



# Fire & Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Task Force Report DRAFT II

## **Introduction**

The Fire & EMS Task Force was formed by Vice Mayor Linda Gorton on November 7, 2011. The charge of the Task Force was to examine the issues of women & minority recruitment in the Fire Department; the issue of Paramedic staffing levels; response times for the Emergency Care units; and the issue of giving preference points to those applicants trained as Paramedics from places outside Fayette County.

The Task Force membership consisted of 5<sup>th</sup> District Council Member Bill Farmer, Jr., who served as chair; Fire Major Kristin Chilton; Fire Captain Les Fryman; Patti Howard, Ph.D., RN; Judy “JJ” Jackson, Ph.D.; David Stevens, M.D.; Steven Stack, M.D.; Fire Major Brian Wood; Vice Mayor Linda Gorton; 3<sup>rd</sup> District Council Member Diane Lawless; and 8<sup>th</sup> District Council Member George Myers.

Staff was provided by Jessica Gies, Jennifer Benningfield and Paul Schoninger of the Council Office.

## **Background**

At the March 8, 2011 Council Public Safety & Public Works (PS/PW) Development Committee, Dr. Stack, representing the Emergency Medical Advisory Board (EMAB) gave a presentation regarding Paramedic and EMT training.

Dr. Stack stated that the EMAB is a permanent board that serves in an advisory capacity to the urban county government on all matters pertaining to emergency medical and transportation ambulance service and care.

Dr. Stack reported that from 1977 until 2008 there were annual uninterrupted Paramedic training classes. He further stated that there were no classes in 2009, 2010 & 2011 and if the class is not budgeted in 2012, Lexington will be at least 5 years without a training class.

Dr. Stack reported to the PS/PW Committee that the number of emergency care runs is too high to sustain service. He stated that the 9 emergency care units (ambulances) are averaging over 3,800 runs per year and while the numbers of runs (incidents) are increasing, response times are also increasing. He stated that in 2006 and 2007 90% of the incidents were responded to within the goal of 8 minutes or less. In 2008 and 2009 88% of the incidents were responded to within the goal of 8 minutes or less; in 2010,

87% of the incidents were responded to within the goal of 8 minutes or less. The response times and the number of Emergency Care (EC) incidents runs, along with the lack of Paramedic training classes for almost 4 years has caused and contributed to a substantial amount of staff burnout because they stay on Emergency Care EC Units longer before moving to trucks.

The EMAB requested that the committee and Urban County Council budget for a new class of Paramedic recruits and an additional ambulance during the FY 12 budget deliberations.

At the March 8, 2011 Public Safety and Public Works Committee meeting, Council Members discussed having qualified Paramedics, EMS response times, diversity of the work force, 2 versus 3 responders on EC units, level and structure of staffing for the Division of Fire, recruiting practices and training classes.

A motion by Council Member Crosbie and seconded by Council Member Ellinger to request that Vice Mayor Gorton appoint a Task Force to study response times, preference points, women & minority recruiting, Paramedic level of staffing, and other staffing issues was passed unanimously.

### **Findings**

The Task Force found that Emergency medical transportation response times have increased over the last several years. In 2007, 90% of the emergency care incidents were responded to within eight (8) minutes. In 2011, only 87% of the emergency care incidents were responded to within 8 minutes.

The Task Force also found that the number of emergency care incidents have increased substantially. In 2007, there were 27,910 incidents that required an emergency care response. In 2011 the emergency care incidents had increased to 36,696.

The Task Force found that there is a direct but negligible relationship between the number of responses and the response time necessary to answer an incident.

The Task Force found that of the nine (9) current emergency care units (ambulances), five (5) made over 4,000 runs each during the last calendar year. The goal is to keep ambulance runs at a maximum of 3,200 per year to remain consistent with national standards. All of the emergency care units had over 3,600 emergency runs in 2011.

The Task Force found that Paramedic training was offered annually from 1977 through 2008. However there were no classes offered from 2008 through 2011. The Task Force also found that the most recent collective bargaining agreement provides for annual Paramedic training classes for the next two (2) years.

The Task Force found that preference points for new applicants are presently being given for Paramedics (10%); Firefighters (5%); and Military (2%). The Task Force also found

that the application process is being rewritten and only the Military preference points will remain.

The Task Force found that while there has been improvement in the hiring and retention of women and minority recruits, there is still a need to pursue avenues that will encourage women and minorities to apply for positions as Firefighters.

Women account for over 51% of the recruitment age population in Fayette County. In addition minorities account for approximately 25% of the recruitment age population in Fayette County. However, women account for 2.3% (12 females) of the Lexington Division of Fire and minorities account for just 6.7% (35 minorities) of the force.

### **Recommendations**

The Task Force agrees that the EC units should continue to be staffed by 3 Firefighters, with a combination of two (2) Paramedics and one (1) EMT.

The Task Force agrees that Paramedic training will be held annually for at least the next two years.

The Task Force recommends that LFUCG purchase two (2) additional EC units and hire the necessary personnel to staff both units. Because of the investment this recommendation should be phased. The capital cost associated with the 2 additional Emergency Care units is approximately \$800,000. The annual personnel cost to train and hire 23 staff for the two (2) units is approximately \$1,335,000.

It is estimated that the Division of Fire will lose approximately 20 staff due to service retirements annually for the next several years. It is therefore recommended that the LFUCG continue to annually maintain staffing levels to ensure that response time meets or exceeds national standards.

The Task Force agrees with the Administration proposal to discontinue preference points with the exception of Military preference points.

The Task Force supports the concept of discontinuing preference points where they inhibit our diversity efforts.

The Task force recommends that Lexington-Fayette Urban County Government increase its efforts to recruit women and minorities through several different strategies including recruitment at military bases, recruitment at local high schools and community colleges, assignment of a staff member to the role of “diversity recruiter,” by examining Firefighter/Paramedic internship or mentoring programs, and examining the potential of incentives for current Firefighter/Paramedics to recruit minorities and women.

Appendix

Chart on EC Unit Runs 2010/2011  
Incidents/Response Time Chart  
Years of Service/Gender by Rank Analysis  
Retirement Chart  
Up-fit Cost for New Recruits  
Division of Fire Organizational Chart  
Summary of Task Force Meetings