



January 2026
Chief Michael Robinson
Monthly Report to CCVESA

Attached herein is my report for January 2026. I will not be in attendance at this evening's meeting due to my wife celebrating her birthday and the cost of a divorce lawyer! Please contact me to answer any questions or concerns.

STAFFING: We were nearing our authorized strength of 224 field personnel and hope to hire 6-8 personnel on 1/15/26. Bryan Van Fossen our long time Fire Protection Specialist retired on 12/19/25 following 30+ years with the county. He began with public safety and was transferred over to DFEMS two years ago. We wish Bryan the best in his retirement, and he continues as an active member and Vice-President at Westminster. We have hired a replacement, Christopher Evans who has extensive training and experience and retired from the federal fire service as well as the State of Maryland where he served in various fire marshal positions. He will also start next Thursday 1/15.

ALS Units: All 16 units are now 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.

Flu Season: Is now upon us and we have seen patient surges at both CHC and surrounding facilities. We are closely monitoring the situation. Carroll Hospital is now requiring masks to be worn at their facility as are other hospitals. The state health department has also issued some precautions and Dr. Kemp/Chief Zaney are watching closely and monitoring. Stations should be taking precautions similar to the pre-COVID scenario with frequent cleaning, disinfecting wipes and masks for those who may be at risk. We also recently sent out information on available flu vaccines through DFEMS. COVID is also an issue as well and the same precautions/isolation procedures should apply. If you have questions on that or have personnel requiring flu vaccines, please contact your assigned EMS Supervisor/Lieutenant for direction.

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 place 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.

The situation overall is still not good, and we will be developing a plan to address. 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.

FY-27 Budget:

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

1. Additional 8 (eight) floater positions from original FY-23 staffing plan
 2. Four (4) shift safety/training lieutenants-new positions
 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.

So, I had also asked each of your (chiefs) for personnel requests based on their own staffing assessments. Accordingly, I have requested in the FY-27 budget, additional positions as follows:

- Hampstead- 4 lieutenants
- Westminster-4 FADOs (Tower 3)
- Taneytown- 8 FF/EMTs for a second EMS unit
- Pleasant Valley- 4 lieutenants
- Union Bridge- 4 FADOs (Tanker)
- Gamber- Day shift lieutenant
- Winfield- 4 lieutenants

These positions are being handled separate from the budget requests and will also be addressed at the rescheduled ESAC/Commissioners presentation.

29 positions total + 14 positions (my requests) = 43 new career positions or \$4.5 million

In an effort to support these requests I will be meeting with the commissioners to consider the use of SAFER funding to achieve this additional staffing goal. These positions will be addressed directly at the ESAC/BOCC meeting on 1/29 ?. I commend those companies who are forward thinking and recognize their staffing needs. I believe we need to be realistic in assessing what our next direction should be while also recognizing those companies who continue to do the best

they can to achieve volunteer staffing. I believe these additions if approved will put our system in a safer and more efficient situation. There is still plenty of need and we all need to work together to achieve consistent staffing goals! This will take multiple budget cycles to attain.

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.

DC Joe Dennis is leading the volunteer budget effort for FY-27, and he is working with each of you. I am in support of Joe's concepts on the budget, and we have had several discussions on this. I will meet with Joe and the respective companies over several dates to review each budget to gain a greater understanding of each company's needs. Obviously with inflation and increasing energy, insurance and goods and services costs there will be the need for increases for the FY 27 budget.

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. Our challenge with the budget will be the growing state budget deficit and the unpredictability of state funding and revenues into the county.

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 \$1.3 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.

The state legislative delegation met with the commissioners and administration to discuss the prioritization of that project which if approved would move our phase II of the PSTC forward. Currently you can see that our warehouse project is progressing and will hopefully be complete by early next year. This will move our quartermaster/supply operation entirely to this rehabbed space and will significantly increase our storage capacity. More to follow.

Cancer screening grant: I submitted on Friday, 11/14 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 2nd VP Mott, that you have also submitted a separate grant to cover volunteer personnel. The grant process was then suspended by the state health department and is now reopened. We have again applied for this grant which closes on 1/15 and CCVESA is also applying again. This would be done separately by a third-party cancer screening company. 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.

Operations: Our new fireground (SOP Section 4) policies are in effect and are working well. My observation of the changes is that they are working, and we are more efficient, organized and certainly safer on fire/rescue incident scenes. We have standardized our running assignments, communications and incident organization. Over the holidays we have experienced multiple working fires, and the responses have been great and each fireground has been well organized with great accountability. Our career and volunteer command officers have really stepped up with staffing and command presence. We are making great progress overall! Our next area of concern involves communications and some realignment of our talk groups and policies and together I believe we can improve that area through some specific changes.

Cancer Awareness Month: Is throughout the month of January and our Safety & Health division will be sending out materials later this week. As a victim of fire related occupational cancer, I can’t stress enough how important awareness, testing and prevention is in this area. Our information will provide resources as well as best practices for addressing this significant concern for all of us. Also, a bill was recently signed into law by President Trump that will now make certain forms of cancer (19 total) as occupational cancers for all emergency services personnel. This will provide LODD/PSOB death benefits for those who die as the result of these 19 types of cancer. This will be retroactive to 2020 as well as for all those involved in 911 response to the WTC, Pentagon and Shanksville. The MSFA should have some additional information on this.

NERIS: As of 1/1/2026 our NERIS reporting is now active and NFIRS is no longer available. In the 5 days since implementation, we have had a few glitches and are monitoring each. In addition to our three-day training sessions. We held a follow up informational session with our ESO vendor on Friday, 11/7 and some of you were present. 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 mstrong@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.

Commendations Board has met and will be meeting in January to review submissions for awards related to 2025 incidents, special recognitions and to make recommendations for the Carroll County Chamber of Commerce Awards. Please review the SOP and consider submitting for the various categories of awards. The Chamber awards include a countywide Fire and EMS person of the year and other rewards. We have had a lot of significant incidents, and many people have provided significant levels of service. Don't let them go unrecognized! Please contact President Todd Tracey or DC Price for further information or to make a submission. The awards event will be scheduled for some time in the Spring of 26. Don't miss the opportunity to recognize some great people who have gone above/beyond!

ESAC meeting with Commissioners was cancelled for Thursday, December 4 at 1300 and Chairman Rick Baker is working on a rescheduled date -possibly 1/29. Chairman Baker has prepared a slide presentation which addresses the priorities for the FY-27 budget as well as an update on ESAC recommendations for our system to move forward. He will also update our progress. Given their schedule, the presentation will be limited to one hour so there is a lot of content to provide. I will attend as well, and I will defer to Rick for further elaboration of this important meeting.

Maryland General Assembly/Legislative Session-2026 will begin on 1/14/26 in Annapolis. This will be a challenging year for the state given the billion+ deficit. I will be attending the MACO Winter Conference next week along with other department directors, administrators and commissioners. We will receive some insight into the session from the governor and other key legislators as well as an economic overview for the state. I will also be 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.

Respectfully submitted,

Chief Michael W. Robinson

Michael W. Robinson MA, CFO, NRP

Director

MWR/mr

C: CCVESA officers
Command Staff