



**March 2026**  
**Chief Michael W. Robinson**  
**Monthly Report to CCVESA**

Attached herein is my report for March 2026. Please review and I will provide some highlights at the meeting.

**ESAC/Commissioner's Meeting:** I want to commend Chairman Rick Baker for the professional demeanor and outstanding presentation last month (2/12) before the Board of Commissioners. The presentation was insightful and although it had a lot of information, I believe it was well received. As we enter the Fy-27 budget process, I am certain that we will be revisiting many of the areas that were presented. Having this presentation sets the tone and lays the foundation for our Fy-27 priorities and beyond. This has been a collaborative process among all of the ESAC membership, and I wish to thank each of you for your efforts.

**STAFFING:** We were nearing our authorized strength of 224 field personnel and hired 3 additional paramedics in January and have seen some departures of personnel. This leaves us with 12 current vacancies or a total of 212 field personnel. We are currently processing for these positions and will fill the majority of them on the 26<sup>th</sup> of March.

Please welcome Christopher Evans to our administrative staff as our new Fire Protection Specialist who also began on 1/15. Chris brings with him decades of experience in various fire prevention/inspection roles both with the federal and state governments as well as private industry. He has a strong fire service background and is going through some learning and orientation to our plans review system. We were able to bring back our retired Fire protection specialist-Bryan Van Fossen for several days of orientation and training. Once he gets settled into his position. Chris' position is primarily plans review, but he is also here to support our prevention and new construction efforts and is our internal fire codes contact.

**ALS Units:** All 16 units remain staffed at the ALS level with some exceptions when staffing does not allow. When that occurs an EMS supervisor or the nearest ALS medic will upgrade the BLS unit based on location. Our remaining positions are either paramedics or FF/Paramedics so we should soon have floaters that will limit that occurrence. We currently have some additional ALS personnel that are completing their field precepting and should be released within the next several weeks.

**EMS Fleet:**

We recently placed the new M-139 in service. This is a Ford F-550/Horton ambulance, and we were able to replace the wrecked unit within 3 months of the accident. We also recently placed the new M-128 in service and that unit is a 2025 Ford F-550/Road Rescue. Both units will be an

asset and lessen the strain on our overall fleet. Thanks to both Gamber and Sykesville for their assistance in getting things moved around and facilitating these new units. Both of these units have been “down” several times for some warranty work which is typical for new units and their level of complexity.

The situation overall is still not good, and we will be developing a plan to address this. In the interim we will work closely with you and your vendors and our maintenance shop to address issues as they occur. We are also addressing this in the FY-27 budget and will request at least five additional replacement medic units which could all be demos v. custom designed. Those units if available would give us a significantly shorter delivery time. It may take two years and 10 units to put us where we need to be. We also have an additional Tahoe on order and an F-150 for the BC/Shift commander. We hope to have both in service by the summer. We currently have multiple SUV/vehicles down for service issues and have not had enough reserve units available.

### **FY-27 Budget:**

We are in the preliminary stages of the Fy 27 budget and placed our requests for additional staffing as elaborated in the ESAC presentation. Our priorities remain as follows:

1. Four (4) shift safety/training lieutenants-new positions
  2. Additional 8 (eight) floater positions from original FY-23 staffing plan
  3. Laborer either full or part-time to be assigned to the Quartermaster/warehouse
  4. Paramedic position (grant funded) for mobile integrative health (MIH) program
- 14 total positions

The training/safety Lieutenants positions would be assigned to each of the 24/72 shifts and would focus on the training and compliance needs of each shift as well as the volunteers. They would have an immediate safety officer response profile and perform other duties such as accident/injury investigations, station and PPE inspections and provide driver training and OSHA compliance. All other departments in the region currently have such a position. We are having a second meeting on these positions later in the week.

Last month, I met with our county budget analyst, Treasurer Mary Carole and Joe Dennis, to go over the FY-27 CCVESA budget as well as the 14 individual company budgets. Joe Dennis and I met with 14 companies and went over each budget item by item prior to Joe’s final submission. We have centralized some purchasing in areas such as IT and nozzles/appliances and done some streamlining to other items. An increase in the overall VFC budgets is submitted with a recommended increase of over \$654,000 which I am fundamentally in support of. This is also to meet the spirit of the MOUs between each company and the county government.

In addition, given the challenges with apparatus replacement and timing we are asking for increases to the maintenance budget line item. Just understand that this will now be subjected to the standard review and processes that all county agencies go through. An initial budget is like a “wish list” and subject to the process and procedures of the Department of Management and Budget. The Department of Management and Budget is currently reviewing our entire

submission and at this week's Commissioner meeting the initial budget reflecting their analysis and cuts will be presented. A hearing should be held sometime in March and there will be an opportunity for public comments and to further validate our needs. CCVESA should be submitting a request at this time for presentation time at the budget hearings if that is your desire. Those hearings will begin in the third week of March.

My other goal with the FY 27 budget is to request a countywide study by a consultant. That study would evaluate our current system and its capabilities to include both fire and EMS coverage, station locations, apparatus needs/type and staffing. We would use three criteria in the study and that would include ISO standards of coverage, NFPA -1201,1710 for coverage and CFAI (fire accreditation) standards of cover. I believe we all have our opinions but a third-party unbiased organization using national standards could provide a comprehensive overview of our strengths, weakness and recommendations for future Fire/EMS coverage and potential costs. This would also provide an analysis of apparatus and fleet needs both for procurement and maintenance as well as station locations and maintenance requirements to provide sustainability. We will see if we are able to have this included and will move forward from there. Included with my report is a "sample" of two such studies from our region. These were done by two different consulting organizations for Baltimore County and Anne Arundel County. This will give you an opportunity to see the comprehensive nature of these studies. If the commissioners approve such a direction, then an RFP would be developed to define the "scope" of such a study. I need your feedback as to the depth/breadth of such a study which will influence our future directions.

Insurance is another ongoing concern in terms of cost and coverage. The 10K deductibles based on accident history are not sustainable and I am working with risk management and our insurer VFIS to see what options are there. We will also look at that issue in our budget discussions. I have had some initial discussions with risk management on that issue, and the Commissioners are aware of our concerns.

Our challenge with the budget will be the growing state budget deficit and the unpredictability of state funding and revenues into the county. I want to thank Joe Dennis for his significant efforts in the budget process, and I believe that we are moving towards a more streamlined and equitable process to meet the needs of the 14 VFCs while serving the citizens with efficiency and cost effectiveness.

**PSTC improvements/ Phase II:** We are also submitting in our budget at the request of the training committee a replacement container/module for our burn facilities which have become worn giving the age. This current configuration of a burn facility was intended to be temporary pending phase II of the PSTC. Currently we have a priority project into the state for several million to provide a remediation project for the PFAS and water delivery to the PSTC site. The new water line construction has begun, and progress is being made. I had a recent discussion among other county agencies involved and a new cost estimate for phase II of the PSTC, which includes comprehensive remediation has a price tag of approximately \$22 million.

We must evaluate the required remediation issues and determine what/when/how of the overall project as well as the intended outcomes and compliance. We are moving towards that goal. The state legislative delegation met with the commissioners and administration to discuss the prioritization of that project which if approved could move phase II of the PSTC forward. I have met with the Commissioners, DPW and Planning to make a commitment to move forward and begin with a timeline and update to the project.

Currently you can see that our warehouse project is progressing and will hopefully be completed by late March. This will move our quartermaster/supply operation entirely to this rehabbed space and will significantly increase our storage capacity. Once we have a handle on the completion, we will be scheduling a “small scale” ribbon cutting/dedication. More to follow.

**Cancer screening grant:** I submitted on 1/15 through the state health department, a grant for \$85,500 for cancer screening for 228 uniformed career personnel. There is \$480,000 available for a one-time cancer screening. I was told by 2<sup>nd</sup> VP Mott that you have also submitted a separate grant to cover volunteer personnel. This would be done separately by a third-party cancer screening company. We have had several “follow up” questions from the state which I would say indicates we are still a viable candidate. Our goal would be to provide testing for all who receive physicals through a cancer screening company and to attempt to do this on an annual basis at no cost to personnel. Cancer screening is now mandated annually for all career personnel under the state law known as the “Jim Malone Act”. There is no difference in vulnerability between career and volunteer so I will always be including funding for everyone to be tested annually for cancer consistent to the national recommendations. This has been added to the FY-27 budget.

**NERIS:** As of 1/1/2026 our NERIS reporting is now active and NFIRS is no longer available. In nearly two months since implementation, we have had a few glitches and are monitoring each. Richard Koons along with Melissa are working daily to assure that everything is in place. We will be maintaining 14 FDIDs or the new NERIS identifiers and we will centralize our data while allow each of you the ability to utilize the associated modules. We are also continuing to work with Richard on assuring the preservation of legacy LOSAP data and have worked out a solution. Understand that there will be glitches with the system as is the case with any new technology. Together we will figure this out and move forward with hopefully a better data and reporting system. We are in contact with our vendor, and I held a recent meeting with their management to review their contractual commitments and specifically the preservation and delivery of archived legacy data. Anyone with specific issues that can not be handled by your station representative may contact Melissa Long our NERIS lead at [mlong@carrollcountymd.gov](mailto:mlong@carrollcountymd.gov) Please try to resolve at the station level and if there is an issue then contact Melissa and she checks her mail multiple times each day. We have also removed DFEMS EMS supervisors, BC101 and the command chiefs (FD1, OPS100, EMS 100, Safety 100) and created a station 100 for separate reporting. So EMS cars will no longer be in your stations data as they will report within station 100. We are also working to resolve the issue with the NFIRS legacy data. Each company has received a

request from Melissa for access, and this is required so we can respond to both attorney and insurance reporting requests. Each company should have received an email to that effect.

**Commendations Board** has met to review submissions for awards related to 2025 incidents, special recognitions and to make recommendations for the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce Awards. The awards event has been scheduled for Tuesday, April 7, 2026, at the Flood Zone in Union Bridge. Invitations were sent out today and all volunteer members are encouraged to attend this special event to celebrate our career and volunteer personnel and their outstanding accomplishments. Don't miss the opportunity to recognize some great people who have gone above/beyond! The commendations board is also submitting to the Chamber of commerce public safety awards and that event will be a breakfast ceremony on May, 19 at Pleasant Valley. Tables are available for purchase through the CC Chamber via their website.

**Maryland General Assembly/Legislative Session-2026** began on 1/14/26 in Annapolis. This is a challenging year for the state given the nearly 4 billion+ deficit and their politicization of many national issues. I am also in attendance during the session for the Friday fire service legislative meetings along with your MSFA President and other fire service reps. Hopefully the fire service will make some progress and preserve state funding in areas such as 508, loan funding and other relevant initiatives. Each company should sign up for the weekly MSFA legislative bulletin to keep abreast of progress in these areas. I'm sure that President Simpson will have more to say in this area. There are a number of Fire service-related bills that are being opposed by the various organizations. Highlights include:

1. A bill to mandate quarterly ambulance inventory compliance by MIEMSS
2. A bill to allow medical marijuana use by career Fire/EMS personnel
3. A bill to mandate all jurisdictions to work a 168 hr./28-day cycle (our current schedule)
4. A bill mandating inspections of short-term rental properties
5. Many other bills with impact on the fire service

I have recently attended several company banquets with more to come. I want to congratulate those companies for making the effort to recognize your membership. The selfless actions of our volunteers are significant both in operational responses, training and administrative support. Without each of these areas we can't function. It is great to see and hear of the accomplishments within each of our VFCs as well as the years of service of so many members. I would encourage all of you to submit members for county level awards as you all have many deserving members.

**Operations:** We are working with FROPS and ESAC to finalize several policies including signal 13. We also introduced a "Draft" SOP on POV response and continue to work on our minimum officer standards, and both are work in progress. Our communications subgroup has made some significant recommendations to realign our talk groups for clarity and consistency. We are awaiting some clarification issues from the ECC in that area. We look to reprogram all portable and mobile radios to reflect this sometime in the late spring/early summer.

**EMS:** Our ALS refreshers are finalizing for those expiring this month. We have applied for a grant that would enhance our blood supply capabilities. In addition, we are preparing to implement our field IV pumps, some additional blood equipment and transport ventilators that will be on all of our EMS supervisor units.

**Annual Report:** A note of thanks to all stations who submitted their company pages for our 2025 report. We had 100% participation. We are in the final stages of editing the 65+ page report and this should be ready for distribution in the next several weeks. The timing will be consistent to our budget presentations and will be available in both hard copy and electronically on our website. Thanks to Melissa Long, our data analyst who has headed up this project along with Lt. Karolenko.

**CISM/behavioral health:** Is going through some transition and Chief Zaney has the leadership of this area which includes our CISM team, peer support and our Chaplain Program. BC Guy Gearhart will provide the daily supervision and coordination in this area, and we look for some expansion with some new members both career and volunteer. CCVESA Chaplain Sam Mann is also looking to enhance the role of his chaplaincy duties along with the DFEMS Chaplain, Deacon Tom White. Our goal is to bring all of these services to personnel, their families and those in need of behavioral and spiritual support in a timely manner.

Respectfully submitted,

*Chief Michael W. Robinson*

Michael W. Robinson MA, CFO, NRP  
Director

MWR/mr

C: CCVESA officers  
Command Staff