Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad

Strategic Plan
Foreword

I am very proud to share Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad’s Strategic Plan with our community and partners. I am honored to serve alongside the most compassionate and gifted caregivers our profession has to offer.

Our Strategic Plan provides a roadmap for success and represents a collaborative effort with input from our internal and external stakeholders; our membership; our leadership; our citizens and our Board of Directors. The direction set by this plan will guide us in building a stronger organization, better equipped to deliver on our mission, “To provide continuously improving high quality emergency medical and special rescue services to the citizens of the Charlottesville, Albemarle and the University of Virginia communities by utilizing the collaborative effort of a diverse team of highly skilled volunteers in alliance with partner agencies”.

We envision CARS as a strong leader and partner in innovative, cost-effective medical and rescue operations by providing sophisticated and evidence-based services within the community we serve. Each of the four strategic goals in this plan supports our mission, vision, values and is anchored in our concern for our members, our community, and our overarching commitment to fiscal responsibility and stewardship. I would like to thank everyone involved for their efforts in making this Strategic Plan a great success. I encourage everyone to review this document and embrace the goals and strategies contained within. Doing so will ensure the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad continues to challenge the status quo, break new ground and remain a leader in the provision of emergency services.

—Noah Hillstrom
Chief
Introduction

In 1960, a vision was realized when the Albemarle Rescue Squad was organized. The charter members of what is now the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad (CARS), saw an unmet need in the community for the treatment and transport of the injured and ill. The subsequent planning, discussion, and meetings culminated in the creation of an Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agency providing care for the sick and injured.

Today, nearly 60 years later, CARS remains an all-volunteer organization committed to understanding and maximizing our role and response to the growing need for EMS in the Charlottesville-Albemarle region.

The strategic planning process is an opportunity to evaluate current operations, set priorities, and designate resources toward measurable, achievable outcomes. Our founders did the same with the genesis of CARS. Today, more than ever, intentional planning as well as collaboration with surrounding municipalities and stakeholders is essential to maximizing CARS contribution to the regional EMS system and ensuring our future as a diverse, adaptive, dedicated and vibrant volunteer partner.

The Board of Directors of CARS is pleased to bring this Strategic Plan forward to identify the immediate and future goals for the agency. This is not a static document, but a living roadmap that can be engaged to sustain and enhance CARS as a valued organization in the Charlottesville-Albemarle region for the delivery of Emergency Medical Services.

— Michael D. Berg
Chair, Strategic Planning

— Virginia Leavell
President, Board of Directors
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History and Overview

The Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad (CARS) has been and continues to be a critical part of the community health system. CARS is a volunteer rescue squad with approximately 135 active members. CARS has been serving the community continuously since 1960. The Albemarle Rescue Squad became the Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad soon after beginning operations in November of 1960. In 2008, CARS ran over 12,000 calls and Firehouse Magazine ranked CARS as the busiest volunteer rescue squad in the country. The Squad carries on the original mission by:

- Training and equipping members to respond to calls for assistance and provide basic and advanced life support care;
- Maintaining specialized rescue teams to provide vehicle extrication, water rescue, and technical rescue;
- Providing technical rescue training classes to local Emergency Medical Services (EMS) agencies;
- Providing logistical support for the community fire departments when needed.
Personnel, Organization and Structure

Organizationally, CARS has a shift supervisor on duty who is known as the Duty Officer. The Duty Officer is immediately available to actively manage the operational and administrative issues of the agency while ensuring that EMS are provided to the community in the most effective manner. Selected well-trained personnel take turns for 12 hour shifts to ensure that operating procedures and guidelines are being followed consistently. They manage the department’s tactical resources on a minute-to-minute basis and provide Incident Management System (IMS) services at major incidents. They are authorized to modify incident assignments, execute policy, conduct investigations, and initiate corrective actions.

CARS has over 76 personnel trained in Advanced Life Support (ALS) with 5 advanced Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), 5 Intermediates, and 65 paramedics. ALS trained personnel can start intravenous (IV) lines to give fluids, some medications can initiate complex medical and airway procedures for critically injured trauma and medical emergency patients. Ninety-nine members are certified at the EMT level. EMT’s receive over 100 hours of training and are taught basic critical care procedures to react to most any emergency situations. These technicians are also able to assist patients with administering their own medications. The number of trained staff in the various levels will fluctuate with the ongoing and robust training schedule and the constant influx of UVA student help.

CARS is dispatched on emergency calls by the coordinated Emergency Communications Center (ECC) to both the city of Charlottesville and Albemarle County in conjunction with career paid staff. CARS staffs one Basic Life Support (BLS) ambulance during business weekdays. It provides 3 BLS-level ambulances and one medic in a quick response car during nights, weekends, and holidays. Assignment of apparatus to emergency calls is predetermined based on response time and distance. Most members carry a department issued pager or use a smartphone app which alerts them to major emergency calls and assists in bringing in additional staffing during peak call load.
Currently, CARS does not have an active strategic plan in place to assist with the dynamic change ongoing in the communities they operate in. With all volunteer-based rescue organizations, a struggle exists with an all-volunteer “work force.” The uncertainty of having enough staff to run the necessary calls makes it difficult to plan effectively for growth and change. As noted in the history, CARS began as the only rescue organization in the city and county. About a decade ago, a decision was made to not expand when the need was apparent due to the uncertainty of being able to staff accordingly and provide reliable, consistent community service.

One other factor has played into the shrinking CARS geographical service area. A decade old decision that governmental entities have chosen to provide fire and rescue services to the communities within their jurisdiction. One key example is that the local governments now own the 911 system. Hence, as the decision was made by CARS to not expand with the expanding population in 2008, the governmental entities had to act to provide that service.

Therefore, the growth in career governmental response is a consequential result of meeting the community need. In addition, fire departments nationally are running fewer fire calls freeing up career departments to meet other needs such as rescue service work. Concurrent with this phenomenon is the normal governmental build-up of support staff and budgets such as volunteerism and recruitment personnel, training support, and technological innovation. With this increased local government support, the historical role of CARS must shift.
The Unique University of Virginia (UVA) Student Service Role

The UVA student population provides a significant number of CARS personnel, particularly students who desire medical experience. Their role has both a positive and negative influence on the long-term viability of CARS. The undergraduate student role provides a staff resource pool of members to run the service calls and they do well at this task. However, their service time is relatively short-term (2-3 years) and creates a high turnover rate. This turnover rate leads to decreased organizational stability through time. In addition, the summer presents another difficulty as many students leave for the summer for other activities despite their 2-year, full-time commitment to CARS.

Also, the concept of a “compounding error” is possible. This is defined as a young, not completely trained student training on a call with another newer student which could result in a service call error. To alleviate this concern, there has been a call to increase the number of community-based memberships with a longer service term perspective and to re-engage older members to assume leadership positions within CARS Board committees.
Currently, CARS operates eight advanced life support (ALS) ambulances (medic units), three advanced life support quick response cars (zone cars), one heavy rescue truck (squad), a water rescue truck with three boats, a technical rescue truck, a command car, and a mass causality incident truck. All current apparatus is owned by the agency and was purchased primarily with funds raised through community donations.
As noted above, CARS has a long vibrant history of community service in the City of Charlottesville and Albemarle County. For more than 40 years, CARS was the only rescue squad serving the city and parts of the county. The shifting of responsibility from volunteer to career providers, shrinking geographical area, loss of community membership and aging infrastructure has put the organization in a position of necessary change to continue to operate at a high level and serve area communities.

To move the organization forward and better serve the community they cherish, the CARS Board and membership decided to undergo a strategic planning process in April 2019 with completion of the plan by August 2019. The Board agreed to conduct the following elements of a strategic plan:

- CARS member survey-located in Appendix One
- Interviews with key community members-located in Appendix Two
- Board retreat discussing the following elements:
  - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis
  - Mission and Vision review
  - Goal setting with objectives, strategies and associated metrics
Board Retreat Process

A Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis was conducted during the first part of the Board retreat. A SWOT analysis identifies core themes for organizations and lays the foundation for addressing a strong path forward. The following are the results from the analysis:

Strengths
- Revenue positive
- Dedicated members
- A strong legacy and history
- Basic Life Saving (BLS) component
- UVA students
- Partnerships - a “willingness”
- Great community support
- Strong diversity
- Money and people and willing to stand on 2 legs

Weaknesses
- Operational oversight
- Complicated history
- Composition of Advanced Life Support and Length of Service
- Legacy and history
- Still not full funding
- Outdated infrastructure
- Institutional knowledge from 2008 to the present
- Volunteering community-wide
- Core Mission consensus
- Lack of appropriate human resources policies

Opportunities
- Succession and leadership planning including training
- Fostering partner relationships
- Innovative recruitment and retention
- Collaborative training
- Increased interaction with partners at the field level
- Charlottesville Fire Department (CFD) acting as preceptor
- Streamline priorities of time and money matching our Mission
- Executive Director

Threats
- Dissolution
- Partner uncertainty
- Relevancy
- “The enemy is us”
- Lack of formal administration
- Local political environment/No formal connection to our partners
The CARS Vision

During the June 1 Board retreat, the current Vision statement was re-visited to ensure its timeliness and relevancy to the ongoing strategic planning process. The current Vision statement is as follows:

*The CARS is committed to responding to the challenging needs of our service area and being a recognized leader in innovative, cost-effective, clinically sophisticated and scientific-based delivery of comprehensive emergency medical and rescue services.*

Upon review during the Board retreat, participants made only one suggestion (underlined) to revise this Vision statement. The Board wanted to ensure that the communities, partner agencies and local governments understand what they believe is the role of CARS framed in a truly collaborative spirit. The revised Vision statement follows:

*The CARS is committed to responding to the challenging needs of our service area and being a recognized leader and partner in innovative, cost-effective, clinically sophisticated and scientific-based delivery of comprehensive emergency medical and rescue services.*

To differentiate from Mission statements, the Board revised the Vision and incorporate a more forward-looking approach. The new Vision is as follows:

*We envision CARS as a strong leader and partner in innovative, cost-effective medical and rescue operations by providing sophisticated and evidence-based services within the community we serve.*
The CARS Mission

The mission statement of any organization outlines the business, goals and strategy for reaching those goals. The mission statement can be used to shape the culture of the organization. In addition, a mission statement allows the organization to differentiate itself by answering three key questions: What do we do, for whom do we do it, and what is the benefit? The mission statement serves as a focal point that keeps everyone clear on the direction of the organization.

For CARS, the original Mission was developed in 1960 and updated in 2015. Both are provided below:

To save life and administer first aid, to teach methods of safety and first aid to the general public and in the schools; to serve in time of flood, fire, hurricane and famine; to render assistance in case of accident, casualty and illness; to instruct its members in principles and applications of life saving and first aid (1960).

To provide continuously improving high quality emergency medical and special rescue services to the citizens of the Charlottesville, Albemarle and the University of Virginia communities by utilizing the collaborative effort of a diverse team of highly skilled volunteers in alliance with partner agencies (2015).

Like the current Vision statement, the Mission statement was also re-visited by the Board to ensure alignment with their work on a revised strategic plan. Board members agreed the current Mission statement reflected the current CARS work. However, there was considerable discussion during this planning process that the special and heavy rescue services are not being utilized frequently enough to warrant continuing this type of service into the future. However, rather than totally removing all references to any special or heavy rescue services, the CARS Board decided to leave the word “rescue” in the Mission to accommodate any changing service delivery. Hence, the new Mission statement is as follows:

To provide continuously improving high quality emergency medical and rescue services to the citizens of Charlottesville, Albemarle and the UVA communities by utilizing the collaborative effort of a diverse team of highly skilled volunteers in alliance with partner agencies.
Interviews With Key Community and CARS Members

A series of face to face and phone interviews was conducted to gain additional insight on the role of CARS within the EMS community and what the future may hold in store. A record of the interviews is included in Appendix Two. Several key elements emerged out of the interview process. They are as follows:

• All interviewees expressed strong support for CARS and believe they are a vital and necessary part of the community they serve

• The EMS community in Charlottesville City and Albemarle County cannot handle the rescue load without CARS. CARS handled over 3700 calls in 2018

• Interviewees generally expressed the same belief that CARS must move forward in infrastructure, membership and re-dedicate themselves to a bright future

• All interviewees believe a new organizational model is needed including an Executive Director to better handle the day to day administrative and organizational priorities plus a review of the Board Committee structure including expanding types of Board membership.
Legal Identification and Role of CARS Through the Commonwealth of Virginia and Albemarle County

Contained within both the Code of Virginia and Albemarle County are numerous and significant references to volunteer rescue squads and CARS. In the county code, CARS is stated specifically as a viable unit and critical member of the community-wide rescue team. Additionally, within the state Code shown below is the stated reference to a written plan coordinated with the locality and subject to annual review.

The designated emergency response agency shall develop and maintain, in coordination with their locality, a written plan to provide 24-hour coverage of the agency’s primary service area with the available personnel to achieve the approved responding interval standard.

Below show two specific references to CARS and volunteer rescue squads within the Albemarle County Code. Both indicate a solid foundation for the efforts of CARS within the community. Furthermore, it is expressly stated that EMS must be an integrated and seamless approach (county-wide) and without it, the county could not meet its obligation to take care of its citizens. Hence, the formalization of the city, county and CARS relationship through a more structured, formal agreement appears warranted and needed as CARS moves ahead to plan for the future and better engage the community.

The board of supervisors determined to provide for the public safety health and welfare of Albemarle County citizens and communities hereby establishes a coordinated and integrated fire and emergency medical service system currently composed of the following volunteer fire companies, volunteer rescue squads and the Albemarle County Department of Fire and Rescue (ACFR):

• Charlottesville Albemarle Rescue Squad
• Crozet Volunteer Fire Department
• Earlysville Volunteer Fire Company
• East Rivanna Volunteer Fire Company
• North Garden Volunteer Fire Company
• Scottsville Volunteer Fire Department
• Scottsville Volunteer Rescue Squad
• Seminole Trail Volunteer Fire Department
• Stony Point Volunteer Fire Company
• Western Albemarle Rescue Squad

In taking this measure to assure the most efficient and effective service possible and to meet the challenges of the growth and development of the jurisdiction, the board of supervisors specifically: recognizes the essential and historical contributions of volunteers and the necessity of continuing and expanding volunteer participation without which the county could not discharge its responsibilities. The coordinated fire and rescue system shall work to develop an integrated and seamless systems approach to the provision of emergency services promote the interests and welfare of county, citizenry, and communities perform with maximum cost effectiveness consistent with safety objectives account for service delivery and resource utilization and communicate and consider all views regarding the system.
Goals and Goal Setting

Organizational goal setting is characterized by deliberative discussion by individuals passionate for the Vision and Mission. Goals are defined as the “big what’s” with objectives listed as the “smaller what’s” under each Goal and strategies as the “how” to accomplish. The Board’s original draft Goals are presented in Appendix Three. They are presented on the following pages.

During the Board retreat, a “SMART” goal-setting approach was utilized to target key CARS aspirations. The definition of the SMART goal process are as follows:

- **Specific**: focused and well defined
- **Measurable**: Able to track
- **Attainable**: Be real
- **Relevant**: To our Mission
- **Timely or Time-based**
Goals and Goal Setting
Goals

1

Goal One—
Develop a recruitment and retention plan to focus on drawing membership from all areas of our community and developing a life-long relationship with CARS

Objective One
Increase retention through training, scheduling flexibility, leadership development and other incentives

Strategy One
Implement formal operational (non-medical) training including National Incident Management System/Incident Command System (NIMS/ICS), scene safety, and situation assessment

Strategy Two
Re-engage UVA in the recruitment and retention process and discover different ways to retain the UVA student population in CARS

Objective Two
Recruit community volunteers that are representative of the community we serve

Strategy One
Recruit more community members to at least 25% of active members

Strategy Two
Conduct additional community outreach/awareness programs to include community knowledge of CARS

Strategy Three
Recruit experienced, tenured members to chair committees

Metrics
- Meet with the UVA staff regarding the CARS/student relationship by the 4th quarter of 2019; Revise any student approaches by the 2nd quarter of 2020
- Develop a recruitment and retention plan by the 1st quarter of 2020
- Conduct 4 community outreach events by the 3rd quarter of 2020

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Goal Two—
Ensure appropriate infrastructure to support the Mission

Objective One
Upgrade the current building within three years and replace within ten years

Strategy One
Contact Albemarle County regarding building replacement capital planning for volunteer agencies

Strategy Two
Allocate annual funds for building improvements

Strategy Three
Working with our city and county partners, develop a building replacement plan

Objective Two
Develop a vehicle justification and replacement plan

Strategy One
Adjust vehicle numbers and types through time per the plan

Metrics
- Contact Albemarle County Albemarle County Fire Rescue (ACFR) regarding volunteer building capital planning by the 3rd quarter of 2019
- Develop vehicle and building replacement plans by the 3rd quarter of 2020
3

Goal Three—
Invest in systemic administrative and leadership support to enable sustainable development and retention of leaders and succession planning

Objective One
Create and hire the role of Executive Director (ED) to administer and support the Board and members with functions to include but not limited to: budget, procurement and liaison to partner agencies

Strategy One
Improve fundraising strategies to increase contributions

Strategy Two
Review and revise by-laws and standard operating procedures

Strategy Three
Review, update and implement Human Resource (HR) policies

Objective Two
Develop member leadership through non-medical training, transparent protocol and personal training courses

Strategy One
Beginning in 2020, identify two members each year for non-medical leadership development training

Metrics
-Develop an ED job description by 3rd quarter of 2019
-Hire an Executive Director by 4th quarter of 2019
-Revise and implement HR policies by 4th quarter of 2020
-Implement fundraising efforts by the 3rd quarter of each year

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Goal Four—
Improve partner relations by establishing formal agreements through a combined system of local Emergency Medical Systems (EMS)

Objective One
Implement a formalized funding and combination service agreement with community partners that reflects CARS contribution to local EMS and fully funds our Agency Mission by FY 2021

Strategy One
Develop and present a combination service agreement by December 1, 2019 including training and preceptor responsibility, levels of technical and medical competence, coverage area, funding levels and administrative responsibility

Strategy Two
Clarify existing agreements and ordinances resulting in a new system response plan with Albemarle County pursuant to 12 VAC5-31-610, Albemarle County Code 6100 through 6503 and City Code Chapter 12, Article 4

Objective Two
Actively participate in the local Fire and Emergency Management System (FEMS) Board and committee work

Strategy One
Designate CARS participation responsibility to FEMS and attend pertinent committee meetings

Metrics
-Increase engagement with ACFR on Response Plan clarification and development by the 3rd quarter of 2019
-Complete the Strategic Plan information delivery to key stakeholders by the 4th quarter of 2019
-Attend 75% of FEMS Board and pertinent committee meetings

1 The actual and pertinent Code of Virginia listing, Albemarle County, and the City of Charlottesville Code is in Appendix Four
Charlottesville-Albemarle Rescue Squad

Strategic Plan