

## **Wolfforth Fire EMS**

### **Proposed Organizational Changes**

3-31-26

#### **Problem Statement:**

Wolfforth Fire EMS has evolved in the last 18 months in many ways. What was once a good structure for the beginning of a paid service is now becoming more detrimental and difficult to manage. Our organization is at the point of needing a change in duties in our captain and lieutenant positions. Those positions are currently too close together and we have no clear distinction between the two. Captains are currently assigned to a shift for response and administrative duties concurrently. This has proven to be very ineffective and inefficient. With our current call volume and response duties, it is not feasible to have administrative duties and be assigned to response simultaneously. Therefore, administrative responsibilities are being ignored and not taken care of. This ultimately leads to a very poorly run organization with no clear distinction between captains and lieutenants. Lieutenants in this structure are ineffective since captains are the higher rank with the same response duties. Captains end up being shift officers instead of the lieutenant.

Administrative duties are getting neglected and getting further behind. We cannot effectively manage our administrative duties including state mandated reporting and compliance without neglecting other aspects of running a fire, EMS, and emergency management department.

Our transition to fully paid service began with captains being administrative. We changed them in November 2025 to an assigned shift for 24/7 captain coverage. This model does not allow captains and chiefs to work together since everyone must work different shifts. This brings on a lack of communication in the leadership group and lends all shifts to always being at minimum staffing. Before this model was implemented, we had many days with extra personnel due to captains and chiefs working at the same time. Staffing was never below minimum at any given time with extra personnel at times. This allows better oversight of responsibilities, collaboration for progress, and more efficient response.

#### **Solution:**

I believe with our current situation, the best option is to change the duties of the captain to primarily administrative. This will allow the captains to focus on their assigned administrative duties and allow for a better department. This will also allow the lieutenant to become the true shift officer and run the shift as intended. Captains will be available for responses as they always have been when needed or required and will still be able to staff for response. We will do this by designating a captain or chief for response each shift on a rotating basis. By doing this we can address all the issues listed above and get back to progressing our department as we all want to. The hours worked and pay will stay the same as was budgeted. Captains will work on rotating shifts of 48 hours in response and 36 hours in administration for each pay period. This allows us to continue to complete our emergency response requirements and address our administrative tasks. I have attached an organizational chart along with duties for reference.

### **Scheduling:**

The members of Wolfforth Fire EMS are strongly in favor of a 48/96 schedule. Most of them worked that schedule before coming to work here in Wolfforth. This schedule allows more time on duty to accomplish certain tasks and duties. This also allows the crews to participate in longer training sessions and hands-on training evolutions. The current schedule does not allow for this because there is no back fill of personnel to respond while the on-duty crew trains. Therefore, these types of training are not possible. More time on duty allows personnel to respond to emergencies and allows them to return to the training evolutions in order to complete them before the end of the shift. The 48/96 shift also allows for more oversight of leadership personnel. As all leaders of the department have access to all the personnel due to the longer on duty times. This schedule will allow personnel to have ample time to recover better from busy shifts. The current schedule can prohibit ample work/rest ratios. The 48/96 shift schedule does not affect overall work hours or pay amounts when implemented correctly.

From a city's perspective, the primary benefit of a 48/96 work schedule is that it is a budget-neutral way to significantly improve employee recruitment, retention, and morale without increasing headcount or total hours worked. While often viewed as "firefighter-friendly," several operational and financial efficiencies also benefit the municipality and its taxpayers.

## **1. Financial and Budgetary Benefits**

- **Budget Neutrality:** Transitioning from a 24/48 to a 48/96 schedule does not change the total number of hours worked per year, meaning it requires **no additional hiring** or changes to base pay structures.
- **Reduced Sick Leave Usage:** Cities often see a decrease in sick leave payouts. For example, some departments reported reductions ranging from **20% to 80%** after switching. This is attributed to better long-term recovery and less "burnout-related" absenteeism.
- **Lower Overtime Costs:** The "holdover" portion of overtime budget costs incurred when one shift is late to relieve another—can be cut by up to **50%** because there are half as many shift changes per year.

## 2. Operational Efficiencies

- **Increased Productivity on Large Projects:** Personnel can work continuously on complex station maintenance, administrative tasks, or training for two consecutive days without having to "tear down" and set back up for a new crew every 24 hours.
- **Improved Continuity of Service:** Working 48 hours allows crews to follow up on non-emergency public communications or incomplete fire inspections the very next day rather than passing the task to a different shift.
- **Resource Conservation:** Cities may save on overhead costs due to activities being cut in half. This is due to the reduction in number of daily shift changes.

## 3. Recruitment and Retention

- **Competitive Advantage:** As the 48/96 schedule grows in popularity—adopted by over **300 departments** nationally—cities that offer it are more likely to attract and keep experienced personnel.
- **Geographic Flexibility:** Because commuting is reduced by **50%**, cities can recruit from a wider talent pool, including highly skilled firefighters who may live further away from the service area.

The benefits of a **48/96 work schedule** (48 hours on duty followed by 96 hours off) primarily stem from its ability to provide extended, consolidated rest periods, which significantly improves firefighter well-being and operational efficiency.

## 1. Health and Wellness Benefits

- **Improved Sleep Quality:** Transitioning to a 48/96 schedule has been shown to increase total sleep time (by an average of **23 minutes per night**) and improve sleep efficiency.
- **Psychological Health:** Longitudinal studies indicate significant reductions in **insomnia** and **depressive symptoms** within 3 to 6 months of adopting the schedule.
- **Better Recovery:** The four-day (96-hour) break allows for a full "repayment" of sleep debt that is often impossible during shorter breaks, helping to reduce chronic fatigue and burnout.

## 2. Personal and Family Benefits

- **Quality Family Time:** The 96-hour break offers more consecutive mornings and evenings at home, allowing firefighters to feel fully engaged in family life, such as attending sports or school events.
- **Weekend Frequency:** The 48/96 schedule provides approximately **26 full weekends off per year**, compared to roughly 17 on the traditional 24/48 schedule.
- **Commute Reduction:** Firefighters cut their annual commutes by **50%**, saving significant time and money while reducing the stress of frequent travel.

## 3. Organizational and Operational Benefits

- **Enhanced Productivity:** Two consecutive days on shift allow for more efficient completion of large projects or training sessions, as crews don't have to "tear down" equipment for a new shift every 24 hours.
- **Recruitment and Retention:** Many departments use the 48/96 schedule as a powerful tool to attract new recruits and retain experienced personnel who value better work-life balance.

- **Lower Absenteeism:** Some cities report a **20% to 80% reduction in sick leave usage** after switching, as personnel are better rested and have more time to manage personal appointments during their four days off.

## 4. Comparative Summary

Feature	Benefit of 48/96
Shift Relief	50% fewer transitions per year, improving crew continuity.
Vacation Efficiency	Using 2 vacation shifts can provide <b>10 consecutive days off</b> .
Cost	<b>Budget-neutral</b> ; it does not change total annual work hours or required headcount.

All members of Wolfforth Fire EMS are greatly appreciative of the leadership and council of our city. We also greatly appreciate all city departments and our ability to work and continually improve the services to our residents.