

Fire and Emergency Management

Goals

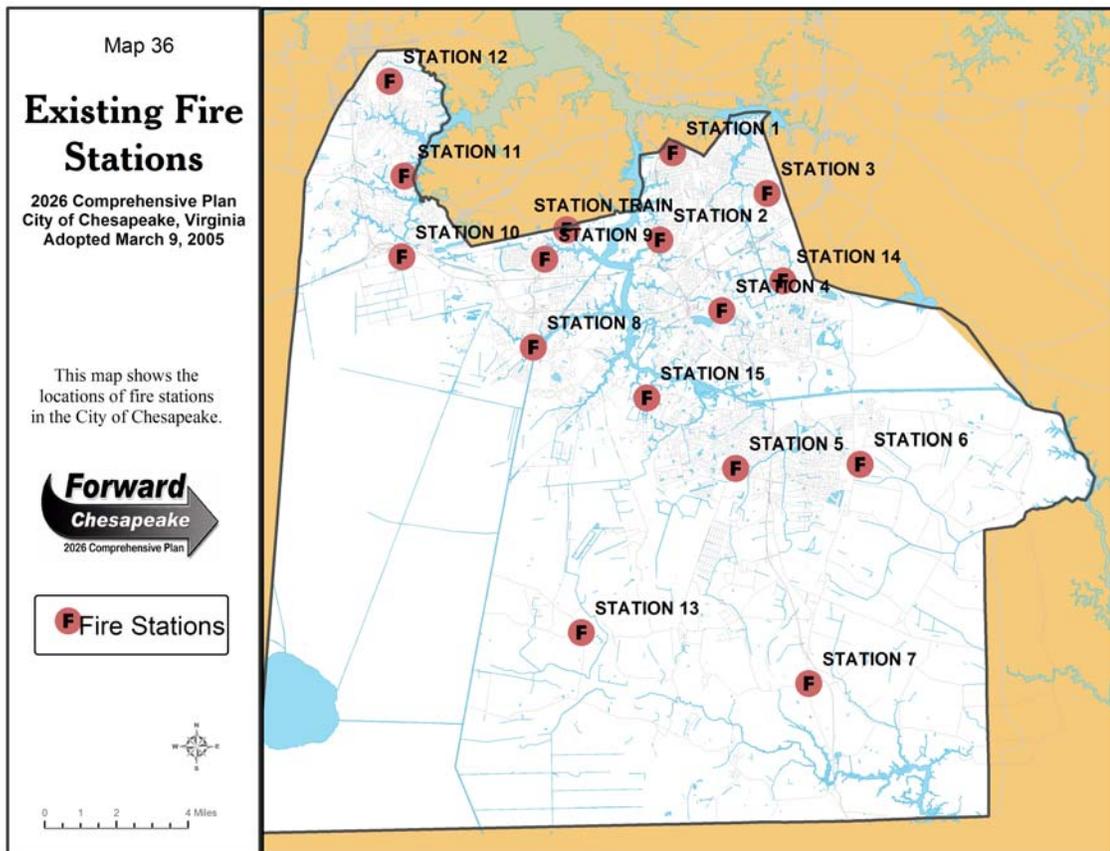
The City will:

- Provide adequate public facilities and services for all services which the City provides.
- Coordinate the location and design of all City public facilities with the goals and policies of the Comprehensive Plan.



Overview

The Fire Department provides rapid response to fires, emergency medical emergencies, hazardous material incidents, natural and man-made disasters, mutual aid assistance to neighboring departments and related emergencies to reduce life and property loss. The Department provides specialized rescue operations, and supports regional hazardous material, technical rescue, and maritime response teams. In addition, the Fire Department inspects businesses and properties, assists with code enforcement, and conducts public education programs. The Department maintains a constant level of readiness through professional training and development. The City of Chesapeake currently operates 15 stations strategically located throughout the jurisdiction. There are 3 divisions in the Fire Department: Fire Operations (Fire and Emergency Medical Services), Fire Prevention, and Support Services.



The Fire Operations Division provides professional response to various emergencies including fires, medical emergencies, accidents, natural and man-made disasters, hazardous materials incidents, and tactical rescues. The Fire Operations Division is also responsible for a public education program to mitigate and prevent many emergencies before they occur. The Office of Emergency Management under the Operations Division is tasked with developing a disaster resistant community through a total system concept. They accomplish this by developing and updating the City's Emergency Operations Plan, designing and conducting all-hazards exercises and drills, and managing the City's Emergency Operations Center.

The Fire Prevention Division provides fire safety inspections, code education and enforcement, pre-construction plan review, and investigative services to reduce the probability, frequency, and severity of fires, explosives, hazardous materials, and the corresponding deaths, injuries, and loss of property from these events. In addition, this division responds to and investigates incidents of suspicious and incendiary fires, hazardous materials, terrorist threats, bomb threats, and explosive devices. A proactive approach is taken by educating citizens and the business community in fire safety codes and reviewing pre-construction plans to ensure compliance with applicable building and fire codes.

The Support Services Division is responsible for health, safety, training, resource management, and accounting for Fire Department personnel. The Support Services Division pursues technology to improve service delivery, manages the inventory and

resources of the department, and ensures that the department is operation in a fiscally sound and efficient manner. The Training branch of the Support Services Division conducts a 26-week recruit academy for new employees, and in-service programs and recertification classes for incumbent members. The training staff not only provides professional training for Fire Department staff members at also for other departments and citizens.

The Fire Department has conducted several Deployment Studies to evaluate when and where additional stations and resources are needed. An impact study of NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations t the Public by Career Fire Departments, is being conducted to bring the Department’s response times and staffing complement into compliance with this National Standard.

Issue One: Growth Strains Fire and EMS Response Capabilities

The rapid population growth in the City has increased the demand for fire and emergency services. As a result, the Department has had trouble in providing adequate services in acceptable response times. For example, there is a need for additional Advanced Life Support Medic Units in the City. The City frequently has all 10 Medic Units committed to emergency incidents and must rely on mutual aid for any additional calls for service, resulting in an increased response time. Projections indicate that this trend will increase due to unhealthy and elderly populations.

The City shall strive to balance future growth with its ability to provide adequate Fire and EMS services.

Strategies:

- Guidelines and standards, including NFPA 1710 Standard for Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, should be followed to determine services needed to provide adequate emergency coverage for the City’s population.
- The City should develop methods to monitor impending impacts to its emergency services created by changes in demographics and new development.

Issue Two: Need for Adequate Fire and EMS Capital Facilities and Equipment

The quality of its equipment and facilities can impede or enhance the Department’s ability to provide adequate emergency services. The Department has a 5-year capital plan that is evaluated and updated on an annual basis. Capital needs have been identified including the relocation, renovation, and addition of several stations throughout the City due to the expanding development pattern. Currently, the Department has identified a need for additional capital assets in Indian River, southern Greenbrier, Cavalier Industrial Park area, Western Branch, southern Deep Creek, and southern Chesapeake. When the impact study of NFPA 1710 Standard for Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, is complete, the five year capital plan will be updated with these recommendations.

One of the greatest capital needs of the Fire Department is for a Fire and Emergency Medical training facility. The Fire Department's current training facility consists of four borrowed portable classrooms. The Fire Department has only two staff members assigned to training, a Training Program Manager, and a support member. They are responsible for training the 410 employees of the Fire Department.



There is also an urgent need for a functional Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The current facility has severe space limitations with little room for expansion. The support facilities such as restrooms, showers, food preparation, and rest areas necessary to sustain a support an active EOC do not exist in the current structure. Even during small scale incidents, the EOC is often above capacity. Furthermore, the technologies required to manage the complex and evolving incidents faced by emergency responders in this new age require a state of the art EOC. The facility is the nerve center of operations. The must be secure and hardened from external threats including floods, explosives, cyber attacks, and wind damage. The current facility is susceptible to all these external threats.

Technology can greatly improve the Department's ability to provide emergency services, particularly in improving response times. The Department uses mapping software technology and Geographic Information Systems (GIS) in an office environment for analysis and planning. However, this should be expanded to each station and integrated with Auto-Vehicle Location (AVL) technology. This will allow the closest unit to automatically be dispatched to and emergency. This program will decrease response times allowing emergency services to arrive on the scene faster, mitigating the loss of life and property.

The City will find an efficient and effective means of providing the necessary facilities and equipment to provide quality Fire and Emergency Management Services.

Strategies:

- The City will continually evaluate its Fire and EMS stations to ensure that they are aligned for maximum efficiency.
- Where enhanced service is warranted, the City will develop an implementation strategy to provide new, expanded, or relocated stations.
- The City will continue to integrate and improve the technology used to deliver Fire and Emergency Management Services in order to improve service delivery.
- In order to reduce costs, opportunities to co-locate fire stations with other public facilities should be explored.

Issue Three: Need for More Comprehensive Emergency Planning

The City is vulnerable to many types of natural hazards, including hurricanes, nor'easters, floods, tornadoes, winter storms, and wildfires. Growth in Chesapeake has increased the potential for severe economic and social consequences if a major disaster or other catastrophic event were to occur today. Such events can potentially cost the City millions in damages to public buildings and infrastructure, lost tax revenue, unemployment, and homelessness. A multi-hazard mitigation plan has been adopted by the City in accordance with the Disaster Mitigation Act of 2000. The Chesapeake City Council adopted this plan on October 14, 2003, making Chesapeake the first community in the Commonwealth of Virginia with an adopted, and FEMA-approved, local hazard mitigation plan.

Chesapeake will strive to maintain a proactive approach to planning for emergencies.

Strategies:

- The City will enhance the safety of residents and businesses by protecting new and existing development from the effects of hazards. The City will endeavor to protect new and existing public and private infrastructure and facilities from the effects of hazards.
- The City will increase its floodplain management activities and participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. The Departments of Fire, Neighborhood Services and Planning will work together to improve the City's existing floodplain management program.
- The City will institute hazard awareness and risk reduction principles into the City's daily activities, processes, and functions. The City will enhance community-wide understanding and awareness of community hazards. The City will publicize mitigation activities to reduce the City's vulnerability to the identified hazards.
- The City will discourage development in floodplains in order to protect the public health and welfare and prevent property damage.
- The creation of a new Emergency Operations Center (EOC) with appropriate staffing will be pursued.
- The City should explore federal and state grant opportunities as they relate to homeland security and all hazards preparedness.

Issue Four: Regional Cooperation Needs

Because of its proximity to other urban areas, Chesapeake has fostered regional cooperation with neighboring localities in providing Fire and EMS services. The Department participates in numerous regional endeavors to experience economies of scale, pool limited resources and expertise, and to promote a positive and proactive image.

The City should continue to work cooperatively with neighboring jurisdictions to provide needed emergency services.

Strategies:

- The City will continue to participate in regional endeavors such as the Southside Hazardous Materials Team, Tidewater Technical Rescue Team, Maritime Incident Response Team, Local Emergency Planning Committee, and the Metropolitan Medical Response System.
- Opportunities to work cooperatively with neighboring jurisdictions in the provision of training facilities should be considered.

