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2013 Achievement Awards

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Virginia Association of Counties
1207 East Main Street, Suite 300
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Call for Entries



2013 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 1, 2013

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 1, 2013.**

Program Information

Locality York County

Program Title "Mobilizing Training to Meet a Need"

Program Category Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Contact Information

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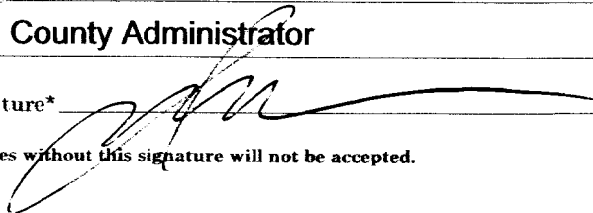
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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

Name James O. McReynolds

Title County Administrator

Signature* 

*Entries without this signature will not be accepted.

**2013 VACO Achievement Award Program
York County, Virginia
“Mobilizing Training to Meet a Need”**

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety strives to maintain the highest standards of professional development and in doing so, attempts to offer high quality training when and where possible. As the economy downturn left many looking for ways to continue to do more with less, the Department’s management staff was determined to meet an essential training need while meeting that challenge. While it is not always feasible to send staff and apparatus away to participate in training, it may be feasible to bring the training to the department! Working through a myriad of scenarios to ensure that high quality, safe, efficient and effective live fire training was available to all department members, staff worked with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to bring mobile live fire training props to the County, therein “Mobilizing Training to Meet a Need!”

Firefighting is an inherently dangerous and physically demanding business. The combination of strenuous work, heavy and encapsulating personal protective equipment (PPE), hot and dangerous working conditions, and high adrenaline levels can lead to significant levels of cardiovascular and thermal strain during firefighting activities. The physiological consequences that threaten firefighters are often difficult to recognize, and even harder to appreciate if you have never performed the work that a firefighter is asked to perform.

Structural firefighting is the culmination of the basic skills that every firefighter is taught and expected to be able to perform consistently at a moment's notice. Like any other skill where one is expected to maintain proficiency, recurrent training and skills evolutions are an extremely important part of the maintenance process. Live fire training provides valuable experience and is an excellent means of training and maintaining proficiency for firefighters. While this type of training provides high levels of realism, it obviously carries with it the hazards associated with firefighting at an actual incident. All firefighters need safe and controlled "real life" training offered through live fire exercises in order to be fully prepared for the hazards of the fireground.

In the past, there were typically two methods by which to maintain these important skills: 1) conduct live-fire training in fixed facilities (burn buildings) and/or 2) in acquired structures (residential buildings provided by their owners). With either of these training models, the department had to commit a significant amount of preparation time to ensure that the buildings were safe and met pre-

designated standards to ensure that all safety measures and precautions were met. This often included the expenditure of funds to ensure a safe operating environment. Additionally, the buildings were typically not centrally located, therein requiring the department to relocate apparatus and staff to participate in the training exercises, often out of the local jurisdiction. These issues, coupled with higher customer service demands and the economic downturn, required the York County Department of Fire and Life Safety to develop a new live fire training model that provided the essential live fire training, in a safe environment, that incorporated all of the required safety standards, while minimizing the associated training costs and keeping response units in service.

Live fire training is necessary in order to prepare firefighters for the dangerous and challenging environments in which they are expected to perform. You have to achieve a balance of risk in training versus the risk of not having that training. The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety is using a proactive approach to live-fire training by using state-of-the-art Mobile Live Fire Trainers, made available by the Virginia Department of Fire Programs. Through a cooperative training agreement, York County requested and was provided with a Mobile Live Fire Training Trailer for a period of three consecutive days, three months in a row, for a total of nine training days during the first quarter of 2012.

Through the use of these trailers and adoption of a creative training calendar and planned evolutions for each of the nine days, the entire department had the opportunity to conduct multiple training evolutions in live fire conditions,

while maintaining safe, efficient and effective operations both on the training ground and throughout the county by keeping units in-service to cover each fire station district. The custom-built fire training trailers allow for convenient live-fire training in a safe, controlled, and environmentally sound manner. Its benign smoke generators are environmentally safe to breathe if emergencies occur during training and do not disturb the community as many typical live fire training evolutions do, as they emit the by-products of incomplete combustion. The on-board computer operated system ensures a safe training environment with emergency shut-down capabilities. These 53' training trailers were staged at various York County Fire Stations, therein reducing travel costs, fuel charges and fire/rescue company down-time. This convenient training solution also allowed multiple fire/rescue companies to train simultaneously without the need to leave York County to travel to buildings in other jurisdictions. Department members participated in live fire training evolutions that included movable interior walls that can be set up as a home or a business, complete with a stove, couch, bed or motor; a pitched roof chop out panel for practicing ventilation techniques; a forcible entry simulator; single and multi-story fireground operation capability; room and contents fires and roll-over fire simulation. The addition of "real-life" incident sound effects such as victim's calling for help, crying babies, barking dogs and fireground operations enhanced the training evolutions. The department's innovative approach to live fire training has enabled department members to

maintain proficiency in fire attack, fire suppression, flashover, and search and rescue skills in an efficient and safe manner.

The costs of this program were minimized by using creative staffing models to ensure that fire apparatus was appropriately staffed to cover for the apparatus/personnel that were participating in the training at any given time and maximizing efficiencies when and where possible.

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety is extremely pleased with the outcomes of this mobile training opportunity and bases the success of this training on the feedback received from participating department members and the improvements in operational efficiencies and improved fire ground safety, strategy and tactics. Since completion of the initial training, other departments in the region have adopted a similar model for their “live fire training.” The department is currently working with the Virginia Department of Fire Programs to bring the Mobile Live Fire Trailers back in 2013 to continue to provide this important training to all department members.

The economic impact of “Mobilizing Training to Meet a Need” through the provision of on-site mobile live fire training was minimal and typically absorbed into the day-to-day operations of the shift as the training was conducted. The long-term economic impact may likely be extremely difficult to gauge because if this training contributes to a reduction in fire service and/or civilian injuries and/or deaths related to structural fire incidents, as well as reduced property losses, then the program is a success and it is impossible to place a dollar amount on life.





