



SQUAD COMMANDER HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

Congratulations on your assignment to the Squad Commander position! You are now engaged in a critical role within the Virginia Beach Department of EMS (VBEMS). You are responsible for the leadership and direction of your squad/team. As the department's primary agent at this level, the Chief of EMS has empowered you with a number of important responsibilities. This handbook is designed to provide reference material for the most common topics affecting a squad commander. Feel free to add documents to this manual as you progress in your position. The department will also send you updates as things change.

It is important to note that you there are other important references out there, most notably the Rules, Regulations and Policies documents found on the department's website. You should also be familiar with regional and state regulations. The following websites will be useful to you:

Virginia Beach Department of EMS: www.vbems.com

City of Virginia Beach: www.vbgov.com

Tidewater EMS Council: www.tidewaterems.org

Virginia Office of EMS: www.vdh.virginia.gov/oems/

You are also encouraged to ask questions of your chain of command and EMS Administration any time.

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Section 1: Department of EMS Mission, Vision Values

Mission

The mission of the Department of Emergency Medical Services is to provide services to the community which preserve life, improve health and promote the safety of citizens and visitors who live, learn, work and play in our community.

This mission is accomplished through a systems approach focused on providing timely responses; high quality patient care services; public awareness and education; proactive safety interventions; and all hazards readiness.

Vision

We are a leader in the emergency medical services field and the community is confident in our services.

Values

Quality Customer Service

Serving customers is the fundamental reason the Department of Emergency Medical Services exists.

Volunteerism

Volunteers are an integral part of the department. There is no differentiation between career and volunteer members in terms of performance standards, certifications and input to the organization.

Teamwork

Organizational goals are attained when members and customers work together.

Leadership and Learning

Learning at every level of the organization creates opportunities for leadership experience and for members to continuously expand their capacity to create a quality organization.

Integrity

Integrity creates the trust essential to Quality Service and long-term personal and organizational growth.

Commitment

Commitment is the necessary mechanism enabling members to focus their behavior on attaining organizational goals.

Openness and Respect

Members must be truthful and open with each other and with customers to grow responsibly and effectively.

Quality Work Life

A quality work life influences the degree of members' satisfaction which enables the accomplishment of the department's mission.

Section 2: Role and Duties of the Squad Commander

The Squad Commander is single-handedly the most influential officer in the VBEMS organization. The Squad Commander is the first line supervisor of the department's most important resource-our volunteers. He/she is responsible for the overall leadership and management of a rescue squad or special operations team. Effective operations and good morale starts with the Squad Commander.

VBEMS has training courses available to assist you in your development as an effective and informed leader. All personnel are encouraged to attend this training. The department holds regular officer meetings in order to keep everyone informed. And of course, there is a cadre of chief officers ready and willing to assist you.

The Squad Commander is appointed by the EMS Chief and serves at his pleasure within a designated chain-of-command. Even though a Squad Commander may have been nominated as a result of a Rescue Squad Captain election, the actual Squad Commander title is only given via appointment. The Squad Commander is considered a department agent and is responsible for implementation of all policies and directives of the department. The Squad Commander's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- ? Ensuring maximum participation of members for optimum staffing
- ? Corrective personnel actions
- ? Leave approval
- ? City policy implementation and enforcement
- ? Regulatory compliance
- ? City facility care taking and maintenance
- ? City equipment maintenance
- ? Mentoring junior officers
- ? Agency advocate

While a Squad Commander may also hold the title of Rescue Squad Captain, all actions taken as a City/VBEMS agent must be taken in the capacity as Squad Commander. Unless specifically stated in VBEMS policies, individual squad by-laws or procedures are not recognized when for operational and personnel matters.

All Squad Commanders must meet with the Chief and Deputy Chief annually and upon appointment.

All Squad Commanders participate in quarterly Operations Officer meetings. These meetings are typically held the first Saturday of February, May, August and November (0800-1200).

Section 3: Virginia Beach EMS Organization

The basic VBEMS structure consists of a Chief, Deputy Chief and five Division Chiefs that manage daily department activities. Each division has various line and support personnel to support ongoing organizational functions.

Chief Bruce Edwards directs and oversees all activities of the department. He reports directly to the City Manager.

Deputy Chief Bill Kiley is responsible for implementation of the overall strategic direction and management of the department. He oversees each of the five Division Chiefs.

Division Chief of Operations Dan Kiley is charged with the oversight of the volunteer rescue squads and special operations teams. He has four brigade chiefs assigned to assist the squads with their administrative and operational needs in order to provide effective rescue and patient care services to the community.

Division Chief of Operations Ed Brazle oversees all career field providers, including the four rotating medic shifts and their Brigade Chiefs. He is responsible for ensuring the proper number of resources are available and deployed around the clock. He directs all daily field activities ensuring high quality patient care services are provided around the clock.

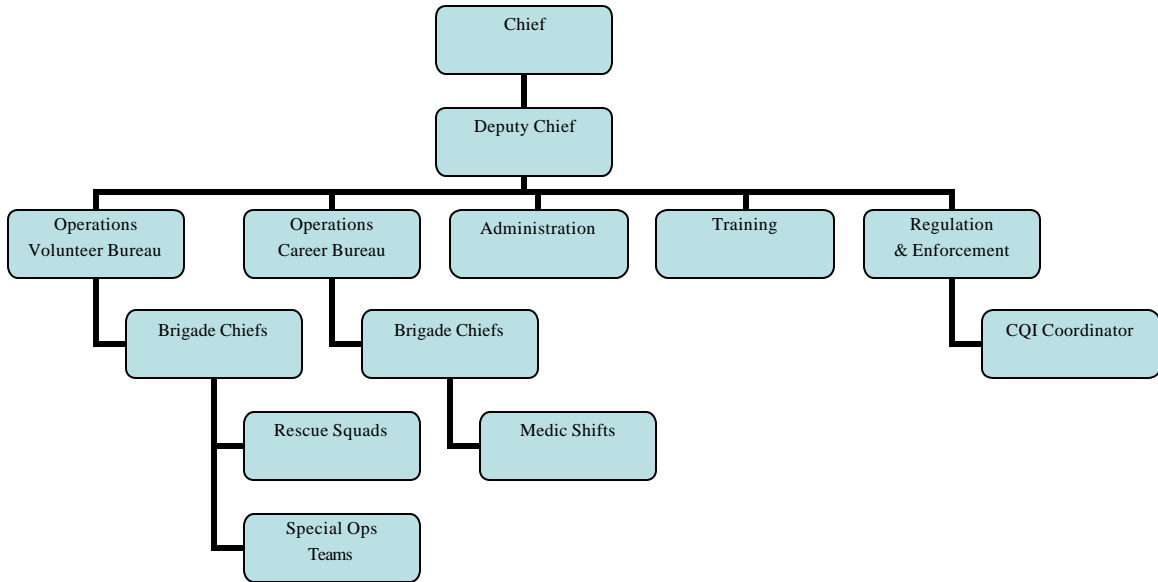
The Administration Division is led by Division Chief John Bianco. His team provides the administrative services of the department including human resources, recruiting, retention and general office management.

The Regulation and Enforcement Division is led by Division Chief Tom Green. He is responsible for rescue squad and private agency compliance to all regulations. He oversees the Public Safety Analyst and the CQI Captain.

Division Chief Bruce Nedelka directs the Training Division. His team conducts basic EMT classes, continuing education programs and specialized life support programs. Member certification and recertification is coordinated via the Training Division.

SPECIFIC POINTS OF CONTACT AND AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY ARE LISTED IN THE MEMBER SERVICES GUIDE

DEPARTMENT OF EMS ORGANIZATION



Radio Callsigns:

EMS1: EMS Chief
EMS2: EMS Deputy Chief
EMS5: Citywide Shift Commander
EMS6: EMS Field Supervisor
EMS7: EMS Field Supervisor
EMS10: EMS Field Supervisor
EMS21: Operations Division Chief (Volunteer Bureau)
EMS22: Operations Division Chief (Career Bureau/Daily Operations)
EMS23: Training Division Chief
EMS24: Administration Division Chief
EMS25: Regulation and Enforcement Division Chief
Brigade x: Brigade Chief
Captain x: Captain
MD1: Operational Medical Director

xx50: Station Squad Commander
xx51: Station Assistant Squad Commander

Special Ops 5 – Volunteer Supervisor Team Captain
Special Ops 30 – Squad Truck Team Captain
Special Ops 40 – Disaster Preparedness Captain
MRT1 – Marine Rescue Team Captain
SAR1 – Search and Rescue Team Captain
Medic 1 – SWAT Medic Team Captain
Maintenance 2 – Maintenance Captain
Logistics 1 – Logistics Captain

Admin x – Administrative Support Personnel
xx70-xx99 – Rescue Squad Paramedics and Intermediates*
xx30-xx49 – Squad Truck Personnel
SARx – SAR Team Personnel
Dive x – Marine Rescue Team Personnel
Medic 1-10 – SWAT Medics
Medic 30+ - Career and Staff Medics
Training x – Staff Instructors

*Squad Commanders approve the radio number for newly released medics at his/her station. The final selection should be forwarded to Brigade Chief John Fusco.

Section 4: Discipline and Grievance

All disciplinary actions taken by a Squad Commander must fall within the DEMS Corrective Action Policy. This includes all associated progressive steps and grievance procedures. Any deviations from the DEMS policy could likely result in the corrective action being nullified due to procedural errors.

You are strongly encouraged to document all counseling in writing. Disciplinary actions must be in writing. The official file of record is located at EMS Admin, so be sure a copy of any action is forwarded to the department for inclusion in the member's personnel file.

Corrective action letters must include the following contents:

- ? The reason(s) for the action taken described in sufficient detail so that a reasonable person would understand the basis for the discipline
- ? The date when the any pre-disciplinary and/or fact finding meeting took place and a summary of the employee's response
- ? A warning that future unsatisfactory performance or misconduct may result in further disciplinary action
- ? An explanation of the member's rights, if any, under the Corrective Action and Grievance Policy

The DEMS Corrective Action Policy and sample letters are attached for reference. Officers are encouraged to use the sample letters as templates for their own activities.

Sample Counseling Letter

Date: <Insert>
To: <Insert Member Name>, Rescue Squad Member
From: <Insert Officer Name>, Squad Commander
Subj: Official Counseling

You failed to report for scheduled duty on 2/18/08. As we discussed yesterday, I understand that you had a work conflict. However, you should have notified me or EMS5 as soon as you were aware of the event. You must notify appropriate officers whenever you cannot stand a scheduled duty.

Any unexcused absences within the next 12 months will result in disciplinary action.

Sample Disciplinary Letter

Date: <Insert>
To: <Insert Member Name>, Rescue Squad Member
From: <Insert Officer Name>, Squad Commander
Subj: <Official Reprimand > {disciplinary action taken}

You failed to stand duty on 4/5/08 without an advance excuse. According to my records, this is the second duty you have missed within two months. You were counseled on this matter in February following the missed duty on 2/18/08.

Any additional unexcused absences within the next 12 months will result in suspension.

If you feel this <reprimand> is inappropriate, you may initiate a grievance to your immediate supervisor within twenty (20) consecutive days of this action. Please refer to the Department of EMS Corrective Action and Grievance Policy for your specific grievance rights.

Section 5: Regulations and Compliance

Each rescue squad holds its own EMS Agency license. As such, they must comply with all Virginia Department of Health regulations. They must meet other requirements set at the local, regional, state and even national level. You should have access to a Virginia EMS Regulations Manual at your station. This document is also available online.

Your agency must meet required standards for equipment, training and records. While DEMS covers many of the administrative and medical control requirements on your behalf, there is no escape from equipment and supply standards. You must carry the required equipment and supplies on your vehicles. DEMS does not have adequate stocks to keep your vehicles in service. We will help when possible, but ultimate responsibility rests with the Squad Commander.

In terms of minimum equipment and supplies, VBEMS has some requirements which exceed the Department of Health requirements. For example, all ambulances must carry CPAP masks and crico-thyrotomy kits. We also require that all durable equipment such as defibrillators be uniform across the entire rescue squad system. You are not authorized to purchase new types of medical equipment without approval of the department and the Operational Medical Director. A standing EMS equipment committee and staff review the latest tools and technologies to ensure the highest standards of care are maintained.

Special Operations Captains should consult with their Brigade Chief regarding equipment and vehicle regulations for their team. No medical supplies can be added without permission of the Regulation and Operations Chiefs.

New vehicles must be approved by VBEMS before purchase. Once a new apparatus is delivered, the Regulation and Enforcement Chief will assist you will obtaining the necessary Department of Health permits.

The Virginia Department of Health Office of EMS inspects all ambulances and squad trucks every two years. We participate in a consolidated inspection process where all vehicles and records are delivered to a central location for checks. It is the responsibility of each squad to prepare and participate in the inspection process. A regional inspector also has the authority to spot check your vehicles any time. Violations are handled via a citation either to your agency or the member directly.

IV and Drug boxes are actually property of the Tidewater EMS Council and area hospitals. We participate in a regional exchange system. Padlocks and keys are provided by DEMS, and DEMS manages the routine inventory reporting process on your squad's behalf.

All pre-hospital patient care reports (PPCR) are submitted via a centralized filing process. VBEMS data clerks enter PPCR information into a database. This required

information is then forwarded on your behalf to the Department of Health. Rescue squads are not authorized to maintain separate PPCR files at their station.

The Regulation and Enforcement Division Chief is your best reference for agency compliance. Feel free to contact him when you need guidance. While you can call the Virginia Office of EMS directly, you are highly encouraged to ask your question locally first. If we don't know the answer, we would be happy to work with the state or region to get you the information you need.

Section 6: Maintenance

Vehicles

All rescue squad and department-owned vehicles are covered by City of Virginia Beach insurance. As such, all vehicles will have a City inventory number. Most squads utilize the City Garage for their maintenance. The garage is open during business hours. Drop off and pick ups can also be handled after-hours. Emergency towing and road service can only be arranged via EMS5. Your best source of information regarding City vehicle services is Logistics 1.

Fuel Keys

The department utilizes a key system to access fuel from several sites around the City. Each vehicle has a unique key that should only be placed on that unit. Key failures/lost keys should be reported to Logistics 1.

Facilities

Squad owned buildings are maintained by the rescue squads themselves. City facilities are maintained by the City. If you need a general repair in a joint Fire-EMS station, contact the B-shift Fire Captain. He/she will submit the necessary work order. Requests for modifications or major repairs not covered under routine maintenance (i.e. install new electrical outlets) should be made to the Operations Division Chief.

You are not authorized to reassign any rescue squad spaces to the Fire Department or other outside agencies. Only the EMS Deputy Chief can approve transferring rooms, bay space or other facilities to another organization. If approached to rearrange rooms, parking arrangements or space access, forward the requestor to the Operations Division Chief. This same standard applies in reverse. Station Fire officers are not authorized to assign any Fire spaces to EMS without executive level approval.

Section 7: Accidents/Damage

All accidents involving City or rescue squad owned equipment must be reported to EMS5. Likewise, all injuries must be reported to EMS5. A field supervisor will respond to complete required paperwork. EMS5 may ask that the Squad Commander complete risk management forms (DF-75) for loss or minor damage to equipment at the station.

Section 8: Local Vehicle Registration Fee and Rescue Tags

Currently under revision by Division Chief Bianco

- In the interim, contact EMS Administration Office to obtain the appropriate forms.

Section 9: Scheduling Process

VBEMS is required to maintain a minimum level of ambulances citywide. Certain stations are required to be staffed at all times. Career medics are used to augment staffing where necessary. Occasionally, volunteers may be assigned to run at locations other than their home station in order to meet minimum staffing goals.

VBEMS uses a centralized scheduling process. All member availabilities must be submitted into the OSCAR scheduling database no later than the 10th of the month for the subsequent month's schedule. Each squad develops their own schedule based on initial inputs. The scheduling officer, squad commander or other representative must bring this schedule along with member availabilities to the monthly centralized scheduling meeting. At this session, some crews are shifted or mixed in order to optimize citywide staffing. Once the centralized meeting is over, the final schedule can be published.

Duty schedules will change due to illnesses, status changes new qualifications, etc. You or your scheduling officer must be prepared to make adjustments throughout the month. Vacancies should be filled whenever possible. All changes must be reported to Brigade Chief John Fusco so he can adjust the master City schedule.

Our system is designed to allow any member-volunteer or career-to run duty on any ambulance in the City.

Section 10: Leave

Currently under revision by Division Chief Bianco

Bianco

- ? *Medical status*
- ? *Granting leave*
- ? *Reduced duties*
- ? *Entering info into OSCAR*

Section 11: Training

Currently under revision by Division Chief Nedelka

- ? *ID Cards*
- ? *AIC Process*

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- ? Corrective Action

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- ? Rules, Regulations and Policies List
- ? Virginia EMS Regulations