



BELTSVILLE FIRE STATION FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When did the Department find out about the health & safety issues? Why wasn't the Beltsville VFD notified?

In December 2023, an employee brought significant health and safety concerns regarding Station 831 to the Office of the Fire Chief, which prompted an investigation. A designated representative of the Beltsville Volunteer Fire Department (BVFD) was present during the inspection conducted in December 2023. The BVFD President was provided with a correction order after the completion of the Fire Inspection. Additionally, the Office of the Fire Chief attempted to schedule meetings with the leadership of the BVFD to further discuss the implications of the inspection findings and next steps but were unable to do so before the January 24, 2024, meeting.

How did the PGFD not know about unsafe conditions in the station? Why were these issues not addressed?

All volunteer fire departments are prompted annually to submit projects for approval through the Fire Commission. The BVFD has not submitted any Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) requests, either through the survey or through their District Fire Commissioner, in several years, although many of the health and safety concerns present in the facility would have been eligible projects for CIP fund allocation.

If the station is unsafe for Career personnel, how is it safe for the Volunteers?

We are concerned about the long-term effects of exposure to carcinogens within the station for all members, both career and volunteer. Although firefighting is an inherently dangerous profession, there are ways to mitigate these risks, and we must ensure we take every measure to do so. Exposure to carcinogens has caused two department Line of Duty Deaths in the past 8 years, and that is completely unacceptable.

If the building is so unsafe why are the career personnel still here?

We have been able to reduce some of the risk to personnel by:

- Ventilating the station.
- Ensuring the use of current exhaust systems.
- We have swapped out the frontline engine due to a failed exhaust system transmitter, but there may be potential for other areas of diesel exhaust infiltration within the station that we will continue to monitor and mitigate.
- We will continue to monitor personnel for signs and symptoms of illness associated with the identified risks.

Prince George's County invested over \$262,000 in the station over the past 5 years. How were those funds spent?

FISCAL YEAR	PROJECT	COST
2023	HVAC unit replacement	\$35,000
2022	Boiler replacement	\$61,000
2022	LED lighting upgrades	\$44,755
2018/2019	Bunkroom/bathroom renovation & structural repairs to flooring/slab	\$121,261.29

Since 2019, there have been 57 Facilities Maintenance (FOM) Requests submitted for BVFD. Of these requests, a total of 43 requests have been resolved, however, there appear to be at least six duplicate submissions. The submissions indicate several consistent issues including lighting issues (4), HVAC/boiler issues (14), sewage/other plumbing issues (15), exhaust removal issues (2), and egress issues (7).

Many of the recurring issues are reflected in the completed CIP projects, including the HVAC unit replacement, boiler replacement, LED lighting upgrades, bunkroom/bathroom renovation and structural repairs to flooring/slab.

**Who is responsible for paying for and taking care of the unsafe working conditions?
The County or the BVFD?**

Currently, there is no Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract between the County and BVFD for repairs, maintenance, or upkeep of the BVFD building. Over the years, the County has provided the Fire/EMS Department an annual maintenance budget for ALL department facilities in the amount of:

FISCAL YEAR	ANNUAL MAINTENANCE BUDGET ALLOWANCE
2024	\$2,500,000
2023	\$2,474,000
2022	\$1,983,000
2021	\$4,175,000
2020	\$3,100,000
2019	\$4,800,000

The Fire Commission works exclusively with the 26 volunteer-owned stations and 3 municipality-owned stations to prioritize repairs and building projects. Funding for building projects can come from AMOSS funds, the County budget, or bond bills from the State.

This project will be a shared responsibility and effort between the Prince George's County Fire/EMS Department and the BVFD since the BVFD owns the building.

The County will pay for the planned assessment of the station which will provide a report regarding the issues at hand and suggested solutions. The estimated cost of the assessment is between \$25,000 and \$30,000. Once the extent and cost of the renovation are determined, the Prince George's County Government will work directly with the BVFD leadership to determine a funding plan.

When will the station reopen?

The station is not closing.

How can community members continue to be involved?

We are currently establishing the Beltsville Fire Station Workgroup, which will be comprised of community members, stakeholders from the Fire/EMS Department, including the BVFD, Fire Commission, Prince George's County Volunteer Fire Rescue Association, International Association of Fire Fighters Local 1619; as well as County partners like the Office of Central Services and the Department of Permitting, Inspections, and Enforcement. This group will be deeply involved in establishing a plan moving forward while ensuring transparency in the process.