

**Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire & Rescue Co.
131 Retreat Road
Bluemont, VA 20135**

July 29, 2020

Chris Boies

County Administrator
County of Clarke, Virginia
101 Chalmers Ct.
Berryville, Virginia 22611

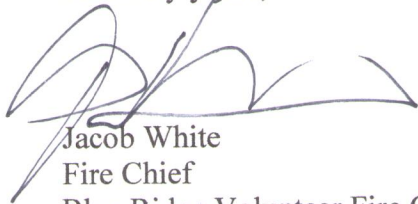
Dear Mr. Boies,

I am requesting immediate 24/7 coverage at Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company. Since staffing was removed from our station we have struggled to respond to emergency incidents and our response times have increased. Blue Ridge was not in favor of the change in staffing, knowing that it would have a negative impact on our response times, adequate staffing, and service to our community.

Availability of volunteers varies greatly at Blue Ridge. Many of our members do not work a regular schedule. Schedules are predictable, however, member availability is not. We are a from-home-response station, it is not feasible for a small membership to pull duty at the station away from their families. Also, we have lost several members that have recently moved.

The SAFER grant was written to staff several stations including Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company. System members were expecting the staffing plan that was approved by the Commission and included in the SAFER grant narratives to be followed. Obviously, this is not the case and our membership has been left to fill the void. We will continue to do our best to respond to emergency incidents, however, we implore you to reconsider staffing assignments.

Sincerely yours,



Jacob White
Fire Chief
Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company

**Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire & Rescue Co.
131 Retreat Road
Bluemont, VA 20135**

August 7, 2020

Chris Boies

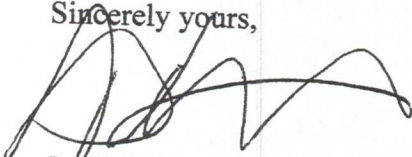
County Administrator
County of Clarke, Virginia
101 Chalmers Ct.
Berryville, Virginia 22611

Dear Mr. Boies,

This letter shall serve as a follow-up from a staffing request dated 07/29/2020. After our conversation a survey was created to explore the effects that COVID-19 has had on our membership in regards to call responses/duty hours. Fifteen active operational members were polled; ten responses were received. 90% of the active operational members that responded report that COVID-19 has had a direct impact on their ability to respond to incidents and run duty. Attached is a copy of the survey results. You may also view the results online following the link provided:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/results/sm-d2vj9ykb7/>

Sincerely yours,



Jacob White
Fire Chief
Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company



SIGN UP FREE



Survey Results

QUESTION SUMMARIES

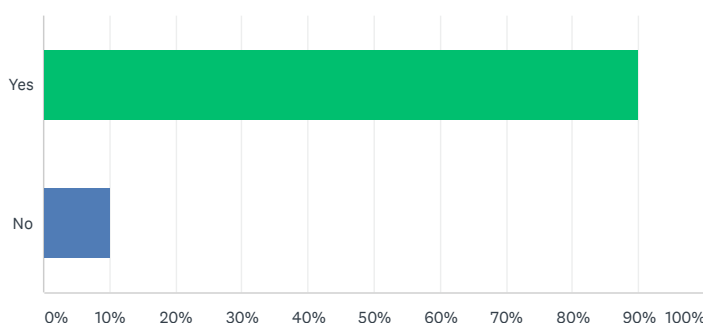
INDIVIDUAL RESPONSES

All Pages ▾

Q1

Has the Coronavirus Pandemic effected your ability to respond to Blue Ridge calls for service or sign up for services, time?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0

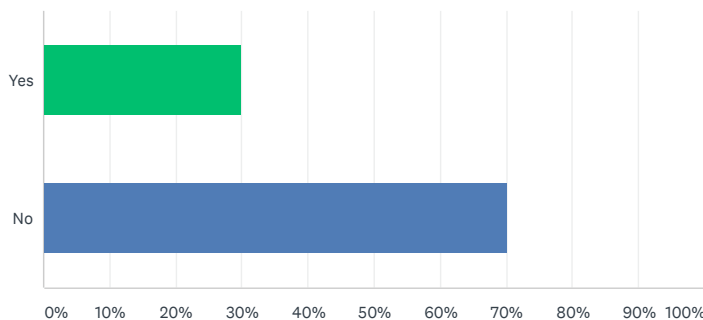


ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	90.00%	9
No	10.00%	1
TOTAL		10

Q2

If yes, has the coronavirus pandemic caused you to have childcare problems that has effected your availability?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	30.00%	3
No	70.00%	7

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<https://www.surveymonkey.com/re:>

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10 responses



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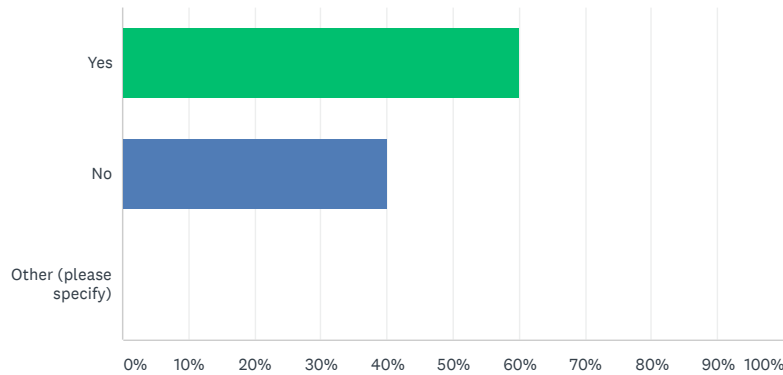


Q3



Have you reduced responding to calls due to being worried about being quarantined/contracting for COVID-19 and not receiving compensation from your full time job?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



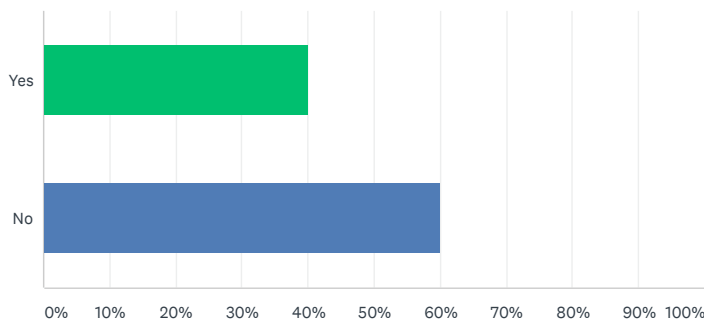
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	60.00%	6
No	40.00%	4
Other (please specify)	Responses 0.00%	0
TOTAL		10

Q4



Have you been working more hours at your full time job due to the coronavirus pandemic?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	40.00% 4
No	60.00% 6
TOTAL	10

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10 responses



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to share any other information you would like provide that illustrates the coronavirus pandemic's impact on volunteering at Blue Ridge?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 7

No

8/1/2020 3:43 PM

Having an aeroclave system would be very helpful. I am not fearful of running calls; however, my time has been very limited by my current work schedule

8/1/2020 2:46 PM

Paid medic unit provides coverage and county supports that model from data. No need to spend two hours away from home when paid response is acceptable by county supervisors.

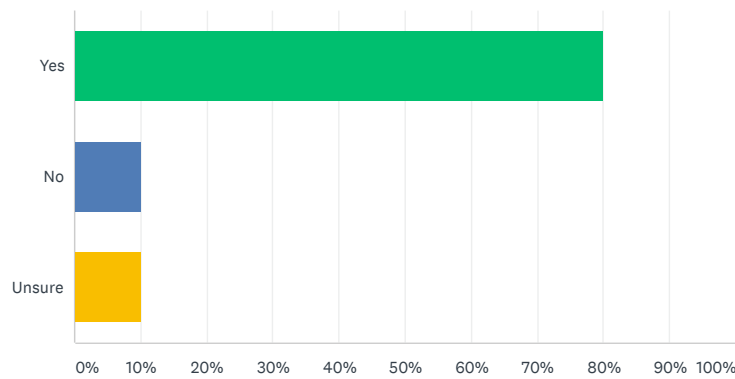
8/1/2020 1:54 PM

Q6



If Blue Ridge was staffed would it cause you to run more calls/more duty?

Answered: 10 Skipped: 0



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES	
Yes	80.00%	8
No	10.00%	1
Unsure	10.00%	1
TOTAL		10

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10 responses



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has affected your volunteer ability?

Answered: 5 Skipped: 5

No	8/1/2020 3:43 PM
I do like to run duty with people together. I am unsure when a call goes out if people will also be responding	8/1/2020 2:48 PM
With my work schedule when I'm off work I choose to not take time from my family.	8/1/2020 2:27 PM
Summertime Family obligations	8/1/2020 2:21 PM

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10 responses



County of Clarke, Virginia
Department of Fire, EMS and Emergency Management
Director Brian Lichty



MEMORANDUM

To: Chris Boies, County Administrator

From: Brian Lichty, Director Fire, EMS and Emergency Management

Cc:

Date: August 3, 2020

RE: Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company Staffing Request

In a letter dated July 29, 2020 the Blue Ridge Volunteer Fire Company (BRVFC) requested staffing assistance. As identified in the letter a decrease in membership is one of the significant contributing factors to their request.

After a careful review of statistical information and researching several different options, I provide you with the following 3 recommendations. A 24/7 staffing option was eliminated due to concerns over proper sleeping facilities, possible station moisture/mold and ability to provide the service. Additionally, there are no recommendations to change the current staffing model, which could potentially result in negative impacts on out system performance.

Plan	Est. Monthly Cost	Pros	Cons
Hire PT seasonal employees, goal of 2 personnel 12 hours a day 5-7 days a week	\$14,000 - \$16,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PT employees do not commit County to long term obligations • Could help with system structure and standardization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If temporary situation, could be difficult to hire enough PT to fill positions • Will require additional costs in PPE & Uniforms

Hire 4 additional FTEs to staff, with goal of staffing 2 personnel, 12hrs a day 5-7 days a week	\$15,000 - \$17,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would require less employees than PT • Could help with system structure and standardization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A long-term commitment • Will require additional costs in PPE & Uniforms and benefits
Develop a private-public partnership to provide Fire, EMS or Both	\$20,000+	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not require hiring new employees • Costs such as PPE, uniforms, etc., are the responsibility of Private Company 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially very costly • Could have impacts on EMS Revenue Recover • Could be complicated with short or long term contracts • Could have complications with Medicare

It can be difficult to determine when staffing assistance is needed for any Volunteer Fire-Rescue Company. Our efforts over the past couple of years are having a significant impact on our service delivery. We are getting crews to the scene faster and relying less on surrounding jurisdictions. However, volunteerism is still on a decline.

Any additional staffing to a Volunteer Fire Company will only further enhance the progress we have made. The Volunteer Fire Companies of Clarke County have provided an invaluable service to the community for years. Many of the areas where we still struggle to meet our response goals are in the BRVFC's first due area.

In coordination with the options above, I recommend a staffing period of 4-6 months. During this time an aggressive recruiting effort will be done to try and bring additional Volunteers to BRVFC. It should be noted that certification requirements to fight fires and provide medical care can take as much as a year to obtain and cost departments thousands of dollars. Therefore, the 4-6 month staffing period may need to be extended.