

The background image shows a stone building with several windows. A wooden cross-shaped signpost stands in front of the building, with a blue police badge hanging from it. A green bush is in the foreground, and a yellow curb is visible at the bottom. The text 'City of Elkins' and 'Comprehensive Plan' is overlaid in a large, white, serif font with a drop shadow.

City of Elkins Comprehensive Plan

Chapter 2: Public Safety

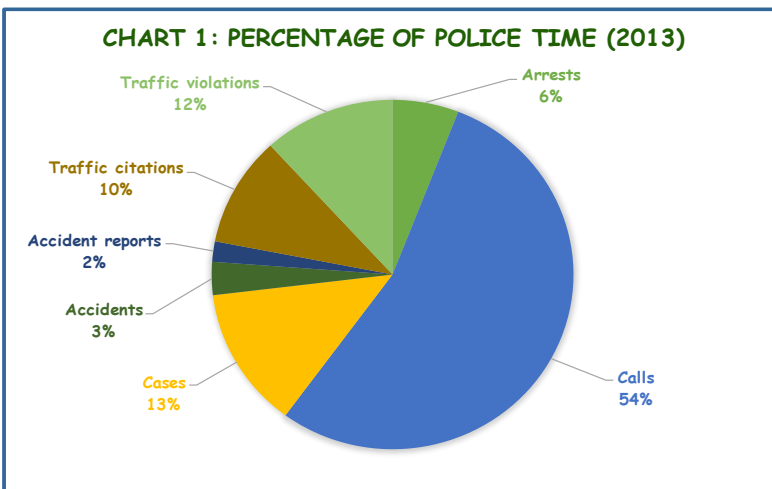
Background Information

Public safety refers to the protection of the public. Government is usually charged with the responsibility of keeping its residents safe. Public safety usually consists of police protection, fire protection, emergency medical services, and emergency management. This chapter also examines the medical needs of residents within and near the City.

During the public participation process, public safety was routinely mentioned as a major concern to residents. This chapter will explore the public safety departments and their needs and concerns, as well as the general public's.

Police Department

The City of Elkins Police Department consists of 11 police officers and 2 support staff with a yearly budget of 1.2 million dollars. The department also has two K-9 units. The police department patrols approximately 25 square miles. There is a mandatory training requirement for police officers. All applicants to the police department undergo background investigations and drug, psychological, medical, polygraph, and physical fitness tests.



As shown on *Chart 1: Percentage of Police Time (2013)* over half of the police department's time is spent responding to calls. In 2013, the department received over 4,500 calls. Cases and traffic violations also take up a good portion of police duties. The department responded to 285 traffic accidents, with 144 of those being reportable and 141 only a minor exchange of information necessary.

Fire Department

The City of Elkins Fire Department was established in 1898. The department has a paid fire chief and 3 paid officers, and 27 active volunteers. The fire chief works 40 hours a week and the officers work 24-hour shifts, on duty for 24 hours, off 48 hours. Funding sources include the City Fire Service fee, Randolph County Commission, State Insurance Excise Tax, fundraisers, and donations.

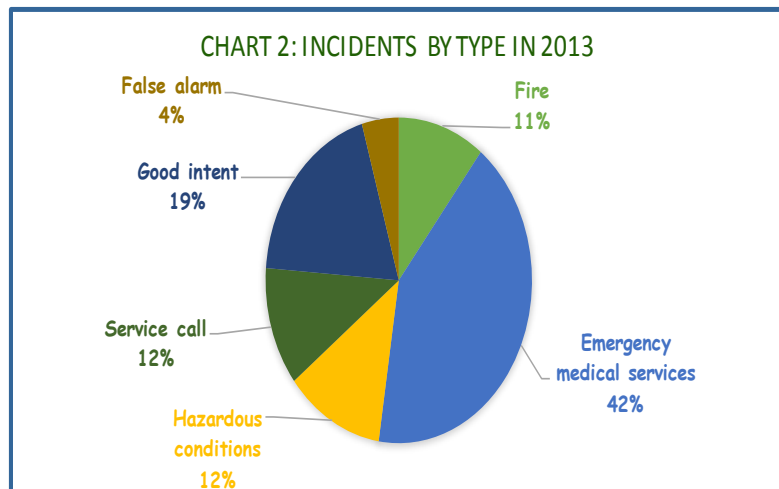


Chart 2: Incidents by Type in 2013 displays the types of incidents that the fire department responds to on a daily basis. The fire department responds to more emergency medical service calls than any other type of call. Emergency medical service calls include medical assists, vehicular accidents, search for people on land, and swift water rescue. The next highest incidents that the department responded to were good intent calls, which include alarms, smoke scares, and authorized controlled burning.

Formerly, Elkins charged fire-services fees only on property inside city limits. In summer 2014, Elkins adopted a new fire-fee ordinance which extends the fire-service-fee outside the city boundary,

across the entirety of the Elkins Fire Department's First-Due Area. Starting July 1, 2015, the new fee both inside and outside the city will be \$100 per year for single-family homes and duplexes. Commercial, industrial, and multi-family buildings with three or more units will pay five cents per square foot.

Emergency Medical Services

Emergency medical services in the City of Elkins are provided by the Randolph County Ambulance Authority.

Emergency Management

The Office of Emergency Management is responsible for the planning, coordination, and implementation of all emergency management and Homeland Security related activities for Randolph County. The mission of the office is to lessen the loss of life and reduce injuries and property damage during natural and technological man-made incidents through mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery (Randolph County Office of Emergency Management, 2014). The goals and objectives of Randolph County Emergency Management are as follows:

- Provide training for disaster staffing
- Update and maintain an effective Emergency Operations Plan
- Enhance mitigation activities in Randolph County
- Provide easy access of preparedness, planning, and emergency information to the citizens of Randolph County
- Enhance communications with the citizens, local media, community associations and businesses
- Maintain an integrated countywide emergency communications system
- Maintain a fully equipped Emergency Operations Center
- Ensure compliance with NIMS (National Incident Management System) and other Federal and State mandates

The Randolph County Office of Emergency Management is currently updating the countywide Emergency Operations Plan, which will include municipal plans within the county, and will also continue to update the THIRA (Threat & Hazard Identification And Risk Assessment).

Medical Facilities

Davis Medical Center

The Davis Medical Center is located within the City of Elkins between Harrison Avenue and Gorman Avenue. The center employs 525 full-time and 125 part-time employees. The center offers the following services:

- Outpatient center
- Full service emergency department
- Inpatient services
- Full service diagnostic center
- Cancer care services.
- Home health
- Pharmacy

The center also offers several community outreach programs throughout the year.



Davis Medical Center

Needs Assessment

In terms of public safety, many residents are unhappy with the level of crime and drug use that is occurring in the City. To further examine this issue, the police department was asked to complete a stakeholder interview to provide insight on the workings of the department and any issues within the Department itself. Other public safety departments were also interviewed to determine any issues or concerns that they may have.

Police Department

Crime was one of the biggest concerns of residents that was mentioned during the planning process. Residents are concerned with increased drug activity and what they feel as a lack of police protection. Residents feel that more police patrols and manpower, drug task force, drug abuse education programs, enforcement of laws, bicycle cops, and a neighborhood watch program would help solve the crime issues within the City.

In a stakeholder interview with the police department, the police chief felt that one of the greatest challenges facing the police department is a lack of manpower. Currently the department has 11 funded positions. A drug task force, bike patrol, and drug education program would be difficult to develop with the limited amount of officers on staff. In addition, equipment, such as body armor and ammo, needs to be updated or replaced. Once the City hires an officer it is also difficult to retain them as the pay is lower, which is why once officers receive training they leave for municipalities that offer more money.

A comparison of communities that are close to Elkins, as well as those that have similar population size, was developed to better understand the composition of other police departments. *Table 1: Comparison of Police Departments in West Virginia Communities* shows that Elkins has about the same number of officers as other communities (City of Dunbar) with a similar population size. The comparison illustrates that the total budget available to a community impacts the amount of money that is then available for the police force. The City of Elkins has a lower budget and therefore is not able to provide as much money to the police force to pay for additional police officers and to increase the starting salary.

Community policing may help the City fight crime and improve the image of the police department. Community policing focuses on the police department building ties and working with members of a community. Community policing also gives

police officers more eyes and ears on the ground to report problems.



Table 1: Comparison of Police Departments in West Virginia Communities

Name	Population	Total Budget	Police Budget	Number of Police Officers	Starting Salary
City of Buckhannon	5,639	\$3,862,309	\$965,560	9	\$32,261 (certified base pay) \$39,708 (with overtime)
City of Hurricane	6,284	\$4,162,193	\$1,434,026	16	N/A
City of Elkins	7,094	\$4,386,690	\$1,130,873	11	\$27,040 (first year-without over-time) \$31,200 (non-probationary patrolman without overtime)
City of Nitro	7,178	\$6,231,543	1,294,195	15	N/A
City of Dunbar	7,907	\$5,817,454	\$838,400	12	\$37,000 (built-in overtime)
City of Bridgeport	8,149	\$16,558,996	\$2,856,931	30	\$43,644 (average)
City of Moundsville	9,318	\$6,404,141	\$1,510,118	18	N/A
City of St. Albans	11,044	\$10,946,682	\$1,945,926	26	N/A

Fire Department

No real concerns were stated by the public concerning fire protection. However, the public is concerned about the many vacant and dilapidated structures in the City, which could eventually lead to a fire safety issue.

The fire department was interviewed and stated that an engine truck and rescue truck are in need of replacement. They also would like to make minor improvements to the fire station and construct a substation. The biggest concern of the department is the need for additional paid staff members. The department would like a minimum of 3 paid officers on duty at a time to improve response times. Currently, there is only 1 officer on duty at a time. Lastly, there are several areas outside of the City that also lack adequate hydrant protection.

Recently the City enacted new fire fees that will help the department send more trucks to battle fires. The new fire fee will also support hiring additional professional firefighters, which will enable higher staffing levels on each shift.

Emergency Management

A concern of local elected officials in Elkins is the lack of a disaster/emergency shelter in the City. It has been discussed that the City building could be used as a shelter, however there may not be enough room. Another possible location is the old Armory building. The City also does not have a generator, however the fire department does. During Hurricane Sandy and the derechos it was apparent that there were no specific plans in place in case of an emergency. An improved communications system needs to be established between all the agencies involved in providing emergency services. A plan also needs to be developed on ways to better communicate information during an emergency to the public.

It is also a concern that the city is not yet included in the Randolph County E911 Center's computer-assisted dispatching system, although a project is currently underway to correct that.

Medical Needs

A concern of the Planning Commission is the lack of a drug abuse treatment center to help with the drug problem in Elkins. The commission feels that an outpatient facility would not only benefit Elkins but the surrounding region as well.

Action Plan

The following action plan was developed utilizing the public input that was received throughout the planning process. The action plan is meant to address the various needs in relation to public safety that are detailed on page 2-6. All of the action steps detailed are recommended to help achieve the following goal:



Goal 1: Further strengthen public safety services to meet the needs of existing and future residents and businesses

Objective 1: Ensure residents are served with a high quality police and fire department

Action Step 1: Budget for new equipment and additional staffing for the police and fire departments

Both the police and fire department would like to hire additional officers. There is also a need for new equipment that could put a significant strain on the City budget. Therefore, the City needs to prepare a long-term budget plan for new equipment and hiring needs. The fire department would like to replace a 1990 engine and a 1995 rescue truck. The police department is in need of body armor and ammunition.

Action Step 2: Develop community oriented policing to address the concerns of residents in Elkins pertaining to crime

The majority of respondents that completed an online survey for the comprehensive plan feel that one of the biggest issues facing Elkins in the future is crime. The police department participated in a stakeholder survey for the planning process and responded that money and increased personnel are needed to adequately address the needs of the public. Since the City of Elkins has a limited budget, the police department should develop community oriented policies to help improve the image of the department and fight crime. Community oriented policing brings police and the community together by working together to address and identify crime. There are simple and inexpensive methods to get the public involved:

- Facebook page
- Email system
- Community crime watch meetings
- Text messaging system
- Additional press releases
- Youth policing academy
- Citizens Police Academy
- Conduct classes at local high school

Case Studies

Nitro Police Department Community Initiatives

In 2012, the Nitro Police Department began implementing community-oriented measures. Measures include crime watch meetings, Facebook page, email system so citizens can contact police, and text messaging system that alerts residents of accidents, emergencies, and crimes.

Dunbar Police Department Facebook Page

The City of Dunbar's Police Department Facebook Page is very popular with over 1,000 likes. The department posts updates concerning criminal activity, accidents, and community events.

Fayetteville Youth Police Academy

The Fayetteville Youth Police Academy is free to children ages 10-15. The academy provides an opportunity for children to see the inside workings of a police department. Topics include use of force, SWAT, patrolling, fire and gun safety, K-9, drug awareness, forensics, crime scene investigation, and traffic concepts.

Objective 2: Establish policies to help protect the public from disasters and make the community more resilient

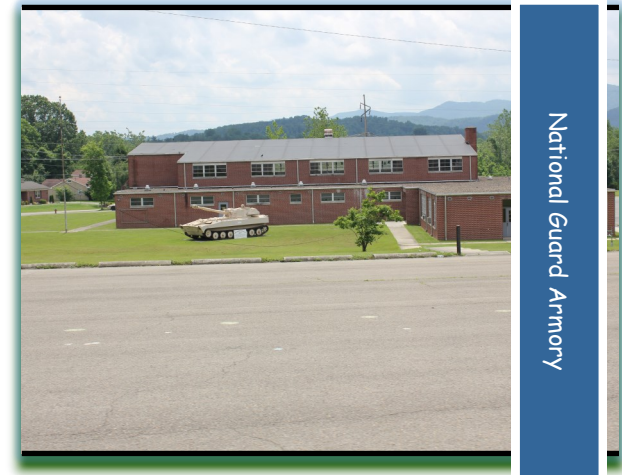


Action Step 1: Partner with the County to update the countywide emergency operations plan and determine a location for an emergency shelter in Elkins

Randolph County is in the process of updating the county emergency operations plan. The City of Elkins should fully participate in this effort. As the plan designates who is in charge during an emergency, it is also important that all city public safety personnel are involved as well.

As part of the process, a location for an emergency shelter in Elkins should be designated. This is very important since Elkins is the county seat and the largest population center in the County. Not only would residents of Elkins use the shelter but many throughout the County as well. When choosing a site for use as an emergency shelter the following should be considered:

- Capacity
- Bathroom and showers
- ADA accessibility
- Floor plans
- Space for parking
- Cooking facilities
- Safety features
- Heating and cooling capacity
- Emergency generator on site



A possible location for an emergency shelter would be the National Guard Armory in Elkins. Elkins City Council should determine if the armory would meet the criteria mentioned for use as an emergency shelter.

If the armory is not an appropriate use for an emergency shelter, another location should be identified by City Council, Fire Department, Police Department, and Randolph County Office of Emergency Management.

Objective 3: Provide residents and students with information regarding the effects of drug use

Action Step 1: Seek evidence based education for young children on drug abuse prevention

Increased drug use is a major concern by many residents in Elkins. The Planning Commission would like to explore the options available to educate young children on the affects of drug use. A committee should be formed between Planning Commission, Council, and the Board of Education to explore these options. Partners include the Randolph County Family Resources Network, Randolph County Partners in Prevention, and the Randolph County Drug Task Force.

Action Step 2: Explore the possibility of the development of a drug abuse treatment center in Elkins

Currently there are no drug abuse treatment centers in Elkins or in nearby communities. The City of Elkins should work with the Randolph County Family Resources Network, Randolph County Partners in Prevention, and interested developers to determine if there is a suitable location for a center in Elkins.

