



CITY OF COLONIAL HEIGHTS

FIRE, EMS AND EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Colonial Heights Fire & EMS Chosen To Participate in a Statewide Study on Volunteer Recruitment and Sustainability

Colonial Heights, VA., June 1, 2011: The Virginia Fire Chiefs Association (VFCA) announced that Colonial Heights Fire & EMS has been selected as one of 20 departments in Virginia to participate in a federally-funded program to develop a first-of-its-kind model to achieve and sustain adequate levels of fire and emergency service volunteer staffing. The Volunteer Workforce Solutions (VWS) program is being led by the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, who identified the need for departments in Virginia to seek new solutions to address continuing downward trends in volunteer staffing levels. The VFCA secured the funding from a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant.

Research and data collected by the VFCA since 2004 has shown that staffing issues in volunteer fire departments is consistently the #1 issue facing fire departments in Virginia. A 2010 Virginia Fire Service Needs Assessment Survey conducted by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs, found that 67% of all survey respondents reported the need for more volunteer firefighters. The VWS program will work to identify and address recruitment and retention challenges facing volunteer fire departments while helping the departments and elected officials in effectively planning their future emergency response systems.

“Over the last several years, it has been very tough for many fire departments throughout Virginia to recruit and retain volunteers for a variety of reasons,” said Chief Jack Jones, VFCA President. “Most volunteer fire departments are constantly struggling to bolster their volunteer workforce in order to provide the optimum level of protection for residents. The participating departments -- and

their communities -- are really stepping up to provide leadership on this issue, not just for Virginia, but for volunteer fire departments throughout the nation.”

A total of twenty communities were selected by the VFCA to participate in the year-long effort based on geographic information, population, fire department statistics, and an interest to participate by the community. Ten departments will engage in a Geographic Information Systems (GIS) Segmentation study which will use technology to take a deeper look at the community’s characteristics and create a future roadmap for recruitment and retention. The other ten departments will serve in a control group engaging in a traditional recruitment campaign.

Colonial Heights Fire & EMS is one of ten departments selected to participate in the study’s control group which will use traditional methods to recruit and retain volunteers. The traditional recruitment campaign entitled “Do You Have What It Takes” kicks-off this month. The Colonial Heights Fire & EMS Department will receive promotional materials (banners, brochures, postcards and posters) and will identify a local “advocate” to share our message via facebook and twitter.

Our local advocate is Firefighter Stephen Hoke and can be reached at (804) 524-8730, www.facebook.com/FirefighterStephenHoke, or www.twitter.com/FirefighterHoke.

Colonial Heights Fire & EMS responds to over 4,500 calls for service each year protecting over 17,000 citizens as well as thousands of daily visitors to the City. The Department is comprised of both career and volunteer membership working side by side to serve the citizens of Colonial Heights.

Colonial Heights Fire & EMS encourages all citizens to contact (804)524-8730 or visit www.Colonial-Heights.com/FireEMS.htm to find out more about becoming a volunteer firefighter.

About the Virginia Fire Chiefs Association, Inc. (VFCA)

The VFCA (www.vfca.us) is an advocate for leadership to emergency response organizations. The VFCA provides a comprehensive and integrated statewide public safety effort to enhance the quality of life for its customers. The VFCA is committed to providing its members the educational opportunities, leadership skills, and support tools to manage and lead today, and into the future.