



Accreditation Report

**Virginia Beach Fire Department
4817 Columbus Street
Virginia Beach, VA 23462
USA**

**This report was prepared on June 01, 2021
by the
Commission on Fire Accreditation International**

**This report represents the findings
of the peer assessment team that visited the
Virginia Beach Fire Department
on April 25-29, 2021**

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PREFACE

To the citizens and the governing body of the agency: This report represents a thorough review of the organization to verify and validate how this agency is executing its stated mission in accordance with universally accepted practices for a contemporary fire and emergency services organization. Quality improvement can only be initiated and realized by those agencies that challenge themselves through a comprehensive self-assessment. This report documents that this agency is seeking organizational improvements and discovering elements of excellence. Please note that the recommendations by the peer assessment team are opportunities for improvement provided from professionals in the fire and emergency service industry.

To the agency: This report communicates the outputs and outcomes of your dedication and commitment to quality improvement. Your self-assessment, community risk assessment: standards of cover, and strategic plan amount to years of work to understand your community, establish accountable goals, institute transparency, and factually comprehend what you did not know about your organization. The verification and validation of your agency by a team of peers represents a major accomplishment. The recommendations in this report are opportunities to become better and stronger in your community. Finally, take this report and communicate to your community the areas you identified during your self-assessment that were outstanding and those that represent improvement opportunities.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Virginia Beach Fire Department is a career organization with 499 uniformed personnel, staffing twenty-one engines and seven ladder companies, two heavy rescue/squad companies, and numerous cross-staffed specialty assets at twenty fire stations. All fire suppression vehicles are staffed with a minimum of with three firefighters and at a minimum are able to provide basic life support (BLS). The agency operates with a minimum daily staffing of 120 personnel. The number of personnel dedicated to community risk reduction/public fire education is thirty-two full-time personnel. Ten full-time staff are dedicated to fire training.

The city represents 306.8 square miles and is defined as an independent city within the Commonwealth of Virginia. It is located in the southeast portion of the state directly on the Atlantic Ocean. The 2018 census indicated a population of 450,189.

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) has completed a comprehensive review and appraisal of the Virginia Beach Fire Department based upon the ninth edition of the *Fire & Emergency Service Self-Assessment Manual (FESSAM)*. The commission's goals are to promote organizational self-improvement and to award accreditation status in recognition of good performance. The peer assessment team's objectives were to validate the agency's self-assessment study, identify and make recommendations for improvement, issue a report of findings, and conclude if the agency is eligible for an award of accreditation.

The peer assessment team followed CFAI processes and the Virginia Beach Fire Department demonstrated that its self-study accreditation manual, community risk assessment/standards of cover (CRA/SOC), and strategic plan met all core competencies and criteria. The peer assessment team recommends accredited agency status for the Virginia Beach Fire Department from the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.

The peer assessment team observed a strong commitment by the agency to the CFAI accreditation process and, in particular, the agency is working to ensuring appropriate succession training for the accreditation manager position. The current accreditation manager is actively supported by the immediate past accreditation manager throughout the process. The current accreditation manager also has a support team, of which, one of the members will be selected as the replacement for the next accreditation cycle in five years. In addition, several members of the agency regularly act as peer assessors for CFAI. These approaches ensure continuity, more direct access to quality improvement best practices with similar organizations, and the engagement of a broader spectrum of the agency.

The peer assessment team had meetings with the city manager, allied city departments, and various firefighters. Individually and collectively they expressed a long-standing interest in the process, having been engaged and involved from the outset of the agency's journey towards accreditation. There is clearly a commitment to continue to follow and support the implementation of identified opportunities for improvement. It can be anticipated that all representatives will be strong supporters and network participants as the full benefits of going through the self-assessment process are realized and built on in the future.

The peer assessment team identified opportunities for improvement that are provided below. These recommendations flowed from discussions, interviews, and a review of agency supplied documentation to support its self-assessment conclusions.

The following represents a synopsis of the recommendations that were made by the peer assessment team during the on-site visit. Additional details for each of these recommendations can be found in the Observations Section of this report. For each of the recommendations, the performance indicator from the model is provided, including notating if it is a core competency (CC).

Recommendations

Recommendations were developed from the evaluation of criterion, core competencies, and performance indicators.

1. It is recommended that the agency work with the Virginia Beach EMS Department to gain insight into response and staffing data. ([2B.2](#))
2. It is recommended that the agency study the effect on response times and resiliency that could result from reducing out of service times of apparatus when personnel are needed to transport patients to the hospital. ([2C.8](#))
3. It is recommended that all agencies involved in the EMS delivery system study and implement efficiency programs to reduce the need for transport units in the system. ([CC5E.1](#))
4. It is recommended the agency conduct a detailed study focused on analyzing the location of its moored marine assets and explore any prospects for response time improvement. Additionally, further analysis, integration and procedures concerning the marine GPS systems and the agency CAD/RMS systems is recommended to meet goals specified in the agency standards of cover. ([CC5J.1](#))
5. It is recommended that the agency develop a plan to ensure all equipment is maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations. ([CC6E.3](#))

6. It is recommended that the agency further concentrate on the discovery or reporting of near miss situations that occur within the agency and develop programs to communicate these situations to all personnel. ([7F.6](#))
7. It is recommended the agency research and implement processes to interface the hydrant maintenance software's between the fire department and public utilities department. ([9A.4](#))
8. It is recommended that the agency have a process by which their agreements are managed, reviewed and revised. ([10B.2](#))

The agency demonstrated its keen desire to immediately implement plans to address opportunities for improvement. The best example is to provide additional documentation and reporting to ensure that the annual appraisals are consistent throughout the organization. These have been accomplished historically through quarterly meetings, live dashboards, and annual program appraisals. In an effort to streamline the process and provide consistency, each program manager was tasked with implementation of a standard annual program appraisal document.

The agency responded to a total of 37,621 emergencies in 2020 including: 781 fire calls (2.1 percent); 22,384 emergency medical service (EMS) calls (59.5 percent); and 14,456 miscellaneous calls (38.4 percent). Servicing these calls in 2020 resulted in a total of 59,756 unit movements.

In 2015, the Insurance Services Office (ISO) visited the city to rate its public protection classification. The outcome of the visit was providing a score of ISO 2/10 for the urban areas and a score of 5/10 for the rural areas located on the south side of the community.

While on the site visit, we had the opportunity to witness the Virginia Beach Fire Department's incident command training. This training program is designed to better prepare commanding officers to respond to and serve as the incident commander at various structure fire and rescue incidents. The training occurs monthly and is designed to provide real-world training to the incident commanders. This training has improved the command experience and has shown to increase testing scores on simulations provided as part of promotional testing and also provides for more effective incident command at real incidents. The training provides a stronger command presence, consistent leadership style, and a safety-focused education. This in turn provides for a safer workplace while operating at a structure fire. This is considered an innovative practice for others to emulate.

OBSERVATIONS

Category 1 — Governance and Administration

The Virginia Beach Fire Department is legally established in 1906 by the adoption of the City Charter, City Code, and the Code of Virginia. The City Charter Section 3.05 authorizes the city council to organize, conduct, and operate the agency. The Code of Virginia also provides for the establishment of a fire department. These codes also authorize the establishment of a Chief to manage and lead the organization as well as guide the agency to administer its programs and services using the approved financial resources.

The agency's organizational structure aligns with and support the mission, purpose, goals, and objectives of the organization. The agency operates under a fire chief who directs the various branches, divisions, and bureaus as outlined in their organizational chart. The city budget has provided appropriate resources to ensure the agency is able to address any vacancies and to meet the stated missions and goals.

Category 2 — Assessment and Planning

The agency is constantly collecting and analyzing data for the legally adopted response area. The boundaries of the response area are clearly documented and shown on mapping of the area provided by the CommIT/GIS Division of the department. The agency also collects data and documents legally the response area for mutual and automatic aid areas, of which the agency has written agreements with. Through the mapping technology utilized the agency can also assess the area characteristics within each planning zone to include land use, transportation systems, hazards and risks, critical infrastructure and other applicable response data.

The agency does have an established methodology for planning zones and also generates data for the response area in map grid zones for interoperable planning between city departments. However, the methodology for planning zones includes changing the planning zones for new assets added which could conflict with long-term data comparison. The agency further evaluates a planning zone based on population density according to definitions from the U.S. Census bureau. The population density of an area is taken into account when forecasting response time standards and goals for the planning zone.

The agency collects pertinent data to include property, life, injury, and environmental loss data and also human or physical assets that have been saved by the actions of the agency. The collection of demographic information for the established planning zones is also collected and analyzed by the agency. This data has led to confirmation through data management to ensure that intuitional thinking is consistent and correct for response deployments.

The agency utilizes data collected from response activities to improve their prevention and risk reduction efforts. However, due to staffing shortages they have decreased in the number of businesses inspected when compared to previous years. The agency is making strides in filling these positions in the Life Safety Division; however, this has proven to be a slow process further complicated by the global pandemic.

The agency has an adopted methodology for assessing the risk categories and classification for their services that are within their control. However, the current system and relations in the EMS system make deployment and categorization difficult, without having access to the data needed to ensure proper response as expected by the community and the authority having jurisdiction (AHJ). There could also be a slight restructuring and combinations of some sections of the CRA/SOC that would make the document clearer to the reader. These changes were discussed on site and changes were made to the document.

The agency has an extremely robust dash boarding system that has transformed the agency's deployment models and has given the agency more than adequate data for the divisions they have access to said data. The emergency medical services (EMS) agency in the city, which the agency is a part of by ordinance and operational protocols, but does not have access to EMS response data, scene times, transport times, current deployment awareness, ambulance availability, or a needs assessment for the next 12 hour period of the day. This leads to operational inefficiency and unneeded out of service times for Fire units that need to fill the voids in staffing. [It is recommended that the agency work with the Virginia Beach EMS Department to gain insight into response and staffing data.](#)

The agency keeps data for reporting for loss and saved property and life for their responses. The agency also identifies risk that threatens the community appropriately, however, needs to expand the reporting through the CRA/SOC to improve the holistic nature of the document. The agency also accounts for fire protection systems, sprinkler systems, and critical infrastructure into their response planning.

The agency has an adopted methodology to continue a consistent level of service among all risk levels with the exception of the EMS category. This hampered by the lack of information that is shared with the agency and field personnel. It is anticipated that this could be improved through increased communications and interaction between departments.

The agency through the robust dashboarding systems has established a system to monitor system performance, with the exception of the EMS category. This information should be made available to the agency in an effort to ensure transparency and allow the agency to monitor their performance. This data can be used to increase efficiency of response for the agency.

A critical task analysis has been created by the agency for all response categories, based on response levels established in NFPA 1710. The agency has also compiled total response time data for all areas of response and has done as much as possible to show response times for medical emergencies, however, lacks pertinent data to complete this tasking. The agency has utilized their data to identify gaps in service which has resulted in the addition of resources to the agency in the coming months to include the opening of a new station.

The agency has a methodology to study resiliency in its response matrix and planning zones and has identified out of service times due to three person staffing and the need for assistance in transporting patients to the hospital as a possible cause for loss of efficiency and resiliency in the planning zone. Therefore, [it is recommended that the agency study the effect on response times and resiliency that could result from reducing out of service times of apparatus when personnel are needed to transport patients to the hospital.](#)

The agency has adopted methodologies for assessing performance through the dashboard system that keeps all personnel aware of changes to departmental performance. The agency constantly looks for opportunities for improvement to their response over the entire area. The agency reports on its performance measures regularly to the AHJ, however for previously stated reasons is unable to do so accurately on their participation in the EMS system. Having the ability to have the data would help the agency identify any other developing trends or issues in the response area.

The agency evaluates their response methodology and protocols against current industry research, however with the limited access to EMS data, patient care data, and deployment data it is not possible to apply current trends in the EMS field to the agency's response to medical emergencies. Community risk reduction programs are targeted to areas which through demographic data would have the best chance for a positive impact. The current system of data analysis, with the exception of EMS data, helps the agency identify gaps in coverage to include inadequacies, inconsistencies, and negative trends. Along with the identified gaps, the agency has created a plan to address these gaps in performance. These gaps are presented as appropriate to the AHJ and the public.

Category 3 — Goals and Objectives

The agency developed a strategic plan the helps to direct the agency's budget and provides guidance for the agency. This plan is then submitted to the city council for their review. While there is not a formal approval process with the council, the plan is used to guide the priorities of the organization and can be modified if the needs and will of the governing agency changes.

The agency relies on feedback from internal and external stakeholders to help determine their goals and objectives as part of the strategic planning process. External stakeholders are engaged by a robust online presence of the City of Virginia Beach and through a series of Citizen Advisory Committees that meet regularly on police issues. This feedback was then incorporated into its strategic business plan to ensure the document is consistent with the mission and is appropriate for the community it serves. These goals are then communicated to the personnel by the battalion chiefs. In addition, a lesson on the accreditation process is presented to the recruit class early in their careers. Using these methods, the agency works to ensure that all of its personnel are involved in the planning process and has an understanding of the goals that are driving the organization.

The agency utilizes a strategic business plan to guide its implementation of goals and objectives. These are tracked using a spreadsheet document that is available to all personnel. The identified program managers have access to edit and modify the document to record progress. This goal tracking spreadsheet is reviewed quarterly by senior staff to identify any progress issues and ensure that appropriate resources are allocated.

The agency creates and utilizes a strategic business plan to develop and identify specific goals and objectives of the organization. This plan serves as part of the process to ensure that the goals and objectives are examines and modified at least annually. An additional step is to ensure each agency goal is compatible with the ten focus areas that are identified annually by the city council.

Category 4 — Financial Resources

The City of Virginia Beach works collaboratively with the agency to plan the budget and allocate resources where needed in a transparent fashion. Financing reflects the city's strategic plan and a commitment to its goals and objectives. As part of the city's strategic plan, residents feeling safe and secure and timely response to an emergency are emphasized. Clearly defined policies are in place and followed. The Department of Budget and Management Services provides what is called the Target Letter to each department, this letter outlines the budget allocation that has been calculated for departmental budgets. Financial support for programs and services is adequate to maintain the number and quality of personnel, along with other operational costs.

The agency has received financial support to maintain and increase the agency's staffing. New apparatus, facilities and equipment has been enhanced and education has been provided to support the fire department through the budgeting process. The Virginia Beach Fire Department (VBFD) will continue to present the need for funding to expand personnel. The initiative is to implement four person engine staffing throughout the agency. The agency's strategic business plan identifies how staffing levels impact services provided to the community.

The peer assessment team confirmed that the City of Virginia Beach is in receipt of the most currently available Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting (certificate) from the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA) for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The agency has submitted its most recent GFOA certificate and CAFR as prima facie compliance with this criterion.

The City of Virginia Beach budget process is driven by the city's strategic plan, which aligns with the agency's strategic plan. The linkage between the two plans, identifies the goal to maintain a community where residents feel safe at all times and to provide timely response to emergency calls for service. Financial resources are appropriately allocated to support the organizational mission, long-term plan, goals and objectives, while maintaining the quality of programs and services. The city, through the Department of Management Services, produces and publishes forecasts to provide an analysis of the financial conditions for a five year period. This projection is utilized to determine budget targets and to prepare annual budgets. City departments are assigned a budget liaison to assist with preparing the budget. The Budget and Finance Manager for the agency has held this position for the last two years and has improved efficiencies across the board within the agency. Performance measures are tied to funding and agencies are afforded the opportunity to request additional funding to expand current programs, and or, request funding for new programs. Negotiable bonds are available through the city to assist with funding needs and policies and guidance documents are in place to address procurement, investment, debt payment and contingency fund practices. The city maintains a general fund undesignated fund balance of 8% to 12% of the following year's budgeted revenues.

Virginia Code §38.2-401 established the Virginia Fire Programs Fund. This fund is derived from one percent of fire-related insurance coverage. Aid to Localities (ATL) funding can be used to pay for training, construction of training centers, equipment and protective apparel. Allocations are population based and approximately \$1.6 million each year in ATL funding is received by the VBFD. The agency also receives funding from various Department of Homeland Security grants (DHS) that support hazmat, marine and technical rescue programs. Most recently, grant funding was made available for COVID through the CARES Act. The city has an investment policy and all are

discussed in the city's annual Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR). The investment policy is currently being reviewed and possibly revised under the direction of the City of Virginia Beach.

Category 5 — Programs

Criterion 5A – Community Risk Reduction Program

The agency is ruled by the State of Virginia and mandated to follow the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code. This is adopted by the agency in the City of Virginia Beach Fire Code, Chapter 12. The agency ensures compliance of applicable fire protection laws through its Fire Prevention Bureau. The bureau consists of three different divisions, public education, inspections and investigations. The agency maintains 19 full-time personnel, supplemented with five part-time employees to accomplish its community risk reduction goals, stated in the community risk assessment.

The agency has identified performance gaps in its ability to meet self-appointed goals of 100% occupancy inspections annually. This is being addressed by the agency currently, thru staffing analysis and records management software upgrades. The agency is also considering modernization by analyzing the use of external partners, by using a software program to assist with routine inspections.

Criterion 5B – Public Education Program

The agency provides a vigorous public education program to the City of Virginia Beach. The agency has identified and developed tools to address public education needs identified in the community risk assessment and standards of cover. The agency has adapted during difficult periods with COVID, creatively delivering public education and monitoring efficiency. The agency is progressive with an in-house video studio. The studio enabled the agency to produce public education & training videos seamlessly and distribute to the community more effectively via the internet.

The agency provides ample education to the younger population. Opportunities exist for the agency to research and develop effective public education for its older population, specific risks such as drowning education and other risks identified in the SOC/CRA, by annually evaluating performance measurements of the public education program.

Criterion 5C – Fire Investigation, Origin and Cause Program

The fire marshal's office is tasked with the investigation and prosecution of all offenses involving hazardous materials, fires, fire bombings, bombings, attempts or threats to commit such offenses, false alarms relating to such offenses, possession and manufacture of explosive devices, substances and fire bombs in accordance with the Code of Virginia, 27-34.2:1. The agency has appropriately trained and equipped personnel to meet the needs of the community. The agency had previously identified a gap due to retirements and is actively working to reinstate an environmental crimes task force and has a new investigator in place whose primary focus is environmental crimes. The agency utilizes various other assets such as drone videos and photos to assist with the investigation and documentation of incidents. The agency also works to conduct regular appraisals of the program in the form of weekly staff meetings and a documented process.

Criterion 5D – Domestic Preparedness, Planning and Response

The agency adheres to the Office of Emergency Management (OEM), defined by the city's Emergency Operations Plan (EOP). The city's EOP is an all-hazards plan that clearly outlines the structure and responsibilities of various departments and agencies. Emergency management staff and members of the Virginia Beach Incident Management Team (VBIMT) maintain continuous planning in emergency management roles and in specific hazard areas. All are compliant with the National Incident Management System and the Incident Command System. As for the agency, all new hires receive NIMS Training, as well as newly promoted employees. Domestic preparedness, planning and response is part of the city's strategic plan. The strategic plan goals include to serve the community by providing exceptional public safety through preparedness and emergency service and to predict and forecast emerging trends and challenges. The agency has been activated to large events, such as the 2012 Navy airplane crash, the 2019 active shooter incident at the Virginia Beach Municipal Center, and most recently, the COVID pandemic. Through these experiences, the agency has improved and learned lessons to prepare for unexpected emergencies. External relationships and collaboration play an important role in the agency's success.

External support is documented through memorandum of understandings (MOU) and through the WebEOC platform. The agency's strategic business plan incorporates language to guide the agency to develop plans with regional partners for response through recovery. OEM has established a training and exercise workgroup to develop, run, and evaluate exercises and drills. The agency and the city participate in drills at the local, regional, state, and federal level. Exercises are consistent with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP) methodology. The fire department provides HSEEP evaluators for city exercises and drills. The city, as a Local Partnership Performance Agreement (LPPA) jurisdiction has an annual exercise requirement that must be met with a real emergency activation or an exercise. Annually, the city is required to report to the Virginia Department of Emergency Management on emergency management capabilities using the Local Capability Assessment for Readiness (LCAR) format. The OEM secured a grant to complete a vulnerability assessment of the critical infrastructure and to develop plans to maintain service delivery. This is expected to occur by 2022. In 2020, the agency developed a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) to identify the critical infrastructure within the fire department and to address service delivery when key components of the infrastructure are lost.

Criterion 5E – Fire Suppression

The agency has extensive experience and skills in fire suppression. The deployment of personnel and other resources is studied and constantly updated based on the needs of the community. The response of the agency meets the expectations of the community.

The agency uses a standardized Incident Command System that is supported by extensive training and policy. The agency is commended on its dedicated Command Simulation training modules for the continued education of command officers.

Performance Gap Analysis

The following table represent the agency's actual performance (baseline) versus the goal (benchmark). The gaps are provided in red (representing improvement opportunities), and green (when actual performance exceeds the goal).

2016-2020 Moderate Risk Fire Suppression Response Times				
1st/ERF	Urban/Rural	Baseline	Benchmark	Gap
1st Due	Urban	8:26	6:20	02:06
		n=765		
1st Due	Rural	13:54	9:20	04:34
		n=26		
ERF	Urban	16:16	10:20	05:56
		n=512		
ERF	Rural	34:48	15:20	19:28
		n=17		

Criterion 5F – Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

The agency and the corresponding Virginia Beach EMS agency (VBEMS) share a unique cooperative response effort that in some cases can be difficult to rationalize. VBEMS is the city EMS agency that runs as a combination type agency that is supported by 10 volunteer EMS agencies. Staffing for the EMS system is supplied by both career VBEMS employees and volunteers from the various volunteer agencies. The agency supplements the staffing when units or personnel are not available to respond or treat patients. The agency also acts as the primary first responder for medical incidents in the city. This staffing model results in a various number of transport units staffed and available for service and has led to confusion on the part of agency personnel due to lack of information about the EMS daily deployment. To further increase efficiency, [it is recommended that all agencies involved in the EMS delivery system study and implement efficiency programs to reduce the need for transport units in the system \(i.e. Mobile Integrated Health, fire only response, taxi vouchers, etc.\).](#)

The agency has standing protocols in place through the Medical Director. These protocols are created at the regional level with on-line medical control provided by the ER physician at the receiving or closest hospital. All personnel have been trained in the HIPAA and a statement that must be accepted by the agency personnel is provided to ensure compliance on each incident. The quality improvement and quality assurance process in provided for the agency by the Medical Director and VBEMS personnel.

The EMS system that protects the residents and visitors of the City of Virginia Beach has performed well independently of systemic issues that hamper efficiency. The personnel of the agency, VBEMS and the 10 volunteer organizations should be commended for making the system work as the leaders work through long-term systemic issues.

Performance Gap Analysis

The following table represent the agency's actual performance (baseline) versus the goal (benchmark). The gaps are provided in red (representing improvement opportunities), and green (when actual performance exceeds the goal).

2016-2020 EMS Moderate Risk EMS Response Times				
1st/ERF	Urban/Rural	Baseline	Benchmark	Gap
1st Due	Urban	10:04	6:00	04:04
		n= 83484		
1st Due	Rural	14:40	9:00	05:40
		n= 845		

It was verified and validated by the peer assessment team that the Virginia Beach Fire Department has ongoing data collection issues with the Virginia Beach EMS Department. Therefore, no performance gap analysis is provided in this report.

Criterion 5G – Technical Rescue

The agency technical rescue team (TRT) operates two technical rescue units, with one being recently relocated to address response time difficulties found in the agency standards of cover. The agency is the sponsoring agency for Virginia Task Force 2, facilitating additional resources locally if needed. In addition, the agency participates in the regional Tidewater Regional technical rescue team.

The agency meets its deployment objectives with a tiered response system. This system consists engines, ladder companies, technical rescue vehicles and support vehicles, each with trained personnel. Incidents reaching higher levels of the tiered response first include the statewide request for the regional TRT response from the Tidewater Regional technical rescue team. Finally, Virginia Task Force 2 can be utilized by federal request.

The agency determines the effectiveness of its TRT through a formal and documented annual appraisal. Additionally, the program manager evaluates the TRT goals and objectives with documented quarterly reports. These reports are gauged with the agency standard of cover, regional, state & federal resources and agency training standards. Providing quarterly improvements in the program.

Performance Gap Analysis

The following table represent the agency's actual performance (baseline) versus the goal (benchmark). The gaps are provided in red (representing improvement opportunities), and green (when actual performance exceeds the goal).

2016-2020 Technical Rescue 90th Percentile				
1st/ERF	Urban/Rural	Baseline	Benchmark	Gap
1st Due	Urban	10:22	6:20	04:02
		51		
ERF	Citywide	20:36	18:20	02:16
		5		

It was verified and validated by the peer assessment team that the Virginia Beach Fire Department had a statistically insignificant number of technical rescue incidents (rural) requiring an effective response force (ERF) for 2016-2020, to provide a sufficient data set to study. Therefore, no performance gap analysis for the ERF (rural) is provided in this report.

Criterion 5H – Hazardous Materials

The agency's hazardous materials response team (HAZMAT) operates out of fire station #3, which is located in the central part of the city. This unit is equipped with a wide variety of technologies designed to detect, identify, and mitigate a full spectrum of hazards, including chemical, biological, radioactive, nuclear, and explosive (CBRNE) incidents. In addition to personnel at station #3, additional trained personnel are located throughout the city, if needed. The team is equipped and trained to respond to incidents on both land and water.

The agency meets its deployment objectives with a tiered response system. This system consists personnel at the company level having appropriate training to identify hazards and additional resources called, as needed. Incidents reaching higher levels of the tiered response first include the statewide request through the Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) regional HAZMAT coordinator for additional response assets.

The agency determines the effectiveness of its hazardous materials response program through a formal and documented annual appraisal. Additionally, the program manager evaluates the hazardous materials goals and objectives with documented quarterly reports. These reports are measured against the agency standard of cover, regional, state & federal resources and agency training standards.

Performance Gap Analysis

The following table represent the agency's actual performance (baseline) versus the goal (benchmark). The gaps are provided in red (representing improvement opportunities), and green (when actual performance exceeds the goal).

2016-2020 Hazardous Materials 90th Percentile				
1st/ERF	Urban/Rural	Baseline	Benchmark	Gap
1st Due	Urban	10:23	6:20	04:03
		2467		
ERF	Citywide	13:25	8:20	05:05
		1128		

It was verified and validated by the peer assessment team that the Virginia Beach Fire Department had a statistically insignificant number of hazardous materials incidents (rural) requiring an effective response force (ERF) for 2016-2020, to provide a sufficient data set to study. Therefore, no performance gap analysis for the ERF (rural) is provided in this report.

Criterion 5J – Marine and Shipboard Rescue and Fire Fighting Services

The agency provides marine and shipboard rescue & firefighting services to an extensive coastline and inland waterway system. Uniquely located, the agency is responsible to provide these services up to three miles offshore in the Atlantic Ocean, Chesapeake Bay and Back Bay. The Intercoastal Waterway also traverses the agency along with many inland channels.

Delivery of these services is provided by the agency with three fireboats located throughout the city. Two are strategically located and moored to reach most agency incidents, and the other is a trailered boat with firefighting capabilities. The agency also operates a robust rescue swimmer program, supplied with equipment from numerous apparatus throughout the jurisdiction. The vastness of water

risks within the agency jurisdiction has also facilitated partnerships with the Virginia Port Authority Maritime Incident Response Team (VPAMIRT), U.S. Coast Guard Virginia Hampton Roads Sector, U.S. Coast Guard North Carolina Sector and other area fire department marine resources.

The agency meets its staffing, stations, equipment and extinguishing requirements deployment objectives. Opportunities exist for the agency to improve and meet the response time objectives annotated in the agency standards of cover. Extensive no wake zones and the ability to capture accurate and detailed response times are problematic and recognized by the agency.

The agency conducts an annual, formal and documented appraisal of its Marine Shipboard and Firefighting program. Furthermore, the agency performs comprehensive after-action reports on all marine incidents, verifying agency goals and objectives are sustained.

The marine vessels were noted to have extended transport times due to docking locations, no wake zones, and the distance from the fire stations. [It is recommended the agency conduct a detailed study focused on analyzing the location of its moored marine assets and explore any prospects for response time improvement. Additionally, further analysis, integration and procedures concerning the marine GPS systems and the agency CAD/RMS systems is recommended to meet goals specified in the agency standards of cover.](#)

Performance Gap Analysis

The following table represent the agency's actual performance (baseline) versus the goal (benchmark). The gaps are provided in red (representing improvement opportunities), and green (when actual performance exceeds the goal).

2016-2020 Marine Search and Rescue 90th Percentile				
1st/ERF	Urban/Rural	Baseline	Benchmark	Gap
1st Due	Urban	12:27	6:20	06:07
		252		
1st Due	Rural	18:06	9:20	08:46
		25		
ERF	Citywide	45:38	20:20	25:18
		141		

Criterion 5L – FEMA Urban Search and Rescue

The agency operates Virginia Task Force 2, which is one of 28 urban search and rescue (US&R) teams that operate as part of the national response system. The agency is responsible for overall team management and leadership. This team has responded to significant incidents across the county and into foreign countries. In addition, the team is also responsible for the Incident Support Team Cache for the entire East Coast. This equipment cache could be part of the US&R deployment or could respond, as the case of the most recent presidential inauguration, deployed as a standalone asset.

As part of the national response model, the team is closely managed and is required to produce readiness self-evaluations and participate in administrative readiness evaluations. These processes

ensure compliance with the federal requirements and also serve as documentation of ongoing assessments.

Performance Gap Analysis

It was verified and validated by the peer assessment team that the Virginia Beach Fire Department had a statistically insignificant number of FEMA US&R incidents for 2016-2020, to provide a sufficient data set to study. Therefore, no performance gap analysis is provided in this report.

Category 6 — Physical Resources

The agency's established physical resources are consistent with established plans. The Standards of Cover, Strategic Business Plan and the HBA Facilities Assessment and Master Plan serves as a systematic and planned approach to the future development of facilities. The Facilities Assessment and Master Plan document provides benchmarks for future development. The City's Resource Management plan includes a Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for fire station facilities. Currently, one fire station is funded in the CIP for future development. Future funding will include the Harry Diezel Fire Training Center. Station construction is coordinated through the District Chief of "B" shift, which established a facilities team to assist with planning. Long-range planning for station construction and improvements are continuously reviewed as part of the strategic business plan.

Requests for renovations and new facilities are submitted through the CIP process to the City Manager for inclusion in the budget request to City Council. This process includes input from all departments, as well as the community through public meetings.

The Virginia Beach Fire Department's fixed facilities include, 19 city owned fire stations, one joint lease agreement with the Joint Expeditionary Base Fort Story, one city owned building for the Fire Prevention Bureau, one leased warehouse facility for the Resource Management Division, one city owned building for the Fire Department Wellness Center, and the Harry Diezel Fire Training Center (HDFTC). The above mentioned facilities are located throughout the City of Virginia Beach to provide efficient response to emergency services and to meet the agency's goals and objectives.

Fire stations apparatus consist of 21 engine companies, 8 ladder companies and two heavy rescues. Fire stations were built from 1968 to 2015. Many of the stations lack the adequate space needed to meet the needs of the expanding operations and staff requirements. The agency will continue to seek funding through the Facilities Assessment and Master Plan Study and the Capital Improvement Program. Buildings are maintained by various city departments and policies are in place to report maintenance issues on a daily basis for work orders. Quarterly inspections are conducted by station captains and annually by battalion chiefs and the shift safety officer. Facilities meet federal, state and local building codes and regulation requirements. NFPA 1500 is utilized as the foundation for the agency's Safety and Health Program.

There are over 100 vehicles included in the agency's fleet. Apparatus resources are designed, purchased and maintained to meet the agency's goals and objectives. Each apparatus is assigned to stations that best support that service requirement. Specialty vehicles support ancillary operational requirements, such as incident command, wildland and urban interface incidents, rural water supply, hazardous materials response, technical rescue and marine incidents.

The Department of Public Works Fleet Management Division maintains all apparatus and is staffed by five personnel. Apparatus are updated and replaced on a scheduled replacement cycle based on age, use, serviceability and budgetary limitations. State and federal standards are met regarding replacement. Apparatus management design, training and coordination is the responsibility of the A shift district chief, with assistance from an apparatus committee, consisting of seven personnel from both the fire department and fleet management. The apparatus committee designs apparatus based on the needs of the agency and seeks input from end users

The agency partners with the Fleet Management Division to operate an effective apparatus maintenance program that adheres to state and federal regulations and standards. The inspection, testing, preventive maintenance, replacement schedule and emergency repair of all apparatus are well established and meet the emergency apparatus service and reliability needs. Maintenance is prioritized based on safety and functional needs of the agency. Standard operating procedures are in place for the maintenance of apparatus and outline daily, weekly and monthly inspections, reporting procedures and requesting emergency repair procedures.

Five designated personnel are trained and certified technicians and perform inspections and repairs based on manufacturer's recommendations and state and federal standards. New drivers attend a 16-hour course focused on the maintenance and safe operation of apparatus. Testing of apparatus is conducted in accordance with NFPA guidelines. Some repairs are contracted out to certified service centers for overflow, technical repairs, and warranty work. Supervision duties are shared with a battalion chief and fire shop manager.

During routine equipment inspections, it was found that hazardous materials response suits were out of the manufacturer recommended testing and inspection schedule. [It is recommended that the agency develop a plan to ensure all equipment is maintained in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.](#)

The agency utilizes the Resource Management Bureau (RMB) as the main logistics and distribution center, responsible for coordinating supply requests, replacement, repairs and providing general inventory of critical items for utilization by field operations. Recently, two positions have been filled to act as support for logistics functions. The RMB provides maintenance of small tools and equipment and has certified personnel on staff to ensure that the equipment is repaired or updated to meet manufacturer standards. When an item can't be repaired, the product is sent to a reputable company for proper repair or replacement. RMB staff collaborate with program managers and fire operations to assist with specification, purchasing, distribution, replacing maintaining, testing, inspecting, and the overall inventory of tools and equipment used by the agency. Supplies are appropriate and based on NFPA and OSHA guidelines, along with state standards.

At the station level, when repairs are warranted, the equipment is identified using a blue tag format and sent to RMB for repair, upgrade, or replacement. The "blue tag" process is also recorded in a station blue equipment log. The agency recently adopted a digital booking feature that sends a notification to RMB when items need to be serviced, allowing for a timelier response. Policies are in place for daily, weekly, monthly and quarterly inspections at the company level. The RMB also has certified SCBA technicians and a full-time maintenance technician on staff to deal with anything from small engine repair, tool repair and SCBA repairs. Contract vendors are used for all other maintenance requiring certified or technical repairs that cannot be accomplished in house. Future planning is being sought after to establish a replacement schedule to ensure that these capital items are budgeted for. Tools are delivered through a scheduled process and as needed through the RMB.

Currently, the agency has a second set of bunker gear for more than ninety percent of firefighters and a stock of replacement gear is on hand. Documentation of repair and replacement is noted in the Data Analysis Management System. This system is used to track and control inventory for all apparatus, tools and equipment.

The Virginia Beach Fire Department provides all hazards safety equipment that is adequate and designed to meet agency goals and objectives. The equipment is suitable for responses to fire, emergency medical services, hazmat, technical rescue and marine responses. Guidelines, such as NFPA, OSHA, NIST, IAFF and IAFC are utilized when purchasing equipment. In 2015, the agency replaced and upgraded all SCBA equipment to meet the latest CBRNE and respiratory standards to include in mask HUD, blue tooth radio communications and integrated PASS devices. Additionally, each SCBA was upgraded to incorporate a personal thermal imaging camera (TIC) for each SCBA and for each riding position. As a result of COVID, the development of a PPE cache for public safety agencies was created by the city. This cache holds additional nitrile gloves, N95 masks, gowns, safety glasses, hair bouffant, disinfectant, and other related medical supplies. Additional PPE, including ear protection and medical exposure equipment, are provided for personal issue. Company Officers are charged with the regular inspection of this equipment. This equipment is integrated in a risk management and safety program and supported by policies.

All the components of turnout gear are on a ten year replacement cycle and all related PPE follows the recommended expiration dates. Special operation gear is on a similar replacement, overseen by the program managers. This is coordinated with the Finance Bureau to ensure budgeting is appropriate. The RMB staff is trained on the different equipment to maintain manufacturer, state and federal standards. Trained staff have completed course work and hold certifications from mine safety appliances (MSA), Stihl and the like to allow them to work on anything from small engine repairs to SCBA's. Additionally, several field personnel hold related certifications and can be called on if needed. Company in-services have allowed for turnout gear inspection, SCBA and other safety and PPE training using manufacture recommendations of when to spot deficiencies and when to take these items out of service. All safety equipment is inventoried and tracked through SharePoint, which is soon being replaced by a new asset management system, which is expected to go live in July 2021.

Category 7 — Human Resources

The agency has a designated human resources manager that is supported by four civilian personnel and reports to a uniformed district chief in the agency. The human resources division works in conjunction with the city human resources department to navigate through issues and processes for the agency. The agency and the city have processes in place for policy revision and review that have worked well for the agency and consistent with CFAI standards.

The city utilizes a standard system to announce and identify potential positions and promotions in the agency. The agency human resources division tracks these potential opportunities and share the data with the city's human resources department. The agency has a diverse group of personnel that act as recruiters for the agency which involves the agency on the recruiting process. The recruitment and selection devices and criterion meet all state, local and federal requirements and laws. Workforce assessment are completed for the agency for planning purposes to forecast the needed number of positions that are required for hire and training.

The demographics of the workforce are improving when compared to the make-up of the community they serve. The agency has created a document titled the *Guide for Creating a Diverse and Inclusive*

Department which serves as a guide for the agency staffing values. The agency's environment and working conditions attract appropriate candidates and the agency has a high retention rate once employees enter the agency. At the end of the employment with the agency, the agency conducts exit interviews and the information from those interviews are shared with the fire chief.

New members, both uniform and civilian, are given an orientation as they enter the agency and city. The agency has a structured probationary process to evaluate new and promoted members that has been successful for the agency. The agency has a recognized employee recognition program that include both uniform and civilian staff.

The agency has written policies, to include a policy that defines and prohibits harassment, bias, and discrimination, that are reviewed regularly and revised as needed in compliance with their Policy Revision policy. This document and process was changed recently to reflect CFAI requirements. Policies are available to all personnel through a web-based policy repository. There is also a policy group that reviews policies and assures that time frames are maintained. The agency also has policies on ethics and conflicts of interest. A discipline system is in place and enforced by the agency with backing from city human resources. There is also a grievance and complaint procedure that is followed throughout the agency.

A position classification with an associated monitoring system is in place for the agency. This includes written job descriptions for each position. The written appraisal system is in the form of evaluations for employees and is in the process of updating to better meet the agency's needs. The agency also welcomes suggestions from employees through programs like "Chief's Chats" and other opportunities.

The agency has a very structured development program, especially for those that choose to pursue promotion. The provided captain and chief academies are wonderful examples of their professional development culture.

The city conducts regular market studies to examine pay rates in the area to ensure that agency personnel are compensated fairly in the market. These pay rates and benefits are published and available regularly.

The agency has an assigned Safety and Wellness Bureau that is responsible for the safety, health and risk management for the agency. This bureau is staffed with a battalion chief, 3 captains and 2 civilian personnel. The agency has appropriate policies and procedures in place to ensure the health and safety of personnel. The agency and city keep thorough documentation of risk reduction practices and programs. The reporting of injuries and accidents is also thorough and as a result of the programs the agency has seen a reduction in injuries from 208 in 2014 to 68 in 2019.

The agency was very fortunate during the COVID-19 pandemic to have a surplus of medical PPE on hand prior to the pandemic. The agency has also been able to keep abreast of the changing conditions and establish policies and procedures for the ever changing guidelines during the pandemic to keep personnel safe. This protection goes beyond COVID-19 and the agency has a superb record of keeping their personnel safe.

The agency has an established safety and health training program that is implemented by several departments and divisions in the city and agency. The program starts at the beginning of employment and is carried on throughout the employee's career with the agency. The agency also has a structured program for the investigation of accidents and injuries that is supported by the IT infrastructure of the city.

Incident safety officers are dispatched to all working fires and large special incidents for the purpose to reduce risk and enforce risk management practices. The safety officers are also tasked with the near miss program that has been established in the agency. The program includes research of current trends around the country and notifying employees of dangerous situations from around the country. All of this is distributed to agency members through the daily briefing messages. Where all of these actions go toward keeping member vigilant to external situations, [it is recommended that the agency further concentrate on the discovery or reporting of near miss situations that occur within the agency and develop programs to communicate these situations to all personnel.](#)

The agency has adopted the IAFF/IAFC Wellness and Fitness Initiative and has provided the appropriate personnel and equipment to ensure proper implementation of the program. All employees uniform and civilian are able to utilize fitness facilities and equipment which boasts a healthier workforce. The daily workout application is also available to all employees. The Health and Safety Coordinator is constructing a program that would be implemented in the agency's captain and chief academies that focuses on mental resiliency.

The agency provides mental health services through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and has also trained peer mentor to provide assistance to other employees that reach out. There were discussions on how the program could be enhanced and offered even outside the agency to families of employees in the future, especially during trying times such as the current global pandemic.

Category 8 — Training and Competency

The agency has a robust training program in place for both recruit and incumbent members. There are many avenues the agency uses to identify training needs including operations, training, safety, and committees that communicate freely on their ideas. The training staff then takes these recommendations and gives them to operations to decide how to move forward if funding is available. The training provided very much aligns with the organizations mission statement of being an all-hazards agency. The agency seems to have a generous budget for training as well as being part of the FEMA Task Force 2, which provides invaluable training to a large portion of their team. The organization has multiple partnerships with other organizations as well as in house training that meet or exceed the minimum requirements of state and federal mandates. The agency has a documented process to identify and ensure members meet a minimum standard of training. The agency has a goal of having all executive officers complete the Executive Fire Officer program. The agency also has a unique and robust command lab simulation center to enhance their operational performance.

The organization identified a possible deficiency with training records and delivery systems especially with COVID and took steps to correct these issues to include purchasing Target Solutions and WebEx hardware to provide training in a multitude of mediums. The agency maintains a training schedule that is accessible to all members to show mandatory training. The agency has many ways to evaluate crew performance and documents their progress. The agency uses multiple forms and discussions to get student feedback of training programs. The agency has an RMS for training records and has purchased Target Solutions to better document and house-training records.

The agency has a well-built facility for training and an expansion project is in the planning stages. The agency has a cadre of instructors that must meet certain standards and qualifications. The agency has a process in place to ensure training materials are up to date and ensures the latest materials are available for students. The agency has several reserve engines and a reserve truck that are assigned to the academy. These vehicles are designated as the specifically for training. The agency is continuously looking at better ways to ensure inventory is adequate and is working to institute a central inventory program and RMS systems. The agency's training staff evaluate training materials at least annually and send their staff to a variety of training opportunities to ensure they are on the cutting edge.

Category 9 — Essential Resources

Criterion 9A – Water Supply

The agency establishes minimum fire flow through their requirement to follow Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code (VSFPC) §507.3. This minimum flow is maintained through extensive electronic valves, along with monitoring and control from a dynamic computer system. The agency has been proactive in identifying areas of their jurisdiction with known fire flow challenges. This knowledge has allowed mitigation, by providing enhanced water supply to these areas by tenders and first response engines with larger water tanks. The agency also maintains a well-developed training program for pumper operator in drafting techniques.

The agency water supply system is maintained and operated via the city department of public utilities. The system is well maintained through robust cooperation between the fire and public utilities departments. The agency has recently moved to follow *NFPA 291 Recommended Practice for Fire Flow Testing and Marking of Hydrants* more closely and identified the need to enhance their color coding of hydrants throughout the city. This is achieved through assignments to each station and district.

The public utilities department maintains their hydrant records with the Hansen software system. While the fire department maintains hydrant records with their internal records management software Red Alert NMX. Opportunities exist for the agency to seek interfaces between the two software's to enhance efficiency. [It is recommended the agency research and implement processes to interface the hydrant maintenance software's between the fire department and public utilities department.](#) The agency recognizes the need for continuous improvement. In long-range planning the City has dedicated over \$59 million in funds, dedicated in an adopted capital improvement plan through year 2027.

Criterion 9B – Communication Systems

The agency maintains a Motorola ASTRO P25 trunked 800 MHz land mobile radio (LMR) system and uses Motorola APX portable, mobile and console radio hardware. The system has nine radio towers connected by a microwave and fiber-optic backbone located to provide redundant coverage in the event of a site outage. Engineers from the Information Technology Department maintain the system, along with support through Motorola's service agreement. Portable and mobile radios are configured and maintained by personnel in the Information Technology Department Mobile Communications Division. These personnel also configure and maintain the mobile data computers and electronic patient care reporting computers, found in all apparatus. The portable radios have Bluetooth capability and have been setup to pair with the appropriate self-contained breathing

apparatus (SCBA) so that radio communications are less affected by background noise and radio feedback. The LMR system also has many additional features that provide for the safety of public safety personnel. These features include, push to talk identification, an emergency flasher that provides an alert tone and visual, GPS locations, audio logging to the NICE® recording software for all repeated channels and digital vehicle repeaters (DVRs). The system provides excellent portable radio coverage throughout the entire City of Virginia Beach, allowing departments to easily communicate. Each frontline apparatus has five portable radios with one assigned to each riding position.

The Technology and Communications Bureau is comprised of uniformed members to support, maintain and improve communications. This bureau includes a battalion chief, captain and master firefighter and provides direct technology support for radios, computers, station alerting, phones and tablets.

The Emergency Communications and Citizen Services (ECCS) provide 911 dispatching and call handling for the Virginia Beach Fire Department. The ECCS holds accreditation through the Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies (CALEA). The ECCS utilizes the Automated Secure Alarm Protocol (ASAP) service to receive automatic alarm notifications. This service provides a direct link between the alarm monitoring center and the Virginia Beach ECCS dispatchers through a CAD interface. The ASAP-to-PSAP service provides alarm information to the CAD, which automatically parses the information and creates a call for service. Automatic Number Location/Automatic Location Identification information can provide a call back number and location in the event that a call is disconnected. The text-to-911 service provides an avenue for citizens to request emergency services when they are unable to make a call. The ECCS is adequately staffed and equipped, as well as secured by a card access system. The City of Virginia Beach is continuously hiring to fill vacant positions. Dispatchers receive training as new hires and three times a year thereafter and are appropriately certified. Dispatchers utilize a formal recognized Emergency Medical Dispatch System.

Alarm handling response times have been defined and communicated by the agency and ECCS through dashboards, emails and phone calls. Alarm handling times for EMS have far exceeded benchmarks during 2020, some over three minutes. Some explanations are due to EMD and COVID related questions. This has resulted in extended alarm handling times. Another reason for extended times comes as a result from the EMS system. The call taker must call the agency to respond to an EMS call, there is not an automatic interface. The new CAD to CAD system will be in place within a year, which will alleviate this problem. The agency has a very robust dashboard system to analyze calls and the components of response times, however, improvements can be made in how that information is shared and analyzed between the agency and the City's ECCS. A plan to reinstitute the Public Safety Analyst working group is being considered to improve communication flow and alarm handling performance.

ECCS has a backup facility, housed at another location. The backup center has redundancy in most dispatch and communications operations. The City's ECCS has a redundant backup uninterrupted electrical power supply through two back-up generators.

Criterion 9C – Administrative Support Services and Office Systems

The agency provides support for administration and office systems through its Administrative Services and Personnel and Development. Each year the agency utilizes the budget process to ensure that appropriate resources are allocated to allow adequate support.

Category 10 — External Systems Relationships

The agency's operations and planning efforts include relationships with external agencies and operational systems that affect or may influence its mission, operations, and/or cost effectiveness. This is evident in the agency's Strategic Business Plan 2020 – 2025. In addition, the agency currently has several written mutual aid agreements with surrounding municipalities, the FBI, the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic Fire/EMS Department, the military, Virginia Port Authority, Virginia Department of Emergency Management, FEMA, and Currituck County Fire/EMS. Each MOU or agreement has a provision to negate the agreement if either party deems necessary. The Hampton Roads Fire Chiefs' meet monthly to share issues and concerns on a regional basis. In addition, agency representatives meet on a regular basis. A tri-city automatic aid agreement exist between the cities of Virginia Beach, Norfolk and Chesapeake to provide reduced response times and to meet the objectives of the agency and their mission. The automatic response occurs once received by the dispatcher, who then dispatches the specific apparatus if available. Once the CAD to CAD systems interface, this will eliminate the extra step and the automatic aid will be captured.

As the coordinating agency with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), the agency regularly interacts with the FBI and the Department of Homeland Security. The Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) interacts and collaborates with a wide variety of local, state, and federal relationships that define daily code enforcement and evaluation of the risk factors within the city. The FPB coordinates public safety messaging with schools, local media, and regional partners, and works with emergency management agencies in disaster planning. The Virginia Department of Fire Programs' Regional Fire Training Center allows for frequent involvement with outside agencies.

The agency maintains current agreements with external agencies to support identified programs that mutually benefit operational responses and interagency coordination. The agreements are centrally located and managed by division and program managers within the organization. These agreements are reviewed within a five year period or more frequently if needed to ensure they support the organizational needs of the agency. Federal MOU's are reviewed at intervals determined by the federal agency.

[It is recommended that the agency have a process by which their agreements are managed, reviewed and revised.](#) Currently, each department or division is responsible to update and review the MOU of their respective area of responsibility, however, the review is not defined or documented, leaving uncertainty of the actual review.