

*Consolidation Proposal
of
First Responder Services
in
Huntersville*



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Huntersville Fire Department Mission Statement

It is the mission of Huntersville Fire Department to protect lives and property through a comprehensive program of fire suppression, fire prevention; public education; rescue; extrication and EMS first responder services to the community. The Department is committed to providing a high level of service and professionalism to the residents and visitors of Huntersville and the surrounding communities by ensuring all members and employees receive a competent level of training and continuing education.

Synopsis of Effective Service Delivery

The overall goal of this report is to examine delivery of current and future services and implement measures which will increase the overall level of Fire/EMS services, improve efficiency and provide services at the same level with a reduction of financial costs. One key consideration is that any agency contemplating a consolidation should understand the interests of the public who are receiving the services must be the basic motivation for the consolidation, for example, improved service delivery and financial efficiency.

A preliminary review of the budgets of the two organizations reveals many areas of overlap in operating costs, including training, public education, administration, insurance, equipment, fundraising expenses, vehicle repairs and professional services. With this many areas of overlap and duplication a substantial cost savings is anticipated as these services are consolidated.

In this time of economic challenges, we have an opportunity to change the status quo and make the changes necessary to deliver a sustainable, effective, and efficient emergency response service into the future. The challenge of consolidating same services in order to provide a better emergency service to the community is essential. It is a challenge worthy of our best effort. For the same service provided by North Mecklenburg Rescue Squad in the Huntersville Fire Station One District; the Huntersville Fire Department will provide services at a lower cost. HFD can provide first responder service in station one's district for \$248,000 which will be used to staff 2 certified Firefighter/Emt's at fire station one 24/7 365 days a year. This will fund the operating cost of personnel needed to consolidate Fire and EMS.

Immediate Savings

Organization	Service	Area	Cost yearly
North Meck Squad	EMS	Station 1	\$376,633.00
Huntersville FD	EMS	Station 1	\$248,000.00

This will constitute a cost savings to the Town and its citizen's of \$128,633.00 annually.

The Creation of a Strategic Plan

The Huntersville Fire Department will adopt a proactive approach to the needs of the Town of Huntersville and its residents. This Strategic Plan is organized into several broad categories that will focus on implementation over the span of one to three years and serve as an aid for future planning thus making Huntersville Fire innovators in the consolidation of fire and rescue services.

As the Town and the Huntersville Fire Department build station four in the area of Hambright Road it will eliminate the need for the current contract with Long Creek Fire Department. Although Long Creek may continue their contract with the county some members may elect to join HFD which will increase the level of preparedness and response.

The fire service is involved in constant growth that reflects constant change. It is important that the Town of Huntersville and the Huntersville Fire Department share a vision that guides us into the future. The fire service is operating in a dynamic environment and sharing the vision will provide rewards for those courageous enough to embrace the challenges and opportunity.

EQUIPMENT & RESOURCES

While there are really no specific department items that will be impacted by this change, there are minor impacts or improvements that will occur. Vehicles and equipment purchases such as Extrication or EMS supplies will no longer be managed as fire only or EMS only and will be managed as one resource. Other areas where consolidation is expected to result in more efficient use of equipment and resources include ICS/NIMS training, communication equipment (radios/pagers) management, clothing purchasing and public education activities. Essentially any resource or piece of equipment that was previously being tracked, purchased or managed separately will now be consolidated.

LONG-TERM IMPACTS

As the Town continues to experience increased residential and commercial growth the call volume is projected to increase. This consolidation will dictate a more manageable and streamlined staff for management. Operating under a consolidated structure it is expected to reduce duplicated efforts as well as allowing management to continue to review responses and discipline issues. Currently, if a member serving on both departments has a discipline issue related only to one department their status on the other department may be unaffected. Having a single disciplinary process that is uniform under a consolidated department will provide for a more fair and consistent process for the member and the town in the future.

INCIDENT RESPONSE

The Huntersville Fire Department and the North Mecklenburg Rescue Squad currently each have their own unique sound tones for their pagers when incidents are dispatched. Members that provide both services will continue to receive pages for both types of incidents. If any additional services are requested, such as Fire or EMS assistance any HFD fire station can be requested through dispatch and the page will then be sent to the closest station.

Currently Fire and EMS calls are responded to by the use of station apparatus as well as member's personal vehicles, this procedure will not change. Currently all HFD apparatus are fully equipped to respond to a medical call. For example, if the department is on scene responding to a fire call and a medical call is dispatched, then depending upon the staff at the scene and other circumstances, command will determine how response can best be provided without compromising the needs at the active incident. Please note that these types of decisions and vehicle usage are already being made by the HFD and consolidation will overall result in limited changes to this current highly cooperative process. It should also be noted that having all fire apparatus equipped for medical responses not only allows for response to medical calls, but provides the necessary resources to assist our own firefighters should a medical situation arise while on an active call or offsite training.

CONSOLIDATION BENEFITS

- Improves the confidence and abilities of emergency response personnel to handle emergency incidents by providing coordinated training, management, organizational structure and technology.
- Improvements expected on-scene for calls. Reduced issues of transferring command and having personnel work only fire or only EMS. Members will serve and work on both as deemed necessary by incident command.
- Improves grant selection process for the department. Having a consolidated department reflecting a greater number of calls, vehicle usage and coordinated activities is expected to improve grant opportunities.
- Improved coordination and productivity during major incidents and disasters with all involved agencies, including the on-scene command post, emergency management and the emergency operation center (EOC).
- Improved emergency management and National Incident Management System (NIMS) coordination and implementation which is imperative for major incident responses and to maintain federal grant eligibility.
- Improved human resource management for members that will now be served by a single set of bylaws and SOG's providing consistency and equal treatment for all members. One person, the Fire Chief, would be responsible for all final human resource decisions.

- Improved coordination on budget development and management due to only one budget being developed and responsibility for the budget under one board of directors.
- Increased efficiencies and management of resources and equipment which are currently used separately by departments (ex. communication equipment, educational materials/training, member recognitions/events, etc.)
- Improved opportunities for future multi-department consolidations. Consolidated departments are more appealing for future growth because of the additional resources that consolidation offers.
- Member retention expected to improve. With increased opportunities for providing various services to the department, members will have expanded opportunities and ways to serve the community.
- Provides a clear chain of command and accountability. Issues that involve both fire and EMS will be managed under a clear hierarchy.

CONSOLIDATION ISSUES

- Loss of long term agency name
- Hurt Feelings
- Loss of additional agency at high call volume times
- Loss of current rescue squad members due to no interest in firefighter discipline.

AREA FIRE DEPARTMENTS ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The following is a brief summary of the organizational structures of fire departments in the surrounding area.

City of Charlotte: This fire department is a career department and their fire and EMS are consolidated in one department

City of Concord: This fire department is a career department and their fire and EMS are consolidated into one department

Town of Cornelius: This fire department is a combination/volunteer as well as paid-on-call. There Fire and EMS are consolidated in one department.

East Lincoln: This fire department is a career department with two stations which are part of their municipality.

LongCreek: This fire department is a combination/volunteer as well as a paid-on-call department. Their EMS and fire are consolidated in one department.

Town of Davidson: This fire department is a combination/volunteer department and their EMS and fire are consolidated in one department.