

Patrick County

FIRE & EMS STUDY



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



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Patrick County Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Study. This report provides guidance to the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, the Patrick County Administrator, its fire and EMS organizations, and other stakeholders in the community regarding public safety.

This study was requested by a resolution of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors and was conducted by the Virginia Fire Services Board, in partnership with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and the Virginia Department of Health's Office of Emergency Medical Services. The Virginia Department of Forestry was also represented by a member of the Virginia Fire Services Board as noted above.

Below is a high-level summary of the findings and recommendations. Additional details regarding each recommendation can be found within the report.

- *Develop a countywide fire and rescue strategic plan:* County leadership should work with fire and EMS departments to set short- and long-term goals, incorporating community input. The plan should be regularly reviewed and address personnel, facilities, equipment, and infrastructure needs.
- *Develop a fire and EMS Ordinance:* It is recommended to codify the fire and EMS system through an ordinance to clarify roles and responsibilities, enhancing coordination and accountability. The ordinance would define the relationship between the county, Emergency Management Director, the Fire and EMS Commission, and fire/EMS agencies, improving operational efficiency.
- *Clarify the role of the Emergency Management Director:* The role of the Emergency Management Director (EMD) is crucial for coordinating emergency response and managing resources in Patrick County. Clear duties include overseeing fire, EMS, and emergency preparedness operations, as well as coordinating both career and volunteer services. An organizational chart should be developed to clarify the EMD's role and improve collaboration with local agencies. The EMD should also assist in identifying and securing funding through grants to support training, equipment, and resources for emergency services.
- *Conduct Narrow-Focused Community Risk Assessment:* The study team recommends a narrow-focused Community Risk Assessment (CRA) to analyze emergency types, response frequency, required resources, and necessary funding. The Emergency Management Director should evaluate emergency response capabilities and conduct a fleet assessment to identify apparatus needs, considering factors like population density and response data. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation of existing fire and EMS fleets, including apparatus age and condition, should guide long-term replacement and update plans.
- *Financial Recommendations:* Recommendations include implementing regular audits, revising the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to account for fleet needs, and the county covering fuel and insurance costs for fire and EMS apparatus. Establishing a damaged

equipment fund and exploring collective purchasing opportunities for cost savings are also advised. Additionally, creating an apparatus maintenance program will help extend the life of equipment and reduce repair expenses.

- *Increase Training Opportunities*: Patrick County's fire and EMS volunteers need improved training opportunities. The study recommends increasing funding for VDFP courses, establishing multiagency training sessions, and offering more flexible training times, such as evenings and weekends, to accommodate volunteers' schedules. The Emergency Management Director should develop an annual training schedule and maintain accurate training records for all personnel.
- *Recruitment, Retention and General Administration*: Patrick County, like much of Virginia, faces challenges in volunteer first responder recruitment and retention. Key recommendations include improving facility conditions, strengthening leadership with clear accountability, and prioritizing work-life balance and confidentiality to reduce burnout. Additionally, establishing an incentive and awards program, such as personal property tax reductions and the VOLSAP retirement program, is recommended to increase volunteer retention and recognition.
- *Create Tactical Playbook (SOPs/SOGs)*: It is recommended that Patrick County develop a tactical playbook of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) to enhance coordination, safety, and service consistency for all emergency response agencies. The county should also review and update mutual aid agreements and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with surrounding areas to ensure clear roles, liabilities, and resources.
- *Improve Communications*: To improve emergency response, Patrick County should establish automatic mutual aid response protocols with neighboring North Carolina departments and address radio dead spots to enhance communication reliability. A countywide tone system should be implemented to streamline dispatch, reducing delays and improving response times by alerting all fire and EMS personnel simultaneously.
- *Patrick County Fire and EMS (Station 8)*: Patrick County should address the poor condition of Station 8 by finding a new facility or leasing space to ensure proper living quarters for career personnel. The staffing model needs revision, with consideration for part-time employees or a "rover" position to ensure adequate staffing and more efficient emergency response.
- *EMS Recommendations*: Patrick County should collaborate with health systems to improve local healthcare access and ensure adequate staffing for EMS. Communication issues, including dead spots and paging problems, should be addressed by enhancing infrastructure and exploring technologies like First Net.
- *Other Community Risk-Related Recommendations*: This study recommends considering a Mobile Integrated Healthcare/Community Paramedicine program once 911 calls can be adequately addressed. Additionally, the county is encouraged to support cancer prevention practices for firefighters, implement the Firefighter Cancer Registry, and maintain accurate volunteer fire department rosters for compliance with Virginia law.

METHODOLOGY

The following is an overview of the study process:

PHASE I: INITIATE PROJECT

Objectives: Initiation of Study

To initiate the study, the Patrick County Administrator sent a Resolution, on behalf of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors, to the Virginia Fire Services Board requesting a review of the fire and EMS system in the county (Reference Appendix A).

The county requested the following areas of concentration:

- Organization
- Budget
- Personnel
- Training
- Fleet Management (equipment/apparatus)
- Emergency Services Council
- Patrick County Fire & EMS Departments

A study team was convened, and the study team began by reviewing county-submitted data including the self-assessment questionnaire completed by the county. The team also began collecting and reviewing existing data, memorandums of understanding and relevant policies and procedures.

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

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 opinions of department personnel concerning the operations and performance of their department and county coordination;
- Identify issues and concerns of personnel 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.

The study team, in coordination with county leadership, developed a schedule of face-to-face interviews with local fire/EMS organizations, as well as county leadership as outlined below.

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.

The study team met with leadership from Patrick County to include the Emergency Management Director and the County Administrator. The study team also met with leadership from nine fire departments and six EMS squads during the visit.

All interviews were conducted during an allotted timeframe and a considerable amount of information was collected. A public hearing was advertised by the county and held on August 26, 2024 to give the public an opportunity to share feedback with the study team regarding the Fire & EMS system in Patrick County.

During the interviews and public hearing, the study team received information regarding volunteer staffing levels, service delivery, budget information, apparatus, relationships between career staff and volunteers, and other information about the operation of each volunteer department. The discussion also provided an opportunity for each organization to share comments regarding service delivery of fire & EMS services in the county and possible areas for improvement.

PHASE III: PREPARE ANALYSES AND DEVELOP CORE STRATEGIES

Objectives: Evaluate Current Trends and Prepare a Report

The third phase of the study involved further investigation and understanding of the organizational structures, operations, limitations, achievements, and opportunities for improvement within the fire and EMS delivery 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. During this phase, the study team worked with public safety staff and other departments to obtain additional information. Data obtained during the study process also assists the study team in identifying issues influencing the current levels of service.

After receiving and critically evaluating information from the interviews and all supporting materials, the study team began identifying the necessary and critical components to achieve effective and uniform service levels throughout the county.

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 Patrick County Administrator to ensure the technical content in this report is accurate. Upon receiving corrections, the study team revised the draft report, as needed, to assist in the preparation and issuance of the final report.

COUNTY INFORMATION

Patrick County is almost 500 square miles, consists of around 17,000 people, and is located at the foot of the Blue Ridge Mountains on Virginia's southern border with North Carolina. It was organized in 1791, and its administrative center is in Stuart. Its gross domestic product (GDP) is close to \$450 million, while its per capita income sits around \$15,000. The area is mainly rural, while median incomes are well under the national average. Patrick County is known for a few tourist destinations, including Mabry Mill and its covered bridge (NACO).



FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The recommendations contained in this study are not a requirement for the county to implement. The recommendations are to be used as a guideline of potential solutions that could assist the county as it further develops its capabilities to provide fire and EMS services. The purpose of the study is to review weaknesses and strengths of Patrick County's current fire and EMS practices, providing recommendations to better serve the citizens and visitors of Patrick County, as well as the efficiency and effectiveness of the volunteer fire/rescue system.

Many recommendations below refer to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards which provides industry-wide best practices for fire and EMS service. Although the NFPA standards are considered best practices, the study team understands that not all NFPA standards

are attainable in individual jurisdictions. Patrick County should strive to meet NFPA standards to provide best-in-class service to its citizens and visitors.

Volunteers are a critical component of the fire and EMS structure in Patrick County. **The study team encourages the county to recognize the volunteer fire and EMS departments as part of its infrastructure.** Many of the recommendations below are tied to this common theme as it is critical to the continued delivery of fire and EMS services in Patrick County.

I. DEVELOP A COUNTYWIDE FIRE AND RESCUE STRATEGIC PLAN

Although most people, and department members, often do not consider fire departments to be a business, there are numerous connections that make strategic planning worthwhile. For fire departments, strategic planning should prioritize efforts and allocate resources based on the community's need backed by data and reasoning.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that county leadership work with the Fire and EMS Commission to develop a list of short- and long-term goals of Patrick County fire and EMS. Short term goals should be identified for the next 1-2 years, while long term goals should range from 5-10 years. The list should include goals from county leadership which impact fire and EMS departments, personnel, facilities, and equipment or other infrastructure.
2. Public engagement is a helpful tool when creating a strategic plan. It is recommended to hold a series of community meetings throughout the county to solicit goals from the community related to fire and EMS services. These community meetings should be well advertised and be an open forum for citizens to discuss needs and their intended goals.
3. Once created, this plan should be routinely reviewed on a schedule set by the county and the Fire and EMS Commission.
4. More information on strategic plans:
 - a. Four Steps to High-Impact Strategic Planning in Government¹
 - b. Fire Department Strategic Planning²

II. DEVELOP A FIRE AND EMS ORDINANCE

To enhance the operational efficiency and organizational clarity of the county's fire and emergency response services, it is recommended that the services be codified. The ordinance would define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all entities involved in fire, EMS, and emergency management. Creating a clear and structured framework is crucial for ensuring an integrated, effective, and coordinated response to emergencies, while promoting accountability and operational excellence.

¹ Boland (2018). BCG Global

² Fire Department Strategic Planning 101. Fire Engineering

The ordinance serves as a foundation for improving communication, standardizing procedures, and fostering collaboration among all fire and emergency service providers and the Emergency Management Director.

Recommendations:

1. Codify Fire and EMS System

- a. By formalizing and codifying the fire and EMS system within the county, the ordinance would outline the essential duties and responsibilities of the Emergency Management Director, the Fire and EMS Commission, volunteer fire and EMS departments/members, and the career fire and EMS component of the Patrick County Fire and EMS delivery system. This clarification ensures that the Emergency Management Director functions in a well-defined capacity, providing the necessary guidance, resources, and leadership for all fire and EMS components. This structure will help eliminate ambiguity and improve coordination across all levels of emergency management and response.

2. Define the relationship between Patrick County, the Emergency Management Director, volunteer fire/EMS departments, and the Fire and EMS Commission.

- a. The ordinance should explicitly define the roles and responsibilities of Patrick County, the Emergency Management Director, the Fire and EMS Commission, and fire/rescue agencies. Establishing clear guidelines for how these entities interact — both during routine operations and in response to emergencies — will improve operational coordination and ensure that all parties understand their obligations and expectations. This framework will also help streamline resource allocation and utilization of both career staff and volunteers, and communications, ultimately resulting in more safe and efficient emergency responses.

3. Expand Fire and EMS Commission Responsibilities

The expansion of the Fire and EMS Commission would significantly improve communication, collaboration, and decision-making between the fire and rescue departments, EMD, and the Board of Supervisors. In many communities, the relationship between these two entities can often be strained or fragmented, primarily due to the complexities of emergency services and the diverse needs of the community. A Fire and EMS Commission would serve as a structured platform to bridge these gaps and foster a more cohesive, transparent, and responsive system.

Working closely with the Emergency Management Director, the Commission would provide several benefits:

a. Facilitate Direct Communication with Board of Supervisors

A dedicated Fire Rescue Commission would provide a consistent and organized forum where representatives from fire and rescue departments along with the EMD can meet periodically with the Board of Supervisors. This interaction would allow for a direct exchange of concerns, updates, and priorities. For example, the Fire and EMS Commission could present the operational challenges their

departments face, such as staffing shortages, equipment needs, and funding shortfalls, while the Board of Supervisors could provide immediate feedback or propose solutions. This would ensure that all parties are aligned and that critical issues are addressed promptly, reducing misunderstandings and improving overall service delivery through direct communications.

b. *Prioritize Fire and EMS Needs*

The Fire and EMS Commission would provide a focused avenue to ensure that fire and emergency medical services are adequately represented to the EMD in the policy-making process. This would help secure long-term support for the departments, enabling them to maintain operational readiness and respond effectively to emergencies.

c. *Improved Planning and Resource Allocation*

The Fire and EMS Commission could work with the EMD & Board of Supervisors to ensure that future plans for community development take into account fire/rescue capabilities and infrastructure. As local governments grow and develop, it is essential that fire and rescue departments have input into planning decisions related to new developments, traffic patterns, and other factors that could impact emergency response times and service delivery. The Commission could work with the EMD to create long-term strategies for improving response times, resource distribution, and operational efficiency, ensuring that Patrick County Fire & EMS system needs are integrated into larger community planning.

d. *Addressing Personnel and Training Needs*

One of the most pressing issues in fire and EMS services is personnel. Through the Fire and EMS Commission, fire and EMS department leaders could present detailed assessments of personnel needs, training requirements, and retention strategies. The Commission could serve as an advocate for better incentives and/or compensation packages, workforce development programs, and other initiatives designed to improve both volunteer and career recruitment and retention. By fostering this ongoing dialogue, fire and EMS departments and the EMD can be better supported by the Board of Supervisors in addressing the critical issue of personnel shortages that can compromise service delivery and morale.

III. CLARIFY THE ROLE OF THE EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIRECTOR

The role of the Emergency Management Director is pivotal to ensuring the effective coordination and execution of emergency response operations within Patrick County. A well-defined role will help streamline decision-making, strengthen interagency collaboration, and manage resources during both routine and emergency situations. The study team has provided recommendations to clarify the role of the Emergency Management Director.

Recommendations:

1. General Duties of the Emergency Management Director

Per the job description provided to the study team:

- Responsible for all operational and administrative aspects of fire, EMS, and emergency preparedness/management
- Oversees and coordinates operations of both career and volunteer services in the best interest of the county citizens

2. Develop Org Chart to Clearly Define Roles

- a. Develop an organizational chart that clearly illustrates the relationship between the Emergency Management Director, volunteer fire departments, career personnel and other emergency service agencies. This chart will help ensure transparency in the chain of command, making it easier to understand the Director's role in coordinating emergency responses and collaborating with local agencies. An example of a proposed org chart is available for reference in Appendix C.

3. Assisting with Grant Writing

- a. The Emergency Management Director should take an active role in identifying funding opportunities to secure resources for emergency services. This includes working alongside fire and EMS agencies, as well as county leadership, to apply for grants that support training, equipment, and other necessary resources for emergency preparedness.
- b. The Emergency Management Director should work with the grant writer to assist the organizations with the acquisition and management of grants. Below are a few grants to research and consider from federal, state and private resources:
 - i. Virginia Department of Forestry Grants
 1. Volunteer Fire Assistance (VFA) Grant
 2. Firewise Virginia Community Hazard Mitigation Grant
 3. Dry Hydrant Grant
 - ii. Federal Emergency Management Agency Grants
 1. Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG)
 2. Fire Prevention & Safety (FP&S)
 3. Staffing for Adequate Emergency Response (SAFER)
 - iii. Virginia Department of Health-Office of Emergency Medical Services' Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) Grants
 - iv. Virginia Fire Services Board Grants, administered by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs including the Live Fire Structure Training Grant discussed in the training section.
 - v. Various private grant programs:
 1. <https://www.grants.gov/>
 2. <https://www.emsgrantshelp.com/>

IV. **FIRE & EMS RISK ASSESSMENT**

Community Risk Reduction (CRR) is defined by Vision 20/20 as “a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources (emergency response and prevention) to reduce their occurrence and impact.” CRR provides a focused approach to reducing local identified specific risks

while also identifying areas for improvement within a department or community. Each CRR plan will be unique to each locality, based on the types of risks identified for that community and the needs identified.

The study team recommends a narrow-focused community risk assessment (CRA) that looks at the county overall, with specific emphasis on identifying the types of emergency responses, the equipment needed to effectively respond, and the funds required to provide this response.

Recommendations:

1. The Emergency Management Director should conduct a narrow-focused CRA of emergencies in each response district, including the type of emergency, frequency, and type of resource(s) needed. This process should also include a review of community profile information, event history and response capabilities of both the department and mutual aid departments. By examining the types and frequency of incidents to which each fire department responds, a CRA can help focus and prioritize the fire prevention/loss prevention activities and/or response needs of both the community and department. For example, examining the number of firefighters, as well as the type of apparatus needed (engine, ladder, rescue, etc.) can help the department make long term decisions.
 - a. The Emergency Management Director could request the VDFP CRR Coordinator return and assist the county in its Community Risk Assessment (CRA).
 - b. The NFPA 1720: Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments. According to chapter 1 of NFPA 1720, the standard defines “levels of service, deployment capabilities, and staffing levels for substantially volunteer fire departments.” This standard contains minimum requirements for deploying fire suppression and EMS for service delivery, response capabilities and resources. It also contains requirements for managing resources and systems such as health and safety, incident management, training, communications, and pre-incident planning. It addresses the strategic and system issues involving the organization, operations, and deployment of a volunteer fire department.³
 - i. NFPA Standard 1720 section 4.3.2 requires a minimum staff of six personnel on scene within 14 minutes 80% of the time for rural demand zone sections of the county and minimum staffing of 10 personnel on scene within 10 minutes 80% of the time in suburban demand zone sections of the county. Section 4.3.4 requires an initial attack be performed within two minutes of necessary resources arriving on scene.
 - ii. NFPA 1720 indicates that the emergency services engage in the development of a community risk management plan for fire, emergency medical service, and hazardous materials use, storage, and transportation within the county.

³ NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments.

2. Evaluation of the county's existing fleet is the foundation of a good apparatus plan. The EMD should conduct a fleet assessment and evaluation. From this assessment, the Director should work with the Fire and EMS Commission and county leadership to plan for the replacement or updating of apparatus.
 - a. A fleet risk assessment should include at a minimum:
 - i. A focus on apparatus that meet community specific needs such as population density, development, previous call data, etc.
 - ii. The ability of the apparatus to provide the adequate resources needed on regular responses identified in the community risk assessment.
 - iii. The adequate number of each category of response vehicle is within the limits of each response area needs to be determined. The referenced category of response vehicles could be 1) engine/pumping 2) tanker or tender
 1. The engine/pumping apparatus criteria should be based on the number of personnel (career or volunteer) available to adequately staff the apparatus for 75% of the appropriate responses. If apparatus cannot be regularly staffed, it should be considered *excess* apparatus.
 2. *Excess* apparatus can be utilized as "*reserve apparatus*". The amount of "*reserve apparatus*" could be considered at four reserve engines and three tanker/tenders, strategically placed throughout the county. This would eliminate the need for back-up apparatus at each station.
 - b. A fleet evaluation should include at a minimum:
 - i. The age of the apparatus.
 - ii. The average use of the apparatus annually.
 - iii. Mechanical condition
 - iv. Repair and maintenance cost history
 - v. Inspection of all components
 - c. A similar process should be developed for EMS transport vehicles to determine excess fleet and reserve vehicles.

V. FINANCIAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Effective financial management is crucial to ensuring that fire and EMS services in Patrick County can operate efficiently and continue to meet the needs of the community. Proper allocation of resources, transparency in spending, and long-term financial planning are essential to sustaining the county's emergency services infrastructure.

The study team has provided several recommendations below to optimize the use of available funds and provide ample time to plan for the increasing financial need of fire and EMS services. This increase in financial support is not unique to Patrick County. The county must recognize that volunteer fire and EMS agencies will require **greater support** from the county with funding now and in the future.

Recommendations:

1. Transparency

To ensure that funds are being used efficiently and appropriately, it is recommended that a regular audit process be implemented for all fire and EMS agencies. Transparency in the use of funds fosters accountability, confirms compliance with financial guidelines, and allows for public trust in the management of taxpayer dollars. Audits should include a thorough review of agency budgets, expenditures, and grant allocations.

2. Clarify/Revise use of CIP in policy

During the interviews, the study team learned the county provides funding for a new piece of apparatus to each department in a yearly rotation. The rotation results in funding in the amount of \$154,000 towards a new piece of fire apparatus for each department about every 8 years and funding in the amount of \$76,000 towards a new EMS ambulance every 7 years. The county has a more than adequate amount of apparatus. The totals include 23 pumpers, 11 tenders, 12 brush trucks assigned to 8 fire departments and 14 ambulances assigned to 7 EMS organizations. With the cost of a stock fire pumper apparatus costing \$700,000 or more and EMS transport vehicles costing \$250,000 and up, the current annual amount set aside for either the fire or EMS apparatus is inadequate.

It is recommended that the Capital Improvement Plan process be modified and clarified in a policy. The CIP should incorporate the results of the fleet assessment. It is advised that the county consider replacing equipment and/or apparatus based on an unbiased assessment of use/age, etc. instead of providing funds on a rotating basis. As stated in the fleet assessment portion of this report, the study team feels that the apparatus deemed as excess apparatus should not be included in the revised CIP process. It is important to make sure that future CIP fleet replacements are factored into long-term planning given the rapidly increasing price of firefighter and EMS transport apparatus.

Additionally, the CIP should include necessary upgrades or improvements to fire and EMS stations to keep them operational. This includes considering the expansion of facilities, improvements to infrastructure, and addressing any safety or logistical concerns.

3. County should pay fuel and insurance on apparatus

To reduce the financial burden on local fire and EMS agencies, it is recommended that the county take on the responsibility of covering fuel and insurance costs for all non-excess and reserve fire and EMS apparatus. This would help ensure consistency in funding and avoid unpredictable financial strain on individual agencies, allowing them to better allocate their resources to other critical needs.

4. County should create a damaged equipment fund

Establishing a dedicated fund for damaged equipment is recommended to help the fire and EMS departments manage the costs associated with repairing or replacing damaged apparatus or gear. This fund would be used for equipment damaged in the routine performance of the job of emergency response as verified by the EMD in consultation with the Fire and EMS Commission. This budget item would provide a financial safety

net for agencies, ensuring that emergency response capabilities are not compromised due to unforeseen equipment issues.

5. Collective Purchasing

The county should explore opportunities for collective purchasing among fire and EMS agencies to reduce costs and improve purchasing power once they are identified as a component of the county fire & EMS infrastructure. By pooling resources for items such as equipment, supplies, and apparatus, the county and fire & EMS Departments can take advantage of bulk discounts, standardize equipment across agencies, and achieve cost savings that can be reinvested into other critical areas of service.

- a. Many items, including medical supplies and items used daily, can be centrally stored in accordance with state regulation and distributed. In addition, many equipment purchases could be made county-wide to increase interoperability and reduce costs as mentioned in other areas of this report.

6. Apparatus Maintenance

It is recommended that the Emergency Management Director in cooperation with the Fire and EMS Commission, create an equipment maintenance program to increase the life of apparatus and reduce repair costs. This equipment maintenance program should consider variables such as age and mechanical condition, as well as the use level of each apparatus. If volunteer departments are completing their own maintenance, the EMD should maintain joint records of this maintenance. Where possible, Patrick County should financially support regular maintenance of non-excess and reserve apparatus.

VI. INCREASE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Patrick County has a group of very dedicated volunteers in both fire and EMS. However, all volunteers expressed the critical need to improve the amount, type, location and frequency of training. The study team heard that Firefighter I & II were offered annually but not given unless the minimum student number identified by the Department of Fire Programs (10 students registered) was obtained. It was also communicated that anything other than basic EMS training was not available within the county.

When people in Patrick County call for help, they expect and deserve the very best service. The importance of training in the fire and EMS service cannot be overstated. To prepare personnel to handle any emergency, it is essential to provide and prioritize training opportunities.

Recommendations:

1. Funds for training to host more VDFP classes

One of the most effective ways to ensure personnel receive high-quality training is by increasing funding to cover the cost of VDFP courses that don't meet the VDFP minimum enrollment number. These state-certified courses provide valuable instruction in essential areas such as fire suppression, rescue operations, and more. By providing

additional funding, the county can offer these training sessions locally, reducing the need for travel and making it easier for personnel to attend.

- i. The study team was made aware that there were two training classrooms made available to Patrick County Fire & EMS by the community college. The EMD should ensure that at least one classroom is always available to be utilized for scheduled classes.
 - ii. The EMD should also ensure the Fire and EMS Commission is aware of the amount and expenditure of the training funds which are included in the EMD budget.
2. Establish multiagency training between departments
Collaboration across departments is crucial in emergency response situations. Establishing multiagency training sessions to include both Virginia and North Carolina mutual aid agencies will help foster stronger working relationships, improve communication, and ensure that volunteers from across the county can coordinate effectively during large-scale emergencies.
 - a. The county should consider practicing large-scale multi-agency scenarios where fire departments, EMS, and law enforcement each play a vital role.
3. Increase training opportunities on weekends/evenings
To accommodate varying schedules, it is important to offer training opportunities outside of standard working hours. By scheduling courses on weekends and evenings, this provides greater flexibility for volunteer firefighters and EMS personnel who may have daytime employment commitments. This will allow a larger group of responders to participate in training, ensuring that all team members are well-prepared to serve the community when called upon.
4. Utilize VDFP and other resources for more advanced training classes
While basic training is critical, advanced training in specialized areas such as hazardous materials response and technical rescue is just as essential. The study team recommends leveraging VDFP and other available resources to offer more advanced courses that can elevate the proficiency of first responders in handling complex situations.
5. Consider the VDFP Firefighter Modular Program
VDFP offers a modular firefighter I program format which contains four modules of training and testing. The study team recommends that the county pursue this training format because it allows a locality to spread out the 160-hour program and test it modularly, instead of cumulatively at the end of the program. This format allows students to test on the knowledge at the end of each module rather than after several months of training.
 - i. These classes should be offered annually to maintain the recommended minimal levels of certification and to provide the maximum number of “interior certified” firefighters and Basic EMT’s in accordance with the individual departmental by-laws and operating procedures.

- ii. It is also recommended that the VDFP Basic Pumps and Rural Water Supply courses be scheduled on a reoccurring basis and funding covered, if needed
- 6. The Emergency Management Director should be tasked to develop an annual training schedule which is accommodating to the various availability of the Fire & EMS personnel. The Director should also establish, provide, and maintain accurate training records for all Fire & EMS personnel.

VII. RECRUITMENT, RETENTION AND GENERAL ADMINISTRATION

Not specific to Patrick County, the Commonwealth of Virginia has seen a steep decline in volunteer first responders for a variety of reasons. This poses a significant threat to public safety in Virginia if numbers continue to decline.

Recruitment and retention of both volunteer and career personnel is crucial to ensuring that Patrick County can continue to respond to emergency incidents. The ability to maintain a well-staffed and skilled workforce is vital to providing the level of service the community deserves.

However, recruitment and retention efforts can be significantly impacted by factors such as inadequate facilities, management challenges, human resources issues, and unclear or inconsistent standard operating procedures. Addressing these concerns is essential to maintaining a stable, effective team.

Below are key recommendations for corrective actions to improve recruitment and retention within the Patrick County Fire and EMS departments.

Recommendations:

1. Facility Accommodations

The physical environment where career staff work and live plays a significant role in both recruitment and retention. Inadequate or deteriorating facilities can create a sense of neglect and dissatisfaction, leading to high turnover rates. It is essential to prioritize improvements to firehouses and other essential facilities, ensuring that accommodations meet basic health and safety standards. This could include renovating aging structures, upgrading dormitory and kitchen facilities, and enhancing communal spaces to improve morale and the overall work experience. Investing in these upgrades will signal to current and prospective employees that the department values their well-being, which will positively impact both recruitment and retention efforts.

2. Strengthen Leadership and Accountability

Effective management is the cornerstone of any successful organization, and fire and EMS services are no exception. Patrick County is currently operating as a combination career and volunteer system. The study team immediately recognized that the Emergency Management Director was attempting to manage both components of the current combination system. This arrangement is not effective, efficient or successful.

- i. There must be an overall system manager (Emergency Management Director) which should not be a primary response asset and a Deputy Director position which is a primary response asset with primary authority overseeing the daily career responders. While it appears that there may already be two positions currently in the organization chart, they are not utilized effectively.
- ii. It is recommended that the county consider basic leadership training. Addressing management issues requires providing leadership training for supervisors, enhancing communication structures, and ensuring accountability at all levels. It is crucial to foster a positive work environment where all staff feel supported and respected. Clear and consistent management practices will reduce burnout, frustration, and turnover, while also improving the overall quality of service. Additionally, addressing management concerns through regular feedback and performance evaluations can help identify and resolve potential issues before they affect personnel morale and retention.
- iii. The Chair and Vice Chair of the Fire and EMS Commission should be identified as leadership positions for the volunteer response assets with one being a fire representative and the other being an EMS representative.

3. Use “Make Me a Firefighter” Tool

The county is encouraged to utilize the National Volunteer Fire Council’s “Make Me A Firefighter” recruitment tool which features a [department portal](#) filled with resources and tools for implementing a local recruitment campaign as well as a [public web site](#) to allow potential volunteers to find local opportunities. There are step-by-step guides and resources on marketing and planning events to engage prospective recruits. It will allow a posting of volunteer opportunities by entering them into a database which is searchable to potential volunteers who can connect directly with the department through Make Me A Firefighter. It is possible to customize outreach materials for each individual department to use in the community. The MMAFF program can track recruits and send reminders of where they are in the recruitment process.⁴ This system can be utilized to recruit any type of member, auxiliary, logistics, administrative, etc.

4. Fire Service Culture

The average age of a volunteer member in the fire service today is above 50 years old. Today’s fire service “culture” tends to subscribe to the belief that all members should “be able to do all things.” This strategy may not be successful in today’s culture. Today, a more productive belief is a fire department should be viewed as a football team with several different groups of individuals being responsible for specific functions.

- i. Each department should do an assessment to determine what the main operational areas are for their organization. This would allow for the targeted recruitment of individual members to handle emergent response

⁴ NVFC: *Make Me a Firefighter Program*, 2021

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.

and non-emergent functions such as fundraising, entering fire reports, marketing/social media initiatives, fire & life safety education and community programs, human resource management, station & apparatus maintenance, and in-house training. By utilizing these specialized groups to achieve specific tasks, it works to free up the demands on those members that are interested in responding to emergencies and maintaining the necessary training. Thus, this type of “culture” addresses retention needs by ensuring all members attain a sense of achievement and being a part of the community.

5. Incentive/Awards Program

Numerous fire and EMS departments expressed disappointment that the county provided no incentives for fire and EMS volunteers. It is recommended that Patrick County establish an incentive/award program to show continued support, recognition, and appreciation of the county volunteer members. Examples of programs: personal property tax reduction, pay per call, local business discounts, years of service awards, annual picnic or banquet, and the VOLSAP retirement program.

- a. The commonwealth has a VOLSAP retirement program administered by the Virginia Retirement System. This program is a service award program established to provide a financial incentive and monetary award to eligible volunteer firefighter and rescue squad workers. The program allows eligible volunteers, local departments, squads and localities to contribute money that is then invested alongside the VRS pension trust fund. Contributions must be quarterly and be either \$30, \$60, or \$90 per quarter in addition to any matching contributions by the department or locality. Members will continue earning service credit for each year of volunteer service until the member reaches the age of 60 at which point fund distribution begins. Visit this link for more information: <https://www.volsap.org/>

VIII. CREATE TACTICAL PLAYBOOK (SOPs/SOGs)

Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) are written guidelines that explain what is expected and required of fire service personnel in performing their jobs.⁵ SOGs are, in their simplest form, a “how-to” guideline to follow to achieve a desired goal. SOGs should not be viewed as rules and regulations, but rather as a roadmap to achieve specific goals and objectives. Standard Operating Procedures, however, are formal policies that specify a course of action, thereby ensuring efficiency, predictability, consistency, and safety.

Additionally, the status of mutual aid agreements and/or memorandums of understanding with the county and surrounding areas should be reviewed and updated, as necessary.

- a. It is recommended that the county develop a tactical playbook of guidelines, such as Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs). This will help improve coordination,

⁵ Standard Operating Procedures: The First Step to a Safer Fireground

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.

safety and set a documented level of service for emergency response in the Patrick County delivery system.

- b. This recommendation ensures the county is following NFPA 1720.4.1.1 which states, “the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) shall promulgate the fire department’s organizational, operational, and deployment procedures by issuing written administrative regulations, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and departmental orders.”
- c. The study team recommends that the county review and/or establish mutual aid agreements and/or MOUs with the surrounding counties, and emergency response agencies.
 - i. The agreements should ensure there is a clear delineation for liabilities, cost of service, authorization to respond as well as staffing and equipment.
 - ii. This recommendation is in line with NFPA 1720 standard 4.8 regarding intercommunity organization which states, “mutual aid, automatic aid and fire protection agreements shall be in writing to address issues such as liabilities for injuries, disabilities, and deaths; cost of service; authorization to respond; staffing; and equipment, including the resources to be made available and the designation of the incident commander.”⁶
 - iii. The ability to communicate between mutual/automatic aid units and incident command should also be addressed (NFPA 1720 4.8.3).⁷

IX. IMPROVE COMMUNICATIONS

Effective radio communication is a critical component of emergency response operations, especially for fire and EMS personnel. In high-pressure, fast-paced situations, clear and immediate communication between first responders, dispatchers, and support teams is vital to ensuring the safety of both the public and emergency personnel.

Radio communication systems not only allow for real-time updates on incident developments, but also help coordinate resources across jurisdictions and provide a clear chain of command. However, there are challenges in achieving optimal communication systems, which can hinder response times, cause confusion, or even lead to potentially dangerous situations if not addressed. With these challenges in mind, the study team has reviewed the current state of radio communication in Patrick County and offers several recommendations to enhance emergency response capabilities.

Recommendations:

1. Improve dispatching from NC departments

Departments reported inconsistent dispatching of North Carolina departments, delaying response times to emergency calls. The county should ensure that dispatchers know the proper procedures for requesting or toning North Carolina departments. One significant improvement that can be made is to establish/reinforce automatic mutual aid response

⁶ NFPA 1720 – 4.8.1

⁷ Ibid

protocols for areas where neighboring departments in North Carolina that are or should be second due are alerted immediately, reducing response time and ensuring that critical resources are mobilized faster.

2. Address Radio Dead Zones

Radio dead zones continue to pose a challenge in certain areas of Patrick County. These dead zones prevent communication between first responders and dispatch, causing confusion and jeopardizing safety. Identifying and addressing these dead zones should be a top priority. Solutions may include upgrading radio infrastructure, installing additional repeaters, or working with local providers to ensure consistent coverage across all service areas.

3. Establish a countywide tone

Currently, emergency personnel are "toned" individually, with separate alerts sent to each company in Patrick County. This process ties up valuable airtime, slowing down communication and response efforts.

The study team recommends implementing a countywide tone system when the initial company does not answer the call. This would allow all fire and EMS personnel to be alerted simultaneously, reducing air traffic and improving response times. A unified tone would streamline dispatch, allowing first responders to receive information more efficiently and minimizing unnecessary delays during critical moments.

X. PATRICK COUNTY FIRE AND EMS (STATION 8)

The study team applauds Patrick County for considering the use of career personnel during times when volunteers are unavailable. However, the study team encourages the county to ensure that an adequate staffing model is in place and proper living quarters are provided.

The condition of fire and EMS facilities and equipment is foundational to ensuring efficient emergency response. Well-maintained infrastructure not only supports the physical needs of first responders but also impacts response times, safety, and the overall quality of service delivered to the community.

Recommendations:

1. Dilapidated Living Quarters

The study team is concerned with the facility being utilized as career housing and administration known as Station 8 as it is in poor condition. It is strongly recommended that a new facility be found as soon as possible. One solution could be to approach the volunteer stations about utilizing available space.

2. Use of volunteer owned stations or equipment

Many of the volunteer fire and EMS stations in Patrick County are owned by the volunteer agencies, and their equipment is similarly managed by each individual

department. Like the financial recommendations mentioned previously in this report, the study team recommends that the Station 8 crews be permitted to use volunteer stations and equipment through the establishment of Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) or Memorandums of Agreement (MOAs) between the county and individual volunteer organizations. These agreements would outline shared responsibilities for maintenance, equipment use, and operational coordination, ensuring both the county and volunteer stations are aligned in their approach to emergency response and infrastructure management.

3. Adequate Staffing and Management

The study team is concerned that both career and volunteer ambulances are rarely fully staffed. This could be due in part to the extremely long transport times which range from 3-5 hours. This causes Patrick County to be without a response unit or have extremely long response times if returning from the hospital.

- a. It appeared that there were instances where the career crews will transport when a volunteer crew is in route. This is an example of when the Deputy Director position could decide how to best deploy resources.
- b. Like many localities, Patrick County is experiencing emergency transport requests for non-emergency complaints primarily from skilled nursing facilities. It is suggested that the EMS leadership, Operational Medical Director and EMD meet and decide on a plan to reduce the amount of interfacility transports or agree on a compensation model to utilize for such transports which could utilize overtime positions in which the costs are covered by the requesting facility.
- c. It was apparent to the study team that the current career staffing model is not working. The use of part time employees or additional career positions should be considered.
 - i. It is strongly suggested that consideration be given to the development of a process in which an additional career position is designated as a rover and will travel to any volunteer station which can provide an additional care provider to complete a two-person response team for at least an eight-hour duty period or any process which can provide a combination team.

XI. EMS RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are provided by the Virginia Department of Health – Office of Emergency Medical Services.

Finance:

Unfortunately, like many other rural localities both in and outside of Virginia, there are limited financial resources at the disposal of both Patrick County government and the fire and EMS agencies located in the county. It was mentioned many times by several agency representatives that current financial models aren't sustainable for the future. It is encouraging to see that each of the transport agencies in the county are billing for service, but unfortunately these agencies are having varying degrees of success with rates of return/reimbursements for service. In addition, some of the means that agencies have used for fund raising have had limited success as well.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the county explore avenues (training, etc.) to improve documentation of patient care reports (PCR), to ensure that accurate information is included on what billable services have been provided to patients, as well as ensuring that billing companies are given the proper information for claims to be submitted to insurers promptly and accurately.
2. Additionally, the licensed EMS agencies in the county should be submitting applications for funding of vehicles and equipment through the OEMS Rescue Squad Assistance Fund (RSAF) for each funding cycle. RSAF does consider applications submitted by agencies in underserved populations. The county government, along with the agencies within the county, should continue to explore additional funding through charitable organizations, foundations, and grant offerings from appropriate federal entities.
3. While it is commendable that there have been efforts made for joint applications for grant funding and the like, there should be a concerted effort made for the county and its agencies to explore ways that cost savings are possible through bulk purchasing, standard contracts, and other mutually agreed upon purchasing policies and procedures.

Delivery of Service:

Like many other similar areas of Virginia, the agencies of Patrick County face limited staffing resources, as well as long periods of time to conduct a single EMS call, due to long response times and long transport times, causing great strain to the county system. Many of the providers that were interviewed during the study mentioned that the system volume was much more manageable when there was a hospital in Stuart, which significantly reduced the time to complete an EMS call.

Further, many of the providers interviewed also mentioned shortages in the staffing of full-time providers both with Patrick County EMS (Station 8), and the Jeb Stuart Rescue Squad.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that Patrick County leadership continue discussions with health systems to determine any plan or project that might make a medical facility feasible/available in the county that would have the capability to receive patients from EMS in the county, as well as the ability to provide specialty care to avoid an increase in interfacility transfers.
2. The county should continue to work to ensure that there is adequate career staffing to meet the needs of the county EMS system, including serious consideration of placing career staff or response vehicles in Fire stations and/or rescue squad buildings throughout the county.

Communication:

Like many rural counties in Virginia and the United States, communication issues are a constant struggle. While there have been advances and improvement to communications infrastructure, it

is quite a lot of evidence and anecdotal information that demonstrates communication dead spots throughout the county.

In addition, there was a common theme related to the paging system in the county, with repeated pages for individual calls. Several providers that were interviewed also mentioned issues with radio interoperability, and issues with communication with agencies outside the county and across state lines who provide mutual aid into the county.

While it is widely known that state government is dedicated and actively working toward effective broadband infrastructure in rural areas, there is no defined time that broadband will be available in Patrick County.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the county explore the possibility/potential of enhancing the paging system to create pathways for better communication via paging. It is the hope that the county will continue to evaluate radio communications to determine the best way to address remaining dead spots.
2. The county should also be communicating with entities outside of the county to ensure adequate communication can occur between county Fire/EMS agencies, and entities outside the county and/or the state.
3. Lastly, until there is dedicated and fully functional broadband service countywide, some consideration should be given to the idea of enhanced communications through technology such as First Net or similar.

Training:

As has been stated, rural localities face unique challenges with the availability of training, be it EMS certification courses and/or continuing education (CE). Quite often, providers are faced with the prospect of traveling long distances to receive the level of training that they require, especially at advanced EMT levels.

However, there are opportunities for providers and those interested in initial certification to receive that training locally. The county does have several OEMS approved educators who are able to teach both initial certification courses and CE offerings.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the county (and its EM Director) work with the agencies in the county to create a CE schedule that provides an opportunity for these offerings to be held in different parts of the county over the calendar year.
2. The county should also strive to work with its agencies, school divisions, and higher education entities to provide at least one EMT course per year within the county, with the condition that minimum enrollment levels are met.

3. Patrick County should take advantage of the numerous ways that CE can be obtained online as well. For advanced level education, the county should continue to explore avenues where advanced EMT education can be offered with as little travel as possible.

Recruitment and retention:

Given the size and population of the county, it is an ever-existing problem for the EMS system to bring providers on and keep them involved and engaged. Long transports, training requirements, and related obligations can be obstacles to effective recruitment and retention.

Recommendations:

1. It is recommended that the county, and the agencies in the system take a collaborative approach to recruitment and retention. Special focus should be paid to target demographics, such as unemployed or under employed residents, and those who are retired, but may be willing to provide some service to the system, be it through operations, administration, or other duties and tasks that are helpful or even essential to the viability and sustainability of both the agencies, and the system.
2. There should also be efforts made to work with the county Chamber of Commerce to identify companies who may be willing to allow employees to provide EMS care during work hours, and/or assisting the EMS system to demonstrate the importance of EMS to the community. Programs where local businesses identify themselves as “friends of the Patrick County Fire and EMS System” may prove effective in enticing residents to consider volunteering or choosing Fire/EMS as a career. In addition, OEMS does give special consideration to any RSAF grant application that is recruitment and retention focused.

XII. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS – COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION

Community Risk Reduction (CRR) is not just the fire marshal’s office and public education. Instead, it is a whole-organization approach to providing programs and services to best meet community needs. By embracing this broader view and applying the models of CRR, fire suppression, EMS, technical rescue, recruitment, incident command, functional fitness and other such elements all exhibit ties to improved community outcomes.

CRR efforts are a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. Risk is often influenced by economic and social data. Therefore, the CRR process must address socioeconomic issues as well as correcting unsafe actions and processes.

Evaluate the need for a Mobile Integrated Healthcare/Community Paramedicine (CP) Program

A CP program is designed to alleviate the burden on existing medical, social services, and emergency services by misappropriated requests for resources. While all CP programs share this mandate, they differ in the execution of the services provided based on local need. Reference NFPA 451 – Guide for Community Health Care Programs as a resource for this recommendation.

Disparities in access to healthcare exist across the system and involve many factors – location, race, gender and income. Due to the inability of some Americans to obtain effective healthcare, patients will turn to one resource that is always available – EMS, supported by hospital-based emergency medicine. Inability to access appropriate care leads to activation of the EMS system as it is the only assistance some people can rely on.

An effective CP program must be data driven. A common reason programs fail is that their creation and intent differ from the needs of the community. An effective CP program must be a root cause and data-driven process. Root causes may consist of geographic locations of frequent EMS calls, spikes in call volume at a particular location or for a person, and/or repeated requests for service for another individual. A common reason programs fail is that their creation and intent differ from the needs of the community.⁸

The Office of Emergency Medical Services main criteria for any agency that is considering implementing a program is that agency must be responding to 100% of their 911 calls. When evaluating an MIH or CP program, Patrick County should address emergency calls first. The link below is a commonly used tool to assist in evaluating a MIH/CP program:

<https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/community-paramedicine>

National Fire Incident Reporting System Transition

The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) is leading a national effort to develop and launch a new interoperable fire information and innovative analytics platform, known as the National Emergency Response Information System (NERIS).

The Emergency Management Director is encouraged to work with all the departments and dispatch to ensure that incident reports are completed and submitted in the new system once the transition is completed (anticipated by early 2026).

NOTE: *The study team's investigation into the county's current process of submitting fire incident reports into the existing NFIRS system found that reports are not being accomplished with any degree of reliability. Discussions with the EMD pointed to the possibility that the county's contract with their third-party provider for*

⁸ *Community Paramedicine: What, why and how?*, 2022

incident record submittal may not include the submittal of fire incident reports into the NFIRS system the same as it does for the required medical incident reports. All federal grants require that the department is current and active in the NFIRS system to be eligible for any grant funding.

Safety Practices: Cancer

As stated in the Lavender Ribbon Report,⁹ developed by the NVFC and IAFC, cancer is the leading health risk facing firefighters, largely due to the chemicals and carcinogens they are exposed to while engaged in response activities. Chemically based plastics are in use in nearly every product in our homes, business and vehicles and when they burn, they change their chemical composition.

- a. It is generally accepted that occupationally caused cancer is something that can be prevented by wearing protective gear properly, gross removal of fireground contamination while on scene, washing of turnout gear after returning from incident engagement, establishing a fire hood exchange program and showering as soon as possible, are just some of the basic best practices. These best practices should be incorporated into the county's updated tactical playbook discussed earlier in this report.
- b. The Firefighter Cancer Registry Act of 2018 mandated the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to create a **voluntary** registry of firefighters to collect health and occupational information to determine cancer incidence in the U.S. fire service. In response to this mandate, CDC's National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) established the National Firefighter Registry (NFR):
<https://www.cdc.gov/niosh/firefighters/registry.html>
- c. In addition to the Firefighter Cancer Registry Act, in support of the Virginia Line of Duty Death Act, it is recommended that the county work with the Fire and EMS Commission to ensure each volunteer fire department maintains a roster of members and submits the roster to the clerk of the circuit court as detailed in Code of Virginia § 27-42.¹⁰

⁹ NVFC: Lavender Ribbon Report

¹⁰ *Code of Virginia* – Chapter 4

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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APPENDIX A

Resolution requesting the Virginia Fire Services Board conduct a comprehensive analysis of the fire and EMS system of Patrick County:



COUNTY OF PATRICK *Board of Supervisors*


Resolution

of the Board of Supervisors of Patrick County, Virginia
authorizing the request of a Virginia Fire Services Board study

WHEREAS, Patrick County requests the services of the Virginia Fire Services Board (VFSB) in conducting a complete and thorough review of the fire and EMS system in Patrick County; and

WHEREAS, the requested areas of concentration of the study include organization, budget, personnel, training, fleet management (equipment/apparatus), emergency services council, Patrick County Fire & Rescue Departments; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Supervisors of Patrick County, Virginia hereby adopts this Resolution of Support for a complete and thorough review of the aforementioned areas of concentration and a comprehensive list of recommendations to enhance the delivery of services to the citizens of Patrick County.

By: 
Brandon J. Simmons, Chairman
Patrick County Board of Supervisors

Date: 04/08/24

Attest: 
Amy Walker, Clerk

The County of Patrick will not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex, national origin, age, marital or veteran status, medical condition or handicap, or any other status protected by law. We are an Equal Opportunity Employer.

P. O. Box 466 • 106 Rucker Street • Stuart, Virginia 24171
Telephone: (276) 694-6094 • Fax: (276) 694-2160
<http://www.co.patrick.va.us>

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 B

Letter requesting a fire and EMS Study from the Patrick County Administrator



COUNTY OF PATRICK *Office of the County Administrator*

April 9, 2024

Attn: Virginia Fire Services Board
105 Technology Park Dr.
Glen Allen, VA 23059

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

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

This study has the support of the Patrick County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator as shown by the attached Resolution of Support adopted at the Board of Supervisor's meeting held on April 8, 2024.

The requested areas of concentration of the study include:

- Organization
- Budget
- Personnel
- Training
- Fleet Management (Equipment/Apparatus)
- Emergency Services Council
- Patrick County Fire & Rescue Departments

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

Your consideration of this request at the next available opportunity would be greatly appreciated. Scottie Cassell is our Director of Emergency Services and is available to respond to any questions you may have regarding this request. He may be reached by phone at 276-692-7731 or by email at scassell@co.patrick.va.us

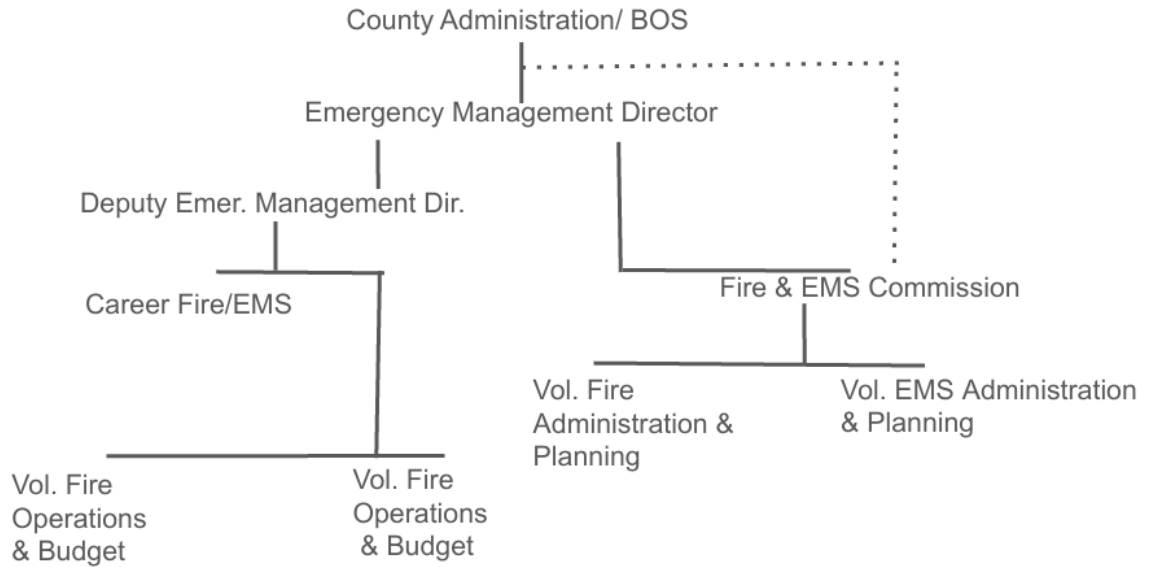
Sincerely,

Beth Simms
County Administrator

P. O. Box 466 • 106 Rucker Street • Stuart, Virginia 24171
Telephone: (276) 694-6094 • Fax: (276) 694-2160
<http://www.co.patrick.va.us>

APPENDIX C

Sample Organizational Chart for Patrick County Fire and EMS



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 D

Other resources available to Patrick County

1. Manuals

- a. NVFC: Understanding & Implementing Standards: NFPA 1500,1720, and 1851
 - i. https://www.nvfc.org/resource_item/understanding-implementing-nfpa-standards-1500-1720-1851-english/
- b. NVFC: Understanding & Implementing Standards: NFPA 1407 and 1021
 - i. <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Standards-Guide-Vol2-1407-1021.pdf>
- c. NVFC: Psychologically Healthy Fire Departments Implementation Toolkit
 - i. <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/PHFD-Implementation-Toolkit.pdf>
- d. NVFC: What to expect: A Guide for Family Members of Volunteer Firefighters
Volunteer Fire Services Culture: Essential Strategies for Success
 - i. <https://www.nvfc.org/guide-for-family-members-of-volunteer-responders-now-available/>

2. Informational Sheets

- a. Training Volunteer Firefighters to be Combat Ready
 - i. Section 9: Developing and Implementing Training Best Practices
 - ii. Appendix B: Sample Knowledge and Skills Based Annual Training Topics Plan
 - iii. Appendix E: How to Use NFPA Standards To your Department's Advantage
 - 1. <https://www.iafc.org/docs/default-source/1vcos/operational-training-guide.pdf>
- b. The 16 Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives
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