


F R O M	Name & Title	Niles R. Ford, PhD <i>NRF</i> Fire Chief	CITY OF BALTIMORE MEMO 
	Agency Name & Address	Baltimore City Fire Department Fire Chief's Office 401 E. Fayette Street	
	Subject	BCFD's Response to Councilwoman McCray's Inquiries Related to CC 21-0033R (Investigative Hearing- Women in Public Safety)	

May 11, 2021

TO: Public Safety and Government Operations Committee of the City Council

Councilwoman McCray asked for a timeline of repairs/renovation to facilities as related to providing a more equitable/inclusive environment for women.

The Baltimore City Fire Department (“BCFD”) has been taking intentional steps to make our stations more inclusive and comfortable for a diverse workforce. As background, our stations have an average age of 80.5 years, which includes 11 stations that are over 100 years old. When most of our fire stations were built, they were constructed with open communal bunkrooms and bathrooms. The bathrooms typically have a few toilet stalls, along with an open shower room with shower heads. As any significant repair to a station is required, we also are installing gender neutral bathroom facilities. These are individual bathrooms with a locking door that have a shower, sink, and a toilet. These replace the open bathroom facilities. In a space where the open bathroom once was, we can typically fit 2 or 3 of the private bathroom/shower units. This provides privacy to anyone who uses it. In stations with communal bathrooms, we have installed, or are working on installing, locks on the inside of the doors to provide privacy. In addition, for all single restrooms that are open to the public, we have recently installed signage indicating that the facility is a gender-neutral restroom.

The recent total renovation of Engine 58 in Cherry Hill contains both private bunks and bathrooms. We have also recently updated the bathrooms at Engine 47 (Morrell Park), Engine 29 (Park Heights), Engine 56 (Hamilton), and Engine 33 (Broadway East) to be individual rooms. The cost to convert from communal bathrooms to individual facilities can range from \$30,000.00 - \$100,000.00 based on the number of bathrooms needed for the BCFD personnel assigned. In some of our larger stations with multiple bathroom facilities, we have designated separate bathrooms and bunkrooms by gender. As bunkrooms need major repair, or a station gets renovated, we are adding individual smaller rooms to contain the beds. This gives everyone their own room for privacy. The old bunkrooms typically hold anywhere from 4 – 10 beds, depending on the number of BCFD personnel assigned.

We have plans to start with complete renovations of two stations with current funding, which is from the Amoss Grant. The first two stations identified are Engine 14 at 1908 Hollins Street and Engine 2 at 800 Light Street.

The process of renovating all of our bathroom facilities is going to be complex and challenging. First, we would need significant capital budget approval for a project of this size and scope. These projects would each be over \$50,000.00 and would have to be managed by the Department of General Services (DGS) Capital. The scope of work for each station has to be identified, put out to bid, awarded, etc. Once the project is scheduled, the work would probably end up taking a few weeks each. Generally, when doing repair work of this nature, we usually come across other infrastructure issues, such as plumbing drains or electric wiring in the stations that is outdated, lead paint, asbestos flooring needing removal, etc. that have to be handled at that time as well, often requiring additional funding and contractors.

There are approximately 30 stations that would require renovation, so a realistic timeline for completion would be five years and an approximate cost of \$2,500,000.00. While this is a priority for BCFD, we have other capital projects related to the general safety of stations that would take precedence, and this project is not funded in our current capital plan.

BCFD also has uniforms and turnout gear made specifically for women. Our newly introduced female cut uniform shirts are standard issue for the women in the BCFD, with female cut pants available upon request. We are also currently conducting a field trial of a new turnout gear that is specifically cut to allow better movement when our members are performing emergency response. These protective clothing ensembles are also available in a women's cut. We are currently rolling out the new turnout gear (including the women's cut option) as a field trial. There are several women included in this trial. BCFD's plan following the field trial is to offer the women's cut to anyone who would prefer it.

Fire Chief Niles R. Ford, PhD

cc: Councilwoman Danielle McCray