



DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

DIRECTOR'S OFFICE

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November 22, 2021

Chris Horton, Ph.D., CIA, CGAP  
County Auditor  
2100 E Clarendon Blvd, Suite 300  
Arlington VA, 22201

Dear Dr. Horton,

We want to thank you for your review, observations, and recommendations of the DES Equipment Bureau and vehicle fleet. We agree with the majority of your recommendations. Our continued focus on improving safety is demonstrated by a 2019 award the department received from the Chesapeake Region Safety Council for "Most Improved." The Equipment Bureau's incident improvements were a major part of that achievement and have continued to improve since then as illustrated in the report. In addition, in 2019 the Equipment Bureau received an unannounced random inspection from the Virginia Occupational Safety and Health Program (VOSH). The results of that inspection were only two "other than serious" violations that were abated on the spot and resulted in zero penalties. This is also a great positive indicator on the safety performance of the bureau.

Many of the action plans to respond to your recommendations are already underway and we look forward to continuing to improve upon our culture and focus on safety.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Gregory S. Emanuel".

Greg Emanuel

DES Department Director

**Recommendation 1.1:** DES should review the feasibility of charging departments directly for maintenance costs due to accidents, including quantifying the costs and benefits of directly charging departments for accident-related maintenance costs. Subsequently, DES should determine whether it will work with DMF to institute this practice as part of the maintenance cost development process.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion
Disagree	N/A	<p>This will disproportionately impact smaller departments with vehicles. In contrast, a large department can absorb unbudgeted accident costs. In addition, most employees are a few steps removed from the financials and budget process. As such, we believe this won't have as much impact on safety behavior as do the other mechanisms of accountability that are already in place. These mechanisms include the monthly Vehicle Incident Review Committee meetings and the County Driver Policy, which includes a point system that can ultimately result in demotion or dismissal from County service.</p> <p>In addition, due to the nature of their mission and the many miles that their officers travel, the Police Department typically experiences the highest volumes of annual accidents/incidents. Their vehicles have specific class codes that result in their accident-related expenses being charged to their department.</p> <p>Given the smaller budgets of some departments, accounting for accident repairs by vehicle class along with repairs and maintenance insulates smaller departments from potential budget issues. This averaging of like-vehicle costs is one of the fundamental principles of equipment funds.</p>

**Recommendation 2.1:** Now that additional data on low utilization has been gathered since the 2018 Fleet Utilization Policy was implemented, Equipment Bureau should assess the Policy's threshold for low utilization to see if it has materially reduced the incidence of low-mileage vehicles in the County fleet, and to determine whether an increase in the low utilization threshold is needed.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Partially Agree	Chris Allison	<p>We agree that the threshold for low utilization should not be a static identifier. However, we are still trying to understand our fleet needs in relation to changing staffing metrics as we slowly come out of the pandemic. In addition, the 2020 and 2021 mileage data will not be useful in assessing mileage thresholds since the Pandemic impacted vehicle utilization. We will reassess the low utilization threshold, no earlier than 2024, to allow enough time for normalized data to be analyzed post-pandemic.</p> <p>We will continue to utilize the 1500-mile threshold for the immediate future and make associated assessments as we</p>

		discuss low mileage vehicles with respective department management. We will continue to examine low mileage vehicles in March of every year in preparation for the annual Equipment Replacement Meetings in May.
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**Recommendation 3.1:** Equipment Bureau should develop and codify metrics for timely maintenance of light fleet, heavy fleet, and buses. Equipment Bureau should ensure these metrics include both “Work Finish” and “Closing” work orders.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Chris Allison (Bureau Chief / Al Williams (Shop Superintendent) / Ronald Bright (Equipment Stores Manager)	<p>As mentioned in this report, the Equipment Bureau services over 1 200 vehicles with multiple product lines made by various manufacturers. In fact, our fleet is made up of over 20 different vehicle manufacturers with many more body, chassis and drivetrain configurations. Unlike many Municipal fleets, the Equipment Bureau services vehicles for Police, Fire, Schools, snow and leaf collection operations, and the multiple remaining vehicle classes operated in the County. This extensive product line provides many challenges not found in a fleet represented by one manufacturer or of a fleet consisting solely of simple passenger vehicles. One such challenge is a single metric that provides meaningful and representative data.</p> <p>Working with programmers for our data management software group (Fleet Anywhere), we are requesting a modification to the default report to provide a custom “Work Finish” metric which, if we are able, will help us track the timeliness of our vehicle servicing. Although our goal is to provide same-day service for all of our vehicles, we will use the 5-day completion metric as our tracking point. Unfortunately, the normal difficulties in parts procurement and timely invoicing from multiple vendors are now being exacerbated by the delays we are seeing from pandemic related supply chain challenges. We are therefore moving to a weekly shop superintendent review (Friday) of any work order that has been open for more than 1 week. The Equipment Stores manager will be brought into the discussion to see if he can resolve any parts ordering delays experienced by his staff.</p> <p>The weekly review will also include a review of work orders for vehicles that have already been returned to our customers but that are in a work finished rather than closed status. This can be looked at as the administrative side of completing the service on a vehicle. Delays for parts and the associated invoices for Fire apparatus, emergency add-ons for Police Interceptors and even the many and varied parts for our seasonal Leaf Truck operation are examples of delays that can take months. Many of these parts requests are actually manufactured upon request as opposed to being filled from a stocked warehouse, and invoicing isn’t always quick to follow.</p>

		<p>This makes having a standard metric that is easily tracked, difficult. Our mission is to close the more usual work order scenarios in an efficient manner and to work with vendors to improve their invoicing processes.</p> <p>We have asked Fleet Anywhere to research their ability and associated cost to create a custom report to track the time between the Work Finished date and the Work Closed date with the same 5-day metric. Progress and success on this custom report will be communicated to Dr. Horton. Even if this second report is not possible, due to cost or technical limitations, we will continue to review open work orders weekly to help supervisors overcome roadblocks in completing them (i.e. invoicing challenges, etc).</p> <p>These weekly reviews will be completed by the superintendent with individual section supervisors working from the actual open or work finished work orders in question.</p> <p>Expected Completion is March 2022.</p>
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**Recommendation 3.2:** The Equipment Bureau should ensure that its Bureau Chief and direct reports have access to current work order performance in comparison to these standards to facilitate regular, ongoing management review and, as needed, correction.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Al Williams (Shop Superintendent) / Chris Allison (Bureau Chief)	<p>The Shop Superintendent will review his most recent work order completion metrics with his supervisors at the start of each weekly review of open work orders. The metrics and any challenges will be reviewed with the Bureau Chief by the following Monday morning.</p> <p>Expected completion is January 2022.</p>

**Recommendation 4.1:** The Equipment Bureau should continue to work with the DES Safety team to remind Equipment Bureau staff about the existence of the DES near miss reporting tool, periodically train staff on the near-miss reporting system, and develop ways to encourage the use of the near-miss reporting system.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Al William (Shop Superintendent) / Chris Allison (Bureau Chief)	<p>The encouragement and formal review of near miss reporting will be accomplished through bureau wide training by the DES Safety team.</p> <p>In addition, a section on “near miss” reporting will be incorporated into the more detailed and structured weekly</p>

		<p>Safety Inspections as a way to remind supervisors to encourage staff to report near misses. See recommendation 4.3 below.</p> <p>Employees continue to have multiple options available to them for reporting near misses. It is always better to document near misses immediately at the supervisor level for timely proactive behavioral change. The Equipment Bureau utilizes a paper form for this purpose. However, the online DES near-miss reporting system also exists for situations where employees may not feel comfortable going to their supervisor. Lastly, the employees who have not documented near misses previously, will also now have the opportunity to discuss safety issues, near misses or any other issues during the weekly safety inspections.</p> <p>Expected completion is January 2022.</p>
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**Recommendation 4.2:** The Equipment Bureau should identify ways to improve the tracking of past safety inspection findings for both supervisors and management by considering options including an electronic system for conducting and storing safety inspections.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Al Williams (Shop Superintendent) / Chris Allison (Bureau Chief)	<p>DES is developing an app-based form that supervisors will use, accessible on their phones or a tablet, to document Safety Inspections as they walk through the shop on safety walks. The form will collect more detailed and structured safety data. All the data collected will be kept on SharePoint for historical tracking and real time review. The data will be reviewed weekly between the Shop Superintendent and his supervisors (see recommendation 4.3 below), with the Bureau Chief and at our quarterly Safety Committee Meeting, attended by Al Williams (shop Superintendent), Safety Specialist, and a representative from Stores and 3 representatives from the mechanic position class.</p> <p>Expected completion is January 2022.</p>

**Recommendation 4.3:** The Equipment Bureau should reinforce the need for detail in documenting safety inspections to allow for better tracking of either ongoing concerns or good safety practices.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Al Williams (Shop Superintendent)	The DES Safety Team will develop a more detailed and targeted App based form that will be completed weekly by the Shop Superintendent, to be initially scheduled each Friday,

		<p>working directly with his supervisors, to document weekly safety walks.</p> <p>The form will also include a section reminding supervisors to review any near misses mentioned by staff.</p> <p>Expected completion is January 2022.</p>
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**Recommendation 4.4:** The Equipment Bureau should ensure that weekly supervisor inspections are occurring.

Agree/Disagree	Responsible Individual	Action Plan and Expected Date of Completion (Month/Year)
Agree	Al Williams (Shop Superintendent)	<p>See recommendation 4.2. Safety Inspections will occur every Friday. Compliance will be assured with a review at the quarterly Safety Committee Meetings.</p> <p>Expected completion is January 2022.</p>

# DES Fleet Management Response FINAL 11\_22\_2021

Final Audit Report

2021-11-22

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