

# Executive Summary

The purpose of the *2003 Long Range Service Plan for the Fauquier County Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services* is to provide a “State of the Emergency Services” for members of the Fauquier County community. Specifically the plan recognizes the current levels of emergency services, identifies target levels of emergency services, facility needs for inclusion in the county’s Capital Improvement Program, and needs of support and response personnel. This Executive Summary provides a brief overview of the Emergency Services structure while reviewing the current issues.

## ***Background***

For many years Fauquier County relied on volunteer citizens to provide emergency services to the population. This group of volunteers, organized into 13 individual fire and rescue servicing areas, were charged with raising their operating funds, training their volunteers, and recruiting new members. In 1973 the Volunteer Fire Rescue Association (VFRA) was formed to provide individual companies with technical and administrative support for budgeting, training, and personnel services. The creation of the VFRA also enabled the Fauquier County Board of Supervisors to provide support to all the companies through one organization.

In 1988 Fauquier County created a Department of Fire and Emergency Services charged with emergency planning and disaster management, as well as providing administrative support to the volunteer companies. The Department acts as a liaison for emergency planning and preparedness between the various states and federal agencies (including Federal Emergency Management Agency, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Virginia Department of Emergency Management) and the Fauquier County decision makers, public, and volunteer companies. This group of career emergency personnel also includes the Operations Division (Firefighter/Paramedics), the Fire Marshal’s Office and a Training Division. The Fauquier County Fire and Rescue Services Agreement further defines the functions of these groups.

The Fauquier County Fire Tax Levy, established in 1995, allocates 65% of its income to the VFRA and 35% to the Department of Fire and Emergency Services. Since 1999, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services has grown from 12 full time employees to 24 in 2003 while retention and recruitment of volunteers has fallen throughout the years. There are approximately 400 registered volunteers of which 260 are operationally active. The operating budget for all fire rescue services in fiscal year 2003 totaled \$4.1 million.

Meanwhile, Fauquier County continues to experience intense growth pressures. Since 2000, the county has outpaced its goal of an annual 1% growth rate by growing at 2.89%. The fact that Fauquier tries to steer 85% of its land development to the nine service districts helps concentrate the areas where emergency services are needed but it does not fully mitigate the impacts of increased call volumes and incidents or the required personnel to answer the calls. In the last five years the number of emergency incidents has nearly doubled to a total of 10,810 calls.

## ***Mission Statement***

Fauquier County Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services adopted the following statement:

“Fauquier County Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services is dedicated to exceeding customer expectations for fire protection, emergency medical services and related life safety functions with fiscal integrity, while maintaining both a balanced volunteer and career service.”

## ***Goals***

The Fauquier County Board of Supervisors adopted these goals for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services as part of the 2003 Balanced Scorecard initiative:

1. Meet or exceed Fauquier County’s response time standards of 2 EMS personnel for EMS incidents or 4 firefighters for fire/hazardous materials incidents on scene within 10 minutes 80% of the time.
2. Strengthen efforts to recruit and retain qualified volunteer and career personnel to provide appropriate responses.
3. Equitably distribute public safety resources to include but not limited to a public safety station in Bealeton.
4. Provide appropriate personal living quarters in all fire/rescue stations such as bunking, eating and personal hygiene, in order to improve response times as well as recruitment and retention.
5. Identify alternative revenue sources for services to include, but not be limited to, fire prevention and life safety code enforcement.

## ***Objectives***

In October of 2000, the Fauquier County Emergency Services Task Force, which was made up of members of the Board of Supervisors, Department of Fire and Emergency Services staff, Fauquier County Fire and Rescue Association representatives, and citizens, published the following objectives.

1. Develop recommendations to provide emergency services consistent with the remainder of the county to the areas of Scott and Cedar Run districts formerly served by the VHF Fire/Rescue Station, Company 20.
2. Review and recommend changes in service areas to achieve equality in response times and workload.
3. Identify mechanisms and resources to reduce response times of all fire and rescue companies.

4. Position the career firefighter-paramedics (OES staff) countywide according to the most efficient of the following two methods: geographic and/or needs based.
5. Produce a staffing plan with a schedule of coverage to maximize the service of the OES personnel during the time periods 5:00-6:00 a.m. and 4:00-6:00 p.m.
6. Determine a staffing level for OES personnel that will absorb the effect of normal absences of personnel for annual/sick leave.
7. Establish a threshold or benchmark based on measurable criteria to determine whether an expansion of career personnel, services or facilities is justified.

### ***State of the Physical Facilities***

For the most part, the 13 volunteer companies are operating from outdated fire rescue stations. Today's facilities need infectious waste decontamination areas, generators, male and female locker rooms with bathrooms and showers, office space, laundry rooms, kitchens with dining areas, male and female sleeping corridors, and lounges. None of the companies in Fauquier County, except Marshall Volunteer Rescue Squad, fully meet these requirements.

### ***State of Emergency Response Operations***

Emergency "Turnout Time" is defined as the time the 911 dispatcher receives a call to the time emergency personnel are responding in a fire truck or ambulance. "Response Time" is defined as the time the 911 dispatcher receives a call to when a fire truck or ambulance arrives at the scene of the requesting party. As Fauquier County's goal is to arrive on scene with appropriate personnel within 10 minutes 80% of the time, the greatest hindrance is geography, followed by the inability of most of our fire rescue stations to facilitate duty crews. If personnel are at stations when calls for service are received, the "Turnout Time" is reduced as well as the subsequent "Response Time".

### ***Recommended Actions***

The Fauquier County Emergency Services Task Force developed recommendations to help implement the October 2000 Objectives. A summary of the recommendations and their current status follows:

1. Improve the living quarters of the fire-rescue stations to better facilitate duty crews on nights and weekends. (Status: Ongoing)
2. Reduce the non operational requirements of the volunteer fire and rescue personnel (i.e. fundraising). (Status: Ongoing)
3. Recommend that the volunteer Fire & Rescue Association establish standards to ensure that the closest EMS unit is dispatched to a call location at all times and consider adjusting the dispatch protocol to have a second due unit dispatched at 4 minutes. (Status: Ongoing)
4. Fund the "fill-in" position or use as one of the six additional personnel requested. (Status: Resolved)

5. Assign the DFES personnel so they are working in pairs, not alone in stations. (Status: Resolved)
6. Increase the DFES personnel so that there are two to each of the six stations or areas (six personnel). (Status: Resolved)
7. Expand the hours of coverage from 6:00 – 4:00 to 6:00 – 6:00 by adding four additional DFES personnel. (Status: Resolved)
8. If the additional personnel are approved the minimum staffing, in regards to annual and sick leave is to be set at 80%. (Status: Resolved)
9. The TF would not impose a recommendation that the current personnel be grouped together, but recommended that the DFES Chief, in consultation with the Fire & Rescue Association, have the authority to assign personnel as necessary. (Status: Resolved)
10. Establish a time and response standard where four firefighters or two EMS personnel arrive on the scene within 10 minutes 80% of the time – this is to be the average of all incidents county wide. (Status: Resolved)

### ***Service Levels***

The **service level demands** were objectively derived based on statistical information such number of emergency incidents and other requests for support services such as training, technical maintenance, prevention (inspections/investigations) and emergency planning.

The service goals are based on acceptable risk by the community at large, i.e. what is the public willing to pay for? The first priority is EMS, followed by Fire Responses Prevention and then Training.

### ***Staffing and Volunteers***

As the volunteer base continues to be weakened by call volume, personal needs, and increasing training demands and inappropriate facilities, the greatest attrition is that of volunteer advanced life support providers (Paramedics). Therefore, career staffing priorities lean toward paramedical capabilities, however, 80% of the DFES providers are cross trained as paramedics, firefighters and engine driver operators. The area defining the greatest need for career personnel is New Baltimore followed by Bealeton.

### ***Recommendations***

#### **1. Physical Facilities**

As detailed in the plan, Turnout Times may be reduced and recruitment & retention will increase through improving the fire rescue stations. This includes renovation, consolidation/relocation as well as new fire rescue stations. As the cost is too great to be funded through traditional fund raising, a bond referendum is recommended for November 2004. The VFRA has established an independent CIP committee to make recommendations to the BOS reference new construction and funding. The highest priority for new stations are New Baltimore, Bealeton and Catlett.

2. Personnel recommendations are divided into four categories: *Response, Support, Prevention and Dispatch.*

The plan recommends a limited number of career fire rescue personnel be added based on service demands and prioritized by areas experiencing high growth, such as New Baltimore and Bealeton. Additional personnel are needed immediately to improve three stations' staffing from 10 hour shifts to 12 hour shifts. It further recommends adding a limited number of 24 hour/seven day/week career paramedics based on the direct request of the VFRA and the Fauquier Emergency Room Operational Medical Director.

Support personnel are recommended to improve the Training Division by reestablishing a full time Training Captain (process underway), hiring a Technical Support maintenance technician to maintain critical equipment such breathing apparatus and meet other OSHA requirements. Hire a full time Volunteer Coordinator to support the Human Resource needs of the VFRA and represent the VFRA at the many daytime meetings and functions.

The Prevention Division has become overwhelmed with an increased workload in plans reviews, inspections, investigations and environmental concerns. Up to now, the Chief, Operations Captain and three volunteers provide these services. However, with the increased service demands have greatly exceeded the available time of the current personnel. Therefore the plan recommends hiring two full time Fire Marshals, who with the Chief and Operations Captain will be able to provide 24 hour services for at least five years.

The plan recommends several improvements to the WFJCC (911 Center). The most important is to dedicate approximately one third of the dispatchers to specialize in Fire Rescue dispatching. Currently, all personnel rotate through all of the positions, preventing quality improvement and quality assurance. Benchmarks should also be identified as to when additional personnel will be needed and at what functions.

### ***Funding Opportunities***

- Facility Improvements – Bond Referendum
- Career Personnel – General Fund and/or Ambulance Transport Fees to Fund 24 hour Paramedics
- Fire Marshals – General Fund Supported by Cost Recovery, Inspection Fees, Permit Fees