

**GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department**



**Fiscal Year 2017 Budget Oversight Hearing**

Testimony of

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Before the

Committee on the Judiciary  
Chairman Kenyan McDuffie

April 12, 2016  
Council Chamber  
John A. Wilson Building  
1350 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20004



Good morning Chairman McDuffie, Council Members and staff. I am Gregory M. Dean, Chief of the D.C. Fire and Emergency Medical Services Department (“the Department”). I am here today to testify in support of Mayor Muriel M. Bowser’s Fiscal Year 2017 Budget, entitled “Giving District Residents a Fair Shot.” For those of you watching on television, my testimony is available on the Department’s website at [fems.dc.gov](http://fems.dc.gov).

When I appeared before you in February, I testified about the initiatives we are working on to bring us closer to our shared vision of a Fire and EMS Department that provides the best possible service to its citizens. I am pleased to tell you that Mayor Bowser’s proposed FY 2017 budget provides the Department with the resources necessary to achieve that vision. My testimony today will focus on how we will use those resources to maintain our progress towards creating a safer, stronger District of Columbia.

The Mayor’s proposed FY 2017 gross operating budget for the Department is \$254 million. This is a 9.8 percent increase over the FY 2016 approved gross budget of \$232 million. The budget is comprised of \$250 million in Local funds, \$3 million in Federal Grant funds, \$1 million in Special Purpose Revenue funds and \$400,000 in Intra-District funds.

In Local funds, the Department’s proposed budget includes a net increase of \$19.7 million. This increase is largely due to the Mayor’s historic investment in EMS reform with the inclusion of \$12 million for the third party provider initiative. It also includes:

- \$2.4 million to replace aging personal protective equipment that keeps our first responders safe from injury and meets collective bargaining agreement (CBA) requirements;

- \$600,000 to purchase 20 new LifePak 15 and AED 1,000 units to help us save cardiac arrest patients;
- \$324,000 for signal boosters in FEMS stations to improve Wifi connection capability, which will improve the timeliness and accuracy of 911 responses and patient care reporting;
- \$2.7 million in cost of living adjustments and step increases;
- \$137,000 to create a new administrative captain position for the president of Local 36 of the International Association of Firefighters (Local 36) consistent with the 2015 overtime negotiations; and
- \$3.8 million in increased funding for DC Water's fire hydrant fee.

In Federal Grant funds, the proposed budget includes a net increase of \$3 million and 42 Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) positions that reflect the Department's receipt of the SAFER<sup>1</sup> grant to hire firefighter paramedics. These paramedics are scheduled to start at the Training Academy on May 16, 2016. They follow the 25 new firefighter/emergency medical technician (EMT) recruits who started at the Academy on March 21, 2016, the first class to be selected from the Department's 2015 hiring registry. 22 of the 25 firefighter/EMT recruits are District residents, keeping Mayor Bowser's promise to create Pathways to the Middle Class for District residents during her administration. In addition, we plan to hire a cadet class this summer, and to start another firefighter/EMT class after Labor Day.

The addition of the SAFER grant-funded firefighter paramedics and the administrative captain position, combined with the elimination of seven frozen and/or

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<sup>1</sup> Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response.

vacant administrative positions, account for the Department's net increase of 36 FTE's in FY 2017.

The budget includes FY 2017 capital projects funding totaling \$16.2 million which includes \$15 million for apparatus and \$1.2 million for scheduled capital improvements. The new apparatus funding is consistent with the recommendations of the 2013 BDA Global audit report. Mayor Bowser's inclusion of the same level of funding in the FY 2016 capital budget is already reaping benefits for the Department, as we have been steadily rebuilding our front line and reserve apparatus over the last several months. In FY 2019 through FY 2022, there is additional funding for a new Harbor Patrol Facility on the waterfront, for renovations at Engine 23, and for the relocation and renovation of Engine 26. We have also secured grant funding from the Homeland Security and Emergency Management Agency (HSEMA) to conduct a fire load study on the SE/SW waterfront. The ultimate goal of this study is to make sure that the Department has the response resources it needs as the waterfront area continues to develop and grow.

As you are aware, on March 28, 2016, we rolled out the third party provider initiative with the deployment of American Medical Response (AMR) ambulances throughout the District. During the first two weeks of the rollout, AMR transported over 1,300 Basic Life Support (BLS) patients to District hospitals. AMR units reached their ten-minute response time goal 60 to 70 percent of the time during the first week and at least 75 percent of the time during the second week.<sup>2</sup> Every day, their response time performance gets better and we expect to continue to see improvement in this area in the short term. Most importantly, we already are seeing a positive impact on our own unit

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<sup>2</sup> These are preliminary estimates as we are still conducting quality assurance review of these numbers.

availability as a result of the contract. Our units are not only consistently more available for calls, but they are also responding more often from their assigned neighborhoods, rather than having to respond from hospitals all over the District.

I do want to caution that we are only in week three of an initiative that is very new to all of us. We will continue to review how it is working and will make any necessary tweaks as we learn more. Our priorities at the moment are working with the Office of Unified Communications (OUC) to implement dispatch changes that complement the new operation, as well completing the integration of both parties'<sup>3</sup> electronic patient care technology so that the transfer of patient care on the scene can be entirely electronic. Overall, though, we are encouraged and cautiously optimistic that this investment will yield dividends for our EMS system.

As I testified in February, our ultimate goal with this initiative is to slow down our providers so they can more effectively practice medicine in the field and save more lives. Our goals are to improve our response times, more frequently train our providers (in all of our disciplines, not just EMS), preserve resources for our highest acuity patients, provide better field supervision and performance evaluation, do preventive maintenance on our fleet, and improve agency culture surrounding EMS. We are already making progress in these areas. On March 21, 2016, we started our first round of in-service and battalion-level EMS training, covering the topics of patient assessment, patient care documentation and high performance CPR. Under the leadership of our Interim Medical Director, Dr. Robert P. Holman, we are working to create an in-service EMS training plan for the remainder of this fiscal year and beyond. We are engaging our local hospitals in this effort so that we can bring cutting edge technology and

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<sup>3</sup> DCFEMS and AMR.

instruction to our members.

We are also working toward our goal of preserving our Advanced Life Support (ALS) resources for our most life-threatening emergencies. On March 28, 2016, we put in place a new policy designed to ensure that we consistently staff 14 medic units every day. And the dispatch changes that I referenced earlier will limit use of those units to the transport of ALS patients. This change is a work in progress but, ultimately, we hope it will represent a significant and positive shift for the Department.

Finally, in March, we put eight refurbished ambulances in the field, as well as three new ladder trucks. These additional units are allowing us to have reserve ambulances on hand, which allows us to do more preventive maintenance. We also expect two new ladder trucks and two refurbished engines to be delivered this summer.

Before I close, I want to briefly summarize the Department's legislative proposals that are included in the Budget Support Act (BSA). First, we propose permanent legislation authorizing the Department to contract with a third party provider to treat and transport BLS patients. As you know, the Council approved emergency and temporary legislation on this subject last fall, but the temporary legislation expires in September. The permanent legislation, which will authorize the Department's entry into a longer term contract for this purpose, was intended to be included in the BSA as introduced in March. It will be included in the errata letter being transmitted to the Council later this month.

Second, we propose legislation authorizing our entry into a memorandum of understanding with the Council of Governments (COG) to support having a fire liaison officer in the Washington Metropolitan Area Transit Authority (WMATA) Rail Operations

Control Center. Last year, the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), regional Fire Chiefs, and WMATA agreed to create this position to better support WMATA's management of fire incidents on the Metro system. The District has not been able to participate because such an MOU, and the Department's provision of resources outside of the District, are not currently authorized by statute. The BSA legislation would provide such authorization and permit the District's participation in a partnership that is helping to keep Metro passengers and employees, as well as first responders, safe.

Third, we propose legislation that will address the pay compression that exists between our unionized supervisors and our chief officers that is caused by a difference in the way longevity pay is calculated for the two groups of employees. Under the collective bargaining agreement between the Department and Local 36, longevity pay for union members at the rank of captain, lieutenant, sergeant, firefighter/paramedic and firefighter/EMT is calculated based upon the employee's rate of pay. By contrast, the D.C. Code<sup>4</sup> requires that service longevity for nonunion fire officials at the ranks of assistant fire chief, deputy fire chief and battalion fire chief be calculated based upon step 1 of the employee's salary class. As a consequence, current law creates pay compression between union and nonunion sworn FEMS members. Our proposed legislation would treat both groups of employees the same and hopefully provide more incentive for our unionized managers to aspire to the chief officer ranks.

Mr. Chairman, supporting Mayor Bowser's FY 2017 proposed budget will allow us to make the necessary investments to keep our neighborhoods and residents safe. The introduction of a third party provider is an important first step, but moving forward we

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<sup>4</sup> DC Official Code § 5-544.01(a)(1).

will need full support from the District's collective leadership to successfully address the underlying problems that have kept the Department from moving forward for so long.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity today to explain our Department's budget request, and to ask for the support we need to continue our progress in creating a safer, stronger District of Columbia.