

Virginia Fire Services Board



A Report of Findings And Recommendations:

Nottoway County Fire & EMS Study



June 2021

Table of Contents

REPORT AUTHORS **2**

ACKNOWLEDGMENT **2**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY **3**

THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (PAGE 9).....3

THEME 2: COMMUNICATION (PAGE 13)3

THEME 3: TRAINING (PAGE 15).....4

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION (PAGE 16).....4

THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES (PAGE 18)4

METHODOLOGY **5**

PHASE I: INITIATE PROJECT.....5

PHASE II: OBTAIN STAKEHOLDER INPUT5

PHASE III: PREPARE ANALYSES AND DEVELOP CORE STRATEGIES.....6

PHASE IV: PREPARE FINAL REPORT.....7

COUNTY INFORMATION **8**

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS **9**

THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT.....9

THEME 2: COMMUNICATION13

THEME 3: TRAINING.....15

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION.....16

THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES18

REFERENCES..... **22**

APPENDIXES **26**

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John Prosize, Deputy County Administrator

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Burkeville Volunteer Fire Department

Crewe Volunteer Fire Department

Nottoway County Sheriff's Office Dispatch

Nottoway County Emergency Squad

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Nottoway 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 Nottoway 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 Nottoway 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 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 Nottoway County.

Below is a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations, which will be discussed further in the report.

Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 9)

- *Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue:* Nottoway County should examine the feasibility of hiring a career Chief/Director of Fire and EMS/Rescue Services as the central position responsible for the coordination and authority for all fire and rescue issues within the county.
- *Strategic Plan & Unified Vision:* Nottoway 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:* Nottoway County should create countywide Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for both Fire & EMS organizations to ensure continuity and level of service across the county.

- Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association: The County should improve the effectiveness of this association by providing bylaws and structure through the Board of Supervisors.
- 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 Nottoway County Government should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a mediator to discuss ways to improve communication and continuity for countywide emergency services.
- Dispatch System: The County dispatch should have minimum staffing standards to be prepared for any emergency scenario and potential influx of emergency calls.

Theme 3: Training (Page 15)

- Coordinated Training Program: The County should pursue a comprehensive joint training program between all three 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 three volunteer fire departments to collaborate in local training opportunities.
- Live Fire Training Structure: The County through the Town of Blackstone needs to re-examine the administration and up keep of the Southside Fire Training Structure. This is a valuable training asset and should be maintained for future training.

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 16)

- Budgeting: Nottoway 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: Nottoway County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage purchasing power and reduce operational expenses to departments.

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 18)

- 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.

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 Nottoway 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 Deputy County Administrator John Prosis. Mr. Prosis 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 three volunteer departments in Nottoway County to include Blackstone, Burkeville, and Crewe to inspect fire apparatus and equipment. In addition the committee also visited the Nottoway Rescue Squad, the Southside Fire Training Structure, 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 Deputy County Administrator, John Prosize, 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.

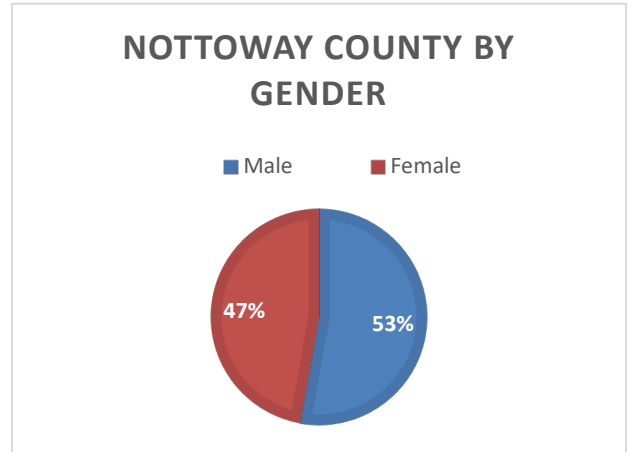
The deliverables for the final phase of the work plan consisted of 1) a draft report, and 2) the final report.

COUNTY INFORMATION

Nottoway County is located in the south-central portion of Virginia, bounded by the counties of Amelia to the north, Dinwiddie to the east, Brunswick and Lunenburg to the south, and Prince Edward to the west. With a 2021 population estimate of 15,853 citizens. This population has a median age of 41.7 living in the county.

The county seat, Nottoway Courthouse, is approximately 59 miles southwest of Richmond, the state capital; 128 miles west of Norfolk and the Ports of Hampton Roads; 167 miles south of Washington, D.C.; 412 miles south of New York City; and 795 miles southeast of Chicago and 440 miles northeast of Atlanta.

The Nottoway County Board of Supervisors is the governing body in the county. The Board has control over local taxation, budgets, borrowing, general County policy, and the adoption of local ordinances.



The County Administrator, Ronald E. Roark, is the chief appointed officer of the county. He serves as clerk to the board and is in charge of implementing board directives as well as advisor to the board. At the time that this study was requested Mr. Roark was the current serving county administrator. John Prosize served as the interim administrator during the study, but retired May 7th.

Board members represent the election district in which they live. Each of these five election districts are determined every 10 years, soon after census figures have been tabulated. The Board of Supervisors meets the third Thursday of each month at 7:00 p.m. in the General District Courtroom. Citizens wishing to submit agenda items or speak to the board should contact the County Administrator at least one week prior to the board meeting.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Nottoway County has three separate town volunteer fire departments that serve the citizens and provide fire services to the County; Blackstone, Crewe, and Burkeville Volunteer Fire Departments. The County currently has one Volunteer Rescue Squad and an EMS service that runs out of the Burkeville Volunteer Fire Department.

Currently the county emergency services have the Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association. The Association is comprised of Nottoway County emergency service organizations that convenes to discuss county issues. The study team heard on multiple occasions that this group is dysfunctional and needs to be reformed. The Association lacks structure and currently operates with no bylaws or record retention, so there is little information on historical actions of the Association.

Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue

1. Nottoway County should examine the feasibility of hiring a career Chief/Director of Fire and EMS/Rescue Services as the central position responsible for the coordination and authority for all fire and rescue issues.
 - a) The position should be codified through a local ordinance outlining specific responsibilities and expectations.
 - b) The current Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association stakeholders should provide recommendations to the Chief/Director of Fire and Rescue Services on ways to improve overall fire-rescue service delivery.
 - c) An organizational chart should be generated and distributed to all affected parties.
 - d) The position should focus on quality of service countywide and the promotion of emergency services as a whole to include both Fire & EMS organizations equally.

Strategic Plan and Unified Vision

1. Create and implement a communication system throughout the organization to effectively and efficiently achieve all operational goals. Communications was mentioned by each organization outlining various problems caused due to the lack there of.
2. There should be a long-term plan for the provision of fire and EMS services. 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. Nottoway 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

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.

- 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 Nottoway 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 an integral part of 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. Nottoway County government should adopt and implement a strategic plan for its fire and EMS services so it is able to improve performance efficiency.
 - a. Stakeholders must each play an integral part in the development of this strategic plan in order to meet expectations and foster commitment.
 - b. 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.
 - c. Nottoway 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.
 - d. 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.
 - a. Strategic plans should identify immediate, intermediate and long-term goals with reasonable target deadlines.
 - b. The Board of Supervisors should routinely review the achievement of these performance measurements and alleviate any barriers to their completion.
3. In developing its strategic plan, Nottoway County should use incident analysis and reporting, to include the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS).

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

- a. 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.
- b. 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.
- c. 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.
- d. 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

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 for firefighters 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 firefighter’s course of action, thereby ensuring efficiency, predictability, consistency, and safety for all firefighters. During the study committee visit it was determined that each fire department operated independently and did not have countywide standards. By implementing countywide standards it will help to improve coordination and safety in response on a fire scene where multiple departments respond to an active fire. This will also aide in a level of service countywide for all citizens.

Recommendations:

1. Working with their volunteer membership and relevant stakeholders – Nottoway County should adopt a single Standard Operating Procedures or Guidelines (SOPs/SOGs) with an accountability system.

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

³ Ibid

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

The Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association

During our site visit the interview committee spoke with leadership of all emergency service departments within the county. It was determined that a majority of the interviewees agreed that the association needed further structure to ensure a prosperous way forward. Efforts to improve in the effectiveness and efficiency of this group will help to shape countywide emergency services.

Recommendations:

1. The locality should explore options to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the Emergency Services Board.
 - a. **Membership:** Membership should consist of all Nottoway County fire and rescue departments, if feasible; therefore, it should include but not be limited to a minimum of one representative from Blackstone, Crewe, and Burkeville volunteer fire departments, a representative of the 911 dispatch center and Sheriff's office, two members of local EMS services, one member of the Nottoway County Board of Supervisors, and the new Emergency Services Chief/Director. All members will be voting members.
 - b. **Role:** The entity would provide valuable contribution on decision-making efforts relating to emergency services operational and administrative procedures to the Board of Supervisors. Furthermore, it must function as a voice for all fire and EMS providers. It is therefore incumbent of all administrators to respect the products that come from the committee or association.
 - c. **Codification of Association:** This Association should be codified outlining specific responsibilities and expectations to improve the organizational cohesiveness and efficiency. Bylaws and Guidelines should be created and voted upon by the county Board of Supervisors to govern over the process and work of the board. These bylaws and guidelines should be disbursed to all members and emergency services personnel.
 - d. **Organization:** An organizational chart should be generated and distributed to all affected parties. A proper record retention process should be created to retain documents, findings, and determinations of the board.

- e. **Structure:** This entity should elect a chairman each year and follow *Roberts Rules of Order*. Parliamentary procedure will enable the board to maintain decorum, to ascertain the will of the majority, to preserve the rights of the minority, and to facilitate the orderly transaction of the business.

THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

It was the determination of the study committee that the county lacks proactive steps to ensure communications to citizens. Improvement of the current level of communication has the potential to create a more cohesive relationship with citizens 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 county and volunteer departments. Lack of effective personal and professional communications can have the potential to affect the application of fire and rescue activities within Nottoway County. These efforts are vital in developing a way forward to fight for a common goal of improving emergency services within the county. 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. It was discussed on multiple occasions that the ice storm that took place in February of 2021 highlighted the need of communication and emergency preparedness coordination throughout the county. Developing an emergency plan and testing it, in the case of disaster is vital. Although all departments spoke to different issues all stated that they were open to working together to ensure that they can better serve their communities in the case of an emergency.

Recommendations:

1. Nottoway 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.
 - a. 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 fire and rescue departments.
 - b. 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.

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.

- c. 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.
 - d. 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/>

Dispatch System

The Dispatch System is located within Nottoway County Sheriff's Office. The facility is responsible for all incoming emergency and non-emergency communications; moreover, it is staffed 24/7. The Nottoway Sheriff's Office dispatches for the Nottoway County Emergency Squad, all three Town Police Departments, the Nottoway Sheriff's Office, and all three Town Fire and EMS agencies. The normal call load is approximately 40 calls in a 24 hour period. During the site visit the study team observed one dispatcher on duty answering all calls as listed above, including any day to day calls for the County Sheriff's office. While the call volume may be low in an emergency situation the dispatch could become easily overwhelmed with one individual accepting all emergency calls for multiple organizations.

Recommendations:

1. Nottoway Dispatch should have a minimum of 2 dispatchers in service or establish a dispatcher on call to assist if needed at all times.
2. Dispatchers should mainly focus on emergency calls and not have additional receptionist duties while on duty in the emergency call center.

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 operation procedures and no standards for their fire departments in regards to countywide training. 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 Southside Fire Training Facility that is located in the Town of Blackstone. This live fire training structure is a valuable training resource for the local fire departments and surrounding counties. This 6,700 Square foot, four story building is one of the largest in the state. It is designed to simulate a variety of residential, commercial, and institutional building conditions as situations that public safety personnel will experience in the line of duty. 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 Nottoway County. As a county the three towns have 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. Nottoway County should pursue a comprehensive training program and assess it annually. Such assessment will enable the adoption of warranted changes.
 - a. The Board of Supervisors should appropriate all the necessary resources to fulfill the county's identified training challenges and fully train existing firefighters and rescue personnel.
 - b. Set up training goals and standards for fire personnel.
2. Nottoway County should seek ways to properly maintain the Southside Fire Training Center live fire training structure.
 - a. The Southside Fire Training Commission needs to be reformed or a new system put in place to serve as the administrator of the building.

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.

- b. Additional allocations for repairs should be made to bring this live fire training structure back into compliance.
 - c. Coalitions with surrounding counties should be sought to pursue additional funding 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 Nottoway County to ensure countywide training of emergency provider personnel.
- a. The county should develop a countywide training program to coordinate classes amongst the three volunteer fire departments
 - b. Coordinate joint live fire training exercises between departments
 - c. Work with VDFP Division 1 staff to discuss local training opportunities

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

According to the study groups individual interviews and documents received by the county, each volunteer department receives the same amount of annual operating funds from the county. The study committee observed that these amounts while fair for all three departments to receive the same initial funding, lacked sufficient evidence as to sound budgeting practices. It was determined that there was not sufficient accountability for reporting of public funds that were being disbursed and spent by each department. By not ensuring the expenditure of county funds there is no structure to determine further expenditures and sustainable service levels.

Budgeting

From the study committee's interviews it was determined that improvements in the budgeting of Nottoway 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 departments. The county needs to take a more in depth and proactive approach working directly with members of their emergency services to develop priorities and understand current problems.

Recommendations:

1. Nottoway 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.
 - a. The County must develop an accountability process for public funds disbursed to emergency services. Nottoway 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.

- b. Monies should be allocated based on the most critical needs and the highest call volume data.
 - c. It is recommended that the county continuously evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investments.
2. 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.

Standardization and Central Purchasing

There is no centralized purchasing system for fire and EMS equipment in Nottoway County. Currently all fire departments 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. Develop specifications for central purchase activity areas. Below are suggested areas/activities for central purchasing:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
3. Nottoway county should exert efforts in identifying specifications for future apparatus purchases, and replacement using the following national consensus standards:
 - a. NFPA 1901 - Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus ⁶
 - b. 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>

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THEME 5: DELIVERY OF SERVICES

The county has three town fire departments which consists of all volunteer members. During the study team's visit it was determined that additional recruitment and retention methods need to be explored for the county's volunteer fire departments to continue to be a successful system. Blackstone Fire Department has roughly 50 active members and has the ability to respond to calls on a consistent basis. Crewe Volunteer Fire Department stated that they have about 33 registered members, but has seen a recent decline in membership. They are still actively responding to fires consistently, but require an increase in members to be successful in the future. Burkeville Volunteer Department stated that they have roughly 25 members, but very few are active and ready to respond to a fire. In a letter submitted to the study group from January of 2021, Burkeville requested the Nottoway County Dispatch Center to route the Crewe Volunteer Department to all fire calls in Burkeville due to staffing shortages. This is concerning for countywide level of service and response times.

Recommendations:

1. If membership does not improve the Burkeville Department may need to serve as a substation of another department to ensure response in the case of an emergency.

EMS Services

When it comes to EMS Services within Nottoway County they currently operate out of two rescue squad buildings. They have a hybrid system with about 14 Full time and 22 part time staff with roughly 7 to 8 volunteers. Additionally the Burkeville Volunteer Fire Department runs EMS trucks separate from the Nottoway County Rescue Squad. Both departments bill, but do so independently and operate as separate entities. Burkeville primarily responds to the surrounding state facilities, but does aid in county wide EMS response. The Nottoway County Rescue Squad runs 95% of all EMS calls for the county. Lastly the Nottoway rescue squad currently has a contract with the Foreign Affairs Security Training Center. This contract brings in much needed revenue for this entity and we applaud the county for exploring additional opportunities to continue and improve service.

Recommendations:

1. All EMS services should have one billing entity and combine emergency response efforts with standardized SOP's for the county.
 - a. Allows for a single Operational Medical Director for all EMS agencies increased interoperability, cross staffing, continuity of care, etc.
 - b. Volunteer FD EMS responders can become members under the main EMS agency in the county.
 - i. Enables a larger pool of responders to assist with staffing and responses not limited to their FD PSA.

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.

- ii. Additional assistance available without needing “mutual aid”
 - c. Utilize EMS responders in multiple localities under one agency. Still maintain individual agencies. (Refer to Virginia Beach EMS which may be a good model)
- 2. Additional opportunities should be explored to ensure the same level of response countywide for all citizens.

Recruitment and Retention

Nottoway 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 successive planning process is present. 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 Nottoway 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/wp-content/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.
 - a. 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. Hire an official part-time Recruitment and Retention Officer. This individual could be assigned additional responsibilities.
3. Adopt an official countywide recruitment and retention program.
 - a. 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.

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.

- b. 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.
 - c. Work with local schools to engage students and educate about the needs of the volunteer agencies.
 - d. 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:
 - Badges/ID cards or other rewards for completing specific training requirements or other achievements;
 - 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.
 - Possibly tax incentives for volunteer members
 - e. Publicize the fact that there are a variety of services for volunteers in the fire and rescue services. Examples include:
 - Direct providers of fire, rescue and EMS
 - Support services (equipment maintenance and repair, training, etc.)
 - Administrative services (secretarial, bookkeeping and accounting, legal, data processing, etc.)
 - f. 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.
 - g. 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
 - a. Improve the visibility of the county fire and EMS services in the community.
 - b. Continued use of word-of-mouth recruiting is effective. Each member should be encouraged to inform their respective community network about the Nottoway County Fire & EMS Department's training and educational opportunities.
 - c. Social Media Platforms while in use by most departments should be more active in recruitment efforts within the community.

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

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.

5. In addition, Nottoway County Fire & EMS Department should take advantage of pre-existing recruitment and retention information. Resources may be downloaded at the following locations:
 - a. Fire/Volunteer (Guide)- <https://www.nvfc.org/firefighters/resources/>
 - b. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)-<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/emergency-medical-services/>
 - c. 2004 Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission Report (House Document No. 37). “Review of EMS in Virginia” Part III of the report; *Recruitment, Retention and Training of EMS Providers* (Page 55) – <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2004/HD37/PDF>

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APPENDIXES

**FOR A COMPLETE LIST OF ALL DOCUMENTS PLEASE CONTACT THE
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FIRE PROGRAMS GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS
MANAGER.**

April 9, 2021

To: Blackstone VFD
Nottoway Emergency Squad
Crewe VFD
Burkeville Fire and Rescue

From: John Prosis

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs would like to visit with department officers or representatives at the following places and times. Please make every effort to have persons available that can speak for the department. Later that evening, a town hall will be held where all Fire / EMS department personnel and interested parties may offer their input to the Fire Program representatives.

**Virginia Fire Services Board / Fire and EMS Study Schedule
for Nottoway County, Virginia
Monday, April 19, 2021**

9:30 AM	County Administrator's Office 344 West Courthouse Road, Nottoway
10:15	Communications (Dispatch) Center 266 West Courthouse Road, Nottoway
10:45	Blackstone Volunteer Fire Department 318 Church Street, Blackstone
11:45	Blackstone Burn Building Rocky Bump Road, Blackstone
12:15 - 1:15	Lunch
1:15	Emergency Squad Substation - Blackstone 400 Third Street, Blackstone
2:00	Nottoway County Emergency Squad 501 E. Virginia Avenue, Crewe
3:00	Crewe Volunteer Fire Department 1105 W. Virginia Avenue, Crewe
4:00	Burkeville Volunteer Fire and Rescue 503 Namozine Street, Burkeville
5:00 - 6:30	Dinner
7:00 - 8:00	Town Hall Meeting General District Courtroom, Nottoway

OFFICE OF
THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
NOTTOWAY COUNTY

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BUILDING & CODE OFFICIAL
DEAN S. LEWIS

May 19, 2020

Mr. Walter Bailey, Chairman
Virginia Fire Services Board
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23059-4500

Department of Fire Programs

MAY 21 2020

Administration

Dear Mr. Bailey:

I am writing to request the services of the Virginia Fire Services Board in conducting a complete and thorough review of the Fire and EMS system in Nottoway County.

It was the unanimous consent of the Nottoway County Board of Supervisors at its meeting on May 14, 2020, to request a comprehensive analysis study on our Fire/EMS system.

The areas of concentration should include:

- Organization
- Budget & Administration
- Training
- Delivery of Service
- Fleet Design & Management
- Operations

The Board would like to have a complete review of the Fire/EMS system of our County and a comprehensive list of recommendations to enhance the delivery of services to our County's citizens.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald E. Roark".

Ronald E. Roark

FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES STUDY SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONNAIRE

Name: Ronald E. Roark
Title: County Administrator
Locality Name: County of Nottoway

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

N

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?

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 *no*
- Stations

16. Does your jurisdiction/locality have a:

- Fire Marshal *no*
- 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 *state guidelines*
 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

NO

POPULATION AND STUDY

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

15,800

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

15,800

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

- Fire
- EMS
- Other

NO

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

Funding - Recruitment - Retention
Standardized organization

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

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS AWAITING
Report - hopefully the report will
aid in improving service to
our county

CONTITUTION AND BY-LAWS
OF THE
NOTTOWAY COUNTY VOLUNTEER EMERGENCY
SERVICES ASSOCIATION

April 1990

ARTICLE	I	NAME
ARTICLE	II	PURPOSE
ARTICLE	III	MEMBERSHIP
ARTICLE	IV	OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ARTICLE	V	DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS
ARTICLE	VI	COMMITTEES
ARTICLE	VII	MISCELLANEOUS

ARTICLE I

NAME

SECTION 1

This organization shall be known as the Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

SECTION 1

The purpose of this organization is as follows:

1. To unite the counties Fire Departments and Rescue Squad together in a single association to provide the maximum quality of services to the citizens of Nottoway County.
2. To educate the general public as to the various requirements, rules and regulations and demands which are mandated upon the counties Fire Departments and Rescue Squad.
3. To provide an organized means of working together in providing communication, training, and mutual aid to all member organizations in the county.
4. To show a united effort in negotiation with the various government organizations on the local, state, and national levels.
5. To assist each member organization in acquiring funding in order to be able to provide the maximum level of quality emergency protection to the citizens of Nottoway County.

ARTICLE III

MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1

The membership of this organization shall consist of the Burkeville Volunteer Fire Department, Blackstone Volunteer Fire Department, Crewe, Volunteer Fire Department, and the Nottoway County Emergency Squad, Inc.. A representative of the Nottoway County Sheriffs Department shall serve as a nonvoting member of this organization.

SECTION 2

Any Volunteer Fire Department or Rescue Squad which shall be organized within Nottoway County may apply for membership.

SECTION 3

Application may be made at any regularly scheduled business meeting. The application will lay on the table and be acted upon at the following business meeting. Upon acceptance of 2/3 of the voting member organizations present the applicant organization shall be declared a fully participating member.

ARTICLE IV
OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SECTION 1

The Board of Directors shall consist of two (2) representatives from each of the participating member organizations. They shall serve for a period of one (1) year and may be re-elected or re-appointed at each individual organization's pleasure.

SECTION 2

Each member organization shall have one vote.

SECTION 3

In the event of a tie the motion shall be taken back to the member organization for further discussion and a revote will then be taken if it cannot be settled by the Board of Directors.

SECTION 4

The officers of the Association will consist of a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and a Secretary-Treasurer. Each will be elected from within the Board of Directors. They will serve for a period of one (1) year or until their term as a member of the Board of Directors expires according to their organization's pleasure - whichever comes first. Officers may be re-elected to office.

SECTION 5

Nomination of officers will be open and from the floor of the Board of Directors meeting. Voting will be by secret ballot. A simple majority of those voting is necessary to be elected.

SECTION 6

A vacancy in any office will be filled by an election at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the Board of Directors.

SECTION 7

The term of each officer is effective upon election.

ARTICLE V
DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS AND BOARD OF DIRECTORS

SECTION 1

The management of the affairs and business of the association shall be vested in the Board of Directors.

SECTION 2

A quorum of the Board of Directors will consist of a simple majority of the Directors being present. Less than a quorum may adjourn a meeting.

SECTION 3

The Board of Directors shall hold regular scheduled meetings on the first (1st) Tuesday of each month and such special meetings as may be called by the President.

SECTION 4

The Board may pass resolutions. All actions of the Board of Directors shall be by a vote of the simple majority present.

SECTION 5

The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Association and the Board and be an ex officio member of all committees. In the absence of the Chairman the Vice-Chairman shall assume the duties and the Secretary-Treasurer after that.

SECTION 6

The Secretary-Treasurer shall keep minutes of all meetings, shall keep a register of active members of the Board of Directors, shall send out required notices of meetings, shall handle correspondence and perform such other duties as directed. As Treasurer he shall collect and receive all money, shall disburse funds in accordance with the appropriations of the Board of Directors, and shall present a statement of accounts at each regularly scheduled meeting and keep all necessary financial records of the association.

ARTICLE VI
COMMITTEES

SECTION 1

The board shall create such standing committees and temporary committees as are deemed necessary.

SECTION 2

Committee members and the chairman of each committee shall be appointed by the Chairman. The chairman of each committee shall be a member of the Board of Directors. The members of the committees can be any member in good standing of the member organizations.

SECTION 3

The term of office of the committees shall be at the pleasure of the Board of Directors.

ARTICLE VII
MISCELLANEOUS

SECTION 1

Dues in the amount of twenty-five dollars (\$25.00) per annum are due and payable on the first of each fiscal year.

SECTION 2

Roberts Rules of Order shall govern the Association.

SECTION 3

Amendments to these By-laws may be made by 2/3 vote of the Board of Directors. An amendment must lay on the table from the meeting in which it was introduced

until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

SECTION 4

These By-laws become effective upon 2/3 vote of the Board of Directors present at the time of their introduction.

SECTION 5

The fiscal year shall be the calendar year (January through December).

Accepted and approved by the Nottoway County Volunteer Emergency Services Association on April, 1990.