

Recognizing the Best in County Government Programs!



2014 Achievement Awards



2014 VACo Achievement Awards

Deadline: June 2, 2014

Application Form

All applications must include the following information. Separate applications must be submitted for each eligible program. **Deadline: June 2, 2014.**


Program Information

Locality York County
Program Title Marking Vehicles to Reduce Repeated Responses
Program Category 3. Criminal Justice & Public Safety

Contact Information

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Signature of county administrator or chief administrative officer

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Title County Administrator
Signature 

Call for Entries

**2014 VACO Achievement Award Program
Nomination Summary
York County, Virginia**

Program Category: Criminal Justice and Public Safety

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety responds (fire/rescue/EMS) to many reports of vehicle accidents that occur on all types of roads. The number of accidents and responses multiplies during inclement weather, especially winter weather conditions. The need for emergency vehicles to leave stabilized/mitigated incidents to respond to others and/or return to service for other responses often requires that vehicles that are not a hazard be left off the side of the road until they can be removed by towing/recovery services. Passersby are often unaware that the accident has previously been reported and responded to, so they vigilantly report the accident again. If dispatchers are unable to get “verifiable” information or distinct identifiers to determine that a response has already been conducted, they must respond fire and rescue personnel to verify that the response is now a duplicate. In an attempt to reduce and potentially eliminate repeated responses to the same accident scene and provide a more efficient operational response model, reduce unnecessary apparatus travel and response on dangerous roads and provide for the safety of department personnel, the department developed a low cost, easily identifiable and highly visible marking system so that dispatchers could ask the caller if they were able to identify the marker(s).

In an attempt to reduce and potentially eliminate repeated responses to the same accident scene and provide a more efficient operational response model, reduce unnecessary apparatus travel and response on dangerous roads and provide for the safety of department personnel, the York County Department of Fire and Life Safety sought to provide a low cost but obvious way of marking the vehicles involved in accidents to which a response had already been made. This marking system had to be easily identifiable and highly visible so that dispatchers could ask the caller if they were able to identify the marker(s). Additionally, the marking system had to be something that would not distract traveler's attention from their driving responsibilities. After researching various commercially available systems, the department determined that the use of "Blaze Orange" surveyors tape was a low-cost alternative for marking vehicles. Additionally, the general public is familiar with surveyors tape, as it is often found along roadways across the country to mark trees, construction projects and other items of significance making it an easily recognizable marking system that was not distracting to drivers and one that dispatchers could ask callers if they saw it wrapped around the vehicles. The program is rather simple. Each piece of fire and rescue apparatus is equipped with "Blaze Orange" surveyors tape; when units respond to a vehicle accident, vehicle fire or other incident involving a vehicle(s) along a roadway and a delay in removal of the vehicle is indicated, personnel mark the vehicle with surveyors tape

by wrapping it around vehicles, attaching it to visible door handles, mirrors and/or antenna(s) so that the tape is visible. When a caller reports what the dispatcher believes to be a duplicate incident, the dispatcher can inquire as to whether the vehicle is marked with surveyors tape or not and, if so, a response is not initiated, if not, the appropriate units are dispatched to the new incident.

The problem was not a new one by any means; however, technology exacerbated the problem exponentially. Fire and rescue departments across the nation respond to thousands of vehicle accidents each year. The number of accidents and responses multiplies during inclement weather, especially winter weather conditions, such as snow, sleet and ice. Before the advent of cell phones, passersby would have to drive to a pay phone, fire station or knock on someone's door to make a report, therein creating a delay between reports that often enabled emergency crews to arrive on scene before numerous reports were made. With technology advances in portable and cellular telephones, reporting emergencies and accidents was literally at the fingertips of the majority of travelers and daily commuters on the road. Because cell phones are so prevalent, reports of accidents have increased. During inclement winter weather conditions, the number of accidents increases, coupled with increased response demands and potential delayed emergency response due to treacherous driving conditions. The need for emergency vehicles to leave stabilized/mitigated incidents to respond to other incidents and/or return to service for other responses often requires that vehicles

that are not a hazard be left off the side of the road until they can be removed by towing and recovery services. Additionally, passersby are often unaware that the accident has been reported and responded to, so they vigilantly report the accident again and if dispatchers are unable to get “verifiable” information or distinct identifiers to determine that a response has already been conducted, they must respond fire and rescue personnel to verify whether or not the response is a duplicate. In some cases, incidents received multiple responses, due to multiple reports by different people, and none of them providing verifiable identifiers. These repeated responses are not an effective or efficient use of resources and require critical fire and life safety equipment and apparatus to be committed, typically unnecessarily when they may be needed at another emergency. However, because the possibility exists that emergency responders may be responding to a different accident for persons requiring assistance, the response must be made to verify the reports.

Surveyors tape is a relatively inexpensive item and, when purchased in bulk, the price is further reduced.

The success of this program can be measured in the reduction of responses to the same incident repeatedly which allow apparatus, equipment and personnel to remain available for other emergencies and reduces the likelihood that emergency apparatus will have to travel to the same location multiple times on already hazardous roads.

The York County Department of Fire and Life Safety believes that this program is worthy of the recognition of this prestigious award. The department has always placed the safety of our citizens, businesses and visitors, as well as that of our department members, as our highest customer service priority. This program is a reflection of that commitment and has direct positive safety implications and continuous improvements to our operational efficiency and effectiveness. As we continuously seek operational efficiencies in all aspects of our programs and services, the ability to use a low cost, highly visible marking system to reduce repeated responses has proven to be an effective and efficient use of operational resources.

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