

# ANNUAL REPORT 2020





2020 was a year like no other. The COVID-19 Pandemic affected people globally, and we are still living in a world of mask-wearing and sanitizing stations. Our organization changed, I believe, for the better. We overcame obstacles, and our remarkable team worked together like never before. The ESD Commissioners were extremely supportive of our crews for this once-in-a-lifetime event, and we are grateful for their generosity.

Our 9-1-1 call volumes were drastically reduced for the first few months of 2020. Almost immediately, PPE was on a national shortage. HCEC preserved our resources and did not suffer any PPE shortage. Employees were never in jeopardy for not having protective equipment.

Then COVID infection rates started increasing, which elevated our 9-1-1 call volume to exceed any previous record in history.



# LETTER

## FROM OUR CEO

**We overcame obstacles, and our remarkable team worked together like never before.**

During the time of significant volume increases, employees got the virus. Other staff stepped up to fill needed roles. With events on indefinite hold, event staff helped fill in additional ambulances for COVID response. Field staff took a place in dispatch to help screen calls. The Dispatch Center and field staff worked hand-in-hand to make sure the calls were made appropriately with the right precautions.

During all of this, we were able to open two new stations. The ESD Commissioners worked hard to procure and construct Station 92 and Station 94 for us. We also retained ACE Accreditation, CAAS Accreditation, and Gold Plus Achievement from the American Heart Association.

I would like to thank each person involved for your commitment to our organization and the community we serve. I appreciate the work you do each and every day. To the HCESD #1 Commissioners and the HCEC Boards, thank you for continuing to support HCEC and our outstanding staff.

*Jim Hycle*





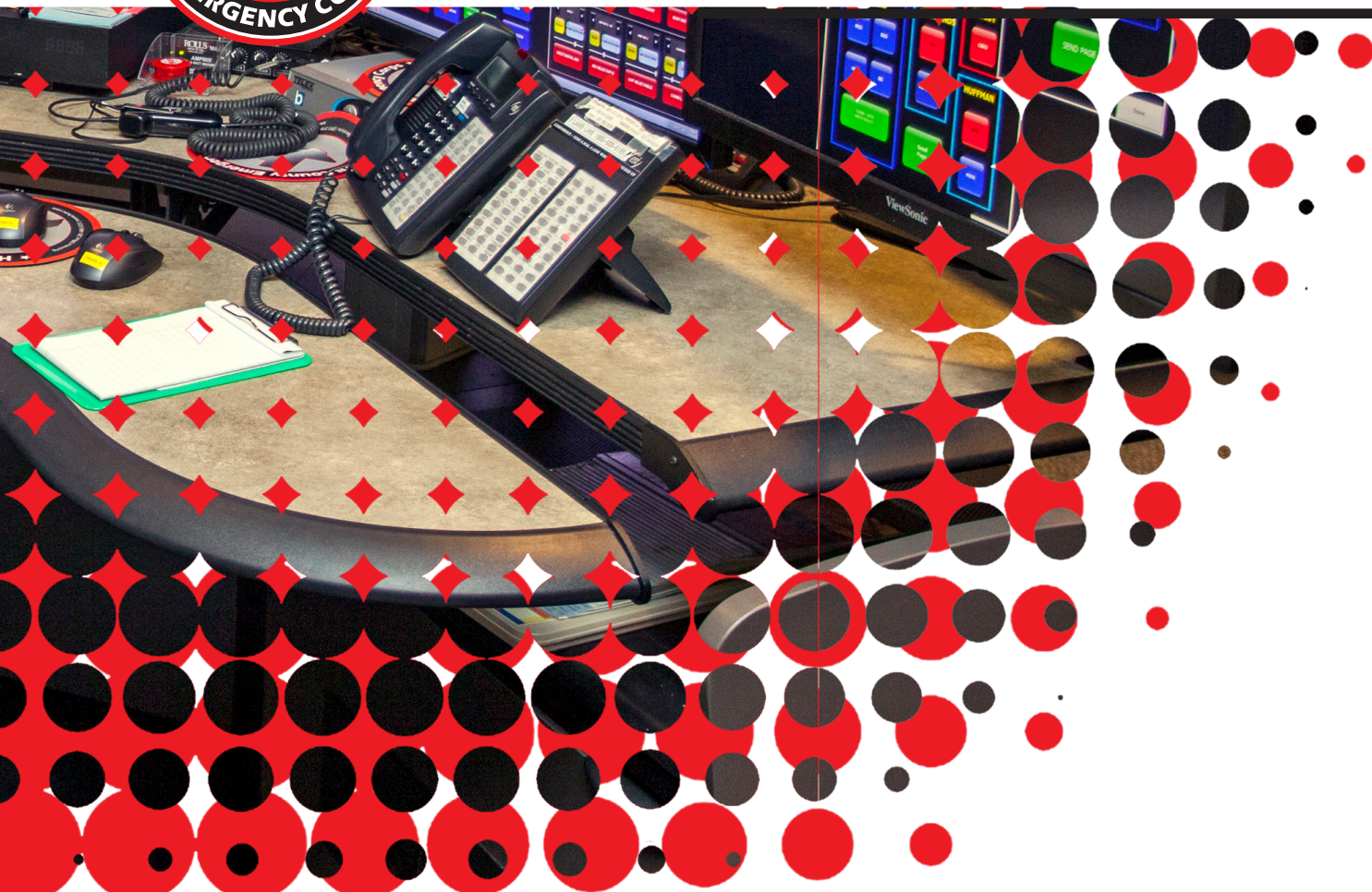
Dispatch developed a COVID call triage which allows staff to ask certain questions to screen all 911 calls for a possible COVID positive patient so the EMS Crews will be able to better prepare for the patient contact by having proper PPE.

Part-time staff were added to the roster to help relieve the burden of the regular full-time staff due to the COVID situation.



# COMMUNICATIONS

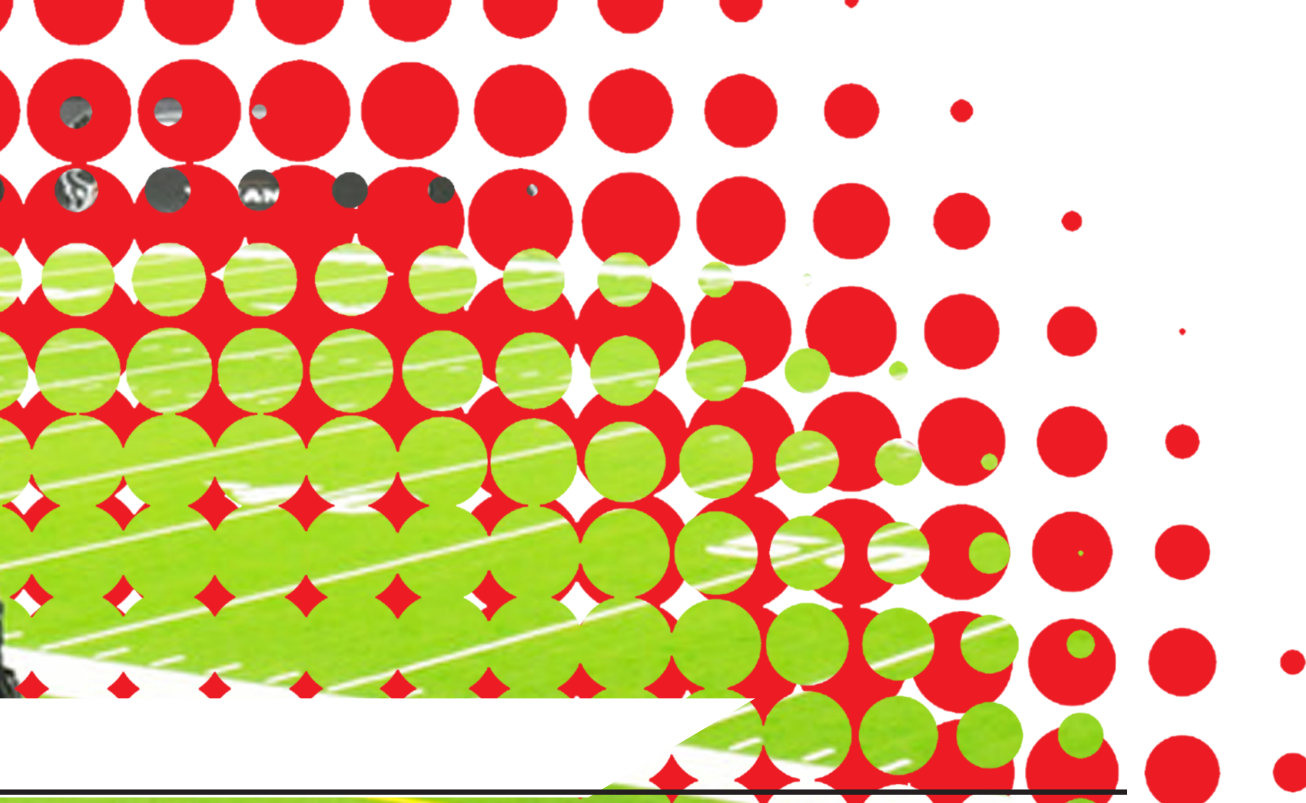
**Dispatch developed a COVID call triage to better prepare for patient contact.**



The Communications back-up center at new Station 94 was tested and verified functional with a live test including 9-1-1 calls and radio operations. All systems are tested frequently in the event the back-up center needs to be staffed at any time. Laptops from Greater Harris County 911 allow us to take 911 calls and create an independent operation from the main dispatch center.

IP station alerting at HCEC Stations was implemented. This is a dedicated circuit directly to the station via fiber connectivity from the dispatch center. It is monitored remotely and can alert the IT Department and Dispatch if the connection is broken.

During 2020 and COVID, Dispatch maintained IAED Medical ACE for each quarter of 2020.



# EVENT SERVICES

**2019 TOTAL  
Special Event Hours only:  
26,639**

**2020 TOTAL  
Special Event Hours only:  
11,609**

**2020 TOTAL  
Operations Hours  
(911+Communications):  
14,404**

HCEC prides itself on having the largest dedicated professional Special Events service in Harris County.

Consistently providing EMS and First Aid coverage for more than 850 events a year since 2014, we were on track to do the same in 2020. In January 2020, a meeting was held for the upcoming Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Show in March, attended by HLSR representatives, Houston Health Department, ASM-Global, and HCEC.

This was a small meeting with about 10 attendees at one conference table, the participants were less than 6 feet apart and masks were not a “thing”.

included the implementation of peak BLS units and dedicated EMS personnel in COVID call screenings, to be staffed by part-time personnel.

A process to bring event personnel in to cover attendant shifts on 911 units helped reduce system strain and provide continued employment within our organization.

Even within the backdrop of COVID-19, special events continued post-March 2020. Through planning, implementation, and lots of COVID testing— and with a special “thank you” to the Astros team medics, Dynamo and Dash team medics, and the Texans field crew medics.

**A process to bring event personnel in to cover attendant shifts on 911 units helped reduce system strain and provide continued employment within our organization.**

At the meeting, the topic of “COVID-19” was discussed, not to great lengths, but in enough detail that contingencies would need to be made in the case a positive case would “pop-up” at rodeo... that the ramifications could be severe and the possibility existed of rodeo being cancelled.

## How It's Going

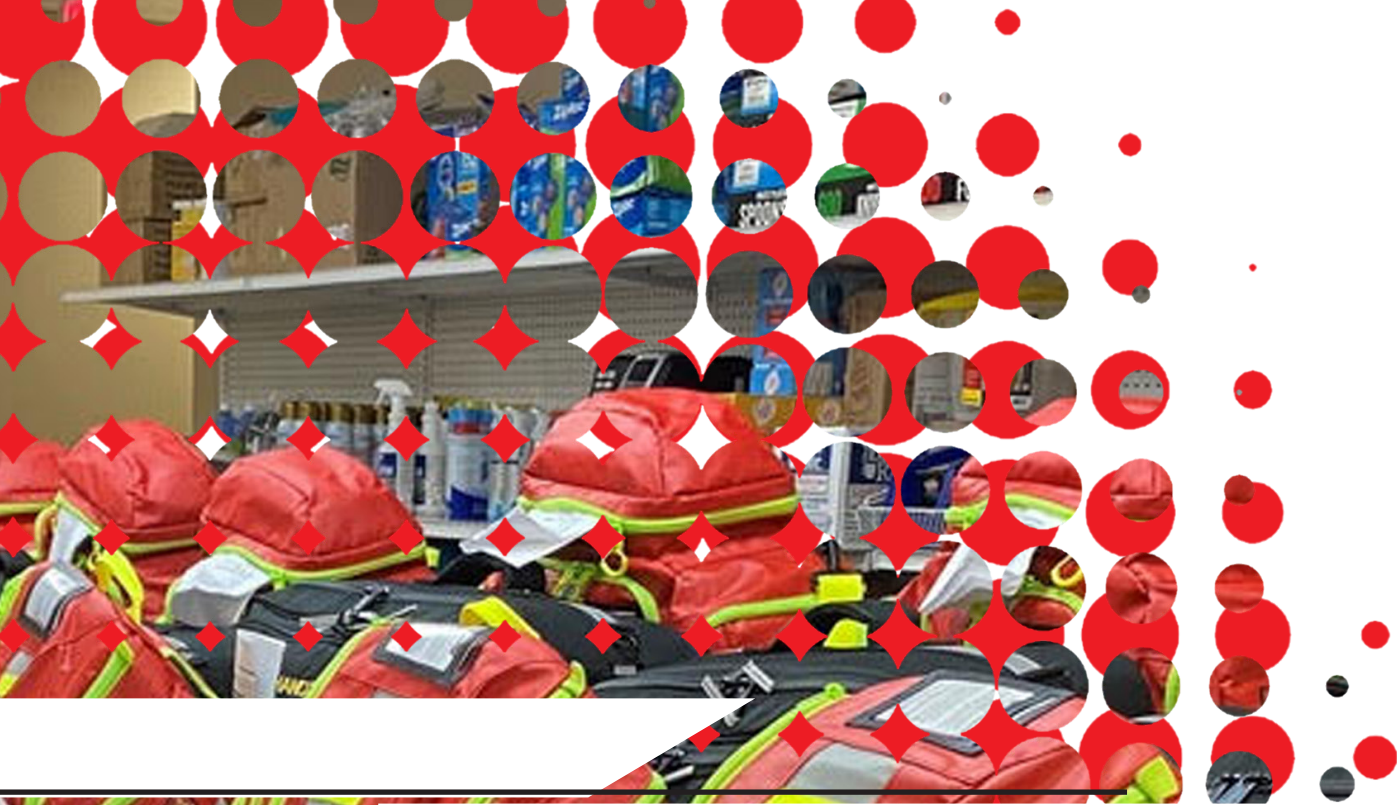
We all know how this turned out in March 2020... a positive case was tracked back to rodeo, the decision was made to cancel the remainder of the HLSR, and all major sporting events in Harris County followed thereafter.

Adjusting to the reality of having the largest employee base dedicated to Special Events with no events to cover, and the real possibility that our part-time event personnel would not be available to work events when “normal” returned, strategic changes were made. Faced with planning for the repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic in our service area, system changes were made which

## EMS/First Aid coverage:

- 38 Houston Astros** games and practices
- 11 Houston Texans** games, watch parties, and scrimmages
- 11 Houston Dynamo/Houston Dash** fútbol matches
- 13 High School football games** and track meets
- 3 College football games**
- 18 Days of Early voting and Ballot operations** at NRG Arena
- 3 Monster Energy Supercross** shows
- 7 Monster Jam** shows

Though 2020 saw HCEC Special Events operate with a reduction in event coverage, for the events we did cover we did so safely and without detriment to the quality in service that our clients and patients expect. Through our experiences in 2020 we are prepared for 2021 with numerous events including Memorial Hermann COVID Vaccination Drive-through events, Houston Sabercats rugby, Houston Astros baseball, Spring Nutcracker Market at NRG Center, and Houston Texans football.



At the tail end of 2019, unaware of what 2020 would bring, Logistics secured a three-year pricing contract for medical supplies. In the past, this was done on an annual basis and required a fair amount of time completing.

In February, Logistics assisted with placing three new ambulances in service by stocking the units and ensuring their readiness. We were also able to work with the events division ensuring their units were fully stocked and ready for the annual City of Houston inspections.



# LOGISTICS

**The Logistics Department purchased a large volume of N95 Masks and PPE Suits due to the uncertainty of the supply chain and ensure the ability to continue to operate as normal.**



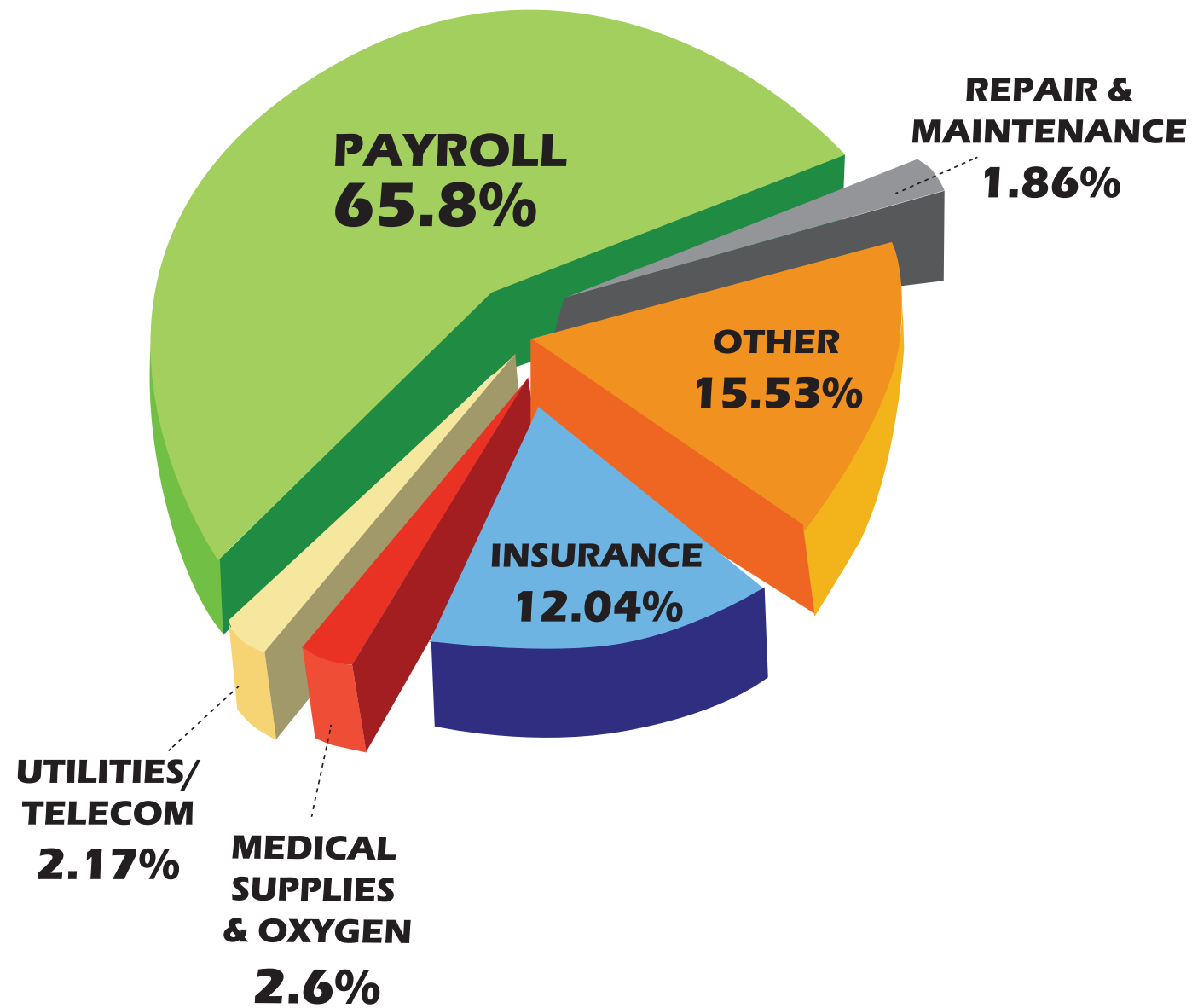
In March, with the onset of COVID-19 and shutdowns, Logistics purchased a six-month supply of our most utilized items. This was done with the uncertainty of what the supply chain would look like and ensure the ability to continue to operate as normal. We also purchased a large volume of N95 masks and PPE suits. Over the remaining part of the year, our PPE supply was maintained through Amazon's new COVID division, as well as SETRAC and Texas Department of Emergency Management.

All of the annual inspections and routine PMs were completed within a 1-2 day time frame. This allows us to bring the in-service ambulances in just once per year reducing the total out of service time.

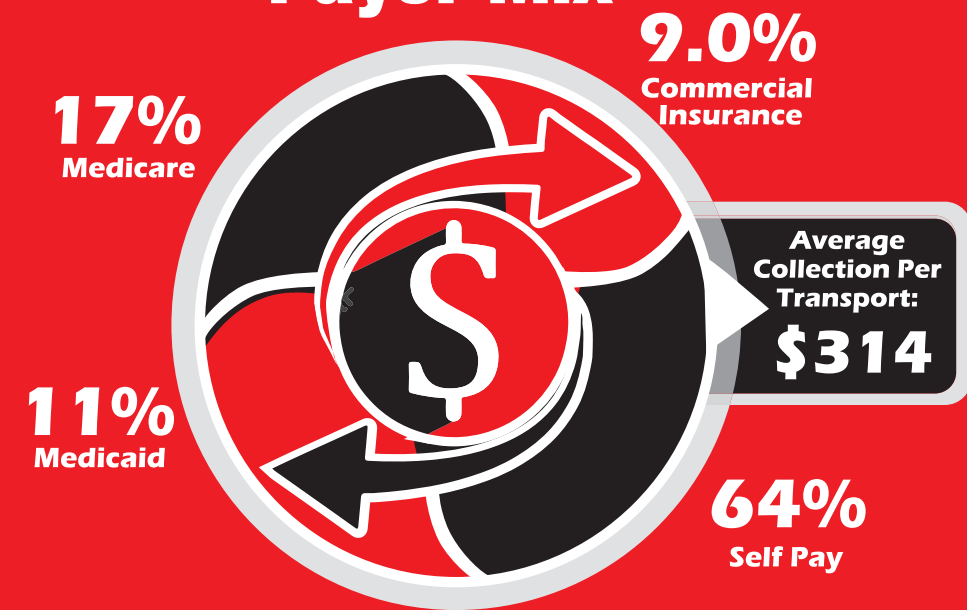


## BY THE NUMBERS

### 2020 EXPENSES



### Payor Mix



FULL TIME  
MEDICS  
**83**

**31**  
DISPATCH  
PERSONNEL

PART TIME  
MEDICS  
**75**

**31**  
OTHER  
STAFF  
OFFICE & SUPPORT

**21,374**  
TOTAL CALLS  
**15,664**  
TOTAL TRANSPORTS

**8:25**  
RESPONSE TIME





# MAINTENANCE & INFRASTRUCTURE



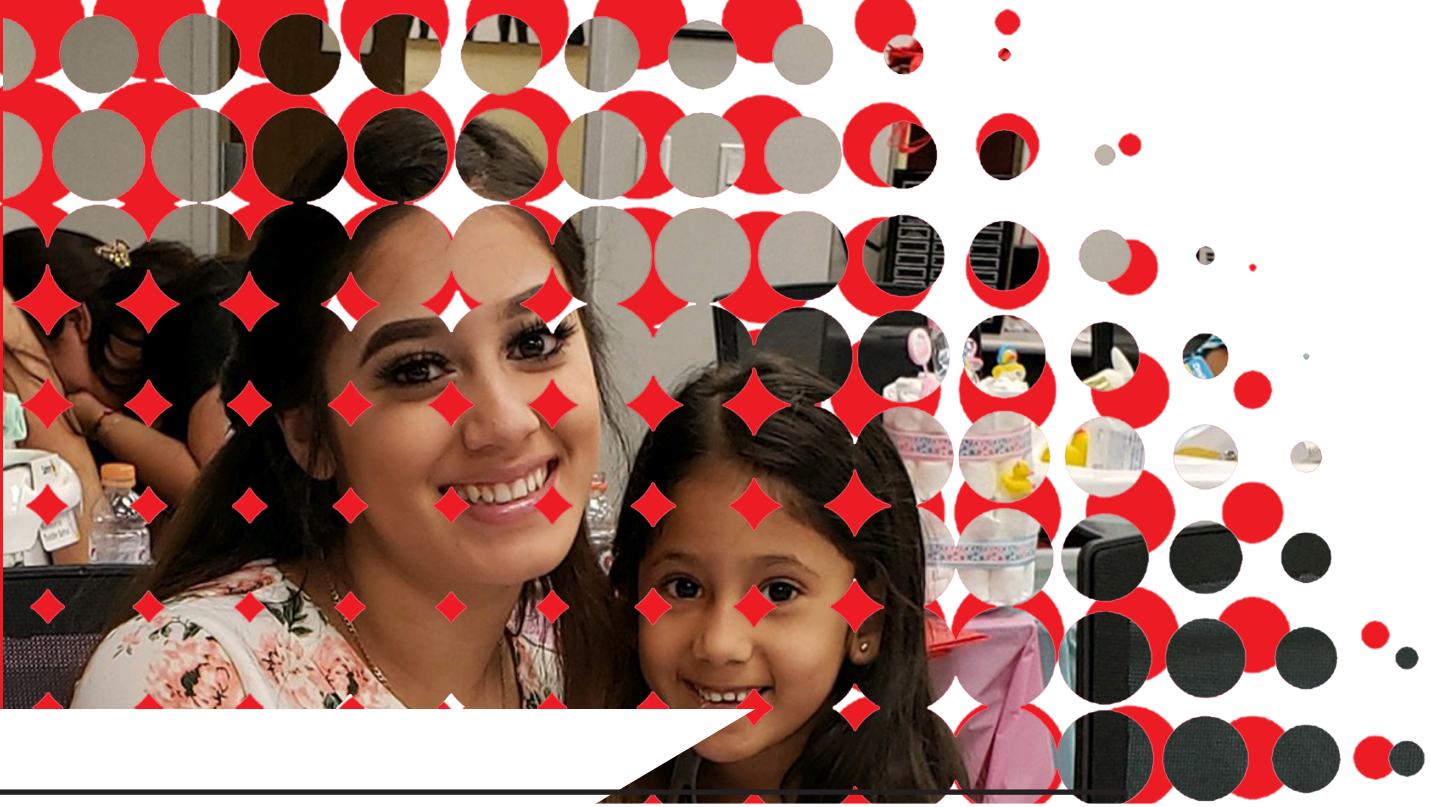
Completion of station 92, 94, and 97. 97's crew will move in early 2021.

Ambulances 1901, 1902, and 1903 were remounted and serviced. A total of 11 new ambulances were purchased and will be in service early 2021.

Completed the move-in for the new stations 92 and 94.

**Completion of station 92, 94, and 97.  
A total of 11 new ambulances were  
purchased and are in service.**

- ✓ Remodeled break room at our headquarters
- ✓ Repainted the exterior of our headquarters
- ✓ Implemented new camera safety system for the ambulances
- ✓ Turned a used Tahoe into a high water vehicle for use during floods
- ✓ Installed a new exterior sign for ESD #1



The HCEC Community Outreach Team continued to offer several programs and services to families in our local community in 2020. One we are extremely proud of is our New Parents program, which successfully graduated seven families from Parenting classes that started in February.

In addition, our Child Passenger Safety Technicians participated in several car seat events early this year and performed free inspections throughout the area to monitor the safety of our youngest residents. Technicians ensure caregivers have the correct child passenger safety seat for their child and know how to install the seat correctly. HCEC sent five additional employees to become certified as Child Passenger Safety Technicians this year in order to continue growing this program.



# COMMUNITY RELATIONS

**Five additional employees to become certified as Child Passenger Safety Technicians this year in order to continue growing this program.**



In partnership with Aldine ISD and Harris County Public Health, HCEC participated in career and health fairs, and taught Injury Prevention classes to students and members of our community through both in-person and virtual classes. Our Explorer Student program also gave back to the community by volunteering in 2 events over the summer distributing food and school supplies to families in need, while enjoying fellowship with those in their community.

In October, HCEC participated in a Halloween Parade through the neighborhoods with some of our local business partners in order to bring some fun back to the families of the district. Our Community Outreach Team truly enjoys working with families and business partners in the community and looks forward to offering even more programs in the future.



2020 was truly an unprecedented year filled with an array of obstacles that challenged the workplace as we know it. Not only the HR department, but the entire Administrative team had to find ways to operate within this new normal and still produce successful results. Even though we were under work from home sanctions, the needs of the business were still existent, especially staffing. With limited in person contacts, we embraced technology to keep us moving forward.

ahead of time to assist our department definitely helped contribute to our success in 2020.

**Employee Engagement**

In 2020 the position of the Employee Engagement Coordinator was implemented to support Employee Recruitment and Retention efforts, and focus on employee engagement activities. This position serves as the primary contact for new hires in the Onboarding process and facilitates existing employee needs, while working under the



# ADMINISTRATION

**2020 was an unprecedented year filled with obstacles that challenged the workplace.**

Through numerous development hours and the hard work of our Special Projects Coordinator, the implementation of additional modules in our NeoGov platform allowed HCEC to automate our extensive hiring process. New features such as online job postings, applicant tracking, eForms, and a new employee portal expedited our ability to hire and streamlined the onboarding process. HR participated in numerous training sessions to learn and customize the system and also added Zoom video conferencing to our new process in order to conduct interviews and ensure social distancing. In addition, with the use of the Aflac At Work portal, our open enrollment period ran smoothly and as planned. The measures that were taken

joint supervision of the Vice President of Administration and the Vice President of Clinical Services.

Due to COVID-19, there were many changes needed to maintain the morale of our staff and meet our staffing needs. Through the use of Zoom video conferencing to conduct the New Employee Orientation Program (NEOP), we were able to increase the frequency of the orientation program and accommodate the hiring of multiple EMTs for our new BLS units.

Since in person events were not possible, during EMS week employees were recognized with personalized thank you notes provided by children in the



# ADMINISTRATION continued

community, and recognition signs were placed in the front yard of each employee's home thanking them for their service. In October, we focused on Breast Cancer Awareness fundraising efforts with our annual employee designed T-shirt competition. Through an online T-shirt sales campaign and a raffle for two themed quilts, 2020 was HCEC's most successful year, raising \$6000 which was donated to The Rose. In November, HCEC also implemented quarterly blood drives, with our first blood drive producing 25 successful donors, saving 75 lives at local hospitals.

Throughout 2020, innovation and technology has been an integral part of maintaining employee engagement during the times of social distancing. With this in mind, we also increased our Social media presence showcasing the efforts of our crews, administration, and Board throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Finance

The Finance team comprises Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, and Payroll. While these are our 3 major roles, we are also responsible for internal financial audits, proper account allocations, and financial acuity to ensure HCEC is in good financial standing to operate efficiently. This year brought its share of challenges, keeping us focused on our financial health and integrity.

Audits, the standard for which accounting is

held, still needed to be completed to ensure compliance. We had a successful external worker's compensation, 401k, and most importantly, annual financial audit by our CPA firm. In cooperation with other departments, we helped complete 2 Grants that will be used to better serve our community. The accounting team implements and monitors the yearly budget, which helps inform corresponding departments. We also generate financial reports which provide financial transparency between the HCEC and ESD-1 boards, and validates our commitment to the community.

## Compliance

With numerous changes because of COVID 19, the need to monitor our finances, business processes, and education was paramount. Through internal reviews and departmental collaboration on policy changes, absence tracking, supply acquisition, training needs, and infectious disease prevention, HCEC worked tirelessly to ensure the safety of our employees, our support teams, and the community.

Through funding awarded to HCEC under the CARES Act, we were able to provide Hazard Pay for our staff, allow employees paid time off for COVID related illnesses or exposures without requiring the use of vacation hours, and offset costs associated with the increased need and expense of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

# CERTIFIED



**CAAS Accredited EMS agencies are optimally positioned to address the innumerable challenges facing EMS today. This includes tough issues such as risk management, legal requirements, fiscal accountability, and patient safety. CAAS accreditation tells the community that your EMS agency cares enough to meet the "Gold Standard".**

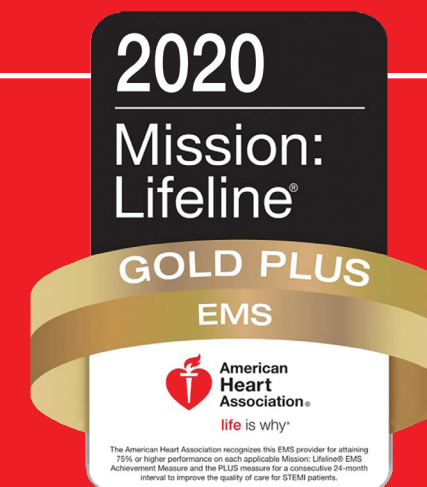
— Kathy J. Rinnert, MD, MPH, FACEP, University of Texas Southwestern, Dallas, TX  
Professor, Department of Emergency Medicine, Director, EMS Fellowship Program,  
EMS Medical Director



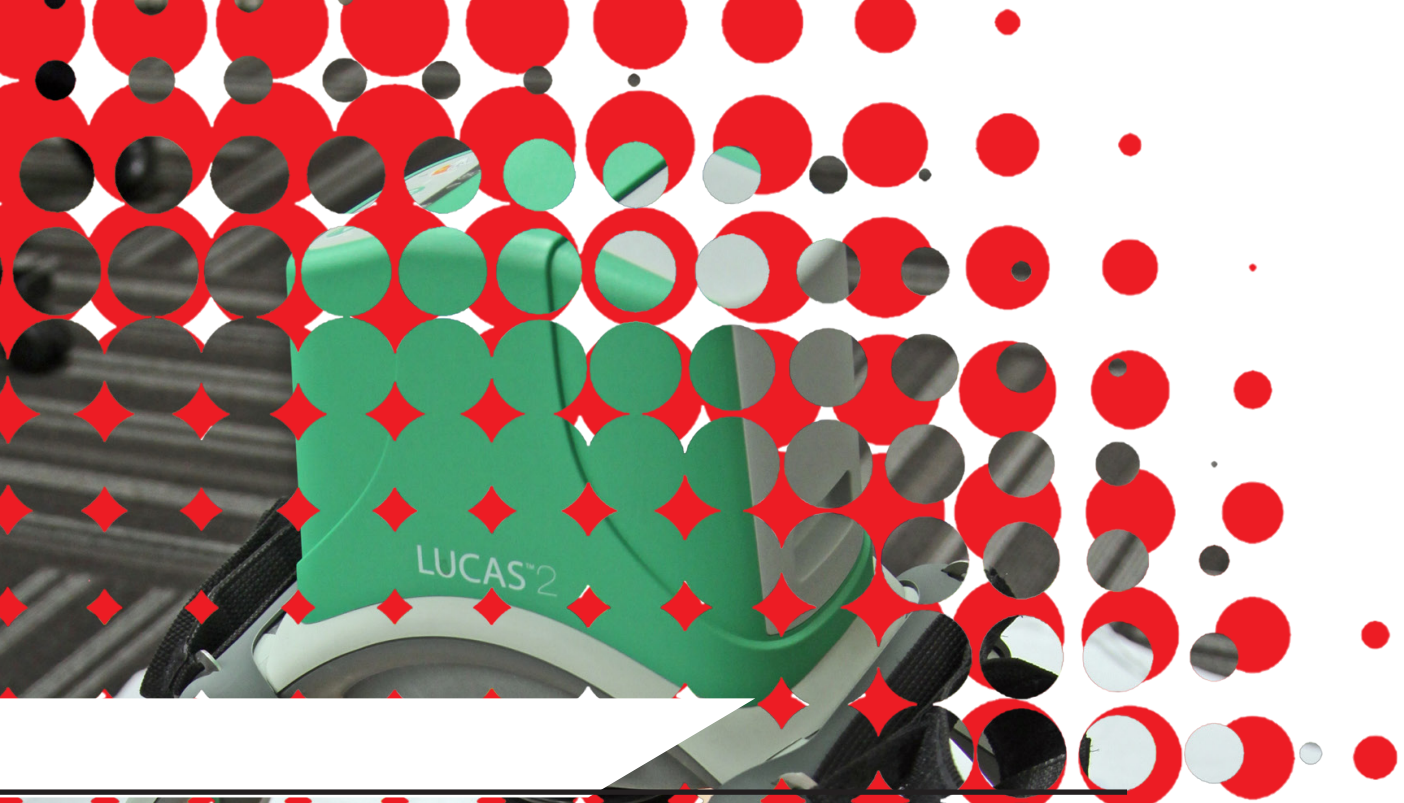
**ACE Accreditation sets us apart worldwide and across the United States. Only 128 out of approximately 6,000 dispatch centers in the United States are ACE Accredited.**

**Our Communications team worked together to achieve this accreditation and we are all proud of the work they do every day to make HCEC one of the best in the world.**

**American Heart Association's Mission: Lifeline® EMS Gold Plus Award for implementing quality improvement measures for the treatment of patients who experience severe heart attacks.**



**The award is the highest achievement through the American Heart Association for EMS agencies and it is the second consecutive year HCEC has achieved this designation.**



The Clinical Services Department acted swiftly and creatively to implement a tactical and real-time response to COVID-19. Communication strategies were developed with crews and updates were implemented utilizing multiple platforms such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Monday.com. During the peak of the pandemic, the team was focused on creating policies, communicating protocols on the website daily, and guiding crew decision making with high-risk patients. The team also participated in regional and state-wide stakeholder calls to develop best practices with a focus on addressing the COVID-19 pandemic.



# CLINICAL SERVICES

**The Clinical Services Department acted swiftly and creatively to implement a tactical and real-time response to COVID-19.**



Along with a COVID-19 response, Clinical Services developed and released the 2020 Clinical Operating Guidelines and 2020 FRO (First Responder Organization) Guidelines, completed three In-Charge Academies, and integrated quarterly cadaver lab trainings for paramedics to review high-risk/low-frequently medical procedures.

Another major achievement was the implementation of the FirstWatch system. The program consists of a software package that helps improve the quality improvement process by converting raw data into meaningful information, helping HCEC improve situational awareness, operational performance, and patient outcomes in real time.

A system of BLS units and response plans were implemented to augment the EMS system during periods of heavy call volume.

The Community Health Paramedic program managed over 75 referrals and introduced a Nurse Health Line. Collaboration efforts were made with six EMS services for current and future MIH-CHP programs.



# COVID 19

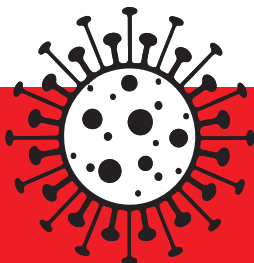
**Our staff was among the first healthcare providers in Houston to get vaccinated so that we could better support our community.**

## IMPACT

When COVID was declared a pandemic in 2020, it took healthcare providers, including HCEC by surprise.

Fortunately, HCEC had a stockpile of PPE to begin with. Our team immediately began the process of procuring more PPE through any means we could. The education staff immediately began training our providers on the proper use of PPE. HCEC asked non-essential employees to work from home to minimize the risk of exposure to our field and dispatch staff. Early in the pandemic, HCEC noticed a large drop in call volume because citizens were afraid to go to the hospital. As a result, we saw more out of hospital deaths and CPR cases than any time in our history. Throughout the pandemic, our call volume returned to normal and eventually grew to record numbers, which we are still experiencing. We are proud of our staff that took the proper precautions to stay healthy.

Our staff was among the first healthcare providers in Houston to get vaccinated so that we could better support our community.



### CORONAVIRUS IMPACT

**210K+**  
in N95 masks



**\$120K**

in compensated employee  
leave (outside of PTO)



**7194**

Calls screened with  
positive COVID symptoms

