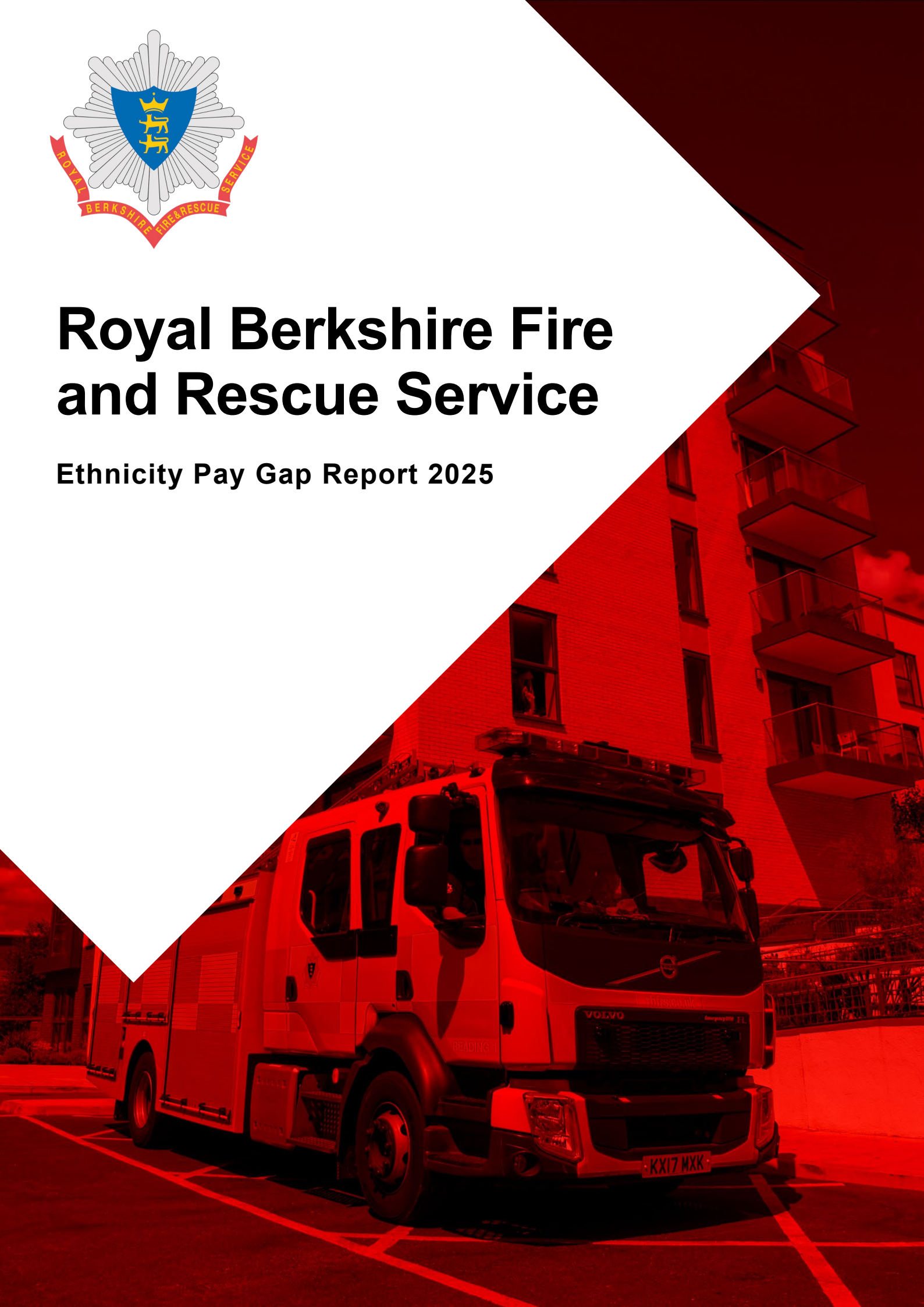




# Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service

## Ethnicity Pay Gap Report 2025





# Executive Summary

The ethnicity pay gap report for Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) provides information on the pay gap that exists between white and ethnic minority staff within the Service. Currently there is no legislative requirement for organisations to publish their ethnicity pay gap but RBFRS has opted to publish this information voluntarily. The continued publication of this report is an important tool to help us achieve our ambition to fully embed a transparent, diverse and inclusive culture.

RBFRS follows the CIPD and Race Disparity Audit's recommendations in this report, referring to ethnic minority groups rather than BME/BAME (black and minority ethnic/black, Asian and minority ethnic) which highlights some groups and omits others.

The ethnicity pay gap is calculated using the mean and median average rates of hourly pay for white and ethnic minority staff, and this is also split into four quartile pay bands. A negative pay gap shows that ethnic minority staff are paid more than white staff.

Our mean pay gap is -1.55% and our median pay gap is 2.76%. This shows on average for each £1 earned by white staff, ethnic minority staff earn £1.05 according to the mean ethnicity pay gap. According to the median ethnicity pay gap, for each £1 earned by white staff, ethnic minority staff earn £0.97. The median gap is a more accurate measure of an ethnicity pay gap as it discounts very high or very low rates of pay that can skew the overall average.

The mean and median pay gap is also calculated for each of the quartile pay bands (lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper). Due to the various elements making up pay within the Fire Service, including allowances and payments for additional responsibilities, pay gaps across the quartiles can appear different from the overall pay gap. Each quartile is also impacted year on year by movement within the quartiles in terms of recruitment of new staff, pay increases and promotions. This year the quartiles have also been impacted by a equality data collection exercise where the proportion of staff choosing not to disclose their gender has increased.

While RBFRS is confident that it is paying the same salary to roles of equivalent value to all staff, care should be taken when considering the latest ethnicity pay figures. It is important to recognise that ethnic minority staff are still significantly underrepresented in the workforce. The ethnicity pay gap calculations consider pay only and not the overall demographics of the workforce.

RBFRS is taking action to address this including the development of an Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Action Plan, positive action activities and developing community engagement activities through our Local Safety Plans.



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## Background

Currently organisations with more than 250 employees are required to publish their gender pay gap by law, but there is no requirement to publish their ethnicity pay gap. RBFRS has opted to publish these figures voluntarily. The method for calculating the ethnicity pay gap mirrors that of gender pay gap reporting and show how large the pay gap is between their white staff and staff from ethnic minority groups.

Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service (RBFRS) report on the following:

<b>Mean ethnicity pay gap</b>	The difference between the mean hourly rate of pay of white employees and that of ethnic minority employees as a percentage.
<b>Median ethnicity pay gap</b>	The difference between the median hourly rate of pay of white employees and that of ethnic minority employees as a percentage.
<b>Mean bonus gap</b>	The difference between the mean bonus pay paid to white employees and that paid to ethnic minority employees as a percentage.
<b>Median bonus gap</b>	The difference between the median bonus pay paid to white employees and that paid to ethnic minority employees as a percentage.
<b>Bonus proportions</b>	The proportions of white and ethnic minority relevant employees who were paid a bonus during the relevant period
<b>Quartile pay bands</b>	The proportions of white and ethnic minority employees in the lower, lower middle, upper middle and upper quartile pay bands.

This is the fifth year that RBFRS has reported the ethnicity pay gap, and due to the reporting of ethnicity pay gap figures being voluntary rather than a legal requirement, there are no national average figures reported to benchmark RBFRS ethnicity pay gap.

While there is no overall national ethnicity pay gap figure, research by the Office of National Statistics (ONS) suggests an ethnicity pay gap has persisted since 2012, with some ethnic groups continuing to earn less on average than their white counterparts.

## RBFRS' Pay and Bonus Ethnicity Pay Gap

This ethnicity pay gap report is based on data as at 31 March 2025. RBFRS employed 680 staff with 593 (87%) declaring their ethnicity as white and 46 (7%) declaring they are from an ethnic minority. Please note, due to an equality data collection exercise, 41 staff (6%) preferred not to disclose their ethnicity information. Due to the reporting requirements and provisions, RBFRS can only report the ethnicity pay gap for staff who declare their ethnicity.



RBFRS follows the CIPD and Race Disparity Audit's recommendations in this report, referring to ethnic minority groups rather than BME/BAME (black and minority ethnic/black, Asian and minority ethnic) which highlights some groups and omits others.

The overall ethnicity pay gap for RBFRS is as follows:

	Mean		Median	
Year	2024	2025	2024	2025
Pay Gap	0.90%	-1.55%	-0.88%	2.76%
Bonus*	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

\* RBFRS does not offer a bonus scheme therefore this measure has not been calculated. Additional Responsibility Allowances (ARAs) and Continuous Professional Development (CPD) payments are included in ordinary pay. For clarity, ordinary pay is defined as basic pay, shift premium pay, pay for piecework, pay for leave and allowances.

A **negative** pay gap shows that white staff earn 1.55% less than staff declaring they are from an ethnic minority based on a **mean** hourly rate of pay. A **positive** pay gap shows that white staff earn 2.76% more than staff declaring they are from an ethnic minority based on **median** hourly rates of pay.

## What do the mean and median ethnicity pay gap figures tell us?

The mean gives an overall indication of the size of the ethnicity pay gap in RBFRS. A high mean ethnicity pay gap would indicate a payment system that disadvantages ethnic minority groups – specifically when comparing the mean hourly rates when calculated using the nationally agreed methods for the workforce as a whole, staff identifying their ethnicity as white (white British, white Irish or white other) earn less on average than staff from ethnic minority groups.

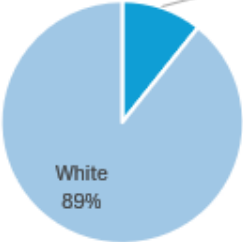
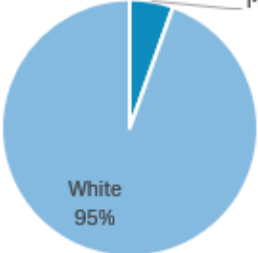
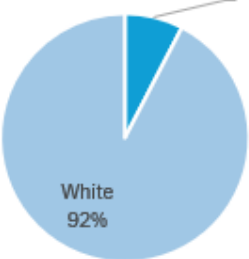
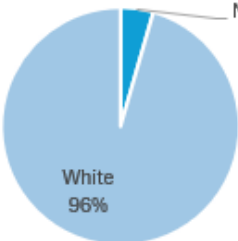
The median is typically a more representative figure as the mean can be skewed by a handful of highly paid employees this can be seen more clearly when you compare quartile on quartile.

The quartile distribution detailed below. This is based on the actual hourly ordinary pay for all staff and gives an indication of how white and ethnic minority staff are distributed across the organisation, in addition to the mean and median pay gap in each of the quartiles.

## Quartile Pay Bands

The proportion of white/ethnic minority staff in each quartile pay band is as follows:



Quartile		Year	Mean Pay Gap	Median Pay Gap
Lower		2025	-8.35%	-2.67%
		2024	-10.51%	-4.17%
Lower Middle		2025	0.66%	1.61%
		2024	1.28%	0.88%
Upper Middle		2025	-1.96%	-0.65%
		2024	-0.23%	1.51%
Upper		2025	-6.94%	2.58%
		2024	7.95%	1.24%





## Commentary

The mean and median pay gap was calculated for each of the quartiles to give an indication of the range and distribution of white and ethnic minority pay. When broken down into the four quartiles, the ethnicity pay gap differs significantly from the overall ethnicity pay gap. This can in part be attributed to the scope for variation in hourly pay in each of the quartiles. In addition each quartile, contains a number of longer serving staff members, which sit in the upper, higher paid, part of each of the quartiles. Longer serving staff are more likely to have achieved competent status (for staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services (Grey Book)) or reached the top of their pay spine (staff conditioned to the NJC for Local Government Services (Green Book)). 41% of staff from ethnic minority groups have over five years' service. It should be noted that each quartile is also impacted year on year by movement within the quartiles in terms of recruitment of new staff, pay increases and promotions.

The overall proportion of staff from ethnic minority groups has increased by 2% in comparison to last year. In the Lower quartile, 16 staff are from ethnic minority groups, in the Lower Middle nine staff are from ethnic minority groups, in the Upper Middle quartile seven staff are from ethnic minority groups and in the Upper quartile there are 12 staff from ethnic minority groups. In each of these quartiles, staff from ethnic minority groups occupy a range of grades and roles, which will impact the overall mean and median pay gap of each of the quartiles.

The lower quartile remains a negative pay gap in favour of ethnic minority staff this year, however the gap is smaller in comparison to last year for both the mean and median. The number of staff from an ethnic minority in the lower quartile has increased by 5% in comparison to last year, they are distributed across the quartile but the majority fall in the middle and top of the quartile. The bottom of the quartile is predominately made up of On-Call (Retained) employees all of which are white. The middle of the Lower quartile is also made up predominantly of apprentice Firefighters, of which the majority are white.

The Lower Middle quartile has a positive pay gap for both the mean and median in favour of white employees which is consistent with last year. The size of the mean gap has decreased in comparison with last year, but the median pay gap has increased. Despite a 2% increase in staff from ethnic minorities in the quartile, more fall at the bottom or middle of the quartile in terms of hourly rate. This quartile has the second highest proportion of white employees overall. It is also predominately made up of Competent Firefighters, who are mostly white.

The Upper Middle quartile has both a mean and median pay gap that is negative in favour of staff from ethnic minorities. The number of ethnic minority staff in this quartile has increased by 4% in comparison to last year which will explain the change in both pay gaps in favour of ethnic minority staff. The seven staff from ethnic minority groups are distributed throughout the quartile but the majority fall in the upper half of the quartile.

The proportion of staff from ethnic minorities in the Upper quartile has increased in comparison to last year, but despite this the quartile has the highest proportion of white employees overall. The median pay gap remains positive in favour of white staff and the size of the gap has increased in comparison with last year, whereas the mean pay gap is now negative in favour of staff from an



ethnic minority. The mean pay gap can be skewed by one highly paid employee in the quarter which can explain the significant change in comparison to last year's pay gap whereby one employee at the top of the quartile is from an ethnic minority, a change from last year's reporting.

It is recognised that ethnic minority groups are still underrepresented in the workforce. The progression pathways will also differ for Grey and Green Book staff (whereas Grey Book staff have specific routes for promotion, Green Book departments are often relatively flat in their structure and offer less scope for promotion). 56% of employees from an ethnic minority are Green Book staff as of 31 March 2025. It is therefore important that the ethnicity pay gap figures are considered in the context of this demographic.

As a Service, we are confident that staff have equal access to promotion and development opportunities, but it is also acknowledged that culturally, barriers or biases may exist which are not evident from these figures, and that staff in ethnic minority groups may experience challenges regarding their career progression. RBFRS is taking action to identify any such trends and address this, including a review of where positive action initiatives can be used within promotion processes.

The Service is expanding our equality monitoring processes to take into account progression, development and promotion. This will allow career progression and development to be monitored across the Service, with any causes for concern targeted and addressed as appropriate.

Notwithstanding the known issues with underrepresentation amongst ethnic minority groups, RBFRS pays staff in accordance to nationally agreed terms and conditions and is satisfied that it is paying the same salary to roles of equivalent value across all staff groups. An equal pay audit was carried out in November 2024, the results of which did not indicate any underlying causes for concern. The next equal pay audit will take place in 2026.

The Service continues to work hard to attract a more diverse workforce and has already taken actions to address the overall diversity within the RBFRS workforce. These include but are not limited to:

- Utilising Equality Impact Assessments (EIAs) to identify the impacts of recruitment processes to ensure there are no negative or disproportionate impacts on any ethnicity. RBFRS have reviewed and updated the guidance and training around completing EIAs.
- Continuing to improve our programme of positive action events, including the 'Discover a Career as a Firefighter', and increasing the frequency and understanding of such events. Evaluating these events to see how they translate to recruitment and where attendees reach within the recruitment process if not recruited.
- An internship programme aimed at residents from Berkshire that are 18 years old from ethnic minority groups that are currently under-represented within the Service ran over the summer of 2025. This paid internship gave students an opportunity to develop workplace skills and discover opportunities available within RBFRS. The internship has been approved to run as business as usual each summer taking four interns.





- Identifying and developing a steady flow of community engagement activities through our Local Safety Plans including the introduction of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) accountability within the middle manager cohort at each station/hub.
- SLT completed anti racism training in 2025 as part of their commitment to continue to develop awareness as strategic leaders to support the objectives in our Culture Plan. The training supported continuous personal development and proactively focussed learning regarding others experiences.
- RBFRS partakes in the Anti-Racism Alliance established by Frimley ICB which brings together Chief Executives from public sector organisations across the Frimley ICB and Thames Valley area to have a systemic approach to addressing racism and to develop an anti-racism framework.

RBFRS launched face to face EDI and Cultural Awareness Training in 2024 to help improve learning across the Service, demonstrating our commitment to promoting EDI and making a positive difference for our employees, this continues to be rolled out across the Service.

Specific actions to address the information outlined in this report are contained in the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan which is appended to this report. A version of the plan will be published on the RBFRS website. Work is also underway internally to draft and consult on the new EDI action plan and objectives for 2026 and beyond

**Wayne Bowcock**  
**Chief Fire Officer and Chief Executive**  
**November 2025**

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