



## **XI. Public Safety**

### **911**

#### **General**

The Tazewell County 911 Center went online in April of 1997. The enhanced 911 system is projected to be completed within the next 6 months, at which time the Automatic Location Identifier (ALI) will meet the State's requirement of 95% match rate on phone numbers with proper physical addresses. Wireless calls to the Center display the cell tower location, wireless telephone number and the name of the cellular telephone company. The Center will dispatch all EMS and Fire calls for the Town of Bluefield, while calls for the Bluefield Police Department will be transferred or information will be properly relayed. Tazewell 911 currently has 15 telecommunicators and fields approximately 25,000 calls per year.

#### **E911 Agreement with Richlands and Tazewell County**

An agreement between the Town of Bluefield, the Town of Richlands, and the County of Tazewell went into effect June 23, 1997. The agreement states that Tazewell County will establish an enhanced 911 system and impose a countywide tax for the operation of the system. The tax will be \$1.50/month on all eligible telephone service within Tazewell County, including the Town of Bluefield and the Town of Richlands. In addition, neither the Town of Bluefield nor the Town of Richlands will establish a competing system. This agreement will be in effect for two years and will automatically renew every year thereafter unless terminated by a participating jurisdiction by notice in writing at least 90 days prior to the expiration date.



## *XI. Public Safety*

The State of Virginia enacted legislation that set the statewide fee for E-911 Tax at \$0.75 and also enacted a 5% sales tax on all communications devices. The fees are collected by the State and then distributed to the counties.

### **Addressing Change/Assigning New 911 Addresses**

In 2007 the Town collaborated with Tazewell County 911 and VITA to identify areas in the Town that have been addressed incorrectly in the past. Some of these changes include structures which were assigned a half address number, house numbers that are out of sequence, and streets that need to be renamed. The Town has updated the addressing standards to better match State of Virginia recommendations. This ensures that when the review and changes are complete that every structure will have a unique sequential number on every street and help emergency service locate structures or addresses more efficiently. The standards will also be used when addressing a new subdivision. The Town will continue to evaluate areas where problems may arise.



## *XI. Public Safety*

### **Police Department**



The Police Department headquarters is currently located in the Municipal Building of the Town Hall. This area includes all offices for the department, including the holding cells, the Chief of Police's office, and the dispatcher's office.

In 2014, the police department upgraded its communication system. New digital radios and digital repeater. These changes have resulted in greatly improved communications for the department and with all other town services.



## **XI. Public Safety**

### **Fire Department**

#### **Mission**

The mission of the Bluefield Virginia Fire Department is to provide a high level of fire protection to the Town and surrounding unincorporated areas. Additionally, their mission is to save lives and property through the best fire protection possible.

#### **General**

The Bluefield Virginia Fire Department consists of approximately 21 volunteers and provides emergency response 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The Fire Department operates out of a state of the art facility located at 100 North College Avenue that was completed in 1999. The completion of this new facility has allowed the department to purchase additional response equipment that was previously prevented due to the very limited space in the old station.

#### **State Classification**

The State of Virginia provides a classification of fire protection services. The most efficient and comprehensive fire coverage in cities of high intensity development with paid firefighters is Class I. Class II includes smaller cities with less intense development with a paid force. Class III is reserved for incorporated towns or municipalities that provide community protection through a volunteer department. Class IV applies to cities or towns that are incorporated but have no adequate fire department, water supply, or water distribution system.

#### **ISO Rating**

The adequacy of fire protection in a jurisdiction is determined by comparing fire defense facilities to the standard grading schedule of the Insurance Services Office (ISO). The grades range from 1-10 with a grade of one being the highest attainable score.



## *XI. Public Safety*

Fire defense standards are based on criteria such as water supply, equipment, fire prevention, structural adequacy of the building, and building floor area. The Town has a Class 6 rating within corporate limits, and those areas within 5 miles of the station and within 1,000 feet of a hydrant also qualify for a Class 6 rating. All other response areas of the department have a Class 9 rating. A better rating in the standard grading schedule results in lower fire insurance rates for the community. Improvements to the water system that increase fire flows could lower this rating.

### **Personnel**

Volunteer membership is the backbone of the Bluefield Virginia Fire Department. The volunteers save the Town over one million dollars a year in salaries and benefits. These savings can instead be spent on more modern equipment, or they can be used for other community projects. Volunteers exhibit a high level of pride in their work because they are donating their time and expertise to the community. Volunteer members participate in training, service calls, and emergency responses, in effect leaving less time for personal and family responsibilities. Firefighters volunteer for the opportunity to help those in need.

### **Training**

Training occurs throughout a firefighter's career. The Department currently has a State Certified Fire Instructor in its membership. Training occurs both in-house each week and by members attending State sponsored schools throughout the region on weekends. Various members in the Department are certified in, Aircraft Rescue & Fire Fighting (ARFF) for Structural Fire Departments, Confined Space Entry Awareness, Driver/Operator, Emergency Vehicle Operators Course (EVOC), Farm Machinery, Safety & Extrication, Fire Instructor, Hazardous Materials First Responder Awareness, Hazardous Materials Fire Responder Operations, L.P. Gas Emergencies, Fire Arson Detection, Incident Command System (ICS), Rope Rescue, Trench Rescue and Vehicle Rescue. Department members also participate in training throughout the year with local industry and other emergency service agencies to better prepare themselves to respond to and mitigate a wide multitude of incidents.



## ***XI. Public Safety***

### **Fire Prevention & Public Education**

Public education is a job that the Fire Department puts great efforts in by sponsoring fire prevention week activities annually. This consists of open house at the fire station, visits to area schools by volunteers to present a fire education skit/program, and media campaigns to aid in the prevention of fires. The Departments various programs reach almost 1,000 children a year.

### **Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**



The Bluefield Virginia Rescue Squad, Inc. is a nonprofit organization located in the Town of Bluefield. The Rescue Squad serves the Town as well as the eastern portion of Tazewell County. The Rescue Squad is supported by voluntary contributions and billings for services to insurance, Medicare & Medicaid. In 2000, the Rescue Squad placed paid crews on duty to supplement the volunteer staff.