



PUBLIC SERVICES AND SAFETY

10



PUBLIC SERVICES

This chapter describes how public services support community development in Beckley.

it defines necessary steps to ensure public safety, and to meet the medical, cultural,

historical, social, educational and disaster needs of current and future residents. It also

addresses public safety programs to educate and protect the public from disasters, both

natural and manmade.

“The thing that lies at the foundation of positive change, the way I see it, is service to a fellow human being.”

—Lee Iacocca

10.1

EMERGENCY SERVICES

The overall objective of the City of Beckley Department of Emergency Services is to ensure the City is capable of responding to and recovering from a wide variety of natural, man-made and technological disasters. This is accomplished by developing a “culture of preparedness” among City administration and personnel, as well as business owners and operators, non-governmental and faith-based organizations, as well as those citizens that make up our community. Such a broad-based initiative must be addressed on a number of fronts.

A primary component concerns enhancing the collaborative actions of City departments and personnel related to emergency preparedness and response. Such efforts begin with proactive planning designed to address a variety of issues the City is expected to address in a competent and coordinated manner. Adhering to the National Incident Management System and other pertinent guidelines, a number of documents have been formulated. Examples include the City Emergency Operations Plan, Continuity of Operations Plan, as well as a Multi-Year Training and Exercise Plan. The latter speaks to another critical component of the City’s all-encompassing preparedness efforts; delivering public safety education and training in a multi-agency format. Whether it is utilizing subject matter experts to address specific topics or conducting a discussion or

operations-based exercise to adequately prepare for our many planned events, training is conducted in accordance with the Homeland Security Exercise and Evaluation Program (HSEEP).

Looking outward, numerous programs are conducted in an effort to incorporate the resources and expertise of the “Whole Community.” This is an approach to emergency management that is supported at the federal level and fully embraced by the City of Beckley. It reinforces the fact that we must leverage all that our community has to offer in an effort to make us as ready and resilient as possible. One shining example is the Southern WV Preparedness Partnership, an effort that began in 2009. Bringing together representatives from the public and private sectors, this group routinely provides educational offerings to address pertinent public safety needs. Another is the Beckley CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program. This national effort is designed to train volunteers to assist others in their neighborhood or workplace following an event when City responders may be overwhelmed and unable to immediately respond. They are also encouraged to support emergency response agencies by taking a more active role in emergency preparedness projects in their community. Beckley CERT routinely takes part in such city-sponsored events and activities.

Another integral part concerning emergency services involves communications and information. Whether it is our emergency responders or the public at large, credible information delivered in a timely manner is critical. This issue is addressed on a number of fronts. First concerns the relationship the City maintains with the Raleigh County Emergency Operating Center. This agency works to enhance emergency response capabilities and performs tasks such as 911 call intake and dispatching, address verification, and helps coordinate activities for first responders. Likewise, the City Coordination Center (C3) has been established at the City level, a location where representatives from local government, affected agencies and appropriate representatives can meet and coordinate their efforts in the midst of a critical incident. The Department of Emergency Services has also taken steps to disseminate information on a number of fronts. These include “Beckley Ready,” an initiative to take advantage of the power of social media, “Nixle,” a nationally recognized community communication tool, as well as the Integrated Public Alert & Warning System (IPAWS). This provides the City of Beckley with an effective way to alert and warn the public about serious emergencies using the Emergency Alert System, Wireless Emergency Alerts, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Weather Radio, and other public alerting systems from a single interface. These efforts, coupled with relationships established with local media, ensure that critical information is conveyed in a broad-based, expedient manner.



10.2

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The Beckley Police Department is located on Prince Street and provides law enforcement services within the City limits. It is a large department with full-time officers and civilian personnel. The major divisions of the Beckley Police Department and their responsibilities include:

- **Patrol Division** – Enforcement of local ordinances and state laws, and monitoring and enforcing traffic regulations.
- **Detective Bureau** – Investigates felony level crimes.
- **Narcotics Unit** – Handles drug-related situations and drug trafficking.
- **Police K-9 Unit** – Supports detection, patrol, and trailing and tracking.
- **Parking Enforcement Staff** – Handles parking violations.
- **Domestic Violence** – Handles domestic and shelter/protection programs to victims.
- **Highway Safety Division** – One of the eight regional highway safety coordinators reporting to the Governor’s Office.
- **Training Unit** – Develops proficiency and skills necessary for optimal performance.



Recent crime statistics in Beckley point to high levels of criminal activity compared with similar-sized communities in West Virginia. While this consideration is an obvious area of concern, some aspects of this may be attributable to the fact that the City of Beckley serves as an urban center for a much larger region. Beckley has a daytime population that far exceeds the resident population, and those individuals with criminal intent are more likely to be drawn to urban centers.

10.3

FIRE PROTECTION

In the City of Beckley, fire protection is an issue that resonates significantly with local leaders who know local history. The Beckley Fire Department was established in 1907-08 when City Council acted to purchase equipment and provide funding for a new fire station on Fayette Street. Around this same time, a group of volunteer firefighters was organized and the City water system was being constructed. A few years later, a downtown fire started and ultimately consumed about four blocks of downtown bordered by Neville, Prince, McCreery and Heber Streets. Undoubtedly, the fire would have been much worse without the existence of the newly formed Beckley Fire Department.

Today, the Beckley Fire Department has two newer fire stations. Station 1 is located on Third Ave. near downtown, and Station 2 is located on Pikeview Drive, near I-77 just north of Harper Road. Station 3 is located on Eisenhower Drive, toward the north side of town and it includes a three story training tower built in 1998.

One measure of the level of fire protection in a community is the Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating system. It is a national classification system that assigns a rating number that ranges from 1 to 10. Class 1 represents exemplary public protection, and Class 10 indicates that the area's fire-suppression program doesn't meet ISO's minimum criteria. The 2004 Annual Report from the Beckley Fire Department reported that Beckley's ISO class rating was 3 and it was one of only 8 such designations in the State of West Virginia. In the past, improvements to Beckley's ISO rating were aided by the addition of a new station and equipment, additional hydrants, and increases in the capacity of water lines to meet fire flow requirements.

Concerns related to fire protection for the long-term center on the fact that residents outside of the City (in the donut holes) depend on volunteer fire departments located outside Beckley. There are nearly 15 fire departments in Raleigh County. Additionally, water lines in the unincorporated areas in and around Beckley may not always have optimum capacity to meet the needs of fire fighting efforts.

10.4

EMERGENCY MEDICAL

The Beckley Fire Department has personnel certified as Emergency Medical Technicians and licensed paramedics who stabilize accident victims at the scene of an injury and are equipped and trained in the use of defibrillators.

10.5

911

The Raleigh County Emergency Services Authority provides services to the residents of Raleigh County, as well as those individuals who visit or travel through the County. This countywide agency works to enhance the County's emergency response capabilities and performs tasks such as 911 call intake and dispatching, address verification, and coordination of activities for first responders. The average number of calls processed in a year average from 180,000 to 200,000.

Best Ambulance Service is one private ambulance service serving the Beckley area. Established in 1993, Best Ambulance has personnel certified as Paramedics and Emergency Medical Technicians-Basic. Forty percent of the ambulance fleet is four-wheel drive vehicles, which allows for continuity of service, regardless of adverse weather or road conditions. Best Ambulance Service responds to emergency 911 requests, Level 3 (C3-IFT) hospital to hospital transfers, convalescent transports, out of state transfers, private emergency and non-emergency requests, as well as providing coverage for large scale community events.

Offenses Known to Law Enforcement

| City | Population | Violent crime | Murder and non-negligent manslaughter | Forcible rape | Robbery | Aggravated assault | Property crime | Burglary | Larceny-theft | Motor vehicle theft | Arson |
|------------------|------------|---------------|---------------------------------------|---------------|---------|--------------------|----------------|----------|---------------|---------------------|-------|
| Beckley | 17,675 | 189 | 6 | 21 | 55 | 107 | 1,588 | 335 | 1,221 | 32 | 6 |
| Clarksburg | 16,649 | 112 | 1 | 10 | 10 | 91 | 665 | 110 | 532 | 23 | 3 |
| Martinsburg | 17,487 | 89 | 0 | 3 | 33 | 53 | 886 | 127 | 732 | 27 | 7 |
| Morgantown | 30,294 | 107 | 1 | 4 | 26 | 76 | 823 | 175 | 632 | 16 | 9 |
| Parkersburg | 31,558 | 146 | 1 | 17 | 22 | 106 | 1,698 | 433 | 1,199 | 66 | 25 |
| South Charleston | 13,396 | 74 | 0 | 3 | 15 | 56 | 492 | 66 | 411 | 15 | 1 |
| Weirton | 19,652 | 17 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 13 | 308 | 61 | 231 | 16 | 1 |
| Wheeling | 28,356 | 245 | 0 | 17 | 42 | 186 | 767 | 265 | 455 | 47 | 1 |

Source: FBI - Uniform Crime Reports - 2012

Along with the general desire to maintain standards in line with nationally recognized best practices, one objective of the Beckley Police Department is to move forward with the CALEA (Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement) program. This has been discussed by City Council, and the list of requirements is being investigated. CALEA's accreditation programs improve the delivery of public safety services, primarily by: maintaining a body of standards developed by public safety practitioners covering a wide range of up-to-date public safety initiatives; establishing and administering an accreditation process; and recognizing professional excellence. Some future challenges to meet this goal relate to the condition of the existing police department and the need for a new or upgraded facility. Some needs are also evident in terms of personnel.

10.7

HEALTH CARE

One indicator of the quality of life in a community is the strength of its health care system. The City of Beckley is served with three major hospitals, cancer treatment centers, extended care centers and clinics, nursing homes and more than 150 physicians. The three facilities which are located on Harper Road, care for nearly 13,000 patients each year and treat more 50,000 patients in the emergency room. Raleigh General Hospital is an American College of Surgeons verified Level III

Trauma Center as well as a percutaneous coronary intervention (PCI) center (coronary angioplasty and stenting). Appalachian Regional Healthcare (Beckley ARH Hospital), located on Stanaford Road, is a not-for-profit, 173-bed, acute-care facility (including 60 psychiatric beds) with a level IV Trauma Center Emergency Room. The Beckley VA Medical Center serves the needs of more than 38,000 Veterans living in an 11-county area of southern West Virginia. It is a 40-bed general medical and surgical care facility with a 50-bed community living center.

10.6

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

Emergency preparedness is among the most essential services provided by governments. Hurricanes, earthquakes, wildfires, hazardous waste spills and other natural or man-made disasters demand swift and deliberate action to prevent loss of life and property. Beckley is well served by a Department of Emergency Services that is engaged in many aspects of emergency preparedness. The dimensions of this involvement extend beyond public services and emergency responders and connect with both the faith-based community and the business community. Youth education is also a part of local emergency preparedness. The City of Beckley also assumes a leadership role in an organization known as the Southern WV Preparedness Partnership (SWVPP). SWVPP provides educational and training opportunities designed to enhance collective levels of readiness and resiliency. Past topics have included incident management, mass care, cyber security, and well as business continuity planning. Looking forward into long-term community needs, three subjects stand out as significant issues for Beckley.

1. The City of Beckley lacks a modern police department building. The existing building is located at 340 Prince Street in downtown and is regarded as being inadequate. The issue of construction of a new police department is tied to the future construction of a new municipal complex. Space is set aside for a new municipal building at the BIG site, but plans to accommodate specific municipal functions and activities within a new building have not been prepared. This task needs to be accomplished in the future and funding is

an obvious consideration. Typically, detailed and extensive space studies are completed to determine floor area needs and specific adjacencies that need to be provided for efficient municipal service delivery. Certain law enforcement functions may or may not be involved with the construction of a new municipal building.

2. The City of Beckley lacks a public safety training facility. Local facilities in some communities include facilities and equipment necessary to support training and education for police, fire, emergency services and hazmat. Training-related activities could specifically involve indoor shooting ranges, K-9 training areas, classrooms, fitness equipment, emergency simulation areas, etc. Specific training and facility needs would have to be determined after some study and collaboration with local first responders and community leaders. It is also possible that such a facility could be constructed in partnership with other political jurisdictions in the area to help support regional needs.

3. Local leaders should support local resiliency and volunteerism. Challenges ranging from extreme weather to man-made disasters are common occurrences among U.S. communities. Communities that are able to bounce back quickly typically have fostered a local culture of resiliency and empowerment that is evident long before the disaster. Greensburg Kansas is one example of extraordinary resiliency that was demonstrated after an EF-5 tornado damaged or destroyed nearly all buildings in town. In the years that followed, Greensburg community leaders focused on the opportunity to rebuild a more socially, economically, and environmentally sustainable city.

“Beckley should be a resilient community, one that is able to withstand and “bounce back” from whatever comes our way. Many things go into this, such as basic preparedness efforts that make us all more self-reliant during those times when emergency services are overwhelmed. This starts at the local government level where such recognition is made, then translates to all aspects of our community. This also begins at the individual level, then to family, neighborhoods, congregations, businesses, etc. Beckley will continue efforts to:

- Build overall community resiliency in the midst of a disaster.
- Enhance participation from individuals and various groups concerning emergency preparedness issues (i.e. business community, faith-based organizations, critical infrastructure owners and operators, etc.).
- Recognize the need for self-sufficiency for our overall population, beginning at the individual level.
- Provide continuity of operation planning for local government and the business community.
- Utilize volunteers in a coordinated manner such as through the Beckley CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) program.
- Embrace and implement the “Whole Community” concept touted and endorsed by the Department of Homeland Security.
- Build on the efforts of the Southern WV Preparedness Partnership to bring together representatives from both the public and private sectors in emergency preparedness activities.”

Kevin Taylor
City of Beckley, Director of Emergency Services