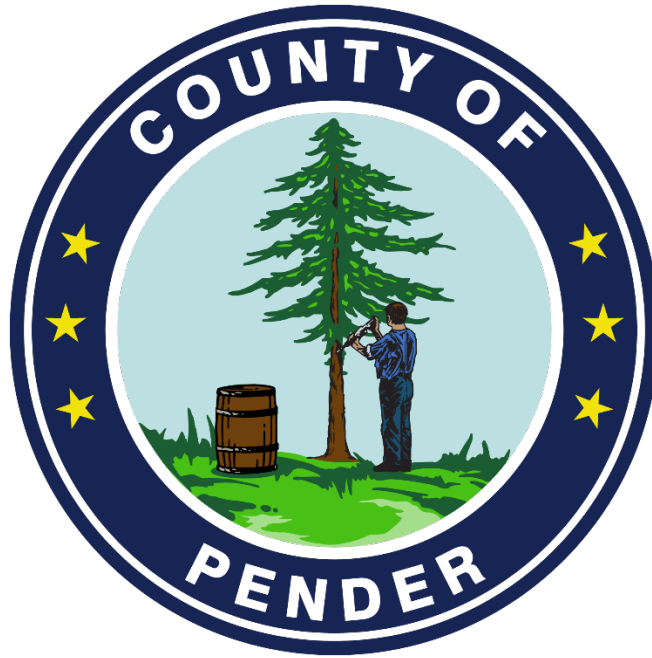


Pender County Emergency Services Merger



June 2025

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 BACKGROUND

Emergency Services are provided by a number of entities in Pender County. The Pender County Sheriff's Office (including Animal Control and E-911 operations), Burgaw Police Department, Surf City Police Department, Topsail Beach Police Department, and the North Carolina Highway Patrol provide law enforcement services. Pender EMS & Fire and Union Rescue Squad provide EMS services. Fire protection services are provided by Pender EMS & Fire, Penderlea Fire Department, Maple Hill Fire Department, Rocky Point Fire Department, Burgaw Fire Department, Atkinson Fire Department, Surf City Fire Department, Topsail Beach Fire Department, and the North Carolina Forest Service. Pender County provides the Fire Marshal's Office and the Emergency Management department.

There has been a slow progression over the past thirty years from an almost entirely volunteer fire and EMS service to full-time paid services. Pender EMS & Fire itself is the result of multiple mergers between EMS providers in 2003 and the organization then assumed fire operations in 2013 at the request of the County in an effort to improve the level of service and accountability provided to citizens. As the fire tax and EMS tax no longer fully support fire and EMS operations, the County began contributing additional general fund ad valorem tax to support the fire operations of the County around 2018. Since then, Pender County has expressed a desire to bring fire and EMS services under the County for the purpose of increasing efficiency by reducing the number of different departments operating within the County and to be able to provide first responders with local government benefits.

1.2 PROPOSED STRUCTURE

This merger will result in the creation of an Emergency Services Department in Pender County. The Emergency Services structure is recognized throughout North Carolina and aims to enhance coordination between first responders.

Underneath an Emergency Services Director will be a Deputy Emergency Services Director, a Fire Division Chief, an EMS Division Chief, the Emergency Management Director, and an Emergency Communications Administrator.

The Fire Division will assume all fire protective services currently provided by Pender EMS & Fire, Penderlea Fire Department, Maple Hill Fire Department, and Rocky Point Fire Department. Burgaw Fire Department, Surf City Fire Department, and Atkinson Fire Department will continue to provide service in their county districts as the district lines are currently drawn. Topsail Beach Fire's district will also be unaffected by the merger. An Assistant Chief of Operations will oversee fire response within the County. A training section will remain under the Fire Division to ensure quality continuing education, certification requirements, and effective onboarding of new staff. Special teams will also fall under the fire training section. An Assistant Chief of Training and Special Operations will oversee these functions. The Fire Marshal will become an Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention to match other

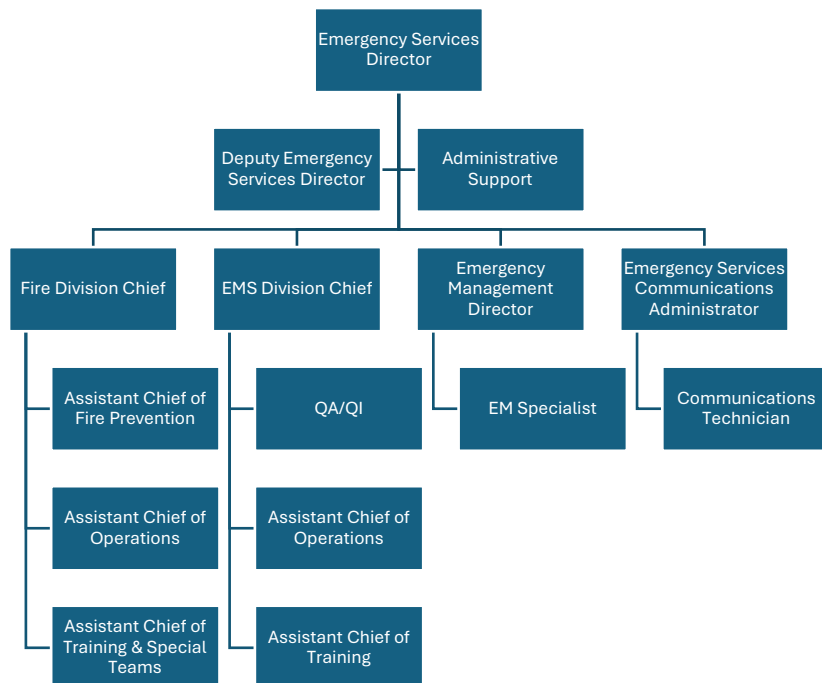
counties and continue to serve as the Fire Marshal and provide fire plan reviews, fire inspections, fire investigations, and public education for prevention.

The EMS Division will assume all EMS services currently provided by Pender EMS & Fire and will work with Union Rescue Squad as a contractor providing EMS coverage in the Union District and throughout the County for mutual aid. A training section will remain under the EMS Division to ensure quality continuing education, certification requirements, and effective onboarding of new staff. The Quality Assurance and Quality Improvement section will also remain in place.

The Emergency Management division will continue to provide coordination for large-scale events, preparedness, planning, response, and recovery for natural disasters as they currently operate.

The Emergency Communications Division will support radio communications and other emergency communications such as satellite devices. The Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communications Manager will continue to serve in the Sheriff's Office overseeing the countywide radio system and E911 needs. The Emergency Communications Division will consist of an Emergency Services Communications Administrator and an Emergency Services Communications Technician. Staff will respond as they do with Pender EMS & Fire, providing support for over 400 radios, multiple portable satellite and wireless devices, associated equipment, and setting up field communications for incidents. They will interface with the Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communication System Administrator and Information Technology as needed.

Other staff positions currently under Pender EMS & Fire, such as from the Administrative and Logistics Divisions, will be allocated to the matching County departments such as Facilities & Fleet, Human Resources, IT, or Finance. Some may remain under the Emergency Services Department. These positions will be assessed individually to determine the best location for the position within the organizational structure. This will ensure the best utilization of staff skills and experience.



1.3 KEY ASSUMPTIONS

This plan is written with a few key assumptions.

1. The goal is to minimize or mitigate any change in operations. EMS stations, fire districts and stations, and special teams will remain the same. Staffing levels will remain the same for first responders and support staff.
2. All assets including buildings, vehicles, and equipment will be transferred to Pender County for the continuation of fire or EMS services. It has been indicated that there are buildings that were donated to volunteer departments over the years, however, there are no records of deed restrictions with the Register of Deeds office preventing these properties from being transferred to the County for the continuation of services.
3. All of the dedicated first responders in the County will lend their skills and expertise during this transition to ensure it is as smooth as possible for the safety of the public and staff.
4. This plan does not answer every possible question or address every possible scenario. Minutiae will be addressed during the implementation phase as the County works through this process with the departments and NC Fire Chief Consulting. The plan as it is written will serve as a framework for the implementation phase.

1.4 COST ESTIMATE SUMMARY

The table below is a summary of all costs further detailed in *Section 3: Financial Analysis* and *Section 4: Transition Plan*. Some of these costs are offset by the associated assets or only partially attributed to the assumption of emergency services. The County cannot anticipate every cost that may be incurred, but those listed within the plan are the major costs that can be estimated with some level of accuracy.

	Estimated One-time Costs	Estimated Recurring Costs	Notes
Additional Personnel		\$2,606,858	Includes FTE Salary & Benefits w/ 3% COLA, not PT
Debts & Liabilities	\$15,631,598		Alt. Annual Debt Service, Assets to offset
Asset Costs	\$436,160		Rebranding and IT hardware
Operational Costs	\$14,500	\$441,460	Mowing, Internet, Licensing, Other Minor Adjustments +/-
Legal Costs	\$100,000		Asset Retitle/Deeds
Capital Costs	\$9,000,000		New fleet garage (partial cost attributed to emergency services; partial regular fleet)

1.5 MILESTONES AND TIMELINE

The timeline below is further described in *Section 7: Implementation*.

Milestone	Begin	Completion Goal
Merger MOUs signed	-	July 15, 2025
Identify Emergency Services Director	July 1, 2025	October 15, 2025
Staff Town Hall meetings	September 2025	November 30, 2025
Inspect all buildings	October 2025	December 31, 2025
Final Merger Agreement	-	December 31, 2025
Finalize Operational details	-	January 31, 2026
Rewrite EMS system plan	January 2026	May 1, 2026
Public Town Hall meetings	February 2026	May 1, 2026
Payroll & Benefit informational sessions	March 2026	May 30, 2026
Dispatch/CAD updates	June 2026	June 26, 2026
Transition to the County (Operations, Supervision, Payroll, etc.)	-	July 1, 2026
Onboarding for benefits/employment	June 29, 2026	July 1, 2026
First Payroll	-	July 10, 2026
Deed Transfers & Re-Title Assets	July 1, 2026	July 31, 2026
IT Integration	July 1, 2026	December 31, 2026
Re-brand Vehicles & Stations	July 2026	June 30, 2027
Final Closeout of department financials	-	June 30, 2027

1.6 VARIABILITY

As the County moves forward with finalizing merger agreements and working through operational details, some sections of this plan are subject to change as needed in the best interests of the citizens and staff.

The County is working with NC Fire Chief Consulting as a facilitator throughout this process. Their experience will be invaluable and having a third party involved in the process will ensure all concerns and suggestions are heard by an impartial party.

2 DEPARTMENT DESCRIPTIONS

2.1 PENDER EMS & FIRE

Pender EMS & Fire is a private, non-profit charged with providing fire and EMS services, heavy rescue, swift water rescue, and search and rescue countywide. Pender EMS & Fire is the result of multiple mergers between EMS providers in 2003 and then the organization assumed fire operations in 2013 at the request of the County in an effort to improve the level of service provided to citizens. PEMSF operates eight ambulances and two Quick Response Vehicles (QRVs) 24 hours a day, seven days a week. They have six fire stations with four engine companies and two ladder companies, two heavy rescue trucks, and boat operations on both sides of the county for water rescue. Fire stations are staffed by a minimum of three full-time personnel, each with at least an EMT-Basic credential, Technical Rescue (Heavy Rescue), NC Firefighter I and II, and Hazmat certifications. Additionally, PEMSF has tankers, wildland urban interface vehicles, and two air boats for special operation response. PEMSF has a current ISO rating of a 3.

PEMSF has eight EMS stations, two of which are shared with fire. Ambulances are staffed by one EMT-Paramedic and one EMT-Intermediate or basic. Pender EMS & Fire is in the process of expanding the QRV program to more efficiently utilize Paramedics within the County.

Pender EMS & Fire provides training for its staff in house through certified instructors with NCOEMS, NCOSFM, and the community college system. They have a training center with a three-story training tower. They also provide training for the public.

Pender EMS & Fire employs just under 200 staff, including a full Logistics Division which handles all facilities, fleet, equipment, technology, and emergency communications. They also have administrative staff for human resources, finance, and billing.

2.2 ROCKY POINT FIRE

Rocky Point Fire Department, established in 1974, has historically been staffed by volunteers, transitioning to part-time paid staff in recent years. Rocky Point Fire operates one station and one substation, with a current ISO rating of 4/9E.

2.3 PENDERLEA FIRE DEPARTMENT

Penderlea Fire Department was established in 1957. It has historically been staffed by volunteers from the farming community. Over the past few years, Penderlea has transitioned to being staffed with full-time paid firefighters from Pender EMS & Fire due to the difficulty in ensuring enough responders are available with only volunteers. Penderlea Fire Departments operates two stations (Station 17 in Penderlea and Station 31 in Shiloh-Columbia) and a substation in Watha. Penderlea Fire Department has a current ISO rating of 4/9e.

2.4 MAPLE HILL FIRE DEPARTMENT

Maple Hill Fire Department has historically been staffed by volunteers from the farming community. Over the past few years, Maple Hill has transitioned to being staffed with full-time paid firefighters

from Pender EMS & Fire due to the difficulty in ensuring an appropriate response level with only volunteers. There is also a paramedic QRV stationed at Maple Hill provided by Pender EMS & Fire. Maple Hill Fire Department currently has an ISO rating of 4.

2.5 UNION RESCUE

Union Rescue Squad has provided EMS services in Pender County since the 1980s. In recent years, Pender EMS & Fire has provided a paramedic for response and Union Rescue has provided volunteer EMTs to respond to calls in the district. Union Rescue Squad operates two ambulances and one QRV.

3 FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

Section 4: Transition Plan gives a narrative explanation for each of the costs below. Many of the costs below will either be offset by assets, offset by reductions in costs in other areas, or are one-time costs.

3.1 PERSONNEL COSTS

The pre-transition costs below are salary costs as of March 2025. The post-transition costs include the 3% COLA that will occur in Fiscal Year 25-26.

Total Positions		Full Time		Part-Time
EMS		88		30
Fire		103		3
Admin		13		2
Logistics		6		2
Training		3		1
Totals		213		38

Full-Time Salary		Before		After	
EMS		4,558,287		4,936,004	
Fire		6,006,608		6,252,877	
Admin		1,134,798		1,143,306	
Logistics		458,209		500,411	
Training		205,026		216,752	
Rocky Point		100,000		546,601	
Total Annual Salaries		12,462,927		13,595,951	762,136

Adjusted for 3% COLA

Benefit Estimates		Before		After	
Health Insurance (Annually)		8,131		8,088	
		1,731,920		1,722,744	(9,176)

Taxes & Retirement		Before		After	
Medicare	1.45%	180,712	1.45%	197,141	
FICA	6.20%	772,702	6.20%	842,949	
401K	6.00%	747,776	2.50%	339,899	
ORBIT	0.00%	-	14.39%	1,956,457	
Rocky Point Benefits				218,640	
Total Estimated Cost		1,701,190		3,555,087	1,853,897

Total Estimated Full-Time S&B	15,896,037	18,873,782	2,606,858
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3.2 DEBTS & LIABILITIES

Many of the debts and liabilities can be paid off early without penalty, others will be absorbed into the annual debt service. Most debts are offset by the assets the leases are paying for.

Debt Type	Amount
Finance Leases	7,851,225
Operating Leases	43,772
Long Term Debt	4,882,515
Defined Benefit Plan	1,822,363
Accrued Vacation	1,031,723
Totals	15,631,598

3.3 ASSET COSTS

3.3.1 Fleet Rebranding

The costs below are one-time costs and based on the average cost per vehicle type. The County will seek a bulk discount from multiple vendors.

Apparatus	Cost Estimate per vehicle	Number of vehicles	Total Cost
Admin vehicle/ QRV	\$1,000	38	\$38,000
Fire apparatus	\$3,500	43	\$150,500
EMS apparatus	\$3,500	14	\$49,000
Other assets (boats, etc.)	\$1,000	37	\$37,000
Totals			\$274,500/ one time

3.3.2 Facilities

The costs below are one-time costs and based on having to replace existing signage. The County will seek a bulk discount from multiple vendors.

	Cost per building	Number of buildings	Total Cost
Rebranding	\$3,500	19	\$66,500/ one time
Mowing	\$800/month	19	\$182,400/ year

3.3.3 Information Technology

The recurring costs below will be partially offset by reductions in licensing and network costs for the departments.

Item	Cost per	Number	Total Cost
Network stack	\$2,800 (one time)	19	\$53,200/ one time
Physical Security hardware			\$41,960/ one time
Switched Ethernet	\$450/month	19	\$102,600/ year
Physical Security license			\$1,328/ year
Software Licensing		225	\$124,028/ year

3.3.4 Capital Costs

A new fleet or expanded garage was identified as a need in the 2025 Facilities Master Plan, even without the assumption of emergency services. A new garage large enough to support the regular

fleet and the additional fleet will be necessary with the assumption of emergency service vehicles. The County owns land that can be used for this purpose. The cost is estimated to be around \$9 million based on a cost estimate for a similar sized warehouse.

Capital	Total Cost
New Fleet Garage	\$9,000,000

3.4 GENERAL OPERATIONAL COSTS

The County already intends to change timekeeping software due to the limited functionality of the current software. The cost below is for the Emergency Services portion of the annual cost. There will be a reduction in the current timekeeping licensing costs once the transition is complete.

	One Time Cost	Annual Recurring
Time and Attendance Software Licensing and Support	\$14,500	\$31,104

3.5 TRAINING COSTS

Any changes in costs for training are anticipated to be minimal or will be offset by other cost savings.

3.6 FIRE OPERATIONS COSTS

Any changes in costs for fire operations are anticipated to be minimal or will be offset by other cost savings. Staffing costs are included in Section 3.1.

3.7 EMS OPERATIONS COSTS

Any changes in costs for EMS operations are anticipated to be minimal or will be offset by other cost savings. Staffing costs are included in Section 3.1.

3.8 LEGAL COSTS

Costs listed below are one-time costs.

Item	Description	Amount
NC Fire Chief Consulting	Facilitator Services	\$50,000
Deeds & Titles	Estimate	\$50,000

3.9 ANTICIPATED FUTURE COSTS

Additional fire stations near Rocky Point, Maple Hill, Atkinson/Currie will likely be needed in the future with continued growth and district changes to maintain ISO ratings. Maintaining ISO ratings will prevent significant financial impact to individual taxpayers on their homeowner's insurance.

Additional fire or EMS stations may be needed in the future due to the call volume from new developments, especially in the central and western portions of the County.

4 TRANSITION PLAN

4.1 HUMAN RESOURCES

All permanent positions with Pender EMS & Fire (PEMSF) will have equivalent positions with the County as part of the merger and unification. Some of those positions will be the same under the new Emergency Services structure and others will be utilized throughout the County, such as positions relating to HR, finance, technology, facilities, or fleet. This will be covered more thoroughly in *Section 5: County Emergency Services Structure*. Penderlea Fire Department and Maple Hill Fire Department are staffed solely by Pender EMS & Fire staff, so their positions are accounted for within PEMSF. Rocky Point Fire Department is staffed with part-time employees, many of which work for other local governments or PEMSF. Human Resources will work with these staff on a case-by-case basis to allow continued service to the County. The station itself will be staffed with 4 FTE staff to ensure all stations have the same level of staffing as before the transition.

An Emergency Services Director will be identified with a goal date of October 15, 2025, to ensure they are in place to help guide the transition process through completion. This Director is a new position in the County and will be publicly advertised, however, it may be filled by a staff member currently employed with Pender EMS & Fire.

4.1.1 Local Government Retirement System

All employees transitioning to full-time work for the County will be entered into the Local Government Retirement System (LGRS). The County cannot alter LGRS and all employees new to the system will begin contributing as new employees. New employees who have worked previously for local government will continue their contribution to their existing account, as long as the funds were not previously withdrawn. The ORBIT employer contribution effective 7/1/2025 is currently 14.39% of the base salary. Each employee is also responsible for contributing 6% of the base salary.

4.1.2 401K Plan

Pender EMS & Fire employees can roll their existing 401K funds into the County's supplemental 401K without penalty. The County currently contributes 2.5% of the base salary into each employees' 401k. The employees are allowed to contribute an additional amount if they choose to do so.

4.1.3 Defined Benefit Plan

Pender EMS & Fire is closing their Defined Benefit Plan and will handle all notifications and distributions for that plan. The County does not have a Defined Benefit Plan. The Defined Benefit Plan must be fully funded during this transition to ensure staff are able to receive their benefits. Pender EMS & Fire is in the process of funding the plan.

4.1.4 State Health Plan

All employees transitioning to full-time work for the County will be entered into the State Health Plan. Employees may choose their specific plan at the time of enrollment. The County currently contributes \$674.62 monthly towards the employee's insurance premiums.

4.1.5 Other Benefit Enrollment

All employees transitioning to full-time work for the County will have the opportunity to enroll in other benefits such as dental insurance, vision insurance, short-term disability, hospital indemnity, life and AD&D, universal life, critical illness, flex spending (medical and dependent care), pet insurance. The County covers all full-time employees with a \$10,000 life insurance policy. All employees will also have access to the Employee Assistance Program through MetLife.

4.1.6 Accruals

Pender EMS & Fire staff have all accruals in one bank referred to as PDO (Paid Days Off). The County utilizes multiple banks of time. PEMSf accruals are capped at 500 hours and no further accruals occur after this maximum is reached. Pender County will transfer up to 240 hours of vacation time and transfer the rest of an employee's PDO time, up to 240 hours, to Administrative Leave time. Any remaining will be credited as sick time. First responder staff will be paid overtime as opposed to accruing comp time. Administrative Leave will be used prior to using vacation or sick leave and can be used for either purpose.

Full-time employees accumulate sick leave at a rate of 4 hours for each pay period worked up to a maximum of one hundred four (104) hours per year, there is no limit to how many sick leave hours employees can accrue.

Full-time employees receive fifteen (15) paid holidays, equivalent to one hundred twenty (120) hours annually. Employees who are required to work on a scheduled holiday will be paid holiday in addition to work time as the holiday occurs per the BOCC approved holiday schedule.

The recognized holidays are:

- New Year's Day
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Good Friday
- Easter Monday
- Memorial Day
- Independence Day
- Labor Day
- Veterans Day
- Thanksgiving Wednesday, Thanksgiving Day and Thanksgiving Friday
- Christmas Day plus two (2) additional days per Personnel Policy Manual

Staff will accrue vacation time at the rate of their years of service. Staff will be credited for their years of full-time service with Pender County EMS & Fire. Staff will have the opportunity to earn 8 hours of vacation leave during the annual employee wellness incentive and they will also be given 8 hours community service time annually to participate in a community service event of their choice.

Years of Continuous Service	Hours Earned Each Pay Period	Approximate Hours of Full-time Annual Vacation Earned	Approximate Number of Days
Less than 2 years	3.0769	80	10
2 years, but less than 5 years	3.6923	96	12
5 years, but less than 10 years	4.6154	120	15
10 years, but less than 15 years	5.5385	144	18
15 years through 20 years	6.4615	168	21
20 years through 24 years	7.3846	192	24
25 years or more	7.6923	200	25

4.1.7 Longevity

Employees will be given credit for longevity with the County based on their years of service with Pender EMS & Fire as those years were in service to the citizens of County.

In addition to regular wages, a longevity payment will be made annually in recognition of long-term service of regular or permanent full-time employees who have served at least two (2) continuous years with Pender County in a regular or permanent full-time position. Annual longevity pay amounts are calculated based upon the length of continuous Pender County service and a percentage of the employee's annual rate of base pay on the date of eligibility.

Years of Continuous Service	Longevity Pay Rate
2-3 years	.50%
4 years	1.00%
5 -9 years	1.50%
10 – 14 years	2.00%
15 – 19 years	3.00%
20 – 24 years	4.00%
25 or more years	5.00%

4.1.8 Pay scale

The following are the pay grades for the primary position classes created as a part of this merger. These are the pay ranges for Fiscal Year 25-26 after a 3% COLA, not individual salaries for specific personnel. Any current positions not listed in this salary table, such as those in administration or logistics, will be titled and graded appropriately per the Pender County salary table. These positions

will be assessed individually to determine the best location for the position within the organizational structure. This will ensure the best utilization of staff skills and experience.

Position	Grade	Minimum	Maximum
Emergency Services Director	22	\$114,598.68	\$170,465.53
Deputy Emergency Services Director	20	\$101,277.38	\$150,650.11
Division Chiefs	18	\$87,956.10	\$130,834.70
Assistant Chiefs	16	\$79,630.31	\$118,450.09
Battalion Chiefs	14	\$72,969.66	\$108,542.38
Captains	13	\$69,639.34	\$103,588.51
Lieutenants	12	\$66,309.02	\$98,634.67
FTOs	11	\$62,978.70	\$93,680.82
EMT Paramedic	10	\$59,648.37	\$88,726.95
AEMT FTO	9	\$56,318.06	\$83,773.11
Field Preceptor	8	\$52,987.73	\$78,819.24
AEMT	8	\$52,987.73	\$78,819.24
EMT Basic	6	\$46,327.10	\$68,911.57
Driver Operator (DO)	9	\$56,318.06	\$83,773.11
Rescue Tech	9	\$56,318.06	\$83,773.11
Firefighter	8	\$52,987.73	\$78,819.24
Firefighter Trainee	7	\$49,657.42	\$73,865.41
Maintenance Mechanic	14	\$72,969.66	\$108,542.38
Logistics	9	\$56,318.06	\$83,773.11
Maintenance Tech	4	\$39,666.46	\$59,003.85
HR Assistant	8	\$52,987.73	\$78,819.24
IT Tech	9	\$56,318.06	\$83,773.11

4.1.9 Payroll & Benefits Informational Training & Onboarding

There will be informational sessions provided for new staff regarding payroll and benefits prior to the transition of staff, no later than May 30th, 2026. The sessions will cover how the payroll process works, benefit options and how benefits are paid, how accruals are to be used, time entry, and any other questions staff may have regarding the transition.

Within the first 3 days of the transition, staff will be onboarded with documentation and benefits. This step cannot be completed until the employees report to Pender County and must be completed within three (3) days. Human Resources will create an onboarding schedule to accommodate all

EMS and Fire schedules to eliminate any disruption to the services provided to Pender County citizens.

4.1.10 Schedules

Administrative, support staff, logistics staff, and any other staff not working a shift will work a standard Monday through Friday, 8am-5pm schedule, unless an alternate work schedule is approved by their department director.

EMS shifts will remain 12-hour shifts on the same schedule currently used by PEMSF.

Fire shifts will remain 24-hour shifts and continue on the same schedule currently utilized by PEMSF. Staff will be paid every two weeks on the same schedule as other County employees. Overtime can be calculated on a 28 day cycle. County staff are working with the US Department of Labor to finalize the best option for fire scheduling and payroll.

4.1.11 Liability and worker's comp insurances

By state law, Pender County provides Workers' Compensation insurance to all employees. This will include employees transitioning from other departments. Currently the County Human Resources Department works with NCACC Sedgwick to provide workers comp insurance to its employees. Exact costs have not been provided for Worker's Comp as the County is waiting on NCACC Sedgwick and will need to provide birth dates for all new staff. VFIS will not be able to serve the County for Worker's Comp purposes.

The County's liability insurance is also provided through NCACC, but the County can and will utilize VFIS liability insurance intended for Public Safety property and liability coverage as applicable, consistent with Fire Marshal's Office and Emergency Management, when economically feasible.

4.1.12 Volunteers

Volunteer service is an important part of public safety. Any volunteers currently serving any fire department or EMS department in the county are encouraged to continue to volunteer with the County. Volunteers will complete an application and background check, just as current County volunteers do. Volunteers will be managed by the training section of each division. Volunteer incentives still need to be determined.

4.1.13 Staff Town Hall Meetings

County staff will hold Town Hall meetings with future staff between September and November 2025 to answer questions and give staff an opportunity to provide feedback regarding final structure and operational details.

4.2 FINANCE

4.2.1 Debts & Leases

Pender County will ensure all debts and leases are paid off or assumed so that no department's credit is affected. The total amount of debt to be assumed or paid off is \$15,631,598.

4.2.2 Existing Contracts

Existing contracts will be assumed or ended appropriately according to the written agreement. Efforts will be made to consolidate contracted services with existing County services where possible.

EMS Billing is a company utilized for collecting EMS billing. Billing fees and collection methods will remain the same or similar. Any uncollected funds where a payee is unable to be contacted will be treated in the same manner as write-offs in the Health Department.

4.2.3 Current Grants & requirements

Departments will furnish any necessary paperwork to satisfy any open grant requirements. Currently there is one major open grant with the NC Office of State Budget and Management for construction of EMS Station 9. The County is the pass-through agency for this grant and will continue to provide the appropriate reporting and communication with the State while facilitating the construction of the eligible facility.

4.2.4 Fixed assets

Lists of fixed assets have been acquired from each department. All assets will be entered into the County's database and tracked according to policy. Efforts will be made to reduce any redundant equipment in an effort reduce maintenance costs. However, it is imperative to have back-up equipment on hand for disaster preparedness and to ensure the continuity of operations in the event of equipment malfunction.

4.2.5 Payroll

Human Resources and Finance staff will meet with Pender EMS & Fire staff to ensure personnel records match and to have a final checklist for beginning the new payroll no later than June 1, 2026.

The first payroll for onboarded staff will be July 10th, 2026.

New timekeeping software will be tested and in place by March 2026 as the County's existing software does not meet current needs. New software being tested includes functions for scheduling and will be easier to utilize for shift work, including the Sheriff's Office. The cost below is only for the Emergency Services portion of the annual cost.

	One Time Cost	Annual Recurring	Total Year 1 Cost
Time and Attendance Software Licensing and Support	\$14,500	\$31,104	\$45,604

4.2.6 EMS & Fire Tax

The County-Wide EMS District rate will be reduced to zero, as well as the individual Fire District tax rates. These rates will be incorporated into the overall County effective ad valorem tax rate to account for the revenues that were generated by these individual tax rates. Fire Districts served by municipal departments will continue to receive funding to contract those services to those municipalities based on the values of the properties in the areas they serve.

4.3 FACILITIES & FLEET

4.3.1 New Fleet Garage

A new or expanded fleet garage was identified as a need in the 2025 Facilities Master Plan. A new fleet garage is necessary to ensure the maintenance of fire and EMS apparatus, as well as the County's regular fleet. The garage will need roughly five acres of land to ensure enough space for fire and EMS apparatus to maneuver and turn around and ensure enough parking for vehicles waiting for service. The garage needs a minimum of 25-foot ceilings to allow for ladder extension during repairs, ten to twelve bays to allow apparatus to remain inside while being worked on, regular fleet repairs, storage for parts, and a fenced in area to allow for appropriate storage of equipment. The County is working on finding an appropriate location utilizing land already owned by the County.

The estimated cost of fleet garage construction is \$9 million. This is based on estimates for a similar sized warehouse. This entire cost is not attributable to Emergency Services as it will represent approximately half the fleet.

4.3.2 Fleet Maintenance

All departmental equipment has branding to identify it as belonging to a first responder agency. Within one year of acquiring all assets, Pender County should rebrand all emergency response apparatus and stations.

Staff will be presented with options for a new logo and be offered the opportunity to vote on the new branding.

Apparatus	Cost Estimate per vehicle	Number of vehicles	Total Cost
Admin vehicle/ QRV	\$1,000	38	\$38,000
Fire apparatus	\$3,500	43	\$150,500
EMS apparatus	\$3,500	14	\$49,000
Other assets (boats, etc.)	\$1,000	37	\$37,000
Totals			\$274,500/ one time

Fleet staff will transition from Pender EMS & Fire. This will allow certified Emergency Vehicle Technicians with valuable other certifications to continue to work on apparatus in the County. Utilizing contracted services for emergency vehicle repair is both costly and results in extensive out-of-service times, often upwards of a year. Until the new fleet garage is operational, staff will continue to utilize the rented facility used by PEMS and use contracted services as a stop-gap.

The fleet replacement schedules have been received from each department and Pender County Facilities & Fleet Services will ensure the schedule is maintained due to long lead times on emergency service apparatus utilizing current software.

4.3.3 Buildings

All departmental equipment has branding to identify it as belonging to a first responder agency. Within one year of acquiring all assets, Pender County should rebrand all emergency response apparatus and stations. Additionally, each station will be added to the existing mowing contract.

Pender EMS & Fire does contract mowing for some of their buildings, but not all, therefore there will be additional cost from their current operating cost. Firefighters often provide lawn care for fire stations in other jurisdictions. This is an option but would require the purchase of lawnmowing equipment as well as maintenance for such equipment. The cost below is for contracting the mowing of the stations, which has been determined to be more cost-effective than mowing all properties in-house.

	Cost per building	Number of buildings	Total Cost
Rebranding	\$3,500	19	\$66,500/ one time
Mowing	\$800/month	19	\$182,400/ year

All stations are currently functional and well-maintained, but will be thoroughly assessed by December 31, 2025, for any needed repairs or modifications to ensure OSHA or other standards are met. Any necessary work will be added to Pender County Facilities & Fleet's work order system.

4.4 INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

4.4.1 Building infrastructure

Each station will need an Information Technology network stack as well as internet service connecting the station to the County network. Departments do not use technology that meets the security standards for the County. The network stacks can be phased in and do not have to be installed immediately. Physical security, including surveillance cameras and door access control, will need to be installed to meet the County's standard and be consistent across County facilities.

Item	Cost per building	Number of Buildings	Total Cost
Network stack	\$2,800	19	\$53,200/ one time
Physical Security hardware			\$41,960/ one time
Switched Ethernet	\$450/month	19	\$102,600/ year
Physical Security license			\$1,327.60/ year

4.4.2 Vehicle Technology

All mobile computers, radio equipment, and Cradlepoint devices will transfer with the apparatus or equipment and are compatible with County use. Departments already pay for licenses for these items and there will therefore be minimal additional cost, if any.

4.4.3 Staff Support

There are a number of licenses required for staff to have email, cybersecurity protections, and the like. Departments are paying for some licensing costs, so these costs will be offset by a reduction in those costs. IT will be part of the onboarding process with HR.

Item	Number of Licenses	Total Cost
Licenses	225	\$124,028.92/ year

4.4.4 Integration

All hardware, software licenses, social media, and websites will need to be transferred to the County infrastructure by December 31, 2026.

4.5 EMERGENCY COMMUNICATIONS

4.5.1 Radio & Emergency Communications support

The Emergency Communications Division will support radio communications and other emergency communications like satellite devices. The Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communications Manager will continue to serve in the Sheriff's Office overseeing the countywide network and E911 needs. The Emergency Communications Division will consist of an Emergency Services Communications Administrator and an Emergency Services Communications Technician. Staff will respond as they do with Pender EMS & Fire, providing support for over 400 radios, multiple portable satellite devices, associated equipment, and setting up field communications for incidents. They will interface with the Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communication System Administrator and Information Technology as needed. Staff will bring all required equipment to their new roles with the County from their roles with Pender EMS & Fire.

Station numbers and response district lines will remain the same in an effort to ensure continuity of response and reduce confusion during the transition period. Licensing for Central Square will all need to be merged under the County's account to ensure supervisors have access to all data. Licenses are currently paid for by departments, so this will not incur additional cost. The total number of licenses may be able to be reduced due to the consolidation of departments. Dispatch will be responsible for coordinating with departments and County IT to consolidate accounts.

Active 911 allows for notification of individuals such as supervisors or those on-call. These licenses will also need to be merged under one account to ensure the ability to continue using this valuable tool. The total number of licenses may be able to be reduced due to the consolidation of departments. IT will be responsible for coordinating with departments to consolidate accounts and set up new notification flows.

4.6 TRAINING

Training is an essential part of emergency services. In order to provide a high level of service to the public, fire and EMS staff need to not only maintain their current certifications and skills but also learn new skills and stay abreast of ever-changing technology and protocols.

4.6.1 Academies

The training academies for new fire fighters will continue as needed to onboard new, certified staff utilizing existing resources and training staff. The training academies for EMS staff will also continue as needed to increase EMT certifications.

4.6.2 Credentialing & Career Development

All training sessions, certification tracking, and career development currently conducted by Pender EMS & Fire will continue as needed to maintain certifications and develop staff. The career development opportunities will be aligned with the Pender County Career Development Program.

4.7 SPECIAL OPERATIONS

Special Operations teams are critical to ensuring specialized response in complex or time-critical emergencies. Pender EMS & Fire currently has several teams that operate in the special operations divisions. These include, water rescue, marine operations, search and rescue operations, Unmanned Aircraft System operations, State Medical Assistance Team, and tactical medics. All of these are vital assistance partnerships within the County and will remain under the Special Operations section of the Fire Division.

4.7.1 Swift Water Rescue

Water Rescue capabilities are critical in a County subject to hurricanes and river flooding. Pender EMS & Fire coordinates water rescue efforts with a highly trained Swift Water Rescue team. This team will continue to be supported through existing resources after the unification. The Swift Water Rescue team and equipment will fall under the Special Operations section of the Fire Division.

4.7.2 Marine Operations

Marine Operations capabilities ensure quick and efficient access to emergencies in both inland and coastal waters of Pender County. Pender EMS & Fire operates several classes of watercraft from small Jon boats to high powered amphibious fan powered vessels. This team will continue to operate with existing resources and under the Special Operations section of the Fire Division.

4.7.3 Search & Rescue

Search and Rescue (PENSAR) is a function of Pender EMS & Fire, operated primarily by volunteers, but also including paid PEMS staff, Sheriff's Office staff, and Emergency Management staff. The Search and Rescue team and equipment will fall under the Special Operations section of the Fire Division.

4.7.4 Drone Operations

Drone Operations are critical to SAR missions as well as other special operations missions. The Sheriff's Office also operates a drone program for searches or investigations. Drone operations will reside under the Emergency Communications Division and will coordinate with the Sheriff's Office to ensure coverage and reduce redundancy when possible.

4.7.5 State Medical Assistance Team

Pender EMS & Fire currently operates a State Medical Assistance Team, SMAT III, that can be utilized anywhere in the state should a disaster or major event occur. This team will continue to operate with all of its equipment under the EMS division training section.

4.8 FIRE OPERATIONS

4.8.1 Staffing & Equipment Standard

For the purposes of the merger and unification, station staffing levels will not decrease. All stations staffed by PEMSF, including Maple Hill and Penderlea are staffed with either three or four staff. Station 16 in Hampstead is staffed with four due to the presence of the ladder truck. These stations will maintain these levels of staffing. Rocky Point is currently staffed by part-time staff. The station will be staffed by the equivalent of four full-time staff to ensure all districts served by County-operated departments are receiving response with comparable staffing levels.

Efforts will be made to reduce equipment to reduce maintenance costs without reducing the station's ability to respond. Equipment may be reallocated between stations to increase efficiency.

The substations at Rocky Point and Watha will be maintained for ISO purposes. The Watha substation is leased, and the County will need to renew that lease with the Town of Watha. Maintaining volunteers is crucial to the effectiveness of substations without having to add staff.

4.8.2 OSFM Requirements for Ownership Change

There are a number of items that must be completed when fire departments merge per NC OSFM. These including ensuring fire stations are within 10 miles of each other, filing Articles of Merger when applicable, dissolving the tax ID numbers of dissolved departments, dissolving charters of departments, ensuring enough personnel for each station, submitting a new roster to the NC Firefighter's Association, updating names on contracts, and notifying NC OSFM of the merger completion to schedule a 9S inspection of all stations and apparatus affected. All these items are provided in a checklist form from NC OSFM and will be worked through by County staff in close coordination with the NC OSFM contact for the region.

4.8.3 ISO Impacts

Response districts will not change, and staffing levels will remain the same or increase, so citizens will be receiving the same or higher level of fire protection. County staff will work closely with the regional NC OSFM representative and NC Fire Chief Consulting to mitigate any impacts to ISO ratings. It is important to note that small changes in ISO rating do not negatively impact response and only minimally affect homeowner's insurance in many cases.

4.8.4 County Districts Served by Towns

Three fire districts are currently served by municipal departments. The Northeast Pender District is served by Surf City Fire Department. The Pender Central District is served by Burgaw Fire Department. The Atkinson District is served by Atkinson Fire Department. There will be no change to these districts at this time.

4.8.5 Fire Commission and Firefighters Association

After transition, the Fire Commission will consist of the Fire Marshal (Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention), a Pender County Commissioner, the Chief of each fire department (Pender County, Town of Burgaw, Town of Atkinson, Town of Surf City, Town of Topsail Beach), and two community representatives.

The Pender County Firefighters Association is governed by the Pender County Fire Commission, and may still meet to host trainings and perform other duties as needed.

4.9 EMS OPERATIONS

4.9.1 Staffing and Equipment

Ambulances will continue to be staffed by a minimum of one A-EMT and one B-EMT if a paramedic level Quick Response Vehicle (QRV) is stationed in the area. Otherwise, an ambulance must have one paramedic and one EMT of any level. QRVs will remain at the station they are assigned to and be paged along with an ambulance to calls requiring paramedic-level care.

4.9.2 EMS System Plan

The EMS System Plan contains information regarding staffing, equipment, training, and processes. It will need to be rewritten as an ownership change and submitted to NC OEMS a minimum of 30 days prior to the change. PEMS staff have maintained the EMS System Plan and will be instrumental in making appropriate changes. The County will aim to complete these changes by May 1, 2026 to allow time for NCOEMS to respond and for the County to make any alterations that may be necessary.

4.9.3 OEMS requirements for ownership change

There are a number of items that must be completed when ownership of an EMS provider changes. These include updating the EMS system plan and an inspection of all stations and apparatus by NC OEMS. Staff will work closely with NC OEMS and NC Fire Chief Consulting to ensure all required tasks are completed.

4.9.4 Quality Assurance/ Quality Improvements (QA/QI)

Quality Assurance, Quality Improvement, and Peer Review are a critical component of ensuring patient care and excellent service. QA/QI staff will continue to provide review of patient charts and coordinate review with the Medical Director as needed.

4.10 LEGAL

4.10.1 Memorandum of Understanding

Memorandums of Understanding are needed with Pender EMS & Fire, Penderlea Fire Department, Maple Hill Fire Department, and Rocky Point Fire Department. MOUs ensure all parties understand the overall scope and direction of the process. The MOU will outline key dates and responsibilities and lays the groundwork for the final merger agreement. County staff will provide an MOU to each department by June 30, 2025 with a goal to have fully executed MOUs by July 14th, 2025.

4.10.2 Public Hearings

Public hearings may be needed for any changes to fire districts or tax districts that may occur. As staff become aware of the need for a public hearing, appropriate notices will be made and all procedures followed.

4.10.3 Final Merger Agreement

The Final Merger Agreement will lay out all legal stipulations and details of the merger for the County and for each department involved. These agreements will be completed by December 31, 2025.

4.10.4 Public Town Hall Meetings

In an effort to promote transparency, there will be Public Town Hall Meetings between February and April 2026 to ensure the public are able to ask questions and express concerns about emergency services in their districts.

5 COUNTY EMERGENCY SERVICES STRUCTURE

This merger will result in the creation of an Emergency Services Department in Pender County. Underneath an Emergency Services Director will be a Deputy Emergency Services Director, Fire Division Chief, an EMS Division Chief, the Emergency Management Director, and an Emergency Communications Division. An Emergency Services structure is recognizable and mirrors the structure of other counties in North Carolina to ensure interoperability with other agencies.

The Fire Division will assume all fire protective services currently provided by Pender EMS & Fire, Penderlea Fire Department, Maple Hill Fire Department, and Rocky Point Fire Department. Burgaw Fire Department, Surf City Fire Department, and Atkinson Fire Department will continue to provide service in their county districts as the district lines are currently drawn. A training section will remain under the Fire Division to ensure quality continuing education, certification requirements, and effective onboarding of new staff. The Fire Marshal will become an Assistant Chief of Fire Prevention to match other counties and continue to serve as the Fire Marshal and provide fire plan reviews, fire inspections, fire investigations, and public education for prevention.

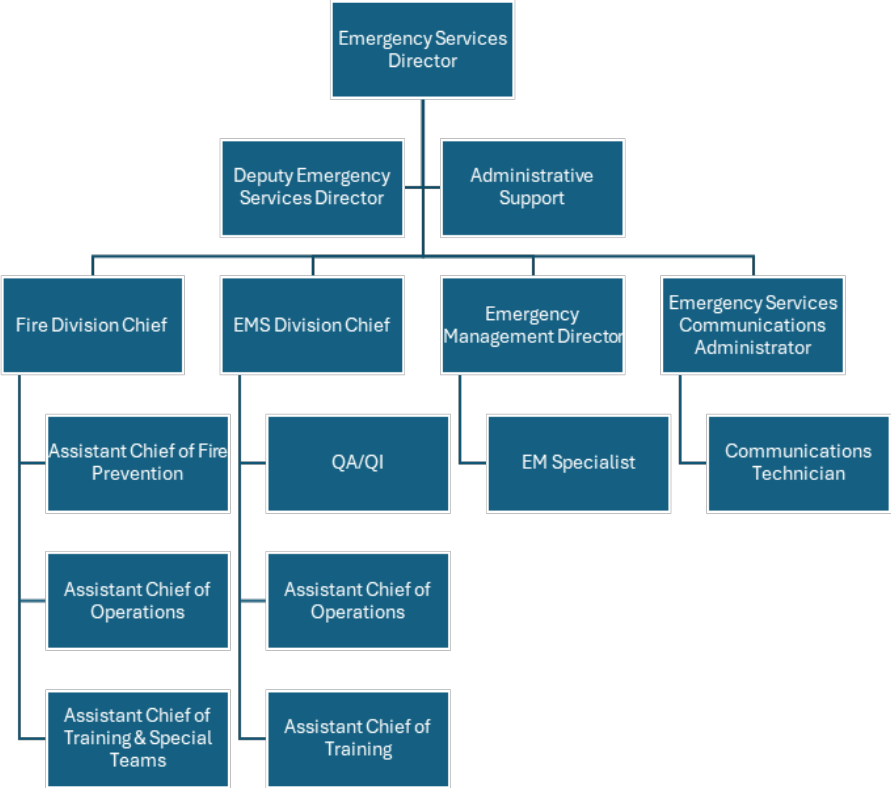
The EMS Division will assume all EMS services currently provided by Pender EMS & Fire and will work with Union Rescue Squad as a contractor providing EMS coverage in the Union District and throughout the County. A training section will remain under the EMS Division to ensure quality continuing education, certification requirements, and effective onboarding of new staff.

The Emergency Management division will continue to provide coordination for large-scale events, preparedness, planning, response, and recovery for natural disasters as they currently operate.

The Emergency Communications Division will support radio communications and other emergency communications such as satellite devices. The Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communications Manager will continue to serve in the Sheriff's Office overseeing the countywide radio system and E911 needs. The Emergency Communications Division will consist of an Emergency Services Communications Administrator and an Emergency Services Communications Technician. Staff will respond as they do with Pender EMS & Fire, providing support for over 400 radios, multiple portable satellite and wireless devices, associated equipment, and setting up field communications for incidents. They will interface with the Sheriff's Office Public Safety Communication System Administrator and Information Technology as needed.

Other staff positions currently under Pender EMS & Fire, such as from the Administrative and Logistics Divisions, will be allocated to the matching County departments such as Facilities & Fleet, Human Resources, IT, or Finance or utilized within the Emergency Services department. These positions will be assessed individually to determine the best location for the position within the organizational structure. This will ensure the best utilization of staff skills and experience.

Pender County Emergency Services Merger



6 RISK ANALYSIS

There are a number of risks associated with an undertaking of the magnitude and complexity of unifying all fire and EMS services under County operation. Risks could affect the safety of the public, ISO ratings or failing to meet NFPA or other standards, failing to meet EMS standards, and other internal risks.

6.1 PUBLIC SAFETY

Any disruption in staffing, fleet, or other operations could result in a substandard response, delayed response, or no response to an emergency call. Failure to maintain staffing levels, ensure timely payroll, properly maintain vehicles, update appropriate call numbers in Dispatch, or failing to complete a number of other items could result in a failure to respond when dispatched. A delay of even a few minutes could change the outcome of a call.

Keeping key personnel involved in public safety in conversations surrounding the unification of these departments will reduce the likelihood of missing a step in the process and reduce the risk to the public.

6.2 ISO/NFPA STANDARDS

Changes in districts or staffing could affect ISO ratings which can impact homeowner insurance and property insurance for businesses. Combining departments can also affect ISO ratings due to changes in mutual aid. Municipal departments are also held to a higher standard than non-profit or volunteer departments and should not expect the same grace in state inspections or deadlines that smaller departments may receive.

Staying in conversation with NC OSFM, NC Fire Chief Consulting, and Fire Chiefs in the County should help identify any possible pitfalls early on in order to avoid significant failures.

6.3 EMS STANDARDS

Failure to meet certain standards for EMS services can result in the revocation of licenses to provide care, the inability to administer certain medications, or a reduction in the level of service that is able to be provided.

Maintaining the excellent training standards already set forth in the County and staying in regular contact with NC OEMS should help identify any possible pitfalls early on in order to avoid significant failures.

6.4 INTERNAL RISKS

Onboarding a significant number of staff at once, along with a significant number of buildings and apparatus, creates challenges for County staff. Although the departments come with vast experience in their own processes, the new staff are unfamiliar with County processes. There is a chance of missing an onboarding item for payroll, benefits, or technology which could disrupt an employee's ability to perform their job duties.

Having consistent meetings with HR, finance, and IT should help make the payroll and benefits process smoother. Having consistent meetings between IT and Facilities & Fleet should help ensure a smooth transition with equipment and buildings.

7 IMPLEMENTATION

7.1 OBJECTIVES

The primary objective during this merger is to ensure the safety of the public. The secondary objectives are to increase efficiency by operating a single department and to provide first responders who have been serving Pender County with local government benefits.

The intent is to complete all tasks with as little disruption as possible.

7.2 TIMELINE

Milestone	Begin	Completion Goal
Merger MOUs signed	-	July 15, 2025
Identify Emergency Services Director	July 1, 2025	October 15, 2025
Staff Town Hall meetings	September 2025	November 30, 2025
Inspect all buildings	October 2025	December 31, 2025
Final Merger Agreement	-	December 31, 2025
Finalize Operational details	-	January 31, 2026
Rewrite EMS system plan	January 2026	May 1, 2026
Public Town Hall meetings	February 2026	May 1, 2026
Payroll & Benefit informational sessions	March 2026	May 30, 2026
Dispatch/CAD updates	June 2026	June 26, 2026
Transition to the County (Operations, Supervision, Payroll, etc.)	-	July 1, 2026
Onboarding for benefits/employment	June 29, 2026	July 1, 2026
First Payroll	-	July 10, 2026
Deed Transfers & Re-Title Assets	July 1, 2026	July 31, 2026
IT Integration	July 1, 2026	December 31, 2026
Re-brand Vehicles & Stations	July 2026	June 30, 2027
Final Closeout of department financials	-	June 30, 2027

The process should begin with all departments signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU is a non-binding agreement. This will set timelines, benchmarks, and expectations for both sides. This should be signed prior to taking other action.

The next step will be to hire an Emergency Services Director so they can be involved in later steps. Advertisement can begin immediately with a goal date to hire by the Fall of 2025. This person may be an existing employee with PEMS or other department within the County. Building and equipment inspections can begin in the Fall of 2025 as well, with completion by the end of the calendar year. The Emergency Services Director should be identified by the end of 2025 in order to assist with finalizing operational details, determining the exact structure of the new department with divisions and sections, oversee rewriting the EMS system plan, and coordinate with HR and finance for the onboarding of new staff.

To ensure as little disruption as possible, the final merger agreements should be complete by December 31, 2025. These are legally binding documents and will allow all parties to focus on the transition tasks in 2026. The two months leading up to the staff transition will be busy with training, onboarding staff with benefits and retirement, and making appropriate changes in Dispatch to ensure a smooth transition for responders.

With a goal date of July 1, 2026, the first payroll will be processed on July 10, 2026.

In the year following the transition, vehicles and stations will need to be rebranded, and departments will still need to provide W-2s and file appropriate tax and other documentation.

7.3 RISKS & MITIGATION

In order to prevent risks to the public and ensure smooth internal processes, continuous communication between all parties is critical. Having an MOU with clear expectations will ease tension and help all parties work together to finalize details. Utilizing the services of NC Fire Chief Consulting also provides an impartial third party to hear all concerns, work through difficult conversations, and provide extensive experience in both fire and EMS.

7.4 PERFORMANCE STANDARDS

7.4.1 *Response Times*

Response times are not a sole indicator of performance, but they are a simple metric to track and compare across a period of time. Response times will be compared pre- and post-merger to ensure there are no significant increases in response times for either fire or EMS. The Emergency Services Director will be responsible for ensuring these times are compared and take reasonable actions to improve response times.

7.4.2 *After-Action Reviews and QA/QI*

After-Action Reviews and Quality Assurance/Quality Improvement are already conducted by fire and EMS. Staff conducting these reviews will alert the Emergency Services Director of any issues appearing to result from the merger and include recommendations to improve services.

7.4.3 *EMS Billing*

The Finance Director will ensure billing continues for EMS services and will compare collection rates pre- and post-merger. The Finance Director will provide suggestions for improving collection rates.

7.4.4 *Budgeting & Costs*

The Finance Director will show the cost annually post-merger during the annual budget process of the costs for all fire and EMS services.

8 POST-ACQUISITION INTEGRATION

8.1 PERFORMANCE EVALUATION

8.1.1 *Merger Committee meetings*

The Internal Merger Committee responsible for the writing of this plan (HR, Finance, CMO) will meet monthly with the Emergency Services Director, Division Chiefs, and County Manager for the first six months to evaluate any issues that may arise related to personnel, finances, assets, or operations including, but not limited to, items listed in *Section 7.4: Performance Standards*. Updates from those meetings will be provided to the Board of County Commissioners. These meetings will end in December 2026 unless it is deemed necessary to continue monthly meetings. After the first six months, these meetings will occur quarterly for another year, ending in December 2027.

8.1.2 *Public Safety meetings*

The Emergency Services Director, Division Chiefs, Sheriff's Office, and 911 will meet monthly for the first 12 months to evaluate any issues or inefficiencies that may arise operationally, including, but not limited to, items listed in *Section 7.4: Performance Standards*. Updates from those meetings will be provided to the County Manager and to the Board. These meetings will end in June 2027 unless it is deemed necessary to continue monthly meetings. After the first 12 months, these meetings will occur quarterly.

8.1.3 *Town Hall Meetings for Staff*

Human Resources and the County Manager's Office will hold quarterly Town Hall meetings for staff in the Emergency Services department for the first year after transition.

8.2 FUTURE PLANNING

The merger of fire and EMS services into a County-operated department is only one step. Improving the services provided to the citizens of Pender County will require planning for the future of public safety. After the transition is complete, leadership from each first responder agency will meet to discuss what public safety in Pender County should look like. This will include discussing a long-term plan for staffing, station locations, the standardization of equipment, the use of special teams within the county, and training.