

Northumberland County

FIRE & EMS STUDY

In consultation with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, Virginia Department of Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services, and the Virginia Department of Forestry



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Luttrell Tadlock, County Administrator

Wes Packett, Chief of Emergency Services

Callao Vol. Fire Department

Fairfield's Vol. Fire Department

Mid-County Vol. Rescue Squad

Callao Vol. Rescue Squad

Northumberland County Rescue Squad

Smith Point Sea Rescue

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Northumberland County Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Study. The information contained is not to be construed as legal advice or as binding recommendations. This report is intended to provide guidance for Northumberland County and its fire and rescue stakeholders an opportunity to build on what is working well, while observing opportunities for improvement. Strategic focus in these areas will enhance the overall quality and coordination of fire-rescue service delivery to residents of Northumberland County and the surrounding areas.

The study was requested by the Board of Supervisors in order to analyze several areas of responsibility within the Counties Fire and Rescue Services. The Study Committee was comprised of representatives from the Virginia Fire Services Board, the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, the Virginia Department of Forestry, and the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services.

The findings and recommendations are organized into five working themes to include:

- Organizational Development
- Communication
- Training
- Budget and Administration
- Delivery of Services

These working themes provide a central focus for prioritizing the study's recommendations. They serve as a guide for the Study Committee to identify and evaluate measures that ultimately will improve the quality and coordination of Fire and EMS Services within Northumberland County.

Below is a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations, which will be discussed further in the report. Additional suggestions are within the report and are not highlighted in this high level summary.

Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 9)

- ***Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:*** Northumberland County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services, so it is able to improve performance levels utilizing measurable data.
- ***Accountability Practices:*** Northumberland County should create countywide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for both Fire & EMS organizations to ensure continuity and level of service across the county.

- Emergency Medical Services: The County should look to organize county EMS efforts under one umbrella agency to provide a standard of service across the county.

Theme 2: Communications (Page 13)

- Levels of Interdepartmental Communication: The Northumberland County Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a mediator to discuss ways to improve communication and continuity for countywide emergency services.

Theme 3: Training (Page 15)

- Coordinated Training Program: The County should pursue a comprehensive joint training program between all volunteer fire departments to ensure proper basic training and assess it annually to ensure that it meets the needs of departments. The County should encourage the volunteer departments to collaborate in local training opportunities.
- Rappahannock Regional Burn Building: The County needs to re-examine the administration and up keep of the local Rappahannock Regional Burn Building. This is a valuable training asset and should be maintained and utilized for future training.

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 17)

- Budgeting: Northumberland County should implement an annual financial review of all fire and EMS providers with line by line budget reports for all allocated county public funds.
- Capital Budget Fund: The County should establish a planned replacement of equipment and apparatus.
- Standardization and Central Purchasing: Northumberland County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses to departments. The county should consider the possibility of insuring all emergency apparatus on one policy.

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 20)

- Recruitment and Retention: County Administration should identify the needs for additional volunteer fire and rescue personnel to meet the service demands and citizen expectations. Local government must take a proactive role in accomplishing the task. While developing new recruitment strategies to increase volunteer workforce.
- Countywide Program: Adopt an official countywide recruitment and retention program.

- *Work with Smith Point Sea Rescue:* The County should explore the opportunity to have an EMS provider on board to respond to calls to assist with injuries and medical conditions on the water. Additionally the county could look to add a fire suppression system on a boat to help with ISO ratings along the expansive waterfront community.
- *Location of Emergency Service:* The County should examine the locations of its current Fire & Rescue facilities and should consider moving one of the career trucks to a different location to cut down on response times

METHODOLOGY

For each task of the work plan, the Study Committee identified objectives, performed specific activities, and delivered project products. The following is an overview of the study process:

PHASE I: INITIATE PROJECT

Objectives: Initiation of Study

To initiate the study, the Study Committee began by gaining a comprehensive understanding of the project’s background, goals, and expectations. This was carried out by identifying in detail the specific objectives for the review, and assessing how well the work plan would accomplish the objectives. In addition, the Study Committee set out to establish a mutually agreed project work plan, timeline, deliverables, and monitoring procedures that would support the accomplishment of all project objectives. The final study initiation step consisted of collecting and reviewing existing operational data and information on agreements along with relevant policies and procedures. Many of these review materials are included in the appendix of this study.

As part of Phase I, the Study Committee met with leadership from Northumberland County to establish working relationships, make logistical arrangements, and determine communication lines. During these meetings, the Study Committee discussed the objectives of the project and identified policy issues and concerns central to the study.

The meetings also allowed the Study Committee to obtain pertinent reports and background materials relevant to the review, such as current and historical staffing data, as well as a description of the current service delivery system and organization.

Based on this course of action, the Study Committee concluded this section of the study with a revised project work plan/timeline deliverable.

PHASE II: OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER INPUT

Objectives: Conduct Leadership Interviews & Capture Input from the Departments

The second phase of the study consisted of leadership interviews and department evaluations. The expectations were as follows:

- Identify expected service levels;
- Identify opinions of department officials concerning the operations and performance of the department;
- Identify issues and concerns of officials regarding fire and rescue services;
- Identify perceived gaps in existing service levels and new priorities in mission; and,
- Identify strengths and weaknesses as perceived by departmental personnel.

Each goal was realized with the support of the Chief of Emergency Services, Wes Packett assisted in finalizing the interview list and establishing a schedule that was reasonable, but more importantly convenient for the interviewees. All interviews were conducted during an allotted timeframe and a considerable amount of information was collected. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with all County Fire & EMS organizations as well as County leadership.

The Study Committee received descriptions of staffing and deployment responses in meeting service demands at targeted service levels. The discussions also provided a snapshot of personnel management contentions as well as concerns regarding service delivery. It is also important to note that the Study committee visited all volunteer departments in Northumberland County to include Fairfield's Vol. Fire Department Reedville Station, Fairfield's Vol. Fire Department Glebe Point Station, and the Callao Vol. Fire Department to inspect fire apparatus and equipment. In addition the committee also visited all rescue squad locations to include the Northumberland Rescue Squad, Callao Vol. Rescue Squad, Mid-County Vol. Rescue Squad, and a brief visit to see the facilities for the 911 dispatch in the County's Sheriff's Office.

The deliverable for this section of the study work plan consisted of a thorough evaluation of the site visit data and the development of working themes to capture the team's assessment.

PHASE III: PREPARE ANALYSES AND DEVELOP CORE STRATEGIES

Objectives: Evaluate Current Trends and Prepare a Report

The third phase of the study work plan involved further investigation and understanding of the organizational structures, operations, limitations, achievements, and opportunities for improvement within the volunteer system. The activities that supported this process consisted of additional requests for information not already obtained in Phase I and II of the work plan. Data requests, made in this phase of the study, attempt to address any issues that emerged from the interviews, and further evaluate implications of the operational issues cited. Data obtained during the study process also assists the Study Committee in identifying issues influencing the current levels of service.

After receiving and critically evaluating information from the interviews and all supporting materials, the Study Committee began identifying the necessary critical action steps

to achieve exceptional organizational functioning and uniform service levels throughout the County.

Each action step was selected to identify the changes in policies, facilities, apparatus and equipment to ensure that the county would be capable of providing fire, EMS and rescue services at the desired level going forward.

The deliverables achieved in Phase III involved drafting a report that evaluated current trends in the services, recommended action steps for improvement, and the assignment of responsibility.

PHASE IV: PREPARE FINAL REPORT

Objectives: Prepare and Present Final Report

The final phase of the study involved documenting the results of all previous tasks into a written report with critical components, such as an executive summary, methodology, background, and findings and recommendations. Once completed, a draft report was shared with the County Administrator, Luttrell Tadlock, to ensure the technical content is accurate. Upon receiving corrections, the Study Committee revised the draft report, as needed, to assist in the preparation and issuance of the final report.

The deliverables for the final phase of the work plan consisted of 1) a draft report, and 2) the final report.

COUNTY INFORMATION

Northumberland County is located in the Northern Neck bordered by Lancaster, Richmond, and Westmoreland County. The county sits on a peninsula nestled between the Rappahannock River to the south and Potomac River to the north. The Chesapeake Bay is immediately east of the county. Located at the eastern terminus of U.S. Route 360, Reedville is a popular place to begin fishing charters and trips to Tangier Island in the Bay. Reedville is also a tourist destination itself, steeped in the history of the menhaden fishing industry which is the area's largest economic driver.

In 2019, Northumberland County, VA had a population of approximately 12.2k people with a median age of 58.9 and a median household income of \$62,632. Between 2018 and 2019 the population of Northumberland County, VA declined from 12,223 to 12,190, a -0.27% decrease and its median household income grew from \$58,677 to \$62,632, a 6.74% increase. From the study committee interviews it was stated that the area has seen a significant population growth due to the recent pandemic which has changed the demographics of the county along the waterfront regions.

The County Administration Office works under the direction of the Board of Supervisors. They draft, implement, and enforce policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors. In addition, the County Administration Office maintains the records of the Board of Supervisors along with maintaining county operating and capital budgets. The current County Administrator is Luttrell Tadlock,

The Northumberland County Board of Supervisors consists of 5 members, one from each of the five election districts, serving a four year term and are elected officials of the County. Board meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month. All meetings are held in the New County Courthouse located at 220 Judicial Place Heathsville, VA 22473.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Northumberland County has two volunteer fire departments and three volunteer rescue squads that serve the citizens of Northumberland County. Additionally the County has a Department of Emergency Services which consists of two functional areas, the Division of Emergency Medical Services (EMS) and the Office of Emergency Management (OEM). The county EMS provides 24 hour-a-day, state of the art basic and advanced life support emergency medical services to the residents and visitors of Northumberland County. OEM provides preparedness, response and recovery services to the residents of Northumberland County by writing the Emergency Operations Plan, managing the county's emergency operations center, and by coordinating post disaster recovery activities. The county also provides two 24 hour EMS trucks

Currently the county emergency services has the Northumberland County Emergency Services Working Committee that meets on a quarterly basis to discuss issues within in the emergency services community.

Strategic Plan and Unified Vision

There should be a long-term plan for the provision of fire and EMS services in the county. The creation and implementation of a communication system throughout the organization to effectively and efficiently achieve all operational goals is vital for its success. Communications was mentioned by each organization outlining various problems caused due to the lack there of.

The long-term plan must be able to address growth in service demands, and how the system will work to limit service interruptions and collaboratively work with its mutual aid providers. Northumberland County should create this plan to serve as a road map to move forward in sustaining and improving countywide services.

- Enhance the quality of life through prevention, education, and community involvement
- Deliver responsive and caring emergency services
- Mitigate emergencies and disasters
- Prevent the loss of life and property
- Retention and expansion of volunteer workforce

Moreover, the locality must pursue to establish a strategic plan that represents the collective efforts of Northumberland County leadership and nearby service providers, so it is able to identify the critical challenges it faces with clearly defined performance goals. Such evaluation will allow the locality to identify specific initiatives they must undertake so it is capable of delivering quality service to their citizens. Strategic planning must become institutionalized as

The foregoing is a recommendation authorized pursuant to Va. Code 9.1-203.A.4 and is not to be construed as legal advice or as a binding recommendation.

an integral part of the fire and rescue department and community resource allocations.¹ The county should explore hiring a professional facilitator with strategic planning experience to guide them through this process.

Recommendations:

1. Northumberland County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services so it is able to improve performance efficiency.
 - I. Stakeholders must each play an integral part in the development of this strategic plan in order to meet expectations and foster commitment.
 - II. Parties involved in the strategic planning process should analyze the gap between where the county is and where it wants to be in the future and identify strategies to close this gap.
 - III. Northumberland County officials should meet with each individual emergency service organization to gain a full understanding of the current state of emergency services within the county.
 - IV. It is suggested that a neutral party facilitate this process.
2. Collaboratively, service providers and the county Administration must establish a system of measurable performance goals and objectives. These measures will serve as the basis for the strategic plan.
 - I. Strategic plans should identify immediate, intermediate and long-term goals with reasonable target deadlines.
 - II. The Board of Supervisors should routinely review the achievement of these performance measurements and alleviate any barriers to their completion.
3. Utilize the Virginia OEMS Standards of Excellence (SOE) Program
 - I. All 4 EMS agencies are highly encouraged to utilize the SOE self-assessment exercises to examine the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for their respective organizations and utilize it to further evaluate the long term sustainability of the county's EMS System.
 - II. Here is the link to the site: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/virginia-standards-of-excellence-program/>
4. In developing its strategic plan, Northumberland County should use incident analysis and reporting, to include the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS).
 - I. The county commitment to reporting will ensure that they have reliable data to appropriately assess performance and develop a plan to address operational and capital funding needs, or equipment, apparatus and facility needs.

¹ Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service, March 2004

- II. By analyzing fire and rescue incident data and potential community hazards, a plan can be developed to improve deployment of resources, placement of sub stations, and the number of personnel needed for response and prevention efforts.
- III. Access to the data collected should be provided to the rescue squad and fire department so they are able to get a comprehensive understanding of their performance.
- IV. The use of data such as VFIRS can be contributing factors to performance measurement and can further enable stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan.

Performance measurements will enable the Board of Supervisors an ability to evaluate the performance of its service providers tasked with accomplishing the goals and objectives of the strategic plan. The performance measurement will exhibit clear association between performing, planning, spending and results. The county will have the opportunity to evaluate its mission, vision and performance objectives through three perspectives: financial accountability, constituent priorities and internal processes.

Accountability Practices

During the study committee visit it was determined that each fire department and volunteer EMS service operated independently and did not have countywide standards. By implementing countywide standards it will help to improve coordination and safety in a response of an emergency where multiple departments respond. This will also aide in setting a level of service countywide for all citizens.

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), a standard operating procedure is “an organizational directive that establishes a standard course of action.”² Standard operating Guidelines (SOGs) are written guidelines that explain what is expected and required of fire service personnel in performing their jobs.³ SOGs are, in their simplest form, a “how-to” guideline to follow to achieve a desired goal. SOGs should not be viewed as rules and regulations, but rather as a roadmap to achieve specific goals and objectives. SOPS, however, are formal policies that specify a course of action, thereby ensuring efficiency, predictability, consistency, and safety.

Recommendations:

1. Working with their volunteer membership and relevant stakeholders – Northumberland County should adopt a single Standard Operating Procedures or Guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) for EMS and fire organizations with an accountability system.
2. Engage all stakeholders in the development of countywide SOPs/SOGs to encourage buy in through a formalized process that encourages all emergency service personnel to contribute

² Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments, December 1999

³ Ibid

3. Ensure the countywide use of these SOPs/SOGs to ensure a level of service and aid in the understanding across departments.

Emergency Medical Services

During the study committee's site visit the members visited all EMS facilities and sat down with each volunteer rescue squad to discuss the current level of service. The volunteer organizations operate for 6am-6pm and run mostly Basic Life Support calls. An addition to the volunteer service, the county has two paid career trucks that run all Advanced Life Support calls for the county 24/7.

1. The county should change the EMS model where the County EMS agency is an "umbrella agency" in which all volunteer EMS members are also a member of the County's EMS Agency.
 - I. This would allow for cross staffing across all agencies as needed, (Similar model as Virginia Beach has, <https://www.vbems.com/>) allowing each agency to still have its independence as a nonprofit agency, but staffing can be covered with more availability across the county for cross staffing.
 - II. Consideration of all EMS agencies under the County EMS License to allow for the admin work for volunteers to be maintained by career staff administration allowing the volunteers more time to answer calls and less time dedicated to the administrative responsibilities.
2. Uniformity with Medical Director
 - I. 1 or 2 OMDs for the agency(s) to have all providers covered under the same expectations and quality assurance practices, etc.
 - II. All agencies are currently operating under the same baseline EMS Protocols (PEMS).
 - III. Having dual OMDs may still be a beneficial aspect due to the varied transport locations, but ensuring the OMDs are working together on provider competencies, expectations, etc. Would be beneficial to the organizations.

THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

It was the determination of the study committee that the county lacks proactive steps to ensure communications to citizens and coordinating emergency service stakeholders. Improvement of the current level of communication has the potential to create a more cohesive relationship within the emergency services organizations in the county. For a volunteer system to remain effective it must have a clear way to communicate to the constituents they serve. An effective communications process will improve the strategic plan and clearly define expectations for the community, while showing an active and open environment that is attractive to potential volunteers.

Levels of Interdepartmental Communications

During the site visit, the study committee observed a need for improved communication among the volunteer organizations. Lack of effective personal and professional communications can have the potential to affect the application of fire and rescue activities within Northumberland County. These efforts are vital in developing a way forward to fight for a common goal of improving emergency services. The county must identify and resolve the breakdowns in communications and work tirelessly to educate all members. Currently all emergency services operate separately and rarely explore opportunities to work together. The county's dispatch System is located within Northumberland County Sheriff's Office. The facility is responsible for all incoming emergency and non-emergency communications; moreover, it is staffed 24/7.

Recommendations:

1. Northumberland County should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a mediator to resolve existing challenges and barriers amongst all Emergency Services personnel and affected parties to help determine strengths and weaknesses and ways to improve services countywide.
 - I. The objective of this work session should be to develop strategies to overcome identified barriers. It should further create and implement an effective communication system involving all emergency departments and entities.
 - II. The county must develop an efficient and effective communication model to ensure all stakeholders within the public safety community have input into long-term plans and decisions.
 - III. This communication model must ensure reliable documentation related to public safety strategic planning and development. It must be disseminated and received by all public safety stakeholders.
 - IV. The communication session should further serve as an opportunity to clarify and establish countywide joint operations opportunities

2. The county should explore additional ways to communicate with its fire and EMS personnel. Some options include producing an annual report, developing a quarterly newsletter and utilizing social networking avenues.
3. The Emergency Service Departments should look to create public websites to engage potential volunteers and be more active in the dissemination of information of public services within the county.
4. The county should take advantage of pre-existing fire and life-safety information available through state and federal organizations. Public fire and life-safety education resources are available at the following locations:
 - I. Virginia Department of Fire Programs: <https://www.vafire.com/fire-safety-education>
 - II. Virginia Fire and Life Safety Coalition: <http://www.vflsc.org>
 - III. The Home Safety Council: <http://www.homesafetycouncil.org>
 - IV. National Fire Protection Association: <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/Building-and-Life-Safety>
 - V. Virginia Department of Forestry: <https://dof.virginia.gov/wildland-prescribed-fire/wildfire-prevention/>
 - VI. Virginia Department of Emergency Management: <https://www.vaemergency.gov/agency/planning/>

THEME 3: TRAINING

Development of important skills is the basis for safety and improving services received by the citizens. The county does not currently have standard operating procedures for their fire departments in regards to countywide training. Individual departments did have their own training manuals such as the Fairfield's Yellow Hat Manual for new recruits. But additional training is needed to ensure that individuals are able to assist and respond safely. Training accessibility can serve as a barrier for new recruitment for volunteer organizations, so any effort to simplify training should be made to maintain a volunteer service in the county. In addition to visiting all of the fire departments in the county the study committee also visited the local live fire training structure. The Rappahannock Regional Burn Building is a valuable training resource for the local fire departments and surrounding counties. Currently the building administration is lacking structure which has led to a poor maintenance schedule of the building and allowed the building to fall below the allowable standard.

Coordinated Training Program

Although the county appears to be trying its best to utilize the best practices in delivering training – there is no coordinated training system in place within Northumberland County. There is a unique opportunity to pursue joint operations as it pertains to training. These joint operations will ensure a properly trained and prepared response and help departments coordinate for future joint responses to emergencies.

Recommendation:

1. Northumberland County should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually. Such assessment will enable the adoption of warranted changes.
 - I. The Board of Supervisors should appropriate all the necessary resources to fulfill the counties identified training challenges and fully train existing firefighters and rescue personnel.
 - II. Set up training goals and standards for fire personnel.
2. Northumberland County should seek ways to properly maintain the Rappahannock Regional Burn Building live fire training structure.
 - I. A proper maintenance schedule should be put in place to make sure the building remains safe and in compliance with standards.
 - II. Additional allocations for repairs should be made to bring this live fire training structure back into compliance.
 - III. Coalitions with surrounding counties should be sought to pursue additional funding if needed for the continued maintenance of the structure so that it does not fall into dis-repair.

3. Joint or collaborative training opportunities must be pursued by Northumberland County to ensure countywide training of emergency provider personnel.
 - I. The county should develop a countywide training program to coordinate classes
 - II. Coordinate joint live fire training exercises between departments
 - III. Work with VDFP Division 1 staff to discuss local training opportunities

Additional Suggestions:

4. Cross training County EMS Staff for Firefighter-EMS.
 - I. Fire Fighter scheduling rules under the DOL are different from non-suppression related job duties.
 - II. Driver pump operators- get apparatus to scene, flow water during low volunteer situations.
5. County Fire-EMS Educator.
 - I. For initial training i.e. EMR, EMT, FF1, HazMat, etc. as well as continuing education (CE) for EMS providers.
 - II. CE training offered at the various volunteer stations and or rotated throughout.
 - III. Have a CE program that would afford all providers the ability to complete the recertification on the NREMT cycles of 2 years.
 - IV. Work on bringing EMR-EMT-Firefighter to the high school for high school student program.
6. All EMS agencies are encouraged to have leadership training including VA OEMS EMS Officer.
 - I. Additional EMS Leadership resources can be found here:
<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/chatr/leadership-management/>
 - II. Additional Leadership/Management information from OEMS can be found here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/agency-technical-assistance-resources/>

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

The study committee observed that the county does not collect sufficient budgeting data for proper expenditure reporting from the volunteer organizations. It was determined that there was not sufficient accountability for reporting of public funds that were being disbursed and spent by each department and rescue squad. By not ensuring the expenditure of county funds there is no structure to determine further expenditures and sustainable levels of service.

Budgeting

From the study committees interviews it was determined that improvements in the budgeting of Northumberland County should be improved. By not doing so, the county may not assess whether the level of funding currently expended is adequate to support the organizations.

Recommendations:

1. Northumberland County should complete an annual needs assessment for the delivery of fire and EMS services and ensure it improves the base funding allocation system centered upon the priorities set through the needs assessment and quantitative data.
 - I. The County must develop an accountability process for public funds disbursed to emergency services. Northumberland County should implement an annual financial review of all fire and EMS providers with line by line budget reports for all allocated county public funds. This process will aid in the determination of further need and the proper expenditure of public funds.
 - II. Monies should be allocated based on the most critical needs and the highest call volume data.
 - III. It is recommended that the county continuously evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investments.
 - IV. More financial support such as insurance, fuel, utilities, medical supplies, etc. would allow for more volunteer availability to respond and train vs fundraise to sustain agency.
2. All agencies need to have a formalized budget and a formal review process such as an audit report.
 - I. Donations, grants, county allocated funds, Medicare/Medicaid are all taxpayer sourced funds to a 501c3.
 - II. For transparency and verification of appropriate use of public funds, financial reports should be required to the county annually for continued/increased financial support.
3. The county should establish a practice of planned replacement of fire and EMS equipment and apparatus to take advantage of changing technologies and avoid increasing maintenance costs.

The foregoing is a recommendation authorized pursuant to Va. Code 9.1-203.A.4 and is not to be construed as legal advice or as a binding recommendation.

Additional Suggestions:

4. Grants

- I. RSAF (Rescue Squad Assistance Fund) is a grant offered by OEMS for nonprofit and governmental EMS agencies
 - i. <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/administration-finance/rsaf-grants-program/>
 - ii. EMS equipment, vehicles etc.
 - iii. 911 Dispatch centers (Northumberland Sheriff's Office is eligible to apply for RSAF for EMD)
 - a. EMD remains a priority for funding for RSAF.
 - iv. Agencies are highly encouraged to apply for funding through RSAF.
 - a. Joint agency application has a higher impact for the funding if it is covering a larger population, i.e. multi-agency = more citizens covered.
 - v. Special Priorities for RSAF Funding
 - a. Migration to VPHIB Version 3 (VAv3) Requirements
 - b. Emergency Medical Dispatch Emergency Operations Innovative (Special) Projects
 - c. Multi-Jurisdictional or Agency Projects
 - d. Recruitment and Retention
- II. Seek funding through private grants and foundations. Some additional grant opportunities may be found on the RSAF link above.
- III. The County could look to hire a grant writer for Fire-EMS to assist and/or write grants for Fire-EMS. We know that the current Chief of Emergency Services has done some work and has experience in writing grant applications.

Standardization and Central Purchasing

There is no centralized purchasing system for fire and EMS equipment in Northumberland County. Currently all fire and rescue squads shop, stock, and service their equipment separately. This leads to increased cost and the inability to share man power effectively. It is imperative that the county pursue centralized purchasing. Standardization and central purchasing will not be without difficulty, but is necessary for delivering cost-effective and efficient fire and rescue services. Group purchasing is highly recommended. The use of standardization of future equipment and apparatus purchases can potentially lead to cost-savings countywide.

Recommendations:

1. County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.

2. Consider one Insurance Policy for all Fire-EMS apparatus.
 - I. Consider county funded insurance under the county's policy to help reduce the need for volunteers to raise funds to operate. (Less fundraising efforts, more efforts of their limited time to call response and training.)

3. Develop specifications for central purchase activity areas. Below are suggested areas/activities for central purchasing:
 - I. Personal Protective Equipment⁴ and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus⁵ Ensure all departments are purchasing compatible equipment that meets National Fire Protection Association standards and are reaping the same cost savings.
 - II. Equipment/Apparatus – The emergency services decision making body should survey each department to determine if equipment commonalities exist. As previously mentioned, common apparatus specifications should be created and contracted, allowing organizations to make customizations without overly altering the specs, and reap the benefits of group purchasing for routine maintenance and replacement of aging fire and EMS apparatus.
 - III. Countywide medical supply ordering.
 - i. Items ordered as a bulk order can be centrally ordered, stored and distributed to the appropriate agencies.
 - ii. Reduces expenses through supply sharing and bulk order discounts.
 - iii. Less waste of funds and supplies. Items near expiration may be utilized on a higher volume unit at times rather than expiring on a lower volume unit.

4. Northumberland county should exert efforts in identifying specifications for future apparatus purchases, and replacement using the following national consensus standards:
 - I. NFPA 1901 - Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus ⁶
 - II. NFPA 1911 – Standard for Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus ⁷

⁴ See NFPA 1971 Standard on Protective Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting

⁵ See NFPA 1981 Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) for Emergency Services

⁶NFPA 1901, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1901>

⁷ NFPA 1911, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1911>

The foregoing is a recommendation authorized pursuant to Va. Code 9.1-203.A.4 and is not to be construed as legal advice or as a binding recommendation.

THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The county has 2 fire departments which consists of all volunteer members. During the study team's visit it was determined that Northumberland still has a large base of volunteer fire members. Fairfield's Vol. Fire Department reported 33 current members with roughly 22 active and responding in the case of an emergency. In addition, the Callao Vol. Fire Department reported having 80 members with an active role of 50 members responding.

When it comes to EMS Services within Northumberland County there are three volunteer rescue squads to include Mid- County, Callao, and the Northumberland Volunteer Rescue squad. The county also has two staffed paid EMS trucks separate from the volunteer organizations to help supplement services. These are two fully staffed trucks that run 24/7 and are located near the county courthouse. Volunteer organizations currently only run calls between the hours of 6am- 6pm and are spread out around the county. Each Volunteer Organization reported having around 22-19 members each, but few members were active and responding to calls on a regular basis. The study committee did not believe that the volunteer rescue squads had sufficient trained EMS personal to properly respond and that additional are needed.

Lastly the study committee visited the Smith Point Sea Rescue a local all-volunteer organization dedicated to providing assistance to boats having difficulties in the mid-Chesapeake Bay area. The Sea rescue does not charge for rescue services and receives no regular monetary support from the county. Funds are derived from donations and fundraising events. The service does not currently have any EMS personnel on board and is mainly a boating tow service. While this is not a county service the study committee saw an opportunity for emergency services to partner with the boat service to cater to the counties large waterfront population.

Recommendations:

1. Examine the location of fire & rescue stations.
 - I. There is opportunity to utilize volunteer agencies to house a career truck at a different location to cut down on response time for career trucks.
2. Work with Smith Point Sea Rescue to have an EMS provider to respond to calls to further assist with injuries and medical conditions on the water.
 - I. Smith Point Sea Rescue could be included into the "County umbrella EMS agency' via MOUs, including SOPs/SOGs for the Sea Rescue determining if EMS and or Fire personnel are needed to respond for the deployment of Sea Rescue.
 - II. Smith Point Sea Rescue should work with the fire/county to purchase a volume pump for fire suppression from water to help improve ISO ratings along the waterfront properties in the county.

3. Assess additional need for Trained EMS personal in volunteer departments
4. Utilize EMS run data via ImageTrend/ESO and 911 Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) Data to study and evaluate the best options for staffing locations of the career staffing.
5. Consider modifying the response models to expand the volunteer hours.
 - I. Further assistance to both career and volunteer can be supplemented with a career/volunteer Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider in an ALS quick response vehicle (QRV) response i.e. SUV.
 - i. ALS QRV coverage for volunteers can be a take home unit that would be assigned to ALS volunteers for sign up on a countywide basis.
 - ii. This may help to bring additional volunteers to an ALS level.
 - II. If volunteer units are strictly running as a BLS unit, financial savings can be acquired if the ALS supplies are utilized from an ALS QRV(s) to be brought onto the Basic Life Support (BLS) unit.
 - III. Volunteers can consider driver only roles for their agencies to help with staffing.
 - i. Oftentimes these roles expand into become certified providers and works well as a recruiting tool, particularly in rural areas.

Recruitment and Retention

Northumberland County, similar to other parts of the Commonwealth, requires consistent support from local government to help with recruitment and retention. The County Government in collaboration with the individual departments must actively recruit to ensure that an effective succession planning process is place. While the fire volunteer base in Northumberland was higher than average additional steps should be taken to ensure that these levels are maintained and continue to flourish. The rescue squads did not have as of a robust volunteer membership and may need additional volunteers to be sustainable. The volunteer requirements and applications should be clearly outlined on the County and individual department websites. This enables any individual interested in pursuing a career in fire and EMS services within Northumberland County an opportunity to read and review content without endless inquiries. When building a recruitment plan, it is important to consider the following: how to actively recruit, barriers to recruitment, keeping members once they join, assessing why members join, and addressing how important it is to have the right leaders in place.

The study committee determined that some recruitment efforts have been undertaken by the departments, but many other ways could be deployed to increase engagement and retention of volunteers. This is a great resource:

<https://www.nvfc.org/wpcontent/uploads/2017/07/Culture-Shift-Textbook-FINAL.pdf>

Recommendations:

1. County Administration should identify the needs for volunteer fire and rescue personnel to meet the service demands and citizen expectations.
 - I. Through improvement of fire and rescue incident data analysis and strategic planning, the county should be able to determine fire and rescue personnel needs, equipment needs and deployment.⁸
2. County Recruitment and Retention (R&R) Officer/Coordinator
 - I. County staff personnel who has duties to assist, coordinate county wide Fire-EMS R&R Programs
 - i. POCs available upon request from various EMS/Fire-EMS agencies in VA, See additional information below re R&R
 - II. County gov. have a more involved interest in assisting with the Fire-EMS R&R
 - i. VA Beach having a strong Volunteer support from the City saves the city \$22m per year.
 - a. <https://vbrescuefoundation.org/about/>
3. Adopt an official countywide recruitment and retention program.
 - I. This recruitment and retention program should take into consideration the needs of current members and identify motivational factors to keep this population engaged and committed to the fire and rescue service.
 - II. The County should set annual recruitment and retention goals and concentrate its efforts and resources to achieving these benchmarks. The plan should be included in the strategic plan.
 - III. Work with local schools to engage students and educate about the needs of the volunteer agencies.
 - IV. County Administration should look at creating further incentives for emergency volunteer personnel participation. Develop programs within the County to reward members with small, tangible and intangible tokens of appreciation for exceptional performance and effort. Rewards such as :
 - i. Badges/ID cards or other rewards for completing specific training requirements or other achievements;
 - ii. Reading, posting, and forwarding to the County Board of Supervisors, the County Administrator, favorable reports, letters, and commendations, especially those from the public and particularly those related to joint volunteer activities.
 - iii. Possibly further tax incentives for volunteer members

⁸ International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) - "Make Better Decisions: Put Your Data to Work," <http://www.iafc.org/MemberCenter/OnSceneArticle.cfm?ItemNumber=5840>. This article provides an example of how multiple sources of data can be incorporated into fire and rescue department planning.

- V. Publicize the fact that there are a variety of services for volunteers in the fire and rescue services. Examples include:
 - i. Direct providers of fire, rescue and EMS
 - ii. Support services (equipment maintenance and repair, training, etc.)
 - iii. Administrative services (secretarial, bookkeeping and accounting, legal, data processing, etc.)
 - VI. Develop a mentoring program so new volunteers can receive assistance from experienced volunteers, to make new volunteers feel comfortable and accepted, and to provide assistance in learning required skills and technical requirements. Encourage career personnel to serve as mentors. •
 - VII. Encourage the local media in their reporting on fire and rescue activities to emphasize the uniqueness of the County's volunteer service.
4. Find low-cost methods to enhance public-education efforts such as open houses and creating PSAs.⁹
- I. Improve the visibility of the county fire and EMS services in the community.
 - II. Continued use of word-of-mouth recruiting is effective. Each member should be encouraged to inform their respective community network about the Northumberland County Fire & EMS Department's training and educational opportunities.
 - III. Social Media Platforms while in use by most departments should be more active in recruitment efforts within the community.
5. In addition, Northumberland County Fire & EMS Department should take advantage of pre-existing recruitment and retention information. Resources may be downloaded at the following locations:
- a. All Fire-EMS agencies are encouraged to join the Virginia Recruitment and Retention Network. <https://www.varecruitretain.com/>
 - b. Additional Recruitment & Retention information from OEMS here: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/chatr/recruitment-retention/>
 - c. Fire/Volunteer (Guide)- <https://www.nvfc.org/firefighters/resources/>
 - d. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)-<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/>
 - e. 2004 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission Report. "Review of EMS in Virginia" Part III of the report; *Recruitment, Retention and Training of EMS Providers* (Page 55) –

⁹ Fire Service Image Task Force Report: Taking Responsibility for a Positive Public Perception 15

<http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/4d54200d7e28716385256ec1004f3130/87c75ac37063994d85256ec500553c41?OpenDocument>

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APPENDIXES

Because of the large amount of documents we did not include all documents used in the preparation and promulgation of this study. If you would like to see further documents that were utilized and collected please feel free to email Travis Rickman with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs at Travis.rickman@vdfp.virginia.gov.

The foregoing is a recommendation authorized pursuant to Va. Code 9.1-203.A.4 and is not to be construed as legal advice or as a binding recommendation.

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JAN 27 2020

January 22, 2020

Mr. Travis Rickman
Government Affairs Manager
Virginia Department of Fire Programs
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23059

RE: Comprehensive Analysis Study of Fire/EMS System Request- Northumberland County

Dear. Mr. Rickman:

This letter is to request services of the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) in conducting a complete and thorough review of the fire and EMS system in Northumberland County.

The Northumberland County Board of Supervisors, at their meeting held on January 9, 2020 voted 5-0 to request such review of the fire and EMS system from the Virginia Fires Services Board.

The requested areas of concentration of this study include:

- Organization
- Budget and Administration
- Personnel
- Training
- Fleet Design and Management (Equipment/Apparatus)
- Operations

It is the Board's and County Administration's proposal to have a complete and thorough review of the aforementioned areas of concentration and a comprehensive list of recommendations to enhance delivery of services to the citizens of Northumberland County.

Your consideration of this request at the next available opportunity would be greatly appreciated. Please contact me at 804-580-7666 or at ltadlock@co.northumberland.va.us if you should have any questions regarding this request.

Sincerely,

E. Luttrell Tadlock
County Administrator

January 9, 2020

The following excerpt is from the minutes of the regular meeting of the Northumberland County Board of Supervisors held on January 9, 2020.

RE: Virginia Department of Fire Programs Study Request

Motion by James W. Brann, seconded by James M. Long, that a letter be submitted to the Virginia Fire Services Board requesting their services in conducting a review of the fire and EMS system in Northumberland County.

Thomas H. Tomlin- AYE

James M. Long- AYE

James W. Brann- AYE

Richard F. Haynie- AYE

Ronald L. Jett- AYE

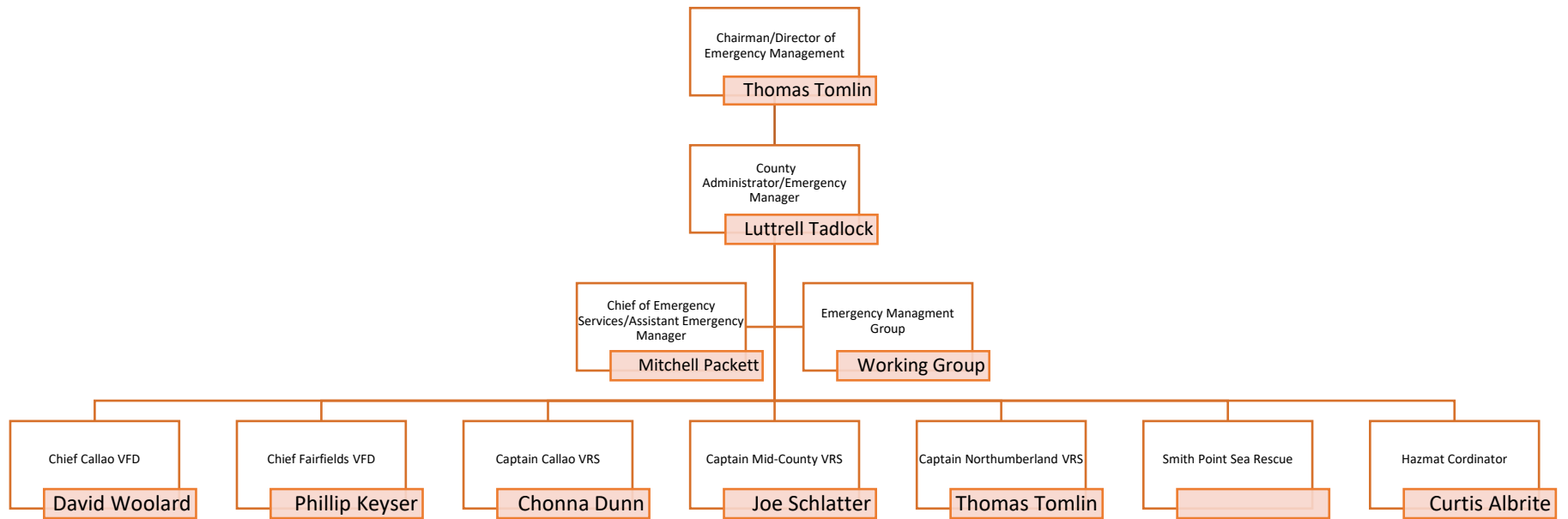
Certified True Copy:



E. Luttrell Tadlock
County Administrator



Northumberland Emergency Management Chart



FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Luttrell Tadlock

Title: County Administrator

Locality Name: Northumberland County

1. This request is being made by:

- Local Fire Department
- Other Fire Services Organization
- Local Government
- Other: (Please specify)

2. Scope of Study: Study results/recommendations will be comprehensive in nature. Below are the areas that will be evaluated. Please add additional areas the locality wants assessed.

- a. **Organization**
- b. **Budget and Central Purchasing**
- c. **Personnel**
- d. **Training**
- e. **Fleet Design and Management (Equipment/Apparatus)**
- f. **Operations:**
- g. **Other:** (Please specify below)

3. Can you provide a current organizational chart? If yes, please email it to travis.rickman@vdfp.virginia.gov.

- Yes No

4. What best describes your fire operations response?

- Career
- Volunteer
- Combination (both career and volunteer)

5. What best describes your EMS operations response?

- Career
- Volunteer

FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- Combination (both career and volunteer)

ORGANIZATION ESTABLISHMENT

6. Is your organization (Fire or EMS agencies/departments) established by local or county government?
 Yes
 No
 Other
7. Are all of the organizations (Fire or EMS agencies/departments) participating in this study established by a local government or county government ordinance? If yes, please email those to policyoffice@vdfp.virginia.gov.
 Yes
 No
 Other
8. Does the local government's establishing ordinance clearly authorize all services that are provided by your organization (Fire or EMS agencies/departments)?
 Yes
 No
9. Does your organization have stated short and long term goals?
 Yes, but Fire Only
 Yes, but EMS Only
 Yes, both Fire and EMS
 No

CENTRALIZED AUTHORITY

10. Do you operate under a centralized Fire and EMS authority?
 Yes
 No
11. If yes to the above, what is the title of the position that oversees the central Fire and EMS organization?

N/A
12. Is there an organization (i.e. Fire and Rescue Association) or similar body that discusses Fire and EMS issues collaboratively?
 Yes
 No

FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

FUNDING AND RESOURCES

13. Does the local government provide funding?

- Fire
- EMS
- No funding provided

14. Does your organization charge for services?

- Fire Services
- EMS Services
- We do not charge

15. Does the jurisdiction/local government own the:

- Fire Apparatus
- EMS Vehicles
- Stations

16. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a:

- Fire Marshal
- Public Fire and Life Safety Educator
- Fire Corps Program

17. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a:

- A Coordinated Centralized Training Program for Fire
- A Coordinated Centralized Training Program for EMS
- A Fire Training Officer
- An EMS Training Officer

STANDARDIZATION

18. Has your jurisdiction/locality adopted the Statewide Fire Prevention Code?

- Yes
- No

19. Does your jurisdiction/locality provide public fire and life safety activities?

- Yes
- No

20. Does your jurisdiction/locality have formal written Mutual or Automatic Aid agreements with your neighboring jurisdictions/localities?

- Fire
- EMS

FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

- We do not have formal written agreements
- 21. Does your jurisdiction/locality have current, written Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and/or Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) that all organizations follow? If yes, please email those to policyoffice@vdfp.virginia.gov.**
- Fire
 EMS
 We do not have SOPs and/or SOGs
- 22. Does your jurisdiction/locality have established written response time criteria?**
- Fire
 EMS
 We do not have written response time criteria
- 23. Does your jurisdiction/locality have centralized and structured dispatch criteria with predetermined response criteria?**
- Fire
 EMS
 We do not have centralized and structured dispatch criteria
- 24. Does your dispatch center practice Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD)?**
- Yes
 No
- 25. Is your jurisdiction/locality NIMS compliant?**
- Yes
 No
- 26. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a written policy for minimum staffing level for:**
- Fire
 EMS
 We do not have a written policy for minimum staffing levels
- 27. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a structured Recruitment and Retention program?**
- Career Fire
 Volunteer Fire
 Career EMS
 Volunteer EMS
 We do not have program
- 28. Does your jurisdiction/locality have minimum standardized training requirement?**
- Yes
 No

FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

29. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a centralized data collection system?

- Fire - VFIRS
- EMS - PPDR
- EMS - VPHIB

POPULATION AND STUDY

30. What is the daytime population of the area being served?

Depends on the season. A lot of commuting to Fredericksburg, Washington, Richmond, Newport News for work.

31. What is the nighttime population of the area being served?

Approximately 12,000, this number increases significantly during the summer season.

32. Have you had a similar study conducted within the past five years?

- Fire
- EMS
- Other

33. What prompted your request for this study? Please provide detailed comments below.

Requested by Board of Supervisors.

34. Please provide any additional comments that you believe would be beneficial to the study team.