

## NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) will hold a **Public Hearing on April 22, 2025 at 6:30 p.m.** at Leonardtown High School located at 23995 Point Lookout Rd in Leonardtown, Maryland to consider public input on the **establishment of an Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County, Maryland.**

Public hearing information and related documents can be viewed online at:  
<https://www.stmaryscountymd.gov/publichearings>.

Residents are encouraged to attend and participate in the public hearing. Those wishing to address the Commissioners may participate in-person or provide their feedback via:

- Email to: [csmc@stmaryscountymd.gov](mailto:csmc@stmaryscountymd.gov)
- Mail to: PO Box 653 Leonardtown, Maryland 20650

**All submissions must be received no later than 5 p.m. on April 29, 2025.** Submissions will be considered by the Commissioners at the Public Hearing and/or up to seven days following the Public Hearing.

CSMC Public Hearings are televised live on St. Mary's County Government (SMCG) TV Channel 95 and streamed live on the SMCG YouTube Channel at:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@StMarysCoGov>.

Please note Public Hearing Guidelines are subject to change. Appropriate accommodation for individuals with language or special needs will be provided upon request. To meet these requirements, we respectfully ask for one week's prior notice. Please contact the CMSC Office at (301) 475-4200, ext. 1340. Proceedings are televised live and/or recorded for later broadcast. All content of these proceedings is subject to disclosure under the Maryland Public Information Act. Photographic, electronic audio, visual broadcasting, and recording devices are used during CSMC meetings. These are public meetings and attendance at these meetings automatically grants St. Mary's County Government permission to broadcast your audio and visual image.

By: Jennifer Utz, Director of Emergency Services  
4/4/25 and 4/11/25

St. Mary's County  
Department of Emergency Services

Jennifer Aubert-Utz Director



Commissioners of St. Mary's County

James R. Guy, President  
Michael R. Alderson Jr., Commissioner  
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner  
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner  
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

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TO: Commissioners of St. Mary's County  
David A. Weiskopf, County Administrator

CC: David Yingling, Deputy County Administrator  
Buffy Giddens, County Attorney

FROM: Jennifer Utz, Director of Emergency Services *JA-U*

RE: Request for Public Hearing to Establish an Active Volunteer  
Firefighting and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St.  
Mary's County

DATE: March 25, 2025

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**Historical Background:**

Currently there is no property tax credit or stipend for volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members in St. Mary's County.

**Summary:**

The Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC) recognize the essential contributions of volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members in protecting the safety, health, and welfare of the residents of St. Mary's County. St. Mary's County volunteer fire and rescue services play a critical role in emergency response, and increasing call response rates among volunteers is a public safety priority. Volunteers who respond to emergency calls incur incidental costs, including fuel expenses, wear and tear on vehicles, uniform maintenance, and food consumed while performing their duties; volunteers who respond to a greater number of calls have greater incidental costs.

St. Mary's County currently administers a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) codified in Chapter 181 of the St. Mary's County Code, which provides benefits for eligible volunteers. Pursuant to St. Mary's County Code § 46-1 and 46-3, the County may pay annually from general county funds to each of the active volunteer fire departments and volunteer rescue squads in St. Mary's County. The Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), 29 U.S.C. § 203(e)(4)(A), and 29 C.F.R. § 553.106 allow stipends to volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members for the payment of nominal fees that offset the out-of-pocket costs



incurred in their volunteer service. Annotated Code of Maryland, *Tax-Property Article*, § 9-260 authorizes the County to provide a property tax credit against the county property tax imposed on a dwelling in St. Mary’s County owned by a public safety officer.

The creation of an Active Volunteer Firefighting and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary’s County Program is intended to reimburse active volunteers for some of these unavoidable costs, thereby reducing the financial burden of their service and promoting continued participation in emergency response efforts.

The Proposed Ordinance is designed to allow flexibility for volunteers to elect what portion of the reward should be a stipend or a property tax credit. This flexibility allows volunteers that do not pay property tax or pay a smaller property tax to be an equal participant in the program via the cash stipend option. Equally those volunteers not wanting to exceed the \$600 Federal Tax Exemption may offset the remainder of the reward through a property tax credit.

Elections for property tax credit must be submitted from the Department of Emergency Services to the Treasurer by May 1. This deadline precedes the budget deadline in May, which is why March 15 was selected as a deadline for adjustments.

**Plan of Action:**

To approve a public hearing on the proposed Active Volunteer Firefighting and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program Ordinance. We would request a public hearing be scheduled for April 22, 2025, at 6:30 PM at Leonardtown High School.

**Budget:**

The proposed ordinance would impact the budget in an unknown amount, depending on the reward amount selected by CSMC for the Tiers as well as the number of qualifying volunteers.

**Timeline:**

Commissioner Meeting: Request for Public Hearing	Tuesday, March 25, 2025
Deadline: Submit Public Notice to Southern Maryland News (before 3pm)	Tuesday, April 1, 2025
Publication: 1st Public Notice	Friday, April 4, 2025
Publication: 2nd Public Notice	Friday, April 11, 2025
Public Hearing	Tuesday, April 22, 2025
Close of Public Comment Period (5pm)	Tuesday, April 29, 2025
Commissioner Meeting: Decision (this date or beyond are okay)	Tuesday, May 6, 2025

**ST. MARY'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT  
DEPARTMENT OF THE  
COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR**

*David A. Weiskopf, County Administrator*



**Commissioners of St. Mary's County**

James R. Guy, President  
Michael R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner  
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner  
Michael L. Hewitt, Commissioner  
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner

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To: Commissioners of St. Mary's County  
David A. Weiskopf, County Administrator

Fr: Jennifer Aubert-Utz

Date: March 20, 2025

**Request for Public Hearing  
Staff Proposal**

Topic: Ordinance to Establish an Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County, Maryland

Plan for Stakeholder Input:

*Please provide a list of potential community stakeholders:*

<i>Volunteer Fire &amp; Rescue Members</i>	<i>County Fire Chief &amp; County EMS Chief</i>	<i>Email and telephone notification; Attendance at Fire Board and Rescue Association Meetings</i>
<i>Public Hearing Notice</i>	<i>Southern Maryland News</i>	<i>Printed news, published twice</i>
<i>Public Hearing Notice</i>	<i>SMC Government, Dept. of Emergency Services</i>	<i>Social Media</i>

*(Please include name and contact person. Describe type of contact (meetings, forum, survey, website, social media, notifications, etc.)*

Departmental Response:

*Department will request a Public Hearing and post a notice of public hearing in the Southern Maryland News paper (twice) and post on the St. Mary's County Government and Department of Emergency Services social media accounts.*

Notification:

*Work with the PIO office to develop a News Release and associated Public Hearing messaging on the Count website.*

Timeline:

*Commissioner request for Public Hearing on March 25th, submit public notice to Southern Maryland News on April 1st (before 3 p.m.), 1st public notice on April 4th, 2nd public notice on April 11th, public hearing on April 22nd, close of public*

*comment period at 5:00 p.m. on April 29th, and Commissioner decision on May 6th.*

*Suggested Attachments:*

*Proposed Ordinance*

*Public Hearing Notice*

*Departmental Forms/Documents*

**Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County**

**ORDINANCE**

**AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH AN ACTIVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND RESCUE SQUAD RESPONSE REWARDS PROGRAM IN ST. MARY'S COUNTY, MARYLAND**

**WHEREAS**, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County (the County) recognize the essential contributions of volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members in protecting the health, safety, and welfare of the residents of St. Mary's County; and

**WHEREAS**, St. Mary's County volunteer fire and rescue services play a critical role in emergency response, and increasing call response rates among volunteers is a public safety priority; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to St. Mary's County Code § 46-1, the County may pay annually from general county funds to each active volunteer fire department in St. Mary's; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to St. Mary's County Code § 46-3, the County may grant funds annually from general county funds to the active rescue squads in St. Mary's County; and

**WHEREAS**, St. Mary's County currently administers a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) codified in Chapter 181 of the St. Mary's County Code, which provides benefits for eligible volunteers; and

**WHEREAS**, in accordance with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), 29 U.S.C. § 203(e)(4)(A), and 29 C.F.R. § 553.106, stipends or other financial incentives provided to volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members allow for the payment of nominal fees that offset the out-of-pocket costs incurred in their volunteer service; and

**WHEREAS**, the County acknowledges that volunteers who respond to a greater number of emergency calls incur greater incidental costs, including fuel expenses, wear and tear on vehicles, uniform maintenance, and food consumed while performing their duties; and

**WHEREAS**, this Program is intended to reimburse active volunteers for some of these unavoidable costs, thereby reducing the financial burden of their service and promoting continued participation in emergency response efforts; and

**WHEREAS**, pursuant to Maryland Annotated Code, *Tax-Property Article* § 9-260, the County, by law, may provide a property tax credit against the county property tax imposed on a dwelling in St. Mary's County owned by a public safety officer; and

**Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County**

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**WHEREAS**, a notice of a public hearing was advertised on April 4, 2025 and April 11, 2025 in *Southern Maryland News, the Enterprise*, a newspaper of general circulation in St. Mary's County, and a public hearing was held on April 22, 2025 to receive public comment and consider the enactment of Chapter 181A of the Code of St. Mary's County, Maryland, to provide for the establishment of an Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Commissioners of St. Mary's County find that it is in the best interest of the health, safety and welfare of the citizens of St. Mary's County to enact Chapter 181A of the Code of St. Mary's County, Maryland, to establish of an Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County; and

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED** by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, pursuant to St. Mary's County Code §§ 46-1 and 46-3, and §9-260 of the *Tax-Property Article* of the Annotated Code of Maryland, that:

**SECTION I.** Chapter 181A of the Code of St. Mary's County, Maryland, is enacted to read as follows:

**CHAPTER 181A. ACTIVE VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTER AND RESCUE SQUAD RESPONSE REWARDS PROGRAM**

**§181A**

**SECTION 1: APPLICABILITY**

This Chapter applies to all active volunteer firefighters and rescue squad members meeting the LOSAP eligibility criteria and the required number of call responses:

**SECTION 2: DEFINITIONS** For the purposes of this Ordinance, the following definitions apply:

1. Public Safety Officer – A St. Mary's County volunteer firefighter, rescue squad or advance life support member who meets the eligibility criteria set forth in Section 3 of this Ordinance.
2. Dwelling – As defined in Md. Tax-Property § 9-105, a dwelling includes a house, condominium, cooperative unit, or any other residential property occupied as a principal residence by the property owner. The dwelling must be in St. Mary's County, Maryland.

**Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County**

**SECTION 3: ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA** To qualify for benefits under this Program, a Public Safety Officer must meet the following criteria:

1. **LOSAP Qualification** – The Public Safety Officer must earn a minimum of 50 LOSAP points in a calendar year to qualify as an active member in accordance with the point system set forth in Chapter 181-5 of the St. Mary's County Code.
2. **Response Rate Calculation Period** – A Public Safety Officer's response rate shall be determined based on calls for service responded to from January 1 through December 31 of the prior calendar year, consistent with the LOSAP points accumulation period.
3. **Benefit Tiers:**
  - A. Basic Eligibility: Public Safety Officers who meet 50 LOSAP points qualify for a \$1000 stipend or property tax credit.
  - B. Second Tier: Public Safety Officers who meet 50 LOSAP points and respond to 20% or 100 of the department's/squad's calls for service (whichever is lower) qualify for an additional \$1000 (\$2000 total) or an equivalent property tax credit.
  - C. Third Tier: Public Safety Officers who meet 50 LOSAP points and respond to 40% or 200 of the department's/squad's calls for service (whichever is lower) qualify for an additional \$2000 (\$3000 total) or an equivalent property tax credit.
  - D. If a Public Safety Officer volunteers in multiple departments/squads, their calls for service will be counted cumulatively between their departments/squads.
  - E. Only calls run in a volunteer capacity shall qualify as calls for service.
4. **Benefit Election:** Public Safety Officers may elect to split their total reward between a cash stipend and a property tax credit but must submit their election to DES no later than April 1 each year. Tax credits are non-transferable, and only applicable to the property owner who qualifies for the credit.
5. **No Retroactive Adjustments:** Public Safety Officers who do not submit a benefit election by the April 1 deadline shall forfeit their ability to receive a stipend or property tax credit for that year.
6. **Leadership Benefit:** Public Safety Officers serving in designated LOSAP officer certified leadership positions shall receive the maximum benefit (Third Tier) amount available after accumulating their 50 LOSAP points. Leadership roles are exempt from



**Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County**

the requirements outlined in sub-section 7 below, "Active Membership Verification". Leadership roles are defined as:

A. Administrative Leadership:

- i. President (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year),
- ii. Vice President (maximum 2 per department/squad per calendar year),
- iii. Secretary (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year),
- iv. Treasurer (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year).

B. Operational Leadership:

- i. Chief (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year)
- ii. Assistant Chief (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year)

**7. Active Member Verification:** In addition to the conditions outlined above, to qualify as a Public Safety Officer for Second or Third Tier, an individual must, during the qualifying calendar year:

A. Have a current fit test or appropriate certification (e.g. EMT, paramedic, firefighter, EVOC/pump operator),

B. Be issued gear, and

C. Operate as a current crew or driver.

**SECTION 4: ADMINISTRATION**

1. Subject to the discretion of the Commissioners of St. Mary's County, the Director (or their designee) of St. Mary's County Department of Emergency Services shall administer this program.
2. If the Commissioners of St. Mary's County desire to alter the stipend and tax credit amounts, they shall set the stipend and tax credit amounts no later than March 15 of each year.
3. **Annual Certification Deadline:** Individual departments/squads shall certify, under oath, members' active status and response rate certifications and submit documentation to DES no later than February 15 of the following year for verification and processing.
4. **Special Rules for Fiscal Year 2026**

Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer Firefighter and Rescue Squad Response Rewards Program in St. Mary's County

A. For Fiscal Year 2026 only, Public Safety Officers shall be eligible to receive a stipend but shall not be eligible for a property tax credit under this Program.

B. Eligibility for the Fiscal Year 2026 stipend shall be determined based on the certified 2024 LOSAP list.

C. To receive the stipend, Public Safety Officers must submit their qualifying information and benefit election to DES no later than June 1, 2025.

D. All other provisions of this Program shall remain in effect unless otherwise specified.

5. **Record Retention and Inspection:** Each department/squad shall retain any and all required documentation collected and/or submitted pursuant to this Ordinance for not less than 5 years. For continued participation in the program, these documents shall be made available for copying and inspection to the Commissioners of St. Mary's County and/or DES upon request.

**SECTION 5: SEVERABILITY** If any provision of this Ordinance is found to be unlawful or unenforceable, such provision shall be stricken, and the remainder of the Ordinance shall remain in full force and effect.

**SECTION II.** This Ordinance shall be effective upon the "Effective Date" written below.

Those voting Aye: \_\_\_\_\_

Those voting Nay: \_\_\_\_\_

Those Abstaining: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Adoption: \_\_\_\_\_

Effective Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**ATTEST:**

**COMMISSIONERS OF ST. MARY'S COUNTY**

\_\_\_\_\_  
David A. Weiskopf  
County Administrator

\_\_\_\_\_  
James R. Guy, Commissioner President

\_\_\_\_\_

Requested by: Department of Emergency Services

Ordinance No. 2025 - \_\_\_\_\_

**Subject: To Establish the Active Volunteer  
Firefighter and Rescue Squad  
Response Rewards Program in  
St. Mary's County**

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Michale R. Alderson, Jr., Commissioner

APPROVED AS TO FORM  
AND LEGAL SUFFICIENCY:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Eric S. Colvin, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Buffy Giddens  
County Attorney

\_\_\_\_\_  
Mike Hewitt, Commissioner

\_\_\_\_\_  
Scott R. Ostrow, Commissioner



March 25, 2025

**To:** Commissioners of St. Mary's County

**From:** David M. Yingling, Deputy County Administrator

**CC:** David A. Weiskopf, County Administrator  
Vanetta VanCleave, Chief Financial Officer  
Buffy Giddens, County Attorney  
John Sterling Houser, Deputy County Attorney  
Jennifer Utz, Director of Emergency Services

**Subject:** "LOSAP Plus" Proposal

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**Background:**

In March 2018, St. Mary's County Government convened a focus group to evaluate budgetary impacts of an optional tax credit that could be approved by resolution to "public safety officers," particularly Maryland Tax-Property Code § 9-260. The law became effective in 2017 and allowed public safety officers to receive up to a \$2,500 tax deduction on the county portion of the tax bill. The focus group included representatives from the volunteer community (fire and EMS), law enforcement (Sheriff's Office and State Police) and dispatchers. The legislation was amended in 2024, giving the local jurisdiction additional flexibility by allowing them to define a public safety officer and removing the \$2,500 cap.

The property tax credit has been reviewed multiple times during the budget process but without action by the Commissioners of St. Mary's County (CSMC), most recently during the FY 2025 Budget Work Session. For the past two consecutive year the Emergency Services Board has sent a letter of support asking for additional consideration for the tax credit for "Fire and EMS Volunteers."

On March 11, 2025, during CSMC meeting staff was directed to review a slightly modified proposal. The goal of project is to incentivize active volunteerism in the volunteer EMS and volunteer fire departments, emphasizing response criteria and departmental leadership.

**Program Overview:**

Working with volunteer departmental/rescue squad leadership data was received regarding CY 2024 LOSAP submissions. Based on the data provided the framework of the program was developed based on independent conversations with individual commissioners, various county staff, other elected officials for eventual presentation to the CSMC. The goal of the program is to recruit and retain active volunteers and incentive additional responses by volunteers, limiting the need for additional career staff.

The program is designed as a benefit to all LOSAP qualifying members of each department in three tiers:

- Tier I – All LOSAP qualifying individuals from the volunteer department
- Tier II – All “active members” meeting response criteria of 100 calls for service or 20% of the call volume.
- Tier III – All “active members” meeting response criteria of 200 calls for service or 40% of the call volume or specified leadership positions.

Active members were defined as those eligible with:

- Have a current fit test or appropriate certification (e.g. EMT, paramedic, firefighter, EVOC/pump operator),
- Be issued gear, and
- Operate as a current crew or driver.

Eligible Leadership Position were defined as:

Administrative Leadership:

- President (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year),
- Vice President (maximum 2 per department/squad per calendar year),
- Secretary (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year),
- Treasurer (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year).

Operational Leadership:

- Chief (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year)
- Assistant Chief (maximum 1 per department/squad per calendar year)

### **Volunteer EMS and Volunteer Fire Department Meetings**

Discussions were held with various VFD and VRS leadership to discuss the proposal. During the discussions various opinions were received consisting of:

- Discussions of what defines leadership positions in VFD and VRS
- Reasonable standards of call volume between VFD and VRS

- Tax Implications of Stipend / Reimbursement
- Administrative burden of Reimbursement
- Desire for a recruitment and retention tool

### Timeline

LOSAP Due – February 15

Stipend/Tax Credit Determined – March 15

Forms Due to DES – April 1

Date due to Treasure – **May 1 (Year 1 Implications)**

### Loss in Revenue / Expense

Department	LOSAP Eligible Members	Ordinance	Responses - Standby Included		Cost by Department
			100 or 20%	200 or 40%	
1 - Leonardtown	65	6	8	10	\$105,000
2 - Mechanicsville	89	7	12	18	\$151,000
3 - Bay District	114	7	8	31	\$198,000
9 - Bay District			0	0	
4 - Ridge	95	6	12	14	\$147,000
5 - Seventh District	37	6	7	8	\$69,000
6 - Valley Lee (Fire)	102	7	10	7	\$143,000
7 - Hollywood	124	6	17	12	\$176,000
<b>FIRE TOTALS</b>	<b>626</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>74</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>\$989,000</b>
19 - Leonardtown	56	6	7	2	\$79,000
29 - Mechanicsville	60	6	4	0	\$78,000
38/39 - Lexington Park	98	6	9	4	\$128,000
49 - Ridge	40	6	0	0	\$52,000
59 - Seventh District	30	6	4	1	\$48,000
6 - Valley Lee (EMS)			3	0	
79 - Hollywood	28	6	2	1	\$44,000
10 - SMCALS	25	6	4	0	\$38,000
<b>EMS TOTALS</b>	<b>337</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>\$467,000</b>
<b>FIRE &amp; EMS TOTALS</b>	<b>963</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>107</b>	<b>108</b>	
<i>Calculations</i>	<i>x \$1,000</i>	<i>x \$2,000</i>	<i>x \$1,000</i>	<i>x \$2,000</i>	
<b>FISCAL TOTALS</b>	<b>\$963,000</b>	<b>\$174,000</b>	<b>\$107,000</b>	<b>\$216,000</b>	
<b>TOTAL</b>					<b>\$1,456,000</b>

For the purpose of the above model the following figures were used for calculations:

- Tier I - \$1000
- Tier II - \$2000
- Tier II - \$3000

### Items to be Determined by CSMC

- Amount of Each Tier Annually

- Year 1 timeline implications

**Method of Reimbursement**

- Directly to volunteer organization or
- Directly to qualifying member

**Historical LOSAP Data:**

<b>LOSAP Eligibility Lists</b>			
<b>Department</b>	<b>2022</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2024</b>
1 - Leonardtown	81	70	65
2 - Mechanicsville	78	83	89
3 - Bay District	93	117	114
4 - Ridge	83	89	95
5 - Seventh District	37	38	37
6 - Second District	75	92	102
7 - Hollywood	109	115	124
<b>FIRE TOTALS</b>	<b>556</b>	<b>604</b>	<b>626</b>
19 - Leonardtown	33	48	56
29 - Mechanicsville	66	56	60
38/39 - Lexington Park	92	83	98
49 - Ridge	33	43	40
59 - Seventh District	28	31	30
79 - Hollywood	35	35	28
10 - SMALS	30	28	25
<b>EMS TOTALS</b>	<b>317</b>	<b>324</b>	<b>337</b>
<b>FIRE &amp; EMS TOTALS</b>	<b>873</b>	<b>928</b>	<b>963</b>
<i>Increase per year</i>	<i>N/A</i>	<i>6%</i>	<i>4%</i>