



Response to Questions on the FY 2010 Advertised Budget Plan

Request By: Chairman Bulova

Question: Please provide information on how “call back” overtime is minimized by the Fire and Rescue Department (FRD).

Response: In order to ensure Fairfax County receives the same level of fire and rescue coverage daily, the department operates with minimum staffing levels. This means there is a minimum number of field personnel that must be on duty at all times. One method of accomplishing minimum staffing levels is through the use of call back, or calling personnel back to work on overtime when a shortage exists. Shortages typically occur when personnel are ill and take a day of sick leave, are injured, or have some type of unforeseen emergency. Although call back is one method to address staffing shortages, the Fire and Rescue Department uses other methods prior to resorting to the use of call back overtime.

For example, if a firefighter calls in sick, leaving a station without adequate minimum staffing levels, staff assesses all stations within the battalion to determine if any stations have personnel above the minimum required that could be used to fill the vacancy. If no extra positions are available within the battalion, the secondary step is to check all battalions in the County for personnel above minimum staffing. If available, a person is sent to cover the vacant position, thus avoiding the need for call back. If no person is available, the shift staffing technician will call back a person to fill the void.

Also, staff personnel assigned to the office are used on a regular basis to cover unforeseen vacancies. Staff personnel are required to fill operational positions 24-hours per quarter and account for approximately 9,000 hours of filled coverage in any given year. Use of staff personnel in the field reduces the need for resorting to call back and allows staff personnel to maintain their skill level while in office assignments. Also when available, volunteer firefighters and paramedics provide coverage for short term vacancies.

Other measures taken by FRD this fiscal year to reduce the need for call back of personnel include reducing the number of personnel approved for a detail out of operations for training, seminars, conferences and other associated duties. A detail out of operations is generally only approved for required re-certifications.

Due to minimum staffing requirements, FRD will never be able to completely eliminate the use of call back overtime; however the department continually explores and uses other resources when available to limit the cost of overtime.