

# Office of Emergency Management

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LOB #242:

## **EMERGENCY OPERATIONS**

### **Purpose**

The Emergency Operations Division manages the EOC and the AEOC, as well as supports the County emergency notification system, all technology, crisis information management and the Duty Officer program. The Operations Division, in support of the County's EOC, manages real-time information, personnel, agency coordination and resident support during emergency incidents.

### **Description**

**Emergency Operation Centers:** The Emergency Operations Division maintains two EOCs in support of Fairfax County. The primary facility is located in the McConnell Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center (MPSTOC). The AEOC, which is located at the Government Center, serves as the fully functional backup facility to the MPSTOC. Each facility is linked to the Department of Cable and Consumer Services to televise real-time operational briefings to employees and residents during an incident. Both facilities provide state-of-the-art EOCs, work areas for OEM personnel, a situational awareness center, a consolidated public safety operations area, training/meeting space, senior policy conference room, and secured communication capabilities. These multi-faceted facilities provide a location where key government decision makers and private sector partner agencies can assemble during significant emergencies. These facilities have physical and virtual interoperability and connectivity with regional, state and federal partners, neighboring jurisdictions, utility companies, volunteer agencies and private sector businesses. Over the last seven years, these facilities have dramatically improved the capabilities of the County to respond to the needs of the community.

**Duty Officer Program:** This program is primarily designed to enhance incident support and communications interoperability within Fairfax County; however, having connectivity with surrounding Northern Virginia localities, the NCR and federal partner agencies is paramount. In addition, the OEM Duty Officer keeps Fairfax County employees, local businesses and residents aware of any significant events such as significant weather, traffic notifications and County operations through the County emergency notification system.

OEM personnel are trained and prepared to respond to any event within Fairfax County. Services provided include coordinating with Red Cross, serving as a liaison between internal and external agencies and the community, and working with residents to evacuate their homes if necessary.

**Emergency Notification Programs (Employee Alert Network (EAN)/ Fairfax Alerts):** The EAN and "Fairfax Alerts" are the official County notification systems for employees and County residents. The EAN section of the system allows County representatives the ability to alert employees of potential dangers within the County or situations specific to their agencies twenty-four hours a day and seven days a week. The Department of Public Safety Communications, Police Department, and Fire and Rescue Department use EAN to alert and inform their personnel of events and incidents. The public facing "Fairfax Alerts" gives residents the ability to receive official emergency information about County incidents via mobile phones, email, home phone and multiple other devices. In addition, residents can subscribe to receive information notifications such as traffic information, government closings, inclement weather, and non-emergency information from County agencies such as Tax Administration, Elections, Police, Fire and OEM.

**Crisis Information Management System (WebEOC):** WebEOC is the nationally-adopted crisis information software system used in all of the Emergency Operations Centers in the National Capital Region which include Virginia, the District of Columbia and Maryland. WebEOC is used to manage both small and large-scale incidents and provides a platform to share information such as critical infrastructure status, transportation and public messaging. More than 1,000 County employees are trained to use the system.

# Office of Emergency Management

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## Benefits

In support of the County's Emergency Operations Plan, section "D", County Planning Vision, Goals, and Objectives, the Operations Division strives to achieve the following:

- Ensure an effective overall response and support to an incident occurring within Fairfax County and to all employees and residents of Fairfax County.
- Provide important, accurate and timely information to Fairfax County employees and residents on devices and technology they prefer.
- Identify, research and implement new technologies to increase effectiveness of emergency awareness, response, recovery and notification.
- Manage and document information collected during large planned events and/or disasters to ensure Fairfax County can successfully apply for and receive state and federal reimbursement.
- Leverage technology to provide coordinated communications between field operations and support Emergency Operations Center staff members ensuring response and recovery to the community occurs efficiently and timely.
- Manage the EOC response and recovery and the County agencies' coordination to ensure that residents' needs are addressed.

## Mandates

Virginia Department of Emergency Management Laws:

Section 44-146-19-G: All localities with a population of greater than 50,000 shall establish an alert and warning plan for the dissemination of adequate and timely warning to the public in the event of an emergency or threatened disaster.

## Trends and Challenges

### Trends:

- The increase of smartphone technology use and reduction of land (home phone) line use by Fairfax County residents sharply changes how OEM reaches/notifies them during an emergency. (2-3 percent of households cancel home phones annually)
- An increase in the number of EOC activations to support Fairfax County.
- Emergency events are becoming more widespread, therefore, requiring more co-location of resources such as equipment and supplies, joint/combined EOC activations during large planned events or disasters (Multi-Agency Coordination Center activations for Presidential inaugurations, World Police and Fire Games)
- Utilizing social media platforms to communicate with Fairfax County residents.

### Challenges:

- Maintaining appropriate funding and staffing to support increased EOC activations.
- Informing vulnerable populations such as the elderly and non-English speakers.
- Aging equipment and costs to upgrade/replace technology.
- Maintaining EOC operational training and preparedness.

# Office of Emergency Management

## Resources

Category	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Adopted
<b>LOB #242: Emergency Operations</b>			
<b>FUNDING</b>			
<u>Expenditures:</u>			
Compensation	\$160,909	\$166,979	\$183,241
Operating Expenses	57,929	147,806	90,000
Capital Equipment	0	27,560	0
<b>Total Expenditures</b>	<b>\$218,838</b>	<b>\$342,345</b>	<b>\$273,241</b>
General Fund Revenue	\$0	\$0	\$0
<b>Net Cost/(Savings) to General Fund</b>	<b>\$218,838</b>	<b>\$342,345</b>	<b>\$273,241</b>
<b>POSITIONS</b>			
Authorized Positions/Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs)			
<u>Positions:</u>			
Regular	2 / 2	2 / 2	2 / 2
<b>Total Positions</b>	<b>2 / 2</b>	<b>2 / 2</b>	<b>2 / 2</b>

## Metrics

Metric Indicator	FY 2013 Actual	FY 2014 Actual	FY 2015 Actual	FY 2016 Estimate	FY 2017 Estimate
Fairfax Alerts Registrations (previously Old Community Emergency Alert Network prior to FY 2014)	49,000	52,000	56,661	59,494	62,469
Total EOC Monitoring Activations	9	11	9	10	10
EOC Monitoring Level Activations	NA	8	7	7	8
EOC Partial and Full Level Activations	NA	3	2	3	2

When discussing trends within the Emergency Operations division, the goal should always be to continue to identify the efficient ways to continue to support the Whole Community. Technology, communications and how Emergency Management provides information to the population during emergencies is constantly changing. Fairfax Alerts and the Employee Alert Network system is a state-mandated notification system that has the capability to reach the Whole Community during an event. This is a regionally and state managed/used system for emergencies and important information dissemination to the community. The demanding/desired increase of information to County staff, leadership and the community requires a system that can adjust on the fly and provide emergency information in a timely manner.

## Office of Emergency Management

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The Emergency Operations Center serves as the hub for coordinating County emergencies. The Fairfax County EOC operates at one of three different staffing levels depending on scale of the event/emergency. These levels are:

- **Monitoring; 5-15 County staff:** Emergency Management Staff and key event-specific agencies monitor and track potential impactful emergencies to Fairfax County. An example of a monitoring level activation would be any named Hurricane or Tropical storm located in the Atlantic Ocean with the potential to turn into the eastern seaboard of the United States. The EOC would monitor the storm path and coordinate with other states and localities to determine resources which could be needed to support Public Safety and the residents of Fairfax County.
- **Partial; 15-45 County staff:** For a major weather or hazardous incident within Fairfax County, the EOC would require key agencies within public safety and social services to assist residents during and after the event occurs. An example of a partial activation in Fairfax County would be a significant rainfall event where portions of the County experience residential flooding. Communication could be difficult, travel and overall safety concerns for Public Safety personnel and residents would be of concern.
- **Full; 45-80 County staff:** For a catastrophic emergency within Fairfax County, the EOC would require a full activation of agency subject matter experts, volunteer organizations, business partners and surrounding jurisdictional governments for a multiple days, weeks, or months event. The EOC staff would be supporting incident commanders in the field but would also ensure that areas outside of the emergency continue to have resources available to respond to day-to-day emergencies. One example of a full activation in Fairfax County was the activation for the Derecho storm event. Wide-spread communication and power outages, debris management, traffic management, emergency response, public messaging, vulnerable populations needing assistance, and critical infrastructure damage were just some of the issues that had to be addressed as a result of the storm.