

Prince Edward 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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Trey Pyle, Director of Public Safety	Rice Volunteer Fire Department
Prince Edward-Farmville Emergency Communications Center	Darlington Heights Volunteer Fire Department
Farmville Volunteer Fire Department	Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report documents the findings and recommendations for the Prince Edward County Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Study. This study and the information contained herein should not be construed as legal advice or as binding recommendations for Prince Edward County. This report provides guidance to the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors, the Prince Edward County Administrator, its fire and EMS organizations, and other stakeholders in the community regarding public safety. Prince Edward County should strive to meet and/or exceed the recommendations contained in this report. These recommendations could enhance the service provided to those dialing 911 in Prince Edward County.

This study was requested by a resolution of the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors to analyze the county's fire and EMS system as it continues to experience demands on fire and emergency medical services to ensure the fire and EMS system is structured, staffed, and equipped to meet the current and future needs of the county.

The study 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. The above referenced working areas served as a guide for the study team to identify issues, evaluate current fire/EMS operations, and make recommendations to improve Prince Edward County fire and rescue services. Of note, the Town of Farmville was not a formal member of the study requested by the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors, but the Study Team did meet with the Farmville Volunteer Fire Department.

The study found that Prince Edward County benefits from a dedicated network of volunteer fire and EMS providers, strong relationships among local agencies and county government, and significant financial support from the county. At the same time, the system faces challenges associated with organizational structure, volunteer recruitment and retention, apparatus and equipment costs, training, emergency communications, EMS capacity, and long-term strategic planning.

A central finding of the study is the need to establish a more clearly defined countywide framework for fire and EMS services. The current county ordinance does not fully establish the roles, responsibilities, authority, and expectations of the various agencies providing emergency services. The study recommends codifying the fire and EMS system through a county ordinance and establishing a Department of Public Safety responsible for coordinating fire, EMS, training, funding, policies, and operational standards. The Department would include the county's fire and EMS agencies and would be led by a Director of Public Safety, supported by an advisory group of chief officers. If a county-level department is not established, legally binding agreements between the county and each emergency services agency should clearly define responsibilities, liabilities, funding, staffing, equipment, response expectations, and incident command.

The study also emphasizes the importance of standardized operational policies and incident command. A countywide Standard Operating Procedure/Guideline (SOP/SOG) manual should establish common expectations for command, accountability, personal protective equipment,

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.

training, response operations, and other critical functions. All chief and line officers should receive incident command training, and policies should clearly identify command authority during multi-agency incidents. Establishing a common organizational structure and command system will improve coordination, accountability, responder safety, and operational effectiveness.

Prince Edward County maintains a significant fleet of fire and EMS apparatus and equipment. However, the cost of replacing and maintaining this equipment continues to increase, while the availability of volunteers to staff multiple apparatus is declining. The study recommends a comprehensive countywide fleet risk assessment to identify appropriate frontline, reserve, and excess apparatus based on community risk, call volume, staffing availability, and operational requirements. Rather than maintaining duplicate reserve apparatus at every station, the county should consider strategically locating a countywide reserve fleet.

The county should also establish minimum specifications for each type of apparatus and common equipment specifications among agencies. County-funded purchases should meet established standards, while agency-specific enhancements could be funded locally. Centralized or coordinated maintenance, joint maintenance records, and dual ownership or titling of county-funded apparatus should also be considered. Agencies should establish agreements allowing apparatus to be shared during emergencies, staffing shortages, or maintenance periods. The study further recommends exploring GPS tracking, mobile data terminals, and countywide access to emergency information through CAD technology.

The study recommends moving the county and its emergency service agencies toward data-driven strategic planning. Departments should develop strategic plans, community risk assessments, and emergency plans that identify local hazards, vulnerable populations, response needs, and opportunities for prevention. Continued support for NERIS incident reporting and improved data literacy will allow county leaders and fire chiefs to make resource decisions based on actual community risk and service demand.

The county should also expand partnerships with schools, nursing facilities, social service agencies, healthcare providers, nonprofit organizations, faith-based organizations, and other community partners. Public education programs such as Hands-Only CPR and Stop the Bleed can increase residents' ability to provide lifesaving assistance before responders arrive.

Prince Edward County already provides substantial financial support to its fire and EMS agencies, including annual funding to each agency, EMS levy funding, and support for fuel, hose testing, ladder testing, and other expenses. The study recommends building on this foundation through a formal capital improvement plan covering apparatus, equipment, facilities, and other long-term needs.

The county should also evaluate centralized insurance purchasing, regional or shared services, and mechanisms for recovering certain emergency response costs where permitted by Virginia law. The impact of Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College on the county's emergency response system should be evaluated, with the county and affected agencies engaging the institutions regarding potential financial and operational support. The study also recommends consideration of a county fire service district or levy to provide a sustainable source of funding for fire service operations and capital needs. Annual independent audits of volunteer agencies receiving public funds would further strengthen accountability and transparency.

The volunteer workforce remains the foundation of Prince Edward County's fire and EMS system, but recruitment and retention are among the greatest challenges facing the county. The study recommends that the county take a more active role in supporting recruitment, including encouraging local businesses to accommodate employees who respond to emergencies and expanding incentives and recognition programs for volunteers.

The county should develop a coordinated recruitment and retention program rather than relying solely on individual departments. This could include centralized recruitment campaigns, social media outreach, volunteer application coordination, targeted recruitment for administrative and support roles, and use of the National Volunteer Fire Council's recruitment resources. Partnerships with Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College should also be formalized to recruit students, provide opportunities for accredited training, and explore educational or financial incentives.

Given the seasonal decline in volunteer availability when college students leave the county, the Director of Public Safety should use response data to determine whether part-time paid staffing is necessary in specific areas. Cross-trained personnel could provide supplemental staffing, particularly for EMS transport units.

Countywide training standards should be established to ensure that all personnel meet consistent certification and continuing education requirements. A training coordinator should develop an annual training schedule, coordinate multi-agency training, maintain personnel training records, and work with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs and Office of EMS. Additional technical rescue training should be provided based on local call volume and risk.

The county should also explore reinstating a high school firefighter program and developing high school-based EMR or EMT opportunities to create a pipeline for future emergency responders.

The Farmville-Prince Edward Emergency Communications Center has generally received positive feedback since its consolidation. The study recommends improving resource accountability by requiring agencies with staffed resources to report daily availability and encouraging the development of volunteer duty crews. Countywide run cards and standardized dispatch assignments should be established, along with shared CAD access and improved interaction between telecommunicators and fire/EMS personnel.

The study concludes that Prince Edward County has a strong foundation upon which to build. The dedication of its volunteer responders, existing county financial support, and positive relationships among agencies provide significant advantages. However, the changing emergency services environment requires greater structure, consistency, coordination, and long-term planning. The overarching goal should be to preserve the strengths of the volunteer system while providing the organizational framework, financial resources, training, technology, staffing support, and accountability necessary to sustain it.

METHODOLOGY

The Virginia Fire Services Board, through § 9.1-203, is authorized to provide technical assistance to local fire departments, fire service organizations, and local government. The Board, through policy, may complete four studies a year at no cost to the locality requesting the study. The following is an overview of the study process. Their purpose is to objectively assess local fire and EMS services, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

The studies also offer broad, customizable recommendations to support local agencies and communities. These recommendations are advisory and not legal mandates.

PHASE I: INITIATE PROJECT

Objectives: Initiation of Study

To initiate the study, the Prince Edward County Administrator sent a Resolution, on behalf of the Prince Edward 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 study was approved by the Virginia Fire Services Board at their June 2026 meeting.

The county requested that the study be completed as it continues to experience demands on fire and emergency medical services to ensure the fire and EMS system is structured, staffed, and equipped to meet the current and future needs of the county.

A study team was convened on the basis of experience and expertise, with representation from the Department of Fire Programs, Department of Health's Office of EMS, and the Virginia Fire Services Board. 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 Prince Edward 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. A site visit was scheduled for July of 2026.

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. This site visit occurred from July 28-30 in Prince Edward County. During this phase, the study team worked to:

- 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 the eight departments, as well as county leadership as outlined below.

The study team met with leadership from Prince Edward County to include the Director of Public Safety, Assistant County Administrator, and the County Administrator.

A public hearing was advertised by the county and held on July 29, 2026, to give the public an opportunity to share feedback with the study team regarding the Fire & EMS system in Prince Edward 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. Additional information was requested from the county in August of 2026. 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. This draft was developed in August and September of 2026, and shared with the county for technical comments on September 8 2026. Once completed, a draft report was shared with the Prince Edward 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

Prince Edward County is located in the heart of Virginia and was created by the Virginia Colony in 1754 prior to the formation of the United States of America. The county is bordered by seven other counties (Cumberland, Buckingham, Amelia, Appomattox, Nottoway, Charlotte, and Lunenburg). Longwood University, a state-supported university, and Hampden-Sydney College, a private institution, are both located in the county. The Town of Farmville serves as the county seat, and some services are shared between Prince Edward County and the town.¹

The county has 354 square miles of land, with two incorporated towns (Farmville and Pamplin City). Major transportation in the area is provided by U.S Highway 15, U.S Highway 360, and U.S Highway 460.

According to the U.S Census Bureau, Prince Edward County has a population of 21,949 people with a median household income of \$56,315 and a total of 9,209 housing units. Most of the county's population is located immediately around the Town of Farmville.²

The county operates under the guidance of the Board of Supervisors, which includes eight members. The County Administrator serves as the Chief Administrative Officer and executive for the county. The Director of Public Safety serves as the Emergency Services Coordinator and advises the county administrator on public safety in the county. Prince Edward County does not have any paid public safety personnel that staff apparatus in the field, while the Town of Farmville does have a paid fire chief and other paid staff augmented by volunteers. The Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad and Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue each provide paid EMS staff, supported by volunteers, that are managed by each respective agency.

¹ Prince Edward County, *National Association of Counties*

² Prince Edward County, *Virginia U.S Census Bureau*

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The National Fire Protection Association provides industry-wide best practices for fire and EMS service industry. Although the NFPA standards are considered best practices by the fire service in the United States, the study team understands that not all NFPA standards are attainable in individual jurisdictions. Prince Edward County should strive to meet NFPA standards to provide best-in-class service to its citizens and visitors.

Numerous recommendations below refer to National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, including 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. It 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

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.

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I. FORMALIZATION OF FIRE/EMS STRUCTURE

A review of the Prince Edward County Code of Ordinances⁴ found that the county's current emergency services system is not well defined. An ordinance would define the roles, responsibilities, and expectations of all entities involved in fire, EMS, and emergency management. Most agencies operating in Prince Edward County highlighted a strong working relationship between the agencies and county government. The county should build upon these solid relationships by formalizing the fire and EMS structure, which will ensure clear lines of communication, a more robust emergency response system, and clear expectations for volunteer agencies and local government.

Recommendations:

1. ***The Board of Supervisors should codify the fire and EMS system within the county.*** The ordinance should outline the essential duties and responsibilities of the Director of Public Safety, volunteer fire and EMS departments/members, and the county staff providing fire and EMS. This clarification ensures that the Director of Public Safety 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. ***The Board of Supervisors should codify a Department of Public Safety which identifies the Director of Public Safety as the position responsible for the supervision and authority of the Department.*** The Department should consist of all fire and EMS agencies operating in Prince Edward County. The Department should be responsible for providing training, overseeing county funding for all fire and EMS operations, and developing Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines for all aspects of emergency operations. In the event of a multi-company response, the Director of Public Safety should be trained and equipped to serve as the incident commander.
 - a. The Department should, by ordinance, include an advisory group made up of the chief officers of each organization to review and approve policies implemented by the Director of Public Safety.
3. ***If Prince Edward County should choose not to codify a county-level department to manage fire and EMS agencies operating in the county, then legally binding memorandum of agreements/understand (MOA/MOU) should be developed between the county and each emergency response agency.***
 - a. The agreements should ensure there is a clear delineation for liabilities, cost of service, authorization to respond, response expectations, compliance with county procedures/policies, use and ownership of equipment, and staffing considerations.
 - b. 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;

⁴ Chapter 50, Prince Edward County Code of Ordinances

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.

authorization to respond; staffing; and equipment, including the resources to be made available and the designation of the incident commander.”⁵

4. ***The Director of Public Safety should develop an organizational chart that clearly illustrates the relationship between the Director of Public Safety, volunteer fire departments, EMS agencies and other emergency service agencies.*** The chart should be available to all fire and EMS agencies in the county, as well as leadership such as the County Administrator and Board of Supervisors. 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.
 - a. The study group recommends that the Department of Public Safety be separated into three divisions, each led by an assistant director. Each division would be responsible for a specific area of the department, and paid staff do not have to be utilized to fill the roles. The three divisions would be Fire Suppression, Training, and EMS.
 - b. An example of a proposed organizational chart is available for reference in Appendix B.
5. ***The Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the Prince Edward Area Firefighters Association, should develop a Standard Operating Procedure/Guidelines (SOP/SOG) Manual that clearly outlines common fire department SOP/SOG, including command procedures, accountability, personal protective equipment, training requirements, and others.*** The study team received Policies and Guidelines from the Director of Public Safety that outlined several areas, including driver training, vehicle inspection and maintenance, and hose securement. These policies are provided under the framework of the Prince Edward Area Firefighters Association, not Prince Edward County. In most cases, these policies were broad and lacked clear direction on the topic covered, such as requiring annual drivers training but not specifying how that could be completed. A county-wide riding position clearance process, to include training and certification requirements for each position, should be established in policy. Policies should also establish response expectations, roles and responsibilities, and tactical considerations on various types of incidents. At minimum, effort should be made to establish training development and continued-education while considering Insurance Services Office (ISO) training requirements.
 - a. The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors should codify that the Director of Public Safety, with authority passing to each individual agency, chief or captain, has the ultimate authority in enforcing the above mentioned manual. Personnel who fail to meet requirements should be accountable to their chief officer or captain, and if required, the Director of Public Safety. Operational effectiveness and the safety of both the public and personnel is dependent on the enforcement of SOP/SOG.
 - 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

⁵ NFPA 1720 – 4.8.1

by issuing written administrative regulations, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and departmental orders.”

- c. An example of SOP/SOG for Prince Edward County could be taken from Amherst County, Virginia. The Amherst County Standard Operating Guidelines (2012) offer a robust starting point for Prince Edward to consider in the development of a county-wide SOP/SOG Manual.⁶
6. ***All line officers and chief officers should be trained in the effective use of the incident command system, with policy clearly outlining who serves in command during an emergency incident.*** Although most agencies reported a good working relationship during multi-company responses, some reported that other agencies acted independently from the command structure and in one example, created their own command structure. This does not align with best practices and presents a dangerous situation that conflicts with state law. Resources to reference include:
 - a. FEMA’s Incident Command System⁷
 - b. Street Smart Command⁸
 - c. Commanding Alone⁹
7. ***The Prince Edward County Administrator should consider hiring a second position within the newly created Department of Public Safety to assist with the duties of the department.*** Through interviews with staff and volunteer providers in the county, the Study Team heard/the resounding sentiment expressed was vesting all emergency management, coordination, and administration duties in one position is not effective for future growth. Agencies expressed praise for the role and recent successes but understand that a sole person cannot complete all the necessary tasks. This role can help separate duties, including emergency management, financial oversight, grant writing, and overseeing the member agencies. If a Department of Public Safety is not created, this new role should report to the Director of Public Safety.

II. FLEET AND EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

The apparatus and equipment used by first responders is critical to ensuring that both the public and the responders themselves are protected. A comprehensive assessment must look at the apparatus fleet, facilities, and other equipment of the fire and EMS system deemed necessary by the locality. As apparatus acquisition/production continues to expand in cost, Prince Edward County must prepare to further support the purchase of this lifesaving equipment. The recommendations below should be informed by NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus.¹⁰

⁶ Standard Operating Guidelines, *Amherst County, Virginia*

⁷ The Incident Command System, *FEMA*

⁸ Street-Smart Command: The Role of the Incident Commander, *Fire Engineering*

⁹ Commanding Alone: Fireground Leadership When You’re All You’ve Got, *Firefighter Nation*

¹⁰ NFPA 1901: Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus

The study team wishes to note that Prince Edward County recently began providing funding for fuel, hose testing, and other equipment needs, which were widely supported by the volunteer agencies.

Recommendations:

1. ***The County should consider assuming responsibility for maintenance costs associated with fire and EMS apparatus to ensure consistency across departments.*** Prince Edward County should examine utilizing one maintenance contract for all fire and EMS vehicles operating in the county. This will likely reduce costs and ensure consistency as noted. 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 county should maintain joint records of this maintenance. Where possible, Prince Edward County should financially support regular maintenance of non-excess and reserve apparatus.
2. ***The Director of Public Safety should develop minimum apparatus specifications for each apparatus type, allowing volunteer organizations to make customizations at their own cost in some areas.*** Prince Edward County should only fund apparatus that meet or exceed the county level specifications and not pay for additional “bells and whistles”. This will ensure uniformity across the system at the most basic level, making training and operations more effective. The volunteer agencies should be included in the development of common equipment specifications that would be adopted by the department.
3. ***Prince Edward County should complete a fleet risk assessment to examine if the county’s fire and EMS agencies have excess equipment and prioritize replacement and maintenance.***¹¹ It is the Study Team’s opinion that each department possessed several excess apparatuses, with most departments stating this posture was to ensure appropriate apparatus was in service during maintenance or a large-scale emergency. With that being said, it is not financially feasible for each department to maintain a reserve stock of apparatus, nor are there sufficient volunteers to staff the apparatus during a large-scale emergency. A county-wide fleet risk assessment should include:
 - a. A focus on apparatus that meet community specific needs such as population density, development, previous call data, etc.
 - b. The ability of the apparatus to provide the adequate resources needed on regular responses identified in a community risk assessment.
 - c. The adequate number of each category of response vehicle within 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 three reserve engines and two

¹¹ Conducting a Fire Apparatus Fleet Evaluation, *Fire Engineering*

tanker/tenders, strategically placed throughout the county. This would eliminate the need for back-up apparatus at each station.

- d. A similar process should be developed for EMS transport and first response vehicles to determine excess fleet and reserve vehicles.
4. ***Prince Edward County should consider dual-titling emergency vehicles to ensure both the local agency and the county have legal control of the vehicle.*** This should be implemented for any new purchases of apparatus that involve county funds. Dual titling ensures that both the volunteer agencies and the county have a vested interest in the apparatus.
5. ***Whether through a Department of Public Safety policy, or a memorandum of understanding between the agencies, each agency should allow their apparatus to be shared in the event of an emergency.*** The Study Team was impressed by the amount of apparatus present at both the fire and EMS agencies operating in Prince Edward County. Several agencies had multiple front-line engines/pumpers, tankers, brush trucks, and EMS transport units. In some cases, this apparatus is likely excessive based on the availability of volunteers to respond to incidents. With that being said, no formalized agreement exists between the various agencies to utilize equipment owned by other agencies. This could include during an emergency response when a member of another department is closer to a different agency, when one department's apparatus is down for maintenance, etc. A standardized training program could be developed to ensure all drivers of emergency apparatus county-wide meet a minimum requirement to operate other agencies' vehicles.
6. ***An option that the volunteer fire chiefs of Prince Edward County should consider is the Rural Apparatus Support Program, which is a joint program between the Virginia Fire Chief's Association and Virginia State Firefighters Association.***¹² Recent reports by the Virginia Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security and Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Public Policy have outlined the growing costs associated with fire apparatus.¹³ Many agencies in the county expressed this concern when discussing the replacement of current apparatus. As noted above, a fleet assessment can assist with determining which apparatus should be replaced. This program connects larger departments who are removing equipment from service with smaller departments in need of updated equipment. These units often have several years of service left, especially in areas with smaller call volumes. Prince Edward County's fire chiefs could likely benefit from both acquiring and relocating apparatus throughout the state.
7. ***The Director of Public Safety, in cooperation with the Farmville-Prince Edward Emergency Communications Center, should consider the addition of GPS tracking in fire and EMS apparatus.*** This could also be coordinated with the addition of a mobile data terminal (MDT) in each apparatus that could provide dispatch notes and other information. Some agencies reported that they were purchasing devices, such as IPADs, with their own funds to provide mapping, etc. An MDT in primary response apparatus could provide several benefits, including shared mapping, hydrant locations, tracking of resources during emergencies, and access to dispatch notes that could provide critical

¹² VFCA Rural Apparatus Support Program, *Virginia Fire Chiefs Association*

¹³ Service to Others: A Report on the Commonwealth's Fire and EMS Service, *Secretary of Public Safety and Homeland Security* and Review and Assessment of the Sufficiency of Fire and EMS In The Commonwealth of Virginia, *Virginia Commonwealth University's Center for Public Policy*

information while enroute to an emergency. The Study Team understands this is a costly endeavor and suggests that the primary response apparatus at each station be identified and prioritized first, such as EMS response vehicles and the primary engine/pumper.

8. ***The Director of Public Safety should research the cost associated with providing an automatic external defibrillator (AED) to each fire department in the county, ensuring that at least one response apparatus in each district has an AED.*** Prince Edward County has two EMS transport agencies and several first responder programs through local fire departments. Not all fire departments are equipped to handle a medical emergency. As noted above, the creation of a county-level department with one EMS license could assist with this issue. Personnel in each station should also be trained to operate this life-saving device. This would provide a network of AEDs throughout the county in the event that EMS resources are strained, protecting both firefighters and the public.

III. COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

Community Risk Reduction (CRR) is a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. This process informs data-driven planning and strategy rooted in a community's unique risks, capabilities, and characteristics rather than historic district lines, preexisting relationships, and "how things have always been done". Further, partnering with local community partners can improve the impact of the fire and EMS agencies on the citizens they serve, offering a new means of addressing risks in the community.

Recommendations:

1. ***Prince Edward County should support its departments with developing community risk assessments to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. The Director of Public Safety or each agency's chief should contact the VDFP Coordinator of Community Risk Reduction for assistance with developing a community risk assessment.***
2. ***Prince Edward County should model for and encourage its departments to develop strategic and emergency planning documents, taking into consideration vulnerable communities and resident input. The Director of Public Safety could provide standardized documents to help guide strategic planning for the departments.¹⁴***
3. ***Prince Edward County should develop a public health literacy program to educate residents on how to help others in the advent of an emergency (Hands-Only CPR, Stop the Bleed).***
4. ***Prince Edward County should continue to support departments with NERIS fire incident reporting and promote data literacy to drive more strategic, data-informed decision making.***
5. ***Prince Edward County should promote stronger relationships between its fire/rescue services and other local government and civil society organizations (schools, nursing***

¹⁴ Planning to Succeed: Developing Your Strategic Plan, *Firefighter Nation*

homes, mental health and social service providers, non-profits, faith-based organizations, extracurricular youth organizations). Such relationships can connect frequent users of emergency services with medium-long term care solutions that operationally oriented fire and rescue services are not designed to provide, as well as bolster various hazard prevention and mitigation to get ahead of the call.

IV. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

The Prince Edward County EMS system is supported by a combination of volunteer, career, transport, and non-transport providers. The Study Team recognizes the significant commitment of the agencies and individuals providing emergency medical services to the citizens and visitors of Prince Edward County. At the same time, the current system presents several challenges related to geographic coverage, staffing, fleet utilization, medical oversight, performance improvement, and long-term sustainability.

Prince Edward County benefits from having a critical access hospital located in the Town of Farmville, providing an important local healthcare resource for appropriate emergency and medical patients. However, patients requiring trauma services, higher-level specialty care, or other advanced medical resources may require transport to facilities located an hour or more away by ground, depending on the patient's condition and destination. This creates additional considerations for EMS system capacity, ambulance availability, ALS capability, and mutual aid, as a transporting ambulance may be unavailable to the county for an extended period while completing a long distance transport and returning to service.

These considerations should be viewed within the context of the county's stated mission to “represent all citizens, provide leadership, create vision and set policy to accomplish positive change and planned growth and to provide essential services, enhancing the quality of life and maintaining fiscal responsibility.” The county's vision further identifies lasting public safety, collaboration, prosperity, and fiscal responsibility as priorities. The recommendations in this section are intended to support those objectives by maintaining reliable patient access while using public resources strategically.

The recommendations in this section are also informed by EMS Agenda 2050: A People-Centered Vision for the Future of Emergency Medical Services, developed by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's Office of EMS. EMS Agenda 2050 calls for an EMS system that is people-centered, integrated, seamless, evidence-based, and data-driven, with organizations working across traditional jurisdictional boundaries to achieve shared objectives. These principles are particularly applicable to Prince Edward County's multi-agency EMS environment.

A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

Prince Edward County is served by four independent EMS organizations. The county has two currently licensed as non-transport EMS agencies. One additional fire department, Darlington Heights, has expressed interest in obtaining a non-transport EMS license. The county's two

primary transport EMS providers are the Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad (PEVRS) and Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue (MVFR).

According to data reported to the Virginia State EMS Repository for the County fiscal year July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026, EMS activity was reported as follows:

Agency	EMS Role	Reported EMS Activity
Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad	Primary transport	3,260
Meherrin Volunteer Fire & Rescue	Primary transport	826
Farmville Volunteer Fire Department	First response	1,047
Hampden-Sydney Volunteer Fire Department	First response	108

The county first-due map demonstrates a significant geographic responsibility for MVFR within Prince Edward County. Approximately 30 percent of the county's geographic area is served by MVFR, which is located outside the county, creating additional considerations regarding service continuity, accountability, and formal responsibility.

The Study Team also identified a lack of formal agreements between Prince Edward County and the primary transport providers for the provision of EMS services. This creates a vulnerability if either provider becomes unable or unwilling to continue providing service.

Recommendations:

- 1. The county should establish a formal countywide EMS service framework defining the responsibilities and expectations of each EMS agency.*
- 2. The county should establish formal written agreements with all agencies providing EMS service within Prince Edward County.*
- 3. The county should evaluate the feasibility of placing all County EMS agencies under one coordinated EMS license. This would include Darlington Heights Volunteer Fire Department who is interesting in becoming a non transport EMS agency.*

The development of a coordinated EMS structure is consistent with the broader findings of this study recommending a more clearly defined countywide framework for fire and EMS services.

B. FLEET CONSIDERATIONS AND GEOGRAPHIC PLACEMENT

Prince Edward County's rural geography creates unique challenges for EMS deployment. The county's EMS system must account not only for the number of calls, but also for the geographic distance between calls, availability of staffed ambulances, simultaneous demand, transport destination, and the time required for an ambulance to return to service following transport.

PEVRS reported 3,260 EMS responses during FY 2025–2026 while maintaining five fully equipped ambulances. These units include cardiac monitors, mechanical CPR devices, IV pumps, and other advanced equipment. The number of ambulances and the amount of duplicated equipment should be evaluated in relation to actual simultaneous demand and staffing

availability. MVFR reported 826 EMS responses during FY 2025–2026 while maintaining three equipped ambulances.

Analysis of PEVRS and MVFR incident data identified periods of simultaneous ambulance demand.

Concurrent Ambulance Demand

FY 2025-2026

Number of Units Committed Simultaneously		Approximate Time (Hours)	
	2 or more units committed		684 hours
	3 or more units committed		137 hours
	4 or more units committed		25 hours
	5 or more units committed		4.3 hours
	6 units committed		1.3 hours

The Study Team recognizes that a reduction in fleet size should not be based solely on annual call volume. A fleet that appears large based on annual utilization may still be necessary during periods of simultaneous demand, hospital turnaround, major incidents, or staffing shortages. Conversely, maintaining multiple fully equipped ambulances that cannot be staffed may not provide meaningful additional capacity. Mutual aid should be considered an important component of managing periods of unusually high demand. The county should establish and maintain relationships with neighboring EMS jurisdictions and develop appropriate automatic or mutual aid agreements that allow additional ambulances to be requested when local resources are committed or unavailable. This approach can provide surge capacity without requiring Prince Edward County to maintain a local fleet large enough to independently accommodate every potential period of simultaneous demand. This approach is consistent with EMS Agenda 2050, which envisions an integrated and seamless system in which EMS and public safety partners use the strengths and resources of multiple organizations to protect the community.¹⁵

The Study Team also identified a geographic access concern in the western portion of the county. A 90-day trial performed by the county placed a staffed ambulance in the Prospect Fire station and demonstrated improved response times to patients in that area (reduction in response times

¹⁵ EMS Agenda 2050: A People-Centered Vision for the Future of Emergency Medical Services, *NHTSA*

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.

by 50%). The resource was subsequently removed, and approximately six months passed before the ambulance returned.

Research supports the use of geographic information systems and historical call data to strategically position ambulances in rural communities.¹⁶ Studies have demonstrated that relocating ambulance resources based on geographic demand can improve response times without necessarily increasing the number of ambulances in service.

This approach is consistent with EMS Agenda 2050's emphasis on getting the **right resources to the right people at the right time** and using data and system-level planning to determine how EMS resources can best serve a community.

Recommendations:

- 1. Prince Edward County should conduct a comprehensive EMS fleet and deployment assessment considering call volume, simultaneous demand, geographic coverage, response times, staffing, hospital turnaround, mutual aid, and ambulance availability. Any fleet reduction should be based on the results of this assessment and should ensure that an appropriate number of staffed and equipped resources remain strategically positioned to meet patient needs.*
- 2. The county should evaluate a system utilizing two to three strategically located staffed ALS ambulances. Final deployment locations should be based on geographic and response-time analysis rather than historical agency boundaries alone.*
- 3. ALS capability should be evaluated as a component of the staffed ambulance system. The county's rural geography and transport distances make reliable access to advanced life support particularly important.*
- 4. The county should evaluate whether the current number of fully equipped ambulances is necessary to meet identified demand. If a smaller fleet is determined to be appropriate, advanced equipment should be concentrated on routinely staffed units, with reserve equipment and vehicles strategically maintained.*

These recommendations are consistent with the broader fleet assessment approach recommended elsewhere in this study, which calls for equipment and apparatus decisions to be based upon community risk, call volume, staffing availability, and operational requirements.

C. RESPONSE TIMES

Analysis of FY 2025–2026 PEVRS and MVFR response data identified a combined median response time of approximately **10.9 minutes** and a **90th-percentile response time of approximately 23.3 minutes**, measured from unit notification by dispatch to arrival on scene. PEVRS demonstrated a median response time of approximately 10.3 minutes and a 90th percentile of 22.1 minutes. MVFR demonstrated a median response time of approximately 14.4 minutes and a 90th percentile of 26.9 minutes.

¹⁶ EMS relocation in a rural area using a geographic information system can improve response time to motor vehicle crashes, *Journal of Trauma*

Accordingly, while the typical response was approximately 11 minutes, approximately 10 percent of analyzed responses required more than 23 minutes to reach the scene. These figures should be considered within the context of the county's rural geography, the geographic area served by MVFR, staffing availability, simultaneous calls, and the availability of staffed ambulances.

Response time remains an important measure of EMS access, particularly for time-sensitive emergencies. However, *EMS Agenda 2050* emphasizes a broader, people-centered approach in which EMS systems use data and evidence to determine whether the right resources and appropriate care are reaching patients when and where they are needed

The 2024 Joint Position Statement on EMS Performance Measures Beyond Response Times similarly recommends that EMS systems evaluate performance across broader domains rather than relying solely upon response time, including effectiveness, safety, satisfaction, equity, and efficiency.

Recommendations:

- 1. The county should use both median and 90th-percentile response times as part of an ongoing EMS performance dashboard.*
- 2. The county should use response-time data to guide ambulance deployment decisions, particularly in areas demonstrating consistently longer response times.*
- 3. Response time should be considered one component of EMS performance rather than the sole measure of system effectiveness.*

The EMS Agenda 2050 emphasizes a people-centered EMS system that measures outcomes and evidence-based processes, uses data to improve care, and crosses organizational boundaries to improve system performance.

D. MEDICAL DIRECTION, STANDARDIZATION AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

EMS agencies within Prince Edward County are currently served by three medical directors. While individual medical directors provide an important role in local EMS systems, the use of multiple medical direction structures can create variation in protocols, equipment, medications, education, and clinical expectations within a relatively small geographic area.

National research demonstrates considerable variation among EMS agencies in medical direction, quality improvement resources, and clinical performance measurement.¹⁷ In a national assessment of more than 1,000 EMS agencies, rural-only agencies were less likely to routinely follow clinical quality measures, while greater medical director involvement was associated with increased tracking of quality measures.

¹⁷ National Assessment of Quality Programs in Emergency Medical Services

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The Study Team also identified an opportunity to strengthen performance improvement throughout the County. The non-transport agencies are generally using EMS data primarily for response-time information, while the transport agencies report conducting performance improvement activities but did not demonstrate a consistent, measurable, and sustained approach to clinical quality improvement.

This is an important distinction because EMS performance should ultimately be measured by whether patients receive appropriate and effective care, not simply whether an ambulance arrives quickly. EMS.gov identifies the collection, analysis, and use of standardized EMS data as essential to improving EMS operations, provider safety, and patient care.¹⁸

Clinical data from FY 2025–2026 provide several opportunities for focused performance improvement. Among the ten most common primary impressions, generalized abdominal pain was the most frequent with 224 encounters, followed by shortness of breath (208), weakness (205), and chest pain (177).

Of the applicable chest pain encounters, aspirin administration was documented in 86 percent. Among patients with a documented SpO₂ below 90 percent, oxygen administration was documented in 45 percent. Of the 224 abdominal pain encounters, 18 patients received an analgesic and 37 received an antiemetic.

Research has also demonstrated improvements in clinical performance following implementation of physician medical direction combined with evidence-based protocols, education, credentialing, chart auditing, and clinical remediation.¹⁹ In one EMS system, these interventions were associated with substantial improvements in clinical quality indicators, including protocol compliance and aspirin administration for suspected ischemic chest pain.

These data do not, by themselves, establish that treatment was inappropriate or required in every case. Patient condition, contraindications, prior treatment, refusal, protocol criteria, and documentation must be considered. However, they identify potential areas for targeted clinical review and provide an opportunity for the county to establish focused performance improvement measures. The National EMS Quality Alliance (NEMSQA) provides standardized EMS quality measures that can be used to establish baselines, benchmark performance, and guide targeted improvement efforts.²⁰

A structured EMS quality improvement program incorporating regular patient-care-report review, provider feedback, and education targeted to identified deficiencies has also been shown to produce significant and sustained improvements in documentation, protocol compliance, patient disposition, and overall performance.²¹

¹⁸ Using EMS Data, *NHTSA*

¹⁹ Physician Medical Direction and Clinical Performance at an Established Emergency Medical Services System

²⁰ National EMS Quality Alliance Measure Set

²¹ Efficacy of an EMS quality improvement program in improving documentation and performance

Recommendations:

- 1. The county should evaluate establishing a single countywide medical direction structure and standardized EMS protocols.*
- 2. The county should establish a countywide EMS Performance Improvement/Quality Management program.*
- 3. The county should establish an annual EMS training and continuing education schedule involving all licensed EMS agencies.*
- 4. The county should use EMS data to identify disparities between expected and actual care and use those findings to direct education and system improvement.*
- 5. Performance improvement should follow a continuous process of measurement, review, intervention, and re-measurement, rather than relying solely on periodic review or response-time statistics.*

A unified approach is consistent with the EMS Agenda 2050 vision of EMS systems that operate across organizational boundaries and use evidence-based practices, outcomes, and quality improvement to improve patient care.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

The Farmville-Prince Edward Emergency Communications Center (ECC) provides public safety communications for the county and Town of Farmville. The Study Team generally received positive feedback regarding the ECC following its consolidation in 2025. However, opportunities remain to improve resource accountability and information sharing.

One significant concern is that the ECC is not consistently aware of the availability of staffed EMS resources. This can result in additional volunteer resources being dispatched when a staffed resource may already be unavailable or committed.

The county's multi-agency EMS system also creates opportunities to standardize reporting software, communications, mapping, equipment, and access to CAD information.

The Study Team's broader recommendations already identify the value of GPS tracking, mobile data terminals, and shared CAD access for fire and EMS apparatus.

Recommendations:

- 1. All EMS resources should provide daily availability information to the EOC, including the status and location of staffed ambulances.*
- 2. The county should evaluate common EMS CAD access and mobile technology so that fire and EMS agencies have consistent access to dispatch information, mapping, unit status, and other operational information.*
- 3. The county should evaluate streamlining EMS reporting software.*
- 4. EMS communications and technology should be incorporated into the countywide performance improvement program, allowing response, availability, and operational data to be evaluated together.*

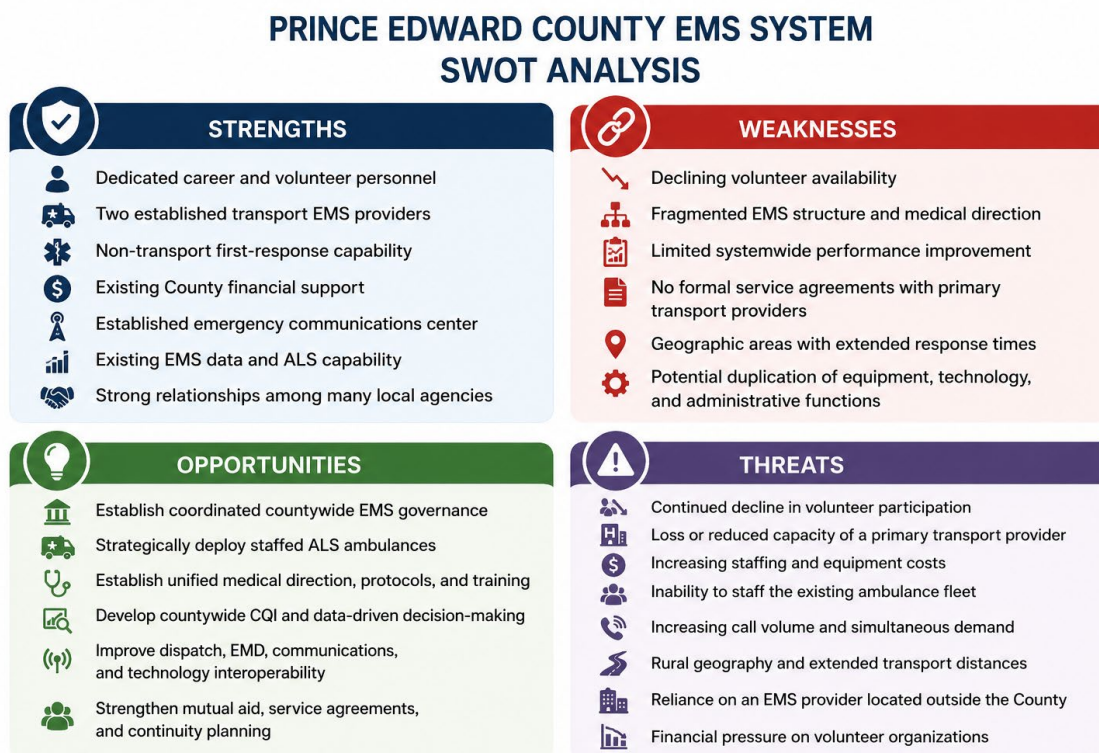
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F. CONCLUSION – SWOT ANALYSIS

The EMS system in Prince Edward County benefits from dedicated volunteers, existing career EMS staffing, multiple fire-based first-response resources, established transport providers, county financial support, and a recently consolidated emergency communications center. These resources provide a strong foundation for continued EMS service.

The Study Team believes the county's EMS system can be strengthened without abandoning the volunteer model that has historically supported emergency services in Prince Edward County. The primary need is to establish greater coordination, standardization, accountability, and long-term planning.

The following SWOT analysis summarizes the major considerations identified during the study.



The county's mission and vision emphasize leadership, collaboration, essential services, public safety, quality of life, and fiscal responsibility. A coordinated EMS system directly supports each of these objectives. The Study Team therefore recommends that the county focus on system reliability rather than simply maintaining existing organizational structures.

Prince Edward County should create a system that establishes the staffing, deployment, medical oversight, training, technology, and accountability necessary to ensure reliable patient care. The Study Team recommends that Prince Edward County prioritize the development of a coordinated, people-centered, data-driven EMS system capable of placing the right resource in the right location at the right time while maintaining fiscal responsibility. This approach supports

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both the county's mission and vision and the national direction established by EMS Agenda 2050.

V. BUDGET AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The Study Team noted that Prince Edward County provided robust financial support to fire and EMS agencies, including \$80,000 annually to each agency, funds from an EMS Levy, and recently covering the costs associated with apparatus fuel, hose testing, and ladder testing. The team also commends Prince Edward County for how it administers the funds by requiring departments to submit bills to the county, ensuring funds are utilized in the appropriate manner. The following recommendations could improve the fiscal stability of the county because many require long-term planning and funding to be successful.

Recommendations:

1. ***The Director of Public Safety should, in consultation with the volunteer agencies, implement a capital improvement plan that addresses apparatus; equipment such as hose, turnout gear, and self-contained breathing apparatus; facilities, and other long-term projects for fire and EMS as identified in the risk assessment.*** Prince Edward County should include these purchases in their overall capital budget plan.
2. ***The Director of Public Safety should continue to track pay differences/incentives in surrounding counties to stay competitive with any future career/paid staff. This program could benefit from a centralized or collective purchasing approach to ensure uniform coverage and cost efficiency.*** There is a lack of clarity regarding how insurance coverage is provided from Prince Edward County for fire and EMS agencies. Some departments report that they provide and pay for their own coverage, creating inconsistencies and possible financial redundancies across the county.
3. ***The Study Team recommends that the Prince Edward County Administrator approach the surrounding counties to research whether shared services could benefit the region.*** As costs to provide emergency response increase, it may be beneficial for several counties to create a regional fire/EMS organization to reduce costs for maintenance, equipment, etc.
4. ***In addressing rising costs to provide fire services, including costs related to apparatus, equipment, personnel, etc., the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors should consider adopting an ordinance to recover costs incurred by volunteer fire departments.*** Code of Virginia § 27-14 permits a locality, by ordinance, to bill property owners on behalf of volunteer fire departments for response to emergency calls, or in supporting licensed emergency medical services agencies. Code of Virginia § 38.2-2130 requires insurers to provide coverage for a volunteer department that “is not fully funded by real estate taxes or other property taxes for service charges where the fire department is called in to save or protect property insured under such policy”.
5. ***The fire and EMS agencies servicing both Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College, with the support of the Prince Edward County Administrator, should approach both institutions to discuss financial support for fire and EMS operations.*** Prince Edward County has two institutions of higher education within its boundaries, Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College. These institutions add an

additional 5,500 people to the county's population when school is in session, in addition to thousands of other guests during community events, sporting events, etc. This undoubtedly creates a burden on the emergency response system compared to when school is not in session. Some departments reported that both institutions used to provide financial support, but that this was no longer the case. Response data, as well as other information, should be provided to portray the impact the institutions have on emergency response. Further, several institutions of higher education nationwide have unique arrangements with local fire departments. One unique example is that Clemson University provides fire protection to the City of Clemson, South Carolina on contract.²²

6. ***The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors should consider the establishment of a fire zone or district with a corresponding levy as permitted under Code of Virginia § 27-23.1.*** The Prince Edward County Code of Ordinances, under Section 50-41, establishes an emergency medical service district levy to fund the "maintenance and operation of the non-profit emergency medical service agencies operating in the county". This ordinance provides dedicated funding for emergency medical response, which should be commended when compared to other localities across Virginia. This levy could support current financial needs of the volunteer agencies, capital improvement of apparatus and equipment, and possible future growth of county staff or resources.
7. ***To maintain financial stability and promote transparency for the citizens of Prince Edward County, each volunteer component should undergo annual audits by an outside entity.*** Each volunteer component may elect to have their own audit done, provided it is independent of the organization. This information should be submitted to the Department of Public Safety and the County Administrator for review. When citizen's tax dollars or donations are being utilized, a high level of accountability must be maintained.

VI. SUPPORTING PERSONNEL

Prince Edward County has a long history of volunteers providing fire and EMS protection. Like much of the country, the county is experiencing strain with less volunteers providing service and increasing calls for service. Although each individual agency in the county completes recruitment, the county must take a more active supporting role or risk losing this vital asset.

Recommendations:

1. ***The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator should encourage/incentivize local businesses to excuse volunteer providers for emergency calls.*** Not specific to Prince Edward 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. Prince Edward County has a strong history of volunteer fire and EMS, and many members have spent decades providing a vital service to their community. Senate Bill 100, passed into law in 2026, prohibits an employer from discharging, disciplining, threatening, discriminating against, or penalizing an employee or taking other retaliatory action regarding an employee's compensation, terms, conditions, location, or privileges of

²² Clemson University Fire and EMS, *Clemson University*

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employment solely because the employee fails to report for work because such employee is serving as a voluntary emergency responder.²³

2. ***The Director of Public Safety should, utilizing emergency response data, determine if part-time paid staffing is needed in certain departments.*** Of concern to the Study Team was the reliance of several departments on college students from Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College to provide fire and EMS. Both reported a steep decline in the number of available first responders when college was not in session, threatening their ability to provide services. The Town of Farmville Fire Department does provide paid staffing, which helps to address this problem. This paid staffing should be cross-trained in fire and EMS and can primarily staff an EMS transport unit in these districts. When student staffing is available, these units can be shifted to other areas of the county or not be staffed.
3. ***The county should consider other incentives for volunteer providers.*** The Study Team commends Prince Edward County for offering several incentive programs aimed at recruiting and retaining personnel, including a tax exemption for fire and EMS providers. This structured incentive, which supports policy compliance, incident response, and training, is a useful tool. Botetourt County recently implemented an incentive program that offers volunteer firefighters \$5 to \$20 per call as well as bonuses for completing training.²⁴ This concept could be implemented in Prince Edward County to encourage additional volunteer fire and EMS providers. Examples include:
 - a. The county should establish an incentive/award program to show continued support, recognition, and appreciation of the county volunteer members. An annual awards event that recognizes the achievements of volunteer fire and EMS could be supported by area businesses or county government.
 - b. The creation of an incentive fund, through a combination of county funds, volunteer department funds where available, and support from local businesses that could be utilized to provide funds to volunteers to purchase individual equipment items, uniform items, or other items identified by the Department of Public Safety. A policy should be implemented that outlines the program requirements and how funds would be disbursed equitably.
 - c. 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 firefighters 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.²⁵
4. ***The Director of Public Safety should approach Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College to create a formalized recruitment and retention process.*** Some agencies in the county expressed success with recruiting college students to serve as

²³ COV § 40.1-27.5

²⁴ “Va. county launches pay-per-call program to boost volunteer firefighter recruitment” *FireRescue1*

²⁵ Volunteer Firefighters and Rescue Squad Workers Program, *Virginia Retirement System*<https://www.volsap.org/>

firefighters or EMTs, although no formal arrangement exists with either institution. A formalized recruitment and retention process that could include:

- a. Notifying students that the campuses are protected primarily by volunteer agencies and providing recruitment materials to incoming students before they arrive on campus.
 - b. Providing course credit for accredited training, including Emergency Medical Technician (Basic, Advanced, Paramedic), Firefighter I, Firefighter II, etc.
 - c. Ensuring students are protected if they leave class to respond to an emergency incident.
 - d. Explore a grant program such as the Staffing For Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant, educational funding, or another funding source to provide a stipend for books, cover room and board, or other expenses for students who serve as first responders in Prince Edward County.
5. ***The county should develop a county-supported recruitment and retention structure that focuses primarily on sustaining the volunteer system, likely reducing the burden on individual agencies from completing this task.*** Almost all agencies operating in Prince Edward County reported concerns over the recruitment and retention of first responders. All departments complete recruitment and retention individually, often relying on outdated models such as word of mouth to recruit candidates. A county program could coordinate recruitment campaigns, process applications centrally and direct new members to agencies in need. Additional considerations include:
- a. Utilize the National Volunteer Fire Council outline for volunteer agencies.²⁶
 - b. Market volunteer departments through social media and other means to solicit volunteers.
 - c. Each volunteer fire chief, as well as the Director of Public Safety, should assess the various areas their organization handles (fire protection, administration, community events, etc). This would allow for the targeted recruitment of individual members to handle 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 of those members that are interested in responding to emergencies and maintaining the necessary training.
 - d. Utilize the “Make Me a Firefighter” Recruitment Tool: Each volunteer agency should utilize The NVFC’s “Make Me A Firefighter” recruitment tool if not already being done. This 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 allows the posting of volunteer opportunities by entering them into a database which is searchable to potential volunteers who can connect directly with the department through MakeMeAFirefighter.org. It is possible to customize campaign materials with departmental specific information and customize outreach materials for each individual department for use in the community.

²⁶ “Develop a Recruitment and Retention Plan” *National Volunteer Fire Council*

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VII. TRAINING

The importance of training in fire and EMS cannot be overstated. Training can occur at many levels, including local agency specific training, certification level training, or skills-based training offered through private organizations. Most of the agencies reported training, predominantly centered around in-house training hosted by each department. They also reported a strong relationship with county leadership concerning courses provided by the Department of Fire Programs. The county does not offer training directly or provide dedicated resources for training. Most departments did not have formal, minimum training standards that required certification level training such as Firefighter I and Firefighter II. VDFP suggests that firefighters receive certification level training such as Firefighter I to be considered interior firefighters. Finally, some departments reported a need for more specific training in technical rescue disciplines.

Recommendations:

1. ***The Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the volunteer fire chiefs and rescue squad leadership, should develop county-wide training standards with reasonable timeline requirements.*** Fire and EMS training standards should be uniform across all agencies. The Director of Public Safety should consider adding a training coordinator position, who could be a volunteer member in the county, that schedules county-sponsored training for fire and EMS services. This training should occur at each fire station and rescue squad and be open to all first responders in Prince Edward County. The training coordinator should establish multi-agency training sessions, develop an annual training schedule, and maintain accurate records for all personnel to ensure compliance, accountability, and tracking of skill development. The training coordinator should also be responsible for working with VDFP staff, OEMS staff, and Prince Edward County first responders to schedule training and continuing education.
 - a. Whether an SOP or SOG, minimum training standards should be reviewed, agreed upon, and enforced based on each level of approved membership without exception.
2. ***The Director of Public Safety should explore creating a training fund to cover any VDFP training course where the minimum number of students required to proceed with the course was not obtained.***
3. ***In a county-wide approach, fire and EMS services should establish necessary technical rescue training that best aligns with the calls for service within the county.*** This would include certification curriculum such as Passenger Vehicle Extrication and Heavy Vehicle Extrication - among others – in addition to attendance-based non-accredited certifications. The VDFP Division Chief and Special Operations Division Chief should be utilized whenever possible to help organize these training events; however, consideration should also be made to solicit vendor specific training on used extrication equipment etc.
4. ***The Prince Edward County Administrator should approach Prince Edward County Public Schools to formally request the reestablishment of a high school-based firefighter program. The Office of EMS notes that the county should also consider a high school-based emergency medical responder (EMR) or emergency medical***

technician (EMT) course to assist local fire/EMS agencies and prepare students for a future career. The academic portion of the course could be taught within Prince Edward County Public Schools, with the Department of Public Safety handling skills training with the assistance of the volunteer fire departments. Rockbridge County recently implemented a high school firefighter course that trains new firefighters and also provides college credit hours.²⁷

VIII. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS IMPROVEMENT

Public safety communications for fire and EMS agencies, as well as the law enforcement agencies in Prince Edward County, is handled by the Farmville-Prince Edward Emergency Communications Center, a recent consolidation that occurred in 2025. In general, the study team did not hear significant complaints concerning dispatch protocols or communication in Prince Edward County. Some personnel expressed concern about areas without radio coverage in the county, but the Study Team was made aware of the implementation of a new radio system that will likely increase coverage.

Recommendations:

1. ***Each entity with paid staffing in Prince Edward County, including the Town of Farmville Fire Department, Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue, and the Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad, should submit a daily report to the ECC with their staffed resources.*** The Emergency Communications Center (ECC) is not regularly or consistently made aware of the availability of crews to respond to emergencies, often delaying emergency response by dispatching additional volunteer resources even if none are available. This should be required in policy or an MOA/MOU. Further, the Director of Public Safety should consider if volunteer agencies should create “duty crews” that may also be communicated to the ECC. A “duty crew” would be volunteer members that could reasonably be expected to respond to the station in a timely manner and respond to an emergency incident. If a district does not have a duty crew, they can still be dispatched along with additional resources from the beginning, rather than waiting for a response.
2. ***The Director of Public Safety, in coordination with the Prince Edward Area Firefighters Association and Director of the ECC, should establish standardized assignments for emergency incidents based on several characteristics, including the information provided to the call-taker, structure type, water supply, etc.*** The Study Team was made aware that three companies were dispatched on a reported fire, although there were no clear guidelines on which units respond or the tasks of the units once they arrive. In addition, terms are not consistent across agencies, such as the term “working fire”. Some agencies have established “run cards” that outline the units that should respond, in order, based on the call type; this should be established countywide. After standardized dispatch assignments are determined, the Director of Public Safety should consider if specific units should be dispatched, not by company, based on a suggested resource needed for that call type. This will allow for greater control of response times by the ECC and more accurate statistics on the real needs of the response districts.

²⁷ “Transformation of Rockbridge career and technical education center brings renewed attention to hands-on high school programs” *Cardinal News*

3. ***The Director of Public Safety, working with the Director of the ECC, should explore a shared phone app/monitor through CAD that all departments would have access to.***
The Study Team noted that some departments receive better access to emergency call information through the Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. Moreover, some departments are purchasing their own information technology resources to access call information. This system should be shared by the fire and EMS agencies in Prince Edward, managed by the Director of Public Safety, and provide the same access to information to all department members. As call information is entered, it should be updated for use by first responders.
4. ***The Study Team recommends that telecommunicators spend time riding with or at training with the area fire and EMS agencies to continue to build relationships.*** The Study Team notes that agencies expressed strong support for the ECC and its work since the consolidation between the Town of Farmville and Prince Edward County. It was reported that telecommunicators complete a ride-along program with area law enforcement, but this is not completed for fire and EMS.

IX. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The information below is included as recommendations independent of the above categories. Select recommendations are both pertinent to Prince Edward County, as well as most fire and EMS studies conducted by the Virginia Fire Services Board. The recommendations are broad but encompass best practices to support future growth for Prince Edward County and the Commonwealth of Virginia, as well as the safety and well-being of first responders and the citizens they protect.

Recommendations:

1. ***The Study Team suggests that the EMS leadership from Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue and Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad, the Operational Medical Directors and the Director of Public Safety establish relationships with local nursing facilities, senior services, public schools, and higher education institutions concerning the role of EMS and their facilities' impact on fire and EMS.*** Improving these relationships may also offer new resources for the fire and EMS system in Prince Edward County.
2. ***The Prince Edward County Administrator should develop, in coordination with the Director of Public Safety, a public marketing campaign that informs county residents, businesses, and visitors that Prince Edward County is protected by a system of volunteer firefighters and EMS professionals augmented by paid staff.*** Most of the fire and EMS in Prince Edward County are provided by a highly dedicated group of volunteers. Volunteer first responders are a cost-effective way of providing emergency services but must be supported since services are never free. As more people move to Prince Edward, they may make an incorrect assumption that fire and EMS are provided by paid fire departments. Many agencies expressed that citizens often question response times and the availability of resources because they moved from an area with a paid fire department.

3. ***The Director of Public Safety should collaborate with local towing services and area law enforcement so that firefighters are not waiting for service on the road in harm's way for extended periods of time.*** If a towing list is maintained by local law enforcement, the wait time for towing services should be addressed with local law enforcement. Volunteer firefighters should not be expected to wait for a prolonged period for towing, which places them in a dangerous situation on Virginia's roadways, removes them from the response matrix, and takes them away from their employers and family.
4. ***The Director of Public Safety, and area fire chiefs, should encourage cancer prevention measures for firefighters.*** The Virginia Fire Services Board will also provide, through the Department of Fire Programs, a new Cancer Screening Grant Program in 2026. At this time, the program is only open to career firefighters as defined in the Code of Virginia. As stated in the Lavender Ribbon Report²⁸, developed by the National Volunteer Fire Council and International Association of Fire Chiefs, 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. 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. 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).²⁹
5. ***The Study Team recommends that the county work with the fire departments 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.***

²⁸ NVFC: Lavender Ribbon Report

²⁹ National Firefighter Registry (NFR) for Cancer, *NIOSH*

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APPENDIX A

Letter Requesting a Fire and EMS Study from the Prince Edward County Administrator

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

E. Harrison Jones
Chair
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COUNTY OF PRINCE EDWARD, VIRGINIA

March 18, 2026

COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Douglas P. Stanley, AICP, ICMA-CM

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Virginia Department of Fire Programs
Virginia Fire Services Board
ATTN: Chief Keith Johnson
1005 Technology Park Drive
Glen Allen, VA 23059

Dear Chief Johnson,

On behalf of Prince Edward County, I am writing to formally request that the Virginia Fire Services Board conduct a Fire and EMS System Study for our jurisdiction, in accordance with §9.1-203.A.4 of the *Code of Virginia*. This request was unanimously approved by the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors at its March 10, 2026 meeting.

Prince Edward County continues to experience evolving demands on our fire and emergency medical services system. As call volumes, service expectations, and operational challenges grow, it is critical that we ensure our system is structured, staffed, and equipped to meet both current and future needs of our community.

We believe this study will help provide an objective and comprehensive evaluation of our existing Fire and EMS delivery system, including organizational structure, staffing, deployment, training, facilities, and overall operational effectiveness. Additionally, the study can offer recommendations to enhance service delivery, improve efficiency, and strengthen our ability to recruit and retain volunteer and career personnel.

Prince Edward County values the expertise and partnership of the Virginia Fire Services Board and believes this assessment will play a critical role in guiding future planning efforts and ensuring the continued delivery of high-quality emergency services to our citizens and visitors.

We respectfully request your consideration and approval of this study. County staff and our Fire and EMS leadership stand ready to assist and coordinate throughout the process.

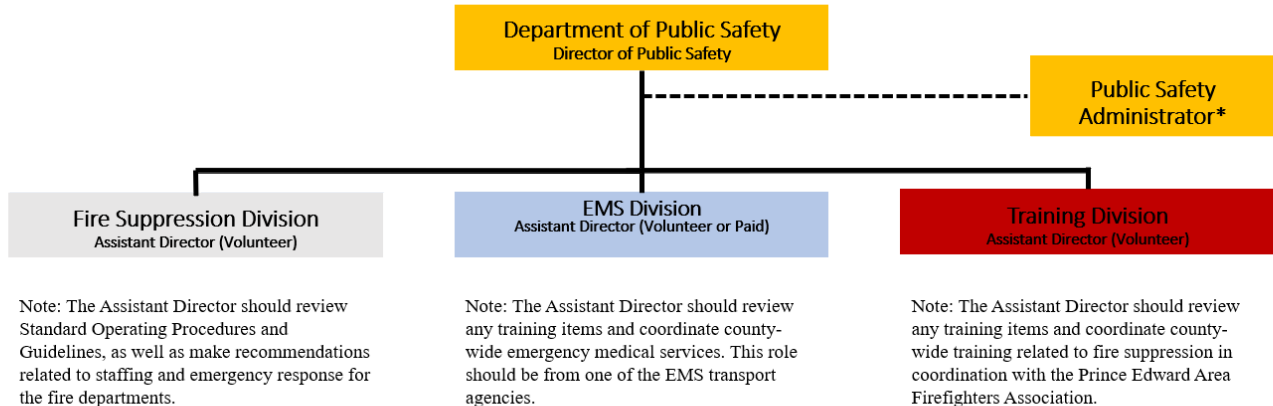
If you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact Trey Pyle, Emergency Management Coordinator, at 434-547-2051.

Sincerely,

Douglas P. Stanley, AICP ICMA-CM
County Administrator

APPENDIX B

Proposed organizational chart for the Department of Public Safety



*New, county position to assist with administrative duties of the Director of Public Safety and emergency management.

APPENDIX C

Other resources available to the Director of Public Safety and Prince Edward County

1. Community Paramedicine

- a. NFPA 450: Guide for Emergency Medical Services and Systems, 2021 Edition –
 - i. Chapter 14 Operations
 - ii. Annex B Time Intervals and Components.
 - 1. <https://catalog.nfpa.org/NFPA-450-Guide-for-Emergency-Medical-Services-and-Systems-P1307.aspx#:~:text=The%20comprehensive%202021%20edition%20of%20NFPA%20450%2C%20Guide,well%20as%20during%20the%20evaluation%20of%20measurable%20outcomes.>

2. 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/>

3. 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
 - i. <https://www.everyonegoeshome.com/16-initiatives/>
- c. VFIS: NFPA 1500 Fire Department Occupational Safety, Health and Wellness Program Worksheet (2018 Edition)
 - i. <https://education.vfis.com/Portals/0/Documents/wellness/NFPA-1500-Worksheet-2018-Edition.pdf>
- d. NVFC: Conducting a Recruitment and Retention Needs Assessment
 - i. <https://www.nvfc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/RR-Needs-Assessment.pdf>

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APPENDIX D

Get Started on CPR with NFPA



GET STARTED ON CRR WITH NFPA

Community Risk Reduction (CRR)

According to NFPA 1300, *Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development*, CRR is a process to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. In other words, it is a process to help communities find out what their risks are and develop a plan to reduce the risks viewed as high priority.

The steps involved in CRR are conducting a Community Risk Assessment (CRA), developing a CRR plan, implementing the plan, and evaluating the plan.

Community Risk Assessment (CRA)

A CRA is a comprehensive evaluation that identifies, prioritizes, and defines the risks that pertain to the overall community. The CRA informs the CRR plan and results in a full understanding of the community's unique risks, capabilities, and characteristics related to the following profiles:

- Building stock
- Community service organizations
- Demographics
- Economics
- Geography
- Hazards
- Past loss & event history
- Public safety response agencies
- Critical infrastructure systems

Given a CRA's broad nature, it is important to collaborate with stakeholders to gain this comprehensive understanding about each of these profiles.

Who's Who in CRR?

Stakeholder: Any individual, group, or organization that might affect or be affected by the CRA or the CRR plan, for example community members, first responders, and city planners

Partner: Party with which an agreement is reached for sharing of physical, financial, and/or intellectual resources in achievement of defined common objectives, such as insurance providers, elder services, and big box retailers

CRR committee: The group of people or organizations responsible for developing the CRR plan

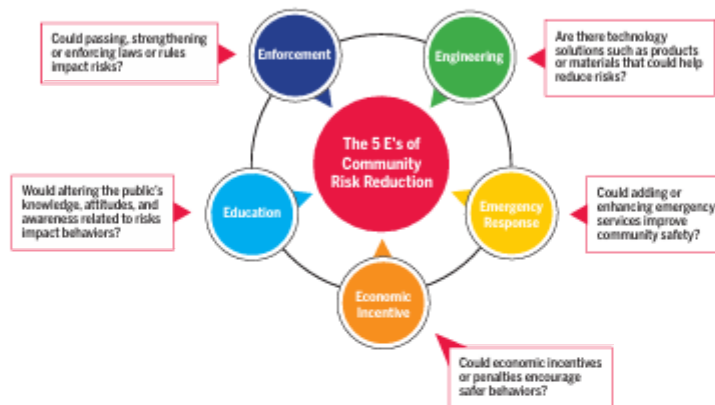
NFPA is working to better meet the needs of communities interested in applying CRR practices. To follow along visit nfpa.org/CRR, and submit your suggestions to CRR@nfpa.org.

This material contains some basic information about Community Risk Reduction. It identifies some of the requirements in NFPA 1300, *Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development*. For free access to the complete and most current version of all NFPA documents, please go to www.nfpa.org/docinfo. References to "Related Regulations" is not intended to be a comprehensive list. The NFPA makes no warranty or guarantee of the completeness of the information in this material and disclaims liability for personal injury, property and other damages of any nature whatsoever, from the use of or reliance on this information. In using this information, you should rely on your independent judgment and, when appropriate, consult a competent professional.



CRR Plan

The CRR plan outlines the goals, programs, and resources needed to reduce the high-priority risks identified by the CRA. The 5 E's approach outlined below can be a helpful framework for setting goals and objectives. The answers to these questions can help you set clear objectives, identify key resources and partnerships, and develop integrated programs in support of reducing identified risks.



CRR Related Documents from NFPA

NFPA documents provide guidance for your CRR activities.

NFPA 1300 [nfpa.org/1300](https://www.nfpa.org/1300)

Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development

NFPA 1300 provides an outline for conducting your CRA and developing and implementing your CRR plan. It is written for any organization or individual to use, and also includes data analysis tools and a sample CRR plan.

NFPA 1730 [nfpa.org/1730](https://www.nfpa.org/1730)

Standard on Organization and Deployment of Fire Prevention Inspection and Code Enforcement, Plan Review, Investigation, and Public Education Operations

NFPA 1730 helps you structure your organization, align resources, and establish standard operating guidelines for fire prevention inspection, code enforcement, plan review, investigation, and public education activities.

NFPA 1452 [nfpa.org/1452](https://www.nfpa.org/1452)

Guide for Training Fire Service Personnel to Conduct Community Risk Reduction

NFPA 1452 offers guidance specifically for conducting CRR for residential occupancies. It contains instructions for performing home safety surveys and highlights the benefits of risk reduction at the residence level.

**IT'S A BIG WORLD.
LET'S PROTECT IT TOGETHER.***

www.nfpa.org

Appendix E
Condensed recommendations of the Virginia Fire Services Board

**CONDENSED RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VIRGINIA FIRE SERVICES BOARD
PRINCE EDWARD COUNTY, VIRGINIA**

I. FORMALIZATION OF FIRE/EMS STRUCTURE

1. The Board of Supervisors should codify the fire and EMS system within the county.
2. The Board of Supervisors should codify a Department of Public Safety which identifies the Director of Public Safety as the position responsible for the supervision and authority of the Department.
 - a. If Prince Edward County should choose not to codify a county-level department to manage fire and EMS agencies operating in the county, then legally binding memorandum of agreements/understand (MOA/MOU) should be developed between the county and each emergency response agency.
3. The Director of Public Safety should develop an organizational chart that clearly illustrates the relationship between the Director of Public Safety, volunteer fire departments, EMS agencies and other emergency service agencies.
4. The Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the Prince Edward Area Firefighters Association, should develop a Standard Operating Procedure/Guidelines (SOP/SOG) Manual that clearly outlines common fire department SOP/SOG, including command procedures, accountability, personal protective equipment, training requirements, and others.
5. All line officers and chief officers should be trained in the effective use of the incident command system, with policy clearly outlining who serves in command during an emergency incident.
6. The Prince Edward County Administrator should consider hiring a second position within the newly created Department of Public Safety to assist with the duties of the department.

II. FLEET AND EQUIPMENT CONSIDERATIONS

1. The County should consider assuming responsibility for maintenance costs associated with fire and EMS apparatus to ensure consistency across departments
2. The Director of Public Safety should develop minimum apparatus specifications for each apparatus type, allowing volunteer organizations to make customizations at their own cost in some areas.
3. Prince Edward County should complete a fleet risk assessment to examine if the county's fire and EMS agencies have excess equipment and prioritize replacement and maintenance.
4. Prince Edward County should consider dual-titling emergency vehicles to ensure both the local agency and the county have legal control of the vehicle.
5. Whether through a Department of Public Safety policy, or a memorandum of understanding between the agencies, each agency should allow their apparatus to be shared in the event of an emergency.

6. An option that the volunteer fire chiefs of Prince Edward County should consider is the Rural Apparatus Support Program, which is a joint program between the Virginia Fire Chief's Association and Virginia State Firefighters Association.
7. The Director of Public Safety, in cooperation with the Farmville-Prince Edward Emergency Communications Center, should consider the addition of GPS tracking in fire and EMS apparatus.
8. The Director of Public Safety should research the cost associated with providing an automatic external defibrillator (AED) to each fire department in the county, ensuring that at least one response apparatus in each district has an AED.

III. COMMUNITY RISK REDUCTION AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

1. Prince Edward County should model for and encourage its departments to develop strategic and emergency planning documents, taking into consideration vulnerable communities and resident input. The Director of Public Safety could provide standardized documents to help guide strategic planning for the departments.
2. Prince Edward County should develop a public health literacy program to educate residents on how to help others in the advent of an emergency (Hands-Only CPR, Stop the Bleed).
3. Prince Edward County should continue to support departments with NERIS fire incident reporting and promote data literacy to drive more strategic, data-informed decision making.
4. Prince Edward County should support its departments with developing community risk assessments to identify and prioritize local risks, followed by the integrated and strategic investment of resources to reduce their occurrence and impact. The Director of Public Safety or each agency's chief should contact the VDFP Coordinator of Community Risk Reduction for assistance with developing a community risk assessment.
5. Prince Edward County should promote stronger relationships between its fire/rescue services and other local government and civil society organizations (schools, nursing homes, mental health and social service providers, non-profits, faith-based organizations, extracurricular youth organizations).

IV. EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

1. The County should establish a formal countywide EMS service framework defining the responsibilities and expectations of each EMS agency.
2. The County should establish formal written agreements with all agencies providing EMS service within Prince Edward County.
3. The County should evaluate the feasibility of placing all County EMS agencies under one coordinated EMS license. This would include Darlington Heights Volunteer Fire Department, which is are interested in becoming a non-transport EMS agency.

B. FLEET CONSIDERATIONS AND GEOGRAPHIC PLACEMENT

1. Prince Edward County should conduct a comprehensive EMS fleet and deployment assessment considering call volume, simultaneous demand, geographic coverage, response times, staffing, hospital turnaround, mutual aid, and ambulance availability. Any fleet reduction should be based on the results of this assessment and should ensure that an appropriate number of staffed and equipped resources remain strategically positioned to meet patient needs.
2. The County should evaluate a system utilizing two to three strategically located staffed ALS ambulances. Final deployment locations should be based on geographic and response-time analysis rather than historical agency boundaries alone.
3. ALS capability should be evaluated as a component of the staffed ambulance system. The County's rural geography and transport distances make reliable access to advanced life support particularly important.
4. The County should evaluate whether the current number of fully equipped ambulances is necessary to meet identified demand. If a smaller fleet is determined to be appropriate, advanced equipment should be concentrated on routinely staffed units, with reserve equipment and vehicles strategically maintained.

C. RESPONSE TIMES

1. The County should use both median and 90th-percentile response times as part of an ongoing EMS performance dashboard.
2. The County should use response-time data to guide ambulance deployment decisions, particularly in areas demonstrating consistently longer response times.
3. Response time should be considered one component of EMS performance rather than the sole measure of system effectiveness.

D. MEDICAL DIRECTION, STANDARDIZATION AND PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

1. The County should evaluate establishing a single countywide medical direction structure and standardized EMS protocols.
2. The County should establish a countywide EMS Performance Improvement/Quality Management program.
3. The County should establish an annual EMS training and continuing education schedule involving all licensed EMS agencies.
4. The County should use EMS data to identify disparities between expected and actual care and use those findings to direct education and system improvement.
5. Performance improvement should follow a continuous process of measurement, review, intervention, and re-measurement, rather than relying solely on periodic review or response-time statistics.

E. COMMUNICATIONS AND TECHNOLOGY

1. All EMS resources should provide daily availability information to the EOC, including the status and location of staffed ambulances.
2. The County should evaluate common EMS CAD access and mobile technology so that fire and EMS agencies have consistent access to dispatch information, mapping, unit status, and other operational information.

3. The County should evaluate streamlining EMS reporting software.
4. EMS communications and technology should be incorporated into the countywide performance improvement program, allowing response, availability, and operational data to be evaluated together.

V. BUDGET AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

1. The Director of Public Safety should, in consultation with the volunteer agencies, implement a capital improvement plan that addresses apparatus; equipment such as hose, turnout gear, and self-contained breathing apparatus; facilities, and other long-term projects for fire and EMS as identified in the risk assessment.
2. The Director of Public Safety should continue to track pay differences/incentives in surrounding counties to stay competitive with any future career/paid staff. This program could benefit from a centralized or collective purchasing approach to ensure uniform coverage and cost efficiency.
3. The Study Team recommends that the Prince Edward County Administrator approach the surrounding counties to research whether shared services could benefit the region.
4. In addressing rising costs to provide fire services, including costs related to apparatus, equipment, personnel, etc., the Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors should consider adopting an ordinance to recover costs incurred by volunteer fire departments.
5. The fire and EMS agencies servicing both Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College, with the support of the Prince Edward County Administrator, should approach both institutions to discuss financial support for fire and EMS operations.
6. The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors should consider the establishment of a fire zone or district with a corresponding levy as permitted under Code of Virginia § 27-23.1.
7. To maintain financial stability and promote transparency for the citizens of Prince Edward County, each volunteer component should undergo annual audits by an outside entity.

VI. SUPPORTING PERSONNEL

1. The Prince Edward County Board of Supervisors and County Administrator should encourage/incentivize local businesses to excuse volunteer providers for emergency calls.
2. The Director of Public Safety should utilize emergency response data to determine if part-time paid staffing is needed in certain departments.
3. The county should consider other incentives for volunteer providers.
4. The Director of Public Safety should approach Longwood University and Hampden-Sydney College to create a formalized recruitment and retention process.
5. The county should develop a county-supported recruitment and retention structure that focuses primarily on sustaining the volunteer system, likely reducing the burden on individual agencies from completing this task.

VII. TRAINING

1. The Director of Public Safety, in consultation with the volunteer fire chiefs and rescue squad leadership, should develop county-wide training standards with reasonable timeline requirements.
2. The Director of Public Safety should explore creating a training fund to cover any VDFP training course where the minimum number of students required to proceed with the course was not obtained.
3. In a county-wide approach, fire and EMS services should establish necessary technical rescue training that best aligns with the calls for service within the county.
4. The Prince Edward County Administrator should approach Prince Edward County Public Schools to formally request the reestablishment of a high school-based firefighter program. The Office of EMS notes that the county should also consider a high school-based emergency medical responder (EMR) or emergency medical technician (EMT) course to assist local fire/EMS agencies and prepare students for a future career.

VIII. EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS CENTER IMPROVEMENT

1. Each entity with paid staffing in Prince Edward County, including the Town of Farmville Fire Department, Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue, and the Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad, should submit a daily report to the ECC with their staffed resources.
2. The Director of Public Safety, in coordination with the Prince Edward Area Firefighters Association and Director of the ECC, should establish standardized assignments for emergency incidents based on several characteristics, including the information provided to the call-taker, structure type, water supply, etc.
3. The Director of Public Safety, working with the Director of the ECC, should explore a shared phone app/monitor through CAD that all departments would have access to.
4. The Study Team recommends that telecommunicators spend time riding with or shadow training with the area fire and EMS agencies to continue to build relationships.

IX. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

1. The Study Team suggests that the EMS leadership from Meherrin Volunteer Fire and Rescue and Prince Edward Volunteer Rescue Squad, the Operational Medical Directors and the Director of Public Safety establish relationships with local nursing facilities, senior services, public schools, and higher education institutions concerning the role of EMS and their facilities' impact on fire and EMS.
2. The Prince Edward County Administrator should develop, in coordination with the Director of Public Safety, a public marketing campaign that informs county residents, businesses, and visitors that Prince Edward County is protected by a system of volunteer firefighters and EMS professionals augmented by paid staff.
3. The Director of Public Safety should collaborate with local towing services and area law enforcement so that firefighters are not waiting for service on the road in harm's way for extended periods of time.
4. The Director of Public Safety, and area fire chiefs, should encourage cancer prevention measures for firefighters.

5. The Study Team recommends that the county work with the fire departments 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.