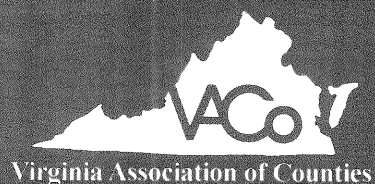


Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**

Program Information

Locality Prince William County

Program Title Heavy & Technical Rescue Instructor Initiative

Program Category Criminal Justice & Public Safety

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Title Deputy County Executive

Signature Susan L. Roltsch

Call for Entries

VACo Achievement Award Entry

Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue

Fire and Rescue Hazardous Materials Support for Law Enforcement Department Members

Program Abstract

In January 2012, the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue recognized the need to provide hazardous materials technician level support to our law enforcement partners within the Prince William County Police Department to improve the individual safety of law enforcement members in the performance of their duties in chemical, biological and radiological environments. What began as a partnership to support the Prince William County Police Department with radiological metering support has expanded into a comprehensive outreach program to provide not only local but also state level law enforcement members with chemical, biological and radiological detection, metering and decontamination support as part of a multi-discipline partnership. This partnership has ultimately resulted in improved law enforcement member safety, a closer working relationship at all personnel levels and an enhanced public safety service delivery to the citizens of Prince William County.

Need for the Program

In 2012, the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue joined with the Prince William County Police Department as partners in the National Capital Region's Preventative Radiological Nuclear Detection Program to detect illicit radiological material and prevent the deployment of a radiological or nuclear device. This program, as organized in Prince William County, tasked the Police Department with

utilizing pager sized radiological detection devices to detect illicit radiological materials and the Fire and Rescue Department to provide advanced radiological isotope identification and mitigation. During the deployment and training phase of this program it was determined that not only did the Prince William County Police Department require radiological support, but its members were also potentially exposed to chemical and biological hazards during their duties that would require a specialized law enforcement decontamination process. Under Federal Law 29 CFR 1910.120(c)(6)(i) and (ii) the employer, Prince William County Police Department, is required to perform atmospheric monitoring for hazardous levels of ionizing radiation and other conditions that may cause death or serious harm. The Prince William County Police Department is also required under 29 CFR 1910.120(k)(2)(iii) to be able to decontaminate employees potentially contaminated by hazardous materials. Like most law enforcement agencies, the Prince William County Police Department is not equipped, trained or provided funding to meet the requirements under this federal law.

Description of the Program

As partners in the National Capital Region's Preventative Radiological Nuclear Detection Program (PRND), the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue and Police Department began a process in 2012 to ensure the efficient deployment of radiological detection equipment. The Prince William County Police Department was tasked with utilizing pager sized radiological detection devices to detect illicit radiological materials and perform citizen interviews due to their training and experience in ensuring the sanctity of citizens' Constitutional 4th Amendment right to protection

from unreasonable searches and seizures. The Fire and Rescue Department was tasked to provide advanced radiological isotope identification and mitigation in support of the Police Department's mission. During the deployment and training phase of this program it was determined that not only did the Prince William County Police Department require radiological support as part of the PRND program, but its members were also potentially exposed to chemical and biological hazards during their duties that would require atmospheric monitoring and a specialized law enforcement decontamination process.

The Prince William County Police Department's SWAT Team as a National Incident Management System (NIMS) Type 2 Team utilizes an NFPA 1992 and 1994 chemical protective garment to guard against potential contamination from hazardous waste, drug labs, chemical and biological threats. During radiological training with the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's hazardous materials personnel as part of the PRND program; it was discovered that the SWAT Team was not trained or equipped to identify or measure hazardous atmospheres or decontaminate their personnel if they were to become contaminated during the performance of their law enforcement duties. To provide atmospheric monitoring of potentially hazardous environments a two stage process was developed. The first stage allowed for the provision of equipment and just in time training of SWAT personnel to utilize atmospheric monitoring meters currently within the Department of Fire and Rescue's equipment cache. The second stage allowed for Fire and Rescue hazardous materials personnel to perform the atmospheric monitoring after the area was secured and declared safe by law enforcement personnel with the law enforcement personnel providing force protection for the hazardous

materials personnel. These processes have been practiced and tested as part of an annual SWAT/hazardous materials exercise.

The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue utilizes a technical decontamination process to remove contamination from hazardous materials response personnel while operating in chemical protective garments that meets NFPA 472. It was determined that this process could in theory be utilized for SWAT Team personnel, but would require modification to provide for their unique chemical protective garments and tactical equipment such as weapons, munitions and body armor. A specialized decontamination process was developed to address the unique challenges posed by SWAT chemical protective equipment and tactical equipment utilizing the industry standard hazardous materials decontamination process that is in compliance with NFPA 472. A training program was developed for both hazardous materials personnel and SWAT Team members to explain the new technical decontamination set up, phases and procedures and so that all personnel would understand not only their roles and responsibilities, but also those of the other agency. During our 2014 annual SWAT/hazardous materials exercise this specialized decontamination process was successfully tested in a full scale practical training scenario.

Illicit narcotic production of substances such as methamphetamine utilizes flammable, corrosive and toxic chemicals as part of the manufacturing process. These chemicals are hazardous to Prince William County Police Department narcotics officers investigating and prosecuting these crimes. The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's hazardous materials personnel were determined to be uniquely equipped and trained to support Police Department narcotics officers in the areas of

atmospheric monitoring, chemical hazard identification, decontamination and clean-up support. These illicit manufacturing processes pose a major health hazard to not only law enforcement personnel, but to citizens that may live in the surrounding area. By supporting the Police Department, these illicit manufacturing processes have been mitigated and cleaned up more quickly creating a safe environment for our citizens.

In February 2014, the hazardous materials support of law enforcement grew to also include the Prince William County Police Department's Animal Control Bureau. The Animal Control Bureau was initially concerned with being able to document hazardous levels of ammonia to animals within households with large numbers of animals for judicial purposes. Upon meeting with the Department of Fire and Rescue Hazardous Materials Officer, it was determined that the highest priority was to provide detection and monitoring for Animal Control Bureau personnel of potentially hazardous levels of not only ammonia but other toxic materials. This initial meeting has developed into another area where the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's hazardous materials personnel are supporting a law enforcement mission to ensure employee safety.

The hazardous materials program support of law enforcement missions has improved both the safety of the physical environment our employees must work in to provide public safety and enhanced their level of training and knowledge through exposure to many different fire, rescue and law enforcement disciplines. While this program has met its initial goal to provide radiological support to a law enforcement mission, those individuals involved did not let this goal limit their vision or application of this process in other areas. The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue

has made the expansion of hazardous materials support for law enforcement missions part of its continuous program improvement process.

Responding to Economic Downturn

As a suburb of Washington, D.C., Prince William County has experienced a rapid increase in its population during the last 25 years. In 1990, Prince William County's population was 216,592 residents and by 2010 the population had grown to 406,517. This population explosion led to an increased need for all levels of public services including public safety. Even during the economic down turn and its resulting high levels of home foreclosures and decreased home construction, Prince William County added an additional 25,000 residents from 2010 to 2012. The rapid decrease in home values coupled with a continuous increase in citizens resulted in an austere County budget requiring all county agencies to limit their activities to those absolutely required by federal and state mandate or needed for public safety.

This partnership to provide hazardous materials support by the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue to local and state law enforcement has allowed county law enforcement agencies to utilize their limited citizen provided funds to provide the required patrol, SWAT, narcotics, and animal control services. Without this partnership, the Prince William County Police Department would have been forced to purchase atmospheric detection and monitoring meters, decontamination equipment, and also remove personnel from their daily law enforcement activities to undergo initial and annual recertification training. By promoting this partnership within two public safety agencies, monies provided by the citizens of Prince William County have been used to

efficiently fill an identified gap in the public safety system within Prince William County without the creation of an expensive and unnecessarily redundant hazardous materials public safety capability.

Costs of the Program

As part of its equipment cache as a NIMS Type 1 Hazmat Team, the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue already possessed the needed equipment to provide chemical, biological and radiological detection and monitoring and decontamination for not only its public safety mission, but also to support law enforcement agencies. Its personnel also had the competencies required under NFPA 472 and 29 CFR 1910.120 to perform the needed law enforcement support tasks. Also, since the equipment used to support the Prince William County Police Department is part of the hazardous materials program's required equipment cache; there was not an increase in the annual hazardous materials budget.

Costs associated with creation of the partnership and working relationships have been incurred within the Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's standard annual budget without any increase. Costs associated with training program development are incurred through the daily work of the personnel assigned as part of the hazardous materials program to include a uniformed Fire and Rescue Captain as the Hazardous Materials Officer/Team Leader and a civilian Hazardous Materials Coordinator.

Results/Success of the Program

The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue's hazardous materials support of the Prince William County Police Department's numerous law enforcement missions has become a model program of intergovernmental cooperation that not only identified a capability gap that would have required a large investment in both training hours, resulting in less police officers performing law enforcement activities, and tax revenues, for equipment, but remedied the many safety concerns without increasing budget costs for either agency. These support processes have led to an improvement in daily operational activities between the Department of Fire and Rescue and the Police Department as more members of both departments are engaged in hazardous materials planning processes and regular joint practical exercises. Both the Department of Fire and Rescue and the Police Department are tasked with ensuring not only the safety of the citizens of Prince William County, but also the safety of those individuals charged with performing the various missions needed to protect our citizens. This program of mutual support facilitates enhanced employee effectiveness by ensuring their health and safety. By providing hazardous materials support to law enforcement there has been a more effective incident stabilization and resolution process due to all public safety personnel operating with a better understanding of their roles and responsibilities to our citizens and each other.

Worthiness of an Award

The Prince William County Department of Fire and Rescue believes its hazardous materials support of law enforcement agencies takes a unique and creative approach to insuring consistent intergovernmental cooperation and coordination in providing public

safety services to our citizens. Any incidents involving hazardous materials can be very complex and require a unified process to ensure the safety of not only citizens but also fire, EMS and law enforcement first responders. This partnership was developed as not only a cost savings process, but first and foremost as a safety initiative. All too often, public safety agencies develop individual processes and teams, resulting in costly, duplicative programs. These programs are often operationally limited by restricted budgets resulting in inefficient processes that are unable to effectively perform needed lifesaving missions. This partnership has resulted in an ability of the Prince William County Police Department to respond to a wide range of citizen calls for service safe in the knowledge that the Department of Fire and Rescue's Hazardous Materials Program is there to support them in a manner that exceeds the requirements of not only the federal regulations, but also the industry consensus standards. From an administrative perspective, this partnership has improved our employee's safety, exceeded the federal requirements, and enhanced the service to our citizens with a very minimal financial investment in personnel costs. The impact of this partnership has resulted in greater public and employee safety. The aspects mentioned and the unique approach more than justifies an achievement award.

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