



Bald Head Island Public Safety

Organizational Background

Bald Head Island Public Safety provides integrated law enforcement, fire protection, emergency medical services, and specialized emergency response for the Bald Head Island community. Because of the Island's unique geography, transportation limitations, and operating environment, the department uses a cross-trained public safety model designed to provide multiple emergency services with a relatively small workforce.

Organizational Structure

The department is led by an Emergency Services Director, supported by a Deputy Chief of Law Enforcement and a Deputy Chief of Fire/EMS. Administrative support is provided by one Administrative Assistant.

Emergency response personnel are assigned across four shifts operating a 24-hour-on/72-hour-off schedule. Each shift is composed of:

- One Lieutenant, who serves as the shift commander
- One Sergeant
- Four Public Safety Officers

The department also employs approximately 10 part-time personnel who supplement staffing and provide coverage when full-time employees are unavailable due to leave, training, vacancies, or other staffing needs.

Integrated Public Safety Model

Full-time operational personnel function across the disciplines of law enforcement, fire suppression, and emergency medical services. Many members hold certifications in all three disciplines, including law enforcement officer, firefighter, and paramedic credentials.

Personnel assignments are driven by the nature of the incident. Depending on the call type, the same employee may function as a law enforcement officer, firefighter, EMS provider, apparatus operator, or in another emergency response capacity. This cross-functional model allows the department to adapt available staffing to the needs of each incident.

Volunteer Support

Bald Head Island Public Safety is also supported by a volunteer program composed of Island residents. Volunteers provide supplemental support during major or extended incidents and may assist with functions such as:

- Responder rehabilitation
- Personnel accountability
- Resource management and logistics
- Other functions, as assigned

The volunteer program provides an additional layer of community-based support while allowing career personnel to remain focused on hot-zone response responsibilities.

Emergency Response Fleet and Specialized Resources

The department maintains a combination of primary response apparatus, reserve apparatus, patrol vehicles, and specialized equipment to address the Island's varied emergency response needs.

Primary and reserve resources include:

- One first-out fire engine
- One first-out ladder truck
- One frontline ambulance
- Three patrol vehicles
- One reserve ambulance
- One reserve fire engine

Specialized response resources include:

- Inflatable water-rescue boat
- Two personal watercraft/jet skis
- Side-by-side utility terrain vehicle
- U SAFE remote-controlled rescue buoy
- Unmanned aircraft system/drone

These resources support responses involving structural fire protection, emergency medical incidents, law enforcement activity, water rescue, beach and remote-area incidents, search operations, severe weather events, and other emergencies unique to the Island environment.

Planning Environment

Bald Head Island Public Safety operates in a setting that differs substantially from a traditional municipal public safety agency. Geographic isolation, ferry access, limited outside resources, seasonal population changes, specialized transportation needs, and the combined public safety staffing model all influence how services are delivered.

The strategic planning process is intended to evaluate the department's current capabilities, identify future operational and organizational needs, and establish priorities that support reliable emergency services for residents, property owners, visitors, employees, and other stakeholders of Bald Head Island.