



Lumpkin County Emergency Services

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Staff Analysis

7/21/2016

Agenda Item: Fire Station Staffing

Item Description: Review of Fire Station staffing

Facts and Historical Information:

In the past, and as staffing levels allowed, Station 5 has been staffed with one firefighter. This practice has presented many challenges in regards to firefighter safety, consistency of coverage, and risk management, so an operational decision to discontinue staffing Station 5, or any other station, with a sole firefighter was made.

Staffing any fire station with only one firefighter creates specific safety concerns. If a fire truck shows up at a scene, especially a structure fire with possible entrapment, the “expectation” of most citizens would be that the firefighter enters the building immediately. This goes against all safety protocols and would put the firefighter’s life at risk beyond normal expectations. NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) standards state that a minimum of two firefighters should enter a structure, but only if two other Firefighters are there and ready to enter the structure as a RIT (Rapid Intervention Team). In short, this is the two in, two out rule. Reference NFPA 1710, Chapter 5, section 5.2.4.2.2.

The practice of staffing with a single firefighter has only been followed at Station 5; no other staffed stations in the county have ever been staffed with only one firefighter. At present, all staffed fire stations have at least three firefighters on duty. Additionally, because of staffing issues, when Station 5 was singly staffed, the station could not always be opened since this single staff member was often pulled to work at another station due to call outs, vacations, etc.

Staffing a Station with only one firefighter was originally implemented with thoughts of getting a response vehicle to a scene in that area of the county more quickly; however, when this practice started, call volume was much lower than it is now, so the risk to this lone responder was lower. County-wide volume has almost doubled meaning that when a station is

staffed by a single individual, he or she is responding to more calls alone leading to increased risk to the firefighter. In years past, when Station 5 has been singly staffed, this station's responder was often backed up by volunteers, however volunteer participation continues to decrease and we cannot rely on any volunteer help to assist on calls, even when only a lone firefighter is responding.

**Potential Courses
Of Action:**

A. Support the operational decision to no longer staff fire stations with only one firefighter.

B. Create a policy to staff fire stations with only one firefighter, which increases the risk to firefighter safety and the liability to the County.

C. Create a policy to staff fire stations with a minimum of two firefighters, resulting in additional positions and requiring a budget increase.

Budget Impact:

A. No change to the budget.

B. No change to the budget.

C. Minimum, three new employees, which would equal an estimated \$159,000 (includes benefits) annual increase to the budget.

Staff

Recommendation:

Recommendation by staff is course of action A. This will not have an effect on the budget and will address both the safety and liability concerns.