WCFC Meeting Highlights

01/18/07 144 W - **+** 17 - 12

From tonight's Wake County Fire Commission meeting, agenda items included:

- New apparatus financing policy proposal, where the county competitively bids financing of bundled apparatus purchases.
- New policy planned for assigning EMS units at all "hot" fire training events.
- Revised service-level goals proposal, consisting of response times, minimum staff for first-unit arrival, minimum staff for incident, and minimum unit response for incident.
- Proposed EMS-sponsored architectural assessment of existing fire stations, to determine facilities that might be suitable for future EMS unit co-location.
- Extended discussion on the economics of paid versus part-time personnel, in the context of the Compensation Committee's recommendation that part-time personnel not receive merit increases for FY 06-07.
- Notice that work is nearly complete on data questions surrounding the Western Wake Station 2 closure report. A special meeting will be called in couple weeks, with a presentation for the Fire Commission.

Would the minimum unit response for incidents finally force county departments to have a set house fire dispatch and working fire dispatch that is the same?
guest - 01/19/07 - 11:37

It would be the best thing the county ever did if they got a set dispatch on multiple-unit calls. As most people know there are some departments that only have themselves dispatched to the call. In my opinion why shouldn't you pull a few units from the closest departments even when you know they have 24 hour staffing and that they are coming with personal and apparatus on dispatch. It shouldn't be about politics, it should be about the community and doing what's right to help them the fastest and most efficient way possible. It needs to be dispatched like a city department in my opinion.
Guest - 01/19/07 - 19:14

It won't be dispatched like a single department until the Depts put aside the "My ISO District" concept. When a dwelling is closer to Dept A but is in Dept B's ISO area, why should Dept B empty engines from their three stations when they are farther away from the incident than the other Depts station? The steamer is still in front of the horse guys.
Another Guest - 01/19/07 - 23:04

Step 1- Assign station numbers and station oriented apparatus numbers.
Step 2- Create a first due area, second due area, etc., for each station.
Step 3- Only 'staffed units' are recognized in CAD.
Step 4- Only staffed units are dispatched. If personnel respond to the station after the staffed units are gone, they can respond non-emergent until specifically requested, however they are not assigned until requested by 'on-scene' commander.
Step 5- Create minimu staffing levels, whether it is a 3-man engine or 4-man engine. Also, ladders need to be staffed if departments are going to operate them.
Step 6- Create a countywide ISO district. It can be done.

Problem solved. WIll it happen? That's up to you guys.

My $0.02 worth.
DJ - 01/20/07 - 00:15

Bravo....I like DJ....
Silver - 01/20/07 - 11:41

Well said DJ..i think that would be the best thing that the county could ever do, the only thing that isnt going to work is 24 hour staffing, although my department has 3 man crews-24 hour shifts there are some departments that dont get the funding for 24 hour staffing or elect not to have 24 hour personal..the thing that could work is as far as im aware most departments have night duty crews. Those crews could report there staffing levels to dispatch once they are on duty. I have hoped that the county would go to a numbering program per county station number, i think it would make things simple. A perfect example of this whole idea is how Prince George's County Fire operates, from unit numbering to how they report staffing levels to county when they have people on duty to how they are dispatched.
Guest - 01/20/07 - 14:44

Guest, the 24 hours staffing can and would work, it's really quite simple, the county ante's up the money and puts staff in place. They already are paying for full time personnel at Bay Leaf, Durham Highway, Eastern Wake, Wake-New Hope (Not to mention a portion of Garner, Wake Forest, Fuquay, Holly Springs, Apex, Morrisville, Wendell, Zebulon). What makes them so special? (aside from some with municipal financing) Now take what depts are paying for duty crews or stipends and what the county is footing for part-time people and I wouldn't think you'd be too far off.

The only depts in the county right now without full time 24 hour coverage (not counting duty crews) are:

Fairview (2 stations and from what I've heard they're asking for 24 hour people this year)
Swift Creek (1 station)
Western Wake (2 stations)
Stony Hill (2 stations)
Falls (1 station)
Bay Leaf (3 stations)
Wake-New Hope (2 stations)
Hopkins (1 station)
Rolesville (1 station)

So putting 3 people per shift per unstaffed station would be 45 employees, 4 personnel would be 60 That's nothing in the grand scheme of things, especially when you talk about cutting part-timers. If you want ladders staffed then you would only have to add another 3-4 because Bay Leaf is the only one on that list with a ladder. It is something this county can and should do.

I also agree with DJ's post about the steps. Step 4 could be the only one to pose some issues. I would say that anything above an initial alarm could page out "non-staffed" units, but those units would have to be placed "in service" when there are adequate personnel at the station and they have changed the status of the units. It would be a mess, but can work.
CFP 7021 - 01/20/07 - 15:57

Years ago I volunteered with Anne Arundel County Md (Odenton VFC, Co 28). If a crew was in the station, staffing the unit, CAD would dispatch it. If there was no staffing in the station, CAD did not recognize it. And that was a CAD system in 1992-3, so for sure a 2005 model will do it. Thereby, only staffed units are dispatched.
DJ - 01/20/07 - 16:26

Those most interested in such arrangements should get together and see about making the thing happen. Start by, say, researching comparable counties. Record some stats. Propose some standards. Compute the requirements to bring Wake County into line. Note the pros and cons. Lay it all out, then make one or more presentations to the Powers That Be. Do it as citizens, and you can probably go directly to the County Commissioners. They'd probably divert same to the Fire Commission, though. Alternately, you could involve the media. That can be a bit like playing with fire, however. But, if you really want to see it happen, give it a shot.
Legeros - 01/20/07 - 16:54

Mike is absolutly correct we need to get together and try to get things inline and make this work. The worst thing that will happen is that there will be a firetruck at someones house faster..but thats what why this needs to work we are here for the community so we shouldnt let politics come into play lets try and make this happen so that we can better this county and more importantly better our overall service to the great citizens we serve..they deserve the best and most efficient service they can get.

If anyone cares look at how Prince George's County,MD runs there departments they are similiar in some ways to Wake County in the aspect that not all departments are 24 staffed. Volunteers play a big role up there and they get the job done and serve there citizens with effctive service. Like DJ has said when you get a unit fully staffed call dispatch and have them show that service in operation. If this happens atleast

you will know that you have a fully staffed rig enroute to your scene.
guest33 - 01/20/07 - 17:57

http://www.penguinradio.com/search/play... or http://www.wlhvfd.com/ Both of these sites have links if you would like to listen to how PG County,MD dispatches. Notice that you will never hear only one department getting solo dispatched to multiple unit calls.
guest33 - 01/20/07 - 18:00

The great part about how our radio system/CAD is designed is that this could happen automatically without having to tie up dispatch just using the DEK boxes. When you are at the station with a staffed piece you could just hit the 10-8 button. If there is nobody there you hit the 10-7 button.

My only question to this is how would that effect tankers/brush units. would you just send an engine to every call first off? Some depts send just a brush truck and tanker. Also Some depts send 1 engine on vehicle related calls and another on structure related calls. How could this be handled from a CAD standpoint? If both units were labeled "staffed" and say a fire alarm came out and they were both dispatched but only one could get out the door how could this be handled. Or in a station where there is a staff and there is a rescue/service truck and an engine, and they were both labeled as in service, and just the rescue truck was sent to a call, would you have to jump in the engine and mark it out before leaving the station? Just some of the situations that would have to be ironed out. I know there are depts out there now that have so finely tuned their dispatching that they cannot mark anything out of service because then they may not get dispatched to a call that they could handle with a different piece.

I guess this would have to be the place where a standard response and the formations of companies would come into play? Or would you also staff X amount of support pieces throughout the county to make sure that they are staffed? For example staff an engine at swift creek, an engine and a rescue at fairview station 1, an engine and rescue at western wake station 2 and an engine at western wake station 1? I know these are not ideal and this is hypothetical, but would this type of staffing ensure that a "service/rescue" be available within a given response area at all times while still staffing engines at each station?
CFP 7021 - 01/20/07 - 18:14

Stony Hill now has 24hr paid staff and I believe that they still run a duty crew at their other station.
Mike - 01/20/07 - 19:20

I would be very interested in assisting in this. I think that the municipal depts need to be involved also. There is no sense in Swift Creek coming to a call in Apex and not Cary. If a committe is formed or a group wants to get together lets do it. The best thing for the citizens would be to get a county wide ISO rating.
apex batt chief (Email) - 01/20/07 - 19:59

Cary's closest station participation is in the works, and I believe it is a CAD programming issue at the current time. We see how well Cary Fire getting sent to EMS calls and then having to wait for an EMS truck is working right now, it'll be the same thing with the "closest station" fire response. Cary will be on the road for 3 minutes before the other dept gets the call. It will not work as it is supposed to until we get everybody working SEAMLESSLY together, which may not be until the new CAD is in place at Cary Communications.

I do agree though that Western Wake passing 2 or 3 Cary stations to come to a fire alarm in apex is kind of crazy. Hopefully one day this county will be as one, and all the political lines and egos and ISO districts can be set aside. It'll take a lot of work though.

Mike, what is Stony Hill staffing at station 1? is it 3 personnel? I forgot that they hired some folks this past go around.
CFP 7021 - 01/20/07 - 23:05

A little more about the Anne Arundel County model, as it was back then-

First, there was the Anne Arundel County Fire Department (AACOFD). There were several stations in the county, nine or ten as I remember, that were operated by the county, staffed with county employees, with county owned apparatus. The rest of the stations were volunteer companies.

In addition to the county operated stations, the county also provided at least one driver to the volunteer stations. At #28/Odenton, there were three 'Enginemen' assigned, each working a 24/48. There were also two or three daytime personnel, to staff an engine or the BLS ambulance.

At my other station #11/Orchard Beach, the county provided an Engineman and a Firefighter III on each 24 hour shift, as well as a Captain

and two Firefighter II's for the Monday through Friday shift. I think that has since changed to a 24 hour officer as well.

All apparatus had DEK boxes, although fire apparatus and EMS vehicles had different button assignments-

EMS-

STATUS 1- Available, dependent crew, meaning that if the engine went out, then the ambulance was OOS. If the ambulance went out, then the engine was still up, although short handed.
STATUS 2- Available, dedicated crew, meaning this equipment was up no matter what.
STATUS 3- Responding. We also sent a message via MDT as to what our staffing was. For example, 0/1 meant no officer and 1 firefighter (or driver). 1/4 obviously meant one officer and four firefighters. Ambulances alsways responded at least 0/2.
STATUS 4- On scene
STATUS 5- To hospital
STATUS 6- At hospital
STATUS 7- At cover (we were doing that way back when)
STATUS 8- OOS

Fire-

STATUS 1- Available, dependent crew, meaning that if the engine went out, then the ambulance was OOS. If the ambulance went out, then the engine was still up, although short handed.
STATUS 2- Available, dedicated crew, meaning this equipment was up no matter what.
STATUS 3- Responding. We also sent a message via MDT as to what our staffing was. For example, 0/1 meant no officer and 1 firefighter (or driver). 1/4 obviously meant one officer and four firefighters. Fire apparatus always responded at least 0/1.
STATUS 4- On scene
STATUS 5- (I cannot remember what these were for)
STATUS 6- (I cannot remember what these were for)
STATUS 7- At cover (they even moved fire apparatus)
STATUS 8- OOS

So, at #28, on the CAD, it would have looked something like this at any given time during the week during the day-

ENGINE 281- STATUS 1
ENGINE 282- STATUS 1
ENGINE 283- STATUS 2 (this was out main pumper)
TRUCK 28- STATUS 1
BRUSH 28- STATUS 1
JEEP 28- STATUS 1
AMBULANCE 289- STATUS 2

At night, the vollies came in and staffed more stuff. We usually had at least two engines, the ladder, and the ambulance staffed on nights and weekends. It worked the same way at #11.

What made it work was that there was one authority, the AACOFD and the AACOFD Chief. He was in charge of everyone. The county was divided into four battalions, and there was a Battalion Chief assigned. Individual company chiefs fell in under the Battalion Chief, unless the fire was in your first due area. Volunteer captains fell in right under career captains, same with lieutenants and everyone else.

If you wanted a piece of apparatus, you had to justify it. You could not decide "Hey, we want a platform" or "We want a heavy rescue". You had to show a need. And if the need was not there, you did not get it, even with your own money, since you were flying under the county's colors.

The county operated the training center, and before you got on a truck you met their standards. Same for EMS or fire. Also, since everyone was part of AACOFD, either Anne Arundel County Fire Department, or something like it, was on the truck, in addition to the vollie company name. At Odenton, TRUCK 28 had the Odenton logo on it, ODENTON VOLUNTEERS on the ladder, but there was AA COUNTY FIRE

DEPARTMENT also on it.

Now one thing that was different. At #11 we operated a volunteer paramedic ambulance, staffed soley by volunteers. However, if we did not have the crew at any particular time, it was just up in STATUS 8. We just had to have it in service 25% of the time, I think it was. We actually had it staffed 90% of the time.

I don't know if that would work...well, yes it would. It just means lots of chiefs (and others) have to decide if their individuality, autonomy, and independence is more important than an efficient model.

Well?
DJ - 01/20/07 - 23:13

I like it and I think it would work, I had not thought about the dependent status positions. It sounds like a similar situation to what we could have in this county. As I've said about things we've gone through in the past, I'm sure we're not the first ones to deal with this. Great insight, now if we could just get everybody on board and run with it. It's amazing most FF's I've talked to are all for it. So the holdup has to be at the top levels and the decision makers have to just come to a conclusion that it's the best thing to do for the citizens and make it happen.
CFP 7021 - 01/20/07 - 23:20

Stony Hill now has 2 people 24 hrs a day at station 2 with a part-timer or 2 working with them. At station 1 they run a duty crew with 3 or 4 people.
Mike - 01/21/07 - 00:08

All of you have awesome ideas. I agree with Legeros, you guys need to form a committee/task force to look into this and put together a proposal. Take a trip to Prince Georges County and see first hand how the system works. It does work, and it will take putting boundary lines to the side to make it work. Make sure the group is proactive AND open minded, and that you are striving towards the same goal. There's a lot of talent in this county, I say let's put it to work and make it happen!!
Silver - 01/21/07 - 00:44

Random recommendations for any working group that develops from this conversation:

1. Involve anyone and everyone, from citizens to chiefs.
2. Draft desired outcomes. Be specific.
3. Conduct business above board. Identify yourselves. Promote yourselves, or your project.
4. Be public. Consider a web site to serve both the project participants and interested parties. List objectives, goals, the scope of the project, the participants, etc.
5. Find out what's already been done. Have similar studies already been conducted by Wake PS, the Fire Commission, etc.? Do past Tri-Data surveys provide clues?
6. Get your story straight to start with. Draft some talking points. Have an elevator speech that you can tell people.
7. Be prepared for media inquiries at any point in the project. See #6.
8. For those employed in PS agencies, ask your chief or supervisor if your agency has any issues regarding participation in such projects.
9. Get ready for the long haul. This will take some time.
Legeros - 01/21/07 - 09:57

I think that this would be the best thing to happen to Wake County's fire service. This could definitely work and I think starting a committee would be great. I know this could work, if it works for others it can work for us it will just take some time and effort. Myself and a few other members of my department have been going to ride along in Prince George's County, MD and they are using the type of system discussed. They have combo departments and all volunteer departments but they get the job done no matter what. They don't have the DEK buttons but they have a direct phone line to dispatch that they pick up and call in there staffing when they have sufficient to run another piece of apparatus. Also they have to report there staffing every morning at 6 am and they also have to report any OOS vehicles. They run on a county wide type system where they are dispatched with units coming from all over but they are always the closest units coming. The dispatch center will also dispatch a unit from a fully staffed station to provide coverage for another if that other company is out on fire or big call, they aren't scared to help each other out and to have other departments in there area. I just would really like to see this work for Wake County, I think that this like I said earlier would be the best thing for us and not only that it would be the best thing to happen for the citizens we serve, and that's what we are here for. Lets all get on the same page here and make this work, it seems that everyone that has posted is really excited about this, so lets use that excitement and drive to make this happen and work.

guest33 - 01/21/07 - 14:47

It might work best to get the Fire Commission to form a subcommittee to work with some of the ideas presented here – how about a "Blue Ribbon Commission for the Future of Fire Service Operations in Wake County"? I think you'd find about the same level of support the group got that tried to renumber fire apparatus, but you won't know if you don't try.

Olson - 01/22/07 - 00:09

Is that the same group that tried the number system back in the 80's?

DJ - 01/22/07 - 01:46

One other thing that i would like to add and also maybe see happen in addition to all the other stuff talked about is staffing reports. There doesnt need to be staffing reports for all calls just calls with multiple units responding such as fires, fire alarms, gas inside, ect. The nice thing about this is that headquarters can switch to the channel asigned and each unit responding can respond with there staffing level, dispatch can then contact the cheif or cheifs enroute and advise them how many responders they have and if and what units are understaffed or fully staffed. Just another idea that would help the system out even more.

guest33 - 01/22/07 - 02:18

I would think that CAD can do all of that with the radios (Motorola ASTROS). With AACOFD, we entered the staffing via the key pad on all units except the primary first due. So, if a dwelling fire occurred in the 28-4 box area, ENGINE 283 would announce over the air that they were responding 1/4, while everyone else entered the info over the key pad. Also, on that call, ENGINE 283 would have been the only one actually talking, while everyone else entered their response status via DEK box.

DJ - 01/22/07 - 09:35

The Northern Virginia area also works in a similiar manner. The SIX Surrounding jurisdictions all participate (Arlington CO, Alexandria City, Metro. Airport Authority, Fairfax CO, Prince William Co, & Loudoun Co) There are SET MIN. STAFFING requirements and SET OPERATIONAL PROCEDURES for all. They differ in a couple of ways though, and their system may work better then PG Co. Everyone has to contact their respective communications center to report what apparatus they have staffed. Whenever a call goes out and a station/apparatus is not staffed, they are courtesy dispatched (in the event that they have staffing there, just not logged in the system yet) along with the CLOSEST STAFFED APPARATUS to insure that someone is going on the call. For example: if a call for an Engine Co was dispatched in E-2's area and they were not staffed, the dispatch would ....Engine CO 2, E-12 (E-12 being the closest staffed engine) ALso the operational/strategic plans were universal for all of the jurisdictions and coverage/service was seamless as the CLOSEST APPARATUS, no matter WHAT JURISDICTION was dispatched and the BASIC assignments were the same no matter where the call was (ie the 1st arriving engine's responsibilities, 2nd arriving engine's duties, 1st arriving truck co, etc) and those jurisdictions run about 10-15 times the amount of calls that are run here in Wake County. I'm all for changing/improving the service levels here and would love to sit on a committee get the ball rolling.

Stay safe

Wayne - 01/22/07 - 11:22

hey cfp 7021, sorry i am late responding, but rolesville has 24 hour coverage. been that way for a year now

kp209a - 01/22/07 - 12:22

What's the staffing at Rolesville? I had forgot they added some people. So that's even fewer personnel that the county would have to add on

CFP 7021 - 01/22/07 - 14:03

Speaking about all of these changes has anyone heard anymore about when that change in CAD, where closest unit whether it be city or county unit goes into affect. I know that the City units are going into the count now but the change is supposed to make it where county goes into the city for closest unit response. Just wondering if any rumors of a date were talked about i know Chris Perry commented in a posting months ago but he said soon but didnt give an approximate date.

guest - 01/23/07 - 16:07

Chris Perry said it is in Dispatch's hands now to make the changes. His job is done.

guest - 01/23/07 - 16:41

Rolesville has 2 on, 24-7, but are planning to go to 3 in the next several months, and 4 (if the application pool allows) after that.

EMS Guy - 01/23/07 - 23:19

well thats good to hear about the changes hopefully they will go into affect soon..thanks for the response.

guest - 01/24/07 - 01:12

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