

**Bay Leaf, Chapel Hill, Ahoskie Rigs on GovDeals**

04/04/13 62 W, 3 I - + 7 - 5

What's for sale on [govdeals.com](http://govdeals.com) lately? North Carolina fire apparatus currently includes, top to bottom, a 1993 E-One pumper from Bay Leaf, a 2000 International/KMC pumper, and a 1974 Ford/American LaFrance pumper from Ahoskie. Thinking that blue rig would work well for, say, Tarheel or Soul City fire departments. The colors already match!





Is Bay Leaf going to replace that rig with another Pierce?

Curious with downsizing and mergers if its necessary given that stations current equipment which is very good and their current call volume. Should that money go to upgrade additional equipment at their station?

Like newer boats, turnout gear, air packs etc...?

Not picking on Bay Leaf because that's the situation throught the county.

Im sure those discussions were had by the budget and equipment repalcement committe folks.

Just curious what the trend is right now going into budget years 2013-2014 and the high unemployment numbers and less tax revenue being raised at the county and the state level.

**Buckwheat** - 04/04/13 - 10:33

Bayleaf already has another Tanker on order. Was that one perhaps to replace this piece? And with Station 3 being totally unstaffed and all but closed, would it not just make sense to sell off all of the equipment there rather than move it over to other already equipped stations?

**FD** - 04/04/13 - 14:49

I don't know how wake county works exactly, but in cumberland county every station has a minimum of 2 engines or pumper/tankers. This is not a waste of money here due to no countywide water system. The main reason stations have more than one pumper is to be able to meet the needed fire flow of their district as set forth by the NC Dept of Insurance office of the state fire marshal. The dept I am a member of has a district wide fire flow of over 3000 GPM, which you cannot achieve with only one 1250 or 1500 gpm pumper. Under current DOI guidelines you do not receive full credit for using a mutual aid depts pumper on your pumping evolution because you cannot maintain your needed fire flow, thus the reason for multiple engines in one dept. There are a few depts in cumberland county that have 5 and 6 engines for this reason. The needed fire flow is also the reason that countywide fire depts are able to obtain a lower insurance rating than individual depts that contract with the county due to being able to make one large fire district that uses urban and rural areas to drop the needed fire flow GPM and pool multiple resources such as pumpers and tankers.

**2406** - 04/04/13 - 15:47

Per ISO guidelines, Stations are placed to provide a point of protection for properties within a 5 or 6 mile district, whether they are staffed or not doesn't matter. There are properties in the BLFD district that are not within that distance from their other stations so it must be kept open for ISO rating purposes. Then, ISO says a station should have at least one engine, add a tanker if it is non-hydranted. Beyond that, the number of engines needed in a community is based upon needed fire flow. There are many intricacies related to the ISO grading process that departments use. Now, we all know that the ISO grade is but one measure of quality. Like any guiding parameters they get used to support as anyone chooses to. Kind of like the old saying, "there are lies, damn lies, and statistics". Every department in this county is trying to do better. There are though some things that seem pointless or contradictory but if you dig deep enough there is usually some history or supporting factor.

**D.Cates** - 04/04/13 - 16:24

At what point do you have to weigh the cost of operating a station and its apparatus versus the cost savings for insurance for the number of people in the ISO area.

For example if there are 100 homes that fall within BLFD's station 3's ISO area is it worth an operating budget of \$100,000, \$200,000, more? At some point it would almost make more sense to pay the individual homeowners the difference of their insurance between a class 6 and class 10 because it would simply be cheaper than paying for the operation of a station.

Just using BL's st 3 as an example since its already being talked about. That could apply to any dept really. Just an interesting thought...

**FD** - 04/04/13 - 21:10

As a taxpayer, I would like to see one Wake County Fire Dept. Everyone operating at the same level of service and trained to the same standard. That way, no matter where you go in this county, you can expect the same level of service. The EMS system in this county already works this way even though there are several different providers. They all have to follow the same set of protocols.

**Taxpayer** - 04/06/13 - 00:17

@Taxpayer, you are overlooking some issues when it comes to your proposed approach to the provision of emergency services. A uniform EMS system works well because it integrates with the local fire departments who provide specialty tools and equipment that EMS in this area do not carry (and don't need to due to that partnership with the fire service). For EMS a patient is a patient regardless of how and where they are located. Fire and water supply, well that's a little different thanks to geography and architecture.

However, if we walk down the path of everyone operating at the same level of service, which level should we go to? At the most basic we could sell all the big rigs and just issue a couple of pick up trucks with pump skids, everyone gets the same level of service and the taxpayers are saving oodles (on the tax bill anyway). However, if I lived in a three story apartment in Wake Forest, I would be awful nervous. Or if I lived out in the woods of Zebulon where my nearest hydrant was two towns away, well I'd hopefully have saved my family and pets before watching my neighborhood burn down. Or do we go to the other extreme? Every department has an articulating tower ladder (think Raleigh L4), 3 pumper/tankers, brush truck, boat, heavy rescue, medium rescue (squad), ARFF truck (there are more than a few little airports/airfields around, but we are going to uniformity right?), foam unit, air truck... I could go on but I think the tax bill on all that would be astronomical.

I hazard to say our system in this county is not as broken as we rhetorically make it out to be, surely it could use some tweaks, I think the equipment swap for Zebulon coming up is an innovative new idea. Look at EMS again, it is not the same system it was five years ago. I would wager to say it will look different five years from now too.

**PJ** - 04/13/13 - 11:39

The expected level of service in Wake County has actually never been clearly defined by the "county" proper. The required ISO Class 6 is the only true performance element in the contract that relates to service levels (most of the contract is funding based rather than performance based). Other parameters have been used by the Fire Commission to determine funding, staffing, etc.; however there is no actual "right size" defined by Wake. Indeed an interesting fact that many are not aware of. "Service" is actually determined by each department and then within the funding they currently receive... of which most is based on historical aspects rather than current needs as (not) defined by the elected officials in Wake. This other blog is also talking about this topic too: <http://legeros.com/ralwake/photos/weblog..> There is now a developing focus on "actuals" for departments as evidenced in this years budget process. I believe it is a developing trend.

**A.C. Rich** - 04/14/13 - 13:20

Thanks for the continued perspective. AC. Wish I could merge these/those two threads..

Historical justification is a piece of the puzzle, to be sure.

Q: Why does department X have Y number of pumpers?

A: Because they always have.

**Legeros** - 04/14/13 - 13:37

AC when you say a trend on actuals, what are you referring?

**Mike** - 04/15/13 - 11:44

Mike, "actuals" are simply... data points reflecting what's "actually" happening. Need AC to put some context and perspective around it.

But it's an idea easily exemplified in this classic exchange: "Why are we doing this?" "Because we've always done this."

That's a traditional or historical-based approach to decision-making or planning. And admittedly, one likely developed on "actuals" at an earlier point in time. The trick comes in the willingness to look at current data. Are you doing things because they're still needed, and still providing value?

**Legeros** - 04/16/13 - 09:33

But do we really need to replace those trucks? Or do we start shrinking the areas with fewer and fewer calls to the fast growing areas such and Wake Forest, Rolesville or Stony hill or Apex and Morrisville?

I guess I fail to see why something like this hasn't been done long before now.

But also there's the dwindling numbers of volunteers in Wake County now.

To cover those gaps you have to have paid help.

Why not use that money from department x and use it to hire people to cover those departments where manpower is limited during the days or nights or weekends.

You can hire lots of folks for the cost of a new Pierce to sit still 85% of the time. and the other half is used to run EMS calls.

I think AC's comments are spot on. it's trending and thats a good thing.

But I would argue that trend started in mid 80's and early 90's.

The data of new construction in the northern part of the county took off like crazy.

Everything from Yrac to Durham Highway to Six Forks to New Hope was growing like weeds.

Funny how they pretty much have the same equipment if not more in some cases, and their call volume has really dipped except the contract work with Raleigh.

How does this happen?

Then you got Rolesville, their call volume is getting higher and higher. They have a new aerial but other than that seems like they have what they've always had.

Seriously?

**Buckwheat** - 04/16/13 - 13:53

"Actuals" = actual costs to operate a FD based on historical funding use rather than historical appropriation.

**A.C. Rich** - 04/16/13 - 20:19

As A.C. said there was definitely more review by county staff this year to see that number from budgets and audits matched up. In a time when budgets have been stagnant for years though there is little room for adjustments. Departments are looking at consolidating and the ideas of downsizing fleets exists. However, in the world of public finance and budgeting the consideration of eliminating capital purchases (trucks, stations, etc.) is never a real trade off for operating expenses. Capital items are "one and done" where as operating are recurring annual expenses.

For example, many municipal departments have seen the time when council would fund a \$350,000 new engine but shy away from the staffing for it. Cost of staffing for an engine, roughly \$350,000 PER YEAR (on the low side)when you figure 9FF @ \$40,000/yr with benefits. That doesn't really even allow for pay increases for Lt's and Capt's. So what is a FD to do. Durham turned down the quint they were offered back in the 1990's saying if they didn't have the people they didn't need the truck. So that capital money went to some other city department to buy something they needed. The other option, take the truck and don't staff it. When council wants to know why it isn't running you say because you didn't give us the personnel. Probably not politically wise, but it would make a statement if you are into that.

In the current county fire budget model the ratio of operating to capital expenditures has been adjusted in recent years to move some annual recurring money away from capital and to operating cost, specifically personnel. But you can't take that but so far. I don't have the numbers in front of me, but there is little more of that possible.

**D.Cates** - 04/17/13 - 10:55