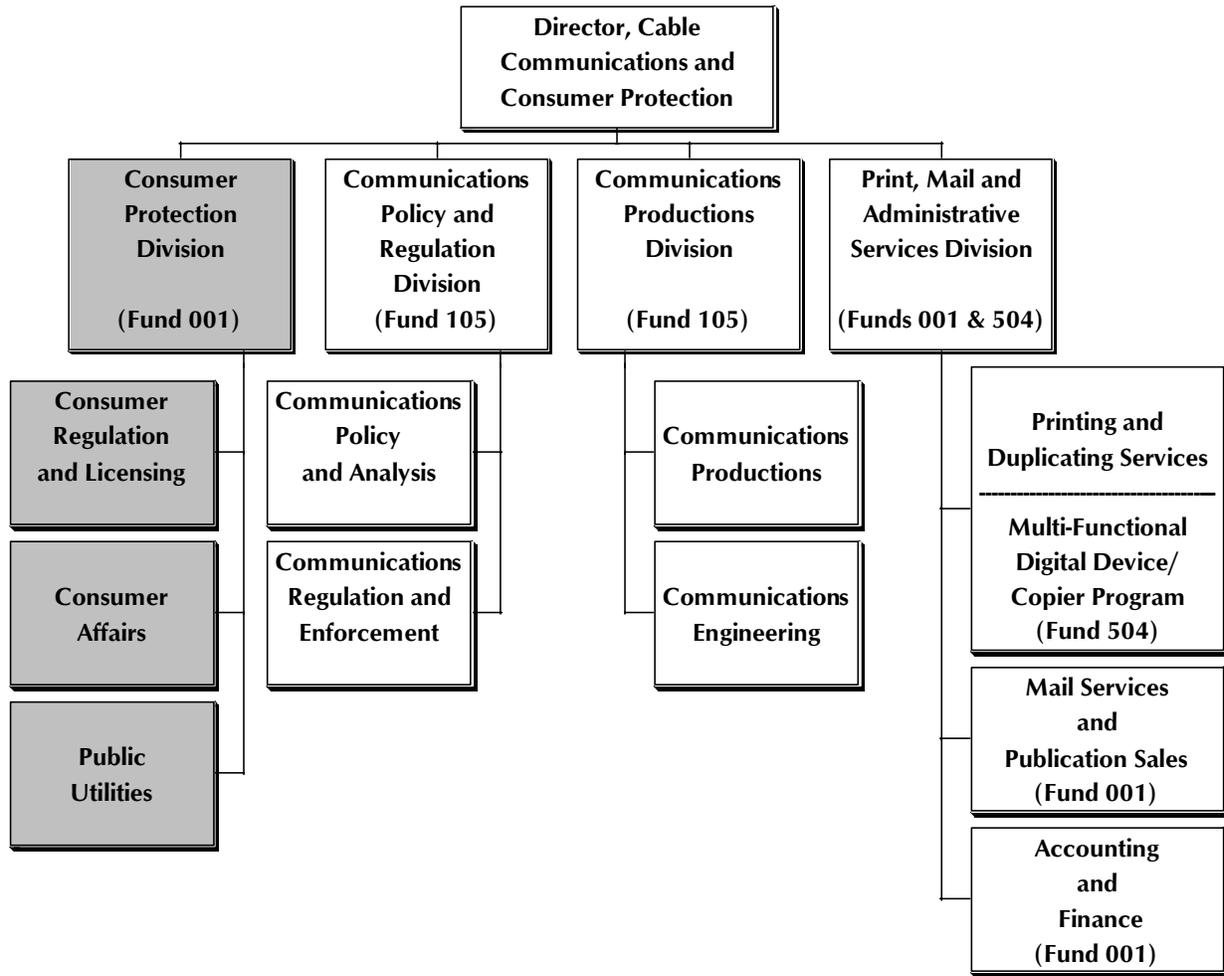


# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection



The Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection (DCCCP) is the umbrella agency for four distinct functions: Consumer Protection; Communications Policy and Regulation; Communications Productions; and Print, Mail and Administrative Services. The total agency staff of 92/92.0 SYE positions and a \$17.4 million budget is dispersed over three funding sources. The Consumer Protection Division, which educates consumers, responds to consumer complaints and ensures business compliance with applicable laws and regulations is presented within the Public Safety Program Area (Volume 1) and is fully supported by the General Fund. The Cable Communications function, which includes the Communications Policy and Regulation Division and the Communications Productions Division, is responsible for television programming and for communications regulation, and is presented in Fund 105 (Volume 2). Fund 105 is supported principally by revenue received from local cable operators through franchise agreements. The department reorganized in FY 2006 and as a result created the Print, Mail and Administrative Services Division which administers countywide printing and duplicating services; mail and publication sales; and accounting and finance services. This new division replaces the previous Document Services Division. Mail Services and Publications Sales along with Accounting and Finance are programs presented in the Legislative-Executive Functions/Central Services Program Area in Volume 1. Printing and Duplicating Services, presented in Fund 504 (Volume 2), is funded by revenues received from County agencies and the Fairfax County Public Schools (FCPS) for printing and duplicating services. The Department of Information Technology is responsible for the management of the Multi-Functional Digital Device/Copier Program and the fiber Institutional Network (I-Net). While the functions of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection provide diverse services, they all provide quality customer service to the community and work collaboratively with County agencies, neighboring jurisdictions and professional organizations.

# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

## Mission

To provide consumer education and protection services for consumers and businesses in Fairfax County in order to ensure compliance with applicable laws. To protect and maintain the fiscal integrity and financial solvency of the department. To provide and coordinate mail, publication sales and distribution services for County agencies.

## Focus

The Consumer Protection Division investigates and mediates consumer and tenant-landlord issues, issues licenses for certain business activities, and provides educational and informational presentations and literature. The division also assists consumers by regulating the taxi and towing industries, and by providing assistance to homeowner associations.

The Consumer Affairs Branch provides essential consumer protection services to Fairfax County consumers through the enforcement of consumer protection laws and the investigation and mediation of consumer, cable and tenant-landlord disputes. Consumer Affairs staff mediates complaints to determine whether consumer protection laws have been violated and also prepares cases for legal action. In addition to mediation, staff develops conciliation agreements to resolve complex disputes and offers binding arbitration when mediation efforts are exhausted. Consumer Affairs staff favorably resolved 77 percent of the 2,668 formal complaints investigated during FY 2006, recovering \$1,394,080 for consumers. The Consumer Affairs Branch also provides a leadership role in the community by conducting presentations and distributing educational brochures on a wide variety of consumer topics. Regular meetings are conducted with associations, schools and other interest groups to keep them apprised of current consumer trends and ways to avoid consumer scams, frauds and other problems. During FY 2006, staff conducted 110 outreach sessions, a 93 percent increase over FY 2005. Also in FY 2006, the Consumer Protection Division was presented with the Achievement in Consumer Education (ACE) Award from the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators (NACAA). This award was in recognition of the outstanding programs the division extended to consumers through seminars, radio, cable programming, news articles, and educational programs on topics such as utility regulation, identity theft, consumer rights, and tenant-landlord matters. Staff also develops a series of consumer programs, *Consumer Focus*, televised on Channel 16. The Consumer Affairs Branch administers an arbitration program at no cost to the business or consumer. Fairfax County's Arbitration Program is a fair and efficient way to resolve consumer disputes without going to court. The Investigations branch provides staff support to the Consumer Protection Commission which is composed of 13 residents of Fairfax County that are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for three-year terms. The Commission advises the agency and the Board of Supervisors on consumer protection and cable communication issues within the community.

### THINKING STRATEGICALLY

Strategic issues for the department include:

- Providing quality customer service to the community and maintaining a highly skilled and knowledgeable workforce;
- Assessing the equity of fees for business certificates and operator licenses;
- Utilizing new technologies to improve resolution rates for valid complaints;
- Improving communication with all residents by pursuing foreign language translations of Web-based information resources; and
- Expanding regulatory authority through the legislative process to more effectively monitor and enforce fair and ethical business practices.

The Consumer Regulation and Licensing Branch regulates the operation of taxicabs for hire within the County by issuing operator certificates for taxicab companies and licenses to taxicab drivers, by conducting vehicle safety inspections, and by inspecting taximeters for accuracy. The branch biennially recommends to the Board of Supervisors the appropriate number of taxicabs to respond to resident demand and reviews certificate applications. Further, the branch investigates consumer complaints and develops fare rate

## Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

recommendations. In addition, the branch is responsible for issuing licenses, permits or registrations to canvassers, peddlers, solicitors, vendors, promoters, massage establishments and technicians, pawn brokers, precious metal dealers, gem dealers, going out-of-business sales, charitable organizations soliciting within the County, and towing companies that engage in trespass towing of vehicles. Licensing staff issued 1,324 licenses in FY 2006. The Consumer Regulation and Licensing Branch also educates and supports the combined total of 1,700 homeowners' associations, condominium unit owners' associations and civic associations that represent approximately 80 percent of the County population. For example, this branch publishes a 300-page detailed Community Association Manual and hosts *Your Community Your Call* (YCYC) TV production shown on Channel 16. In addition, the Consumer Regulation and Licensing Branch provides staff support to the Tenant Landlord Commission which is composed of ten Fairfax County residents who are appointed by the Board of Supervisors for three-year terms. The Commission advises the agency and the Board of Supervisors on Tenant and Landlord issues within the community and arbitrates tenant-landlord complaints. The Consumer Regulation and Licensing Branch recommends regulations and fee levels to the Board of Supervisors as well as provides staff support to the Trespass Towing Advisory Board. This five member board, made up of one County resident, two law enforcement, and two towing industry representatives makes recommendations to the Board of Supervisors on towing industry regulations and fees.

The Public Utilities Branch provides utility rate case intervention on behalf of County residents, including petitioning the State Corporation Commission to change utility rates and services when appropriate, and works directly with the various utilities to encourage the development of beneficial consumer policies. In addition, this branch conducts electrical contract negotiations for County government electric service with Dominion Virginia Power and Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative, which has resulted in favorable contract terms at the lowest cost for all County government agencies. Staff has developed and presented expert testimony before federal, state and local governmental bodies on behalf of the Board of Supervisors and residents. Staff saved Fairfax County residents a cumulative total of \$48 million through FY 2006 on the basis of recurring utility cost savings achieved over the past ten years.

### New Initiatives and Recent Accomplishments in Support of the Fairfax County Vision

 <b>Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities</b>	<b>Recent Success</b>	<b>FY 2008 Initiative</b>
Complete revisions to the <u>Fairfax County Code</u> to ensure best service to and protection of consumers, including Chapter 28.1 Massage Therapy, Establishments and Services and Chapter 82, Section 82-5-32 regarding towing services.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Develop and implement a program for unannounced solicitor, massage, and taxicab licensing and certification site inspections.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue to expand the volunteer program, which consists of Fairfax County residents assisting staff with phone calls and correspondence, in an effort to reduce complaint resolution time.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

## Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

 <b>Connecting People and Places</b>	<b>Recent Success</b>	<b>FY 2008 Initiative</b>
Established a presence in the South County Government Building to provide Consumer Protection Division services to Fairfax County residents and initiate a test program to expand the offering of license processing in the building.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Design and implement licensing applications and forms to be available to the public through the Consumer Protection Web site.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Redesign the Consumer Protection Web site to enhance ease of use and to facilitate access to important consumer information.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Complete revisions to the <u>Fairfax County Code</u> to ensure best service to and protection of consumers, including Chapter 84.1, Public Transportation regarding taxicab operations.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
 <b>Practicing Environmental Stewardship</b>	<b>Recent Success</b>	<b>FY 2008 Initiative</b>
Continue efforts to secure renewable energy sources, such as wind power, that are environmentally friendly, at the request of the Board of Supervisors and other local government organizations.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
In cooperation with other County agencies, seek to obtain credits for the purchases of renewable energy and implementation of energy initiatives on the Environmental Protection Agency's State Implementation Plan (SIP).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Submitted comments on behalf of the Board of Supervisors and Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA) to Virginia's Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ) Air Quality Standards regulation.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

 <b>Creating a Culture of Engagement</b>	<b>Recent Success</b>	<b>FY 2008 Initiative</b>
Established the Trespass Towing Advisory Board (TTAB). Work with the TTAB to best define their role and make the most effective use of TTAB membership expertise when developing code and fee recommendations to the Board of Supervisors.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue to work with the Consumer Protection Commission (CPC) and Tenant Landlord Commission (TLC). Work with TTAB, CPC and TLC to better define their role and make the most effective use of their expertise.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Continue to engage consumers through various outreach activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ conducting educational outreach seminars for Fairfax County Public Schools, civic associations, rotary clubs, retirement homes and various boards and commissions;</li> <li>▪ special community events – Consumer Protection Week, fairs and festivals, annual and special community and civic association meetings, and “Activities for Teens”;</li> <li>▪ guiding, advising, and educating the members and directors of self-governing associations through attending condominium and homeowner association board meetings.</li> </ul>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Update the accessibility of the Community Association Manual on the Consumer Protection Web site.		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Received the Achievement in Consumer Education (ACE) Award from the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators (NACAA) for outstanding educational programs and outreach activities conducted during FY 2006.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

## Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

 Exercising Corporate Stewardship	Recent Success	FY 2008 Initiative
Recovered \$1,394,080 for consumers in FY 2006 through the investigation and successful resolution of consumer complaints.	☑	
Develop and utilize surveys to determine efficacy of complaint processing and outreach efforts.		☑
Continue to review, develop, and implement improved division operations for efficient team operations while increasing attention to detail, standardizing and streamlining complaint and licensing processing.	☑	☑
Successfully completed contract negotiations with the Northern Virginia Electric Cooperative (NOVEC) that resulted in a 4.3 percent rate decrease and ensures capped rates for government accounts through February 2011.	☑	
Successfully intervened in a Washington Gas rate case which yielded \$2.8 million in one-time savings for County residents.	☑	
Continue to work with State Corporation Commission (SCC) staff to ensure residents are treated fairly and billed properly by utility companies. Intervene before the SCC, if necessary, to implement more equitable treatment of billing issues utilized by public utility companies.	☑	☑
In response to significant fluctuating market conditions, prepared and presented two emergency and two temporary taxicab rate surcharge analysis and recommendations to the Board of Supervisors. All staff recommendations were adopted.	☑	
Finalize contract negotiations for the County's electric services that secures rates significantly below those paid by local governments in surrounding jurisdictions, and ensures a freeze in base rates over a three and a half year period.		☑

# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

## Budget and Staff Resources

<b>Agency Summary</b>					
Category	FY 2006 Actual	FY 2007 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2008 Advertised Budget Plan	FY 2008 Adopted Budget Plan
Authorized Positions/Staff Years					
Legislative-Executive Regular	21/ 21	21/ 21	21/ 21	21/ 21	21/ 21
Public Safety Regular	14/ 14	14/ 14	15/ 15	15/ 15	15/ 15
<b>Expenditures:</b>					
<b>Legislative-Executive</b>					
Personnel Services	\$802,315	\$1,151,537	\$1,151,537	\$1,176,927	\$1,176,927
Operating Expenses	3,095,735	3,443,972	3,448,326	3,443,972	3,443,972
Recovered Costs	(2,732,600)	(3,153,719)	(3,141,646)	(3,141,646)	(3,141,646)
Capital Equipment	61,713	62,340	62,340	42,413	42,413
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,227,163</b>	<b>\$1,504,130</b>	<b>\$1,520,557</b>	<b>\$1,521,666</b>	<b>\$1,521,666</b>
<b>Public Safety</b>					
Personnel Services	\$876,341	\$818,715	\$818,715	\$838,626	\$838,626
Operating Expenses	159,770	129,340	129,340	145,817	145,817
Capital Equipment	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$1,036,111</b>	<b>\$948,055</b>	<b>\$948,055</b>	<b>\$984,443</b>	<b>\$984,443</b>
<b>Total General Fund</b>					
<b>Expenditures</b>	<b>\$2,263,274</b>	<b>\$2,452,185</b>	<b>\$2,468,612</b>	<b>\$2,506,109</b>	<b>\$2,506,109</b>
<b>Income:</b>					
<b>Legislative-Executive</b>					
Publication Sales	\$62,990	\$62,092	\$62,092	\$62,902	\$62,902
Commemorative Gifts	12,853	11,653	12,853	12,853	12,853
Copying Machine Revenue	11	2,717	500	500	500
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$75,854</b>	<b>\$76,462</b>	<b>\$75,445</b>	<b>\$76,255</b>	<b>\$76,255</b>
<b>Public Safety</b>					
Massage Therapy Permits	\$24,045	\$25,872	\$25,872	\$26,389	\$26,389
Precious Metal					
Dealers Licenses	4,065	4,925	4,925	4,925	4,925
Solicitors Licenses	6,420	8,000	6,420	6,420	6,420
Taxicab Licenses	133,440	133,776	137,071	137,071	137,071
Going Out of Business Fees	780	500	780	780	780
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$168,750</b>	<b>\$173,073</b>	<b>\$175,068</b>	<b>\$175,585</b>	<b>\$175,585</b>
<b>Total General Fund Income</b>	<b>\$244,604</b>	<b>\$249,535</b>	<b>\$250,513</b>	<b>\$251,840</b>	<b>\$251,840</b>
<b>Net Cost to the County</b>	<b>\$2,018,670</b>	<b>\$2,202,650</b>	<b>\$2,218,099</b>	<b>\$2,254,269</b>	<b>\$2,254,269</b>

# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

## FY 2008 Funding Adjustments

The following funding adjustments from the FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan are necessary to support the FY 2008 program:

- ◆ **Employee Compensation** **\$36,939**  
An increase of \$36,939 in Personnel Services associated with salary adjustments necessary to support the County's compensation program.
- ◆ **Personnel Services Reduction** **(\$17,028)**  
A decrease of \$17,028 in Personnel Services as part of an across-the-board reduction to meet budget limitations based on available revenues as a result of a flattening residential real estate market.
- ◆ **Intergovernmental Charges** **\$16,477**  
An increase of \$16,477 for Department of Vehicle Services charges is based on anticipated charges for fuel, vehicle replacement and maintenance costs.

### Board of Supervisors' Adjustments

The following funding adjustments reflect all changes to the FY 2008 Advertised Budget Plan, as approved by the Board of Supervisors on April 30, 2007:

- ◆ The Board of Supervisors made no adjustments to this agency.

## Changes to FY 2007 Adopted Budget Plan

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes in the FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan since passage of the FY 2007 Adopted Budget Plan. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2006 Carryover Review and all other approved changes through December 31, 2006:

- ◆ **Position Redirection** **\$0**  
During FY 2007, the agency redirected 1/1.0 SYE vacant position from Fund 105, Cable Communications to the Consumer Protection Division within the Public Safety Program Area of DCCCP. The vacant position was used to establish 1/1.0 SYE Senior Utilities Analyst position. There were no funding adjustments associated with this position redirection.

The following funding adjustments reflect all approved changes to the FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan from January 1, 2007 through April 23, 2007. Included are all adjustments made as part of the FY 2007 Third Quarter Review:

- ◆ The Board of Supervisors made no adjustments to this agency.

# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

## Cost Centers

The public safety function of the Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection has one cost center, Consumer Protection, which works to fulfill the mission of the Department and to carry out the key initiatives for the fiscal year.

## Consumer Protection

Funding Summary					
Category	FY 2006 Actual	FY 2007 Adopted Budget Plan	FY 2007 Revised Budget Plan	FY 2008 Advertised Budget Plan	FY 2008 Adopted Budget Plan
Authorized Positions/Staff Years					
Regular	14/ 14	14/ 14	15/ 15	15/ 15	15/ 15
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$1,036,111</b>	<b>\$948,055</b>	<b>\$948,055</b>	<b>\$984,443</b>	<b>\$984,443</b>

Position Summary		
<u>Public Utilities</u>	<u>Consumer Regulation and Licensing</u>	<u>Consumer Affairs</u>
1 Senior Utilities Analyst	1 Consumer Specialist II	1 Consumer Specialist III
1 Utilities Analyst	1 Management Analyst II	3 Consumer Specialists II
	2 Consumer Specialists I	2 Consumer Specialists I
	1 Consumer Specialist III	<b>1 Consumer Specialist I</b>
	1 Administrative Assistant IV	<b>1 Administrative Assistant II</b>
	<b>2 Administrative Assistants II</b>	1 Administrative Assistant II
<b>TOTAL POSITIONS</b> 15 Positions / 15.0 Staff Years		<b>*Positions in Bold Italics are supported by Fund 105, Cable Communications</b>

## Key Performance Measures

### Goal

To provide consumer protection services for consumers and businesses in Fairfax County in order to ensure compliance with applicable laws.

### Objectives

- ◆ To achieve a favorable resolution rate of consumer complaints of 80 percent.
- ◆ To maintain the percentage of outreach contacts who report that educational programs met their associations' needs for FY 2007 and FY 2008 at 99 percent.
- ◆ To achieve a 95 percent completion rate for issuing permanent licenses within 60 days of application.
- ◆ To intervene in rate and service provision utility cases before the State Corporation Commission to ensure quality utility service at the lowest possible rates, to reach an estimated \$51 million in curtailed or limited rate increases, up from \$48 million in FY 2006.

## Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

Indicator	Prior Year Actuals			Current Estimate	Future Estimate
	FY 2004 Actual	FY 2005 Actual	FY 2006 Estimate/Actual	FY 2007	FY 2008
<b>Output:</b>					
Valid complaints investigated	4,047	2,875	3,000 / 2,668	2,700	2,700
Outreach programs conducted	41	57	27 / 110	85	90
Licenses issued	NA	1,324	1,335 / 1,324	1,345	1,330
Utility rate and service cases before SCC/contract negotiations with utility companies	5	8	8 / 8	10	10
<b>Efficiency:</b>					
Staff hours per complaint	5.1	5.4	4.5 / 4.5	4.5	4.5
Staff hours per outreach session	3.6	3.2	3.0 / 3.2	3.2	3.2
Staff hours per license application	NA	NA	NA / 2.5	2.5	2.5
Utility cases per analyst	9	8	8 / 8	10	10
<b>Service Quality:</b>					
Percent of complaints responded to within 48 hours of receipt	100%	100%	100% / 100%	100%	100%
Percent of outreach programs scheduled that are completed	100%	100%	100% / 100%	100%	100%
Temporary licenses issued within 10 working days of application	NA	NA	NA / 89%	95%	95%
Percent of utility case interventions completed within required time frame	100%	100%	100% / 100%	100%	100%
<b>Outcome:</b>					
Percent of favorably resolved valid complaints	90%	80%	85% / 77%	80%	80%
Percent of contacts indicating that outreach programs met educational objectives	97%	100%	97% / 100%	99%	99%
Percent of permanent licenses issued within 60 calendar days of application	NA	NA	NA / 99%	95%	95%
Cumulative County savings due to intervention (in millions)	\$48	\$48	\$54 / \$48	\$50	\$51

# Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection

---

## **Performance Measurement Results**

The total number of complaints investigated is projected to remain relatively steady during FY 2007 and FY 2008. Staff completed two taxi rate studies in FY 2006. Two emergency rate requests were analyzed and implemented due to the significant increases in gasoline costs. It is expected that if gasoline costs remain high in FY 2007, the taxicab company operators will file a permanent rate increase request. Consumer Protection staff will continue participating with other local governments in seeking the lowest electric rates possible through the Virginia Energy Purchasing Governmental Association (VEPGA), which negotiates rates on behalf of local governments. It is anticipated that these negotiations will culminate in a moderate rate increase in FY 2008 of approximately 16 percent. This level of rate increase compares favorably to rate increases experienced by local governments in Maryland of 60 to 70 percent. During FY 2006, \$12.2 million was saved as a result of recurring negotiated rates for County government electric services. Consumer Protection staff will also continue monitoring and intervening in rate case proceedings at the State Corporation Commission in order to achieve the lowest utility rates for consumers that are both fair and equitable. While no rate case interventions in FY 2006 resulted in additional cumulative savings, the SCC reported a one-time savings of \$2.8 million for residents in FY 2006, resulting from a prior year's rate case intervention. It is anticipated that the number of outreach seminars and programs will increase and continue to achieve at least 99 percent satisfaction ratings from organizations that attend such programs.