



Montgomery County Maryland Fire and Rescue Services

Accreditation

Fire and Emergency Services Self Assessment Manual 10th Edition Model Fourth Accreditation Cycle 2023



Commission on
Fire Accreditation
International

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Services

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Category 1: Governance and Administration (Ms. Ruthie Wills & M3 Schulze)

For purposes of this category, governance is defined as the recognition of the authority that allows an organization or agency to legally form and operate. In fulfilling this responsibility, the legal entity that oversees this formation process reflects the public interest, protects the agency from undesirable external interference, determines basic policies for providing services, and interprets the agency's activities to its constituency. Administration is defined as the activities that carry out the implementation of the policies established by the authority having jurisdiction. In fulfilling this responsibility, the agency or organization carries out the day-to-day operations.

The legal entity and governing authority define the duties and responsibilities of the agency in an official policy statement. An organization's charter or local or state/province general statutes likely contain an agency's official policy statement.

The chief executive or chief fire officer should provide staff leadership in developing policy proposals for the legal civil authority having jurisdiction so those officials can take action to implement public policy based upon knowledgeable input from public safety leadership. Keeping an elected governing board and/or high-ranking individual informed on all matters affecting the agency and delivery of emergency services is the primary responsibility of agency leadership.

It must be recognized that other organizations participate in the governance of the agency, such as the state/provincial and federal governments through legislation, regulations, and funding procedures, and other organizations through associations and bargaining units. The governing board coordinates all these diverse interests to set the direction of the agency.

The agency administration exercises responsibility for the quality of the agency through an organized system of planning, staffing, directing, coordinating, and evaluating. The agency administration is entrusted with the assets and is charged to uphold its mission and

programs, to ensure compliance with laws and regulations, and to provide stability and continuity.

For many volunteer fire service organizations, the governing board is within the municipal or county government and is the executive/legislative body for municipal or county governance, some elected directly by the public, such as special districts. In the absence of a municipally appointed fire chief or chief executive officer, for purposes of accreditation, the duly elected or appointed volunteer fire chief shall be the individual responsible for the criteria and performance indicators.

In many city or county municipal organizations a separation of powers exists that give the governing body legislative responsibility while giving administrative responsibility to a strong mayor or city manager. The chief fire officer/chief executive officer in such organizations generally reports directly to the mayor, manager, or designee. It is vital that the leadership of every agency understand who sets policy for the government structure they are working in and their role in implementing that policy.

Criterion 1A: Governing Body

The governing body and/or agency manager is legally established to provide general policies to guide the agency, approved programs and services, and appropriated financial resources.

Summary:

Montgomery County is a council/executive form of government. The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) exists and operates under the governance of the Montgomery County Charter, established by the Montgomery County Council. The Charter Law created, authorized, and directs the overall scope of the fire and rescue service delivery in this jurisdiction.

Performance Indicators:

CC 1A.1 The agency is legally established.

Description

The Montgomery County Charter, Section 101, as well as Part II, Chapter 21, provides for delivery of fire and rescue services to the citizens of Montgomery County. On May 4, 2004, the County Council authorized and enacted Bill 36-03, effective January 1, 2005; thus, changing the Charter Law under Part II, Chapter 21 providing for a single Fire Chief for the County, who was authorized and responsible for all entities providing emergency fire and rescue services in the jurisdiction. The consequence of this change was the creation of one of the largest combination fire and rescue departments in the nation.

Appraisal

The agency was legally established by Montgomery County and has provided services to the citizenry, employing its legal right and responsibility to provide such services.

Plan

As of this writing, there is no known reason nor plan for the Montgomery County Council to make changes to Part II, Chapter 21 of the Charter Law.

References

[Article 1., Sec. 101. County Council](#)

[Chapter 21, Fire and Rescue Services](#)

[Bill 36-03](#)

[Master Plan 2016 to 2022](#) (See PDF page 32 / paper pages 1-9 through 1-11)

CC 1A.2 The agency has a methodology in place for recognizing and reacting to changes in legal requirements of local, state/provincial and federal governments (i.e., inspection reports, regulatory references, meeting minutes and legal opinions).

Description

The MCFRS has practices in place to monitor and track applicable local, state, and federal requirements. At the local level, the fire chief or designee attends and provides feedback at Council and related committee meetings. At the state and federal level, a designated staff member from the Office of the Fire Chief works with colleagues from the Office of Intergovernmental Relations and attends weekly briefings of the Maryland Firefighter's Association when the Maryland House of Delegates is in session in Annapolis to learn of any pending legislation. During these sessions, briefings are held every Friday by a Maryland House of Delegates caucus and the assigned member attends these sessions in Annapolis to learn of any pending legislation that could affect the fire-rescue service in Maryland, and/or that specifically impacts Montgomery County. The Maryland State Fire Marshal and his staff also monitor and attend all the work sessions and report back to the Maryland State Fireman's Association. Trade journals and conferences are helpful sources of upcoming industry changes, and the connected nature of today's fire service through social media, web bulletins, email alerts, etc., often brings legislative and regulatory changes to light.

Appraisal

The process for monitoring and tracking local, state, and federal government actions has allowed MCFRS to remain well-informed on fire/rescue service issues and to provide input into the development process, when necessary. Actively monitoring legislative and regulatory matters has also enabled MCFRS to adjust its internal policies and practices accordingly. This process has proven to be an effective method.

Plan

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service will continue to employ the strategy of collaboration with the County's Office of Intergovernmental Relations to address conflicts to the County's interests at the regional, state, and federal levels, as well as maintain our relationship with the Maryland Firefighter's Association and the Maryland State Fire Marshal's Office. Internally, division chiefs and managers will continue to assess and monitor the department's compliance with all legislative and regulatory changes.

References

[Email from OFC staff member: MSFA Final Legislative Report 2022](#)

[MSFA Legislative Bulletin for 2023](#)

[MSFA Legislative Bulletin 020223 Updated Report](#)

[OHR email to all County Employees re: County Bill 10-22](#)

[Master Plan Appendix A - Laws, Statutes and Standards Impacting MCFRS](#)

1A.3 The governing body of the agency periodically reviews and approves services and programs.

Description

The County Executive identifies “effective, sustainable government” in his vision for a more equitable and inclusive Montgomery County. Hence, the budget process serves as the primary avenue for the Executive and County Council to review and approve services and programs. Separately, the County Council, usually acting through the Public Safety Committee, reviews MCFRS services and programs on a regular basis.

Appraisal

MCFRS has provided the necessary information and support for the County Executive and County Council to make well-informed decisions on services and programs. Through the review and approval process, the Executive and Council have ensured that department operations have remained aligned with the County’s overall strategic goals.

Plan

MCFRS will continue its role in the annual budget process established by the County Executive in support of an effective, sustainable government, and will respond as necessary to the County Council for review of all services and programs.

References

[PSC Agenda for FY22 Budget Review](#)

[Review Package for PSC Work Session](#)

[FY24 Department Head Discussion Budget 011722](#)

[MCFRS Presentation at HHS & PS Committee Meeting reviewing Hospital Capacity and Need for Psychiatric Bed Resources, 1/13/2022 \(FRS begins at 1:52:45\).](#)

1A.4 The role and composition of various policymaking, planning and special purpose bodies are defined by the governing body in an organizational chart.

Description

Montgomery County encourages community members/residents to become actively involved in matters affecting the quality of life in the County. The County Executive makes appointments to over 80 boards, committees, and commissions, and the County Council confirms appointments.

Appraisal

Montgomery County Code Section 21-2 defines the relationship between MCFRS and the Fire and Emergency Services Commission (FESC). The Fire Chief or his designee, during the rating period, met with the Commission monthly, as mandated. A program manager in the Office of the Fire Chief is also appointed as a liaison with the FESC. Additionally, the Fire Chief has assigned each of the division chiefs as points of contact to the citizens advisory boards of the regional service centers, to serve as a resource and connection between our diverse County and the department.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to abide by County law requiring collaboration with the FESC and will continue to engage other community stakeholders through the citizens advisory boards.

References

[Office of the County Executive Boards, Committees and Commissions](#)

[County Code Section 21-2](#) (beginning on PDF p 6)

[MCFRS Org Chart](#)

[Examples of FESC Meetings with Agenda Items](#)

[CAB Assignments](#)

1A.5 The governing body or designated authority approves the organizational structure that carries out the agency's mission.

Description

Montgomery County Code 21-3 outlines the authority of the Fire Chief, as well as two required division chiefs: Operations and Volunteer Services. Chapter 2 Section 39A gives the Fire Chief the capacity to regulate the number of divisions necessary for effective management and administration of the department. MCFRS currently consists of the Office of the Fire Chief and five divisions: Operations, Volunteer Services, Human Resources, Support Services, and Fiscal Management.

Appraisal

The current organizational division structure has been in place since January 1, 2016, following the transfer of Code Compliance to the Department of Permitting Services. Chief Goldstein restructured the existing/remaining sections, renaming a former division as Support Services and creating Fiscal Management. Since then, there have been no changes to the divisions, and only minor changes/realignments to sections within the divisions.

Plan

There are currently no plans to modify the MCFRS organizational structure.

References

[County Code Section 21-3](#) (see PDF page 8)

[County Code Section 2-39A](#)

[MCFRS Org Chart](#)

1A.6 The governing body adheres to an approved conflict of interest policy that is applicable to the governing board members and staff.

Description

All departments within Montgomery County must adhere to Montgomery County Public Ethics Law County Code Chapter 19. *Article III, Conflicts of Interest*, pertains to all merit system employees. This law addresses employment opportunities, participation in boards and commissions, the acceptance of gifts, etc. Under the law, all individuals are required to apply for and be granted approval by the Montgomery County Ethics Commission via the Fire Chief for any request for outside employment to ensure there are no conflicts of interest related to their position within the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service. Additionally, Chapter 19 specifies those employees of County government who must file an annual financial disclosure.

Appraisal

MCFRS has maintained the safeguards necessary to preclude potential conflicts of interest. The workforce is monitored by the Fire Chief, Division Chiefs, and the chain of command officers to enforce the requirements of the County Public Ethics Law. These expectations have been clearly defined and communicated to employees.

Plan

The infrastructure that defines and enforces ethical standards in Montgomery County will continue.

References

[Montgomery County Code Chapter 19A - Public Ethics Law](#)
[Financial Disclosure History for FRS Manager](#)

1A.7 A communication process is in place between the governing body and the administrative structure of the agency.

Description

The Fire Chief has standing monthly meetings with the County Executive and the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to discuss high level issues facing the department. The CAO also holds a monthly meeting with all executive branch department heads to address broader issues facing Montgomery County. In addition to these meetings, the Fire Chief also meets monthly with the Fire and Emergency Services Commission (FESC), and as needed with the County Council, generally working through the Public Safety Committee, to provide updates and briefings on operational and administrative concerns.

Appraisal

The current communication process has functioned effectively and kept the County Executive's office informed of important issues within the department. The communication channels between the Fire Chief and the CAO, County Executive, and FESC are strong. The relationship between MCFRS and the County Council has also been well cultivated; council members know they can easily reach the Fire Chief or other members of the executive staff when their constituents raise concerns. This communication process has worked well to the benefit of all County officials comprising the governing body.

Plan

The Fire Chief will continue to communicate regularly with the CAO, County Executive, and the FESC, to discuss department needs, policies and emergent issues or concerns. Concurrently, the County Executive and County Administrative Officer will continue to communicate their expectations to the Fire Chief concerning policy decisions, the budget, and other enhancement of fire and rescue services regarding new facilities, apparatus, personnel and related needs for the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service.

References

[Fire Chief's Monthly CAO Meeting Calendar Series](#)

[Example of Fire Chief Meeting with County Council Public Safety Committee](#) (forward to 36:30 on the video)

Criterion 1B: Agency Administration

The organizational structure aligns with or supports the agency's mission, purposes, goals, strategies, and objectives.

Summary:

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue service has built an organizational structure designed to support its mission of “protecting lives, property, and the environment with comprehensive risk reduction programs and safe and effective emergency response.” The services and programs required to fulfill this mission have continued to evolve and expand. The fire chief has the responsibility of guiding the administration of programs and services that address these demands. MCFRS relies on a traditional, hierarchical organizational structure in which divisions are based on major functions, led by division chiefs: operations, volunteer services, human resources, support services, and fiscal management. Personnel at all levels of the organization understand their roles and responsibilities. Resource allocation reflects the department's priorities and the community needs.

Performance Indicators:

CC 1B.1 The administrative structure and allocation of financial, equipment and personnel resources reflect the agency’s mission, goals, objectives, size and complexity.

Description

The mission statement of MCFRS directs the department to “protect lives, property and the environment with comprehensive risk reduction programs and safe and effective emergency response.” The responsibilities of MCFRS include the delivery of emergency medical services and fire suppression operations, as well as the provision of specialized response capabilities required to mitigate other hazards that occur within Montgomery County, including hazardous materials incidents, technical rescues, water/ice rescues, and explosive incidents. The traditional, hierarchical structure of MCFRS reflects these responsibilities, with five division chiefs reporting to the Fire Chief, and subsequent levels of command established within each division necessary to carry out the department’s mission and ensure the proper allocation of resources to meet the goals and objectives. While the goals of the department generally remain the same, the objectives and strategies evolve as new challenges arise; this occurs primarily through the master planning process, and less intentionally, through the ongoing monitoring and assessment of environmental and situational factors that present themselves. Any changes to the structure or allocation of resources are reconciled through the annual budget process.

Appraisal

The complexity of MCFRS programs and services has been matched with an organizational command structure that allows the department to focus on the critical functions for a department of this size, including operations, human resources, facilities, fleet, and technology (i.e., Support Services), fiscal management, and coordination of the local fire rescue departments (i.e., Volunteer Services). This structure has provided clarity in roles and accountability. The span of control for supervisory personnel has remained appropriate.

MCFRS has worked through the budget process over the last several years to ensure the budget accurately reflects and sustains the needs of the agency to provide service to the County and the needs of the workforce. Analysis conducted by the CountyStat office in 2018 indicated that MCFRS needs additional operational personnel to maintain its level of service. The department has had some success increasing staffing, but challenges remain. In 2022, the department underwent a resource and deployment study under the County Executive's *Reimagining Public Safety* initiative. The final report highlighted those challenges.

Plan

There is currently no plan to adjust the organizational structure of the department, and MCFRS will continue to advocate for the positions identified as critical to maintaining the service levels necessary to accomplish the mission.

References

[Org Chart](#)

[2016-2022 Master Plan](#) (see Division Responsibilities beginning on PDF page 48 / paper page 2-8)

[MCFRS Net Annual Work Hour Update FY15-FY17](#)

Reimagining Public Safety: Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (report forthcoming)

[FY23 Operating Budget](#)

[2022-10-13 FESC Meeting Agenda with Fire Chief FY24 Budget Update](#)

1B.2 Personnel functions, roles, and responsibilities are defined in writing and a current organization chart exists that includes the agency's relationship to the governing body.

Description

MCFRS is an operational department in the Executive Branch of the Montgomery County Government. The fire chief has full authority over all fire, rescue, and emergency medical services in the County. This authority includes determining adequate resource and staffing needs for the agency to meet its core mission. MCFRS maintains a traditional, hierarchical organizational structure divided by function; within each function, roles and responsibilities are delegated to uniformed and professional personnel. Every position within the organization is based on an approved class specification, which outlines the type of work, duties, and qualifications for the positions.

Appraisal

MCFRS job descriptions are established and clearly define the responsibilities of each position, as well as the knowledge, skills and abilities required to be successful. MCFRS personnel have remained aware of how their individual functions, roles and responsibilities fit into and relate to the overall MCFRS structure, as well as how the department fits into the rest of the County's overall organization.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to ensure that functions, roles, and responsibilities are well-defined, meet the needs of the County, and are communicated to all personnel and other stakeholders.

References

[Montgomery County Executive Branch Organizational Chart](#)

[MCFRS Org Chart](#)

[OHR Classification Homepage](#)

[Battalion Chief Class Spec](#)

[Firefighter/Recruit Class Spec](#)

Category 2: Assessment and Planning (M3 Schulze)

Assessment and planning are defined as the processes used to identify the community's fire protection and other emergency service needs to identify potential goals and objectives. All agencies should have a basic source of data and information to logically and rationally define the organization's mission. Assessment and planning are critical to the establishment of service level objectives, standards of cover, and ultimately, the quality of program outcomes.

The overall purpose of using these processes is to establish a long-range general strategy for the operation of the system.

Criterion 2A: Documentation of Area Characteristics

The agency collects and analyzes data specific to the distinct characteristics of its legally defined service area(s) and applies the findings to organizational services and services development.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (MCFRS) is committed to serving the diverse community of Montgomery County with integrity, respect, and excellence, and promotes the efficient and effective utilization of resources. This requires an understanding of the unique characteristics of Montgomery County. Through the development of the community risk assessment/standards of cover (CRA/SOC), MCFRS identifies the geographic boundaries of its primary service areas. For planning, administrative and service delivery purposes, the response area is primarily segmented according to station coverage areas, which includes 35 fire station areas comprised of 840 box areas, or risk management zones. In-depth analysis has been conducted on demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, as well as many other features of the service area, which affect service demands and improve the department's ability to match capabilities with risk.

At approximately 500 square-miles, Montgomery County is the largest county in the state of Maryland, and the 44th most populous county in the United States¹. Montgomery County is in central Maryland, bordered by Frederick and Carroll Counties to the north/northwest; Howard County to the northeast; and Prince George's County to the south/southeast. Montgomery County is located north of the District of Columbia and to the north/northeast of Fairfax and Loudoun Counties in Virginia. The Potomac River forms the boundary between Montgomery County and Fairfax and Loudoun Counties, and the Patuxent River forms the boundary between Montgomery County and Howard County. The County consists of 11 incorporated and 20 unincorporated municipalities. MCFRS provides all-hazard fire, rescue and emergency medical services across 35 fire station areas, comprised of 840 risk management zones, or box areas, which form the basis for planning and service

¹ United States Census Bureau. Accessed December 25, 2022. [County Population Totals: 2020-2021 \(census.gov\)](https://www.census.gov/popest/data/totals/2020/states/04/md.html)

delivery. MCFRS has automatic mutual aid agreements in place with Prince George's, Howard, Carroll, and Frederick Counties in Maryland, and Fairfax and Loudoun Counties in Virginia. MCFRS also runs automatic aid to all the federal installations in the County; five of those installations have their own fire department.

In 2019, MCFRS revised the previously four-tiered population density zones into two population density zones for the purpose of establishing response time goals: urban (more than 2500 people per square mile) and rural (less than 2500 people per square mile).

MCFRS collects, tracks, and analyzes the following data sets on a regular basis:

- Incident frequency and location
- Response time metrics, including call processing, turnout, travel, and response times (generally at the 90th percentile)
- Fire injuries and fatalities
- Fire confinement and loss (property damage due to fire)
- Numerous EMS-related core measures, including those related to ROSC, STEMI, pediatric patients, trauma patients, overdoses, etc.
- Patient turnover times, by hospital.

Many of the fire-related statistics can be found on the Accreditation SharePoint site, which is updated frequently and available to all personnel with an MCG account. The statistics and analysis from these tools/dashboards is used across all services for operational decision-making.

Performance Indicators:

2A.1 Service area boundaries for the agency are identified, documented, and legally adopted by the authority having jurisdiction.

Description

MCFRS is responsible for providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services to the entirety of Montgomery County, as determined by the authority having jurisdiction, and outlined in Montgomery County Code, 21-10: *The Fire Chief, after receiving Commission approval under Section 21-2(d)(4), must establish response areas served by each fire or rescue station that collectively cover the entire County. The boundaries of a response area are generally the mid-points in road distances between that station and the nearest fire or rescue stations. However, the response area boundaries must consider geographic or other features that affect dispatch operations. (1980 L.M.C., ch. 64, § 3; 1992 L.M.C., ch. 8, § 1; 1998 L.M.C., ch. 4, § 1; 2004 L.M.C., ch. 5, § 1; 2009 L.M.C., ch. 5, § 1.)*

Appraisal

The fire and rescue services of Montgomery County have operated within these boundaries since the 1890s. Station response areas were last modified in 2014, when MCFRS opened Station 32.

Plan

There are no plans at this time to adjust County boundaries, nor to modify station response areas.

References

[Montgomery County Code, 21-10.](#)

2A.2 Boundaries for other service responsibility areas, such as automatic aid, mutual aid, and contract areas, are identified, documented, and appropriately approved by the authority having jurisdiction.

Description

As part of the National Capitol Region (NCR), MCFRS provides and receives mutual aid to other NCR jurisdictions under the NCR Mutual Aid Agreement, adopted by the Montgomery County Council in 2006, and effectuated by the Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan, which was most recently updated in 2021. MCFRS also provides and receives aid from other Maryland jurisdictions outside of the NCR, including Anne Arundel, Carroll, and Howard Counties in Maryland. Automatic aid agreements are in place between MCFRS and Frederick, Prince George's, Carroll, and Howard Counties in Maryland, and Fairfax and Loudoun Counties in Virginia. Automatic aid also occurs between MCFRS and the federal facilities located within the County through individual mutual aid agreements: the Ft. Detrick Army Garrison, the National Institutes of Health, the National Institutes of Standards and Technology, the Naval Surface Warfare Center, and the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center. There is also a regional Potomac River Incident Response Plan, of which MCFRS is a part of, providing response and operational guidelines for incidents occurring on the 15-mile waterway that runs through the region. And MCFRS is a signatory to a regional Fire/Rescue Emergency Procedures Policy Agreement between the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) and the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOC), which outlines emergency operations guidelines for Metro rail incidents.

Appraisal

The mutual aid agreements mentioned here have been in place for many years and have served Montgomery County and the surrounding jurisdictions well.

Plan

Neither Montgomery County, nor MCFRS, plan to discontinue any of its mutual aid agreements.

References

[MCFRS CRA SOC, p. 37-41](#)

[NCR Mutual Aid Agreement](#)

[Fire & Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan](#)

CC 2A.3 The agency has a documented and adopted methodology for organizing the response area(s) into geographical planning zones.

Description

MCFRS currently uses 35 first-due station response areas, which encompass 840 smaller box areas (risk management zones) that are used for statistical reporting and risk assessment.

Appraisal

While the use of box areas has been useful in the past, MCFRS finds that this method is too granular, and does not align well with broader planning efforts at the County level, or other planning resources/tools that are available. In 2021, the Montgomery County Council adopted by resolution the MWCOG’s Equity Emphasis Areas, census tracts consisting of low-income and/or racial and ethnic minorities, to be prioritized in planning and decision making; Montgomery County has 49 EEAs of the 350 identified by MWCOG. The Montgomery County Planning Board has identified 56 Equity Focus Areas in Montgomery County, which the Board is using to instill equity in its planning processes. It is currently not possible for MCFRS to align our box areas with these different planning areas. Furthermore, MCFRS recognizes the limitations in using station response areas and box areas to define “community”. Community is better defined at the census tract level, where measures of demographics and social vulnerability are already measured.

Plan

Over the next couple of years, MCFRS will begin exploring ways to implement the use of census tracts for planning purposes, including analysis of risk in Montgomery County and service needs and outcomes.

References

[MCFRS Station Map](#)

[MWCOG Equity Emphasis Areas](#)

[Montgomery County Planning Equity Focus Areas](#)

CC 2A.4 The agency assesses the community by planning zone and considers the population density within planning zones and population areas, as applicable, for the purpose of developing total response time standards.

Description

In 2020, MCFRS modified its four-tier population density zones to two: urban (greater than 2500 people per square mile) and rural (less than 2500 people per square mile) and applied these classifications to all 840 box areas (risk management zones). MCFRS developed response time benchmarks across all operational categories for urban and rural density zones.

Appraisal

Response times have been assessed at the station response and box area levels and are measured against performance benchmarks compiled to reflect baseline performance, risk groups, and population density (urban/rural). Response times are continuously monitored, and the performance benchmarks were updated in 2022, in response to exceeding some components of first arriving unit (FAU) and effective response force (ERF) response times.

Plan

As MCFRS considers modifying its approach to planning zones (i.e., using census tracts rather than box areas, as mentioned in CC 2A.3), more thought will be given to modifying analysis of response times, as well. Furthermore, we are considering the [revisions promulgated by the U.S. Census Bureau](#) in 2022 to the definition of “urban” and the impacts those definitions will have on planning efforts.

References

[Montgomery County Map by Population Density](#)
[MCFRS Response Time Benchmarks \(updated 2022\)](#)

2A.5 Data that include property, life, injury, environmental, and other associated losses, as well as the human and physical assets preserved and/or saved, are recorded for a minimum of three (initial accreditation agencies) to five (currently accredited agencies) immediately previous years.

Description

MCFRS captures data associated with civilian injuries and fatalities due to fire, as well as estimated property loss due to fire in its records management system, in accordance with NFIRS requirements. MCFRS also records firefighter-rescuer injuries and fatalities due to any job-related activities (e.g., training, physical fitness, performing fire or EMS duties, etc.). MCFRS does not record any data pertaining to environmental loss. Separately, the Emergency Medical and Integrated Health Section (EMIHS) monitors Return of Spontaneous Circulation in cardiac arrest patients and STEMI mortality, statistics that represent human assets “preserved”.

Appraisal

MCFRS has adequate fire-related loss and EMIHS data for the past five years. In September 2022, MCFRS instituted a process whereby personnel can document “saves” during structure fire assignments, where a “save” is defined as *a direct action by a member of FRS to remove a person from danger, where, but for that intervention, the person(s) would have likely suffered significant injury or death.*

Plan

MCFRS will continue its current processes of documenting fire-related losses (civilians and property), employee injuries and deaths related to performance of duty, and emergency medical outcomes related to cardiac arrest. Moving forward, MCFRS will consider expanding the definition and process to record saves to include other incidents (e.g., technical rescue, vehicle collisions, etc.). We have also discussed the possibility of recording displacements, as well.

References

[2021 NFPA Survey](#). Fire loss data begins on PDF p. 7

[EMIHS OHCA dashboard screenshot](#)

[EMIHS STEMI dashboard screenshot](#)

[Email from Ops division chief re: Recording Fire Saves](#)

- 2A.6 The agency utilizes its adopted planning zone methodology to identify response area characteristics such as population, transportation systems, area land use, topography, geography, geology, physiography, climate, hazards, risks, and service provision capability demands.

Description

MCFRS utilizes geographic information system (GIS) technology to analyze response area characteristics within our planning zones (box areas). The station response areas, as well as the box areas (risk management zones) are a layer within GIS, which allows for an assessment of geography and topography. Additional characteristics, such as population density, can be extracted from US Census data and analyzed at the station and box area levels. Transportation systems and other characteristics of the built environment, such as the location of hospitals and schools, can also be assessed. Furthermore, station maps and map books designed and built for each station can be used by operational personnel responding to incidents, and allows them to assess the location, topography, hydrant locations, etc., in order to assess the location and develop operational plans in advance of their arrival onscene.

Appraisal

MCFRS has successfully used GIS technology to identify a wide variety of response area characteristics, countywide and at station and box area levels. This approach has been useful for planning and assessing those characteristics that influence risk, service demands, resource deployment, and emergency response.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate and monitor the physical and natural characteristics of its coverage area at a station level. As MCFRS continues to refine its planning processes, the use of GIS to isolate area characteristics that impact service delivery is crucial.

References

[Risk in Montgomery County](#)

[Risk Scoring Matrix](#)

[Fire Station Map Book Example](#)

2A.7 Significant socioeconomic and demographic characteristics for the response area are identified, such as key employment types and centers, assessed values, blighted areas, and population earning characteristics.

Description

MCFRS utilizes geographic information system (GIS) technology to analyze response area characteristics, including demographic and socioeconomic factors, at the County level, station response level, and within our designated risk management zones (box areas).

Appraisal

MCFRS recently conducted an updated risk assessment within Montgomery County according to hazard type. GIS technology was applied at the box area level to associate a number of demographic and socioeconomic factors to every risk management zone in order to assess a risk score for each area. Separately, a new tool acquired in 2020, the Community Risk Assessment Insight Generator (CRAIG) 1300, provides field personnel with a comprehensive overview of their response areas and hazards based on the most currently available American Community Survey (ACS) data, including basic demographic characteristics, social vulnerabilities, and the built environment

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate and update socioeconomic and demographic data related to the department's defined risk management zones.

References

[Risk in Montgomery County](#)

[Risk Scoring Matrix](#)

[CRAIG 1300](#)

- 2A.8 The agency identifies and documents all safety and remediation programs, such as fire prevention, public education, injury prevention, public health, and other similar programs, currently active within the response area.

Description

MCFRS has many safety and remediation programs available to the public; the website provides a comprehensive overview of those programs and includes information on smoke alarms and carbon monoxide; tip sheets; a list of safety resources; and the means to register for home safety checks and car seat appointments. MCFRS frequently posts information describing community interactions, including fire prevention and safety outreach, on its social media channels and website, further promoting those programs.

Appraisal

MCFRS has effectively used its website to promote its safety, prevention, and education programs. In 2022, there were more than 138k MCFRS Info pageviews by over 44k visitors. 512 visitors reached the website via links on Twitter, indicating that social media has helped raise awareness of these critical programs that MCFRS offers.

For many years, tracking CRR activities and using data to measure progress and direct efforts and impact was challenging due to delayed or incomplete incident reports and lack of integrated systems. To address this, CRR designed an innovative Mobile Data Collection App, which functions across multiple platforms (Android, iOS, Windows), and is geo-coded and shared through a cloud-based dashboard. The app makes resources available to MCFRS operational members in the field to provide to community members and allows users to record important details of their interactions. The app was rolled out in 2021 and has undergone an iterative process with frequent updates based on continuous feedback and integration of improved features to ensure a high level of useability and functionality.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to deliver and promote its safety, prevention, and education programs to reduce vulnerabilities and improve community resilience and will focus on increasing

compliance related to recording pertinent information related to these initiatives. In the future, Planning will work with Community Risk Reduction to incorporate this data set into the risk assessment.

References

[MCFRS Info \(Outreach & Education\) Website](#)

[CY22 Google Analytics for MCFRS Info website](#)

[MCFRS Tweet \(1/21/2023\) Fire Safety Awareness](#)

[MCFRS Tweet \(1/4/2023\) Senior Outreach & Winter Safety](#)

[MCFRS Tweet \(10/30/2022\) After the Fire E-Bike Blitz](#)

[MCFRS Tweet \(12/8/2021\) Sparky & Pedestrian Safety](#)

[MCFRS Community Risk Reduction Data Solution presentation](#)

2A.9 The agency defines and identifies infrastructure that is considered critical within each planning zone.

Description

MCFRS is fully aware of the critical infrastructure that are not only of vital importance to the County, but also essential to its operations. MCFRS' assessment of critical infrastructure within the County is based on the categories outlined in the National Infrastructure Plan and Presidential Policy Directive 21. This includes the following sectors: chemical, commercial, communications, manufacturing, dams, defense industry, emergency services, energy, financial services, food and agriculture, government facilities, healthcare/public health, information technology, nuclear, transportation and water and wastewater systems. MCFRS has also included houses of worship in its assessment of critical infrastructure.

Appraisal

MCFRS has identified and documented critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR) within Montgomery County using geographic information systems (GIS). This resource allowed us to assess CI/KR by station response area and box areas and use some of the data in the updated community risk assessment.

Plan

MCFRS will review its assessment of CI/KR annually, to identify new or changed locations, and update maps and other plans accordingly.

References

[MCFRS 2023 Critical Infrastructure & Key Resources Map](#)
[Critical Infrastructure Sectors](#)

Criterion 2B: All-Hazard Risk Assessment and Response Strategies

The agency identifies and assesses the nature and magnitude of all hazards and risks within its jurisdiction. Risk categorization and deployment impact consider factors such as cultural, economic, historical and environmental values, as well as operational characteristics.

Summary:

A comprehensive risk assessment serves as the foundation for data-driven decision-making in shaping response strategies and tactics. MCFRS recently refined its methodology for identifying, assessing, and classifying risk throughout the County. The process addresses all categories of risk for which the department has primary responsibility and capabilities for incident response, assessing a risk score to every box area (risk management zone) based on a mathematical formula that considers the aggravating and mitigating factors of the hazard. The aggravating factors include characteristics such as historical incident frequency, population density, demographic variables, and socioeconomic factors, while the mitigating factors include response times (first arriving unit and/or effective response force), water supply (hydranted vs. non-hydranted), and building characteristics (sprinklered vs. non-sprinklered).

This process was completed in 2022 and captured in a comprehensive report that documents the methodology and the results: *Evaluating Risk in Montgomery County: An MCFRS Assessment of Community Risk*. An interactive map of the results is also available to all personnel who wish to dive deeper into understanding the risks in their response areas.

Performance Indicators:

CC 2B.1 The agency has a documented and adopted methodology for identifying, assessing, categorizing and classifying all risks (fire and non-fire) throughout the community or area of responsibility.

Description

MCFRS recently refined its methodology for identifying, assessing, and classifying risk throughout the County. Specifically, the formula for calculating a risk score for each box area was modified following significant discussion over the concept of *risk* during a master planning session. Risk is a concept used by MCFRS to provide contextualized understanding to its mission to reduce harm and add value to our communities. In order to reduce risk, one must either reduce the threat, the vulnerability, or the consequence(s). The relationship between resilience (or lack thereof) and risk drives the MCFRS belief that building resilience is an important strategy for reducing risk. In order to make normalized generalizations about risk across the County, MCFRS considers risk as the quotient of the sum of a series of conditions (factors) that increase vulnerability, divided by the sum of the physical characteristics present and the actions taken by the department to reduce vulnerability. The assessment identified and categorized risk at the box area (risk management zone) level for all hazards the department has a responsibility for: fire, emergency medical services, hazardous materials, bombings/explosions, water/ice rescues, technical rescue, aviation rescue/firefighting, and wildland/brush fires.

Appraisal

The methodology for assessing risk has changed since the last time this was conducted (2017) and allows for a more comprehensive analysis of risk. Additional aggravating factors were added to every hazard category, and this is the first time that MCFRS has assessed wildland/brush fires as a hazard.

Plan

The concepts of risk, vulnerability, and resilience will continue to inform MCFRS' planning processes, particularly as the master plan is updated.

References

[Evaluating Risk in Montgomery County: An MCFRS Assessment of Community Risk
2022 Risk Scoring Matrix by Category](#)

[Online Risk Maps](#) (use the Content header on the left to change layers. It defaults to fire.)

2B.2 The historical emergency and nonemergency service demands frequency for a minimum of three immediately previous years and the future probability of emergency and non-emergency service demands, by service type, have been identified and documented by planning zone.

Description

MCFRS identifies and documents countywide historical service demand by frequency type on a calendar year and fiscal year basis. Future service demand is forecasted leveraging Microsoft Excel's forecast sheet tool. Five years of service type frequency are selected and a forecast with future probabilities is generated.

Appraisal

MCFRS described its emergency and nonemergency service demands for the previous five years in its CRA/SOC. Monitoring service demands has enabled MCFRS to review activity levels and prospectively develop plans to address future challenges. The department has compiled sufficient data to effectively identify trends in service demands.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to monitor emergency and nonemergency service demands.

References

[MCFRS CRA/SOC](#), p. 248

2B.3 Event outputs and outcomes are assessed for three (initial accrediting agencies) to five (currently accredited agencies) immediately previous years.

Description

The CRA/SOC describes the MCFRS approach to tracking and assessing outputs and outcomes. The most common measures the department assesses include exposures, civilian and firefighter injuries and fatalities due to fire, and property loss due to fire. This analysis is available for the last five years. EMIHS maintains its own set of dashboards and can set filters to any time period to assess performance.

Appraisal

In 2022, MCFRS implemented a new method of recording positive outcomes from fire incidents. This process was created after many long discussions to define a “save”, and designation of a process owner, who reviews reports in which the incident commander indicates there were saves and approves or denies them. This additional outcome measure allows MCFRS to demonstrate the value it adds to the community.

MCFRS has recognized the limitations of estimating property loss and its use for meaningful analysis. The department does not have any existing procedures or guidelines for members calculating property loss.

Plan

MCFRS will continue monitoring and reporting output and outcome-based measures, while searching for methods and processes that will increase the accuracy and validity of existing measures. MCFRS will consider expanding the fire saves process to capture saves made in other incident types. MCFRS also plans to review and revise many of its existing performance measures and processes, following the update to the Master Plan, to ensure the department’s measures are accurately reflecting the mission of the department, and align with newly established objectives and strategies.

References

[MCFRS CRA/SOC](#), p. 71

[2021 MCFRS Annual Report, p. 18 \(5 years of estimated fire loss\)](#)

[Fire Saves Email Notification to Process Owner](#)

[Screenshot of query that aggregates the # of fire saves recorded](#)

Montgomery County Fire Death Data vs. Population Growth (uploaded to Category 2 folder)

EMIHS ROSC dashboard screenshot (uploaded to Category 2 folder)

EMIHS STEMI mortality by quarter screenshot (uploaded to Category 2 folder)

CC 2B.4 The agency's risk identification, analysis, categorization, and classification methodology has been utilized to determine and document the different categories and classes of risks within each planning zone.

Description

The methodology described in the CRA/SOC and in more detail in the completed risk report, included here as a reference, classifies risk for each box area (risk management zone) as low, medium, high, or special, based on a numerical scoring range that is calculated within each hazard category.

Appraisal

MCFRS documents the findings of its risk assessment in an online map, which color-codes the four risk categories, and is available for MCFRS personnel to review.

Plan

MCFRS plans to build upon this methodology in the future, adding more aggravating and mitigating factors and modifying the risk management zones from box areas to census tracts.

References

[CRA/SOC](#), p. 252

[Evaluating Risk in Montgomery County: An MCFRS Assessment of Community Risk 2022 Risk Scoring Matrix by Category](#)

[Online Risk Maps](#) (use the Content header on the left to change layers. It defaults to fire.)

2B.5 Fire protection and detection systems are incorporated into the risk analysis.

Description

In Montgomery County, residential high-rises built before 1974, garden apartments and townhouses built before 1988, and single-family homes built before 2004 lack sprinkler protection. This factor was considered in the risk assessment for structure fires; an analysis of the housing stock in each box area (risk management zone) was conducted with GIS, and if a majority of the housing stock was of sprinklered age, the box area received 1 point (as a mitigating factor). The lack of sprinklers did not garner any points. MCFRS also considered whether the box area was hydranted or not; hydranted areas received a point for mitigation.

Appraisal

MCFRS incorporated the presence of fire protection systems into the risk analysis of structure fires. Montgomery County does not currently incorporate fire detection systems in the risk analysis, as Montgomery County mandated smoke alarms in all new construction, and retroactively required it in existing commercial and residential occupancies since 1978.

Plan

In 2019, the State Fire Marshal issued a statewide mandate that all existing high-rise buildings not protected by an automatic sprinkler system are a distinct hazard and must be brought into compliance with Fire and Life Safety Codes by January 1, 2033. MCFRS will follow this process closely, in collaboration with our partners at the Department of Permitting Services and will adjust the risk assessment accordingly. Additionally, MCFRS will explore analyses that could help better identify communities that may be lacking smoke alarms, which would better inform our risk assessment. For example, the American Red Cross will be releasing another iteration of its Home Fire Risk Map in 2023. Using this tool, in conjunction with details recorded by community risk reduction and field operations personnel, could help us pinpoint specific communities that are at greater risk for injury or death due to no or non-working smoke alarms.

References

[2022 Risk Scoring Matrix by Category](#), (p. 1)

[American Red Cross Home Fire Risk Map \(2016\).](#)

[Existing High-Rise Building Sprinkler Program](#)

- 2B.6 The agency assesses critical infrastructure within the planning zones for capabilities and capacities to meet the demands posed by the risks.

Description

MCFRS is fully aware of the critical infrastructure that are not only of vital importance to the County, but also essential to its operations. MCFRS' assessment of critical infrastructure within the County is based on the categories outlined in the National Infrastructure Plan and Presidential Policy Directive 21. This includes the following sectors: chemical, commercial, communications, manufacturing, dams, defense industry, emergency services, energy, financial services, food and agriculture, government facilities, healthcare/public health, information technology, nuclear, transportation and water and wastewater systems. MCFRS has also included houses of worship in its assessment of critical infrastructure.

Appraisal

The presence of critical infrastructure in box areas was included in MCFRS' recent assessment of risk in Montgomery County, specifically the categories of hazardous materials and bombings/explosions.

Plan

MCFRS will review its assessment of CI/KR annually, to identify new or changed locations, and update its risk assessment, as needed. Planning has already identified new ways to incorporate CI/KR into additional hazard categories and will begin making those revisions in the coming year.

References

[Risk in Montgomery County, p. 21 and p. 27](#)

[MCFRS 2023 Critical Infrastructure & Key Resources Map](#)

- 2B.7 The agency engages other disciplines or groups within its community to compare and contrast risk assessments in order to identify gaps or future threats and risks.

Description

MCFRS works with numerous partners, including County departments and private and nonprofit organizations, to identify gaps, threats, and risks in planning, prevention, response, and mitigation strategies.

Appraisal

Some of MCFRS' most recent and ongoing partnerships are listed below:

- MCFRS worked closely with Public Health to monitor public health threats and risks, as well as to reduce gaps in racial equity and social justice.
- MCFRS worked with OEMHS to conduct a study of flood impacts on County residents.
- MCFRS participated in a joint workgroup with DOT, DPS, DEP, and many others for managing thermal run-a-way in battery cells and managing the waste stream.
- MCFRS collaborated with the County's Regional Service Centers to identify threats, trends, and gaps in community risk reduction.
- MCFRS coordinated with MCPS and MCPD to address school violence.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to engage County and other partner organizations to assess the environment for gaps in prevention and response strategies for multiple types of hazards.

References

[Intro Slides from ESS Workgroup](#)

[Electric Vehicle Update from Division Chief](#)

[ESS Follow-up Email](#)

[Magruder High School After Action Report Addendum](#)

Criterion 2C: Current Deployment and Performance

The agency identifies and documents the nature and magnitude of the service and deployment demands within its jurisdiction. Based on risk categorization and service impact considerations, the agency's deployment practices are consistent with jurisdictional expectations and with industry research. Efficiency and effectiveness are documented through quality response measurements that consider overall response, consistency, reliability, resiliency, and outcomes throughout all service areas. The agency develops procedures, practices, and programs to appropriately guide its resource deployment.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire & Rescue orients its emergency response strategies to achieve the objectives of protecting life, stabilizing the incident, and preserving property. The deployment of resources is based on the dispatched call type, which indicates the type and level of risk, consequently followed by the dispatch of a matching set of resources deployed to mitigate the respective hazard.

The CRA/SOC summarizes this information for planning and evaluation purposes. The department reviews performance based on actions taken and incident outcomes. In addition, MCFRS assesses response time performance, including the components of call processing, turnout, and travel times.

Performance Indicators:

CC 2C.1 **Given the levels of risks, area of responsibility, demographics, and socio-economic factors, the agency has determined, documented, and adopted a methodology for the consistent provision of service levels in all service program areas through response coverage strategies.**

Description

MCFRS resources and personnel are generally placed strategically across the County to ensure rapid arrival of a fire suppression or emergency medical service unit, as well as an efficient assembly of the effective response force. MCFRS has assigned dedicated, specialized hazardous materials units at stations 7 and 28; additional technicians staff apparatus at stations 20 and 25, and there is a decontamination unit located at Station 20 for large-scale personnel decontamination. Technical rescue capabilities are also distributed throughout the County: boats are located at stations 10, 14, 25, 29, 30, and 31. Other technical rescue equipment is located at stations 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 14, 25, 29, 30, 31, and Rescue 2.

Deployment of resources is ultimately determined at the Emergency Communications Center (ECC), according to the 911 call. The 911 call takers utilize protocol-based EMS, fire, and rescue questions to determine the call type. Dispatchers utilize response plans to dispatch the appropriate number and type of resources for each incident type. Response plans have been carefully determined, based on an evaluation of the specific hazards/risks and the personnel and equipment required to execute the critical tasks to mitigate the incident. Response assignments are reviewed periodically and modified as needed.

MCFRS also has minimum staffing requirements in place to ensure resources are available.

Appraisal

The MCFRS has successfully met the intent of this core competency and met the needs of Montgomery County with a consistent level of service.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to review its critical task analysis and response plans to ensure 911 callers receive the appropriate number of apparatus, personnel, and equipment to mitigate the hazard they are facing.

References

[MCFRS Incident Type and Response Plan Matrix](#) (use the tabs at the bottom to view response plans; uploaded to Category 2 folder)

[MCFRS Policy & Procedure 25-08AMII, Apparatus Staffing Policy](#)

CC 2C.2 The agency has a documented and adopted methodology for monitoring its quality of emergency response performance for each service type within each planning zone and the total response area.

Description

MCFRS has established response time objectives to ensure that all areas of the County receive timely and effective services. The CRA/SOC profiles response time performance for all hazard types. This information is included in the department's annual compliance reports (ACRs), as part of the CPSE accreditation process. And annual program appraisals required by the accreditation process also include a strategic assessment of service delivery performance.

MCFRS also conducts after-action-reviews (AARs) to assess the quality of emergency response performance following incidents, in accordance with Incident Response Policy Appendix T, After Action Reporting.

Appraisal

Meeting the requirements of the accreditation program (i.e., program appraisals and compliance reports) has facilitated the department's efforts to evaluate performance strategically, with a focus on outcomes.

Plan

MCFRS will remain committed to monitoring the quality of emergency response performance through response time analysis by station response area and demonstrated within the annual accreditation requirements and completing AARs to identify issues/concerns and implement corrective action immediately.

References

[CRA/SOC](#), p. 290

MCFRS CPSE Annual Compliance Reports (in MCFRS CFAI SharePoint file)

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01, IRP Appendix T, After Action Reporting](#)

2C.3 Fire protection systems and detection systems are identified and considered in the development of appropriate response strategies.

Description

MCFRS determines response strategies based on the dispatch call type, which is assigned according to the information provided by the 911 caller. Dispatch call types for fire suppression incidents reflect the location, type of fire, and occupancy affected; in other words, the lack of water supply or sprinklers and type of structure increase the risk of the call and units are dispatched appropriately.

Units dispatched for a fire can utilize their mobile data computer to access CAD or Google maps; electronic pre-plans, which contain information about hydrants, sprinkler systems, alarm panels, and water connections; and/or paper maps that contain similar information. This allows responding units to begin developing a plan for the initial attack. The department's Incident Response Policy for structure fires also requires a 360-degree size up, which includes consideration of construction and building occupancy type.

Appraisal

MCFRS has considered the presence of fire protection and detection systems in determining its response plans and fire suppression strategies and tactics. The appropriate deployment of resources is highly dependent on the accuracy of the information provided by the 911 caller. Circle checks/360-degree assessments, required by IRP Appendix D for Structure Fires, have enabled response personnel to minimize fire service and civilian casualties, as well as limit property damage.

One concern the department has is the accuracy of residential sprinkler data, which is maintained by the Department of Permitting Services' Fire Prevention and Code Compliance Division. This information is dependent on residents/contractors complying with the requirement for a permit any time work involves a fire protection addition or modification, or any time a system is affected by any sort of work, including repair.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to consider fire protection and detection systems in determining response strategies and tactics. Station maps and pre-plans will be created and revised as needed. Information regarding the presence of those systems will be shared to the appropriate personnel.

References

[MCFRS Policy & Procedure 24-01, Incident Response Policy Appendix D, Structure Fires](#)
[Sample of Building Plan: The Oaks Apartments](#)

CC 2C.4 A critical task analysis of each risk category and risk class has been conducted to determine the first due and effective response force capabilities, and a process is in place to validate and document the results.

Description

MCFRS details the critical tasks necessary to mitigate each risk category and level in its CRA/SOC. The critical task analysis defines the projected responsibilities of first arriving units and outlines the apparatus and personnel necessary to form an effective response force. Evaluation of results occurs following specific incidents during after-action reports (AARs). Evaluating response time performance serves as another avenue to document results.

Appraisal

MCFRS simplified information on critical tasking and effective response force in the CRA/SOC according to service delivery program and general level of risk for planning and evaluation purposes. The critical task analysis was reviewed and updated in 2022 as a matter of protocol; critical task analysis was added to reflect the addition of two wildland fire response programs. MCFRS has also developed an extensive set of response plans based on dispatched call types, which has ensured that the minimum required resources respond to an incident. The department has relied on AARs as a tool for identifying issues related to incident response.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to review incidents (AAR) and responses (ERF analysis), and update response plans and the critical task analysis, as needed. Changes will be reflected in the CRA/SOC.

References

[CRA/SOC](#), p. 306

[MCFRS Incident Type and Response Plan Matrix](#) (use the tabs at the bottom to see response plans)

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01, IRP Appendix T, After-Action Reporting \(AAR\)](#)

CC 2C.5 The agency has identified the total response time components for delivery of services in each service program area and found those services consistent and reliable within the entire response area.

Description

MCFRS collects data related to total response time components of call processing, turnout, and travel time in its CAD system. MCFRS compiles and reports data related to total response time components for each emergency operations service program according to the respective level of risk. This analysis is completed by the accreditation manager, who maintains the virtual CRA/SOC and includes the analysis in the annual compliance reports. The accreditation manager also maintains the first arriving unit data for the two main programs, structure fires and ALS, on the Accreditation SharePoint site, for access by anyone (on the network) at any time.

Appraisal

The MCFRS accreditation manager has worked tirelessly to ensure call types were appropriately categorized to contribute to the calculations of response time components for each program. And using a set of daily reports, the accreditation manager has also been successful managing data quality issues that impact response time components (e.g., Arrive On Scene timestamp is incorrect, outliers that may indicate technical or other issues, etc.). With this process, MCFRS has been able to assess whether the delivery of services has been consistent and reliable.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate the total response time components for each service program and will address vulnerabilities identified in the service delivery system as resources allow.

References

[Screenshot - First Arriving Engine Dashboard](#)

[Screenshot – First Arriving Paramedic Dashboard](#)

[Screenshot – Accreditation SharePoint Core Programs Page](#) (graphs from CFAI data tables)

[CRA/SOC](#) page 338

2C.6 The agency identifies outcomes for its programs and ties them to the community risk assessment during updates and adjustments of its programs, as needed.

Description

This is a new performance indicator in the 10th edition manual. MCFRS understands the intent of this indicator but is not yet prepared to demonstrate proficiency.

Appraisal

Although MCFRS tracks a few random program outcomes, the department does not have a *coherent* system of performance measurement in place. This can be attributed to several factors, including the resignation of a previous Chief Administrative Officer (CAO), who had developed a robust performance management program that never fully got off the ground due to the onset of the pandemic, and then was abandoned when he resigned. MCFRS maintained most of those measures in the budget process, and must update them annually; however, we have recognized that the measures meet the requirements of the budget process, rather than any MCFRS requirement (i.e., we are required to have 3-5 measures per division, which doesn't align with the programs that MCFRS should be measuring). There is nothing to prevent us from having additional measures; however, the pandemic and the ongoing delay in the master planning process has postponed the effort to address the performance measures (outputs and outcomes).

Plan

MCFRS identified this as need a few years ago and plans to revise and develop a more comprehensive process for tracking performance and implementing corrective actions, when needed. The Master Plan must be completed first, so we know what to measure. The department has also identified the need for a dedicated data analyst to support this effort; a position reclassification request has been submitted to OMB and is awaiting review. Additionally, within the last year, MCFRS assigned a liaison to the Department of Health & Human Services (HHS) to assess ways that the department can help make progress towards reducing health outcome inequities. This is a valuable relationship; HHS' Healthy

Montgomery core measures quantify the County's priority health areas, and through understanding of these measures and social determinants, MCFRS can improve its assessment of risk. Moreover, MCFRS can begin to implement education and outreach programs that could impact these core measures, and thereby reducing the risk overall. An FY24 budget request, originally for two positions, but now only one, would initiate the creation of a Community Action Coordinator in the Operations Division; this position would begin work to provide focused attention to threats that cause death quickly to vulnerable populations in targeted areas. At the time of this writing, the department is unaware if this position will be funded; however, we anticipate that through the work of this position, although limited in scope at this time, MCFRS would improve outcomes in some of these communities.

References

[FY24 County Executive Recommended Budget](#)

[Performance Management Data Analyst Position Adjustment - Jan. 2023](#)

2C.7 The agency has identified the total response time components for delivery of services in each service program area and assessed those services in each planning zone.

Description

MCFRS collects data related to total response time components of call processing, turnout, and travel time in its CAD system. This is stored in a data warehouse, and the accreditation manager analyzes these components for each service program area by density zone and station response areas.

Appraisal

MCFRS has consistently recorded and maintained data for total response time components and assessed those components across station response areas. Benchmarks were revised as needed, most recently in 2022, when it was determined that some components of certain program areas were being exceeded.

Plan

MCFRS will continue assessing total response times for each program area by population density zone and station response area.

References

[CRA/SOC](#), p. 429

[2022 Updated Benchmarks](#)

CC 2C.8 The agency has identified efforts to maintain and improve its performance in the delivery of its emergency services for the past three (initial accreditation agencies) to five (currently accredited agencies) immediately previous years.

Description

As described in the CRA/SOC, MCFRS remains committed to maintaining and improving service delivery. Annual compliance reports (ACRs) submitted to CPSE for its agency accreditation program highlights the department's major developments for the year. The department also provides updates on its resources and capabilities to the County Council's Public Safety Committee. The annual budget and the capital improvement plan summarize plans to upgrade service delivery and improve facilities and apparatus.

Appraisal

MCFRS has effectively tracked its efforts in maintaining and improving service delivery, which has been reported to CPSE and the City Council. The inclusion of operational and capital enhancements in the annual budget and capital improvement plan has helped tie the necessary resources to annual work plans.

Plan

MCFRS plans to continue tracking and reporting efforts intended to maintain and improve service delivery performance.

References

MCFRS Annual Compliance Reports (within the MCFRS CFAI SharePoint)

[CRA/SOC](#), p. 439

November 1, 2021 briefing to Public Safety Committee on Hospital Emergency Department Capacity and Need for Psychiatric Bed Resources; [agenda/briefing packet](#) and [session video](#)

April 29, 2021 Briefing to Public Safety Committee on FY22 Operating Budget; [agenda](#), [briefing packet](#) and [session video](#) (FY22 budget discussion starts at 36:40).

2C.9 The agency's resiliency has been assessed through its deployment policies, procedures, and practices.

Description

Defining the resilience of the organization as its ability to quickly recover from an incident or series of events, or to adjust easily to changing needs or requirements, requires consideration of resistance, absorption, and restoration. Resistance is addressed through response plans, the use of AVL to dispatch resources, and computer-aided resource deployment for specific call types. Absorption and restoration are accomplished through automatic and mutual aid. When MCFRS identifies a gap in resilience, which is a function of system elasticity and excess capacity, the department can use the annual budget process to address it.

Appraisal

MCFRS' resiliency has been tested during periods of peak demand call load, concurrent major incidents, and severe weather events. During the pandemic, emergency medical call volume and overwhelmed hospital emergency departments placed a lot of stress on the system; this was also exacerbated at times by MCFRS personnel unavailable to work. Our LFRD partners were able to step up and put extra units in service, and EMIHS implemented EMS700 to oversee and route patient transports. On a few occasions, apparatus was put out of service to reduce the need for force holds.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to focus on those factors that stress organizational resilience, and the potential solutions to address those issues. Increasing organizational resilience was identified as an objective in a recent certified chief officers' briefing.

References

[Certified Chief Officers' Briefing, January 2023](#)

[Email to #FRSALL re: Recent Surges in EMS Demand](#)

[Fire Chief Email re: MCFRS COVID Changes & Adjustments](#)

Criterion 2D: Plan for Maintaining and Improving Response Capabilities

The agency has assessed and provided evidence that its current deployment methods for emergency services appropriately address the risk in its service area. Its response strategy has evolved to ensure that its deployment practices have maintained and/or made continuous improvements in the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety of its operations, notwithstanding any external influences beyond its control. The agency has identified the impacts of these external influences and communicates them to the authority having jurisdiction.

Summary:

MCFRS remains committed to maintaining and improving service delivery. The department is not only obligated to meet current needs but also to identify and address the needs of the future. This requires planning, monitoring and assessing changes in the external environment, continuous improvement in service delivery, and increasing the resilience of the organization and the community.

Performance Indicators:

CC 2D.1 The agency has a documented and adopted methodology for assessing performance adequacies, consistency, reliability, resiliency, and opportunities for improvement for the total response area.

Description

MCFRS utilizes an after-action reporting process to identify opportunities for improvement on select emergency incidents, guided by Policy & Procedure 24-01. At a broader level, the department assesses total response times as part of its compliance for accreditation, and the accreditation manager maintains a First Arriving Engine and First Paramedic to ALS dashboards on the SharePoint site. MCFRS also has a robust EMS Quality Management Plan, guided by Policy & Procedure 21-04, which exceeds the requirements of state law. MCFRS tracks performance against standardized core measures and publishes these data in a monthly dashboard.

Appraisal

After-action reporting has enabled MCFRS to identify, target, and train deficiencies on emergency scenes. Compiling total response times has increased situational awareness and helped illustrate the need for additional units. And the EMS quality management enhancements are detailed further in Performance Indicator 5F.7.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to utilize the AAR process and the educational programs of the Training Academy to further incorporate lessons learned and facilitate continuous improvement. The department will also continue striving for continuous improvement through compilation of total response time data and annual appraisals and compliance reporting. And EMIHS will persist with its quality improvement and assurance programs, working with the State to incorporate outcome data into the patient care reporting system.

References

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01, Incident Response Policy Appendix T, After Action Reporting](#)

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 21-04AM, EMS Quality Management Plan](#)

[First Arriving Engine Dashboard Screenshot](#)

[First Arriving Paramedic Dashboard Screenshot](#)

2D.2 The agency continuously monitors, assesses, and internally reports, at least quarterly, on the ability of the existing delivery system to meet expected outcomes and identifies and prioritizes remedial actions.

Description

MCFRS has mechanisms in place to review the outcomes of individual incidents on a continuous basis through after-action reviews (AARs) and quality assurance/quality improvement (QA/QI) processes. At a more strategic level, the department compiles data for the budget process and annual compliance reports (ACRs), as well as conducts annual program appraisals across a series of operational programs. The department may conduct additional monitoring and reporting on an ad hoc basis.

Appraisal

Monitoring and reporting outcome-based measures on individual incidents has facilitated the department's efforts in striving for continuous improvement. The quality of data submitted frequently to the County Council and annually to the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) has met expectations.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to expand its processes for reviewing incident performance. Outcome-based performance measures will still be part of the department's ACR, budget, and annual appraisal processes.

References

[MCFRS FY23 Budget](#)

[MCFRS FY23 Budget Operations Division Program Page](#) (see Program Performance Measures section)

[Screenshots of EMIHS \(EMS\) and FEI \(Fire Explosive Investigators\) Monthly Dashboard Examples](#)

[2D-2 Screenshots EMIHS PowerBI & Quarterly CFAI Data Table Updates](#)

CC 2D.3 The performance monitoring methodology identifies, at least annually, future external influences, altering conditions, growth and development trends, and new or evolving risks, for purposes of analyzing the balance of service capabilities with new conditions or demands.

Description

MCFRS actively monitors and identifies external influences and evolving risks that could impact service capabilities and delivery. The primary method of accomplishing this is through the actions of the Planning & Accreditation Section. The planning manager reviews all community master and sector plans under revision by the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Planning Division. The Planning Section also monitors the activities of the various County Council Committees, including Economic Development, Government Operations and Fiscal Policy, Health and Human Services, Planning, Housing and Parks, and Transportation and Environment, in addition to Public Safety. This allows for monitoring of new zoning amendments, changes to street/transportation networks, and additional issues surrounding housing and development.

MCFRS' CRA/SOC details some of these demographic, socio-economic, and environmental risks and their historic trajectories.

Operationally, Montgomery County's membership in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments gives MCFRS a regional, common operating picture, allowing the department to participate in several committees that enable information and intelligence sharing, regional cooperation, and the leverage of multiple jurisdictions/departments to address common concerns. Similar structures exist at the State level, as well.

Appraisal

Montgomery County and MCFRS has actively monitored and tracked changing conditions that may affect operations, increase vulnerabilities and/or reduce resilience, and impact the level of risk. For example, in 2021, the City of Gaithersburg was updating its Lakeforest Mall Master Plan and the department saw an opportunity to acquire a larger parcel of land to build a new facility for Station 8, which would replace an aging facility and better position

them for future service demands. Monitoring external factors and anticipating changes, such as new development, offered the department an opportunity to engage early and attempt to protect and improve MCFRS' interests with potential improvements.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to routinely monitor external conditions and develop strategies that address those changes and better position the department for success.

References

[Memo from MCFRS to City of Gaithersburg re: Redevelopment of Lakeforest Mall](#)

[Email from Fire Chief monitoring development in White Flint](#)

[Slides from Master Plan workgroup session](#) (shows consideration of external factors)

2D.4 The performance monitoring methodology supports the assessment of the efficiency and effectiveness of each service program at least annually in relation to industry research.

Description

MCFRS has three main approaches to assessing performance and opportunities for improvement:

1. Process Delivery. In order to have a process, one must first identify a work task, then sketch out the lifespan of that work task from cradle to grave. Once that is done, key steps or critical junctures are identified, and a process is established to determine the status of those key steps. Then, someone is tasked with periodic review of the processes. Where deviations and/or gaps are identified, targeted countermeasures are deployed. Performance/process measures are also developed, if necessary, and quality assurance/quality improvement processes may be implemented.
2. Maintenance of Internal Feedback Loops. MCFRS has multiple avenues, beyond the written after action, for employees to explain/expose their underlying thought process during incidents. These programs are continuously monitored and where trends emerge, the organization takes on targeted micro-interventions.
3. Maintenance of External Feedback Loops. Montgomery County has a well-educated, empowered, and vocal population. They do not hesitate to provide feedback, both positive and negative. Each occurrence of feedback is treated as an opportunity to learn something new about the organization. MCFRS also participates in learning processes with other County agencies in the form of cross-agency after action reviews, cross-agency policy development, and cross-agency task forces created to solve specific problems. In the past, the department has engaged with partners to conduct industry research, which contributes to the body of knowledge in the field, and the department incorporates changes related to NFPA standards, as needed.

These are continuous, ongoing processes, that are supported through performance measurement (such as response times for every program and risk level), annual review of critical tasking, and regular assessment of risk.

Appraisal

The methods described above have served MCFRS well. Assigning a process owner, for example, allowed MCFRS to develop a structured approach to energy storage systems, modify some programs and practices, and focus on training, awareness, and education of the public.

MCFRS monitored performance for each program and submitted annual compliance reports to maintain its status as an actively accredited agency with the CPSE. The annual compliance reports required response time performance data for each service program based on risk categorization and level. The response time performance data was calculated according to the effective response force and critical tasking configurations in effect for the year being evaluated. The methodology used to generate response time performance data has met the department's needs. Annual compliance reports have been submitted on time and have been approved each year.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to assess performance and opportunities for improvement utilizing the approaches detailed above. Performance gaps and modifications to programs and services will be based on industry standards and research, and we will continue to engage in opportunities for industry testing, training, and scientific research that advances the knowledge base of the fire and rescue services. The department will generate and review performance data for each service program annually, at minimum.

References

[Tweet: Training Risk Based Response to Battery Emergencies](#)

[Tweet: Close Before You Doze](#)

[Tweet: MCFRS attending training from FSRI – Engine Company Ops: Science to the Street](#)

MCFRS Annual Compliance Reports (within the MCFRS CFAI SharePoint)

- 2D.5 Impacts of incident mitigation program efforts, such as community risk reduction, public education, and community service programs, are considered and assessed in the monitoring process.

Description

MCFRS engages in a series of activities intended to mitigate, reduce, or eliminate community risk, including education, outreach, and prevention programs that target the County’s most vulnerable populations – children, seniors, and the socioeconomically disadvantaged.

The MCFRS Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team uses data-driven analytics to provide fire safety education and risk reduction programs that enhance the public’s awareness about fire and life safety issues. This includes:

- Home safety and smoke alarm program
- Premier Child Safety Car Seat Program
- Senior Outreach Program
- Fire safety and curriculum-based programs in schools and summer camps
- Community outreach and education events and bi-lingual presentations throughout the County
- “Safety In Our Neighborhood” community-wide safety and educational outreach programs
- Montgomery County’s SafeKids Coalition

In addition to CRR’s efforts, MCFRS’ “After the Fire” door-to-door outreach program is frequently used by all personnel to increase awareness of fire prevention and safety following significant fire incidents.

Appraisal

In 2021, MCFRS was one of 250 fire departments across the country selected to take part in the NFPA’s Community Risk Assessment pilot project to build and refine a digital tool known in the industry as CRAIG 1300. This dashboard is now a permanent tool for our department and has been customized with years of incident data, which aid in pinpointing specific vulnerabilities.

Additionally, the CRR Section designed an innovative Mobile Data Collection App that puts the principles of CRR into everyone's hands! It makes resources available to MCFRS operational members in the field to provide to community members and allows users to record important details of their interactions. The app was rolled out in 2021 and has undergone an iterative process with updates to improve functionality based on user feedback.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to track data related to incident mitigation activities and eventually incorporate this valuable information into the community risk assessment.

References

[CRAIG 1300](#)

[Email announcing countywide After the Fire initiative](#)

CC 2D.6 Performance gaps for the total response area, such as inadequacies, inconsistencies, and negative trends, are determined at least annually.

Description

MCFRS transparently, both externally and internally, monitors, analyzes, and documents all-hazard emergency services' performance gaps. The systems, processes, and principles used to achieve this mandate are well documented within the CC 2C.2 and CC 2C.5 sections of this assessment and documented within those sections of the CRA/SOC.

MCFRS' commitment to analyzing and defining program gaps and the development of sometimes complex solutions to close gaps, support the agency's desire to seek continuous improvement and never-ending organizational excellence.

CPSE calls *Reporting The GAP* an integral part of the CRA/SOC document. It is the ongoing assessment of the agency's performance, especially its ability to reach the approved benchmark (target) measures. MCFRS reports and projects any widening (negative trending) and narrowing (positive trending) between actual baseline response time performance and established benchmark programmatic target goals on a quarterly basis.

Annual programmatic formal and documented appraisals also assist section chiefs define negative and positive trending within their areas of responsibility. The EMS Section in particular uses sophisticated tools such as Microsoft® PowerBI to analyze many outputs and outcomes which help define any performance gaps.

Other technologies such as FirstWatch® are employed to automate and immediately report to decisionmakers when established trigger emergency resource availability thresholds have been exceeded. This allows decisionmakers to proactively work on solutions to mitigate situations which could lead to performance gaps before they occur.

Appraisal

The Accreditation Manager has run appropriate Crystal report queries and on a quarterly basis for the past five years and updated the CFAI-compliant data charts for 23 MCFRS risk

categories/programs. A system was developed to automate the process of reporting the gap between baseline response time performance and established benchmark targets. The system included charts and graphs to highlight gaps, which have helped the Planning and Accreditation Section Manager define when baselines have eclipsed (beaten) the benchmark target(s). Subsequently, updated benchmark targets have been developed and approved by the Fire Chief. The system developed which automatically updates this gap analysis is pushed to a page within the Accreditation SharePoint site and within the Virtual CRA/SOC.

The formal and documented MCFRS appraisal template has proven to be a helpful tool for program managers to document any gaps and/or inconsistencies or negative trending. Developing this standardized template was a direct result from a previous peer assessment team recommendation and has been a valuable tool.

Technologies such as Power BI and FirstWatch® have been successfully deployed to assist with performance gap monitoring. These systems have greatly enhanced our ability to see gaps and inconsistencies and use data-driven management techniques to help define and close programmatic gaps.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to actively monitor performance gaps for the total response area. As issues are identified, the department will develop strategies and pursue resources, as needed. During the rest of FY23 and within FY24, we will explore technologies such as Microsoft's Power Automate to automatically update some of the processes listed within this assessment that are labor and time intensive. As learned during the 2023 CPSE Excellence Conference, Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department successfully deployed Power Automate, which has inspired MCFRS to reach out and attempt to replicate their automated gap analysis strategies.

References

[CRA/SOC CC 2C.2 \(pg. 290\) and CC 2C.5 \(pg. 338\)](#)

[Screenshot of Accreditation SharePoint Core Programs Page with Analysis Examples](#)

[CPSE/CFAI “Reporting the Gap” Guidance \(see page 4\)](#)

[Screenshot of Accreditation SharePoint Reporting the Gap Page with Examples](#)

[CRA/SOC Reporting the Gap \(beginning on page 343 and offered for each program\)](#)

[FirstWatch® Auto Email Resource Availability Trigger](#)

[EMS PowerBI Dashboard Screenshot of STEMI Gap Monitoring and Reporting](#)

CC 2D.7 The agency has systematically developed a continuous improvement plan that details actions to be taken within an identified timeframe to address existing gaps and variations.

Description

MCFRS works towards continuous improvement in many ways. MCFRS recognizes and documents gaps in capabilities and other needs through planning, evaluation, and the budget process.

The MCFRS Master Plan is the overarching plan by which the department's actions are guided. The last/current plan contains more than 130 initiatives, which were developed over a two-year period and address numerous program areas and gaps. On an annual basis, and in conjunction with the annual budget process, the department develops an annual workplan, which more realistically details those improvements the department can make within its budget parameters.

Appraisal

The department's approach to continuous improvement, guided by the Master Plan and annual workplan development, has served the department well, but progress on completing many of the initiatives in the 2016-2022 Master Plan was low; of the designated high priority master plan initiatives, only 21 were completed. Twenty-five of the 27 that were in progress or not started, directly tied to the budget process and the need for funding (personnel, apparatus, and facilities).

Plan

MCFRS will complete the Master Plan update by the end of 2023 and will continue to develop annual workplans that align with the County's budget process. Plans will be implemented as resources allow.

References

[FY21 Strategic Plan](#)

[FY20 Strategic Plan](#)

2D.8 The agency seeks approval of its standards of cover by the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ).

Description

This is a new performance indicator in the 10th edition Quality Improvement for the Fire and Emergency Services manual. MCFRS has put a lot of effort into updating and maintaining its CRA/SOC and will eventually present it to the Public Safety Committee for approval.

Appraisal

Following the release of the 10th edition manual at the end of 2020, MCFRS presented the CRA/SOC to the County Executive, seeking his approval to present to the Public Safety Committee on an annual basis. MCFRS has not sought the AHJ's approval of its SOC yet.

Plan

MCFRS plans to present and discuss the SOC with the AHJ during the master planning process.

References

[CRA/SOC Briefing request for the County Executive](#)

[Calendar invite for briefing with County Executive on CRA/SOC](#)

[Slides for CE Briefing on CRA/SOC](#)

CC 2D.9 **On at least an annual basis, the agency formally notifies the AHJ of any gaps in current capabilities, capacity, and the level of service provided within its delivery system to mitigate the identified risks within its service area, as identified in its community risk assessment/standards of cover.**

Description

It is formally within the budget process that MCFRS reports on gaps between departmental capabilities and community expectations. The Montgomery County Council serves as the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) over MCFRS and may approve the County Executive's recommended budget or increase/decrease it, based on their understanding of the external environment and challenges that MCFRS is facing, as well as the justification that MCFRS provides for additional funding. The department may also be asked to provide periodic briefings to the Council or its Public Safety Committee.

Informally, there are procedures in place in which the Fire Chief would brief the County Executive and CAO about a gap in performance/service delivery, and then the Council would be briefed.

Appraisal

The reporting of performance in the annual budget has been MCFRS' official and public means to notify the AHJ of any shortcomings in capabilities, capacity, or level of service. Briefings to the Public Safety Committee have also served as an avenue for the department to brief the AHJ on more specific program areas or issues.

During this accreditation cycle, specifically during the pandemic, MCFRS experienced a significant impact to service delivery when there was a significant number of MCFRS personnel unavailable to work. The Fire Chief had to brief the County Executive and CAO, present a plan to address the staffing shortage (service adjustments), and ensure the Council understood and agreed.

Plan

Reporting performance as part of the budget development process will remain the primary method for MCFRS to communicate performance to the AHJ. Additional reports will be provided to the Public Safety Committee and County Council as needed/requested.

References

[FY22 Budget Hearing with Public Safety Committee](#), discussing structural deficiencies
(begin at 36:30)

[Fire Chief Email re: Updated MCFRS COVID Changes and Adjustments](#)

[Press Release for MCFRS Service Adjustments Due to Staffing Shortages](#)

2D.10 The agency interacts with external stakeholders and the AHJ at least once every three years, to determine the stakeholders' and AHJ's expectations for types and levels of services provided by the agency.

Description

MCFRS seeks the input of external stakeholders frequently. Informally, the department uses customer satisfaction surveys to gather feedback on emergency medical services and car seat inspections, and routine meetings with citizens advisory boards (CAB) throughout the County to learn about the different needs and expectations of the communities being served. Formally, the department determines or learns stakeholders' expectations through the planning and budget processes.

Appraisal

MCFRS' relationship with the AHJ and external stakeholders throughout the County has served to identify and clarify expectations. Participation by the division chiefs in the CABs has provided MCFRS with feedback from a cross-section of individuals and organizations from different areas of the County. The openness of the budget process has allowed stakeholders to get involved, ask questions, and clarify expectations at various stages of budget development and consideration. The process used by the Public Safety Committee to gather additional information from MCFRS and express the expectations of the Council and the community has been effective and ensured accountability of the department.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to seek external stakeholder feedback to understand its expectations as part of the master planning process. The department will continue to develop strategies that help meet the expectations of the County Executive and County Council.

References

MCFRS Public Safety Committee FY23 Operating Budget Work session [Packet](#) and [Briefing](#) (forward to 1:00:00 in the video)
[MCFRS Overview of FEI package](#) (briefing requested by the Public Safety Committee)

EMIHS Customer Satisfaction Dashboard (uploaded to Category 2 folder)

2022 MCFRS Car Seat Program Annual Report (uploaded to Category 2 folder; see p. 7-9 for presentation of customer satisfaction survey)

Category III: Goals and Objectives (M3 Schulze)

Agencies should establish general organizational goals designed to implement their assigned missions and short-range plans. Additionally, agencies should establish goals and objectives to direct the priorities of operational programs (to include at least those outlined in Category V) and support services. All goals and objectives should be developed consistent with the elements of the published Strategic and Capital Improvement Plans.

Objectives are specific statements designed to document the steps necessary to achieve the agency's goal statements within a specific time period. For purposes of accreditation, objectives should be consistent with the elements of the acronym "S.M.A.R.T."

Specific

Measurable

Attainable

Realistic

Time-bound

Criterion 3A: Strategic Planning

The mission, vision and values of the agency are incorporated into a strategic plan. Once a strategic plan is in place and resources are available, the strategic plan provides direction, determines initiatives, and guides the goals and objectives of the agency.

Summary:

MCFRS actively supports fulfillment of Montgomery County's vision through development of its own master plan, which is required by Montgomery County Code Section 21-12. County Code Section 21-12(c) provides that the master plan must serve as a guideline for the Executive, Council, and Fire Chief in making decisions regarding the delivery of fire and rescue services. Thus, the master plan serves as a cohesive planning, policy, and accountability document that communicates the department's needs and strategic direction.

The existing 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Community Risk Reduction Plan was set to expire in June 2022. While the planning update process was slow to take off due to the pandemic, MCFRS ultimately requested an extension for a couple of reasons. First, the County was undergoing a complete revision to the Montgomery County General Plan, and it did not make sense to complete the MCFRS master plan until the new County plan was complete. Secondly, under the County Executive's *Reimagining Public Safety* initiative in 2021, MCFRS was tasked with having two audits/assessments completed: one for a diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment of the department, and the second for an audit of the department's resources and deployment. The extension was granted by the County Council, and the new master plan is due by the end of 2023.

For additional context related to this category, the Planning Manager responsible for the development of the 2016-2022 Master Plan retired at the end of December 2019. The new Planning Manager started January 21, 2020; the pandemic was in full swing by March 2020.

Performance Indicators:

CC 3A.1 The agency has a current and published strategic plan that has been submitted to the authority having jurisdiction.

Description

The existing 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Community Risk Reduction Plan was approved by the Montgomery County Council on June 28, 2016, in accordance with County Code Chapter 21. Although due to sunset in June 2022, the Council considered and approved an extension for MCFRS to prepare the new plan.

Appraisal

MCFRS received approval of its existing Master Plan as required and it has been posted on the department's website. The extension for the plan was also approved by the Council

Plan

MCFRS will continue to seek approval of its master plan by the AHJ, in accordance with County code. MCFRS will also continue to publish its master plan to the public.

References

[Montgomery County Resolution 18-546, Approval of the Master Plan](#)

[Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Master Plan](#), published on the website

[Council Package for Master Plan Extension](#)

[Council Summary of Master Plan Extension](#) (p.4)

3A.2 The agency coordinates with the jurisdiction's planning component to ensure the strategic plan is consistent with the community master plan.

Description

MCFRS maintains a strong working relationship with the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission's Montgomery County Planning Board, which is responsible for managing physical growth and planning communities. The Board supports this effort through the development and management of the County's master and functional plans, and most recently, the County's General Plan, Thrive Montgomery 2050. This is an important relationship, as MCFRS' master plan must be consistent, or not contradictory, to the master plans, and vice-versa. For example, recent plans have called for changes to street grids and modifications to roadways that would make it difficult, if not impossible, for MCFRS to traverse the area or set up operations. Issues like this must be addressed before the plan is adopted.

Appraisal

The processes that the Planning Board, MCFRS and Montgomery County have in place to ensure plan review have been effective in ensuring that County departments and stakeholders have an opportunity to review proposed plans and updates, highlight conflicts or challenges, and offer suggested revisions or proposals.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to work with the Planning Board to ensure the Master Plan is consistent with updated or proposed master, sector, and functional plans.

References

[Email re: Planning Board Draft—Compilation/Submission of Comments of the County Executive's Thrive Montgomery Working Group](#)

[Email Notice to Thrive Workgroup ACTION ALERT! Tell Montgomery County to put the brakes on Thrive 2050](#)

[Email regarding Shady Grove Sector Plan](#)

Criterion 3B: Goals and Objectives

The strategic plan defines the agency's general goals and S.M.A.R.T. objectives, directs its activities in a manner consistent with its mission and is appropriate for the community it serves.

Summary:

MCFRS has established goals and objectives aligned with its mission to protect lives, property and the environment with comprehensive risk reduction programs and safe and effective emergency response. The goals and objectives are found in the 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan, approved by the Montgomery County Council on June 28, 2016, and published on the department's website.

With coordination from the IAFF 1664, Montgomery County Volunteer-Fire Rescue Association (MCVFRA), the Fire and Emergency Services Commission (FESC), and the regional Citizens Advisory Boards (CABs) throughout development, MCFRS feels the Master Plan is appropriate for the community it serves. Moreover, Montgomery County conducts a bi-annual Community Survey and MCFRS has consistently received high scores.

Performance Indicators:

CC 3B.1 The agency publishes current, general organizational goals and S.M.A.R.T. objectives, which use measurable elements of time, quantity and quality. These goals and objectives directly correlate to the agency's mission, vision and values and are stated in the strategic plan.

Description

The 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan reflects the department's mission, vision, and guiding principles. Sixteen general organizational goals are set forth, as well as numerous objectives (referred to as *initiatives* in the plan). The initiatives do not define an intended timeline for implementation, as many of them would only be accomplished if funding allowed. However, the initiatives are prioritized.

Appraisal

MCFRS published its goals and initiatives in the Master Plan and has made the document available to all MCFRS members. The goals and initiatives were also reiterated in the 2020 and 2021 annual reports. The document has adequately served the needs of the department.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to define goals and establish associated objectives and ensure that information is published and shared, to ensure the accountability of the department. As the department's planning processes continue to evolve and the master plan is updated, and the department embraces the model of completing annual work plans, MCFRS will be able to demonstrate better compliance with this indicator with documentation of the notion of SMART objectives.

References

[MCFRS Master Plan Appendix I, Quick Reference to 2016-2022 Initiatives & Priorities](#)
[MCFRS 2021 Annual Report \(p. 7-8\)](#)

3B.2 The agency conducts an environmental scan when establishing its goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS conducts an environmental scan during the development of its Master Plan and, in the last planning process, considered the impact of demographics, housing/building stock, development, and mass transit on risk and service demand. It is documented in the Master Plan (see PDF p.111-142).

Appraisal

Environmental scans have been an effective method for MCFRS to identify strengths and weaknesses, optimize resources, and plan long-term strategies. The work session conducted in September 2021 to initiate development of the new master plan incorporated the brief results of an environmental scan and future projections to provide context to the work group participants.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to conduct environmental scans to support planning and decision making. The new Master Plan will include the results of a comprehensive environmental scan.

References

[Slides from Master Plan Workgroup Session, 9/2021](#)

CC 3B.3 The agency solicits feedback and direct participation from internal and external stakeholders in the development, implementation and evaluation of the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

During the development of the existing Master Plan, the Planning Section sought participation internally from the division chiefs and section managers in the development and implementation of the department's goals and objectives. External participation was received through meetings with the Fire and Emergency Services Commission (FESC), and the regional Citizens Advisory Boards (CABs). The community receives an additional opportunity to weigh in on the master plan during a public hearing, as required by Montgomery County Code Section 21-12(b).

Appraisal

The MCFRS has been successful in the past, seeking and including internal and external stakeholder participation in the development of the department's goals and objectives.

In the process that has been initiated for the new master plan, the Planning Manager has engaged a workgroup that includes IAFF and MCVFRA representatives, as well as uniform and professional staff. A planning session was conducted with executive staff at the end of 2021. And the department has once again engaged with the directors of the Regional Service Centers, as well as the County Executive's Director of Strategic Partnerships, to garner external input and feedback on plan development.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to engage internal and external stakeholders in the development of the Master Plan.

References

[Media Advisory for Public Hearing for Draft Fire-Rescue Master Plan](#)

[Master Plan Public Hearing Report](#)

IAFF Representative for Planning Workgroup (email message)

MCVFRA Representative for Planning Workgroup (email message)

Master Plan workgroup planning session (email message)

Fire & Rescue Master Plan meeting invite from Director of Strategic Partnerships, Ken Hartman

3B.4 The agency uses internal input to implement and evaluate its goals and objectives and to measure progress in achieving the strategic plan.

Description

The Master Plan sets forth the department's objectives; implementation is the responsibility of the division chiefs and section managers, in coordination with the Fiscal Management Division and Planning Section, to identify and secure funding. This frequently takes many months, and even years of effort, to complete a specific initiative.

The planning manager tracks the progress of the initiatives. Not all initiatives are achieved within the period of performance of the plan, as the department must work within the constraints and parameters set forth by the Office of Management & Budget.

Appraisal

MCFRS' process to bring objectives from concept to fruition has been successful. Of the 120 initiatives listed in the Master Plan, MCFRS has completed 27; 20 of those were designated Priority A initiatives. Another 47 initiatives are in various stages of progress; and the remaining 46 that have not been started are directly tied to funding, or MCFRS has moved away from its original intent or plan to implement.

Plan

MCFRS will develop processes to implement and evaluate its objectives in the new master plan, involving designated members of the department. The planning manager will continue to track progress, and assist with implementation and evaluation, as needed. New tools available through Microsoft, like SharePoint, Teams, Planner or Project, will allow more efficient options for tracking of the objectives and communication with the designated leaders.

References

[Report of Proceedings Planning Meeting for FY19, 4-3-18](#)

3B.5 The governing body reviews the agency's goals and objectives and considers all budgetary and operational proposals in order to ensure success.

Description

MCFRS is required by Montgomery County Code 21-12 to develop a master plan. The master plan is submitted to the County Executive and must be approved by the County Council. Both have opportunities to provide feedback and/or revise the department's goals and objectives. However, the master plan is not a business plan, nor does it have the force of law or impose any legal obligation on any party. The County Council may choose to fund as many, or as few, of the initiatives set forth in the plan. That decision depends on the fiscal policy established for the budget year, the need and justification provided by MCFRS for its budget submission, and the overall need for funding by other County departments and the prevailing priorities at the time.

Appraisal

The Council's funding decisions have helped MCFRS achieve many of its highest priority initiatives throughout the course of this master plan: funding for 4-person staffing on engines, increased staffing to address failure-to-responds (FTR), the new P-25 radio system, apparatus replacement and maintenance, and station renovations and expansions are just a few.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to seek feedback and approval from the County Executive and County Council on the department's established goals and objectives, in accordance with Chapter 21. MCFRS will submit budget packages in accordance with fiscal policy guidance and consistent with evaluation of system performance and needs

References

[FY17 Budget Package](#) (Initiative on p. 1, funding for engines, staffing to address FTRs)
[FY17 Message from Chief re: budget funding of first phase of AFRAs](#) (4-person staffing was major initiative in Master Plan)

3B.6 When developing organizational values, the agency seeks input from its members and is in alignment with its community.

Description

MCFRS' values – its guiding principles, as presented in the department's master plan – have been reviewed internally and have not changed in many years. The community gets an opportunity to review and provide feedback through the methods described in CC3B.3; there has never been any negative feedback related to the guiding principles.

Appraisal

The existing processes that MCFRS have relied on to get feedback from its members and external stakeholders have worked well for the department.

Plan

MCFRS will ensure that organizational values, developed and supported by the department's members, are aligned with those established by the County Executive in setting his vision for Montgomery County.

References

[County Executive's Vision: A More Equitable and Inclusive Montgomery County](#)

[FY20 Planning Meeting Agenda](#)

[FY19 Report of Proceedings from Planning Meeting](#)

Schedule for Completing FY20 Strategic Plan (uploaded to folder)

Email re: Follow-up to 032519 Planning Meeting (uploaded to folder)

Criterion 3C: Implementation of Goals and Objectives

The agency uses a management process to implement its goals and objectives.

Summary:

At the onset of the adoption of the 2016-2022 Master Plan, the MCFRS utilized a simple process whereby the respective division chiefs were responsible for leading the implementation of the plan's goals and objectives, and the division chiefs would delegate responsibilities to their section managers. Updates were provided informally to the planning manager, and formally, at quarterly meetings; the planning manager tracked and monitored progress using a simple spreadsheet.

Prior to the pandemic, reporting on progress made towards achieving master plan initiatives was done by the previous planning manager at an annual planning meeting and thereafter during quarterly leadership meetings. With the onset of the pandemic, quarterly meetings were suspended in March 2020. An update was conducted virtually with the Division Chiefs that year, and an FY21 Strategic Plan was issued. The planning process changed a few months after that with the initial release of an Annual Report. While there has not been any formal reporting of the Master Plan initiatives (i.e., in a quarterly meeting), the annual report highlights organizational accomplishments that support the plan objectives, as well as a work plan that specifies new initiatives for the next year.

Performance Indicators:

CC 3C.1 The agency identifies personnel to manage its goals and objectives and uses a defined organizational management process to track progress and results.

Description

Division chiefs are responsible for championing the initiatives of their respective divisions. Prior to the pandemic and his retirement, the previous planning manager was using a spreadsheet to track implementation and achievement of the department's initiatives. Updates were provided quarterly, or as needed to gain feedback.

Appraisal

This process worked well in the past for the previous planning manager, but the new planning manager did not get a chance to continue, as the pandemic disrupted quarterly meetings and business as usual. Planning processes have been adjusted, as the department works on development of a new master plan.

Plan

MCFRS will develop new processes to implement and evaluate its goals and objectives, and to monitor progress once the new master plan is completed. Also see 3B.4, where you asked this same question.

References

[MCFRS Goals and Objectives 2016-2022 - updated 2018 -V2](#)

Email string with Ops Chief re: FY21 Strategic Plan update

CC 3C.2 The agency's personnel receive information explaining its goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS members receive information about the Master Plan goals and objectives via an annual “strategic plan” (pre-2021) and now through an annual report, which summarizes annual accomplishments in accordance with the department’s objectives. The annual budget process also presents an opportunity to provide information related to funded initiatives/programs that support department objectives to MCFRS members.

Appraisal

This has proven to be an effective method for MCFRS to communicate information to its personnel.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use the budget process and annual report to convey information to its members but will consider other methods and opportunities.

References

[FY21 Strategic Plan](#) (last one published before switching to Annual Report)

[FY20 Strategic Plan](#)

[MCFRS 2021 Annual Report](#)

3C.3 The agency, when necessary, identifies and engages appropriate external resources to help accomplish its goals and objectives.

Description

Many of the objectives set forth in the 2016-2022 Master Plan require coordination with external resources. Station maintenance and the need for new stations requires engagement with the LFRDs and the Department of General Services. Technology and communications-related objectives require coordination with the Department of Technology & Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS). Community outreach initiatives depend on partnerships with both County resources (i.e., MCPS, Office of Community Partnerships) and nonprofit organizations. And most importantly, nearly all the objectives depend on successful collaboration with the Office of Management and Budget to secure funding

Appraisal

MCFRS has worked with its external partners to implement a number of different initiatives, and to initiate action on some others. Without budget funding, action was not able to be taken on many that were specified in the 2016-2022 Master Plan.

Plan

Going forward, the design of the new master plan, better defining objectives and strategies, and adoption of new planning processes, such as the development of an annual workplan, will eliminate the appearance that MCFRS has been unsuccessful in achieving the objectives of its master plan. MCFRS will still need to work with external partners; however, those partners and the level of effort required, will be better documented in the next plan iteration.

References

[Email with DGS coordinating site selection for new Station 39](#)

Criterion 3D: Measurement of Organizational Progress

Processes are in place to measure and evaluate progress toward completion of goals and objectives and overall plan performance. The goals and objectives are re-examined and modified periodically.

Summary: The process whereby MCFRS annually reviews its goals and objectives has changed slightly during this accreditation cycle with the retirement of the longstanding planning manager at the end of 2019 and the addition of a fresher, more inspired planning manager at the beginning of 2020. For many years, MCFRS has held an annual planning meeting, which included review of MCFRS' organizational doctrine, and the goals, objectives, and initiatives. By design, the goals and objectives are not intended to change; there is no defined end to them. The goals written in 2015/16 for the update of the master plan are still goals of MCFRS today. The annual planning meetings (pre-2020) would revisit the previous year's initiatives in light of budget parameters, assessment of service delivery, and external factors. New initiatives would be defined, and the planning manager would work to track those initiatives as the divisions worked to accomplish them. With the pandemic, and under the new planning manager, there was not a formal planning meeting in 2020, but rather some discussion with the fire chief and division chiefs to outline the initiatives for FY21. Thus, modifications to the planning process began. Rather than completing the annual "strategic plan", the department outlined initiatives in a work plan for the year and communicated that information via the annual report and email or video communications from the fire chief.

Performance Indicators:

CC 3D.1 The agency reviews its goals and objectives at least annually and modifies as needed to ensure they are relevant and contemporary.

Description

MCFRS informally reviews its goals and objectives annually; however, there are generally no modifications to the goals and objectives. Once the Master Plan is approved, it can only be modified through an amendment.

Appraisal

MCFRS has reviewed its goals and objectives annually but has made no changes. There has not been a need to modify the goals and objectives.

In the ongoing planning process for the new master plan, the workgroup has reviewed and suggested revisions to the department's mission and vision. There has also been some discussion about the goals, objectives, and principles.

Plan

Based on the initial planning efforts, there will likely be a revision to the goals and objectives put forth in the new master plan. It is still unlikely that there will be modifications to the goals and objectives through the lifespan/length of the next plan; by design, those are intended to remain static, while the strategies and initiatives change on a yearly basis.

References

[FY19 Report of Proceedings from Planning Meeting](#) (shows review of mission, vision principles, and goals, with minor revision to principles)

CC 3D.2 The agency reviews, at least annually, its overall system performance and identifies areas in need of improvement, which should be considered for inclusion in the organizational goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS considers overall system performance constantly. And in many ways: there are EMIHS dashboards; EMS satisfaction surveys; the Accreditation SharePoint site; regular post-incident analysis and significant incident reviews; and prior to 2020, there were quarterly leadership meetings for all the divisions/sections to share information on a wider level. The previous planning manager facilitated annual planning meetings with executive leadership for the purpose of reviewing performance and identifying gaps in service or overall system improvements. The pandemic disrupted this process for the new/current planning manager, but the department continues to assess and evaluate overall system performance regularly and uses the annual budget process to identify and consider performance gaps/shortfalls in light of the established budget. MCFRS prioritizes the needs and ensures the budget submission reflects not only the department's goals and objectives, but also the County Executive's vision and priority outcomes.

Appraisal

MCFRS has reviewed overall system performance regularly and submitted budget requests that contribute to improving performance and align with the County's priority outcomes. It has not been necessary to modify the department's goals or objectives, as the department's budget submissions support the established goals and vice versa.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate overall system performance and we will continue to request funding when evaluation of system performance indicates a gap or a need, if the need cannot be addressed in another manner (e.g., reallocation of personnel).

References

[FY22 Council Worksession Package](#)

[MCFRS FY22 Budget Report](#)

[Fire Chief Email to #FRSALL on approval of FY22 budget](#)

3D.3 The agency provides progress updates, at least annually, on its goals and objectives to the AHJ, its members and the community it serves.

Description

The Fire Chief and/or other members of his senior staff meet regularly with the County Council, including the Council's Public Safety Committee, as well as the County Executive, to provide updates on the department's accomplishments, as well as ongoing and upcoming initiatives. Sometimes the meetings are necessary to garner additional support (i.e., funding) for specific initiatives.

MCFRS personnel receive updates from the Fire Chief in the form of a monthly video, which is emailed and available on QuickLinks. This video is also available publicly on YouTube via the MCFRS website.

In addition to routine participation in the Citizens Advisory Boards, community members are updated on goals and objectives through the annual budget process. The public can also receive updates via the annual report, which MCFRS started publishing in 2021. The annual report contains the department's workplan for the year.

Appraisal

MCFRS has successfully provided updates to the AHJ, its members, and the general public regarding MCFRS goals and objectives.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use these existing mechanisms to provide update to the AHJ, its members, and the Montgomery County residents.

References

[2021 Annual Report](#)

[MCFRS FY23 Budget](#)

[List of all Fire Chief Monthly Videos](#) (Recommend any, but Feb. 2023 is a good example)

Category 4: Financial Resources (D/C Del Pozzo)

This category evaluates an agency's financial condition to determine its ability to fund operational priorities and its prognosis for long-range quality of service. Resources must be adequate to maintain the various programs to which an agency made a commitment. Whether the agency is public or private, stability of revenues (demonstrated by a consistent history through at least the past three years) is fundamental.

The chief fire officer or chief executive officer, professional staff, and governing board share responsibility for planning, management, and stability of financial resources. Since the budget is the financial expression of agency programs and priorities, it should be developed through appropriate consultation with the governing board of the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), departments, divisions, and other units.

Financial policies covering financial planning, revenue, and expenditures should be developed by the professional staff and adopted by the governing board. Financial policies should be reviewed and revised on at least an annual basis to ensure continued relevance and address any gaps.

In approving the budget, the governing board approves the acquisition and allocation of resources consistent with agency goals, objectives, and stated priorities.

NOTE: An agency that received the Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for their Budget and Comprehensive Annual Financial Report may submit those certificates and reports as prima facie compliance with criterion 4B and therefore does not need to address performance indicators 4B.1 through 4B.9.

Criterion 4A: Financial Planning

Agency planning involves broad staff and community participation in financial planning and resource allocation. The agency's financial planning and budget process reflects sound strategic planning and a commitment to its stated goals and objectives. The agency prepares a balanced budget, which adequately maintains level of service and personnel resources.

Summary:

The department's Master Plan largely guides budgetary planning and allocation. This high-level planning document provides an overview of the department's identified needs for a specified period of time. Obviously, revenue available in the budget may limit what the Fire Chief requests for any particular year.

Decisions related to the allocation of funds are fundamentally policy questions, since programs and services require resources to be implemented. Financial planning documents, especially Montgomery County's operating budget and capital improvement plan, serve as policy documents. Since these documents intend to reflect the priorities of the community, the development process for these documents requires public participation and input along with County Council approval. County requirements and policies have defined the parameters on the development process and the structure of these documents. The process also features subject matter expertise provided by Montgomery County personnel, including those from MCFRS. MCFRS has an obligation to provide services as directed, with allocated resources, and to report output and outcome-based progress.

Performance Indicators:

4A.1 The governing body and regulatory agencies give the agency appropriate direction in budget and planning matters within the agency's scope of services.

Description

The County Executive is responsible for proposing an annual budget to the Montgomery County Council, and the Council, according to the Montgomery County charter and state law, is assigned with the responsibility to "appropriate money to fund the capital and operating budgets". Each September, the Council begins with a study of the economic indicators that help predict the condition of the County economy. With the assistance of staff and fiscal experts, the Council estimates what the County's resources will be: revenue from property taxes, from the County income tax, transfer and recordation taxes, from State and Federal grants, and other sources.

Based on this information, the Council sets a limit on what the County can plan to spend. The "spending affordability" guidelines place a ceiling on property tax revenues, a ceiling on the total operating budget excluding certain grants and enterprise funds and allocate the projected revenue among the agencies. Agencies are required to attach a prioritized list of reductions if they submit a budget that exceeds the spending affordability limit. A similar process is used for the capital budget and six-year Capital Improvements Program (CIP).

OMB leads the process for the County and works closely with the County Executive. As the attached reference shows, OMB issues detailed guidelines for budget development. After active positions are reconciled to budgeted positions, any anticipated changes to the operating (non-personnel) budget are evaluated for possible inclusion.

OMB also oversees the development of the capital budget and planning normally begins several years before there is any spending on a project. Most CIP projects require the development of a program of requirements (POR) for a facility to be built. The POR is reviewed by OMB and competes against other departments' projects for available funding in the out years of the CIP. If the project is included in the CIP, the funding schedule may be modified as the start date draws closer and county-wide priorities come into focus.

Appraisal

The OMB established a budget and planning framework to be followed by County agencies and departments. The OMB framework is comprehensive and has been used successfully each year by MCFRS to prepare its annual operating budget request.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow OMB's budget planning guidelines.

References

[FY24 Budget Kickoff document](#)

Performance indicators:

4A.2 The agency has formally adopted financial policies that address: general fund reserves, reserves in other funds, fund balances, grants, debt, investment, accounting and financial reporting, risk management and internal controls, procurement, long-term financial planning, structurally balanced budgets, capital, revenues, expenditures, operating budgets and charges/fees. The agency reviews financial policies at least every three years and updates as needed.

Description

Montgomery County maintains fiscal policy for all of the categories listed in the performance indicator and uses the budget process as a vehicle for determining and implementing such policies. The fiscal policy statements of the County evolve as the economy and fiscal environment change, and as the County's population and requirements for programs and services change.

Appraisal

Montgomery County has followed its fiscal policies, even throughout the challenges of the COVID crisis. Since the last accreditation, the County has reached its policy goal of reserve funds totaling ten percent of adjusted annual revenue. Most importantly, the rating agencies continue to express confidence that the county adheres to its financial policies by awarding it the highest rating, AAA.

Plan

MCFRS plans to continue to follow the County's financial policies with ongoing oversight by county employees charged with carrying out internal auditing functions, the county's independent inspector general, and annual audits by auditing firms.

References

[Fiscal Policies section of budget document](#)

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/PRO/vendor-resources/laws-regulations.html>

CC 4A.3 Guidelines and processes for developing the operating and capital budgets are defined and followed.

Description

The County's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) develops and promulgates the policies, guidelines, and processes for developing the annual budget. The process begins about a year prior to the beginning of the budget year with the identification of fiscal impacts – changes in spending that have been determined in prior years. Departments then can shift funding within their budgets or seek increases for specific needs. OMB and the County Executive review the proposals from departments, meet with groups of residents, and send a recommended budget to the County Council. After further public participation and committee and Council hearings, the County Council passes the budget.

Appraisal

MCFRS has successfully followed the County's detailed budget process and has submitted requests annually for complement, operating, and facility enhancements.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to adhere to the detailed guidelines issued by OMB for developing future operating and capital budgets.

References

[Budget Process section in budget document \(webpage\)](#)

4A.4 The financial planning/budget adoption process provides internal and external transparency for all expenditures and revenues for the agency.

Description

To replace, consolidate and enhance numerous failing legacy financial systems, OMB developed an in-house budget analysis and statistical information application called BASIS. Using an intuitive and accessible user-interface design, BASIS provides analysts, departments and executive leadership with instant access to budget and performance data in a clear and concise fashion. The open budget website leverages BASIS to instantly display data, visualizations, and content.

Appraisal

Montgomery County has been and continues to be transparent in its budget process. It has posted the revenues and expenditures, for the County as a whole, and filterable by department, on the Open Budget website.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow OMB's guidance and use of BASIS to ensure revenues and expenditures are accurately published.

References

[Montgomery County Operating Budget Open Budget portal](#)

[Montgomery County Operating Budget portal: Revenues](#)

[Montgomery County Operating Budget portal: Expenditures](#)

4A.5 The agency’s operating and capital budgets serve as policy documents, operations guides, financial plans and communication devices.

Description

Montgomery County’s comprehensive budget documents provide valuable information for policymakers, stakeholders, county employees, and residents in general. Decisions related to the allocation of funds are fundamentally policy questions, since programs and services require resources to be implemented. The operating and capital budgets emphasize County and internal MCFRS priorities. County executive leadership, as well as the Council, rely on the documents to ensure the department’s budget aligns with the County’s priorities, and manage future expenses and revenues. Service/program adjustments are communicated to the public through the robust online presentation of the budget process and documents, to better understand the county’s plans and policies, and the value they’re receiving for their tax dollars.

Appraisal

The budget “documents” are presented in user-friendly online formats that allow the user to quickly find the desired information. This encourages use of the document, compared to the several hundred-page budget documents of years ago that might only be consulted by insiders who understood budget and how to find what they needed. As a result, and because the budgets have always included comprehensive policy, operational and financial information, the documents are key sources for all the areas mentioned in this criterion.

Plan

Montgomery County will continue to produce a budget document that is detailed enough to be consulted by management, but sufficiently user-friendly to be beneficial to members the general public, who may simply want to learn how the county spends its tax dollars.

References

[Montgomery County FY 2023 Approved Operating Budget](#)

[Montgomery County FY24 Recommended Capital Budget](#)

4A.6 The agency considers internal and external stakeholders' input in the budget process.

Description

The public budget development process begins with the release of the County Executive's recommended budget on or about March 15th and ends with adoption by the County Council in late May. The County's new fiscal year begins on July 1st.

On March 15th, there is a press conference to announce the release of the County Executive's recommended budget, and detailed budget information is available to the public online in a user-friendly format. The County Council hosts public hearings in which groups and members of the public may express their views on the budget.

Additionally, Council and Council committee meetings on the budget, like most other Council meetings, are open to the public. Key meetings are televised, and the documents for every meeting are available on Council's website. After the budget is adopted, the Council announces its approval, and the details of the final version are available online in the same user-friendly format as the recommended budget.

Appraisal

MCFRS involved internal and external stakeholders in the development of the Master Plan, which guides the department's spending. The County Executive and County Council have provided numerous opportunities for the public to get involved in the budget discussions.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow the budget process as it is conducted and will consider internal and external stakeholders' input throughout.

References

[County Executive's Budget Forum Calendar](#)

[County Council's Public Hearings on the Budget](#)

[Montgomery County Council FY23 Operating Budget Updates](#)

[MCFRS FY23 Operating Budget Worksession, Public Safety Committee](#)

CC 4A.7 The agency’s budget, short and long-range financial planning, and capital project plans are consistent with the agency’s strategic plan and support achievement of identified goals and objectives.

Description

One of the Montgomery County Executive’s top priorities is creating an effective and sustainable government, and he focuses on how to use budgeting to drive innovation and turn resources into real results in Montgomery County. This approach begins with using priority outcomes as a focal point for budgeting; connecting resources necessary to achieve those outcomes; using performance data and evidence to make budget decisions; fostering competition and collaboration; rewarding services that obtain results and shifting dollars from programs that are ineffective; engaging residents in the budget process; and focusing on the return on investment. The Executive’s approach includes evaluating the value of the services offered; evaluating what we are doing; identifying areas of duplication, inefficiencies, new opportunities, and how we can do things differently to obtain more or better results. Thus, policy goals help shape budget decisions.

Once the County issues annual guidance, MCFRS develops a budget that addresses any needs or issues identified internally, and also aligns with and supports the goals and objectives of the Master Plan. For example, the table below ties the FY24 budget enhancements to the Master Plan:

FY24 Request	Master Plan Goal/Objective
DEI Officer	To ensure that MCFRS embraces diversity; implement change to enhance performance
Community Action Coordinator	To build and maintain relationships
CRR specialists	To optimize assets to ensure mission success
Admin Specialist/Program Manager	To optimize assets to ensure mission success
IA investigator	To optimize assets to ensure mission success
IT Specialist III	Achieve and maintain readiness
Fleet Road Technician	Achieve and maintain readiness
CISM manager	Provide for the wellbeing of the workforce
Supervisory Psychologist	Provide for the wellbeing of the workforce

Appraisal

MCFRS has prepared and submitted budgets that not only support the goals and objectives of our own Master Plan, but also the County Executive’s vision of a more equitable Montgomery County, safe neighborhoods, and an effective and sustainable government.

Plan

MCFRS’ Master Plan, which will align with the County Executives vision for a “more equitable and inclusive Montgomery County” will provide guidance for future budgets. Annual analyses and workplans will prioritize the department’s needs for each fiscal year.

References

[2016-2022 MCFRS Master Plan Final Approved](#)

[MCFRS FY23 Operating Budget](#)

4A.8 The agency maintains a long-term financial operating and capital plan, inclusive of all appropriated funds, for a five- to 10-year period. The agency should analyze the financial environment, revenue and expenditure forecasts, debt position and affordability analysis, and strategies for achieving and maintaining financial balance to include plan monitoring mechanisms.

Description

Each year, OMB prepares, and the Council approves a fiscal plan that projects revenues, expenditures and reserves over a six-year period. The plan must show balanced revenues and expenditures and show the maintenance of reserves at policy levels. Some factors examined in the development of the fiscal plan include inflation, demographic changes, the property tax base, employment and jobs figures, and personal income. The fiscal plan is updated in December and again in March, when the county executive sends the recommended budget to Council.

Appraisal

The development of the annual fiscal plan and updates are well-established elements in the budget development process that provide county council with an understanding of available resources and a preview of the fiscal climate well in advance of making decisions on expenditures.

Plan

The county will continue its fiscal plan process, which keeps decisionmakers and stakeholders abreast of anticipated changes in revenues and expenditures. The process will help ensure that reserves are maintained at the policy level and that the county's bonds continue to receive the highest rating – AAA.

References

[County Executives FY23-28 Fiscal Plan](#)
[FY22 Fiscal Plan Update – December 2022](#)

4A.9 For each budget cycle, the agency prepares balanced operational and capital budgets.

Description

Montgomery County has a policy of limiting budgeted expenditures to anticipated recurring revenues. The County's Office of Management and Budget (OMB) begins looking at future fiscal years' financial resources several years in advance. Revenue forecasts are updated twice annually, so by the time the County budgets expenditures, anticipated resources have been reviewed and modified several times. The purpose of this ongoing analysis of anticipated revenues is to ensure that the County adheres to its policy of limiting expenditures to recurring revenues.

Appraisal

The County's reserves have grown for several years and currently meet the ten percent reserve policy. This indicates that Montgomery County is not spending all the revenue taken in, but is making contributions to the reserves while funding all budgeted expenditures. This would not be possible if budgeted expenditures exceeded available financial resources.

Plan

Montgomery County plans to continue to fund its budgeted expenditures while making annual contributions to reserve funds. Per policy and consistent with past practice, budgeted expenditures will not exceed recurring revenue.

References

[Fiscal Policy section of FY23 Approved Budget](#)

Criterion 4B: Financial Practices

Agency financial management demonstrates sound budgeting and control, proper recording, reporting, and auditing.

NOTE: *An agency that received the Distinguished Budget Presentation and Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada for their Budget and Comprehensive Annual Financial Report may submit those certificates and reports as prima facie compliance with criterion 4B and therefore does not need to address performance indicators 4B.1 through 4B.9.*

Summary:

[Distinguished Budget Presentation Award](#) (see page seven of FY23 Approved Operating Budget PDF)

[Certificate of Excellence in Financial Reporting](#) (see page two of the FY22 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report PDF)

Performance Indicators:

4B.1 Financial resources management adheres to generally accepted accounting practices as used by Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada, National Advisory Council on State and Local Budgeting Practices, or authority having jurisdiction (AHJ), and all financial management including: budgeting, accounting and reporting. Appropriate safeguards are in place for expenditures, fiscal reports are provided for administrative decision-making with sufficient flexibility to meet contingencies.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.2 The agency has established and implemented a comprehensive internal control framework that includes the control environment, risk assessment, control activities, information and communication, monitoring, and reporting.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.3 The agency explains projected operating deficit (expenditures exceeding revenues in a budget year) and develops a plan to rectify the deficit.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.4 The agency reviews its financial position including actual and budgeted expenditures on a monthly basis and reviews overall financial performance with the authority having jurisdiction on an annual basis.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

CC 4B.5 Qualified auditors conduct annual independent financial audits for the prior fiscal year. If deficiencies exist, the agency prepares a plan to resolve audit exceptions for approval by the AHJ.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.6 The agency and any subsidiary entities or auxiliaries have financial risk management policies and programs that identify and evaluate risks, establish risk management strategies, and evaluate the risk management program to protect the agency, its assets and employees.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.7 Programs designed to solicit financial support from external sources are aligned with the objectives of the agency. Agency policies govern all fundraising activities, comply with generally accepted accounting practices and other recognized financial principles, and are subject to public disclosure and periodic independent financial audits.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.8 Any revenue-producing organizations authorized to use the agency's name and/or reputation comply with agency principles of financial operation.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

4B.9 The agency is in compliance with all granting agency requirements.

Description

Provide a description that clearly, factually and succinctly summarizes this Performance indicator (usually 2 or 3 paragraphs will suffice).

Appraisal

Provide an appraisal that clearly, factually and succinctly analyzes how well your agency is meeting this Performance indicator. How is it working based upon review of your researched performance data or observed facts that support your appraisal. Are there any outcomes that can be identified?

Plan

Provide a plan that clearly, factually and succinctly; summarizes how your agency will continue to assure that it will continue to successfully address this Performance indicator or how and when it will any short comings indicated in your appraisal.

References

Begin here by double clicking paragraph and entering titles, date and Location using tab key to format.

Criterion 4C: Resource Allocation

Appropriately allocated financial resources support the organizational mission, stated long-term plan, goals and objectives and maintains the quality of programs and services. The agency must ensure that programs and services provided can be supported by adequate fiscal resources using sound budgetary practices.

Summary:

Montgomery County remains committed to implementing budgetary and financial policies that protect the County's assets and foster public engagement for decision making purposes. Montgomery County has fulfilled its obligation in passing balanced operating budgets, while applying standards that intend to secure long-term financial stability. The operating budget serves as a policy document that emphasizes the priorities of a growing economy, thriving youth and families, safe neighborhoods, and an effective, sustainable government.

Resource allocation is handled through the capital and operating budget processes. Both processes begin with MCFRS identifying its future needs. For the operating budget, these needs are identified in the summer and early fall nearly a year before the new budget goes into effect. Identification of needs in the capital budget may take many months due to the size and complexity of capital projects. When capital projects are ready to move forward, they follow a process similar to the operating budget process.

The County's Office of Management and Budget establishes funding constraints and determines which additional needs may be funded, based on priorities submitted by MCFRS and other departments. In recent years, available funding has increased slightly, and departments have submitted requests for additional budget authority. By February (before the beginning of the new fiscal year), the County Executive, after reviewing the requests, makes final decisions on what will be added to or removed from the budget. The Executive's recommended budget must go to the County Council in March. The County Council has three months to review the recommended budget, make any changes, and vote on the final version. By policy, the County is required to maintain a balanced budget in which ongoing expenditures are funded by ongoing revenues.

Performance Indicators:

CC 4C.1 Given current and forecasted revenues, the agency sustains the level of service adopted by the AHJ.

Description

Montgomery County prepares an economic forecast as the first step in the budget development process. OMB coordinates efforts to ensure the budget is developed within these parameters. The County Council approves the budget for each department, including MCFRS.

Montgomery County has a stable and diverse revenue base that is anticipated to rise slowly during the coming years due to anticipated increases in population, home values, and household income. The budgeted service level for the current fiscal year (FY23) is supported by available revenue, and it is County policy for ongoing expenditures, such as fire-rescue service, to be covered by ongoing revenues. In future years, current levels of service are anticipated to be supported through incremental increases in county-wide revenue.

Appraisal

Although MCFRS' FY23 budget saw a substantial increase due to an influx of Medicaid funds to support the costs incurred by the department to transport Medicaid patients, increases in the MCFRS budget have been more incremental and narrowly focused. And, while cuts to service have occasionally been discussed when a new budget is being constructed, such reductions have not been included in the final, approved budgets. The anticipated service level in the budget has been fully supported by available revenue as required by County fiscal policy.

Plan

MCFRS will advocate for the service level necessary for Montgomery County. Revenues are anticipated to be sufficient for ongoing support of that level of service.

References

[Fiscal Policy Webpage of the FY23 Approved Budget](#)

4C.2 Adequate resources are budgeted for the payment of long-term liabilities and debts.

Description

Long-term liabilities are generally funded through the issuance of bonds. When the County issues bonds, a payment schedule is developed for the entire term of the bonds. When the County considers taking on new projects that require the issuance of bonds, the estimated payments on those bonds are included in the planning for upcoming budgets. The County's payment schedule for active bonds are listed in the budget book and the payments, which often continue for several years, are included in future years' budget plans.

Appraisal

The County's debt payments are shown in the annually published budget book. Payments for each year have been budgeted in the debt service fund. The County's AAA bond rating – the highest possible from all three rating agencies – offers objective evidence that the County has a long history of making every bond payment, plans well in advance for future impacts of incurring additional debt, and maintains a reasonable debt load.

Plan

Montgomery County will continue to carefully plan for payment of long-term obligations and maintain its AAA bond rating as well as its reputation as one of the most financially secure county governments in the nation.

Reference

[FY23 Montgomery County Budget Debt Service Document](#)

[Montgomery County receives 'Triple-A' bond rating for 50th straight year, 8/12/22](#)

4C.3 The agency budgets future asset maintenance and repair costs are projected with related funding plans.

Description

MCFRS has many valuable assets to maintain, including apparatus, fire stations, SCBA gear, PPE and firefighting and medical equipment. The department's most expensive assets are purchased through the capital improvements program (CIP). Each project in the program includes a projection of future ongoing maintenance costs so that they may be included in upcoming operating budgets. There are challenges when assets are old and maintenance costs increase. Such increases have the potential to drive the department over its operating budget or compete with other needs for budget authority

Appraisal

As new assets were added through the CIP, the operating impact of these assets were projected and included in future operating budgets. However, the costs to maintain older assets exceed the amounts budgeted.

Plan

The department will continue to project its maintenance needs for new assets being purchased through the CIP and will seek additional funding from OMB for the maintenance or replacement of older assets.

References

[Capital Improvements Program Webpage](#) (scroll 20% down page to “Impact of the Capital Budget on the Operating Budget”)

[Clarksburg Fire Station Example of CIP Project with Operating Budget Impact](#) (see the section titled, “Operating Budget Impact”)

4C.4 Budgets avoid the use of one-time funding sources for recurring standard annual operating expenses.

Description

The County has the following fiscal policy in place: "One-time revenues and revenues in excess of projections must be applied first to restoring reserves to policy levels or as required by law. If the County determines that reserves have been fully funded, then one-time revenues should be applied to non-recurring expenditures which are one-time in nature, PAYGO for the CIP in excess of the County's targeted goal, or to unfunded liabilities. Priority consideration should be given to unfunded liabilities for retiree health benefits and pension benefits prefunding."

Appraisal

The County, per policy, has avoided the use of one-time revenues to fund ongoing expenditures.

Plan

The County has no plans to alter or deviate from the policy in place.

References

[See "Use of One-Time Revenues" subsection within this Fiscal Policy Webpage](#)

CC 4C.5 The agency maintains contingency funds in accordance with generally accepted accounting practice recommendations and anticipates budgetary restrictions and/or shortfalls.

Description

MCFRS is a unit of Montgomery County Government. After the 2008 recession, the county set a goal of accumulating contingency funds totaling ten percent of adjusted annual revenues – over half a billion dollars. The county achieved that goal a few years ago and continues to maintain the fund, adding contributions each year to account for the annual growth in the budget. Maintaining the fund is an important factor in keeping the county’s AAA bond rating.

From the fiscal policy section of the FY23 budget document: “The County must have a goal of maintaining an unrestricted General Fund balance of five percent of the prior year's General Fund revenues and a total reserve of ten percent of revenues including the Revenue Stabilization Fund, as defined in the Revenue Stabilization Fund law (Section 20-65, Montgomery County Code). The County had originally planned to achieve the 10 percent target by FY20, but the COVID pandemic negatively impacted reserves and the 10 percent target was not achieved until FY21.”

Appraisal

The FY23 Recommended Budget has estimated that the Revenue Stabilization fund balance will be \$513.5 million in FY22, and the balance is estimated to increase to \$516.5 million in FY23 (from “revenue stabilization” subsection of “revenues” section of the FY23 budget book). The FY23 approved budget included reserves at the policy levels. Total reserves are currently estimated at \$522 million in the Revenue Stabilization Fund and \$107 million of undesignated fund balance.

Plan

The county will continue to maintain its Revenue Stabilization Fund at ten percent of adjusted revenues, as well as a balance in the General Fund of five percent of prior-year revenues.

References

[See “Reserves” Subsection within the “Fiscal Control Policies” Section of FY23 Approved Budget Book Webpage](#)

Category 5

Criterion 5A: Prevention Program (DPS Manager Warnick)

The agency operates an adequate, effective and efficient program as identified in the community risk assessment and standards of cover. The approach is comprehensive and includes both prevention and mitigation strategies such as life safety, hazard risk reduction, plan review, code compliance, and the detection, reporting and control of fire and non-fire risks. The agency should conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for specific prevention programs.

Summary:

The Department of Permitting Services' (DPS) Commercial Building Construction and Residential Construction and Fire Code Compliance Divisions are responsible for establishing public safety through the effective application of commercial and residential building, structural, electrical, mechanical, and energy conservation codes in new construction, and ensuring compliance with adopted National Fire Codes and Standards, the Montgomery County Fire Code, and the Maryland State Fire Prevention Codes in existing buildings. This is accomplished through technical plan review and inspection processes. DPS also responds to and investigates code violations.

In accordance with Montgomery County Bill 29-16, a division chief within DPS has been designated as the Fire Marshal for Montgomery County and Assistant State Fire Marshal, and the inspection personnel and fire protection engineers collaterally serve as Special Assistant State Fire Marshals.

CC 5A.1 The authority having jurisdiction has an adopted fire prevention and building code(s).

Description

The Department of Permitting Services' Residential Construction and Fire Code Compliance Division is responsible for planning, managing, coordinating, implementing, inspecting, licensing, and facilitating all fire and life safety aspects in Montgomery County, based on the Maryland State Fire Prevention Code, which adopts by reference the National Fire Protection Association Uniform Fire Code (NFPA 1) and Life Safety Code (NFPA 101), and applies to all new buildings with limited exception.

Appraisal

DPS enforcement of the State and County fire codes enhanced the fire and life safety of buildings. The County fire safety code has been applied, as appropriate, to existing buildings that are otherwise exempted in state code.

Plan

The Fire Code Compliance (FCC) Section will continue to monitor changing fire and building codes and will continue to enforce existing codes. FCC will also continue its efforts to meet with the state to coordinate the effort to amend and adopt the most recent code editions to reduce conflict between the state and county codes, as well as between the adopted codes.

References

[Montgomery County Council Public Safety Reorganization Bill 29-16](#)

[Maryland Public Safety Article, §6–206](#)

[Code of Maryland Regulations, 29.06](#)

[State of Maryland Fire Prevention Code](#)

[Montgomery County Fire Safety Code, Chapter 22](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation 31-19](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation 8-16, Fire Safety Code – Building Construction](#)

[Master List of Building Codes and Standards](#)

CC 5A.2 The code enforcement program ensures compliance with applicable fire protection law(s), local jurisdiction, hazard abatement, and agency objectives as defined in the community risk assessment/standards of cover.

Description

The primary mission of FCC is to ensure compliance with fire protection codes. The code requirements come from state and local ordinances and are generally based on consensus standards promulgated by entities such as the National Fire Protection Association and The International Code Council. DPS has adopted the 2015 edition of NFPA 1, Fire Code, and NFPA 101 into the Montgomery County fire safety code. This brought the County in line with the Maryland State's adopted version of the NFPA codes

DPS regulates the vast majority of permits for building construction, fire protection, and life safety. Intended designs are submitted to DPS for review and approval prior to the beginning of construction, renovation, alteration, or addition. DPS officials review the design for compliance.

FCC also regulates private fire protection contractors via a licensing process. Each license holder must meet certain minimum training and education standards to practice in Montgomery County.

Owners and fire protection contractors are required to submit proof of system inspection, maintenance and testing to the FCC. Voided permits, indications of system impairment, or aberrations in reporting trigger an inspection of the fire protection system by a Fire Code Compliance Inspector. Fire Code Compliance Inspectors also perform "drop-by" inspections. Drop-by inspections are randomized. This practice ensures that all occupancies receive routine visits from a Fire Code Compliance Inspector.

Appraisal

The FCC ensured that local practices are consistent with accepted best practices by maintaining a relationship with the Maryland State Fire Marshal's office and others, as necessary. The positioning of FCC resources within DPS has provided a coherent approach to enforcement of the fire and life safety laws.

Plan

While the staffing of FCC represents a system level constraint on the ability to “enforce,” FCC consistently inspects the highest hazard structures, and other structures required by local ordinance. Inspection frequency is driven by risk analysis and to some extent, by complaints. It is not intended that the Fire Code Compliance Inspectors will physically inspect every structure in Montgomery County in the next three years. Instead, the section has applied a risk-based analysis to the schedule of inspections while facilitating the individual building owners’ requirements for code compliance. By holding licenses and establishing minimum qualifications, private sector fire protection work quality is expected to improve dramatically. The types of licenses will also be expanded. Currently, the section only issues licenses for sprinkler and fire alarm work. Additional licensing requirements are planned for kitchen suppression and duct cleaning, smoke control and damper systems, and existing fire-rated assemblies.

References

[Maryland State Fire Prevention Code](#)

[Montgomery County Fire Safety Code Chapter 22](#)

[Universal Inspection Checklist – Fire Code Compliance \(2015 NFPA 1\)](#)

NFPA 1, Uniform Fire Code (copyrighted, not available for linking)

NFPA 101, Life Safety Code (copyrighted, not available for linking)

CC 5A.3 The prevention program has adequate staff with specific expertise to meet the goals, objectives and identified community risks.

Description

Fire Code Compliance is staffed by 13 inspectors who report to three field supervisors; a manager oversees the entire section. Personnel are assigned to work shifts that maximize their ability to conduct inspections during normal business hours. In addition, they also rotate stand-by periods during all non-business hours, so there is an inspector available to support MCFRS field operations to answer questions or handle complaints 24/7. FCC has a quality assurance program that includes multiple inspector evaluations each year.

Additionally, three Engineers report directly to the DPS Division Chief to provide technical advice. One engineer is dedicated to development review, fire department access, and fire department water supply management. This collaboration resulted in the Fire Department Access Performance-Based Design Guide in 2019.

Personnel assigned to the FCC Section are trained across the spectrum of code requirements. FCC management acknowledges the utility of some degree of specialized training in the fire code compliance discipline and supports that through training at the National Fire Academy, the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, and when appropriate, private sector training.

Appraisal

The current staffing and deployment model allowed FCC to meet its goal of inspecting occupancies licensed by outside agencies and high-risk buildings on an annual basis. Additionally, inspectors followed up on all buildings with known impairments to ensure fire and life safety systems were returned to functionality.

Plan

There is no plan to increase staffing, but FCC has laid out a strategy to ensure the program objectives are met through efficient scheduling and collaboration with MCFRS.

References

[DPS Residential Construction & FCC Compliance Division Org Chart](#)

5A.4 A plan review process ensures that adopted codes and ordinances determine the construction of buildings and infrastructure (such as hydrants, access, and street width).

Description

The Division of Residential Construction and Fire Code Compliance reviews all plans, and issues all permits. This division of DPS provides code management services for all disciplines of the building process. All electrical, mechanical, and fire protection systems permits must originate in a building permit to ensure that reviews under the various disciplines are coordinated.

In addition to the plan review process provided by DPS, one engineer is assigned specifically to site plan review. This engineer participates in the Maryland National Capital Park and Planning Commission (MNCPPC) review process. MNCPPC is the statutorily authorized development plan approval authority for all planned communities and large construction in Montgomery County. MNCPPC establishes the requirements, which are then enforced by the County government. The DPS engineer must approve fire department access plans, including road width, setbacks, systems connections access, and water supply at each stage in the process, from concept plan through site plan.

All plans for commercial building construction and fire protection systems must be submitted online through the DPS “eServices” module. The workflow electronically notifies the reviewers that plans have been submitted and allows simultaneous reviews. Plan reviewers can email customers with questions and comments and collaborate electronically on the plans themselves. Once plan review is complete, the workflow identifies the required inspections and inspectors are scheduled when work is completed. All parties, reviewers, designers, contractors, and inspectors have access to the approved plan set.

Appraisal

The present plan review system has generally been effective and produced quality outcomes for a safer environment. An ongoing shortfall in the current system is the ability for someone to submit incomplete plans. DPS plan reviewers can only review the plans that are submitted. Because of this it is possible to have individual systems reviewed without the context of interactions with other systems.

Also worth noting was a collaborative effort between DPS, MCFRS, the Department of Transportation, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission in 2018/19, which resulted in the development of a design guide that consolidated key fire department access requirements and performance-based design which would account for other interests, including pedestrian and bicycle safety and stormwater management. The intent of the guide is to assist engineers, developers, planners, etc. in designing communities that are accessible by MCFRS, while promoting safe intersections and streets.

Plan

DPS will continue to improve the plan review process as opportunities to do so present themselves.

References

[Fire Department Access Performance-Based Design Guide](#)

5A.5 The prevention program identifies the frequency that occupancies are inspected.

Description

There is no known, statistically valid methodology for determining a “frequency” of inspection that reduces fire risk holistically. The Montgomery County Fire Safety Code, Section 22-23 requires inspection " as often as may be necessary all buildings and premises, including such other hazards or appliances, as the director may designate for the purpose of ascertaining and causing to be corrected any condition which would reasonably tend to cause fire or contribute to its spread, or any violation of the purpose or provisions of this chapter and of any other law or standard affecting fire safety”.

Current FCC practices and methods ensure that the Fire Safety Code mandate is consistently met. Further, FCC recognizes that there is a point of diminishing return between the cost of inspecting every structure every year and the resulting decrement in risk. It is for this reason that FCC prioritizes inspections based on risk and in ways that maximize protective value.

Appraisal

The existing program has been sufficient inasmuch as it makes an effort to enforce existing codes and uses a risk framework to execute its mission. The FCC quality assurance and licensing programs have been successful in ensuring that code-based fire prevention efforts are provided according to established standards.

MCFRS has worked with FCC to establish a more effective relationship. This includes the assignment of an operations Battalion Chief to be a liaison to FCC. Most recently, this Battalion Chief has been involved in reviewing photo-voltaic systems and energy storage systems, albeit from a rather high level.

Plan

FCC will continue to work with MCFRS to deepen the existing relationship with regards to emerging hazards. Further, FCC and MCFRS are in the early stages of codifying an approach to code compliance that leverages MCFRS operational personnel as “field sensors” for FCC. In other

words, because MCFRS operational personnel are in the widest range of structures every day, with some minor guidance, they will be able to provide actionable intelligence to FCC about where the most persistent or more hazardous issues are. FCC and MCFRS will also work together to balance the allocation of resources to existing, more fundamental fire code issues and emerging threats in the built environment.

References

[Montgomery County Fire Safety Code, Chapter 22](#)

[FY23 Residential Construction and Fire Code Compliance Budget; scroll ¼ to view the performance measures](#)

5A.6 The agency sets specific, targeted, and achievable annual loss reduction benchmarks for fire incidents and fire casualties based upon the community risk assessment and baseline performance.

Description

Given the complex social, engineering, and environmental contexts that bound annual fire loss, it is a fool's errand to set a "specific, targeted and achievable loss reduction benchmark." A single incident involving uncontrollable human behaviors can overcome even the best designed system and lead to catastrophic loss.

Both FCC and MCFRS aim to control controllable threats/hazards based on realistic assessments of risk and a reasonable allocation of resources. For MCFRS, this notion is present in the principle of scaled response found in the Operational Doctrine Statement, especially as it relates to the notion of "defenses in depth." In this way, FCC enforcement, along with plans review, building design, and MCFRS response work together to build a system of layered protection against fire risk. This system is based on value propositions that consider not only the possibilistic thinking of statistical reductions, but also the cost, the decrement of risk, and the ability to leverage lower cost solutions to gain similar risk decrements.

Appraisal

The current FCC program for inspections, to include the methodology by which inspections are prioritized, has been sufficient to meet the goals of both FCC and MCFRS. While both agencies would likely agree that increased resourcing of FCC could lead to improvements, that proposition is difficult to prove conclusively.

Plan

The current relationship between FCC and MCFRS, while improving, would benefit from increased collaboration and perhaps by the integration of datasets. DPS, and more specifically FCC will continue to develop the existing relationship. FCC and MCFRS now have liaisons and are working on developing regularly scheduled meetings to discuss the present situation and plan for likely future situations.

References

[MCFRS Incident Response Policy Appendix A, Operational Doctrine Statement](#)

CC 5A.7 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program's impacts and outcomes, and to measure performance and progress in reducing risk based on the community risk assessment/standards of cover.

Description

FCC conducts periodic reviews of all its processes, to include the effectiveness of its personnel and programs. This work is not tied specifically to MCFRS' stated objectives, but rather, is based on existing codes and ordinances.

Appraisal

FCC has completed an annual program appraisal for MCFRS, as required for accreditation.

Plan

FCC will continue to complete annual program appraisals to help MCFRS maintain its accredited agency status.

References

[FY19 Formal and Documented Program Appraisal](#)

[FY20 Formal and Documented Program Appraisal](#)

[CY21 Formal and Documented Program Appraisal](#)

Category 5

Criterion 5B: Public Education Program (M3 Nesselt)

A public education program is in place and directed toward reducing community risks in a manner consistent with the agency's mission and as identified within the community risk assessment and standards of cover. The agency should conduct a thorough risk analysis as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a specific public education program.

Summary:

The MCFRS Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team has a strong, progressive, and effective public education program in place to address, reduce and mitigate community risks as identified in the department's Community Risk Assessment and Standards of Cover. MCFRS works hard to promote a culture of CRR innovation and deliver a cohesive strategy for effective community-based education, programs, and outreach services, consistent with the organization's mission and goals. The department's Community Risk Reduction (CRR) team is the lead for identifying public education initiatives, designing marketing strategies, developing, coordinating, delivering, and evaluating impactful CRR programs, campaigns, and initiatives. The department is community-focused and has adopted a comprehensive strategy and integration of fire and life safety education into the broader field of Community Risk Reduction.

The department's public education programs are developed, implemented, evaluated and appraised using a comprehensive program analysis. Public education programs include, but are not limited to, motor vehicle and child passenger safety programs, bike and pedestrian safety, fire safety and injury prevention for all ages, comprehensive fire and injury prevention programs and services for senior/older adults and those with special needs, participation in a national fire safety curriculum and program (Sound Off) for elementary school-age children, After the Fire initiatives and popular Home Safety Check program. Each of the department's programs include comprehensive review using information and data obtained through analysis of local, regional and national incident data and trends, incident reports, Fire and Explosive Investigation's reports, program progress and impacts.

Annually, CRR programs are prioritized and implemented based on the frequency and severity of the risk, resources available and the overarching priorities of the administration. The result of this analysis is the development and delivery of focused programs targeting the most vulnerable in the community and with elevated fire risk--- senior/older adults, children, the disabled and those who are low income and/or living in high-poverty areas. The community is on social media. The department and CRR team are active on social media and continue to extend its well-followed social media platforms and channels to provide timely and impactful safety messaging, news about department programs in the community, general safety, and risk reduction information to residents. The CRR Team regularly trains and partners with agencies and organizations that provide services to high-risk and vulnerable residents to amplify messages and deliver programs, education, and services in the community. These “force multipliers” help to create a culture of preparedness and fire-safe and resilient communities, aligned with the department’s mission to reduce risk.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5B.1 The public education program targets specific risks, behaviors and audiences identified through incident, demographic and program data analysis and the community risk assessment/standards of cover.

Description

The MCFRS CRR Section offers a large variety of free, public education programs that target specific risks identified through incident and trend analysis and vulnerabilities identified through the community risk assessment process. The primary focus of MCFRS is the young and the elderly, and many programs offered by CRR are tailored to address the needs of these demographics, including but not limited to car seat safety checks and installation; “Sound Off”, a national school-based program; a home safety and smoke alarm program; and a senior outreach program.

The department also relies on collaboration with other County departments and private and nonprofit organizations to reach target populations. *The CRR Focus: Diverse Communities* reference highlights these partnerships over the last few years, as well as the efforts taken to identify and work with those vulnerable populations.

Appraisal

The ability to implement effective programs starts with data intelligence. Over the last five years, there has been a departmental transformation to a model of risk assessment, prioritization, resource deployment, program measurement and evaluation. In 2021, MCFRS was selected by the NFPA to participate in a pilot program to build and refine a digital community risk assessment (CRA) tool powered by MySidewalk. The Community Risk Assessment Insight Generator 1300 (CRAIG 1300™) Dashboard aggregates community data, and has enabled our team to identify, assess, and use local demographic, geographic and economic information real-time. The CRAIG 1300™ Dashboard is aligned with the NFPA 1300 Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development and has emerged as an effective tool in a new era of CRR and predictive modeling. CRAIG 1300™ is now a permanent tool for MCFRS and has been further customized with three years of incident data, box areas, and Title I schools. In

December 2022, MCFRS' CRR manager and accreditation manager presented at a virtual "Kitchen Table" meeting, sharing the innovative ways the department is utilizing CRAIG 1300 (see references).

For years, tracking of CRR activities and using data to measure progress and direct educational efforts and impact was a time-consuming and challenging process due to the lack of reporting systems, systems that were not integrated, and reports that were not submitted or were incomplete. To address this, the CRR Section designed an innovative Mobile Data Collection App that functions across multiple platforms and has resolved many of these longstanding issues. The mobile app was developed for use with the Android, iOS and Windows platforms. and all the data collected by the mobile app is automatically geocoded and shared through a cloud-based dashboard. The app contains a library of downloadable PDFs and videos on topics such as car seat safety, laws, smoke alarm requirements, etc. The mobile app's dashboard gives managers filterable GIS capability, as well as customized CRR reports that aggregate data to show key metrics for smoke alarm installations, school-based and community programs, and senior engagement by city. The mobile app went through an iterative process with frequent updates based on continuous feedback and integration of improved features to ensure a high level of usability and functionality. The use of "big data" has been shown to be a highly effective CRR strategy for our department by using the mobile app and CRAIG1300 Dashboard to document programs and work in the community to determine output and measure performance and progress in reducing risk in the community.

The department's community risk assessment, the CRAIG 1300™ Dashboard, and the Mobile Data Collection App have been the key drivers that provide alignment and focus on populations and occupancies that represent the greatest risks in our community – and to firefighters. Access to accurate data allowed the department to make informed decisions about where to focus efforts and resources to reduce risk, integrate prevention and mitigation strategies, and produce measurable results to build a safer community.

Plan

Understanding the challenges faced by those in our community can help us better assist the people we serve. Vulnerability comes in many forms: economic, health, educational, social, and environmental. The CRR Planning Team will continue to review program analytics to ensure the target audience is reached and the desired effect is achieved. Monthly CRR team review and analysis meetings addressing planning, development, delivery and evaluation of CRR programs will continue to help us ensure that the team is strategically positioned to implement changes or adjustments real time to ensure successful achievement of performance indicators.

References

[Community Risk Reduction Focus: Diverse Communities](#)

[MCFRS NFPA 1300™ CRAIG PLUS Dashboard](#)

[NFPA CRR “Kitchen Table” Zoom Email Announcement – MCFRS Presenting](#)

[2022-12-14 MCFRS CRR/Accreditation Presentation for “Kitchen Table” Zoom \(offered to show how MCFRS meets this core competency PI\)](#)

[MCFRS CRR App Presentation](#)

[CRR App Report](#)

CC 5B.2 The program has adequate staff with specific expertise to address identified risks and meet the public education program goals, objectives.

Description

The MCFRS Community Risk Reduction section is currently staffed by a manager, two program managers, and a part-time senior outreach program manager (contract position). Regrettably, the CRR Team does not have the staff capacity to meet the current demand for CRR programs and services. Throughout the region, fire departments use a formula for minimum CRR staffing that consists of one CRR education specialist per 100,000 people. Montgomery County's current population is 1,057,236, yet CRR is currently allocated only 3.5 positions. Although the department believes that all personnel have an important role in community risk reduction, relying on on-duty first responders to deliver programs has been largely unsuccessful due to call volume.

For additional context, prior to a reorganization several years ago, MCFRS staffing in the CRR arena included the Fire Marshal, two PIO positions, three full-time program manager positions, one Senior Outreach position, and additional overtime, light duty and/or alternate placement MCFRS personnel to support the mission. The CRR section has not had light duty or alternate placement personnel assigned since 2019 and relies on a small allocation of overtime to help staff events, programs, and services that regularly exceed current CRR staffing resources.

All staff assigned in the CRR division are certified NFPA 1035 Life Safety Educators and maintain current skills and awareness of industry trends by taking courses offered by the United States Fire Administration and National Fire Academy, including Introduction to Strategic Community Risk Reduction, Vision 20/20 Community Risk Reduction training, Leadership and Public Education courses, Social Media training, and basic and advanced Public Information and Media Relations courses. A wide range of educational opportunities in the field of Community Risk Reduction and Fire and Life Safety Education are made available to staff and include seminars, conferences, webinars, workshops and online classes by organizations, advocates, and industry leaders. Training and educational opportunities include FEMA and NFPA training courses, Code Compliance updates, the Mid-Atlantic

Life Safety Conference, MFRI courses and Public Life Safety Educator Training seminars, National Fire Academy (NFA) courses, Vision 20/20 Conferences and on-going education and training with our public health partners. Car seat technicians attend a 4-day training class to achieve national certification, and recertification occurs every two years.

Education is not limited to the community, and risk reduction is a mindset of MCFRS and part of every firefighter's job. The CRR team has developed tools and strategies to advance the next generation of fire service leaders, and over the last few years, has trained MCFRS members at multiple levels, from recruit to company officer. This magnifies the messaging of the department and allows every member to serve as "CRR Champions" in their fire stations and the community, which magnifies the department's messaging.

Appraisal

Staffing was consistent throughout the reporting period; the CRR Section was severely understaffed to meet the demands of over one million residents. The pandemic presented its own set of challenges, and the CRR team took their programs virtual. Unfortunately, COVID significantly challenged the department's Car Seat program and staffing. The Car Seat program has historically had a large and diverse pool of certified technicians to support child passenger and car seat events. Since the start of the pandemic, the department experienced a significant decline in the number of technicians available to work events. Over the last year, the number of active technicians dropped from 98 to 39. Technicians' certifications lapsed, and it was (and continues to be) a challenge to attract or add new technicians due to the lack of required national training and certification courses offered. This had a direct impact on program operations and CRR staff being redeployed from scheduled CRR-related work to cover car seat appointments and events to avert cancelling and rescheduling appointments. Over 1,000 program evaluations are received annually from residents who have participated in the car seat program; the satisfaction rating averages over 99%. The most requested improvement? Increase appointment availability and reduce the 3-week wait time for an appointment.

In 2022, MCFRS was selected to participate in the pilot of a national school-based program called “Sound Off.” The program had immediate impact and resulted in almost a 50% increase in knowledge gained, determined through pre- (baseline) and post-testing of participants. However, Montgomery County Public Schools is the largest school district in Maryland and the 14th largest in the United States; there are 131 elementary schools and 35 are designated Title I Elementary Schools. The CRR team struggled to keep up with school demand requesting the very popular and effective program. Plans have been made to introduce a virtual curriculum and expand training to teachers to deliver the program in the future as a strategic approach to provide critical fire safety education to elementary school students until CRR and fire department staffing resources are available.

The department remained committed to the education and development of its employees. CRR staff regularly engaged in online learning classes, courses, conferences, seminars, webinars, educational programs, and other workforce development opportunities. Increased training opportunities ensured staff acquired new skillsets, and stayed up-to-date and aware of trending issues, technology, legislation, and industry best practices.

And during this reporting period, MCFRS recruits were the first in the nation to graduate with the USFA’s “Essentials to Community Risk Reduction” online course as part of their MCFRS firefighter graduation requirements. The recruits learned about the importance of data through introduction to the NFPA 1300 Standard on Community Risk Assessment and Community Risk Reduction Plan Development. Recruits also learned to access and use the CRAIG 1300™ Dashboard to complete assignments and learn more about the community’s profile data and their first-due station response areas. This innovative training fostered insights into the department’s “all-hazards approach,” as well as the diversity of our community and was recently featured by the NFPA in a national presentation.

Plan

It is projected that by 2040, one in five residents in Montgomery County will be 65 and older, and one in three will be 55 and older. Older adults represent one of the highest fire risk populations in the country. Complications associated with aging increase the likelihood

that an elderly person will unintentionally start a fire and at the same time, his/her chances of surviving the fire will be reduced due to aging. As the County's elderly population grows at unprecedented rates and more residents choose to "age in place," the fire toll will likely rise in direct proportion to the growth unless measures are taken to reduce the increased risk for older adults. MCFRS has a premier senior outreach program; however, it is only funded at a part time level. This is a critical opportunity for MCFRS to build upon. Two additional positions have been requested in the FY24 budget; at the time of this writing, it is unknown if they will be funded.

In the meantime, CRR will continue to explore opportunities to enhance the current staffing model to support the growing and diversified demand for critical fire and life safety programs. CRR staff will continue to build on its collaborative approach with partners from other departments, agencies, and organizations such as Meals on Wheels, community nurses, faith-based organizations, Rebuilding Together, and others that have trusted, well-established relationships with seniors and other high-risk populations. Continuing education will continue to be a high priority for CRR staff to ensure success and continuing innovation in the field of CRR.

References

[Org Chart Showing MCFRS CRR Section](#)

[CRR Section FY24 Budget Staffing Enhancement Request](#)

[Social Media Examples of MCFRS Recruits Awarded the NFA CRR Cert and Immersion](#)

[National Child Passenger Safety Certification](#)

[NFPA 1035 Certification](#)

5B.3 Programs are in place to identify large loss potential or high-risk audiences (such as low socio-economic status, age and cultural/ethnic differences, where appropriate), forge partnerships with those who serve those constituencies, and enable specified programs to mitigate fires and other emergency incidents (such as home safety visits, smoke alarm installations, free bicycle helmet programs, fall prevention programs, etc.).

Description

In MCFRS, the fire service exists not only to respond to emergency incidents, but also to proactively prevent or mitigate the impact of such incidents within our community. Fire departments are uniquely positioned to know their communities better than most other organizations. Firefighters and emergency medical services first responders see firsthand, whether through emergency calls or simply driving through the community daily, how people live, the needs they have, and the associated risks. Our department works diligently to identify large-loss potential and high-risk populations to ensure progressive public education and CRR programs are designed, available, and implemented for residents, businesses, and the community. Specific risks and high-risk audiences are identified by analyzing incident data, community data across multiple metrics in our CRAIG 1300™ Dashboard and mobile app, and through work with Fire Code Compliance and others to prioritize and deliver programs. As a learning organization, MCFRS believes in training and instilling the need for knowledge of the community in all its members. Recruits receive an extensive introduction to risk reduction, which includes application and use of CRAIG 1300, and CRR has recently introduced this during Company Officer Leadership Academy (COLA) sessions, so all members of the department have this information at their fingertips.

In addition to data analysis, CRR receives incident notifications/summaries (see reference) from the fire investigators, which helps risk reduction personnel evaluate the factors that led to the fire and determine an appropriate course of action; this includes follow-up with the homeowner for a home safety visit, or more elaborate after-the fire initiatives for an entire neighborhood (this is highlighted in the *Social Media Explains It All* reference document).

The CRR Section maintains a robust online library for the community to explore and receive preventative tips and information (e.g., safety checklists), and to learn more about and sign up for programs, such as File of Life and home safety inspections. Communicating with our citizens is a top priority. With a broad demographic to reach in Montgomery County, social media (Twitter, blog, etc) is a powerful tool being used to engage and inform the public about emerging issues/trends, ways to reduce risk from fires and other hazards, and insightful information about what MCFRS is doing in -- and for -- the community to keep them safe.

MCFRS also relies on and magnifies its risk reduction efforts and programs through partnerships (also highlighted in the *Social Media Explains It All* reference document). Partnerships with other County agencies, and private and non-profit organizations offer access to vulnerable populations that we otherwise may not have until it's too late.

Appraisal

The CRR team effectively used information from the field and the CRAIG1300 dashboard and the mobile app to identify high-risk populations and areas and deliver programs that would educate and prevent fires and emergency incidents. Incident reports and statistics drove initiatives such as “After the Fire,” home safety and inspection visits, and distribution of alarms and carbon monoxide detectors.

We could never do what we do solo – it’s all about the power of partnerships and building trust in the community. The CRR team worked tirelessly with community partners, stakeholders, advocates, and trusted members of communities – those community champions who can open doors to the most vulnerable and at highest risk in the community; those “hidden” or forgotten residents that will benefit the most from our services and programs. One of the most underutilized, yet most influential, organizations the CRR team partnered with has been faith-based organizations, which have been a critical partner in the success of our Home Safety Check Program for older adults and vulnerable people. Other partners included Rebuilding Together, Meals on Wheels, SafeKids, the American Red Cross, public health departments, County departments and agencies, veterans’ groups, after

school “Excel Beyond the Bell” programs for disadvantaged youth, car dealerships, the University of Maryland’s School of Nursing, Title I schools, Linkages to Learning, the Gilchrist Immigrant Resource Center, and many more. These key partnerships were the force multipliers that pushed our CRR mission and programs strategically into the community to meet the needs of high-risk residents.

Plan

MCFRS will continuously assess community risk and develop programs to address the most vulnerable populations and highest risk areas. The CRR Section has already started and will continue planning for programs that are provided in multiple languages and ensuring the community is aware of specialized fire safety equipment for deaf or hearing-impaired residents. The CRR team and the whole department will continue to forge relationships throughout the County that will allow us to expand our reach and hopefully, our outcomes.

References

[MCFRS Public Education Website – Seniors and/or Disabled](#)

[Fire and Explosive Investigation \(FEI\) Auto-Email Reports Examples](#)

[After the Fire Example Using Data to Target Specific Community/Issue](#)

[After the Fire Sample Ops Briefing](#)

[CRR Social Media Explains It All](#)

CC 5B.4 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program’s impacts and outcomes, and to measure performance and progress in reducing risk.

Description

MCFRS uses the accreditation requirement for an annual program appraisal as an opportunity for the respective programs to reflect on the previous year, review strengths and weaknesses, and challenges and opportunities. The annual appraisal is used by Planning to contribute to the annual report and the next year’s workplan.

In addition to the annual appraisal, the CRR Section regularly conducts appraisals (evaluations) of all programs to ensure they are consistent with the department’s goals and objectives. Performance, impact, and outcomes are measured in several ways. Using pre- and post-tests across all programs, the CRR team is able to rapidly assess knowledge gained; using evaluations and appraisals, we are able to measure performance and achievement of goals; and using analytics we are able to measure specific metrics. Each of these tools ensures progress and alignment to reduce risk in the community.

Appraisal

The CRR Section has completed the required annual program appraisal for each of the last five years. In 2022, the format of the appraisal was modified from a fiscal year appraisal to a calendar year appraisal, to better support the department’s planning efforts.

Plan

The CRR Section will continue to complete the annual program appraisal and support the department’s planning efforts. The Section will also continue to analyze program data, information, and outcomes to plan programs and ensure program objectives meet the needs of community and address the vulnerabilities that need to be managed.

References

[CY2021 Criterion 2B Public Education Program Annual Appraisal](#)
[FY2020 Criterion 2B Public Education Program Annual Appraisal](#)
[FY2019 Criterion 2B Public Education Program Annual Appraisal](#)
[FY2018 Criterion 2B Public Education Program Annual Appraisal](#)

Category V

Criterion 5C: Fire Investigation, Origin, and Cause Program (Capt. Ferguson/M3 Hoglander)

The agency operates an adequate, effective, and efficient program directed toward origin and cause investigation and subsequent classification of fires, explosions, and other emergency situations that endanger life or property to drive community risk reduction activities. The agency should conduct a thorough risk analysis as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a fire investigation program.

Summary:

All fires in Montgomery County are investigated to determine origin and cause. The initial investigation is conducted by responding firefighters. Per industry standards and current department policy, specially trained investigators must be utilized when initial responders cannot determine the cause, units in addition to the initial alarm are required, a death or injury has occurred, the fire is suspected or known to be incendiary, or there has been an explosion.

The Fire and Explosives Investigations (FEI) Unit is part of the Department's Special Operations Section. FEI provides 24-hour coverage for the County via a rotating shift-work schedule. All unit personnel receive fire and explosives investigations training and certification to industry standards. The unit is designated by the State of Maryland as a law enforcement agency. All twelve Investigators are appointed as Maryland Special Assistant State Fire Marshals, as well as sworn police officers in accordance with the standards of the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission. The Unit also serves as the Bomb Squad for Montgomery County and is certified by the Federal Bureau of Investigation to protect lives and property by rendering safe or preventing the criminal use of improvised explosive or incendiary devices. In addition, all members of the unit are required to maintain fire/rescue and emergency medical services certifications.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5C.1 The agency's fire investigation, origin, and cause program is authorized by adopted statute, code, or ordinance.

Description

The authority to investigate all fire and explosive incidents in the County is based on both State Law and County Code.

The authority of the MCFRS Fire & Explosives Investigations (FEI) Unit is limited to the authority granted to the State Fire Marshal or a full-time investigative and inspection assistant of the Office of the State Fire Marshal pursuant to Maryland Criminal Procedure Articles § 2-208 and 2-208.1. Criminal Procedure Sections 2-202 and 2-203 enumerate additional authority of FEI. Montgomery County Code Chapters 21 and 22 further define the authority of the Fire Chief to “organize and supervise a Fire and Explosive Investigation Section in the Fire and Rescue Service to investigate the cause and origin of any fire.” (Section 22-6). In 2018, Senate Bill 1037 expanded the definition of FEI investigator to include any individual who has been employed as a firefighter/rescuer for at least five years. State laws and County codes are monitored by the department and revisions to departmental policies and procedures are recommended when needed changes are identified.

Appraisal

The Annotated Code of Maryland defines FEI as a “Law Enforcement Agency” and its investigators as “Police Officers,” having the full authority to enforce the laws of the State of Maryland and the same authority granted to the State Fire Marshal. By definition, FEI personnel are subject to the regulations set forth in House Bill 670, Maryland Police Accountability Act of 2021 – Police Discipline and Law Enforcement Programs and Procedures and Montgomery County Expedited Bill 49-21. In 2022, MCFRS initiated a thorough review and assessment of the unit’s policies and procedures to ensure the department is in compliance with the many requirements of the legislation.

Plan

The Department will continue to assess the impact of the police accountability legislation on existing FEI processes and modify and develop policies and procedures that ensure FEI is in compliance with the statutes.

References

[Code of Maryland Regulations, Criminal Procedure Article 2-208](#)

[Montgomery County Code, Chapter 21-1\(c\), 3\(b\)](#)

[Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22-6\(f\), 8\(a\)1, 9](#)

[Montgomery County Council - Expedited Bill 29-16 \(09/2016\)](#)

[2018 Maryland Senate Bill 1037](#)

[Maryland Police Accountability Act \(2021; HB 670\)](#)

[Press Release: Montgomery County Expedited Bill 49-21](#)

CC 5C.2 The agency uses a systematic approach based on the scientific method to investigate all fire and explosion incidents. The investigation should determine or render an opinion as to the incident's origin, cause, responsibility and/or prevention to include the damage and injuries that arise from such incidents.

Description

The FEI personnel assigned to arson and fire investigation duties are required to obtain certification, based on National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards. The investigators are certified through the National Fire Service Professional Qualifications Board and/or the International Association of Arson Investigators. Learning and applying the scientific method is part of the certification curriculum.

Appraisal

Every fire investigator has received training and certification in conducting systematic investigations based on the scientific method. The Formal Training and Evaluation Program (FTEP) curriculum also supported the scientific approach. Challenges to investigative processes and industry changes require investigators to demonstrate proficiency in the scientific approach. Beyond initial training, this process is reinforced through quarterly Fire Investigations Training (FIT), an internal training program that focuses on the following JPRs per NFPA 1033: fire science, fire chemistry, thermodynamics, and fire methodology and technology. The FEI quarterly training program began in January 2021. This training is designed for fire and post-blast investigation techniques and applications.

Plan

FEI will continue to be guided by the scientific method for investigating and determining the origin and cause of all fires and explosions.

References

NFPA 921 (2021) & NFPA 1033 (2014), FEI Library (available onsite)

FEI SharePoint, which includes training materials/curriculum (available onsite)

CC 5C.3 The program has adequate staff with specific expertise to meet the fire investigation, origin, and cause program goals, objectives, and identified community risks.

Description

The authorized staffing level of the Fire and Explosives Investigations (FEI) Unit / Bomb Squad is twelve full-time Fire and Explosives Investigators and one full-time Investigations Technician. In addition to maintaining all firefighter/EMS training and certifications, all personnel must obtain and maintain fire investigator certification meeting NFPA 921 and 1033 standards. FEI Investigators are also certified as police officers by the Maryland Police Standards and Training Commission and must maintain all law enforcement-related certifications and requirements, including firearms proficiency and use of force training. The majority of the investigators are certified as Hazardous Device Technicians by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and are required to recertify every three years. The Investigations Technician is a certified fire investigator, meeting NFPA 921 and 1033 standards, and works a day-work schedule in support of Unit operations.

Appraisal

The authorized staffing level for FEI has not changed since 2015, when the number of investigators increased from 10 to 12. Two of the 12 positions have been vacant since 2021. Additionally, a shift captain was moved to a daywork position to address administrative needs, leaving nine investigators to handle a majority of the caseload. In 2022, a review of legislation impacting FEI resulted in the creating of a civilian Program Manager position to oversee the unit. Once filled, the manager will be responsible for evaluating all aspects of the unit, including staffing levels and deployment.

Plan

In addition to the two currently empty positions, another retirement is anticipated in the next two years. Therefore, the Department plans to begin the selection process for three candidates to attend the May 2023 Montgomery County Police Academy. A pilot program is being considered that will restructure the current work schedule. One of the goals of the pilot program will be to collect data to determine if the new schedule can increase unit

efficiency while decreasing the need for overtime and the workload on individual investigators, at least until such time that unit staffing is increased. The pilot scheduling program will begin in 2023. The new FEI manager is expected to start in the January/February timeframe and will evaluate workload and staffing, as well as many other aspects of the unit.

References

[FEI Dashboard - FY2021](#)

CC 5C.4 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program’s impacts and outcomes, and to measure performance and progress in reducing risk.

Description

A formal, documented program appraisal on fire investigation, origin, and cause is conducted annually by FEI. In addition, program impacts, outcomes, and effectiveness are also determined through policy-guided after-action reporting procedures.

Appraisal

MCFRS developed a formal process to document annual program appraisals following a peer team strategic recommendation from the 2013 reaccreditation effort. This formal annual process helps with documenting impacts, outcomes, and program effectiveness. During the first three years of this accreditation cycle, formal appraisals were submitted on a fiscal year schedule. It was determined to be more advantageous to change to a calendar year assessment, which began in 2021.

Plan

FEI will continue to use the formal Operations program appraisal process on an annual basis to capture program changes, inputs, outputs, and outcomes, as well as new initiatives, programmatic changes, and other objectives for the upcoming year. MCFRS is committed to reviewing the performance of all operational programs to identify improvements.

References

[CY2021 FEI Annual Program Appraisal](#)

Category V

Criterion 5D: Domestic Preparedness, Planning, and Response (A/C McDonald)

The agency operates an all-hazards preparedness program that includes a coordinated multiagency response plan designed to provide the community preparedness and resiliency in response to terrorist threats or attacks, major disasters, and other large-scale emergencies occurring at or in the immediate area.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) has established several departmental goals as part of the Master Plan. Two of these goals are “To maintain our operational readiness at all times for an all-hazards mission and response capability, including emergency medical services, fire suppression, technical rescue, water/ice rescue, aviation, fire-rescue hazardous material, and explosive device emergency services.” And “To seek and sustain tactical and strategic partnerships with other county, municipal, regional, state and federal agencies and private sector organizations to enhance our capabilities to prevent, respond to, and mitigate emergency incidents locally and regionally in keeping our homeland safe.” (Master Plan Section 2-4 p. 44 of 225, goals #4 and 8)

As part of these goals, MCFRS is part of the Emergency Management Group (EMG). The EMG is comprised of several County departments, agencies, and municipalities. The Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS), in conjunction with the EMG, collaborate to create and revise the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The (EOP) is a multidiscipline, all-hazards plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of major emergencies and disasters within the County. MCFRS is a primary agency in the (EOP).

As an agency supporting the EOP, MCFRS is required to develop and maintain resources for emergency response to all situations, including but not limited to hazardous materials, water rescue, structural/trench collapse, confined space, and rope rescue, in addition to the normal firefighting and emergency medical services capability.

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) is a signatory to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan (MAOP), which establishes the mutual aid agreement between all MWCOG participating jurisdictions. MCFRS also has automatic aid agreements with the federal installations in Montgomery County to provide mutual aid for all types of emergencies. We also partner with several local, state, and federal agencies to ensure that as an all-hazard agency, we have the resources to assist us in mitigating the emergencies we face. MCFRS is compliant with the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and has interoperability with other agencies that we partner with. MCFRS has processes in place to request additional resources from our partners, should we need them.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5D.1 The agency maintains a local emergency operations/all-hazards plan that defines roles and responsibilities of all participating departments and/or external agencies. The agency participates in maintaining and revising the plan with the AHJ.

Description

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) is a participating member of the Montgomery County Emergency Management Group (EMG). The EMG is comprised of several County departments, agencies, and municipalities. The Montgomery County Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS), in conjunction with the EMG, collaborate to create and revise the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The EOP “is a multidisciplinary, all-hazards plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of major emergencies and disasters within the County.” The plan is implemented when it becomes necessary to mobilize the resources of county departments, offices, and cooperating organizations as the Emergency Management Group (EMG) to save lives and protect property and infrastructure. The plan assigns major roles and responsibilities to departments, offices, and cooperating organizations.” (EOP letter of agreement page VII paragraph 1)

It also establishes the Concept of Operations for the County and organizes departments and agencies into seventeen Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) to facilitate planning and coordination for an effective emergency response. It is intended to be used in conjunction with established operational procedures, plans, and protocols.

Appraisal

MCFRS has been an active participant on the EMG. Personnel have participated in meetings, trainings, and exercises. MCFRS has trained personnel to staff the Emergency Operations Center ESF-04 desk and has maintained capacity with personnel qualified to staff this position. These personnel have been evaluated on a semi-annual basis through EOC exercises and activations. Personnel also participated in monthly drills on the use of WebEOC.

Plan

MCFRS will continue participating in the review and update of the Emergency Operations Plan, which is on a four-year cycle and should be coming up for review within the next year. The plan is being reviewed for content, accuracy and application by the members of the EMG. MCFRS personnel selected to work in the EOC will continue their review of the Annexes where MCFRS is a primary or support agency to ensure MCFRS is prepared to fulfill the roles and responsibilities stipulated in the plan. MCFRS will continue participating in EOC drills and training to keep personnel up to date and will ensure there is adequate capacity of personnel available to staff positions in the EOC.

References

[Emergency Operations Plan October 2017](#)

5D.2 The agency complies with the National Incident Management System, or other appropriate incident management system, and its operational methods are compatible with all external response agencies.

Description

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) “Certification Standards for Training Experience and Credentialing Requirements” requires all MCFRS Integrated Emergency Command Structure (IECS) certified personnel must complete NIMS-ICS training in compliance with Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5 and Section 21-8A of the Montgomery County Code. MCFRS is an all-hazards fire/rescue service organization that uses a modular and scalable standard Incident Management System (IMS). The IMS is based on the National Incident Management System (NIMS), which enhances the management of emergency incidents by establishing a single, comprehensive plan for responding to these incidents. MCFRS has an Incident Response Policy (IRP) to provide a set of policies and procedures common to all incidents using the NIMS structure for communications.

Appraisal

MCFRS command officers have successfully completed an annual competency evaluation to maintain IECS certification in accordance with the Certification Standards for Training Experience and Credentialing Requirements.

MCFRS's Incident Response Policy was adopted on July 1, 2017. All MCFRS personnel and our mutual aid partners were trained on the policy through an educational plan that included documents, videos and references to prepare for an Incident Response Policy test to ensure competence.

In addition, Appendix T of the Incident Response Policy requires after-action reporting by the incident commander if an incident meets the prescribed threshold. After-action reporting was intended to take the lessons learned and share them with other personnel and to serve as an aid in evaluating our incidents for improvement. Many of these lessons were

broadcasted on a YouTube channel hosted by our Public Safety Training Academy. This resulted in reaching a larger target audience, especially during the pandemic when in-person training was not possible.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow Certification Standards for Training Experience and Credentialing Requirements to ensure the competence of our IECS-qualified personnel.

As stated in the position statement of Appendix T of the Incident Response Policy: “The AAR process must focus on facts, lessons available for learning, and recommendations for future improvement.” This process will continue leading to a department-wide evaluation of our performance and will lend itself to the improvement of the department through our shared experiences.

Due to the success of the YouTube broadcasts, we will continue to reinforce our incident management and lessons learned through this media.

References

[MCFRS Policy 36-08am-Certification Standards for Training, Experience, and Credentialing](#)

[FCGO 07-16](#)

[IRP 24-01 Appendix B - Incident Command](#) page 1 of 12

[IRP 24-01 Appendix T - After Action Reporting](#)

[Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5](#)

[Integrated Emergency Command Structure \(IECS\)](#)

[Section 21-8A of the Montgomery County Code](#)

5D.3 The agency has a process in place for requesting additional resources not readily available in the community served.

Description

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) is a signatory to the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG) Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan (MAOP). This plan establishes the mutual aid agreement between all MWCOG participating jurisdictions. MCFRS also has entered into automatic aid agreements with the federal fire departments located on five federal facilities within the borders of Montgomery County. These agreements and plans specify the process for requesting and providing mutual aid assistance between the participating agencies. In addition, our Fire, Explosives, and Investigations unit (FEI) partners with the Federal Bureau of Investigations (FBI) and the Department of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). We are also a member of the Metrotech group in the National Capital Region (NCR) partnering with bomb squads from Fairfax County, Arlington County, Maryland State, Metro Transit Authority, District of Columbia, and Virginia State. We are a Federally accredited Bomb Squad and by Executive Order of the Governor, work with the Governor's Office of Homeland Security (GOHS), the Office of the State Fire Marshall's Office (OSFM), Maryland Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) – {currently called Maryland Department of Emergency management (MDEM)} and 5 other local bomb squads to provide safe, immediate, and effective response to bomb threats within the State of Maryland. The OSFM coordinates the mutual aid with other bomb squads and calls for the State.

Appraisal

The Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan is evaluated on a recurring basis to update the agreement and to address changes in jurisdictional capabilities. This evaluation is completed under the direction of the MWCOG Fire Chief's Committee. A revised plan was completed in 2021. The federal fire department automatic aid agreements are constantly evaluated by the MCFRS Federal Fire Chiefs Committee to ensure they are efficient and effective while addressing the needs of both parties to the agreement. FEI has responded to many bomb calls in other jurisdictions

around the State of Maryland in accordance with our agreement under the Governor's Executive order coordinated by the OSFM. FEI has attended and hosted monthly meetings with the Metrotech group to ensure all parties are coordinating efforts and keeping up-to-date with current protocols and training.

Plan

The MWCOG Fire Chief's Committee and the MCFRS Federal Fire Chiefs Committee will continue in their current practices of evaluating and updating their respective mutual aid and automatic aid agreements. FEI will continue to participate in the Metrotech group for the NCR and stay current with trainings, meetings, and agreements as revised. FEI will also continue to be a participating agency of the OSFM's local bomb squad group, which provides resources throughout the State of Maryland.

References

[Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan 2021](#)

[MCFRS -ATF arson task force agreement](#)

[Metrotech NCR agreement](#)

[Executive Order 01.01.2011.13](#)

5D.4 The agency has processes to record information and provide data on needed resources, the scope and nature of the event, and field resources deployed to local, state/provincial, and federal agencies.

Description

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) uses a records management system (RMS) that was developed by the MCFRS Information Technology Section. This system provides for the collection of incident-related information that will be reported to the Maryland State Fire Marshal and to the National Fire Incident Reporting System. MCFRS also has a process in place to release proper information to parties that request information for a specific event.

MCFRS Policy and Procedure 02-01-AMIII, titled Incident Reporting Requirements and Records Management, Section 5.A (page 2 of 13) requires that a unit report must be completed for every unit dispatched/ responded on an incident. The appropriate personnel must complete the Unit Report, Incident Report, EMS Report, and other related reports after the conclusion of an incident.

Additionally, MCFRS works with Montgomery County's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS) when events are active for an extended period. These may be large scale events or those that, just by nature of the call, would take several days and require resources from other agencies throughout the County. **MCFRS is responsible for documentation and reporting requirements of the Montgomery County Emergency Operations Plan.** OEMHS maintains a WebEOC platform for use by all County agencies for coordination and information sharing during multiagency events.

Appraisal

There have been several layers of responsibilities put in place to reinforce the use of the policy to ensure that accurate data is collected for incidents. The Station Captains have been required to check these reports daily to ensure compliance. The Battalion Chiefs or LFRD Chiefs review these reports to ensure reports were completed in a timely manner. MCFRS IT sections send out reports throughout the year and an end of year report that calls out missing reports that needed to be completed. This information was passed down to the

Battalion Chief or LFRD Chief through the Duty Operations Chief to ensure that reports were completed.

County agency representatives from each agency that were trained in WebEOC were required to participate in monthly exercises that OEMHS provided. This was set up to ensure that representatives maintained familiarity with the system. OEMHS has also facilitated bi-annual exercises that include the use of WebEOC, which has ensured competency and the exercise of the disaster management process used during major events.

Plan

The Department will continue to review compliance with the RMS policy. The Duty Operations Chief will hold all personnel on their respective shifts accountable for compliance with the policy.

MCFRS will continue to ensure that personnel are identified and trained in the EOC. These personnel will be required to maintain their participation in WebEOC exercises and bi-annual EOC exercises. Personnel will also be required to fill positions within the EOC during major events where the EOC has been activated.

References

[Emergency Operations Plan \(montgomerycountymd.gov\), PDF p. 10, #7 & 8; p. 31; p. 59 for roles and responsibilities.](#)

[RMS Policy_02_01AMIII_final_2_0_07_21_2016.pdf \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

[MCFRS Training Offering to Members Including WebEOC Training](#)

5D.5 The agency conducts and documents a vulnerability assessment and has operational plans to protect the agency’s specific critical infrastructure, including but not limited to materials, supplies, apparatus, facilities security, fuel, and information systems.

Description

MCFRS has identified and documented critical infrastructure and key resources (CI/KR) within Montgomery County using geographic information systems (GIS), including our own facilities and information systems (data and communications). MCFRS’ assessment of critical infrastructure within the County is based on the categories outlined in the National Infrastructure Plan and Presidential Policy Directive 21 and includes the following sectors: chemical, commercial, communications, manufacturing, dams, defense industry, emergency services, energy, financial services, food and agriculture, government facilities, healthcare/public health, information technology, nuclear, transportation and water and wastewater systems. MCFRS has also included houses of worship in its assessment of critical infrastructure.

MCFRS has several Fire Chief’s General Orders (FCGO’s) and Procedures to ensure protections of our systems, data, materials, apparatus, etc. FCGO 14-10 – Station, Apparatus, and Equipment security – addresses station security procedures including ensuring that apparatus bay doors are closed. The FCGO also discusses the responsibilities of the unit officer for apparatus and equipment security. Apparatus must never be left unattended or out of sight of MCFRS personnel while performing routine business to ensure there is no theft of apparatus or equipment and to report any suspicious activity. Information Bulletin 16-02 discusses how to report suspicious activity and when police must be notified immediately. FCGO 09-16 gives direction on securing portable data and devices. We also use multi-factor authentication as outlined in FCGO 22-01.

MCFRS also follows Montgomery County Administrative Procedures to ensure information security. Administrative Procedure 6-7 (AP 6-7) outlines our requirements and responsibilities to protection our information. Section 4.2. 1 (page 3 of 3) “Ensures users participate in the County's Information Security Awareness Training Program and comply

with the County's information technology security procedures including this administrative procedure and the Information Security Rules of Behavior Handbook and the Information Security System and Data Owners Handbook.”

Appraisal

The Department of Technology & Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS), formerly known as the Department of Technology Services (DTS), has mandated and tracked compliance with AP6-7. TEBS has also provided employees with multi-factor authentication (MFA) devices and has required MFA to access information that should not be public, and our passwords are stringent and must be changed frequently. MCFRS personnel participate monthly in security awareness training through TEBS. Personnel have been reporting suspicious activity appropriately through the SARS email outlined in information bulletin 16-02.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to reinforce all FCGOs that pertain to security of information, equipment, apparatus, stations, etc. As technology changes and TEBS makes more stringent requirements for personnel, new FCGO’s will be written and adopted to follow these requirements. We will continue to participate in the monthly security awareness training to ensure that it is fresh in the minds of all personnel and that security of information is one of our top priorities.

MCFRS will also continue to collaborate with our regional intelligence partners to ensure critical information is relayed in a timely manner

References

[MCFRS 2023 Critical Infrastructure & Key Resources Map](#)

[FCGO 14-10](#)

[MCFRS information bulletin 16-02](#)

[FCGO 09-16](#)

[FCGO 22-01](#)

[AP 6-6](#)

[AP 6-7](#)

[Information Security Rules of Behavior Handbook](#)

[Email regarding Station, apparatus, and equipment security](#)

5D.6 The agency has a documented continuity of operations plan, that is reviewed annually and updated at least every five years, to ensure essential operations are maintained.

Description

The OEMHS Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) includes requirements for the Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) for each department within Montgomery County. The (EOP) is a multidiscipline, all-hazards plan that establishes a single, comprehensive framework for the management of major emergencies and disasters within the County. The EOP is revised every five years by OEMHS with the support of all agencies that are part of the Emergency Management Group, of which MCFRS is a participant. The COOP is incorporated into Montgomery County's WebEOC platform so that all agencies can have access to the plans.

Appraisal

OEMHS facilitated a monthly WebEOC drill over the course of this rating period. Qualified MCFRS personnel, including the COOP coordinator, participated in these WebEOC drills, which helps maintain an ongoing review of the MCFRS COOP.

Plan

MCFRS representatives will continue to participate in monthly and yearly COOP management and exercises requirements.

References

[Emergency Operations Plan \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#) (PDF page 92/paper page 74)

MCFRS COOP extracted from WebEOC (uploaded to Category 5D folder)

5D.7 The agency has processes in place for intelligence sharing with other public safety agencies.

Description

MCFRS works in conjunction with many of our regional public safety partners within Montgomery County, the State of Maryland and the members of the Washington Metropolitan Council of Governments (MWCOC). All Senior Chiefs in MCFRS receive emails from a distribution list within the Maryland Coordination Analysis Center (MCAC), the Washington Regional Threat Analysis Center, and the Northern Virginia Regional Intelligence Center. MCFRS has access to several federal information sources through the Homeland Security Information Network (HSIN). MCFRS also has a Suspicious Activity Reporting (SAR) email that shares SAR reports with MCFRS Senior Chiefs, the Fire and Explosives Investigation Unit (FEI), and the Montgomery County Police Intelligence Unit.

MCFRS also participates and currently co-chairs the MWCOC Fire Intelligence sub-committee. This group includes MWCOC fire and rescue agencies, Washington DC Joint Terrorism Task Force (JTTF), and the National Counterterrorism Center. This committee acts as an information sharing platform, as well as a facilitator of training and education.

Appraisal

MCFRS used many sources to evaluate our progress in collecting and disseminating intelligence information. The SAR program has been used to collect information from personnel in the Department. The information received was sent to proper authorities to perform an investigation. This platform has seemed to serve us well in the past. As technology has changed over time, this platform may need to be re-evaluated.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to participate in the MWCOC fire intelligence sub-committee. We continue to maintain partnerships with MCAC and other intelligence agencies to ensure we have up-to-date information regarding threats to our communities and our systems. We will work with IT to explore other ways to share intelligence information in the future that is safe and secure.

References

[Information Bulletin 16--02 Suspicious Activity Reporting](#)

[MWCOG Homeland Security and Policy Webpage](#)

5D.8 The agency has a crisis communications or public information plan.

Description

MCFRS has both internal crisis communications, and external crisis communications in partnership with OEMHS. Internally, Microsoft Teams is our main avenue of communications during large incidents. We have a channel called FRS incident notification, which all Chiefs (Battalion Chief and above) and PIOs are included in. It ensures situational awareness about incidents or events and are updated throughout. It gives an opportunity for real-time communications with Chiefs on the scene and other members of the group. When incidents become large enough to warrant a call back of Chiefs to backfill field positions, we use a channel in MS Teams called FRS CCO Coverage. CCO stands for Certified Chief Officer and is part of Montgomery County Executive Regulation 16-05AM- Integrated Emergency Command Structure (IECS). In MS Teams there is also a differentiation between an incident/event or a major event. A major event can be anything from a weather event to a terrorist attack. MCFRS uses the FRS Major event plans channel to coordinate units and personnel and create plans for next operational period. MCFRS also uses “FirstWatch®” to alert personnel to apparatus that is being depleted below standard levels. For example, we have an EMS surge plan used for ensuring EMS coverage when transport units are at the hospitals for excessive amounts of time. If the department has a certain amount of transport units committed on incidents for a long period of time, personnel are notified through FirstWatch by way of email and text message.

Our external crisis communications are through use of social media through the Public Information Officer (PIO) or through OEMHS who alert the community regarding events through ALERT Montgomery.

Appraisal

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, our organization, like many others, were forced to find alternative ways of communicating and doing everyday business in general. We started with the use of Microsoft Teams and other platforms to conduct meetings. After that, several channels were added for incident notifications, etc. During the January 6th storming of the Capitol, we used MS Teams instead of making phone calls from the FRS Operations

Center where Senior Staff and support staff monitor the events and adjust the operational plan based on how the event unfolds. We needed a way for all personnel in the field and providing mutual aid to DC and all support and senior staff to be informed. The platform of MS Teams also helped us capture information and timelines for our follow-up documentation. It proved to be a great tool for us to use beyond the pandemic.

Plan

We plan to continue using MS Teams and other platforms for internal communications, as it provides the ability to send a timely message throughout the department so personnel can stay informed of events. We will look for new ways to use MS Teams as an avenue for capturing information to refer back to for future planning and for documentation. We continue to closely partner with OEMHS to ensure that the community is informed of events.

References

[Executive Regulation 16-05am.pdf](#)

[Screenshots: MCFRS Use of FirstWatch® for Resource-Incident Capacity Notifications
FireWatch® Webpage](#)

[Email from Operations Division Chief Outlining MS Teams for Notifications/Sit.Aware
Alert Montgomery information](#)

CC 5D.9 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program’s impacts and outcomes, and to measure performance and progress in reducing risk.

Description

The department conducts a formal appraisal for Domestic Preparedness, Planning, and Response. Much of our appraisal centers around using Appendix T of the Incident Response Policy as the baseline for evaluating performance and to identify gaps. We then use our lessons-learned program and the educational outreach programs of the training academy to disseminate the lessons.

Appraisal

As a new criterion in the 10th edition, MCFRS completed its first appraisal for this area in 2022 (for CY21).

Plan

MCFRS will continue to document the impacts and outcomes of this program as events occur that fall within the framework of this program.

References

[5D Domestic Preparedness Appraisal](#)

[Appendix T. Incident Response Policy](#)

[Gaithersburg Plane Crash From the Command Post](#)

[Lyttonsville Significant Incident Review](#) (link removed per policy)

[Quince Orchard Building Explosion Boss Talk](#)

Battalion Chief SharePoint (access required per Chief Bailey)

Category V

Criterion 5E: Fire Suppression Program (D/C Bailey)

The agency operates an adequate, effective, efficient and safe fire suppression program directed toward controlling and/or extinguishing fires to protect the community from injury or death and reduce property loss. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency should conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a specific fire suppression program and support the overall risk reduction strategy.

Summary:

MCFRS operations are adequate, effective, efficient and safe. Fire suppression is guided by the Incident Response Policy and the following appendices: Structure Fires, Incident Command, Water Supply, and Highrise Fires. MCFRS delivers fire suppression through 35 engine companies focused on the "fast water/coordinated ventilation" framework with aerial apparatus, EMS units, and heavy rescues providing support functions.

The MCFRS approach puts significant emphasis on the rapid application of water to burning surfaces as the primary methodology for ensuring the continued survival of occupants who may be trapped and for reducing risk for firefighters. All components of our fire suppression methodology are consistent with NFPA and fire suppression research.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5E.1 **Given the agency’s community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), pumping capacity, apparatus and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of fire suppression incident(s).**

Description

MCFRS meets its staffing objectives primarily by ensuring that each of the minimum staffing positions is staffed at the beginning of each shift, even if that requires forced overtime. Secondly, MCFRS relies on volunteer staffing on nights and weekends to fill the gaps left when some career personnel go home at night.

MCFRS fully staffs 35 engine companies with a standard staffing of four personnel. Most engines have a 750-gallon booster tank and a 1500 GPM pump. MCFRS dispatches 5 engines, 2 aerials, 1 rescue squad, 1 EMS unit, and 2 command officers on all reported high-risk structure fires within areas served by fire hydrants. For special risk reported structures fires in areas without hydrants, an additional engine and three tankers are added, and for reported high-rise fires, a third aerial ladder truck is added. For low-risk suppression incidents, 1 engine is deployed and for moderate risk incidents, 2 engines and one special service (aerial or rescue squad) are deployed.

MCFRS has conducted a Programmatic Critical Task Analysis by Risk Class for 1st Due & Effective Response Force (ERF), which is documented within the Virtual Community Risk Assessment: Standards of Cover and meets response time objectives for fire suppression risk classifications.

Appraisal

During the five-year appraisal period between fiscal year (FY) 2018 and FY 2022, it was determined through CFAI data charts reporting, MCFRS had eclipsed its previously established total response time benchmark target in rural density zones for the arrival of the first-due engine to Fire Full Assignments in Non-Hydranted box areas (Special Risk). The

original benchmark was 0:15:00 and the five-year baseline is 0:14:34. This analysis also determined an update to the travel time benchmark for this risk category for first arriving engine was also warranted. The original first arriving engine travel time benchmark was 0:10:00 but the new 90th percentile performance is 0:09:58. In addition, the ERF for this risk classification in rural zones was eclipsed. To this end, the Fire Chief issued a memorandum on October 7, 2022, outlining updated benchmark targets for this and other risk categories and classifications.

Plan

MCFRS will be reviewing its approach to ventilation as a mechanism for the continued survival of occupants who may be trapped, and based on that review, may add ventilation equipment to engines, in addition to what is carried on aerials and rescue squads. MCFRS will also be exploring whether the 750 gallon/1500GPM booster tank to pump capacity is the right fit for the actual fires that we are running.

References

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01 Incident Response Policy](#)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix D Structure Fires](#)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix E High Rise Fires](#)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix F Water Supply Operations](#)

[Virtual CRA/SOC](#)

See page 173 for Critical Task Analysis, page 215 for minimum staffing, and beginning on page 216 CFAI Data Charts & Baseline and Benchmark Statements

[October 7, 2022: Fire Chief Memorandum on New Performance Benchmark Targets](#)

[25-08AMII, MCFRS Policy and Procedure, Apparatus Staffing Policy](#)

CC 5E.2 The agency uses a standardized incident command/management system, which is supported by agency policy and training programs.

Description

The County Code requires MCFRS to use a standardized incident management system (IMS). Federal law requires that the IMS be NIMS-compliant. Furthermore, MCFRS policy outlines how the incident command function is deployed locally.

Appraisal

MCFRS has effectively used our NIMS-based IMS to manage a myriad of incidents and events. Chief officers are regularly trained, and their competency is evaluated annually. Internal review processes, including “chief officer accountability” meetings are held where Chief Officers give an account of their action to a panel of supervisors.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to meet this core competency primarily by ensuring adherence to the existing incident management framework and secondarily by continuing with the annual competencies program.

References

[Incident Response Policy Appendix B Incident Command](#)

[Chapter 21 County Code](#) (see Section 21.8 and 21.8A on pages 14-15)

[Policy & Procedure 23-05AMIII: Chief Officer Professional Development and Improvement](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation 16-05AM IECS](#)

CC 5E.3 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impacts, outcomes, and effectiveness of the program, and to measure its performance towards meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

A formal and documented programmatic appraisal is conducted annually by Operations Section leadership, which includes the fire suppression program. In addition, program impacts, outcomes, and effectiveness are also determined through policy-guided after-action reporting procedures.

Appraisal

MCFRS developed a formal process to document annual program appraisals secondary to a peer team strategic recommendation from the 2013 reaccreditation efforts. This formal annual process has helped with documenting impacts, outcomes, and program effectiveness. MCFRS has also implemented formal policy to guide when incident after-action reporting (AAR) will occur. AAR is not a new concept for MCFRS, and this policy has solidified expectations on when and who conducts hot washes, initial after-action reporting, and significant investigative reporting.

Operations Section leadership values both the formal written program appraisals and AAR's, although during the appraisal period, has not linked AAR lessons learned to the formal written annual appraisals.

Formal appraisals were submitted on a fiscal year schedule, and it was determined to be more advantageous to change to a calendar year assessment, which began in 2021.

Plan

Continue mandating the use of the formal documented Operations annual program appraisals and after-action reporting. Within the next calendar year, determine the feasibility and value of adding AAR lessons learned to the annual and documented program appraisal process.

References

[FY18 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see fire suppression beginning on PDF page 36)

[FY19 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see fire suppression beginning on PDF page 16)

[FY20 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see fire suppression beginning on PDF page 17)

[CY21 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see fire suppression beginning on PDF page 8)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix T: After Action Reporting](#)

Category V

Criterion 5F: Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Program (B/C Kaufman)

The agency operates an EMS program with a designated level of out-of-hospital emergency medical care that protects the community from injury or death. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency should conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for a specific EMS program and support the overall risk reduction strategy.

NOTE: EMS is a major element of many fire service agencies. Fire service personnel are frequently the first responder to medical emergencies. For that reason, emergency medical response can be organizationally integrated with fire suppression activity. Care should be exercised not to create a priority or resource allocation conflict between the two program activities. Agencies that only provide first responder services must also complete this criterion.

Summary:

The MCFRS provides all emergency medical services (except routine inter-facility transports) within the borders of Montgomery County. MCFRS engages in a robust program of measurement and assessment to ensure that the agency is responding to the EMS needs of its community. During the five-year rating period, MCFRS expanded ALS services, added BLS transport capacity, built out a robust quality management team, and refocused the mobile integrated health program to respond to follow-up needs of our patients. The EMS Section (Emergency Medical and Integrated Healthcare Services or "EMIHS") focuses on quality of care through constant review of specific data metrics. EMIHS members actively contribute to the body of prehospital medical research and regularly present at scientific conferences.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5F.1 Given the agency's community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), apparatus, and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of emergency medical incident(s).

Description

MCFRS EMS responses include high-risk ALS2, moderate-risk ALS1, low-risk BLS Hot, and lowest-risk BLS Cold. The agency is meeting emergency deployment objectives for these programs. Daily and effective staffing levels are maintained and mandated through the Apparatus Staffing Policy. Based on a granular total response time (TRT) analysis for each type and magnitude of EMS incidents and contained within the Virtual Community Risk Assessment: Standards of Cover (CRA/SOC) manual, total response time performance for first arriving unit and effective response force (ERF) are being met. Additionally, MCFRS continues to maintain adequate fire-rescue stations, apparatus, and equipment to help it achieve its vision, mission, guiding principles and values, and goals and objectives, all of which are articulated within the Master Plan.

Appraisal

MCFRS strived to ensure ALS resource availability for high and moderate risk ALS incidents. Years ago, the department began taking steps to move the ALS capabilities off of the transport units to other response vehicles; this is an ongoing and long-term goal. The department also worked toward assigning an ALS capability to every station. As of April 15, 2018, this was achieved by adding ALS service to E702 in Takoma Park and E720 in Bethesda. An analysis of two years of data before and after the implementation of these companies confirmed the decreased total response times to reported high and moderate risk ALS incidents of the first arriving paramedic. It should also be noted many of the strategies, both current and future, employed to assure continued compliance with this core competency are transparently documented in the Virtual Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover, the Master Plan, tied to the annual budget via performance measures, and within the MCFRS Annual Report.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to monitor multiple performance metrics and make adjustments to system delivery as needed.

References

[Two-Year Before & After Analysis 1st Arriving ALS in FS2 & FS20 RMZ's](#)

[2020 MCFRS Annual Report](#) (see page 27 for ALS performance measures)

[Virtual MCFRS Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover](#) (see EMS risk category and classification data tables, baseline and benchmark statements and reporting the gap analysis beginning on page 241)

[MCFRS Master Plan – see Pages 5-2 to 5-4 and 5-8 to 5-9 re: ALS deployment changes](#)

[FY22 Operating Budget for Operations Division](#) (see program performance measures)

[Apparatus Staffing Policy](#)

CC 5F.2 The agency has standing orders/protocols in place to direct EMS response activities to meet the stated level of EMS response including determination criteria for specialty transport and receiving facility destination.

Description

The Montgomery County Police PSAP processes 911 calls using the Priority Dispatch ProQA system for all disciplines. The typical tiered Medical Priority Dispatch System (MPDS) stratified the EMS incidents primarily as ALS2, ALS1, BLS Hot or BLS Cold. EMS clinicians respond and provide medical care according to the Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services. These protocols include the criteria for specialty transport and receiving facility capabilities.

Appraisal

Using a customized Determinant Analysis Report, the MCFRS conducted a regular (every six months) comprehensive historical review of the dispatched EMD code with the associated EMS response. Using actual patient data, the intention of these reviews was to match the most appropriate future EMS response with the EMD code. This allowed several EMD codes to safely be changed to BLS Cold responses. Fire Chief's General Order 19-10 was subsequently issued outlining the BLS Routine, i.e., Cold policy. It is noted MCFRS has not and will not measure response time as part of the total response time continuum to BLS Low Risk Cold/Routine incidents.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to conduct regular (every six months) comprehensive reviews of the ProQA EMD code and the associated dispatched EMS resources. The intention is to gradually and safely reduce the number of emergency responses using historical data regarding the use of Potentially Life-Saving Interventions (pLSIs) presented by Dr. Jarvis et al.

References

[Fire Chief's General Order 19-10 Routine BLS Responses & Transports](#)

[Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services](#)

[Medical Priority Dispatch System](#)

[Dr. Jarvis paper – potentially life-saving interventions](#)

[Screenshot of Determinant Analysis Report](#)

Cold Response Call Type Report (uploaded to folder)

5F.3 The agency annually reviews and updates, as needed, orders/protocols and engages external stakeholders in the process.

Description

EMS clinicians provide medical care according to the Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services and MCFRS Clinical Practice Guidelines (CPGs) which provide specific guidance for EMS clinicians.

Appraisal

In each of the last 5 years, MCFRS played an integral role in the development of new and revised content for the Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services. Through constant process review, MCFRS identified several opportunities for improvement at the state level. For example, MCFRS presented and was successful at adding the following protocols in the most recent (2022) version:

- Narrowed the indication and removed the consultation requirement for the administration of sodium bicarbonate in cardiac arrest resuscitation
- Added the critically unstable patient protocol
- Replaced haloperidol with droperidol
- Added lateral uterine displacement for pregnant cardiac arrest patients

In July 2021, MCFRS issued a Fire Chief's General Order which empowered the MCFRS Medical Director to issue local clinical guidance. These CPGs supplemented the Maryland Medical Protocol.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to be a presence at the Maryland state protocol review committee which meets every other month and prepares a new protocol version every year. Through continuous system monitoring the MCFRS Medical Director will identify the need for local clinical guidance and issue CPGs accordingly.

References

[Maryland Medical Protocols for Emergency Medical Services](#)

[Clinical Practice Guidelines](#)

[Clinical Practice Guideline FCGO](#)

[Podcast with the state medical director, Dr. Chizmar, about protocol development](#)

CC 5F.4 The agency has online and offline medical control.

Description

MCFRS EMS clinicians can receive online medical direction as needed and when required by protocol via radio or telephone patch from local Emergency Department physicians through the statewide Emergency Medical Resource Center (EMRC). All Maryland ED physicians are certified by the state to provide online medical direction (“Base Station Physicians”). Offline medical direction is provided by the MCFRS Medical Director. The MCFRS Medical Director provides medical oversight for EMS clinical care, EMS dispatch, and EMS training.

Appraisal

The state EMRC radio system provided adequate radio coverage for online medical control. MCFRS maintained a separate system of 800 MHz radio channels with all county and close surrounding receiving hospitals for hospital notification purposes and as a backup so that any lapse in EMRC coverage has not affected the ability of clinicians to obtain online medical direction. MCFRS participated in the state base station review process and maintained good relationships with our local hospitals. The MCFRS Medical Director worked full-time hours and was available on short notice for offline medical direction.

Plan

MCFRS will maintain good working relationships with the state EMS office and our local hospital partners. MCFRS will maintain the 800 MHz radio channels for hospital notification and consultation. MCFRS will maintain the contract with an EMS Medical Director.

References

[Maryland Medical Protocol – Communications Section](#)

[COMAR Chapter 06 – Base Stations](#)

[Base Station home page](#)

[MCFRS Radio Reference and Fleet Maps](#)

CC 5F.5 The agency creates and maintains a patient care record, hard copy or electronic, for each patient encountered. This report records a provider impression, patient history, data regarding treatment rendered, and the patient disposition. The agency must make reasonable efforts to protect reports from public access and maintain them as per local, state/provincial, and federal records retention requirements.

Description

MCFRS completes an electronic patient care report for each patient encounter. These reports are entered into the statewide electronic Maryland EMS Data System (eMEDS®), which is maintained by MIEMSS. Use of eMEDS® is required by Maryland regulations. In addition, all MCFRS personnel are mandated to follow incident reporting procedures as outlined in MCFRS Policy Number 02-01-AMIII which establishes procedures on report writing requirements, data entry, system security, and release of incident documentation. This policy includes patient care reporting requirements.

Appraisal

MCFRS has actively participated at the state level to ensure that the eMEDS® system is effective in collecting the right information while not being onerous for providers to use. MCFRS had a near perfect report completion rate. System security was maintained both at the state level and locally in a secure data warehouse by the MCFRS Information Technology Section.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to be heavily engaged at the state level to ensure that patient care reports are collecting the appropriate amount of information without being cumbersome for EMS clinicians. MCFRS will continue to monitor report completion on a daily basis to keep up with our policy compliance.

References

[MCFRS Records Management Policy](#)

CC 5F.6 The agency has a program to maintain compliance with privacy laws such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) or equivalent (e.g., Canada's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy) that meets federal and state/provincial guidelines. All personnel are trained in HIPAA/FOIP regulations and procedures.

Description

MCFRS is compliant with federal, state and county HIPAA regulations. All personnel who handle medical records must attend initial HIPAA training and an updated training is required annually. MCFRS restricts access to only those with necessity and maintains an audit trail to view those who have accessed medical records. The MCFRS records custodian is a full-time employee responsible for handling requests for incident, unit, and medical reports.

Appraisal

In July 2022, Montgomery County issued Administrative Procedure 8-2 regarding HIPAA compliance. MCFRS has restricted access to EMS reports such that supervisors cannot view the reports of subordinate personnel, and supervisors cannot determine if patient care reports have been completed. While these access restrictions reduced the likelihood of unauthorized access to medical records, they also prevented supervisors from performing quality reviews. This resulted in quality management personnel being burdened with all of the report review, and simple bandwidth makes it impossible to perform chart review on all but the highest acuity cases.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to be compliant with HIPAA regulations. MCFRS will work toward a solution that will allow supervisors to view the medical reports for subordinate personnel. The MCFRS Records Management policy will be modernized to reflect updated business practices.

References

[AP 8-2 cover letter](#)

[AP 8-2](#)

[MCFRS Report Requests](#)

[MCFRS Records Management Policy](#)

5F.7 The agency has a quality improvement/quality assurance (QI/QA) program in place to improve system performance and patient outcomes including provisions for the exchange of patient outcome data between the agency and receiving facilities.

Description

MCFRS has a model and robust quality management program governed by the MCFRS Quality Management Plan which exceeds the requirements of state law. The program consists of a Battalion Chief (currently 20 hours/week) who supervises a full-time quality assurance officer and a full-time quality improvement officer (both Captains). There are several uniformed assistant quality assurance officers who assist with case work and remedial training. QA concerns are tracked in a modernized secure database via sequential number. There are also several process owners who perform 100% case review and data analysis on specific patient interactions (STEMI, cardiac arrest, stroke, and advanced airway management). The QA team handles multiple requests per week from clinicians for patient outcome data. MCFRS tracks performance against standardized core measures and publishes these data in a monthly dashboard.

Appraisal

During this review cycle, MCFRS made several major quality management enhancements. The database that tracks QA concerns was modernized from an access database to a customized and streamlined software solution. MCFRS continued working with FirstWatch® by building multiple real-time surveillance triggers, adding FirstPass protocols, and adding Academy Analytics to analyze t-CPR times. Staffing was increased with the addition of the Quality Management Battalion Chief. MCFRS issued and updated the Quality Management Plan through MCFRS policy. MCFRS added a customized and revolutionary process to solicit and examine customer satisfaction by texting patients the day after the interaction with EMS clinicians. MCFRS subscribed to the regional health information exchange, CRISP. MCFRS contributed to the body of EMS research through several peer reviewed publications, scientific conference speaking engagements and abstract presentations. MCFRS improved communications with field clinicians through the distribution of “5-minute drills” and the podcast “Hot Topics in EMS”. Finally, MCFRS

encouraged the HIE, CRISP, and the state to automate the data exchange for patient outcomes.

Plan

MCFRS will persist with the continuous quality improvement cycle. MCFRS will continue working with state to incorporate outcome data into the patient care report system.

References

[Quality Management Plan](#)

[Monthly Dashboards](#)

5F.8 The agency has implemented or developed a plan a cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and public access defibrillation program for the community.

Description

MCFRS does not directly administer a public access defibrillation program nor does it offer CPR classes to the public. All high school students in Maryland are required to have CPR training prior to graduation. The public access AED program is administered by the state of Maryland. After a cardiac arrest resuscitation, MCFRS and local hospitals report into the CARES registry which requires information about CPR start times and defibrillator use.

Appraisal

MCFRS participated in several community outreach events which supported the importance of learning first aid and hands only CPR. MCFRS participates in the county fair each August in Gaithersburg, MD. This year, MCFRS partnered with a local hospital at the fair.

Plan

MCFRS will take a lead role in efforts to train the county workforce in first aid and hands only CPR modeled off of the Albuquerque, New Mexico program.

References

[State AED Program](#)

[State education requirements](#)

[Albuquerque, New Mexico program](#)

CC 5F.9 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impact, outcomes and effectiveness of the program and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS is constantly appraising the EMS program. In addition to the monthly dashboards and CQI program, the EMS Section prepares and annual appraisal.

Appraisal

In 2021, the annual reports were changed from fiscal year reporting period to a calendar year reporting period.

Plan

MCFRS will continue a formal and documented annual EMS program appraisal.

References

[FY18 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see EMS 5F beginning on PDF page 55)

[FY19 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see EMS 5F on PDF page 33)

[FY20 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see EMIHS 5F beginning on PDF page 29)

[CY21 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see EMIHS 5F beginning on PDF page 12)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix T: After Action Reporting](#)

Category V

Criterion 5G: Technical Rescue Program (B/C Hinkle)

The agency operates an adequate, effective, efficient and safe technical rescue program directed toward rescuing the community from any life-endangering causes (e.g., structural collapse, vehicle accidents, swift water or submersion, confined space, cave-in, trench collapse). If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency must conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for specific technical rescue programs and support the overall risk reduction strategy. Agencies that only provide first responder services must also complete this criterion.

Summary:

As part of Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) all-hazards incident response capability, the department trains all members to the awareness level of the *NFPA 1670: Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incident* for the following disciplines: rope rescue, confined space search and rescue, vehicle search and rescue, trench search and rescue, surface water search and rescue, and swift water search and rescue. Additionally, MCFRS offers training so certain groups are certified to operate at the operations level and several specialty teams are trained to the technician level.

The Technical Rescue Team (TRT) is tasked with providing technician level capabilities for rope rescue, structural collapse, confined space, vehicle, animal technical rescue, machinery, trench, and tower search and rescue. Similarly, the Swift Water Rescue Team (SWRT) provides technician level response capabilities for helicopter, surface water, swift water, ice, watercraft, and flood search and rescue.

Additional operations level response to these technical rescue incidents are staggered throughout the county based on risk and hazard assessment.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5G.1 Given the agency’s community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), apparatus, and equipment deployment objectives for each type and level of risk of a technical rescue incident(s).

Description

To meet the identified objectives, MCFRS utilizes a “blended” response model and training program(s). During initial training, all MCFRS members receive awareness level training in rope rescue, confined space search and rescue, vehicle search and rescue, trench search and rescue, surface water search and rescue, and swift water search and rescue. Several of these levels include an annual refresher to meet the requirements set forth by various regulatory authorities (OSHA, MOSH, etc.).

Select stations and/or personnel receive operations level training based on the equipment/apparatus assigned to their stations. An example of this would be the “operations” boat stationed at Fire Stations 25, 29, 31, and 40. Personnel assigned to these stations and expected to operate the watercraft receive additional training providing them operations level training for ice rescue and flood water, as well as technician level training for surface water, and watercraft search and rescue. The number of qualified personnel trained to these levels varies by day and shift with no specific established staffing levels.

Personnel stationed at Fire Stations 10, 30, and 14 are trained to the technician level in ice, flood water, surface water, watercraft, and swift water search and rescue. In total, between these stations, at least ten personnel are on duty at any given time and trained to these technician levels. If severe weather is forecast for the region or if events are long duration, other personnel with technician training may be available throughout the county and available for consolidation and up-staffing of additional water rescue assets.

Personnel assigned to Fire Stations 25, 29, and 31 are trained to the technician level in rope, structural collapse, confined space, vehicle, animal technical rescue, trench, machinery, and tower search and rescue capabilities. Fire Stations 29 and 31 have an established minimum

staffing of five technician-level personnel each, to include one technical rescue officer (TRTo) each. Fire Station 25 does not have a minimum staffing level but regularly provides additional technician level personnel. On a daily basis, several additional technician level personnel are available throughout the county and can be used to augment response capabilities. As a final force multiplier, MCFRS is the sponsoring agency for Maryland Task Force One (MD-TF1), one of the nation's 28 Urban Search and Rescue Teams. This team has many additional people with technician level training from MCFRS, as well as mutual aid partners available for long duration or intensive technical rescue incidents.

Appraisal

An evaluation of call response data shows an increase in volume for TRT related incidents, approximately 64%, between 2020 and 2022, which may be attributed to extended, multi-day operations.

The volume of water-related events in 2022 was consistent with 2021, 130 and 137, respectively. The cause of this reduction can be hard to account for, since it may be attributed to several factors such as decreased severe weather or the positive impact of the Water Outreach program.

A 30-day review of 2021 staffing schedules was conducted and found that, on average, FS 29 and 31 fielded a combined TRT staffing of 13.6 full team members and 1.3 trainees on a daily basis. This same time period found that FS25 was able to provide an average of an additional 4.5 TRT members and 1.1 TRT trainee daily. The same 30-day evaluation found an additional non-consolidated TRT personnel average of 11.2 members per day. Compared to an identical assessment from 2020, which found the combined staffing to be 12.7 full team members and 2.3 trainees. Support staffing from FS25 was 3.1 full members and 1.9 trainees per day. Supplemental field staffing was 7.6 per day. As expected, the number of trainees in 2020 was higher than in 2021. As time progresses, personnel move from trainee to full status. That is consistent with the increase in full team members in 2021.

A review of swift water team staffing at FS10, 14, 30, and non-consolidated over a 30-day period in 2021 found that FS10 and F14, and FS30 fielded a combined 13.2 full qualified SWRT members less than one trainee daily. Non-consolidated personnel provided another 1.5 full SWRT members on average. As compared to the same time period the previous year, the combined personnel were 7.7 personnel and supplemental non-consolidated staffing was 3.0.

Statistical analysis of SWRT Moderate Risk responses for 2021 and 2020, county-wide call processing county-wide travel time, and county-wide ERF have all decreased by 3:04, 5:19, and 4:14 respectively. Similar analysis of Total Response Time Special Risk related calls shows similar statistics, with a reduction in call processing time of 0:41 and a reduction in travel time of 0:19. The time for ERF assembly has increased by 1:55. The source of this increase is unknown but likely due to the wide variety of areas in which the TRT incidents are occurring.

Reduction in response times remains a key priority. The increase in required SWRT staffing at FS14, effective July 2021, significantly reduced SWRT assets' response time to a large portion of the Potomac River. Similarly, the SWRT began conducting water safety outreach during identified "peak call volume" time periods on the Potomac River. It is hard to quantify if this caused a true reduction in call volume, but several calls occurred while watercraft were already on the water and had significantly reduced response times.

Plan

Through the normally occurring review process, we continually identify and investigate statistical anomalies. If these anomalies are found to be erroneous, all efforts are used to identify the correct information. Once datasets have been verified, they are used to compare to benchmark goals outlined in the 2022 Updated Performance Benchmarks and identify trends and deficiencies.

By the end of FY2025, the plan is to have all SWRT and TRT resources outfitted with Mobile Data Computers (MDC), which will assist in capturing accurate on-scene

timestamps. MDCs allow tracking in the technical rescue vehicles, as well as using advancements in modern technology to assist the Emergency Communications Center with more accurate and rapid call processing. An example of this would be the application *What3Words*. This application, through the use of cellular signal, can triangulate a caller's location within a ten-foot area. This information can be relayed to rescue personnel enabling faster initial patient contact.

Finally, through grant funds, TRT is in the process of purchasing a tractor trailer style technical rescue vehicle. This will shrink the TRT vehicle fleet from four assets to two assets. This reduction makes facilitating a TRT response substantially easier with less logistical concerns required by the current model. It is anticipated that this will increase response efficiency.

Both teams will continue to seek progression with regards to staffing, capabilities, and training. Grant funding opportunities will continue to be sought to secure additional training opportunities for MCFRS, and training with mutual aid partners to include additional courses in structural collapse specialist, technical search specialist, and medical specialist. The SWRT continues to send personnel to specialized classes focused on vehicles in flood waters. Additionally, both teams will continue and enhance training regiments that include mutual aid resources. These include Prince George's County Fire Rescue, Loudon County Fire Rescue, Howard County Fire Rescue, Frederick County Fire Rescue, Fairfax County Fire Rescue, District of Columbia Fire and EMS, Maryland National Capital Park Police, and Maryland State Police.

References

- 2021 TRT dashboard [CY 2021 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Page 21-23)
- 2020 TRT dashboard [FY 2020 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Page 61)
- 2021 SWRT dashboard [CY 2021 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Page 25-29)
- 2020 SWRT dashboard [FY 2020 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Page 62 & 63)
- MCFRS [Community Risk Assessment Standards of Cover](#) (Page 270 & 269)

CC 5G.2 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impact, outcomes and effectiveness of the program and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS Special Operations Section annually conducts and documents the CFAI Technical Rescue Program Appraisal, which is inclusive of Technical Rescue and Swift Water Rescue Teams. MCFRS developed a formal process to document annual program appraisals following a peer team strategic recommendation from the 2013 reaccreditation effort. This formal annual process helps with documenting impacts, outcomes, and program effectiveness. During the first three years of this accreditation cycle, formal appraisals were submitted on a fiscal year schedule. It was determined to be more advantageous to change to a calendar year assessment, which began in 2021. In addition, program impacts, outcomes, and effectiveness are also determined through policy-guided after-action reporting procedures.

Additionally, all individual technical rescue team members (TRT and SWRT) are required to complete task books and/or initial task books to document their knowledge and skills. The Task Books are consistently reviewed by Team Leadership for completeness and to establish future training needs. These task books identify specific tasks personnel need to complete to demonstrate a specified level of proficiency to remain contributing members of their respective teams. Failure to complete the task book results in termination from the team and an involuntary transfer from their specialty station.

Finally, TRT conducts an annual review of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs). As missions change or new tools, equipment, and techniques become available, there is a significant need to update policies, procedures, guidelines, and task books. This ensures guidelines remain relevant to the topics covered and remain consistent with modern technology and standards.

Appraisal

The TRT completed its annual appraisals over the course of this reporting period. Some of the items that were identified to be addressed included:

- The requirement of all TRT personnel to be trained to technician level in the four disciplines (Trench, Confined Space, Rope and Structural Collapse).
- Revision to and creation of new task books. For example, the SWRT revamped their existing “boat operator” task book to better account for tasks performed by the team and updating existing tasks to account for recently acquired equipment such as the “Garman Side Scan Sonar” and “Garmin Panoptix LiveScope Ice Rescue Sonar”. The “boat crew” task book is also getting an overhaul. And a new task book specific to the Technical Rescue Officer (TRTo) position has been created to help with the extra knowledge and skills necessary to be a supervisor. This is currently in the review process. Both teams hope to implement the revisions by mid-2023.
- Revision of policies, including the confined space SOG, which is pending approval, and the driver training SOG, which is being revised in preparation for the upcoming tractor-trailer style technical rescue vehicle.

Plan

MCFRS technical rescue team will continue to hone existing policies and guidelines, as needed, based on call response issues, updated standards (OSHA, NFPA, ANSI, etc.), new technology, new equipment, and industry best practices. TRT will continue to use the formal Operations program appraisal process on an annual basis to capture program changes, inputs, outputs, and outcomes, as well as new initiatives, programmatic changes, and other objectives for the upcoming year. Finally, TRT will continue to have a bi-annual meeting of management and leadership to review overall operations, efficiency, and deficiencies.

References

[FY 2018 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Begins on PDF page 63)

[FY 2019 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Begins on PDF page 59)

[FY 2020 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Begins on PDF page 51)

[CY 2021 Technical Rescue Program Appraisal](#) (Begins on PDF page 18)

Category V

Criterion 5H: Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) Program (B/C Browning)

The agency operates an adequate, effective, efficient and safe hazardous materials program directed toward protecting the community from the hazards associated with the uncontrolled releases of hazardous and toxic materials. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency must conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for specific hazardous materials program and support the overall risk reduction strategy. Agencies that only provide first responder services must also complete this criterion.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service encounters the potential for numerous hazardous materials incidents daily across 507 square miles of urban and rural response areas. The hazardous incident response team (HIRT) was formed in 1981 when the department determined there was a capability need to mitigate life safety and environmental concerns at emergency incidents involving hazardous materials. There are currently 191 SARA Title III facilities located with-in the jurisdiction and 642 high use hazardous materials facilities. These hard facility hazards are enhanced by the significant roadway, railway and some light air traffic transportation routes found with-in the county. There are also significant pipeline transportation routes that traverse Montgomery County from the western border along the Potomac River to the eastern border along Howard County. MCFRS considers the location of the SARA Title III facilities, historical dispatched hazmat incident frequency, and railroad, highway, pipeline locations as part of its community risk assessment.

MCFRS responds to hazardous materials incidents with a tiered response based on the information reported to the dispatch center using geographically positioned equipment and personnel. These responses include first responder units staffed with operations trained personnel for initial operations and hazardous material units and support companies staffed with hazardous material technicians for advanced mitigation. The MCFRS HIRT is a FEMA recognized Type 1 response team that operates with two, four-person Hazardous Material

Units and respond from a central and southern station. Both units are cross staffed with the suppression engines located at their station and supplemented with two support companies out of two other stations. There is the ability to dispatch additional non-consolidated hazardous material technicians working or perform a call back for complicated and/or long-term incidents.

Hazardous materials training is tiered into initial training received by all first responders and advanced technician level training required of all personnel assigned to the HIRT. The training of all personnel meets or exceeds the OSHA regulations and NFPA consensus standards. Response training in Montgomery County begins with all first responders obtaining NFPA Operations level training at the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA). Personnel assigned to the HIRT complete required hazardous materials technician training course certification. To maintain compliance with required federal regulations, all MCFRS personnel complete annual refresher training through the departments Public Safety Training Academy. HIRT personnel complete annual skills check-offs concurrent with hazardous materials response operations used in Montgomery County. In addition, MCFRS has an AHJ Hazardous Materials Officer program to ensure knowledge and proficiency with hazardous materials group/branch oversight on incidents. The HIRT currently has 104 hazardous materials technicians and 21 hazardous materials officers spread out across three 24 hours shifts and a day work shift.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5H.1 Given the agency's community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), apparatus and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of hazardous materials incident(s).

Description

MCFRS meets its hazardous materials staffing objectives by ensuring that each of the minimum staffing positions are staffed at the beginning of each shift. The current staffing model requires forced overtime if necessary. The minimum staffing for hazardous materials personnel remains at 13 on-duty hazardous materials team members (HMm's) at the consolidated stations, with two of those being MCFRS hazardous materials officers (HMO's). The consolidated hazardous material stations are 7, 20, 25 and 28.

The apparatus and equipment deployment model MCFRS uses is staffing two hazardous material units at Station 7 and 28 with a standard staffing of 4 personnel. These units are cross staffed with the paramedic engine assigned to those stations and have a utility to respond with additional equipment as necessary. Station 28 has an ambulance assigned which may be staffed with additional HMm's above the minimum requirement. MCFRS also staffs two hazardous materials support companies at Station 20 and 25. Station 20 has one paramedic engine company and is required to have 3 HMm's on-duty. Station 25 has one engine company, one truck company and 3 EMS units staffed daily. 2 of the staffing positions are required to be HMm's and they can be assigned to any unit. Both stations may have additional staffing that are HMm's and go above the on-duty minimum requirements. There are non-consolidated HMm's that can be working at any station daily. These personnel are accounted for on the daily line-up program used by MCFRS and are in addition to the minimum staffing requirements at the consolidated stations.

The hazardous materials units meet FEMA requirements as a Type 1 entry team through a combination of equipment and personnel. Hazardous material units are equipped with research material, chemical protective clothing, decontamination and other special

equipment to handle a variety of chemical incidents. The hazardous material support companies bring personnel and additional air monitoring equipment to incidents. All engine, aerial and rescue squad apparatus with MCFRS are equipped with basic hazardous material reference material and 3-gas air monitoring instrumentation for initial control zone establishment along with foam capability to affect quick rescues at hydrocarbon incidents.

The emergency fire dispatch used by the department tiers hazardous materials incidents based upon information gathered during the initial 911 call. The selected call determinant is associated with a response plan based upon the potential risk hazard by incident type. A majority of hazardous material incidents require first-responder fire and EMS apparatus supplemented by a single hazardous materials unit and hazardous materials support company. Major hazardous materials incidents are dispatched with a standard box alarm assignment, additional EMS units, two Hazardous Material Units and two Hazardous Material Support Companies.

MCFRS has conducted a Programmatic Critical Task Analysis by Risk Class for First Due & Effective Response Force (ERF). These are documented within the Virtual Community Risk Assessment: Standards of Cover and meets response time objectives for hazardous material risk classifications.

Appraisal

Hazardous material program staffing met federal requirements and consensus standards for the evaluation period. This staffing model allowed for all required positions as stated in MCFRS HIRT Standard Operating Guidelines and provided a safety factor of extra personnel to be assigned. There were no known incidents during the evaluation period where outside jurisdictions were called upon to meet minimum staffing requirements for a Level A or B entry. The National Institute of Health Hazardous Material unit located in Bethesda did provide response to a small number of incidents as the primary or secondary unit.

For the evaluation period of FY 2018-22, the MCFRS hazardous material program achieved an earlier established benchmark target for the arrival of the first unit, total response time (TRT) to Hazmat Special Risk dispatched incidents in urban density zones. The old

benchmark was 0:10:45 and through aggressive response time monitoring and reporting, it was determined the baseline for this measure during the appraisal period became 0:10:45. Subsequently and through a Fire Chief memorandum, this benchmark has been changed to 0:10:30. In general, the gap between MCFRS' baseline performance for first arriving and ERF TRT are narrowing, although, it was noted the limited number of incidents within rural density zones, which have questioned the reliability of those data elements. Additionally, response time data has also been affected by cross-staffing procedures where the primary engines have been on other incidents, thus extending the ERF times to arrive.

There was also a noticeable knowledge gap over the evaluation period with HMm personnel and their ability to maintain advanced knowledge of equipment and tactics. This was seen across all stations but more so at the support companies and with non-consolidated personnel. This problem had several factors including inability for personnel to attend monthly trainings, the inability to bring subject matter experts in as instructors, a decrease in experienced personnel through transfers, promotions and retirements along with cancellation of training activities throughout the Covid pandemic.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate and develop updated response packages through critical tasking and procedures to become closer aligned with MCFRS target benchmarks for hazardous materials response. Discussion and brainstorming on the current staffing and deployment model are already in progress at a section level. There will be continued planning on what changes can be made to the apparatus, personnel and equipment deployment models and once finalized, submitted through the chain of command for inclusion in the budget process as necessary. There will also be an enhanced focus on maximizing training opportunities to maintain advanced skills related to current hazards and emerging threats.

References

[Virtual MCFRS Community Risk Assessment/Standards of Cover](#) (see Hazmat risk category and classification data tables, baseline and benchmark statements and reporting the gap analysis beginning on page 253 and Critical Task Analysis beginning on page 191)

[MCFRS Master Plan – see Hazmat Risk beginning on PDF page 99/paper page 4-14](#)

[Apparatus Staffing Policy](#)

[FEMA Typed Resource Definitions](#)

[MCFRS Station Staffing Matrix](#) (click “Battalion” then Sta 7, Sta 20, Sta 25, or Sta 28)

[Oct. 07, 2022: Fire Chief Memo Outlining New Benchmarks for Operational Programs](#)

5H.2 The agency complies with all aspects of applicable hazardous material regulations such as annual refresher training, medical monitoring of response personnel, annual physical examinations as applicable per standards, and exposure record retention.

Description

MCFRS requires all personnel to meet rigid hazardous materials training requirements upon entry as a firefighter/rescuer into the career or volunteer ranks. This training meets and/or exceeds certification training required by OSHA. Personnel assigned to the Hazardous Incident Response Team (HIRT) are required to complete Hazardous Materials Technicians training and complete AHJ team member requirements to become a HIRT hazardous material team member (HMm). MCFRS maintains an AHJ process for captains, lieutenants and chief officers to become Hazmat Officers (HMo's) for the department and provide oversight at the hazardous materials unit stations and program. MCFRS also maintains federal compliance for on-scene incident commanders as required by OSHA.

Annually, all MCFRS operational personnel have been required to complete hazardous materials refresher training that complies with OSHA regulations and meet NFPA consensus standards. In addition to this, HIRT personnel are required to complete AHJ annual skill checkoffs that ensure competency for procedures and equipment necessary to mitigate hazardous materials incidents safely. All MCFRS personnel are required to pass an annual physical examination, including an annual fit test, in accordance with all applicable OSHA standards and NFPA consensus standards. The MCFRS Safety Section, in coordination with the MCFRS Fire-Rescue Occupational Medical Section, have in place a robust exposure reporting, management, monitoring, and record storage system.

Appraisal

MCFRS met federal OSHA regulations and NFPA standards by requiring all operational personnel to complete an annual refresher training program. This was developed and put forth to all department operational personnel to ensure regulatory compliance, skill usage and knowledge enhancement. Documentation continued to be maintained using the department's website database and the PCAP program.

New hazardous material technicians completed an 80-hours certified training course using Maryland Fire Rescue Institute or Center for Domestic Preparedness curriculum. These courses met OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120(q)(6)(iii) regulations and NFPA 470 or 472 consensus standards. Upon completion, personnel completed an AHJ check-off to become an official HIRT Hazardous Material Member (HMm). Regulatory compliance and technical skill upkeep continued to be maintained annually using team member task books. These task books ensured team members maintained their base set of knowledge related to general and advanced skills along with standard operating guideline review. The task book was modified at the end of 2020 to incorporate the most current team equipment and practices. Delivery of the Hazardous Materials Technician course was complicated during the Covid pandemic as instructors and students had to learn and work around the virtual learning platforms available.

HIRT team training was completed monthly during dedicated training days. There was also station level training that built upon monthly team training and incorporated individual and team skills required for hazardous materials response. These trainings incorporated AHJ annual skills checkoffs. The COVID pandemic beginning in 2020 presented a significant strain on providing required and necessary training to all personnel. This unique challenge was overcome using virtual platforms and information sharing along with additional risk management and safety parameters instituted during group training sessions.

All HMm skills continue verified by a hazardous materials officer or subject instructor and then recorded locally on the check-off sheet and entered into the departments Fire App records management system. An audit of completion status was completed annually by the special operations section. In the 2018 self-assessment, it was noted that planning efforts were underway to staff a full-time Special Operations Captain position. This position was to develop, track and schedule training requirements for personnel but did not come to fruition and tracking was handled by station officers and team leadership.

The Hazardous Materials Officer process continued to align with standards set forth by NFPA 470, Chapter 17: Competencies for Hazardous Materials/WMD Officers. This

program was offered continuously for the evaluation period as a self-study program. The program was delivered in-person using the curriculum and enhancements during the end of FY21. Both delivery types used tabletop simulations and/or practical scenarios for skill assessments and completion status. This documentation was maintained with the departments Special Operations Section and the members Telestaff profile. The department held one Hazardous Materials Incident Commander course to enhance knowledge and skills of Hazardous Materials Officers and certified chief officer's (CCO).

Compliance with OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120(q)(6)(v), On-scene Incident Commander, continues to be accomplished through the initial hazardous materials operations training provided to all personnel and the AHJ's certified command officer (CCO) process. CCO's recertified annually to maintain their status through written and practical testing scenarios. Documentation of initial certification and annual requirements have been maintained through the PSTA.

MCFRS continues to maintain an occupational medical program that meets OSHA regulatory requirements, NFPA 1500 and NFPA 475, Chapter 10. This program was overseen by the Fire Rescue Occupational Medical Section (FROMS) and included processes for medical surveillance prior to and during assignments, annual physical examinations, annual fit testing and exposure follow-up requirements. FROMS is staffed by trained and certified personnel who administer, review and communicate the required processes and information to employees. Based on regulations and standards, Hazardous Materials Technicians assigned to the HazMat Team have also been subject to additional annual testing and monitoring, including heavy metal testing.

During the reporting period, exposure reporting used a combination of FROMS and Safety Section personnel. Any hazardous material exposures would have been reported by an employee through their chain of command. Documentation of these exposures were recorded in the departments Risk Map program through the Safety Section and all follow-up occurs through FROMS.

Plan

The current training processes used by MCFRS continue to meet all aspects of local, State and Federal law regarding hazardous materials regulations. The processes also meet or exceed the established consensus standards of NFPA. Records management continues to be an obstacle in gathering and maintaining hazardous materials member annual skills requirements. The Special Operations Section will continue to work with MCFRS Information Technology and the Public Safety Training Academy to develop and institute an easier and seamless record keeping process for HIRT members.

Medical surveillance meets all established requirements and standards and will continue to be maintained through the departments Fire Rescue Occupational Medical Section. All required hazardous materials examinations, fit testing and heavy metal testing will be required annually through the physical process. Any changes to the standards will be vetted through FROMS and the Special Operations Section.

References

[OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120](#)

[National Fire Protection Association Standard 470](#) (copyright protected and available in person)

[National Fire Protection Association Standard 475](#) (copyright protected and available in person)

[MCFRS HIRT Annual Skills Check-off](#)

[MCFRS Hazardous Materials Officer Process](#) (behind the firewall and available to see in person)

[MCFRS Annual Refresher for Hazmat Webpage](#)

CC 5H.3 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impacts, outcomes, and effectiveness of the program, and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

The Hazardous Materials program is part of MCFRS Operations under the management of Special Operations Section. The program is managed by a Battalion Chief working under the Special Operations Assistant Chief. The teams' priorities are to work within the department's incident command system to safely mitigate emergencies involving hazardous materials. An appraisal occurs annually through the accreditation process to evaluate where the hazardous materials program stands with regards to response capability. The appraisal encompasses the previous appraisal statistics related to response, training, deployment model and equipment.

The effectiveness of the program is measured in the ability to get trained personnel and appropriate equipment to hazardous materials incidents in a timely manner. This allows members of the Hazardous Incident Response Team (HIRT) to research chemical information, perform a risk assessment of associated hazards and develop an incident action plan that accounts for the safety of civilians and responders while limiting environmental impact.

Hazardous Materials Program goals are established by the Battalion Chief with input from MCFRS Hazardous Materials Officers and team members. The program maintains an ongoing commitment of complying to all local, State and Federal regulations and working with-in established MCFRS policy and guidelines. The Special Operations Assistant Chief, Battalion Chief and team leadership are directly responsible for ensuring compliance of these requirements. Evaluation of the program, its efficiency and its associated goals are made annually using OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 and NFPA 470 and data defined in the department's Standards of Cover document.

Appraisal

The hazardous materials program was managed by a Special Operations Battalion Chief who utilized OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120 and NFPA 470/472/1072 to assess and self-evaluate the program while leveraging the MCFRS annual program appraisal template. Team leadership and members were consulted to ensure the process of researching, developing and pursuing goals and objectives for the team were evaluated and met. Short and long-term goals were established over the reporting period and followed through with or presented to department leadership for movement if necessary.

MCFRS continued to use hazardous material response baselines and benchmarks established in the Community Risk Assessment: Standards of Cover manual. Using data gathering within MCFRS programs, the hazardous materials program was able to evaluate its effectiveness on an annual basis utilizing crystal reports for an effective response force (ERF) arriving at the variety of incidents involving hazardous materials. The performance measurement of the 90th percentile remained the standard that incidents were evaluated for the reporting period. Separating call types into low, moderate, high and special risk hazardous materials incidents was able to provide appropriate information to make informed decisions about the program. Due to the limitations of the record management system configuration, this process required excessive man-hours to pull data from the system and put it into spreadsheet format.

The hazardous materials program was able to obtain a large portion of needed equipment through internal purchasing mechanisms, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments or Maryland Emergency Response System budgeting processes. Many equipment purchases were pushed through MWCOG and MDERS initially while some purchases were made at the local level. There was an enhanced effort to replace old and outdated equipment or purchase newer technology as funding was available.

The hazardous materials program had an increase with involvement and planning for mitigation of lithium-ion battery incidents during the end of the evaluation period. There was significant concern across industry in relation to responses buildings and across transportation. The toxic and flammable hazards associated with this newer hazard have

required advanced training and movement on purchasing appropriate equipment to mitigate incidents. There is department and regional movement through MWCOG to ensure the MCFRS program and all jurisdictions have battery response capabilities but this.

The HIRT routinely attempted to leverage outside training opportunities with a goal of enhancing knowledge and response capabilities. Outside vendor training while very beneficial to personnel, proved to be costly to the department. Outside training opportunities that were critical to hazardous materials response were evaluated and pushed through the funding process to include internal mechanisms or opportunities through MWCOG and MDERS.

Plan

The hazardous materials program and HIRT will continue to use the standardized appraisal process for evaluation. The data and dashboard system will be the primary tool for evaluation and the regulations and consensus standards set forth by OSHA and NFPA the processes used to establish the programs framework. The Special Operations Section will work with information technology to develop a process within the records management system to better track hazardous materials data that requires less man hours. HIRT standard operating guidelines are already in the process of being updated and will be in-service soon. The hazardous materials program will be evaluating the current model of apparatus and equipment. There is an upcoming need to replace the hazardous materials units and funding was appropriated for this process. The hazardous materials program leadership will work with the Operations Division to establish if we can consolidate to one primary hazardous materials unit and supplement that with support units capable of bringing necessary personnel and additional equipment such as hydrocarbon support and technical decon to incidents. Team leadership will continue to evaluate staffing models for hazardous materials units by using federal regulations, consensus standards, response information as metrics. The chain of command will be consulted with recommendations and the budget process used as the mechanism to accomplish this.

The program will continue research and attempt to leverage grant funding that is available for hazardous materials response equipment and training. A continued focus on funding through MCFRS, MWCOG and MDERS will be used to ensure the HIRT is equipped to

handle hazardous material emergencies as a Type 1 team. Baseline technician level training will continue with programs through Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute and delivered by certified MFSPQB instructors. There will also be a focus on bringing in outside vendors to maintain the advanced technical skills to mitigate hazardous materials incidents. There will also be a focus to use programs such as PHMSA (Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration) and their Hazardous Materials Emergency Preparedness (HMEP) funds where the team will look to benefit through total team or train-the-trainer type courses.

An enhanced focus is being placed by the Special Operations Section on developing strategy and tactics for battery response. Using team personnel knowledge and outside training, basic information gathering, and sharing will give first responders the knowledge and skills to begin operations at battery related incidents. Establishing a HIRT standard operating guideline for these responses will provide a basic framework for Hazardous Material Officers to mitigate incidents safely and efficiently. The hazardous materials program will continue to work with other internal agencies to establish current and future needs for these responses, specifically code enhancements and equipment and procedural policies.

References

[FY18 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see Hazmat 5H beginning on PDF page 74)

[FY19 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see Hazmat 5H beginning on PDF page 70)

[FY20 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see Hazmat 5H beginning on PDF page 65)

[CY21 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see Hazmat 5H beginning on PDF page 30)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix T: After Action Reporting](#)

[OSHA 29 CFR 1910.120](#)

[National Fire Protection Association Standard 470](#)

[MCFRS Hazardous Materials Team Standard Operating Guidelines](#)

Category V

Criterion 5K: Wildland Fire Services (A/C Reid, ret.)

The agency operates an adequate, effective, and efficient wildland fire program directed toward controlling and/or extinguishing wildland fires to protect the community from injury or death and to reduce property loss. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. The agency must conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category 2 to determine the need for specific wildland fire services and support the overall risk reduction strategy.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) operates an adequate and effective program aimed toward containing and extinguishing various types of wildland and urban interface fires within the County. MCFRS is the first responder for wildland fires and provides quality service consistent with our mission statement. MCFRS is sometimes supplemented by response from the Maryland Forest Service, particularly if wildland fires involve state lands.

The department's Incident Response Policy (IRP) instructs and governs agency members on all emergency response operations. The IRP provides sufficient direction on which to base any operational decision.

The measure of the effectiveness of the agency is performed through an analysis from its fire reporting systems and required Post-Incident Reviews.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5K.1 Given the agency's community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station(s), apparatus and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of wildland fire services incident.

Description

MCFRS has a fleet of firefighting resources, including 35 engines meeting NFPA 1901 Pumper Classification, 12 brush trucks, and eight tankers/tenders (3,000 gallons or more each). In 2020, four new 2019 Rosenbauer/Freightliner all-wheel drive brush engines were placed into service to replace aging units. Wildland/brush fires are handled through our standard staffing and deployment models. Tankers and brush trucks are mainly cross-staffed by other apparatus operators assigned to the station. Current staffing plans only require a tanker driver in stations that house a tanker. There is no station staffing requirement for a brush truck driver; however, if a brush truck does respond, the standard staffing is two (2) and the minimum staffing is driver only. The total response time of first arriving engines to documented wildland fire incidents is comparable to other low-risk fires in the County.

Appraisal

MCFRS is familiar with the wildland-urban interface fire environment and recognizes the difference between structural firefighting and wildland firefighting. Wildland fires in Montgomery County have been relatively few in number and small in scale, generally handled by a small contingent of apparatus and mostly involve short grasses. On rare occasion, fire will break out in a forested area, but even those fires tend to be self-limiting and within the reach of hose lays or vehicles. MCFRS does not do dismounted wildland operations; we do not cut fire line to mineral soil using hand tools. We use progressive hose lays to place water onto burning terrestrial surfaces. The deployment model has been effective to deal with the primary type of wildland incidents found in Montgomery County. MCFRS has determined the FY18 to FY22 total response time for the first arriving engine to low-risk documented wildland fire incidents (NFIRS incident type/situation found codes 140, 141, 142, 143, 170, 171, 172, 173) are comparable to other dispatched low-risk fire

incidents, such as vehicle and outside transformer fires. Between these five years, wildland fires accounted for \$173,239 total losses, although only six of the 778 incidents accounted for \$150,000 or 87% of the total losses. These high dollar losses are attributed to large electric company transformers, damage to an intercontinental gas line, hay bales and bailer, and an exposure causing melted vinyl siding.

Through the process of conducting a self-assessment on MCFRS wildland fire responses, it has been determined our low-risk fire data response time analysis has been acceptable, although work is still needed to better define our moderate risk events, which will require a revisit of our moderate risk critical task analysis and subsequent first arriving and ERF analysis.

Plan

Because our current methods work, and they work well, we plan to keep doing them until circumstances make it clear they are no longer working, at which point we will change programs.

MCFRS will continue to build out the risk assessment for wildland fires and will reevaluate the critical task analysis for moderate risk wildland fire events, which may lead to determining a better effective response force package to measure performance to these incidents.

References

[MCFRS Operations Staffing Plan](#)

[October 2020: Four new brush engines placed into service](#)

[Risk in Montgomery County \(brush/wildland begins on p. 31\)](#)

[Virtual CRA/SOC low-risk wildland fire data chart](#) (page 220)

5K.2 The agency has developed a wildland risk assessment including: a fuel management plan, fire adapted communities plan, and an inspection and code enforcement program.

Description

MCFRS has not developed a fuel management, adapted communities, or inspection and code enforcement program related to wildland fire. The department's Incident Response Policy (IRP) instructs and governs agency members on all emergency response operations; the IRP provides sufficient direction on which to base any operational decision. The Maryland Department of Natural Resources (DNR) and the National Park Service are responsible for State lands and national parks, respectively, within Montgomery County. DNR targets wildfire-urban interfaces throughout the State and promotes awareness and prevention through outreach and education. In 2005, the DNR produced a State Wildland Fire Assessment Atlas that analyzed land usage, land cover, population density, firefighter accessibility, and fuels data and presented five models to assess fire start potential, fire impact potential, fuel hazard potential, and a composite map. In the composite map, the assessment indicated that Montgomery County had low cause for concern due to population density, limited fuel, and firefighter accessibility (see p. 18 in the reference section). DNR's Firewise Maryland Program also prepares Community Wildfire Protection Plans for at-risk communities; there are no Community Wildfire Protection Plans in Montgomery County.

Appraisal

MCFRS included wildland fire for the first time in its most recent assessment of risk in the County, but the assessment is elementary and requires a more systematic approach in evaluating the WUI fire risk. The department has also defined low and moderate risk wildland fire categories and started tracking first arriving and effective response force response times.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to monitor the wildland/WUI program through the established annual appraisal process and will coordinate with partners at the DNR to improve our risk

assessment, and perhaps consider their expertise in completing a Community Wildfire Protection Plan, if analyses support it.

References

[Maryland DNR State Wildland Fire Assessment 2005 Montgomery Abridged](#)

[Risk in Montgomery County \(brush/wildland begins on p. 31\)](#)

[“Firewise Maryland”](#)

CC 5K.3 The agency conducts a formal and documented appraisal, at least annually, to determine the impact, outcomes and effectiveness of the program, and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

The MCFRS Operations Division has adopted a formal and annual appraisal for all operational programs. The MCFRS wildland and urban interface fire program is in its infancy and CY2021 represents the first formal appraisal of this program. Some examples of program inputs and results/outcomes of this appraisal included the process of documenting program personnel, apparatus/equipment, SOP(s) and protocols, training and certifications, key accomplishments and long and short-term goals being met. In addition, the process includes reviewing applicable After-Action Reviews (AARs) to determine strengths and/or weaknesses in the program, along with recommendations on how to enhance service delivery and efficiencies to these incident types.

Appraisal

The MCFRS wildland fire program was initiated as a direct result of this Criterion. Other than reviewing significant wildland/urban wildfire interface AARs, a formal appraisal was never conducted. As a result of the CFAI model, MCFRS started conducting a wildland and urban wildfire interface program appraisal in calendar year (CY) 2021.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to conduct annual appraisals on the program category.

References

[CY21 Operations Program Appraisal](#) (see Wildland Fire Services 5K beginning on PDF page 34)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix T: After Action Reporting](#)

Criterion 5L: Other Programs (US&R) (Mr. Stojinski & Ms. Amber Adams)

Note: The agency may provide additional operational programs designed to provide a specific service to the community. The agency must conduct a thorough risk assessment as part of activities in Category II to determine the need for specific program and support the overall risk reduction strategy. If identified risks are outside the scope of the agency's capabilities, Category 10 performance indicators should address the agency's ability to receive aid from partners in those areas. If applicable, the agency should utilize the generic text below to depict other agency programs that are a part of the agency's mission, goals and objectives but are not already included in Category 5. Each major program should be numbered and listed separately (i.e., 5L, 5M, and so on)

Summary:

The National Urban Search and Rescue (US&R) Response System, established under the authority of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in 1989, is a framework for organizing federal, state, and local partner emergency response teams. The System's twenty-eight US&R task forces may be deployed by FEMA to a disaster to aid in structural collapse rescues or may be pre-positioned when a major disaster threatens a community. The task forces are equipped and ready to deploy within four hours for land travel and six hours for air travel of various response models.

The agency sponsors and operates an adequate, effective, efficient, and safe program directed toward US&R incidents known as Maryland Task Force One (MD-TF1). The team is comprised of highly trained and specialized firefighters, paramedics, police, and civilian specialists, such as physicians, engineers, and canine handlers. As a federally sponsored program under the Department of Homeland Security that responds to local, state, and national disasters, the team has secured a cache of specialized rescue, medical, communications, and logistical support equipment to facilitate the specialized team functions during missions and deployments. The cache ensures that the task force is completely self-sufficient for seventy-two hours and can maintain around-the-clock operations for up to fourteen days.

FEMA guidance suggests that each US&R team should consist of approximately 210 personnel to respond to activation orders for deployments requiring a single resource or up to seventy members for a Type I deployment (and additional support staff as outlined in the activation order). Other common deployment types, as outlined in the Statement of Work, include Type III (35 personnel) and Type IV (22 personnel). In 2022, MD-TF1 rostered 187 personnel, consisting of civilian specialists from various parts of Maryland and professional first responders from Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service (FRS), Montgomery County Department of Police, Howard County FRS, Prince George's County FRS, Frederick County FRS, and District of Columbia (DC) Fire & Emergency Medical Services. The team has increased the number of personnel from other jurisdictions, but recruiting efforts are in place to offer more flexibility in deployments and lessen the impact on MCFRS, allowing for more in-county personnel from the team to respond to local emergencies during deployments.

In addition to deployments, MD-TF1 members also participate in the Incident Support Team and specialized skill training, including Hazardous Materials (HazMat) Equipment Push Package (HEPP) capabilities and maintaining one of seven US&R HEPP caches within the nation. The specialized skills training, such as HazMat, HEPP, water rescue, and canine search teams, provide personnel with professional development opportunities and expand the skill sets and knowledge of our local fire and rescue units, providing additional versatility when responding to emergencies. In 2022, MD-TF1 logged more than 12,000 man-hours of training, yielding 180 trained and certified members across 19 specialties.

Performance Indicators:

CC 5L.1 **Given the agency's community risk assessment/standards of cover and emergency performance statements, the agency meets its staffing, response time, station, apparatus and equipment deployment objectives for each type and magnitude of the US&R program.**

Description

MD-TF1 responds to various regional incidents that require specialized technical rescues. These incidents often include building collapse, trench rescue, mass casualty incidents (MCIs), extended search operations, and other incidents that may require specifically trained personnel and specialized equipment. On a national level, the team is prepared and responds to incidents when activated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). MD-TF1 is recognized as one of the twenty-eight assets utilized for US&R operations of the National Emergency Response System Program.

MD-TF1 is funded through a cooperative FEMA agreement, with a three-year performance period. As opposed to a grant, this means that FEMA has extensive programmatic involvement. The National Response System Operations Manual is an overview of the entire System and utilizes various documents to provide additional guidance when the team is activated. Each activation order indicates the exact reporting instructions, including the arrival date, specified time, and the requested number of personnel. Additional Program Directives and General Memorandums are provided as needed to provide further guidance and policies to ensure readiness.

Appraisal

The cache maintained by MD-TF1 met the requirements of the Cooperative Agreement and Statement of Work (SOW). This ensured that the equipment deployment objectives for various US&R events were fulfilled in a timely and effective manner. On the Annual Readiness Evaluation, MD-TF1 obtained maximum scores for Warehouse Resources, Inventory System, Equipment Trainings and Exercises, and Transportation Resources.

MD-TF1 met the staffing objectives for five deployments in the 2021 calendar year but had to decline a Type III deployment in September 2021. Due to COVID restrictions, precautions, and additional factors, such as medical leave and retirements, the task force was unable to fulfill Type I deployments since April 2020. The task force was unable to fulfill any deployments from the end of December 2021 to the beginning of February 2022 because of the impacts of COVID on Montgomery County FRS staffing. The team has a Type III deployment in September and Type III and support deployment in October 2022.

Plan

MD-TF1 plans to expand recruiting efforts with civilian specialists and other professionals from First Responder agencies within the State of Maryland to decrease the direct impact on Montgomery County FRS staffing and backfill during deployments. The addition of personnel from neighboring agencies will allow the task force to meet the staffing requirements for Type I deployments.

References

[Appendix A SOW FY2021](#)

[National Response Framework \(NRF\) | US EPA](#)

[National US&R Response System Operations Manual: Annex D](#)

[Urban Search & Rescue | FEMA.gov](#)

[US&R GENERAL MEMORANDUM – 2022-014](#)

CC 5L.2 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal program appraisal at least annually, to determine the impacts, outcomes and effectiveness of the program, and to measure its performance toward meeting the agency’s goals and objectives.

Description

MD-TF1 participates in a program of rotating Administrative Readiness Evaluations (ARE). These evaluations are conducted by selected peer representatives from the other federal US&R teams within the system. The evaluators conduct a full evaluation of the team’s administrative processes including personnel training records, logistical management, cache management, team deployment processes, fiscal management of team operating funds, and other requirements of the Cooperative Agreement.

To aid in this evaluation, the team utilized a Program Appraisal Template to outline accomplishments and identify any shortfalls. The template documents personnel assigned to the team, qualified and deployable personnel, management of the vehicle fleet, program accomplishments, long-term team goals, and documentation of administrative and deployment procedures manuals.

Appraisal

MD-TF1 effectively maintained and updated the National cache with necessary items during the appraisal period through federal grant funding. During the annual inventory, the logistics and warehouse team account for 95% of the cache list as identified by the 2021 Operational Readiness Exercise (ORE) evaluation. Shortfalls were reported to the Administrative Management team and the task force began the procurement process for the remaining 5% of cache list items to ensure compliance and readiness in the event of a deployment activation.

Post-deployment and exercise analysis was accomplished by gathering information regarding the team’s incident response and identifying which operations could be improved or enhanced. In addition to post-incident analysis through after-action reporting, each

member was asked to provide feedback in the form of an after-action survey to improve future training opportunities. After information gathering, the findings were compiled into a formal After-Action Report (AAR) that was reviewed by the team management and FEMA leadership.

MD-TF1 management coordinated a self-annual appraisal of personnel training records, response processes, and overall cache management to improve the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the team's response processes utilizing the Program Appraisal Template. The team's quarterly training opportunities provided additional opportunities for overall team improvement. This self-evaluation was a component of the normal FEMA evaluation process. It allowed the team's leadership to remain apprised of evaluation criteria and identify any shortfalls that could be fulfilled before additional, formal evaluations.

Plan

MD-TF1 will continue to maintain its current cache of equipment as identified by FEMA and anticipates the arrival of any current shortfalls by the end of the calendar year. As additional training opportunities become available following the reinstatement of System Sponsored training, MD-TF1 will make every effort to ensure members are attending in-person training to meet the requirements of deployment.

References

[2021 Administrative Readiness Evaluation](#)

[CY21 MCFRS Annual Program Appraisal 5L](#)

Category 6: Physical Resources

Physical resources are defined as fire stations, training facilities, fire apparatus, and other capital expenditures and outlays that make up the property assets of an agency. Special attention is required to obtain and maintain appropriate quality physical resources.

Facilities that are leased and/or jointly operated may also be considered for agency use if this is accomplished in accordance with properly adopted, clearly established policies.

If work is contracted outside the agency and/or to another department within the parent agency, it is incumbent on the agency to ensure that facilities, equipment, staff, record keeping, and procedures are consistent with the performance indicators in this category.

Criterion 6A: Physical Resources Plan (M3 Evans, ret.)

Development and use of physical resources are consistent with the agency's established plans. A systematic and planned approach to the future development of facilities is in place.

Summary:

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) is mandated and conforms to a well-established, Montgomery County process for building, remodeling, renovating and/or adding new facilities. Utilizing a Capital Improvement Program (CIP), individual department projects are introduced, planned, and then funded. This process allows the department to add new stations in growing or underserved areas of the County, as well as upgrading existing stations where needed. The need is justified and articulated within the approved 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan.

Performance Indicators:

6A.1 The development, construction or purchase of physical resources is consistent with the agency's goals and strategic plan.

Description

MCFRS outlined several facility needs in the 2016-22 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services and Community Reduction Master Plan, including station renovations/upgrades and new facility needs. As the County grows and the Planning Board develops and updates master and sector plans, those plans are assessed for impact on the fire department, and when feasible, changes are incorporated into the facility planning effort, which occurs during development and update of the Capital Improvements Plan. MCFRS is limited by the Department of General Services (DGS) to only two full-scale projects in the CIP per cycle.

For new stations, the County purchases available land within the targeted growth areas in accordance with the applicable community master plan or sector plan. MCFRS' goal is to design and build new stations that will reduce gaps in existing response coverage. Four such stations/areas – White Flint, Montgomery Village, Shady Grove, and East County have been proposed, but finding suitable available land is an issue that the County wrestles with. In 2021, DGS identified two potential locations for Montgomery Village (Station 39), but data analysis conducted on the areas, as well as issues identified by DGS during the site visit eliminated both and there has been limited discussion on site selection since then.

Fire Station 35 in Clarksburg is currently housed in a leased facility. Construction of a new Fire Station 35 is underway and scheduled for a late Summer 2023 completion.

Existing stations are being monitored annually for signs of aging in accordance with maintenance outlay costs and are updated, either under a capital improvement plan for specific system upgrades, or the operating budget for lesser ones, a few stations at a time.

Appraisal

The development of the White Flint station is an example of the County's commitment to MCFRS for adequate facilities as outlined in its adopted Master Plan. Based upon the White

Flint Sector Plan, which spelled out the area's expansion and its anticipated needs, the County Executive moved up the planning and construction of a new station within the White Flint area to get it online before rapid development brings thousands more people to the area. This process involved the purchase of several, small business properties in 2019, which were then combined to provide the land needed for this station. However, this project has since been delayed by the County for a couple of years; design will restart in FY24, with construction programmed to begin in the summer of 2025 and be completed in spring of 2027.

Over the past decade, the County has completed and brought online a total of five new fire-rescue stations. Three reduced gaps in coverage, while the remaining two stations increased capacity for their coverage areas by modernizing their physical structure through a complete renovation.

Plan

Every year, MCFRS will assure that its Capital Projects Section, its Planner and other staff members remain engaged with other County agencies at the start of the CIP project initiation process, and whenever the facility needs of the department may be involved. MCFRS will continue to remain aware of the plans and efforts being made by other agencies so that MCFRS support capabilities and required standards are not overlooked, set aside or jeopardized by others with no working knowledge of fire department-related concerns.

MCFRS will continue to pursue the planning, design and construction of three new stations currently in the planning phase of the CIP as land and funds become available.

In addition, MCFRS is assisting two LFRD's with plans for replacement stations by coordinating discussions between the LFRD ownership and the County's Building, Design and Construction Section of its General Services Department (DGS). Under the auspices of a Memorandum of Understanding, the LFRD/County partnership will fund, design and construct replacement stations using an MCFRS-sanctioned Program of Requirements (POR) to ensure the same level of design/construction that new County owned fire stations meet.

References

[2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, EMS and Community Risk Reduction Plan Appendix H](#)

[FY23 – FY28 Capital Improvement Program Transmittal Letter 09/09/21](#)

[FY23–FY28 Full Capital Improvement Program Department Head Review \(see pages 1-3\)](#)

[White Flint Station](#)

[Fire Station 35 Clarksburg Groundbreaking Brochure](#)

[Fire Station 25 Kensington-Aspen Hills](#)

[Program of Requirements - POR for MCFRS Gude Drive Community Services Building](#)

CC 6A.2 The governing body, administration, and staff are involved in the planning for physical facilities.

Description

Whether it is a renovation or a new station, MCFRS has a team of staff that acts as a department liaison from the inception of design through the one-year, post-construction, warranty walk through. The team consists of a Capital Projects Manager, assisted by a field operations battalion chief, station commander, several IT and related systems representatives, and any other specialty staff that may be required. Work done at Volunteer-owned fire stations includes representation from the respective Board of Directors, as well.

For instance, the exercise room is laid out in accordance with the fire-rescue personnel who buy and service the equipment because they know best how the room should be designed and what equipment will be going into it. Likewise, IT, telecommunications, station alerting, radio and other staff experts will determine the needed size, location and equipment for the consolidated IT room. As equipment changes, so do the layouts recommended by the in-house representatives which avoids a "cookie cutter" mentality, since every site, and sometimes station missions, aren't always the same as before. The integration of these specialty groups also assists architects and engineers with the planning and designing of the electrical and communications schedules since the department specific equipment drives utility placements. The combined team ensures that projects sponsored by LFRDs are in line with MCFRS' objectives of functional efficiency, are in accordance with current health and safety practices, and are compliant with the rights of the collective bargaining agreements.

Because capital projects have been funded by the County and represent a considerable outlay of funds, a team consisting of architects and engineers have provided the professional management in conjunction with MCFRS technical experts.

Appraisal

This collaborative planning and review practice has worked very well in that it has allowed the MCFRS CIP team to participate in and have some oversight of the efforts of the engineers, architects, and contractors.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to incorporate 1) lessons learned from past projects, 2) best practices learned from using these new or renovated properties, and 3) emerging trends learned at conferences like FIERO or through publications, like Fire Chief Magazine, thereby ensuring provision of the best and safest facilities to MCFRS emergency services providers.

References

[Design Progress Meeting Minutes for Fire Station 13 HVAC Replacement](#)

[FRS35 Plans Review Notes & Furniture-Equipment Schedules](#)

[8/10/21 Example of Article in Fire Chiefs Magazine](#)

Criterion 6B: Fixed Facilities (M3 Evans, ret. & M3 Schulze)

The agency designs, maintains and manages fixed facility resources that meet the agency's goals and objectives.

Summary:

MCFRS has in place an apparatus, equipment and facilities plan that has been identified in the 2016-2022 Fire, Rescue, Emergency Medical Services, and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan, funded through the Capital Improvements Program (CIP) Budget, and implemented, in part, through the Department of General Services (DGS). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) evaluates requests for all capital projects and makes recommendations to the County Executive on whether to include such requests in the CIP.

The Master Plan lays out the need for facilities throughout the County and establishes the basis for all CIP requests from the Fire Chief to OMB.

The project must then be accepted into the CIP program via a facility planning study process. This study gathers information from the requesting department about the type of facility envisioned and consolidates it into a Program of Requirements (POR) format, which allows it to compete for acceptance as a standalone project in the formal CIP. MCFRS ushers this process along for each of its projects by way of a liaison team representing MCFRS interests along the way.

Once built, expanded, or rehabbed, these fire department facilities are maintained by a Facilities Section, whose objective is to oversee the properties' management and maintenance.

Performance Indicators:

6B.1 Each function or program has adequate facilities and storage space. (e.g., operations, prevention, training, support services, and administration).

Description

MCFRS operates from 47 different worksites, 37 of which are fire-rescue stations, while the remaining 10 worksites provide the other support and administrative functions of the department.

Core mission operations occur from 14 County-owned and 23 Volunteer-owned fire rescue stations located throughout the County. The newest three stations, built in the last five years, are approximately 22,000-26,000 GSF each and provide for both present needs and expansion of personnel and equipment for decades to come.

MCFRS also utilizes leased, satellite spaces for support services, which are sized for the needs of a particular section or service, i.e., Logistics Warehouse, Maintenance Shop, Emergency Communications Center, Health Services, Community Risk Reduction, and the Special Operations/US&R Warehouse.

The Public Safety Training Academy is now housed in a new, state-of-the-art facility that is shared with County law enforcement agencies. This full-service training facility, completed in 2016, occupies 46 acres that includes an academic building with various classrooms and training rooms, an Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and paramedic training facility, a simulation area, gymnasium, indoor firing range, office spaces, locker rooms, graphics and video development area, canine facility, an Emergency Vehicle Operations Center (EVOC), driver training classes and simulation room, a driver training skid pad and skill pad, a driver training track, Cityscape, and a fire safety training building.

Appraisal

The processes employed to assure our needs for adequate facilities and storage have worked well. All new stations have been built with apparatus bays to accommodate frontline apparatus, as well as some reserve equipment and apparatus. To further accommodate the needs of modern firefighting, stations have been designed/retrofitted with separate spaces for all activity not related to living quarters, i.e., offices, gear storage, SCBA, maintenance

shop, EMS storage, a second laundry room, outdoor equipment storage, wellness/quiet rooms, and community/training rooms.

There have been storage space challenges at older and smaller stations. Those being expanded and upgraded have provided opportunities for increased storage and equipment space. Fire Station 25, Aspen Hill is an example of a station whose mission outgrew its capacity. It has been expanded by three new bays and completely renovated, while remaining operational throughout.

Plan

Whenever possible, spaces in older stations, like maintenance bays, which will no longer serve a past use, will be repurposed to compensate for newer equipment or training space requirements. When smaller stations have breached their maximum space capacity and can no longer expand to accommodate newer requirements, the Volunteer Corporations will enter negotiations with the County to have the station replaced or an addition added under the CIP. Three Volunteer Corporations are currently undergoing this process and have been added to the CIP planning roster.

Planning funds are programmed in FY23 for FS11, Glen Echo, a volunteer owned station. This project provides for a renovation of its existing 10,800 square foot space and an addition. FS03, Rockville, also a volunteer owned station that was constructed in 1965, is a project providing partial funding for its renovation. The scope of work includes an addition and improvements. The third volunteer owned station which has become somewhat undersized for its mission is FS24, Hillandale which is in the process of coordinating a joint station replacement project for CIP inclusion.

References

[Fire Station 25 Kensington-Aspen Hills](#)

[Fire Station 25 Renovation CIP](#)

[Fire Station 3 Renovation CIP](#)

[Fire Station 3 CIP Current Webpage \(11/15/22\)](#) and [PDF of this Webpage](#)

[Screenshots of FS11 and FS03 Status from CE's Recent CIP Review Meeting](#)

6B.2 Buildings and outbuildings are clean and in good repair, and the surrounding grounds are well kept. Maintenance is conducted in a systematic and planned manner.

Description

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Facilities Section coordinates facility management at 47 MCFRS work sites. Management includes acquisition, installation, operation, maintenance and disposal of building systems, furniture, equipment, grounds, and other exterior elements. The FRS Facilities Section is responsible for ensuring that facility and equipment maintenance is properly coordinated and planned, repairs and renovations are performed in a timely manner, and all work complies with the applicable mechanical, building, fire, health and/or life safety codes in conjunction with other local, county, state and federal agency requirements and guidelines.

For the most part, actual cleaning is handled by the career and volunteer staffs with cleaning materials which are supplied by the County. There is a work order system in place which allows career and volunteer staff to bring up, point out and address maintenance issues that arise. Additionally, most County owned stations are maintained under a cleaning service contract, which supplements on-duty staff cleaning assignments; stations 2, 10, 15, 29, and 3 do not have contracted cleaning services. All properties have a contractor doing the landscaping, and lawn maintenance on the surrounding grounds, as well as snow removal.

MCFRS Facilities Section uses an internal Fire Station Defect Reporting System. Defects and requests for service are submitted at the station level in the system for both LFRD and DGS facilities. Upon defect submittal, an automatically generated email is sent to the appropriate station commander, LFRD leadership if applicable, and the MCFRS Facilities Maintenance Section. Defects that are the responsibility of DGS Department of Facilities Maintenance are communicated electronically from MCFRS' system.

Appraisal

The MCFRS Facilities Maintenance Section triaged all defect submissions and assigned them to either DGS or the appropriate vendor for service. In FY22, the section received 1,320 LFRD defect tickets and MCFRS Facilities was involved in 798 DGS-managed defect tickets for a total of 2,118 defect tickets in the last fiscal year. The established processes for assuring facilities remained safe and in good condition, and that scheduled maintenance occurred has worked well for the agency.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use the Fire Station Defect Reporting System and the Facilities Section will continue coordinating facility management at its 47 work sites. Management includes acquisition, installation, operation, maintenance and disposal of building systems, furniture, equipment, grounds, and other exterior elements. Defects and requests for service will still be submitted at the station level in the system.

References

[MCFRS Station Safety Inspection Form](#)

[Screenshot of Montgomery Co Facilities Maintenance Request Form](#) (behind firewall)

[Station Management Policy 15-01](#)

[Info Bulletin 2014-10](#)

CC 6B.3 Facilities comply with federal, state/provincial and local codes and regulations at the time of construction; required upgrades for safety are identified and, where resources allow, addressed. For those items that warrant further attention, a plan for implementation is identified in the agency's long-term capital improvement plan (i.e., fire alarm systems, sprinkler system, seismic, vehicle exhaust system, asbestos abatement, etc.).

Description

MCFRS, when planning and constructing new facilities or undertaking significant building improvements, complies with all federal, state, and local codes, laws, and regulations. These building codes are succinctly outlined within the Montgomery County Department of Permitting Services (DPS) website. MCFRS will not occupy any facility without maintaining an approved occupancy permit acknowledging all applicable compliances. Initiatives are guided by MCFRS' 2016-2022 Master Plan. Monies are allocated via the Montgomery County Capital Budget and Improvements Program (CIP).

The MCFRS Facilities Section is responsible for ensuring that facility and equipment maintenance is properly coordinated and planned, non-CIP repairs and renovations are performed in a timely manner, and all work complies with the applicable mechanical, building, fire, health and/or life safety codes in conjunction with other local, county, state and federal agency requirements and guidelines. MCFRS also seeks grant opportunities to assist with implementation of long-term capital improvement plans.

Appraisal

The process of ensuring MCFRS facilities meet all applicable codes and regulations has worked well over the rating period. As an example, and during the appraisal period, the MCFRS Division of Support Services, Facilities Maintenance Section conducted an internal vehicle exhaust extraction system audit, which identified worksites that did not have exhaust extraction systems for all response vehicles. Subsequently, MCFRS applied for and was awarded an Assistance to Firefighters (AFG) Grant to purchase and install these systems to make them compliant. The process worked well, as now all worksites have Plymovent®

systems. In addition, the Facilities Maintenance Section implemented a yearly PM schedule for all Plymovent® systems in FY22/FY23. Another example includes having conducted a roof condition assessment on all fire stations. Engineering and design of roof replacements for stations identified in the assessment have begun.

In addition to the aforementioned, the following initiatives were successfully completed over the last several years:

- Completion of upgraded life safety systems installation at Stations 1, 4, and 11 accommodated newer technology and a change in communications systems.
- Completion of a system wide emergency generator program, which was designed to provide generators capable of supplying power to entire buildings for 72 hours in Dec 2022.
- Completion of resurfacing at stations 8, 15, and 29 with the newly added mandate to have ADA accessible pathways from the street to the building, as opposed to the prior requirement from the parking lot to the building.
- Completion of an Asbestos survey (for safety) at FS11, Glen Echo, prior to planned station upgrades.

Plan

The Facilities Section will continue to assure facilities are safe and compliant with all applicable codes and regulations and will, for large-scale projects, participate in the Capital Improvements Projects processes along with Local Volunteer Fire Rescue Departments. This includes leveraging this study to guide which roof replacements are most critical so appropriate CIP funds are programmed accordingly. In addition, six fire stations will undergo a Life Safety System upgrade at a rate of one per year for the next six years.

References

[Master Plan](#) (see PDF page 161/paper page 5-15 to PDF page 167/paper page 5-21)

[Assistance to Firefighters Grant Approval: Exhaust Extraction System](#)

[Fire Station Roof Condition Assessment](#)

[Montgomery County Capital Budget Website: MCFRS Roof Replacement Project](#)

[Montgomery County Capital Budget Website: Emergency Generator Project](#)

[Last Fire Station Which Completed Emergency Generator Project](#)

[Fire Station 11 Asbestos Safety Survey Prior to Planned Station Upgrades](#)

Criterion 6C: Apparatus, Vehicles and Maintenance (A/C Butsch)

Apparatus and vehicle resources are designed, purchased, and maintained to adequately meet the agency's goals and objectives.

Summary:

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) maintains a fleet of front-line (and reserve) apparatus to meet the response needs articulated in the Community Risk Assessment / Standards of Cover and the MCFRS Master Plan. The executive and legislative branches of the Montgomery County Government have approved and funded a multi-year apparatus replacement plan. MCFRS has its own repair shop, staffed with Emergency Vehicle Technicians, to maintain and repairs its fleet.

Performance Indicators:

CC 6C.1 Apparatus and vehicle types are appropriate for the functions served (e.g., operations, staff support services, specialized services and administration).

Description

The MCFRS has determined, through the CRA/SOC and its Master Plan, the critical tasks for the incidents that it mitigates, and which apparatus types are necessary to fulfill those critical tasks.

Appraisal

MCFRS has acquired and equipped a functional and safe fleet of apparatus that fulfills the critical tasking requirements.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use its existing policies and budget plan to ensure the acquisition of functional and safe apparatus that will fulfill its stated mission. Moving forward from the 2022 purchase of engine companies, the MCFRS will develop a tactical capabilities document to spell out the intended capabilities of each type of unit, as these units are specified and purchased.

References

[MCFRS CRA / SOC \(see page 175\)](#)

[MCFRS Master Plan 2016-2022](#) (see PDF page 152/paper page 5-6)

6C.2 A current replacement schedule exists for all apparatus and support vehicles based on current federal and state/provincial standards, vehicle condition, department needs and requirements.

Description

As mentioned above, the Montgomery County government as a whole has worked to approve and fund an apparatus replacement plan. This plan is captured within the Montgomery County Capital Improvements Program (CIP), which is predicated on a six-year cycle. The program is reviewed and updated every two years.

Appraisal

The apparatus replacement plan allows MCFRS to meet industry and local guidelines (such as NFPA 1901) for maintaining a safe, functional and affordable fleet. Over the six years from 2023 to 2029, the MCFRS anticipates replacing seven aerials, 46 ambulances, 18 engines, one brush engine, four rescue squads/hazmat vehicles, two tankers and other assorted specialty vehicles. A threat to this program will be inflation and rising costs of new technology; however, the Montgomery County CIP has accounted for inflation with an estimation of 5% rise in costs for the first two years of the plan, and 2% a year thereafter. As mentioned above, the plan is reviewed and updated every two years and inflation will have to be taken into account during those reviews.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to work within the existing capital budget process to plan for and acquire replacement apparatus.

References

Montgomery County CIP: [Apparatus Replacement Program \(P451504\) | Montgomery County Maryland Capital Budget \(montgomerycountymd.gov\)](#)

6C.3 A process exists for writing apparatus and vehicle replacement specifications with employee input.

Description

The Fleet Operations and Support Section (under the Division of Support Services) has the responsibility for ensuring that apparatus specifications are written in a manner that includes input from all stakeholder groups within the agency. This process is spelled out in MCFRS Policy 03-08AM “Acquisition of Fire and Rescue Apparatus”. Section 3.c of the policy spells out the membership of the Apparatus Specifications Committee (ASC), which includes a MCFRS mechanic, a career chief officer, and a representative each from the International Association of Firefighters Local 1664 and the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association. A separate ASC is formed for each of the three major types of apparatus: aerial apparatus, pumping apparatus, and EMS transport units. Under Section 5.a, the policy also spells out the approval process for the local fire and rescue departments (LFRDs) to purchase their own apparatus with non-tax funds. This apparatus must still meet county minimum standards for safety and functionality. These are spelled out in the MCFRS Apparatus Specification Sheet, located on the Fleet Section’s web page for easy retrieval. The Apparatus Specification Sheet was developed in response to a recommendation from the 2017 CFAI Peer Assessor Team.

Appraisal

The policy has worked well to assure that stakeholder groups have a voice in ensuring the acquisition of functional and safe apparatus for the MCFRS.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use Policy 03-08AM to ensure that stakeholder groups have a voice in ensuring the acquisition of functional and safe apparatus for the MCFRS. As part of its policy review work, the MCFRS will periodically review the policy to ensure that it stays relevant and current.

References

[MCFRS Apparatus Minimum Standards: Apparatus Specification Review](#)

[MCFRS Policy 03-08AM](#)

Criterion 6D: Apparatus Maintenance (A/C Butsch)

The inspection, testing, preventive maintenance, replacement schedule and emergency repair of all apparatus are well established and meet the emergency apparatus service and reliability needs.

Summary:

The Fleet Operations and Support Section of the Division of Support Services is responsible for the inspection, testing, maintenance, repair, replacement, and stocking of MCFRS apparatus. Most of this work is done at the MCFRS Central Maintenance Facility located in Rockville, Maryland. The work that can't be handled in-house is outsourced to contracted vendors that have the appropriate expertise and technology to handle.

Performance Indicators:

CC 6D.1 An apparatus maintenance program is established.

Description

MCFRS apparatus undergoes a daily, weekly, and monthly check by station personnel. MCFRS has an on-line defect reporting system so that personnel can quickly report problems found during field inspections. Apparatus is also brought to the Central Maintenance Facility (CMF) on a periodic basis to do appropriate preventative maintenance and federal DOT inspections.

Appraisal

MCFRS has successfully established a maintenance program and is performing at a standard that meets the minimums required by law. MCFRS has only recently begun measuring the ratio of scheduled to unscheduled repairs and is working to shift to a maintenance program that emphasizes a preventative, rather than reactive, approach. MCFRS was handicapped during the rating period by not being able to fill all authorized roles within the CMF (one equipment services coordinator and two technicians). This action was taken as a temporary cost cutting measure by the County budget authorities. As of March 2023, the CMF was down one technician. CMF was also handicapped due to a frankly antiquated fleet management software system. As of spring 2023, MCFRS and Montgomery County's Department of General Services (DGS) are planning to transition to a new fleet management software system. MCFRS is dependent on DGS for the timing and pacing of this transition.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to work to expand the amount of resources (personnel and equipment) dedicated to the apparatus maintenance function.

References

[Screenshots of Apparatus Tracker and Defect Reporting System](#)

6D.2 The maintenance and repair facility has adequate space and is equipped with appropriate tools.

Description

MCFRS is blessed with a large climate-controlled maintenance facility. This facility is fully equipped with lifts and the tools necessary to perform all vocational repairs. MCFRS mechanics are given a tool allowance so that they can maintain their own tool set necessary to affect the repairs within their area of responsibility.

Appraisal

The CMF has the space and equipment necessary to carry out its assigned role. However, as technology advances, MCFRS will need to research and modify the equipment necessary to continue its functions. One area of concern is the lift sets that CMF is currently using; they are hardwired and powered by shorelines. The CMF is moving towards battery operated lift sets that are wirelessly connected. As of this date, about half of the lift sets have been migrated over.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to invest in the equipment necessary to continue its functions. CMF will continue to replace lift sets to take advantage of newer technologies that offer greater flexibility and portability.

References

[Google earth view of Building A & B of CMF](#)

[View of interior of CMF showing exhaust systems, fall protection, overhead cranes](#)

[View of CMF interior showing wireless lifts, tools](#)

6D.3 The program is adequately staffed, supervised, trained and certified to meet the agency's needs.

Description

The CMF is allocated 12 technicians, 4 crew chiefs, 1 equipment services coordinator, 2 parts technicians, one parts manager and one overall manager. By virtue of their job class specifications, the technicians, crew chiefs, and ESC are all required to be certified at appropriate levels by the [Commission of Emergency Vehicle Technicians \(EVT\)](#) and the Automotive Society of Excellence (ASE). The technicians also hold relevant certifications in AC management. All work performed, whether by MCFRS personnel or outside vendors, is inspected for accuracy and completeness by the crew chiefs.

Appraisal

The CMF currently has enough personnel to ensure that all periodic DOT inspections/services are performed in a timely manner. As mentioned above, the CMF only recently began measuring the ratio of preventive to unscheduled maintenance, and as of the spring of 2022, measuring time to performance of desired (but not required) preventive maintenance is only being discussed. The current job class specifications work to ensure that there is some uniform industry standard applied to the mechanics and crew chief. These qualifications have made it almost impossible to hire someone with the requisite experience and education from outside the shop, which forces the MCFRS to hire mechanics with general automotive experience and train them to become EVTs. This is about a three-year process and represents a significant investment by the department in the employee.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to require its technicians to obtain the appropriate EVT and ASE certifications. The MCFRS will evaluate how to ensure that it is able to recruit sufficient personnel into this job class. The MCFRS will continue to refine data and metrics necessary to measure the ability of the CMF to meet demand from the department.

References

[Job Class Specs: Emergency Vehicle Mechanic Technician II](#)

[Job Class Specs: Emergency Vehicle Maintenance Crew Chief](#)

[Fleet Section Org chart](#)

6D.4 The reserve vehicle fleet is adequate, or a documented contingency plan is in place for when an apparatus must be taken out of service.

Description

The MCFRS maintains a fleet of reserve apparatus in order to meet the operational demands of the agency. This includes nearly 30 secondary and reserve engines, 10 aerials, 20 ambulances, 2 rescue squads, a tanker and a brush truck.

Appraisal

The MCFRS tracks when it falls short of desired service levels on a daily basis. When the reserve complement falls to one vehicle in a given category, daily reports are furnished to the Apparatus Chief by the CMF which detail what is being done to remedy the situation. In CY21, MCFRS fell short of the desired complement of aerials 5 times, rescue squads 26 times, and tankers 89 times.

In addition, the MCFRS does have contingency plans for moving personnel and apparatus when shortfalls occur.

Plan

The county fixed its reserve tanker in early CY22 and is purchasing a new one to provide two spares. Further, the apparatus replacement program will provide three new rescue squads, five new TDAs, and five new towers in CY21, 22, and 23. This should work to alleviate the shortfalls identified above. The MCFRS will continue to monitor service delivery shortfalls and will continue to address these shortfalls on a short-term basis via utilization of its contingency plans, and on a long-term basis via the apparatus replacement plan.

References

[Screenshot of CMF Shortfall Report](#)

[Contingency plans: Operations Upstaffing and Down Staffing Charts](#)

[Apparatus Replacement Program](#)

CC 6D.5 The inspection, testing, preventive maintenance, replacement schedule, and emergency repair of all apparatus are well established and meets the needs of the agency.

Description

MCFRS apparatus undergoes a daily, weekly, and monthly check by station personnel. MCFRS has an on-line defect reporting system so that personnel can quickly report problems found during field inspections. Apparatus is also brought to the CMF on a periodic basis to do appropriate preventative maintenance and federal DOT inspections. MCFRS does in-house hose and pump testing and outsources periodic ground and aerial ladder testing.

Appraisal

As mentioned above, the CMF has met the minimums for DOT type inspections and services but has only recently started measuring and striving towards meeting a more intensive preventive maintenance schedule. The MCFRS has met the ISO and NFPA standards for pump, hose, and ladder testing and received glowing reviews for its record keeping during the ISO review in 2021.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to meet the minimum DOT, NFPA and ISO requirements and will work to measure and meet a more intensive preventative maintenance schedule.

References

NFPA 1901, 1911, 1917 (copyrighted and unable to be linked).

[2022 ISO Public Protection Classification \(PPC\) FPSA Report](#) (see scoresheet on PDF page 11/Paper page 7)

Criterion 6E: Tools, Supplies and Small Equipment (A/C Butsch & Capt. Poist)

Equipment and supplies are adequate and designed to meet the agency's goals and objectives.

Summary:

Logistical support for equipment and supplies within MCFRS is a shared responsibility that is distributed by area of function. There are defined processes for tracking, ordering, and repairing equipment. MCFRS has worked hard to bring as much consistency as possible to this process.

Performance Indicators:

6E.1 Tools and equipment are distributed appropriately, are in adequate quantities and meet the operational needs of the specific functional area or program (e.g., fire suppression, prevention, investigations, hazmat, etc.).

Description

Logistical support to the department is provided by the Division of Support Services. The Safety Section is largely responsible for uniforms, PPE, EMS equipment, meters, and SCBA related matters. The Fleet Section is responsible for most tools and equipment. The IT section is responsible for radios, telephones and IT equipment. The Facilities section is responsible for station supplies. Different elements within the department can and do order specialty equipment that is not within general use.

Appraisal

In general, equipment has been provided in a timely manner to meet shortfalls in established inventory levels. The “ticket” systems in place that track requests and fulfillment have worked well. There is a document available on the MCFRS Quicklinks that identifies logistic support responsibilities that all personnel may refer to. MCFRS does suffer from the lack of a modern asset tracking system.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to work to streamline logistical functions. MCFRS will work with the County Department of General Services to implement a new facilities and fleet management system which does also contain an asset tracking system.

References

[Screenshot Small Tools Request](#)

[Who Fixes What](#) (from Quicklinks>Support Services Division)

6E.2 Tool and equipment replacement is scheduled, budgeted and implemented, and is adequate to meet the agency's needs.

Description

Tool and equipment replacement tends to be “baked” into whatever functional area it fits into. For example, the Apparatus replacement plan includes funds for stocking new vehicle purchases. The county CIP Master Plan also includes funding for biomedical, radio and SCBA replacement cycles on an as needed basis. IT replacement cycles are also funded by the CIP and coordinated by the Montgomery County Department of Technology & Enterprise Business Solutions. Lower cost and disposable items are funded through the operating budget.

Appraisal

The department is well stocked with equipment and tools that are appropriate for the missions of the department. While MCFRS does not always have the newest of any particular type of equipment, it does have modern equipment that works well to accomplish the tactical tasks that the department must accomplish. The department is also subject to compliance with Montgomery County government contracting requirements, which dramatically reduces the number of items which can be acquired through a direct purchase without a contract.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to iterate its logistical supply process to gain efficiencies. The department will continue to work with the County's Office of Procurement to bring more items under contract.

References

[Capital Improvements Projects](#)

[Station Commanders Ordering Process](#)

CC 6E.3 Equipment maintenance, testing and inspections are conducted by qualified personnel, following manufacturer's recommended schedules.

Description

MCFRS has a wide variety of portable equipment that requires regular preventive (and as needed) maintenance and inspection. This task is accomplished either by vendors who are under contract to handle the matter, or by in-house personnel who are trained and certified to do the work. For example, all MCFRS ambulance cots are inspected and PMed once a year by a vendor authorized by the cot manufacturer and contracted by the county to handle this task. Conversely, hose and pump testing are handled in-house by trained personnel who follow the relevant NFPA standards. SCBA and air compressor testing, and maintenance is also done in-house by two full-time non-sworn personnel who are trained and certified by Scott breathing apparatus to do the work.

Appraisal

MCFRS successfully completes almost 100% of required preventive maintenance and testing for portable equipment. The MCFRS has made decisions based on cost and time efficiencies about handling repairs and maintenance in-house versus contracting it out. The one possible criticism is that record keeping for this process resides in many disparate places.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to monitor the effectiveness and efficiency of its portable equipment maintenance and testing program. The agency will pursue an asset management program to better unify information about maintaining and testing its equipment.

References

[SCBA Shop Webpage](#)

[Small Tools Shop Webpage](#)

6E.4 Inventory control and maintenance tracking systems are in place and current.

Description

As mentioned above, the department tracks its inventory, maintenance, and testing efforts in a variety of disparate ways.

Appraisal

Information regarding maintenance and testing can generally be readily obtained from the personnel or section of the department that is responsible for that function. The use of the Office365 suite of products has greatly eased this function by allowing individual sections to create Sharepoint sites and common files. However, there is no common way of gathering, storing, and retrieving this information.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to ensure that it collects, retains, and publishes the data necessary to demonstrate that it is carrying out its responsibilities to maintain its stock of portable equipment. MCFRS will work with the Montgomery County government at large to pursue implementation of an asset management program.

References

[Fleet Operations and Support Webpage With Unit Inventories](#)

[EMS Quicklinks with EMS Inventories](#)

6E.5 Supplies and materials allocation is based on established objectives and appropriate to meet the operational needs of the specific functional area or program (e.g., fire suppression, prevention, investigations, hazmat, etc.), and is compliant with local, state/provincial, and national standards.

Description

MCFRS is a well-resourced department and sufficient tools and equipment are provided so that all personnel may accomplish their assigned tasks. Provided equipment meets the relevant local, state, and national regulations and standards.

Appraisal

As stated above, the MCFRS does not always use the newest, flashiest equipment, but is well-equipped with modern, proven devices. The department does take care to respond to changing mandates as required. An example of this is the recent Maryland legislation that outlawed PFAS containing firefighting foams. Even though the MCFRS could have taken until 2024 to change its fleet over to non-PFAS foam and to dispose of the old PFAS foam, both of these tasks were accomplished in CY2021.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to iterate its logistical functions to assure that all sections of the department are provided with the tools and equipment needed to do the job.

References

[2022 Regular Session - Senate Bill 273 Chapter \(maryland.gov\)](#)

Criterion 6F: Safety Equipment (M3 Maxam)

Safety equipment is adequate and designed to meet agency goals and objectives. For the purposes of this criterion, safety equipment includes personal protective equipment and related equipment (e.g., self-contained breathing apparatus).

Summary:

MCFRS ensures its personnel are provided with appropriate safety equipment which meets the needs of a large and varied fire-rescue service. Safety equipment, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and SCBA, meets or exceeds appropriate NFPA and OSHA standards.

Multiple MCFRS sections are involved in the research and selection of MCFRS safety equipment. MCFRS personnel meet regularly to ensure provided safety equipment is adequate and still serving the needs of the workforce.

Performance Indicators:

CC 6F.1 Safety equipment is identified and distributed to appropriate personnel.

Description

Members of the MCFRS Joint Health and Safety Committee (defined in the IAFF Local 1664 Collective Bargaining Agreement) and managers from the Property & Supply and SCBA business units work to identify safety equipment that meets the needs of MCFRS personnel. A process is in place to ensure products are evaluated and deemed effective before accepting and procuring new products. PPE and SCBA are distributed to all career and volunteer personnel from a centralized MCFRS Logistics facility using an effective inventory management and tracking system.

Appraisal

In 2021, EMS Logistics, SCBA and Meters, and Property and Supply Sections were organizationally relocated to the Safety Section and placed under the supervision of the Assistant Chief assigned to Safety (prior to this, these were under the management of the Assistant Chief assigned to Fleet). This move added to the cohesiveness between the Safety Section and the distribution of safety equipment.

The MCFRS Joint Health and Safety Committee (JHS) met regularly to evaluate product changes and review issues with current safety products or distribution. In addition, members of the JHS committee attended the Fiero conference in 2021 where they learned about advancements and changes to available products. Of particular interest to MCFRS, has been the evaluation of PFAS in PPE components. JHS members have met with multiple product manufacturers to evaluate PPE that would reduce exposure of personnel to PFAS, including exploring single layer PPE for non-IDLH environments.

Plan

The MCFRS Joint Health and Safety committee will meet at least quarterly to ensure products provided to MCFRS members are safe and effective. Personnel will continue to

attend training and conferences, which will enable them to keep on the forefront of research and products that may provide better results. MCFRS personnel will continue to be active in exchanging, challenging and gathering information from other jurisdictions. MCFRS will seek to remain a role model for other departments by developing and maintaining a high quality, standardized field-testing program for new products.

References

[IAFF contract, Article 35, page 70](#)

[Organizational chart which shows Safety & Supply in Support Services Division](#)

6F.2 Distributed safety equipment is sufficient for the functions performed.

Description

MCFRS PPE and SCBA items meet or exceed NFPA 1971 (Standard for Protection Ensembles for Structural Fire Fighting and Proximity Fire Fighting) and NFPA 1981 (Open-Circuit SCBA for Emergency Services) standards. Personnel are provided with adequate quantities of PPE items to safely and efficiently perform their tasks.

Appraisal

MCFRS successfully weathered the inventory shortages and delayed turnaround times created by Covid. MCFRS career and volunteer personnel have been issued sufficient quantities of PPE (i.e., two complete structural firefighting ensemble sets per career firefighter and two sets for some active volunteer firefighters) to ensure that clean, safe PPE is available. The MCFRS Property and Supply Section maintains inventory to lend when personnel are not able to access their personal PPE set(s). EMS PPE has become standard issue for volunteers providing only EMS services. Lastly, female PPE sizing is available for personnel requiring specialized sizes.

Each firefighter has been issued an individual, properly sized face piece. SCBA quantities remained adequate and spare equipment is kept at each station.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to evaluate changes to NFPA standards which may affect the safety equipment the department chooses to provide to its personnel. Currently, MCFRS is planning multiple wear trials in 2023, to include PPE pants and coats, single layer PPE, and barrier hoods. The Joint Health and Safety Committee will continue to evaluate the functionality of distributed safety equipment and recommend changes or enhancements as needed.

References

[MCFRS PPE](#)

[FireDex Gear Trial December 2022](#)

6F.3 Safety equipment replacement is scheduled, budgeted, implemented, and adequate to meet the agency's needs.

Description

MCFRS replaces PPE items at 10 years per the NFPA 1851 (2014) recommendation. Funds are made available for the acquisition of new items as equipment is retired. MCFRS utilizes the Capital Improvements Program budget process to replace Self Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA).

Appraisal

The process for scheduling, budgeting and implementation of safety equipment replacement has been adequate. All PPE elements are available for replacement at 10 years. A large-scale initiative was completed in the spring of 2017 when the entire stock of SCBA was replaced with new SCBA. This SCBA is under warranty until 2026.

Plan

MCFRS intends to place funds into the 2026 capital budget for replacement of 2017 SCBA acquisition. MCFRS is committed to several product evaluations in light of increased awareness of health effects associated with carcinogen exposure and heat stress. The Joint Health and Safety Committee will continue to advocate for regular replacement of MCFRS safety items.

References

NFPA 1971 and 1851 related to retiring PPE. Copyrighted, so not hyperlinked.

6F.4 Safety equipment maintenance, testing, and inspections are conducted by trained and qualified personnel, and appropriate records are kept.

Description

MCFRS uses a third party verified ISP (Independent Service Provider) to ensure its PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) and specifically structure firefighting ensemble is inspected, maintained and repaired in accordance with the highest manufacturer standards. SCBA is maintained and tested by certified personnel.

Appraisal

MCFRS actively managed the relationship with their ISP to ensure PPE elements are cleaned, inspected and maintained to the highest standards. Frequent contact was and continues to be made with the ISP to ensure expectations are clear. Record keeping for PPE and SCBA maintenance is organized, accessible and updated.

In addition to ISP inspections, quarterly PPE inspections are completed at each station. A newly created system (jot form) allows station officers to efficiently track their own PPE inspections and maintain a list of serial numbers associated with each member. The new system is accessible on a cell phone.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to actively manage their relationship with their PPE ISP to ensure PPE is inspected and maintained at the highest levels. NFPA 1851 guidelines to have an Advanced Inspection performed annually will continue to be followed but MCFRS will reevaluate the need for additional cleanings when NFPA 1851 is revised. Certifications for SCBA staff will continue to be maintained.

References

NFPA 1851 (Copyrighted, so not hyperlinked)

[MCFRS SCBA Technician Certification Certificates](#)

[MCFRS PPE Quarterly Inspection Form](#) (example, as normally on jotform.com)

[MDFireCandR Record](#)

[Air-Pak 5500 NFPA – Snap Change doc](#)

6F.5 A safety equipment inventory control and maintenance tracking system are in place and current.

Description

MCFRS Property & Supply and the MCFRS SCBA shop utilize a current, dedicated, inventory control and maintenance tracking system that includes control and tracking of safety equipment. Updates to this system are made most business days. Inventory counts are conducted several times a year.

Appraisal

The inventory control and maintenance tracking system works well for controlling and tracking of safety equipment. Using the current inventory system, a new monthly report was created to notify LFRD leadership which valuable items their members have not returned upon separation. This report has contributed to an improved return rate of issued items.

Plan

Recently the SCBA and Property Sections were asked to transition their inventory system to the Quartermaster - powered by the MotionDeck360 platform, which is being utilized by other areas of MCFRS. The change allows MCFRS to use a more stable, off-the-shelf platform, rather than relying on internal developers who change frequently. The new system is expected to be online in the first half of 2023.

References

[Example of MCFRS Property Issuing and Tracking System](#)

<https://mcmtechnology.com/solutions/Motiondeck>

Category 7: Human Resources (D/C Kinsley & B/C Pinthiere)

Human resources (HR) are defined as all aspects of personnel administration, except those of Training and Competency (addressed in Category 8) and Health and Safety (addressed in Category 11). Any reference to the HR Division is specifically directed toward the processes of recruiting, hiring, promotions, labor relations and administrative services, payroll administration, records management, and personnel administration; while Training and Health and Safety are housed in the HR Division, these sections are addressed in other FESSAM categories.

The heart of any organization is its people, and this category is designed to appraise the efficiency and effectiveness of the human resources program. Completing the human resources section may involve members from other governing entities or other elements of the community.

Criterion 7A: Human Resources Administration

General human resources administration practices are in place and are consistent with local, state/provincial and federal statutory and regulatory requirements.

Summary:

MCFRS is an operational department within the Executive Branch of Montgomery County Government; therefore, the regulations and laws of the County are fully adopted and enforced by the Department. The Montgomery County Personnel Regulations (MCPR) provide the principles, procedures, and practices that must be utilized for personnel administration within the Department. The Montgomery County Code mandates that the County utilize collective bargaining with the International Association of Fire Fighters, Local 1664 (“the Union”). The resultant collective bargaining agreement (CBA) between the parties affects or controls some areas of personnel administration procedures and practices. The County Attorney reviews the CBA to ensure it adheres to all statutory and regulatory requirements of the MCPR, state, and federal laws. In addition, the Department ensures all personnel actions are compliant with federal, state, and local laws. All personnel administration within the Department is completed by the Human Resources Division.

Performance Indicators:

CC 7A.1 A human resources manager is designated.

Description

There is a Division Chief designated to manage the Human Resources Division. The HR Division Chief oversees the following functional areas: Fire Rescue Occupational Medical Services (FROMS), Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA), Administrative Services, Mental Health and Wellness, Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM). Assistant Chiefs are designated to manage Administrative Services and the PSTA, while a Battalion Chief oversees FROMS operations. Note: while the PSTA is housed in the HR Division, training is discussed and addressed in other FESSAM categories.

Appraisal

The Department has always maintained a designated HR manager. The management configuration of a Division Chief (DC), two Assistant Chiefs (AC), a Battalion Chief (BC), and civilian managers worked well for the Department for a long time, but gaps in management capacity were identified. During the COVID pandemic, help was needed to assist with FROMS operations. In 2022, the Captain position in the recruiting office was converted to a Battalion Chief. These gaps are elaborated upon further in criterion 7A2.

Plan

The Department plans to expand the current HR Division management structure within budgetary limitations and management priorities. However, the Division Chief of Human Resources will maintain responsibility for all personnel issues. The Department plans to begin the work of expanding the Mental Health and Wellness unit, per the recommendations of a County Office of Legislative Oversight report on mental health services issued in April 2022.

References

[MCFRS Org Chart PDF](#)

[Admin Services Future Org Chart](#)

[Division Chief Class Specification](#)

[Assistant Chief Class Specification](#)

[Battalion Chief Class Specification](#)

[Program Manager II Class Specification](#)

[OLO Mental Health Report](#)

7A.2 The human resources program has adequate staffing to accomplish the human resources administrative functions.

Description

There are a mix of uniformed and civilian personnel that staff the HR Division. An AC and BC staff the administrative services and labor relations functions. A civilian Program Manager II and four civilian specialists staff the personnel administration, payroll, hiring, and records management processes. A BC manages the recruitment and promotional processes.

Appraisal

The workload in HR has been a challenge with a department of our size. The HR Division has always had a goal of enhancing staffing, but it has always been constrained by budgetary demands. Staffing in HR was enhanced in 2022 with the addition of the BC for recruitment and promotions, and an administrative specialist who handles recordation; the administrative specialist was transferred to HR from another Department unit. Prior to the addition of the BC, the recruiting position was vacant due to the then-assigned Captain being reassigned to assist FROMS during the COVID pandemic. The reclassification of the Recruiting Captain to the Recruitment/Promotions BC has helped to renew the important recruitment function and taken many tasks off the shoulders of the Labor Relations BC. Since the Recruitment BC was assigned on November 1, 2021, there have been over 1,000 candidate interactions at dozens of career/job fairs. Prior to this and since the COVID pandemic, there were no in-person recruitment efforts, only the use of social media.

While the additions of the BC and specialist were good, these moves only served to keep the HR Division afloat against the steady onslaught of work. The Division was not able to add the policy analyst and hiring/benefits specialist as planned in the previous assessment.

Plan

The Division will continue to work towards adding additional positions to ease the workload on employees. Specifically, the Division still plans to work towards the addition of a policy

analyst who would be responsible for policy analysis and writing, and a hiring/benefits specialist. In addition, the Division plans to explore the possibility of hiring an attorney, at least two uniformed officers, and a Program Manager to assist with recruiting, and two Administrative Specialists to absorb work from the upcoming delegation of authority from County HR.

References

[MCFRS Org Chart PDF](#) (see pages 9, 10, & 12)

[Assistant Chief Class Specification](#)

[Battalion Chief Class Specification](#)

[Program Manager II Class Specification](#)

[Administrative Specialist III Class Specification](#)

[Administrative Specialist II Class Specification](#)

7A.3 Policies are established to direct the human resources administrative practices in accordance with local, state, and federal requirements. The policies are reviewed annually and updated as needed.

Description

There are various sources of established policies, regulations, orders, laws, and procedures that direct the human resources practices of the Department. One of those sources is the Montgomery County Personnel Regulations (MCPR), which apply to all employees of MCFRS. Another source is the compilation of Departmental policies, procedures, and orders, enacted by the Fire Chief, that internally govern personnel practices in alignment with external requirements. Additionally, the CBA directs administrative practices in accordance with local, state, and federal work rules.

All County administrative policies, procedures, and regulations are kept on file with the Montgomery County Government, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850 . In addition, these documents are available online on the Montgomery County Government website.

Appraisal

The division and section chief have been tasked with reviewing policies and procedures that affect the HR work unit on a regular basis. In addition, the HR division has had some responsibility to review system-wide policies to ensure relevance and accuracy. With the nature of the workload of HR, this review has not been as robust as one would like. As noted previously, this is what prompted the interest in hiring/assigning a full-time policy analyst position.

While their review has not been consistent, policies and procedures have always been accessible to personnel on the Departmental and County websites. When documents have been newly posted, updated, or rescinded, personnel have had easy access to those changes, both via the website and through direct email communication.

Plan

The HR division will continue to strive to perform regular policy reviews and updates, as necessary. In addition, the HR division will attempt to hire/assign a position that is mostly focused on policy analysis and writing. Further, the HR division will continue to ensure that its policies are in line with local, state, and federal requirements.

References

[Montgomery County Personnel Regulations](#)

[DFRS Policies and Procedures](#)

[MCFRS/FRC Policies and Procedures](#)

[Rescinded Orders, Policies, Procedures](#)

[IAFF Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

Criterion 7B: Recruitment, Selection, Retention and Promotion

Systems are established to attract, select, retain, and promote qualified personnel in accordance with applicable local, state/provincial and federal statutory requirements.

Summary:

The Department follows established policies and procedures to ensure its recruiting, hiring, and promotion efforts meet all legal requirements. The Recruitment Section uses strategies to attempt to ensure the hiring pool mirrors the ethnic and cultural make-up of the community. This includes targeting various communities within the County through the establishment of relationships with community leaders. In addition, the Recruitment Section attends and advertises at various activities that are sponsored by local groups and establishments, such as Tough Mudders for Women and local gyms. There are policies that direct promotional activities, as well as the section on promotions in the CBA.

The Department has many partnerships that help it bring on new employees while following statutory requirements. The HR Division program manager and staff work closely with County HR staff in following established methods to select, retain, and promote personnel. With the assistance of County procurement and contracting personnel, the Department contracts with hiring and promotion experts, Industrial/Organizational Solutions (IOS), to provide applicant and promotional testing materials, expertise, and oversight.

Retention of employees is not an issue with the Department. Most uniformed employees make employment with MCFRS a lifelong career choice and only leave upon retirement. Retention of civilian personnel is also very good, although there is always the desire and opportunity for civilians to promote and move within the County by way of other departments and agencies within county government.

Performance Indicators:

7B.1 A mechanism is in place to identify and announce potential entry-level, lateral, and promotional positions.

Description

Several mechanisms are used to announce positions. Entry-level positions are listed online via the Department's recruitment website and the County OHR website. Social media sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are utilized to advertise entry-level positions. Further, the Recruitment Section has created a vast email distribution list whose members receive announcements when MCFRS is hiring. There is currently approximately 1,000 people on the distribution list.

A software program called Promotional Candidate Application Process (PCAP) is utilized to announce and facilitate promotional positions. PCAP allows employees to record, review, and revise their promotional application. Additionally, personnel receive promotional exam information through email sent out by the PCAP system, and supervisors may also approve applications for promotion in the system.

A software program called the Transfer Request Management System (TRMS) is utilized to facilitate lateral movement. Personnel utilize the TRMS to enter desired transfers, which in turn are acted upon through a joint effort involving management and union representatives, as long as those requests meet specific criteria.

Appraisal

MCFRS has continued to inform the public and its employees of vacancies in the paid and volunteer firefighter and civilian career paths. The Department has attended numerous recruiting events since 2018, realizing that the COVID pandemic put a rather significant damper on recruitment efforts. The County hosted its first Public Safety Career Fair on October 22, 2022. Between FY18 and FY22, the Department hired 244 firefighters and 22 civilian employees. In CY20, there were 53 promotions and in CY21 there were 66 promotions made via the PCAP system.

Lateral movement has occurred routinely, utilizing the TRMS system. At least every quarter, personnel have been transferred to the worksite of their choice if they have put in such a request through the TRMS system. Since 2018, there has been an average of 331 transfers of personnel per year.

While recruitment efforts were dampened, the Department refocused efforts on recruitment by assigning a Battalion Chief to oversee the process in November 2021. Since the assignment of the BC, the Department has significantly expanded its scope of recruitment efforts. The BC has attended numerous career fairs, college recruitment sessions, speaking events at high schools, and community groups.

Plan

There have not been any issues identified with the PCAP or TRMS systems; therefore, the Department will continue to utilize these systems. Entry-level positions will continue to be advertised utilizing the current methods. For entry-level positions, the Department plans to continue expanding and participating in college recruitment events, state-wide career fairs and speaking engagements at high schools, and community colleges. In addition, the funding for a dedicated recruitment vehicle has been placed into the FY24 budget and plans for this vehicle are to provide logistical and visual marketing support.

References

[Promotional Candidate Application Process System Screenshot](#) (behind firewall)

[DFRS Policy #512 – Promotion Procedure](#)

[MCFRS Recruiting Website](#)

[Examples of 2022 MCFRS Social Media Recruitment Efforts](#)

[2022-August Bethesda Beat Magazine](#)

7B.2 The agency's administration and its members are part of the recruiting process.

Description

A Battalion Chief manages the Recruitment section. The members of the MCFRS recruitment process are essentially part of a 30-member decentralized team. This team is comprised of CPAT mentors and other field personnel who are hired back on overtime to attend career and job fairs and other local recruitment events.

The organization incorporates the ideas of all its members into the recruiting process by constantly soliciting input. MCFRS relies on all members to disseminate information through flyers, emails, and social media posts with family members and friends.

The MCVFRA manages the recruitment efforts of the various LFRD corporations.

Appraisal

On November 01, 2021, a Battalion Chief was put in charge of the Recruitment section. The make-up of the recruitment team was kept intact from prior years and has worked well for the organization. The utilization of social media and internal communications has also worked well for the organization.

Plan

The Department plans to increase the composition of the recruitment team to improve the efficiency of the section. The addition of full-time members to the recruitment team is planned prior to the next assessment. Further, the Recruitment Manager plans to introduce some formalized training for recruitment team members.

References

[MCVFRA Recruitment Site](#)

[Example of Mass Email to All MCFRS Members Announcing Employment Opportunity](#)

CC 7B.3 Processes and screening/qualifying devices used for recruitment and selection of initial, lateral, and promotional candidates are job-related and comply with all local, state/provincial, and federal requirements, including equal opportunity and discrimination statutes.

Description

The Department's processes and screening/qualifying devices are job-related and comply with local, state, and federal requirements. The Department performs its hiring and promotion functions in partnership with the County Office of Human Resources (OHR), who manages these processes. The County OHR is staffed by human resources professionals who are well-versed in all local, state, and federal requirements that govern hiring and promotion, including EEO requirements. Training on interviewing skills and selection panels are offered to all personnel engaged in these activities by the County OHR. Further, promotional and lateral activities follow DFRS Policy 512, Promotion Procedure. MCFRS contracts with an outside vendor – Industrial/Organizational Solutions (IOS) – to assist in the hiring and promotional processes and validate their adherence to employment laws and procedures. IOS organizes job-analyses for relevant positions utilizing industry-standard validation methods, which ensures the Department's screening and qualifying devices are applicable to the advertised positions and are without bias.

The Department uses the Candidate Physical Ability Test (CPAT), endorsed by the IAFF and IAFC, as one selection tool. The CPAT has been reviewed by the U.S. Department of Justice and is used by fire departments around the country. The CPAT is job-related and validated as being able to gauge one's ability to engage in training as a firefighter.

Appraisal

MCFRS has maintained a partnership with the County OHR, which has enabled the Department to ensure all processes related to personnel hiring, promotion, and movement remain job-related and follow established requirements. Additionally, the contract with IOS has been maintained, which provides another layer of assurance that processes remain job-related and fall within requirements.

In 2022, the County and MCFRS retained the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) to perform a comprehensive equity assessment of the Department, to include its hiring, training, and promotional processes. The final report was issued in September 2022 and contained several HR-related recommendations to ensure hiring processes are inclusive and equitable and improve diversity.

Plan

MCFRS will ensure processes remain in compliance with local, state, and federal requirements by maintaining a relationship with County OHR, IOS, and the newly formed ORESJ. The Department will discuss and address the recommendations from the NAPA report.

References

[NAPA MCFRS Assessment](#)

[Industrial/Organizational Solutions](#)

[DFRS Policy #512 – Promotion Procedure](#)

[MCFRS CPAT Process - Recruiting Site](#)

[MCFRS Background Check Process – Recruiting Site](#)

[MCFRS 2021-2022 FF-Rescuer RC52 Hiring Process](#)

7B.4 The agency's workforce composition is reflective of the service area demographics, or the agency has put forth a reasonable effort by instituting an effective recruitment plan to achieve the desired workforce composition.

Description

MCFRS is dedicated to ensuring its workforce reflects the demographics of the community. The County population is a little over 1 million residents. As of 2019, Non-Hispanic Whites represent the minority race in the community, at 43.8%. As of 2019, Hispanics make up 19.5% of the population, Black or African-Americans make up 17.9%, and Asians and Pacific Islanders make up 14.7%.

The MCFRS Recruitment office is managed by a Battalion Chief who advertises across a diverse array of media outlets to attract members of the community. In addition, the Recruitment BC organizes recruiting efforts at local colleges, military installations, and local business districts.

Appraisal

The most recent demographic analysis of MCFRS was completed in 2022 by the National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA), which was contracted to conduct a diversity, equity, and inclusion assessment of MCFRS. MCFRS does not have immediate access to demographic data of its employees, a deficiency that was identified in the NAPA assessment.

MCFRS has strived to attract and hire the most qualified candidates by recruiting from a wide variety of external sources to ensure diversity.

Plan

MCFRS would like to start a program that is a one-day camp for 8- to 14-year-olds who are interested in learning more about the fire service and what it takes to become a firefighter. The goal is that each camper walks away empowered with life skills and professional guidance that encourages them to pursue a career in public safety. Similar programs have been successful in Fairfax (VA) and Howard County (MD).

References

[Montgomery Planning – Montgomery County Demographics](#)

[MCFRS Recruitment Website](#)

[MCFRS Comprehensive Equity Assessment, pages 53-58](#)

7B.5 A new-member orientation program is in place.

Description

The Department has a new employee orientation program in place. New employees spend most of their first day with representatives of County OHR for orientation. During orientation, employees complete required paperwork relating to payroll, insurance, and benefits. New employees are also provided with Recruit School policies and procedures. The Local Fire Rescue Departments (LFRD) are responsible for the orientation of their new members. Minimum requirements for volunteers have been put in place to include the course requirements of EEO, Cultural Diversity, Blood Borne Pathogens, SCBA and Protective Equipment, and making members aware of Department policies and procedures.

Appraisal

The orientation program has worked well for the Department and LFRDs. The orientation process has provided a defined set of guidelines to help new employees and volunteers be successful. Since the last accreditation process, the Recruit Rules and Policies book was updated to reflect changes in EMT scoring requirements, clarify procedures during separation, and make other editing changes. The Department is not aware of any current issues with the orientation process.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to work with County OHR to continuously evaluate and monitor the new employee orientation program and make adjustments where necessary. The Department will also monitor the LFRD orientation process to ensure it is complete and provides the minimum required knowledge.

References

[Recruit Class Rules and Policies](#)

[County OHR New Employee Orientation](#)

CC 7B.6 A supervised probationary process is used by the agency to evaluate new and promoted members based on the candidates' demonstrated knowledge, skills and abilities.

Description

The Department has a one-year probationary process, which follows the requirement put in place by Montgomery County Government for all new hires. According to the Montgomery County Personnel Regulations (MCPR), during probation “employees must demonstrate the proper attitude and ability in order to be granted merit system status.” Employees are informed of the probationary requirement during their orientation, and the process is documented in the Probationary Manual. Each probationary employee is directly supervised by a preceptor throughout the probationary time period. The station officer is ultimately responsible for ensuring the employee has appropriate time and resources allotted to complete the probationary requirements. Volunteer members also have a probationary requirement that is determined by each LFRD. The LFRDs are responsible for communicating the probationary requirements to their new members.

The Department follows the probationary requirement for newly promoted employees put in place by Montgomery County Government. Newly promoted employees must demonstrate the ability to perform the duties of the new job satisfactorily during a 6-month probationary period. All newly promoted employees are supervised throughout their probation, and that supervisor is responsible to complete a performance evaluation for the employee on a recurring basis.

Appraisal

The Department’s probationary process for new recruits has been effective at ensuring new members reenforce the skills learned during recruit school and develop those skills in the field to become valued and contributing members to the workforce. The Recruit Probationary Manual was revised since the last accreditation cycle, to include changes in passing grades for EMT modules in conjunction with curriculum changes. Additional language was updated concerning separation and the return of property.

In recruit classes 48 and 49, there were only two members that required a probation extension (due to injury and military deployment), which is an action that must be approved by the Fire Chief; 57 employees were graduated out of these two classes combined. Out of 66 promoted employees in CY21, no employees were returned to their previous position due to poor performance.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to review and update the Probationary Manual as needed. In addition, the current processes for supervising new employees and promotees will continue.

References

[MCPR Section 7, Appointments, Probationary Period, and Promotional Probationary Period RC49 Probationary Timeline](#)
[Administrative Services Individual Performance Planning and Assessment site](#)
[Recruit Rules and Policies 2022](#)

7B.7 The agency has an employee/member recognition program.

Description

There are several programs in place that recognize employee/member achievement and performance. Montgomery County Government has a program called “Montgomery’s Best”, which is a County-wide initiative to recognize the work of employees throughout the County government system. The employees that choose the recipients of the Montgomery’s Best recognition are appointed by the County Executive.

MCFRS has avenues for employee/member recognition through Unit Citations and the EMS Provider of the Month program; both vehicles for recognition are used on a regular basis. In addition, MCFRS has a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) that recognizes different levels of service provided by volunteer members to the community.

In addition to the above internal mechanisms for employee/member recognition, the Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce sponsors the annual Valor Awards program. The Valor Awards are presented to public safety employees or members based on acts of courage and/or sacrifice, and community service. The categories of awards available to employees and members include gold, silver, bronze, honorable mention, unit citation, and community service.

Appraisal

The number of available programs has allowed employees many opportunities to be recognized for doing good work for the Department and community. Eighteen (18) MCFRS members received Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Valor awards in CY22. Fifty-seven (57) members received Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce unit citations in CY22. Personnel have enjoyed being recognized for their work; recognition has been a positive experience for employees and members.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to support and participate in programs that provide for the recognition of employees/members.

References

[Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards](#)

[Length of Service Award Program](#)

[Example of Unit Citation](#)

[MCPR Section 13, Performance Awards](#)

[2022 Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards Email](#)

7B.8 The agency's working conditions and environment accommodate diverse and qualified applicants and retains a tenured workforce that is reflective of the community.

Description

MCFRS follows EEO guidelines and strives to attract and retain a diverse workforce that is reflective of the community. MCFRS has a management-level employee in the Recruiter position to make decisions and implement ideas that will continue to work to diversify the workforce. One of the strategies the Recruiter uses is to place a strong emphasis on community relationships to gain access to a diverse pool of applicants and build trust within the community. MCFRS and Montgomery County Government promote good working conditions for all employees. MCFRS and County government maintain good working relationships with the several organized groups that have workers or members serving the Department and community, including, IAFF Local 1664, UFCW Local 1994 (MCGEO), and MCVFRA.

Appraisal

In recent years, there has been a downward trend in the number of applicants to public safety jobs in the region. In FY21, the Department had 1315 applicants. In FY22, the Department had 974 applicants. Then in FY23, the Department had 871 applicants. In response to the trend, the Department implemented a process to host entrance examinations via virtual medium, making it easier for applicants to take the test. Three examinations have been given with the virtual option. Applicants were still afforded the ability to take the exam in person. The Department would have liked to post its demographics information here for CFAI, but that information is kept with County OHR and they will not release it to the Department. The recent National Academy of Public Administration (NAPA) study that was completed in September 2022 recognized this deficiency and recommended that OHR update its data collection and reporting methods in partnership with MCFRS.

MCFRS has strived to attract and hire the most qualified candidates by recruiting from a wide variety of external sources to ensure diversity.

Plan

The Department will continue to monitor and evaluate its recruiting process and strategies to reach the goal of a workforce that is truly representative of the community. The Recruitment manager will continue to strengthen and build relationships within the community. MCFRS will maintain a good work environment for all employees, no matter their background.

The Department continues to expand its recruitment efforts to a broader applicant pool to increase the number of diverse applicants.

References

[Montgomery Planning – Montgomery County Demographics](#)

7B.9 The agency conducts exit interviews, periodic employee surveys or other mechanisms to acquire feedback for improving policies and procedures.

Description

The Department conducts exit interviews of employees that resign. These interviews are conducted by the Labor Relations Battalion Chief. The results of exit interviews are shared with the Fire Chief so that he/she may make informed decisions on policy and/or procedure updates when needed.

When new policies and procedures are developed, they are sent to the IAFF and MCVFRA for comment. Both groups may query their membership to provide feedback on the policy or procedure prior to it going into effect. The process for comment by the IAFF and MCVFRA takes up to 75 days.

Division Chiefs and the leaders in all MCFRS organizational elements are responsible for annually reviewing policies and procedures, orders, directives, and bulletins that directly affect their organizational area. These personnel are responsible for initiating the development, revision, or rescission of documents, according to the MCFRS Document Policy #06-02.

Appraisal

The Department has continued to conduct exit interviews of personnel that resigned. The interviews have given the Department a clear picture of the reasoning for the employee's exit. For the most part, the interviews revealed personal reasons for leaving, as opposed to any effect by specific policies or procedures.

In the last appraisal cycle, the desire to evaluate the need for a more formal process to receive input from personnel was identified. As part of that process, the Department formulated a new document policy in 2020 – MCFRS Document Policy 06-02. Policy 06-02 makes clear the responsibilities for ensuring personnel are familiar with policies and procedures, and the responsibility for continuous review. Policy 06-02 also outlines a

procedure for any MCFRS personnel to forward proposals to establish, revise, or modify any policy or procedure.

Plan

The Department will continue to hold exit interviews with employees. The Department will evaluate the effect of Policy 06-02 on enticing employee participation in the policy and/or procedure formulation and review processes.

References

[County Exit Procedure for Employees](#)

[MCFRS Document Policy 06-02](#)

7B.10 The agency conducts workforce assessments and has a plan to address projected personnel resource needs, including retention and attrition of tenured and experienced employees.

Description

Departmental attrition charts are produced on a regular basis and are used to determine the need for additional personnel. These charts show the balance between the projected numbers of personnel leaving MCFRS and the scheduled hiring of new employees. Attrition charts are produced for several scenarios as needed and are greatly affected by the budget. For example, we may not know whether we can hold a recruit class or the size of that class until the budget for that FY has been approved. The Fiscal Management Division will produce several charts with the varying scenarios. The Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) that is in place allows the Human Resources Division to identify how many employees are planning to retire with three years notice, allowing the Department to accurately project personnel needs in the future.

Appraisal

The DROP has proven to be a valuable tool to predict personnel needs. The Department has knowledge of many retirements three years in advance of when they will occur, allowing us to plot that on the attrition charts. Once this information has been incorporated in the attrition charts, it paints a clear picture of when the Department needs to hire new personnel to retain the correct personnel complement. Though hiring needs are easy to identify, there have been times when MCFRS could not meet those needs due to budgetary constraints. The County's budget affects whether a recruit class can take place, the timing of the class, and the number of recruits.

Plan

The Department is happy with the present methods used to assess personnel needs. We will continue to work with the County Office of Human Resources to standardize the scheduling of recruit classes.

References

[FY22 MCFRS Attrition Chart](#)

Criterion 7C: Personnel Policies and Procedures

Documented personnel policies and procedures are in place to guide both administrative and personnel behavior.

Summary:

MCFRS has various policies and procedures, and documents affecting employees and members, that are clearly documented and communicated for personnel to view and follow. The various bodies of policies and procedures include the following: MCFRS/FRC Policies and Procedures, DFRS Policies and Procedures, Directives, Fire Chief General Orders, Collective Bargaining Agreement, Directly Negotiated Agreement, Montgomery County Personnel Regulations. These documents are made available to all employees/members in both printed format and online via the Department's easily accessible Quicklinks site. The MCPR is also accessible via the County's website. Where direction, policies and/or procedures are not followed, personnel are held accountable through corrective measures.

Performance Indicators:

CC 7C.1 Personnel policies, procedures, and rules are current, documented and communicated to all personnel.

Description

Personnel policies, procedures, and rules are documented by MCFRS and the County government by way of various forms of documents. The various formats used to document direction to employees include Policies and Procedures, Personnel Regulations, Directives, and Fire Chief General Orders (FCGO). The MCFRS Document Policy 06-02 assigns responsibility for keeping the various documents current to the Division Chiefs and leaders within the organizational elements. Policy 06-02 states that the various documents must be reviewed annually and evaluated for further development, revision, or rescission. Further, Policy 06-02 assigns the responsibility of familiarity to all MCFRS personnel, in addition to directing station officers to review new documents with their personnel. In addition to the various formats that provide direction to personnel, many of the Department's activities are also guided by the CBA with IAFF and the DNA with the MCVFRA. These agreements with the two labor groups are kept current by the negotiation process, which typically takes place every three to five years.

All Policies and Procedures, FCGOs, Regulations, Directives, the CBA, and the DNA are easily accessible to employees and members online via the MCFRS Quicklinks site, under the Human Resources Division. Any new direction is emailed to employees and members, and also posted onto the Quicklinks site.

Appraisal

The Department wrote and implemented MCFRS Document Policy 06-02 in 2020 to formalize and document the process of policy formulation and make clear all members' responsibilities pertaining to document development and revision. The implementation of Policy 06-02 formalized the responsibility of all personnel for the development, understanding, revision, and cancellation of policies and procedures, FCGOs, and Directives. Even with the advent of Policy 06-02, though, all policies and procedures have

not been able to be updated due to workload and time constraints. Many policies that use outdated terminology have remained in force without being updated due to time constraints and competing projects; this was identified in the previous appraisal.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use Policy 06-02 to manage the development and revision of various documents; an emphasis will be placed on updating outdated documents.

References

[Fire Chief General Orders](#)

[MCFRS Quicklinks](#)

[MCFRS/FRC Policy and Procedures](#)

[DFRS Policy and Procedures](#)

[Montgomery County Personnel Regulations](#)

[MCFRS Document Policy 06-02 \(03/16/2020\)](#)

[IAFF 1664 Collective Bargaining Agreement](#)

[Montgomery County Volunteer Fire Rescue Association Bargaining Agreement](#)

CC 7C.2 The agency has a policy that defines and prohibits harassment, bias and unlawful discrimination of employees/members based on sex, race, disability or other legally protected characteristics, and describes the related reporting procedures. The policy and organizational expectations specific to employee behavior are communicated formally to all members/employees and are enforced.

Description

MCFRS relies on several policies that define and prohibit harassment, bias, and unlawful discrimination of employees/members. Policy and Procedure (P&P) 507, Discrimination, defines discrimination, harassment, and sexual harassment, and describes/outlines prohibited conduct and reporting responsibilities/procedures as they relate to individuals experiencing discrimination or harassment and supervisors. Executive Regulation 22-00AM, Code of Ethics and On-Duty Conduct, similar to P&P 507, defines discrimination and harassment, and outlines prohibited conduct and reporting requirements. The Montgomery County Personnel Regulations, Section 5, Equal Employment Opportunity, also defines discrimination, harassment, and retaliation, and outlines prohibited conduct and reporting requirements/procedures.

In addition to the outlined policies, the MCFRS Quicklinks site, under the Human Resources Division, has a site dedicated to MCFRS EEO complaint handling. The site outlines the options available to personnel for reporting discrimination or harassment. The site also provides personnel with instructions to complete the online complaint form and a direct link to the form.

The policies outlined above serve as formal notices to employees on expected behavior and outcomes for failure to abide by expectations. Personnel are reminded yearly of EEO expectations and guidelines through the Department's Annual Recertification process, which includes a scenario-based quiz. The policies on discrimination and harassment are expected to be enforced by all supervisors, from first line supervisors all the way up to the Fire Chief. The Administrative Services group, working on behalf of the Fire Chief, is

tasked with implementing measures to correct employee behavior when policies and procedures are not followed.

Appraisal

Since the last appraisal in 2018, the Department has moved away from the use of an internal EEO officer to referring all cases of confirmed or alleged discrimination or harassment to the Office of the County Attorney (OCA) representative for EEO affairs. This move has led to a more consistent and uniform approach to EEO matters, ensuring MCFRS' procedures and actions are similar to the rest of County government. Since 2020, 30 EEO cases have been referred to the OCA.

The Department planned to update P&P 507, Discrimination, after the last cycle but was unable to achieve that goal.

Plan

The Department plans to update its existing policies (507, 22-00) to ensure they are in line with the current practice of referring allegations to the OCA and the expectations of the County leadership and Fire Chief. MCFRS will continue to provide refresher training and guidance to personnel concerning EEO matters through the Annual Recertification process.

References

[Policy 507, Discrimination](#)

[Executive Regulation 22-00AM, Code of Ethics and On-Duty Personal Conduct](#)

[MCPR Section 5, EEO](#)

[MCFRS EEO Site](#)

7C.3 A corrective actions system, which ensures accountability, is in place.

Description

The Department adheres to a system of policies, procedures, fact-finding, and investigations, which ensures accountability of all personnel. Procedures and levels of discipline are addressed in the MCPR, the CBA with IAFF, and the DNA with the MCVFRA. In addition, P&P 503 addresses discipline by mirroring the requirements and procedures set forth in the MCPR. MCFRS typically relies on fact-finding by supervisors prior to determining the need and type of corrective action to be taken to ensure accountability. The Fire Chief may utilize the Internal Affairs Office when an in-depth investigation is required or when incidents may require high-level discipline.

Appraisal

The MCFRS system for corrective action has been effective at ensuring accountability and ensuring employees are treated in the fairest manner. Fairness and equitability have further been ensured by adherence to the levels of discipline as dictated by the MCPR and adherence to past practices for like behavior.

Plan

The Department will continue to adhere to the procedures concerning discipline and corrective action as dictated by the MCPR, CBA, and DNA to ensure fairness and equitability.

References

[MCPR Section 33, Disciplinary Actions](#)

[Collective Bargaining Agreement, IAFF Local 1664, Article 30](#)

[DFRS Policy 503, Disciplinary Action Procedures](#)

[Directly Negotiated Agreement MCVFRA](#)

CC 7C.4 An internal ethics and conflict of interest policy is published and communicated to employees/members.

Description

Montgomery County Code Chapter 19A establishes ethics regulations for the County and its employees. MCFRS sets the expectation that all personnel follow the County's ethics rules and disclosure requirements as outlined in the Personnel Regulations, Section 3, Ethics, Disclosure of Illegal or Improper Acts, Employment of Relatives, etc. The MCPR is available for all personnel to view online. Further, MCFRS makes all personnel aware of the rules governing outside employment by way of reference through Policy and Procedure 510, Outside Employment. All MCFRS policies and procedures are available to all personnel through the Department's Quicklinks site. Some personnel are identified as holding positions that require annual completion of a Financial Disclosure form with the County Ethics Commission.

Appraisal

The standing policies that have been in place have worked well to ensure employees are ethical in their actions. Many corrective actions that have been implemented have referenced the Code of Ethics policy, which has ensured employees were made aware of expectations.

Plan

The Department will continue to follow the ethics and conflict of interest procedures and policy as outlined by the MCPR.

References

[Montgomery County Ethics Commission website \(allows you to view County Code Chapter 19A and Ethics Regulation Chapter 19A\)](#)

[MCPR Section 3, Ethics, Disclosure of Improper Acts, etc.](#)

[DFRS Policy 510, Outside Employment](#)

7C.5 An employee/member grievance/complaint process is published and communicated to employees/members.

Description

An employee/member grievance/complaint process is published in several places for employees and members of MCFRS. The MCPR, Section 34, outlines the grievance process for County employees, including non-union employees. The grievance procedure for employees belonging to IAFF Local 1664 is described in Article 38 of the CBA. The grievance process for members of the MCVFRA is outlined in Article 8 of the DNA. However, Article 7 of the DNA outlines the procedure for any appeal of disciplinary action by volunteers. These grievance procedures are available to employees and members in both printed and online formats.

Appraisal

Awareness of the grievance procedure has been made evident by the fact that employees across all employee groups have been able to file grievances. Employees have been able to access grievance procedures via the various published methods the Department has made available.

Plan

The Department will continue to follow the current grievance/complaint process as outlined by the various articles addressing the same.

References

[MCPR, Section 34, Grievances](#)

[CBA, Article 38, Contract Grievance Procedure](#)

[DNA, Article 7, Disciplinary Action Procedures for LFRD Volunteers](#)

[DNA, Article 8, Contract Grievance Procedure](#)

Criterion 7D: Use of Human Resources

Human resources development and utilization is consistent with the agency's established mission, goals, and objectives.

Summary:

The organization develops and utilizes its human resources with fairness, transparency, and adherence to established laws, policies, and regulations. Consistent with its mission, the Department ensures personnel are highly skilled, motivated, and ready to serve the community with the highest level of customer service. All members are treated as the most valuable commodity and have a voice within the organization. The Department continues to work to ensure its members are reflective of the community they serve.

Performance Indicators:

CC 7D.1 A position classification system and a process by which jobs are audited and modified are in place.

Description

County OHR has a position classification system in place and a process by which jobs are reviewed and modified. County OHR contracts with an outside vendor who assists with the classification of positions. These classifications are listed on the County OHR Classification home page. In addition, Departments may make requests for position reclassifications through a process called a June Box, which takes place every year in June.

Appraisal

The County's position classification system and review process has been working successfully. In CY21, the Department had one civilian position reviewed and/or modified. In CY22, zero positions were identified to be reviewed. In addition, the Department was able to create 15 positions in CY22. The system has provided the opportunity for employees and the Department to challenge position classifications to ensure employees are receiving compensation commensurate to their duties.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow the County OHR process of position classification review and modification, to include submittal of June Box requests as the Department or employees see fit.

References

[FY22 Job Classification Memo](#)

[FY22 June Box Request Memo](#)

[County OHR Classification Homepage](#)

7D.2 Current documented job descriptions exist for all positions, and incumbent personnel have input into revisions.

Description

All fire rescue positions have descriptions, which are evaluated and documented by County OHR. All employees can offer recommendations on additions or deletions to any position description; requests can be made through the Human Resources Division to County OHR. In addition, personnel are regularly queried by the promotional exam vendor on the validity of their position's description.

Appraisal

The process of establishing position descriptions has led to accurate and valid descriptions for all positions. The promotional exam vendor has regularly sent out surveys to employees asking for validation of duties and responsibilities; in 2021, a job analysis survey was sent out to both Captains and Battalions Chiefs prior to the respective promotional exam. The job analysis process included providing information on current tasks and Knowledges, Skills, and Abilities needed for personnel to perform their current job. In 2021, OHR initiated an effort to update all MLS position descriptions countywide, and incumbent personnel reviewed and updated that information as necessary.

Plan

The Department will continue working with County OHR and the promotional exam vendor to ensure position descriptions are relevant and valid.

References

[Captain Job Analysis Update](#)

[Battalion Chief Job Analysis Update](#)

[OHR Classification Homepage](#)

[Memo – MLS Position Descriptions](#)

7D.3 A personnel appraisal system is in place.

Description

There is an appraisal system in place for personnel. The Department uses the Individual Performance Planning and Appraisal (IPPA) process for bargaining unit employees. Personnel at the ranks of Captain and below are reviewed at least yearly by their supervisors using the IPPA process. The County Workplace Performance Management System is used to appraise the work of personnel in the Chief officer ranks and civilian employees. As with the IPPA process that is used for bargaining unit employees, chiefs and civilians are reviewed annually. Annual reviews for all employees are typically based on their hire/anniversary date. Employees are appraised against a Performance Plan, which is generated by the employee's supervisor.

Appraisal

The appraisal system in place has worked well for the Department. IPPAs have enabled supervisors to track employee performance over time and provided concrete metrics for employees to aspire to. The appraisal process has also provided a tool for supervisors to use to track performance in relation to the effect of corrective actions. In all, the appraisal system has been a good tool for the Department to promote continuous improvement of employees. The previous plan stated there was a plan to move all IPPAs to the County's Workplace Performance Management System. This plan did not come to fruition, and the Department has continued to utilize the paper IPPA process for bargaining unit employees.

Plan

The Department will continue to use the current personnel appraisal system.

References

[MCPR, Section 11, Performance Planning and Evaluation](#)

[MCGeo Appendix IX, Performance Planning and Evaluation Procedures](#)

[Quicklinks – IPPA site](#)

7D.4 The agency has a policy or program for receiving employee/member input or suggestions.

Description

The Department does not have a specific policy or program for receiving employee/member input or suggestions. However, employees/members have many avenues by which to provide the organization with input and suggestions. Through collaboration with the IAFF and MCVFRA, employees and members participate in various committees and work groups that allow them to voice their opinions, concerns, and offer ideas for the good of the organization. In addition, the Fire Chief and all members of the management team maintain an open-door policy by which members and employees are never discouraged from bringing valid concerns and suggestions to their superiors. Employees and members are encouraged, with almost every communication from management, to voice any questions, comments, or concerns to their chain of command. The chain of command is emphasized so that lower-level managers may have the chance to address minor issues or concerns that otherwise might take valuable time from senior management or the Fire Chief. The Fire Chief always maintains an open-door policy to any employee or member that has an immediate or serious concern that warrants bypassing of the chain of command.

Appraisal

While the open-door policy appears to have served the organization well, the Department recognizes that a more formal process might be beneficial in terms of complaint/concern tracking, data gathering, and trend identification. The Department may benefit in various ways from the ability to analyze trends, and efficiency and safety might be improved.

Plan

The Fire Chief and management will surely maintain an open-door policy while also relying on the chain of command principle to filter out smaller issues or concerns. At the same time, the Department will begin to evaluate the feasibility of the development of a formal process for employee/member input, to include any policy or technology solutions.

References

See HR Division Chief for a listing of all committees and members (confidential and on-site)

7D.5 Career and professional development programs are in place for all members and encourage the pursuit of professional credentialing.

Description

There are several avenues available to all members of the organization interested in career and professional development. The Department has two policies, Policy and Procedure 512 and Executive Regulation 36-08AM, that guide members as to what training and certification is needed for movement up the promotional ladder. The training academy hosts periodic seminar-type sessions via an online format that are directed at both company-level and management-level personnel; the sessions are broadcast via YouTube Live and offer review and discussion of actions, ideas, and best practices surrounding various topics, such as fire or EMS incidents and new Department programs. In addition, County OHR offers periodic courses aimed at professional development that members may take. Also, there is a Lieutenant mentorship program for those members who are eligible for promotion to Lieutenant and have taken the Lieutenant promotional exam. Additionally, chief officers are required to participate in the Chief Officer Professional Development and Improvement Program (COPDI), which requires chief officers to acquire a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education on an annual basis in to maintain their chief officer credential. Finally, members who seek to take outside courses for professional development, such as at places like the National Fire Academy and Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute, are always supported and encouraged by the organization.

Appraisal

The career and professional development programs in place have been working well; there has not been a shortage of trained and well-rounded personnel to take promotional exams. Also, there has been much positive feedback and support for the YouTube seminars, “Boss Talk” and “From the Command Post”. The County OHR has continued to send out frequent professional and career development-oriented course offerings. The COVID pandemic stalled the process of reviewing/updating Executive Regulation 36-08AM, as stated in the 2018 assessment.

Plan

The Department will continue to offer the well-received YouTube seminars, and work to review and update as necessary Executive Regulation 36-08AM.

References

[Executive Regulation 36-08AM](#)

[Policy and Procedure 512](#)

["Boss Talks"](#)

7D.6 The agency has a succession plan that incorporates mentoring.

Description

The organization has a couple programs in place that address succession planning with a mentorship model. As mentioned in 7.D.5, there is a Lieutenant mentorship program that targets those members on the eligibility list. In addition, the Department has a Captain “bump-up” program that is available to Captains on the Battalion Chief promotional eligibility list. Those Captains on the list pair with tenured Battalion Chiefs to complete an orientation program, which allows them to act as Battalion Chiefs as needed.

The Department also addresses succession planning through analysis of the Deferred Retirement Option Plan (DROP) program. The DROP program allows the Department to know three years in advance when members will be retiring, thereby allowing for the planning and budgeting for new personnel. In the case of higher-level positions, the Department allows for shadowing of those personnel who are nearing retirement to ensure a smooth transition; these personnel serve as a mentor to the person who will eventually replace them.

Appraisal

The department has been satisfied with the varied leadership development paths currently in place and its ability to perform succession planning. As noted above, the Department was successful in developing a mentorship program for Lieutenants as identified in the 2018 Self-Assessment. The Department has put the following numbers of personnel through Battalion Chief bump-up mentoring since 2018: 10 from the 2021 eligibility list; 6 from the 2019 eligibility list.

While the Department has been mostly satisfied with its succession planning model, it is recognized that reliance on the DROP program leaves a small gap in analysis in terms of identifying those personnel who decide to resign prior to normal retirement timeframes. There is no mechanism in place to catch people who may be thinking of resigning or retiring early.

Plan

The Department will continue with the current succession planning model, while also analyzing the feasibility of identifying early retirees and resignations before they happen.

References

[Bump Up Training Content](#)

[Lieutenant Mentorship Task Packet](#)

Criterion 7E: Personnel Compensation

A system and practices for providing employee/member compensation are in place.

Summary:

There are various systems and practices in place for providing employee compensation and making employees aware of the various benefits available to them. The County OHR maintains a robust website and Employee Self-Service online system that allows employees to view, at any time, their compensation and benefits. Employees are also able to view their benefits and compensation utilizing the organization's Quicklinks site and the applicable bargaining agreement. In addition, the Employee Self-Service system allows employees to make changes to their benefits annually during the Open Enrollment season.

Performance Indicators:

CC 7E.1 Rates of pay and compensation are published and available to all employees/members.

Description

Rates of pay and compensation are published in multiple locations for employee access. The IAFF CBA has compensation information published in several articles, to include wages, overtime, special duty differentials, call-back pay, holiday pay, and emergency pay. The MCGEO CBA has similar information on salary, wages, and compensation. Both agreements are posted on the MCFRS Quicklinks site for access by all personnel. Personnel may also access compensation information through the County OHR website. Further, personnel have access to compensation information through the County Employee Self Service system.

Appraisal

The current avenues for disseminating compensation information have worked well for the Department. There have not been any issues brought forth regarding any of the current systems for displaying compensation information.

Plan

The organization plans to keep the current methods of providing pay and compensation information in place.

References

[IAFF CBA 2022-2024 Appendix I-A, I-B, I-C – Salary Schedule](#)

[MCGEO CBA 2020-2023 Articles 5&6 \(See PDF pg 10/paper page 5 to PDF pg 26/pg 21\)](#)

[MCFRS Quicklinks – Human Resources Division](#)

[Montgomery County OHR Compensation Site](#)

7E.2 Member benefits are defined, published, and communicated to all employees/members.

Description

Member benefits are defined and communicated to all employees at the beginning of employment and posted via the County OHR site. The County OHR sponsors an Open Enrollment season every year, where updated benefits information is added to the site and communicated to all employees for selection for the next calendar year. The OHR benefits site is available to all employees throughout the year, where they can look up information on medical, dental, and vision plans, plus information on wellness programs, compensation, tuition assistance, career development, employee assistance, and retirement. In addition, member benefits are published in the collective bargaining agreements, which are available to all members.

Appraisal

During the last accreditation cycle, one improvement that was recommended was the addition of the ability for members to look up their current beneficiary elections using the County OHR system. Currently, members can look up their current beneficiary designations for their retirement benefits via the retirement vendor websites. County OHR is working on resolving a technology issue that will allow members to access their life insurance beneficiary elections. Otherwise, the current method of publishing and communicating member benefits has worked well.

Plan

The organization plans to continue to point members to the County OHR site to view benefit information. The County OHR will continue to maintain its site.

References

[Montgomery County Office of Human Resources](#)
[MCFRS Quicklinks – Human Resources Division](#)

Category 8: Training and Competency (A/C Sanford & B/C Gibson)

Training and educational resource programs express the philosophy of the organization they serve and are central to its mission. Learning resources should include a library; other collections of materials that support teaching and learning; instructional methodologies and technologies; support services; distribution and maintenance systems for equipment and materials; and instructional information systems, such as computers and software, telecommunications, other audiovisual media, and facilities to utilize such equipment and services. If the agency does not have these resources available internally, external resources are identified, and the agency has a plan in place to ensure compliance with training and education requirements.

A learning resources organizational structure and a technically proficient support staff are central to success of training and educational programs. The training staff should provide services that encourage and stimulate competency, innovation and a continual learning cycle. The agency or system should provide those learning resources necessary to support quality training. The agency should depict its approach to recognized state/provincial and national fire service professional standards programs in its written responses to the performance indicators in this category.

Criterion 8A: Training and Education Program Requirements

A training program is established to support the agency's needs. The agency provides access to and guidance on educational programs that increase advancement potential and support the agency's needs.

Summary:

Training programs are presented at the Public Safety Training Academy (PSTA) year-round. The PSTA schedules are designed to accommodate the volunteer and career personnel of MCFRS' combined system.

The Fire Chief and PSTA staff employ the concept of front-end analysis to meet the department's training needs. Management staff continuously monitors and evaluates departmental trends to determine training strengths and needs to effectively deliver programs to personnel.

The courses offered at the PSTA are designed to meet the needs of personnel seeking minimum training and/or promotion, as well as advanced and/or specialized training. Courses meet or exceed State and national certification standards, including National Board on Fire Service Professional Qualifications (NBFSPQ); International Fire Service Accreditation Congress; and Maryland Fire Rescue Education Training Commission.

Performance Indicators:

CC 8A.1 The organization has a process in place to identify training needs, including tasks, activities, knowledge, skills and abilities.

Description

The department has a continuous process that it follows to ensure training needs are met. Management continually monitors personnel attrition, reviews standards and critical calls, and analyzes feedback to assist the training design process. The rate of personnel attrition is also monitored as an aid to the training process. Attrition is a factor in the type and schedule of training that the department needs to provide. And national and state standards are monitored for changes that may affect the training provided by the department. Various national and state entities and local policies dictate the training standards that fire service personnel must adhere to when performing in their roles as firefighters and rescuers. National and State entities that the department monitors to ensure compliance and best practices include National Fire Protection Association (NFPA); Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA); Maryland Occupational Safety and Health Administration (MOSHA); Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI). Local policies that dictate training requirements include Fire Chief General Orders (FCGOs); Montgomery County Executive Regulations; Fire and Emergency Services Commission (FESC) policies; Fire Chief Directives.

The department reviews critical and complex calls to ascertain if any specific skills or knowledge need to be revisited by the PSTA to ensure personnel safety and proficiency. The department reviews critical calls through the Post-Incident Analysis and Significant Incident Report processes. Additionally, the PSTA analyzes these reports in order to identify trends that may impact training topics or lead to adjustments in current training.

The department continuously receives and evaluates feedback provided by students and by the specific program managers. The program managers continuously monitor needs pertaining to their program areas. They identify deficiencies in training and ensure all requirements are met. The PSTA course schedule can then be adjusted as necessary.

Furthermore, the PSTA continuously solicits feedback on courses and training from the primary stakeholders - the students.

Appraisal

The process that is in place has proven to be effective in meeting the needs of all members of the organization, both career and volunteer. Much valuable information on classes and programs has been obtained through course and training feedback mechanisms. The Calendar Year (CY) 2022 In-Service training program trained over 900 personnel in acquired structure training and returned 100% of feedback solicitations, which provided information on the quality of the program and suggested adjustments. The program was designed to fill a gap created initially by COVID and later, by departmental staffing and call volume issues, which hampered the ability to send large numbers of on-duty personnel to the PSTA for in-service training. The PSTA staff has met with volunteer leadership in CY2021 and CY2022 in order to ensure classes being taught meet the needs of the volunteer members. This led to adjustments in scheduling, as well as adjustments in specific offerings, which was well-received.

MCFRS' aggressive training schedule is comprised of courses that meet the needs of members, specialty teams, management teams, officer training, and company level operations. Each course was evaluated by instructors, PSTA staff, and students to ensure the most effective educational strategies were used, which ensured the highest quality training and the most effective field personnel were produced. The PSTA ran over 250 classes in CY2022, most of which solicited specific feedback on the course, instructors, materials, and training environment. While feedback has been consistent, the PSTA still utilized paper feedback forms in some classes, which often made it cumbersome for managers to review the enormous amounts of forms returned throughout the year.

The Emergency Medical Services Quality Assurance/Improvement Office has successfully used quantitative analysis to focus departmental training needs on the most critical areas. Return of spontaneous circulation (ROSC), ST Elevation Myocardial Infarction (STEMI), and patient stroke interventions data have been routinely quantitatively analyzed against

American Heart Association recommended standards of practice. This data and analysis have been successfully used for EMS training program development, enhancement, and updates, and subsequently, integrated into PSTA training to improve patient care.

Plan

The Training Chief (Assistant Chief, Training Section) will continue to oversee all PSTA programs and confer with program managers to evaluate their programs. In addition to regularly scheduled weekly meetings of PSTA staff, bi-annual meetings will be held to identify training needs and deficiencies within MCFRS, and identify tasks, activities, knowledge, skills, and abilities required for emergency operations. The Training Chief will consult with the Operations Division Chief and his staff on information obtained in Post Incident Analysis and Significant Incident reports to identify any training deficiencies that the PSTA might be able to address in current or new training initiatives. The Training Chief will continue the process of moving to all-electronic feedback mechanisms which might also provide easier interpretation of analytics.

References

[Example of After-Action Review: 3/3/2022 – Lyttonsville Rd Explosion \(SharePoint Screenshot Example\)](#)

[2022 In-Service Data](#)

[2022 All PSTA Classes](#)

8A.2 The agency's training program is consistent with the mission statement, goals and objectives, and helps the agency meets those goals and objectives.

Description

The overarching premise of the organization's mission statement from a training perspective is to provide personnel with the knowledge, skills, and abilities that will allow them to meet the community's needs through an all-hazards approach to emergency response. The training that is provided at the PSTA fulfills this mission statement.

The PSTA trains personnel to respond to and mitigate any type of hazard that the community may encounter, from entry-level firefighting and emergency medical skills ,to specialty team responses in the areas of Hazardous Materials, Swift Water Rescue, Technical Rescue, and Heavy Rail responses, as well as Driver Training, both entry-level ambulance driving and advanced Class B and Class A heavy vehicle driving.

In addition to the core training provided to personnel, the organization also provides continuous professional development opportunities to further prepare individuals, such as the Command Officer Professional Development and Improvement (COPDI) program, the Company Officer Leadership Academy, the In-Service Training program, and EMS continuing education courses. Training is provided by the PSTA year-round to continually provide personnel with the training to prepare them for emergency response delivery.

Appraisal

The training programs have effectively supported the organization's mission. Personnel have been able to maintain numerous certifications and licenses that have allowed the organization to maintain normal response levels and specialty team activities. The PSTA graduated 59 new career recruits in CY22 that were trained as nationally registered emergency medical technicians, firefighters, hazardous materials first responders, and emergency vehicle operators, forming a foundation for continued learning towards fulfillment of the Department's mission. Additionally, 31 volunteers successfully completed Fire 1 & 2, 174 completed Hazardous Materials Operations, and 79 became credentialed Maryland EMTs. Eighty chief officers were certified through the COPDI

program for CY22, ensuring safe, consistent, and effective command of a wide range of hazards.

An area where the department needs to improve is the organization of the wealth of data that is generated from training delivery into easily quantifiable metrics that succinctly summarize the effectiveness of the training program.

Plan

To ensure the continued success of the training program, the Training Chief and staff will continue to assess outcomes through a process of continuous monitoring, evaluation, and action, as needed. In addition, a system will be devised to standardize data to a form that is easily translated into performance metrics and accessible to all staff; department IT staff is working on the development of an enterprise management system that will address this need, with a desired completion date in CY2024. Further, we will continue to ensure weekly staff meetings will allow staff the opportunity to discuss training efforts and collaborate on the best delivery methods for various programmatic efforts.

References

[Command Officer Professional Development](#)

[EMS Recertification Schedule](#)

[Company Officer Leadership Academy 2021 Syllabus COLA 2021](#)

[2022 In-Service Data](#)

8A.3 The training program is consistent with legal requirements for mandatory training.

Description

The PSTA provides standardized training for all members of the department that meets the requirements of all applicable regulations, codes, directives, and adopted standards. The various agencies, associations, and/or entities that assert legally-binding regulations, codes, directives, and standards which direct the training efforts of the organization include, but are not limited to OSHA, NFPA, Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR), the Montgomery County Executive, and the Department of Homeland Security.

The PSTA provides training to meet many requirements posed by the entities identified above. The OSHA regulations that personnel are trained to include, but are not limited to 29CFR1910.120, 134, 146, and 1030. NFPA standards that personnel are trained to include, but are not limited to NFPA 472, 1500, 1561, 1583, 1584, 1001, 1002, 1006, 1521, 1041, and 1021. All members of the Department must meet (and are trained to prior to leaving the PSTA as new members) the minimum training standards as defined in Montgomery County Executive Regulation 38-08AM, Certification Standards for Training, Experience, and Credentialing Requirements, which follows Montgomery County Code Chapter 21, Sections 8 and 18. In addition, personnel training delivery has been upgraded to comply with Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5 (HSPD 5), which requires those receiving federal preparedness assistance funding to be compliant with the National Incident Management System.

Some of the courses provided by the PSTA that satisfy legal requirements include: Bloodborne Pathogens, Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus and Personal Protective Equipment, Hazardous Materials Awareness and Operations for First Responders, Introduction to the Incident Command System, National Incident Management System, an Introduction, ICS for Single Resources and Initial Action Incidents, Emergency Medical Technician-Basic.

Appraisal

The PSTA's training program has met and exceeded the legally binding requirements that have been set forth by the entities previously mentioned. Also, the training program has consistently met the requirements of the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute under the Maryland Fire-Rescue Education Training Commission.

The PSTA has successfully implemented all program changes as mandated by MFRI and MIEMSS. The PSTA has passed all reviews conducted by MFRI and the MFSPQB in the past five years. In addition, testing security has been upgraded to match new testing software that has been instituted by MFRI.

Plan

The Training Chief and staff will continue to monitor the legal environment to ensure that the training programs delivered by the PSTA meet all requirements. The PSTA will continue to partner with MFRI, MIEMSS and other applicable entities to plan for and implement change notifications as we receive them.

References

[Montgomery County Code, Chapter 21](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation 38-08AM](#)

[NIMS Training, Fire Chief General Order](#)

[Homeland Security Presidential Directive #5](#)

8A.4 The agency identifies minimum levels of training and education required for all positions in the organization.

Description

MCFRS is subject to many regulations, standards, and codes that dictate the minimum levels of training that members are to have at all levels of the organization. MCFRS continues to monitor minimum levels of training that are dictated by OSHA, NFPA, the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT), the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), and the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS).

MCFRS has documented levels of training required for all positions in the organization. The Montgomery County Executive Regulation, 36-08AM Certification Standards for Training, Experience, and Credentialing Requirements, incorporates the MCFRS minimum levels of training into one document. Regulation 36-08AM identifies minimum training that is required for entry-level firefighter and EMS recruits through the ranks of EMS Chief and Duty Operations Chief. Further, MCFRS has identified minimum levels of training for the various specialty personnel in the organization. MCFRS adheres to training levels as dictated by NFPA and OSHA for the positions of Hazardous Materials Technician, Hazardous Materials Officer, Fire Investigator, Fire Inspector, Incident Safety Officer, and the various Technical Rescuer positions: Confined Space, Swift Water, Rope, and Trench.

In addition to the minimum training that is required at each level in the organization, MCFRS provides for the ongoing training of personnel through its Command Officer Professional Development and Improvement (COPDI) program. Annual COPDI training is required for personnel at the Chief Officer rank in the amount of 12 hours of continuing education each year as well as successful execution of a Command Competency exercise.

Appraisal

The department continued to identify minimum training that was required by constantly monitoring the regulatory environment for changes. Personnel have successfully met the minimum levels of training, education, and experience, as exemplified through the delivery of year-round training. The PSTA delivered over 250 classes in CY2022; these courses included minimum training to allow personnel advancement through the ranks. MCFRS continues to engage new career personnel through the recruit training process which adheres to identified minimum entry-level standards designed to allow for effective service delivery to the community. MCFRS graduated 59 recruits in CY2022.

Plan

The Training Chief and staff will continue to monitor the regulatory environment to maintain the required levels of training for personnel and provide them with training that continues to meet the all-hazard mission of the Department. The Training Chief or designee will meet with the Council of Governments (COG) and regional area peers to ensure up-to-date training in all areas related to our mission.

References

[National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#)

[Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation, 36-08AM](#)

Criterion 8B: Training and Education Program Performance

Training and education programs are provided to support the agency's needs.

Summary:

Adherence to training, experience, and credentialing standards ensures that individuals who perform fire and rescue operations within the organization have the requisite knowledge, skills, and abilities to execute their duties safely and effectively.

The State of Maryland established and maintains a quality assurance program for courses delivered through and sponsored by the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI). The Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board (MICRB) evaluates course delivery and instructors in accordance with state standards. Course instructors conduct quality assurance audits for the organization's training academy courses, which are reviewed by the Training Course Coordinator.

The Training Division will regularly evaluate all courses, review student evaluations, and assess instructor evaluations and effectiveness for all training provided by the Training Academy. Since NFPA standards are reviewed and/or updated every five years, staff will continue to analyze and modify the curriculum to meet or exceed any amended standards.

Performance Indicators:

8B.1 A process is in place to ensure that personnel are appropriately trained.

Description

The organization has many processes in place that ensure personnel receive the necessary training to perform essential job functions, from introductory firefighter/rescuer through the chief officer ranks. The process begins with the recruit training curriculum, which provides entry-level training for firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs) to NFPA standards for new firefighters and Maryland standards for EMTs.

After recruit training, personnel are exposed to various Training Academy courses covering a wide range of topics that provide the skills, knowledge, and abilities for personnel to fill a range of vital departmental roles. Examples of roles that personnel can be trained for by the Academy include apparatus driver, paramedic, hazardous materials technician, swift water rescue technician, technical rescue technician, and boat operator. In addition to specific academy courses for core organizational roles, personnel seeking to promote to line officer and chief officer ranks are required to take additional management-oriented courses prior to testing for those positions. All personnel are required to meet minimum training standards as designated in policy 36-08AM for all positions within the organization.

The Department requires a yearly review of personnel certification files of all personnel by supervisors to ensure personnel have the current training required to function in essential positions. This review occurs concurrently with a mandatory, annual recertification period when personnel review material to ensure proficiency in essential subject areas for all-hazard emergency delivery. An electronic record of compliance is maintained in the enterprise management system.

Appraisal

The processes in place have done well in ensuring personnel are appropriately trained and meeting necessary standards. The Promotional Candidate Application Process System (PCAP), which is a training database that is part of the enterprise management system, has

been a helpful tool, giving managers an easy way to ensure that personnel are compliant with Department policies and standards.

Training of all kinds has continued to be delivered to all members of the organization. Course registration has been transitioned to an entirely online format to allow for more robust and timely access for all personnel. Further, the transition to online delivery of most recertification courses and non-classroom courses has allowed for quick and robust tracking of completion rates.

The Training Academy has continued to hold classes during days, nights, and on weekends to accommodate both career and volunteer personnel. The transition to a new facility has increased the capacity to run multiple classes and recruit training simultaneously.

The onset of COVID in 2020 significantly altered the manner in which training was delivered. To the extent possible, didactic portions of classes were moved to a virtual format almost immediately. Class size for hands on components of training was decreased and all appropriate precautions to prevent transmission of COVID were taken. The PSTA provided face coverings for all personnel. The area of greatest impact proved to be with delivery of the Recruit Training program. However, ultimately, no permanent negative results occurred because of COVID. There were delays in certain, specific cases, but tracking was consistent, and all personnel were able to complete the required recruit training.

Other training programs were significantly adjusted during the first 1-2 years of COVID. When the need for adjustments became clear, a process was created, coordinated with Operations, and implemented such that there was no negative impact to personnel or to required training programs. Timelines had to be extended; however, there was no negative outcome for the students.

Plan

The current process will be maintained to ensure personnel are appropriately trained. Further, the Training Academy will continue to provide the current schedule of training and evaluate the quantity of training that needs to be provided on a semi-annual basis. The quality of training will be continually evaluated by all involved, to include students, instructors and administrators. Course offerings will be reviewed by the Training Chief and Course Coordinator on an annual basis to ensure the organization's needs are being met and adopted training standards are being followed.

References

[PSTA 2023 Management Course Offerings](#)

[PSTA 2023 Firefighter Course Offerings](#)

[Montgomery County Executive Regulation, 36-08AM](#)

[PCAP Screenshot](#)

[Annual Recert Screenshot](#)

[Recruit Class 51 Probation](#)

8B.2 The agency provides a training schedule that meets the organization's needs.

Description

The Training Academy schedules classes to accommodate all personnel, including both volunteer and career. Long-range classes are scheduled during the daytime, evening, and weekend in order to best accommodate all students, career and volunteer. Classes largely mirror the college/university semester delivery model which works well for students planning ahead to ensure promotional eligibility. A schedule of classes is made available online to all personnel, and registration is automated for all personnel. Personnel are notified via email, departmental mail, and the online training registration system (OTRS) of upcoming course schedules or of the need to adjust schedules based on enrollment, weather, etc.

In-service training takes place via the Acquired Structure Training program to assist personnel in skills maintenance, and to explore new techniques and trends in the fire/rescue service industry. In-service training takes place throughout the year based on availability of acquired structures. Scheduling of acquired structure training is managed in close collaboration with Operations in order to capture a majority of career and volunteer personnel.

Personnel are given the option of receiving certain, specific courses via a distance learning model delivered through an online system. Currently we are using the FireRescue 1 Academy program which provides its own content, as well as allows the Department to create, produce and track its own training. This has proved invaluable as a low-cost alternative and for personnel who have a hardship with getting to the academy site.

Appraisal

The PSTA training schedule has met personnel needs by making courses available throughout the workweek and during all seasons. In CY2022, over 250 classroom-based courses totaling over 100K student hours of training were scheduled to meet organizational

training needs. In addition, the In-Service program has been scheduled in a way that has allowed for maximum participation of on-duty personnel either at an acquired structure or the Flashover simulator. In-service training alone accounted for nearly 2000 hours of training.

PSTA uses the “TeamUp” scheduling software to assist with the scheduling of classes. Because the PSTA shares the site with Montgomery County Police training and with the County-run Bus service training, this system also assists in coordination between the various agencies. Since we began using TeamUp in 2016, we have greatly enhanced our ability to manage the use of space in our facility. We are able to jointly manage up to 80 different indoor and outdoor training areas seamlessly.

Plan

The Training Academy will continue to provide a training schedule that attempts to meet the needs of all personnel. The Training Chief is working to increase the number and availability of acquired structures and increase the training provided to the volunteer members. The Training Chief is in the planning phase of new programs designed to provide leadership training to new and incumbent company level officers via several new initiatives including Company Officer Leadership Academy (COLA), Company Officer Simulations (AR, VR & in-person sims). In addition, the Academy will continue to develop a distance learning model that will further accommodate personnel while maintaining a minimum standard of quality and allowing for continuous quality assurance.

References

[In Service Data 2022](#)

[TeamUp Calendar Screen Shot](#)

[All PSTA Classes Delivered 2022](#)

[Screenshot Example of Online Training Registration System \(OTRS\)](#)

CC8B.3 The agency evaluates individual and crew performance through validated and documented performance-based measurements.

Description

As a first step to performance-based evaluation, the Training Academy evaluates all personnel through the classroom process. At the end of all required classes, there are several methods of performance measurement that are utilized to assess individuals' retention of knowledge and ability to perform skills as required by adopted standards. For example, individuals taking Firefighter I/II are required to meet the performance standards of NFPA 1001, which are evaluated through standardized performance and cognitive tests throughout the course. As another example, individuals learning to become hazardous materials technicians must pass standards based on NFPA 472.

In addition to individual evaluations based on adopted standards, departmental standardized benchmarks are used to evaluate a combination of crew and officer performance. Chief officers can use benchmarks for all apparatus types assigned to incidents to evaluate officer and crew performance, and completion of expected tasks. Further, command officers are evaluated at least yearly, for adherence to command-level benchmarks.

Finally, all personnel are evaluated yearly utilizing a standardized measurement tool used by MCFRS called the Individual Performance Planning and Appraisal (IPPA). This document serves as an evaluation based on expected performance outcomes tailored to an individual's rank, job class and/or level in the organization. These forms also serve as documentation of the organization's efforts to boost and support employee performance when needed.

Appraisal

The organization has provided fair, timely, and objective, performance-based evaluations of individual and crew performance. Appropriate span of control supervision has been provided on all levels for all personnel which has allowed for the robust delivery of evaluations. New probationary employees have returned to the PSTA on a consistent basis

for periodic, standardized evaluations throughout their probationary periods: timely evaluations have ensured that performance issues have been caught early and addressed before they became deeper problems. Fifty-nine probationary employees returned to the PSTA in CY2022 for probationary testing.

Plan

The Training Chief and Training Academy staff will continue to review classroom and training performance standards on an annual basis to ensure the organization is conforming to nationally and/or locally recognized standards. PSTA staff will participate at the State level in development of training evaluation standards. Further, the Training Chief will collaborate with Operations leadership to ensure ongoing opportunities for evaluation of the organization's performance benchmarks for all activities and positions are relevant and in-line with organizational policies and recognized standards.

References

[Water Supply Benchmarks](#)

[Command Benchmarks](#)

[IPPAs](#)

[Firefighter II Performance Test II](#)

8B.4 The agency analyzes student evaluations to determine reliability of training conducted.

Description

Student evaluations and surveys are collected for all formal training conducted by the Training Academy. Instructors are required to review these evaluations after every class. Further, program managers and the Training Chief review classroom evaluations to assess instructor effectiveness and content of the class.

Student surveys are also collected for company training that takes place during in-service training exercises sponsored by the Training Academy. In addition to analyzing student surveys and evaluations, the Training Academy regularly reviews the evaluation process and methodology to ensure they conform to national and local testing standards and are accurately measuring the outcomes that the organization is seeking to document. Further, the Training Academy's classroom testing instruments are strictly designed and tracked by MFRI, who handles all test design instruments for all classes they sponsor.

Appraisal

The class and instructor evaluation process has almost completely migrated to an electronic format. There are still some MFRI-sponsored classes that require a paper evaluation. With the use of a system that requires submission of a survey to receive attendance credit, the in-service program has been at a virtual 100% compliance rate for submission of surveys which has enhanced analysis of training reliability. Instructors and managers continue to evaluate students and the evaluation techniques used during hands-on training.

The Training Academy has recognized that an investment in a learning management software suite may be necessary in the future to manage and consolidate the amount of data being generated by a large organization; consolidation might be able to help instructors and managers better recognize patterns that may exist in training delivery and student response. The department's IT Section has started internal work on a custom enterprise management system, which should alleviate the management burden at the Training Academy.

Plan

The PSTA will continue to modernize the student evaluation processes so that data accumulation and trend recognition is easier and faster. The Training Chief will ensure the PSTA has significant input into the design of the enterprise system that is being built. A preliminary 6-month timeframe has been allotted for the gathering of current and future evaluative and data needs to assist with input on the new learning management system. In the interim, the Training Chief will explore existing platforms that we can utilize more effectively for data capture.

References

[MFRI Testing Policy](#)

[In Service 2022](#)

8B.5 The agency maintains a training records management system that meets its needs.

Description

The Training Academy utilizes a training records management system (RMS) to meet the needs of all personnel, both volunteer and career. The RMS that the Training Academy uses is called “Pathlore.” It is a database that stores the training records for all personnel from the start of their service and throughout their time in MCFRS. Volunteers may search their training records by using the volunteer database, Personnel Information Management System (PIMS) which pulls information from the Pathlore database. Career personnel utilize the Promotional Candidate Application Process (PCAP) system to view training information stored in Pathlore.

In addition to Pathlore, all personnel in the department may utilize the MFRI transcript system and the Pro Board Fire Service Professional Qualifications System to view training records. Many of the courses that personnel take at the Training Academy are MFRI-sponsored courses; therefore, these training records are also stored in MFRI's RMS. Individuals who receive training that qualifies for national Pro Board certification may apply for Pro Board equivalency. Once approved, their records can be viewed in the Pro Board's RMS.

Appraisal

The methods that MCFRS has used to maintain training records have satisfactorily met students' and departmental needs; however, the Pathlore system is antiquated and needs improvement. Specifically, the records of roughly 2500 personnel are maintained in the Pathlore system with no major issues, but the system is old, clunky, and does not have data sufficient analytical capabilities to significantly enhance our programs. The MFRI and Pro Board systems are basic, but easy to use and provide the information they were intended to provide.

Plan

MFRI and the Pro Board do not have plans to discontinue their records systems; these systems will continue to be available to personnel. The Training Chief, utilizing input from a representative group of stakeholders and Training Academy staff, shall explore the continued viability of Pathlore and has formulated specifications on more current and user-friendly database options, with an eye towards a total revamp of training records. The enterprise management system that the organization's IT department is working on will likely suit the training and tracking needs of the organization, with significant input from the Training Chief.

References

[Screenshot of Pathlore](#)

[MFRI Transcript/Certificate Request Form](#)

[ProBoard Certification Form](#)

CC 8B.6 The agency conducts a formal and documented program appraisal, at least annually, to determine the program's effectiveness and compliance with meeting the needs of the organization.

Description

The Training and Education Program has conducted informal appraisals in the past and on-going basis, as well as participated in the accreditation cycle.

Appraisal

This was the first accreditation cycle that included a requirement for a formal and documented appraisal of the Training and Education Program areas. The MCFRS template from other program areas was used for this calendar year 2022 reporting period.

Plan

MCFRS will continue a formal and documented annual appraisal of the Training and Education Program, with an emphasis on developing goals and objectives, better data collection and analysis, and improved documentation on future annual appraisals.

References

[CY22 Annual Program Appraisal](#)

Criterion 8C: Training and Education Resources

Training and education resources, printed and non-printed library materials, media equipment, facilities, and staff are available in sufficient quantity, relevancy, and diversity, and are current.

Summary:

The Training Academy moved to a new, state-of-the-art facility in CY2016 that provides an increase in capacity and training resources. The new facility exceeds the national standards set by NFPA 1402, Guide to Building Fire Service Training Centers. Training facilities include a single-family burn building, high-rise burn building, high-bay building, apparatus bay building that houses fire apparatus, breathing apparatus, and protective equipment storage, command development center, subway car training prop, flammable liquid training area, vehicle fire training prop, compressed gas training prop, flashover simulator and vehicle extrication and rescue area. MCFRS shares a large driver training “pad” with Montgomery County Police and Ride-on buses driver training.

In addition to the physical training areas, the new academy provides sufficient capacity and technology to seat up to 350 personnel amongst eight traditional classrooms. In addition, the command development center can be converted to seat roughly 20 people and provides equipment to serve as a classroom. All of the traditional classrooms in the academic building are equipped with state-of-the-art LCD screens, projectors, and audio systems to enhance the learning experience. Further, the academic building houses an audiovisual laboratory for the technical development of training materials.

The Training Academy currently has approximately 130 Maryland Instructor Certification Review Board-certified instructors on its rolls, who are available to meet the training needs of the organization in all areas, including fire, EMS, hazmat, search and rescue, water rescue, driver training, etc.

Performance Indicators:

CC 8C.1 Facilities and apparatus are provided to support the agency's all-hazards training needs. The agency has plans addressing any facilities and apparatus not available internally to complete training activities.

Description

In 2016, the training academy moved to a new training compound that exceeds the standards of NFPA 1402. There are a plethora of classrooms, instructors, and ancillary training structures available to support the organization's training needs.

The academic, or “A” building, is a large educational structure shared with Montgomery County Police. MCFRS occupies the entire upper level, which includes two large theatre-style classrooms that seat approximately 85 persons each, four mid-sized classrooms that can accommodate 30 students, and three smaller classrooms that can comfortably hold 20 persons. Each classroom is equipped with computers, LCD screens, projectors, and audio systems to enhance the learning experience. The lower level has shared student locker room/shower space for 120 male students and 60 female students, as well as a full-sized gymnasium and large, well equipped weight/cardio room.

Outdoor facilities are numerous and include the single-family burn building, high-rise burn building, high-bay building, apparatus bay building that houses fire apparatus, breathing apparatus, and protective equipment storage, command development center, subway car training prop, flammable liquid training area, vehicle fire training prop, compressed gas training prop, flashover simulator and vehicle extrication and rescue area. MCFRS shares a large driver training “pad” with Montgomery County Police and Ride-on buses for driver training.

The PSTA keeps one Type 1 Pumper and one Type 1 tractor-drawn aerial unit and several ambulances, as well as several work vehicles needed for daily operations. In addition, the PSTA has internal departmental access to a variety of apparatus to support training,

including: 35 FEMA Type I Pumpers; 15 FEMA Type I Aerials; 8 FEMA Type I Water Tenders; 6 Rescue Squads; a multitude of ambulances.

The PSTA has agreements with regional municipal training facilities of Frederick County (MD) and Loudoun County (VA) to facilitate firefighter training with Class A combustible materials. The academy also uses the MFRI burn building, as it is a statewide training facility.

Appraisal

The PSTA has provided access to training of all career and volunteer personnel with the current facility, equipment, and apparatus complement. In CY2022, the PSTA produced over 250 classes, inclusive of firefighting, rescue, driver training and EMS. In addition, the PSTA hosted classes, which required use of a multitude of specialized internal apparatus and equipment: surface water rescue, ice rescue, swiftwater technician, pump operator, vehicle and machinery, and hazardous materials technician.

In addition to the regularly occurring classes that have been successfully delivered at the PSTA, there have been many beneficial interactions with outside agencies who provide facilities and equipment that would not have otherwise been available. In CY2022, there were eight Firefighter I/II courses that were delivered utilizing help from outside agencies that provided Class A burn buildings (named above). In 2021, the PSTA staff successfully constructed our own modular maze to assist in the delivery of entry and advanced firefighter training. In CY2022, the PSTA Recruit Training program successfully graduated 59 new firefighters utilizing a combination of facilities and equipment located both internally and externally.

Plan

The new training academy will provide years of quality training platforms for the organization. The Training Chief will ensure that the training staff maintains the equipment and facilities that have been placed in service. The Training Chief will also ensure that the organization is continually reevaluating facilities and equipment to be certain that the most

current and efficient resources are being utilized for training. Though the current facility is meeting our needs, we continue to expand and improve and therefore the Training Chief will begin the discussion of the future training facility either in its current location or elsewhere.

References

[Map of PSTA](#)

[FEMA Resource Typing Scheme](#)

[PSTA Assigned Apparatus](#)

CC8C.2 The agency has access to instructional personnel, within the organization or from identified external resources, with teaching qualifications and expertise to meet its needs.

Description

The PSTA employs 17 full-time staff to meet the instructional needs of the organization. All PSTA uniformed staff are required to obtain Level II MICRB-instructor certification upon assignment. The current full-time positions support the following programs: Firefighter/Rescuer, Recruit Training, Driver Training, EMT, Paramedic, In-Service Training, Command Officer Development and Ancillary Training (PPE, HazMat, Rescue, etc.).

In addition to full-time staff, the Training Academy has approximately 120 MICRB Level II-certified instructors whose primary roles are operation, but who supplement the full-time staff as adjunct instructors. These instructors are available to meet the training needs of the organization in all areas, including fire, EMS, hazmat, technical rescue, water rescue, driving, etc.

MICRB Level II instructors are required to have Instructor I and II coursework; complete practical and cognitive evaluations; complete 60 interim instructor-training hours; receive two satisfactory evaluations from MICRB evaluators. Additionally, credentialed instructors must recertify every three years by completing a minimum of 12 hours continuing education and teaching at least 60 hours.

Appraisal

The PSTA maintains a relatively stable base of full-time staff instructors and administrative personnel. Since 2020, several staff positions have been adjusted in an effort to meet our needs more effectively, either from civilian to uniformed or via a change in rank of uniformed personnel. In addition, since 2020, we have worked to improve the instructor intake process as well as the instructor credentialing process in order to add more adjunct instructors to our cadre and to create a variety of instructor levels, allowing instructor

candidates to enter as “apprentice” instructors before committing to the lengthy MICRB process. We have also worked to increase diversity in our instructor pool. This is still a work in progress but is moving in the right direction.

The Training Academy has had an increasing need for full-time instructors/staff to meet the ever-expanding needs of our growing department. The Training Academy has utilized part-time personnel to assist with training and instructional delivery in every program. There were roughly 41,000 overtime hours utilized in CY2022 to deliver PSTA training programs.

Plan

The Training Chief and PSTA staff will continue to track overtime usage and details needed to administer programs and deliver training to provide justification for the necessary addition of more full-time personnel. The Training Chief will look to identify creative means for improving programs within the current configuration of limited full-time staff supplemented by a large pool of adjunct instructors. The Training Chief will collaborate with the state fire service instructor credentialing agency to improve instructor professional development opportunities and to create a tiered system of instructor credentialing as a means of increasing instructional capacity without sacrificing subject matter expertise.

References

[PSTA Organizational Chart](#)

[MICRB](#)

[Master Instructor List - 2022](#)

[Overtime Report – CY2022; FRS066 Reason Code](#)

8C.3 Instructional materials are current, easily accessible, and support the training program's stated objectives.

Description

Training materials are current, support the program, and are easily accessible because MCFRS conforms to Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute (MFRI) standards for class delivery; most training programs delivered by the Training Academy are MFRI-sanctioned courses. Since the department has a testing and evaluation agreement with MFRI, instructional materials for all MFRI-sanctioned training is maintained to current NFPA standards. The Training Course Coordinator (TCC) maintains an electronic database of the most current instructional materials that are provided by MFRI. In addition, the TCC maintains a physical library of the most current textbooks and instructor guides as provided by MFRI.

For programs that are not a part of the MFRI agreement, MCFRS still maintains currency with the most up-to-date NFPA standards and standards of care and practice. Overall, the Training Academy complies with the requirements of the following local, regional, and state certifying bodies: MFRI, MFSPQB, International Fire Service Accreditation Counsel (IFSAC).

The department's Training Academy website makes many training materials available in a web-based format for quick and easy access. The website includes access to driver training, CPR, and command competency resources. In addition, the In-Service Training site makes many skill-oriented training resources accessible in an online format as well. When personnel access the PSTA's website, recent training efforts can be reviewed along with new training materials deemed as priority training by the Training Chief.

Appraisal

The organization has maintained conformity with MFRI course delivery and testing standards on a consistent basis. Instructional materials have been kept up-to-date, organized, and easily accessible. The PSTA has kept a consistent physical inventory for

roughly 18 courses, including instructor guides and textbooks. The onset of COVID in 2020 did not deter the PSTA from our mission. In fact, it brought out the creativity in many of our personnel such that new ways of teaching and learning that were introduced as a result of COVID have continued, even after the return to the classroom.

The In-Service Training program has grown exponentially, providing web access to training resources, the pertinent training content in a variety of formats. The program has capitalized on the many new electronic and/or web-based platforms available. All personnel have 24-hour access to a large volume of training materials via a large library of customizable topics in the FireRescue1 training platform. Here the student can access individual training opportunities, or the company officer can identify company level drills. In 2021, the PSTA developed a YouTube channel in which programs are live-streamed to personnel who can interact via a “chat” feature. Alternatively, if not able to participate in real time, personnel are able to view the episodes by accessing the YouTube channel. The programs are varied, timely and have proven to be very well-received.

Plan

The organization will continue to maintain the training agreement with MFRI and conform to MFRI standards on course delivery and material currency. Further, the In-Service Training Coordinator will continue to work with the Training Chief to expand the electronic availability, subject matter, and reach of current training materials. The Training Chief will work to transition what was the fledgling Digital Media section of the PSTA, to a full-time section of personnel specifically assigned to create training content for MCFRS.

References

[Examples of Online Resources for Command Competencies](#)

[Challenges in the Streets](#)

[Boss Talk](#)

8C.4 The agency has a process for purchasing, developing, or modifying existing curriculum to meet its needs.

Description

The Training Academy has a written agreement with MFRI to deliver MFRI-sanctioned instruction, which makes up the bulk of courses delivered by the PSTA. Through the agreement, continuous curriculum development and materials are provided by MFRI in exchange for the PSTA's concordance with the provisions of the agreement. Curriculum development, test development, and course materials are all provided by MFRI at no cost.

All EMS programs delivered in the State fall under the purview of the Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems (MIEMSS). MIEMSS directs training and develops curriculum which must be followed by all Maryland jurisdictions that provide emergency medical services. Further, all medical providers in the State must be certified by the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT), which also dictates training course content. The organization follows all the training and curriculum requirements put forth by MIEMSS.

The PSTA utilizes its annual budget to purchase curriculum materials that are not covered by the MFRI agreement. Major purchases are routed through the County Government procurement process.

Other training and recertification programs delivered by the Training Academy are reviewed and/or updated annually to ensure content is relevant, timely, and in accordance with industry standards. Annual recertification materials are reviewed annually by subject-matter experts (SMEs) who provide input to the In-Service Training Coordinator. The In-Service Training Coordinator plans training which is developed in conjunction with the Operations Division's needs and approved by the Training Chief. The Recruit Training Coordinator (RTC) continuously reviews training materials to ensure they are in accordance with MFRI and MIEMSS standards. Further, the RTC continuously ensures that practical training aligns with accepted industry practices.

Appraisal

The organization has continuously delivered current and relevant training that is in accordance with national, State, and institutional requirements. Materials, curricula, and practices have been reviewed and/or updated as necessary to deliver effective training.

While training and curricula pertaining to MFRI, State, and national training programs have been reviewed on a continuous basis, the process for other training and recertification might be more efficient for managers if there existed a schedule for the review and submittal of material for delivery to personnel.

Several non-MFRI courses have been recently developed by staff who recognized a deficiency between the training the organization was providing and the hazards facing responders within the jurisdiction; a surface water boat operator, ice rescue awareness, and ice rescue technician courses were developed.

Plan

The organization will continue to adhere to the requirements set forth by MFRI, the State, and the NREMT. Further, the Training Chief will work in conjunction with PSTA staff to devise a preliminary schedule for the planning and review of recertification and in-service training curricula. Personnel who have ideas for the enhancement of existing courses, and the development of new ones, will continue to be supported by the Training Chief.

References

[MFRI Agreement to Allow MCFRS Academy to Teach Programs](#)

[MIEMSS Initial Certification and Licensure Requirements](#) (specifies training required by EMS Board for EMT-B and Paramedic)

[Recruit Training Schedule](#) (shows training topics)

8C.5 Equipment utilized for training is adequately maintained in accordance with the agency's operational procedures. The agency makes training equipment readily accessible to instructional personnel.

Description

The PSTA has at its disposal an abundance of apparatus and equipment that is used solely for training. Equipment and apparatus that is made readily available to instructional personnel includes: two fire engines; a passenger bus; a utility van; a pickup truck; four ambulances; Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA); ladders; fire extinguishers; CPR mannequins; manual defibrillators; BLS/ALS equipment; saws; and hose appliances. In addition to the aforementioned equipment utilized for practical skills and class delivery, the PSTA also uses a multitude of multimedia equipment, including laptop/desktop computers, video projectors, and video/editing lab equipment.

The maintenance of most of the department's equipment is directed by the Support Services Division as dictated by the County Executive's Office. Within the Support Services Division is the Fleet Maintenance Section (FMS), which coordinates maintenance of most fire and EMS apparatus and equipment. Notwithstanding, FMS coordinates the repair and maintenance of most of the PSTA's equipment, including apparatus and their associated small appliances, ladders, and SCBA. Ladders are tested and inspected annually by an outside vendor, coordinated by FMS. SCBA are exchanged annually with the SCBA shop, who flow-tests all of the department's SCBA. Apparatus maintenance is coordinated by FMS as well. FMS also coordinates the repair of ambulance stretchers and small equipment.

The maintenance of the PSTA's defibrillators and other durable medical equipment is coordinated through the department's EMIHS Section, which maintains the warranty with the manufacturer. Maintenance of smaller EMS equipment, including mannequins, is coordinated in-house by the PSTA EMS Program Coordinator; equipment may be repaired by staff or replaced utilizing the PSTA's EMS Program budget.

The PSTA Technical Services Coordinators (TSC) play a large role in coordinating the repair and maintenance of training equipment and determining whether small items may be serviced in-house or should be sent to the manufacturer or a certified vendor.

The maintenance of all computers and electronic equipment is coordinated through the County Departments of Technology Services and General Services.

Appraisal

Training equipment has been properly maintained to enable the effective and efficient delivery of instruction at the PSTA. The PSTA has maintained a sufficient quantity of equipment to fulfill its mission. The TSCs have proven invaluable to the operations of the PSTA in terms of equipment maintenance and overall operational readiness. In the rare instance where a piece of equipment needed for training has been found broken or otherwise inaccessible, the PSTA Technical Services Coordinators have been able to utilize various mechanisms to obtain replacements from the department's reserve cache or field units. The TSCs have built strong relationships with many outside contacts which has contributed to the swift resolution of many equipment issues.

All department personnel are encouraged to utilize the resources available at the PSTA. Companies who wish to train on-site can coordinate their needs via electronic forms that identify not only basic logistics such as dates & times, but also require the company officer to provide a training plan to ensure any safety issues are met and equipment is being used in a safe manner that does not lead to damage or misuse.

PSTA staff developed a comprehensive defect reporting system which has significantly improved the repair and replacement of PSTA equipment. From nearly any location on the PSTA grounds, personnel can scan a QR code which will open a defect report that is then routed to the appropriate team for repair or replacement.

Plan

PSTA staff will continue to ensure that all equipment is maintained in peak condition to enable the safe and effective delivery of training programs to personnel. TSCs will continue to play a major role in the operations of the PSTA. The Training Chief will explore adding additional TSC personnel to the currently overworked team. The Training Chief will collaborate with the Technology division to improve the digital capacities.

References

[Screenshot of Fleet Management Defect Reporting System](#)

[PDFs of 6, 12, 24-month Pumper Inspection sheets](#)

[PSTA Facility Use Request](#)

8C.6 The agency maintains a current inventory of all training equipment and resources.

Description

The PSTA purchases all equipment through a closely monitored, County purchase approval process. This process requires all purchases to be reconciled monthly and reviewed by the County Finance Department. Records of purchases are maintained by both the Finance Department and PSTA staff. In addition to the purchase approval process, when equipment is received by the PSTA, it is labeled as such and tracked by program managers. The EMS, Training Course, Driving, and Technical Services Coordinators all keep records of equipment and resources that are housed under their programs. Further, the Driver Training Coordinator maintains an inventory of all major apparatus assigned to the PSTA, while the County Equipment Maintenance Operations Center (EMOC) tracks all staff vehicles.

Appraisal

The inventory system utilized by the PSTA has been individual to each program and manually managed; accuracy is heavily dependent on accurate human input and close coordination between staff and the Finance Department. The Training Chief and Deputy Training Officer have not had the ability to view inventory at-a-glance and in one location, if the need were to arise. The system has worked thus far, but benefit might be realized in a searchable, centralized, inventory tracking system.

Plan

The PSTA will mount efforts to evaluate inventory tracking needs and streamline the current process where necessary. Outside systems will be evaluated for efficacy in meeting the PSTA's current inventory tracking needs where applicable.

References

[TCC inventory of training resources](#)

[PSTA Apparatus Inventory](#)

8C.7 A selection process is in place for training and educational resource materials.

Description

MCFRS has an academy agreement with the Maryland Fire and Rescue Institute; as such, training and resource materials are provided by MFRI to the PSTA for the delivery of training courses - in both print and multi-media formats. MFRI has a continuous process of evaluation and replacement of training materials to keep information current with nationally recognized standards. PSTA assigned staff personnel are assigned as SMEs on the MFRI course content updates.

Further, the PSTA is evaluated on a continual basis by MFRI for compliance with the academy agreement. The TCC maintains an inventory of the most current instructional materials that are provided by MFRI.

The PSTA creates its own content to supplement many of the MFRI courses. This occurs extensively in the Driver Training program, as well as with the Recruit Training Course content for non-MFRI and non-MIEMSS.

In addition to the MFRI academy agreement process, the PSTA selects educational and training materials that supplement its programs and meet or exceed all local, State and national requirements and standards. Standard-setting bodies that the PSTA resource material selection process conforms to include, but are not limited to, the Office of Homeland Security, NFPA, Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments, and MIEMSS.

Appraisal

The selection process has worked well for the PSTA. The PSTA has maintained compliance with the academy agreement with no issues. MFRI has continued to perform spot-check evaluations of compliance with all procedures and materials. MFRI has been moving to a

tablet-testing format, which has created a number of challenges requiring ongoing collaboration with MFRI training personnel.

Plan

Training and educational resource materials that meet or exceed all applicable standards will continue to be selected for use. Further, the PSTA will continue to comply with the requirements of the academy agreement with MFRI to continue using their selection process for resource materials.

References

[TCC inventory of training resources](#)

[Sample MFRI v PSTA learning materials](#)

CC8C.8 Training materials are evaluated at least annually, to reflect current practices and meet the needs of the agency.

Description

Training materials are kept current and continually evaluated for efficacy in meeting MCFRS needs. The department has a testing and evaluation agreement with MFRI, so instructional materials for all MFRI-sanctioned training are maintained to current local and national standards, including Maryland Fire Rescue Education and Training Commission and NFPA standards. Further, training materials for EMS courses are continually evaluated for compliance with standards set by MIEMSS and the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians.

The Acquired Structure Training program is developed and evaluated on a continuing basis by collaboration between the PSTA and Operations Section to ensure the program and materials are meeting the department's needs.

Appraisal

The Training Chief and Deputy Training Chief met at least semi-annually, or as-needed, to review minimum standards set forth by NFPA, MFRI, and other standard-setting organizations that guide the activities of the department. The Training Chief met at least quarterly with each of the program managers individually and during PSTA staff meetings to ensure training and related materials have continued to meet the department's needs.

Plan

The Training Chief will continue to meet with the Deputy Training Officer and staff to discuss the PSTA's position in ensuring that materials reflect current practices and meet the department's needs. The Training Chief will ensure that program managers are continually evaluating the materials their programs are using for relevance and efficacy. During development, PSTA staff ensures the in-service training program reflects the current policies and procedures of the department and adheres to industry-wide best practices.

References

[Maryland Fire Rescue Education and Training Commission](#)

[Maryland Institute for Emergency Medical Services Systems](#)

[National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians](#)

[In-Service Training Data](#)

Category 10: External Systems Relationships (M3 Schulze)

An agency's external relationships are defined as those relationships which serve to integrate the performance of one system with another. The increased use of multiunit systems and the increase of interagency agreements between various types of government entities necessitate regular attention to these relationships and the agreements between autonomous operating units. Agreements must be legally adopted, current, monitored and updated within the accrediting period. Programs that rely on support from external system relationships to meet agency expectations must be referenced in the agreement.

Criterion 10A: External Agency Relationships

The agency's operations and planning efforts include relationships with external agencies and operational systems that affect or may influence its mission, operations and/or cost effectiveness.

Summary:

Montgomery County, Maryland is one of several densely populated metropolitan counties in the National Capital Region (NCR). The region encompasses multiple jurisdictions that are substantially interconnected. The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) recognizes that identifying and building collaborative relationships help advance its mission. Some relationships have been formalized through agreements and MOUs to help establish expectations and responsibilities, such as those related to public service delivery and emergency operations. Others remain informal, as contracts are not necessary for sharing best practices or planning in the fire service. Continuous effort and building relationships are necessary when pursuing common goals and objectives.

Performance Indicators:

CC10A.1 The agency develops and maintains external relationships that support its mission, operations, and/or cost-effectiveness.

Description

Public safety agencies within Montgomery County, including the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS), are active participants within the Metropolitan Washington Council of Government's (COG) public safety committees. Regional public safety relationships fostered through COG committees are invaluable. They significantly enhance and support MCFRS' ability to meet its mission, while nurturing its vision of enhanced trust and understanding amongst fellow stakeholders. These relationships enhance regional policy formation and adoption, grant concept development and funding prioritization, and strengthen automatic and mutual aid agreements. This amalgamation effectively leverages public safety assets toward tremendous economies of scale.

Internally, and aside from our public safety partners, all MCFRS divisions endeavor to maintain formal and informal relationships with other County departments, nonprofit and private organizations, community groups and individuals that either support the MCFRS or share similar missions or responsibilities. Section 2 of the MCFRS 2016 – 2022 Fire, Rescue, EMS, and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan outlines numerous, additional partnerships the MCFRS maintains across a diverse array of outside entities, each of which supports or contributes to the department's mission or overarching goals.

Appraisal

During the appraisal period, MCFRS actively participated on the COG Fire Chiefs' Committee and numerous technical subcommittees, including Emergency Medical Services (EMS); Communications; Health, and Safety; Hazmat; Passenger Rail; Senior Operations; and Technical Rescue. MCFRS shared its expertise by providing subject matter experts to these committees who took part in regional collaboration to advance critical issues in their respective fields. The Fire Chiefs Committee advised COG's Emergency Preparedness Council, the Homeland Security Executive Committee, and the Human Services and Public Safety Policy Subcommittee, which are comprised of local and state elected officials, on

items of interest or concern. These relationships have led to robust regional policy and procedure development, seamless and integrated automatic aid pacts, development of large-scale operational exercises, and Urban Area Security Initiative (UASI) grant concept and program sustainment efforts.

Within MCFRS, the Division of Operations met quarterly with public safety stakeholders from neighboring jurisdictions and federal government partners (e.g., fire departments located within Montgomery County's borders) to discuss issues and develop strategies and plans to improve operations and service delivery. These associations complement our previously discussed efforts within COG. And each of the other divisions has fostered and enhanced relationships beyond the bounds of the core mission; for example, Human Resources has worked with MC Public Schools on a career readiness program for fire science and rescue. Support Services partnered with the Department of Recreation to source appliance repair, resulting in a cost savings for MCFRS. The Office of the Fire Chief's Community Risk Reduction Section has partners throughout the County, who they coordinate with to advance outreach, education, and prevention initiatives.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to strengthen its relationships with all partner agencies through formal and informal channels, such as MWCOG, our interactions with our state partners, and via regular engagements with other public safety stakeholders and community members. Furthermore, the MCFRS will continue to embrace its culture of collaboration by building relationships and strategic partnerships with other municipal, county, regional, state, and federal agencies, and private sector organizations. The department firmly believes these endeavors greatly enhance our ability to exceed the tenets of our stated mission, by allowing engagement with stakeholders to help develop synergistic solutions to sometimes complex problems.

References

[MCFRS Master Plan](#) (See MCFRS Partnerships beginning on PDF page 62/page 2-22)

[MWCOG Fire Chiefs Committee](#)

[Social Media Examples of MWCOG Regional Public Safety External Relationships](#)

[MWCOG Homeland Security & Public Safety Webpage](#)

[MCFRS Annual Report](#) (See Internal & External Partners on page 13)

[Social Media Examples of MCFRS Relationships with Cultural-Based Organizations](#)

10A.2 The agency's strategic plan identifies relationships with external agencies/systems and outlines a process to identify any impact or benefit to the agency's mission, operations or cost-effectiveness.

Description

Section 2 of the MCFRS 2016 – 2022 Fire, Rescue, EMS, and Community Risk Reduction Master Plan documents the numerous partnerships the MCFRS maintains with a diverse array of external agencies and organizations, all of which support the mission and goals of the department. Each external agency partnership listed in the Master Plan includes a bulleted list describing their benefits and impacts to the MCFRS. Goal #8, listed on page 2-4 of the Master Plan, reinforces the importance of each of these relationships:

To seek and sustain tactical and strategic partnerships with other county, municipal, regional, state, and federal agencies and private sector organizations to enhance our capabilities to prevent, respond to, and mitigate emergency incidents locally and regionally om keeping our homeland safe.

Appraisal

MCFRS has acknowledged the importance of external entities in its operations during the planning development process. MCFRS is primarily responsible for implementing the objectives and initiatives detailed in the Master Plan but has identified partners that could play supporting roles.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to seek input from internal and external stakeholders, in order to identify common goals and potential partnerships. The department remains committed to collaborating with other entities in pursuit of Montgomery County's overall goals and objectives.

References

[MCFRS Master Plan](#) (Section 2 and specifically beginning on page 2-22)

[MCFRS Annual Report: Built and Maintained Relationships with Internal and External Partners](#) (page 13) and Goals and Objectives (page 7)

10A.3 The agency researches, evaluates and considers all types of functional relationships that may aid in the achievement of its goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS planning, both operationally and strategically, places a strong emphasis on functional relationships that are mutually conducive toward supporting each organization's goals and objectives. They often find their genesis in situations where fire/rescue research and analysis identify a challenge requiring collaborative solutions. In other instances, they may evolve when the MCFRS is approached to help solve certain challenges, or through collaborative engagement whereby local or regional issues are tackled. Regardless of the forces that bring us into a relationship, the MCFRS places a high value on synergistic partnerships that maximize success in achieving mutual goals and objectives and enhance the communal safety and welfare of our constituents.

Appraisal

When Montgomery County started experiencing a steady increase in 911 calls for emergency medical services in which the patients were usually experiencing non-emergency events that stemmed from behavioral health issues, substance abuse, chronic illness, etc., MCFRS partnered with the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to connect the frequent 911 callers with the social services that addressed callers' underlying challenges.

Plan

The MCFRS commits to actively building and sustaining relationships with identified partners for functions across the department.

References

[Montgomery County, MD Connects Frequent 911 Callers to Comprehensive Support – A Case Study](#)
[2020 AIMHI EMS Integration Award](#)

10A.4 A conflict resolution process exists between all external organizations with whom the agency has a defined relationship.

Description

The MCFRS acknowledges that differences of opinion are a normal, relationship phenomena, and maintain a formal process of scheduled meetings with our external partners to address any issues that may arise. In most instances, issues or concerns are resolved through committee processes, negotiation, or on an informal basis between jurisdictions. This approach is used, for example, to mitigate concerns that arise between mutual aid partners.

Appraisal

MCFRS leadership firmly believes its approach to conflict resolution remains the most effective means for resolving conflict. Through non-confrontational and professional approaches to issues, the MCFRS has found that informal conflict resolution has worked best when no one jurisdiction supersedes the others. Our regional public safety partners and local governments employ similar approaches. An example of the successful MCFRS approach to conflict resolution occurred in 2020, following activation of CAD2CAD technology with other regional Fire-Rescue partners. Within months, MCFRS units along the Prince George's (PG) County line experienced an exponential increase in incident and unit responses into Prince George's County, while the number of responses from their units into Montgomery County were nowhere near equitable. Concerned about unit availability, the then MCFRS Operations Division Chief initiated conversations about this issue with the PG Fire and EMS Operations Chief. This led to email exchanges, meetings, phone calls, and data analysis between MCFRS and PGFD. This process led to a resolution that both jurisdictions would program similar time CAD penalties depending on the unit(s) CAD status. While this did not completely resolve the inequities, it did help.

When MCFRS underwent reaccreditation in 2018, the peer team recommended the department consider including conflict resolution statements in all its agreements. While most agreements contain clauses for severability and indemnification, not all contain instructions or processes for resolving conflicts. In consultation with Montgomery County's

Office of the County Attorney (OCA), legal counsel offered the following conflict resolution provision, which could be added to new agreements, as needed: *This _____ will be governed and construed in accordance with the laws of the State of Maryland. Any action in connection with this _____ shall be brought in the courts of Montgomery County, Maryland or in the Federal District Court for the Southern District of Maryland.*

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to employ its current approach to managing conflicts that may arise with external partners/agencies. On a routine basis, we will evaluate events that fall within the definition of “conflict” and determine whether our efforts contributed to successful resolution. Where shortcomings are identified, we will acknowledge them, and identify corrective action(s) and engage timely change(s) in business practice. As MCFRS considers entering into agreements with new partners, MCFRS will work with the OCA during the review process to ensure the document contains this conflict provision if other conflict resolution language is not included.

References

[Email with external agency \(Prince George’s County Fire-EMS\) working to resolve a conflict surrounding CAD2CAD technologies](#)

ATF_MCFRS Arson Task Force 21-26, p. 7-8 for conflict resolution

UMDMC_PSTA_Clinicals_2010, p. 4 for conflict resolution

Criterion 10B: External Agency Agreements

The agency maintains current agreements with those external agencies which support the identified programs. All external agency agreements required to be maintained in support of any program must be current, reviewed, and/or updated within the accreditation period and adopted by the appropriate governing bodies. All agreements should support the agency's effort to take advantage of any operational and cost-effective benefits. Data reports, at least annually, should reflect the impact of each agreement on the agency.

Summary:

The MCFRS is deeply committed to ongoing collaboration with external agencies that appreciate value that comes with synergistic relationships. We ensure this end through routine dialogue with local, regional, and state-based stakeholders who share mutual interest in preserving the safety and welfare of our vast and highly diverse constituency. Agreements are henceforth memorialized in written agreements.

The MCFRS participates in written Mutual Aid Assistance Agreements with all five federal fire departments located in Montgomery County. These include the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center (WRNMMC), the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the Naval Surface Warfare Center (NSWC), the National Institutes of Standards and Technologies (NIST), and the Fort Detrick Fire and Emergency Services - Forest Glen Garrison.

The MCFRS also participates in a written National Capital Region (NCR) Mutual Aid Agreement through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (MWCOG). This agreement encompasses the District of Columbia, surrounding counties in Maryland and Virginia, self-governing municipalities within those counties, and the Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority (MWAA).

In addition to the above-referenced, written mutual aid agreements, the MCFRS also participates in several MWCOG regional mutual aid plans, including the Regional Emergency Coordination Plan and the Mutual Aid Operations Plan.

MCFRS possesses a limited number of written mutual aid agreements with regional partners outside Metropolitan Washington COG. Howard and Anne Arundel Counties, in Maryland, are two examples. Mutual aid with other counties (e.g., Carroll County, Maryland) has been conducted on an informal basis, but the department is working to implement a formal agreement.

Performance Indicators:

CC10B.1 External agency agreements are reviewed every three years and revised as necessary to meet objectives.

Description

The MCFRS reviews and revises all external relationship agreements on an as-needed basis. MCFRS has mutual aid agreements with several Maryland agencies and a few departments in Virginia. Additionally, Montgomery County Government is a signatory to the NCR Mutual Aid Agreement, while MCFRS is a signatory to the NCR Mutual Aid Operations Plan. All agreements are signed by Montgomery County's Chief Administrative Officer and adopted by the Montgomery County Council.

Mutual Aid Assistance Agreements with the federal fire departments and the NCR Mutual Aid Agreement are current and support the department's objectives. These agreements advance a broader understanding of regional public safety issues and help ensure participating agencies benefit from the synergistic effects of collaboration and economies of scale.

Appraisal

MCFRS recently completed an effort to scan and digitize all paper mutual aid agreements and MOUs. All were reviewed for relevance and timeliness, and categorized on the Division Chiefs' Share Point site for storage and future review.

Separately, while most partner jurisdictions in COG do not regularly revisit specific terms and conditions within its mutual aid agreements and compacts, all COG partners routinely engage in one-on-one dialogue and in joint forums to discuss issues associated with interoperability. Potential changes are reviewed, discussed, and carefully vetted prior to engaging in revisions or adjustments. Approval of such changes would require extensive legal review by the Office of the County Attorney, as well as vetting through the County Council. In 2021, the COG Operations Chiefs updated the Fire and Rescue Mutual Aid Operations Plan (MAOP).

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to participate in the Metropolitan Washington COG planning process for regional emergency response. MCFRS will seek out written mutual aid agreements with jurisdictional partners where none currently exist and when deemed necessary and appropriate for sustaining continuity or success of operations. And MCFRS will commit itself to conducting routine reviews of its external agreements; this process will be much easier and transparent, as the agreements are now located in a centralized location in electronic format.

References

[Approval of a Mutual Aid Agreement between Federal, State and Local Governments in the National Capital Region. \(2006\). Montgomery County Council](#)

[Mutual Aid Operations Plan. \(2021\). MWCOG](#)

[Approval of Mutual Aid Agreements between Montgomery County, Maryland and National Institutes of Health, National Naval Medical Center, Montgomery County, Maryland and Walter Reed Army Medical Center, and Montgomery County, Maryland and National Institute of Standards and Technology. \(Numerous years\).](#)

[Division Chiefs SharePoint MOUs Folders](#) (screenshot – behind the firewall)

Memo from Fire Chief to Division Chiefs: MOUs and Agreements (uploaded to folder)

10B.2 The agency has a process to manage, review and, if needed, revise agreements.

Description

In the past, MCFRS relied on an informal practice of monitoring local and regional activities and events to ensure its current agreements serve Montgomery County’s interests and are consistent with regional practices. MCFRS’ active participation in MWCOC Fire committees also established and built relationships with regional partners and provided the opportunity to revise plans and agreements, such as the National Capital Region (NCR) Mutual Aid Operations Plan, Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan, and Regional Emergency Coordination Plan, when it was deemed appropriate. In 2022, MCFRS took steps to modernize the collection and maintenance of mutual aid and other local and regional agreements and plans, many of which existed only in paper form. Those agreements were scanned and reviewed for relevance and timeliness and categorized on the Division Chiefs’ Share Point site for easy access by management. Agreements that were previously stored by the respective “owners” on their local drives were gathered and uploaded in a similar manner. In April 2023, the Fire Chief issued a memo to the Division Chiefs, informing them of the updated process to route, store, and review agreements going forward. Any concerns related to expiration of existing agreements or those which no longer meet MCFRS’ interests shall be raised through the chain of command and undergo appropriate legal review, as needed.

Appraisal

The informal process employed by MCFRS, relying on committee work sessions and informal communications between partners, was effective for the department and allowed for one-on-one dialogue with our public safety partners; agreements and plans were reviewed, discussed, and carefully vetted prior to engaging adjustments. However, it was often challenging for personnel to find current and previous agreements when the subject arose; for example, in the recent *Reimagining Public Safety* study of resources and deployment, the consultant had asked for copies of mutual aid agreements. There was not a centralized source to visit and obtain those documents, so it required several inquiries and exchanges to locate those documents. The newly established Share Point site, which

maintains both local and regional agreements, provides a consistent and reliable way to store these important documents, and initiate review when it is needed.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to participate and coordinate with the COG Senior Fire Operations subcommittee to develop and review functional agreements and response plans with partner jurisdictions in the NCR. Review of existing MCFRS-specific agreements will occur, at minimum, every three years, or as needed.

References

[COG Update on the Mutual Aid Operations Plan Revision](#)

10B.3 The agency evaluates external agency performance annually to ensure that external agencies are capable and effective in supporting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

Internally, there are several County department's that use annual surveys asking for stakeholder/user feedback, so the County department may use the results of our evaluation to revise or improve their service delivery.

Appraisal

While the EMIHS dashboards are not intended to evaluate the hospitals' performance, there are statistics/measures that speak to capabilities and effectiveness. For example, duty officers are able to monitor patient distribution at the hospitals to guide transport destination decisions and minimize hospital drop times. EMIHS also maintains PowerBI dashboards that show trends over time (i.e., turnover times, drop times, cycle times, etc.). And there are measures in the EMIHS STEMI dashboard (i.e., first medical contact to balloon, SOAR, mortality) and ROSC dashboard (i.e., CPC 1 or 2) that could also be used to evaluate an external agency's performance.

Separately, MCFRS included an assessment of mutual aid calls in the annual statistics that are provided to the Fire and Division Chiefs; again, it was not to evaluate the other agencies, but rather to assess current workload and demands for service.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to monitor patient transport distribution, hospital times, and mutual aid calls. At this time, there is no plan to monitor or further evaluate any other external agencies.

References

[Hospital Transport Status screenshot](#)

[Hospital Interface Report](#)

[EMIHS STEMI Dashboard Screenshot](#)

[EMIHS OHCA Dashboard Screenshot](#)

[Email requesting MCFRS feedback on OLR survey rating](#)

[CY22 CAD-NFIRS totals \(mutual aid review: p. 38-41\)](#)

Category 11: Health and Safety

Keeping employees/members healthy and safe is a major priority for any organization. Having adequate programs and processes in place will help meet the goals of eliminating employee injuries and deaths, reducing liability to the organization, and ultimately making the organization more effective and efficient.

Criterion 11A: Occupational Health, Safety and Risk Management

(AC Jones, AC Carpenter, BC Stanton & Capt. Henry)

The agency's occupational health, safety and risk management programs protect the organization and personnel from unnecessary injuries, loss, and liability.

Summary:

MCFRS has a substantial network of systems, personnel, and programs designed to protect the organization and personnel from unnecessary injuries, loss, or liability.

A designated risk manager is in place and oversees the occupational health, safety, and wellness programs as prescribed by the NFPA 1500 standard. To effectively accomplish this mission, the MCFRS risk manager, who is the Assistant Chief of the Safety Section, and the assigned Safety Captains, collaborate with Montgomery County Government's Division of Risk Management, the five MCFRS Divisions, and the Local Fire and Rescue Departments (LFRD) to accomplish the task of developing, administering, and enforcing these programs.

The County's Division of Risk Management reviews all injuries and illness claims reported by MCFRS supervisors. MCFRS utilizes Corvel, a national provider of risk management solutions, as a third-party claims administrator for injury claims, while Volunteer Fireman Insurance Services (VFIS), a Division of Glatfelter Insurance Group, is the contracted insurance provider that handles collisions, facility, property, and liability claims. Prior to this review, each report undergoes a thorough quality review by either the Safety Section Assistant Chief or the Fire and Rescue Occupational Medical Services (FROMS) Battalion Chief.

The Safety Section embeds the four primary MCFRS Safety Officers into the Operations Division; they are responsible for investigating injuries, collisions, and significant or near-miss events to determine causal factors and identify behavioral trends. Regular evaluations are conducted post-incident to determine the specifics that led to the event and to ensure necessary steps are taken to prevent future injury, illness, or loss.

MCFRS developed and introduced a resourceful system to consistently report injuries, collisions, and other types of losses as it pertains to personnel and physical assets. This computer-based reporting system is known as the Risk Management Accountability Program (RMAP). The Safety Section acts as the system's program manager by handling system updates, allowing reporting privileges, and providing managers with comprehensive training and support to ensure user success. The benefit of using RMAP allows for managers to quickly run reports to assist in identifying trends and search for commonalities to determine root causes. The RMAP reporting system also doubles as the insurance form that is submitted to initiate a claim, saving users from having to report the incident twice.

MCFRS consistently asserts its safety message to its workforce through a focus on continual safety-related training, education, and an emphasis on physical and behavioral wellness.

Performance Indicators:

11A.1 A specific person or persons are assigned responsibility for implementing the occupational health, safety and risk management programs. (Capt. Henry)

Description

Responsibilities for occupational health, safety, and risk management programs in MCFRS are shared between units in the Division of Human Resources and the Division of Support Services. MCFRS follows Administrative Policy 3-1, Reporting and Record Keeping of Injuries, and works closely with the Montgomery County Division of Risk Management in the Department of Finance.

The Assistant Chief from the Safety & Supply Section and the Battalion Chief from Fire and Rescue Occupational Medical Services (FROMS) co-manage a team that implements occupational health, safety, and risk management programs for MCFRS.

Fire and Rescue Occupational Medical Service (FROMS) manages the medical contract currently provided by Concentra that provides medical evaluation and care to all MCFRS employees and LFRD members.

For risk management, MCFRS has 24-hour, on-duty safety officers that work within the federal, state, and county guidelines to ensure fire and rescue employees are compliant in all fire and rescue safety regulations.

Appraisal

During this reporting period, MCFRS realigned the Safety Section from within the Division of Human Resources to the Division of Support Services, merging it with Logistics to create the Safety and Supply Section. By making this realignment, MCFRS was able to streamline the oversight of several processes.

One example of this is that the Assistant Chief of the Safety Section, aligned under Support Services, provides the ability to oversee Property and Supply, which issues firefighting PPE as one of the many parts of its workload. The Safety Section has a large part in selecting our

firefighting PPE and can more easily work as a cohesive team with Property and Supply to ensure that MCFRS firefighters are issued the best turnout gear and that it is maintained properly and safely.

Another example of this is that the Health and Wellness Battalion Chief can oversee pre-employment physicals while being under the roof of the Division of Human Resources. This Division also completes the rest of the hiring process for MCFRS, which allows for efficiency while screening candidates for employment.

Plan

MCFRS does not plan to modify the organizational structure, nor the delegated responsibilities of those tasked with managing the health, safety, and risk management programs.

References

[Risk Management Administrative Policy 3-1 Reporting](#)

[MCFRS Organizational Chart \(slide 7\)](#)

[Concentra Contract](#)

11A.2 The agency has policies and procedures for reporting, evaluating, addressing, and communicating workplace hazards as well as unsafe/unhealthy conditions and work practices. (Capt. Henry)

Description

MCFRS has a number of procedures for detecting, reporting, evaluating, addressing and communicating workplace hazards, as well as unsafe/unhealthy conditions and work practices, including:

- First Notice of Loss (A report with CORVEL for an injury)
- MCFRS Quarterly Workplace inspections
- VFIS Annual Workplace inspections
- MCFRS Station Defect Reporting System
- MCFRS EMS Stretcher/Stair Chair Incident Reporting Protocol
- Risk Management Accountability Program (RMAP) reporting
- Significant Injury reporting
- Employee Medical Screening
- Apparatus Safety inspections
- Gear Inspections
- Monthly Collision Investigation Review Committee reports
- MCFRS Safety Officer Training Requirements by Function
- Monthly Joint Health & Safety Committee reports and studies
- 24-hour staffed Safety Officer position

MCFRS also has policies that protect members from unsafe/unhealthy conditions and work practices:

- DFRS Policy and Procedure 813 established a station safety inspection program.
- MCFRS Policy 26-06AMII, Respiratory Protection Policy requires the use of Respiratory Protection Equipment (RPE) in atmospheres that are Immediately Dangerous to Life and Health (IDLH) and in "hazardous and/or toxic atmospheres".
- FCGO 05-04 Plymovent® Safety Guidelines and Operations mandates the use of the vehicle exhaust extraction system in the station.

- Directive 04-21, MCFRS Safe Driving Action Plan

Appraisal

The department's policies and procedures for detecting, reporting, evaluating, and communicating workplace hazards have worked well and there are numerous examples to share.

The MCFRS station defect reporting system has allowed Facilities Management to respond in a timely manner to correct unsafe and unhealthy workplace conditions. Additionally, Facilities Management has continuously provided updated guidance on how to handle facility defects, ranging from routine repairs (e.g., a leaky faucet), to urgent repairs (e.g., a burst pipe leaking water throughout the facility).

When reporting via RMAP alerted the Safety Section to the number of patients being dropped on EMS stretchers, MCFRS was able to jump into action to establish training to address the issues involved in the patient drops.

Following a 2018 incident in which a reserve tiller truck was returned from the shop and placed at Station 12, and the drivers did not realize it would fit at Station 12, the tiller firefighter got his head pinned between the door and the cab of the tiller seat when the door struck a low-hanging pipe, causing serious trauma to his face and jaw. In light of this serious incident, MCFRS assessed and measured all station bay heights/clearances and created a spreadsheet that outlines the dimensions of each bay at every station, noting any obstructions, so there is a clear reference document when apparatus is being placed in a bay it doesn't normally belong. That reference document is available to all members. The department is currently in the process of posting signage with the clearance heights above all the bay doors.

The Safety and Facilities Sections recently developed a process for identifying potential mold issues at MCFRS worksites. The intent of this process is to inform the workforce of

the procedure for reporting potential mold issues in any MCFRS worksite, so that remediation can occur as quickly as possible.

A new initiative recently implemented by the Safety Captains is a quarterly publication called “The Safety Dispatch,” which is distributed to the entire department to communicate workplace hazards and trends. This publication includes statistics and trends for injuries and collisions in the past quarter. Relevant safety notices and recommendations for best practices are also included. As of this writing, the first publication of “The Safety Dispatch” just occurred, and as such, there is not any data of relevance as to how well it is working.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use these tools and processes to manage workplace hazards and monitor unsafe/unhealthy working conditions. Issues will be communicated as needed, and the Safety Section will continue the quarterly publication of “The Safety Dispatch” as follow-up. MCFRS will modify this quarterly publication as needed with trends as they begin to appear. A potential example is if there is an uptick in exposures to bodily fluids, the publication allows a platform to broadcast these issues and remind MCFRS providers to ensure that they are wearing their proper PPE on all incidents.

References

[Policy 813 Station Safety Inspection Program](#)

[Policy 26-06AMII, Respiratory Protection Policy](#)

[FCGO 05-04, Plymovent® Safety Guidelines and Operations](#)

[FCGO 20-03, MCFRS Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals](#)

[Directive 04-21, MCFRS Safe Driving Action Plan](#)

[MCFRS EMS Stretcher Incident Reporting Protocol](#)

[MCFRS Fire Station and Work Site Defect Reporting Guide](#)

[Mold Reporting Process](#)

[RMAP Program screen shots](#) (actual application is behind the firewall)

[Quarterly Station Safety Inspection Form](#)

[Fire Station Defect Reporting System screenshots](#) (actual application is behind firewall)

[Tiller Operator Pinned 7/3/2018](#)

[Bay Door Height Document](#)

[The Safety Dispatch](#)

[Example of Safety Notice regarding hose bed dumps](#)

11A.3 The agency documents steps taken to implement risk reduction and address identified workplace hazards. (Capt. Henry)

Description

MCFRS has several different avenues to document steps taken to implement risk reduction and address identified workplace hazards depending on what type of risk/hazard it pertains to. MCFRS has risk reduction programs in place for things that range from Occupational Health to Scene/Operational Safety, as well as programs in place to identify and document workplace hazards and the avenues taken to rectify them.

MCFRS allows for reporting of any workplace hazards by anyone to either their union representative or through their chain of command. The majority of these types of hazards are identified via employees and their supervisors via the MCFRS Facilities Defect Form. Additionally, each MCFRS station conducts a Quarterly Station Safety Inspection via an online form that regularly highlights issues within stations and assists in directing the Station Commander to submit a Facilities Defect. The Facilities Defect Form allows for tracking of what steps have been taken to rectify a repair within a station and provide a timeline when it cannot be immediately repaired.

MCFRS reduces risk and provides direction on how to do so in a myriad of ways. The steps taken to reduce the risk are then documented and shared to the department via different platforms depending on the nature of the risk. Examples of these platforms are Fire Chief's General Orders, Safety Notices, and Directives. At times, if the risk is something that needs to be addressed immediately, an email to the entire department is sent that identifies the risk and the direction on how to reduce it.

Medical screenings are provided by FROMS to evaluate new onset illness or injury and to provide baseline and periodic screening of all employees. Medical records are maintained to create individual wellness profiles of all employees and volunteers in the organization. Records are kept for thirty years following employment.

Lastly, MCFRS has a mechanism in place for employees or supervisors to request a review or discussion on any topic through the Joint Health & Safety Committee, which is comprised of labor and management representatives. The Joint Health & Safety committee reports on matters directly to the Fire Chief and Union President.

Appraisal

MCFRS recently had a developing issue where a specific breed of fire engine (2019 Pierce) was having issues with supply hose deploying inadvertently while driving down the road. After recognizing this trend, the MCFRS Safety Section immediately investigated, determined a root cause, and then published direction to reduce the risk of hose deployment occurring. This was sent via an email to FRS.All, a distribution list to all of MCFRS, to ensure that action was taken immediately on the affected apparatus. This and other Safety Notices have been published on the robust Safety Section webpage.

MCFRS Support Services Division also conducted an audit of all bay door clearances and usable depth and highlighted overhead obstructions that are below the door height. Upon completion of the audit, MCFRS was able to take steps to ensure that that bay door collisions could be avoided. The clearance heights are in the process of being posted above all bay doors and that will continue through the coming months.

The Safety Section as well as the Health and Wellness Section effectively responded to matters brought to their attention regarding employee wellness and safety. This was usually accomplished through informal contact by an employee's supervisor or the union once a situation or concern had been identified. The Safety Officer is frequently the primary level to launch an investigation and manage its progression. Currently, no intake form exists to capture this type of interaction, especially if the issue is corrected immediately at this level.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to identify risk and workplace hazards via the outlined procedures and address them accordingly, while continuing to document these processes. MCFRS Facilities section plans to continue the use of the facility defect form to ensure that any

issues involving one of the 47 worksites are properly documented so that repairs/remediations can begin in a timely fashion and thus reduce the amount of risk for personnel. MCFRS will look to develop a form to document informal contact with the on-duty Safety Officer regarding Safety issues in the event there is an action taken that warrants documentation. This will allow MCFRS to reduce risk in that moment as well as share this information to ensure that all stations and personnel are receiving the same information.

References

[Fire Station Defect Reporting System screenshots](#) (actual application is behind the firewall)

[Fire Station Defect Reporting System Tracking screenshot](#) (actual application is behind firewall)

[Quarterly Station Safety Inspection Form](#)

[Fire Station Defect Reporting Guide](#)

[Policy 813 Station Safety Inspection Program](#)

[FCGO 05-04](#)

[FCGO 21-07](#)

[Hose Bed Dumps Email to FRS.All](#)

[Safety Notice – Hose Bed Dumps](#)

[Safety Section Webpage](#)

[MCFRS Maximum Door Clearances](#)

11A.4 The agency has established and communicated procedures and guidelines for preventing the transmission of blood-borne pathogens and other infectious diseases and reducing exposure to harmful chemicals. Guidelines should include an improvement of practices process. (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

As the Infection Control Plan (ICP) states: MCFRS is committed to providing a safe and healthful work environment for all personnel. The ICP was specifically developed and implemented to eliminate or minimize the risk of occupational exposure to communicable diseases, and complies with the OSHA standard, "Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens," codified at 29 CFR 1910.1030 and NFPA 1581, Fire Department Infection Control Program.

Fire Chief's General Order (FCGO) 20-03, Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals, requires the Human Resources Division to establish and maintain department-level guidelines for infection and exposure control.

The department's policies and guidelines establish guidance for tracking of all exposures, which allows for analysis of trends and offers the opportunity to implement policies and guidelines to mitigate these behaviors.

Education on the importance of wearing and the proper donning of personal protective apparel for universal precautions, respiratory precautions, and the cleaning and decontamination of equipment used in the course of duty is covered both in basic EMS classes, continuing EMS education programs, and as a part of recertification programs that comply with local, state and federal standards. We continue to use the specialized decontamination sprayers that are deployable to the local emergency rooms for high volume EMS unit decontamination and maintain stocks of medical grade decontamination supplies at the stations and the transport locations.

FCGO 21-07, Protective Measures for Novel Hazards, establishes a platform called the

‘Novel Hazard Briefing’, that allows for the rapid updating, sharing, and when necessary, modification of the department’s operational stance based on the most current information available for a novel hazard.

Appraisal

Since the development of FCGO 20-03, Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals (ICHERM), MCFRS has also improved the processes to ensure that proper PPE has been made continuously available to all employees via the MCFRS COVID PPE/EMS Supply order form. With the ICHERM and the Order Form being ‘live’ documents, MCFRS has made it possible to adjust PPE requirements and PPE availability to novel hazards as needed.

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue’s policies, guidelines and Novel Hazards Brief have proven to be effective in reducing the number of exposures to blood-borne pathogens, disease, or harmful chemicals. This is documented by the reduction in reported exposures in RMAP.

During the pandemic, the Novel Hazard Briefing was the most effective way of communicating the risk of disease and transmission of community viruses and threats to the membership. It was frequently updated with information from the Health Department and CDC recommendations and as such PPE requirements for different levels of interventions were also defined and updated for EMS providers. It was required that all crews at the Stations’ morning lineup reviewed the NHB for new information. A Word Press site for the NHB provided a “one-stop shop” for members to get the briefing, contact FROMS, review PPE requirements, and catch up on other announcements, to which they could also submit questions for follow-up.

Plan

The Division of Human Resources will continue to ensure department and section plans are updated as exposure hazards change, or other requirements need modifications.

MCFRS will continue to provide training to ensure complete compliance with the infection control standards. The department will continue to monitor developments and techniques for decontamination to continue to enhance our ability to effectively and quickly turn our units around for service while ensuring the safety of our patients and providers.

The department will continue to use the Novel Hazard Briefing as the primary means of communicating emerging threats, plans for PPE and provider protection, community resources, and the department's posture to all members.

References

[Bloodborne Pathogens Protocol](#)

[MCFRS Infection Control Plan](#)

[FCGO 20-03, Infection Control & Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals](#)

[Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals \(attachment\)](#)

[FCGO 21-07, Protective Measures for Novel Hazards](#)

[MCFRS Policy 26-06AMII, Respiratory Protection Policy](#)

[Novel Hazard Briefing \(NHB\) sample](#)

[Novel Hazard Briefing Word Press site](#)

[MCFRS Covid PPE/EMS Supply order form](#)

[MCFRS Exposures 2018-2022](#)

CC 11A.5 The agency's occupational health and safety training program instruct the workforce in general safe work practices, from point of initial employment through each job assignment and/or whenever new substances, processes, procedures or equipment are introduced. It provides instructions on operations and hazards specific to the agency.

(Capt. Henry)

Description

The MCFRS engages in an aggressive system of basic, compliance, and awareness training that is designed to communicate to the employee the hazards associated with providing emergency response and the dangers of working in the light to moderate industrial setting found in firehouses. Entry level training focuses on the basic use of personal protective equipment, from N95 face masks to use of exam gloves, to the use of structural firefighting gear and self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA). Fit testing is performed by Fire Rescue Occupation Medical Services or at the SCBA shop. Testing is performed for users of the N95 particulate mask and the Scott AV3000 HT face piece. Members who are not compliant are removed from the Integrated Emergency Command Structure (IECS) list, and will not be permitted to engage in emergency operations. These devices, associated training, and evaluations protect members and the Department from injuries, illnesses, and potential claims.

Each operational employee is required to take this basic safety training prior to response or participation at any emergency incident or event. The Department protects all employees by implementing all federal, State, and local workplace health, safety and wellness regulations that apply. Annually, all employees and LFRD members must complete recertifications that ensure compliance with mandates. This training includes a blood born pathogen program and teaches the responder basic use of body substance isolation (BSI). Training is conducted annually to maintain each responder to the hazardous material Operations level. This “hazmat” training is designed to allow responders to evaluate, protect from, and work in the presence of potentially hazardous chemicals. Non-responder employees are not required to take part in this training.

Upon successful completion of basic training, employees or members are qualified to operate the basic tools required as a member of a fire and rescue department in Montgomery County. At the root of all provided training is the thread that protects the health, safety and wellness of the employee or volunteer members. Training has been designed to provide background, theory and safety methods designed to protect the provider while delivering emergency response, throughout their agency tenure and after, by teaching the employee about the long-term exposure risks associated with emergency response work.

In addition, all responders must complete annual recertification training which takes place through a web-based training program and in person to ensure compliance. MCFRS employees are provided training and education on the chemical substances used in the workplace, where they are stored and proper use. Employees are educated about Safety Data Sheets (SDS) and Chemical Information Lists are contained in SDS-Pro, a web-based system outlining chemicals located in each MCFRS facility. Each time new chemicals are added, the information is updated. MCFRS assures that station level supervisors perform this training and continuing education is conducted annually. Volunteer chiefs have been tasked to ensure volunteer personnel are following the same direction and procedures. The SDS and right to know information is applicable to all MCFRS employees, not just the responders.

Appraisal

All fire/rescue series employees have met basic training standards prescribed by the NFPA, the State of Maryland, the federal government and MCFRS. During this rating period, when new equipment was approved and made available, MCFRS conducted in-service training and Battalion-based training to familiarize members with the use of the device(s) and proper procedures required to operate the device(s). Also, each employee or responder has been provided annual fit testing to ensure compliance with respiratory protection regulations and policy.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to protect the health and wellness of all MCFRS personnel throughout their tenure with the agency. As issues develop, MCFRS will continue to target and reduce hazards and threats and limit exposure of the organization and members to risk. Additionally, the Safety section as well as the Health and Wellness Section will continue to participate in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments semi-annual Safety and Health Symposium. This symposium is designed to focus attention on the risks associated with being a fire-rescue care provider.

References

[IECS List](#)

[Web Based recertification for 2022 \(now 2023\)](#)

[2023 Email From Operations Division Chief Requiring Annual Recertifications](#)

[SDS-Pro](#)

[Safety Section Webpage](#)

[NFPA 1971](#)

[NFPA 1851](#)

[FCGO 17-07: Air Monitoring Devices](#)

11A.6 The agency uses near miss reporting to elevate the level of situational awareness in an effort to teach and share lessons learned from events that, could have resulted in a fatality, injury, or property damage. (Capt. Henry)

Description

According to the Incident Response Policy Appendix T After Action Reporting, Section 5, d, Significant Incident Investigative Report (SIIR), the Fire Chief or Division Chief will appoint a panel to investigate significant incidents. A near-miss/close call, such as a mayday situation, constitutes a significant incident and MCFRS produces these reports to not only teach and discuss lessons learned, but to determine if training or policy enhancements are needed to prevent future occurrences.

Appraisal

MCFRS has conducted post-incident analysis/after-action review reports for near-miss mayday situations and posted them on the Quicklinks website for all members to read and learn. One such report was from November 27, 2018, when Fire Station 18 had a hose-testing incident with a near-miss and two firefighters were injured. That report pushed MCFRS to revamp hose testing procedures by developing a process to enhance the safety of all personnel handling hose during testing which included designating a specific area at the PSTA to conduct hose testing, limiting hose testers to MICRB MFF's and above, and documenting all hose testing. By designating, training and developing safe procedures, hose testing injuries have been reduced.

The last mayday occurred in December 2020, at a house fire on Lorain Avenue when two firefighters fell through the floor. An after-action review was completed, and this incident was also the topic of a Boss Talks episode, which allowed company/unit officers to discuss the incident from their perspective.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to encourage all personnel to report a near miss event. MCFRS will consider development and maintenance of an internal near miss program that is web-based

and linked to the National Near Miss Reporting system. This would include instructions to make personnel aware of the power that their event has in alerting others to a condition that may cause significant injury, loss, or line of duty death.

MCFRS will continue to perform after action reporting as outlined in Incident Response Policy Appendix T.

References

[Incident Response Policy Appendix “T”](#)

[Post-Incident Analysis Page screenshots](#) (actual application behind the firewall)

[Hose Testing Near Miss 11/27/2018](#)

[Boss Talks Lorain Avenue](#)

11A.7 The agency has a process in place to investigate and document accidents, injuries, legal actions, etc., to determine root cause. The agency's information management system supports this process. (Capt. Henry)

Description

The MCFRS process to investigate and document accidents, injuries, legal actions, etc., is outlined in MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-02, Vehicle Collision Investigation and Reporting Policy; DFRS Policy 606, Vehicle Accident/Incident Review and Disposition; and FCGO 10-17, Reporting MCFRS Insurance Claims. As established by FCGO 10-17, all collisions, incidents, and incidents of liability **MUST** be reported via the Risk Management Accountability Program (RMAP) within 24 hours. With the exception of workers' compensation claims, all insurance claims are required to be reported in RMAP. This data has allowed us to quantify and analyze collisions and other incidents of liability/injuries to determine if there is an area of increased or unwarranted risk that must be addressed.

The Collision Investigation Review Committee (CIRC) has the responsibility of reviewing all the documented accident materials and recommending a plan of action to address the issue that caused the incident/accident. This committee meets on a monthly basis and includes a union representative, the Safety Section Chief, a representative from Montgomery County Risk Management, and the employee who as the option of attending. At the conclusion of each review, if the collision warrants, points are assigned to the employee for the severity and preventability of that particular collision.

MCFRS uses DFRS Policy 812 to direct significant injury investigation/reporting. This policy dictates when an Injury Investigation Team will be activated and outlines which personnel will accomplish specific tasks to properly investigate/document the injury. To ensure documentation of the injury, a RMAP is completed for all injuries, as well as a worker's compensation claim (as dictated by FCGO 18-09)

Appraisal

Over the last five years, MCFRS has investigated and documented 1,033 collisions and there have been approximately 60 CIRC meetings to encompass all the at-fault/preventable collisions. This has been proven to be working and that is shown by the overall number and severity of collisions trending downward.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to operate under current policy to ensure there is a framework under which all personnel can operate safely. MCFRS will continue using the Safety Section website to communicate areas of concern and personnel resources to assist in accident reduction and make sure all of MCFRS' personnel are operating safely.

References

[Policy 808](#)

[Policy 24-02](#)

[Policy 606](#)

[Fire Chief's General Order 10-17, Reporting MCFRS Insurance Claims](#)

[VFIS Claims Reporting Form](#)

[RMAP Program screen shots](#) (actual application is behind the firewall)

[Safety Section webpage](#)

[Policy 812](#)

[Fire Chief's General Order 18-09, Worker's Compensation Claims Information](#)

11A.8 The agency incorporates risk management practices to increase the level of decision making and the ability to identify unsafe conditions and practices during emergency operations. (Capt. Henry)

Description

MCFRS has a robust Incident Response Policy (hereinafter referred to as ‘the IRP’) with multiple appendices that address risk management in some fashion. IRP Appendix A – Operational Doctrine Statement (hereinafter known as the ODS). This policy states at the beginning: *The ODS sets the tone for operational behavior. It describes the fundamental high-level notions on which all other operational matters are based. It is the authoritative statement of the MCFRS philosophical approach to emergency incident response.* This policy applies to everyone within MCFRS and puts our risk management principles in black-and-white. It is the foundation for every action that is taken during an emergency incident.

The ODS provides clear direction to aid in decision making on what a calculated risk is. Some specific examples in the ODS state that:

- ✓ MCFRS seeks to reduce the risks associated with any incident to the lowest achievable level without compromising the mission:
 - We will extend calculated risk to save savable lives.
 - We will accept limited risk to save savable property.
 - We will not risk Firefighter lives for lives or property that cannot be saved.

- ✓ Every incident has some degree of risk, and all the risks will never be known. However, personnel are required to accept risk when the benefits outweigh the costs.

- ✓ Risk describes the relationship between hazards and harm. More specifically, risk is the product of the chance that a certain hazard will cause harm and the severity of the harm if it were to occur. A risk assessment is a dynamic process of gathering information about the operational environment as it relates to risk,

and then comparing the identified risks to the expected benefits of a given action. Stated differently, it is the process of making the decision of whether or not it is “worth it” to conduct a given operation. In the context of incident operations, the benefits are usually framed in terms of lives saved, significant injury reduced or avoided, and reduction in property loss. The risks may include injury or death.

Additionally, one of the operational principles found in the IRP is effective leadership. Under this section – it states very clearly that every member has the opportunity to demonstrate leadership, which includes refusing unnecessary risk, but not being risk averse. This shows how MCFRS acknowledges there are times when we will need to extend greater risk for greater reward, but that all levels of the organization are a part of that decision.

Moreover, under “Commitment to Learning, the ODS states: *As a learning organization, MCFRS actively engages in critical self-analysis, the discovery and dissemination of lessons, and continual operational evolution. Engaging in critical evaluation, even after success, is vital to improvement.* This states, with no uncertainty, that MCFRS looks at both its successes and failures to promote positive change and growth within the department. These analyses allow MCFRS to assure and continue to promote a culture of safety, as well as better understand the notion of appropriately managed risk.

Appraisal

The IRP and its core risk management doctrine, principles, and practices have served MCFRS well throughout this rating period. These practices have been supported and emphasized strategically and tactically, through daily, routine calls and complex incidents, training, and integrating the concept of risk into planning and decision-making. Over the last several years, the PSTA hosted numerous programs (Boss Talk, Challenges in the Streets, etc.) focused on different calls that had occurred; risk was discussed in many of them. From the routine service call that turned into a successful water rescue (Twinbrook Parkway flooding) to the review of a near-miss incident (Lorain Avenue), the PSTA moderators and the panelists (firefighters, providers, unit officers, command) discussed, examined, and re-lived many incidents, focusing on risk, decision-making, leadership, and

safety. In 2022, a Chief Officer Professional Development and Improvement (COPDI) session was dedicated to discussing risk assessment. The PSTA later hosted a Risk Management workshop, in collaboration with the US Coast Guard, and focused on the safety culture. MCFRS has done a great job institutionalizing the principles of the ODS.

Plan

MCFRS prides itself on being a learning organization. The department will continue to embrace the IRP and indulge in additional critical thought analyses and discussion on risk and risk management to ensure it is embedded in our culture. MCFRS will continue our culture of appropriately managing risk while taking a look at significant incidents that had positive and/or negative outcomes and learn from them. By continuing with this environment, MCFRS can get a more honest and candid view of what decisions were made by its members because they don't have a fear of retribution, which will allow MCFRS to have the greatest opportunity to learn and grow.

References

[MCFRS IRP/Appendix "A" ODS](#)

[CITS/Boss Talk: Twinbrook Parkway Water Rescues](#)

[COPDI Risk Assessment as a Process: Not just for structure fires anymore.](#)

[Email confirming risk management workshop](#)

[Second Email Regarding Risk Management Workshop](#)

11A.9 The agency has adopted a comprehensive program to address direct- and cross-contamination of clothing, personal protective equipment, other equipment, apparatus and fixed facilities. (Capt. Henry)

Description

MCFRS maintains a comprehensive program to address direct and cross contamination of clothing, personal protective equipment, and other equipment, apparatus, and fixed facilities. Policies, procedures, and guidelines are established and communicated which provide procedures and standards for the use of personal protective equipment, personal, and equipment and apparatus decontamination. This results in a decreased risk of personnel exposures to blood-borne pathogens and other infectious diseases and harmful chemicals. These exposures could lead to employee lost time, disability, and financial loss. These policies and guidelines implement strategies to minimize their adverse effects on the employees, equipment and on the organization's mission.

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue's policies and guidelines provide expectations and specific courses of actions to be followed that are intended to prevent or reduce and remove contamination of clothing, personal protective equipment, and other equipment, apparatus, and fixed facilities. These guidelines provide guidance on the proper level of personal protective equipment to be used, the decontamination method and solutions to be used. One of the ways this is communicated is through the MCFRS Novel Hazards Brief. This brief is to be review with all crews at the Station's morning lineup. The Novel Hazards Brief includes links to the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals (I-CHERM).

Appraisal

With use of the I-CHERM, MCFRS has established procedures outlining such a variety of different hazards that we can be exposed to, and how to best decontaminate from them. This has shown to be effective by personnel beginning to use baby wipes to complete on-scene decontamination after a working fire. Additionally, MCFRS recently began completion of our quarterly PPE inspections with an online form that better tracks who has completed their

inspection. An integral part of that inspection is the cleaning dates for each article of PPE. This provides real-time data to the employee as well as MCFRS administration which articles of PPE need to be cleaned, and as such has resulted in an increase in PPE being sent for cleaning.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to follow established process to minimize cross-contamination of carcinogens, pathogens, chemicals, and other hazardous things which can cause harm to our members. MCFRS will also continue use of the newly implemented PPE Quarterly Inspection Form to better track gear-cleaning dates and reduce carcinogens in each worksite.

References

[MCFRS, Human Resources Division, FROMS Administrative Section](#)

[Fire Chief General Order 21-07 Protective Measures for Novel Hazards](#)

[Novel Hazard Briefing \(NHB\)](#)

[MCFRS Infection Control and Hazard Exposure Reduction Manuals](#)

[New MCFRS Quarterly PPE Inspection Jotform](#)

[Tracking form for New Quarterly PPE Inspection Jotform](#)

11A.10 The agency collects and maintains exposure records in accordance with local laws, regulations and/or current research. (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

The MCFRS collects and maintains required exposure records of all MCFRS personnel at the Fire and Rescue Occupational Medical Service (FROMS) in accordance with all local laws and regulations. Records of the testing done on the employee, as well as any information provided on the source patient of the exposure are transmitted to the physician for review, and a plan of treatment is enacted.

MCFRS has developed in concert with the local area hospitals and clinics a system to transmit any finding in their patient population who are brought in by EMS with communicable diseases. Hospital Infection Control personnel make notification *via email to EMS Section at headquarters, then follow up with a phone call to the EMS battalion chief to confirm he/she received the information, and to supply any additional information. The EMS battalion chief then documents the potential exposure, which includes the providers' name(s), the incident number, date of transport, and unit(s) involved with transport on the MCFRS Jot Form which then automatically notifies the Occupational Medical Services and FROMS.* ~~to the incident number from the EMS run report, date of the transport, and the unit involved in the transport.~~ FROMS personnel ~~pull the relevant unit reports to identify then~~ notify personnel on the incident who are then contacted by the medical staff at FROMS to determine the potential for exposure and determine follow up treatment necessary. *In addition, the battalion chief responsible for the member completes a RMAP report, which documents the circumstances surrounding the exposure, any treatment received, and the first notice of injury information.*

Records of the immediate treatment at facilities other than FROMS are also maintained as a part of the employees' chart at FROMS. As a standard, the employee also notifies their supervisor, who completes a first notice of injury report, while the employee immediate treatment is guided by the MCFRS Bloodborne Pathogens Exposure Checklist to ensure the exposure is managed properly. The MCFRS supervisor provides the employee with a

Medical Evaluation of Work Status Form and a copy of the OSHA standard to the employee, which are updated as new standards are released, to take with them to treatment by a healthcare provider of their choice.

Appraisal

Exposure data was collected and analyzed quarterly for the number and types of exposures but was not generally used beyond identifying possible deficiencies in the infection control plan. Responsibility for determining the trends in exposures was split between the FROMS section which treated the affected individuals and followed up on exposure reports and the Safety Office that maintained the database of reports. As a part of the shift, FROMS will begin working through the EMS section to provide data for provider training to reduce the incidents of exposures.

Plan

In the coming year, MCFRS will begin to track the number and types of exposures not only to determine trends for future education and prevention initiatives, but to see baseline incidences of the different types of exposures. Educational programs will be developed and added to the regular training conducted to ensure a working knowledge in every employee and supervisor of the exposure notification and treatment protocols.

Personnel having an exposure to a hazard will be immediately referred to a medical provider for immediate evaluation and care, the FROMS clinic or after hours the local emergency room or other medical facility as designated by the Montgomery County Occupational Medical Section Plan. The MCFRS will request the source patient or source of the hazard, if identified, to be tested to determine the threat posed by the exposure and the nature of the exposure. This information will then be used by the FROMS clinical providers to provide ongoing follow-up care and counselling to the exposed providers for their long-term health and safety as well as their personal contacts and family.

MCFRS will be able to record statistical data from the exposure reporting to identify trends and possible preventive actions to reduce overall exposures in a monthly format to include

data on the number of exposures and types of exposures, routes of exposures, uses of protective equipment. This data will be collated through the FROMS clinic and provided to EMS maintaining confidentiality of the patient to ensure follow up with outside agencies, and if necessary, EMS and FROMS will work with OMS to notify any potential exposure providers for evaluation. We will then use this data to compare our organization against other organizations, as well as look to organizations that may have different training or solutions to preventing or mitigating exposures. After hour care provided at other facilities will be reported to FROMS by the employee with the transfer of records from that facility/provider to FROMS for management of the employee exposure and appropriate follow up over time.

This will constitute a change in practice, as the data that we have maintained on exposures has only been reported in a quarterly period to FROMS from the Occupational Medical Services (OMS) vendor using FROMS records. Having access to this data on a monthly timeframe from our clinic will allow MCFRS to compare our rates to other agencies. We in the past have used some informal tools to look at identifying trends and needs for education beyond stressing standard precautions against infection based on identified health trends and public health warnings, but no in-depth study of the number and types of exposures has been used before to generate a hazard assessment for our providers.

MCFRS will adhere to the applicable CDC and Maryland Department of Health Guidelines for the evaluation and treatment of exposures to pathogens or other hazardous materials in the evaluation of our members. Members will use the FROMS clinic as the resource for the long-term management of the exposure and testing to ensure the proper processes and protocols are performed for the suspected agent of exposure.

References

[DFRS Policy 807-Communicable Disease and Hazardous Materials exposure](#)

[MCFRS Blood/Body Fluids/Airborne Exposure Checklist](#)

[2021 NFPA FD Experience Survey](#) (see Part IV beginning on page 10)

11A.11 The agency has established procedures to ensure effective and qualified deployment of an Incident Safety Officer to all risk events. (Capt Henry)

Description

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue has a designated Safety Officer assigned each day. There is also a back-up safety officer working Monday – Friday from 7am – 5pm. The five Battalion Chiefs assigned to operations can also function as safety officers. The Battalion Chiefs are strategically stationed throughout the county for a quick response and to ensure scene stability and the safety of all people on the scene. Using the Telestaff program, the MCFRS scheduler can ensure that a certified safety officer is assigned each day.

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue has an on-scene Incident Commander to assess the actions of the Safety Officer. The Assistant Chief in charge of the safety section has the responsibility of doing individual performance planning and conducting assessments on each of the four Safety Officers each year.

Appraisal

The current deployment and staffing plan of MCFRS Safety Officers has proven to be adequate to ensure that an Incident Safety Officer is present at all risk events. With the Safety Officer being located centrally in the county and adjacent to many interstates that can go in all directions, they can efficiently get to all major events. In the circumstance that there is more than one high-risk event, the MCFRS battalion chiefs can assign one another as the Incident Scene Safety Officer.

Plan

MCFRS has no plans to change its current staffing and deployment model for Safety Officers.

References

[IPPA for Captain](#)

[Requirements for Safety Officer by Function](#)

[Kronos Telestaff screenshot](#) (actual application behind the firewall)

11A.12 The agency establishes and consistently follows procedures for maintaining accountability of all personnel operating at all risk events. (Capt Henry)

Description

MCFRS takes accountability as one of the most important aspects of safety for our personnel. There are several different overlapping tools and processes that assist MCFRS in maintaining accountability for all personnel. These are defined in Fire Chief's General Order 19-11.

Kronos Telestaff (or PIMS, for the LFRDs), is a scheduling software that ensures that each station is staffed with the required levels of staffing and is used to assign riding positions for each staff member. The second process is the MCFRS battalion line-up, which is created from the personnel assigned in Telestaff. There is a line-up board at each station, as well as a personnel line-up conducted by the station officer per MCFRS Policy and Procedure 15-01 – Station Management, in which riding positions are reviewed for all personnel. All our assigned riding positions are filled daily. The employee assigned to each position is accurately documented and that documentation is circulated daily to all personnel in operations. If riding assignments change during the shift, the database is updated.

The Incident Response Policy, Section 6 states that all personnel are responsible for *being accountable to their unit officer at all times and ensuring that their unit officer is aware of both their location and their actions*; similarly, unit officers are responsible for *knowing the location and action of all crew members at all times*. Likewise, Appendix B of the IRP defines the “effective command” of the incident commander must include accountability, and that is further described in terms of the Location-Conditions-Actions-Needs (LCAN) format and personnel accountability report (PAR) checks.

Appraisal

The current process has worked well during this rating period. MCFRS schedulers used the Kronos Telestaff program, which is a concrete and accurate database that maintains accountability of our MCFRS staffing. Additionally, station officers are required to

document riding assignments in the MCFRS Battalion Line-up, as well as accurately post riding assignments at the beginning of each shift. This process is supervised and enforced daily by the Battalion Chiefs and the Battalion Line-up is provided to all operational personnel for accountability and situational awareness.

Plan

MCFRS will continue the current staffing and accountability plan. Additionally, MCFRS will continue to track crew accountability, as well as conduct regular PAR checks per the Incident Command policy to ensure that all personnel are accounted for during all risk events.

References

[Fire Chief's General Order 19-11](#)

[Kronos Telestaff screenshot](#) (actual application behind the firewall)

[Battalion Line-up screenshots](#) (actual application behind the firewall)

[Fire-App screenshots](#) (actual application behind the firewall)

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure #15-01 – Station Management](#)

[MCFRS Incident Response Policy and Appendices](#)

11B: Wellness/Fitness Programs (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton/Dr. Lee)

The agency has a wellness/fitness program for personnel. The agency specifies and communicates the provisions if employees/members do not comply with the wellness/fitness program.

Summary:

The MCFRS FROMS, as part of the preemployment screening conducts cardiac stress testing to the NFPA 1582 Standard, and during basic recruit training provides for physical fitness instruction in basic exercise. The MCFRS yearly physical examination criterion are based on the ability to perform the essential job duties in the NFPA 1582 Standard, as well. Both the MCFRS leadership and the Local IAFF 1664 have agreed to the importance to this matter, and the wellness issue is addressed in the [collective bargaining agreement](#) with Montgomery County Career Firefighters (Section 35.3).

MCFRS maintains a well-equipped physical fitness space with cardiovascular and weight/resistance equipment for the use of our membership while in the worksites. Part of the daily routine is devoted to the physical fitness time for the members to participate in individual exercise. The MCFRS also has a group of trained and certified Peer Physical Fitness Counselors in the Operational workforce who can be contacted by members to assist in developing individual exercise plans to meet their goals.

MCFRS through FROMS clinic provides infection control and surveillance in concert with the area community health agencies in Montgomery County, area hospitals, and health care facilities. MCFRS also maintains a robust staff of psychological support services for our members using peer support and professional licensed counselors and mental health professional through the Department and through the County Government.

Performance Indicators:

CC 11B.1 The agency provides for initial, regular, and rehabilitative medical, and fitness evaluations. (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

Candidates are initially given a preemployment physical meeting the standards of the NFPA 1582 Standard (2013 edition) as adopted by MCFRS, including a screening of blood, urine, physical exam, and an exercise stress test to 12 METS. During the process, the candidate is monitored by medical personnel and the testing is supervised by an onsite physician. During recruit training, the candidate participates in and is taught exercise fundamentals of calisthenics and body weight resistance exercises, job specific and task related exercises, and cardiovascular fitness to meet the physical fitness standards of NFPA 1582 under the supervision of certified peer fitness counselors.

Annually, the members are brought into FROMS for a physical examination under the supervision of a licensed and accredited physician and perform an exercise stress test to the 12 METS for candidates and 10.5 METS for incumbent personnel while under ECG monitoring by a licensed healthcare provider. The members' blood and urine are tested, and cancer screening and the elevated risks of cancer in firefighters are discussed. Members demonstrate joint flexibility and range of motion during the exam with the physician.

As a part of the yearly physical, all members (career and volunteer) receive a Cardiac Monitored Exercise Stress Test to measure their individual ability to meet the MET standard based on their classification as a career and Volunteer Firefighters, or Volunteer EMS only based on the needs developed by the basic job duties of NFPA1582. Passing this evaluation is required to be able to continue to ride MCFRS apparatus. Personnel who do not complete the exercise stress test are placed on provisional status and removed from riding fire and rescue apparatus as staffing. Any new or incumbent personnel who do not meet the standard are not allowed to ride and are offered diet and exercise counseling to practice for the exam before coming back to repeat the exam.

Appraisal

As a part of the final recruit testing, all MCFRS Career Recruits must pass a physical fitness evaluation to complete their probationary period to become full county employees. During this appraisal period, all career employees who have successfully completed their promotional period have completed the test based on the standards for physical fitness from NFPA 1582, 2013 edition. All volunteer candidates are required to pass the Exercise Stress Test (EST) prior to enrolling in any training classes. All members are required to complete the EST as a part of the yearly physical, with anyone who cannot is removed from riding status and counseled on physical fitness. Currently, the primary function of the peer fitness training staff has been to assist and develop the recruit and volunteer training classes in developing strength and fitness for completion of firefighting school.

Plan

In the coming year, MCFRS will hold additional classes to certify more peer fitness counselors, and members who do not meet the fitness ratings will be assigned a nonpunitive referral to work with a fitness trainer on duty to develop and implement a restorative exercise regime to bring their level of physical fitness back to the level that is acceptable under the NFPA 1582 Standards adopted by MCFRS. The additional fitness trainers will be needed to address the change in standards from the current 10.5 METs to the new 12 METs standard for incumbent personnel.

FROMS will serve as a resource gateway for members, providing information through our staff diet and exercise specialist to members on healthy lifestyles, an additional source of contact for fitness resources, and as a source for collecting information from programs in the area offering services in health and wellness to firefighters. While MCFRS will not endorse any of these programs, we will evaluate those that ask and if they are sound, will allow them to place advertising materials in our worksites to increase the choices for our members to seek education and guidance in the personal health and fitness field.

The Peer Fitness Program will also be tasked with working with the video crew of MCFRS in developing short video messages for the PSTA YouTube channel about proper mechanics

of stretching, and the benefits of low impact exercises. The videos will also serve as a gateway to contact the Peer Fitness program for members through an email account to request follow up or to make an appointment for an evaluation of strength and flexibility and adding exercises or motions to improve their general fitness for duty.

The department will continue to maintain, repair, replace, and add to the variety of equipment in all worksites to provide options for the members to conduct strength and flexibility training to maintain fitness and flexibility/mobility key to injury prevention in the course of their duties. The facilities will be open to all members of the MCFRS and time in the schedule for every shift will be set aside for physical fitness training.

References

[NFPA 1582 Standard](#) (2013 edition) - Copyright protected and available on-site

[Fire Chief General Order 05-15 Annual Physicals for Volunteer Members](#)

[MCFRS Policy & Procedure 01-02 Medical Standards for Members and Candidates](#)

11B.2 The agency provides personnel with access to fitness facilities and equipment. (AC
Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

The MCFRS worksites are currently equipped with physical fitness equipment to optimize physical performance and increase overall health and wellness. MCFRS has created a new electronic physical fitness request form that is used to expedite the purchasing, requesting, and the repairing of broken fitness physical equipment at MCFRS work sites. In addition, MCFRS maintains a contract with a third-party fitness equipment contractor to handle all preventive maintenance and repairs for MCFRS fitness equipment. MCFRS, in collaboration with IAFF Local 1664, also provided the necessary funding to the new MCFRS Public Safety Training Academy for state-of-the-art equipment. Presently, one MCFRS employee is assigned to inventory, purchase, repair, and sell old fitness equipment.

In every fire and rescue worksite, the department has equipped a workout/gym with cardiovascular equipment such as treadmills, rowing machines, and elliptical machines. The facilities also are provided with free weights and dumbbells for strength training, elastic bands for resistance training, as well as lateral pull down/combination machines for upper body strength workouts. Two hours of each shift is allotted for the members to exercise to maintain their fitness, and employees are free to contact the peer fitness trainers in their battalions for help in designing customized work out plans for them and their needs.

Appraisal

MCFRS has evaluated the number of personnel at each worksite and provided equipment in sufficient quantity and quality to serve the needs of the members. We have built and staffed several new fire stations in the past 5 years, and the FROMS and Peer Fitness Coordinator have worked with the design and architects to plan out and install superior workout spaces in these facilities with new state of the art equipment. The section has also maintained standing repair and maintenance contracts which included yearly service visits for all mechanical workout equipment, replaced all old iron weights with rubberized coated

weights, and established a reporting system for any defects or issues with the equipment to ensure timely repairs at all 47 worksites.

Plan

The department will continue to cycle through replacements of equipment and buying heavy duty commercial use exercise machines with extended service warranties. We will continue our contract with the maintenance provider for yearly services to the entire inventory, as well as repairs as needed to any machines. The video productions, along with visits from peer fitness counselors on the proper uses of the equipment and mechanics of exercise will be reinforced at the worksite level. The new stations will continue to have custom areas designed for exercise and fitness.

We will also continue to work with the station commanders to service and maintain equipment, and to monitor the use of the different equipment to ensure that we have not only a variety but enough of the demanded equipment for the member's use. We will continue to; monitor service hours of machines, poll members, and fitness trainers on what equipment they would like to see added for additional value in the program and replace older equipment on schedule to ensure functional equipment.

Finally, any equipment that needs to be serviced will be requested by the on-site supervisor through the station commander to minimize the time until an authorized service technician is able to get to the site for repairs. FROMS will track the time that any equipment is placed out of service, making arrangements for loaner equipment, if available, and analyzing the reasons for the out-of-service condition for future purchase or maintenance decisions.

References

[NFPA 1582 Standard](#) (2013 edition) - Copywrite protected and available on-site

[Information Bulletin 14-10 Facilities & Fitness Equipment Defect Reporting](#)

<https://apps.montgomerycountymd.gov/FacilityDefectReporting/>

[Email Announcing Crackyl Fitness Industry Magazine Featuring MCFRS FF Eric Campbell Who Also a Peer Fitness Trainer and Manages Fitness Equipment Repair](#)

[Social media example: Showing MCFRS commitment to providing exercise equipment](#)

[Social media example: MCFRS Training Academy exercise equipment/nutrition pics](#)

11B.3 The agency makes available wellness/fitness training to all employees/members. (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

The department provides aerobic machines, weights, and resistance physical fitness equipment to all worksites. Additionally, the County Government allows members free access to Montgomery County Recreational Facilities including indoor swimming facilities for exercise and Community centers that have exercise classes and groups. Peer Fitness counselors are available to any member who requests help in developing exercise plans or for counseling in the mechanics of exercise.

Additionally, Policy and Procedure 15-01, which outlines fire station management for volunteer and career firefighters, articulates daily on-duty responsibilities of station personnel to assure, "... the operational readiness of its personnel, facilities, records, and apparatus, while ensuring a safe and healthy work environment." One of this policy objectives that must be implemented supports physical fitness training, which supports maintaining the operational readiness of our personnel.

Appraisal

In the past, the department has not done an effective job in measuring the amount of physical fitness training that occurs in the worksites other than the yearly physical examinations. During the examinations, the members must meet the Exercise Stress Test Metabolic Equivalent (EST METs) goal and during the physical exam, demonstrate joint and muscular flexibility in the range of acceptability.

MCFRS, through FROMS and the Safety Office, has provided training and training materials on the dangers of excessive weight and obesity, health hazards from cardiovascular and other diseases, as well as the increased risks of cancers in firefighters and EMTs. Materials have been sent to the stations on a bi-monthly schedule on different health and wellness topics. The training also encompasses tactics and techniques for the

lifting and moving of patients, which is one of our highest causes of on-the-job injuries, and the importance of joint and muscle flexibility to minimize the risks of injury.

The physical fitness program at the station level has individual driven, and the strongest motivator has been peer support among the shifts to participate. Members have been free to develop their own routines and goals based on their personal needs but have not gotten specific departmental-sanctioned exercise programs or routines. There has been no systematic appraisal of the progression of their exercise program progress.

Plan

In the coming year, the MCFRS will launch an initiative to educate the membership on the essential functions of the job, and the role of fitness in the readiness to perform the job. MCFRS, through the FROMS, the Peer Fitness Program, and the Video Production unit at the MCPSTA, will develop and post exercise videos of routines and exercises that members can do in the stations and with only bodyweight/resistance to develop and enhance flexibility and strength. Peer fitness personnel will make rounds through stations and worksites to meet with members, get them in the gyms, and assist them in developing techniques and routines to meet fitness goals.

During the coming year, members identified as not able to meet higher levels of fitness will be counselled on the need to improve and then paired with a peer fitness trainer for personal assistance. Using the yearly physical for screening, fitness recommendations for improvement will be added to the employee and the standard will be discussed.

FROMS will evaluate community resources and businesses in the health and wellness/exercise business that wish to post advertisements in our worksites offering discounted programs to members for additional assistance.

References

[MCFRS Fitness YouTube website](#)

[MCFRS Policy & Procedure 15-01](#)

[Social media example: Members working out while on duty 1](#)

[Social medial example: Members working out while on duty 2](#)

[Social media example: Showing MCFRS commitment to providing exercise equipment](#)

[Social media example: MCFRS nutritionist “Train like a Champion”](#)

11B.4 The agency provides an employee/member assistance program with timely access to critical incident stress debriefing, peer support and counseling, and other behavioral health resources. (Dr. Lee)

Description

MCFRS has a Mental Wellness Team, which currently consists of a Staff Psychologist and a Staff Therapist. MCFRS also has the Peer Support – Critical Incident Stress Management (PS-CISM) team, which the Staff Psychologist provides clinical oversight for. The Staff Psychologist receives notifications for various critical incidents and provides that information to the PS-CISM shift leader to delegate follow-up as soon as possible. The Mental Wellness team is trained to assist both members and their immediate family members. Further, the Mental Wellness team updates their website so that various resources and contact information is easily accessible from the MCFRS Quicklinks page. These resources include a request form for services, information on the PS-CISM team, articles, books, videos, and podcasts about a wide range of mental health or substance use issues, audio guided meditations, and meetings or workshops that they can attend for various issues they may be dealing with.

Additionally, MCFRS members have access to the PS-CISM team, who are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The PS-CISM team consists of a team leader as well as a shift leader for A, B, C, and Day shifts, the Volunteers, and at the Emergency Communications Center (ECC). MCFRS members also have access to the Montgomery County Crisis Center and the Employee Assistance Program (EAP), which are agencies independent of MCFRS.

Appraisal

The long-term, former Staff Psychologist retired and was unable to meet the current Staff Psychologist to pass on any procedures or other data he had gathered during his tenure with MCFRS.

Since April 2021, the Mental Wellness team implemented an online services request form, which eased the access to mental health services. Between April 2021 and October 2022, there have been 203 individuals who have requested mental health services using the services request form. This number does not account for crises that have occurred or when individuals email the Mental Wellness team individually asking for assistance finding resources for themselves or their families. The Mental Wellness Team has responded within one business day of all service requests received. The Mental Wellness Team met monthly to address the known mental health needs of MCFRS. Additionally, the Mental Wellness Quicklinks page has been viewed over 5,000 times since its creation in March 2021.

There was no data available on the frequency of the activations of the Peer Support – Critical Incident Stress Management (PS-CISM) Team. The PS-CISM team has undergone multiple leadership transitions in the last two years. The team has changed the leadership structure from one uniformed employee and the Staff Psychologist to five uniformed employees and the Staff Psychologist. The five uniformed employees are called Shift Leaders so that there is one person available in a management capacity on every shift and coverage is available 24 hours a day. The PS-CISM team has also appointed two team members to find and share various resources and training opportunities for the team. An online form was created for members to complete after they were activated or engaged with a crew.

Plan

The Mental Wellness Team will increase the number of staff available to respond to mental health service requests. The team will also continue to update the Mental Wellness Quicklinks webpage as new resources are discovered or made available. The PS-CISM team leaders will meet with the Staff Psychologist on a quarterly basis, and then meet with the other team members to discuss updates and training opportunities. The team members will complete the Post Activation form to assist in collecting data of frequency of the utilization of the PS-CISM Team. The PS-CISM team is working to improve communication with MCFRS members by taking a proactive approach and contacting members following a critical incident, as opposed to waiting for someone to reach out to the team requesting a

critical stress debrief. The PS-CISM team is also undergoing some changes to improve transparency, communication, and opportunities for trainings.

References

[MCFRS Mental Health Resources Webpage](#)

[Mental Wellness webpage analytics screenshot](#)

[Critical Incident Stress Management \(PS-CISM\) Team Org Chart](#)

[Mental Health Team meeting calendar invites examples](#)

11B.5 The agency provides for cancer and behavioral health screenings and a cardiac assessment. (AC Carpenter/BC Stanton)

Description

During the yearly physical examination, members have blood work and stool screening for cancer. The Saris Colo-Rectal Examination and Education Needs program (SCREEN) is a joint MCFRS and IAFF project designed to monitor the membership for colorectal cancer by checking for the presence of blood in the stool. Additionally, educational materials stress the need for firefighters, who are at high risk, to have colorectal exams in coordination with their private doctors.

The MCFRS has a staff psychologist and a licensed social worker who oversee the behavioral health component of the FROMS clinic, as advisors to the Peer Counselors and Critical Stress Incident Management Team and doing direct patient care for members in need. Additionally, the FROMS contract physician group has an on-call psychological specialty provider. MCFRS also has access through Montgomery County Government to the Montgomery County Crisis Center and the Montgomery County Employee Assistance program which offer counseling and emergent psychological resources.

As mentioned in the above standards, each member, as a part of their yearly physical exam receives a exercise stress test with cardiac and blood pressure monitoring, as well as a physical assessment including being asked about possible cardiac issues or symptoms. Periodic chest x-rays assess for cardiomegaly and great vessel distensions.

Appraisal

Historically, FROMS has not maintained statistics on the number of personnel whose health issues and types of issues have been identified in the clinic due to patient confidentiality. Over the last several years, the FROMS physicians have identified and referred many patients for follow up with their private physician based on exam results for conditions relating to hypertension, cardiac dysrhythmias, and potential positive precancer test findings.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to provide education and awareness training for its members in the dangers of occupational exposures to the products of combustion that can cause cancer and cardiovascular disease, and the psychological and physical stressors that contribute to cardiovascular disease and mental health issues. Working with our physician group and the resources of the IAFF and National Volunteer Fire Council we will continue to disseminate information and education on mental and physical health conditions and the increased risk posed to the fire service providers.

MCFRS will continue to evaluate new technologies and approaches to the detection of cancers, such as the Galleria Blood Test System, to proactively identify more diseases early to get members treated in the early stages. Additionally, we will continue to provide members with Stool Guaiac test kits and push for more stringent field decontamination procedures to reduce exposures.

We will explore additional avenues of programs and support for mental health in concert with the IAFF and local mental health providers, and local businesses that offer physical fitness training and resources.

References

[Human Resources Division's Health and Wellness Section Organizational Chart](#)

[Galleria Blood Test System website](#)

[Stool Guaiac test information webpage](#)

[MCFRS Fire and Rescue Occupational Medical Services Website](#)

[Sarris Colorectal Examination and Education Needs Program \(bottom of webpage\)](#)

Also see references listed under Performance Indicator 11B.4

CC 11B.6 A formal and documented appraisal is conducted, at least annually, to determine the effectiveness of the wellness/fitness programs and its impact on meeting the agency's goals and objectives. (D/C Kinsley)

Description

The Wellness and Fitness program will formalize the appraisal process for the entire program. FROMS has been evaluated by the department yearly as a part of the MCFRS for performance metrics based in the NFPA1582 standard and the numbers of career and volunteer physicals completed. The goal is to evaluate every member of the service every year, and reports are run monthly for both career, volunteer, and preplacement/pre-entrance exams. All members are certified to the NFPA1582 fitness standard and receive a fit test for SCBA/PPE before being allowed to begin any fire department training classes.

All Physicians are appropriately licensed and certified in the State of Maryland to provide their level of medical care. All other medical staff are appropriately licensed/certified in their disciplines to operate in the state. All medical equipment and testing devices are certified and tested to the standards for the device by the MCG OMS. The vendors used for testing laboratory are also certified to operate in the state.

Appraisal

This was the first accreditation cycle that included the core competency for a formal and documented appraisal of the wellness/fitness program areas. The MCFRS template from other program areas was used for this calendar year 2022 reporting period.

Plan

MCFRS will continue a formal and documented annual appraisal of the wellness/fitness programs, with an emphasis on developing goals and objectives, better data collection and analysis, and improved documentation on future annual appraisals.

References

[CY22 Annual Appraisal](#)

Category 9: Essential Resources

Essential resources are defined as those mandatory services or systems required for the agency's operational programs to function. They should be given the same value of importance as a primary program. Appropriate adjustments may be necessary in the self-analysis to adapt the typical components listed below to the local situation. For example, when reviewing a water supply system, the evaluation may not be limited to conventional resources, such as water lines and fire hydrants, but may include alternative resources, such as tankers (tenders), ponds, streams, lakes, cisterns, etc.

Criterion 9A: Water Supply (D/C Bailey)

The water supply resources are reliable and capable of distributing adequate volumes of water and pressures to all areas of agency responsibility. All areas meet fire flow requirements in accordance with applicable fire flow criteria. An agency seeking prima facie for this criterion should refer to the Commission on Fire Accreditation International Interpretation Guide for the qualifying language.

Summary:

Montgomery County, Maryland is served by three water supply purveyors, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), the City of Rockville Public Works, and the Town of Poolesville Public Works. The largest provider of water is WSSC. All three public water supply systems manage over 23,000 fire hydrants. The reliability of the water supply system is confirmed within the release of the 2022 ISO FPSA Public Protection Classification report with the overall credit for water supply listed as 35.77 out of 40 points or 89% of the total credits available.

The MCFRS pumper fleet consists of more than 40 pumpers, each capable of pumping more than 2,000 gpm from hydrant sources and more than 1,500 gpm from static water supply sources. The use of large diameter hose as supply hose is the standard across the entire frontline and reserve pumper fleet; thus, allowing large volumes of water to be pumped over long distances.

MCFRS has created a process for non-hydranted water supply operations, which includes a process definition, the assignation of a process owner, a method for identifying “working incidents” in non-hydranted areas, and a mechanism for monitoring process delivery.

Minimum fire flow requirements for new development in Montgomery County are established and mandated through both State and County Code.

Performance Indicators:

CC 9A.1 The agency establishes minimum fire flow requirements for new development in accordance with nationally and/or internationally recognized standards and includes this information in the fire risk evaluation and pre-incident planning process.

Description

The Montgomery County Fire Marshal and the Department of Permitting Services (DPS) Fire Prevention and Code Compliance Division are responsible for enforcing the fire and life safety code within the County. Minimum fire flow requirements for new development in Montgomery County are established and mandated through both State and County Code. The Maryland State Fire Prevention Code, which adopts NFPA 1 Fire Code (2018 edition), and includes minimum fire flow requirements, has been adopted in Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22, Fire Safety.

The local County Code applicable to fire prevention is reviewed triennially, along with the Maryland State Fire Prevention Code. Updates to the State Code are then adopted by Montgomery County, also on a triennial basis. The County Fire Marshal serves as a subject matter expert at the State level during the State's review and adoption on fire and life safety codes adoptions and recommended code changes. A similar process occurs in the County. The County Fire Marshal recommends local amendments to be considered by the Director of Permitting Services, the County Council, and County Executive.

MCFRS has incorporated building stock with fire protection systems into its fire risk assessment. The agency's water supply model is based on fire risk and preplanning processes and has been validated by local testing with its equipment, water supply resources, and travel times.

Appraisal

Montgomery County's minimum fire flow requirements are in line with the State's and National Fire Protection Association's Standard 1.

Plan

The Montgomery County Fire Marshal will continue to remain engaged with proposed changes to national and international fire and life safety codes. Proposed updates to codes affecting fire flow will be analyzed for applicability and the Fire Marshal will continue to educate stakeholders and make effective recommendations to the executive leadership regarding code changes.

MCFRS will continue to liaison with the Department of Permitting Services Fire Code Compliance Section to address mutual life safety objectives applicable to fire flow.

References

[Water Supply Study Appendix B](#)

[State of Maryland Fire Prevention Code, Revised January 1, 2016](#)

[Montgomery County Council Resolution 18-604: Approval of Executive Regulation 8-16](#)

[Requirements For the Submittal of Combined NFPA 13, NFPA 14 and NFPA 20 Fire Protection Systems \(ePlans\)](#)

Section 18.4 of NFPA 1 (2015) Fire Flow Requirements for Buildings (copyright protected and available during site visit at the DPS Fire Code Compliance Office)

CC 9A.2 An adequate and reliable water supply is available for firefighting purposes for identified risks. The identified water supply sources are adequate in volume and pressure, based on nationally and/or internationally recognized standards, to control and extinguish fires.

Description

Montgomery County is served by three public water systems: Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission (WSSC), the City of Rockville, and the Town of Poolesville. The three systems support fire suppression through more than 23,000 fire hydrants.

In terms of fire protection, all three systems generally provide sufficient water volume and pressure to support fire suppression efforts regardless of location or time of day. This assessment is based upon MCFRS' no known incidence of insufficient, municipal system volume or pressure; and no serious deficiencies noted in ISO's 2022 PPC Summary Report for Montgomery County FPSA (hydranted area). When indicated by water main issues, MCFRS will temporarily either relocate a tanker to a problem area and/or add an additional engine to structure fire assignments.

Appraisal

According to ISO's 2021 PPC Summary Report for Montgomery County FPSA, MCFRS received a score of 29.46 out of a possible 30.00 points on Item 616 – Credit for Supply System. The ISO PPC evaluation process is an in-depth evaluation process that uses recognized American Water Works Association (AWWA) and NFPA standards to assess a community's water supply for fire protection. With a score of 29.46 (98.2%) in the water supply system category, the public water supply systems that serve Montgomery County achieved a top-rated performance score in the ISO evaluation process – a score relative to a Class 1 PPC rating.

Plan

MCFRS' liaison to the three public water systems will continue to work to ensure that communications with system authorities remains strong so that the timely notification of supply issues occurs. The MCFRS Water Supply Officer will work to standardize response

plan adjustments for those times when water system supplies are impacted by outages or pressure reduction.

References

[2022 ISO PPC Montgomery County FPSA Summary Report](#)

[Montgomery County Comprehensive Water Supply and Sewerage Systems Plan](#)

9A.3 The agency has a contact list on file and maintains regular contact with the managers of public and private water systems to stay informed about available water supplies.

Description

Regular contact is maintained with the three public water system providers in the County. An MCFRS Battalion Chief is assigned as a liaison to all three systems. Further, when WSSC hydrant outages are captured, plotted on a map, and clusters of out of service hydrants are noted, command staff are alerted by email. The email contains a map with the outage cluster.

WSSC also contacts MCFRS to pre-plan maintenance/inspection outages on major distribution links. Water main breaks are typically reported to the communications center.

Appraisal

MCFRS is enjoying the benefits of an improving relationship with the three major water suppliers. While there remain some areas for improvement in understanding, especially in the Town of Poolesville, the situation is sustainable.

Plan

MCFRS plans to maintain regular productive relationship with the water service providers.

References

[2021 -04-13 WSSC Fire Department Coordination Committee Meeting Minutes](#)

[2022-10-07 Example of OOS Hydrant Cluster Automatic Email Alert](#)

[Email String with Dept of Permitting Services Fire Code Compliance Leadership](#)

- 9A.4 The agency maintains copies of current water supply sources and annually reviews fire hydrant maps for its service area to ensure they are accurate.

Description

MCFRS uses three tiers of mapping products: paper, open source electronic, and GIS-based products.

Paper maps are generated and validated at the fire station level. When updates are made, affected stations are notified and copies are made available in pdf form on the MCFRS intranet and electronically in pdf form on the mobile data computers. Battalion Chief vehicles also carry a proprietary WSSC Water supply paper map book that contains main sizes, control points, and other data.

Open-source electronic maps are generated using commercially available tools combined with GIS data. These maps are validated on deployment and the map owners update the maps as things change. These maps tend to focus on highly specialized mission sets, like Potomac River Rescue access points, interstate water supply locations, and rural water supply locations.

The core hydrant data found in the CAD is shared directly with MCFRS by the water providers as a GIS file.

Appraisal

The MCFRS system for developing situational awareness with regards to water supply options remains effective. Personnel have a variety of options at their fingertips and tend to engage where they feel most comfortable, paper or electronically.

There continues to be significant variation in mapping technique at the local level; however, the availability of CAD mapping and commercial products reduces the impact of those variations.

Plan

Station personnel will continue to generate and revise the local response maps making sure to provide updates to the technical support staff responsible for the CAD mapping system. Station personnel will continue to review all static water supply source data for accuracy and currency.

References

[Example of Typical MCFRS Map Book with Hydrants Listed](#)

[Example of MCFRS Mobile Data Computer in Apparatus Map Layer with Hydrants](#)

9A.5 Fire hydrant adequacy and placement are based on nationally and/or Internationally recognized standards and reflect the hazards of the response area.

Description

The placement and flow adequacy of fire hydrants in Montgomery County is addressed by Chapter 22 of the Montgomery County Code. All fire hydrant placement over the last 25 years has been driven by Montgomery County.

Appraisal

According to ISO's 2021 PPC Summary Report for Montgomery County FPSA (hydranted area), MCFRS received a score of 29.46 out of a possible 30.00 points on Item 616 – Credit for Supply System. MCFRS received a score of 3.00 out of a possible 3.00 points on Item 621 – Credit for Hydrants. MCFRS received a score of 3.5 out of 7.0 points for Item 630 – Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing.

It is clear that the public water systems supplying water to Montgomery County provide a robust service in terms of water for fire protection and consumption. All three water systems have a strong infrastructure and supply. The area of deficiency most noted in the ISO 2021 PPC summary report relating to water supply was fire hydrant inspection and flow testing. The public water system authorities received only 50% of the possible points in this evaluation category. In most cases, the leading factor affecting fire hydrant inspection and flow testing is lack of sufficient resources (water system personnel) to complete the work on the 23,000 fire hydrants in compliance with ISO and NFPA requirement

Plan

The MCFRS liaison to DPS will ensure code compliance issues related to the placement and flow adequacy of both public and private fire hydrants are addressed. MCFRS will continue to liaison with the public water system authorities to ensure that fire hydrant inspection and flow testing occurs in a manner such that the ISO scores on Items 616, 621, and 630 of the PPC are at least maintained at their current level or improved.

References

[2021 ISO PPC Montgomery County FPSA Summary Report](#)

[Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22, Section 22-29](#)

- 9A.6 Public fire hydrants are inspected, tested, maintained, visible and accessible in accordance with nationally and/or internationally recognized standards. The agency's fire protection-related processes are evaluated, at least annually, to ensure adequate and readily available public or private water.

Description

MCFRS has never been directly involved in the flow testing of fire hydrants in any of the three public water systems serving the County. All inspection and flow testing activities on the 23,000+ fire hydrants maintained by the three public water systems are scheduled and completed by those authorities. All inspection and flow testing activities on private fire hydrants in Montgomery County are scheduled and completed by the property owners within the County Code.

MCFRS' knowledge of individual water system adequacy is based on historical experience and on the findings of ISO's assessment of the water system. Since the last accreditation review process, MCFRS knows of no incident involving water supply volume or pressure matters in the hydranted response areas.

In addition, the ISO 2021 Public Protection Classification (PPC) Summary Report for Montgomery County FPSA noted no serious deficiencies in the assessment of the three municipal water supply systems serving the County.

Appraisal

According to ISO's 2021 PPC Summary Report for Montgomery County FPSA (hydranted area), MCFRS received a score of 28.81 out of a possible 30.00 points on Item 616 –Credit for Supply System. MCFRS received a score of 3.00 out of a possible 3.00 points on Item 621 –Credit for Hydrants. MCFRS received a score of 3.96 out of 7.0 points for Item 630 – Credit for Inspection and Flow Testing. The public water systems supplying water to Montgomery County have provided a robust service in terms of water for fire protection and consumption during this rating period. All three water systems have a strong infrastructure and supply. The area of deficiency most noted in the ISO 2021 PPC summary

report relating to water supply was fire hydrant inspection and flow testing. The public water system authorities received 57% of the possible points in this evaluation category. In most cases, the leading factor which has affected fire hydrant inspection and flow testing is lack of sufficient resources (water system personnel) to complete the work on the 23,000 fire hydrants in compliance with ISO and NFPA requirements

Plan

MCFRS will continue to liaison with the public water system authorities to ensure that fire hydrant inspection, testing, and maintenance occurs in a manner such that the ISO scores on Items 616, 621, and 630 of the PPC are at least maintained at their current level or improved. In addition, MCFRS' review of system inspection, testing, and maintenance records will occur on an annual basis; not just when an ISO survey is underway. The review of records will be completed by the Water Supply Officer, with findings reported to the Fire Chief.

References

[2022 ISO PPC Montgomery County FPSA Summary Report](#) (see PDF page 11 for scoring chart)

[Montgomery County Code, Chapter 22, Section 22-29](#)

- 9A.7 The agency identifies, plans and trains for the possibility of a water supply system failure, including fire hydrants with insufficient capacity and areas where fire hydrants are unavailable or inaccessible.

Description

Personnel train regularly at the station and battalion level on water supply evolutions. There is also training for command officers on water supply operations, which includes a video completed when the Incident Response Policy (IRP) Appendix F, Water Supply Operations, was adopted. In addition, a series of training videos have been created and dedicated to policy and operational explanations/expectations about rural water supply, which help support the doctrine and direction of Appendix F that will be employed in non-hydrant areas and should a water supply system failure occur in hydranted areas.

MCFRS provides station officers and Battalion Chiefs with a wide range of training material for water supply operations. Moreover, the driver's training process for engines, tankers, and brush trucks each require hours of training at drafting, dump tank operations, attack tanker operations, and relay operations. Additionally, the training academy employs practical application guide sheets to assure driver/operator candidates meet or exceed minimum performance competencies secondary to these types of apparatus.

Appraisal

MCFRS has provided station officers and Battalion Chiefs with a wide range of training material for water supply operations. Moreover, the driver's training process for engines, tankers, and brush trucks has required hours of training at drafting, dump tank operations, attack tanker operations, and relay operations and has been deemed effective through after-action reviews of significant events.

Plan

MCFRS plans to continue using the driver's training process as the primary mechanism for ensuring continuity of process with regards to water supply operations. We will also continue to augment that with multi-station and Battalion level training. In the coming years,

it will be appropriate to dedicate another in-service training cycle to water supply operations to capture people who have either not done it before or have not done it in a long time. After-action reviews and reporting will continue as mandated by IRP Appendix T, so we can continue to focus on facts, lessons available for learning, and recommendations for future improvement.

References

[Incident Response Policy Appendix F: Water Supply Operations](#)

[MCFRS In-service Training Videos: Rural Water Supply Series](#)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix F: Water Supply Operations](#)

[MCFRS Incident Response Policy Training Website: Water Supply](#)

[MCFRS Water Supply Battalion Training Website](#)

[MCFRS Practical Application Guide Sheet: 1st Due Tanker](#)

[MCFRS Practical Application Guide Sheet: 2nd Due Tanker/Dump Site Ops](#)

[Tanker Training Excerpts Secondary to IRP Appendix F: Water Supply](#)

[Example of After-Action Review from Rural Water Supply House Fire](#)

[Incident Response Policy Appendix T: After Action Reporting](#)

9A.8 The agency has operational procedures in place outlining the available water supply and reviews those procedures as part of their documented review policy.

Description

MCFRS fire suppression operations treat water as a resource. Our operations are predicated on adjusting suppression tactics with resource limitations in mind. Appendix F "Water Supply Operations" of MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01, "Incident Response Policy (2017)" is the plan for water supply operations.

Appendix F provides doctrine and direction regarding the process by which water supply operations are initiated and expanded upon to support emergency response operations.

Appraisal

MCFRS has yet to identify a single incident where the water supply plan described in policy was not able to meet the operational goals established in policy.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to use “attack tanker operations” until either a more effective method is developed, or infrastructure changes force the issue.

References

[Appendix F "Water Supply Operations" of MCFRS Policy and Procedure 24-01](#)

Criterion 9B: Communication Systems (A/C Baltrosky & A/C Radcliffe)

The public and the agency have an adequate, effective, and efficient emergency communications system. The system is reliable and able to meet the demands of major operations, including command and control within fire/rescue services during emergency operations, and meets the needs of other public safety agencies.

Summary:

The Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) Emergency Communications Center (ECC) is co-located in the Public Safety Communications Center (PSCC) with the following agencies:

- Montgomery County Police Communications (Primary Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP))
- Traffic Management (TMC)
- Emergency Management (EMG)
- The Emergency Operations Center (EOC), a component of the County's Office of Emergency Management and Homeland Security (OEMHS)
- The Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions, PSCC Support Component.

The MCFRS ECC is responsible for the coordination of all fire, rescue and emergency medical services related emergency events in Montgomery County. These responsibilities are regulated and governed by the references listed below.

The MCFRS ECC is responsible for assisting with the PSAP call taking, while primarily dispatching incidents for fire, rescue and emergency medical assistance and recording pertinent incident information. At the 911 call-taker position, a determination is made on whether an incident is medical- or fire-related. The call-taker enters the appropriate information on a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) terminal and sends the CAD incident to the primary radio position to be dispatched. All 911 call-takers utilize protocol-based call-taking practices, using one of three protocol paths. If the 911 call is EMS in nature, the call-taker processes the call using an Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) protocol. If the 911

call is fire in nature, the call-taker processes the call using an Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD) protocol. Police incidents are processed using Emergency Police Dispatch (EPD).

Once the fire/rescue CAD incident is created and assigned a unique incident number, all incidents are queued to one dispatch position for review prior to dispatch. This methodology ensures that requests for service are not duplicated. To determine the closest appropriate resource for dispatch, CAD Automatic Routing Logic (ARL) is employed to determine the location of the units based upon either their actual GPS location or their geographically located station. Rarely is human intervention required for most apparatus assignments; however, if needed, the dispatcher can reference the static CAD recommendations, which are based on fixed station running orders in a pre-calculated running route (run card). The dispatcher has the following redundant systems available for dispatch of the event information:

- Emergency Alerting System (Purvis) consists of station audible and visual alerting alarms that can be configured to control lights, traffic control devices, door and audible alarms or whistles.
- Mobile Data Computer system (MDC)
- Remote Station CAD terminals and station printers
- Personal and unit paging system (Everbridge, Active911, Code Messaging)
- Ultra-High Frequency (UHF) Alerting System (700-800 MHz)
- Very-High Frequency (VHF) Alerting System (150-174 MHz)
- Public Telephone System.

MCFRS ECC phone and radio communications are recorded on both instant recall and logging digital recorders. These recordings are maintained by a commercial off-the-shelf (COTS), client-based database system.

The MCFRS ECC transitioned all 911 call-taking to the primary PSAP in 2019. The MCFRS ECC maintains 42 full time uniformed fire and rescue personnel to function as the dispatch personnel, and the primary PSAP provides call-takers to meet the needs of the emergency dispatch functions of the department. Included in these numbers are shift

supervisors, dispatch and call-taking supervisors, training officers, and quality assurance officers. Additionally, MCFRS Tech-Ops personnel support the operations of the CAD, radio system and equipment, and Telecommunications device operations. The MCFRS ECC also maintains a back-up cadre of MCFRS ECC certified personnel in other operational positions throughout the department to supplement the MCFRS ECC workforce shortages.

The MCFRS ECC operations staff and supervisors work a three-day rotation consisting of one 24-hour day on duty and two 24-hour days off duty. These days are configured as follows:

- 0700 to 0700 for a 24-hour period staffing 8 positions with a minimum on-the-floor of 7 personnel.
- During this 24-hour shift, personnel are afforded one 6-hour rest period, one 3-hour physical training period.
- To regulate the hours, personnel are given a rotation of Kelly Days. The Kelly Day is a scheduled day off from the regular shift. These Kelly Days are assigned one per every three weeks, two per every 6 weeks and three per every 12 weeks to create a 42-hour workweek with a 504-hour, 12-week pay cycle.

In the 2022 ISO classification review, the ECC was evaluated on the following:

- Communications facilities provided for the general public to report structure fires
- Enhanced 9-1-1 Telephone Service including wireless
- Computer-aided dispatch (CAD) facilities
- Alarm receipt and processing at the communication center
- Training and certification of telecommunicators
- Facilities used to dispatch fire department companies to reported structure fires

The ECC received 9.09 out of 10 available credits during the ISO review.

Performance Indicators:

CC 9B.1 A system is in place to ensure communications with portable, mobile, and fixed communications systems in the field. When an area is identified as not allowing for adequate emergency scene communications, such as inside buildings or below grade level, an operational plan is documented and tested.

Description

There is a system in place to ensure communications with portable, mobile, and fixed communications systems in the field. The backbone of this system is the public safety land mobile radio system. Montgomery County operates a simulcast 22-site 20-channel digital trunked 800 MHz radio system.

The radio system is shared by all County users, the municipal police departments, and the National Institute of Standards and Technology. The system is designed as a Simulcast System. This configuration specifies that the system transmits (and receives) simultaneously from all 22 radio sites in the County, which helps in-building system coverage. The 20 radio channels provide up to 36 voice paths for communication (one channel is used as the control channel to coordinate network traffic and some of the channels can host two conversations simultaneously) and they are trunked (assigned on demand when the radios transmit) by a central controller. When the radio system is operating normally, with a controller assigning channels and the radio consoles used by the dispatchers at the communications center, and the alternate communications center connected to the system, the system is deemed to be in Wide Area mode; this is the way the system operates almost all the time.

MCFRS has a plan for operating in environments where there are limited or absent land mobile radio communications available. The most salient example is the regional light rail (METRO) system, where the public safety land mobile radio system integrates with the leaky line communications cable in the METRO system. In known areas, such as the Forest Glen METRO, where communications are “spotty” between the main entry and the platform level where the communications cables run, personnel have been trained to use conventional

channels (talkaround) and set up radio-to-radio relays to overcome the lack of system connectivity. Outside of the METRO system incident commanders are trained to activate their vehicular repeater systems at the first sign of connectivity issues and personnel regularly use the talkaround capability to overcome in-building coverage issues.

Appraisal

In 2021, Montgomery County launched a new radio system, which increased the number of tower sites, improved in-street communications, brought the system into compliance with [APCO P25 consensus standards](#), enhanced interoperability, and improved system reliability by moving off of unsupported architecture.

MCFRS does not experience, especially with the improved coverage of the new radio system, many places where in-building coverage is an issue. MCFRS personnel have even walked METRO tunnels to confirm that leaky line cables work and that alternative methods, such as VHF and talk around capabilities, are functional. MCFRS personnel also ride the METRO system at least monthly to confirm that radio communications work.

Plan

The department will continue to work with partners, including the public school system and the Department of Permitting Services, to identify and correct coverage issues. The practice of training new officers how to identify and manage common coverage issues will continue.

References

[P25 Public Safety Radio System to Serve First Responders in Montgomery County](#)
[County Executive Elrich Briefing on new P25 Radio System](#)

9B.2 The emergency communications system is capable of receiving automatic and/or manual early warning and other emergency reporting signals.

Description

The MCFRS ECC is not equipped with direct alarm reporting devices for suppression and evacuation diction devices. Notification of fire alarm system activations are provided by a combination of telephone calls from citizens hearing an audible alarm or from commercial monitoring companies reporting alarm activations.

Montgomery County is part of the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments' (MWCOG) notification system known as RICCS (Regional Incident Communication and Coordination System). This Regional Emergency Support Function (R-ESF) communications infrastructure supports regional response efforts before, during, and after a regional incident or regional emergency, by ensuring that regional decision makers and leaders are aware of events in the region and are prepared to react/respond to these events.

MCFRS also actively works with all surrounding jurisdictions to ensure interoperability of radio systems and communications.

In addition, the MCFRS ECC participates with the Maryland State Joint Operations Center and the National Weather Service to exchange information on critical events and severe weather events. Both systems are monitored and tested twice daily. The MCFRS ECC is also enhanced by the availability of the National Warning System (NAWAS). NAWAS is a 24-hour, continuous, private line telephone system used to convey warnings to federal, State and local governments, as well as the military and civilian population.

In addition to these notification systems, all MCFRS radios are equipped with emergency button functionality. When this button is activated by the end-user, an audible alarm and a flashing visual icon will occur on the dispatcher consoles at the MCFRS ECC. When the emergency button is activated, the MCFRS ECC receives the identification of that unit. If the unit is not associated in the radio system, a generic hexadecimal number is displayed. A

procedure is in place to address the activation of these signals on both the field user and the MCFRS ECC personnel levels. The MCFRS has also implemented a satellite/internet 10 based weather station, which is used to supplement warnings provided by the various weather agencies.

Appraisal

MCFRS subscribes to internet-based AlertEagle, which is on every Purvis event screen in the stations and can be viewed at every worksite. It has live radar, National Weather Service alerts, Potomac River water levels, and many other metrics. The current early warning systems in place at the MCFRS ECC are sufficient for notifying personnel and subsequently, the decision-makers, about impending emergencies and/or events which impact the region/country. The reliability has been near 100%. The systems meet our needs and there is no notable room for improvement. (new reference added, 4/20/23)

Plan

The MCFRS ECC can receive alerts from national weather and various joint-operations centers around the region. With the addition of the satellite/internet-based weather station, these systems work well as designed and support the current fire-rescue mission.

References

[FEMA - NAWAS Manual](#)

[MWCOG – RICCS System](#)

[Montgomery County AlertEagle](#)

9B.3 The agency's communications center(s) is/are adequately equipped and designed (e.g., security, telephones, radios, equipment status, alarm devices, computers, address files, dispatching circuits, playback devices, recording systems, printers, consoles, desks, chairs, lighting, and map displays).

Description

The MCFRS ECC provides communication and technical support to all phases of public safety, via a complex information technologies infrastructure. The MCFRS ECC fulfills these mandates through a business process focused on rapid and consistent customer service. Calls for service are received on a standardized 911 emergency telephone line (i.e., AT&T ESInet system).

Incoming calls are processed and assigned to an event using technologies such as Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD), Proactive Quality Assurance (Pro-QA), Automatic Routing Logic (ARL), and Computer Aided Dispatching (CAD). Once processed, emergency alerts are provided to fire-rescue stations.

MCFRS career and volunteer personnel are alerted by alphanumeric and conventional wireless paging and by an 800 MHz radio system. Field units receive the events over the 800 MHz radio system and with the assistance of Mobile Data Computers and telephones (cellular and landline). Personnel in the field manage these events using both mobile and hand-held communication devices.

Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) systems are easily defined as work-order processing systems. Call-takers enter the details of 911 calls for service into the CAD system. The system then determines, based on the call type and the location of the emergency, what resources should be sent to the call. When used in conjunction with and EFD, CAD can improve resource utilization and management.

Beyond the technology associated with the dispatch and call-taking process, the PSCC is supported by administrative personnel. In addition to ordinary office technologies, ECC personnel also utilize the following specialized services:

- Kova Servers: Used to record all incoming and outgoing telephone and radio messages.

- AQUA: Used for oversight of the EMD and EFD processes.
- PEPCO: A system designed to track power outages.
- County Enterprise Computers: A standard intranet server

There are ten seated CAD positions all equipped with adjustable desktops, seating, communication ports for users and trainees, computers, lighting, chairs, and the technologies mentioned above.

A complete back-up center with 70% redundancy is available at a separate facility in the County and can be occupied and fully operational within 2 hours of transition.

Appraisal

The current Computer Aided Dispatch system has been adequate for daily MCFRS operations. This system went live on April 2, 2017, with a new system design holistically based on Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and dispatches using Automatic Routing Logic (ARL), based on the unit's GPS-acquired location. With this CAD system, the technology meets national standards. Systemic issues are rare, and we continue to develop efficiencies in this system. As reported previously, the PSAP was upgraded with brand new furniture designed for emergency communications centers. This implementation has increased productivity and workflow.

Plan

The MCFRS is actively working through a significant CAD system enhancement, projected to go live in Spring of 2023. The CAD version and hardware upgrade will continue to enhance system efficiencies and business practice modifications. Through quality assurance, quality improvement and continued training, MCFRS will strive to reduce call processing times and resource efficiency throughout the service.

References

ECC Configuration Diagram (Confidential – Reference Located in the Tech Operations Battalion Chief's Office)

9B.4 The uninterrupted electrical power supply for the primary communications equipment in the communications center is reliable and tested and has automatic backup capability.

Description

The PSCC is supplied with power by the Potomac Electric Power Company (PEPCO), with three Commercial Power Phases delivered from a single power transfer station. Each phase powers a specific area of the building. All power comes into the building through one of several uninterrupted power supplies (UPS). The UPS cleans the power and delivers it at very consistent amperage, eliminating power fluctuation potential. In addition, the building is supported by two generators. Each generator can support 100% of the building's electrical load:

- Each generator – 780 KW
- 5,400-gallon diesel fuel tank (300-hour continuous run capacity)
- 50-gallon day tank

Upon loss of commercial power, both generators come online and provide power to the building. Generator power also runs through an UPS. While both generators are operating, only one supplies power while the other runs in stand-by mode. Should one of either generator fail, the power system begins a load shed process. Load shedding occurs when only one of the two generators is operational. During load shedding, nonessential lighting and HVAC systems are shut down to conserve power.

In addition to the emergency generators, the facility is supported by four independent UPS systems. Two of these UPS systems are dedicated to Police and Fire communications, while the remaining two support the remaining occupants at the PSCC. These UPS are battery systems designed to clean the power, by removing small fluctuations in continuity, amperage, and voltage from commercial and generator sources. The UPS is also designed to carry the load of the building during the loss of commercial power and the start-up of generators. This transfer capability allows power to remain constant even during power outages. Although not designed for continuous support, the UPS will support the building power independently based upon the size for specified times:

- UPS #1 – 220 KW UPS – PSCC excluding TMC and EOC – 210 minutes

- UPS #2 – 220 KW UPS – PSCC excluding TMC and EOC – 60 minutes
- UPS #3 – 150 KW UPS – TMC Only – 120 minutes
- UPS #4 – 150 KW UPS – EOC Only – 120 minutes

Two Power Distribution Units (PDUs) are located on each operations floor and are designed to distribute power to the essential components. The PDU is simply a distribution box with circuit breakers designed to direct power sources to their respective locations. The power outlets are color-coded to provide indicators on the UPS and the intended use. The color codes are as follows:

- Ivory – Radio Equipment – Supported by 30 KW UPS
- White – Radio Equipment – Supported by 220 KW UPS
- Red – Data Equipment – Supported by 220 KW UPS
- Grey – Telephone Equipment – Supported by 220 KW UPS
- Black – Furniture, heaters, fans, lights, motors – Not UPS Supported
- All TMC – Supported by 150 KW UPS
- All EOC – Supported by 150 KW UPS

UPS batteries are on constant charge by commercial power or by generator power; however, in the absence of all 3 phases of commercial power, or during generator power, the charging capability is reduced. As such, supported time can vary.

Appraisal

The systems have been efficient for the operation of the MCFRS ECC. Weekly tests were performed under normal operational load for thirty minutes, and monthly tests are conducted for one hour. With the implementation of the new furniture, the entire system was re-engineered and readjusted to account for the new power loading. At this time, the UPS system is adequate for the mission.

Plan

The MCFRS will maintain the current PSCC power system, with weekly checks for operation and monthly service on the components, including the generator, battery level,

and general system maintenance. The operational checks will be consistent with manufacturer recommendations and practices and will be conducted by authorized electricians and systems service agents.

MCFRS will maintain the current PCC power system with routine maintenance and testing. In addition, the MCFRS, in conjunction with building partners and other County agencies, will participate in a replacement project to bring increased reliability, redundancy and availability of power within the PSCC over the next two years. This includes installing solar panels, new generators and updating the electrical distribution infrastructure.

References

[ECC and AECC Electrical Power Systems Overview](#)

9B.5 Adequate numbers of fire or emergency telecommunicators, supervisors and management personnel are on duty to handle the anticipated call volume.

Description

MCFRS ECC operations staff and supervisors work a three-day rotation consisting of one 24-hour day on duty and two 24-hour days off duty. On-duty personnel staff general non-emergency call-taking and dispatching positions, in addition to one Floor Supervisor position. Daytime staffing consists of six personnel on the floor, while at night, a minimum of two dispatchers and two supervisors are on the ECC floor. The MCFRS ECC Office of Professional Standards personnel also supplement floor staffing when needed. As a backup, every morning, the on-duty MCFRS ECC Supervisor identifies ECC-qualified personnel that are assigned to operational fire-rescue stations. In rare situations, the supervisor may develop a plan with the MCFRS Duty Operations Chief to move these personnel to the MCFRS ECC when periods of high incident volume are anticipated, such as severe weather, or another significant event which taxes the staffing in place. These procedures have proven valuable several times since their implementation. A workflow study conducted in 2010 by a consultant in emergency communication operations recommended combining the Police and Fire-Rescue 911 call taking function into a single, unified call taking function under the MCPD, which was implemented in 2019. The unified call-taking reduces the time necessary to process 911 calls for fire-rescue services, by no longer requiring the calls to be transferred.

Appraisal

MCFRS ECC staffing has been adequate for the level of service intended, with the unified call-taking eliminating the need for MCFRS to answer 911 calls. The overall consolidation of services under the Montgomery County Police 911 Center continues to be challenging, as the goal has shifted to assuming the fire-rescue radios operations. Recruiting communication specialists has been challenging for MCPD and staffing issues continue to plague the ECC; as of February 2023, there are 60 vacant emergency communications specialist positions. The MCFRS ECC staff continues to assist in training MCPD personnel; however, they are not afforded adequate time to receive on-the-job training necessary for success, due to 911 call-taking and MCPD radio staffing responsibilities. Likewise,

additional challenges arise with training civilian personnel to understand the functions of the MCFRS with little institutional knowledge.

Plan

Until full consolidation is achieved, the MCFRS will continue to show the need for additional personnel trained as ECC radio qualified dispatchers through the normal budget process. MCFRS will also continue to participate in and advance the consolidation model toward implementation to better leverage the use of existing personnel. The management team and joint-MCPD/MCFRS senior governance group in place to guide the consolidation process will continue to meet weekly and strive to achieve full consolidation under the MCPD. As consolidation evolves, the overall process will integrate into process review and resolution through an Executive Steering/Governance Committee. This plan will only be successful if staffing numbers are sufficient to allow for minimum staffing to be maintained, while allowing time for training and quality improvement efforts.

References

[Operations Battalion Roster 2023-ECC Staffing](#)

[MCPD Briefing to Public Safety Committee Worksession Packet, 2/13/23](#) (see ECC info on PDF p. 7-8, 16-17; watch the [PSC worksession](#) (forward to 1:13:35))

9B.6 A maintenance program is in place with regularly scheduled and documented system tests.

Description

There are many forms of maintenance for the various systems within the PSCC. Each system is supported by a maintenance contract with the vendors. In addition to these contracts, the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) and the MCFRS Technical Operations Section provide both routine and emergency maintenance.

The primary maintenance contract is administered by Motorola Solutions, Inc (MSI). Motorola provides on-site dedicated technicians for all Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD), phone and radio systems. Motorola oversees routine maintenance and is responsive to the County's needs. The County has the overall authority in prioritization of systems maintenance. County agency representative groups are tasked with prioritization of upgrades and system enhancements through a customer experience process.

Appraisal

The current CAD contract with MSI is effective and has worked well since its implementation. Weekly meetings between MCFRS, MSI, and TEBS are conducted to address maintenance issues and to coordinate initiatives to improve the capabilities of the system. These meetings address change management, CAD system updates, phone system changes, and computer replacements. Monthly building governance meetings are held to discuss and coordinate building components.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to participate in the weekly and monthly meetings concerning the systems in place. MCFRS personnel will also continue to participate in the customer experience committees and enhancement priority groups. This will allow the MCFRS to voice our needs and provide overall enhancements to the systems.

References

Motorola Maintenance Agreement (Confidential – Reference located in the Tech Ops B/C Office)

- 9B.7 The agency has established time-based performance objectives for alarm handling. These objectives are formally communicated to communications center managers through direct report, contracts, service level agreements and/or memorandums of agreement and are reviewed at least annually to ensure time-based performance objectives are met.

Description

MCFRS manages calls for service based on various factors, including the nature of the call for service, level of emergence (priority), and available resources. Understanding the importance of industry best practices and standards, MCFRS measures its internal alarm handling time-based performance objectives and future benchmark target goals to the voluntary National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) 1221 Standard on the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems. Benchmarks are reviewed and updated as needed and posted for member awareness on Quicklinks. MCFRS constantly strives to narrow the gap between baseline alarm handling performance and the stated published benchmark performance goals for each emergency service program. Ultimately, MCFRS wants to meet the NFPA 1221 performance standards and works toward this goal by first attempting to reach benchmark goals.

Rigorous time-based performance reviews occur regularly; expectations are communicated to the operational staff by the MCFRS ECC Office of Professional Standards, which maintains the call processing data.

Appraisal

The MCFRS ECC Office of Professional Standards utilized an effective SharePoint site to formally communicate time-based performance objectives for alarm handling to all staff members. This medium has proven an effective tool to monitor and compare performance, as well as define outlier issues having the potential of causing inflated call processing times. The SharePoint serves as an effective general portal for housing all applicable ECC resources.

In addition to the ECC's SharePoint, there is an MCPD-MCFRS ECC Call Processing Collaboration channel within the Accreditation site, as well as an Echo Call Processing page, that keeps members apprised of trends in this category.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to enhance and strive to meet response time objectives and goals, as well as assure alarm handling quality assurance. The goal is that calls for service will be handled with increased accuracy, speed, and efficiency. This will be based on protocols as indicated by the State of Maryland, MCFRS, the National Academies of Emergency Dispatch, and NFPA guidelines.

References

[Performance Benchmark Tables, 2022, on Quicklinks](#)

[Screenshot - MCPD & MCFRS ECC Call Processing Channel in AM SharePoint](#)

9B.8 Communications training programs for emergency telecommunicators and emergency response personnel ensure adequate, timely, and reliable agency emergency response.

Description

MCFRS Emergency Communications Center's (ECC) Office of Professional Standards (PSU) is ultimately responsible for communications training programs and ensuring the adequate, timely and reliable emergency dispatch and response. The ECC PSU consists of an MCFRS Assistant Chief, Captain and two Lieutenants. One Lieutenant is responsible to training new and existing ECC personnel in-service training, while the second Lieutenant oversees the Quality Assurance program. Each year, the MCFRS ECC trains approximately eight new MCFRS ECC personnel and maintains the skills and qualifications for approximately 60 incumbents, while also assisting with the training of approximately 20 MCPD civilian ECC personnel. All personnel seeking the ECC-Radio Qualified certification participate in a six-week classroom training program, followed by approximately 4 months of preceptor on-the-job training.

All call-takers are trained to the minimum level of Emergency Telecommunicator. Nationally recognized Emergency Telecommunicator EMD and EFD courses are used, and course instructors are employed by Montgomery County to teach and certify call-taking personnel. The Professional Standards Unit audits and assigns resource deployment response plans to each EMD and EFD incident type, ensuring adequate resources are dispatched to meet the departments mission.

The Office of the Professional Standards Captain provides coordination and supervision of the Training Quality Assurance Programs. This PSU works collectively with the MCPD training and Quality Assurance programs, to ensure consistency across the entire ECC certified workforce.

Appraisal

The Office of Professional Standards has successfully provided the necessary oversight, administration, and operational needs for all MCFRS ECC training, as characterized in

dispatch times which are consistent with national standards. The PSU's success is attributed to detailed training programs, lesson plans, syllabuses, training aids, instructing, monitoring, evaluating, and adjudication of all issues related to training and quality assurance.

Plan

The PSU will continue with current practices and develop plans to increase the efficiency of MCFRS ECC operations. This will be measured by an anticipated decrease in overall alarm handling times.

References

[Operations Battalion Roster 2023- ECC Staffing](#)

[Code of Maryland Regulations \(COMAR\) Sec. 30.0.04 EMD Education Programs](#)

9B.9 The interoperability of the communications system is documented, tested and evaluated. The agency has processes in place to provide for interoperability with other public safety agencies in the field including portable, mobile and fixed communications systems, tools and equipment.

Description

MCFRS radios (portable and mobile) are programmed with fifteen 800 MHz trunked radio systems that consist of all the jurisdictions that share common borders with Montgomery County and all members of the National Capital Region (NCR), as defined by federal statute.

Shared Border:

Carroll County, MD	Loudoun County, VA*
Fairfax County, VA*	Prince George's County, MD*
Frederick County, MD*	Washington, DC*
Howard County, MD	* - Also member of NCR

NCR Member:

Arlington County, VA	Prince William County, VA
City of Alexandria, VA	Washington
Metropolitan Airport Authority, VA	

(Note: There are fewer than 15 jurisdictions listed because some jurisdictions have more than one trunked radio system and all relevant systems in each jurisdiction are programmed in the MCFRS subscribers.)

This shared programming allows MCFRS users to directly access the radio systems of mutual aid partners when responding to incidents in the jurisdictions identified. When switched to a mutual aid radio system, MCFRS radios function as though they are native subscribers on the active system permitting access to all advanced trunking system features, including emergency alerts and emergency calls via the emergency buttons on the subscriber radios. In addition to the identified trunked radio resources all MCFRS subscribers are also programmed with 800 MHz regional and national conventional mutual aid channels:

FCC Region 20 interoperability channels:

RINS1	RINS4
RINS2	RINS5
RINS3	RINS6

FCC NPSPAC national interoperability channels:

8CAL90	8TAC93
8TAC91	8TAC94
8TAC92	

These conventional channels support interoperation with 800 MHz capable jurisdictions outside the NCR, either when they respond into Montgomery County or when MCFRS units respond into their jurisdiction.

MCFRS also houses one element of the NCR Radio Cache, which is managed by the NCR Communications Interoperability Group (NCR CIG). The MCFRS element of the NCR Radio Cache consists of Motorola APX and XTS5000 portable radios programmed with NCR fire-rescue and law enforcement systems and talk-groups. These radios are available to be issued to responding jurisdictions and agencies that are not organically equipped with radios that provide direct MCFRS interoperability. The Cache is also equipped with interoperability switches and repeaters that can be deployed to provide interoperability and/or enhanced communication options in specific circumstances. The NCR CIG personnel are nationally trained to the Communications Leader and/or Communications Technician levels that can provide management and oversight of incident communications when requested by command. Should the need arise, MCFRS can request support from the other two NCR Radio Cache elements bringing an additional Motorola APX and XTS5000 radios programmed with fire-rescue and law enforcement interoperability systems and talk-groups in addition to other NCR CIG personnel to assist with the management of the resources.

The subscriber radios of the listed mutual aid partners also carry MCFRS radio zones in their radios so that when mutual aid users respond into Montgomery County, they can directly access our trunked radio system as would a native Montgomery County radio.

Mutual aid responses are routine within the NCR, making it important to have a similar radio fleet map structure throughout the region. MCFRS recently updated its fleet map and talkpath naming conventions to align with the regional “standard.” MCFRS participates in the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments’ technical Communications Subcommittee, which provides a forum for regional partners to discuss and plan for fleet map changes, code plug programming, and other communications-related changes occurring in member jurisdictions. This committee is also responsible for developing and maintaining the Tactical Interoperable Communication Plan.

Appraisal

The interoperability shared by Montgomery County and its regional partners is second to none in the nation. It has proven to be very robust and is constantly improved through regional coordination and participation in regional communications committees. Through these efforts, interoperability is continually evolving and expanding to ensure local, regional and national interoperability. Montgomery County and the NCR Region is often looked to as the model in the nation for radio communications interoperability.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to evaluate the effectiveness of its radio “fleet map” deployment model. Bi-yearly programming changes will be made and implemented into all subscriber radios. This model will be continuously reevaluated and improved as in County and neighboring systems change.

References

[GAO – EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS In the National Capital Region](#)

9B.10 The dispatch process utilizes a formal and recognized emergency medical dispatch (EMD) system that allows for pre-arrival instructions and adequate triaging of medical calls for service.

Description

The calls for emergency service are processed and assigned to an incident using advanced technologies such as Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD), Emergency Fire Dispatch (EFD), and Proactive Quality Assurance (Pro-QA). These systems are Commercial Off-the-Shelf (COTS) products, governed by national standards established by industry leaders.

Personnel receiving 911 calls are licensed by the State of Maryland in EMD and certified by the National Academies for EMD and EFD. Their training and certifications include the imbedded national standard Post-Dispatch and Pre-Arrival Instructions, which are imbedded as part of the EMD/EFD software programs. Prior to disconnecting each call, the call-taker is required to provide these instructions to the caller as part of the EMD/EFD call processing.

Appraisal

The use of industry standard protocols such as EMD and EFD, along with consistent quality management and quality assurance, both increases the reliability of the call intake process (as expressed by consistent process delivery) and reduces the liability associated with process variation. EMD also provides the ability to insert medical intervention earlier in the chain of survival (pre-arrival instructions) and provides early recognition of time critical chief complaints. *Note: The cards are proprietary and can be inspected onsite.*

Plan

The call-takers receiving the 911 call will continue its use of EMD and EFD protocol systems when creating MCFRS incidents. Through the Dispatch Review Committee and constant quality assurance oversight, we will continue to improve incident intake and dispatch measures, while reducing response times, increasing rapid intervention during critical lifesaving events, and better management of resources.

References

[MCPD ECC SOP, Call Taker Duties and Responsibilities](#)

9B.11 The agency has a documented and tested system in place for the notification and recall of off-duty agency personnel and telecommunicators for unplanned, large-scale incidents.

Description

Callback/recall of MCFRS ECC personnel is guided by DFRS Policy & Procedure #901; however, this policy is outdated, and while still in effect, is in violation of the most recent IAFF bargaining unit agreement. Additionally, the PSCC maintains an "ECC Emergency Action and Evacuation Plan." This document specifies the recall of police personnel for the primary PSAP; however, it does not include Fire & Rescue Communications. The document was last updated in 2006, when major changes were recommended to the primary PSAP in 2016 after a major 911 outage. These changes were largely ignored and not put into place in the master document/procedure.

All on-duty ECC personnel are required to remain in contact with the MCFRS ECC Supervisor via phone, radio or pager when on approved break from the operations floor or during ancillary activity periods. On-duty personnel may leave the PSCC property only with the approval of the MCFRS ECC Supervisor. The MCFRS ECC uses several measures to immediately recall personnel to the operations floor when needed. Automatic notifications may be sent to personnel via Minitor paging, and third-party vendors (i.e., Active911, Everbridge, MCEN), which alert personnel of incidents.

Recall of non-ECC MCFRS personnel occurs through a request to the Operations Division Scheduling Office, which uses a phone/email notification system to reach the personnel needed for the incident.

Appraisal

MCFRS ECC personnel are regularly called back to the operations floor for significant events. The methods in place work adequately, and the supplemental staffing increases efficiency and timely response.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to maintain its current on-duty call-back methods and expand as necessary as outlined in the ECC Emergency Action and Evacuation Plan.

References

[ECC Emergency Action and Evacuation Plan](#)

9B.12 The agency has a documented plan, which is reviewed and tested annually, to ensure continuity in communicating during any partial or total disruption or failure of a communications system or facility.

Description

The agency has multiple plans to ensure continuity in communication. They include the yearly recertification of personnel on proper radio procedures, regular forcing of the radio system into failsoft, the use of “talkaround channels”, the deployment of specially trained, all-hazards communications personnel to emergency scenes to establish local talkpaths or de-conflict communications, and the regular testing and use of the back-up communications center.

Appraisal

MCFRS has met this criterion through the regular training and exercise of backup functionality and the ongoing use of communications assets on large events.

MCFRS has had several significant events in the past years where communications assets were deployed to an incident scene to support communications. We have also experienced technology disruptions at the main center that forced a move to the alternate center and in each case, the move was transparent to the end user and went well.

Furthermore, the core communications tool, the land mobile radio system, is robustly engineered. It has multiple redundant fibernet backbones, redundant microwave backhaul, and a semi-independent VHF network.

Plan

FRS will continue to work with the Montgomery County Police and other key County agencies to ensure that the communications backbone for public safety remains both robust (i.e., resistant to failure) and resilient (i.e., able to recover from failure).

References

[Radio One Book](#)

CC 9B.13 A formal and documented appraisal is conducted, at least annually, to determine the effectiveness of the emergency communications systems and their impact of meeting the agency's goals and objectives.

Description

MCFRS Technical Operations (TechOps) and MCFRS Operations meet on a regular basis and after each significant event to determine the effectiveness of the communications framework. This is done via the Radio Systems Workgroup, which is comprised of various members of the Technical and Operations Teams. Any changes to fleetmaps, programming and the like, are run through this committee and brought before the senior leadership for final approval.

The MCFRS ECC assistant chief completes the annual appraisal required to meet accreditation requirements.

Appraisal

In 2021, the annual appraisal process was modified to reflect calendar year-reporting, rather than fiscal year reporting. Annual appraisals for Communications, have been completed, as required.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to complete annual appraisals for the communications program. In the future, the department will consider including TechOps in the report, as well as asking the MCPD to provide information related to overall PSCC management.

References

[FY18 Annual Appraisal](#) (beginning on PDF page 105)

[FY19 Annual Appraisal](#) (beginning on PDF page 108)

[FY20 Annual Appraisal](#) (beginning on PDF page 94)

[CY21 Annual Appraisal](#) (beginning on PDF page 45)

Criterion 9C: Administrative Support Services and Office Systems (M3 Schulze)

Administrative support services and general office systems are in place with adequate staff to efficiently and effectively conduct and manage the agency's administrative functions such as organizational planning and assessment, resource coordination, record keeping, reporting, business communications, public interaction, and purchasing.

Summary:

The Montgomery County Fire & Rescue Service provides a vast array of services to the public, including emergency medical services, fire suppression, prevention and education, arson investigations, hazardous materials mitigation, and technical rescue. With more than 1,200 career personnel and another 1,400 volunteer personnel, 47 worksites, and hundreds of pieces of apparatus, this department requires a strong framework of administrative and support services, to ensure the department can operate with effectiveness, efficiency, and resiliency. Some of these functions include fiscal management and procurement, human resources, training, fleet and facilities management, logistics, and SCBA repair. MCFRS provides these essential services with both uniformed personnel and professional staff. The Local Fire Rescue Departments (LFRDS) have an additional roster of approximately 1,000 volunteer administrative and support personnel.

Performance Indicators:

CC 9C.1 The administrative support services are appropriate for the agency's size, function, complexity, and mission, and are adequately managed.

Description

Fulfilling the MCFRS mission to “protect lives, property, and the environment” requires a substantial effort from the department’s approximately 1,300 County employees. This includes the uniformed and professional staff that provide administrative support to the operational part of the department. Approximately 10% of the employees serve in an administrative support role, which includes but is not limited to fiscal management, training, human resources, fleet and facilities management, information technology, and logistics. These positions are dispersed across all the divisions since the scope and scale of each division’s functions are substantial. Most of the administrative support positions are filled by professional staff. The FY23 civilian complement is 99.

Appraisal

MCFRS has maintained a relatively stable and mostly appropriate level of administrative and support services staff to adequately meet its needs. Over the reporting period, MCFRS has made several requests for new positions to address deficiencies identified in the Divisions of Support Services and Human Resources. Some were successful; others were not. The FY24 budget request included requests for 16 new support positions. As of the writing of this PI, it is unknown how many will be funded.

Plan

Uniformed and professional personnel will continue to meet administrative support service needs for MCFRS and continue to request additional positions when needs are identified.

References

[MCFRS FY23 Budget](#) (showing addition of several new support positions)

[MCFRS Org Chart](#)

[CE FY24 Budget Submission Review Package](#) (see PDF p. 11 for additional administrative requests)

9C.2 Public reception, public information, and electronic communications components support the customer service needs of the agency.

Description

MCFRS has a variety of resources that enable the department to meet the needs of Montgomery County residents, or anyone who has a non-emergency need. MCFRS primarily depends on MC311, the County’s customer service center. Many people call 311 first and are generally able to have their needs met immediately. MC311 routes any outstanding requests to the appropriate department.

The department’s website can be used by the public in a number of useful ways; they can contact the fire chief, find their local station, locate and download prevention and educational information, schedule a car seat inspection, request incident reports, or look up other important phone numbers. The Fire Chief also maintains a blog and posts his monthly messages there.

MCFRS has a designated public information officer (PIO) to manage social media outreach and engagement and interact with major media sources to promote MCFRS programs, activities, and operations. There are several designated back-up PIOs who assume these responsibilities when the primary PIO is unavailable. MCFRS Recruiting maintains a separate social media profile, allowing those users to specifically target potential applicants.

Appraisal

Montgomery County as a whole, and MCFRS, specifically, has established resources necessary to meet public information and communications needs. The County’s 311 service has worked well and fielded or directed an average of 1500 calls a year over the last five years. As you can see in the following chart, the number of calls to 311 for MCFRS-related topics began dropping significantly in 2019, when the department put more resources into its website.

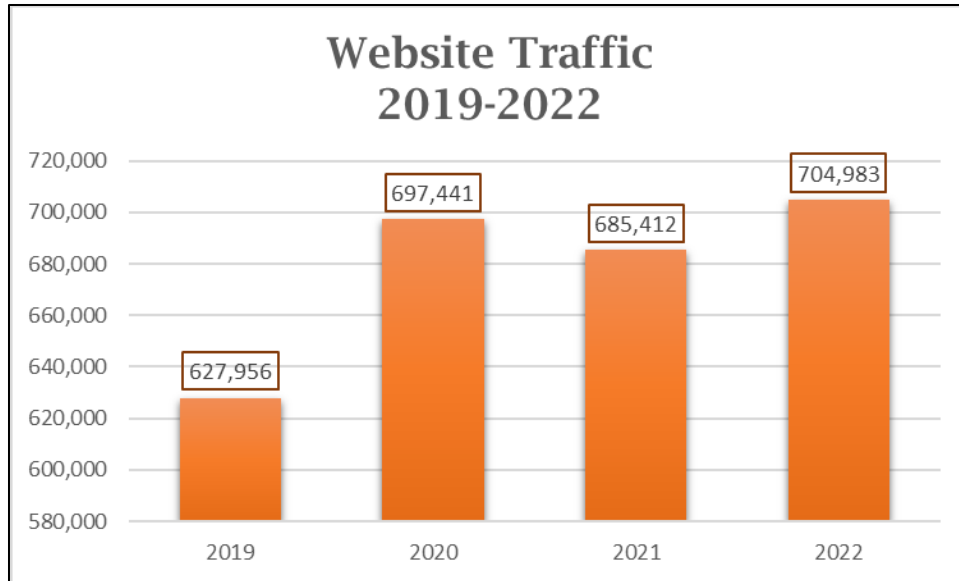
311 Calls for MCFRS 2018-2022



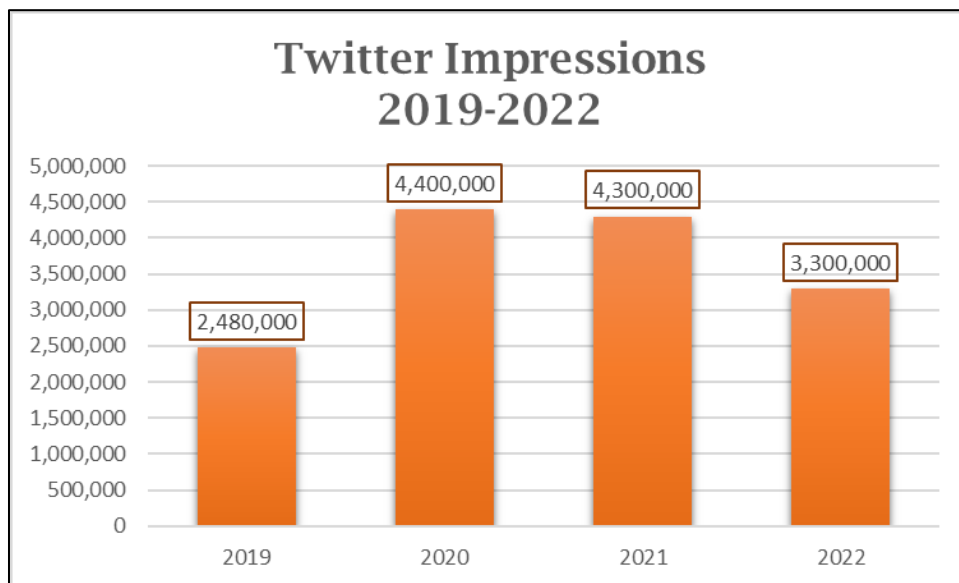
The Montgomery County public has had easy access to department activities, news, and information through the website. In 2022, there were more than 704k pageviews from 130,839 visitors.

Top visited pages

1.	MCFRS Recruiting	182,754
2.	MCFRS Main Page	110,092
3.	MCFRS Public Education - Infant Heimlich Manuever	38,785
4.	MCFRS - Contact Information	35,292
5.	Fire Rescue Training Academy Home Page	28,863
6.	Driver Training Class Materials	18,059
7.	MCFRS Public Education - Child Care	14,790
8.	MCFRS Car Seats	13,702
9.	Driver Training Home	13,576
10.	Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service - Publi...	12,302



And the primary MCFRS social media account, Twitter, has maintained substantial reach, with 3.3 million “impressions” in 2022, and 44,500 followers.



Plan

MCFRS will continue to interact with the public through direct contact, its website, traditional media, and social media. For an agency of this size serving a large metropolitan County, there is opportunity for the department to increase the staffing in this program area

and to consider other platforms to reach the community at large (e.g., NextDoor). MCFRS recently participated in a collaboration between the executive branch's Customer Service Initiative (CSI) and the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO)'s Resident Communication project. The teams were seeking information from all County departments about their channels for resident communication and accessing information and services:

- CSI was researching incoming sources of communication and touchpoints for how customers find departments' information and services (residents → department), and
- OLO was researching outgoing sources of communication and how we reach out to our customers (department → residents).

MCFRS is looking forward to the fruits of this effort.

References

[MCFRS Twitter Account](#) or [MCFRS PIO Twitter Account](#)

[MCFRS Website: FAQ](#) (how to request 911 recordings and incident reports, contact EMS billing, etc.)

[dataMontgomery MC311 Service Requests](#)

[Google Analytics MCFRS Website Traffic](#)

CC 9C.3 Organizational documents, forms, standard operating procedures or general guidelines, and manuals are reviewed at least every three years and updated as needed for all agency programs.

Description

MCFRS has many different kinds of “organizational documents”, including Fire Chief’s General Orders, Policies and Procedures, Information Bulletins, Directives, and Clinical Practice Guidelines. These are posted on the department's internal website, Quicklinks and described in Policy and Procedure 06-02. MCFRS updates these documents or develops new ones, as the need arises, i.e., changes to collective bargaining agreements, laws, or County regulations; new, or updates to, programs and processes. Many of the department’s most common forms have transitioned to an online “jotform” and are posted on Quicklinks for easy access.

Appraisal

Although Policy and Procedure 06-02 delegates the responsibility of development, revision or rescission of documents to the division chiefs and other leaders in all MCFRS organizational elements, the pandemic certainly disrupted many of the routine tasks the department was accustomed to. MCFRS has revised many organizational documents to support service needs and other changes, yet the department has a lot of legacy documents that date back to the 1980s, 90s, and early 2000s. MCFRS has ensured those documents, which might contain inaccurate references to divisions/sections, do not conflict with current policy and procedure. While MCFRS recognizes the need to ensure policies and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis, many “dated” policies are best suited as is because revision of the policy will open the entire policy up for review and potentially lack of approval for the new policy. Policy is required (by Chapter 21) to be reviewed by the Fire and Emergency Services Commission, which greatly adds to the effort and length of time it takes to get a single document approved for use/publication.

Over the course of the last five years, 40 new Fire Chief’s General Orders and 10 Policies and Procedures were issued/updated.

Plan

MCFRS will continue to review its documents, forms, and standard operating procedures and guidelines and make revisions as the need arises.

References

[MCFRS Document Policy 06-02 \(03/16/2020\)](#)

[Fire Chief's General Orders](#)

[MCFRS Policy & Procedures](#)

[DFRS Policy & Procedures](#)

[Information Bulletins](#)

[Directives](#)

9C.4 Public records are maintained, available and disposed of in accordance with local, state/provincial and federal legal mandates. Record retention and destruction are documented in accordance with an adopted procedure.

Description

Montgomery County follows established state of Maryland regulations pertaining to maintenance, access, retention, and disposition of records. This includes State Government Article 10, sections 608-611 and sections 614-619, Code of Maryland Regulation 14.18.02. Montgomery County also complies with the Maryland Public Information Act, established in General Provisions Article §§4-101 through 4-601. Montgomery County has an established framework, Administrative Procedure 6-3, Records Management, to manage and control the maintenance, storage, preservation, and disposal of records and meet the requirements of State law. Montgomery County Personnel Regulations, Section 4, also provides guidance for maintenance and disposal of various personnel files. The Department of General Services' Division of Central Services serves the County's records management and warehousing needs.

Internally, MCFRS is guided by Policy and Procedure 02-01AMIII, Incident Reporting Requirements and Records Management, as well as the IAFF Collective Bargaining Agreement, which defines guidance for access, retention, and disposal of personnel records and internal affairs case files. MCFRS has a records custodian who handles all requests for incident reports and supports the PIO in providing responses to MPIA requests.

Appraisal

While the MCFRS policy sufficiently addresses the quality of reporting requirements, it may fall short on retention/destruction criteria for certain types of records. Overall, MCFRS has complied with state and County requirements for records retention and public information. The department has also safeguarded personal health information according to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

Plan

MCFRS intends to follow all County regulations and internal policies, as well as collective bargaining agreements, related to records retention and public information. MCFRS will explore whether it is necessary to address retention/destruction of other records to internal policy or develop an official retention schedule per the guidance of the Maryland State Archives.

References

[MCFRS Policy: Incident Reporting Requirements and Records Management](#)

[MCFRS Webpage: Procedure for Requesting Incident Reports](#)

[State Government Article 10, sections 608-611](#)

[State Government Article 10, sections 614-619](#)

[Code of Maryland Regulations 14.18.02](#)

[Montgomery County Administrative Procedure 6-3, Records Management](#)

[Montgomery County Personnel Regs, Section 4, Records](#)

[IAFF CBA, 2022-2024](#)

Criterion 9D: Information Technology (A/C Baltrotsky)

Information technology resources are in place with adequate staff to efficiently and effectively conduct and manage the agency's information technology functions, such as hardware and software implementation and maintenance and data analysis.

Summary:

The MCFRS has an established Technology Services Section lead by an Assistant Fire Chief. This section includes Data Management (RMS & Scheduling), Enterprise Systems, Technical Operations (mobile data computing, emergency patient care reporting, Land Mobile Radio), CAD & GIS systems, and Technical Training and Web Services. The MCFRS Technology Services Section is staffed with thirteen (13) personnel on full-time basis and numerous personnel on an as needed basis.

Performance Indicators:

CC 9D.1 Hardware, software and IT personnel are appropriate for the agency's size, function, complexity and mission.

Description

The MCFRS Technology Section has a staff of 13 full time personnel and numerous as-needed personnel to operate the entire breadth of technology systems within the MCFRS. These staff are supported by the County's Technology Enterprise and Business Solutions (TEBS) department and various other support personnel from throughout the county government.

Appraisal

The MCFRS Technology Section is understaffed for its mission scope. The 13 personnel do not provide the bandwidth to adequately support the range of technologies requiring support. There are well over 5000 end point services and devices that are supported by the Technology Section. These services are critical to the operation of the MCFRS, and without them, the core ability to provide emergency service would be diminished to a detrimental level.

Plan

MCFRS has embraced the need for additional personnel in the Technology Section and has requested additional positions in the FY24 budget cycle; at the time of this writing, it is unknown whether the positions will be funded. The recommended additions include a Cellular Data and Asset Manager, as well as a radio systems technician. In addition to these positions, the Technology Section Chief will be requesting a contractor to assist in management of Land Mobile Radio systems and for FY25, an additional Enterprise Systems IT specialist position. These additions would greatly improve the capacity of the MCFRS Technology Section.

References

[Technology Services Org Chart](#)

[FY24 Operating Budget Worksession Package](#) (p. 11 reflects requested positions)

9D.2 Software systems are integrated, and policies are in place addressing data governance, data accuracy and data analysis.

Description

MCFRS has multiple systems, policies, and processes under which the Technology section manages to create an efficient, integrated services platform for MCFRS membership. MCFRS software and data systems are based on and meet local, state, and federal regulations and requirements, and are redundant, providing nearly 100% uptime. These software systems are based on local server-side applications and networks and provide essential services, such as the platforms to report fire and EMS incidents and the ability to conduct data analysis.

Montgomery County Administrative Policies 6-1 and 6-7 provide the framework for security of MCFRS software; internally, MCFRS Policy and Procedure 02-01AMIII provides guidance for incident reporting requirements and records management.

MCFRS maintains and supports a Tech Training website, which provides users with training such as Intro to the MDC, Intro to FireApp (the RMS), eMEDS, Crystal Reports, and HIPAA. There is also a Tech Training Blog and Tips website, where users can go to ask questions and find solutions to common problems with software programs and forms.

MCFRS' utilizes a "data warehouse", where multiple systems' records are maintained and used to create analytical products, many of which have been used throughout the CRA/SOC and FESSAM as exhibits or references. Data analysis and performance measuring is decentralized; most divisions/sections handle their own analytics, including performance measuring and monitoring.

Appraisal

Over the course of this reporting period, MCFRS has partnered with TEBS and a variety of vendors to ensure MCFRS had reliable and secure software and data systems. The systems and processes in place have worked well and provided the capacity for MCFRS to record

essential information (fire incidents, patient information, etc.) in accordance with established standards and requirements (NFIRS, HIPAA, etc.) and conduct analysis on said data. The use of PowerBI for analytics has grown within the department, particularly within EMIHS, but it is available for other divisions/sections/users to employ within their respective field/area of responsibility. The County offers PowerBI training for MCG employees through Montgomery College. There are still opportunities for MCFRS to improve the quality of fire incident reports, and develop and implement a more comprehensive data analytics plan, whereby the majority of analysis and performance measurement occurs from a central focal point and aligns with and supports the department's mission, goals, and objectives.

Plan

Moving forward the MCFRS intends to move many of the server-side applications which are locally hosted, to cloud-based service providers. The movement of these applications and systems will allow the MCFRS to shift focus away from the maintenance of computer hardware and move the IT specialists into the data accuracy and intelligence aspects of data management. This focus will broaden the MCFRS capabilities in the respect of providing better data, more accurately represented, in nearly real time. Separately, MCFRS has initiated a plan to improve analytics with the creation of a position dedicated to analytics and performance measurement; this position will also work to improve data quality in the fire dataset.

References

[Montgomery County Administrative Policy 6-1, Use of County Internet, Intranet and Electronic Mail Services](#)

[Montgomery County Administrative Policy 6-7, Information Security](#)

[MCFRS Policy and Procedure 02-01AMIII, Incident Reporting Requirements and Records Management](#)

[MCFRS Tech Tips Website](#)

[MCFRS Tech Training Website](#)

9D.3 A comprehensive technology plan is in place to update, evaluate and procure hardware and software.

Description

Updating enterprise systems is rolled into the overall county lifecycle maintenance program. The acquisition is generally managed by the Montgomery County Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS), and is based on the County's lifecycle technology plan, which replaces devices on a 5-year capital improvement cycle. This includes systems such as mobile data computers, desktop computers, software systems, etc., which must be evaluated for security vulnerabilities (hardware) and overall computing resilience.

The MCFRS relies on multiple vendors (internal and external) to provide hardware and software. The plans in place work very well to ensure that these critical systems are the "best in class" for the response components and daily activities to which they play a vital role.

Appraisal

The MCFRS Technology Section and TEBS have worked well together over the years to ensure timely replacement of hardware and software systems. Through co-management of these systems, their efficiency, and lifecycle is maintained. In 2022 the MCFRS began a program as part of the replacement cycle to replace all "seat" administrative (non-fire station) desktops with laptop computers and docking stations. This level of efficiency allows the administrative employees to carry one platform regardless of work location. This included the replacement of administrative Chief Officer computers and MDC computers into an all-in-one semi-rugged computer to use as both an administrative computer and a response computer.

Plan

Moving forward the MCFRS will continue to advocate for and implement best in class systems for emergency response, data collection and data analysis, in accordance with Montgomery County's enterprise architecture standard and lifecycle plans. The county's Enterprise Architect program is undergoing a transition, and MCFRS will work closely with

our colleagues to ensure we remain compliant and can adequately plan for replacement of critical systems when the time comes.

References

[Montgomery County Government Enterprise Architecture](#)

9D.4 A cybersecurity policy is in place to protect the integrity of the infrastructure, including networks, programs and devices, from unauthorized access that could disrupt essential services.

Description

The Office of Enterprise Information Security (OEIS) within the Department of Technology and Enterprise Business Solutions (TEBS) takes the awareness and application of cyber- and information security very seriously, as does the MCFRS Technology Section. Montgomery County is guided by Administrative Policy 6-7, Information Security, but MCFRS must comply with all local, state and federal laws and regulations, including the Federal Information Privacy Standards (FIPS), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability, Act, and multiple federal data protective regulations (NCIC, CJIS, DOJ and NIST) for the securing of information technology.

Appraisal

In accordance with Administrative Policy 6-7, MCFRS personnel completed monthly Information Security Awareness Training, which trains and sometimes tests personnel on cybersecurity threats and best practices. The system is designed to notify personnel at the beginning of the month, as well as send reminders in the middle of the month to users who haven't completed the training. A program manager maintains and sends a monthly non-compliance report to managers/supervisors to ensure accountability and completing of required training.

In 2021, Montgomery County Government instituted mandatory multi-factor authentication (MFA) for all employees, contractors, volunteers and vendors to further protect members and the County from phishing and ransomware attacks. Training was provided by the County, but the MCFRS Technology Section was also instrumental in helping MCFRS members set up their accounts, use their fobs, communicating updates, etc.

Plan

The MCFRS will continue to focus on cybersecurity measures, in alignment with Montgomery County Government. Behind the scenes, the Technology Section will

continue to work closely with TEBS/OEIS to ensure hardware and critical infrastructure are fortified to withstand attacks, and on the frontlines, to ensure all members are knowledgeable of cyber/information security tactics and measures, so they are constantly looking out for potential vulnerabilities, preventing them when possible, and reporting them if they occur.

References

[Office of Enterprise Information Security](#)

[Montgomery County Administrative Policy 6-7, Information Security](#)

[Montgomery County Information Security Rules of Behavior](#)

[Email providing Security Awareness Training Status reminder to managers](#)

[Monthly ISATP Non-Compliance Report from Technology Services email](#)

[ISATP Compliance Report from CAO](#)