

OVERVIEW

In June, the Oconee County Council directed me as the County Administrator to develop a comprehensive Emergency Services Plan. The fire and rescue services of Oconee County have been a constantly evolving issue for the last five (5) years, and the Plan has become a sensitive topic at best. Research proves the multiple approaches to managing these services have been unsuccessful on many levels. Upon receiving the Council direction, I made it a priority to develop a fair and objective approach to restructuring Oconee County Emergency Services to provide more efficient and effective public safety for the citizens of Oconee County.

METHOD

Throughout the country, many organizations have hired consultants to analyze their emergency services systems and further develop plans for operations as a means to develop and / or improve services. Oconee County is no different. Multiple plans have been developed in this county over the years, and parts of each present merits for improvement. I believe Oconee County has enough good people with thorough knowledge of emergency services working and living within our boundaries, that if we capture their ideas, we can come up with a plan that meets our needs for improvement. Over the past several months, I met with each fire station, rescue squad, commission, staff member, municipal agency, community organizations, and citizens. I even had the pleasure of running a call with one of our stations during an all day Saturday meeting.

These meetings provided an open forum for candid discussion with station leaders which allowed them the opportunity to share ideas about the problems we have, while providing insight into ways we can improve our structure to provide better service to the citizens.

I was impressed and encouraged by the input from our all of our responders.

You might assume these meetings were centered around petty complaints, but much to the contrary; the members approached these meetings with an objective mindset, and with genuine goals for improvement.

I also spent a substantial amount of time reviewing previous plans prepared for the County, and compared those to other plans throughout the state, to help me develop ideas for our organizational structure.

No single plan fits each county perfectly; therefore each county must be willing to engineer a plan that works best for their particular needs.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Oconee County consists of approximately 625 square miles. The terrain varies considerably, and we are part of the Appalachian area of the state.

Anticipated major growth areas are the I-85 corridor, at the southern border of the county which is roughly half way between Atlanta, Ga., and Charlotte, NC, and the extreme northern area of the county, near the intersection of SC Highways 11 and 130, where construction of high-value residential homes is rapidly increasing.

United States Census Bureau population estimates a population increase of seven percent since the 2000 Census. Specifically, the Census estimates Oconee County's current population at 71,514 compared to just over 66,000 in 2000.

Residents live in an estimated 39, 114 housing units according to 2009 Census estimates.

Duke Energy's Oconee Nuclear Station is the largest employer, however, a significant number of light industrial manufacturing plants also employ an estimated 8,000 people.

Our industries, businesses and residents depend on adequate fire protection.

A sizable area of Oconee County is heavily forested, and several sections face the complexities of an urban / wild land interface. The possibility of a wild land fire threatening to or destroying homes, similar to what occurred in Florida and California, is very real. This problem is magnified by the current drought trend in our region. Near the upper end of Lake Keowee, approximately 1,600 homes are in the Fire Wise Program of the Federal and State Forestry agencies. Other locations are being considered for inclusion in this category as well.

Single family, single story residences are in most areas of the county. Concentrations are highest within and very near the municipal boundaries of the county's four municipalities: Salem; Seneca; Walhalla and West Union. A small number of mobile or manufactured home parks are noted. Multi-family structures are primarily in Keowee Key, and areas bordering the west side of Clemson University. Another densely populated area is south of Westminster, near the Tugaloo River and Lake Hartwell.

Of the estimated 71,514 citizens in the County, approximately 14, 442 live within the county's four municipalities. Therefore, the remaining 57,072 people live in the unincorporated areas of Oconee County. The county is responsible for fire protection, either directly or through contract, to all of these citizens.

By providing and maintaining fire apparatus and financial support to the County's four (4) municipalities, the County is actually very much a part of the entire fire protection scenario, but has a secondary response role on land under the primary fire suppression control of the US Forest Service or the South Carolina Forestry Commission.

Due to the fact that some fire departments use the National Fire Incident Reporting System while others use locally developed forms, it is difficult to collect and analyze structural fire data in Oconee County. The State Forestry Commission 2009 Report stated, "Agency firefighters recorded 2,001 fires that burned 30,739.6 acres of forestland and grassland during the fiscal year. The number of fires was well below average, but acreage was above. . . . In the fiscal year 2008-2009 wildfires destroyed 100 homes and damaged 109 others. In addition, 45 other buildings were destroyed and 19 buildings were damaged. There were 86 vehicles damaged" (pg 5).

Oconee County is fortunate to have a low fire fatality rate – on average, not more than two or three per year. This is due to a number of demographic factors, climate and other favorable elements. A high percentage of homes are owner-occupied and few areas of extreme poverty exist. Fire prevention education and activities contribute to this favorable situation.

The population increase in our County is reflected in the data collected from the County's Building Codes Department. In fiscal year 2000, 2,511 permits were issued, with a valuation of \$119,868,072. Although the numbers of permits issued remained relatively steady through 2006, the valuation of those permits steadily increased to a high of \$269,450,530 in that same year – a 44 percent increase in valuation. The national economic downturn in 2007 influenced both permitting and valuation. In 2009, building permits dropped to 1,315, with valuations ranging just above 2005 levels at \$127,053,545. Mobile home permits have consistently decreased from 808 in 2000, to 255 in 2009.

EXISTING SYSTEM

Oconee County's Emergency Service System is comprised of a volunteer system to manage rural fire and rescue services within unincorporated areas of the County. Thirteen (13) independent rural fire districts exist within the county, and are coordinated through the Oconee County Emergency Services. The county also contracts, on a short term basis, with the four (4) municipalities to provide service to the municipal incorporated areas of the County. The County has fielded a team of volunteers to provide Hazardous Materials (Hazmat) services as a support agency for each district. This team is organized by a Hazmat Chief, but does not operate independently from the rest of the districts.

One Special Tax District exists, which primarily serves the Keowee Key community and surrounding area. Additionally, full-time response assistance and part-time station assistance to the individual districts is provided by a County-wide unit, Station 21. Station 21 has six (6) members that rotate on a three (3) shift basis with two responders per shift.

The County's emergency medical service is provided by Oconee Medical Center. To aid in medical and rescue services, the County also utilizes seven (7) rescue squads and two (2) special rescue units which are operated by volunteers. The County rescue squads function as medical first responder, while the special rescue units specialize in dive, swift water, vertical, and other rescue components.

GOAL (Unified System)

After analyzing Oconee County's Emergency Services, the goal of my proposed plan is to create a Unified County Emergency Services Department. **It's important to note that a Unified System is different from a combined or consolidated system.** Regardless of the type of incident, it is more common than not for multiple districts and/or agencies to respond to **every** call. When we respond to a call, we do so as a County body utilizing separate districts and departments, but we all work under the County umbrella as we respond to our citizens. This unified response approach comes with coordination of multiple departments within the County each time a tone goes out.

How do we create a Unified System for response purposes, while also preserving the local identities of multiple districts?

There is no easy answer to this question, but I do believe that with the dedication of the volunteers and paid staff, we can make it work here in Oconee County. Focus must be maintained on preserving our rural volunteer system, while strengthening support with County career staff and funding. Rural Fire Districts can exist within this system, and maintain their individual local personalities, while

simultaneously implementing a Unified System that responds as one body working under the same guidelines when emergencies occur.

NOTABLE CHALLENGES

During the months of developing this fire plan, four (4) key areas of improvement were consistently noted. These four deficiencies need to be addressed as part of the implementation schedule. Several methods and components are included, but they need not be implemented as a comprehensive whole, rather items should be developed separately from others. The four (4) core challenges include: Organizational Management; Volunteer Station Assistance; Training; and Equipment & Vehicles.

Organizational Management

Leadership – Proper leadership should be reestablished by utilizing a director who understands the complexities of working in a volunteer rural system and who demonstrates the ability to guide and lead the organization.

Communication – Leadership at the management level must be coupled with proper communication. Better communication can exist up and down the system, as well as within the entire County Emergency Services Department.

Project Management – The County has to do a better job of maintaining focus on projects and issues. Too many times the County has lost focus of immediate issues that lingered too long.

GIS Mapping Assistance – The County should better utilize technology to provide valuable information to our responders before, during, and after an emergency response. The County's GIS department is consistently improving, and this technological knowledge should be utilized to provide resources to all districts in the County. The West Union Fire District and others have utilized GIS Mapping to improve their planning information and ultimately provide better response capabilities.

Additional Fire Dispatcher – The increase in call volume at the 911 Communications Center is putting more demand on current dispatchers. Multiple calls involving many disciplines create an environment that makes it difficult for dispatchers to manage each incident in a timely fashion. An additional dispatch position should be created to primarily handle Emergency Services calls, and to provide back-up assistance during times of heavy call volume to the other disciplines.

Certified Emergency Vehicle Technician – The Fleet Maintenance Division should train and certify a technician to specialize in heavy emergency response vehicles.

Fire Prevention Team & Education – Should be expanded with more focus and investment.

Grant Writing Assistance – Oconee County is missing opportunities to pursue and obtain grant funding for expensive capital equipment and vehicles. Agencies in South Carolina receive multiple pieces of emergency service equipment annually through aggressive Grant Campaigns. Oconee County should provide grant writing support to our volunteer stations, and strive to subsidize locally invested tax dollars in capital equipment. Applications can be submitted on behalf of the local

districts, with their approval. Equipment purchased through grants can be used to implement an established vehicle rotation plan.

Fire Marshall in Emergency Services Department – I recommend the Fire Marshall position be relocated to the Emergency Services Department, where this official can be better utilized to provide support to the fire service.

Volunteer Station Assistance (Take the work out of being a Volunteer)

| | |
|----------------------------|--|
| ISO Preparation Assistance | Hose Testing |
| Ladder Testing | Fire Reports & Run Reports |
| Pump Testing | IT Support for Firehouse Software & Station Networks |
| Hydrant Testing | Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD) |
| Pre-Fire Plan Assistance | Paid Staff in Stations Everyday |
| Inspection Assistance | |

Training

| | |
|---|--|
| Continuation of Training Officers Committee | Water Shuttle Training Program |
| Training Facility Improvements | Minimum Training Guidelines |
| Skeleton Training Tower | Increase Training (and Travel) Funding |
| Flammable Liquids and Gas facility (F.L.A.G.) | Established Training Officer with more training certifications |
| Library of Training Aids | Increase in-house training class opportunities |
| Standardized Training Schedule & Calendar | |

Equipment and Vehicles

| | |
|---|--|
| 20 Year Replacement Schedule on Apparatus | Equipment Replacement Schedule (not in bulk) |
| 2 Vehicles a Year minimum for all Equipment and PPE | Improve Marine Response |
| Better utilize Grants | Quick Response Vehicles with Nitrite System (for mountain districts) |
| Need Cover for Rescue Equipment | New Volunteer Turn-Out Gear Program |
| Utilize Quick Attacks for Station 21 response | Resource & Asset List |

Miscellaneous Items

- Volunteer Recognition and Support (Pins, Awards, Dinner)
- Funding Equity
- Operations Support
- Countywide Standard Operating Procedures & Guidelines (SOP's & SOG's)
- Dispatch Protocols
- Building Improvement Issues
- Local Community Identity & Station Recognition (Trucks)
- GIS Water Point Map
- QRV Medical Services Plan (Northern County)
- Station Administrative Vehicles
- Bonding and Liability Coverage for Chiefs
- Residency requirement for Career Staff Management

EMERGENCY SERVICES PLAN OBJECTIVES

Our primary objective should be to protect and serve the citizens of Oconee County and consistently strive to improve emergency response in fire and rescue services by actively supporting the volunteer districts and maintain focus to improve organizational, operational, and financial support in an effort to guarantee the advancement of the volunteer districts within the Emergency Services Department.

EMERGENCY SERVICES PLAN REQUIREMENTS

During the development of this plan, key issues surfaced and resurfaced. These issues need to be addressed to improve relations and service delivery for Oconee County. For many years, the County has operated as a rural volunteer system, and at this point, this system can still be an economical and viable option with reinforcements.

As I moved forward with the plan development, I consistently asked myself "What type of Emergency Service Delivery Model fits best with the personality of this County?"

I found myself moving in many different directions as I met with responders, and studied the history and the many plans previously developed for the County. Repeatedly, my thought process moved in a circular pattern, but each time my assessments led to the same conclusion: "The volunteer system still fits Oconee County."

We must find a way to build a plan to improve our support of the volunteer stations, guaranteeing their existence for as long as we can. In order to accomplish this objective, certain issues have to be resolved to build a unified, stable, and responsive TEAM.

The key components that require attention in order to establish a properly designed Emergency Services Plan are:

- Management Restructure
- Emergency Service Commission Structure (Department Input)
- County Coverage (Substations)
- Station 21
- ISO Assistance and Improvement
- Proper Funding
- Municipal Contracts

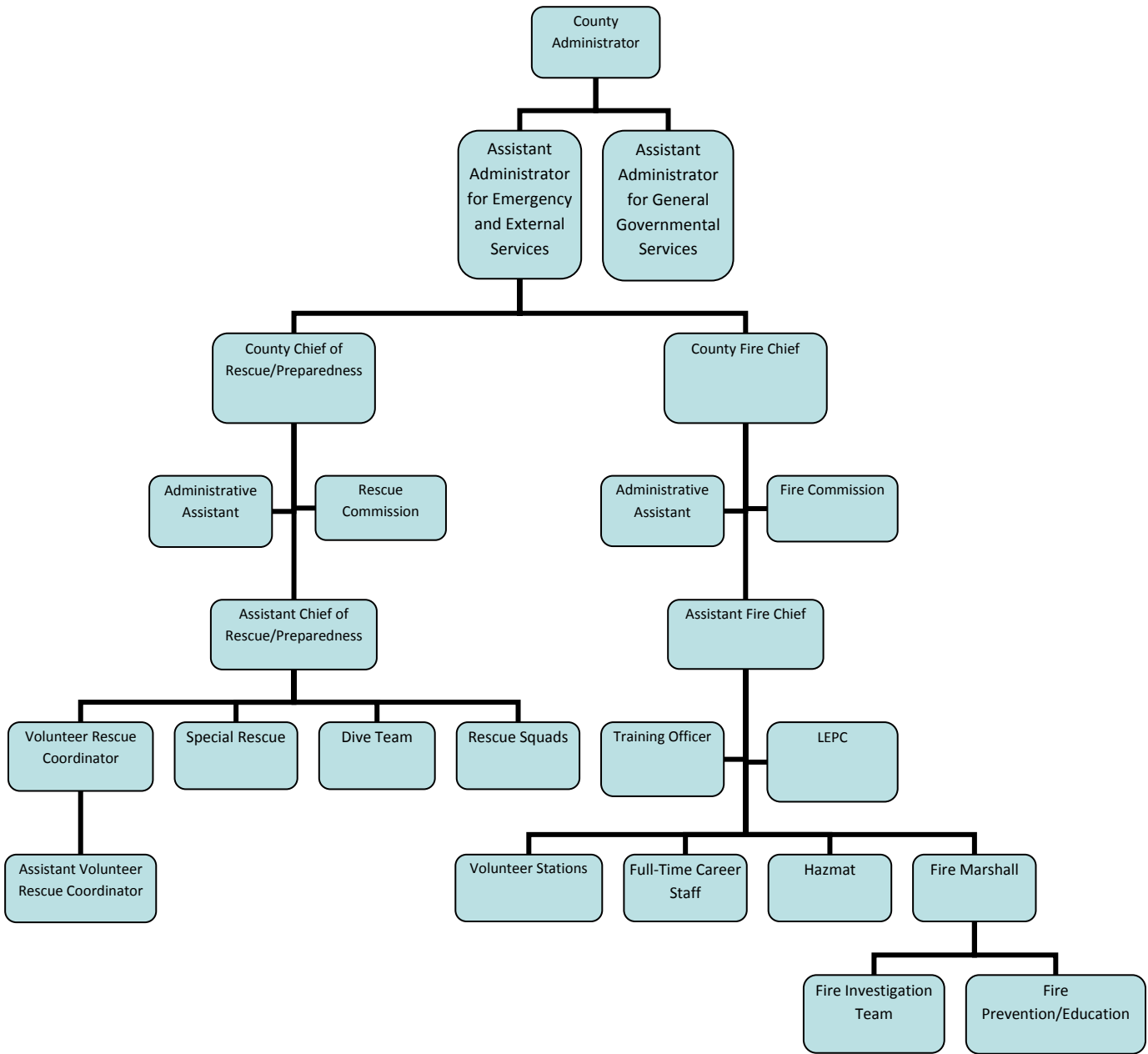
EMERGENCY SERVICES PLAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Management Restructure

The first task I recommend is to re-establish a properly designed management structure to oversee the Emergency Services Department. Currently the department is lead by an Emergency Services Director with three Deputy Chiefs each managing a separate function: Training; Fire; and Rescue & Preparedness.

I recommend a change to the management structure which includes a clear chain of command in a two-department structure. A Chief of Rescue and Preparedness, and Fire Chief would essentially manage the departments. The coordinated Emergency Services supervision would be provided by an Assistant Administrator for Emergency and External Services. By structuring the department with two department heads, decision making will be focused on a lower level. This two-department approach will allow both the fire and rescue services to maintain separate existences, which at this time it does not make sense to combine these two components of service in a consolidated system.

Both Chiefs would manage an Assistant Chief. This establishes a chain of command in the absence of a Chief. Currently, no clearly defined second in command for the Emergency Services operation exists. The final recommended change to the structure is to the reassignment of the Fire Marshall back to the Emergency Services Department. This position would also be responsible for the Fire Investigation and Education and Prevention Teams. A visual representation of my recommended structure is provided below.



Emergency Service Commission Structure

The current Emergency Service Commission was established to serve as an advisory commission to County Council. The five (5) members are representatives of both volunteers and citizens who meet on a semi-regularly basis.

I recommend this Commission be dissolved and, instead we establish two (2) commissions to serve in an advisory and policy initiation function to assist the Emergency Services staff with operations.

I propose a Fire Commission and Rescue Commission be established to work directly with the Chiefs to coordinate the policies and procedures of our Emergency Services Operations. The Commission members should be appointed by the respective service districts for each. One option is to incorporate the County districts into five (5) regions, and allow the volunteers from each district to elect their representative to the Commission.

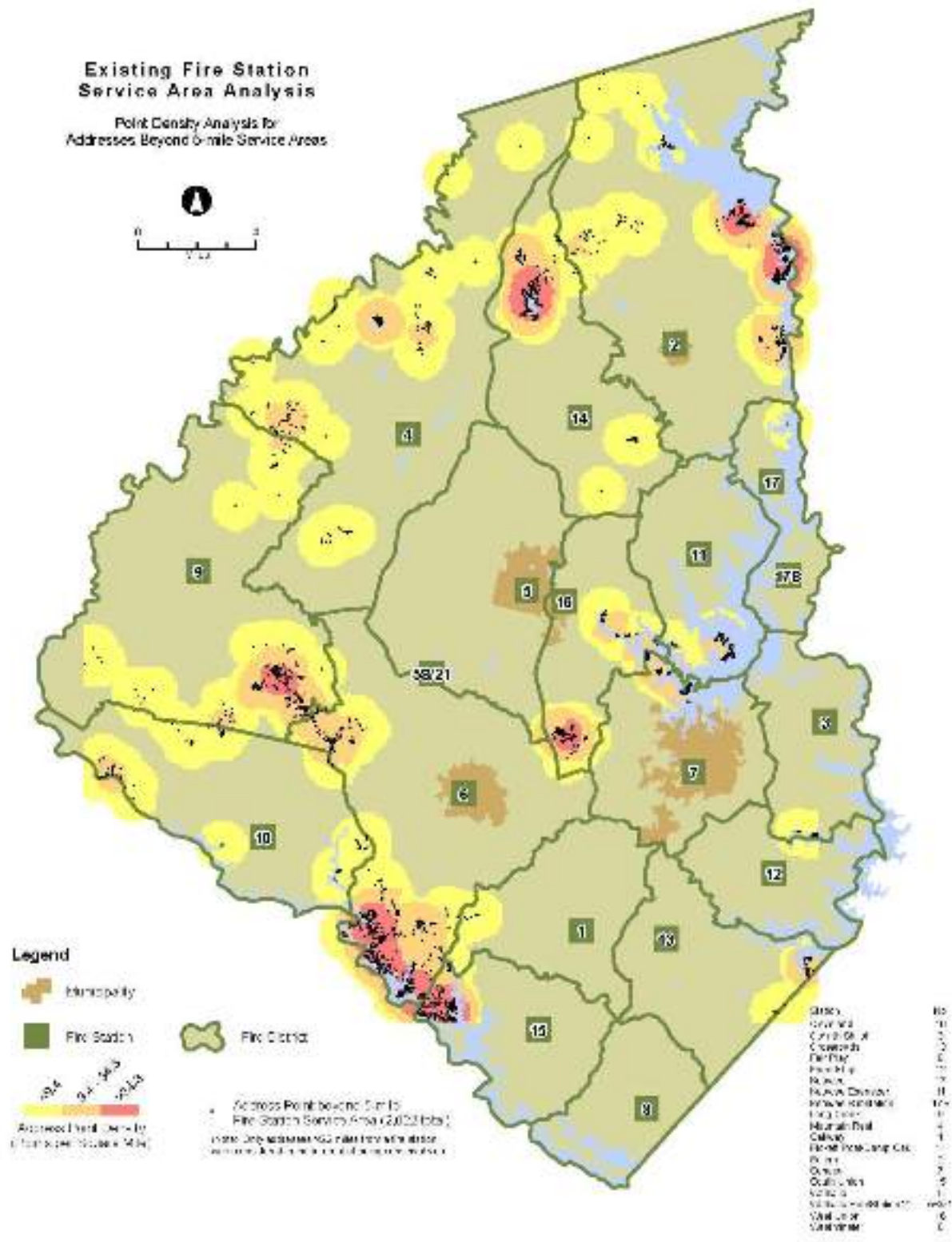
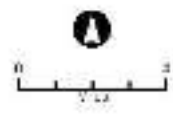
The Commissions would be responsible for the approval of the Standard Operating Procedures and Guidelines, and to assist with the development of vehicle and capital needs assessments to be built into the Improvement Plan. As County implementation decisions are developed, this Commission should assist with making recommendations for improving operations. Daily decisions and direction would still be managed by the Emergency Services management team, but the Commissions could provide an advisory resource to help determine how decisions may affect the daily service delivery.

Emergency Services requires an abundance of communication and coordination, and the formation of the Commissions I have suggested will provide hands-on involvement with a direct line of communication to the volunteer stations.

County Coverage (Substations)

Many areas in Oconee County remain uncovered, according to the ISO station location requirements that state structures should be located within five (5) miles of an equipped station. Substations will allow the County to provide better service to citizens, and improve ISO scoring capabilities for areas that currently receive no credit for proximity of a fire station. With the assistance of the GIS Mapping Department, we have compiled an analysis for suggested substation locations. According to the data analysis, a total of eight (8) substations would be required to provide suitable coverage of all densely populated pockets. These stations were located on the map by analysis only, therefore the final location will depend on availability of property, district ownership, and other factors not yet identified.

Existing Fire Station Service Area Analysis
 Point Density Analysis for
 Addresses Beyond 0.5-mile Service Areas



Legend

- Intercity
- Fire Station
- Fire District

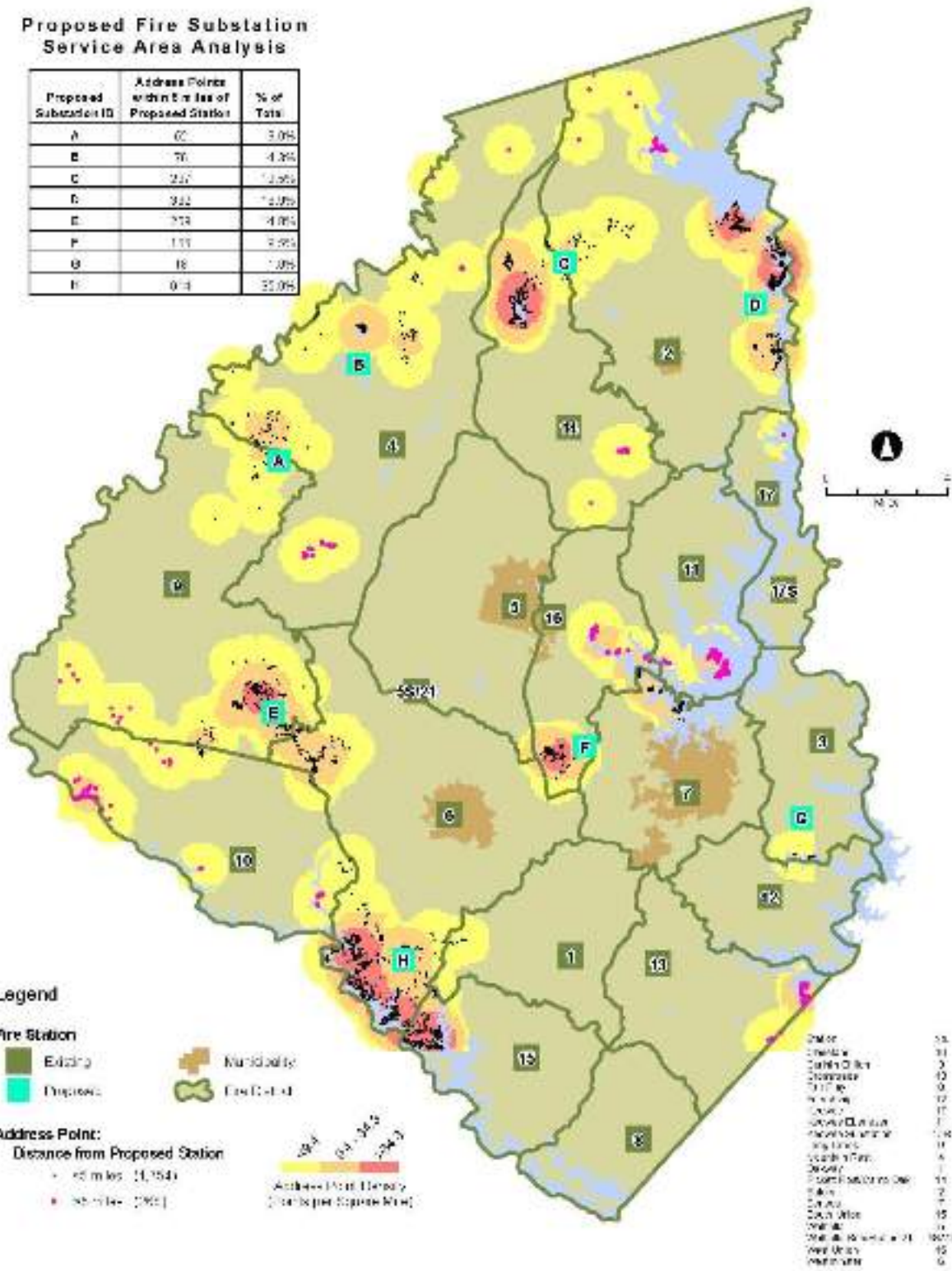
Address Point Density for
 Addresses Beyond 0.5 Miles

Address Point beyond 0.5 mile
 Fire Station Service Area (2002 jobs)
 Note: Only addresses 0.5 mile from address
 service. Address points are not shown outside

| | |
|-----------------|-----|
| Area | No. |
| County | 10 |
| City of Oconee | 11 |
| City of Dalton | 12 |
| City of Cordele | 13 |
| City of Dalton | 14 |
| City of Dalton | 15 |
| City of Dalton | 16 |
| City of Dalton | 17 |
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| City of Dalton | 46 |
| City of Dalton | 47 |
| City of Dalton | 48 |
| City of Dalton | 49 |
| City of Dalton | 50 |

Proposed Fire Substation Service Area Analysis

| Proposed Substation ID | Address Points within 5 miles of Proposed Station | % of Total |
|------------------------|---|------------|
| A | 62 | 3.0% |
| B | 76 | 4.3% |
| C | 227 | 12.9% |
| D | 222 | 12.8% |
| E | 272 | 14.8% |
| F | 171 | 9.3% |
| G | 16 | .8% |
| H | 613 | 33.9% |



Station 21

The principle behind creating Station 21 was meritorious in design, but implementation of this valuable resource has been inconsistent with the overall County objective. I recommend Station 21 be implemented in accordance with the original design, and the County expand the number of full-time positions from six (6) to a minimum of eighteen (18), and remove the part-time positions. The County should make a priority to disperse these first responders throughout the County call areas.

During daytime hours, Station 21 staff can be utilized to provide much needed assistance of station and equipment requirements as well as being in closer proximity for call response. A developed schedule would be used to allocate these responders throughout the county by region, similar to those established for the Commissioner seats. Every station would not have Station 21 staff in their station every day, rather the six (6) on duty members would rotate throughout the week so that each station gets a minimum of (1) full day a week.

Ideally, Station 21 should be expanded to at total of thirty (30) members, but the expansion to eighteen (18) would allow the County to establish the process and minimize the initial financial impact.

It is vitally important to maintain Station 21 presence throughout the County to assist volunteer stations with calls during evening hours. Having this staff in a stationary location at Camp Road significantly increases response time to certain areas of the County.

I propose to split the shift into three (3) locations at night. One suggestion is to leave the captain and one (1) fire fighter at the Camp Road site, and locate two (2) additional in the southern portion of the County, perhaps at the South Union Fire Station and the other two (2) at a different location yet to be determined. Other variations exist for day and evening placement of Station 21 staff. This type of discussion should be between the Emergency Services Department and the Commissions.

It's also important to note that Station 21 staff would respond to both fire and medical calls as needed.

Attention needs be given to the response vehicles currently being used by Station 21. Two (2) people in a pick-up truck significantly decreases the ability to effectively respond to calls, especially if they need to respond directly to a call without access to volunteer station apparatus.

The County should consider providing two (2) Quick Attack pumpers as resources for the Station 21 responders. The shift Captain could utilize the current truck as transportation to call areas.

ISO Assistance and Improvement

As a taxpayer service, the Emergency Services Department utilizes tax dollars to provide a service that directly protects life and property. A residual benefit of our County services is through lower home owners' insurance rates. Our performance indirectly affects our citizens through ISO ratings which has a direct impact on the cost of home owners' insurance rates. We should maintain focus to improve our immediate service delivery of protecting life and property, but all the while remember the effectiveness of our organization and our stations' performance affect citizen insurance dollars as well. The County should provide information and administrative resources to the volunteer stations. Emphasis needs to be placed on records improvement, equipment, station locations, staff and volunteer training, response, etc., and the County Emergency Services Department needs to be a vital part of collaborating with the volunteer stations to improve their ratings.

Proper Funding/Municipal Contracts

The final two (2) items are included together, because they truly have relevant impacts upon each other. It's no secret that the Municipal Contracts are at the center of controversy that has been developing over the last several years.

Volunteer stations feel more focus and special treatment is given to the municipalities, while they are treated as second rate departments. Levels of funding are inequitable when compared to the service territories and call volume. Each district is asked to protect a rural area of the County, yet the municipalities receive substantially more funding than the volunteer districts. It's also noted that volunteer stations struggle with raising money to repair their buildings, while the County contributed \$2.5 million to the construction of the joint County/Westminster Station.

I'm not here to judge decisions made in the past, nor question the levels of funding requested or approved; I want to focus on the underlying issues which have created a tense environment.

If we don't understand the problem, then the solution will be ineffective.

If the volunteer system is to be successful, then we must devote energy to improve those relations and consider viable solutions to the fundamental problems that led to the downfall of previous staff members who struggled with restructuring the Emergency Services Department.

Many demands are placed on fire fighters including: training; station upkeep; equipment and vehicle testing; hose and gear cleaning; record keeping; run reports; call response; fund raising; meetings; and others. Due to the demands placed on volunteers who normally have other full-time jobs and a family life, departments see a high rate of volunteer burn-out. With suitable funding, the County can help to alleviate the time consuming demands of fundraising to cover departmental operating costs.

As I struggled to find a solution to the Municipal Contract issue, I considered cancelling the contracts for each respective service area. My main area of focus, since it is the most expensive, was to analyze the impact of cancelling the City of Seneca Fire Contract. As I contemplated the construction of a new station in the Bountyland area, I began to establish an operating and capital budget to support this station. The operational portion of this analysis increased the amount of funding needed to service this territory at a minimum of \$350,000. The increase may seem minimal, but the reality is we would be diverting additional limited resources that could be allocated to the volunteers.

I then evaluated each of the four (4) municipal contracts and developed a strategy to partner with the cities and establish paid County departments within the municipalities to dissolve the contracts. This plan is ideal, and could solve municipal contract issues, and increase career staff in each area of the County which could in turn support the volunteer stations during day and evening hours. But once again, this plan increased the Emergency Services operating budget by a minimum of \$3.5 million. Not only would this have a substantial impact on the current budget, it would also lead to tax increases in the future. I analyzed the impact this would have on the volunteer stations, and quickly realized they would be in no better position than they are now. This outcome has no positive impact, and does not achieve the original objective to the plan. Under this scenario, resources and focus would, once again, be diverted from the volunteer system to a paid system; and no additional territory than what the municipalities are covering currently would be covered.

I ultimately came to the realization that the primary goal of this plan is to focus on improving the volunteer system, while providing as much career staff as our limited resources will allow. I recommend we maintain the contracts with the Municipalities, and place our priorities on assisting and funding our Volunteer Stations. By maintaining the contracts with the Municipalities, the County can increase direct aid to the volunteer departments, increase career support staff, and establish a proper management structure that is responsive to a Volunteer Department System.


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

December 21, 2010

- ▶ Welcome
 - ▶ Safety; Restrooms; Exits
 - ▶ Overview of Presentation
- 


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

OVERVIEW

- ▶ Oconee County Council directed County Administrator to develop a Emergency Services Plan
 - ▶ Restructure of Oconee County Emergency Services should provide effective public safety for Oconee County
- 


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

METHOD

- ▶ Multiple plans have been developed
 - ▶ Each present merits for improvement
 - ▶ We have people with knowledge
 - ▶ We can come up with a plan that meets our needs
 - ▶ Met with each fire station, rescue squad, commission, staff member, municipal agency, etc.
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

METHOD

- ▶ Ran a call with one of our stations
 - ▶ Forum for candid discussion
 - ▶ Shared ideas about problems
 - ▶ Provided insight to improve structure
 - ▶ Input was an objective mindset, and genuine goals for improvement
 - ▶ Reviewed previous plans and compared to other plans
 - ▶ Developed ideas for organizational structure
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

I was impressed and encouraged by the input from our responders.

No single plan fits each county perfectly; therefore each county must be willing to engineer a plan that works best for their particular needs.


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▶ 625 square miles
- ▶ Population est. 71,514; 7% growth rate
- ▶ 39,114 housing units
- ▶ 12,000 industrial manufacturing jobs
- ▶ Sizable area is forested
- ▶ Possibility of wildfires destroying homes
- ▶ 71,514 citizens total – 14,442 in municipalities – 57,072 in rural areas
- ▶ County responsible for protection of all citizens

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

**Our industries,
businesses and residents
depend on fire
protection.**



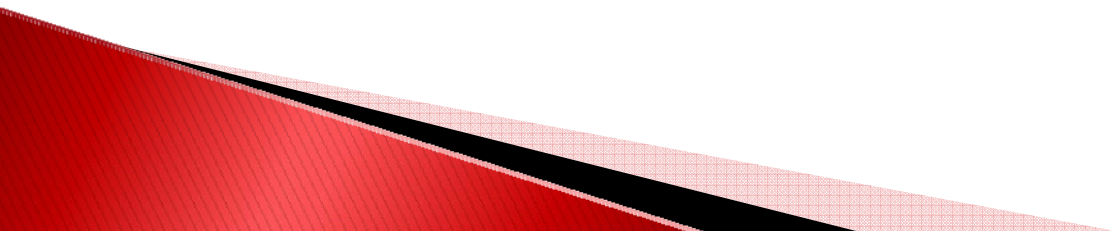
Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

EXISTING SYSTEM

- ▶ County operates as Volunteer System
- ▶ 13 rural fire districts
- ▶ 4 municipal departments
- ▶ 1 special tax district
- ▶ Station 21: 6 members rotating on a three shift basis
- ▶ HAZMAT volunteers
- ▶ EMS by Oconee Medical Center
- ▶ 7 rescue squads
- ▶ Rescue squads are first responders
- ▶ 2 special rescue units specialize in dive, swift water, vertical, and other rescue

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

GOAL (Unified System)

- ▶ Unified County Emergency Services Department
 - ▶ *Unified is NOT a combined / consolidated system*
 - ▶ Respond as County body with separate districts
 - ▶ Unified response requires coordination
 - ▶ Preserve volunteer system through strengthened support
 - ▶ Rural Districts exist within system
 - ▶ maintain individual local personalities
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan


How do we create a Unified System while preserving the local identities of our multiple districts?

There is no easy answer to this – I believe that with the *dedication* of the volunteers and paid staff, we can *make* it work.

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES


Four key areas of improvement

- Organizational Management
 - Volunteer Station Assistance
 - Training
 - Equipment & Vehicles
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES

▶ *Organizational Management*

- Leadership
 - Communication
 - Project Management
 - GIS Mapping Assistance
 - Additional Fire Dispatcher
 - Certified Emergency Vehicle Technician
 - Fire Prevention Team & Education
 - Grant Writing Assistance
 - Fire Marshall in Emergency Services Department
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES

▶ *Volunteer Station Assistance*

- ISO Preparation Assistance
- Ladder Testing
- Pump Testing
- Hydrant Testing
- Pre-Fire Plan Assistance
- Inspection Assistance
- Hose Testing
- Fire Reports & Run Reports
- IT Support for Firehouse Software & Station Networks
- Critical Incident Stress Debriefing (CISD)
- Paid Staff in Stations Everyday

*“take the work out of
volunteering”*

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES

▶ *Training*

- Continuation of Training Officers Committee
- Training Facility Improvements
- Skeleton Training Tower
- Flammable Liquids and Gas facility (F.L.A.G.)
- Library of Training Aids
- Standardized Training Schedule & Calendar
- Water Shuttle Training Program
- Minimum Training Guidelines
- Increase Training & Travel Funding
- Established Training Officer with additional certifications
- Increase in-house training opportunities

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES


▶ *Equipment & Vehicles*

- 20 Year Replacement Schedule on Apparatus
- 2 Vehicles / year minimum with all Equipment and PPE
- Better utilize grants
- Need cover for Rescue Equipment
- Utilize Quick Attacks for Station 21 response
- Equipment Replacement Schedule (not in bulk)
- Improve Marine Response
- Quick Response Vehicles with Nitrite System for mountain districts
- New Volunteer Turn Out Gear Program
- Resource & Asset List

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

NOTABLE CHALLENGES

Miscellaneous Items

- Volunteer Recognition and Support
 - Funding Equity
 - Operations Support
 - Standard Operating Procedures & Guidelines
 - Dispatch Protocols
 - Building Improvement Issues
 - Local Community Identity & Station Recognition
 - GIS Water Point Map
 - QRV Medical Services Plan (Northern County)
 - Station Administrative Vehicles
 - Bonding and Liability Coverage for Chiefs
- 


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

PLAN OBJECTIVE

Protect and serve the citizens of Oconee County and strive to improve emergency response in fire and rescue services by supporting the volunteer districts and maintaining focus to improve organizational, operational, and financial support in an effort to guarantee the advancement of the volunteer districts within the Emergency Services Department.


Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

PLAN REQUIREMENTS

- ▶ Several issues surfaced & resurfaced
 - ▶ Issues need to be addressed
 - ▶ The County is a volunteer system
 - ▶ System is an economical and viable option
 - ▶ Plan to improve support of volunteer stations
 - ▶ Build a unified, responsive TEAM
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

What type of
Emergency Service Delivery
Model
best fits the
personality of Oconee County?



Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

The volunteer system still
fits
Oconee County.




Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

THE PLAN

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan


RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ **Management Restructure**
 - ▶ **Emergency Service Commission Structure**
 - ▶ **County Coverage**
 - ▶ **Station 21**
 - ▶ **ISO Assistance and Improvement**
 - ▶ **Proper Funding / Municipal Contracts**
- 

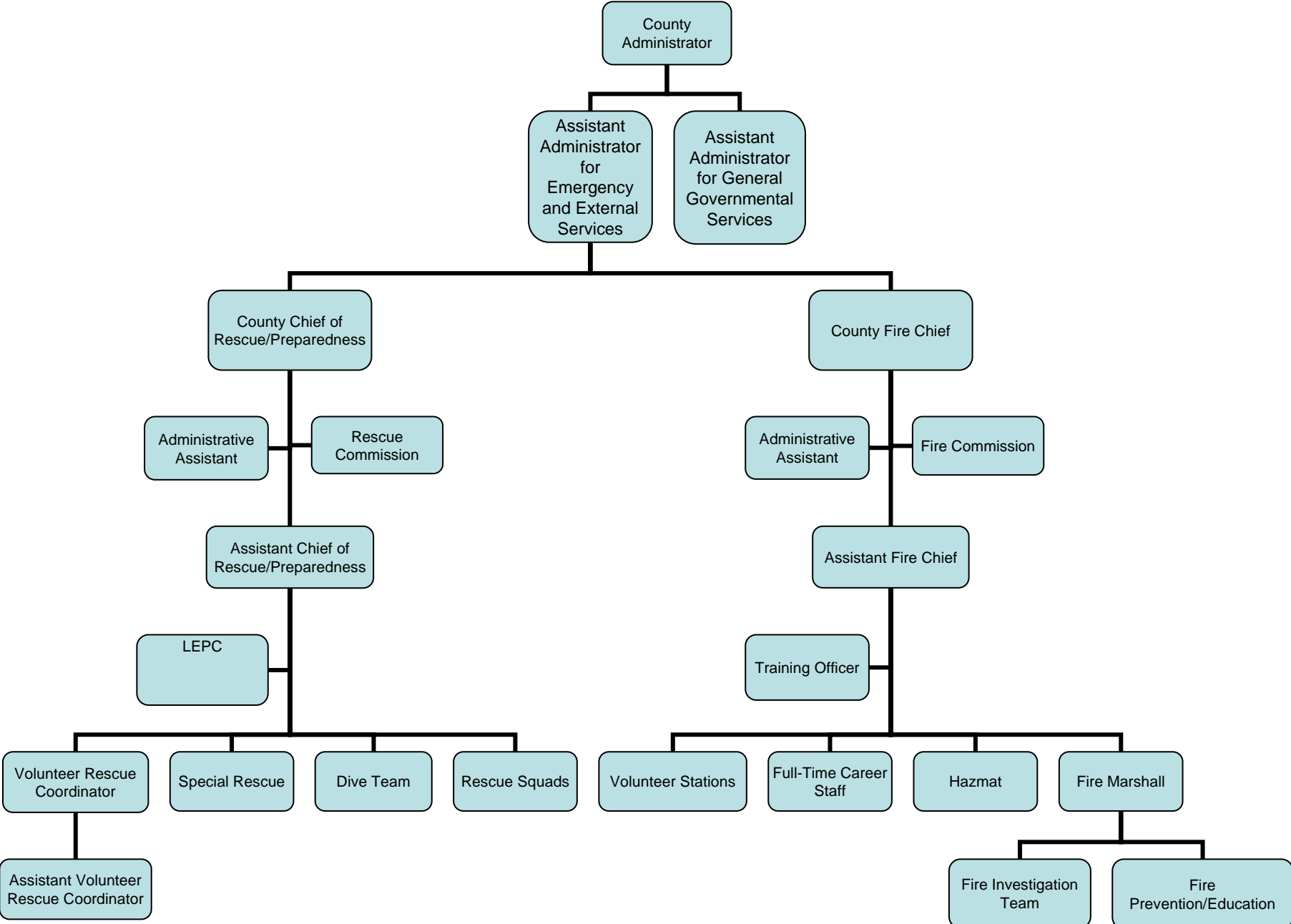
Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

Management Restructure

- ▶ Two-department structure
 - ▶ Chief of Rescue & Preparedness and Fire Chief
 - ▶ Assistant Administrator for Emergency and External Services
 - ▶ Fire Marshall in Emergency Services Dept.
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan



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RECOMMENDATIONS

Emergency Service Commission Structure

- ▶ Create a two-Commission structure
- ▶ Fire Commission and Rescue Commission
- ▶ Members appointed by service districts
- ▶ Communication is required
- ▶ Commissions will provide hands-on involvement and a direct line of communication

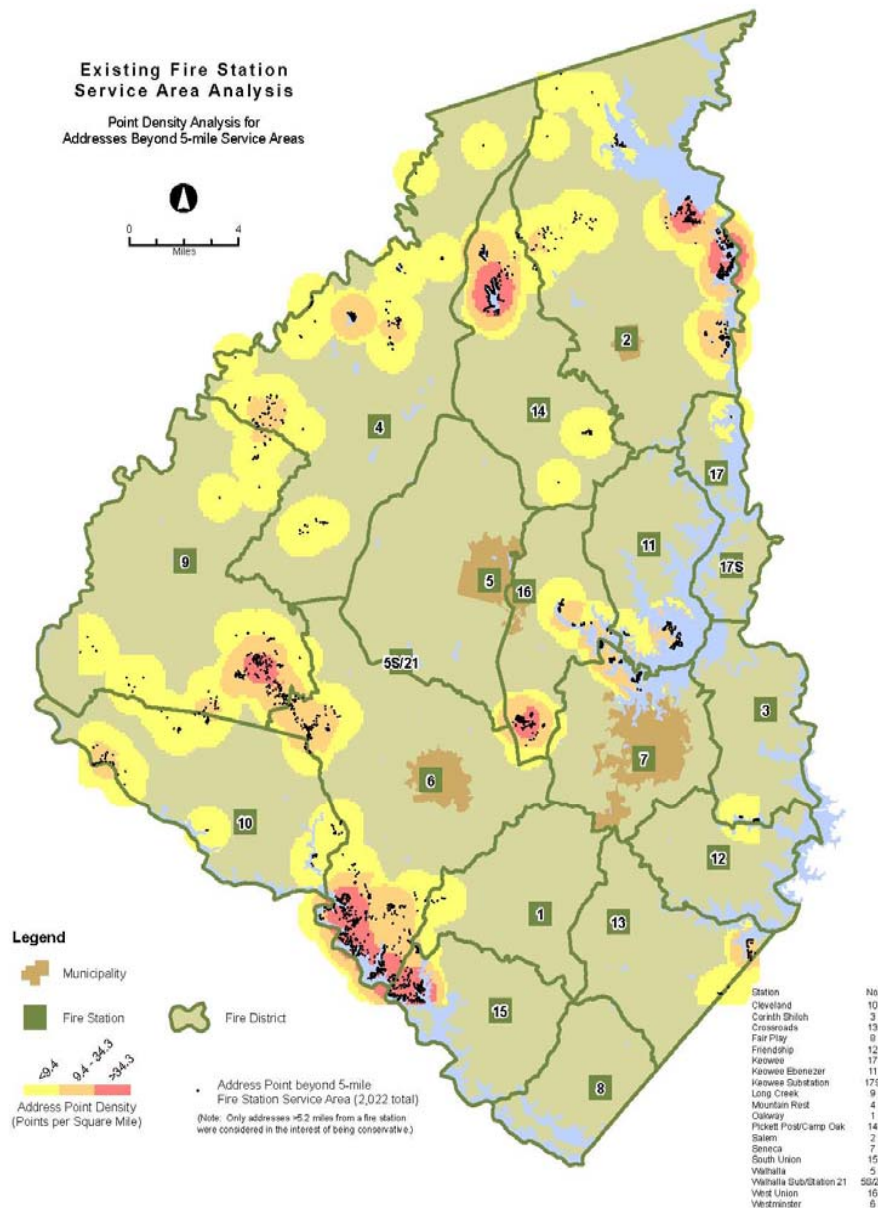
Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

County Coverage (Substations)

- ▶ Many areas remain uncovered, according to the ISO station location requirements
- ▶ Substations will provide better service to residents and businesses in County
- ▶ Improve ISO scoring capabilities
- ▶ 8 substations are required to provide suitable coverage

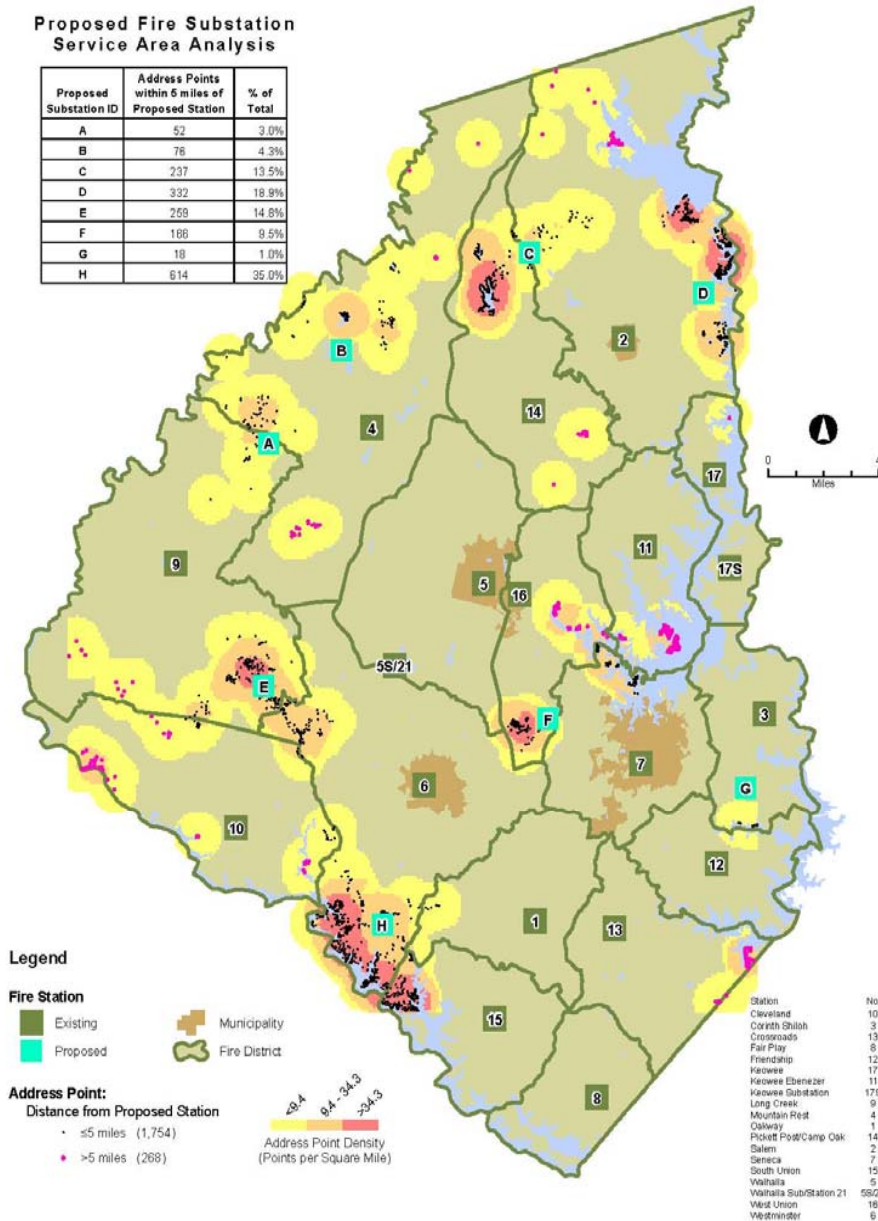
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Proposed Fire Substation Service Area Analysis


| Proposed Substation ID | Address Points within 5 miles of Proposed Station | % of Total |
|------------------------|---|------------|
| A | 52 | 3.0% |
| B | 76 | 4.3% |
| C | 237 | 13.5% |
| D | 332 | 18.9% |
| E | 259 | 14.8% |
| F | 186 | 9.5% |
| G | 18 | 1.0% |
| H | 614 | 35.0% |



Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS


Station 21

- ▶ Increase full time staff to 18
 - ▶ Dissolve part time positions
 - ▶ Split shifts – day & night
 - ▶ Station 21 responds to both fire and medical calls
 - ▶ Provide 2 Quick Attack pumpers
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS


ISO Assistance and Improvement

- ▶ Anticipated reduction in homeowners' insurance rates
 - ▶ County Emergency Services should be vital to collaboration with the volunteer stations to improve ISO ratings
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper Funding / Municipal Contracts

- ▶ Municipal Contracts controversial
 - ▶ Volunteers feel like second rate departments
 - ▶ Municipalities receive substantially more funding than the volunteer districts
 - ▶ Westminster Fire Station
- 

Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

**If we don't understand the problem,
then the solution will be ineffective.**



Oconee County Proposed Fire Plan

RECOMMENDATIONS

Proper Funding / Municipal Contracts

- ▶ Viable solutions for fundamental problems
 - ▶ Suitable funding to volunteer stations
 - ▶ Maintain municipal contracts
 - ▶ Strong management to support Volunteer System
- 