

CHAPTER 7: PUBLIC SAFETY



INTRODUCTION

Public safety is critical to the daily activities of all citizens and visitors to Horry County. While components of Public Safety are typically integrated into a comprehensive plan as part of the Community Facilities Chapter, Horry County has developed a separate Public Safety Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan. This chapter includes the 9-1-1 Communications Center, emergency operations, law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services and the court system. Understanding trends in these public safety sectors is extremely important to identifying solutions that will improve the sense of security and quality of life for our residents, visitors, and business community.

EMERGENCY 9-1-1 COMMUNICATIONS CENTER

The Horry County Emergency 9-1-1 Communications Center in Conway is a vital link between the community and the public safety responders in the area. The utmost responsibility of 9-1-1 emergency telecommunicators is to work with the caller, service providers, computer aided dispatch (CAD), and mapping to assure rapid response, accurate database management, and support of the Public Safety Division and Horry County Government. All 9-1-1 calls and non-emergency calls made in Horry County, including in area municipalities, are answered in the Communications Center. The center dispatches police, fire, and ambulance calls, including law enforcement for Atlantic Beach, Aynor, Briarcliffe Acres, Conway, Loris, County Police and County Sheriff, and fire rescue for Conway, Surfside, Loris and the County. If the services of the SC Highway Patrol or any other emergency agency is needed, the call is immediately transferred to them. In addition, staff provides medical pre-arrival instructions to callers, dispatches to County environmental services and litter control officers, along with maintaining the records of all calls and radio traffic.

In FY2017, the 9-1-1 Center handled 528,307 total incoming calls, which resulted in 235,087 dispatches, along with an additional 125,201 outgoing calls. This averages to 71 calls per hour being handled by nine telecommunicators and two supervisors per shift with two rovers working between the two shifts per day. However, staffing is greater during special events and emergency situations such as hurricanes.

Amount of Telephone Calls

	FY17
9-1-1 Calls Received	272,254
Non-Emergency Calls Received	256,063
Total Incoming Calls	528,307
All calls made to all others from the 911 Center	125,201
% of 9-1-1 from wireless phones	77.6%

Source: Horry County Emergency 9-1-1 Center

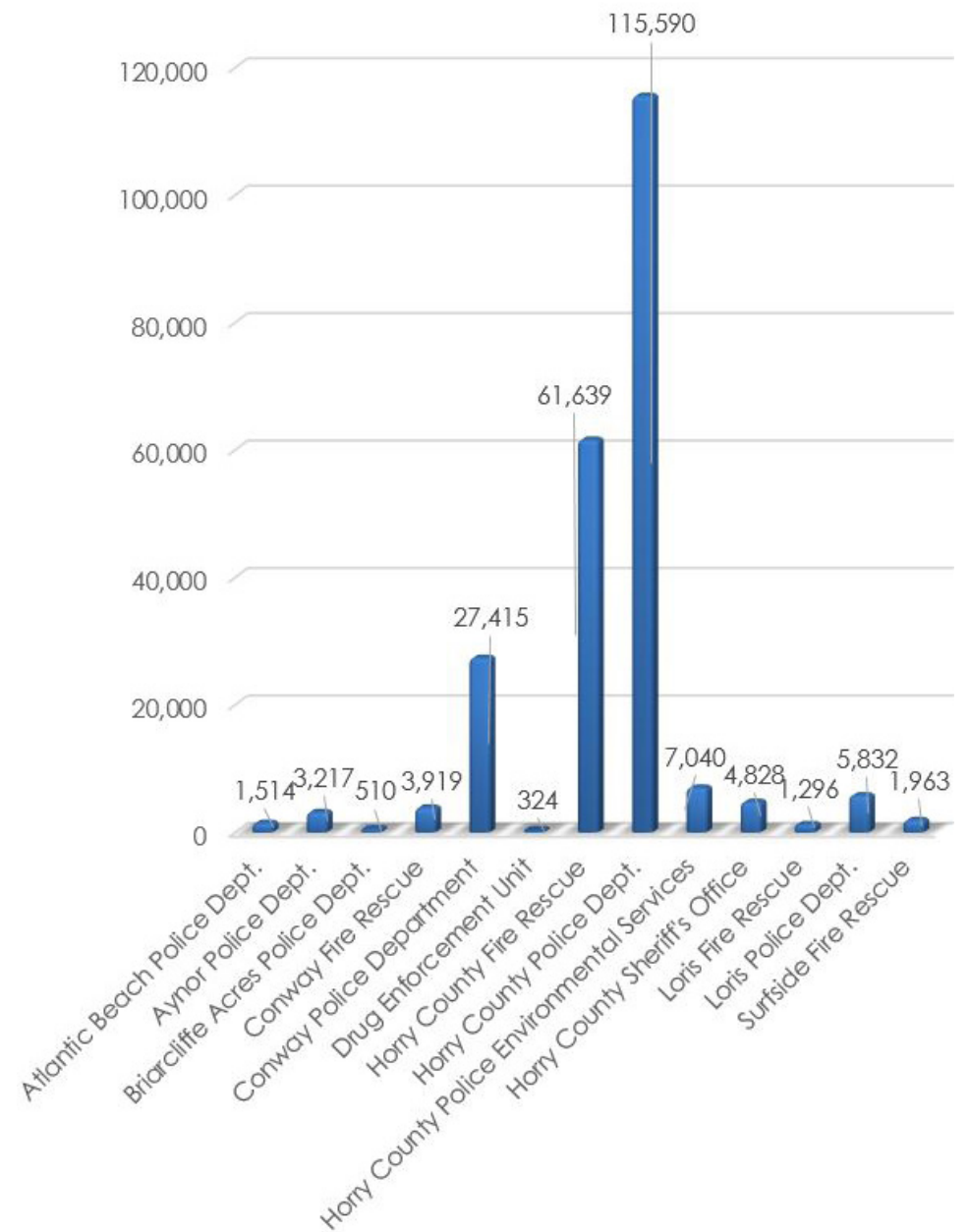
While call numbers have been relatively constant over the last few years, they can spike during economic downturns. It is also common that in consistently high crime areas that residents often become apathetic to report crimes for a variety of reasons.

Incoming Call Volumes to 9-1-1 Communications Center



Source: Horry County Emergency 9-1-1 Center

2017 Dispatched Calls



Source: Horry County Emergency 9-1-1 Center

9-1-1 FINDINGS

Staffing levels should keep up with changing population, visitor numbers and as staffing increases for police and safety personnel. Currently, staffing levels are below what the budget allows for; however, there is a need for even more positions and equipment to keep pace. Beyond staffing, public information and education should be made more readily available regarding the non-emergency phone number. In addition, paper records need to be added to the electronic data base, making information readily available to the telecommunicators.

With growing call volume, the Emergency 9-1-1 Center will need a larger facility that is tied into the County's fiber optic line and located where there is unimpeded ability to cooperate with the Emergency Operations Center and IT/GIS. Not only have they outgrown their existing space, the building is not programmed with sleeping areas, a kitchen, and showers that would be necessary for long-term occupancy during major storms and during disaster recovery. In addition, the backup 9-1-1 system facilities are also too small, and the building's location may inhibit access during flood events. Plans to relocate the 9-1-1 Center with a new Emergency Operations Center are being looked at.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT

Horry County Emergency Management leads the County's all-hazards emergency management program through collaborative planning, education, and coordination of response operations and recovery initiatives. Emergency Management is responsible for developing emergency response plans, and taking the lead role in the coordination of those plans during an emergency. The Department serves as the liaison between the local, state and federal agencies in the emergency management network. In addition, Emergen-

cy Management is responsible for special events permitting, post-disaster recovery planning and the emergency alert notification system, known as CODE RED. These efforts do not include the municipalities which have their own Emergency Operation Centers.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT PLAN

The Horry County Comprehensive Emergency Management Plan (CEMP) is the governing strategy for all operations during an emergency or disaster. Through the implementation of measures aimed at the four phases of emergency management; preparedness, response, recovery, and mitigation, lives can be saved and property damage minimized. This ongoing operation is called comprehensive emergency management, and it emphasizes the interrelationship of activities, functions, and expertise necessary to deal with disasters. The CEMP was created by the County emergency management staff, working cooperatively with the state and local governments, and non-profit organizations that have a role in the emergency management program in Horry County.

The CEMP culminates all other required planning documents into one overarching plan. It includes the Public Information and Outreach Plan, Emergency Operations Plan, Logistics Plan, Short-Term Recovery Plan, All-Hazards Mitigation Plan, and Continuity of Operations Plan. This plan addresses a variety of natural disasters and man-made emergencies, including, but not limited to: earthquake, hurricane, riverine and coastal flooding, tsunami, communication, evacuation, mass fatalities, re-entry, operational areas, mosquito borne disease, severe weather, drought, wildfire, along with specific emergencies, such as a plane crash or a toxic spill.

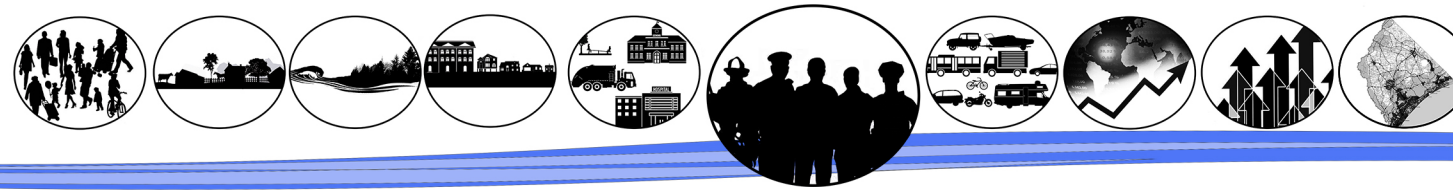
The Emergency Management Plan also contributes to the County's participation in the Community Rating System (CRS), which uses disaster operation plans, hazard mitigation plans and floodplain management activities to enhance public safety, reduce damage to property and public infrastructure, help avoid economic disruption and losses, reduce human suffering, and protect the environment in addition to reduced flood insurance premium rates for policyholders. This important document can be found on the Emergency Management website.

EMERGENCY OPERATIONS CENTER (EOC)

The Emergency Operations Center is centrally located in the M.L. Brown Building in Conway, in addition to Fire Rescue, Police, and the Coroner. The M.L. Brown Building is located in a flood prone area. This was made apparent during the 2015's historic floods, 2016's Hurricane Matthew, and as far back as Hurricane Floyd in 1999. Hwy 701, that leads to the building, in addition to the parking lot and vehicles parked within it, have flooded in the past. This not only restricts the flow of relief staff to the EOC, but also the delivery of supplies and food in the days following the storms. In addition, the roof of this building is only able to sustain winds of minimum hurricane strength.



Flooding at the ML Brown Building Parking Lot
Source: Horry County Emergency Management



A FEMA Hurricane Evacuation Study was completed in 2012. This study indicated that the M.L. Brown facility was modeled to be under approximately 6.5 feet of storm surge flooding in the event of a Category-5 Hurricane, and the County's back up facility, the IT/GIS Technology Center, is projected to be under approximately 8.5 feet under a worst-case scenario. Therefore, this potentially renders the existing structures incapable of serving their designed purposes.

In addition to being flood prone, the EOC lacks enough showers, a kitchen, and sleeping quarters that are necessary for emergency situations, which can last for weeks. Currently, staff must bring their own cots or sleeping bags and end up sleeping in the hallways of the building. The design for a new Emergency Operations Center is underway and is tentatively planned to be located across from J. Rueben Long Detention Center. It is estimated to cost \$26 million; however, after more than one spatial needs assessment and building design, funding has yet to be allocated for its construction.



Site Plan for new EOC, 9-1-1 Facility
Source: Architects Design Group

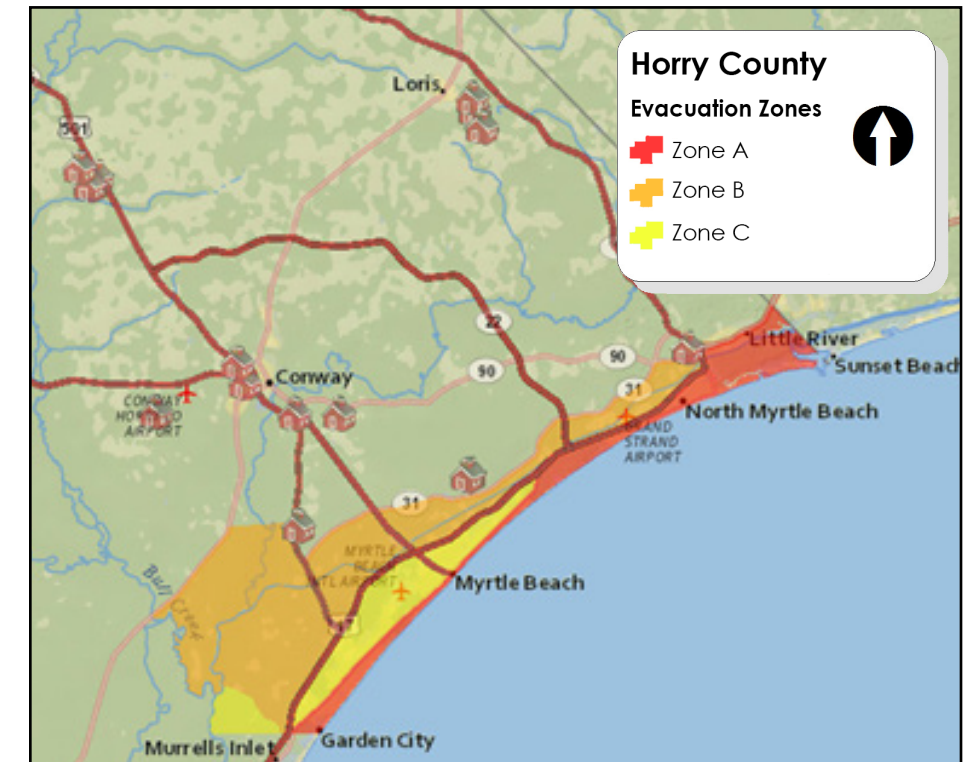
EVACUATION ROUTES

Emergency Management is responsible for alerting evacuations and in conjunction with law enforcement implementing lane reversals. The department implements the 'Know Your Zone' public education campaign to inform the citizens and visitors of Horry County of the hurricane evacuation zones and their vulnerability to storm surge. The Know Your Zone campaign was developed as a result of the information contained in the South Carolina Hurricane Evacuation Study (HES) for the Northern Conglomerate that was released by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) in 2012. The campaign also reflects the National Hurricane Center's (NHC) decision to separate the association of storm surge inundation from the category of storm.

As new major roadway projects are completed, such as the Southern Evacuation Lifeline (SELL, also known as the Hwy 22 extension) and I-73, evacuation times will vastly improve in the County. These improvements will also allow people to return more easily after a disaster, thus allowing the community and economic activity to return to normal sooner.

SHELTERS

Emergency Management is also responsible to alert the public to the opening of shelters and their locations. Currently there are 16 shelters in the county; all are public schools. In addition shelter locations can change over time. As new schools open, they can be designated as shelters. Finding shelters that are not schools is important to ensure that schools can begin operating as soon as possible after an event. This is a tactic to help families have a sense of normalcy during the hectic recovery process. During Hurricane Matthew and post-Hurricane Florence, the James Frazier Community Center became a shelter and at times even local churches have served as shelter locations.



Source: Horry County GIS. <https://www.horrycounty.org/Online-Services/Know-Your-Zone>

DISTRIBUTION POINTS

Another consideration is additional "distribution points" for use during a disaster situation. These distribution points are large paved parking areas (at least 250' x 300') for trucks and helicopters and used by Emergency Operations, National Guard, etc. Currently, the County uses parking areas at recreation centers and schools. These distribution points, also known as "black tops", could be included in new County facilities, such as recreation centers. Another possibility is pursuing partnerships with amusement facilities to use their parking areas during a disaster situation.

There is also a need for distribution points where County officers and first responders have gas available to refuel during power outages and emergency situations. Currently Privetts Rd. is the only fueling location available for County vehicles to refuel if power is out throughout the County.

PUBLIC EDUCATION

The Emergency Management Department has the latest information online concerning safety for a variety of issues, including how to prepare for and what to do in case of specific emergencies, with links to additional safety information. In addition, there is printed information available such as the Know Your Zone Hurricane Guide. Beyond printed materials, Horry County Emergency Management hosts multiple public meetings and special events throughout the year for the public to learn how to prepare for a natural hazard.

SPECIAL EVENT PERMITTING

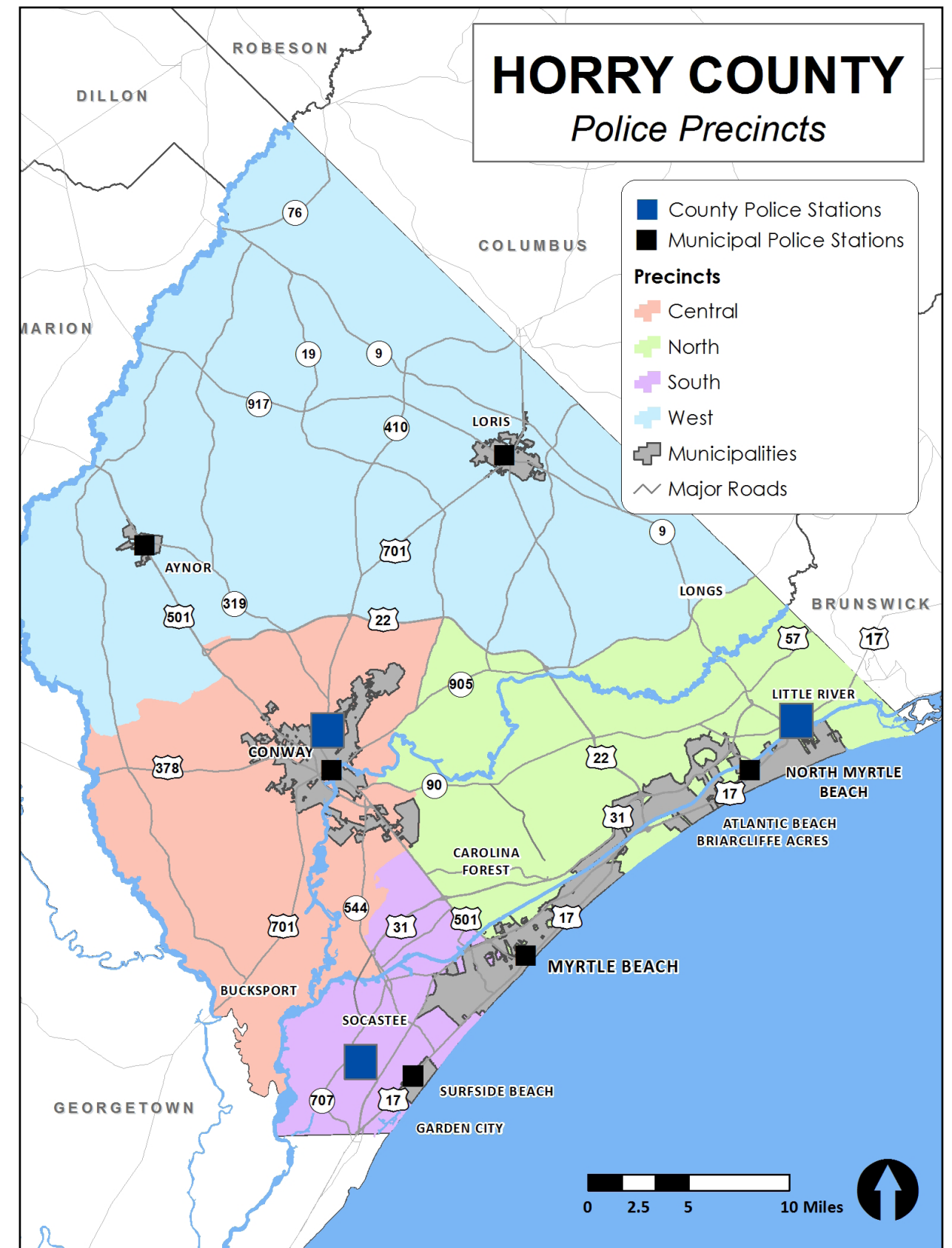
Outdoor events that anticipate having over 500 people at any given time are required to have an approved Special Event Permit from the Emergency Management Department. Parades, rallies, concerts, festivals, marathons, circuses, fairs, block parties, poker runs, community events, mass participation events, sporting competition events such as running events, bicycle races or tours, or spectator sports such as football, basketball and baseball games, golf tournaments, hydroplane or boat races, may require a special event permit. After a complete application is obtained by Emergency Management, staff has ten days to approve or deny the request.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT FINDINGS

A new 9-1-1 Communications Center is in the design phase in conjunction with the relocation of the EOC, to ensure adequate response capabilities in the event of any disaster. This center will need the capacity to expand. Evacuation routes, shelters, plans, and distribution points will need to be evaluated and updated on a continuing basis as population increase and major road projects are completed. As new developments are underway, they should not be located along the future routes of major roadways, like the SELL and I-73, to ensure that the construction of these roadways remains a viable option. Last, but not least, a continued and expanded public education program is necessary to ensure that newcomers to the area are able to prepare for all natural hazards.

**LAW ENFORCEMENT
POLICE**

The Horry County Police Department provides law enforcement services to the unincorporated portions of the County. It was established as the primary law enforcement agency in 1959, and remains the only county police department in South Carolina. Municipalities within Horry County also maintain individual police forces. The County participates in mutual aid agreements with the cities and supplements their police services upon request. The South Carolina Law Enforcement Division (SLED), DNR, as well as Probation and Parole assist during major events such as bike week.





As of 2017, the Police Department maintained a staff of over 275. Services are centralized within the M.L. Brown facility in Conway, which acts as the operational center and includes the Chief of Police, Deputy Chief, Professional Standards, Crime Analysis, Public Information Officer, and administrative staff. The department's patrol function is separated into four precincts; North (Little River), Central (Conway), South (Myrtle Beach), and West (Green Sea).

Additional units include a blood hound tracking team, beach patrol, SWAT team, hostage negotiation team, criminal investigation division (CID), training division, bomb squad, airport division, community outreach team, street crimes unit, traffic unit, environmental standards, and an honor guard. Officers not only provide regular duty services, but also fill positions in these units. The Police Department has a regulatory component that issues preclearance letters for Late Night Establishment, lends engravers for Operation Identification, issues Precious Metal Permits, and is involved with towing enforcement. Staffing is below the national average.

The County Police are at capacity in the M.L. Brown Building, as well as in the four precinct buildings. Future growth includes the construction of a new fifth Police Precinct. This fifth "East" Precinct is planned to be located east of the Waccamaw River and has an estimated cost of \$3,000,000. The Police Department's recommendation to staff this facility is 45 new positions. However, the department also recommends precinct staff expansion, support expansion and CID expansion for a total of 80 new positions.

Training facilities are currently scattered. While some specialized training is done at the M. L. Brown Building, EOC rooms, and conference rooms at Conway Airport are also utilized. Driver training is done at Conway and Georgetown Airports. Police use the City of Conway's firing range located on Highway 905, which is too small to accommodate use by all local law enforcement and does not allow for night time training. A centralized practice firing range that has the capacity of training with handguns and rifles is needed. An indoor range would add the advantage of additional use at night and during inclement weather, however it is only good for handgun training. The construction of a consolidated Police Training Facility with driving and firearm practicing facilities would accommodate the future growth needs of not only the police department but the Sheriff's Office as well.

Currently, the department is purchasing new equipment as budget and grant money allows for. This includes safety equipment for officers; however, there is still a great need to ensure officers have the training and equipment they need.

Response Times

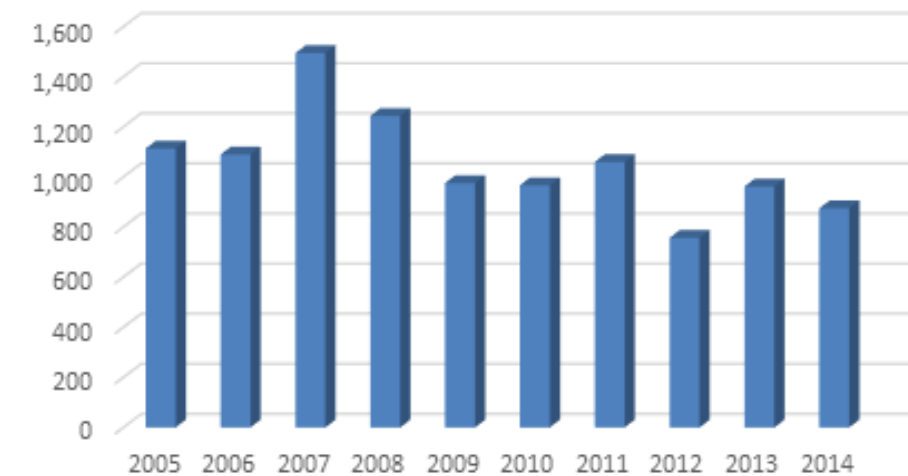
Congestion on roads can play a factor in delaying response times. Emergency Vehicle Preemption is an option and is discussed further in the Transportation Chapter. Logistics can also play a part in delayed response in the west precinct. There are large areas to cover and the location of the officers in proximity to where the call comes from

can influence response time. In addition, when cars need servicing for oil changes, each officer must drive to Privetts Rd. This affects the availability of the officer.

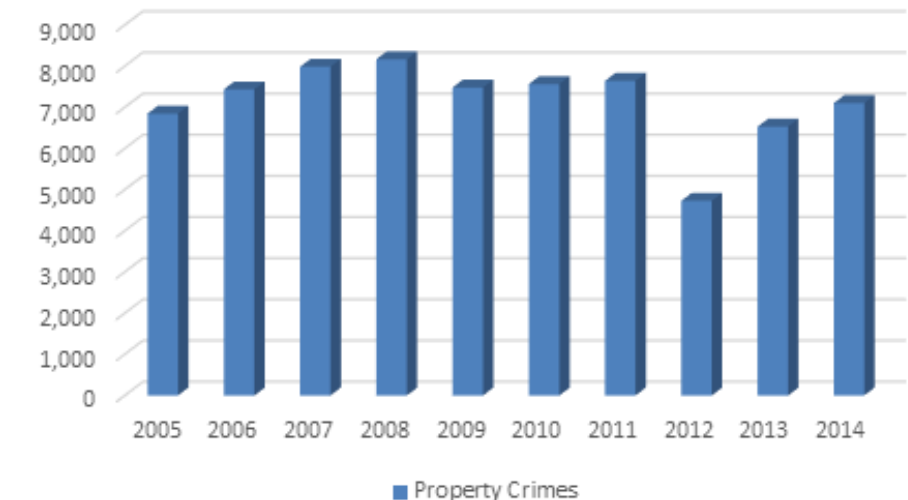
Crime Trends

The following two charts show crime data for the unincorporated areas of the County, as reported to the FBI from 2005 to 2014. Violent crimes include murder, non-negligent manslaughter, rape, robbery, and aggravated assault. Property crimes include burglary, larceny – theft, and motor vehicle theft.

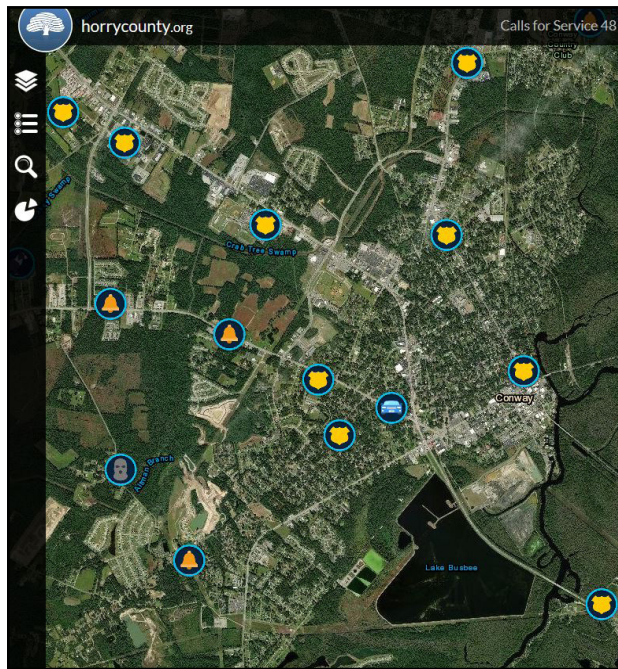
Violent Crimes Reported



Property Crimes Reported



Source: FBI



The Police Department has an online GIS map that tracks crime for the past 48 hours.

Source: Horry County GIS. <https://www.horry-county.org/gis/calls48/>

Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design

The design of the built environment can play a role in limiting crime and aiding police efforts. Examples of design factors that can improve visibility and minimize criminal activity include the siting of entry and exit points, building orientation with windows overlooking streets, sidewalk and parking lot lighting, and landscape design. Even property maintenance can have an effect on crime. When it is perceived that no one cares about an area, the broken window theory suggests that this further encourages criminal behavior. The County can use a variety of measures to address community safety, but it requires a collaborative effort amongst departments and with the community.

For example, building code enforcement of deteriorated and abandoned buildings can ensure such buildings are secured, repaired, or demolished. The lighting and programming of park space can also be a deterrent. In addition, the creation of Neighborhood Watch Organizations and community cleanup programs to remove trash and graffiti can contribute to reduced crime rates.

Environmental Services

Environmental Services is comprised of nine officers with one-supervisor. These officers handle the enforcement of all laws pertaining to animals, litter, and property maintenance. This includes, but is not limited to, the accumulation of garbage, junk cars, and illegal dump sites.

Animal Care Center

The Horry County Animal Care Center is located in Conway. An addition is needed for a surgical and recovery area, as well as a large storage area for animal feed. Beyond publically operated facilities, there are two Humane Society shelters, one in Myrtle Beach and one in North Myrtle Beach, as well as animal rescue centers around the County.



Picture Taken on Opening Day at the Horry County Animal Care Center
Source: <https://www.horrycounty.org/Departments/Animal-Care-Center>

Domestic Violence

Currently, there are no domestic violence shelters in Horry County. There are several domestic violence groups working to raise the funds to build a facility, however there is a need for long term funding to operate the center once it is built.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE

The Horry County Sheriff's Office is separate from the Horry County Police Department. Its roles include serving papers, serving warrants, maintaining and securing the Court House and the J. Reuben Long Detention Center. The Sheriff's Office also conducts fingerprinting, provides funeral escorts, performs local record checks, assists with temporary beer and wine permits in conjunction with the Department of Revenue, and has personnel that participate in mental health court. Horry County is the only county in South Carolina that has both a police department and a sheriff's office.

In addition, the Sheriff's Office is responsible for the cameras throughout the Government and Justice Center building. To replace the system with all new technology will run around \$170,000. As the old analogue cameras are replaced, they are being updated individually with IP cameras and converters to be compatible with the analogue system. Eventually, the entire system will need to be converted to IP.

Presently, the Sheriff's Office is located in Conway. In addition to the area on the first floor of the Justice Center, which the department has outgrown, the Sheriff's Office is using additional space wherever it can be found. This means that the Sheriff's Office has been scattered between the first, second and third floors of the Justice Center and within the old courthouse across the street. Currently, training is located in rooms above the J. Reuben Long Detention Center administrative offices and can accommodate up to 160 people. Firearm training takes place at the City of Conway's range and the City of Myrtle Beach's indoor range. There is no facility for use that would allow for firearm training with a gun range, a driving course, and a conference center along with a training facility all in one location. Although no future plans are currently in place, a single larger facility is needed for the sheriff's office.



J. Reuben Long Detention Center

The Horry County Sheriff's Office assumed control of the J. Reuben Long Detention Center in 1999 from Horry County Government. The center provides a safe, secure environment for the incarceration of people charged with criminal offenses awaiting trial, inmates sentenced in court and serving 90 days or less, or inmates sentenced in family court.

The Detention Center facility opened in 1989, with the original building designed to house 213 inmates, and later accommodated to house 249 inmates. It was the first direct supervision type facility in South Carolina. This type of facility contains a group of cells surrounding an area known as a pod which contains tables, chairs and a television. An officer is stationed within the pod and is able to observe the inmates and has the ability to interact with them. In 1996, a 96-bed minimum security building was completed to house the sentenced inmate worker population. In 2003, a female housing unit, courtroom, and victim services section was built adjoining the original building. In 2008, a 128-bed dormitory-style facility was completed. From 2009-2011, a 563-bed tower, administrative building, kitchen, and laundry building were constructed. Currently, the Detention Center can house 1,000 inmates in twenty housing units. As of February 2018, the Detention Center has never been at full capacity. On Labor Day of 2017, the Detention Center had 904 inmates. According to the sheriff's department, at the current rate of use, a second tower with 526 beds may need to be started in 2021 allowing for two years to complete.

A way to stretch out the use of the existing facility would be to increase the Community Corrections Program, which allows for electronic monitoring instead of incarceration. Currently, there are about 100 people electronically monitored but increasing this method of correction, will keep the incarcerat-

ed population down. The electronic monitoring equipment is leased at a rate of \$4.50 per day which makes this the cheapest way to keep the numbers down within the Detention Center. Currently personnel for the day report/electronic monitoring have outgrown their space and are in need of larger quarters.

The Jail Diversion/Reentry Program, a drug and alcohol treatment program, currently has a proven track record of approximately 33% of the participants that complete the program and are able to remain clean and sober. In comparison, 30 to 90 day acute care treatment programs are achieving a 7% clean and sober rate. However, this program is currently only available to male inmates.

Staffing for detention facilities is determined by the Minimum Standards for Local Detention Facilities in South Carolina which receives its authority from the South Carolina Code of Laws. Using an analysis of 650 inmates, J Reuben Long was understaffed for 2017 and incurred overtime costs of \$850,000.

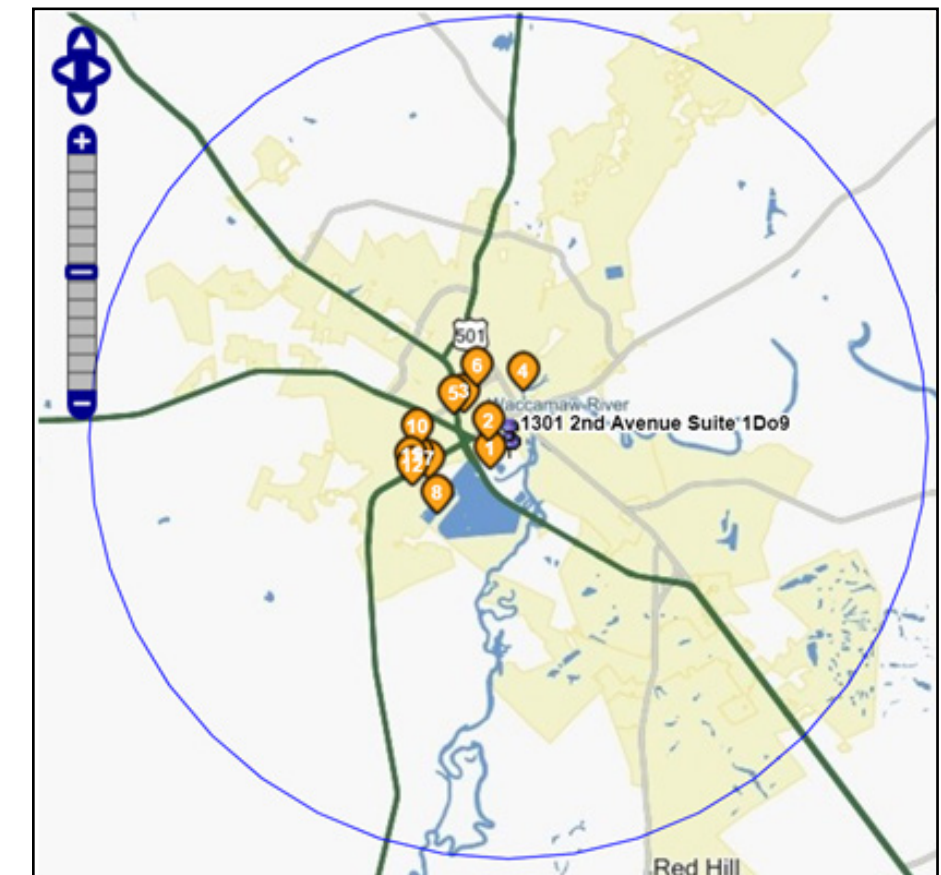
Sex Offenders Registry

The Sheriff's Office is in charge of sex offender management and the community notification tool. This tool manages and monitors the whereabouts, conduct, and compliance status of registered offenders in Horry County. An updated registry is available on line for anyone to use and even allows for free email notification when a sex offender registers in Horry County. Currently, there are five staff members monitoring sex offenders with 550 active cases.

According to S.C. Code Ann. §23-3-535, it is unlawful for a specific type of sex offender who has been convicted to reside within 1,000 feet of a school, daycare center, children's

recreational facility, park, or public playground. When siting new schools, daycare centers, children's recreation facilities, parks, and public playgrounds, any existing registered sex offenders within the 1,000 feet of the new facility will be exempt from the rule because they were there prior to the new facilities. When the County considers the development of new facilities, it should also consider the location of existing sex offenders, so children are not brought into a potentially unsafe environment. Properly sited public facilities could possibly serve as a deterrent for new sex offenders locating themselves in Horry County, as they cannot live within a 1,000' radius of new schools, recreation centers, and parks per state law.

Example of Horry County Sex Offender Mapping

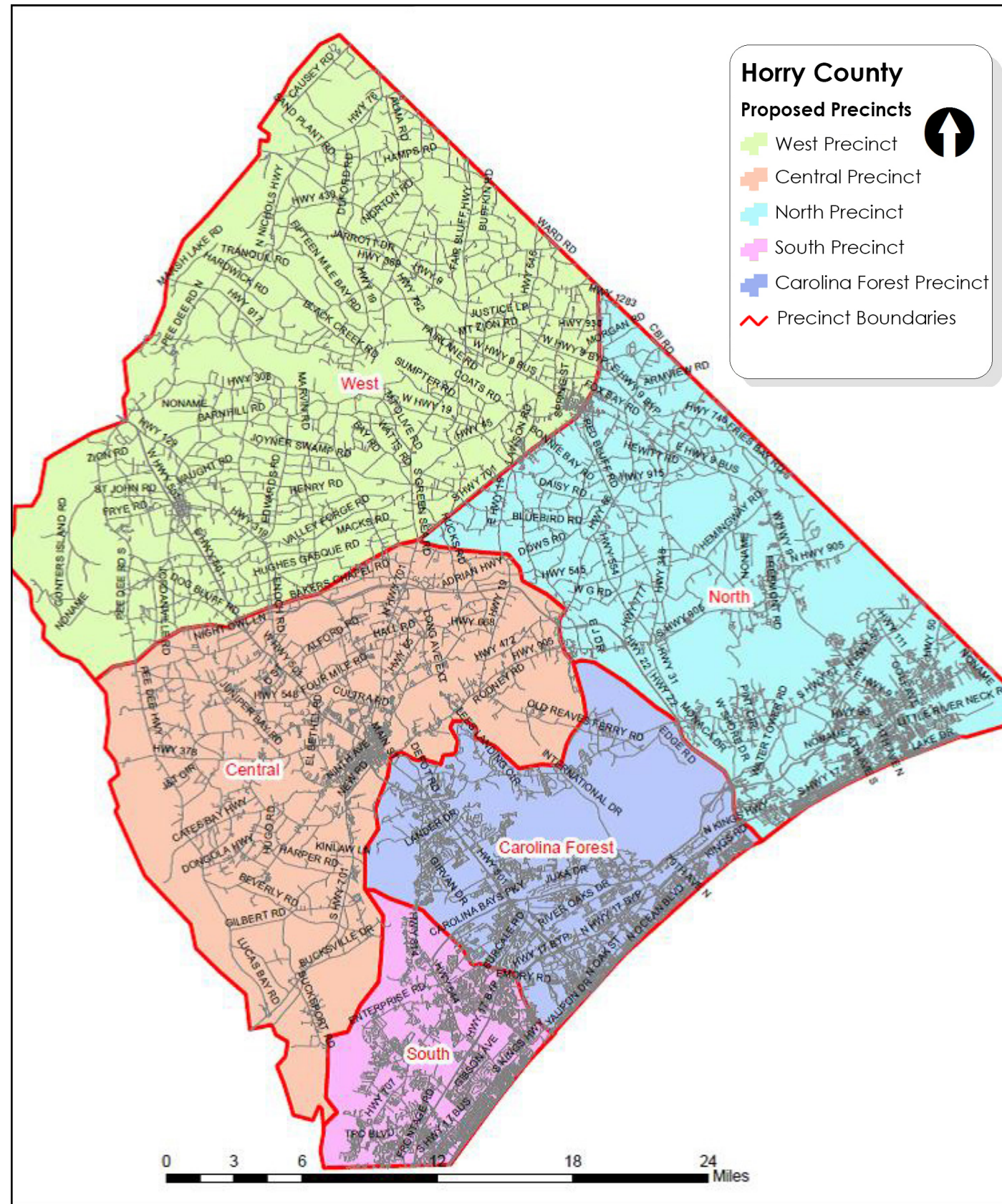


Source: Horry County makes information on the location of registered sex offenders available to the public through its website at: <https://www.horrycounty.org/Online-Services/Sex-Offender>.

LAW ENFORCEMENT FINDINGS

For both departments, staffing levels must keep up with the changing population, visitor numbers, and call volume. In addition, equipment needs to be continually updated. A training facility that includes a firing range with the ability to train at night, driving course and conference area is desirable. In addition a satellite fleet maintenance center or a contract with an oil change business is needed.

While the police are looking to add a fifth precinct, the Sheriff's Office would like to consolidate all offices into one building to enable operations to run smoother, and a location on the J. Reuben Long Detention Center campus would be ideal. A small sheriff's presence for security at the Court House would need to be maintained and the camera system within the Government and Justice Center will continue to require updating. The expansion of the Community Corrections Program will put off the construction of a new jail facility. In order to use this option to a greater capacity the court system must buy in. Last, the addition of a Jail/Diversity Program for women is needed.



COURT SYSTEM SOLICITOR'S OFFICE

The Fifteenth Judicial Circuit includes Horry and Georgetown Counties and our mission at the Fifteenth Circuit Solicitor's Office is to preserve the rights of the citizens of these counties while prosecuting those who violate the law. The office is staffed by a team of assistant solicitors, investigators, victim advocates, and qualified staff personnel who work hard to ensure criminals are punished for their crimes and the rights of victims are protected.

The 15th Circuit Solicitor's Office handles all General Sessions Court cases and certain misdemeanor cases in Magistrate's Court and all criminal cases in Family Court in Horry and Georgetown counties, which includes the Grand Strand and Myrtle Beach areas. Each year our office prosecutes about 14,000 cases. In addition to prosecution, the 15th Circuit Solicitor's Office manages several diversion programs for adults and juveniles.

The Solicitor's Office is a high demand department which faces daily challenges related to infrastructure and staffing needs. When the Solicitor's Office moved into the Justice Center, they took office space on the first, second and third floors. The department is now spread out between floors and also between several buildings. Investigators are located in the Drug Enforcement Building on Church Street; a building the County pays the mortgage for. The Victim Advocates have moved into a rented building on Beaty Street; the County pays a portion of the rent and the rest is paid



through a grant. In addition, the Solicitor's Intervention Program for diversion away from the court system, is located in a fourth building on the corner of 2nd Avenue and Laurel St. This building is owned by the Solicitors Office. While a security officer has been hired for this location, for security reasons it would be better if this program was located in a wing of a structure that housed all of the solicitor's offices together. Recently, the Solicitor's Office has purchased the old Conway Hospital on 11th Ave and Hwy 501 in Conway. Renovation will be needed prior to use.

Technology needs and infrastructure are another daily struggle for the Solicitor's Office. Presently, court rooms are only equipped with a drop down screen. All technical equipment needed for court is brought in daily and must be secured. More equipment is needed, but there is no available space to add secured storage. In addition, storage of files and digital file conversion are a problem. The amount of cases this department currently handles means that there are constraints for files, equipment, and staff.

CLERK OF COURTS

The Clerk of Court's purpose is to provide all the services of the judicial system to the general public for Circuit and Family Court. Their services include, but are not limited to:

- summoning of jurors for civil and criminal court
- filing of civil, criminal and family court documents
- processing arrest warrants
- passport applications
- public defender applications
- hawker's and peddler's applications
- notary public registration
- filing of bondsman license and collecting estreatments

- collection and disbursement of child support and alimony
- collection of general sessions fines and court costs
- custodian of civil, criminal, and family court documents
- preparation and maintenance of civil and family court dockets

Currently, the Clerk of Court's office is located in the Justice Building in Conway. They have outgrown their space, resulting in jury and waiting rooms and even closets being converted to office space. Additionally, records are being stored on opposite floors from staff, creating staffing inefficiencies. Staffing levels are already too low to address the current case load. As the County's population grows, so will the number of cases, files required to be stored onsite, and the staffing to keep up with the cases and files. The possibility exists to scan the records into an offline secured database; however, the physical files will still need to be kept at Records Retention, which would free up space in the Justice Building.

COURT SYSTEM FINDINGS

Staffing levels for both the Solicitors Office and the Clerk of Courts, need to keep up with the changing population, vacationers and police personnel. Both offices need more room and the consolidation of all Solicitor's offices into one building would make operations run smoother and more secure. Within the current building, the Solicitor's Office, Sheriff's Office and Clerk of Courts are all competing for space. Another service that would help these two departments to run efficiently and free up space, is to create a dedicated scanning department. In addition, the Solicitor's Office needs more secured storage areas for Exhibits and the satellite Magistrate offices will also need to be expanded.

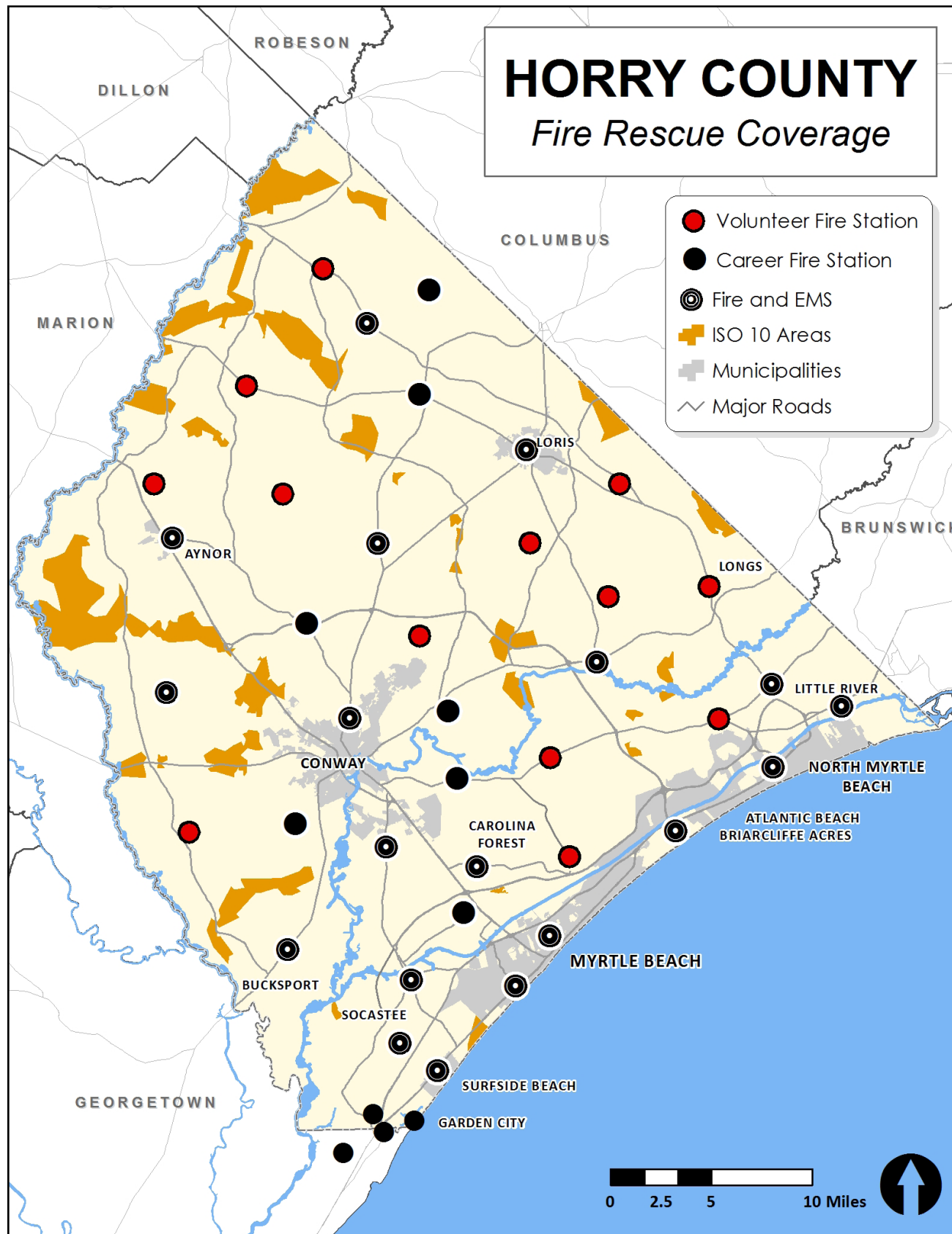
FIRE PROTECTION AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Horry County Fire Rescue has been in service since 2001. The department is an all-hazards emergency response agency consisting of both Fire and Emergency Medical Services (EMS), providing protection in the unincorporated areas of Horry County, Aynor and Atlantic Beach, as well as EMS coverage in all the incorporated municipalities.



Horry County Fire Socastee Station
Source: Horry County Fire and Rescue

Horry County Fire Rescue provides aid to the cities of Myrtle Beach, North Myrtle Beach, Conway, Surfside, Loris, Murrells Inlet, and Nichols, as well as Fairbluff, Tabor City and Calabash in North Carolina. These departments also provide aid to the County. The Department is split into four battalions geographically, operating from 39 stations. As of 2017, staffing for the department consists of over 394 full time career staff and over 300 volunteers. In addition to the County and municipal stations, the Murrells Inlet – Garden City Fire Department operates within a Special Purpose District serving approximately 25 square miles in southeastern Horry County and northeastern Georgetown Counties. This area is protected by three stations, with a fourth recently completed on McDowell Shortcut Road.



Currently, Horry County Fire Rescue utilizes 20 EMS Transport Units to serve the entire County and municipalities. The headquarters is located in Conway within the M.L. Brown Building. Four volunteer-based rescue squads within Horry County provide a supplement to the EMS response. A Fire Rescue Training Academy is located on Hwy 67 in Loris.

Horry County Fire Rescue does not have a Fire Marshal, as this responsibility is housed within the Horry County Code Enforcement Department. This means that routine inspections of buildings are the responsibility of Code Enforcement.

ISO RATINGS

The Insurance Services Office (ISO) rates all fire stations throughout the County. ISO is a private insurance organization that evaluates fire protection capabilities. Ratings criteria include the distance between structures and fire stations (requirement is within five drivable miles), the composition of structures, numbers and types of firefighting equipment and apparatus, fire stations, and personnel. Lower ratings represent lower premiums assumed by the insurance-holder. The survey evaluates all aspects of fire rescue services, as well as water supply services. In 2016, the ISO rating in Horry County was improved from a Class-5 to a Class-3. Any area rated ISO-10 is more than five miles from a station. Currently the County has fifteen ISO-10 areas with 72.29 square miles (6.87% of the total coverage area). Since the evaluation of ISO-10 areas a 16th one was created within a new development. Future growth in these zones will result in greater stresses on the department to service these areas and higher insurance premiums for those living there. The top three ISO-10 areas have an assessed value of \$20,007,068.

FIRE RESPONSE

Response times are not only important for ISO ratings, but should also be used to inform rezoning requests and land development decisions. Reflecting rapid population growth, call volume handled by Horry County Fire Rescue over the past ten years has risen considerably. Fire Rescue services would like to rework their coverage areas and add a fifth battalion. The following chart shows an average of 10% increase per year in emergency responses.

Emergency Responses by Horry County Fire Rescue



Source: Horry County Fire Department



The addition of 18 new positions would allow Fire Rescue to convert staffed stations to three-person staffing; however, this is a shortfall compared to the four-person staffing as recommended by the National Fire Protection Association. To accommodate current and projected needs, the County will minimally need to convert the Carolina Bays, and Longs stations from volunteer into career stations and Cherry Hill, Goretown, Joyner Swamp, Nixonville/Wampee, Maple, Antioch, Mt. Vernon, and Floyds stations from volunteer to day staff. It will also need new stations for Prestwick, Oak Street, Hwy. 378, Shell, Atlantic Beach, and Carolina Forest, while So-castee needs to be expanded and the Forestbrook station upgraded. In addition, renovation is needed at the Ketchup-town, Cates Bay, Mount Olive, North Myrtle Beach and Loris stations along with the training facilities, while replacement is needed for the Myrtle Beach 21st Ave, Longs and Finklea, locations. This list does not include lifecycle maintenance or recurring capital needs.

EMS RESPONSE

Moving forward, the department will utilize community and citizen needs, combined with response data to provide an EMS deployment which meets the needs of Horry County. EMS Service will be delivered through the deployment of a combination of fire and transport units. These units will be staffed by personnel and equipment with the capability of providing Basic Life Support Care, and Advanced Life Support Care, driven by patient need at the onset of the 9-1-1 call for service. To address the growing EMS volumes, 24-hour ambulance crews will need to be added to the following stations; Nixonville/Wampee, Longs, Lee's Landing, Ocean Bays, Finklea, Pitch Landing, and Allens. In addition, EMS daytime coverage would be added to Goretown and Cherry Hill stations.

PERSONNEL TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT

The department staffs a full-time Fire Training Center in the Bayboro area and has recently added a Mobile Training Simulator. This allows training programs to be delivered at each of the 39 Fire Rescue Stations. This resource will provide training in the areas of Live Fire Training, Search and Rescue, Ladder Drills, High-Angle Rescue, Confined Space Rescue, and Firefighter May-Day Drills.

In addition, the department staffs a full-time EMS Training Division in the M. L. Brown Building. These members deliver all the required initial emergency Basic Life Support training, CPR training, in-service and recertification training for all Fire Rescue Personnel, as well as specialized training for the Advanced Life Support providers. The department is currently completing the process to become an Advanced Life Support Training Center and will begin providing this training in-house.

TRAINING FACILITIES

Horry County Fire Rescue will continue to seek to improve the capabilities of their training facilities. The current facilities, while functional, are dated in age, as well as technology. The ability to replace the current Fire Training Facility with a state-of-the-art training center, capable of live burns utilizing Class A materials, in combination with a second burn building which utilizes Class B materials, would be an excellent improvement for the future needs of the members and the organization. This should be combined with a training tower, built specifically for the needs of firefighter training; replacing a pole-barn construction type building currently utilized by the department.

The department also needs to consider updating the tools, equipment, and technology for training. Providing the ap-

propriate state-of-the-art training equipment for both the EMS instructors, and providers, will ensure the entire department is trained and equipped to handle any medical emergency or trauma incident.

WILDFIRE TEAM

The Horry County Fire Rescue Wildfire Team operates from Fire Station 27 (Allens) located at 2501 Bay Water Drive, Aynor. The members of the Wildfire Team are available to work with individuals and groups to assist with wildfire prevention efforts and as the liaison with "Firewise USA", a program of the National Fire Protection Association. This Nationally recognized program teaches people how to adapt to living with wildfire and take action now to prevent losses.

OUTDOOR BURNING

Horry County has taken steps in recent years to reduce wildfire risks. As of 2018, Outdoor burning was no longer authorized in any development of 11 lots or more within unincorporated area of the County. All other areas within the County, are regulated by the South Carolina Forestry Commission. All burning regulations and rules, can be located at the South Carolina Forestry Commission web address: <http://www.state.sc.us/forest/fire.htm>. As the pressures for development increase, so will the dangers of wildfires in the wildland urban interface (WUI). Regulations will need to be continually evaluated and updated to reduce these risks further.

FIRE RESCUE FINDINGS

Staffing levels and facilities must keep pace to meet the emergency response needs of a constantly changing and increasing full-time and transient population in Horry County. Outdated equipment needs to be replaced. In conjunction with this, the continuation of studies for the locations and need for

new Fire Rescue Facilities, and addition of career staff to volunteer stations, to ensure the expanding Fire and EMS needs of the community are met. Coordination with Planning and Zoning on rezoning cases to ensure response times are maintained within proper parameters should be implemented.

CONCLUSION

Staffing levels must keep up with the changing population and visitor numbers for all safety departments. New equipment and training will need to be met to ensure a high level of service is provided when it comes to the safety of the community. Adding a 5th Police Precinct will allow for greater police coverage and response times. In addition, numerous new and expanded fire and EMS stations are necessary throughout the County. In contrast, the sheriff's office would like to consolidate all offices at one location.

On the 2018 public input survey for the comprehensive plan, safety was the number one answer to the question; in the next 20 years, what do you think will be the MOST concerning issue in your community? In addition, people also responded that they were willing to pay extra for public safety service improvements. Public Safety, including emergency preparedness, fire safety, emergency medical services, and provisions for our judicial system should remain as one of the forefront topics for improvement for the County.