



Strategic Plan for the Provision of Emergency Services

March 2012

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Orange County Chief's Association (OCCA), a 501(c)(3) organization, represents the united voice of the volunteer and professional fire and rescue chiefs serving Orange County. This strategic plan, the first one ever produced for emergency services in the county, introduces OCCA's vision for opportunities for the future of the emergency services delivery system. As Orange County looks forward to smart growth, the OCCA feels the time is right for a coordinated, long-range plan. We hope to use this plan to help us work in partnership with Orange County and other key stakeholders to enhance life safety services. The Orange County Chief's Association is dedicated to providing the most effective, efficient, and compassionate emergency response services for the residents of and visitors to Orange County.

BACKGROUND

Since its formation in the late 1970s, the Orange County Chief's Association has fostered better relationships among the fire and rescue services in Orange County by establishing a forum that promotes a venue for airing shared concerns, developing mutual respect and familiarity, and fostering cooperative relationships. The OCCA strives to provide for policy and resource planning and sharing of best practices for safe, effective, and efficient response and mitigation of emergencies. The Orange County Chief's Association is a member-supported cooperative group of the ten fire chiefs and one rescue squad chief that provide service within Orange County. Two fire departments located outside of Orange County that directly serve portions of the county also participate, but are not dues-paying members.

Figure 1: OCCA Membership	
Full Members	Adjunct Members
Caldwell Fire Department	Mebane Fire Department
Carrboro Fire-Rescue Department	North Chatham Fire Department
Cedar Grove Fire Department	
Chapel Hill Fire Department	
Efland Fire Department	
Eno Fire Department	
New Hope Fire Department	
Orange Grove Fire Department	
Orange Rural Fire Department	
White Cross Fire Department	
South Orange Rescue Squad (SORS)	

Aside from Chapel Hill and Carrboro, every other department serving Orange County is either fully volunteer or a mix of volunteer and paid staff. Volunteer fire and rescue departments have historically been the norm in places like North Carolina, which only recently has begun to experience significant urbanization. Volunteer emergency service personnel represent the best of our citizens, those friends and neighbors who not only willingly answer calls during the middle of the night, but also risk their lives to save life and limb.

Broad demographic trends have made recruiting and retaining volunteers more challenging for some departments, as fewer residents have the time to dedicate to increased training and response requirements. Even so, the volunteer force remains the core of the fire and rescue service for most of Orange County, and is expected to remain so for the foreseeable future.

This arrangement has always been extremely beneficial for taxpayers in Orange County. Especially in the current times of greater financial constraints, volunteer services provide a significant value to the county. **To replace volunteer services in Orange County with paid staff at current staffing levels would cost taxpayers at least \$17 million per year.**¹ This figure jumps to at least \$27 million within the next few years once seven anticipated stations² are completed.³

The needs of the emergency services system have recently come to the forefront in Orange County. The OCCA supports the creation and continued work of the Emergency Services Work Group, which is beginning to address many of the concerns outlined in this report.

A HISTORY OF PROGRESS

The OCCA is proud of its accomplishments in service to the residents of Orange County. Thirteen independent departments work together to form the core of fire and rescue services for Orange County. Together, the OCCA has worked tirelessly to promote best practices, accountability, and cost savings.

- **Group Gear Purchases & Equipment Standardization:** Departments have banded together for group purchases on many occasions, saving money for taxpayers as well ensuring interoperability of equipment.
 - a. Standardized hose connections: (all departments)
 - b. Radios
 - c. Breathing apparatus
 - d. Protective clothing⁴
 - e. Tanker trucks: five departments purchased tankers together in 2009
 - f. Reflective vests: 2006 and 2008 (all departments)
 - g. Velcro helmet tags: 2002-2011 (all departments)

- **Active Pursuit of Grants:** Grant funding allows fire and rescue departments in Orange County to save taxpayer money. The OCCA serves as a forum for sharing successful strategies in this often lengthy and complicated process. Many of these grants required at least a partial match of additional departmental funds, and all applications were strengthened by the cooperative spirit and diligent work efforts resulting from the Orange County Chief's Association.

¹ Base salary of entry level firefighter (plus benefits) times 15 per truck; NFPA 1710 recommends a staff of 15 firefighters per fire truck to keep it fully operational 24 hours per day, year-round. The Department of Insurance requires two trucks, an engine and a tanker, for a station to be certified in rural areas. Times 13 stations (MMA Consulting Group, 2011, p. 13) minus existing paid staff working at volunteer fire departments. 26 full-time personnel work for volunteer fire departments and 15 part-time paid employees; the latter were calculated at half a position (MMA Consulting Group, 2011, p. 12).

² Future stations: Caldwell (1), Efland (2), Orange Grove (2), Orange Rural (1), White Cross (1)

³ Current local salaries range from a base firefighter salary of \$31,500 (\$48,000 with benefits) in Mebane to \$34,736 (\$49,325 with benefits) in Cary. These conservative calculations assume only 2 trucks per station and every firefighter earning an entry-level salary.

⁴ NFPA 1851 recommends replacing protective clothing (turnout gear) every 10 years, or sooner if contaminated.

Figure 2: Examples of Grants Awarded to OCCA Members

Program	Year	Department	Purpose	Amount
FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (AFG)	2001	Chapel Hill	Replaced breathing units	\$183,375
	2002	Chapel Hill	Repaired training facility	\$9,993
	2002	Orange Rural	Thermal imagers	\$18,450
	2003	Carrboro	Vehicle exhaust system	\$40,590
	2003	Orange Rural	800 MHz radios	\$152,280
	2003	North Chatham	Breathing units	\$112,590
	2004	Chapel Hill	800 MHz radios	\$345,120
	2004	New Hope	Breathing units & rescue clothing	\$195,000
	2004	Orange Rural	Breathing units	\$65,286
	2004	New Hope	Hurst rescue tools	\$44,000
	2006	Carrboro	800 MHz radios	\$84,012
	2007	Cedar Grove	800 MHz radios	\$118,000
	2007	Orange Grove	Facilities upgrades	\$40,649
	2007	Orange Grove	800 MHz radios	\$16,845
	2007	Orange Grove	Air packs w/ spare cylinders	\$85,000
	2007	North Chatham	Vehicle exhaust system	\$158,753
	2007	White Cross	Radios and mobile repeater	\$124,117
	2008	Cedar Grove	Air packs	\$35,000
	2008	Cedar Grove	Air compressor & refilling system	\$28,000
	2008	Orange Rural	Exhaust system & other equip.	\$76,266
2008	White Cross	Breathing units & compressor	\$85,430	
2010	White Cross	Thermal imager	\$8,550	
2011	Carrboro	Automatic sprinkler system	\$67,950	
FEMA SAFER	2006	Chapel Hill	12 Positions	\$1,240,748
	2007	Carrboro	3 Positions	\$314,262
	2008	Carrboro	6 Positions ⁵	\$646,075
	2009	Orange Grove	4 Positions ⁶	\$404,364
Firehouse Subs	2009	Chapel Hill	Breathing unit upgrades	\$14,000
NC Division of Forest Resources	2007	Carrboro	Forest fire protective clothing	\$670
	2009	Carrboro	Forest fire equipment	\$416
North Carolina Office of State Fire Marshal	2005	SORS	Protective equipment & radios	\$12,480
	2007	SORS	Rope rescue equipment & radios	\$12,497
	2008	SORS	Water rescue equipment & radios	\$24,994
	2008	White Cross	Protective clothing & headsets	\$10,490
	2009	SORS	Technical rescue gear & radios	\$24,900
	2009	White Cross	Protective clothing	\$4,400
	2010	SORS	Rescue gear, AEDs, & radios	\$19,117
	2010	White Cross	Protective clothing & equipment	\$16,925
	2011	Caldwell	Breathing units & pagers	\$54,400
	2011	SORS	Rescue gear, AED, & radios	\$25,000
Strowd Roses, Inc.	2004	SORS	EMS equipment & radios	\$15,000
	2005	SORS	Community CPR & first aid program	\$10,385
	2007	SORS	Community CPR & first aid program	\$10,000
	2010	SORS	Community CPR & first aid program	\$10,000
	2011	SORS	Community CPR & first aid program	\$10,000
US Smokeless Tobacco	2009	Orange Rural	Polaris ATV	\$11,500
OCCA members have collaboratively obtained grants in excess of				\$5,000,646

⁵ Declined by Carrboro due to lack of certainty about future tax revenue to sustain positions

⁶ Declined by Orange Grove for the same reason: cautious financial stewardship

- **Local Spending Initiative (“Buying Local”):** The OCCA has always prioritized local and in-state vendors on equipment purchases, when possible. Newton’s Fire & Safety Equipment, Inc. in Swepsonville has been the primary vendor for OCCA purchases. CW Williams and Co., LLC, of Rocky Mount, and Municipal Emergency Services, Inc., of Charlotte, have been other major vendors.
- **Children’s Fire Safety House:** After a coordinated fundraising effort involving all departments, the OCCA purchased an educational fire safety trailer in 2005. The Children’s Fire Safety House is available for use in community events countywide.
- **Establishment & Enhancement of Countywide Mutual Aid System:** The OCCA spearheaded the original countywide mutual aid system in 1994. This ensured a standardized, multi-departmental response to fires outside of municipal boundaries.
 - a. In 2005, the OCCA signed an upgraded mutual aid compact, which provides for a three-department response to areas outside of municipal areas.
- **Policy Development:** As independent corporate entities, the fire and rescue departments have relatively independent operational authority. Nevertheless, departments have found it beneficial to unify and develop shared response policies to streamline operations and mutual aid. Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) represent the daily guidelines for departmental operations. Coordinated standards benefit departments by ensuring functional operations at mutual aid scenes. Residents in turn benefit from greater effectiveness. Major accomplishments are highlighted below, but a number of other practices have been initiated by one department and adopted by others through sharing in the OCCA.
 - a. Station Numbering and Resource Typing, mid 1990s: Systematic identification of assets
 - b. Plain Language Radio Communication Procedures, 1992: The OCCA mandated the use of “clear text” on the airwaves to replace 10-codes, a decade before this became a DHS mandate in the wake of September 11th.
 - c. 2 in, 2 out SOP, 1998: The OCCA recommended this best practice response to structure fires.
 - d. ICS protocols SOP, 2011: The Incident Command System (ICS) has been a standard procedure in the fire service for years, and forms a standardized, recognizable frame for organizing a response to major incidents. This policy standardized ICS protocols across departments.
 - e. Accountability SOP, 2011: This allows for Incident Commanders from any agency to track all responders at an emergency scene using the same protocols.
 - f. Mayday SOP, in progress: The OCCA is standardizing the way firefighters from all departments call for help in a life-threatening situation to ensure a consistent response.
- **Major Resource Sharing:** Around the country, many fire departments suffer from “one upsmanship,” in which departments strive to outdo each other in equipment. The Orange County Chief’s Association is proud of the quality apparatus and rescue equipment throughout Orange County, but has cooperatively planned to share major resources like air trucks, ladder trucks, and a heavy rescue truck. This restraint has allowed the fire and rescue departments to provide quality service at reasonable tax rates. Departments also use both the Caldwell training tower and the Chapel Hill training facility to conduct equipment testing and other training.

- **Hardship fund:** In 2009, the OCCA established a fund where firefighters in distress can apply for small grants of emergency financial assistance. The OCCA believes in taking care of their respective personnel, and is mindful of the sacrifices that many personnel, especially volunteers, make in order to contribute to the greater good. Such assistance helps retain valuable trained firefighters.
- **Outside Speakers Forum:** The Orange County Chief's Association brings in speakers periodically to share lessons learned. In November 2010, the OCCA hosted Worcester, Massachusetts Fire Chief John Sullivan, who has spoken nationally about line-of-duty deaths. In January 2011, a representative from Salisbury, NC spoke about losing two firefighters in 2008.

THE STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The Orange County Chief's Association engaged the UNC School of Government in August 2011. School of Government faculty and staff work with local boards, managers, department heads, and nonprofit groups to help them set priorities, plan and manage work towards those priorities, and evaluate results. Lydian Altman, Director of the Strategic Public Leadership Initiative, worked on this project with Master of Public Administration student Jake Pflapsen, who has worked as an emergency service provider for almost ten years in two municipalities and is a Nationally Registered EMT. Lydian and Jake developed a work plan for the overall project, drafted agendas and a discussion exercise, facilitated discussions, and documented the decisions of the group into this final report.

Summary of the Work:

1. Individual Interviews: October-November 2011
 - School of Government representative conducted individual interviews with each OCCA member to discuss concerns and priorities.
2. First Retreat: Saturday, November 19th, 2011
 - Initial retreat focused on airing concerns and developing a shared vision.
3. Evening Planning Session: Tuesday, January 17th, 2012
 - Progressive goal formulation and agreement
4. February Retreat: Saturday, February 11, 2012
 - Retreat finalized goals and objectives, discussed strategies for moving forward.
5. Final plan review: Tuesday, February 28, 2012
 - OCCA representatives met and edited final strategic plan.

GOALS

The Orange County Chief's Association recognizes the important interdependencies that exist to provide emergency services to the citizens of Orange County. These goals are a mix of work that the OCCA can complete independently and with others. Therefore, successful implementation of this plan and completion of each objective often requires cooperation and communication with other key stakeholders.

The OCCA recognizes that the importance of keeping in mind the "big picture," and has supported adopting specific standards and identified timeframes for doing so throughout this plan. The OCCA encourages its key partner agencies to do the same. The Orange County Chief's Association invites and encourages the Orange County Board of Commissioners to carefully consider the goals and objectives in this plan and how they can positively impact the citizens of Orange County.

GOAL I: Ensuring Viable and Reliable Voice and Data Communication

Objective A: To work with Orange County, relevant law enforcement agencies, the North Carolina Highway Patrol, and outside experts to apply technology solutions to insure 99% radio coverage throughout Orange County with building penetration by July 2013. The MMA Report acknowledged these deficiencies, noting that "dead spots and poor building penetration place responders at risk when operating under emergency conditions."⁷

Background: Currently, the VIPER (Voice Interoperability Plan for Emergency Responders) digital 800MHz system provides inadequate radio coverage for emergency services personnel across Orange County. VIPER was originally designed for use at street level by the North Carolina Highway Patrol. Fire and rescue providers often respond to calls beyond the highways, creating substantial safety hazards. As Orange County Emergency services notes: "The current system does not provide 100% coverage – there are "dead spots.""⁸ VIPER has problems with **coverage, capacity, and building penetration.**

Construction of new towers in strategic locations may be required to address this problem. Some fire departments in the county, including Chapel Hill, Efland, and White Cross, have already purchased mobile repeaters to partially address this issue. These repeaters are vehicle based, and cost approximately \$20,000 each, and are not considered adequate substitutes for a full tower.⁹

The VIPER system is strained from its use by all Orange County public safety agencies. Due to the increased usage, users are sometimes confronted with "busy bonks," a beeping when trying to transmit due to system overload. The problem and the solution have been acknowledged by Orange County. "Adding channels to existing towers will improve system capacity. The cost of one channel added to one tower is approximately \$30,000 and multiple channels will be needed on multiple towers."¹⁰

⁷ MMA Consulting Group, April 2011, p. 78

⁸ Orange County Board of Commissioners, November 17, 2011 Action Agenda Item #8-d Abstract: Review of VIPER

⁹ Adapted from Orange County Board of Commissioners, November 17, 2011 Action Agenda Item #1 Abstract: VIPER

¹⁰ Orange County Board of Commissioners, November 17, 2011 Action Agenda Item #1 Abstract: VIPER

Lastly, building penetration is minimal in large structures, including commercial buildings, schools, and university facilities. The fire and rescue services often respond to these areas, operating without radio communication. The aforementioned mobile repeaters partially improve building penetration; however, the OCCA encourages Orange County to adopt legislation mandating repeaters to be placed inside large structures, as some other local North Carolina jurisdictions have required. Local examples include the municipalities of Cary, Chapel Hill, Durham, and Raleigh.

Objective B: To advocate for the continued and ongoing support of the radio paging system with consistent use of audible call information beginning in 2012.

Background: The VHF/UHF repeater system forms the backbone of the radio paging system used by all departments throughout Orange County. Individual departments issue pagers to emergency responders because it would be impractical to purchase take-home radios and require continuous monitoring. Emergency responders have repeatedly been paged and not received follow-up audible call information. This small step is vital to correctly routing personnel when seconds count. The OCCA encourages Orange County Emergency Services to immediately apply appropriate policy and training steps to correct this common oversight.

Cell phones and digital text pagers have repeatedly proven inadequate as sole communication devices for emergency call outs due to coverage and network issues; however, they are still important secondary communication devices used by emergency responders.

Objective C: To encourage the continued development of a robust mobile data network throughout Orange County by January 2014.

Background: Cell phone data networks form the third leg of the emergency communications network, and will be a vital component to the future mobile data network (Goal II, Objective B). The expansion of the existing capacity of this network benefits not only emergency responders, but also citizens with increasing digital connectivity demands.

GOAL II: Improving the 9-1-1 Telecommunications System and Center

Objective A: To work with Orange County to ensure the deployment of a state-of-the-art 911 Telecommunications Center that is able to dispatch emergency calls within 90 seconds or less 90% of the time by January 2014.

Background: "The Telecommunications Center is the public safety answering point and is the link for citizens to access law enforcement and emergency service agencies."¹¹ The OCCA seeks to ensure consistent and reliable dispatching by supporting and encouraging the Orange County 911 Telecommunications Center to fully adopt additional nationally recognized standards¹² and measureable benchmarks for public safety call taking and dispatching. Orange County itself has long-acknowledged "the goal is to process and push the call to the first response agencies within

¹¹ <http://www.co.orange.nc.us/emergency/About.asp>

¹² NFPA 1221: Standard for the Installation, Maintenance, and Use of Emergency Services Communications Systems, 2010 Edition, & APCO Recommended Best Practices PSAPs / Telematics Call Processing, 2009

90 seconds of receipt, but due to the added workload and flat resources, the current average process time is 135 seconds.”¹³

Objective B: To support the acquisition by January 2014 of a Computer Aided Dispatch (CAD) network with live links to Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) in the field.

Background: CAD networks with live links to MDTs offer system managers the ability to remotely supervise an entire emergency services network, while freeing up valuable radio airtime. Responders in the field appreciate the push button status changes, as well as the ability to know exactly what dispatchers know in real time. This two-way information sharing promotes accountability, and some emergency systems have even opened up their CAD systems (in a view-only mode) to online public viewership. Live CAD systems run off wireless networks.

Durham County already supports a live CAD network, as do many jurisdictions around the state and the country. This technology has existed for decades, and proven invaluable in public safety applications. Both Carrboro and Chapel Hill already have static MDTs on their fire apparatus, and these mobile computers will be configured to support online capabilities.

The OCCA envisions Orange County Emergency Services developing the network and providing ongoing technical support, but allowing individual departments to purchase the equipment on their own following the system roll-out by January 2014. This approach, taken in Durham County, has allowed for a phased-in approach to better suit the financial planning needs of individual departments. The OCCA encourages each member department to purchase equipment within a year of the system becoming operational.

Goal III: Encouraging the Adoption of Measureable Emergency Response System Benchmarks and Reporting Norms

Objective A: To establish transparent and measurable benchmarks for EMS service delivery to ensure continuous quality management by January 2013.

Background: Due to differences in how data is collected and measured between the fire and rescue departments and Orange County EMS, benchmarking is currently impossible. The public has a right to be able to assess the quality and effectiveness of the emergency services response network. The Orange County Chief's Association desires transparent and available information regarding EMS response times and coverage.

The OCCA seeks routine reporting to the Orange County Board of Commissioners and support agencies of such commonly used benchmarks as call volume and type, normalized response times, unit availability, unit downtime due to maintenance, time on scene, transport times, Advanced Life Support vs. Basic Life Support cases, delays between first responder and ambulance arrival times, cost per response, third party collection rates, personnel vacancy rates and turnover, training time per employee, and numbers of medical protocol violations.

¹³ Orange County Board of Commissioners, March 25, 2010 Action Agenda Item #2 Abstract: EMS Delivery Report

The live CAD system should facilitate easy and instantaneous reporting of this data in the future; however, the OCCA looks for weekly reports of existing available information in the meantime.

Goal IV: Setting Service Standard Goals for Volunteer Fire Departments

Objective A: To ensure all Orange County residents can receive the maximum fire protection and homeowners' insurance savings available by improving individual departments' ISO ratings¹⁴ in the following manner:

Figure 3: Timeline for ISO Applications	
Goal	Date for ISO Application
ISO Rating of 8	July 2013
ISO Rating of 6	July 2016

Background: Numerous members have already lowered their ISO ratings, and the OCCA has provided a collaborative forum in which fire chiefs share strategies and concerns in their pursuit of this goal. For the first time ever, OCCA members have agreed that all volunteer fire departments will work towards achieving an ISO rating of 6 for residences within a five mile district of fire stations.

The OCCA has undertaken this goal by itself, mindful of the significant challenges it will pose to some departments in terms of upgrading water hauling capabilities, equipment, and personnel training. By working together in a collaborative fashion with Orange County planners and educating citizens about the benefits of lower insurance ratings, the OCCA looks to accomplish this major initiative. The Orange County Chief's Association also acknowledges the link of ISO ratings to commercial development, and the critical role that water supply plays in those calculations. As Orange County looks to foster sustainable growth, the OCCA recognizes the potential for shared solutions.

Objective B: To ensure that all fire and rescue departments in Orange County have sought to adequately implement nationally recognized consensus standards.

Background: The NFPA has established national consensus standards of best practices for emergency responders with training and operational guidelines that exceed ISO's standards. NFPA 1710¹⁵ and NFPA 1720¹⁶ specify best practices for career and volunteer fire departments, respectively. NFPA 1670¹⁷ establishes standards for technical rescue disciplines of the sort provided by South Orange Rescue Squad. OCCA members will research, discuss, and consider the full implications of attaining these standards. The OCCA encourages all its member

¹⁴ "ISO's expert staff collects information about municipal fire protection efforts in communities throughout the United States. In each of those communities, ISO analyzes the relevant data and assigns a Public Protection Classification (PPCTM) — a number from 1 to 10." A grade of 6 represents the maximum insurance savings that can be achieved by a fire department for residential properties. (<http://www.iso.com/faq/ISO-FAQ/The-Public-Protection-Classification-PPC-Program.html>)

¹⁵ NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments, 2010 Edition

¹⁶ NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments, 2010 Edition

¹⁷ NFPA 1670: Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents, 2009 Edition

departments to implement a plan for compliance with their applicable NFPA standards by January 2014, with a goal to meet these standards by January 2016.

GOAL V: Planning for a Countywide Training Facility

Objective A: To work with Orange County to provide a modern, centrally located training facility for firefighters and emergency personnel.

Background: Caldwell Fire Department built the first training facility in Orange County in 1981, a drill tower that is still used frequently. Chapel Hill opened a training facility in the mid-1980s that provides a classroom, drafting pit, drill tower, and burn building. Both facilities are open for shared multi-departmental use; however, they are older and not easily accessible for all departments. The Orange County Chief's Association would like to work towards finalizing a plan for a modern replacement facility by January 2016, with a goal of completion by January 2018.

GOAL VI: Preparing a Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment Plan

Objective A: To work with Orange County to prepare a Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment Plan by January 2013. This plan will establish:

- a. Specific inventory of target hazards and infrastructure protection needs
- b. The frequency, probability, and history of events
- c. The types of responses that are needed in the county
- d. Who is/can be prepared to offer that response, e.g., swift water rescue, mass casualty incidents
- e. Training needs for various departments
- f. Adequate legal protection to the organizations providing the services
- g. That fire protection and emergency service needs shall be considered in the development review and approval processes

Background: Risk assessment plans are proven emergency management tools that integrate GIS based mapping with hazard projections. A comprehensive Multi-Hazard Risk Assessment Plan has never been completed in Orange County, but these plans are required by FEMA for disaster reimbursements.¹⁸ The OCCA would like to be involved in the development of the initial plan and subsequent 5-10 year updates done to maintain the plan.

GOAL VII: Building Better Relationships with Key Stakeholders

Objective A: To ensure sustainable services and recognize the nature of long-term partnership between the Orange County Board of Commissioners and volunteer fire and rescue services by instituting five-year coverage contracts with annual review and extension by January 2013.

Background: Most volunteer fire departments in Orange County operate on old contracts with automatic one-year renewals. This means that either party could decide to terminate the contract, leaving only one year to scramble to find solutions. The North Carolina State Legislature has recognized a five-year contracting period with rural fire departments as an

¹⁸ <http://www.fema.gov/plan/mitplanning/risk.shtm>

appropriate time frame to allow for adjustments in purchasing, planning, and borrowing.¹⁹ Annual review and renewal at the time of budget allocations would in effect extend the contract for another five years, safeguarding the interests of both parties. Neither party benefits when the ability to provide emergency services is jeopardized, or when the viability of long-term and expensive capital planning remains tenuous.

Objective B: To engage in a conversation with the Orange County Board of Commissioners for reimbursement for the provision of first responder EMS services.

Background: Providing emergency services is not free, even when volunteers are used. Orange County, like all other counties in North Carolina, has a legal responsibility to provide emergency medical services. Fire departments are under no obligation to provide these services, yet they are dispatched to and expected to perform first responder services at medical aids.

OCCA members expect that fire departments be compensated for the marginal cost of providing first responder service. These costs of doing business include fuel for transport to non-fire calls, additional training for firefighters expected to perform emergency medical services, and medical supplies. These costs incurred in the provision of first responder service are all currently borne by individual departments. Orange County collects substantial fees for EMS services, though fire departments are not reimbursed for their contributions.

Objective C: To have a joint discussion with Orange County Emergency Services and the Medical Director to develop strategies to adequately use EMT-based Basic Life Support (BLS) capabilities within the county.

Background: South Orange Rescue Squad is a valuable force multiplier for Orange County, with a large base of Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs). Many fire departments also have members who are EMTs. These employees are dissuaded from career progression and higher certification because of limited career opportunities with Orange County Emergency Services, the only Advanced Life Support (ALS) provider in the county.

The Orange County Chief's Association expects to use this discussion to review criteria for first responder dispatch. If necessary, limits should be negotiated for first responder dispatch to preserve fire protection coverage, the top priority for fire departments. The OCCA expects to always be involved in the decision making process.

GOAL VIII: Fostering Increased Public Awareness

Objective A: To develop ongoing strategies to foster greater public awareness of how emergency services are delivered and to highlight the role volunteers play in providing services.

Background: As the MMA Consulting Group noted in their recent report, "Orange County has a complex and sophisticated fire and rescue system."²⁰ The OCCA looks to proactively engage members of the public and elected officials to better convey the roles and responsibilities of the fire and rescue services in Orange County.

¹⁹ G.S. § 160A-57.58

²⁰ MMA Consulting Group, April 2011, p. 1

Prior to this time, no community expectations have been established for what Orange County citizens want in emergency services. Decisions are made through year-to-year budget requests based on the professional recommendations of emergency services leaders to boards or appointed managers. The Orange County Chief's Association welcomes a public discussion regarding service level expectations, and hopes to provide accurate information to advance this conversation.

Key points to address in public outreach

- What does "response time" mean and who/what agencies are involved in the equation? Explain any existing gaps. ("Why does the fire truck/ambulance take so long?")
- The value of leveraging paid staff with volunteers. Explain how much money Orange County saves by using volunteer fire and rescue departments.
- The value of the levels of service and training offered in departments, along with the number of hours donated through volunteer fire departments and South Orange Rescue Squad.
- ISO ratings and insurance link: how marginally higher taxes help homeowners save significant amounts of money.
- The 2012 OCCA Strategic Plan as a foundation for noting past successes and direction for future progress.

CONCLUSION

With Orange County's "changing demographics and increased urbanization"²¹ comes the responsibility for quality fire protection and life safety services. The Orange County Chief's Association urges thoughtful public consideration and discussion of the goals contained in this report, and looks forward to a future of collaborative progress built on our tradition of past successes. As noted by Orange County Emergency Services, "appropriate resources must be available to ensure an equitable, high-performance service delivery system."²² The Orange County Chief's Association is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure this vision of emergency services delivery becomes a reality.

²¹ Orange County Board of Commissioners, March 25, 2010 Action Agenda Item #2 Abstract: EMS Delivery Report

²² Orange County Board of Commissioners, March 25, 2010 Action Agenda Item #2 Abstract: EMS Delivery Report

Caldwell Fire Department

Chief Brad Allison

Orange Grove Fire Department

Chief Tommy Holmes

Carrboro Fire-Rescue Department

Chief Travis Crabtree

Orange Rural Fire Department

Chief Jeff Cabe

Cedar Grove Fire Department

Chief Jeff Borland

White Cross Fire Department

Chief Jerry Lloyd

Chapel Hill Fire Department

Chief Dan Jones

South Orange Rescue Squad

Chief Matthew Mauzy

Efland Fire Department

Chief Kevin Brooks

Mebane Fire Department

Chief Bob Louis

Eno Fire Department

Chief Bryan Baker

North Chatham Fire Department

Chief John Strowd

New Hope Fire Department

Chief Mike Tapp

