of Strategic Plans

- **Issue-Based Plan**
- **Organization-Based Plan**
- **Customer-based Plan**



Source: ESCI, 2017

# Elements of a Strategic Plan

- Executive Summary
- Organizational Philosophy
- Needs and Expectations
- Key Findings and Analysis
- Initiatives, Goals, and Objectives
- Timelines, Tasks, and Targets





# Core Values and Expectations

A photograph of Air Force Honor Guard members in dark blue uniforms. The focus is on the chest and hands of a member in the foreground, who is wearing white gloves and holding a rifle. Several medals and ribbons are pinned to the uniform. The background shows other members in similar uniforms, slightly out of focus.

Integrity first

Service before self

Excellence in all we do

# Build a Community Profile

- **Geographic overview**
- **Demographics**
- **Hazards and vulnerabilities**
- **Response experience**
- **Community needs, expectations, and concerns**

# SWOT-C Assessment Tool

- **S**trengths
- **W**eaknesses
- **O**pportunities
- **T**hreats
- **C**hallenges



# Initiatives, Goals, and Objectives

- **Initiatives**                      **How we will deliver on the vision**
- **Goals**                              **What we want to accomplish**
- **Objectives**                      **How we will accomplish each goal**
- **Timelines**                      **Immediate, short-, mid, and long-term**
- **Tasks**                              **Specific action items and assignments**
- **KPI Targets**                      **How we will measure success**

# SMART Objectives

- Specific
- Measurable
- Action-Oriented
- Realistic
- Time-sensitive



# 6 Key Performance Indicators

- Call volume and Incident Type
- Response Times
- Injuries, Exposures, Deaths
- Number of Personnel Responding
- Property Values and Losses

**“Plans are worthless,  
but planning  
is everything”**



attributed to  
Dwight D. Eisenhower  
1890-1969

# Planning is Everything



What do we need to prepare for?



What level of capability do we need to be prepared?



What are our current capabilities?



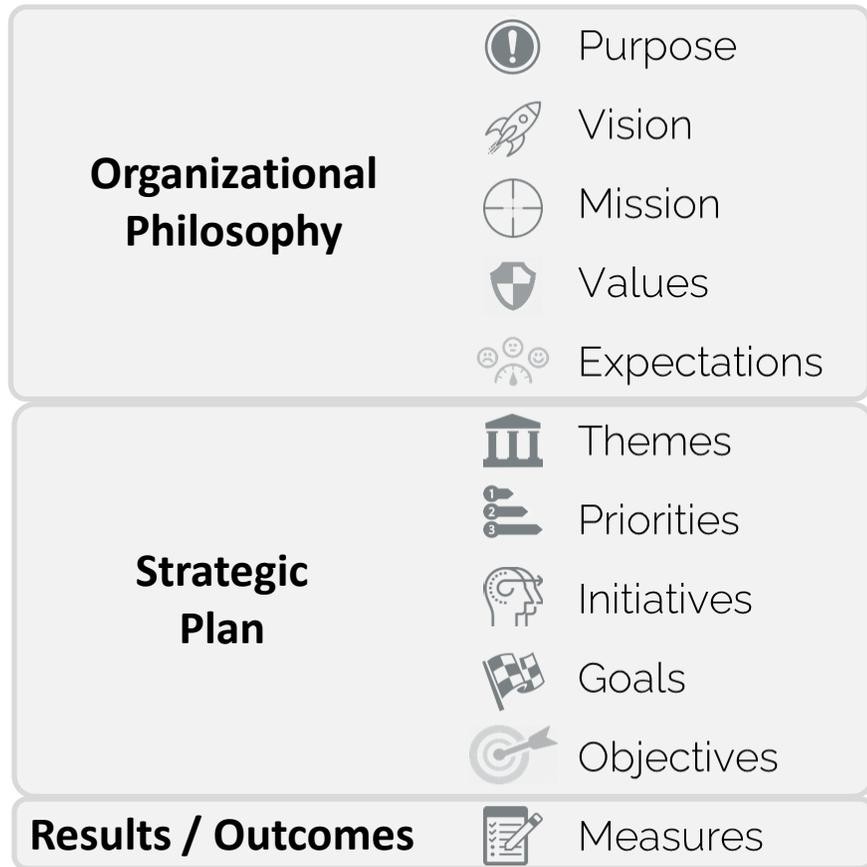
What gaps exist between what we have and what we need?



How can we address our capability gaps?

*Source: CPG 201: THIRA/SPR Guide—3<sup>rd</sup> Edition, FEMA, May 2018*

# The Balanced Planning Process



Source: adapted from "Balanced Scorecard for Government and Nonprofit Agencies", Paul Niven, © 2003

# Plan to Be Successful

- Gain insight and understanding
- Use the past as a foundation
- Define realistic expectations
- Plan with abilities in mind
- Build a compelling story



# Useful Planning Resources





For more information:



# Mike Montgomery

Interim Fire Chief  
Klein Fire Department

346-367-5581

[mmontgomery@hcesd16.org](mailto:mmontgomery@hcesd16.org)

