

REQUEST FOR BOARD ACTION

HENDERSON COUNTY BOARD OF COMMISSIONERS

MEETING DATE: January 3, 2005

SUBJECT: Rescue Squad Funding

ATTACHMENTS: **Rescue Squad Services Summary**

SUMMARY OF REQUEST:

After reviewing the Rescue Squad budget for the first time this year, the Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee realized the Rescue Squad provides a unique and expansive list of services to our community. The forecast trends for these services project continued growth and expansion. The Committee feels that in order to continue these services to an increasing population the Rescue Squad must develop a funding stream that is stable, and provides for growth commensurate with service expectations. As demand for service increases, the Rescue Squad will need the flexibility to plan for service provision in a more effective and efficient manner which means capital reserves and cash flow are not only important, but necessary. The Committee has reviewed several funding options (e.g. Service Fees, Service Districts, Special Legislation) for Rescue Squad services without requiring additional allocation from the County's general fund. In fact the intention is to eliminate the general fund appropriation altogether. After considering the available options, the Fire and Rescue Advisory Committee would like the Board to consider a request for special legislation (local bill) to establish a special county-wide tax district (including the municipalities) to fund Rescue Squad services.

COUNTY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION/ACTION REQUIRED:

It is obvious that the Rescue Squad's roll in the provision of emergency services is extremely important for the safety and welfare of our community. As the County continues to grow, the Squad's roll will expand. Historically, the Rescue Squad has relied on various sources of revenue including donations, governmental/non-profit allocations, fund raising, etc. None of these sources could be considered "stable." I recommend that the Board either 1) commit to increasing the County tax rate to fund the capital and operational requirements of the Rescue Squad or 2) support a local bill that establishes a County-wide special tax district (including the municipalities) to fund the capital and operational requirements of the Rescue Squad.



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Agency's General Functions

Since 1957 the purpose of this organization is to serve at any time, upon proper request, on any mission of mercy; to aid and assist in case of disaster or accident, within the capacity and mission of the Rescue Squad, where human life is or has been endangered.

More specifically the Henderson County Rescue Squad provides:

- Backup for Henderson County EMS when all their units are busy.
- Four wheel drive ambulances and drivers for HCEMS when needed, especially during inclement weather.
- Primary extrication and rescue services to those areas in the county without such, and back up and assistance to those that do.
- Underwater Search and Rescue
- Swiftwater / Floodwater Rescue
- High Level and Rope Rescue
- Wilderness and Urban Search and Rescue
- Medical Standbys for numerous events
- Assistance to law enforcement i.e. traffic control, manhunts, criminal death investigations.
- Weather related services i.e. ice storms, snow, floods, shelters
- Training for other departments
- Mutual aid to other counties in the entire state which in turn makes that available to Henderson County in time of disaster.

Looking to the Future

Following 46 years of tradition in providing innovative services the Rescue Squad is looking to the future to provide for the needs of today and tomorrow. Like all agencies we must stand ready to adapt to the new and changing needs of the community. Currently we are planning on developing the following resources to better serve the community:

- **Duty Crew** – Currently a committee is evaluating the feasibility and logistics of having a crew of Rescue Squad members on duty during the peak time of the day. This would improve response time and coverage when it is difficult for responders to leave work. The duty crew would rely upon volunteers to supplement manpower.
- **Facilities** – The Rescue Squad operates out of one County owned facility located off Williams Street. Presently we are having to park vehicles outside due to a lack of space. Long range plans include to construction of two stations allowing the Rescue Squad to decentralize, allowing improved response times. This would allow the County to use the facility on Williams Street for other uses.
- **SMAT Team** – Working in conjunction with HCEMS and the NCOEMS we were awarded a Statewide Medical Assistance Team. Our team will be one of 26 in the state designed to respond to instances of mass casualties or to assist local agencies to recover from hazmat or terrorist activity.
- **Confined Space Rescue** – Along with the Henderson County Fire & Rescue Association and the Fire Departments we hope to improve the County's response capability of dealing with confined space emergencies.
- **Trench Rescue** - We hope to begin developing a trench rescue team during the next year. With the growth of Henderson County we feel this is the biggest need in the community to be able to deal with collapse incidents at construction sites or excavations.
- **Heavy Rescue** – Running parallel with trench rescue is the field of structure collapse rescue. We hope to develop an initial response capability to stabilize an incident until a NC USAR regional response team can arrive to assist with the incident.

Departments of County Government with which we work extensively

All of the departments listed below benefit from HCRS and therefore the HCRS saves the County money.

- **County Manager**- Disaster declarations, 4WD transport
- **Extension Service**- Medical standby at Farm City Day
- **Emergency Management**- Disasters, emergency shelters, weather related incidents, assist with disaster drills
- **Emergency Medical Service**- 4WD transports, EMS backup, STAR team training, use of our ambulances when theirs are out of service for repairs
- **Fire Marshall**- Assist all fire departments, and assist Fire Marshall's office with anything requested
- **Health Department**- Transport residents and staff to and from shelters, providing supplies
- **Medical Examiner's Office**- Transports for investigations
- **Parks and Recreation**- Medical standby for special events and athletic events at Jackson Park
- **Public Schools**- Medical standbys at interscholastic sporting events and Special Olympics
- **Sheriff's Department**- Diving for evidence, search missions, plane crashes, SERT team training, death investigations, manhunts, use of our facility as a command center
- **Travel and Tourism**- Apple Festival medical standby, traffic control at parades
- **Volunteer Fire Departments**- We assist all 12 volunteer fire departments in Henderson County with mutual aid, rehab of firemen at fire scenes, medical standby at controlled burns
- **Youth Development**- Transport workers to the shelter in inclement weather

We also stand ready to assist the City of Hendersonville Fire Department as well as any other municipalities in Henderson County during a time of need.

2004 Calls for Service Summary

	Totals	Manhours
Medical Transport	97	435
Medical Standby	37	641
Assist EMS	8	23
EMS Standby	19	94
Weather Related Call Snow	9	606
Motor Vehicle Crash	123	622
Public Service Call	13	76
Assist Arc Angel	2	4
Structure Fire Standby	51	295
Water Rescue / Flood Related	70	1920
Plane Crash	1	8
Football Standbys	73	563
Search Mission	7	98
Assist LEO	4	4
Dive Recovery	3	105
Technical Rescue / Carryout	4	102
Grand Totals	521	5596

These figures represent a 36% increase over 2003 and a cost savings of \$384,000