



Section Summary

Public safety involves the prevention of and protection from events that could endanger the well-being of the general public, such as crimes or disasters (natural or human-caused). Crises are not constrained by jurisdictional boundaries, requiring agencies in the region to maintain close links so that stresses to one agency do not negatively affect nearby communities. The individual counties and municipalities have planning mechanisms in place to address individual needs and coordinate, as needed, on joint efforts.

Overall, the public safety network in the study area is operating well. The majority of key issues and recommendations focus on maintaining the high level of service by addressing funding challenges and increasing delivery efficiency and ensuring sufficient staffing, and an adequate inventory of facilities and equipment as the population increases.

Existing Conditions

Emergency Management and Communication

Generally, the emergency management agencies in the study area reported that service is adequate and request for support for their mission is well received by policy makers and elected officials. During the course of the analysis, three areas of concern were noted:

- Traffic congestion continues to increase in urban centers and on main arterials during peak hours, having the potential to create significant conflicts if a response is required.
- Emergency communication systems are an ever-evolving technology with implementation costs that require reinvestment over periods of time. Ensuring that each agency and county maintains compliance with the Federal Communication Commission requirements, as well as supplying each member of all response teams (dispatchers, officers, firefighters, and paramedics), can create sizeable expenditures and investments. Directors require diligent research to ensure maximum effectiveness with minimal expenditures.
- In the event of an evacuation, maintaining clear and adequate evacuation route corridors is critical. Most directors cited experience in the 1990's, particularly the evacuation associated with Hurricane Floyd, and the lessons learned for implementation in future events.

Fire

The analysis revealed that the primary issues related to fire service and protection are as follows:

- Fire service and protection is correlated to response time. As development continues to occur outside core urban limits, service ranges of responders are stretched, potentially lengthening response times.
- Several of the chiefs interviewed noted concerns relating to funding for stations, personnel, and training during a period of declining revenues. Recent changes have eliminated



districts not owned by governments from cost recovery of certain activities; agencies continue to experience increases in the gap between revenues and expenditures.

- In addition to creating response time concerns, development in rural portions of the county and outside of the urban core have lacked a dedicated water source for fighting fires, requiring some responders to bring the water necessary to respond to fires.
- The use and reliance of volunteer forces to respond is common throughout the study area. However, as populations increase in size and density, many of the areas will be compelled to provide manned service areas to ensure adequate protection and coverage is available.
- Insurance Services Office Inc. (ISO) Ratings in portions of the study area are high (an ISO rating of 9 or 10) and create increases in insurance costs to homeowners.

Law Enforcement

Public safety is often one of the most expensive services for a municipal government to provide and several of the chiefs interviewed expressed concern about maintaining existing budgets and personnel in a declining revenue environment.

- Public safety is often one of the most expensive services for a municipal government to provide and several of the chiefs interviewed expressed concern about maintaining existing budgets and personnel in a declining revenue environment. Additionally, as communities continue to grow, the number of service providers must increase. The ability to increase staff to maintain adequate staffing levels for future growth is equally challenging.
- Several chiefs expressed a concern regarding the lack of resources to complete/provide crime prevention programs.
- Several chiefs in smaller jurisdictions cited the decline or lack of organized juvenile after school activities as a source of increases in disruptive behaviors.
- There is a need for remote/satellite law enforcement offices in the study area counties to ensure adequate response times and create more efficiency. The lack of decentralization in some agencies will be exacerbated as development and density outside the core areas continue to increase.
- Some agencies are experiencing increased costs related to housing prisoners in other jurisdictions, particularly if the facilities are located outside the county.
- Local police forces perform many of the same functions as the County Sheriff. For those communities with smaller forces and overlapping functions, cost savings might be realized through the consolidation of departments as a joint agency.
- County Sheriff staffing levels are well below national trends and service ratios. Sheriff's Departments have the larger geographical area to cover. The service areas are disconnected and have a widely dispersed population density. Growth outside core areas into rural portions of the study area counties creates a greater service burden on smaller units.

Growth and Assessment Analysis Findings

Growth Analysis

To help meet future demand, requirements for police officers, full-time firefighters, and fire stations due to anticipated growth in the region were calculated. Information pertaining to standards for emergency services provision (which is critical to quantifying future need) is difficult to obtain, as each locality approaches fire, police, and ambulance services differently. Standards for provision were calculated, however, using information supplied by service providers as part of this study's Existing Conditions report. Based on this data, current standards were derived by comparing existing supply (of, say, fire stations) to the population served (say, of Richmond Hill) to produce a service ratio. Because data was incomplete for a number of services, only future demand for police officers, fire stations, and full-time (i.e. not volunteer) firefighters was able to be calculated. (A more complete summary of the modeling process used to generate the figures below can be found in Section 7.)

For this analysis, it was assumed that current levels of service will be maintained into the future. However, should municipalities develop new standards, perhaps for increased levels of service, the SIF model can easily be adapted to yield alternative demand scenarios. While alternative standards supplied by the Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) office could be used to generate police officer demand, local levels of provision were modeled to provide a picture of future requirements at today's levels of service. For Liberty, Long, and Tattnall Counties, whose current levels of provision are lower than the BJS ratios, these standards might serve as a benchmark for future levels of service.

The demand for emergency services personnel and facilities is shown in the following tables. More detailed explanation of calculations, including standards for emergency services provision, will be included in a Technical Appendix.

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	11.3	23.8	38.1	52.2
Fire Stations	2.0	4.2	6.7	9.2
Full-time Firefighters	0.7	1.4	2.3	3.1

NB: Bryan County demand is exclusive of Richmond Hill demand.

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	12.3	20.7	30.1	39.2
Fire Stations	2.5	4.2	6.1	8.0
Full-time Firefighters	4.1	6.9	10.0	13.1

NB: Bryan County demand is exclusive of Richmond Hill demand.

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	1.4	2.8	4.4	6.0
Fire Stations	0.6	1.2	1.9	2.6
Full-time Firefighters	0.9	1.8	2.8	3.9

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	3.3	6.8	10.4	14.3
Fire Stations	0.4	0.9	1.4	1.9
Full-time Firefighters	0.8	1.7	2.6	3.5

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	6.3	10.5	15.5	20.3
Fire Stations	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.5
Full-time Firefighters	3.3	5.5	8.2	10.7

	By Phase 1	By Phase 2	By Phase 3	By Phase 4
	2010-2015	2015-2020	2020-2025	2025-2030
Police Officers	2.4	5.7	10.2	15.0
Fire Stations	0.2	0.6	1.0	1.5
Full-time Firefighters	0.6	1.4	2.5	3.7

Delivery options for personnel and facilities are described in Tables 8.7 through 8.10 at the end of this section.

Recommendations

Introduction

Overall, the public safety network in the study is operating well. The majority of key issues and recommendations focus on maintaining the high level of service by addressing funding challenges and increasing delivery efficiency and ensuring sufficient staffing, and an adequate inventory of facilities and equipment as the population increases.

Short-Term

Formally Adopt Mutual Aid Agreements

The agencies within the study area identified past experience in joint operations and assistance on an as-needed basis as examples of cooperative efforts among neighboring agencies. Changes in political leadership, population growth, or another extraneous variable may affect future cooperative efforts that have not been formally identified. Smaller communities and responders rely upon these mutual aid circumstances to ensure service is delivered to their constituents. Agencies need to coordinate with the applicable city or county leadership team to formally adopt mutual aid agreements to solidify the response.

Coordination with Emergency Evacuation Routes

Each county needs to ensure that coordination with emergency management officials is maintained related to developments or events that affect defined evacuation routes. As long-term growth, pre-planned construction, or other foreseeable events occur, county leaders and community planners need to define a protocol for coordinating with emergency management officials and proactively formulating contingency plans.



Coordinate with Police and Fire Chiefs

Each county and city needs to ensure continued coordination between development tracking and public safety staffing levels is integrated, maintaining the agency's ability to proactively plan for increasing in staffing commensurate to population growth.

Financial and Capital Facility Planning

Most police agencies are currently understaffed (in comparison to National Service ratio guidelines) to serve the existing populations. The population growth expected in the short-term comes at a time when local, regional, state (and national) funding challenges exist resulting from the economic downturn. The addition of public safety positions that require 24-hour, 7 days of week staffing creates additional burdens on governments not associated with other staffing increases. Maintaining adequate response vehicles and facilities is a capital intensive program, requiring significant advanced planning. Leaders need to establish plans to ensure the ability to provide increases in staff, equipment, and facilities is defined and in place prior to the population growth occurring. The Liberty County "Regional Fire Master Plan" is an existing example of the baseline reporting needed to support this effort.

Crime Prevention

The economic downturn has reduced resources to operate community programs and preventive education. One mechanism that is available to communities that requires no cost beyond existing staffing is the implementation of "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED) strategies. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach involving planners/engineers, law enforcement officials and developers/builders to identify and avoid creating conditions (such as areas of poor lighting or obstructed views) that are conducive to criminal behavior. Influencing the design or amending the development regulations to avoid the creation of such conditions will contribute to an increase in public safety. Local planning leaders need to engage public safety officials to implement CPTED strategies for new developments and identify existing problem areas that could be resolved through future work programs.

Long-Term

Reduce Reliance on Volunteer Fire Services

While some of the cities and portions of counties within the study area are served by professional fire fighters, the majority of the area is served by volunteer forces. As populations and development

increase and require more responders, continued reliance on a volunteer force will result in response delays. County leadership needs to begin a strategic planning effort to look at transitioning to a permanent response team in key areas of their jurisdictions.

Reduce ISO Ratings

There are portions of the study area, as a result of a lack of a dedicated water supply and response times of personnel, that experience ISO ratings of 9 or 10, creating a financial burden for taxpayers through higher insurance premiums. Concurrent with plans to reduce reliance on the volunteer force, the leadership should also make decisions to locate response teams in areas that have the ability to improve ISO ratings for communities. This effort should also be coordinated with the regional water planning efforts related to the distribution of public water resources.

Recruit More After School/Summer Programs

Numerous police chiefs noted a correlation between disruptive activities by school-aged offenders and periods of the year when school is not in session and suggested that the lack of organized activities focused on this cohort may be a contributing factor. While noted in previous sections, it is appropriate to define the need for an increased presence in after school and youth activities to help address this element. Activities need not be recreationally oriented but could also focus on educational and social issues addressing teen concerns.

Regional Prisoner Housing

Housing locally incarcerated prisoners is a labor and resource intensive activity. The community leaders should consider a regional approach to housing offenders to reduce expenditures/investments on services that can be managed to a greater efficiency for all agencies. The approach is appropriate not only for communities within a county but among the counties within the study area.

Liberty and Tattnall Sheriff Satellite Offices

The Liberty and Tattnall County Sheriff s have a significantly large jurisdictional area, interspersed with incorporated cities, yet maintain the major administrative and functional spaces within locations not geographically central to their service areas. There is a need for satellite stations, perhaps through agreement with city police or fire departments, which would allow for the deputies to establish bases of operation closer to the outer reaches of their service areas. Provisions would allow for greater response time and increased coverage (in lieu of period of transition back to the main facilities).

Consolidate Long County/Ludowici Public Safety Agencies

The potential exists to reduce expenses and increase efficiency by consolidating the operation of the Sheriff's office and Police Department into a single agency. The operational needs of both agencies result in redundant services, the volume and need for which could be consolidated into a single operation without impacts to either agency. While the city police department exceeds the service ratio recommendations (officers/population), the Sheriff's office currently provides the lowest ratio of officers per population in the study area. Consolidation would increase the presence of law enforcement in the community and provide increased levels of service, response, and coverage.

Increase Staffing and Facilities Commensurate with Expected Population Increases

Tables 8.7 through 8.10 show the level of emergency services likely to be required in the region by 2030 based on assumptions about current levels of service. It is important to note that this is one option for delivery as the population grows. Opportunities for service consolidation, joint facility planning, and community-based crime prevention programs as described above can also address increasing demand for public safety. More detailed discussions with service providers will need to be carried out in the future to understand service areas and populations served. Delivery strategies related to siting of future

One mechanism that is available to communities that requires no cost beyond existing staffing is the implementation of "Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design" (CPTED) strategies. CPTED is a multi-disciplinary approach involving planners/engineers, law enforcement officials and developers/builders to identify and avoid creating conditions (such as areas of poor lighting or obstructed views) that are conducive to criminal behavior.

facilities, equipment purchasing, and identifying funding streams for hiring, construction and operation also need to be developed in consultation with service providers.

Table 8.7 - Emergency Services Delivery Recommendation, 2010-2015		
	Recommended Provision	Comments
Bryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 11 police officers • 2 fire stations 	There is not enough demand for even 1 full-time firefighter, even though there is demand for 2 fire stations. The current service ratio for full-time firefighters is low for Bryan County. This could indicate that 1) the firefighting force is comprised mostly of volunteer firefighters or 2) the population is currently under-served.
Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 police officers • 2 fire stations • 4 full-time firefighters 	-
Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 police officer 	Demand for a new fire station is not adequate, yet pressure will be put on existing facilities due to population growth. A new full-time firefighter is not yet warranted but additional volunteer support may be.
Tattnall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 police officers 	Demand for a new fire station is low. A new full-time firefighter is not yet warranted but additional volunteer support may be.
Hinesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 6 police officers • 3 full-time firefighters 	Only 2 fire stations currently serve Hinesville's population, yielding a low service ratio and no demand for a new station, yet 3 new firefighters are required.
Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 police officers 	Demand is low for a new fire station but relatively higher for a new full-time firefighter. Volunteers may be needed to help relieve pressure.
NB: Demand arising from Hinesville excluded from Liberty County total; demand from Richmond Hill excluded from Bryan County total		

Table 8.8 - Emergency Services Delivery Recommendation, 2015-2020		
	Recommended Provision	Comments
Bryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 police officers (23 total) • 2 fire stations (4 total) • 1 full-time firefighter 	-
Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 police officers (20 total) • 2 fire stations (4 total) • 2 full-time firefighters (6 total) 	Demand nearly warrants the addition of another full-time firefighter. More volunteer firefighters might need to be identified to relieve pressure.
Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 police officer (2 total) • 1 fire station • 1 full-time firefighter 	Demand nearly warrants the addition of another full-time firefighter. More volunteer firefighters might need to be identified to relieve pressure.

Table 8.8 - Emergency Services Delivery Recommendation, 2015-2020		
	Recommended Provision	Comments
Tattnall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 police officers (6 total) • 1 full-time firefighter 	A new fire station is nearly warranted. Capacity may start to be reached at existing facilities.
Hinesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 police officers (10 total) • 2 full-time firefighters (5 total) 	Demand remains low for a new fire station.
Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 police officers (5 total) • 1 full-time firefighter 	-
NB: Demand arising from Hinesville excluded from Liberty County total; demand from Richmond Hill excluded from Bryan County total		

Table 8.9 - Emergency Services Delivery Recommendation, 2020-2025		
	Recommended Provision	Comments
Bryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 15 police officers (38 total) • 2 fire stations (6 total) • 1 full-time firefighter (2 total) 	-
Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 police officers (30 total) • 2 fire stations (6 total) • 4 full-time firefighters (10 total) 	Pressure should be relieved on full-time firefighters as adequate provision should be reached in this phase. Recommend hiring early and throughout the phase.
Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 police officers (4 total) • 1 full-time firefighter (2 total) 	Recommend hiring full-time firefighter early in phase. Demand nearly warrants the addition of another full-time firefighter by the end of the period. More volunteer firefighters might need to be identified to relieve pressure. Capacity may be begin to be reached at existing fire stations as population nearly demands the addition of a new facility.
Tattnall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 police officers (10 total) • 1 fire station • 1 full-time firefighter (2 total) 	-
Hinesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 police officers (15 total) • 3 full-time firefighters (8 total) 	Demand remains low for a new fire station.
Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 police officers (10 total) • 1 fire station • 1 full-time firefighter 	-
NB: Demand arising from Hinesville excluded from Liberty County total; demand from Richmond Hill excluded from Bryan County total		



Table 8.10 - Emergency Services Delivery Recommendation, 2025-2030

	Recommended Provision	Comments
Bryan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14 police officers (52 total) • 3 fire stations (9 total) • 1 full-time firefighter (3 total) 	-
Liberty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 9 police officers (39 total) • 2 fire stations (8 total) • 3 full-time firefighters (13 total) 	-
Long	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 police officers (6 total) • 1 fire station (2 total) • 1 full-time firefighter (3 total) 	Phasing of new fire station and firefighter recommended early in phase to relieve pressure on existing facilities. By the end of the phase, demand for another new firefighter increases.
Tattnall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 police officers (14 total) • 1 full-time firefighter 	A new fire station is nearly warranted by the end of the phase. Facilities may start to reach capacity by 2030.
Hinesville	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 police officers (20 total) • 2 full-time firefighters (10 total) 	Based on current levels of provision, no new fire stations are warranted by 2030, yet the firefighting force will add 10 new full-time members. Expansion of a facility – depending on where firefighters are added – may be called for.
Richmond Hill	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 5 police officers (15 total) • 1 full-time firefighter (3 total) 	-

NB: Demand arising from Hinesville excluded from Liberty County total; demand from Richmond Hill excluded from Bryan County total