
CITY OF BALTIMORE

Brandon M. Scott – Mayor
Zeke Cohen – Council President



Office of Council Services

Nancy Mead – Director
100 Holliday Street, Room 415
Baltimore, MD 21202

PUBLIC SAFETY COMMITTEE

The Honorable Mark Conway
CHAIR

HEARING NOTES

LO25-0006

Baltimore City Fire Department & Emergency Medical Services Operations & Oversight

Hearing Date: 2/10/2026

Hearing Start Time: 1:00 PM

Hearing End Time: 2:30 PM

Location: Du Burns Council Chamber / Webex

Total Estimated Attendance: 25

Committee Members in Attendance:

- **Chair** Mark Conway
- Paris Gray
- Isaac "Yitzy" Schleifer
- Phylicia Porter

Additional Councilmembers in Attendance

- Odette Ramos
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MAJOR SPEAKERS

(This is NOT an attendance record.)

- Chief James Wallace – Baltimore City Fire Department
 - Chief Richard Matz – Baltimore City Fire Department
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NOTES

- Chair Conway introduced the committee and welcomed those in attendance
- Chief Wallace shared BCFD's slideshow
 - Apparatus
 - Recent deliveries of backordered trucks
 - FY26 and 27 – additional apparatus
 - Including POD units that will allow the department to avoid clogging streets with excessive apparatus
 - Operations
 - Inspections
 - Increase in community engagement
 - Over 57,000 home inspections in FY24
 - Over 40,000 smoke alarms inspected

- Over 7,500 smoke alarms installed
 - Significant increase in fy25
 - 60k inspections
 - 45k alarms inspected
 - 8k alarms installed
 - FY26
 - Up over 20k inspections already
 - 12k alarms inspected
 - 2k installed
 - Increased trajectory
- Code X and vacant structures
 - Increase in total Code X addresses
 - An occupied burnout structure is classified as a Code X
 - Not a significant change – expected
 - 20% increase from September 24 to september 25
 - But unlikely to see future extreme increases
- Efforts to continue to develop critical thinking
- Also now conducting public after action reports for significant incidents
 - Previously only on incidents involving injury
- Using real time technology in field – improves information sharing with other entities like those controlling rail lines
 - Know when trains are coming and what is onboard
- Structure fires
 - Greater than 50% increase in Code X structural involvement in structure fires
 - Also saw increase in structure fires that involve occupied dwellings
 - Less occupied structure fires in Q1 26 vs Q1 25
 - Overall favorable decreases
 - Increase in second-alarm fires but that is because the department has been bringing more people to a scene to decentralize work
 - Decrease in actual fires in Q1 26 vs Q1 25
 - Suppression responses Q1 26 significantly lower overall than Q1 25
- Fire Marshall
 - Decrease in fire investigations, but that is an improvement that comes in tandem with decreased fires
 - Initial teams could also conduct evaluations that limit the need for an investigator
- LOD Fireground injuries
 - Nearly 50% decrease over a year
 - Trainings are working, leadership and safety officers are working
 - Burns
 - 76% decrease from 2025, 100% decrease from Q1 24 to Q1 26 (none in Q1 25)
 - Workers comp payouts have decreased significantly as a result
- From 2022 to 2025 total line of duty injuries decreased 19.8%
 - Anything that happens on duty in the line of duty

- Fire Academy
 - Q1 25 to Q126 class is nearly doubled
 - New connex systems allow recreation of rowhouse conditions
 - Training previously only used in the field is now being administered to recruits
 - Seek lots of grants for training
 - Achieve advanced training with fiscal responsibility
 - Over 500k of reimbursable overtime
 - Clearboarding initiative
 - Partnership between Mayor, DPW, HCD, and BCFD
 - Burn fires to see how it melts and how to gain entry
 - Properties with clearboard installed on vacants enter the CAD system
- Chief Matz shared the remainder of the presentation related to EMS
 - 911 call center
 - Over 1.3 millions call sin FY25 – 15 new hires
 - Also conducting outreach
 - Fire communications
 - In FY 25 answered a call within 64 seconds about 85% of the time
 - Increased in last quarter of FY 25
 - Up to 88% in Q1 26
 - EMS operations overview
 - Transports are up to pre-pandemic levels
 - Call volume – about 530 a day, transport for 265
 - Offload times
 - Up about 4 minutes from FY 24 to FY 25
 - New initiative to transport veterans to VA
 - Tele911
 - 605 people since inception
 - 61% are treat-in-place
 - Nurse diversion
 - Connects people with correct resources before entering system
 - Behavioral health diversion
 - Working to create forward facing dashboard
 - EMS clinical metrics
 - Utstein survival
 - Up in bystander intervention rates
 - FY 26 up to 30% on bystander CPR
 - In the same time frame, Prince George’s County at 45%
 - Chase Car
 - One unit at 24/7 as of January 28
 - 90% of the time dispatched to the correct type of call
 - Community Health
 - Patient contacts in Q1 25 at 9,600
 - Buprenorphine
 - 3 inductions
 - 59 paramedics trained, about 50% of available paramedics

- FY 24 vs FY 25 – overdoses are down city wide
 - People are treating each other
- Questions
 - Chair Conway – best agency in the city, incredibly responsive, data driven, and through
 - We have administered buprenorphine to 3 people, what came from those inductions
 - Feedback from patients was that it subsided symptoms, 2 sent to hospital, 1 sent directly to treatment and they remain in treatment
 - Is there anything that's preventing us from doing this more often?
 - Two methods of administration
 - Strips and blister pack
 - Baltimore County been working since 2023, only administered 7
 - With additional training, numbers should develop
 - Next iteration is getting more resources available on the back-end
 - Getting more people into treatment
 - Several grants would allow for reimbursement of the training time
 - What are challenges operationally on the training
 - Training rewrote from 4 to two hours
 - Must control as a controlled substance
 - Any further challenges in training?
 - No, major challenges are patients not consenting to the treatment
 - This also results in low numbers
 - On inspections – how soon until we touch every door in Baltimore
 - Not able to answer specifically but we are looking at visit data, including when there was no answer at a door
 - CM Schleifer
 - Which hospital is in last place for offload?
 - Harbor hospital – 58 minutes for 90% of the time
 - Increased with flu season, for a while around 45 minutes
 - Trying to get to 32 minutes
 - Hospital self-reported metrics suggest people are seen within a few minutes
 - Is there anything we can do to penalize those hospitals with a poor intake process
 - EMS is only about 10 to 15% of call volume in emergency room
 - Many hospitals have moved to having nurses that specialize in the offload process
 - Does the city council have any authority over the requirements
 - Some cities impose fines for standby
 - Not aware of a regulation that would preclude
 - What does a POD Unit cost
 - A sea container, they will have different disciplines
 - Surrounding jurisdictions have them already
 - Depends on discipline
 - Significantly less than a heavy rescue
 - Vehicles around 500,000, a vehicle for each discipline is 3-5 million compared to a 100,000 per pod
 - Depending on setup compared to a similar vehicle

- RM Ramos
 - Residents in district don't have heat and are using space heaters that are causing fires
 - Is there information on causes related to occupied – how many are related to space heaters?
 - Residents frequently call 911 for water pipe ruptures, can you discuss how those are handled if diverted to BCFD
 - BGE does not provide information on who does not have property and heat
 - Classification for unoccupied – does that mean that no one was there?
 - Unoccupied means that a structure is unoccupied when BCFD arrives
 - Data on Code X removals
 - BCFD is not unable to verify the validity of the work done to a structure
 - Chair Conway
 - How many total Code X properties are there currently
 - About 5,600
 - About half of VBNs are Code X
 - CM Ramos
 - What are new Code X's based on
 - Most on fire
 - Chair Conway
 - 49% decline on injuries, most around vacants, what change lead to that
 - Blend of tactical changes and enhanced critical thinking
 - 360 degree views before making an aggressive entry
 - Redundancy is a safety officer that arrives and makes the same inspection to look for hazards
 - Not confined to just the building itself
 - Fire academy recruits nearly doubled, how many vacancies does the department have
 - Entry-level about 22 vacancies and working to reclassify positions
 - Some firefighter positions may be reclassified
 - Strong position for fire
 - EMS recruitment also improved
 - 44-50 vacancies
 - Started at 35% rate, down to under 15
 - Partnering with BCCC to allow recruits to take classes to become paramedics
 - Are we preparing for retirement, how many eligible for the next year
 - Never know exactly when someone will leave, could provide breakdown of time in service
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FURTHER STUDY REQUESTED

Request	From	Agency	Expected Timeline
Detail cost differential between pod unit and comparable vehicles	Schleifer	BCFD	2 weeks
Provide data on determinations for causes of occupied structure fires over the past 3 years	Ramos	BCFD	30 days
Provide data on 911 calls for burst pipes and responses over the past 3 years	Ramos	BCFD	30 days
Provide Code X removal data for the fourth quarter of calendar year 2025	Ramos	BCFD	30 days

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- Hearing Packet in bill file?** ----- YES NO N/A
Attendance Sheet in bill file?----- YES NO N/A
Vote Record in bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
Agency reports read? ----- YES NO N/A
Hearing televised or audio-digitally recorded? ----- YES NO N/A
Certification of advertising/posting notices in the bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
Evidence of notification to property owners in bill file? ----- YES NO N/A
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Notes by: Ethan Navarre
 Notes Date: 2/10/2026

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