



WINTER STORM BLAIR AFTER ACTION REPORT

Office of Emergency Management



Mitigation, Preparedness, Response,
and Recovery

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Town of Warrenton Winter Storm Blair Response

This report summarizes the Town of Warrenton's response to Winter Storm Blair, highlighting key actions taken to ensure public safety and minimize disruption to town services. The storm, which brought 8 - 12 inches of significant snowfall to the region beginning on January 5th, presented a range of challenges including impassable roads, significant hourly snowfall rates, and the first major snow event to the region in many years.

The Town's proactive approach, guided by its emergency operations plan, focused on pre-storm preparation, timely communication, efficient snow removal, and resident support.

Key actions included:

- Pre-Storm Preparations: Pre-treating roadways, activating the Emergency Operations Plans, coordinating with regional partners, and disseminating safety information to residents.*
- Storm Response: Deployment of snow removal equipment, management of road closures, response to emergency calls, communication updates to the public.*
- Post-Storm Recovery: Clean-up efforts, damage assessment, restoration of services, and continued communication with residents.*

While the storm presented challenges, the Town's coordinated efforts resulted in many positive outcomes - minimal traffic accidents, effective communication with residents, and efficient clearing of critical roadways.

This report further details the specific actions taken by various town departments, identifies areas for improvement, and offers recommendations for enhancing future winter storm preparedness and response. The Town of Warrenton remains committed to ensuring the safety and well-being of its residents during severe weather events.



Message from the Emergency Coordinator

Team Warrenton,

I want to extend my sincere gratitude for your incredible work during Winter Storm Blair. From the pre-planning stages through the recovery efforts, your dedication and teamwork were truly outstanding, and the results speak for themselves.

The pre-planning and preparedness activities we undertook were absolutely crucial. From pre-treating the roads to coordinating with our regional partners and getting important information out to our residents, we were proactive and ready. This foundation allowed us to respond effectively when the storm hit.

During the storm, I witnessed firsthand the remarkable teamwork and commitment on display. Our road crews worked tirelessly around the clock, our emergency responders were quick and efficient, and our communication team kept residents informed every step of the way. Everyone played a vital role, and the coordination was seamless.

The recovery phase has also gone smoothly, thanks to everyone's continued efforts. We've made great progress in clearing roads, restoring services, and ensuring the safety of our community.

Because of your hard work, dedication, and excellent teamwork, Warrenton weathered Winter Storm Blair effectively. We minimized disruptions, kept our residents safe, and demonstrated the true spirit of community. I am incredibly proud to be part of this team.

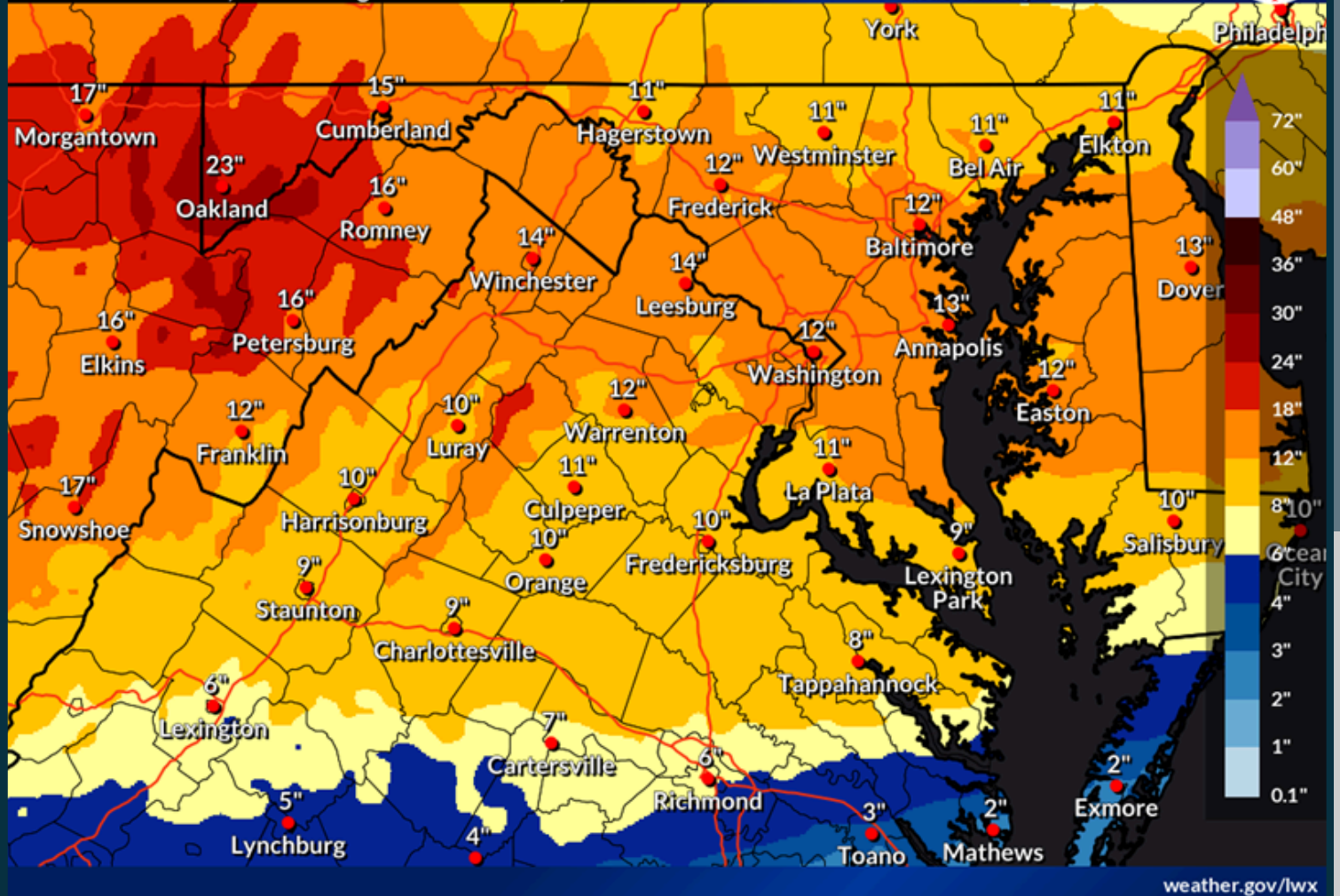
Thank you again for your exceptional service.

Johnny H. Switzer

Emergency Management Coordinator
Town of Warrenton, VA



Issued Jan 05, 2025 10:17 AM EST



Declaration of Local Emergency



Frank Cassidy
TOWN MANAGER
T (540) 347-1101
fcassidy@warrentonva.gov

TOWN COUNCIL
Carter Nevill, Mayor
Paul Mooney
David McGuire
Roy Francis
William Semple II
Larry Kovalik
Michele O'Halloran
Eric Gagnon

DECLARATION OF LOCAL EMERGENCY FOR THE TOWN OF WARRENTON

On Friday, January 3, 2025, Governor Youngkin declared a state of emergency in the Commonwealth of Virginia based on National Weather Service forecasts that indicate a severe winter storm with snow accumulations of several inches along with sleet, ice, freezing rain, and temperatures below freezing for several days that could cause transportation difficulties and power outages.

I, Frank Cassidy, as Town Manager for the Town of Warrenton, find the imminent threat of severe weather and loss or interruption of vital Town services posed by the Winter Storm for which the National Weather Service issued a Winter Storm Warning beginning January 5th, 2025, 10:00PM EST, to be of sufficient severity and magnitude to warrant coordinated local government action to prevent or alleviate any potential damage, loss, hardship or suffering.

Therefore, pursuant to Section 44-146.21 of the Code of Virginia, as amended, and pursuant to authorization and consent of the Town Council, I hereby declare the existence of a Local Emergency in the Town of Warrenton, effective as of the date and time below. In accordance with this Declaration, the Office of Emergency Management and all other appropriate Town agencies and employees are hereby vested with, and are authorized to carry out all powers, duties and functions prescribed by State and local law, rules, regulations and plans as may be necessary to adequately and appropriately respond to said Local Emergency.

Town Manager

JAN 5, 2025 1900HRS.

Date and Time

EXPERIENCE

Effective Communication



TOWN OF WARRENTON

Office of Emergency Management

18 Court Street
Warrenton, Virginia 20186
<http://www.warrentonva.gov>
TELEPHONE (540) 680-9538
FAX (540) 349-2414

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE - JANUARY 5, 2025

Winter Storm Blair

The Warrenton Office of Emergency Management is working closely with our local, state, and federal partners to track, prepare, and respond to the incoming weather of Winter Storm Blair. In addition, the Department of Public Works has been mobilized and is prepared to respond to any effects of this storm.

A Winter Storm Warning is in effect late Sunday into Monday night for the entire area. The latest forecast predicts 5 to 9 inches of snow to fall across the region, starting late Sunday night and lasting until early Tuesday morning. There's a chance of higher snowfall amounts, and freezing rain or ice could mix in at times.

To ensure the safety and efficiency of our first responders clearing snow and ice, we urge all residents to stay off the roads unless absolutely necessary. Please note that all snow emergency routes in the Town of Warrenton are activated as of Monday morning at 5:00 AM. No stopping, standing, or parking is permitted on designated snow routes for a duration of 48 hours. Vehicles found in violation may be towed at the owner's expense. Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.

There is still time to get ready for the winter weather expected to hit our area today through Tuesday. Take advantage of the clear weather to go out and get any last-minute supplies you might need.

Be prepared for potential power outages that could last for several hours. If you plan on using a generator, make sure to use it safely and keep it far away from air intakes to avoid carbon monoxide poisoning.

To get timely updates and alerts, please sign up for Warrenton Alerts: [Alert Center](#) • [Warrenton, VA](#) • [CivicEngage](#).

Be prepared and stay safe.

Weather Updates and Information Relay

Town of Warrenton, Virginia Office of Emergency Management

SPOT REPORT: # 6	DATE:01/05/2025	TIME: 1200
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OVERVIEW: Winter Storm Blair

- A **Winter Storm Warning** is in effect late Sunday into Monday night for the entire area.
- Moderate winter storm threat from accumulating snow.
- Potential impacts include significant travel delays and closures.
- Snow will mix with sleet and freezing rain, especially near and south of Interstate 66. Dry and very cold Tuesday through Friday.
- Wind Chills in single digits each morning Tuesday through Friday. Near zero wind chills are possible on Thursday morning.
- Snow on the ground is not likely to melt.
- Another period of steady snow is expected Monday evening before precipitation ends late.
- Two strike teams of Va. Army National Guard high-wheeled vehicle/debris teams will be at Warrenton VAANG Armory as a regional asset under the control of VDEM. Warrenton EM has prepared documents to request support should the need arise.
- VDEM State EOC and our Region 2 VDEM team will have their EOCs staffed starting Sunday night.
- Public Works has crews activated to begin 24hr staffing operations starting Sunday evening at 2000hrs.
- VDOT has already begun road operations to prep hard surfaces, Road crews will be staged and ready Sunday night.
- Town Emergency Management is in monitoring mode due to the storm being >24 hours from arrival. The incident is currently projected to be a type 3/4 rating.

Please monitor spot reports closely | Be prepared for travel delays and disruptions.

Virginia Department of Transportation



NEWS RELEASE

VDOT.Virginia.gov

RELEASE: IMMEDIATE
CONTACT: Lou Hatter
540-717-2890 (cell)
Lou.Hatter@VDOT.Virginia.gov

Jan. 4, 2025
CULP 2025-003

Sharon Ketcham
540-829-7370 (office), 540-717-8376 (cell)
Sharon.Ketcham@VDOT.Virginia.gov

COMPLETE PREPARATIONS FOR IMPENDING WINTER STORM

Heavy snow, possibly mixed with sleet, freezing rain forecast to begin Sunday evening

CULPEPER — The Virginia Department of Transportation is completing preparations for a significant winter storm that is forecast to affect much of the state beginning Sunday afternoon. Crews have been pre-treating interstates, primary, and major secondary roadways with brine across the Culpeper District and in other districts. Other VDOT crews are fitting trucks and heavy equipment with plows and salt spreaders to prepare them for the storm response.

VDOT is urging the public to also complete all preparations for the storm today. Many people may be traveling home or back to school after the holidays, and VDOT recommends those travels be done no later than Sunday afternoon, by altering plans if necessary. Once the storm begins on Sunday travel will be difficult across much of the western and northern regions of Virginia.

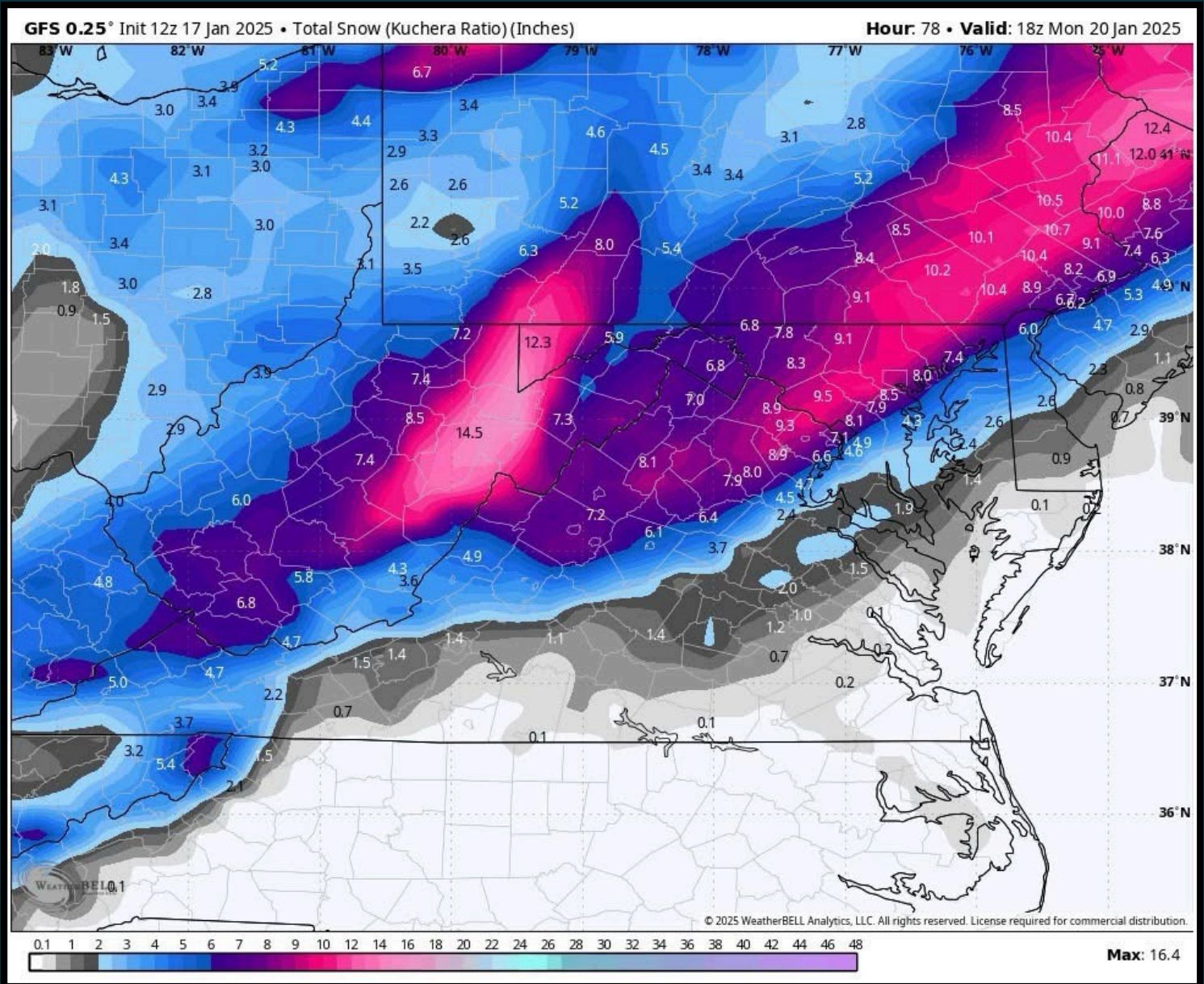
Forecasts have increased somewhat since yesterday, and the storm may drop between 8 and 12 inches of snow across the nine counties of VDOT's Culpeper District, with the highest totals in Fauquier and Rappahannock counties and along the Blue Ridge Mountains. Farther south, in Albemarle, Fluvanna and Louisa County, snow totals may be lower and the snow may mix with sleet or freezing rain during the storm.

Blair Booms to Major Storm!



Storm Prediction Center

N O A A / National Weather Service





AFTER ACTION REVIEW



Can you describe the key resource and/or logistical challenges your team encountered during Winter Storm Blair response, and how did you address them?

What worked well (and did not work well) in this process?

How could coordinating across the ICS structure be improved?

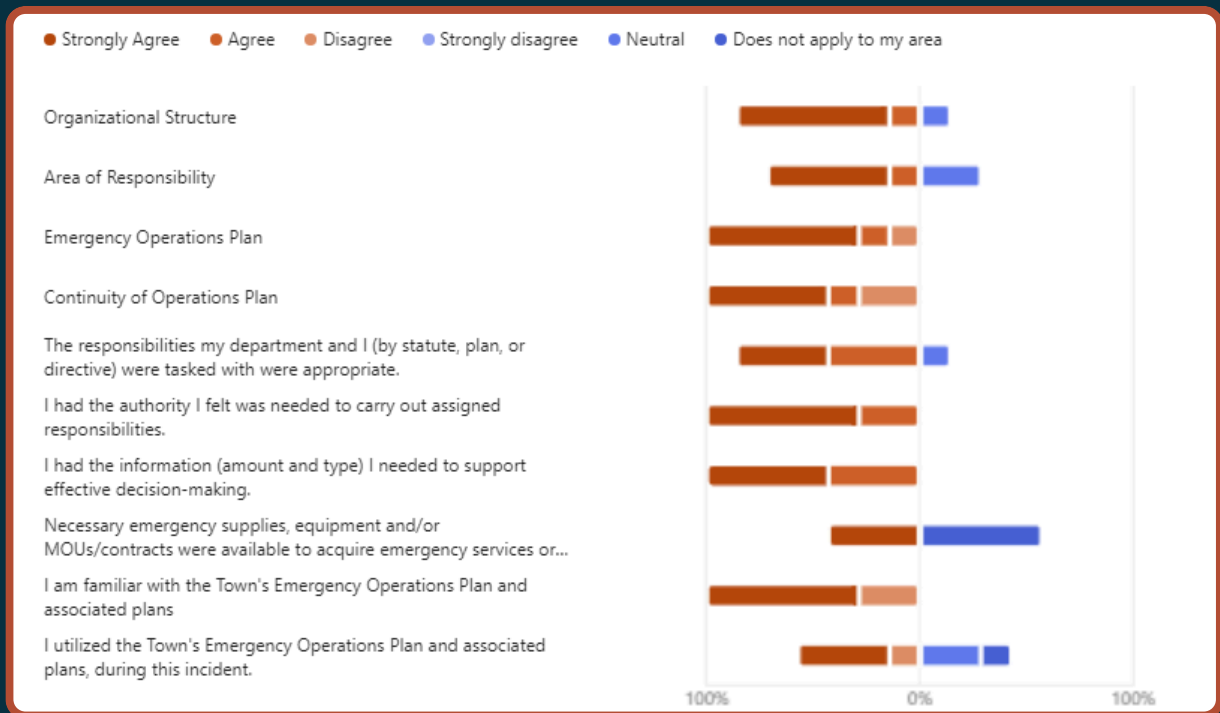
What were the best practices that we adopted during the response that should be captured into policies and plans for future disaster responses?

Questionnaire

How did your team adapt to changing conditions and demands throughout the emergency response, and what strategies or technologies were particularly helpful in making real-time adjustments to your operations?

Could you share some examples of successful collaboration and communication strategies employed during the winter storm response and some examples of challenges?

Were these areas clearly communicated and understood during this incident?



Questionnaire

How did your team adapt to changing conditions and demands throughout the emergency response, and what strategies or technologies were particularly helpful in making real-time adjustments to your operations?

extremely well

The text communication and communication were vital to this response.

*Communication between emergency management and our command staff.
Changes in personnel and resources were made in real-time based on the information received.*

we did our job

HC had no issues adapting to the changing conditions.

Team adapted well to transitioning from a delayed opening to a facility closure, as well as delayed opening with liberal leave and/or telework option. Having the ability to telework, VPN access, etc. allowed full time staff to get work done at home if they were able to.

How would you assess the effectiveness of communication channels and protocols used during the winter storm response?

4.14

Average Rating



Questionnaire

Rate the Incident Command Structure was effective in coordinating across command (Town EM and TM Office) and general town staff (divisions/branches) roles?

4.43

Average Rating



Provide examples of strengths on the Town's Response

teamwork, communication

All departments worked well together. It was clear that good planning went into the response.

communication and team work

Town notified citizens, Council, and employees directly impacted by the storm with timely responses and clear communication.

Crews on site did an amazing job-kept hearing compliments on how well the roads were in town and the response time in getting them cleared, as well as the parks/trails, maybe the county could hire us as contractors... Overall good communication between departments and within own department, as well as to the public

Questionnaire

Provide opportunities for improvement on the Town's Response

more ways on the website to get the word out

I think just external communications as stated before, there are many areas that can be improved.

Further planning/ improving communication

establishing additional availability of resources and cooperation

Snow Emergency Route Activation Order In-Effect



Snow Emergency Routes





Winter Wonderland



**Sherrif's
Office**

Team Work!

VDEM

HC & RM

Public Works



IT



Community

Development

**Emergency
Mangement**

Police

Public Utilities



**Fire
VDOT**

**Finance &
Procurement**



Communications

Facilities & Fleet

Parks & Recreation

Fauquier County