CHAPTER IX

PUBLIC SAFETY



PUBLIC SAFETY

Public safety is an essential component of community well-being and quality of life. It encompasses the protection of lives, property, and the overall health, safety, and welfare of residents, businesses, and visitors. The Town places the highest priority in maintaining a safe and secure community through the delivery of public safety services. These services are primarily provided through law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services (EMS), and emergency preparedness to meet the current and future needs of the community.

Police

The Christiansburg Police Department continues to provide professional, state-accredited law enforcement services that promote public safety, protect lives and property and work with the community to enhance the overall quality of life. The department is staffed with full-time staff of 65 sworn officers, 6 civilian staff, and 2 part-time employees.

The department provides a variety of law enforcement services, including patrol, bike patrol, criminal investigations, K-9 units, Drone Team, Internet Crimes Against Children investigations, and a School Resource Officer program. The department maintains state accreditation, demonstrating its commitment to professional standards, accountability, and continuous improvement. The Police Department's main facility is located at 10 E. Main Street.

The 78-year-old building was renovated in 2001 with the addition of a second floor. While the facility meets the department's operational needs, there is no remaining space available to accommodate future staffing, equipment, and service demands. Additionally, the existing parking area does not provide secure parking for department vehicles.

As the community continues to grow, these limitations will require the Town to evaluate the need of a new police station or a shared public safety facility to improve emergency response coverage, operational efficiency, and future staffing capacity. Annual call volumes have risen to approximately 42,000 per year.

The department fosters strong relationships with the community through community-oriented policing initiatives including its Citizens, Senior, and Teen Academies, partnerships with local schools, and active participation in public events and community outreach programs. The department collaborates with regional partners through shared dispatch services, mutual aid agreements, and coordinated emergency response efforts.



The department maintains approximately one sworn officer for every 362 residents. The addition of new residential development as well as the return of passenger rail service to Christiansburg will increase the service demands on the Police Department, which will necessitate constant monitoring of staffing needs as the community grows. As experienced personnel retire, the department has proactively planned for transitions through succession planning, recruitment, and employee development and retention initiatives to maintain continuity of operations and high-quality public safety services.

In recent years, the department has observed an increase in incidents related to homelessness. Other emerging public safety concerns include retail theft, reckless driving, and noise complaints. Addressing these issues will require continued enforcement, community partnerships, education, and public safety strategies.

The department continues to strengthen technology integration through the use of drone deployment and other emerging technologies. It also continues to enhance regional coordination and expand public outreach programs. Additional opportunities include promoting Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) principles in the planning and redevelopment of neighborhoods, commercial areas, parks, and public facilities to improve visibility, enhance public safety, and reduce opportunities for crime.



Fire

Christiansburg Fire Department provides fire protection and prevention to the Town of Christiansburg and parts of Montgomery County. The department is committed to safeguarding the community by protecting lives and property through emergency response, fire prevention and public education. Their service area covers more than 88 square miles, including approximately 82.5 lane miles of Interstate 81. The department currently has 39 active volunteer members and responds to more than 1200 calls annually.

The Fire Department is located at 110 Depot Street. The station was built in 1976 and continues to serve as the department's primary facility. As the community continues to grow and fire service operations evolve, it will be important to evaluate the facility's ability to accommodate future operational needs and prioritize improvements that support fire service standards, changing service demands, and emerging technologies. As part of long-term planning, the Town must consider the need for additional fire station capacity or a future fire station to maintain efficient emergency response and meet the community's evolving needs.

The department maintains a strong commitment to firefighter training and professional development through ongoing training programs and modern training capabilities. Its dedication has recently been recognized through two departmental awards. As a combination career-volunteer department, continued recruitment and retention of volunteers remain a priority to ensure adequate staffing and maintain high-quality emergency response services. Sustaining volunteer staffing, training, and modern firefighting equipment will require continued funding and investment.

As emergency call volumes continue to increase and incidents become more complex, maintaining adequate volunteer staffing and limited career staffing, particularly during daytime hours become increasingly

challenging. These trends highlight the need to evaluate long-term staffing strategies, including opportunities to transition toward a hybrid combination of volunteer and career personnel to ensure the department can continue to provide reliable emergency services as the community needs evolve.

The department continues to enforce the Virginia Statewide Fire Prevention Code and works closely with the other Town departments and regional partners to ensure adequate fire protection infrastructure. The department also collaborates during the development review process to promote safe emergency vehicle access, effective street circulation, and appropriate fire protection considerations for new development and redevelopment projects. Particular attention is given to roadway widths and on-street parking configurations to help ensure fire apparatus can safely access neighborhoods and emergency incidents. Christiansburg maintains a well-distributed fire hydrant network and seeks to maintain fire hydrants spacing approximately 500 feet where practical. Continued water system improvements will help support fire protection needs.

Community outreach and fire prevention remain key components of the department's mission. Through school fire safety education, fire prevention inspections, participation in community events and festivals, public awareness campaigns, and seasonal initiatives such as the annual burn ban, the department educates residents and promotes fire safety.

The department also utilizes the Town's Citizen Alert system to provide timely emergency notifications. Together, these efforts help reduce fire risks and promote a safer community.

The Fire Department maintains strong partnerships with neighboring fire service agencies through mutual aid agreements with Riner, Elliston, Long Shop-McCoy, Montgomery County, Blacksburg, and the City of Radford. These partnerships enhance regional emergency response capabilities, improve resource sharing, and help ensure timely assistance during major incidents and periods of increased demand. A significant number of emergency responses involve incidents outside the Town, highlighting the importance of continued regional coordination and resource sharing in supporting effective emergency response.



Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

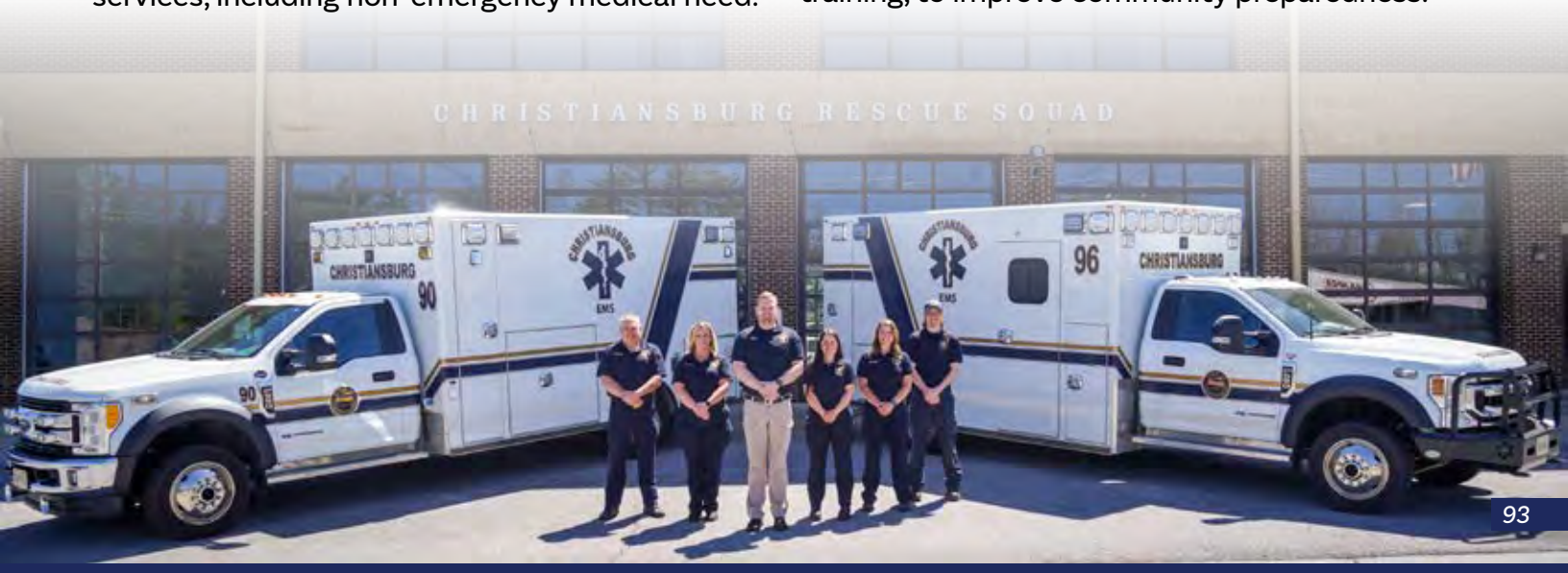
Christiansburg Emergency Medical Services (EMS) provides advanced life support and emergency medical services to the Town of Christiansburg and surrounding areas. The department plays a critical role in protecting lives through timely emergency medical response, high-quality patient care, public education, and strong regional partnerships.

The EMS station is located at 190 Depot Street NW and serves as the department's primary facility for emergency medical operations. The facility houses personnel, ambulances, medical equipment, and administrative functions necessary to support emergency response throughout the community. Continued investment in facilities, medical equipment, technology, and vehicle replacement will help ensure the department continues to provide reliable and efficient medical services. Christiansburg EMS provides emergency medical services throughout the Town and portions of Montgomery County, serving an area of approximately 88 square miles and 82.5 lane miles of Interstate 81. The department operates on a four-shift schedule to provide continuous 24-hour emergency medical coverage. During the past year, the department responded to 4,812 calls for service and anticipates an average annual increase in call volume of approximately 3.5 percent. There has been an increase in call volume associated with an aging population and increased demand for emergency medical services, including non-emergency medical need.

In alignment with emerging best practices, Christiansburg EMS has initiated a Community Paramedicine Program. Community paramedics provide public health outreach by addressing non-emergent medical and social needs through education and connections to community resources. This program expands the department's role beyond emergency response and helps reduce unnecessary emergency department utilization while enhancing overall community wellness.

EMS operates under the DERA Framework, a locally developed plan that establishes operational standards for emergency medical response within the service area. The framework outlines 24-hour coverage and establishes a 90% response rate within 13 minutes of call initiation. The plan also guides mutual aid coordination with neighboring jurisdictions when additional resources are needed.

The EMS department is staffed by highly qualified EMS professionals who maintain exceptional clinical skills through comprehensive training and continuing education. Training includes quarterly in-service programs, as well as advanced certifications such as CPR, Pediatric Advanced Life Support (PALS), Advanced Life Support (ALS), and Critical Care. In addition to emergency medical response, the department provides public education programs, including CPR and Stop the Bleed training, to improve community preparedness.



Christiansburg EMS is widely recognized as a high-performing EMS agency within the region and maintains strong partnerships with local hospitals. The department also participates in interfacility patient transports with the LewisGale Hospital System, providing transfers from the Christiansburg freestanding emergency department to hospitals in Blacksburg and Salem.

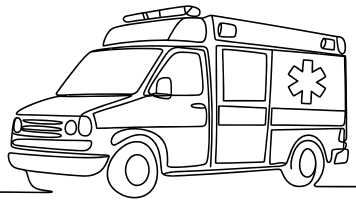
Christiansburg EMS continues to position itself as a regional leader in progressive emergency medical care by investing in advanced clinical capabilities that are uncommon among municipal EMS agencies. The department is the only EMS agency in the region to carry and administer low-titer O-positive whole blood for patients suffering life-threatening hemorrhage, bringing hospital-level resuscitation directly to the scene of critical emergencies. It is also among the few agencies in the region to routinely utilize point-of-care ultrasound as a diagnostic tool, allowing paramedics to make more informed treatment decisions in the field. Advanced mechanical ventilators are carried and used as a standard component of patient care for critically ill and injured patients, providing continuity of care from the scene through transport. In addition, Christiansburg EMS is the only EMS agency in the region that provides interfacility critical care transport capability, extending its advanced clinical expertise beyond emergency response and supporting the regional healthcare system. These investments demonstrate the Town's commitment to innovation, evidence-based medicine, and providing the highest level of prehospital care to its residents and surrounding communities.

As emergency medical service demands continue to increase, ongoing communication with Town administration regarding staffing needs and operational challenges will remain important. Rising call volumes may require additional personnel to maintain service levels. The department makes a significant investment in training EMS personnel, and continued turnover, particularly among part-time staff, requires ongoing investment in recruitment, training, and workforce development. Many employees leave to pursue advanced medical education or full-time employment, reflecting the department's success in developing skilled emergency medical professionals. The department has also identified facility, technology, equipment, and vehicle replacement needs that will require continued planning and investment to maintain reliable and efficient emergency medical services.



PUBLIC SAFETY

Goals, Objectives, & Policies:



Police

Goal PS.1: *Ensure Christiansburg remains a safe, secure, and resilient community by supporting a Police Department that fosters strong partnerships, exemplifies professional excellence, and advances innovative, prevention-focused practices. The Department will work to protect life and property, enhance overall quality of life, and continue fostering the community's confidence in public safety.*

Objective PS.1.1: Strengthen professional excellence, accreditation and performance to ensure a high performing Police Department.

Policy PS.1.1.1:

Maintain state accreditation and pursue national accreditation to ensure consistent professional standards and deliver exemplary law enforcement services. Upon achieving national accreditation, assess the continued need for state accreditation to avoid duplication and maintain operational efficiency.

Policy PS.1.1.2:

Develop and maintain competitive compensation, benefits and personnel policies to help recruit, train, and retain skilled personnel, ensuring effective and responsive coverage that meets the Town's evolving service needs.

Policy PS.1.1.3:

Support continuous professional development, cross-training, and leadership programs for staff.

Policy PS.1.1.4:

Maintain clear performance expectations and response-time standards that reinforce excellence and community confidence.

Policy PS.1.1.5:

Encourage data-driven decision-making and innovation in law enforcement strategies.

Objective PS.1.2: Provide modern facilities and infrastructure to support efficient operation and future growth.

Policy PS.1.2.1:

Evaluate and modernize police facilities to meet operational and growth needs, including potential options such as expansion, renovation, or construction of a new or satellite station.

Policy PS.1.2.2:

Invest in technology and equipment that improve safety and efficiency.

Policy PS.1.2.3:

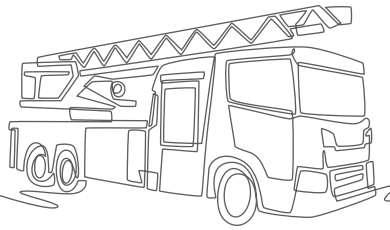
Explore facilities enhancements that incorporate secure parking, evidence storage, and technology infrastructure consistent with best practices.

Policy PS.1.2.4:

Continue to integrate long-term facility and technology needs into the Town's capital improvement plan.

Policy PS.1.2.5:

Pursue state and federal grant opportunities and other external funding sources to support police programs, equipment, technology, training, and other department needs.



Objective PS.1.3: Promote community partnership and public engagement to enhance public safety.

Policy PS.1.3.1:

Strengthen community relationships through accessibility, and regular public engagement.

Policy PS.1.3.2:

Expand citizen education and preparedness programs that promote awareness, safety, and mutual trust.

Policy PS.1.3.3:

Maintain active partnerships with schools, civic organizations, and neighborhood groups to address local concerns and promote youth involvement.

Policy PS.1.3.4:

Continue to use outreach tools, including social media and public forums, to communicate with residents and businesses.



Objective PS.1.4: Expand regional cooperation and interagency coordination to enhance emergency response, communication, and resource efficiency.

Policy PS.1.4.1:

Strengthen partnerships with Montgomery County, Blacksburg, Radford, and Virginia Tech through shared dispatch, training, and mutual aid agreements.

Policy PS.1.4.2:

Maintain interoperable communication systems among police, fire, rescue, and emergency management agencies.

Policy PS.1.4.3:

Coordinate with Fire, Rescue, and Emergency Services to support rescue operations, emergency response planning and explore opportunities for resource alignment.

Policy PS.1.4.4:

Pursue cost-saving opportunities that enhance efficiency and reduce duplication of services.

Policy PS.1.4.5:

Ensure the Police Department participates in the review of major site plans, and rezonings to incorporate safety and security considerations early in the development process.

Policy PS.1.4.6:

Encourage site design to support emergency access, lighting, visibility, and natural surveillance.

Fire

Goal PS.2: *Ensure a safe and well-protected community by delivering high-quality, efficient fire protection, prevention, and education services that safeguard life and property, and enhance overall quality of life.*

Objective PS.2.1: Strengthen staffing and training to provide effective and timely fire protection.

Policy PS.2.1.1:

Promote volunteer recruitment, recognition, and retention programs to sustain long-term community involvement.

Policy PS.2.1.2:

Maintain a strong volunteer department supported by paid staff to ensure consistent response and coverage.

Policy PS.2.1.3:

Expand paid staffing incrementally as service demands grow and operational needs such as inspection and prevention efforts increase.

Policy PS.2.1.4:

Pursue grant opportunities to support staffing, training, and equipment needs.

Policy PS.2.1.5:

Support ongoing training to maintain professional readiness.

Objective PS.2.2: Modernize facilities, equipment, and infrastructure to support operational needs and future community growth.

Policy PS.2.2.1:

Evaluate the existing Fire Station and prioritize renovation, expansion, or replacement to meet modern safety and operational standards.

Policy PS.2.2.2:

Assess and identify emerging growth areas to guide planning and funding of fire stations to improve coverage and reduce response time.

Policy PS.2.2.3:

Explore opportunities to achieve appropriate hydrant spacing such as 500-foot standard and coordinate with relevant departments to support adequate fire flow and water system reliability in developing areas.



Objective PS.2.3: Strengthen partnerships and community engagement to enhance fire prevention, preparedness, and coordinated response.

Policy PS.2.3.1:

Enhance mutual-aid agreements with Montgomery County, Blacksburg, and neighboring jurisdictions to improve emergency response capacity.

Policy PS.2.3.2:

Explore cost-sharing arrangements to support sustainable service delivery in coordination with primary service partners and jurisdictions.

Policy PS.2.3.3:

Expand community education and outreach initiatives, such as school fire-safety programs, and public information campaigns.

Policy PS.2.3.4:

Increase public awareness of fire prevention, hazard mitigation, and emergency preparedness through local communication platforms.

Policy PS.2.3.5:

Encourage interdepartmental coordination during development review to ensure safe access, effective circulation, emergency response, and fire resilient building design.

Policy PS.2.3.6:

Encourage community involvement in public safety initiatives and recognize contributions that support emergency preparedness and resilience.

Emergency Medical Services *(EMS)*

Goal PS.3: *Ensure a high-quality, reliable, and community-centered Emergency Medical Services (EMS) department that meets the community's current and future needs by sustaining response capacity, strengthening the workforce, updating facilities and technology, and expanding preventive initiatives.*

Objective PS.3.1: Continue to maintain a well-trained, fully staffed, and operationally prepared EMS Department capable of meeting established response standards.

Policy PS.3.1.1:

Maintain continuous emergency service coverage with staffing levels that adapt to increasing demand.

Policy PS.3.1.2:

Continue to sustain and expand professional training to ensure competency and compliance with industry standards, ensuring the department consistently exceeds benchmarks and maintains competitive advantage.



Policy PS.3.1.3:

Ensure response time performance meets the Disaster Emergency Response Agency (DERA) standard.

Policy PS.3.1.4:

Strengthen coordination with Town leadership through regular meetings to review staffing, training, and operational needs.

Objective PS.3.2: Strengthen community health, outreach, and emergency preparedness through education, partnerships, and preventive programs.

Policy PS.3.2.1:

Explore opportunities to expand public training through schools, nursing homes, community groups and other local partners.

Policy PS.3.2.2:

As service capacity allows, the EMS department will pursue growth of the Community Paramedicine Program to reduce non-emergency 911 use and support residents with medical and social needs.

Policy PS.3.2.3:

Continue collaboration with hospitals and regional partners, including interfacility transports with LewisGale and coordination with Emergency Management.

Policy PS.3.2.4:

Update and maintain the Emergency Operations Plan (EOP), aligning EMS readiness with emergency preparedness, disaster response, and interdepartmental training.

Policy PS.3.2.5:

Promote citizen preparedness through public education and outreach on topics such as cardiac arrest survival, stroke recognition, and disaster readiness.

Policy PS.3.2.6:

Actively pursue state, federal, and private grant opportunities and other external funding sources to support EMS operations, services, and improvements.

Policy PS.3.2.7:

Invest in and modernize EMS technology to improve emergency response, efficiency, and patient care.

