

VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD

A Report of Findings and Recommendations:
Shenandoah County Fire and EMS Study

April 2014



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- Woodstock Volunteer Rescue Squad
- Strasburg Volunteer Rescue Squad
- Star Tannery Volunteer Fire Department
- Toms Brook Volunteer Fire Department
- Strasburg Fire Department
- Orkney Springs Fire and Rescue Inc.
- Mt Jackson Rescue and Fire Company
- New Market Volunteer Fire & Rescue

PURPOSE



- Capitalizes on What Is Working Well
- Identifies Opportunities for Improvement
- Presents Findings and Recommendations
- Provides Guidance

Note: The study findings are not to be construed as legal advice or as binding recommendations.



METHODOLOGY

- Initiation of Study
- Obtain Stakeholder Input
- Prepare Analyses and Develop Core Strategies
- Prepare and Present Final Report



REQUESTED STUDY AREAS

Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors requested the Fire Services Board to provide a comprehensive review of the following areas:

- Comprehensive Review of Fire and EMS System
- Organizational Development
- Accountability
- Communication System
- Training
- Budget and Administration
- Delivery of Service



WORKING THEMES

(Central focus for prioritizing study recommendations)

- Theme 1: **Organizational Development**
- Theme 2: **Communications**
- Theme 3: **Training**
- Theme 4: **Budget and Administration**
- Theme 5: **Delivery of Service**



THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue Services

- Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors should modify the authority and responsibility of the Fire Chief.
 - The role should be altered to **“Chief of Fire-Rescue.”**
 - Adopt a **local ordinance** recognizing and clearly citing the role of *Chief of Fire-Rescue* as the central position that is the head of combined countywide fire and rescue system.
- The Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors should **codify** the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association to serve as the centralized entity responsible for representing all fire and rescue issues throughout the County.



THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Centralized Authority for Fire and Rescue Services (cont.)

- **Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association**
 - **Membership:**
 - Shenandoah County should establish a manageable membership which includes a representative from each fire and rescue departments (career and volunteer), Chief of Fire-Rescue and one representative from the Communications Center and Law Enforcement, respectively.
- **Fire Marshal**
 - Shenandoah County must consider restructuring the duties of the building inspector and fire marshal to prevent the current overlap on duties.
 - Refine the Fire Marshall's function in order to solely direct Fire Prevention, Cause and Origin Investigation, Mandated Inspections and Public Education/Outreach.



THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Lack of Strategic Plan and Unified Mission

- The County's fire and rescue organizations in collaboration with county government should develop a data-driven Strategic Plan with stakeholder input.
 - Analyze the gap between where the county is and where it wants to be in the future.
 - Identify strategies to close such gap.

Continuity of Leadership and Succession Planning

- Develop an on-going A Leadership and Career development focusing on;
 - Management, Prevention, Operations and Safety.



THEME 1: ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Accountability Practices

- The Shenandoah County Department of Fire and Rescue should formally practice and strictly enforce the current countywide standard operating guidelines.
- Utilizing the guidelines outlined in NFPA 1561: Standard on Fire Department Incident Management Systems;
 - Shenandoah County should formally articulate, practice and strictly enforce a countywide Incident Management System policy and accountability system.
- Establish a “Tanker Task Force.”
 - Allows companies not initially assigned on the response to provide tanker/tender resources.



THEME 2: COMMUNICATIONS

Improved Levels of Interdepartmental Communications

- Host a strategic communication session to resolve challenges between the Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors, the County Administration and members of the volunteer fire and rescue departments.
- The County should strengthen its fire and life-safety communication activities with the residents of Shenandoah County.
 - Increased efforts to promote the positives attributes of the fire and rescue services in Shenandoah County can raise morale and attract more volunteers.

Improved Dispatch System

- The Shenandoah County Board of Supervisors should work with the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association in developing standard dispatch protocols and procedures.
- Shenandoah County Department of Fire and Rescue should review and update its current SOG for dispatch communication.



THEME 3: TRAINING

Coordinated Training Program

- County Government should work with the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association in improving the current training program to address the comprehensive training needs of the entire County.
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association, Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator should explore the feasibility of collectively coordinating the application of a countywide training program.
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association should encourage all new firefighters be cross-trained as Emergency Medical First Responders, at minimum, to enhance rescue capacity within Shenandoah County.



THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

County Funding and Capital Improvements

- Shenandoah County should stop using blanket funding.
 - It is imperative for the County Government to restructure the current funding model so it is able to achieve an equitable and performance based model.
- Shenandoah 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.
- Develop an accountability plan for county and revenue recovery funds.



THEME 4: BUDGET AND ADMINISTRATION

Standardization and Central Purchasing

- Develop and implement a centralized purchasing option to establish equipment and apparatus standardization and reduce operational expenses.
- Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and Chief of Fire-Rescue should survey each department to determine if equipment commonalities exist.
- The equipment commonalities list should be used, along with strategic planning for Shenandoah County's routine maintenance and replacement of equipment, aging ambulance and fire apparatus.



THEME 5: Delivery of Service

Recruitment and Retention

- Shenandoah County should enhance its countywide recruitment and retention program.
- Create a Workforce Coordinator rather than Recruitment and Retention Officer.
 - The 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.

Operations and Staffing

- County should seek to reduce residents insurance cost by improving Insurance Service Office (ISO) ratings.
- Shenandoah County fire and rescue services should continue with efforts to keep accurate records of incident response times in order to continuously assess response capabilities.



CLOSING THOUGHTS

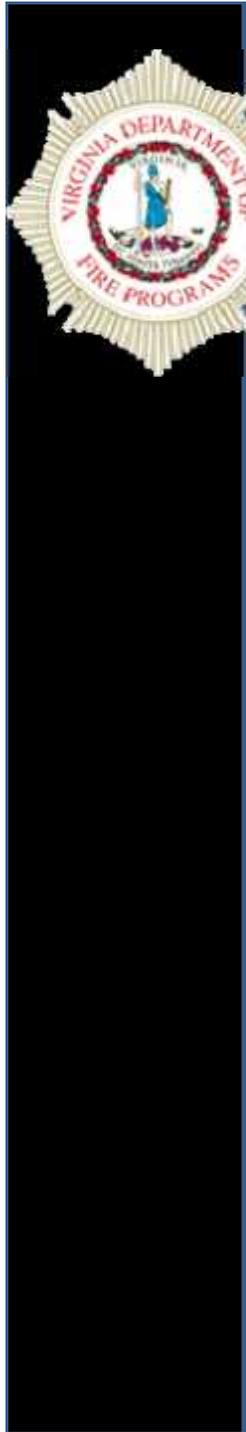
Use these findings to:

- Celebrate your successes
- Capitalize opportunities for improvement
- Discover how to reenergize your fire and rescue service organizations

How? Begin by answering these questions:

- As a community, what do you value most about Shenandoah County's fire and rescue services?
- What core factors would "give life" to these organizations and help them to perform at their best?
- Imagine the County's ten years from now. What would you like to see different? How can we collectively get there?

Use the study findings to guide your efforts.



QUESTIONS

