

## **Department of Cable Communications and Consumer Protection**

### **► Agency Mission**

Under its Consumer Protection Division, to provide essential enforcement of consumer protection laws for the citizens and businesses of Fairfax County, to assist consumers with problems encountered in consumer-business and tenant landlord relations; to administer a licensing program which regulates certain businesses as prescribed by County Code; to obtain for residents of Fairfax County safe, adequate and efficient utility services at just and reasonable rates; and to administer a Community Association and educational outreach assistance program to all County groups and residents.

Under its Communications Policy and Regulation Division (CPRD), to ensure that the County's cable systems provide the highest technical service and quality standards to County citizens; monitor State and Federal regulatory issues affecting the cable television industry; and monitor, enforce, and evaluate current and potential franchise agreements for cable television services in Fairfax County.

Under its Communications Production Division (CPD), to provide a centralized video production center and satellite conferencing facility for the Board of Supervisors, County Executive and all County agencies in order to communicate County information to citizens and training for employees and to provide related production services in new technologies to benefit the public and County operations.

Under its Document Services Division (DSD), to provide and coordinate mail, publication sales and distribution, archives and records management, printing, digital copier and duplicating, and micrographic (microfilm and microfiche) services for County agencies as well as printing services to the Fairfax County Public Schools.

### **Trends/Issues**

The Consumer Protection Division will continue to provide essential consumer services to Fairfax County Citizens. In an effort to maintain data on all complaints received, the Division will continue to develop and update its computerized case management information retrieval system which records, tracks, and disseminates complaint information. In addition, staff will continue to provide utility rate case intervention, including petitioning the State Corporation Commission to change utility rates and services when appropriate, and work directly with the various utilities to encourage the development of beneficial consumer policies. Review, analysis and regulation of the taxicab industry in Fairfax County will also continue. Staff will also continue to provide technical advice and assistance to Condominium and Homeowners' Associations through publications, workshops, seminars and educational outreach presentations. The division will continue to improve services to the public through the use of the Internet and other technological advancements. Consumer complaints may now be filed on-line as well as retrieval of complaint history records on businesses and landlords.

The Communications Policy and Regulation Division will continue to encourage telecommunication industry development throughout the County that offers the greatest diversity and highest quality service at the least cost to citizens and businesses, to develop goals for future telecommunications development and related legislation, and to provide regulatory oversight and enforcement of telecommunications statutes. The division promotes this goal by developing testimony or drafting legislation for federal, state, and local telecommunications initiatives; analysis of, and participation in judicial broadband services

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proceedings that could significantly impact Fairfax County; the research and analysis of telecommunications topics as requested by the County Executive or Board of Supervisors; and developing and negotiating video service franchises. The division provides regulatory oversight and franchise administration for Cox Communications Northern Virginia and Comcast Communications; assesses liquidated damages for franchise or County Code Chapter 9.1 violations; regulates basic cable rates and equipment and installation charges; and investigates and resolves cable subscriber complaints. Additionally, the division provides an engineering and enforcement program that reviews and approves franchised cable plant construction and maintenance plans; tests and performs certification of cable facilities; enforces Federal Communications Commission technical and performance standards and national and state cable construction codes; and, inspects and issues violation citations for cable construction and maintenance performed on County property or rights-of-way.

The Communications Productions Division (CPD) will continue to provide a centralized video production center and satellite conferencing facility for the Board of Supervisors, County Executive, and all County agencies in order to communicate County information to citizens and training for employees and to provide related production services in new technologies to benefit the public and County operations. Since 1997, the CPD has increased the production of programming for the public and the number of training courses and internal communications programs for employees. The division has seen increased demand for services in a new area, the development of video products to reach citizens through the Internet, kiosks, and other technologies. The Division is also offering new services to meet the needs of the citizenry such as closed-captioning and multi-lingual programming. These trends are expected to continue and expand in the future.

The Document Services Division (DSD) is responsible for managing all General Fund activities of the division, as well as the internal services funded in Fund 504. Also through the General Fund and Fund 504, DSD will continue to provide and coordinate all mail service functions, publications and commemorative gift sales, and archive and records management activities, as well as printing, micrographic and digital copier services for County agencies.

Since 1997, there has been an increase in the amount of outgoing U.S. Mail processed by Mail Services and an increase in postal rates. However, due to productivity and technology improvements, there has only been a slight increase in the average cost per piece of outgoing U.S. Mail.

A concerted effort has been made by Archives and Records Management staff since 1997 to have agencies dispose of records in accordance with mandated retention schedules, thereby reducing the need for additional storage space. Archives also has improved its service level by shipping 90 percent of agencies document requests within 24 hours.

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## **Key Challenges for Consumer Protection**

- Manage the increased workload of citizen complaints as a result of the new on-line complaint filing system initiated in FY 2001.
- Expand the capabilities of the computerized licensing database to allow for read-only access of licensing information by the Fairfax County Police.
- Continue to provide expert guidance to the Board of Supervisors, County Executive and members of VML/VACo and the General Assembly on the issue of utility deregulation in Virginia.
- Continue to address the consumer protection needs of an ever-changing and expanding population.

## **Key Challenges for the CPRD**

- Developing testimony on congressional legislation, including amendments to the Communications Act, and Federal Communications Commission proposed regulations on the provision of broadband services;
- Preparing drafts and participating in judicial proceedings, including cases involving the pass through of non-subscriber fees to subscribers and improved customer service standards;
- Developing rights-of-way management partnerships with the Virginia Department of Transportation and the local telecommunications construction industry;
- Providing analysis of telecommunications market conditions and specific company investigations regarding new and transfer video service applicants;
- Regularly reviewing a cable operator's customer service performance to ensure strict conformance with Federal Communications Commission (FCC) and County regulations and statutes;
- Intervening on behalf of cable subscribers in complaints against the cable service provider;
- Responding to citizen inquires and questions regarding video services (e.g., cable, DBS, and broadcast);
- Preparing, in coordination with the County Attorney, and filing of County petitions with the FCC;
- Enforcing of franchise technical provisions and appropriate cable construction methodology through the review of County-required cable company construction design and/or redesign submissions;
- Investigating subscriber complaints involving signal quality and other questions of cable system conformance to FCC and County technical standards;
- Issuing Stop Work orders for cable construction safety violations and violation notices for other cable construction violations; and,
- Assessing penalties against cable operators for violations that continue beyond the specified period allowed for correction.

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## **Key Challenges for the CPD**

- Continue to serve the County's public information needs and internal training needs through the cable television network.
- Continue management initiatives to decrease the number of staff work hours needed to produce programming while maintaining costs, quality, and work hour efficiencies.
- Use the staff hours to enable the division to redirect resources to new technologies.
- Develop advanced video services to communicate with the public using new technologies such as internet video, kiosk video, video news releases, and special services.
- Continue improving technical operations through the migration of equipment from analog to digital-based systems.

## **Key Challenges for DSD**

- Continue to provide effective and efficient mail service for County agencies while complying with ever-changing U.S. Mail regulations and postal increases.
- Continue to utilize in-house equipment and a private sector contract to achieve the highest percentage of outgoing U.S. Mail qualifying for postal discounts.
- Continue to advise County agencies on the best method to prepare special or bulk mailings to ensure the greatest postal discounts while meeting agency time requirements.
- Develop an appropriate pricing mechanism for the Digital Multi-Function Device (DMFD) program to recover costs for copying, printing, faxing, and scanning on these devices.
- Develop an implementation plan in conjunction with DIT for networking the DMFD's to take advantage of printing and scanning applications.
- Improve productivity in the County Printing Center to ensure that it continues to be competitive with private sector printing companies.

## **Key Accomplishments for Consumer Protection**

- Implementation of computerized complaint tracking and licensing database which allows for the on-line filing of consumer complaints as well as the retrieval of complaint history records.
- Revision and implementation of Chapter 28-Massage Ordinance, for both massage therapists and establishments.
- The investigation of approximately 3,000 consumer complaint cases, resulting in 1.1 million dollars of direct restitution for consumers. A favorable resolution rate of 85 percent was obtained in FY 2001, representing the highest favorable rate in department history.

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## **Key Accomplishments for the CPRD**

- Updated County Code Chapter 9.1, Communications, to promote competitive video services, incorporate customer service standards, conform with federal and state requirements, and keep pace with technological innovations that impact the County;
- Reviewed Cox Communications' customer service performance, which resulted in the assessment of \$31,400 in liquidated damages and an improvement in the availability of customer service representatives to answer subscriber inquires and complaints;
- Intervened on behalf of 729 cable subscriber complaints, resolving 698 of those complaints;
- Issued imminent danger construction violations that resulted in 19 Stop Work orders;
- Conducted 6,391 construction site inspections; and
- Implemented a new inspection program based on a survey of best practices in February 2001. Since program implementation:
  - 90 notices of construction or network safety deficiencies issued;
  - 20 VDOT deficiencies issued;
  - 43 other code or franchise deficiencies issued;
  - 61 non-correction violation notices were issued;
  - \$2,600 in penalties were assessed against cable operators for non-compliance; and
  - 100 percent violation correction conformance rate as of July 2001.

## **Key Accomplishments for the CPD**

- Completed 98 percent of public information television programs in requested by the Board of Supervisors and County agencies in FY 2001.
- Increased the number of purchased programs and satellite telecourses and completed 98 percent of the training programs on the FY 2001 production plan.
- Installed a digital video server providing improved service and technical quality to cable television viewers and doubling the programming available on the cable channels to a 24-hour operation.
- Received an award for Overall Excellence as the Best Government Access Cable Television station in the country from the Alliance for Community Media. In addition, received eight other awards from the Alliance, six awards from the National Association of Telecommunications Officers and Advisors, and an award from the International Association of Fire Fighters for programming excellence and professional quality.

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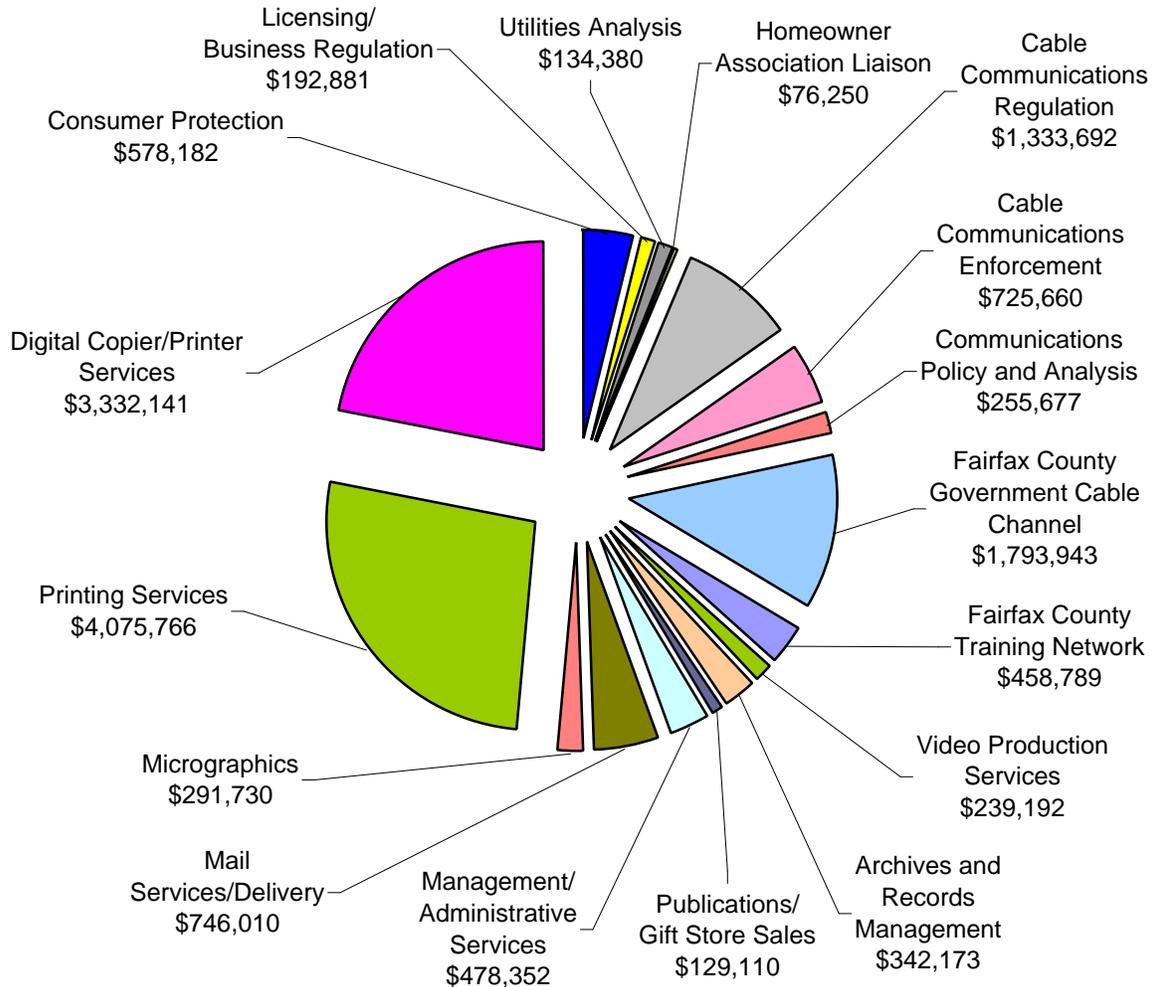
### Key Accomplishments for DSD

- The Administrative Branch successfully coordinated a program in conjunction with the Fairfax County Public School System to replace all analog copy machines in the County and Schools with digital multi-function devices capable of copying, printing, faxing, and scanning.
- Mail Services installed a high-speed, high-volume computerized mail inserter utilizing state-of-the-art technology that has further automated mailing functions, increased productivity, and reduced operating costs.
- Mail Services continues to meet all mandated mailing deadlines for County taxes.
- With the assistance of the Mount Vernon Genealogical Society, the Archives Branch initiated an automated inventory of the permanent records of the Board of Supervisors and the Overseers of the Poor.
- Upgraded offset and digital equipment in the County Printing Center to increase productivity and reduce operating costs.
- Increased the number of jobs electronically submitted to the County Printing Center, as well as printed via digital technology, by 20 percent in order to decrease the turn-around time of jobs for customers.

### ► **Summary of All Agency CAPS**

CAPS Number	CAPS Title	CAPS Net Cost	CAPS Number of Positions/SYE
04-01	Consumer Protection	\$578,182	9/9
04-02	Licensing/Business Regulation	\$17,790	3/3.5
04-03	Utilities Analysis	\$134,380	2/1.5
04-04	Homeowner Association Liaison	\$76,250	1/1
04-05	Cable Communications Regulation	(\$9,725,170)	21/10.5
04-06	Cable Communications Enforcement	\$725,660	0/8
04-07	Communications Policy and Analysis	\$255,677	0/2.5
04-08	Fairfax County Government Cable Channel	\$1,791,943	22/17
04-09	Fairfax County Training Network	\$458,789	0/3
04-10	Video Production Services	\$239,192	0/2
04-11	Archives and Records Management	\$340,408	5/5
04-12	Publications/Gift Store Sales	\$35,293	2/1.5
04-13	Management/Administrative Services	\$478,352	7/7
04-14	Mail Services/Delivery	\$739,536	15/15.5
04-15	Micrographics	(\$3,000)	0/0
04-16	Printing Services	\$70,151	20/20
04-17	Digital Copier/Printer Services	\$2,900,000	0/0
<b>TOTAL Agency</b>		<b>(\$886,567)</b>	<b>107/107</b>

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Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Expenditures = \$15,183,928  
 Total FY 2002 Adopted Budget Net Cost = (\$886,567)