



**Fairfax County Board of Supervisors, Personnel Committee**  
Fire and Rescue Compensation and Organization Review  
Report Summary  
Tuesday, April 2, 2019

1. Introduction and Goals of Study
2. Key Areas of Focus
  - a. Pay Schedule Leveling
  - b. Pay Schedule Placement of the Civilian Fire Apparatus Mechanic Position
  - c. Compensation for “Staff” Assignments
  - d. Job share positions
  - e. Compensation Benchmarking Methodologies
  - f. Overtime Analysis
3. Questions / Discussion



### Summary of Findings and Recommendations

<p><b>Finding #1:</b></p> <p>FRD “F” Pay Plan Inconsistencies</p>	<p>In the current “F” pay plan, the differentials between adjacent grades are inconsistent. While often set at 5.0%, grade-to-grade differentials range from 2.9% to 6.4%. While current FRD pay levels are regionally competitive, consistent with the County’s compensation philosophy, hourly rates generally fall somewhat below the regional average, depending on rank.</p> <p>Fire Apparatus Mechanics, a civilian position more closely aligned with other non-safety County classifications, is included on the “F” schedule.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Pay Plan Leveling</p> <p>Transfer of the Fire Mechanic title to the Civilian “S” scale</p>	<p>The current pay plan could be modified to create clear and consistent 5.0% differentials between steps and grades. This change would provide more predictable increases across all ranks, and would be broadly consistent with recent changes for County law enforcement.</p> <p>Pay plan leveling would modestly improve FRD compensation competitiveness (average of 1.2%).</p> <p>Shifting the Fire Apparatus Mechanic title to the civilian “S” scale would better align this classification with similar positions across County government with regard to any future pay schedule adjustments.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>Costs of leveling will vary by individual, but preliminary estimates of step leveling, show potential wage increases ranging from 0.2% – 1.6% per uniformed employee.</p>
<p><b>Finding #2:</b></p> <p>Lieutenant Rank Pressures</p>	<p>Some FRD focus groups and application rates for promotional examinations to become a Lieutenant indicate some difficulty in attracting candidates for this important supervisory role. While current applications are generally sufficient to fill vacancies, some pressure is indicated, and FRD salaries for the Lieutenant rank lag regional medians to a greater degree than most other ranks.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Monitor Lieutenant Promotional Experience</p>	<p>The County should monitor the application rates for promotion to Lieutenant among eligible personnel, as well as regional compensation competitiveness for this rank. If competitiveness pressures worsen, changes in assignment practices and/or other management strategies could be considered.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>None identified.</p>



<p><b>Finding #3</b></p> <p>Staff Position Recruitment Challenges</p>	<p>While staff assignments require fewer hours of active duty such that hourly pay rates remain equivalent to those for fire suppression, staff positions generally pay less on an annualized basis, due to lost/limited opportunities to earn shift differential, holiday pay and “scheduled overtime.” Additionally, the Department reports challenges in attracting qualified personnel to these positions. To address parallel concerns, Charlotte, Phoenix and Seattle offer supplemental “staff” position pay premiums ranging from 5% to 10% of base pay.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Staff Assignment Premium</p> <p>Rolling shift differential into base pay</p>	<p>(1) The County could explore a staff position premium for ranks up to Battalion Chief, similar to Phoenix, Charlotte, and Seattle.</p> <p>(2) As a partial measure, the County could also consider rolling the equivalent cash value of the current FRD shift differential into base pay. This approach would narrow the current annual pay difference between suppression and staff assignments by roughly one-third (approx. \$2,000 annually, varying by rank). In addition, because the County’s regional pay comparators do not have a separate shift differential, this approach would standardize base pay comparisons.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>(1) If a staff premium were to be pursued, the County would need to determine the appropriate premium, and to address any employee relations concerns resulting from a change in equivalent hourly pay.</p> <p>(2) Rolling shift differential or other premiums into base pay could have a “roll up” impact on the cost of overtime hours, pensions, payroll taxes, etc. that would need to be taken into account when developing an appropriate conversion factor and approach.</p>
<p><b>Finding #4:</b></p> <p>Job Share Expansion</p>	<p>Female focus group participants reported a strong interest in expanded access to job sharing positions in operations. Among FRD women, turnover rates are low, but those who separate voluntarily before retirement often do so early in their careers.</p>
<p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <p>Pilot Expansion</p>	<p>The FRD will explore opportunities to increase the number of job share positions in operations. These efforts should be continued, as they may improve retention.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>The Department would need to assess operational impacts, and to develop a method for determining eligibility.</p>



<p><b>Finding #5:</b></p> <p>Compensation Benchmarking Methodologies</p>	<p>The County makes adjustments to Public Safety pay scales when the salary range mid-point of at least two out of three designated class specifications in each of the Public Safety groups fall more than 95% behind the external market salary range mid-point average.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) The County does not include scheduled overtime earnings in its calculations of hourly pay, even though such overtime is earned for 156 of the annual hours included in the same calculations.</li> <li>(2) For comparing pay at the rank of Firefighter, the County matches to pay grades as reported by its benchmark employers. In some cases, these reported pay grades do not capture the automatic and/or very routine advancement of rank-and-file firefighters to higher pay grades prior to reaching the mid-point of their careers.</li> <li>(3) While the County captures annual, entry, and maximum rates, all comparisons are made based on hourly rates at the midpoint without inclusion of premium pays.</li> <li>(4) The County bases its review of the full schedule on three classifications: Firefighter, Fire Technician, and Battalion Chief.</li> <li>(5) The County develops hourly calculations without taking paid leave accruals into account.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Recommendation</b></p> <p>Consider Methodological Refinements</p>	<p>Consider the following refinements to the County's methodologies.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Include scheduled overtime and shift differential in hourly compensation comparisons, to more fully reflect actual earnings on a regular schedule. Consider adjusting for leave accruals, as well, since paid leave is often somewhat proportional to annual hours.</li> <li>(2) Use of all ranks in the progression equivalent to Firefighter in Fairfax County, such as Firefighter II levels elsewhere (where not reflective of higher-level Technician duties).</li> <li>(3) Analysis of comparative pay for all years of service, inclusive of premiums, consistent with PFM's career average approach detailed in this report. Periodic use of this approach (every 3-5 years) could help to evaluate any career junctures where the FRD is more of an outlier than at midpoint and/or when premiums impact findings.</li> <li>(4) Surveying for all fire and rescue ranks on a periodic basis (again, every 3-5 years) to ensure competitiveness across the full FRD.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>Modest administrative impacts and/or incremental survey costs.</p>



<p><b>Finding #6:</b> Overtime Usage</p>	<p>Overtime costs in the Fairfax County FRD are significant – totaling nearly \$24 million in the General Fund for FY2017 and merit ongoing management focus and review. At the same time, it is important to recognize that overtime spending is not always nor inherently negative. The major drivers of FRD overtime include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) <b>Leave.</b> Replacement of personnel on paid leave drove approximately 48% of FY2017 FRD sworn overtime.</li> <li>(2) <b>FLSA/Holiday.</b> In FY2017, approximately 20% of all sworn was attributable to either “FLSA overtime” (built in overtime within the regular 56-hour operations schedule above the average 53-hour Fair Labor Standards Act threshold) or “Holiday Overtime” (extra pay for regularly scheduled work on a holiday, as often required for first responders).</li> <li>(3) <b>Training.</b> Over 16% of FY2017 FRD overtime was due to training, specialty training, or work at the recruit school.</li> <li>(4) <b>Backfill/Vacancy.</b> At approximately 7% of FY2017 FRD overtime, this category is driven by replacements for a position vacancy, officer shortage, staff shortage, or minimum staffing requirement.</li> <li>(5) <b>Special Projects/Events.</b> This category includes overtime related to internal and external committees, community events, and various department initiatives/projects, accounting for just over 2% of FRD overtime expenditures in FY2017.</li> <li>(6) <b>Emergency.</b> Driven by incidents that require overtime (e.g. a significant storm, oil spill, large scale suppression/EMS event, etc.), this category for less than 1% in FY2017.</li> <li>(7) <b>Other.</b> This general catch-all category includes overtime for promotional exams, physical testing, specialty assignments, court time, administration, and Fire Marshal related activities and comprised approximately 6% of FY2017 FRD overtime.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Recommendation</b> Options for Exploration</p>	<p>Some level of overtime in 24/7 operations is effectively unavoidable, and other uses of overtime may actually be more cost-effective than alternative means of coverage, such as increased headcount. Within this context, we outline several areas of opportunity below, however, note that several of these represent areas for potential further exploration – not recommendations for immediate change.</p>



	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>(1) Some regional fire and rescue employers provide lower cost compensation for holidays worked that are a necessary element of 24/7 coverage – and some of those other approaches are structured as premiums separate from overtime. The County could consider a similar alternative approach to overtime.</li> <li>(2) The County could explore realigning paid leave accruals, which – because FRD annual leave accruals are now comparatively high in absolute terms – would also make more hours available for coverage without overtime (and/or reduce banked leave and payouts upon separation).</li> <li>(3) While not extraordinarily high, sick leave usage and control practices could also be further evaluated.</li> <li>(4) To help determine the best deployment of FRD resources, the County could consider periodically engaging in a detailed workload demand and deployment analysis conducted by independent subject matter experts. Working collaboratively with FRD leadership, such analysis can help to ensure an optimized approach for public safety staffing requirements that underlie many overtime demands.</li> <li>(5) The County could also further explore management of overtime use for non-operational activities. Given the critical nature of some of these activities, such as core training, the complete elimination of this overtime category will not be achievable. Nonetheless, a detailed review could potentially identify opportunities for policy revisions and/or savings.</li> <li>(6) Fairfax County should strongly consider a redesign of its overtime tracking approach to improve the information available to management.</li> </ol>
<p><b>Implementation Issues</b></p>	<p>To the extent that some of the potential changes identified – such as lower leave accruals or modified holiday pay – would effectively reduce an element of employee compensation, such options could be considered for implementation within the context of other positive changes for employees. For example, any paid leave adjustments could be advanced in tandem with (and potentially help to fund) pay plan leveling and/or other pay grade realignment that improves overall compensation.</p>



## Selected Charts (FY2018 Comparisons)

### Fire and Rescue Shift Schedules

	Schedule	Annual Hours	Average Weekly Hours	Annual Appearances
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>24 on/24 off, 24 on/24 off, 24 on/96 off</b>	<b>2,912</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>122</b>
Alexandria	24 on/24 off, 24 on/24 off, 24 on/96 off	2,912	56	122
Arlington County	24 on/24 off, 24 on/24 off, 24 on/96 off	2,912	56	122
District of Columbia	24 on/72 off	2,184	42	91
Howard County	24 on/48 off less Kelly Days every three weeks	2,496	48	104
Loudoun County <sup>1</sup>	24 on/72 off	2,184	42	91
Montgomery County	24 on/48 off less Kelly Days (17.4/year)	2,496	48	104
Prince George's County	24 on/72 off	2,184	42	91
Prince William County <sup>2</sup>	24 on/48 off less Kelly Day every 8th shift	2,496	48	104

<sup>1</sup> Loudoun County: County also has day shift consisting of 4 days on, weekends off, and a rotating day off during the week (10-week rotation, 2 days worked in final week of rotation).

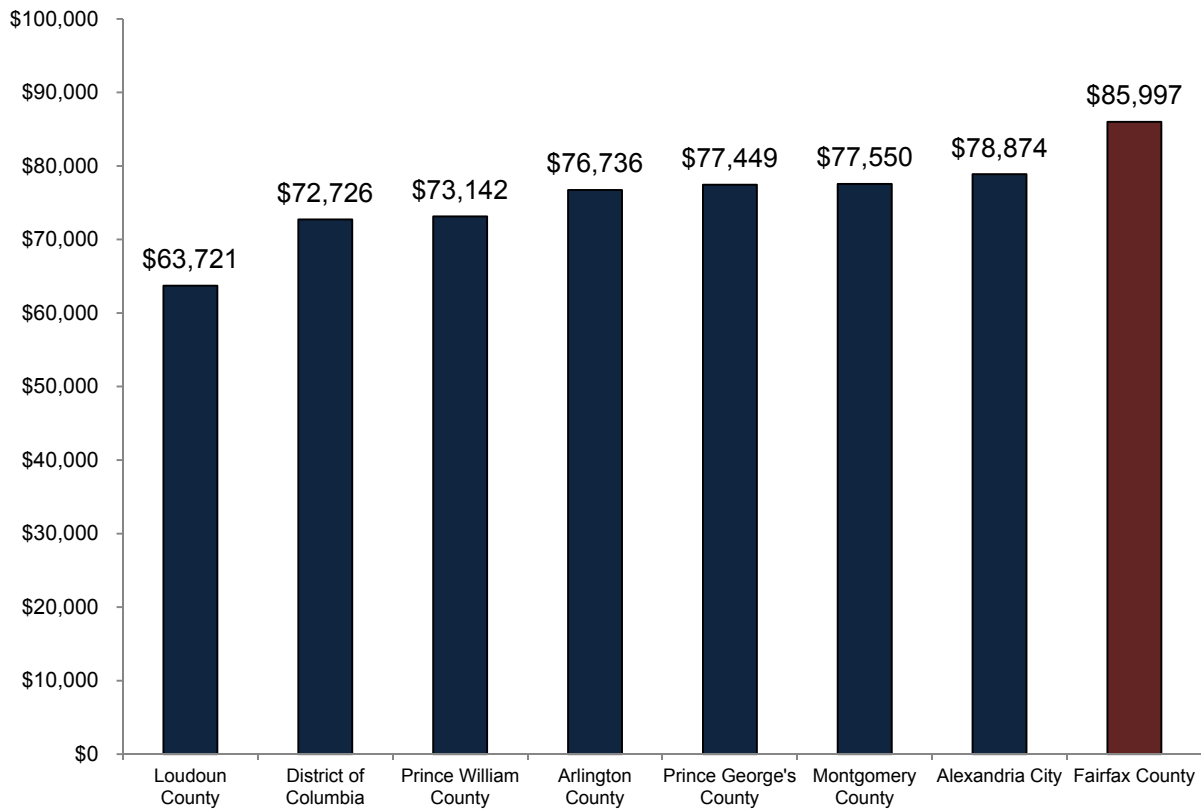
<sup>2</sup> Prince William County: County also has day shift consisting of 4 days on, weekends off, and a rotating day off during the week.



### Fire and Rescue Shift Differential Comparison

Shift Differential	
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>\$0.7275/hr.</b>
Alexandria	None
Arlington County	None
District of Columbia	None
Loudoun County	None
Montgomery County	None
Prince George's County	None

**Figure 1: Firefighter Total Direct Cash Compensation 25-Year Average (Annual)**



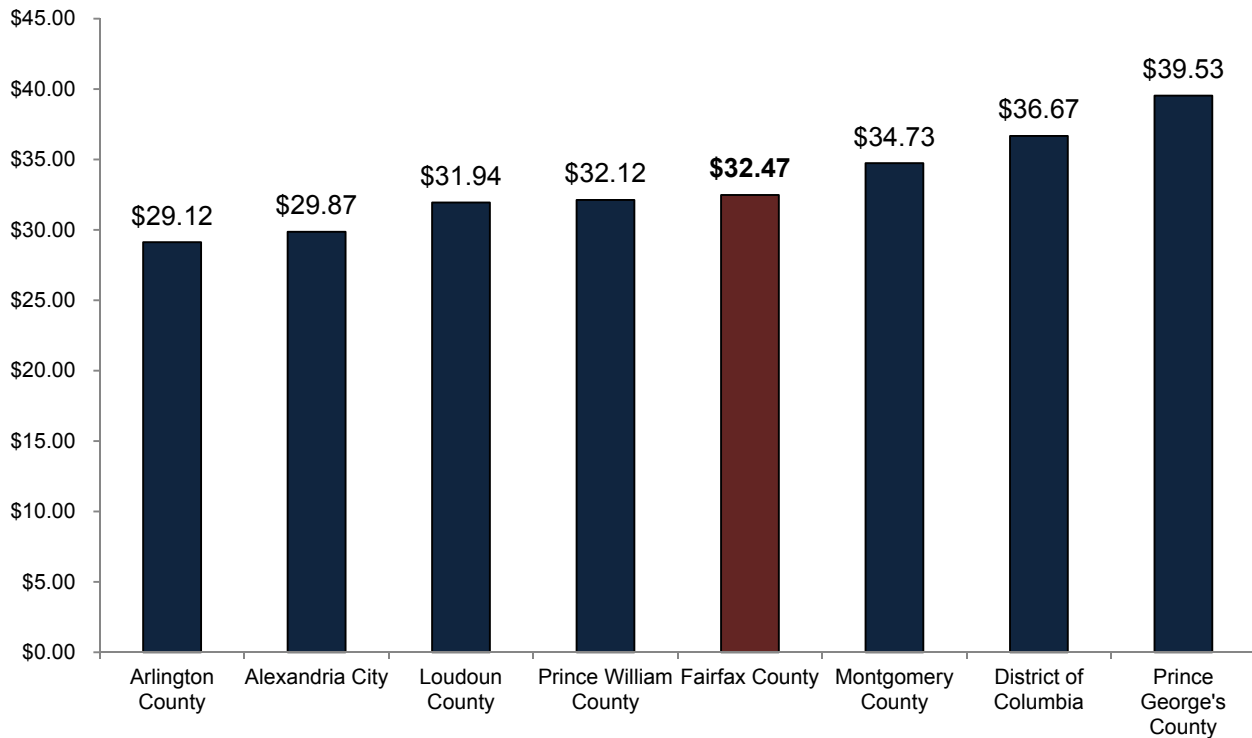




Annual Leave Accruals (Suppression)

Hours of Annual Leave	
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>156 hours in Year 1, maximum of 312 hours</b>
Alexandria	156 hours in Year 1, maximum of 300 hours
Arlington County	156 hours in Year 1, maximum of 312 hours
Loudoun County	104 hours in Year 1, maximum of 206 hours
Prince William County	125 hours in Year 1, maximum of 250 hours
Prince George's County	104 hours in Year 1, maximum of 208 hours
Montgomery County	144 hours in Year 1, maximum 249 hours

**Figure 3: Firefighter Total Direct Cash Compensation, 25-Year Average (Per Net Hour Worked)**





Staff Position Premium

	Staff Position Premium	Average Annual Hours in Staff Positions	Average Annual Hours in Operations	Scheduled Overtime <sup>3</sup>
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>None</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>2,912</b>	<b>Yes</b>
Charlotte	5% of base	2,080	2,730	No
Fort Worth	None	2,080	2,912	Yes
Indianapolis	None	2,080	2,496	No
Nashville	None	2,080	2,756	No
Phoenix	10% of base	2,080	2,912	Yes
San Francisco	None	2,080	2,532	No
Seattle	7.5% of base	2,080	2,352	No
Montgomery County	None	2,080	2,496	No
Prince George's County	-	-	2,184	No

<sup>3</sup> Scheduled overtime is regular overtime earnings based on the length of the standard operations shift schedule.



**Table 38: Comparative Turnover Rates**

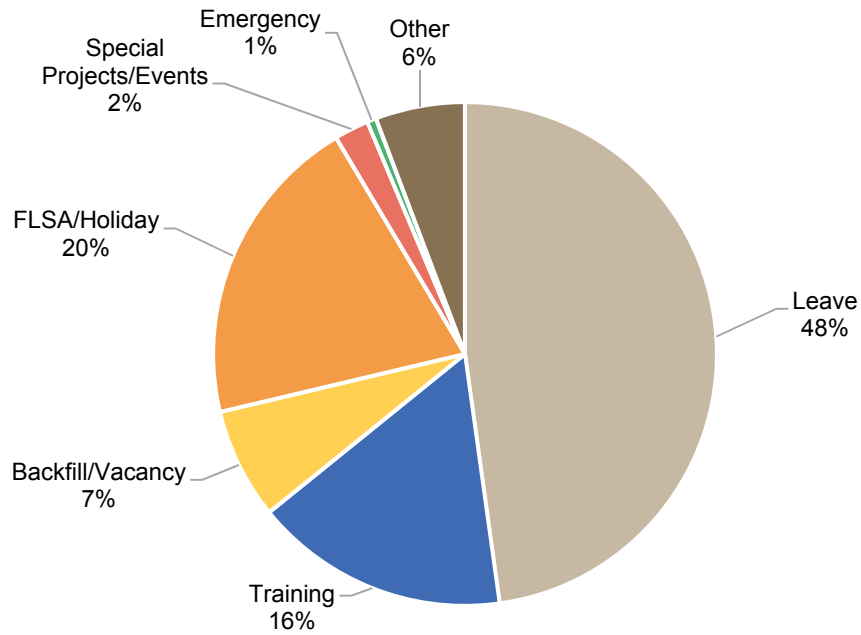
	<b>FY2013</b>	<b>FY2014</b>	<b>FY2015</b>	<b>FY2016</b>	<b>FY2017</b>
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>	<b>4.6%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>4.4%</b>
Alexandria	8.1%	9.0%	5.9%	12.4%	4.7%
Arlington	3.0%	5.4%	6.4%	9.3%	9.3%
District of Columbia	5.4%	4.8%	3.6%	4.1%	3.4%
Loudoun County	-	-	-	5.3%	3.3%
Montgomery County	6.1%	7.7%	3.2%	2.9%	-
Prince William County	4.3%	2.7%	5.4%	4.8%	4.3%
<b>Median (Excl. Fairfax Co.)</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.4%</b>	<b>5.0%</b>	<b>4.3%</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>4 of 6</b>	<b>5 of 6</b>	<b>4 of 6</b>	<b>4 of 7</b>	<b>3 of 6</b>

**Table 39: Comparative Quit Rates**

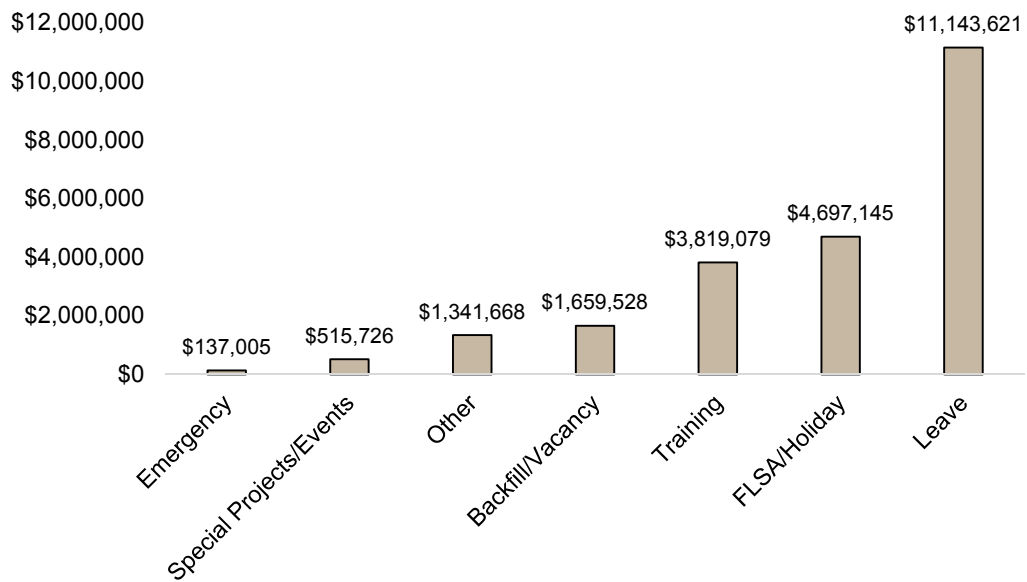
	<b>FY2013</b>	<b>FY2014</b>	<b>FY2015</b>	<b>FY2016</b>	<b>FY2017</b>
<b>Fairfax County</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.2%</b>	<b>1.7%</b>	<b>1.5%</b>	<b>1.6%</b>
Alexandria	3.1%	4.9%	2.7%	8.1%	3.4%
Arlington	1.0%	3.4%	3.0%	2.7%	3.9%
District of Columbia	1.8%	1.3%	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%
Loudoun County	-	-	-	4.4%	1.6%
Montgomery County	1.7%	2.3%	0.8%	0.6%	-
Prince William County	2.8%	1.4%	3.9%	3.5%	2.5%
<b>Median (Excl. Fairfax Co.)</b>	<b>1.8%</b>	<b>2.3%</b>	<b>2.7%</b>	<b>3.1%</b>	<b>2.5%</b>
<b>Rank</b>	<b>5 of 6</b>	<b>6 of 6</b>	<b>4 of 6</b>	<b>5 of 7</b>	<b>5 of 6</b>



**Figure 8: FRD Sworn Overtime Expenditures by Category, FY2017**



**Figure 9: FRD Sworn Overtime by Internal Order Type, FY2017<sup>4</sup>**



<sup>4</sup> Totals differ slightly from DHR payroll data due largely to payroll adjustments.