

Subject: Fire Response Times
Related Department: FIR

FY 2025 Proposed Budget
Budget Work Session Follow-up

4/2/2024/4/2024

The following information is provided in response to a request made by Ms. Cunningham at the work session on March 21, 2024, regarding the following question:

How does Arlington's response time compare to others in the region?

In response to this request, the Arlington County Fire Department (ACFD) looked at how Washington DC, the City of Alexandria, and Fairfax County report on Fire and EMS response times. Each jurisdiction reports on its performance time slightly differently; many jurisdictions use response time, which is turnout time plus travel time or time on scene. ACFD looks at turnout time, the time from when notification is received at the station until travel starts, separately from travel from the station to the scene.

Currently, ACFD references the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA) 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, EMS, and Special Operations in Career Fire Departments to measure response time performance. As ACFD goes through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI) process, it will complete a Standards of Cover (SOC) that will help Arlington meet response time outcomes.

National Fire Protection Agency 1710 Standards

Below are the standards for Fire and EMS response defined as well as a conversion of those standards into response time measures that capture turnout plus on scene time that can be used to compare to the response time measure used by other jurisdictions.

NFPR - Fire Response	Standard	Response Time (turnout + on scene)
Turnout time (interval from when ACFD receives notification to the beginning of travel)	80 seconds	-
First engine on scene (i.e., travel time)	240 seconds (4 minutes)	320 seconds (5 minutes and 20 seconds)
Second company on scene (i.e., travel time)	360 seconds (6 minutes)	440 seconds

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NFPR - Fire Response	Standard	Response Time (turnout + on scene)
		(7 minutes and 20 seconds)
Initial full alarm (low and medium hazard) time	480 seconds (8 minutes)	560 seconds (9 minutes and 20 seconds)
Initial full alarm - high hazards/high-rise initial	610 seconds (10 minutes, 10 seconds)	690 seconds (11 minutes and 30 seconds)
NFPA - EMS Response	Standard	Response Time (turnout + on scene)
Turnout time (interval from when ACFD receives notification and the beginning of travel)	60 seconds	
First responder on scene (i.e., travel time)	240 seconds (4 minutes)	300 seconds (5 minutes)
ALS unit arrives	480 seconds (8 minutes)	540 seconds (9 minutes)

ACFD Current Measures

ACFD's measures are not distinguished between first and second arrivals on scene, but instead represent all responding EMS and Fire vehicles.

Outcome Measures	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Actuals
Percentage of all fire responses turned out in 80 seconds or less	63.99%	63.56%
Percentage of EMS responses turned out in 60 seconds or less	34.69%	35.82%
Percentage of all Fire/EMS responses that achieve first responder engine travel time of 4 minutes or less	51.52%	51.97%

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Regional Metrics

Below is information on response times as reported by other jurisdictions. In reviewing their data, it is difficult to compare measures, as they are reporting out differently from one another. In reviewing fire suppression, Fairfax is under 60% in meeting the NFPA response time goal and Washington D.C. is under 60% for EMS calls, both of which track with Arlington.

Fairfax County Fire and Rescue Department

Community Outcome	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Actuals
Fire suppression response rate for the arrival of an engine company on a structure fire within 5 minutes and 20 seconds	58.92%	58.30%
Fire suppression response rate for 15 personnel within 9 minutes and 20 seconds	87.59%	91.10%
Percent ALS units on scene within 9 minutes	85.17%	76.07%

City of Alexandria

Performance Indicators	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Actuals
Average response time (from dispatch to arrival) to emergency medical incidents within the City	08:30	08:21
Percent of emergency medical incidents within the City responded to in less than 6:30	72.1%	72.5%
Average response time (from dispatch to arrival) to fire incidents within the city	08:17	07:57
Percent of fire incidents within the City responded to in less than 6:30	78.0%	78.1%

Washington, DC

Performance Indicators	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Actuals
Percent of structure fire calls when a first responding fire engine arrived in 5 minutes 20 seconds or less	94.3%	94.3%
Percent of structure fire calls when a first alarm assignment arrived in 9 minutes 20 seconds or less	88.2%	88.6%
Percent of high-rise structure fire calls when a first alarm assignment arrived in 11 minutes 30 seconds or less	63.6%	62.7%

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Performance Indicators	FY 2022 Actuals	FY 2023 Actuals
Percent of higher priority EMS calls when a first responding EMT arrived in 5 minutes or less	48.7%	54.3%
Percent of higher priority EMS calls when a first responding EMT arrived in 5 minutes or less and a Paramedic arrived in 9 minutes or less	40%	45.9%
Percent of highest priority EMS calls when a first responding EMT arrived in 5 minutes or less and two Paramedics arrived in 9 minutes or less	50.7%	59.3%
Percent of higher priority EMS calls when a FEMS transport unit arrived in 9 minutes or less	72.2%	76.3%