



Report to CCVESA

April 7, 2025

Chief Michael W. Robinson, Director

My report is below, and I will discuss the highlights, and you can contact me for further clarification as needed.

Staffing (VFCs): We currently have 204 of our 220 budgeted positions filled which leaves us with only 16 vacancies to fill. We are processing at least that number, and conditional offers have gone out. Our next hire date is Thursday, 4/24/25 and we will be starting 11 personnel depending on getting physical results out. This will include 5 paramedics, 1 FF/PM and 5 FADOs. This will allow us to begin filling our BLS units which will mean assigning ALS positions at Gamber, Union Bridge and then Mt. Airy. That will provide for all DFEMS staffed units being ALS by June 1. We just tested an additional 6 paramedics and FF/PMs which will give us a paramedic over. Those personnel will hopefully begin on Thursday 5/8/25 to finalize our staffing of 220.

This will bring our staffing up to 232 personnel which will complete our original Commissioner approved staffing plan. This will assure 16 transport EMS units daily (24/7) as well as FADO staffing of 13 stations 24/7. Following this we will no longer advertise for positions unless we have vacancies. This may continue depending on the requested positions in the budget. Our recruitment will continue based on our budget initiatives for FY-26 and how successful we are. We will be at the MSFA convention in June and will have a recruitment booth.

Future staffing growth is obviously tied to the budget, and we will determine our needs jointly through VFC requests and based on our ongoing data analysis which will be enhanced with the advent of our new ESO reporting system which is in the implementation phase and will go live by 12/25 or sooner as long as we are comfortable with the implementation progress.

Without the floater positions we will pay additional overtime and that is not optimal as many employees choose not to work additional shifts which can lead to “mandatory holdover shifts” That is not desirable and can compromise safety with increased fatigue of personnel or employee turnover.

Data Analyst: Melissa Long our new data analyst is progressing and moving forward as our new data analyst. She is taking the lead with our transition to the ESO/NERIS reporting system. Next month we will be sending her to the ESO conference in Austin Texas for a week of training and development for our transition to this new reporting system by 12/31/25. Melissa has had ongoing meetings with the ECC and other related entities to get up to par with our systems. She is also finalizing our first DFEMS “Annual Report” which will overview DFEMS response data and other accomplishments from CY-24. That should be out in about a week and will be distributed electronically. The internal ESO development/implementation meetings continue.

Budget: The FY-26 budget process is underway and DFEMS requests were discussed and updated in a budget work session and are now in the decision-making phase with the commissioners. Our proposed third medic unit was cut from the budget, and I have since made a presentation to the Commissioners to validate its restoration. Based on our own audit of the current EMS fleet, the delay of any ambulance replacement will have significant consequences for our aging fleet. We are hopeful that the unit will be restored.

CCVESA also appeared before the commissioners and made your budget requests. Joe Dennis assisted by your Treasurer made a valid presentation with many economic considerations given the impact of the national transitions and policies. We are meeting weekly with our budget analyst. The final FY-26 operating budget should be approved, and the document posted on 4/22. Following that there will be several community budget meetings provided by the Director of the Department of Management & Budget.

There is obviously some impact with the state budget deficit in excess of \$3 billion. There are some new fees, a controversial adopted budget and today is “Sine Die” at midnight which will signal the close of the 2025 legislative session without much progress beyond these new fees and no volunteer incentive enhancements as submitted. I did attend all of the weekly state fire service meetings and the MSFA and other organizations and jurisdictions monitored, testified and supported all relevant fire service-related bills.

This adopted budget has and will have some impacts and for volunteers. Under the current budget, most of the VCAF/MSFA requests as well as individual VFC requests have been denied at the state level and these require state Board of Public Works approval. I am currently working with Jenny Hobbs (Comptroller) on the funding requests that many of the companies have made for capital equipment replacement. The total requested is nearing \$15 million and please be patient as she understands the total requests which will be applied against the issuance of county bonds. I would assume until the state financial picture improves that the county loan option may become the preferred method for capital financing. As needed, I may be reaching out to some of you to clarify the numbers and apparatus currently under application or consideration. I do not anticipate any change in the county’s loan terms. We are aware of the soon to be delivered apparatus and will be addressing that first. Remember that all apparatus requests must go initially through our established process through ESAC.

National Fire Service Issues: We will did not apply for this year for either SAFER or AFG and are working towards a possible submission for next year’s process if the funding remains. This must be approved by the Commissioners as the budget must pick up the funding after year 3 of the grant. We will also need to determine what positions we would request and could facilitate with continuing funding. Remember that SAFER also deals with recruitment/retention grant funding.

The NFA remains closed and is delivering only online programs. As a 31-year instructor and course developer I can’t overemphasize the value of the NFA and its residential and field delivery programs. This also has a huge impact on the Fred Co. and Town of Emmitsburg economy. The NFF Memorial Weekend is still scheduled for May 2-4 at the memorial which is

a designated national monument so it must remain accessible to the public. This year FADO Bobby Jones of Reese is slated to be honored at the formal ceremony on Sunday, 5/4/25. I would hope that given the proximity that Carroll County personnel both career and volunteer will make a good showing. Our Honor Guard is slated to participate.

Last week **NIOSH the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health** was shut down by its parent organization the Health Human Services (HHS). This has significant fire service impact in their areas:

1. National Firefighter Fatality Investigation Program (NFFIP) which investigates most LODDs in the US. This works out of Morgantown, WV
2. The NIOSH safety equipment testing program out of Pittsburg which tests and certifies SCBA and evaluates all PPE following a LODD.
3. The National Firefighter Cancer Registry which is an online database to track cancer diagnosis and occupational exposures.

All of these were previously authorized by congress and have direct safety/health implications. There was no known methodology or process for these closings just an internal administrative directive. This is certainly a loss to the fire service and I'm sure that the MSFA and others are following and working on some action areas to resolve.

Congratulations: To many personnel who will be honored at two upcoming ceremonies to recognize all personnel who have been nominated for various awards.

The Carroll County DFEMS **Commendations Board** will hold its first annual commendation awards ceremony on Tuesday 4/21/25 at the "Flood Zone" in Union Bridge. This is driven by the Commendations Board which is co-chaired by Todd Tracey. Invitations have been sent to each company. There will be no alcohol served at the event but there will be a reception afterwards to include refreshments and a cash bar.

The Carroll County Chamber of Commerce Public Safety Awards annual recognition breakfast will be held on Tuesday, 5/20/25 at 0800 at Pleasant Valley. Over 30 awards in various categories for heroism, lifesaving and supervisory and administrative efficiency will be presented. The honorees have been notified and tickets are required at \$30/person. I believe that CCVESA will have a table at this.

Both of these events are an annual occurrence, and I would encourage CCVESA and each VFC to submit personnel in the various categories. A formal SOP will be forthcoming for the Commendations Board. Todd Tracey has been doing some significant work behind the scenes and I believe all will be impressed with this new recognition system.

Volunteer Backgrounds: The SOP has been implemented based on the last ESAC meeting and distributed through the CCVESA website as well as the DFEMS site. Any questions can be referred to Callie Williams in my office. Again, the highlights of this SOP are as follows.

1. *All new members*-regardless of membership type

2. *All Operational members* (responders as verified by annual physical compliance)
3. *Persons engaged officially as junior advisors/leaders* (consistent to similar groups)
4. *Members recommended by corporations*-your call based on your criteria
5. Current administrative members would be grandfathered
6. Initial background checks of the above (#1-4) and database monitoring for MVA, criminal databases after initial check.
7. Based on discussions with our insurer. Those who drive any vehicles would be placed in the county driver database for monitoring under the MVA.

SOPs/Policies: In concert with the FROPS committee and EMS committee there are a lot of operational, response and other policies that are moving forward and progressing in specific work groups. This includes response, staffing, command officers, training requirements and regional supervision using our limited supervisors. We are also working on a policy that addresses relatives working at the same stations and or shifts. These will all be vetted through ESAC, and our approval process and we are moving to get much of this in place by the early spring. You can contact your FROPS representatives for more information.

MFSPQB-Certification Board: Over the last several months Chief Supko assisted by Chief Brothers have been working to submit Carroll County as an Accredited Training Review Agency (ATRA) under the board. This has involved nearly 100 hours of legwork and validation of our training program, facilities and instructor staff. This past Thursday 4/27 A team consisting of MFRI and various training academies across the state came to the PSTC. After a comprehensive review of our “self-study” documentation, our facilities and personnel the Board has voted to approve Carroll County DFEMS as an ATRA. What does this mean? We will now do certifications through our training academy under Asst. Chief Brothers as an ATRA. A formal SOP will be forthcoming and part of this will be a local Certification Review Board which will consist of three personnel. One of them will be a representative of Carroll County volunteers and we will request CCVESA to provide us with an individual to serve on this group to assure your representation. In the future all Pro Qual applications should be forwarded to AC Brothers, and we will review, approve and then process through the state and then distribute the certifications. We will cover all associated fees. A formal recognition ceremony will take place at the MFSPQB annual meeting on Monday at the MSFA convention. My Sincere thanks to all involved in this process especially Chief Supko. I removed myself from this process as I am the current Chair of the MFSPQB. This has benefits for the entire system and Congratulations!

Annual Veterans Celebration: Will be held on Sunday, May 4th at the Carroll County Farm Museum and is sponsored by the county government. A flier is attached and Christine Cambereri our county communications officer is requesting that companies with electronic signs consider advertising this event. A flier is attached and please contact Christine at ccambereri@carrollcountymd.gov if your station is able to assist with this advertising. Christine can give you the desired dates that she would like you to assist with. DFEMS and Westminster will be involved at the event with an EMS standby. All CCVESA members who are veterans are encouraged to participate in this “Free” event.

Meetings with all corporations/VFCs? I am still wanting to schedule a meeting with each company and either your board of directors or primary officers (your decision?) The purpose of these meetings is to review our successes as well as our challenges under our evolving DFEMS and where we should be moving together, as we progress in the future. Please contact me via email: mrobinson@carrollcountymd.gov with some desired dates. We can schedule at a mutually agreeable time at your stations. I will attend along with DC Supko, and we would like to have an open, civil and honest conversation with each of you with the goal of improvements to our combination system? So far, we have received some great feedback and made some changes as a result of this interaction. This may overlap with Carnival season, and I plan to attend each carnival and can accomplish this during that time if it is more convenient.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson