



## Report to CCVESA

February 3, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

My report is below, and I will discuss the highlights, and you can contact me for further clarification as needed.

**Banquet Season:** Is in full swing and I wish to congratulate Hampstead VFC on their 125<sup>th</sup> Anniversary and for their hospitality on Saturday at their anniversary event and their debut of their outstanding events facility which is known as “Fireside on Main” President Dwyer and his staff are to be commended on their 125 yrs. and on the campus that they have created with both a state of the art Fire/EMS station and an events facility that can handle a variety of community and company events.

Saturday 2/1 was quite busy, and my staff members attended the Lineboro annual awards banquet. I also attended the annual awards banquet for Taneytown who is in their 128<sup>th</sup> year of serving their community. Each of these events are an outstanding means to recognize those members who volunteer countless hours in support of their companies. Congratulations to each of the awards recipients. It is also noteworthy that Commissioner Kiler and Vigliotti were in attendance at Hampstead and Taneytown respectively. Their ongoing support of DFEMS and the volunteer component is important to our viability and operational capabilities.

**Staffing (VFCs):** We currently have 193 of our 220 budgeted positions filled which leaves us with only 27 vacancies to fill. We are processing at least that number, and conditional offers have gone out. Our next hire date is Thursday, 2/13/25 and we will be starting 12-20 personnel depending on getting physical results out. Carroll Occupational Health is dealing with a computer breach at Frederick Health their parent organization. That is slowing down our employment processes.

In February we will have two hiring dates which will allow us to staff Lineboro and Union Bridge by 2/27/25 which is consistent with the sunseting of the supplemental CCVESA funding for those stations. This staffing will absolutely occur, and no additional funding will be made. Depending on our hiring parameters one or both of those units may initially begin as BLS units.

We have met with Lineboro and will meet with Union Bridge shortly. Both stations are working with us to hold orientation dates and driver training over the next several weeks. We have identified transfer requests and new personnel to be assigned to both of these stations with 24 total new positions.

This will bring our staffing up to 232 personnel which will complete our original Commissioner approved staffing plan. This will assure 16 transport EMS units daily (24/7) as well as FADO staffing of 13 stations 24/7. In addition, we will continue with our lieutenants at Westminster, Sykesville and Mt. Airy. Three ALS chase cars at Manchester (EMS 101), Taneytown (EMS

102) and Winfield (EMS 103.) We have also upgraded OPS 101 to the Captain level and they will remain as the shift commander running from the PSTC complex.

Future staffing growth is obviously tied to the budget, and we will determine our needs jointly through VFC requests and based on our ongoing data analysis which will be enhanced with the advent of our new ESO reporting system which is in the implementation phase and will go live by 12/25 or sooner as long as we are comfortable with the implementation progress.

Our recruitment will continue based on our budget initiatives for FY-26 which include upgrade of 12 ALS car paramedics to Lieutenant/paramedics, two training/safety lieutenants and 12 requested additional floaters to offset leave, sick and injury staffing. This would bring our total staffing to 246 in FY 26 if approved. Without the floater positions we will pay additional overtime and that is not optimal as many employees choose not to work additional shifts which can lead to “mandatory holdover shifts” That is not desirable and can compromise safety with increased fatigue of personnel.

**Data Analyst Vacancy:** Melissa Long has been selected and will begin on 2/27 with a learning curve. Katie will work with us. She will also take over the ESO project. Melissa is from Carroll County and has 20+ years in the data analytics field from private industry.

**Budget:** We are beginning our progress with the initial stages of the FY-26 budget and DFEMS requests were discussed and updated in a budget work session among our staff last week. We are meeting weekly with our budget analyst. We anticipate another challenging budget year given uncertainty with revenues and specifically with state funding, federal transition and tax yield. I have no specifics and would suggest all companies to keep abreast of developments at both the state and local levels. The CIP (capital) budget was introduced at the Commissioner’s session several weeks ago. That budget includes an SCBA replacement program to be phased in consistent with the life span of our current SCBA. This will result in the centralization of our SCBA and related logistics to a single system as a matter of uniformity and cost effectiveness. We will also be using available grant funding to begin the renovation of the block building at the PSTC for a warehouse/office for our Quartermaster and supply operation.

On the DFEMS side with recommendations from ESAC we have asked for the personnel requests as explained above in order to grow and support our current staffing.

We will did not apply for this year for either SAFER or AFG and are working towards a possible submission for next year’s process. This must be approved by the Commissioners as the budget must pick up the funding after year 3 of the grant. We will also need to determine what positions we would request and could facilitate with continuing funding. Remember that SAFER also deals with recruitment/retention grant funding. The deadline for all AFG submissions was December 20,2024. So, we are looking at 11 months to prepare for a submission for next year. As everyone is aware there is some uncertainty with the federal grants process which will obviously impact our participation.

We also are going to continue with medic replacements and are requesting 3 units/budget v. the two we currently have. Other vehicles to be requested include additional Tahoes for reserve

status, a replacement reserve engine and pick ups for the training lieutenants. We have received our five new medic units, and they are in service, at M49, M59, M29, M139, M127(tomorrow) and a sixth unit is on the assembly line.

I know that the CCVESA budget is in progress, and we will certainly work with you to move this forward but be reasonable with new requests as the budget will be challenged. State funding for certain initiatives such as 508 and the state loan fund may be challenged. We will continue to support low interest apparatus loans through the county process and issuance of bonds. Please contact me if you anticipate requesting county loan funding in FY 26 as we are currently working with several companies. Remember that all apparatus requests must go initially through our established process through ESAC.

Tonight's **508 presentation**/discussion from the Comptroller should update each company and understand we must assure compliance with all state mandates that are associated with 508 funding. We have received the funding for FY-25 and the distribution process will coincide with CCVESA's formula for distribution/utilization of these funds.

(new medics: 29, 49, 39 at CHC ED)



**Chapter 37 changes:** Chapter 37 under the county Code of Regulations is the area that codifies the rules, regulations, and policies of the DFEMS. There are some changes to the current code that involves FLSA/pay cycle, leave use, promotions and the ability to provide acting pay. These were approved in December and will be published on the county website.

**Congratulations:** To newly promoted Lt. Christopher Troutman now assigned to Mt. Airy/1D shift. This was effective on January 2 and Lt. Troutman was previously a FADO on 1C so he knows the station/territory well. We had 24 personnel who tested for this single position and our

selection was based on a multi-phase internal assessment center. We will no longer hire lieutenants from the outside but rather will make this an internally competitive position.

**Station Operations/Supervision:** We are challenged as a system on an ongoing basis in those stations without 24/7 career supervision. Issues occur including career/volunteer relationships, completion of maintenance, housekeeping, supplies and HR management. In an effort to gain greater control of this a General Order has gone into effect to use the three on duty station lieutenants to provide supervision to other stations that are in proximity to their home station. This does not circumvent the authority of VFC officers but rather affixes accountability of all of our employees to a single direct supervisor consistent with supervisory concepts. Although not optimal it is a beginning initiative to assure greater accountability and consistency with station issues. Contact Chief Supko with any questions or concerns with this.

**Volunteer Backgrounds:** These are not progressing at the rate we anticipated. There have been many concerns since we initially began this process. In response to those concerns I have evaluated our current policy and researched many policies for volunteer backgrounds nationwide. I am completing a “draft” of a revised SOP that will be presented at the February ESAC meeting and distributed through your reps for comment and then approval by ESAC. The new SOP will require backgrounds as follows:

1. **All new members**-regardless of membership type
2. **All Operational members** (responders as verified by annual physical compliance)
3. **Persons engaged officially as junior advisors/leaders** (consistent to similar groups)
4. **Members recommended by corporations**-your call based on your criteria
5. Current administrative members would be grandfathered
6. Initial background checks of the above (#1-4) and database monitoring for MVA, criminal databases after initial check.
7. Based on discussions with our insurer. Those who drive any vehicles would be placed in the county driver database for monitoring under the MVA.

These revisions consider your non-riding members who have already been vetted in your companies for many years. Since they aren't engaged in county Fire/EMS operations and performing public trust activities on behalf of county government, we will respect the existing policies of each corporation for members in the administrative classification. This change should put everyone at ease and will streamline our process administration.

**Commendations Board** members had their initial meeting several weeks ago and have since developed a DRAFT SOP which includes procedures and awards classifications. The CCVESA representative Todd Tracey (Gamber) will serve as the Co-Chair along with Lt. Michael Karolenko representing the career side. Beginning in January they will accept submissions for incidents and activities that occurred during calendar year 2024. The goal will be to review and determine the awardees. A ceremony will be determined and should occur sometime in the Spring of 2025 and if sponsorships allowed, we would like to make the annual event a countywide DFEMS awards banquet. The award types and criteria will be determined by the board. They will also process and recommend the annual Chamber of Commerce awards which

include a volunteer and career member of the year. More information to follow as it is developed. Todd will make a presentation tonight and will be available to handle any questions.

**SOPs/Policies:** In concert with the FROPS committee and EMS committee there are a lot of operational, response and other policies that are moving forward and progressing in specific work groups. This includes response, staffing, command officers, training requirements and regional supervision using our limited supervisors. We are also working on a policy that addresses relatives working at the same stations and or shifts. These will all be vetted through ESAC, and our approval process and we are moving to get much of this in place by the early spring. You can contact your FROPS representatives for more information.

**Legislative Session:** The MD General Assembly opened today in Annapolis. I am part of the MD Metro Chiefs legislative group and will also be attending the weekly fire service meetings each Friday in Annapolis. This involves all MD fire related organizations and is lead by Theresa Crisman of the State Fire Marshall. We will be following those legislative initiatives that may have an impact on the Carroll County DFEMS and career/volunteer personnel. CCVESA members such as MSFA VP Simpson and Exec Comm Chair/PP Mark Bilger, PP Bob Cumberland and others are involved. The session will end in early April. The priority seems to be budgetary in light of the \$3billion state deficit.

**Meetings with all corporations/VFCs?** I would like to schedule in early 2025 a meeting with each company and either your board of directors or primary officers (your decision?) The purpose of these meetings is to review our successes as well as our challenges under our evolving DFEMS and where we should be moving together, as we progress in the future. Please contact me via email: [mrobinson@carrollcountymd.gov](mailto:mrobinson@carrollcountymd.gov) with some desired dates. We can schedule at a mutually agreeable time at your stations. I will attend along with DC Supko, and we would like to have an open, civil and honest conversation with each of you with the goal of improvements to our combination system?

Respectfully submitted,

*Chief Michael W. Robinson*