

**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
FINANCE/GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
ACTION ITEM**

SUBJECT: Fire Marshal's Office Explosive Detection Canine Team

ELECTION DISTRICT: Countywide

STAFF CONTACTS: Chief W. Keith Brower, Jr., Fire and Rescue
Chief Fire Marshal Linda Hale

PURPOSE: To request authorization for the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office (FMO) to increase its explosive detection capabilities by adding a second explosive detection canine team to respond to an event involving the threat or detonation of an explosive device or ordinance and to authorize staff to seek funding for this asset and proceed with the procurement and implementation of an explosive detection canine.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Staff recommends that the Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee recommend the Board of Supervisors (Board) authorize the FMO to procure a second explosive detection canine, and assure the training and implementation of an explosive detection team.

BACKGROUND: Pursuant to the Code of Virginia (§27-31 through §27-37.1), the FMO is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of all offences involving hazardous materials, fires, fire bombings, bombings, attempts or threats to commit such offenses, possession and manufacture of explosive devices, substances and fire bombs. In the case of a suspicious package type call local law enforcement (LE) is responsible for the threat, until an actual device/package is identified, at which time the FMO should be called in, if we are not already there, to work with the local LE.

Risks from explosives have become more familiar in today's society, highlighting the need for better prevention and detection measures. An explosives detection canine program is an important tool to the FMO as it seeks to address these risks. Canines are trained to detect and recognize the odor of explosives through food and praise reward conditioning. This training methodology allows for a canine to be repeatedly exposed to various explosives odors daily, thus reinforcing these odors to the canine continually.

Exposing canines to various explosives from the five basic explosive families will give the dog the ability to detect the widest range of commercial or improvised explosives possible when working in the field. Successful detection of an explosive or firearm earns the canine a food and praise reward, which encourages repetition.

An explosive detection dog can serve to deter explosive events, simply by his or her presence at various events, venues and buildings. This will be a critical preventive asset as the County continues to prepare for Metro's implementation.

The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATFE) are the two largest governmental agencies that train and utilize explosive detection canine teams. Both of these agencies train and test to the United States Police Canine Association (USPCA) standards.

The USPCA certification test is a national standard designed to evaluate the ability of a trained canine team to detect and find explosives concealed in various locations. This is a best practices, annual certification, which requires daily training on the five (5) basic explosives families/groups, including chemical compounds used in an estimated 19,000 explosives formulas. This test is comprised of two parts: odor recognition (ORT) with six (6) odors and operational testing with six (6) odors in three (3) venues consisting of rooms, parcels and vehicles.

ISSUES: The County currently has one explosive detection team in the FMO, and a second team expected to come on line in the Sheriff's Office in mid-November 2016. If assistance is required from other jurisdictions/agencies, there is at least a one to three hour delay before those teams may be on scene under the most favorable conditions, but these teams are not always able to provide assistance

A dog may be worked for no more than 45 minutes in the most optimum of conditions, and then it must be rested for at least 20 minutes. In the recent past there have been two (2) bomb threat events that required the evacuation and search of the Loudoun County Government Center. Both times, weather was a factor for evacuated employees, as it was extremely cold or oppressively hot. It took two hours for six dogs to search and clear the building and another hour for the parking garage to be cleared. An additional explosive detection canine team would have expedited this process, thereby reducing the threat of harm, injury, or destruction.

A dog handler within the FMO is a collateral duty of a current Fire Marshal. For FY 16 the current team has worked 253 incidents/events which required over 369 hrs. This is outside of the no less than twice daily training that must occur with a food reward canine who is only fed when they work, and alert, to what they are trained to detect.

The FMO was able to re-engage an explosive detection team who graduated June 26, 2015 and were operationalized the next day, for the World Police and Fire Games (WPFG). This team was one of the two (2) explosive detection teams utilized during the WPFG held in Loudoun County June 26 - July 6, 2015. The teams searched Loudoun County venues and buses every morning, which required four hours each day, for eleven (11) straight days. Detection teams from other

jurisdictions/agencies were dedicated to other Northern Virginia locations where these games were hosted, so no outside support was provided to Loudoun. The County's resources were stretched very thin during this time.

These incidences serve as examples of how the current and planned explosive detection resources are not sufficient to prevent and protect Loudoun County and our regional partners. As security threats in the region increase, the current capacity will need to be improved to meet these needs.

FISCAL IMPACT: The annual, recurring costs of maintaining an additional explosives detection team are approximately \$26,270. There is a one-time cost of \$7,000 to procure a young dog (approximately one year old). The dog would come with the essential health, behavior, temperament, traits and training to become an explosive detection canine which can be relied upon as part of an explosive detection team. The cost of the dog may be offset by expenses that will not initially occur during training and is included in the \$26,270. Sufficient funding is available in appropriated funds in the Non-Departmental budget of the General Fund. If approved, funds will be added to the FMO's FY 2018 base budget.

DRAFT MOTIONS:

1. I move that the Finance/Government Operations and Economic Development Committee recommend that the Board of Supervisors allocate \$26,270 for the procurement, training and implementation of a second canine explosive detection team for the Loudoun County Fire Marshal's Office.

OR

2. I move an alternate motion.