



Chief Adam Hawkins  
*Bergheim Volunteer Fire Department*

## FIRST CHECK EQUALS NEW EQUIPMENT

Upon receiving the first payment from EMERGIFIRE's efforts, the Bergheim Volunteer Fire Department covered the yearly costs of a new set of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs).

### 650% ANNUAL CALL INCREASE IN 15 YEARS

Bergheim is a small community in eastern Kendall County, near San Antonio. Although named after its station location, the Bergheim Volunteer Fire Dept. operates beyond the community's limits. The agency is responsible for emergency responses in a 58-square-mile area, including Highway 46, which intersects the city. Since 2008 when BVFD first opened their doors, the region has experienced exponential growth. The department that started answering only 58 calls per year and serving 3,500 residents is now responding to as many as 386 calls with 12,000 residents, according to data from 2021.

Led by Fire Chief Adam Hawkins, BVFD relies on its 24 volunteers to respond to the community's high call volume. "We have a pretty good mix of calls. Most places are probably heavier on EMS, but we have a higher average of fire calls than most departments," says Chief Hawkins.

The development of the area and the increased number of calls resulted in some financial challenges. As a 100% volunteer fire department, Bergheim relies solely on citizens' donations and limited funding from the local government. "We appreciate what they give us, but it's barely enough to cover basic operating expenses. The way our funds worked, there was no way to replenish it."

Finding a solution to the financial challenges was crucial. **"We have to grow with our community. We're starting to get a lot more commercial and bigger buildings. For us to be able to cover that, there are equipment needs. Just to keep up with current equipment and bunker gear is hard because the county does not necessarily pay for that."** This reality forced the department to create new strategies to meet their needs.

CLIENT  
SINCE  
2023

LAUNCHED  
FIRE  
BILLING

100%  
VOLUNTEER  
FIRE DEPT.

FIRST  
PAYMENT  
COVERED  
SBCA  
ANNUAL LOAN



### A CUSTOMIZED SOLUTION

Through EMERGIFIRE, Chief Hawkins learned that BVFD had an unexplored opportunity to obtain additional funds. "We never had fire billing before. We looked at it a while ago but were rejected by the company because we didn't have enough billable calls for them. EMERGIFIRE treated us completely differently, and when the team explained the deal to us, there wasn't a downside to it." According to Chief Hawkins, convincing the board members to approve EMERGIFIRE was easy as they quickly realized that this was the solution to resolve BVFD's financial needs so they could better support their growing community.

With the partnership, BVFD started to receive extra money without putting in any extra work. "All we have to do is submit reports from our incidents, something that we complete regardless. After that, the reimbursement process is painless for us. We don't deal with any bureaucracy or timelines required by insurance companies."

The department also customized the contract to their taste. "Our biggest concern was not to bill the residents who donate money to help us keep the doors open. EMERGIFIRE's team knew our needs. They pointed out opportunities, and we signed a contract completely personalized to our reality."



### IMPACT WITHIN THE FIRST CHECK

The first payment received from EMERGIFIRE's efforts had a significant impact on BVFD expenses. "In our first check, we got over \$6,000. And that was very beneficial because it covered the costs of a whole new set of SCBAs for the year," Chief Hawkins explained.

SCBA means "Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus," a type of mask firefighters use to combat fires. These devices provide an autonomous supply of breathable gas in an atmosphere that is dangerous to life or health. Each air pack costs an average of \$10,000 and lasts about ten years. To buy a new set of SCBAs, BVFD had to finance \$78,000, resulting in payments of \$6,000 per year. "This is a costly piece of equipment that we must have. Receiving that first check was a relief because we knew that payment was handled. And any other money we receive can be invested in other needed areas."

"This partnership gave us another avenue to obtain funds. Without EMERGIFIRE, we would be fighting and grinding harder. We don't worry about how much cash we'll get in the future because it depends on the incidents we respond to. But knowing that somebody is working to obtain any possibility of money for us is what makes the difference."



Photos credit: *City of Bergheim, Texas*