

Synopsis of Events Related to the Storm on June 29, 2012 Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department

Friday, June 29

The local evening news reported that a large line of powerful thunderstorms were moving east and could affect the Washington Metropolitan area later in the evening. As the evening progressed, media sources were indicating that the storm had not weakened and would affect the area around 21:00-22:00 hours with damaging winds. As the storm passed thru the County moving west to east, it produced damaging high winds with gusts of up to 80 mph. the storm took about an hour to pass through the county. During the height of the storm, a high volume three-hour period occurred from 22:00-01:00 hours in which well over 500 calls for service were requested for the Fire and Rescue Department. Hundreds of calls for wires and trees down with roadway obstructions and several major road closures impacted emergency response and had to be mitigated. Several major events occurred during this time frame and are noted below.

- 18-year-old struck by lightning or live electrical wires, found in cardiac arrest and resuscitated by arriving Fire and Rescue crews from Fairfax County and Arlington County, 2138 Haycock Rd., Falls Church at 23:18 hours.
- Vehicle accident, tree onto a vehicle with a fatality, Old Keene Mill Rd. and Bower Dr. at 22:59 hours.
- A U.S. Park Police Officer struck by a tree while driving was transported to Fairfax Hospital in stable condition and was released the following morning.
- G.W. Parkway in the area of Turkey Run, at 23:00 hrs.
- A resident was killed when a large tree crashed into her house, 8140 Carr Pl., West Springfield at 22:45 hours. The recovery of the victim was successfully completed at approximately 0830 Saturday morning.
- Fire and Rescue Light and Air Unit assisted the Fairfax County Sherriff's Office for a power failure at the jail.

At the height of the storm, 78 percent of Fire and Rescue Units were committed to emergency calls. During this time frame, numerous staff personnel responded from home to assist with this event. Deputy Chief Reilly and Deputy Chief Morrison both reported to the MPSTOC to assist David McKernan of OEM, Captain Novak of the Police Department and VDOT personnel to coordinate resources from the Dispatch Center. Deputy Chief Johnson and Battalion Chief Ruwe were engaged in field operations assisting with emergency operations on several significant incidents. Assistant Chief Caussin was in constant communications receiving updates from the on-duty Operations Deputy Chief for B-Shift and relaying pertinent information to County Executive Long, Deputy County Executive Stalzer and Chairman Bulova. Initial estimate of 20,000 residents in the County without power and at the height of the storm, it was estimated up to 1 million residents in the Washington metro area may be without power.

Saturday, June 30

In the early morning hours, Deputy Chief Duke reported for duty as the Operations Deputy Chief for the day. At approximately 0700 hours, he reported having challenges that involved significant failures of cellular phones, land lines, iCAD coverage issues, major power outages countywide, multiple fire stations without power (all but one running on generator power) and a

variety of other service-related calls from the public. Due to the challenges that were faced regarding the communications system, a communications plan was created and implemented immediately by all operational personnel. Incident objectives were created for the event and were as follows:

- Maintain safety and well-being of all department personnel.
- Continue to provide emergency and non-emergency services to the residents of Fairfax County.
- Maintain fire stations as a focal point in the communities to which emergencies can be reported.
- Monitor status of assisted care, nursing homes and the general public.

An immediate survey of all fire stations was initiated with deficits noted in telephone status (both cellular and land line), power issues and fuel systems status. There were challenges in contacting off-duty personnel (from a variety of county agencies) to have them report to duty to assist with the event. It was during this time that the 9-1-1 service failed. Chiefs Caussin and Reilly reported to the EOC to assist in operations and at this time the EOC had a partial activation. Chief Caussin assumed the Operations Section Chief position (OSC). The coordination of all operational activities with the following branches and groups under his command; Human Services Branch, Infrastructure Branch, Transportation Group, Damage Assessment Group, Health Group, Law Enforcement Group and the Utility Group. Efforts focused on the continued assessment of the infrastructure needs of the county, operational capability and resource deployment. Attention was provided to accessing the Special Medical Needs Registry and determining the needs of the residents on that list. Fire and Rescue units continued on a periodic basis, checking the status of critical infrastructure to include assisted living facilities, nursing homes, hospitals and their own FRD facilities. Critical facilities identified without power were forwarded to Dominion Virginia Power for priority restoration of power. Critical County buildings that were on emergency generator power were coordinated to have their fuel supply replenished by DVS/FMD. Police units continued with checking roadways that were non-passable as well as providing generator power and traffic control efforts at intersections without power.

Operations personnel initiated an action plan that included the following process that was repeated throughout the operational period:

- Emergency responses as dispatched or notified via walk-ups to the fire station.
- Establishing immediate contact with all fire stations via our training radio channel.
- Desk Watch and unit radio monitoring due to the non-reliability of the 9-1-1 system.
- Windshield Surveys and more in-depth finite neighborhood surveys as the action theater narrowed in focus.
- Clearing of roadways of small trees and debris as necessary.
- Regular check of assisted living and nursing facilities for status of residents' welfare and facilities' status.
- Assistance to those residents and businesses with requests for services in an attempt to restore normalcy or provide relief.
- Monitored FRD phones, power and living/working conditions.
- Provided information to Planning as appropriate.

A Department Operations Center (DOC) was established at Fire Station 430 to assist in the planning of the future operational periods for this event. Chief Ruwe was assigned as the Planning Section Chief (PSC) for the DOC. Initial objectives were primarily focused on ascertaining the status of all of the fire stations, hospitals, elderly care facilities, monitoring the status of the electrical and telephone service and developing an Incident Action Plan (IAP).

- Over 40 percent of fire stations were operating on emergency generator power and 50% had no land-line phone service.
- Over 60 percent of skilled nursing facilities had no land-line phone service and 50% had no commercial power.

An IAP was developed for the daytime portion of Saturday (Operational Period #1) and was forwarded to the Battalion Management Teams (BMT) for dissemination. Subsequently, an IAP was developed for Ops Period #2, Saturday night. Both IAPs were focused on assessing and monitoring the status of basic functions of fire stations and continuing to assess the status and needs of nursing and elderly care facilities (this task continued to expand as the initial scope was on “skilled care” facilities but expanded to include limited and group facilities. A Light and Air unit was dispatched to provide a generator to Sunrise Nursing Home in Springfield until a more permanent solution could be developed. The Falls Church Water Utility’s service outage had a potential impact on firefighting operations as well; the impact on fire stations in the affected area was closely monitored.

At 1800, Chief Johnson assumed the role as the OSC for the period of 1800 hours until 0600. He continued with the coordination of all operational activities with the following branches and groups under his command: Human Services Branch, Infrastructure Branch, Transportation Group, Damage Assessment Group, Health Group, Law Enforcement Group and the Utility Group. Efforts focused on the continued assessment of the infrastructure needs of the County, operational capability and resource deployment. Attention was provided to accessing the Special Medical Needs Registry and determining the needs of the residents on that list. Fire and Rescue units continued on a periodic basis with checking the status of critical infrastructure to include assisted living facilities, nursing homes, hospitals and their own FRD facilities. Facilities identified as critical facilities without power were forwarded to Dominion Virginia Power for priority restoration of power. Critical county buildings that were on emergency generator power were coordinated to have their fuel supply replenished by DVS/FMD. Police units continued with checking roadways that were non-passable as well as providing generator power and traffic control efforts at intersections without power. In addition, the boil water alert for a portion of the City of Falls Church water was coordinated with the PIO office and the County-owned facilities in that area. Chief Morrison arrived at 1800 and assumed the responsibilities of Staff Duty Officer from Chief Reilly and coordinated with Chief Duke on departmental activities.

Sunday, July 1

The focus of the objectives for Operational Period #3 remained similar to that of the previous day with the addition of planning for long-term power and telephone outages at the fire stations as well as the need for re-fueling, continued expansion of our assessment of elderly communities, and assisting with identification of road closures due to debris. Sunday began producing more requests for assistance to elderly communities and to residents with oxygen needs as the duration

of the outages continued. Several requests were forwarded to the Emergency Operations Center. The EOC continued to be staffed by Fire and Rescue Department personnel in the OSC position.

Monday, July 2

Operations continued to focus on monitoring the improving conditions at fire stations and facilities housing the elderly. A few elderly care facilities required assistance and later in the afternoon, we had to address the impact of a large water main break in the City of Alexandria. The EOC continued to be staffed by Fire and Rescue Department personnel in the OSC position.

Tuesday, July 3

Operations remained focused on elderly care facilities but began to expand to include acting on requests from the EOC to investigate information regarding blocked roads and power outages; these requests were apparently from the County's website and social media sites. Due to the 9-1-1 system being stable at this point, Desk Watch was discontinued and personnel were sent home. Late in the morning, focus began to include the need to assess communities that remained without power. Information to conduct this assessment was not developed until late in the day so the mission was deferred until Wednesday morning (additionally, means of addressing any needs would essentially not be in place until Wednesday).