

**REPORT OF HAMPTON ROADS PLANNING
DISTRICT COMMISSION**

**Hampton Roads Automatic Aid
Between Emergency Services**

**TO THE GOVERNOR AND
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF VIRGINIA**



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**HAMPTON ROADS AUTOMATIC AID BETWEEN EMERGENCY SERVICES
A REPORT TO THE HONORABLE TIMOTHY M. KAINE, GOVERNOR AND
VIRGINIA GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**Prepared in response to 2008 House Joint Resolution 155 by the staff of the
Hampton Roads Planning District Commission**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report is being provided to the General Assembly pursuant to House Joint Resolution (HJR) 155. HJR 155 directed the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission to “review the emergency responses of localities of the Hampton Roads region, including responses across jurisdictional lines.” The conclusion of the report states that no legislative action is required to facilitate automatic or mutual aid among fire, emergency medical services (EMS), 911 dispatch agencies, or law enforcement. Subsequently, law enforcement agencies request that legislation be developed that would eliminate the need for regional mutual aid agreements but offer all legal protections and guarantee the delivery of available services.

The report was developed following a series of interviews with representatives from fire, law enforcement, EMS, and 911 dispatch agencies within the Hampton Roads region that focused on the usage and implementation of automatic and mutual aid operations. The interviews determined that Hampton Roads fire departments actively use both automatic and mutual aid and with the exception of the City of Virginia Beach are also responsible for EMS response. Law enforcement agencies do not use automatic aid except in cases of pursuit across jurisdictional lines; however, resources are shared through mutual aid. 911 dispatch centers do not direct use of mutual or automatic aid; rather, the decision is left to the first responder agencies and the dispatch centers facilitate the process the best way possible. To demonstrate the use of cross-jurisdiction response, the April 2008 tornado in Suffolk is used as an example of aid between jurisdictions.

I. SITUATION

On the afternoon of Monday April 28, 2008 a tornado developed and traveled through the City of Suffolk. The tornado resulted in approximately 200 injuries and expansive property damage.¹ Governor Kaine declared a state of emergency following a local emergency declaration from the City of Suffolk. In order to respond to the needs of its citizens, the City of Suffolk requested additional resources through its previously established mutual aid agreements. The following is a summary of the assistance requested by the City of Suffolk and assistance provided by neighboring jurisdictions from the Virginia Department of Emergency Management unless otherwise noted.²

- The Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS) Strike Team whose mission is to support response to mass casualty incidents was deployed. Deployment involved the Southside Logistics Cache (City of Norfolk), Peninsula Logistics Cache (York County), and Peninsula Communication Cache (York County). In addition, three James City County police officers were deployed as part of the strike team.³
- The City of Norfolk activated its emergency operation center (EOC) and hosted the City of Suffolk's emergency operations for two hours until operations were returned to the City of Suffolk's EOC.
- The City of Newport News provided in total 40 police officers. The officers were dispatched for two shifts with 20 officers per shift. Directions regarding officer responsibility were assigned by the City of Suffolk.
- The City of Portsmouth dispatched two engine trucks, one ladder truck, and one medic unit from its fire department. Nine members from the Portsmouth Amateur Radio-ES were sent to assist. In addition, four City of Portsmouth members deployed with the MMRS Strike Team.
- The City of Chesapeake deployed five engines, one ladder truck, one tactical rescue vehicle, a Battalion Chief, three Medic units, an EMS officer, a small bus and a 15 passenger van.
- The City of Norfolk provided 144 officers for six days of 24-hour support.⁴

II. FIRE

Fire departments throughout the Hampton Road region openly provide resources to geographically neighboring as well as non-adjoining jurisdictions during incidents that overwhelm the responding fire department. Assistance is provided primarily through mutual aid, with some support provided by automatic aid. The difference between automatic and mutual aid as defined by the fire departments within the region, is the means through which the resources are deployed. Mutual aid deployments are enacted upon receiving a request for additional resources from the responding jurisdiction. Conversely, automatic aid deploys several jurisdictions' resources through the 911 dispatcher at the jurisdiction where the incident is occurring. The specifics of both automatic and mutual aid are discussed further along with other factors contributing to the continual improvement of fire operations throughout the region.

A. Mutual Aid

As previously stated, mutual aid is the most used means of providing additional resources between fire departments. The use of mutual aid between fire departments is a long standing practice within the region. For instance, the city of Norfolk has had a mutual aid agreement with the Little Creek Naval Base since 1990 while York County, James City County, and the city of Williamsburg have maintained mutual aid agreements for approximately 30 years.

Previously the practice for establishing mutual aid agreements occurred between individual jurisdictions. This practice was deemed cumbersome as any single jurisdiction could hold several mutual aid agreements. As a result, the fire chiefs throughout the region are working towards establishing a regional mutual aid agreement. The agreement once established will network all resources together, much as they are now, however through a single unified mutual agreement thereby eliminating the need for each jurisdiction to establish its own mutual aid agreement. The Virginia Beach Fire Department has been taking the lead on facilitating the development of the regional mutual aid agreement.

In addition to local jurisdictional resources, the Navy Region Mid-Atlantic is a partner in fire mutual aid agreements. Similar to the local jurisdictions the Navy has previously established separate mutual aid agreements for each of its bases. However, the Navy is now using a regional mutual aid agreement that links all of its facilities together. Further, the Navy is establishing mutual aid agreements with local jurisdictions even if a naval base is not located within its jurisdictional boundaries. The new approach will make resources from every naval base available to all jurisdictions with which the Navy holds a mutual aid agreement. Previous agreements limited the exchange of resources to the specific Naval base and locality between whom the agreement had been signed.

The framework of existing mutual aid agreements maintains that requests for additional resources will be made by the City Manager, Fire Chief, Senior Officer on duty, or his/her designee. Within the requested jurisdiction, the decision to render assistance will be made by the City Manager, Fire Chief, Senior Officer on duty, or his/her designee upon receiving the mutual aid request. The response to the mutual aid request will be based on resource availability within the requested jurisdiction. Requests under the agreement can be for both personnel and equipment trained or designed to meet the needs of the situation. Liability against the requesting

jurisdiction is waived and all benefits entitled to the requested jurisdiction's personnel continue while responding in the requesting jurisdiction's boundaries. Finally, with a written 60 day notice the parties within the mutual aid agreement may terminate involvement.

B. Automatic Aid

While mutual aid is the dominant means through which resources are shared it also serves as the foundation for developing automatic aid agreements. The two areas within the region where automatic aid is the primary response mechanism occurs between York County, James City County, and the city of Williamsburg and between the Virginia Port Authority (VPA) and the jurisdictions that are home to VPA facilities.

York County, James City County and the City of Williamsburg can be considered the regional leaders in mutual and automatic aid operations. This designation is based upon their resource matrix dispatch method that identifies the nearest resource to an incident. The matrix is a static document based on the geographic location of resources and pre-identified incident subdivisions. Figure one provides an example of the resource matrix used by the 911 dispatcher.

Location: (subdivision where the incident occurred)
<i>Engine truck:</i> Unit 1 from York County, Unit 5 from James City County, etc.
<i>Ladder truck:</i> Unit 7 from Williamsburg, Unit 4 from Williamsburg, etc.
<i>Medic:</i> Unit 2 from James City County, Unit 4 from Williamsburg, etc.

Figure One: Automatic Aid Matrix

The matrix identifies all fire resources followed by the order in which resources should be requested. To deploy a resource the 911 dispatcher consults the matrix and then deploys the first available resource within the string of identified resources. If the resource is within the jurisdiction then the deployment is based upon the information within the computer aided dispatch (CAD) system; however, if the resources are outside the jurisdiction the 911 dispatcher contacts the jurisdiction with the desired resources to determine if the resource is available. If available the resource would be deployed by the 911 dispatch center within its jurisdiction. If the resource is unavailable then the 911 dispatcher within the jurisdiction with the incident would continue across the resource matrix until an available resource was found and deployed.

The second area of automatic response between York County, James City County and the City of Williamsburg are interstate accidents. This method is preferred as information provided to 911 dispatchers regarding interstate accidents is not always detailed or accurate. By eliminating jurisdictional boundaries the accident victim has the largest chance for survival.

Next, the Virginia Port Authority does not maintain its own fire department; therefore, during a fire incident fire services would automatically be deployed from a neighboring jurisdiction. Currently, the City of Norfolk is the primary jurisdiction set to respond to a fire incident at the Norfolk International Terminal; whereas the Portsmouth fire department is the

primary responder to an incident at the Portsmouth Marine Terminal and the Newport News fire department is the primary responder at the Newport News Marine Terminal. If the incident at the port developed beyond the primary responding jurisdiction's ability then the mutual aid resources previously discussed would be deployed to provide assistance.

C. Hampton Roads Fire Chief's Association

Automatic and mutual aid agreements are the product of cooperative fire operations throughout the region primarily through the Fire Chiefs Association. The Fire Chiefs Association is comprised of regional jurisdictions' fire chiefs. The association meets monthly to discuss the issues impacting the region and foster the continual improvement of fire operations. In addition, the association has six working groups that address topics such as operations and communications. The membership of the working groups is expanded to include operational leaders and the necessary individuals to accomplish the task at hand. Current tasks of the association, in no particular order, include standardized resource typing, unifying standard operating procedures, interoperability, regionally interlinked CAD system, and automatic vehicle locators in all response vehicles. Funding is the primary factor limiting the advancement of each task.

Finally regional fire leaders look to the Phoenix, Arizona metro area and Northern Virginia region as models for automatic aid operation development. Briefly stated, the Phoenix metro area links twenty fire departments using a satellite enhanced CAD system and Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) to deploy the nearest resource to the incident regardless of jurisdictional boundaries.⁵ Emergency calls received in the Phoenix area are first routed through the local law enforcement agency and if the caller is in need of fire or EMS services the call is transferred to the regional dispatch center for resource deployment.⁶ Similarly, the North Virginia region joins the resources for two cities, three counties, Army Base Fort Belvoir, and the Metropolitan Washington Airport Authority.⁷ Under the mutual response agreement the participating jurisdiction's resources will be automatically deployed without regard for jurisdictional boundaries to meet the needs of the incident.⁷ The request for additional resources from other jurisdictions will be made through the telephone, radio, or computer network.⁷

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

Resources are freely exchanged between jurisdictions throughout the region under pre-established mutual and automatic aid agreement while professional networks facilitate the continual improvement of fire operations. Consequently, no legislative action is required to facilitate automatic or mutual aid response among fire departments within the Hampton Roads region.

III. EMS

The majority of EMS providers are under the direction of the local fire departments within the Hampton Roads region. The exceptions are the rural counties and the City of Virginia Beach EMS. Therefore, mutual and automatic aid agreements entered into by the fire departments, as previously discussed, are also applied to many of the EMS agencies. The unique components of automatic and mutual aid as they relate to EMS are discussed below in addition to the professional organizations facilitating the continual improvement of EMS service.

A. Automatic Aid

Currently, automatic aid is not the primary means through which additional resources are requested and deployed. The exception, previously discussed under fire, includes the operations between York County, James City County, and the city of Williamsburg, and the Virginia Port Authority.

B. Mutual Aid

Rather than automatic aid, EMS providers generously provide resources when requested under mutual aid agreements. The agreements are enacted when the requesting jurisdiction contacts the requested jurisdiction for additional resources. In addition to existing mutual aid agreements, EMS providers are required by 32.1-12 and 32.1-111.4 of the Code of Virginia to provide mutual aid within their localities and with all jurisdictions immediately bordering their jurisdiction.⁸

C. TEMS and PEMS

Tidewater Emergency Medical Services Council (TEMS) and the Peninsula Emergency Medical Services Council (PEMS) are two professional organizations whose purpose is to bring EMS leaders together to address issues impacting the region, standardize EMS protocols, and facilitate the continual improvement of EMS service delivery. TEMS and PEMS have no authority over EMS providers to establish rules or regulation; rather, they work with EMS providers to improve service and establish common protocols. The two organizations could serve as a forum to discuss and plan future changes or improvements to mutual aid or automatic aid. TEMS and PEMS already share a joint mass casualty planning workgroup which meets monthly.

The jurisdictional boundaries of TEMS and PEMS extend beyond the Hampton Roads region boundaries; however the two jurisdictions currently meet the needs of the EMS providers. Recently, the consolidation of TEMS and PEMS into a single council was discussed and evaluated. The recommendation following the evaluation was for the two organizations to remain separate entities while continuing to collaborate together. The recommendation was based on the findings that patient care and EMS providers would be better served under a two organization system.⁹

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

Mutual aid agreements are the primary means of requesting additional EMS resources. Under these agreements resources are freely exchanged when requested and follow the Code of Virginia regarding mutual assistance among EMS providers. Professional organizations further facilitate EMS processes focused on collaboration and improved service among the region's

EMS providers. Consequently, no legislative action is required to facilitate automatic or mutual aid response among EMS providers within the Hampton Roads region.

IV. LAW ENFORCEMENT

Law enforcement, for the purposes of this report, is used to describe city police departments, city sheriff department, county police departments, county sheriff departments, and the Virginia Port Authority police. Within the region these law enforcement agencies are willing to offer support through mutual aid agreements upon the request of another jurisdiction. Mutual aid is preferred over automatic aid due to the unique nature of law enforcement. The specifics of both automatic and mutual aid are discussed further along with other factors contributing to the continual improvement of law enforcement operations throughout the region.

A. Automatic Aid

Automatic aid, defined as the immediate deployment of resources to another jurisdiction, is not a standard operating procedure used by Hampton Roads law enforcement. While officers are allowed to pursue individuals beyond their jurisdictional boundaries there are specific limitations as to the functions they are allowed to perform while operating within another jurisdiction's boundaries. Unlike other first responders, the role of law enforcement as the name implies is to enforce the laws. As a result, automatic aid is not always in the best interest of the parties involved.

B. Mutual Aid

For the reasons previously stated, mutual aid is the preferred method of offering assistance between law enforcement agencies. As a result a regional mutual aid agreement has been developed. Signed into effect July 1, 2003 the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement facilitates the distribution of resources throughout the region when local resources are unable to meet demand.

The agreement maintains that all jurisdictions involved will provide law enforcement support, if available, when requested. Requests will be made by the Chief of Police, Sheriff, or designee of the requesting jurisdiction. Acceptance of the request will be made by the Chief of Police, Sheriff, or designee of the requested jurisdiction. Upon acceptance the requesting jurisdiction agrees to provide the requested jurisdiction radios upon arrival to ensure communication of all parties. All personnel sent will be under the direction of the requesting jurisdiction's Chief of Police, Sheriff, or designee. Any activities undertaken by law enforcement personnel dispatched by the requested jurisdiction while assisting the requesting jurisdiction will be protected from liability as dictated by their individual jurisdiction and will be provided with the same powers and immunities in each other's jurisdiction including the authority to make an arrest. The agreement is updated as needed and jurisdictions may withdraw from the agreement following a thirty day written notice period.

A law enforcement specific example of productive mutual operations was the National Socialist Movement on June 25, 2005 in York County. The event received assistance from twelve jurisdictions within the region. Table one demonstrates which jurisdictions participated and the total number of officers supplied.

Agency	Personnel
United States Park Police	110
Virginia Beach Police	32
Chesapeake Police Department	27
Portsmouth Police Department	15
Virginia State Police	148
Norfolk Police Department	18
Newport News Police Department	22-25
Hampton	12
York Poquoson Sheriff Office	69
James City Police Department	16
Williamsburg Police Department	12
Gloucester Sheriff Office	10
Poquoson Police Department	2
Isle of Wight Sheriff Office	5

Table One: National Socialist Movement Mutual Aid

C. Virginia Port Authority Police

Currently, the Virginia Port Authority police are working with its neighboring jurisdictions to develop individualized mutual aid agreements that will grant the Port Authority police the legal authority to pursue an individual leaving the port. The agreements once completed will provide Port Authority officers access to very specific roadways within its neighboring jurisdictions. Localities have been supportive of the Virginia Port Authority police requests for access into their jurisdictions.

D. Hampton Roads Chief of Police Association

Contributing to improved police operations and mutual aid, the Hampton Roads Chief of Police Association, with membership from all law enforcement entities within the region, meets monthly to discuss issues affecting the region and jurisdictions. The association includes city police chiefs, county sheriffs, and the Virginia Port Authority Chief of Police. The meetings provide an opportunity for networking, touring other police facilities, understanding other jurisdiction's operations, and improving regional operations.

E. Conclusion and Recommendations

When requested, law enforcement resources will be shared among jurisdictions under the Law Enforcement Mutual Aid Agreement. The Hampton Roads Chief of Police Association fosters the continual improvement of police operations and mutual aid response. Therefore, given the already established procedures for resource sharing no legislative action is required to require the use of automatic or mutual aid response among law enforcement departments within the Hampton Roads region. Subsequently, during 2009 at the request of the Hampton Roads Chief of Police Association with support from the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission staff will be working to develop legislation for the 2010 session of the Virginia General Assembly that will eliminate the need for regional mutual aid agreements while offering the same legal protections and guarantees of service.

V. 911 DISPATCH

The phone number 9-1-1 is the designated direct line for citizens to request emergency assistance.¹⁰ Therefore, when a citizen dials 9-1-1 the call is routed to a 911 dispatch center which provides the conduit for fire, EMS, and law enforcement to render services. The process between when a citizen dials 9-1-1 and the call is received at the 911 dispatch center varies depending on three phone service options to which an individual subscribes.

The first is a wired phone service or more commonly referred to as a landline telephone. When a citizen dials 9-1-1 from a landline telephone they are automatically directed to the 911 dispatch center within the jurisdiction where they reside. The second type is a wireless phone service also known as a cell phone. When a cell phone user dials 9-1-1 their phone call is routed through the nearest cell phone tower. Cell phone towers then direct the call to a designated 911 dispatch center based upon the preprogrammed designation. As a result a cell phone user may be directed to a 911 dispatch center located outside the jurisdiction from which they are calling. The third is an alternate phone service called Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) which uses an internet connection to provide phone services. Following a mandate from the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) all interconnected VoIP providers are required as of November 2005 to route 911 calls to the 911 dispatch center; provide the 911 dispatcher with the caller's phone number and location; and inform the customer of the differences between services.¹¹

Once the call is received by the 911 dispatch center, regardless of phone service, the individual's location and phone number are verified. Then, based upon the needs of the caller the 911 dispatcher deploys the required services. The decision to deploy resources using automatic or mutual aid agreements is based upon previously established agreements between fire, EMS, and law enforcement departments.

A. Automatic Aid

As previously stated, whether automatic aid is implemented is based upon the actions of the first responders. As a function, 911 dispatch centers can be equipped with automatic aid facilitating technology. However, regionally, upgrades would be required and the operational Fire Chiefs are conducting preliminary talks with vendors to determine feasibility and cost. Structural differences between localities regarding the placement of 911 dispatch centers within the local government impact operations as well as locality population size. As a result the 911 dispatch centers will provide the service that best meets the needs of the first responders to facilitate prompt response while working with them to continually improve emergency response operations.

B. Mutual Aid

Similar to automatic aid, 911 dispatch centers have the capacity to coordinate mutual aid response; however, will follow the requests of the first responders. The two primary ways that mutual aid is coordinated through the 911 dispatch centers occurs during an ongoing incident or when backfilling another jurisdiction's stations. In the first example, first responders would coordinate with their 911 dispatcher to request additional resources. The 911 dispatcher for that jurisdiction would then contact a 911 dispatch center in another jurisdiction to request additional

resources. The second example occurs when a jurisdiction is receiving a high volume of emergency response calls. When this situation occurs the 911 dispatch center may contact another 911 dispatcher center to request that some of their resources be moved to the requesting jurisdiction's stations to facilitate short response times for both localities.

C. APCO

The Association of Public-Safety Communication Officials (APCO) is a professional organization whose purpose is to provide leadership, promote professional advancement, and improve the use of technology for the benefit of citizens.¹² Project 36 is a current initiative of APCO focusing on developing standard CAD-to-CAD interchange.¹³ Once complete the results should set the foundation for interlinking different CAD platforms together.

D. Conclusion and Recommendations

The 911 dispatch centers within the region are willing to coordinate automatic and mutual aid response of first responders. However, since the 911 center serves as the pass through between citizen requests and emergency response to citizens the decision to implement automatic and mutual aid is left to the discretion of the first responder. Further, solutions for interlinking different CAD systems are currently being studied by the APCO. As a result, no legislative action is required to facilitate automatic or mutual aid response efforts by the 911 dispatch centers within the Hampton Roads Region.

VI. STATEWIDE MUTUAL AID

In addition to local and regional mutual aid agreements, the Commonwealth of Virginia has a Statewide Mutual Aid (SMA) program hosted by the Department of Emergency Management. The purpose of the SMA program is to facilitate the exchange of resources during emergency events; however, the SMA program is supplementary and does not supersede any previously established mutual aid agreements between localities. The pre-scripted SMA allows participating members to sign an agreement with another jurisdiction immediately before or during an emergency. Similar to local and regional mutual aid agreements, the procedures, liability, and compensation that each jurisdiction agrees to adhere to while operating within the SMA are explicitly defined. The SMA allows resources to be shared among jurisdictions not typically included within a mutual aid agreement due to geographical distance or in the absence of a formal mutual aid agreement. A total of 139 jurisdictions have adopted the SMA, including all Hampton Roads localities.¹⁴

CONCLUSION

HJR 155 directed the Hampton Roads Planning District Commission to study automatic aid among first responders within the Hampton Roads region. Within the region, since 2001, there have been over 8,000 incidents of mutual aid and over 1,600 automatic aid incidents between fire and EMS departments.¹⁵ Further, a 2005 National Socialist Movement gathering generated assistance from twelve law enforcement agencies within the region. These examples along with the pre-established mutual and automatic aid agreements between first responder agencies within the region lead to the conclusion that no legislative action is required to facilitate automatic or mutual aid among fire, emergency medical services, law enforcement, or 911 dispatch agencies. Subsequently, law enforcement agencies request that legislation be developed that would eliminate the need for regional mutual aid agreements but offer all legal protections and guarantee the delivery of available services.

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