

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD



A Report of Findings and Recommendations:

Rockingham County Fire & EMS Study



February 2016

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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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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The Virginia Fire Services Board would like to extend thanks to the following organizations for their contributions to this study:

Fire Departments

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Clover Hill Fire/Rescue
Bridgewater Fire Department
Hose Company No 4 Fire Department
Broadway Fire Department
Bergton Fire Department
Grottoes Fire Department
Singers Glen Fire Department
Timberville Fire Department
Elkton Fire Department
McGaheysville Fire Department

Rescue Squad

Bridgewater Rescue
Broadway Rescue
Singers Glen Rescue
Grottoes Rescue
Elkton Rescue
Harrisonburg Rescue

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Rockingham 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 Rockingham County Board of Supervisors and its fire and rescue stakeholders 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 Rockingham County.

The study was requested by the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors in order to analyze several areas of responsibility within the County's 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 rescue services within Rockingham 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 11)

- **Strategic Plan:** Working with the Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association, (ESOA) the Rockingham County governance should adopt and implement their current Rockingham 2020 fire and rescue component of the Strategic Plan.
- **Continuity of Leadership and Succession Planning:** Rockingham County should develop a program that illustrates leadership and interpersonal relationship skills within the fire and rescue services with a focus on growing future leadership.
- **Accountability Practices:** The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association in collaboration with the Fire and Rescue Chief should enhance the county's Standard

Operating Guidelines (SOG) for the fire departments while also ensuring to establish one for EMS/Rescue.

Theme 2: Communications (Page 15)

- Levels of Interdepartmental Communications: The County should host a strategic communication session to resolve existing challenges and barriers between the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors, the County Administration, the Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association and members of the volunteer fire and rescue departments.
 - 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.
- Improved Dispatch System: Rockingham County must upgrade its entire communication system
 - The County should improve the fire and rescue dispatch protocols to ensure a consistent service delivery across the County, particularly as it relates to low priority/non-emergency EMS calls.
 - The Rockingham County Board of Supervisors should examine the feasibility of increasing dispatch personnel.

Theme 3: Training (Page 18)

- Coordinated Training Program: The County should work with the Emergency Officers Association to develop a structured and coordinated training program to address the comprehensive training needs of the entire County.

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 20)

- Fire Districts: Fire Tax levy assists communities similar to Rockingham County that have continuous growth. The revenues help keep up with the growth of the community.
 - Establish a single, countywide levy rather than a series of separate districts with individual rates.
- County Funding and Capital Improvements: Rockingham County should restructure its current funding model so it is able to achieve an equitable and performance based model.
 - Rockingham County should complete a yearly countywide needs assessment for the delivery of fire and rescue services and develop a base funding allocation system upon the priorities identified through the needs assessment.

- Standardization and Central Purchasing: Rockingham County should continue utilizing centralized purchasing with an emphasis on enhancing the process.

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 26)

- Standardization of SOG: Rockingham County and City of Harrisonburg must collaboratively standardize their SOGs, with consideration of the current level of mutual aid calls.
- Operations and Staffing: Rockingham County should continue its work in recognizing participation from juveniles in volunteer fire activities.
- Recruitment and Retention: Rockingham County should adopt a countywide recruitment and retention plan.

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, 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 Rockingham County leadership 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.

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.

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 objective was realized with the support of Rockingham County's study project manager and Fire and Rescue Chief, Jeremy Holloway. Chief Holloway 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 majority of Rockingham County's Fire and Rescue organizations as well as County leadership including County Administrator Joseph Paxton and Deputy County Administrator, Stephen King.

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 fire and rescue stations that were staffed throughout Rockingham County in an effort to support their research of the County's organizational functioning.

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 and paid 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 Rockingham 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-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 designated locality project manager, Chief Jeremy Holloway to ensure the 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 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Rockingham County is located in the center of Shenandoah Valley of Virginia.¹ The County is between the Blue Ridge Mountains on the east and the Alleghenies on the west. Rockingham is located along the Interstate 81 corridor and is two-hour drive to Washington, DC.² Three major interstates, I-81, I-66, and I-64 create a strategic transportation network that provides one-day access to two-thirds of the U.S. population.³ Moreover, rail service includes Norfolk Southern and the Shenandoah Valley Short Line. Rockingham County is the third largest county in Virginia which includes the Harrisonburg-Rockingham metropolitan area.⁴

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the population of Rockingham County is 78,171.⁵ The median age of Rockingham County residents is 41.6 years old. Minorities account for 16% of the population. The median household income is \$52,195, which is \$11,712 above the average for Virginia.⁶

The fire and rescue services of Rockingham County are provided by a dedicated group of 530 fire and emergency medical services (EMS) volunteers, 73 full-time career and 17 part-time staffers. Rockingham Fire and EMS is composed of ten volunteer fire companies and seven volunteer rescue squads. The fire companies are strategically located across the County to ensure adequate coverage throughout Rockingham County. During 2014, Rockingham County first responders answered 7,600 fire and emergency medical services (EMS) calls.⁷

A listing of the fire and rescue services providers can be found below:

Fire Departments

Rockingham County Department of Fire and Rescue

Clover Hill Fire/Rescue

Bridgewater Fire Department

Hose Company No 4 Fire Department

Broadway Fire Department

Bergton Fire Department

Grottoes Fire Department

Singers Glen Fire Department

Timberville Fire Department

Elkton Fire Department

McGaheysville Fire Department

¹ The County of Rockingham, Population

² Ibid

³ Ibid

⁴ Economic Impacts of Agriculture and Forest Industries in Virginia

⁵ U.S. Census Bureau: Quick Facts

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS) Appendix 2 and Virginia Pre-Hospital Information Bridge Report Summary – Appendix 3

Rescue Squad

Bridgewater Rescue
Broadway Rescue
Singers Glen Rescue
Grottoes Rescue
Elkton Rescue
Harrisonburg Rescue

The goal of the fire and rescue service is to protect life and property by delivering the highest possible level of service consistent with need at the lowest possible cost consistent with safety. First responders responsible for fire suppression provide an array of additional emergency services to the residents of Rockingham County. They include light and heavy rescue, vehicle extrication, water rescue, hazardous materials, and other non-emergency activities. The rescue squads within the County provide basic life support (BLS) and advanced life support (ALS) rescue ambulance services to all areas of the County.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides a summary of the five working themes for this study report. The summary is based on areas of concern that were repeatedly cited in the face-to-face interviews and observed during the site visit. Following this section is an in-depth examination of each theme, to include findings and recommendations.

Theme 1: Organizational Development (Page 11)

- Strategic Plan
- Continuity of Leadership and Succession Planning
- Accountability Practices

Theme 2: Communications (Page 15)

- Levels of Interdepartmental Communications
- Improved Dispatch System

Theme 3: Training (Page 18)

- Coordinated Training Program

Theme 4: Budget and Administration (Page 20)

- Fire Districts
- County Funding and Capital Improvements
- Standardization and Central Purchasing

Theme 5: Delivery of Services (Page 25)

- Standardization of SOP/SOG

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- Operations and Staffing
- Recruitment and Retention

Rockingham County's fire and rescue service providers and administration should utilize the national consensus standards. The standards were developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) with the input and support of fire and emergency services personnel, businesses, industry and other stakeholders, as guidance documents and resources to address several of the findings identified in this report.⁸

⁸ For a complete listing of the national consensus standards developed by the National Fire Prevention Association, visit: http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/list_of_codes_and_standards.asp

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THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Rockingham County Fire and Rescue consists of ten volunteer fire companies and seven volunteer rescue squads. Rockingham has successfully managed to have approximately 530 fire and emergency medical services (EMS) volunteers, 70 full-time career staff and 17 part-time staff.⁹ Some of the entities above are under the County while the others are within the incorporated towns. The local governing body has clearly articulated the authorities of services provided by the Fire and EMS organizations.¹⁰ Rockingham County successfully protects its community through following special operations teams; Swift Water Rescue, Dive Rescue, Regional Hazardous Materials, Search and Rescue and Technical Rescue.¹¹

Interviewees cited the current organizational structure places a great deal of work on the chief officers. According to Rockingham's 2020 Plan¹², such workload is due to various tasks including field operations, management of volunteer and paid staff, logistical functions, and emergency management. Based on the recommendations of those interviewed, the County could use additional staff, where needed. The County should do an internal evaluation. It is recommended that this recruitment/hire be pursued through an effort of either positioning for new personnel or repositioning of the existing paid personnel. The outcome should achieve the greatest impact in meeting countywide response time standards. A need mentioned more than once was additional paid daytime EMS support.

The locality has an organization named "Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association" which according to its operations guidelines is an association that serves as a "*steering committee to the Director of Fire & Rescue for decisions relating to emergency services operational and administrative procedures in the County of Rockingham*".¹³ The entity appears to function as a voice for all fire and EMS entities within the County.

Recommendations:

1. Rockingham County should consider increasing career staff relative to the areas they are needed the most.
 - a. Interviewees mentioned that there was a need for additional daytime EMS/Rescue support.
2. Improve Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association Functions.
 - a. Agendas and minutes of all meetings should be available online to all service members.

⁹ County Background

¹⁰ Code of Ordinances of Rockingham County

¹¹ County Background

¹² Rockingham 2020 Session – also known as Rockingham 2020 Plan

¹³ ESOA Operation Guidelines

- b. The format of the meetings should be expanded to include standard training reports, recruitment and retention updates, as well as a members' time wherein each member can speak about issues/concerns impacting his or her station/squad and the system as a whole, along with issues pertaining to emergency communications.
 - c. The system should take maximum advantage of this organization.
 3. The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association in collaboration with the Fire and Rescue Chief should update the Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) for the fire departments while also ensuring to enhance the current one for the EMS.
 4. This study should be used as a starting point for continuously reexamining and developing the most efficient and effective Fire Rescue System to meet the community's needs.

Strategic Plan

Rockingham County's fire and rescue organizations identified a need for increased coordination. As a result of such need, the locality pursued Rockingham 2020¹⁴ session, a strategic plan work that represented the collective efforts of Rockingham County's fire and rescue services leadership. Based on the study team's evaluation of the plan, it appears to have successfully identified the critical challenges they face in the future and the initiatives they must undertake to continue to deliver the quality of service their citizens deserve and expect.

This Plan has the capacity to build on the commitments of the County's mission and values. Institutionalization of Strategic Planning must be an integral part of fire and rescue departments and community resource allocations.¹⁵ Although the efforts of the Rockingham 2020 Session is impressive, the study team recommends in the future to hire a professional vendor or bring in someone with experience to guide them through this process. It is also suggested to have community stakeholders such as citizens participate in the process.

In the future, the strategic plan process should develop teams and strategic alliances. Such effort has the potential to¹⁶;

1. To solve problems by using the talents of a variety of individuals.
2. To foster cohesiveness in the work place.
3. To reduce weak system of communication among staff members.
4. Increase productivity by encouraging a cooperative environment.
5. To achieve an effective solution that is not the result of groupthink.

¹⁴ Rockingham 2020 – referred to as the Plan

¹⁵ Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service, March 2004

¹⁶ Charles Mallory, *Team-Building: How to Build a "Winning" Team*, 1991

The strategic plan will allow vested parties the opportunity to create effective policies while being attuned to its publics' interests, demands, and expectations. It is imperative to keep in mind that decisions only have legitimacy if parties involved work together and are in agreement.¹⁷

Recommendations:

1. Working with the Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association, the Rockingham County governance should adopt and implement the current Rockingham 2020 Session Strategic Plan for its fire and rescue services.
2. The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association and the Fire and Rescue Chief should collaboratively establish a system of measurable goals and objectives. The performance measurement's factors will strengthen the newly developed strategic plan.
3. Rockingham County's fire and rescue organizations should continue their commitment to using incident analysis and reporting, to include the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS) and the Virginia Pre-Hospital Information Bridge (VPHIB).
 - a. Rockingham County's commitment to reporting will ensure that they have reliable data to appropriately 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 address deployment of resources and the number of personnel needed for prevention efforts in accordance with the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1730 – Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspections and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigations, and Public Education Operations .
 - c. Access to the data collected should be provided to rescue squads and fire departments so they are able to get a comprehensive understanding of their performance.
 - d. The use of data such as VFIRS and VPHIB can be contributing factors to performance measurement and can further enable stakeholders to assess the effectiveness of the strategic plan.

In Rockingham County, performance measurements will enable the Board of Supervisors to evaluate the performance of fire and rescue entities tasked with accomplishing the goals and objectives of the strategic plan.¹⁸ Performance measurement will exhibit clear association between performing, planning, spending and results.¹⁹ Rockingham County will have the

¹⁷ Mark Moore, *Creating Public Value: Strategic Management in Government*, 1995

¹⁸ Gerald Gordon, *Strategic Planning for Local Government*, 2005

¹⁹ Ibid

opportunity to evaluate its mission, vision and performance objectives through three perspectives: financial accountability, constituent priorities and internal processes²⁰.

Continuity of Leadership and Succession Planning

The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association in collaboration with the County Government should consider developing a continuity of leadership or succession planning program to focus on training and mentoring future leaders within the system. The succession planning program will ensure retention of institutional knowledge, including subsidizing advanced officer training. A succession plan will address the needs of the Rockingham County fire and rescue services by providing formal program to develop and enhance the future potential of personnel.

Recommendations:

1. Rockingham County should develop a program that demonstrates to all fire and rescue personnel the value of leadership and interpersonal relationship skills. The following elements should be considered for inclusion in the program:
 - a. A Leadership and Career development program for the volunteer fire and rescue personnel that focuses on the following subject areas; Management, Communication, Prevention, Operations and Safety.²¹
 - b. Incentives for advanced training and higher education. The locality should do research on best practices within the fire and rescue services.
 - c. Leadership training should be offered as an ongoing long-term project.
 - d. With the assistance of a trained facilitator, the fire and rescue organizations should hold a focus group consisting of stakeholders to determine how to accomplish and successfully implement the program.

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.”²² Standard operating guidelines (SOGs) are written guidelines that explain what is expected and required of fire service personnel in performing their jobs.²³ It is critical for Rockingham fire and rescue personnel that they adhere to a system of SOGs to better coordinate service delivery throughout the County. It is imperative that all members thoroughly understand their responsibilities and expectations. Organizations that have outdated SOGs are increasingly

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ William Shouldis, *Officer Development Programs on a Budget*, 2008

²² Developing Effective Standard Operating Procedures for Fire and EMS Departments, December 1999

²³ Ibid

vulnerable to accidents, lawsuits, preventable costs, personnel problems, and damage to their professional image. Rockingham should be applauded for their current SOG. The SOG which has been effective since July 2011 provides significant instructions which range from adequate staffing to meet department's operational needs to OSHA compliance. Due to continuously changing environment, the locality can improve its SOG by updating it and expanding it to include EMS/Rescue.

1. Utilizing the guidelines outlined in NFPA 1561: Standard on Fire Department Incident Management Systems, Rockingham County should enhance its current fire services SOG.
 - a. Increased structure and coordination to the management of emergency incidents will ensure the safety and health of fire-rescue personnel.
 - b. The County should continue emphasizing the importance of the incident management system in managing all emergency incidents and training exercises. Rockingham County should further emphasize the importance of written plans to anticipate incidents that require standardized procedures.
2. Rockingham County must create either a separate SOG for EMS or include in their current Fire – EMS related SOGs to ensure a higher level of accountability.
 - a. The current SOG lacks details related to EMS.
3. Informational and training sessions must be held with all Rockingham County fire and rescue members to ensure all personnel are knowledgeable and adhere to the countywide SOG.
 - a. New members should receive training on the standard operating guidelines during their orientation to ensure they abide by the County's SOG.
 - b. It is imperative that all members thoroughly understand their responsibilities and expectations.
4. It is recommended that the Incident Command System currently in place be practiced through full-scale exercises.²⁴
 - a. This will help identify response challenges and allow them to be resolved before an incident.

THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

In order to develop a cohesive Fire-Rescue System in Rockingham County, the Board of Supervisors and the County Administration must foster positive internal and external communication among the County's fire and rescue organizations along with members of the general public. Without effective and trusting relationships, the County will have limited success with the recommendations contained in this report and any other attempts at

²⁴ Incident Command System, Overview; <http://www.fema.gov/emergency/nims/IncidentCommandSystem.shtm>

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coordinating and improving the fire and rescue services in Rockingham County. Before other identified recommendations can be implemented, effective and reliable communication capabilities must be established between the service providers and its citizens.

Similar to other parts of the State, there appears to be moderate lack of communication between the public and the fire and rescue services in Rockingham County. The public needs to be aware of the rising cost of life and property loss.²⁵ The fire service needs to competitively market itself and the services it provides. It must recognize the evolving environment of its community. In Rockingham County, the fire and rescue services must pursue an effort that will remove communication barriers and has the potential to engage the community year-round.²⁶

Levels of Interdepartmental Communications

During the site visit, the study committee was advised that the working relationship and communication between the paid and volunteer leadership was considered to be fine. However establishing a designated point of contact/communication within the paid staff to function as a central point for communication would be considered helpful. The study team suggests creating a position below the chief level. This will allow the current chief to manage and deal with high level issues rather than day-to-day communication discrepancies. Lastly, some volunteer leaders felt that communication between members of the volunteer leadership could be improved. Solutions can be derived from a strategic communication session.

The burden lies with the County Administration and the Board of Supervisors in encouraging an open and honest dialogue as it relates to the present system-wide modifications. All relevant parties must work together to provide the highest quality level of service. The County Government must forge alliances and partnerships at all levels within the community, as well as its private investors in the area.

Recommendations:

1. The Rockingham County should consider hosting a strategic communication session with a skilled mediator to assist in developing effective communications between the fire and rescue departments (volunteer and career staff), the community and County Government.
 - a. The objective should be to develop strategies to overcome any identified barriers to the implementation of an effective communication system, both within departments and with the general public.
 - 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.

²⁵ U.S. Fire Administration *Strategies for Marketing Your Fire Department Today and Beyond*, 2012

²⁶ Ibid

- 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.
2. The County should strengthen its fire and life-safety communication activities with the residents of Rockingham County.
 - a. Increased efforts to promote the positives attributes of the fire and rescue services in Rockingham County can raise morale and attract more volunteers. Some options include producing an annual report, developing a quarterly newsletter and utilizing social networking avenues.
 3. The County should continue taking 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: http://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: <http://www.nfpa.org>
 - v. Virginia Department of Forestry: <http://www.fireRockinghamvirginia.org>
 - vi. Virginia Department of Emergency Management: <http://www.vaemergency.gov/social-media/alert-localities>

Improved Dispatch System

Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center

Rockingham County jointly with City of Harrisonburg created the Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center (HRECC). This regional communication system is a multi-disciplined 9-1-1- Center with about 44-50 employees that provide emergency and non-emergency communications.²⁷ The HRECC accommodates the citizens of the City of Harrisonburg and Rockingham County, the towns within the county along with the public safety providers.²⁸

According to interviewees, the entity was created to operate a joint emergency operations center with a two-way radio communications system. The study team was advised that the Harrisonburg-Rockingham public safety radio system requires significant upgrade. The current technology is outdated and parts/equipment is no longer manufactured. Being compliant to federal regulations is becoming difficult. Lastly, the HRECC's logging recorder must be upgraded

²⁷ Harrisonburg-Rockingham Emergency Communications Center (2014)

²⁸ Ibid

to be compatible with the new systems. This original equipment was installed in 2007. The County is aware that its present system has major flaws and a thorough review would improve the response and safety of its public safety community.

Recommendations:

1. Rockingham County needs to upgrade its entire communication system.
 - a. Rockingham County should incorporate a needs assessment for not only the equipment and the platform, but also personnel to operate the system.
2. The County should improve its current fire and rescue dispatch protocols to ensure a consistent service delivery across the County.
 - a. It is highly recommended that input be solicited from the Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association along with other stakeholders.
3. Accounting for call volume and complexity, the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors should examine the feasibility of increasing dispatch personnel.
 - a. Additional staff will likely improve the overall quality of dispatch operations by affording each dispatcher sufficient time to document all pertinent information and efficiently relay it to first responders.
 - b. The County should consider continuously improving the use of emergency medical dispatch program.
 - c. The following resources are provided as a means of analyzing staffing to ensure adequate dispatch coverage:
 - i. The Association of Public Safety Communication Officials (APCO) – Project RETAINS Toolkit 2.0;
 - ii. The National Fire Protection Association’s (NFPA) Standard 1221 – Standard for the Installation, Maintenance and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems; and,
 - iii. The National Emergency Numbers Association’s (NENA) Standard 56-002: 9-1-1 Call Answering Standard/Model Recommendation.

THEME 3: TRAINING

One of the secrets of a successful Countywide Fire-Rescue System is the full integration of volunteer personnel, regardless of their affiliation at the tactical level. Tactical equality recognizes all positions, from firefighter through senior fire officer and requires minimum

training standards to ensure performance level.²⁹ Tactical equality appears to have been achieved at Rockingham County.

Rockingham County should be commended on establishing both paid minimum training standards for fire and EMS responders. It is however recommended for the County to extend such minimum training for volunteers as well. Additionally, the County should consider paying the cost of advanced training for volunteers beyond the minimum requirements upon recommendation of the respective volunteer chief(s). Based on observation, it appears there is a need for enhanced communications between the paid training staff and the volunteers. The County must further augment resources devoted to county-wide training effort. A master training calendar that includes all training opportunities provided by the County and the individual stations/squads should be available on-line.

Coordinated Training Program

Development of important skills is the basis for safety and improving services received by the citizens. The fire and rescue organizations in Rockingham County work hard to ensure the sufficient offerings of mandated and relevant training. The Fire and Rescue System must provide performance-based, certifiable training and the opportunity for all volunteer personnel to train together. The approach will facilitate the development of personal and professional relationships. Training and continuity of leadership are closely joined because solid basic training will foster strong and consistent cooperation among the County's emergency response agencies.

Recommendation:

1. Rockingham County must look into improving its current training so it is able to create a comprehensive training program that is assessed annually. Such assessment will enable the adoption of warranted changes.
2. The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association in collaboration with the Board of Supervisors and County Administration should explore the feasibility of creating a Training Committee from the Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association to develop and coordinate the application of a countywide training program.
 - a. The committee should work to enhance efforts of collaborative multi-company training opportunities.
 - b. It is important for the Training Committee to ensure that the necessary training is being offered and with appropriate notice to ensure maximum turnout and return on investment.

²⁹ Leading the Transition in Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments, November 2005

- i. Better coordination and increased local training opportunities will also assist with recruitment and retention efforts for Rockingham County’s fire and rescue organizations.
 - c. The County should explore utilizing both traditional classroom platforms as well as distance learning models.
 - i. Online training allows greater flexibility in the application of courses to accommodate the schedule of volunteers.
 - d. 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.
 - e. The County should enforce the training requirements and ensure all fire and rescue service providers are competent and capable to perform assigned duties.
3. The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association should encourage all new firefighters be cross-trained as Emergency Medical First Responders, at minimum, to enhance rescue capacity within Rockingham County.
- a. The Emergency Medical Responder/First Responder (EMR/FR) program offered by the Virginia Department of Health (Office of Emergency Medical Services) provides training in emergency care for those who are likely to be the first personnel responding to the scene of an accident, fire, or medical emergency.³⁰
 - b. The course prepares the responder to address the immediate life threats and injuries until more highly-trained personnel are available.
 - c. Having all firefighters obtain a first responder certification will ensure a rapid response in the event of a major medical emergency or trauma.
 - d. The Emergency Medical First Responder classes should be offered in conjunction with each Firefighter I program.

THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

The fire and rescue departments in Rockingham County receive funding from state, local and federal avenues to cover expenses. In FY2015, Commonwealth of Virginia’s Fire Programs Fund allocated \$182,273 to Rockingham County and a total of \$79,575 amongst the seven towns within the locality. Rockingham County also receives approximately \$80,000 from the Office of Emergency Medical Services in Four-for-Life funds.³¹ To supplement operational cost, some fire departments and rescue squads have a fundraising. Rockingham County’s overall operating budget, absent of personnel costs is approximately \$6,591,682.

³⁰ Virginia Department of Health (Office of Emergency Medical Services)

³¹ County Budget – FY15 and FY16

County Funding and Capital Improvements

All interviewees expressed that the demands of fundraising strain volunteer's resources and enthusiasm. It was cited that the volunteers spend substantial amount of time in raising funds which negatively affects their ability dedicate time for training. Volunteers are involved in a highly visible, emotionally charged public service dealing with life and death situations.³² Additional time should be dedicated for training.

Interviewees advised that the County provides each entity (fire/rescue) with an annual contribution to offset utility bills. The allocation is different for each fire and rescue department. According to the County's budget the allocation for volunteers' vehicle insurance is about \$118,313.00 while accidental and health insurance for volunteers is approximately \$52,528.00.³³ The County further contributes \$38,355.00 to volunteers' fire maintenance and \$3,650.00 for the VOLSAP volunteer retirement plan.³⁴

Based on the study committee's observation, Rockingham County provides adequate funding and also incurs reasonable amount of expenses for its fire and rescue services. Rescue squads and fire companies are not required to be audited, nor are they required to submit a financial report to the County. Rockingham County should consider restructuring their funding model to better achieve equitable and performance based budgeting.

Fire Districts

The study team received various comments regarding if there should be a consideration for establishing individual fire districts within the County with each district having a district-wide special tax levy (tax rate) or if there should be a single, countywide levy. Fire Tax levy assists communities similar to Rockingham County that have continuous growth. The revenues help keep up with the growth of the community.

The study team recommends for the County to consider establishing a single, countywide levy rather than a series of separate districts with individual rates. Reasons for such pursuit are as follows;

1. If associated with an actual rate increase, the new funding could be dedicated to improving overall response times.
 - a. If the ESOA is given the primary responsibility of prioritizing and recommending how best to employ these new resources, the effort will promote system-wide thinking and group problem solving initiatives.
2. A system of separate levy works against the high level of group cohesion currently observed throughout the system.

³² Careen Mackay Yarnal & Lorraine Dowler, *Who is answering the call? Volunteer firefighting as serious leisure*, 2010

³³ Rockingham County Budget 2015

³⁴ Ibid

3. To provide sufficient resources through a district level generally speaking the districts with the greatest needs in terms of response time are also the ones in which a district wide levy would have a lower financial yield relatively speaking due to lesser population densities and rural rather than suburban property value/uses.
4. While citizens would generally understand that a County-wide levy would be used to further enhance the County-wide system, for some residents a district levy may negatively impact funding volunteer fundraising as residents within that district will have also been taxed to support their local fire company.

Recommendation:

1. Rockingham County should consider increasing its basic operational support for volunteer stations.
 - a. As opposed to simply increasing financial support such as County-provided/paid and centrally procured fuel, building maintenance, turn out gear.

Financial Accountability

The study team did not see a specific formula in the disbursement of funds to fire and rescue in Rockingham County. There needs to be an increased effort of improving financial transparency. Budget transparency should not be perceived negatively or as a method for the County to micromanage its fire and rescue departments. The Board of Supervisors has been trusted by the citizens of Rockingham County to exercise fiscal responsibility and must therefore ensure taxpayers' dollars are spent efficiently. The burden rests with the Rockingham County Board of Supervisors to ensure its limited monies are utilized responsibly and fairly.

Strong accounting practices and accountability measures provide fire and rescue leadership the opportunity to demonstrate its financial needs may be greater than the allocated monies. The Board of Supervisors should require each fire department and rescue squad to annually provide yearly financial compilations. Greater transparency over the budget will provide another venue to eliminate distrust. The County should be applauded for the amount of support it provides to its fire and rescue system. However, such support should not come without an accountability system.

Recommendations:

1. Rockingham County should restructure its current funding model so it is able to achieve an equitable and performance based model.
 - a. Rockingham County current funding/support method shows allocation of monies/payment of bills to fire and rescue organization without consideration of performance or call volume.

2. An accountability plan should be developed for County funds. The plan should be communicated to citizens and members of the fire and rescue organizations.
 - a. This accountability plan should be developed with fire and rescue organizations' participation.
 - b. By creating an accountability plan and communicating funding usage, confusion should be reduced among fire and rescue organizations on the management of limited County funds.
 - c. The County should require documentation of expenditures and annually audit funds.
3. Rockingham County should complete a yearly countywide needs assessment for the delivery of fire and rescue services and develop a base funding allocation system upon the priorities set through the needs assessment and quantitative data.
 - a. Monies should be allocated based on the most critical needs and the highest call volume data.
 - b. It is recommended that the County continuously evaluate whether it is getting the appropriate return on its investments.
4. With input from the fire and rescue community, the Board of Supervisors should enhance its capital improvement plan for upgrading its fire and rescue stations and equipment.
 - a. Rockingham County should share their current capital improvement plan with its service providers.
 - b. Countywide equipment replacement policy should focus on rotational equipment replacement based on prioritized needs.
 - c. Board of Supervisors should also consider leasing of apparatus or big ticket items as an option.
5. The Rockingham County Board of Supervisors should consider the feasibility of hiring a Grants Coordinator to assist the fire and rescue organizations with the acquisition and management of grants. This individual should research and consider the availability of all federal, state and private grant programs, including:
 - a. The Department of Forestry's Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) grants:
<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/financing/grants.htm>
 - b. The Department of Forestry's Firewise Virginia Community Hazard Mitigation grants:
www.dof.virginia.gov/financing/mitigation.htm
 - c. The Department of Forestry's Dry Hydrant grants:
<http://www.dof.virginia.gov/fire/dryhydrant/index.htm>

- d. The Federal Emergency Management Agency's Assistance to Firefighter Grant (AFG): <http://www.firegrantsupport.com/content/html/afg/>
- e. The Staffing for Adequate Fire & Emergency Response Grant <http://www.fema.gov/media-library/assets/documents/101125>
- f. The Virginia Department of Health-Office of Emergency Medical Services' Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Grants: <http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Grants/index.htm>
- g. The grant programs offered by the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) through the Virginia Department of Fire Programs (VDFP).³⁵
- h. Various private grant programs.³⁶

Standardization and Central Purchasing

There is a strong opportunity to bulk purchase in both daily needs and monthly/annual purchases. The County Government along with the Emergency Officers Association should consider central purchasing and pursue making recommendations and require adherence as part of jurisdictional funding to reduce costs and increase standardization. In instances where savings results the County should not reduce the budgets but rather reinvest the savings back into the area of the system where the savings is realized. This provides a strong incentive to work together to maximize cost savings.

Based on the study team's observation, Rockingham County has a widely diverse fleet of apparatus among the fire and rescue organizations. However, the County appears to have a need for upgrading certain apparatuses. At least two engines, two tankers, two brush trucks and one ladder truck were identified that have either met or surpassed the 15 year replacement recommendation of front line apparatus per NFPA 1901 recommendations. Lastly, the County owns some of apparatus/equipment while the rest are owned by the individual service provider.

Recommendation:

1. The County Administration should develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to leverage county purchasing power and reduce operational expenses.
2. The County Administration after consultation with the Emergency Officers Association shall develop specifications for central purchase activity areas. Below are suggested areas/activities for central purchasing:
 - a. Personal Protective Equipment³⁷ and Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus³⁸
Ensure all departments are purchasing compatible equipment that meets

³⁵ A listing of available VFSB is available online, http://www.vafire.com/grants_local_aid/index.htm

³⁶ A wide variety of Fire and EMS grants can be found on <http://www.grants.gov/> <http://www.firegrantshelp.com/nvfc/> and <http://www.emsgrantshelp.com/>

³⁷ NFPA 1971, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1971>

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.

National Fire Protection Association standards and are reaping the same cost savings.

- b. Equipment/Apparatus – The Fire and Rescue Association should survey each department to determine if equipment commonalities exist. As previously mentioned, common apparatus specifications should be created and contracted, allowing volunteer organizations to make customizations without overly altering the specs, and reap the benefits of group purchasing for routine maintenance and replacement of aging ambulance and fire apparatus.
3. Standardization of branding and graphics of gear and equipment should be deferred to the association.
 4. The Emergency Officers Association along with the County Fire and Rescue Chief should survey each department to determine if equipment commonalities exist. The equipment commonalities list should be used, along with strategic planning for Botetourt County’s routine maintenance and replacement of equipment, aging ambulance and fire apparatus.
 - a. Critical priority list of apparatus should utilize the NFPA 1911 – Standard for Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus.³⁹
 - b. An inventory and capabilities of all vehicles should be provided to the Dispatch Center to improve dispatch development.
 - c. Fire and rescue departments must be strongly encouraged against making significant equipment purchases outside those approved by the Board of Supervisors. It is not fiscally responsible to make equipment purchases that place the County and individual departments in a financially unstable standing.
 5. The Emergency Officers Association and the County Fire and Rescue Chief should develop specifications for future apparatus purchases (considering the cost-effectiveness of regional contracts), refurbishment and replacement using the following national consensus standards:
 - a. NFPA 1901 - Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus⁴⁰
 - b. NFPA 1911 – Standard for Inspection, Maintenance, Testing and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus⁴¹
 - c. NFPA 1912 – Standard for Fire Apparatus Refurbishing⁴²

³⁸ NFPA 1981, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1981>

³⁹ NFPA 1911, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1911>

⁴⁰ NFPA 1901, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1901>

⁴¹ NFPA 1911, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1911>

⁴² NFPA 1912, <http://www.nfpa.org/aboutthecodes/AboutTheCodes.asp?DocNum=1912>

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

Several outside factors are affecting the fire and rescue personnel in Rockingham County. Similar to many other jurisdictions, the county lacks adequate personnel to address call volume and growing administrative requirements. According to the 2014 Virginia Fire Service Needs Assessment, Rockingham County reported that the present call volume warranted 89 additional personnel to sufficiently staff their stations.⁴³ 14 paid firefighters and 75 volunteer firefighters.⁴⁴

Moreover, there appeared to be challenges in operating within two different jurisdictions with two different protocols and standards. It is recommended that both Rockingham County and City of Harrisonburg make a concerted effort to standardize their SOP/SOGs due to the current level of mutual aid calls.

During the visit, the study team was consistently informed that there was a need to reconsider and modify the EMS response time standards and dispatch protocols. Such modification will assist in differentiating between emergency and non-emergency calls for service. Different approach to the lowest tier priority EMS calls would allow the County's more advanced care units to be more easily and quickly deployed to meet higher *priority (i.e. serious/life threatening)* calls for service.

Recommendations:

1. Both Rockingham County and City of Harrisonburg must collaboratively standardize their SOP/SOGs due to the current level of mutual aid calls.
2. Establish different response time targets in accordance to priority call type.
 - a. Contract with a private ambulance company to provide non-emergency medical transport.
3. Rockingham County should strongly consider exploring the concept of *live-in stations* wherein qualified responders that wish to live in the housing unit (department) rent free in exchange for a set number of duty hours/shifts per week.
 - a. This concept has been successful in other parts of Virginia, including Charlottesville.

Operations and Staffing

The study committee observed that most departments have enough personnel to provide adequate services on weekends, some holidays, and afternoons or nights. However, according to the statistics on the strategic plan, there appeared to be call loads and response issues in

⁴³ See Appendix 5: 2014 Virginia Fire Service Needs Assessment.

⁴⁴ See Appendix 5: 2014 Virginia Fire Service Needs Assessment.

some stations on nights and weekends. National statistics continue to show as fire and rescue departments call volume steadily increases, the number of volunteers is decreasing. Similar to other parts of the Country, Rockingham County is also experiencing lower level of volunteers. However, in response to this problem - Rockingham County has successfully initiated programs that encourage the involvement of youth through its Junior Firefighter/Rescue member efforts. Rockingham County's Ordinance, *Sec. 8-1.2* recognizes the participation of juveniles in activities of volunteer fire companies. According to the ordinance, *"any person sixteen (16) years of age or older, with written parental or guardian approval may work with and participate in the activities of any volunteer fire company within the county provided such person has attained certification NFPA 1001."* Such effort provides an opportunity to encourage and interest youth in the field of emergency service. This is beneficial for Rockingham County with respect succession planning.

Recruitment and Retention

Recruiting and retaining quality personnel is an essential component to the overall success of volunteer fire and rescue departments. Rockingham County has felt some impact of declining numbers of men and women volunteering for fire and rescue departments. Recruitment and retention can be improved within the County.

The County has tried many of the standard incentives often used by localities to attract and retain volunteers and while they are appreciated they are also considered to be ineffective by those interviewed. If the County is to be successful in significantly increasing and retaining qualified, active volunteers, Rockingham County will need to intensify its efforts. As each community is unique, this may best be determined by a joint working group of volunteer and paid leadership. Examples that may help are County-paid advanced training, the prioritized/triaged EMS dispatch systems referenced above, reasonable stipends for regularly scheduled volunteer duty crews, and an employer recognition program, group health insurance. Additionally, the County government itself can help set the community volunteer-employer standard by allowing its employees outside the career service who are qualified volunteers to run emergency calls as volunteers during regular work hours, when and where practical.

Recommendations:

1. Working alongside the Emergency Officers Association, the County Government should identify the needs for additional 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, Rockingham County should be able to determine fire and rescue personnel needs, equipment needs and deployment.⁴⁵
2. The Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association and County Government should adopt an official countywide recruitment and retention program.
 - a. This recruitment and retention program should take into consideration the needs of current volunteers and identify motivational factors to keep this population engaged and committed to the fire and rescue service.
 - 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.
3. The Board of Supervisors should consider creating an incentive package in consultation with the Emergency Officers Association.
 - a. Examples include;
 - i. County-paid advanced training.
 - ii. Prioritized/triaged EMS dispatch systems.
 - iii. Reasonable stipends for regularly scheduled volunteer duty crews.
 - iv. An employer recognition program.
 - v. If feasible, group health insurance.
4. The County Government and Rockingham County Emergency Officers Association should collaboratively find low-cost methods to enhance public-education efforts such as open houses and creating PSAs.⁴⁶
 - a. Improve the visibility of the Rockingham County fire and rescue services in the community.
 - b. Continued use of word-of-mouth recruiting is effective. Each volunteer should be encouraged to inform their respective community network about Rockingham fire and rescue services' training and educational opportunities.
5. In addition, Rockingham County's fire and rescue organizations should take advantage of pre-existing recruitment and retention information. Resources may be downloaded at the following locations:
 - a. Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

⁴⁵ 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.

⁴⁶ *Fire Service Image Task Force Report: Taking Responsibility for a Positive Public Perception* 15

- i. <http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/OEMS/Agency/Recruitment/index.htm>
 - ii. http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMSWorkbook_0405.pdf
 - iii. http://www.vdh.state.va.us/OEMS/Files_page/Locality_Resources/EMSWorkbook3.pdf
- b. BecomeEMS.org - <http://www.becomeems.org/>
 - c. Fire/Volunteer (Guide) - <http://www.nvfc.org/resources/rr/retention-recruitment-guide/>
 - d. Fire/Volunteer (Video) - <http://www.nvfc.org/files/documents/Retention-and-Recruitment-Volunteer-Fire-Emergency-Services.wmv>.
 - 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) –
<http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/4d54200d7e28716385256ec1004f3130/87c75ac37063994d85256ec500553c41?OpenDocument>

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1: Rockingham County Letter of Request – July 2015

Appendix 2: Rockingham County - Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System Report Summary

Appendix 3: Rockingham County – Virginia Pre-Hospital Information Bridge Report Summary

Appendix 4: Rockingham County 2014 Needs Assessment Summary Statistics

Appendix 5: Rockingham County FY2015 Aid-to-Localities Allocation Report

APPENDIX 1: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY LETTER OF REQUEST



JOSEPH S. PAXTON
County Administrator



ROCKINGHAM COUNTY

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

PABLO CUEVAS

Election District No. 1

FREDERICK E. EBERLY

Election District No. 2

RICK L. CHANDLER

Election District No. 3

WILLIAM B. KYGER, JR.

Election District No. 4

MICHAEL A. BREEDEN

Election District No. 5

July 28, 2015

Walter Bailey
Chairman
Virginia Fire Service Board
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23509-4500


Dear Mr. Bailey:

The Rockingham County Board of Supervisors, at its meeting on July 22, 2015, requested that the Virginia Fire Services Board initiate a study of the County's fire and rescue program as permitted under state law. Staff will coordinate with the VFSB team to provide a list of study areas that the Board has a special concern and requests that the Team be sure to address in addition to those items that may be undertaken in a normal study.

Please let me know if this request is approved and when the study may be undertaken. Rockingham is a fast growing, urbanizing county that is experiencing an increased demand to support the previously volunteer fire and EMS response in our community.

Let me know if you need additional information.

Very truly yours,



Joseph S. Paxton

C: Board of Supervisors
Deputy County Administrator
Fire & Rescue Chief

20 EAST GAY STREET, HARRISONBURG, VIRGINIA 22802
TELEPHONE (540) 564-3027 • FAX (540) 564-3017
Website: rockinghamcountyva.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.

APPENDIX 2: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY – VIRGINIA FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM REPORT

The Virginia Department of Fire Programs manages the Virginia Fire Incident Reporting System (VFIRS). VFIRS is the statewide system for tracking all emergency responses with fire departments in Virginia. By reporting their incidents to VFIRS, fire departments document the details of their incidents for legal purposes and documenting the overall activities of their fire department.

Incident Type Summary, Rockingham County, Virginia 2010 -2014*

Incident Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Grand Total
Fires	329	274	240	272	257	1,372
EMS/Rescue	2,960	3,419	3,451	3,350	2,791	15,971
Hazardous Condition	355	341	377	351	262	1,686
Service Calls	351	268	299	343	293	1,554
Good Intent	758	824	839	814	629	3,864
False Alarm	423	398	365	400	393	1,979
Other	53	34	30	23	16	156
Total Incidents	5,229	5,558	5,601	5,553	4,641	26,582
Aid Given	1,285	945	951	1,218	853	5,252
Exposures	5	0	1	8	3	17
Grand Total	6,519	6,503	6,553	6,779	5,497	31,851

Fire Dollar Loss Summary, Rockingham County, Virginia 2010-2014*

Year	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Grand Total
Dollar Loss	\$1,187,600	\$1,198,250	\$2,225,056	\$4,047,524	\$2,286,355	\$10,944,785

Casualty Loss Summary, Rockingham County, Virginia 2010-2014*

Incident Type	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total
Civilian Fire Injuries	0	7	4	4	2	17
Civilian Fire Deaths	0	0	0	3	0	3
Fire Service Injuries	2	1	1	0	2	6
Fire Service Deaths	0	0	0	0	0	0

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.

APPENDIX 2: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY – VIRGINIA FIRE INCIDENT REPORTING SYSTEM REPORT

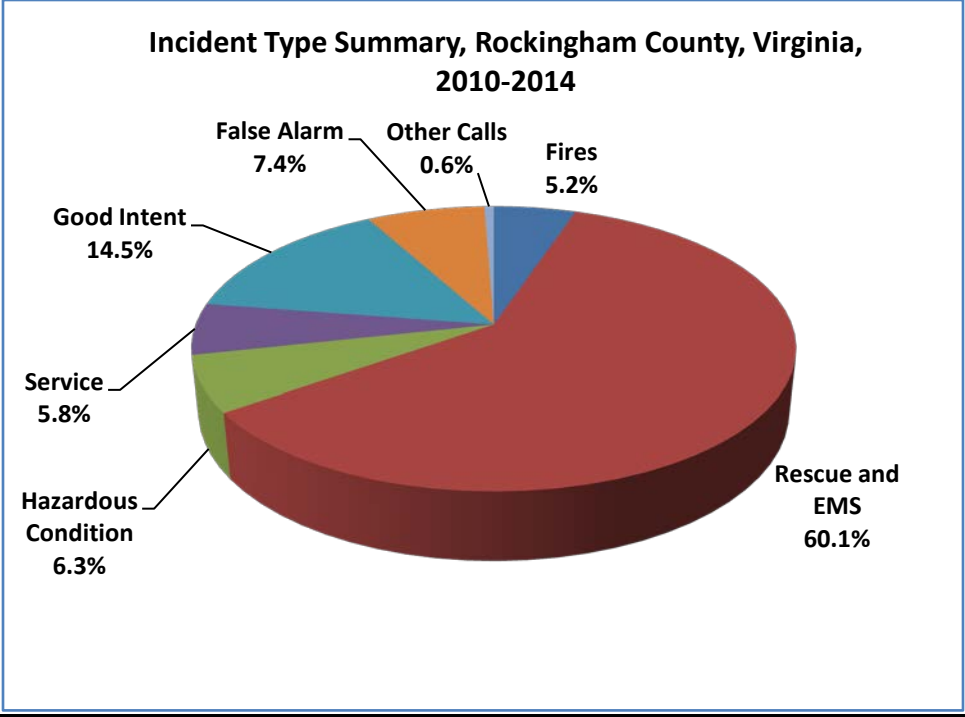
VFIRS Participation by Fire Department, Rockingham County, Virginia 2010-2014*

Fire Department	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Rockingham Co. Dept. of Fire & Rescue	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Singers Glen Vol. Fire Co.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bergton Vol. Fire Co.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Elkton Vol. Fire Co.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Broadway Vol. Fire Dept.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Timberville Vol. Fire Dept.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
McGaheysville Vol. Fire Dept.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Bridgewater Vol. Fire Co.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Clover Hill Vol. Fire Co.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grottoes Vol. Fire Dept.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Hose Co. No. 4	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Fire Departments Participating	11	11	11	11	11
Total Fire Departments	11	11	11	11	11
Percent Reporting	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

Total Incidents by Fire Department Rockingham County, Virginia 2010-2014*

Fire Department	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Grand Total
Rockingham Co. Dept. of Fire & Rescue	215	37	181	186	205	824
Singers Glen Vol. Fire Co.	134	105	151	145	77	612
Bergton Vol. Fire Co.	45	71	55	65	62	298
Elkton Vol. Fire Co.	518	751	729	383	377	2,758
Broadway Vol. Fire Dept.	625	779	690	738	637	3,469
Timberville Vol. Fire Dept.	240	236	312	209	166	1,163
McGaheysville Vol. Fire Dept.	446	445	457	472	482	2,302
Bridgewater Vol. Fire Co.	800	979	870	958	880	4,487
Clover Hill Vol. Fire Co.	486	583	527	571	545	2,712
Grottoes Vol. Fire Dept.	554	644	706	648	301	2,853
Hose Co. No. 4	1,166	928	923	1,178	893	5,088
Total Incidents	5,229	5,558	5,601	5,553	4,625	26,566

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APPENDIX 3: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY – VIRGINIA PRE-HOSPITAL INFORMATION BRIDGE REPORT

SUMMARY

The Virginia Department of Health’s Office of Emergency Medical Service manages the Virginia Pre-Hospital Information Bridge (VPHIB). VPHIB is the statewide system for tracking all emergency medical services (EMS) responses with EMS organizations in Virginia. In accordance with the *Code of Virginia*, “Maintaining a comprehensive emergency medical services patient care data collection and performance improvement system (32.1-111.3).”

EMS Emergency Responses By Agency By Month, Rockingham County, 2011-2015

ID	Agency	Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
717	BERGTON VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY	2011	3	1	6	1	11	5	34	30	8	5	4	2	110
		2012	3	1	4	4	4	3	6	4	4	3	7	5	48
		2013	4	4	6	4	3	2	5	2	2	4	2	2	40
		2014	1	1	7	4	0	7	5	2	0	3	3	4	37
		2015	6	4	6	2	3	4	4	3	2	1	0	1	36
BERGTON VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY Total			17	11	29	15	21	21	54	41	16	16	16	14	271

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
743	BRIDGEWATER VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD	2011	55	67	51	64	51	59	72	36	58	70	64	64	711
		2012	74	56	84	84	65	87	59	54	64	66	39	62	794
		2013	69	75	78	53	66	61	78	87	52	49	42	55	765
		2014	66	60	44	58	87	83	101	97	93	89	49	73	900
		2015	55	71	80	77	71	62	85	81	86	119	78	63	928
BRIDGEWATER VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD Total			319	329	337	336	340	352	395	355	353	393	272	317	4,098

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
745	BROADWAY EMERGENCY SQUAD	2011	38	33	33	30	34	47	39	38	38	32	25	18	405
		2012	37	35	46	39	35	45	38	14	15	54	56	38	452
		2013	47	50	58	68	58	24	42	56	40	37	30	42	552
		2014	52	28	34	13	49	59	52	71	40	45	44	53	540
		2015	52	48	60	51	46	74	76	57	40	48	48	36	636
BROADWAY EMERGENCY SQUAD Total			226	194	231	201	222	249	247	236	173	216	203	187	2,585

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
828	CLOVER HILL VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY	2011	33	40	34	46	29	61	32	41	44	28	39	49	476
		2012	51	34	51	60	49	43	47	42	43	45	34	50	549
		2013	36	42	32	46	30	32	50	32	43	41	45	43	472
		2014	44	30	30	33	46	40	50	35	36	38	36	45	463
		2015	41	41	31	33	42	39	47	68	49	28	36	36	491
CLOVER HILL VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY Total			205	187	178	218	196	215	226	218	215	180	190	223	2,451

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		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
878	ELKTON EMERGENCY SQUAD	2011	86	56	56	66	53	55	68	79	77	73	68	78	815
		2012	107	73	89	97	67	78	96	34	30	70	70	63	874
		2013	55	70	70	56	52	68	66	66	68	71	59	58	759
		2014	67	40	41	18	61	47	57	48	49	58	43	57	586
		2015	77	90	61	65	68	78	63	73	60	57	55	45	792
ELKTON EMERGENCY SQUAD Total			392	329	317	302	301	326	350	300	284	329	295	301	3,826

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
879	ELKTON VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY	2011	24	21	7	31	26	33	30	25	25	19	29	26	296
		2012	38	22	31	20	25	14	15	9	33	21	29	19	276
		2013	3	5	16	6	10	10	7	19	28	12	5	0	121
		2014	0	0	9	3	8	3	1	3	2	1	3	2	35
		2015	0	0	1	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	5
ELKTON VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY Total			65	48	64	61	71	60	53	56	88	53	67	47	733

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
944	GROTTOES RESCUE SQUAD	2011	36	44	36	47	48	30	31	36	54	41	44	41	488
		2012	36	33	37	44	52	77	62	42	52	54	64	68	621
		2013	61	35	35	23	25	39	34	40	34	31	38	33	428
		2014	40	29	40	27	46	40	51	65	39	42	33	35	487
		2015	32	37	47	48	54	54	56	76	47	55	44	30	580
GROTTOES RESCUE SQUAD Total			205	178	195	189	225	240	234	259	226	223	223	207	2,604

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
945	GROTTOES VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT	2011	9	4	6	10	8	15	14	7	20	21	9	25	148
		2012	12	13	9	5	9	20	16	3	17	16	22	22	164
		2013	17	13	22	6	28	25	29	36	14	21	12	9	232
		2014	3	10	5	2	8	9	6	13	7	13	12	13	101
		2015	10	12	16	12	18	14	12	23	8	17	17	12	171
GROTTOES VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT Total			51	52	58	35	71	83	77	82	66	88	72	81	816

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
1054	MCGAHEYSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY	2011	6	8	12	4	4	8	6	13	12	9	12	2	96
		2012	9	11	12	7	2	1	3	1	2	4	6	4	62
		2013	1	0	4	11	3	4	5	2	5	5	2	16	58
		2014	6	14	9	7	12	14	13	17	15	8	7	10	132
		2015	19	14	19	20	16	18	17	25	16	11	18	16	209
MCGAHEYSVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY Total			41	47	56	49	37	45	44	58	50	37	45	48	557

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		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
1220	SINGERS GLEN VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY	2011	4	7	5	10	9	3	4	12	11	4	9	4	82
		2012	18	6	19	10	2	11	6	7	8	12	12	10	121
		2013	6	10	11	6	14	4	7	9	6	7	8	13	101
		2014	11	7	1	2	6	6	6	3	3	4	3	10	62
		2015	6	6	5	9	9	10	13	6	12	8	6	9	99
SINGERS GLEN VOLUNTEER FIRE COMPANY		Total	45	36	41	37	40	34	36	37	40	35	38	46	465

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
1221	SINGERS GLEN VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD	2011	11	17	19	23	14	8	8	13	13	8	10	12	156
		2012	28	13	25	17	5	21	20	14	10	12	20	18	203
		2013	12	18	15	11	17	17	14	17	7	13	15	15	171
		2014	21	10	10	3	11	10	17	8	8	11	11	11	131
		2015	11	19	14	14	10	13	10	12	10	10	8	17	148
SINGERS GLEN VOLUNTEER RESCUE SQUAD		Total	83	77	83	68	57	69	69	64	48	54	64	73	809

		Year	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Grand Total
1273	TIMBERVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT	2011	10	11	16	17	14	18	6	13	14	4	14	13	150
		2012	19	19	19	19	13	25	21	21	20	29	23	20	248
		2013	14	12	8	11	9	10	17	8	8	5	4	4	110
		2014	8	3	1	5	5	6	8	10	2	15	6	15	84
		2015	9	6	11	4	2	10	8	9	11	3	7	6	86
TIMBERVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT		Total	60	51	55	56	43	69	60	61	55	56	54	58	678

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APPENDIX 4: ROCKINGHAM – 2014 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY STATISTICS

The Fire Service Needs Assessment is an annual survey conducted by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. Fire departments complete a survey questionnaire designed to identify their critical needs. Results are compiled and published in a comprehensive report available each January. The Department of Fire Programs received responses from all seven fire departments located in Rockingham County.

Fire Department Personnel	Current*	Need Reported**
Career Firefighters	84	14
Volunteer Firefighters	350	75
Paid-Per-Call	0	
Total Firefighters	434	89
Civilian-Paid	2	0
Civilian-Volunteer	150	0
Total Civilian Personnel	152	0

*Taken from Supplemental Table 1 of the 2014 Virginia Fire Service Needs Assessment.

**Number from Supplemental Table 7, means needed on top of the total column.

Apparatus Owned	Current*	Need Reported **
Aerial Apparatus	3	1
Ambulance/Other Patient Transport	26	3
Command Support Unit	1	0
Command Vehicle (SUV)	10	0
Engine/Pumper	22	2
Fire/Rescue Boat	1	0
Hazardous Materials Vehicle	1	0
Heavy Technical Rescue Vehicle	3	0
Logistical Support Apparatus	0	0
Quint Combination Vehicle	0	1
Tanker	10	0
Wildland Brush Truck	11	0
Other Apparatus	0	0

*Taken from Supplemental Table 2

**Taken from Supplemental Table 5

APPENDIX 4: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY – 2014 NEEDS ASSESSMENT SUMMARY STATISTICS CONT.

Equipment Owned	Current*	Need Reported **
4-Gas Monitors	16	0
Map Coordinate System – GPS	0	0
Mobile Data Terminals	0	0
Personal Alert Safety Systems	0	0
Personal Protective Equipment	440	0
Radios with Emergency Alert Button	460	0
Radios without Emergency Alert Button	0	0
Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (without integrated PASS)	0	0
Self-Contained Breathing (with integrated PASS)	265	0
Thermal Imaging Cameras	30	5
Other Equipment	0	0

*Taken from Supplemental Table 3

**Taken from Supplemental Table 6

APPENDIX 5: ROCKINGHAM COUNTY FY2015 AID-TO-LOCALITIES ALLOCATION REPORT

Description	Population (2010 Census)	FY2015 Allocation
Rockingham County	57,533	\$182,273
Bridgewater	5,644	\$17,881
Broadway	3,691	\$11,694
Dayton	1,530	\$10,000
Elkton	2,726	\$10,000
Grottoes	2,668	\$10,000
Mount Crawford	433	\$10,000
Timberville	2,522	\$10,000
Total	76,747	\$261,848

** VDFP ATL Annual Report