

# **DIVERSITY AND THE VIRGINIA BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT**

## **EXECUTIVE DEVELOPMENT**

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## ABSTRACT

This research project analyzed the diversity of the Virginia Beach Fire Department and several similar fire departments in the same geographic region as Virginia Beach. The problem identified was that the Virginia Beach Fire Department did not actively recruit minorities to create a diverse workforce that mirrored the greater community. The purpose of this project was to identify the current diversity of the City of Virginia Beach and Virginia Beach Fire Department, and then compare the percentage of protected class employees to other similar size cities and fire departments in the region. The research resulted in a proposed plan that contains benchmarks to evaluate long-term success at creating an employee workforce considered diverse when compared with the community it protects.

Historical research was employed to: (a) define diversity and affirmative action regarding employment practices, (b) determine if the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department meets applicable Affirmative Action and Diversity mandated laws, © accurately report the racial and gender makeup of the City of Virginia Beach and Virginia Beach Fire Department, and then to compare the results with the racial and gender makeup of selected similar cities and fire departments, and (d) determine what other fire departments were doing to diversify their workforce.

The procedures used for this research project involved determining the past and present diversity of the Virginia Beach Fire Department, and comparing the results with data obtained from similar fire departments in the geographic area. In addition, an intergovernmental survey was placed on the Internet to learn what other public safety departments had done to successfully diversify their organizations.

The results demonstrate the Virginia Beach Fire Department was not becoming more diverse over time, although the population was becoming more diverse each year. In addition, the fire department was not being successful with their recruitment efforts towards diversifying the department with respect to the percentages of protected class employees employed in the study fire departments.

The recommendations were for the Virginia Beach Fire Department to set up a plan to attract and successfully recruit protected class employees, add replacement employees with consideration of the minority population percentage of the community, and to establish measurable benchmarks to determine successful diversification of the department.

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## INTRODUCTION

This research project analyzed the diversity of the members employed by the Virginia Beach Fire Department and several comparable size fire departments in the same geographic region. The perceived problem was that the Virginia Beach Fire Department does not actively recruit minorities to create a workforce as diverse as the community it serves.

The purpose of the project was to identify the current diversity of the City of Virginia Beach and Virginia Beach Fire Department, along with two surrounding cities and fire departments, and to propose a plan that would contain benchmarks to determine success at creating an employee workforce considered diverse when compared with the community it protects.

The research method employed historical research. The research was conducted to study, understand, and explain past events with respect to diversity in the fire department. The purpose of using this research method was to explain how past events have influenced the present situation over a pre determined study period.

The research was conducted to: (a) define diversity and affirmative action regarding employment practices, (b) determine if the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department meets applicable Affirmative Action and Diversity mandated laws, © accurately report the diversity of the City of Virginia Beach and Virginia Beach Fire Department, and to compare the results with the racial and gender makeup of surrounding fire departments, and (d) learn what other fire departments are doing to diversify their workforce.

The procedures used for this research project involved determining the past and present racial and gender makeup of the Virginia Beach Fire Department. This information was then

compared with data obtained from similar fire departments in the geographic area. In addition, an intergovernmental survey was placed on the Internet to learn what other public safety departments had done to successfully diversify their organizations.

The data suggest that the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not becoming more diverse over time, even though the population is becoming more diverse each year. In addition, it is not being successful with current recruitment strategies of diversifying the department with respect to the percentages of protected class employees in the other fire departments surveyed.

The recommendations are for the Virginia Beach Fire Department to set up a plan to attract and successfully recruit protected class employees, add replacement employees based on a percentage determined by the overall population, and to establish measurable benchmarks to determine successful diversification of the department.

## **BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE**

The City of Virginia Beach has always been a predominately middle and upper-middle class Caucasian community. In 1990, the City of Virginia Beach's minority population, African American, Hispanic, Asian/Pacific Islander, and American Indians, made up only 20% of the total population. However, in 1999 the percentage of minorities had jumped to 26% of the population. It should be noted that females are not included as a protected class for distinguishing minority percentages of a city's population.

As the minority population percentages grow, it becomes increasingly important to maintain a workforce in the fire department that is similarly diverse. The fire department,

because of its intimacy in dealing with the total citizenry, considers diversity a very important issue in the effectiveness and responsiveness of its service delivery system. In 1990, the Virginia Beach Fire Department's workforce was 11 percent diverse when considering all protected class types, including females. In 1998, the fire department remained 11 percent diverse, although the department had only grown marginally.

In evaluating past actions of the Virginia Beach Fire Department, it becomes clear the recruitment strategies have not been successful at impacting the percentages. The inability to create a diverse workforce becomes more critical as the diversity of the population changes. To maintain a workforce that is sensitive to the diverse makeup of the population it serves, it is important to study this problem and recommend potential solutions for future consideration.

The Executive Development Course offered by the National Fire Academy endeavors to give students an understanding of organizations and organizational cultures. The idea of culture means important shared assumptions that generate shared talk, behavior, doings, emotion, and feelings. All of these actions are involved when considering organizational behavior and diversity in the fire department.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Twenty years ago, the men who battled flames and rescued children from smokey high-rises nearly always had white faces. Now, across the United States, a number of these soot-covered heroes are women, and many are black, Latino, or Asian-American men - largely because the courts have stepped in to remedy a history of exclusion (Teicher, 1999). Even so, the fire station remains the setting for one of the most visible, and perhaps fiercest, battles over job

discrimination. Moreover, the uncertain legal climate now surrounding affirmative action has some firefighters - as well as civil rights watchdogs concerned that fire departments will again become almost exclusively white (Teicher, 1999).

The inability to recognize or understand culture is not new. Some of the most tragic errors in history have been the result of the inability or unwillingness to understand cultural differences. For example, the first nine thousand people killed in the Crusades were Middle Eastern Christians dressed in their traditional robes and coming to greet the soldiers from Europe. The Europeans who did not understand that everyone who lived in the holy land dresses that way, attacked and cut down the very people that were their allies (Moore, 1996).

Embracing diversity and understanding different cultures requires a major shift in the way we see the world. Learning to think, act, and work productively in partnership with people of different cultures, styles, abilities, classes, nationalities, races, sexual orientation, and genders, means more than just acquiring new skills and new attitudes. It also means giving up old familiar identities, expectations, roles, and operating patterns with which we have grown so comfortable (Miller, 1994).

The term diversity refers to differences in race, gender, ethnic or cultural background, age, sexual orientation, religion, and physical or mental capacity. It also refers to the myriad of ways we are different in other respects, such as personality, job function, class, educational level, marital status, whether or not one has children, where one lives, the region where one was raised, and how one was raised (Leach, 1995).

Managing diversity is a comprehensive managerial process for developing an environment that works naturally for all employees. Managing diversity also seeks to tap the full



potential of all employees, in pursuit of company objectives, where employees may progress without regard to irrelevant considerations such as race, age, gender and other personal attributes (Baytos, 1995).

Diversity also means creating an environment in which everyone with whom you work, and the people you serve have a real opportunity to reach their maximum potential and to make optimal individual contributions toward reaching common goals (City of Virginia Beach, 1997).

No longer are unawareness and ignorance acceptable as excuses for the inability to work harmoniously and effectively with a variety of different kinds of people. More than ever, Americans need to recognize the importance of being open to varied perspectives in accomplishing work goals and expectations. As city employees, it is crucial to recognize barriers to establishing and sustaining diverse work environments (Gravelly, 2000).

In March 1961, less than two months after assuming office, President John F. Kennedy issued Executive Order 10925, which established the President's Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity. Its mission was to end discrimination in employment by the government and its contractors. The order required every federal contract to include the pledge that "The contractor will not discriminate against any employee or applicant for employment, because of race, creed, color, or national origin. The Contractor will take affirmative action, to ensure that applicants are employed, and that employees are treated equal during employment, with regard for their race, color, creed, or national origin" (Cahn, 1995).

Affirmative action was created 39 years ago as a remedy for the under use of minority and female human resources in the workplace and classroom. The term refers to active measures and passive non discrimination as increasing significantly the recruitment of minorities and,

ultimately, ensuring equal employment opportunity (Teicher, 1999).

Affirmative action is the aspect of workplace diversity that gets the most attention from the popular media. It is not a particular law, as much as it is a recruitment tool to bring formally disadvantaged workers into the workforce, and to help them adapt to corporate cultures. The basic premise is a sound one: that people's potential comes wrapped in many different shapes and colors and, as an employer, you should consider those differences in order to tap the potential (Baytos, 1995).

To promote equal employment and avoid discrimination claims, conscientious employers established voluntary internal audit procedures to evaluate their diversity efforts. Nevertheless, these efforts are voluntary. Since they do not discriminate against people in protected classes, no law says you have to start an affirmative action program (Walsh, 1995).

After more than two decades of complex affirmative action rulings by federal courts, some general guidelines have emerged:

- Preferences may be - quotas no. Employers can use race or gender as a positive factor in certain cases, but they are usually forbidden from employing strict, numerical quotas to fill jobs.
- Affirmative action programs should be temporary efforts to correct past wrongs - specific or general - rather than permanent features of the employment landscape.
- Employers must take into account the burden that any affirmative action program would place on workers or potential workers outside the plan (Carlton, 1990)

Many civil rights lawyers agree that the University of Michigan could be the Alamo of affirmative action, the place where they make their last stand. Michigan's affirmative action

programs, especially at its prestigious law school, is among the best in the country—designed not only to produce diverse student bodies, but also to withstand the right-wing onslaughts, in the courts or at the polls, that has outlawed the use of racial preferences in California, Washington, and other states. That is why so much is riding on the appeal of two lawsuits filed by whites who claim that they denied them admission to Michigan because of their race, pointing out that some black applicants with lower test scores and grade point averages were admitted (White, 1995).

Remembering the long and difficult history of the United States in respect to discrimination and oppression is important; the atrocities perpetrated on different groups of people; and the efforts to end segregation and discrimination, to relieve oppression, and to create a “level playing field” for all people regardless of race, religion, gender, nationality, age, sexual orientation, ability, or other differences should not be forgotten (Swanger, 1994).

The movement against segregation and discrimination based on race in the United States began to gather strength in the 1930s, when blacks gained a modicum of economic leverage through the formation of all black unions. In 1941, A. Philip Randolph, President of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, conferred with other black leaders and organized a march on Washington, D.C. Labor solidarity had a political effect: President Roosevelt, in response to the threatened march, issued Executive Order 8802, ordering an end to discrimination in the defense industries and government employment. That order was reissued by all subsequent presidents (Swanger, 1994).

In 1944, the Supreme Court mandated that all labor unions represent employees without regard to race, though as private organizations they could still deny memberships on that basis.

That same year, the Supreme Court held that the Fifteenth Amendment prohibited discrimination in primary elections. Also during the 40s, President Truman issued an executive order that provided for equality of treatment in the armed services, created a civil rights committee to recommend civil rights programs, and proposed legislation based on the committee's recommendations. Much of this legislation was finally enacted in the 1960s (Baytos, 1995).

In the 1950s, the efforts against discrimination and segregation finally led to monumental legislative and societal changes. In 1954, in *Brown V. Board of Education*, the Supreme Court overturned the separate-but-equal doctrine that had stood since 1896, when it had ruled to allow separate train cars for the races. The court stated that government-supplied services - in this case, public education - was forbidden by the Fourteenth Amendment's equal-protection clause (Swanger, 1994).

During the 1960s, Congress passed a series of laws that legislated the end to racial discrimination in the United States. Foremost among these was the:

- Civil Rights Act of 1960, which enables court appointed officials to protect voting rights and made it a federal offense to obstruct a court order,
- Civil Rights Act of 1964, the strongest civil rights legislation since the Civil War, which prohibited discrimination based on race, gender, national origin, and religion in employment, education, public accommodations, and federally assisted programs,
- Voting Rights Act of 1965, which eliminated the poll tax and mandated the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department to intervene when voter registration rolls fell beneath a certain level, and the
- Fair Housing Act of 1968, which prohibited discrimination in housing and real estate

(Baytos, 1991).

It was Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the first federal employment opportunity law that required compliance from non-public entities, that placed the most pressure on organizations. Strongly supported by the NAACP, Title VII instructed organizations to stop discriminating. Organizations with 25 or more employees were covered when the statute became effective July 1, 1965; two years later, organizations with 15 or more employees came under its umbrella. The statute's prescription against discrimination was enforceable through private litigation, and suits brought by the EEOC's Enforcement Division. For the first time, there was legal clout behind the anti discrimination movement (Carlton, 1990).

Although the EEOC focused initially on African Americans, it also began to address issues related to Asians, Latinos, Native Americans, other people of color, and white women. The Enforcement Division's emphasis was often on goals, targets, and timetables, particularly as to hiring. Affirmative action plans were an important result of this activity, and organizations were forced to examine their work forces and consider diversity as imperative (Swanger, 1994).

There are literally hundreds of laws on the books that deal with discrimination regarding employment practices. The two primary laws dealing with diversity, affirmative action, and discrimination are Chapter 2, Subchapter VI, Title 42 of the United States Code, and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act on 1964 (Walsh, 1995).

The United States Code, Title 42 - The Public Health and Welfare, Chapter 21 - Civil Rights, Subchapter VI - Equal Employment Opportunities states in Sec. 2000 e-2 under Unlawful Employment Practices that it shall be unlawful employment practice for an employer to: (1) fail or refuse to hire or to discharge any individual with respect to his compensation,

terms, conditions, or privileges of employment, because of such individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin; or (2) to limit, segregate, or classify employees or applicants for employment in any way that would deprive any individual of employment opportunities or otherwise adversely affect his status as an employee, because of such individuals race, color, religion, sex, or national origin (Charlton, 1990).

Title VII, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, was enacted to seek an end to discrimination by large private employer's whether or not they had government contracts. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, established by the Act, is charged with enforcing the anti-discrimination laws through prevention of employment discrimination and resolution of complaints. They designed the Act to make employees whole for illegal discrimination and to encourage employers to end discrimination (Charlton, 1990).

The Civil Rights Act of 1991 expanded various aspects of existing workplace diversity law. It came in the wake of what some people considered a decade of erosion of civil rights law under Presidents Reagan and Bush. The biggest change that the 1991 Act affected: It made jury trials and punitive damages available for Title VII claims. Before passage of the 1991 Act, federal judges had heard cases and awards had been limited to back pay and attorney fees (Walsh, 1995).

Critical to the issue of diversity in the Virginia Beach Fire Department is the changing workforce and potential employees for hire in the coming years. United States population trends described in the publication Workforce 2000, published by the U.S. Department of Labor in 1988, proclaimed that nearly 85 percent of all new workers will be African-Americans, native-born women, Hispanics, Asians, and other nonwhite immigrants. The publication also reported

the average number of workers between 16 and 24 years of age would decrease by 8 percent. The average age of the American worker will be 39 years old. The report also suggests that more than 60 percent of women over the age of 16 will be working outside the home. These trends will directly influence the American workforce in the year 2000 and beyond (Carlton, 1990).

A top priority for many county and city managers is recruiting, and retaining, a workforce that reflects their community's diverse cultures. Sometimes, where elected officials are ethnically and culturally diverse themselves or represent a diverse constituency, they set policies to mandate diversity in support for minority and female-owned business enterprises through local government contracting programs. Southern California, which has many communities where Anglos are in the minority, offers many examples of cities and counties actively seeking to diversify their staffs (Farr, 1992).

Susan Brightmire, in a Fire Commentary article, states "I used to believe we should become more tolerant of our differences. Now I propose we take that a step further and actually try to rejoice in them. The truth is, we are a diverse group-beyond the difference of just being men and women. We also differ in all manners of ethics and values. The growing gap in our understanding of each other can be bridged only by sincere and safe communications" (Brightmire, 1995).

Many hard earned lessons emerge from the cumulative experience of American fire departments as they grappled with diversity issues over the past 20 years. The first lesson learned is that major organizational change must be phased in over time and requires demonstrated commitment from all levels of the organization, particularly senior management.

Experience and research have proved that the most effective strategies for integrating minorities and women into the fire service are those that are part of a planned, comprehensive program and includes the following components:

- Involving key players in the planning and implementation of the program,
- Establishing measurable goals and objectives with realistic time frames,
- Organizing support and preparation for change,
- Training and managing, supervising, and working with diversity,
- Focused recruitment strategies,
- Pre-employment training for women and minorities,
- Reflecting a balance in the selection process between maintaining high standards and avoiding adverse impact, and
- Monitoring and evaluation (Kornberg, 1991).

With over three-fourths of Santa Ana, California's nearly 300,000 population identified as ethnic minorities, the diversity challenge for the city government is daunting. Santa Ana's Hispanic community comprises 65.2 percent of its residents - the second highest of U. S. cities with populations more than 50,000. Motivated to increase the ethnic and gender diversity of its workforce, they have developed a quality approach to affirmative action with an Employment Outreach Program (Ream, 1992).

The Employment Outreach Program is designed around the needs of each department in the city. For each classification, each department knows if a job opening has outreach priority by referring to its departmental outreach plan. The plan is created by a team of department employees with assistance from the Personnel Department. The team determines outreach



priorities within the overall department, divisions within the department, job classifications, and/or categories of employment as compared to the diversity of the community. It is up to the department head to decide if any job opening identified with outreach priority will receive special recruitment efforts targeting an ethnic and/or gender group. This system avoids numerical quotas and allows only qualified applicants to be considered for selection. Thus, an aggressive and creative approach to recruitment is necessary (Ream, 1992).

To gain the maximum benefit from diversity, an organization must establish a comprehensive, integrated strategy of inclusive policies, procedures, and systems. Addressing isolated areas with isolated policies keeps both the change effort and the people isolated (Miller, 1994).

To start change in large organizations, management often thinks everyone in the organization must move ahead together. This thinking is admirable, but it is often counterproductive. There are going to be parts of the organization-business units or functional areas-that can move a lot faster than the rest of the organization. These pockets of readiness and opportunity can be very advantageous to change effort, because they can model the change and its benefits for the rest of the organization (Miller, 1994).

The melting pot no longer gives us a vision to deal with the increasing multi-culturalism of the United States. Instead, we need to identify a new paradigm that enables all of our cultures to be proud of and celebrate their uniqueness, traditions, history, art, and yet, at the same time, share a common vision of our future. Celebrating our diversity should be the norm. Allowing, and encouraging each community to acknowledge, recognize, and encourage celebration of its unique cultural identity is paramount (McGrory, 1994).

A diverse organization brings value to a government and enhances existing organizational initiatives. Diversity also helps managers understand who our customers/residents are, and our workforces should reflect those residents and community members.

If diversity is going to work for the next generation of American women and minorities, employers should be encouraged to view it as a bottom line issue. There is nowhere else to go. Diversity is our world, and we must embrace it so that we can maintain our role as the professional leaders of urban America (Carlton, 1990).

We can work together in a way that appreciates diversity as a toll of strength, or we can have a decisive community based solely on numbers. Rather than arguing about how to cut up the pie, we as managers must shift our focus to respecting differences and individualities. This sort of paradigm shift in organizational culture will position an organization (1) to come up with strategies to develop the full potential of all of its employees, and (2) to appreciate that a diverse workplace is more competitive in an increasingly diverse marketplace and global economy (Carlton, 1990).

## **PROCEDURES**

To address the issue of workforce diversity in the Virginia Beach Fire Department it is necessary to identify diversity as a value we wish to embrace within the existing workforce. This proves to be a very complex issue because, as the literature suggests, there are no numerical quotas or percentages mandated by law to consider when determining diversity.

The issue of diversity revolves around the conscious effort of the employer to hire a

workforce that typifies the community and customers it serves. In the Virginia Beach Fire Department, the identification of the problem is not the lack of total numbers of races, classes, or gender considerations, but more the lack of a comprehensive program that addresses the issue or promotes diversity in hiring.

For this study it was necessary to first determine the total numbers of Caucasian, African American, Hispanic American, Asian American, American Indian, women, and men that comprise the employees of the Virginia Beach Fire Department. This information was obtained from employee applications and is only validated by the signature of the employee as to its truthfulness.

To evaluate the ratio of percentages for any one class, gender, or ethnic group in the Virginia Beach Fire Department it was also necessary to determine the same information about the population of Virginia Beach. From these facts current levels of diversity within the fire department could be compared with the diversity of the city population. This city population information was obtained from census data completed in 1990 and 1998 as archived by the City of Virginia Beach Planning Department.

To fairly evaluate diversity-based employment practices in the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department, it was necessary to look at the percentages of protective classes employed by other departments in the area compared with the populations they serve. For comparative analysis the study looked at the employment levels of protected classes for the Norfolk and Chesapeake Fire Departments as compared with their respective communities. The fire service occupation was the only occupation used for comparative analysis. This was necessary, because certain occupations may have attracted a disproportionate percentage of one race or gender.

The information on diversity within the Norfolk and Chesapeake Fire Departments was then compared with diversity of the Virginia Beach Fire Department. This comparison was only listed as a percentage of diverse employees when compared with the populations the respective fire departments served. The information was not intended to suggest the proper percentages of protective employees necessary to create a diverse workforce, but merely to compare regional departments based on their populations.

The potential to correct a diversity issue can only be remedied through the hiring of new employees when openings occur. Therefore, the number of potential openings in the Virginia Beach Fire Department was examined, as was the potential to hire based on approved new full time employees. This process involved looking at the age of the Virginia Beach Fire Department employees, and to forecast potential future expansion in the number of full time openings for the next five years.

To determine a proper course of action based on the results of the study, an intergovernmental search on the Internet was done to identify successful public safety programs on diversity. This process involved developing a questionnaire for distribution by the City of Virginia Beach Municipal Reference Library (See Appendix A).

As with any study there are certain limitations based on the comprehensiveness and accuracy of the study method. This study's limitations are described as:

- The study itself compares the current number of employees in each organization to the total population of that city by gender, and race. This comparison does not distinguish the total of any one group of protected class that could actually qualify as a potential employee,

- The study does not address the cultural beliefs in certain ethnic groups toward certain occupations that reduces the actual numbers of employees available for hire,
- The study does not address cultural biases of current management and employees that may contribute to discouraging diversity,
- The study comparisons do not reflect right, wrong, high, or low percentages of protected class employees. Identified low levels may suggest all of the study fire departments are doing a poor job of maintaining a diverse workforce, and
- Two of the study departments had EMS/Fire systems while the Virginia Beach Fire Department is fire based only.

## **RESULTS**

Managing diversity and affirmative action regarding employment practices is a process to create an environment, and/or culture. It seeks to optimize the organization's ability to foster development of, and use the diverse backgrounds of a wide range of persons. For this reason employers should strive to create a climate that promotes diversity.

Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act mandates that employers not discriminate based on race, sexual orientation, creed, religious beliefs, or gender. Without exception there is no outright evidence that the City of Virginia Beach Fire Department openly discriminates against anyone who qualifies for the position of recruit firefighter. Furthermore, the research has indicated that hiring practices do not follow a pattern of willful exclusion based on any fact that would determine diversity in the department.

To report the racial and gender makeup of the City of Virginia Beach and Virginia Beach

Fire Department, and to compare results with the racial and gender makeup of surrounding departments, each identified city and fire departments were surveyed. The results were placed in tables for easy reference.

In the time between 1990 and 1999 the City of Virginia Beach has experienced an increase in its residential population. Also during this time Virginia Beach lost significant numbers of it's "caucasian" population. Most of this population was replaced with African Americans, and to a lesser extent the remaining protective classes (See Table 1).

Table 1

Virginia Beach Population 1990 and 1999

CITY OF VIRGINIA BEACH	TOTAL 1990	TOTAL 1998	PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1990	PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1998
NUMBER OF CITIZENS	393,069	436,408	100%	100%
CAUCASIAN	316,408	321,478	80%	74%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	54,671	67,101	14%	15%
HISPANIC	0	19,161	0%	4%
ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDER	0	26,989	0%	6%
AMERICAN INDIAN	0	1,679	0%	1%
OTHER _	21,990	0	6%	0%
ALL PROTECTED GROUPS _	76,661	114,930	20%	26%

Note. \_ Statistics on Hispanic, Asian-Islander Pacific, and American Indians were not distinguished separately in 1990. These classes were listed only as Other. \_ For statistical purposes, when considering the cities population, gender is not considered a protective class.

The City of Virginia Beach Fire Department's workforce has not grown significantly over the study period. Likewise the percentage of protective class employees in the fire department has remained constant over the years. Most of the departments employees are caucasian males (See Table 2).

Table 2

Virginia Beach Fire Department Workforce 1990 and 1999

<b>VIRGINIA BEACH FIRE DEPARTMENT</b>	<b>TOTAL 1990</b>	<b>TOTAL 1999</b>	<b>PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1990</b>	<b>PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1999</b>
<b>NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES</b>	343	361	100%	100%
<b>CAUCASIAN</b>	321	336	94%	93%
<b>AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	13	14	4%	4%
<b>HISPANIC</b>	3	4	1%	1%
<b>ASIAN - PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>	2	4	≥1%	1%
<b>AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	4	3	1%	1%
<b>MALE</b>	327	345	95%	95%
<b>FEMALE</b>	16	16	5%	5%
<b>TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP</b>	38	41	11%	11%

The City of Chesapeake has grown the most in population over the study period.

Although, there is an indicated increase in the number of “whites” populating the city, by percentage of population this number has decreased. The total numbers represent an increase in the population and the increase in the total numbers of protected class citizens (See Table 3).

Table 3

The City of Chesapeake Population - 1990 and 1999

<b>CITY OF CHESAPEAKE</b>	<b>TOTAL 1990</b>	<b>TOTAL 1998</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1990</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1998</b>
<b>NUMBER OF CITIZENS</b>	151,976	200,378	100%	100%
<b>CAUCASIAN</b>	107,309	130,855	71%	66%
<b>AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	41,662	61,698	27%	30%
<b>HISPANIC</b>	0	3,662	0%	1.6%
<b>ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>	1,899	3,521	1%	2%
<b>AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	444	624	≥1%	≥1%
<b>OTHER</b>	572	0	≥1%	0%
<b>TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP</b>	44,577	69,523	29%	35%

Note. \_ For statistical purposes, when considering the cities population, gender is not considered a protective class.

The Chesapeake Fire Department has grown in workforce numbers significantly over the study years. By percentage, the workforce has grown in protective class employees at almost an equal percentage of that of the city. The largest percentage of this increase can be attributed to the increase in numbers of female employees (See Table 4).



Table 4

Chesapeake Fire Department Workforce - 1990 and 1999

CHESAPEAKE FIRE DEPARTMENT	TOTAL 1990	TOTAL 1999	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1990	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1999
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES _	207	378	100%	100%
CAUCASIAN	186	328	90%	87%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	18	37	9%	10%
HISPANIC	2	4	1%	1%
ASIAN	1	5	≥1%	1%
AMERICAN INDIAN	0	1	0%	≥1%
OTHER	0	3	0%	≥1%
MALE	196	345	95%	91%
FEMALE	11	33	5%	9%
TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP	32	83	15%	22%

Note. \_ The Chesapeake Fire Department is a Fire and EMS-BASED delivery system.

The City of Norfolk has seen a decrease in the numbers of total population. This decrease has been mostly in the “caucasian” population. Although there has been a decrease in the total population, the numbers of minority populations have increased (See Table 5).

Table 5

The City of Norfolk Population - 1990 and 1999

<b>CITY OF NORFOLK</b>	<b>TOTAL 1990</b>	<b>TOTAL 1998</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1990</b>	<b>PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1998</b>
<b>NUMBER OF CITIZENS</b>	261,229	217,816	100%	100%
<b>WHITE</b>	148,228	107,012	57%	49%
<b>AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	102,012	93,905	39%	43%
<b>HISPANIC</b>	0	7,802	0%	4%
<b>ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>	6,815	8,131	3%	4%
<b>AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	1,165	966	≥1%	1%
<b>OTHER</b>	3,009	0	1%	0%
<b>TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP _</b>	<b>113,001</b>	<b>110,804</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>

Note. \_ For statistical purposes, when considering the cities population, gender is not considered a protective class.

The Norfolk Fire Department significantly increased the size of its workforce over the study period. Additionally, they have reduced the total percentage of whites, while increasing the African American workforce by 3 percent. The Norfolk Fire Department has also managed to double the percentage of it's protective class employees (See Table 6).

Table 6

Norfolk Fire Department Workforce - 1990 and 1999

NORFOLK FIRE DEPARTMENT	TOTAL 1990	TOTAL 1999	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1990	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1999
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES _	402	464	100%	100%
CAUCASIAN	382	426	95%	92%
AFRICAN AMERICAN	18	34	4%	7%
HISPANIC	2	3	>1%	>1%
ASIAN	0	1	0%	>1%
AMERICAN INDIAN	0	0	0%	0%
OTHER	0	0	0%	0%
MALE	398	446	99%	96%
FEMALE	4	18	1%	4%
TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP	24	56	6%	12%

Note. \_ The Norfolk Fire Department is a Fire and EMS-BASED delivery system. The original fire only department merged with EMS in 1991.

Comparing the Virginia Beach Fire Department to the fire departments of Norfolk and Chesapeake it can be concluded that the Virginia Beach Fire Department has not done as good of a job of maintaining a diverse workforce as compared with the total percentages of the protective class population. Simply stated, Norfolk and Chesapeake Fire Departments have increased the population of protective class employees at a rate almost equal to the increase in minorities of the population. (See Table 7 and 8).

Table 7

Comparison of Surveyed Fire Departments - 1990

<b>FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPARISON TABLE</b>	<b>VIRGINIA BEACH</b>	<b>NORFOLK</b>	<b>CHESAPEAKE</b>
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEES 1990</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>402</b>	<b>207</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF PROTECTED GROUP EMPLOYEES BASED ON TOTAL</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE MALE</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>99%</b>	<b>95%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE FEMALE</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE CAUCASIAN</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>90%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE HISPANIC</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&gt;1%</b>	<b>≥1%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE ASIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>≥1%</b>
<b>PERCENT AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

Table 8

Comparison of Surveyed Fire Departments - 1999

<b>FIRE DEPARTMENT COMPARISON TABLE</b>	<b>VIRGINIA BEACH</b>	<b>NORFOLK</b>	<b>CHESAPEAKE</b>
<b>TOTAL EMPLOYEES 1999</b>	<b>361</b>	<b>464</b>	<b>378</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE OF PROTECTED GROUP EMPLOYEES BASED ON TOTAL</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>22%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE MALE</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>91%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE FEMALE</b>	<b>5%</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>9%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE CAUCASIAN</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>92%</b>	<b>87%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE AFRICAN AMERICAN</b>	<b>4%</b>	<b>7%</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE HISPANIC</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&gt;1</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE ASIAN / PACIFIC ISLANDER</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>&gt;1</b>	<b>1%</b>
<b>PERCENTAGE AMERICAN INDIAN</b>	<b>1%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>1%</b>

To increase the numbers of protected class employees an organization must add protected

class employees to the workforce, or replace retiring workers with them. It is anticipated the Virginia Beach Fire Department will only grow in workforce strength by nominal numbers over the next few years. With the opening of Red Mill Station, and this years' general increase in manning, this could mean adding approximately 25 new personnel to the workforce.

Besides new full time positions, the fire department can replace retiring workers when they leave. Although, the actual number of people to retire will be different from those eligible, the study is using the numbers of people eligible to retire as an indicator of potential future positions (See Table 9)

The approximate number of positions that could be filled over the next five years is 130. Using this figure the appropriate numbers of protective class hires can be recommended to make the suggested percentage change in the protected class workforce numbers.

Table 9

The City of Virginia Beach Fire Department Eligible to Retire

AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2000	22
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2001	29
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2002	13
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2003	12
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2004	17
AS OF DECEMBER 31, 2005	12
<b>TOTAL ELIGIBLE TO RETIRE</b>	<b>105</b>

The City of Virginia Beach has a written policy statement speaking to the

diversity values and the hiring process diversity. What has been determined in this research is that while these values are held by Human Resources, little is done to push this promise of diversity in hiring to the department level. Specifically, the City of Virginia Beach professes to:

- Promote the Awareness of diversity issues in all elements of the Virginia Beach Quality Service System,
- Empower the EEO Employee Advisory Committee to conduct Citywide Employee Surveys on EEO issues and make recommendations to address identified concerns,
- Publish a regular column in an employee newsletter about EEO issues,
- Conduct ethnic diversity cultural celebrations,
- Review and revise use analysis advising on areas related to recruitment and promotion, and
- Identify EEO training needs for the city and provide that training.

Many fire, police, and other municipal organizations responded to the Councilink request for information about how to successfully diversify a Public Safety Department. This information spanned from recommendations about organizational behavior, to suggestions on specific processes they found successful. The results of this questionnaire are broken down into three categories, organizational functions, processes, and recommendations.

Clearly, to effectively diversify any organization there must be a commitment by leadership to make it happen. This commitment can be measured in policies and procedures that ensure inclusion and not exclusion in all hiring processes. Organizational functions necessary for success in minority hiring that were received in the survey are described as:

- Chief and city administrators must show commitment to diversity,

- Mandatory diversity training should be in place for all employees,
- Review of all job descriptions to eliminate cultural biases,
- Liaison with local minority community leaders,
- Active cooperation with and use of the local minority media, and
- Encourage citizens' committees to strengthen the city's diversity

Certain groups of responses were categorized as processes, or actions that could be put in place to accomplish diversity. These responses are:

- Perform a periodic review of the selection process to ensure it is nondiscriminatory,
- Make certain that all interview panels have female and minority representation, and
- Create policy that does not rank applicants, but rather identify them as qualified.

Another group of responses was specific recommendations by the responder. These recommendations are:

- Solicit regular feedback solicited from minorities as to best method to communicate job openings,
- Send out information regarding possible employment to organizations, colleges, universities, and other sources that may have a high degree of minorities,
- Organize a local high school recruiting program,
- Form alliances with minority organizations,
- Attend and hold recruitment job fairs,
- Distribute brochures to minority civic organizations, colleges, and churches,
- Host "career days" that focus on female and minorities, and
- Encourage minority employees to refer minority family and friends.

## DISCUSSION

“Although many legal battles have been waged and won to fight workplace discrimination, and many members of the fire service are now females, Hispanics, African Americans, Latinos, Pacific Islanders, and American Indians it is an uncertain legal climate now surrounding affirmative action and firefighting” (Teicher, 1999).

Based on this research it is evident that the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not violating any affirmative action or diversity laws. However, that does not relieve the department morally from trying to create a more diverse workforce. “Managing diversity seeks to tap the full potential of all employees, in pursuit of company objectives . . .” (Baytos, 1995). This suggests the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not reaping the benefits of being a diverse organization.

The research shows the City of Virginia Beach population is becoming more diverse each year. When analyzing the research it also shows that “whites” are leaving and are being replaced by minorities. The current percentage of protected class employees in the fire department is 11%. The same percentage as in 1990, although the total population was 6% more diverse in 1999.

Additionally, the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not as diverse as its neighboring departments. This could be attributed to a lack of effort on the Virginia Beach Fire Department’s part to target minorities in recruiting efforts. In addition, little has been done to study the reasons women and minorities do not seek employment in the fire service.



Although the results of this research have shown that the Virginia Beach Fire Department is not as diverse as its neighbors, the other departments in the region are both fire and EMS-Based systems. It has been discovered during research that many female employees of the two comparison departments spend most of their time assigned to EMS duties. In the Virginia Beach Fire Department all employees are hired and assigned to suppression to actively participate in firefighting duties. While Virginia Beach does handle medical assist calls, it is not the primary transport provider for emergency medical care.

Eventually, lack of diversity in the Virginia Beach Fire Department will become the focus of scrutiny. The implications for the organization involve eventual legal intervention and undesirable press if the situation is not corrected. In addition, the department is missing a tremendous opportunity to learn and grow with the many varied cultures and beliefs of the current population.

Based on the limitations of this research, it is suggested that additional study be done to learn the causes for protected class employees not being interested in the fire service as a career. This study should include surveying current protected class employees for potential perception issues, and potential applicants to determine any existing cultural biases.

To be successful at diversifying the Virginia Beach Fire Department it will be imperative to establish a strategy of having inclusive policies supported by upper management. “A diverse organization brings value to a government and enhances existing organizational initiatives” (Carlton, 1990). Based on research gathered from other departments it would appear that establishing a workgroup to develop a plan for diversity would be a good start.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Maintaining a diverse workforce in the Virginia Beach Fire Department will not happen if a concerted effort is not promulgated to correct the existing percentages of protective class employees. It is the moral obligation of existing leaders to put a plan in place to correct what some would perceive as a less than concerted effort to hire protected class employees. For the Virginia Beach Fire Department to grow and prosper in the future it will be necessary to grow and benefit from people of all cultures, ethnic makeups, and backgrounds.

To diversify any organization there must be a commitment by leadership to make it happen. This commitment can be measured in policies and procedures that ensure inclusion and not exclusion in all hiring processes and organizational functions necessary to assure success in minority hiring.

As determined in the research, there is no law being violated regarding Title VII and hiring practices. No one could make the statement that Virginia Beach is discriminating against anyone in their hiring practices. More, the problem exists with a perceived lack of effort to study the reasons these protective classes are not attracted to fire service work, and then aggressively put in place a plan to correct the situation.

Based on the existing 11 percent diversity of the Virginia Beach Fire Department workforce, and the 26% diversity of the general population, it is recommended the diversity of the existing workforce be increased by a minimum of 10 percent. This change should take place over the next five years, and would mean that 39 of the potential 130 positions filled should be protected class individuals. This would place the Virginia Beach Fire Department workforce at 20 percent, as compared with the 26 percent diversity of the total population. These figures

assume the population does not increase in minority percentages.

In addition to adjusting the percentages of protected class employees, it is recommended the Virginia Beach Fire Department:

- Annually evaluate the percentages of protective class population and adjust future hiring percentages of protective classes to match those changes,
- Establish a Diversity Committee in the Fire Department to study diversity concerns,
- Review of all job descriptions to eliminate cultural biases,
- Actively cooperate with and use the local minority media,
- Perform a periodic review of the selection process to ensure it is nondiscriminatory,
- Make certain all interview panels have female and minority representation,
- Create policy that does not rank applicants, but rather identify candidates as qualified,
- Solicit regular thoughts from minorities as to best method to communicate job openings,
- Send out information regarding possible employment to organizations, colleges, universities, and other sources that have a high degree of minorities,
- Form alliances with minority organizations,
- Attend and hold recruitment job fairs,
- Hold “career days” that focus on females and minorities,
- Encourage minority employees to refer minority family and friends,
- Form alliance networks with companies and educational institutions that value diversity,
- Create Networks for minority employees to serve as a forum for support, and
- Establish mentoring programs that foster relationships between ethnic groups.

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**APPENDIX A****SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE**

**From:** Mary Lawrence [mailto: vbmure@infi.net]  
**Sent:** Wednesday, December 01, 1999 10:40 A.M.  
**To:** Local Government; Councilink  
**Subject:** [COUNCILINK] Diversity in Hiring/Promotion

We are seeking any programs or methods used by any Public Safety departments to manage or create greater cultural diversity in hiring or promotions. If you have any suggestions for ways to encourage recruitment and retention of minorities in Police/Fire Departments, we would like a response by December 31, 1999, if possible.

Mary Lawrence  
Municipal Reference Library  
Municipal Center  
Virginia Beach, Virginia 23456  
(757) 427-4644  
Fax (757) 427-8240

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE SURVEY FOR CITY AND FIRE DEPARTMENT INFORMATION

CITY TABLE	TOTAL 1990	TOTAL 1998	PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1990	PERCENT OF TOTAL POPULATION 1998
NUMBER OF CITIZENS				
WHITE				
AFRICAN AMERICAN				
HISPANIC				
ASIAN-PACIFIC ISLANDERS				
AMERICAN INDIAN				
OTHER				
TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP				

FIRE DEPARTMENT TABLE	TOTAL 1990	TOTAL 1999	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1990	PERCENT OF WORKFORCE 1999
NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES				
WHITE				
AFRICAN AMERICAN				
HISPANIC				
ASIAN				
AMERICAN INDIAN				
OTHER				
MALE				
FEMALE				
TOTAL PROTECTED GROUP				

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