

TOOLIK FIELD STATION

2023 SAFETY



MEDICAL SUPPORT

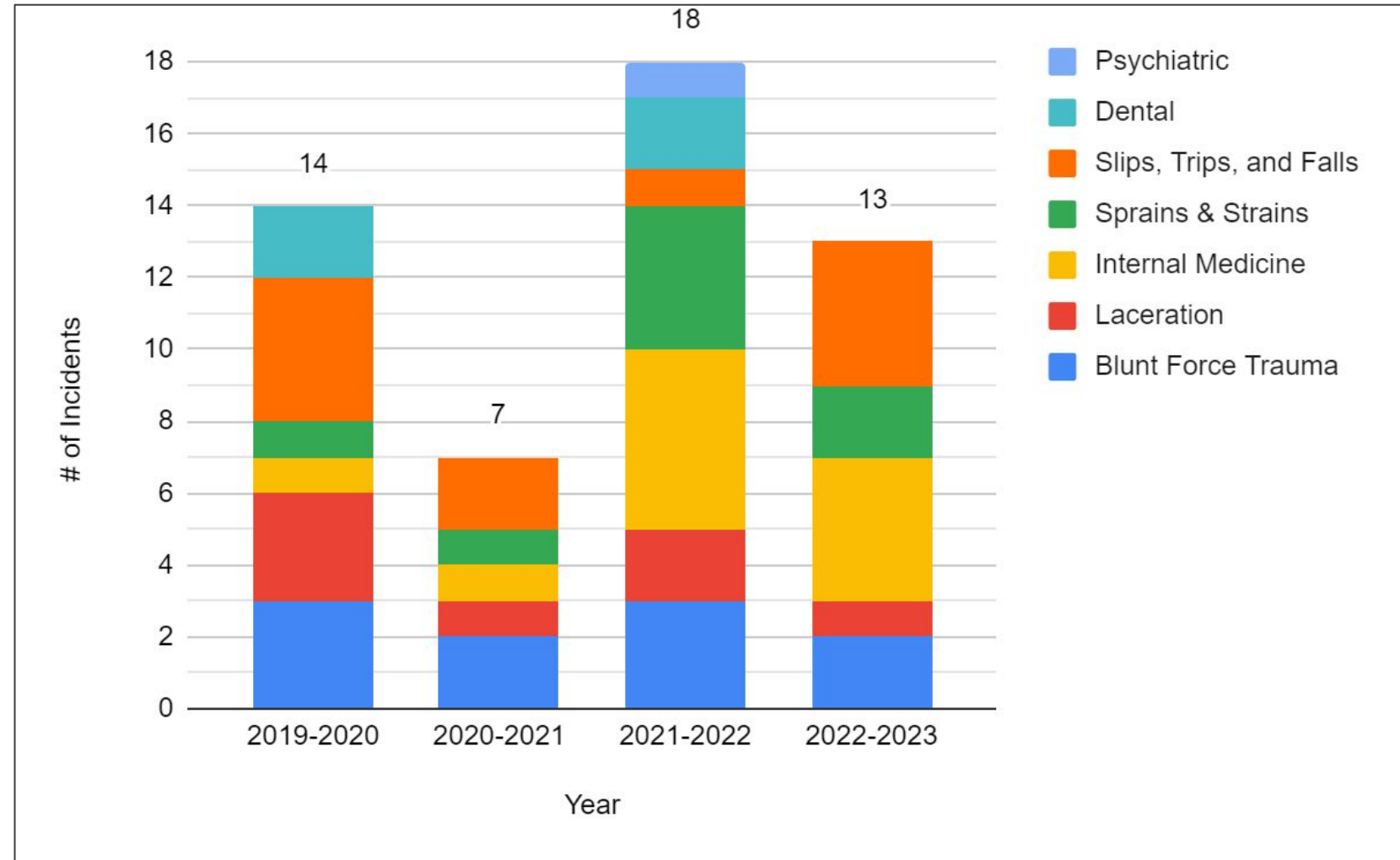
- 2 alternating EMTs provided 24/7 medical support to researchers between 10/1/22 - 9/31/23.
 - Coverage dates correlate with Spring and Fall construction campaigns.
 - Dual role as medical provider and workplace Health & Safety support
- Winter EMT staffing when user population was present.
 - A minimum of one Wilderness First Responder present year-round.
- Physician Sponsor: Dr. Susan Dietz, Providence Medical Center

MEDICAL RESPONSE

- The on-site EMT responded to 13 non-COVID incidents over the course of the 2023 field season.
 - 0 incidents required field rescue operations.
- Two incidents required ground medevac out of the station to pursue a higher level of care.
- An “incident” is defined as any medical concern that requires treatment above and beyond what is possible via self-treatment.

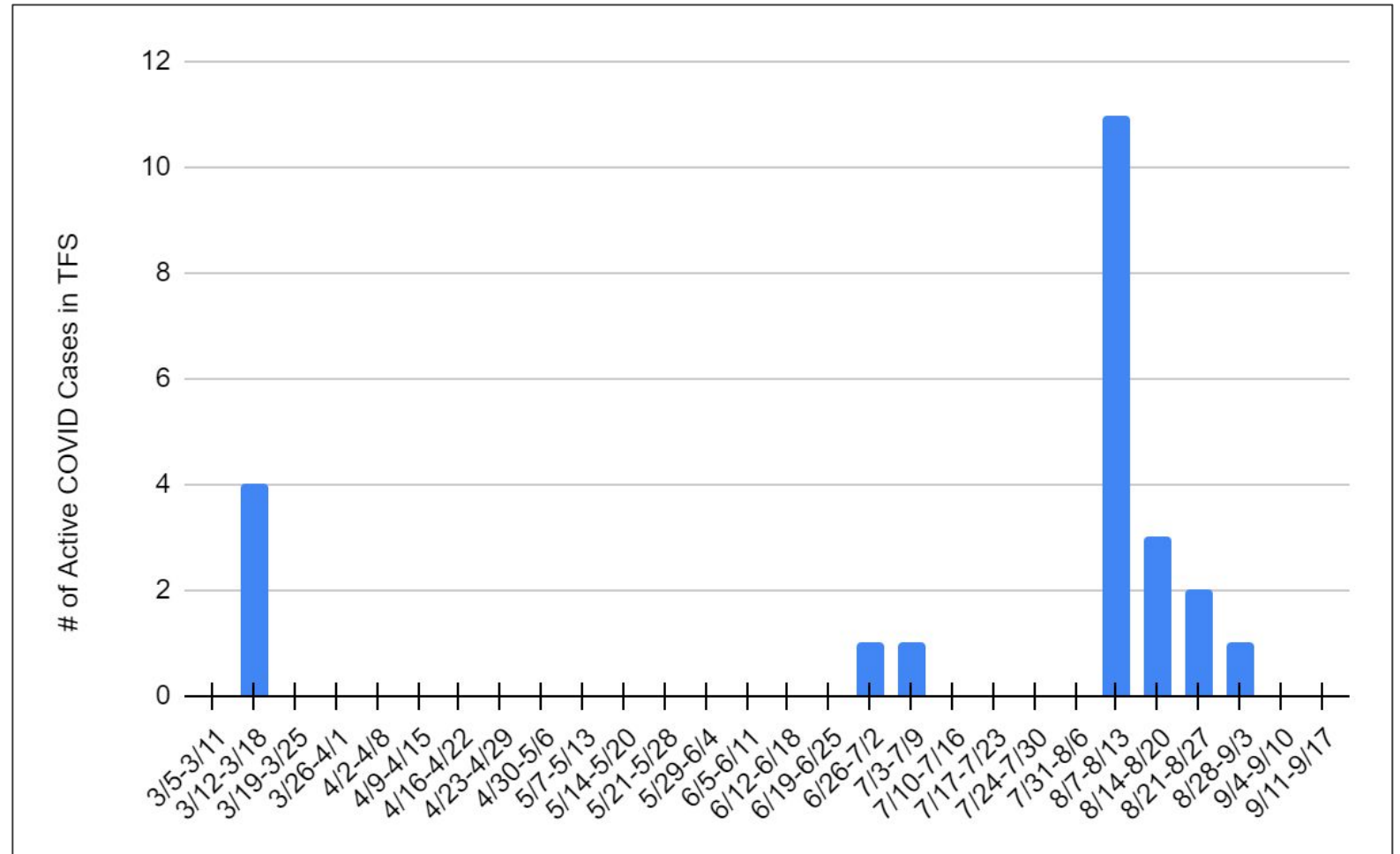
MEDICAL RESPONSE

- Users sought assistance with day-to-day medical support: minor injuries from fieldwork and recreational activities.
- 2023 saw a large number of slips, trips, falls, sprains & strains.
- Most were minor musculoskeletal injuries (sprains and strains) could be self-treated using common-use medical supply cabinet.



COVID-19

- **18 total confirmed COVID-19 cases in TFS during 2023.**
 - 11 maximum cases at the station at one time.
- 7 confirmed COVID cases intercepted during pre-travel antigen testing.



COVID-19: 2023 Mitigation Policy

- Updated COVID mitigation policy:
 - TFS required all travelers entering the station to attest to being up-to-date with vaccinations, according to current CDC guidelines. Exceptions were made for those with medical or religious exemptions.
 - Removal of quarantine in favor of a test-based screening model
 - 2 rapid antigen tests before departure
 - 2 post-arrival tests; 1 each on days 5 & 7 post arrival
- Test results, vaccine attestations, and policy acknowledgements were obtained via a pre-departure Google form.
- The pre-departure form has collected results from 740 individual reservations since 2023.
- Projects were responsible for supplying their own antigen tests.
 - 2 pre-departure, 2 post-arrival, and 2 surplus for a total of 6 antigen tests per person per unique reservation

COVID-19

- On-station protocols prioritized isolation and containment of the spread of COVID-19.
- Two 6-person WeatherPorts were removed from the general housing pool to function as sick bays in case of a station outbreak.
- COVID-positive individuals were relocated to sick bays until cleared via antigen testing
 - The on-site EMT was responsible for delivering meals and attending to the needs of those in isolation.
- Close contacts of COVID-positive individuals were required to eat meals separate from other community members, mask indoors, and undergo a daily testing regimen for 7 days.

COVID-19: Case history

- First active COVID cases in March 2023
 - 4 total cases were isolated in their otherwise unoccupied dormitory due to the low winter population.
 - No suspected spread outside of the affected project.
- One field trip was unable to visit due to COVID. A new helo pilot tested positive 7/1/2023.
- An outbreak of 11 cases occurred between 8/7/23-8/20/23.
 - Multiple projects and staff departments were infected and isolated.
 - 18 additional residents were required to follow monitoring precautions due to their close contact with those infected.
 - A facility-wide test was conducted 7 days after the first case to monitor spread.
 - By 8/28/23 all positive cases from the 8/7 outbreak had either departed the station or been cleared from quarantine with no complications.

COVID-19

- On 8/27, a contractor tested positive for COVID-19 in TFS and left shortly thereafter.
- An additional station resident tested positive for COVID on 9/1 - this individual is believed to have been infected by the 8/27 contractor due to the timeline and potential for close contact between the two individuals.
- There were no additional COVID cases to report after 9/3/23.
- There were no major health complications to report for any cases of COVID-19 at TFS for 2023.

HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- Hazardous waste disposal conducted by UAF in October.
 - 5,775 L of liquid waste
 - 135 kg of solid waste
- Chemical storage in laboratories continues to present a challenge.
 - Materials are left between seasons.
 - Chemicals that are abandoned by non-returning projects become waste that is difficult to dispose.
 - TFS Safety has made great progress in disposing abandoned chemical waste between field seasons.



HAZARDOUS MATERIALS

- Radioactive material transport is performed in conjunction with the responsible project(s) and UAF Environmental Health, Safety, & Risk Management (EHSRM)
- UAF EHSRM conducted an on-site inspection of all above-ground fuel tanks and laboratory facilities on TFS property in September 2023.
- No reportable spills occurred between October 2022 - September 2023.
 - An outhouse blackwater tank ruptured in August 2023 resulting in ~20 gallons of effluent onto the pad before being contained. This was reported to UAF EHSRM, NSF and Battelle ARO.

ROAD AND BOAT SAFETY

- Travel up the Dalton Highway presents many safety risks for TFS residents.
- North and southbound trucks receive a road safety orientation by either TFS Logistics or Safety.
- All vehicles are equipped with GPS tracking as well as sat phones for emergency communications.
- TFS had no major roadside incidents in 2023.

ROAD AND BOAT SAFETY

- All TFS residents who use boats for science or recreation undergo a water safety orientation that covers general boat safety and Toolik Lake topographical features.
- No water safety incidents during 2022.



MENTAL HEALTH

- Continues to be a major concern for users and staff.
- Added a [Mental Health resource page](#) on Toolik website.
- TFS Safety can refer to emergency services but does not have the capacity to provide long-term maintenance care.
- COVID-19 has amplified an already major issue at remote field camps.
 - Small group sizes means that the few who can travel up to TFS have to spend a larger amount of time performing more work → Faster, more severe burnout
- Ultimately, groups must factor the mental health of their researchers into their project plan before they make reservations.
 - Avoid long shifts.
 - Spread work over more people. Can't send more people? Adjust workload.
 - Identify resources your home institution can provide

SEE YOU IN 2024!

