

Wake County Fire Station Closure Update

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The Board of Commissioners today received an update from the Wake County Fire Marshal on the fire station closure project. The update was delivered at the board's works session. The Fire Marshal's office reports board members have been receiving questions about the station closure process from residents in northern Wake County. The update included [this presentation](#) . Also, NBC17 is reporting on this closure process. [Read their story](#).

Next steps, as listed in the presentation, are (a.) complete assessment of cost criterion, (b.) Fire Commission reviews staff analysis, (c.) Fire Commission receives feedback from fire departments and others, (d.) Fire Commission considers recommendation, (e.) Informational sessions for citizens in areas served by fire stations, and (f.) Recommendation forwarded to Board of Commissioners.

The fire stations being evaluated for closure criteria are Bay Leaf #3, Falls, New Hope #1, and Western Wake. Search the blog to learn more, in the upper-right corner. Try keywords such as "closure." There are a number of prior postings.

I wonder how much of a check the County cut to the Town of Cary for the calls they ran in the "suburban fire district" last year, and if that was included in the \$60,000 they "saved" Kicker is that Western Wake is still running calls in that district with Cary FD. So now you're doubling up on all of the calls, which would seem to cost more since the TOC is paid per call.

I think that if the citizens who are affected could step up and speak out on this issue the BOC might listen. Also it's interesting that now Western Wake is running closest station calls within Raleigh's city limits, providing an increased service to the citizens and visitors in those areas. I just want the whole truth to be given out, with cold hard facts, not statistics that are skewed to what the fire marshall's office wants to see.

CFP 7021 - 10/12/09 - 20:00

Falls fire department is saving Raleigh's butt right now. If E-22 has a call in Bedford Town it is a 10-12 minute response time.

C. Smith - 10/12/09 - 20:53

CFP 7021 you are dead on with your comments, for the county to insult everyone's intelligence and actually "believe" they saved us tax payers 60k is ludicrous, I don't know exact figures but I heard the county paid TOC atleast 80% of the 60k figure they used to provide fire protection to the former WWFD#2 area. This is a very complex issue, it is amazing that the county would say those closet to the closed station "could" experience longer response times and us taxpayers say o.k. we will wait longer just to "save" a very small amount of money in the grand scheme. Maybe we could get the county to fund 2or3 less Dodge Chargers per year and fund all the stations for the foreseeable future. RC

Random citizen - 10/12/09 - 21:06

If the county saves \$60,000 there, which is pennies, then they will just piss it away on something else. When you get elected to office or get promoted beyond your intelligence, I think they suck your brain out of your head.

C.Smith ([Email](#)) - 10/12/09 - 21:25

Is Engine 25 out of service or something? That's the only way E22 would be getting a 10-12 minute response time from its fellow companies. E15 is MUCH closer than 10-12 minutes. E19 even, if they go straight down Capital. The only issues I know of are 1.) E25 has picked up recently and could be out on another call, same goes for E15 or E19 since they are MUCH busier than E25 and 2.) the fact that the Neuse River bridge can't support Ladder 5 so it always has to go up Capital, which though out of its way a bit, is STILL much closer than 10-12 minutes.

North Side Fireman - 10/13/09 - 00:55

I say shut em down. Every time these departments get dispatched you hear a Raleigh or Cary unit going also. And the reason I feel this way is that it simply doesn't effect me none. The county is growing so you are going to have growing pains. That's my opinion.

jjg - 10/13/09 - 06:56

What about EW St.2? Wake New-Hope can cover the area north of Knightdale. How much is being spent on that station's budget? Isn't there station in the town limits of Knightdale?

TK - 10/13/09 - 10:20

This is quickly becoming the next dead horse...let's put him in the stable beside foam vs smoothie.

SA - 10/13/09 - 10:38

its been a dead horse for a while now...it comes up every now and then and most of the time you hear the same ole stories.

I feel that the county doesnt really look at this big picture on alot of things. Dont get me wrong, i think the more help u get on a call the better you are but still, look at some of the other districts in the county whose calls out number those of the stations that are in danger of being shut down. When im at work and here new hope or western wake or pretty much all of the stations listed, they are normally goin with multiple raleigh units. Some of the other districts run calls by thereselves and deplete what little manpower they have. Theres places in our rural areas that take 6-8 minutes haulin @\$\$ to get to. If they are gonna shut down stations to use the money else where i hope that they have looked at these type of issues. I hate it for those stations in danger...whats gonna happen to their jobs, their equipment, their community in which they serve?

CTK - 10/13/09 - 11:16

If the people who live in thoses areas really knew how little the country would be saving, In this persons view they would be screaming "WHY"

cey ([Email](#)) - 10/13/09 - 13:59

Preach it CTK. The county needs to quit spending the millions of tax dollars on these stations and distibute what they save to the areas in need. It's common sense. I'm sorry that people may loose their jobs and volunteers would be forced to quit, but there are a lot of departments that need people.

jg - 10/13/09 - 14:35

hey jg, look at the numbers and not the wims of the commissioners. The figures DO NOT support the closings. Ask the town of Cary

cey ([Email](#)) - 10/13/09 - 15:50

It's actually quite funny to read this , better than the Sunday morning funnies. The only one that seems to have any brain activity is CFP7021. Public safety is already underfunded and you're FOR reducing resources? Instead of cutting what it takes to protect live and property, how about cut some of the handouts to illegal immigrants and other worthless programs? Every time you take away a firetruck, ambulance, or police car it hurts us as much as the citizens we protect. I don't know about you, but I don't want a long wait for help when I need it. It's a Brotherhood, FTM-PTB! We should ALL be FIGHTING to KEEP our brothers! (not stabbing them in the back)

ncff - 10/13/09 - 17:38

Wow the drama queens on this blog!! Nobody is stabbing anyone in the back. Places like Hopkins that is WAYYYY out in the county, i understand having them staffed. But what i think jg is refering to is when u hear new hope or falls or bay leaf get dispatched, its with raleigh. Raleigh has a pile of people that work there, if u have multiple units from raleigh going and can most of the time handle the situation, why keep spending money on things that can be spent in a more useful way. Like i said before, the help is always appreciated and sometimes when places grow and spending gets looked at, topics like this come up. Yes it is unfortunate to the "brothers" that may loose their home but hopefully the funds that are "saved" regardless of how much or little can be used to benefit places in need.

Quit thinking inside the box and being so defensive about things. Sometimes good comes out of situations like this, it may seem bad at first but...

CTK - 10/13/09 - 18:02

forgot to add something...

I understand that some of these firemen will loose out on full/part-time money. I can only imagine the stress its putting on these folks. If there is ways to look at how to keep these places in operation and generate more funds, lets blog about that.

CTK - 10/13/09 - 18:05

Closing fire stations is NEVER a good thing.

ncff - 10/13/09 - 19:20

I'm not a fan of fire house closings. I agree with one of the above posters that it is a resource that we have that's underfunded/supported, and

when someone calls 911, it's that much faster that someone receives help, which to me should be our #1 goal. Waiting on SOMEONE to show up (I don't care who), or waiting on your second in company sucks, and closing a house would remove any chance of someone getting faster service, or that next in company to help rescue a victim or down FF.

Instead of closing a house, what about relocating? Wouldn't moving the house so that it is strategically placed to serve an area in both the county and city area be more advantageous? It could serve as primary for the county and closet unit/backup/second in unit to outlying city area. This way there is still a firehouse, jobs are saved, and the community gets fire/ems protection that much faster. This does however bring up minimum staffing and training requirements, which has been beaten to death so many times already, so we won't go down that road. I don't live in the Raleigh/Wake area anymore, and I was never really familiar with the western side of the county (WW, Cary, Fairview, Swift Creek) so I can't comment on that part of the situation.

Rides An Engine - 10/13/09 - 21:06

FYI, the county has stated that no one will loose their FULL TIME jobs with this possiable closure.

info - 10/13/09 - 22:55

The Cary situation has me all crazy. When there was a WW fire station in town, it made sense for them to respond with Cary to areas where they were closer than the first due Cary engine, so now why, since that station is closed, is an engine running from West Raleigh all the way into downtown Cary? There's no money being saved doing that. For that question why does someone always run with Cary regardless of where they have a structure fire? Does Cary pay the County some fee for that? If not, it seems like the County is subsidizing fire protection in the Town for free. And if there are fire stations closed, no money is saved the cost is only transferred as there are many other houses in the county that need personnel that remain unfunded from year to year. It's not about saving money its about putting it where its needed most and the houses on the list are more than protected with their doors shut as there are plenty of engines nearby that can get there as fast or quicker.

eyeswideopen - 10/13/09 - 23:01

No closing a fire station isn't a good thing. But you need to think out side of the box. These county units are not Raleigh units. If not closing stations would have never happened then Durham Highway would have never closed the doors on their station at Pleasant Valley. They have closed them in the past and it's now time to close more. How many county departments do you see in the middle of a big city? NONE! Look at the map on this website and look at how close the stations are around the city. Yea they run more calls than the rural departments, but thats when you close the four stations that have been chosen and open four more in the county. Check this link out and look at how rediculous the response areas are for some of these departments: <http://imaps.co.wake.nc.us/imaps/main.ht>.

jg - 10/13/09 - 23:18

"It's not about saving money its about putting it where its needed most and the houses on the list are more than protected with their doors shut as there are plenty of engines nearby that can get there as fast or quicker"

AMEN! eyeswideopen.

JG, you bring up a good point with the map. There are plenty of areas in the southern portion of the county that have to respond in areas where there should already be additional stations. Town funding hasnt let it happen yet. County money is not there so what can you do? You can look at some of the stations in danger and see that they are just a little speck surrounded by raleigh engines and truck companies that have a 3 to 4 min arrival time. 2 engines on a sick call..a little heavy if u ask me. On a code...send me some more. Quick responses are great and very much needed but if you have multiple units coming to you any how that will all be there within a few short minutes, look at those areas to the south and north eastern parts of the county where its all they can do to provide a engine in 6 to 7 minutes. Thats where you need help at.

CTK - 10/13/09 - 23:36

As always, this is an interesting debate. My take on it is this...if the county spent as much money on ensuring that all of the departments had the proper resources to provide the service as they have on trying to close these stations, the entire county and city would be 1000% better! Instead of arguing back and forth about keeping them open or closing them, make the county communicate with the fire chiefs and provide them with the necessary resources to operate a trained/staffed fire station 24 hrs (full time staff, vol. duty crew pay, etc) Then spend some money on setting up a system where the CLOSEST of any apparatus gets dispatched to the call. It is utterly ridiculous to have city apparatus passing one or more county stations while responding to calls and county apparatus passing one or more city stations. Develop a standardized incident/fireground operations manual for the whole county, including Raleigh and Cary, and implement it. There is so much of a sandbox thing around here and duplication of efforts for no reason other than egos. Someone mentioned it not being a 10-12 min response for E-22 L-5 to get to E-25's area, well working on the north side, I know for a FACT that it takes them that long and often longer to get to half of E-25's area. That area is a prime example of why we should send the closest apparatus no matter who's name is on the door. A sample structure fire response should be E-25, Falls engine, Wake Forest E-2, Wake Forest L-1, and Raleigh R-1 and BC-1. That would be the CLOSEST (and staffed)

apparatus, so who really would lose?

I say quit worrying about and concentrating on closing fire stations and start working on a system that better utilizes ALL fire stations within the county (Raleigh and Cary included). After all isn't it supposed to be about the citizens anyway?

Off my soapbox... stay safe out there folks!

Wayne - 10/13/09 - 23:47

I agree with "rides", how about relocating versus closing? If they shut down Bayleaf #3 for example, which would make sense, Bayleaf can sell the property and build a firehouse in parts of their territory better suited. Same with New-Hope, I'm not familiar with their territory, but is there a better location for their firehouse? It was inevitable, that the city would eventually creep out and swallow up some of these incorporated departments, but surely there's area(s) in the county which these firehouses can be re-located. Maybe there isn't.

Was it ever revealed how much the city said it would cost to provide service for the "county" areas?

Silver - 10/13/09 - 23:52

Silver, I don't believe that that would be an option because the city engines do not carry enough water to service the nonhydranted areas. The city would have to buy a bunch of tankers, staff them, train everyone on drafting, etc. It would be a complete nightmare that I don't think they would even consider doing. Plus it would likely hurt their ISO rating.

Believe this is right - 10/14/09 - 00:27

I hear what you're saying, but there was something previously stated on Mikey's blog when this stuff started, that the city proposed some sort of contract. I'm sure if they implemented it, every "in and out" would be covered.

Silver - 10/14/09 - 00:31

The historical perspective on station closings due to municipal annexation impact include:

Six Forks Road (later just Six Forks, later merged with Bay Leaf), opened in 1956, moved farther north in 1962, and moved even farther north and west in 1974

Western Boulevard, opened in 1957, closed in 1960, and reformed as Fairground (later Fairgrounds, later merged with Yrac to form Western Wake) in 1961.

Durham Highway, opened in 1965, and moved north and west in the 1980s. They opened Station 2 in 1976, then closed Station 1 in the 1980s. They opened the present Station 1 in 1992. In 2000, Raleigh Station 23 opened at the Station 2 location.

Legeros - 10/14/09 - 06:11

Prior postings with information on these closures:

July 16, 2009 Fire Commission meeting presentation on evaluating and applying the fire commission's closure criteria for Wake County fire stations: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

Agenda from that meeting: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

Recalling the TriData study: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

Legeros - 10/14/09 - 06:12

And here's the presentation that TriData made to the Fire Commission in January 2004, upon completion of their report: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

They recommended a LOT of station location changes for 2004-2018, and their recommendations were not terribly well received, if memory serves.

See above presentations for more information on these recommendations:

- Relocate Holly Springs #2 to 10200 block of Holly Springs Road (by FY2004)

- Relocate Knightdale to Laurens Way at McKnight Drive (by FY2006)
- Relocate Garner #1 to Benson Road and Highway 70 (by FY2008)
- Relocate Apex #1 to East Williams Street and Lufkin Road (by FY2010)
- Initiate closure process for Falls (begin FY2005)
- Initiate closure process for Morrisville #3 when Cary #7 opens next door
- Initiate closure process for Western Wake #1 (begin FY2005)
- Initiate closure process for Western Wake #2 (begin FY2005)
- Initiate closure process for New Hope #1 (begin FY2005)
- Initiate closure process for Eastern Wake #2 (begin FY2005)
- Initiate closure process for Bay Leaf #3 (begin FY2005)
- Build new Knightdale station near 2128 Mingo Bluff Boulevard (open FY2006)
- Build new Apex station near Kelly Road and Olive Chapel Road (open FY2006)
- Build new Garner station at Greenfield Parkway near Highway 70 (open FY2006)
- Build new station at Main Street and Harris Road in Wake Forest (open FY2007)
- Build new station at Durant Road and Koupela Road (open FY2006)
- Build new station at Thompson Mill Road and Elmo Road (open FY2009)
- Build new Fuquay-Varina station at Hilltop Needmore Road and Sunset Lake Road (open FY2010)
- Build new Eastern Wake Station in 3200 block of Smithfield Road (open FY2010)

Legeros - 10/14/09 - 06:31

In fact, the entire report was not well-received by the Fire Commission. Those were packed meetings, when these results were released. Very controversial, if memory serves. Very mixed response.

Legeros - 10/14/09 - 06:45

You know, this closure process might be a pretty good gift to the Wake County fire service, in the context of opportunity for public education. Especially as citizens, lawmakers, and reporters become increasingly interested. From the Fire Marshal's office down to the individual department, there are some really good windows for education here. Heck, take it down to the individual unit! If engine companies find themselves quizzed on the street about "is my fire station going to close," equip them with flash cards, with talking points. That ensures a consistent message across all personnel.

Maybe now is the perfect time to educate fire service consumers on exactly what they're receiving, where the trucks come from, how staffing impacts it, how water supply works, and so forth. Bundle in fire prevention for extra credit. Learn 'em about response times, building construction, and so forth.

Obviously, the opportunity for bias also presents itself. In a perfect world, we'd disseminate facts that everyone agrees upon. But with station closures on the table, there's likely to be some varied perspectives. And probably downright oppositional views. I guess that's the nature of the beast. It'll be great if Mr. and Mrs. Six Pack is clearly informed. It'll suck if they walk away confused. This person told me one thing, that person

told me another. Etc.

Legeros - 10/14/09 - 06:58

I believe there is one correction Mike. I thought the Heery study showed a station at Raven Ridge and Falls of Neuse instead of Durant and Koupela.

Rauer - 10/14/09 - 08:27

Whew, interesting mix of responses.

In my opinion we are comparing apples to oranges and grapes here. In the "county" we have to realize the mixture of departments and stations that we have and the level of what I will call "coverage" they provide. First you have to realize that within the county are smaller municipalities that have to provide the services to their citizens, so we're talking about Apex, Fuquay, Zebulon, Holly Springs, Morrisville, etc. Now within those departments they contract with the "county" to provide coverage to the rural areas that surround them. Most (if not all) of these departments (Wake Forest included) are staffed by full-time personnel and have multiple stations that they operate out of.

Now you have your truly municipal departments, Raleigh, Cary and Knightdale. These depts only respond within their city limits, but will respond to requests for mutual aid outside of their city limits. They, once again are staffed by full-time personnel (with Knightdale having supplemental volunteers)

Now you have those "contract" departments. Swift Creek, Fairview, Bay Leaf, Stony Hill, Falls, Western Wake, Wake-New Hope, Hopkins, Durham Highway. This is where the real level of difference in coverage is brought to light. Most of these departments have pretty similar call volume I would guess (maybe taking Stony Hill and Hopkins out of the mix). But they are all staffed strikingly different? Why is this? Why does Durham Highway get funded for full-time paid coverage, while Western Wake doesn't? Why does Wake-New Hope have full-time people while Swift Creek doesn't? This is where the real issue lies in my mind. If all of these departments was to be brought to an equal level of staffing "coverage" if you will then couldn't we continue providing an exceptional level of service to the citizens of our county?

I read an interesting point brought up about city v. county trucks. It takes 2 city engines to provide the water of 1 county truck. Now how are you going to explain to Mr. and Mrs. Homeowner while their house is burning down that you (as a city engine) are not set up or designed to fight "rural" fires in areas where water supply is an issue? Ok great you have a tanker coming from 2 departments away(10-15 minutes if they're not on another call). Now when they get there where's your hard suction? Whoops forgot to think about that. What about their ISO ratings, where they once were a 4 or a 6 they are now a 9 even with their "city" fire protection that provides them a better, faster, more staffed service. Whoops forgot to think about that pesky water supply issue.

I'm still not 100% sure what the whole point is in shutting down firehouses is. If it's to reallocate funds to other departments "in need" (and just which departments are those again? Who's hurting out there?) Then this whole "countywide fire tax" thing is a bunch of BS. If I were a citizen in one of the affected areas and my money was being shipped to the other side of the county while you shut down my firehouse I would be at every fire commission and BOC meeting and be on WRAL and the News & Observer and possibly filing a lawsuit.

That's about it for now. Oh yeah... and what Wayne said!

CFP 7021 - 10/14/09 - 09:40

Shev, good post! Those municipalities that have to provide service to the town and rural areas are what i think some of us are referring to about taking 6-7 minutes to get too. And thats only with 1 company of 3 or 4 with a thousand gallons of water. Sure some of these stations have an engine, tanker, maybe a rescue but when you only have 3 people there its kinda hard to get everything out. You have to wait on another one of your stations to take even longer getting there because they are so far out. Put county stations out in these areas or fork up more funds and build one and let the municipalities that have to provide that protection work something out with hiring personel. Ex. Fuquay station 3/ Willow springs fire station, owned by the county operated and staffed by the town of fuquay.

CTK - 10/14/09 - 09:57

What are we really trying to accomplish here?? The bottom line is that the tax payers of Wake County should expect the same level of service regardless of where they reside/commute or otherwise be at :) There's no way that "closing" stations will facilitate that. I think we need to do a better job of educating the Commissioners as to what it really take to get the job done. Each area has it's own challenges and strengths to handle them. If resources are viewed as under-utilized or "wasted" then re-locate them. Why would anyone think that simply shutting doors will be more cost effective. The city of Raleigh couldn't bear the liability of rural coverage without changing out their entire fleet and procedures. Likewise, most county departments are not as suited for urban issues that arise. If anything, we need more personnel and

equipment to adequately provide for the best interests of the tax payers. Let's stop giving all our money to the true wastes that this county funds and keep our communities safe!

Mike - 10/14/09 - 13:50

Shev, Wayne as always excellent comments. This has been a good read. What would it take to make the "people in Charge" see the light? Or at least listen to reason?

Kermit - 10/14/09 - 15:17

I think that a good number of these stations are a burden on the Wake County Tax payer! C. Smith, a 10-12 minute response time really? Who's watch are you looking at? Maybe St. 19 or 15 I can see your point but not 22 or 25. Come on man. I understand that closing these stations may be hard to deal with being a volunteer my self, but lets face the facts. If a large municiple department is knocking on your door you might as well let them in.

Deez - 10/14/09 - 17:47

and you really think that by shutting houses down the taxpayer is going to see a smaller amount on their tax bill next to the Fire Tax? Nope, they're still going to pay the same amount, it's just going to go to "other" departments out there... Like I said before who's hurting in Wake County? Who needs more rigs (since you can't add to your fleet and every department in the county has a fairly new pumper, tanker, brush truck, support vehicle or aerial), who needs more gear (since every department is allocated gear by the County). Or maybe it's just so we can have some more full time chief's out there making those crazy salaries or giving them raises (and no I'm not talking about municipal chiefs). Just think they could have kept WW #2 open for less than a certain non-municipal chief makes per year. There's the real cost savings right there!

Sorry but if we're going there let's go there. There's way too much inequality in staffing and payrolls out there to save money by shutting houses down. How is that providing the highest level of service to the citizens and visitors of this county? As one of the fastest growing counties in the nation this should not even be thought in anybody's mind.

CFP 7021 - 10/14/09 - 18:24

Just a question, how many on this post are looking at loosing work due to possible house closings?

Inquiring? - 10/14/09 - 19:05

is Western wake station really closed? I saw a fire engine parked in a bay there as recently as last week?

charlie - 10/14/09 - 20:14

Why? Staffing and other priorities have been identified, but the money isn't there to make them happen. Very quickly, station closure rises to the top because there is a perceived significant cost savings. Agreed, as long as there is joint response, the amount saved is questionable. In many of these areas, if you remove the duplicate response like Wayne suggested, some of these stations would rarely respond to a call. Water supply would be an issue, but just in those areas without hydrants. Much of the County area they're talking about is significantly hydranted. Stations on every corner would be nice, but we'd have no money to staff any of them.

Why not more consideration of the other things which could save money, such as the consolidation of some of the administrative functions and use of that money to hire firefighters. Whole lot of administrative overhead in this county. There's things to do to save the cash, but few are popular.

Lastly, I don't know how much the County has spent on this, but some of the things Wayne has suggested (true closest station response) wouldn't cost much money either. Just got to change folks minds.

Chris - 10/14/09 - 20:58

Firehouses burdening the tax payers??? Seriously? What's burdening the taxpayers is the FAILURE of the county's leadership and the egos of some fire chiefs that would do their citizens and taxpayers a HUGE favor by LEAVING! Again, like many of us have said: it is 2009 and almost 2010, WHY IS WAKE COUNTY OPERATING LIKE IT'S 1979? Why do these petty turf wars still exist? Why is the county working so hard to close fire stations instead of working toward BETTER utilization of the existing stations. Instead of buying departments brand new apparatus that they can't get out in a reasonable amount of time, how about they spend that money on another training facility for the north side of the county? How about developing response standards for the county? How about a operations manual for the county for ALL to follow? Why does EVERY department need 2-3 pumpers in each station when they can barely get one out fully staffed? Why spend so much time and money opposing these things? I tell people all of the time: "I don't care who's name is on the door, when I want/need something, I want the CLOSEST STAFFED resource that I ask for, PERIOD!" What are so many people afraid of? If you feel threatened by the fact that someone may be

smarter than you or because you feel like they may be better than you at something THEN GET OFF YOUR LAZY BUTT AND GO GET THE EDUCATION OR TRAINING OR WHATEVER! Don't get upset with those of us that did.

I guess that the bottom line point that I am trying to make is this: Instead of working so hard to close firehouses and against each other, start working to improve the overall service to the citizens here in the capital county and city! That would mean people dropping their egos and actually getting along, ah but we wouldn't want that would we?

As always, stay safe out there folks! The only ones that are looking out for us IS US!

Wayne - 10/14/09 - 21:03

The Fire Commission is broken and we are on the verge of some significant changes if the County leadership does not change or otherwise adapt (this includes the Fire Commission and the Fire Marshall's office). Closing stations is not the solution here right now, but is inevitable. The current problem is ineffective management of the APPLICATION of tax revenues and the lack of a clear strategic plan. Maybe the old Tri-Data report(s) are more accurate than we chose to believe when they were introduced and REALLY do have merit. It was mentioned by Shevais earlier... why is there so much inequity here? FT, PT, No Time, Paid chiefs, part-time chiefs, convoluted committees, poor communication, inexperienced or uneducated leadership and managers..... maybe a little politics? Anyway, we are getting closer to a county wide department. Can you say New Hanover Co.? Y'all Stay safe!

A.C. Rich - 10/14/09 - 22:16

Oh yeah... one more thing. I urge you to all get involved at the Fire Commission level. Talking about it here is a good place to vent frustrations, but if you're serious about change, you need to get involved. I am part of that leadership we critically speak about, but I seem to be a minority. I have tried to be a voice of reason for years, but seem to be outnumbered... Stay safe!!!

A.C. Rich - 10/14/09 - 22:25

Applied twice, no go. I guess the old lady from Eastern Wake County had more paid and vollie experience than I did....oh well!!

Silver - 10/14/09 - 22:47

You gave it a good shot Jeff, but she had better politics. Even still, I have never seen many who blog here at the meetings except for Mike and myself. If you want the Fire Commission to really act (or react for that matter), get busy in their meetings and even more, educate the county commissioners. It will not be easy, but persistence can actually pay off. Blabbing on a blog, although fun, will not accomplish anything if you want change. This is not a spectator sport. Seriously, attempt to educate yourself on what is happening and make some informed comments to these decision makers (call, write, or email). When you do, you better have a "strong case" because it is very hard to break a preexisting perception.

A.C. Rich - 10/14/09 - 23:32

A.C. makes an important about the importance of politics. You might have strong bonafides. You might have attended fire commission meetings. You might be a fixture at said meetings. But unless you're a known entity to the commissioners, the chances of appointment are probably slim. More thoughts on inroads to involvement later.

Legeros - 10/15/09 - 07:45

wayne, as far as being on the same page in the county....wow, good luck! Ive had the oppurtunity to work at a couple of places in the county and sit back and wonder why we even have NIMS. If we are required to take it and its been proven to work, why are we still using "condition blue" or "code 2 condition red"? Thats definately a different horse but i see what you are talkin about and totally support that issue. I also have questions into why the county is letting those departments who may only run a couple of calls a week, get these huge rescues and engines. Is there really a need for them to be spending 6 to 7 hundred thousands of dollars for something that would have done the exact same job but cost a third of that. Is common sense something that is even required anymore for anything. You can have all these degrees and spent tons of money and time in school and really be nothing more than book smart. Do people even think about the what ifs anymore or try to look into the future?

CTK - 10/15/09 - 11:13

Quit buying replacement trucks that don't run and are replacing trucks that although are timed out per the county work great, and use that money for staffing. The County is headed toward one department. Why doesn't someone step up and think about starting a Local for all the county guys. Yes, we work different places but our money and contracts are all handled through the Fire Commission and Fire Marshall's office. So we could use them as one voice.

Mike - 10/15/09 - 11:28

So, what would be involved in transistioning to a countywide fire department?

Citizen - 10/15/09 - 13:05

Isn't the WCFFA supposed to be the voice of the firefighter's to the fire commission?

WCFFA ([Web Site](#)) - 10/15/09 - 18:22

CTK-

You're absolutely right, everyone is SUPPOSED to have taken the NIMS stuff, but when you have been operating like it's 1979 for the last thirty years, it's not gonna change overnight. Plus...how many folks just "took the test" with the answers already given to them? I'd be real interested in knowing how many folks out there know the difference between section, branch, group, or division. But like you said, that is a horse of a different color and a week long discussion!

A.C.-

As always excellent points and thank you for being a voice of reason. I am sure that you get more frustrated than we little people do! It would be great if everyone would get more involved but when a few do, they get shot down (like Silver) and that disheartens the rest.

Will it take the county completely taking over the rural departments to bring everything (everyone) in line or will simply threatening to do it work? Some of the departments do a great job with what they are allowed to work with each other, while others do a horrible job! Like Shevais asked: Why is there so much inequality across the county? Why is X dept. allowed to have/get whatever they want and Y dept not? Why does the county continue to buy apparatus for these departments that DON'T have the available staff to get them out?

Wake County is experiencing a lot of growing pains but many, who are in positions of power, are too afraid to look at other areas that have already been through it and learn from them. Again, what are these people afraid of? Why are so many people afraid to play along? Is it still hurt feelings from crap that happened 30 years ago? Is the fact that some departments are more progressive and it threatens their surrounding companies?

There are some great leaders out there and their departments reflect that leadership through progressive thinking or actions. Things like a water supply strike team for structure fires in their area and marking units out of service when you know that you don't have the available manpower to staff all of your apparatus. These are from 2 different departments that aren't beside each other, but through progressive thinking they are getting the job done for their respective areas.

Now, back to the subject at hand...if the county and city would better utilize existing stations instead of starting a pissing contest about who's district it's in, then what's the problem? If the county spent the money ENSURING that ALL departments were on an even playing field and everyone was on the same page, what does it matter that a county engine ran a call in the city without the city or a city engine ran a call in the county without the county engine? Why waste the money on 2 (or sometimes 3-4) pieces going to a call when only 1 is needed? Again, shouldn't it be about seamless coverage, with the closest apparatus handling the incident, to provide the service to the citizens?

Wayne - 10/15/09 - 18:37

Who are the players in this mess that we're discussing? I'll take a stab...

County Manager. Meet him here: [http://www.wakegov.com/about/leadership/..](http://www.wakegov.com/about/leadership/)

Board of Commissioners. Seven of them. Meet them here: <http://www.wakegov.com/commissioners/>

Fire Commission, which the Board of Commissioners looks to for guidance. The fire commission has 16 seats, spelled out here: <http://www.wakegov.com/fire/commission..> Five seats are citizens/consumers.

Fire Commission Committees, comprised of commission members, fire chiefs, and other interested parties.

County Fire/Rescue staff. Led by the Fire Marshall and a mess of deputy marshals. They're here: <http://www.wakegov.com/fire/>

Fire departments participating in Fire Protection Service Districts. They're led by a mess of Fire Chiefs, and each has their own command staff.

On the municipal front, the chiefs report to town managers. And there's a mayor and a council in the political mix.

On the private front, the chiefs serve a Board of Directors. And each of those has a President.

For those private departments serving municipalities, add the aforementioned town officials again.

Wake County Firefighters Association, and whose president has a Fire Commission seat.

Who's missing? Raleigh and Cary, of course.

Raleigh Fire Department, it's command staff, it's City Manager, it's Mayor and City Council.

Cary Fire Department, it's command staff, it's Town Manager, it's Mayor and Town Council.

Plus professional firefighters organizations in Raleigh and Cary. They have their own muscle.

Who's been left out?

As Shev said earlier, it's quite a mix of apples and oranges and grapes.

Legeros - 10/15/09 - 20:16

With all those apples, oranges and grapes you know there have to be a few nuts too! Way to many of these to ever put together a county wide fire dept. In fact, New Hanover Co. Fire began when the county had to take over a defunct department and progressively moved in to other stations who decided it would be easier to let the county do it. It is not a county wide or even a rural county wide department.

As for the present fire commission, they have been left with a mess by those there before them. When the county wide 10 cent tax was implemented it was like a kid finally getting to raid their trust fund after turning 21. Let's buy this and that, hey new trucks for everyone! Kind of sounds like this country's current administration... free cars... free cell phones... free healthcare... I want, I want, I want...

I want four man engine company's like the business plan calls for, I want a 24 hour driver or officer for all county stations so that volunteers can have a realistic shot at being first due in their own district. I want officers in the county system to have the system wide qualifications whether they are volunteer or paid. I want all ranks to wear the same color helmet so that if we are getting mutual aid I know if I have a firefighter, Lt. or Capt. I want the chiefs that made all of this mess to follow their own rules and plans...

oh hell... I just want to see if those of you griping here even have a clue to what I am talking about. And to answer the question about Western Wake Station 2... just because a building used to be a fire station and there is 1 fire truck sitting where 4 used to be doesn't mean that it is in service. The county got the radios out and the deck box, the truck is off the response card. Both the building and the apparatus are the private property of a private corporation that can do whatever the hell they want to do with it, but that does not include running it on county fire calls.

Instead of signing this skeptic, I think maybe I should sign it as cynic.

skeptic - 10/15/09 - 22:31

More perspectives..... I'm glad Mike has elected to allow this posting to remain as it is an opportunity for many here to better understand the current system. First, transitioning to a county-wide department would be a difficult (if not impossible) endeavor if it were a collective decision. That's one of our dilemmas now – consensus and equity. The players listed by Mike above could NEVER reach a consensus on direction – they can't now; example: the delays on station closures (for good or for bad). Therefore, the decision for a county-wide department would have to be a virtual "line in the sand" by the County Commissioners by which we would have to adapt to and build upon. That's actually how the current Service District Tax came to be... a decision by the Commissioners was made, although it was against the overall wishes of the contracting departments. Heck, we were not in favor of the service district tax at Stony Hill and we were the second lowest tax revenue in the county in 1998. Yes we (as others) have benefitted from the increased funding and newer apparatus, but it is very difficult when you are literally "prostrate" to the "county" to meet needs. Anyway, there was no stopping it as the WC Commissioners had the right to form the service district by virtue of the N.C. General Statutes and funding equity was their goal. The element that was left out early was the organizational and operational standardization piece. You can definitely effect change if it is coupled with money. Tragically, the early fire commission was a learn as you go effort (and still is to some degree).

So, if we want a county-wide department to come into play, we simply need to continue on our path, functioning as a seemingly disconnected group. I'm not talking about differences in response, staffing, training, and etc. Although that is important, I'm actually speaking of unity of effort at the political and decision-making level. Alas, can we work within the the current parameters to improve our effectiveness? I am an eternal optimist (believe it or not), and feel that we can move forward from where we are now; but it will take some time, "new blood" on the Fire Commission/FD Chiefs positions/committees, and a logical unity by all. In addition, formal education, experience, and common sense are vital components in these changes. Actually, the birthplace of initial change related to this discussion is at the Fire Commission committee level. Unfortunately, it is hard to get involved at this critical level and stay consistent unless you are a full time chief and have the luxury to attend these committee meetings during the weekdays. I'll say it again... these committees are where the actual changes will have to begin as the Fire Commission acts on their recommendations. We can debate operational inequities (they are true issues), but in the end, it's the administrative

push that enables the operations piece to flourish (or falter).

Finally a couple of redirects:

1. Contracts are not actually handled by the Fire Commission. They are between the departments and the county commissioners, via the Fire Marshall and the County Manager. The fire commission acts as a coordinating entity.
2. Forming a local would not really help... we can't even come together now. Save your money from international dues and empower the WC Firefighters Association to do more. In my opinion, the same effect would occur. N.C. is a right to work state and unions are not recognized, nor is collective bargaining. You all know that it is the voice of the citizens that will motivate the elected officials and their appointed managers.
3. I really like my new rescue truck!

A.C. Rich - 10/15/09 - 22:32

Oh, by the way... when is it the responsibility of the tax paying citizens of Raleigh and Cary to subsidize fire protection in the unincorporated areas of the county? This is why Cary charged almost \$3000 per call to cover the area of WWFR #2 when they closed it and shifted much of the district to WWFR #1. There is no dept. in the county that gets \$3000 per call. I think we would see every chief foaming at the mouth for that deal. Ask the chiefs of the other municipalities that protect county district how much they get per call versus what they get funding for from their municipality. The county standard is lower than that of most municipalities, however, when a municipality takes over they provide their standard service. This keeps their operations standard and allows them to maintain their ISO rating.

Let's see, the county standard for closing a station is equal service for LESS cost or better service for the SAME cost. I don't really see how that can be achieved with the high service level delivered by the Raleigh Fire Department. I guess we'll see... if RFD ever submits a cost of service proposal...

skeptic - 10/15/09 - 22:47

Thanks AC, for further fleshing out the landscape here.

In addition to station closures, what other issues does the Fire Commission and its committees typically tackle? Here's a random sampling, from meeting documents dating back to November 2008: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..>

- Approving minutes from past meetings
- Conflict of interest/code of ethics policies
- Fire commission committee appointments
- Fire commission chair annual election
- Fire commission committee structure
- Fire tax budget
- Fire tax financial report
- Market survey of salary ranges
- Merger plan for Wake Forest and Falls fire departments
- National fire apparatus standard changes, and expected cost impact on future purchases
- Retirement funding implementation
- Post-incident review program for consideration of adoption
- Request to add Cary and Raleigh as voting members on Equipment Committee

- Salary range changes
- Small vehicle transfer from Western Wake to Swift Creek fire departments
- Southeast Wake County fire station construction bids
- Southeast Wake County fire station funding
- Staffing positions, allocation of new
- Staffing positions, reallocation of position offered to Apex
- Station dormitory renovations
- Station reconstruction project for Bay Leaf
- Sprinklers for station dormitory renovations
- Water supply for sprinklers for station dormitory renovations

Legeros - 10/16/09 - 06:39

With regards to the fire commission, are the alternate members voting members? Or do they just vote in place of the primary in his or her absence? I think that the fire commission needs a complete overhaul. The chiefs in those positions, whether intentionally or not, work simply to get the most for their own department. It is a fight for resources, which is the true essence of a bureaucracy. It is not for the better of the county or even for a region, but a fight to get the biggest piece of the pie. Closing one fire station will not save money, it just transfers it to somewhere else. It is the same with every other item the commission deals with that has a price tag attached.

The commission should change its current formula and incorporate new members that can provide a different insight. This should include academics in the field (engineers, prevention experts, and fire science), citizens, and a mixture of firefighters from various ranks (from the guy who rides backwards all the way up to the chief). Perhaps these firefighter representatives should be given seats and elected by their peers through the Fireman's Association.

There is no easy way around the problems we face, but someone has to take a stand and draw that line in the sand. The people to make that change are the members of the fire commission, a broken commission that needs change.

H2O - 10/16/09 - 07:40

Yep, alternates only vote in the absence of the primary representative. Good logical points H2O (thank you). The rules of procedure for the fire commission are at <http://www.wakegov.com/fire/commission/d..> There is nothing contained therein that suggests that the regional representatives are to be fire chiefs. The chiefs do meet on a regional basis and collectively select their representation for the commission – hence the representation usually is a fire chief.

As before, the fire commission is the overall approving body on actions before submission to the county commissioners. However, they essentially approve the recommendations as presented by the committees. As the fire commission "generally" does not have time to perform all of the leg-work on initiatives (like many governing bodies), they are often faced with the approval of committee proposals with minimal adjustment. Note – this is not always the case, but occurs more often than never. The committees are the key for the initiation of change. But remember, the county commissioners have the final say-so; therefore they may initiate change as they deem necessary outside of the fire commission (been there and seen that, got a t-shirt!!).

I encourage all to come to a fire commission meeting if you can. Ask questions. If nothing more, keep pace with the minutes and agendas (Mike posts them religiously) Yes, there are a lot of white shirts in the crowd, but you are just as important. You do have a voice and are allowed 3 minutes to make any comments at the end of each meeting. If you do speak, please make sure that you have done your homework and do not speak out emotionally (just a suggestion). The comments you make will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

A.C. Rich - 10/16/09 - 14:14

I wish someone could explain to me how closing a fire station is a good thing. Someone is going to suffer because of it. You cant tell me that

the citizens that live near a station that is on the closure list is going to have better or faster service by having to wait for the next closest unit. At some point, someone needs to sit back and ask the question – “Whats more important, the citizens we protect in the county or closing fire stations to save a few dollars.” If the answer is to save a few dollars, I would like to know how much a live is worth in Wake County, because those of us that live near a fire station that is to be closed, your telling me that my live doesn't mean anything and I now will have to wait even longer to get help from some other fire station.

concerned - 10/16/09 - 15:01

Concerned, I think everyone wishes they could live right near a fire station..unfortunately that cant happen. If you have read the blog top to bottom, its not all about saving a dollar or closing down stations. If every fire station only had to run calls to a 1 mile radius to protect the citizen, we would have ALOT of fire stations. I guess on avearage it takes approximately 3 minutes from dispatch to arrival, that is the ideal time frame. Voice your oppinion at the next meeting on this issue. What the county is looking at(im assuming) is taking the funds and making other areas that are not surrounded by other fire stations and putting resources to these needed areas. Not everybody has a station right across the street..hell for that matter there are some housing developments that are 5 miles away from a hydrant or fire station. This is where the tax payers of wake county need these funds put to.

CTK - 10/16/09 - 16:44

CTK, what about those already established neighborhoods that are not in a hydrated area that have been paying their fire taxes all these years who are about to have their department's doors shut and have ill-prepared "city" services provided to them?

If new developments are built and they are not within range of hydrants then a NEW firehouse needs to be built, not taken away from an established one. Which is exactly what is looking to happen here. There are going to be MANY non-hydranted neighborhoods that are going to be left in the dark if their "rural" house shuts down. And with not being annexed they do not have any say at the respective council meetings about their fire service, nor do the municipalities have to provide hydrants into their area within any time frame.

And the 3 minutes from dispatch to arrival is hopes and dreams, 5 is more along the national average. Not to mention the 1-2 minutes of call processing time (and another 1-2 to transfer it to the "other" dispatching agency. Also the last I looked neither Raleigh, nor Cary has put more resources in the West Raleigh/East Cary area, nor are they planning to. Robbing Peter to pay Paul is just bad, and should not be tolerated by the taxpayers of this county.

It's time to let somebody other than the inmates run the asylum that is the WC Fire Commission, which has been corrupt at best from the inception. If you don't have a full time chief or someone who could make all the committee meetings you could forget about getting anything done. It's not bad blood, just look around the county, you'll see what I mean.

CFP 7021 - 10/16/09 - 22:25

I see what you mean..this whole thing has its pros/cons. I think its kind of ridiculous that its almost 2010 and you have got neighborhoods going up all over the rural areas of the county with 2500+ square foot homes ranging from 250,000 on up to 600,000 and no hydrants. I know of one station in one of those rural areas im talking about that the county has probably spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on trying to get the well water at a safe drinking level when i think that maybe they shouldve gave up 5 years ago and started running water lines out in this area. A firefighter at my vol. dept told me the other day that charlotte FD had went through this same stuff years ago. They took those "city" stations that would be taking over those rural areas and put pumper/tankers and tankers with dump tanks in the fleet. Trained their guys and let it roll. Works just fine. We have beat this subject to death just as it was done several months ago. Same response, same feelings, same mixed empotions on it. Id love to see the county do SOMETHING no matter what it is. If shutting the doors on one station to provide "better" protection to areas that dont have the luxury of 3 or 4 stations within 5 minutes that can come help out or whether it be putting up orange cones and men working sines on those back country roads and start layin some water lines and then put more guys in the stations so when you do have that "big one" you're not taking several other stations out of service and leaving a whole municipality unprotected. Its time for a change, hopefully like i posted earlier, the decision makers will do whats best for the county and use their brains.

CTK - 10/16/09 - 23:18

wow just realized the spelling on some of that. Oops gettin a little late perhaps

CTK - 10/16/09 - 23:30

Shev-

Way to go brother, takes me back to the times we'd sit around ol 325 E. Durham Rd talking about this same crap. Ahhhh the good ol days!!!!

CTK-

I agree with most of what you are saying. The only thing I view differently is...who cares if you're taking several stations out of service for a

fire? You can only handle one incident at a time. If you need, just back fill the stations with other apparatus.

I think that we all agree it is time for a change in how business is done here in Wake Co. Now the real question....How do we go about REALLY changing it? Can we really change it? Most of us here are not in positions of power at their organizations, so how much weight do we really carry? I'm just curious.

Wayne - 10/16/09 - 23:59

BTW to all-

Good discussion and I'm glad it has remained professional! It's good to see that good adult debate/conversation can go on with such a "hot topic" debate!

Wayne - 10/17/09 - 00:01

Wayne,

How do we really go about changing it? In my opinion the most important part of that question is WE. As in solidarity. We cant change anything unless we have a common idea/goal to work towards. That we can ALL agree with. Close the stations or not? Where to allocate those apparatus? under what criteria? relocation? countywide department or not? Pros/cons? City into unhydranted county? Cheaper to contract out?...from here it sounds like the ONLY unanimous idea going around is a need for substantial change in how things are run. Until we can all agree to a few common ideas its pretty much everyone for themselves out here and in that respect...we have no weight. The only way to have an outside voice heard is with numbers. Apparently. So what, if any, points/terms/ideas...can we all agree to?

Outside in - 10/17/09 - 19:24

Outside, i think the only reason nothing has really been done yet is because no one can agree on anything. No matter what, someone is going to see things differently and you run into the same things that are being said in this blog. I think what will have to happen is the county say this is how its going to be. The ones who disagree may just have to suck it up and move on. Growing pains suck but sometimes its for the best.

CTK - 10/18/09 - 08:20

The system has failed because of all the "Good-ole boy" politics from Chiefs who continue to ROB the county with their high salaries for less than ROOKIE service. I dont care if you have been Fire Chief for 30 something years...didnt anyone tell you that equates to 1 year of bad experience repeated 30 something times. Once you eliminate these pasture dwellers, and DONT replace them, the county can then run the fire service and everyone in the county will (should) get the same level of service. Doesnt everyone in Wake County pay the SAME FIRE TAX RATE? The only reason they are getting more or less of a service in any given area is because the "Figure Heads" (dare I call them Chiefs) of each individual department is allowed to decide what level of service they give their district... vs. how much they increase their "employment contract".

yeah, I took the bait...

J.Boggs - 10/19/09 - 10:54

J', I've said it before; "the Good Ol' Boy system is great.....when you're one of the Good Ol' Boys"!

Silver ([Email](#)) - 10/19/09 - 12:34

Ancillary question. What's the carrot (or stick) to compel county officials and the citizens that support them, to support and fund fire service change in Wake County? Our area isn't exactly burning up, at least not in ways that grab headlines. Our fire deaths seem low, though I have no idea how they compare to national rates. On the first responder front, our EMS system excels and then some. So, how to "sell" the change that everyone wants?

Legeros - 10/21/09 - 20:04

It is obvious that nothing has changed since leaving wake county. I agree with boggs about getting the old chiefs out and things can begin to change. Also the city of raleigh seems to need to take a more proactive stance on building more fire stations and expanding, therefore providing better coverage to the citizens when the county stations begin to shut down. There is absolutely no reason that a city station should be passing by a volunteer station, nor should a county truck be running past a city station. Also the way to solve the issue of having houses in the rural area with no hydrants, is let the city annex that area, build new stations, and place hydrants in those newly annexed areas. NO firehouse should be kept that is operating inside the city of Raleigh. Only keep your outlieing county station.

9118067 - 12/01/09 - 00:32

Name: (real name preferred)
E-mail: (optional)
Web Site: (optional)

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/ [Textile](#)

Comment moderation is enabled on this site. This means that your comment will not be visible on this site until it has been approved by an editor.

To prevent spam we require you to answer this silly question

What are the FIRST TWO LETTERS of the word 'fire'?

[\(Register your username / Log in\)](#)

Notify: Yes, send me email when someone replies.

Hide email: Yes, hide my email address.

Small print: All html tags except and <i> will be removed from your comment. You can make links by just typing the url or mail-address.