



## **Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency Director's Annual Report for 2018**



Respectfully Submitted by Allen Keyser, Director  
Jan. 22, 2019





# Mission Statement

*The Mission of the Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency (JCESA) is to assist the Jefferson County volunteer fire departments in providing fire and emergency medical services to all citizens and visitors of Jefferson County, West Virginia. JCESA and the fire departments will provide these services in a non-discriminatory manner with compassion, integrity and commitment to all those in need in a timely and professional manner.*





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## JCESA and the Community

### **From the Director**

Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency (JCESA), in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, serves an ever-growing mixture of citizens and visitors to our farms, history rich towns, bustling businesses, and Federal agencies-including parks. Like the County itself, the JCESA has a proud heritage of tradition while always advancing on our quest to deliver the highest quality service with compassion and integrity. JCESA is proud to serve in partnership with our County's seven Volunteer Fire Departments who are dedicated to the wellbeing of every person on every call. The agency governance, provided by the JCESA Board of Directors, includes six resident voting members who oversee the JCESA. The mission of the JCESA is to support the Volunteer Fire Departments with supplemental staffing, assisting in recruitment and retention of volunteer members, and providing key training opportunities to enhance all service delivery while maintaining safety for the responders.

This annual report is prepared for our Board, our partners, and the citizens at large, to express the accomplishments of 2018 and look to the future with our 2019 goals.

### **It Takes A Team**

Jefferson County Emergency Services Agency in partnership with seven independent, incorporated Fire Departments, strives to create a cooperative team environment with each and every member working toward the goal of continuous quality improvement in the areas of: service to all citizens, commuting workers, and visitors; training to maintain and advance our skill; and comradery to buoy our resilience and ability to stay focused during the most challenging calls. We are working together to reduce response times, improve emergency responder safety and ensure cost efficiency in our daily business practices. It is often said of the fire service, that we go into situations that other people are running out of. We respond on what is the *worst day ever* for the people we seek to help. This mission takes courage, dedication, and most importantly- team work.



### **Jefferson County West Virginia- The Community We Serve**

Jefferson County West Virginia is a bedroom community to Washington, D.C. with most of its workers commuting over 35 minutes to work. The population for 2017 is estimated to be 56,338 based on the census data of 2016. Approximately 38% of the residents are children under the age of 18, elders over 65, and disabled persons. People in these categories are often susceptible to increased medical challenges, and therefore may request emergency services at a higher rate. Jefferson County is a growing community with numerous housing developments and new industrial sites springing up. We are a mix of small town and rural areas, with an average of 255 persons per square mile compared to the West Virginia average of only 77 persons per square mile.

### **Response Volume- The Calls We Run**

In 2018, Jefferson County responded to 5,134 fire calls, and 1,516 EMS calls for a total response volume of 6,650 calls.





## A Review of 2018

### **2018 Leadership Transitions**

During 2018, the JCESA experienced transition at many levels of the organization. Our Director, Denise Pouget, moved on to serve as Fire Chief of Metropolitan Washington Airports Authority. Our new Director, Allen Keyser, moved into the lead position bringing over 40 years of fire service experience to our growing system. (See Director Keyser's Bio in Appendix A) In addition, by vote of the JCESA Board, the position of deputy director was eliminated to provide funding for more peak time/weekend staffing in the stations and an administrative assistant position critically needed to keep up with the reporting and legal requirements of the organization. In addition, funds were made available for the two Fire Captains to received small pay increases to bring them in closer parody with comparable officer salaries in surrounding jurisdictions.

At the beginning of 2018, the JCESA Board of Directors consisted of the following members:

Andrew Arnold, Chairman (EMS Rep)  
Jane Tabb, Vice-Chair (Commission Rep)  
Aaron Watson, Treasurer (Fire Rep)  
Elliot Simon, Secretary (Citizen Rep)  
Steve Sowers, Member (Citizen Rep)  
Jason Turner, Member (Citizen Rep)

Also advising at Board meetings were Jefferson County Prosecuting Attorney Nathan Cochran, President of the Jefferson County Fire and Rescue Association Ronald Fletcher, and JCESA Medical Director Marney Treese, M.D. Both Dr. Treese and Ronald Fletcher served as non-voting Board members.

During the 2018 year, Jane Tabb was replaced by Josh Compton as the representative from the County Commission. Also during 2018, a Board vacancy was filled by Tricia Worden. The service of all our Board members, past and current are truly appreciated!



## **2018 Programs and Accomplishments**

### **Class and Comp Study Recommendations**

Under the direction of the 2017 JCESA Board of Directors, a Class and Compensation Study was commissioned and undertaken in 2017-2018 with a final report being issued in August 2017 by the organization Emergency Services Consulting International. This comprehensive and professional study looked at the staffing, compensation patterns, and comparison of service delivery with nearby comparable jurisdictions. (Please See Appendix C for the entire 2017 Class and Comp study.) Key recommendations of the study prepared the groundwork for planning for addition of the following positions which were then implemented in mid 2018 including:

#### **(1) Creation of the Executive Administrative Aid Position**

As decided by the JCESA Board, a search for an Executive Administrative Assistant began in June 2018 and resulted in the hiring of a highly competent and experienced Executive Administrative Assistant, Debbie Lancaster. Ms. Lancaster provides critical support to the running of the organization including all tasks related to monthly Board of Directors meeting – agenda, meeting minutes, website, documents, packets and emails sent; assist with preparation for Agency Annual Audit and Budget; Process and organize all incoming invoices for payment; providing clerical support for updating individual staff members Certifications/Licenses/Trainings in Target Solutions Database; providing clerical support for tracking of all employee fire gear; and updating the website in addition to many other tasks.

#### **(2) Creation of a Technician Position for Driver/Operators**

To appropriately compensate and therefore retain some of our most highly trained fire/ems personnel, an additional step on the promotional ladder was recommended by the Class and Comp Study. Planning for this promotional opportunity, began in 2018 with implementation mid-year.

#### **(3) Hiring of part-time employees to meet the need of peak time/weekend staffing at stations 1, 6, and 7.**

It is critical to note that this staffing was sought in 2018 by the volunteer leadership at each of these stations, for augmenting volunteer staffing and therefore reducing the number of calls that were either non-response or delayed response. Problems with response are often because of lack of a driver for the apparatus. The part-time peak/weekend staff provided the much-needed additional staff to assure that more calls were met with timely response. Two thirds of the cost of providing this peak/weekend staffing was provided by the funds made available by the elimination of the Deputy Director position, while the remaining one-third of the needed funding came from other reworking of the budget.

#### **(4) Hiring full time firefighter/EMT's**

During the 2018 time period, the budget allowed for the hire of two firefighter/EMTs to the staffing compliment. These were additional positions, not hires to fill existing openings. These positions assisted in the on-going effort to provide enough staffing for timely response.



### **Employee Attrition Reduction Measures**

On-Boarding of a firefighter/EMT or Paramedic is expensive. Just the protective gear alone begins at \$2,500.00 and is specially fitted to each employee. Total cost for on-boarding new employees ranges from \$2,500.00 to \$10,000.00 depending on the employee's position and existing training. Also, the time for orientation and training is intensive. Because of these factors, retention of employees is a major concern.

Compensation and benefit disparities are a significant driving force for employees leaving to take positions outside of Jefferson County. To combat this attrition, across the board pay raises for full time employees were implemented in 2018. In addition, plans were configured to allow for pay raises for two Captains, with funding from the elimination of the deputy director position. Also, as requested by our personnel during the Class and Comp interviews, training was increased including the agency's first in-house Fire Fighter I and II classes, complete with live burn training. Trained and certified live exercise monitors were present at all potentially hazardous training components to ensure the safety and well-being of the students and the instructors.

Regarding the benefit packages, 2018 saw the planning for reconfiguration of the medical insurance to allow for affordable dependent coverage allowing numerous employees to add dependent coverage that was cos-neutral to the agency. Immediately upon this change we had 1/3 of the workforce enroll dependents in health coverage that had previously been cost prohibitive. There was also planning for a change in the life insurance from a \$40,000 benefit to a \$50,000.00 benefit. These changes were significant to employee satisfaction and therefore attrition reduction. From 2017 to 2018 there was a 71% reduction in employee attrition, saving the agency approximately \$40,000 in on-boarding costs.

### **Volunteer Recruitment and Retention**

A FEMA SAFER Recruitment and Retention grant in the amount of \$960,000 was received with a performance start date of Nov. 20, 2016. The grant period is four years in length, including all of 2018, during which 50 volunteer firefighters were recruited. Each recruit receives a full NFPA 1582 physical, and upon passing that physical can participate in training and receive individually sized personal protective equipment (PPE) for firefighting operations. Another benefit of the Recruitment and Retention grant is the reimbursement of tuition (for higher education) available for members who are in good standing with their individual fire departments.





# Training

## JCESA and Training

- **EMS Training:** In the complex world of emergency medicine, technology and information is constantly upgrading. For providers, both EMT and paramedics, the need for ongoing continuing education is critical. JCESA is proud to be a recognized and accredited training institute in the state of West Virginia, with accreditation by the West Virginia Office of Emergency Medical Services, and utilizing highly trained and competent certified instructors. In 2018 JCESA delivered 76 courses for emergency medical providers, including 59 required for continuing education and organizational compliance. These courses accounted for 3,088 student contact hours for 240 unique students.
- **FIRE Training:**  
2018 saw a significant increase in fire fighter training including two Fire Fighter I classes, two Fire Fighter II classes, a Haz Mat Operations class, and three classes to help with emergency equipment operations including EVOC (Emergency Vehicle Operations Class), and DPO (Driver Pump Operator). In addition, there were several technical classes and an instructor trainer class. These classes served both career and volunteer personnel in gaining critical training in the arena of fire prevention and suppression, and all hazards mitigation.
- **Citizen Training:** In this our first official year of offering a community education program, JCESA has reached 200 unique layperson students for classes including CPR, First Aid, AED, Emergency Activation & Response Awareness, and Naloxone for law enforcement. Many of these students enjoyed the classes so much, they came back for more than one course! While this program did not have any budget or dedicated staff, the success of the program is likely to have made Jefferson County a much safer place with the training of those 200 citizens.

## **Equipment Grant for Fit-Testing**

Thanks to the generosity of a grant from the Jefferson County Tuberculosis Association, JCESA was able to purchase a fit-testing machine to provide certainty that SCBA facemasks are a proper size and fit for each employee. Proper fit for receiving breathing air, in the toxic environments encountered during any firefighting operation, is of utmost importance for survival. Before the attainment of this equipment,



fire fighters had to come in when fit testing equipment could be borrowed, which at times resulted in additional costs to the testing. With the new equipment, JCESA was able to fit-test all our 50 employees within a week. The equipment is now available for testing during all on-boarding of new employees as well as the annual re-testing required by NFPA. Each employee can be tested on duty, avoiding additional costs.

### **Employee Physicals with New Vendor**

JCESA was able to plan for a complete revamp the process for employee physicals. Prior procedure for physicals for the employees included a physical at the contractor, who then sent them for a treadmill stress test at another location, plus a third trip required for drug screening. The process was lengthy and sometimes involved more than one day to accomplish a physical for one employee. With planning and implementation in 2018, JCESA hired *Professional Health Services* to come to the JCESA building and accomplish all employee physicals in one day. This more convenient same-day service includes a direct cost reduction of over \$8,000.00. Also, because only 2 personnel were needed to back-fill in the stations while employees were getting physicals, there was a significant cost reduction in overtime. In addition to the cost reduction, JCESA was also able to add additional components to the exam including a TB test and chest x-ray, plus a PSA test for the men. The goal of our physicals is to make sure that employees are healthy while serving the public, and that they have the benefit of early detection should any medical problems arise.

### **Employee Assistance Program through PUBLIC SAFETY EAP/A Division of ESI**

While the JCESA employees previously had access to employee assistance program services through a contractor with Jefferson County, few if any employees utilized the services. In 2018, a change of contract was in the planning stages. In late 2018, the JCESA contracted with *Public Safety EAP*, a division of ESI, to provide highly tailored EAP services by culturally competent fire and EMS counselors. Employees and their family members can speak to a counselor by phone, 24/7, 365 days a year. Not only does the counseling provide crisis intervention services and referral to on-going local counseling if needed, but it also provides an outstanding array of informational products (via website) to help employees with everything from purchasing a home, to elder care, to solving problems with their pets! The vastness of the types of help offered by this company is truly remarkable, yet affordable. They are working in true partnership with JCESA for the goal of keeping employees mentally fit and handling their own life challenges well so that they can come to work and concentrate on their performance on the emergency incident scene. For more information on the Public Safety EAP services, please see [www.theeap.com/public-safety-eap](http://www.theeap.com/public-safety-eap).

### **Advancement of Critical Incident Response Capabilities**

Jefferson County has provided critical incident response for several years, however, expansion of the team and improvement in training and response were goals of the existing team that became the focus of work in 2017, continuing to 2018. The team has reformed under a new name: **Emergency Services Stress Management Team (ESSM Team)**. The name change was for two purposes. First, the team wanted the name to express willingness and availability to support any first responder in Jefferson County, whether police, sheriff, dispatcher or Fire/Ems. Second, the team wanted the name to express



availability and willingness to help both in critical incident response, but also in the event of cumulative stress over time, or even suicide prevention. If you take the nature of emergency response, then add to that the increased death exposure related to the opioid epidemic, these improvements were needed. Also, the team networked with a local trauma therapy resource in Jefferson County, The Renovo Center, to gain access to mental health clinicians for consultation and direct services in the event of a critical incident or employee emergency.

### **Transport of Deceased Persons**

In 2017, the Jefferson County Commissioners approved the purchase of a DOA (dead on arrival) transport van to assist in the transportation of deceased persons when necessary. The van was assigned to the JCESA for staffing. There were 16 cases in Jefferson County during 2018 where it was necessary to transport DOA's. The JCESA utilizes off-duty personnel to make the transports, and ensure deceased individuals are transported and placed in a secure and appropriate facility while family members are contacted to claim these individuals. There are several reasons why a deceased person must be transported to a temporary holding facility including: a. when an individual expires in a traumatic accident and there will be a delay in contacting family members. b. when an individual expires due to apparent natural causes, yet no family members or next of kin are available to make decisions. c. when an individual has no family members or next of kin available to make decisions that anyone is aware of. All deaths by apparent unnatural causes are deemed Medical Examiner cases and are transported to the ME by another organization.

## 2019 Goals

Our number one goal for 2019 is to continue to work together in partnership with our seven Volunteer Fire Departments to provide excellent service to the citizens, commuting workers, and visitors to Jefferson County West Virginia. In addition, in the 2020 budget we are seeking 6 additional Fire Fighter/EMT career personnel to increase the response capability for emergency calls. Also, we want to continue to develop and train our Emergency Services Stress Management Team, while also organizing more chaplain services to support our employees and volunteers. In addition, we want to continue to reach out to our citizens with education opportunities to increase public safety, including CPR and AED training classes.