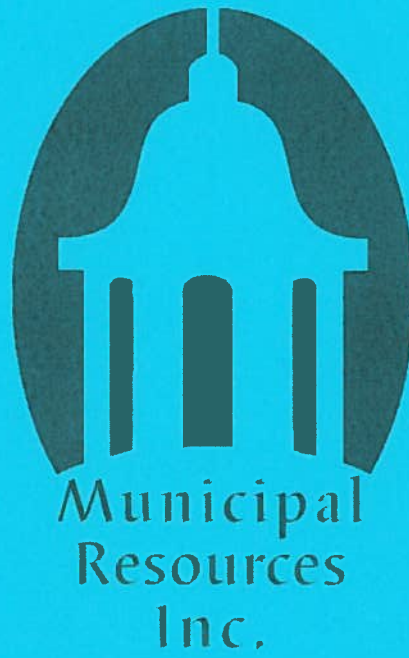


**APPENDICES TO**  
**FINAL REPORT**  
**BERLIN, MA**  
**FIRE DEPARTMENT**  
**AND**  
**RESCUE SQUAD**  
**ORGANIZATIONAL ANALYSIS**  
**MAY 2015**

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# ***APPENDIX A***



# A CALL FOR ACTION

## THE BLUE RIBBON REPORT

PRESERVING AND IMPROVING  
THE FUTURE OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE



*Officers Section*

A CALL FOR ACTION

THE BLUE RIBBON REPORT

PRESERVING AND IMPROVING  
THE FUTURE OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE



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# A CALL FOR ACTION

## THE BLUE RIBBON REPORT

### PRESERVING AND IMPROVING THE FUTURE OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

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## Executive Summary

America's volunteer fire service has faithfully served our nation for more than 300 years. Volunteer firefighters serve their communities with dedication and enthusiasm. Volunteer fire departments save local communities approximately \$37 billion<sup>1</sup> per year—money that can be reinvested to improve local infrastructure, social programs and minimize the local tax burden.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, America has learned that local emergency responders are the community's FIRST line of response, regardless of the event. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and tenure of local emergency service providers. The volunteer fire service faces significant challenges in overcoming a basic lack of resources—both financial and in human capital. Only by aggressively confronting both of these issues will we create the necessary atmosphere of stability that will allow volunteer fire and rescue departments to meet the new expectations and challenges of the 21st century.

While volunteer firefighters and emergency workers provide a tremendous contribution to our country, they are often under-funded and ill-equipped. Lacking cohesive national leadership, efforts to correct these problems are often fragmented and ineffective. Additionally, volunteer fire departments have a difficult time retaining volunteers. Ultimately, much of the blame for these problems can be attributed to poor leadership. Unfortunately, there are few programs at the local, state or national level to assist fire chiefs and volunteer managers in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective management.

Support from the local, state and federal levels is necessary to ensure that the volunteer fire service continues to be a full partner with all facets of homeland security response and effectively functions as the first line of defense within local communities. The International Association of Fire Chiefs believes that by enacting the specific recommendations outlined in the text of this report, we can enhance the role of the volunteer fire service in this critical mission. The most important of those recommendations are outlined below.

At the **local** level, we must:

1. Emphasize the importance of local support for this basic community service
2. Provide appropriate levels of funding for necessary safety gear and training
3. Engage in strategic planning that emphasizes volunteer retention
4. Use mutual aid to offset service and technical deficiencies
5. Use uniform incident management systems
6. Use performance measurement to measure and analyze response times, fire fighting effectiveness, training and retention rates of volunteer fire departments.

At the **state** level, we must:

1. Emphasize the importance of the state government in developing and promoting disaster planning
2. Certify fire and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to comply with basic training standards
3. Promote regional service delivery where local capabilities and technical expertise are weak
4. Provide statewide volunteer benefit programs to protect both the firefighter and employer from the risks associated with volunteer fire service.

Finally, at the **federal** level, we must:

1. Work to produce a national climate encouraging individuals to volunteer within their local communities



# A CALL FOR ACTION

## THE BLUE RIBBON REPORT

### PRESERVING AND IMPROVING THE FUTURE OF THE VOLUNTEER FIRE SERVICE

#### **Introduction**

America's volunteer fire service is deeply woven into the basic fabric of our nation. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there are close to 800,000 volunteer firefighters across the United States, and the majority of this nation's geographical area is protected by volunteer fire departments. Of all the fire departments in America, 73 percent are all-volunteer departments.

Firefighters, both career and volunteer, are extremely dedicated to public service. This trait explains why firefighters often take tremendous risks to save the lives of the citizens they are sworn to protect. Volunteer firefighters, because of their diverse educational and employment backgrounds, bring tremendous depth and diversity to any emergency scene based upon their regular jobs and expertise in their communities. In many cases, volunteer firefighters invest an enormous amount of time and dedication to fire fighting, moving the fire service forward through improved fire fighting techniques and technological innovations.

Volunteer firefighters provide an enormous economic benefit to our nation. It is estimated that volunteer firefighters save the American taxpayers \$37 billion<sup>a</sup> per year that can be reinvested in each community's infrastructure, social and other community programs, and/or a general reduction in local taxes.

Unfortunately, despite their tremendous contribution to American society, volunteer fire departments are often underfunded and ill-equipped, putting many in a position where they must raise their own operational funds to provide apparatus and safety equipment. In addition, the number of volunteer firefighters is declining across the country. During the mid-1980s, it was estimated the volunteer fire service was more than 880,000 members strong, but those numbers have dropped to less than 800,000 in recent years.<sup>b</sup> Finally, the volunteer and combination fire service continues to be unorganized across the nation with no clear leadership representing the volunteers. It has no unified position on national legislative initiatives or research issues affecting their services. Volunteer departments and their managers will continue to struggle until local, state and national attention directs a concentrated effort to assist in preserving and improving the management of this long-standing American tradition.

The perception of the role of emergency services changed with the events of Sept. 11, 2001. These attacks against America changed the expectations of local emergency providers who are now clearly each community's first line of response, regardless of the event. As the country and local communities re-evaluate their abilities to respond and

handle new threats, such as weapons of mass destruction and biological incidents, the stability of the American volunteer fire service has become a significant issue. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and longevity of local emergency service providers. It becomes imperative that local communities understand that the homeland is secure when the hometown is secure. Local communities and the leadership of those communities will look toward the volunteer fire department for answers to questions of terrorist threats and threat assessment. Enhancing the overall community safety is a new responsibility for local responders. Significant improvements in the volunteer fire service will be necessary to improve retention and create an atmosphere of stability, allowing local, volunteer fire departments to meet the new expectations and challenges of the 21st century.

### **Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments Across the United States: Examples of Value and Effectiveness**

*Campbell County, Wyo.*, is governed by a Joint Powers Fire Board and covers the City of Gillette, the Town of Wright and all of Campbell County, with a total response area of 5,000 square miles and a population of approximately 40,000 residents. One third of the nation's coal supply is mined in this community. The combination fire department is composed of 19 career positions and 175 volunteers. The volunteer firefighters of Campbell County have saved local taxpayers more than \$21 million in wages alone since 1996. The department's savings are calculated on the reduced need for full-time career staffing and the actual dollar savings for 226,243 donated hours\* during the study period. When assigned a value of \$16.05 per volunteer hour\* (used as a national mean), the volunteer contribution of \$3,413,244 annually becomes a significant savings for the community.

The Campbell County Fire Department provides all of the normal city emergency services—fire suppression, emergency medical response, rescue, etc. It enjoys an above average working relationship with law enforcement and provides extensive industrial and wildland fire response expertise. The department offers full administrative services including building inspections, plan reviews, investigations, public education, vehicle and building maintenance, and an aggressive industrial fire training and hazardous materials training program to community businesses. All career employees provide both shift coverage and administrative duties. Tactical operations are considered fully integrated and all personnel, regardless of career or volunteer status, meet the same training and experience standards for the rank that they hold. The department retention rate for volunteers is 17 years per person.

The department is family based with yearly activities that support and promote a strong family unit. The department sponsors the Campbell County Cadet Program, which functions as a worksite for juvenile offenders and was chosen as the number one Junior Emergency Services program in the United States in 2000 by Volunteer Fire Insurance Services. Volunteers are active in a number of community events throughout the calendar year, including a community pancake feed serving more than 2,000 people on the Fourth of July and a number of fundraising projects to assist less fortunate families in the community.

The midwest village of *Tinley Park, Ill.* is protected by a 120-member paid on-call volunteer fire department. All firefighters are certified and tested under the state of Illinois certification program. Tinley Park provides coverage for hazardous materials incidents, and features a Combined Area Rescue Team (CART) that provides special services for building collapse and major structural incidents, as well as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). All department members are trained to the Hazardous Materials Awareness level, and members of CART and RIT are certified by the state of Illinois.

The department also employs two personnel specializing in public education, inspections, preplanning, and investigations, supporting the overall safety mission of the department and relieving these administrative duties from the volunteers. It is the largest volunteer fire department of this type in the state of Illinois, protecting a population of 56,000 residents and an estimated 100,000 daytime work population within the 17-square mile area. Full city services are provided from four fully equipped fire stations, and personnel are trained at a state-of-the-art training center. Tinley Park has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of Class 3. The department averages 800 calls per year with a



turnout rate of 30 firefighters per call.<sup>v</sup> The department also assists the local EMS provider with incidents requiring extrication or reported entrapment. All fire department motorized equipment is secured through fund drives. For example, in 2004, community fund drives will finance and pay for the cost of one Class A pumper and a one combination Quint 95' aerial unit with a total cost \$1,500,000.

The department boasts a retention rate of approximately six years per firefighter. Because of the volunteer coverage, the estimated yearly savings to the village exceeds \$3,744,000 per year, deducting the direct volunteer expenses. This is one-quarter the cost of a full-time department.

In ***German Township, Ind.***, the predominantly volunteer department (two paid personnel and 70 active volunteers) serves 11,000 residents and provides the community a direct savings in staffing costs of \$441,000 per year. German Township Volunteer Fire Department responds with an average of 10 volunteer personnel per call. To replace the volunteers with an all paid staff would cost their residents more than \$1.5 million dollars annually.

The community is a suburban bedroom community. Nearly 99 percent of the residents own their residences, and 50 percent of the population has moved into the community within the last 10 years. The fire protection challenges are significantly impacted by the availability of water. A large segment of the population and geographical area has a rural water system that does not provide hydrants every 500 or 1,000 feet. The other portion of the population is protected by a municipal water system that does provide hydrants in the normal configuration. The water or lack of it requires the department purchase apparatus with large water tanks.

The department historically has made a significant commitment to training its members. It has always been its goal that each member is highly trained and competent in all necessary skills. The department's training program is outcome-based and requires a significant investment of time and energy. The instructional staff has identified more than 70 basic skills, and written drills have been developed to allow members to train and measure their competency without attending every regular training session. These basic skills drills have significantly improved the members' competency. They know that when confronted with a dangerous situation, they will be able to perform the fire ground evolution safely and effectively.

Leadership development and certification are encouraged, and in most cases tuition reimbursement is available for course work. The promotional process for leadership positions is based upon a written test, experience, education, seniority and personal performance evaluation. It is not based upon an election or the buddy system. Officers maintain their ranks on a permanent basis provided they continue to receive satisfactory evaluations.

The ***Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department*** is an ISO Class 3 rated, combination fire department in northern Harris County (Houston), Texas—the third most populous county in the nation. The department, formed in 1972 as population growth in the area exploded, currently serves a population of approximately 45,000 people in 13 square miles and provides the community a direct savings of \$439,000 per year based on the hours donated by volunteers. To provide the same coverage with an all-career department would cost the taxpayers an additional \$3,315,000 per year in personnel expenses.<sup>vi</sup>

The county lacks the tax base to provide the necessary funding to transition to full-time career positions. The Emergency Services District levies a tax of 6 cents per hundred dollars of evaluation, which equates to \$60 per \$100,000 of property value that fund all operating and capital expenditures. The 65 volunteers continually demonstrate their commitment to the community by their performance and by maintaining a very effective response system that includes fire, technical rescue, EMS first response, water rescue, hazardous materials response, public education and a host of other services. The cost of the high quality services is only \$27 per resident, which compares to full career departments that are above \$110 per resident.<sup>vii</sup>

The *Roseville, Minn. Fire Department* is staffed by two full-time career firefighters and 70 volunteer firefighters serving a first-ring suburb of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The volunteers represent a vast cross-section of the community, ranging in age from 18 to 55. The chosen full-time career fields of Roseville's volunteers include: police officers, accountants, software engineers, bankers, career firefighters, city employees, teachers and a dentist. More than half of the department's members have college degrees. In addition to their very demanding full-time jobs and family commitments, each volunteer contributes an average of 16 hours every week serving the community. Many say that serving as a volunteer firefighter completes their lives, giving them an opportunity to serve others during difficult times and gives them a reward and sense of fulfillment and teamwork they are unable to achieve in their full-time occupations.

Providing fire and rescue services from three stations, the volunteer department consumes only 3.8 percent of the city's \$35 million budget, easily earning it the accolades of best value in town. In addition to an intense commitment to provide high quality service for the department's 700 annual emergency responses, members contribute thousands of hours supporting hundreds of community events each year. Throughout the summer, Roseville firefighters are frequent visitors to the city's 28 parks, giving hundreds of kids of all ages an opportunity to ride a fire engine and learn fire prevention tips. Firefighters will dress-up a parent in firefighter gear, using the opportunity to teach kids about the equipment firefighters use while educating the parents about the cost of a firefighter's ensemble. Kids are quizzed on fire safety and awarded prizes for correct answers. Roseville's firefighters attend more than 100 community block parties each year, regularly visit senior centers and pre-schools, hosts birthday parties in the fire stations and occasionally show up with a fire engine when the candles are lit on the cake during a celebration of a special senior resident's birthday.

Each and every one of these events represents an opportunity to educate, a role the department takes seriously. While some departments focus primarily on the response to emergency calls, in Roseville, the priority is prevention and education. It's no accident that first line of the department's mission statement reads "To continually strive for the prevention of fires, injuries and accidents..." When it comes to emergency responses, the department is well-trained, well-equipped and well-prepared. In 2001, the ISO scored the department with a 79.36 (ISO Rating 3).

### **Issues Confronting the Volunteer Fire Service**

While there are many volunteer fire departments across the country that play a vibrant role in their community—as exemplified by the examples mentioned in the previous section—much of the volunteer fire service across the United States is currently in crisis. While many departments function at a very high level, many other departments struggle for their very existence. Particularly in rural areas, volunteer departments are closing their doors and shuttering their windows for two basic reasons: 1) lack of financial resources and 2) lack of volunteers. But this problem is not only found in rural America. Many volunteer departments in more populated areas are in a state of crisis and face a deep-seated struggle to provide adequate services. In order to ensure that we maintain a vibrant, capable volunteer fire service throughout the United States, we must confront both of these complex problems head on.

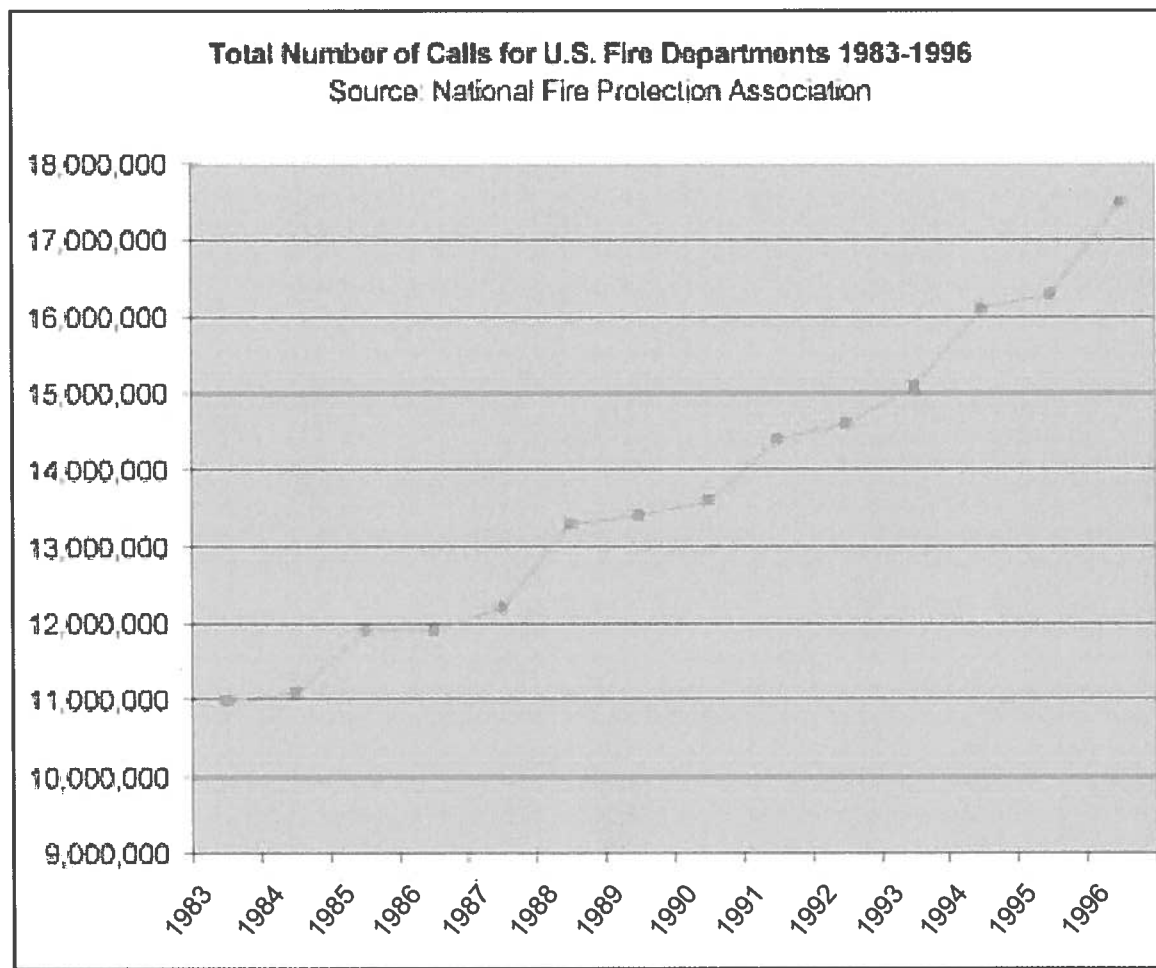
### **LACK OF RESOURCES**

Few local governments understand the true value of their local volunteer fire department—both in financial terms as well as the social capital generated by the department. A number of departments are independent corporations that do not have direct attachment to their local government, yet they are the sole providers of emergency services. In addition, volunteer fire departments often serve as the social and communal hub of their towns. As detailed by the earlier examples, volunteer fire departments save local communities significant expenses. Unfortunately, most volunteer firefighters not only donate their time for this basic community service but also are required to spend a significant amount of time conducting fundraisers to generate revenue. In many communities, local governments take for granted the services provided by the volunteer fire department. They are not willing to assist with even the most basic expenses, such as appropriate safety gear, functional apparatus or station facilities.

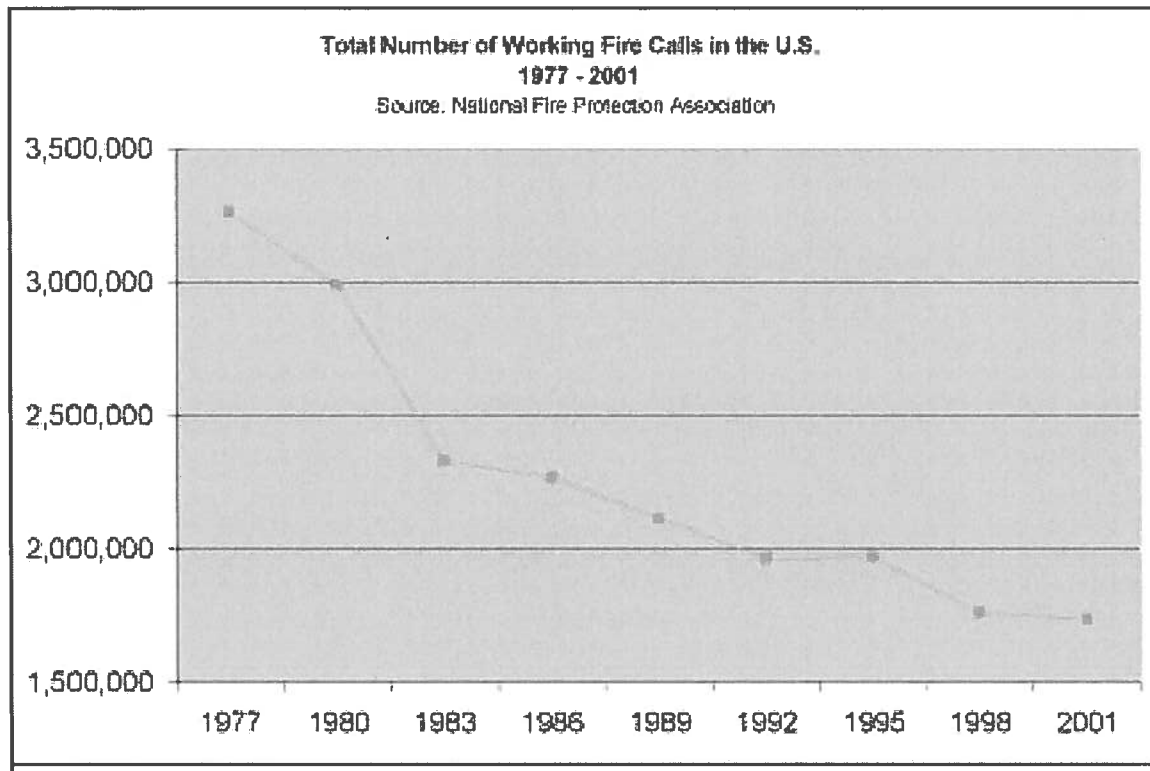
Compounding this problem, the demands on volunteer fire departments have increased significantly over the past 20 years. Today, because of increasing call volumes, departments provide more and more traditional services (firefighting, EMS response, etc.). However, volunteer fire departments also are being asked to expand their role in order to address new problems, the most prominent of which are new duties surrounding homeland security. This increase in responses and responsibility, combined with the lack of resources noted above, means that many departments must make hard choices about the level of service they can provide. This is difficult in a mobile society, where urban dwellers often move to more remote locations and continue to expect the same level of service they were receiving previously. Often, they do not appreciate the funding constraints placed on rural communities.

In addition, the costs associated with new apparatus and equipment have increased exponentially. In 1972, a Class A pumper was about \$25,000; today a new pumper can easily approach \$350,000. Just a few years ago, a single self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) cost about \$1,900; today an SCBA unit costs about \$3,500. The cost for this basic equipment has increased over and above the funding levels available to many volunteer fire departments. As a result, many communities have had to reduce their capabilities by not purchasing needed apparatus, equipment and technology. Other communities have reacted by extending the life of their current equipment. Unfortunately, this decision can give rise to numerous safety related issues.

The following charts demonstrate the growth in emergency response calls in the United States. Total emergency calls in the United States have increased by an estimated 61 percent since 1983\* to nearly 18,000,000 responses per year.



What is particularly interesting about these statistics is the change in the nature of emergency responses. While total responses have increased, the number of actual working fires has decreased 47 percent since 1977.<sup>x</sup> Residential fires have decreased from a reported 472,000 incidents in 1992 to 396,500 fires in 2001, a 16 percent reduction.<sup>x</sup> Because departments are responding to fewer fires, managers are often concerned about the promotion of engine/command officers who lack sufficient experience actually fighting fires. This problem affects the safety of emergency operations and could lead to increased liability exposure for departments.



### **Detailing the Lack of Resources**

As part of an effort to better understand the needs of the fire service, the Congress directed the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to conduct a Needs Assessment Study of the U.S. Fire Service for the United States Fire Administration (USFA). The study attempted to define problem areas in the nation's fire service as well as function as a guide for future planning to enhance the fire service and firefighter safety.<sup>xii</sup>

The following issues were outlined in the executive summary provided in the NFPA report.<sup>xiii</sup> While the report surveyed all types of fire departments, items selected for this report have the most impact on volunteer/combination departments. All of the problems documented below are a greater problem in smaller communities.

### **Concerns with Facilities, Apparatus and Equipment**

- Roughly 15,500 fire stations (32 percent) are at least 40 years old and 27,500 fire stations (57 percent) have no backup electrical power.
- It is estimated that 60 to 75 percent of fire departments have too few fire stations to meet maximum response distance guidelines promulgated by the Insurance Services Office.
- Approximately half of all fire engines are at least 15 years old and more than one-third are over 20 years old.
- One-third of firefighters per response are not equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and nearly half of SCBA units are at least 10 years old.

- Fifty percent of emergency responders per shift are not equipped with personal alert safety system (PASS) devices that assist in locating firefighters trapped in burning buildings.
- An estimated 57,000 firefighters lack even basic personal protective clothing, and an estimated one-third of personal protective clothing is at least 10 years old.

#### ***Communications and Communications Equipment***

- Fire departments do not have enough portable radios to equip more than half of the emergency responders. This is a particular problem in small communities.
- Only 25 percent of fire departments can communicate on scene with all of their public safety partners at the local, state and federal level.
- Forty percent of all fire departments lack internet access.

#### ***Training Concerns***

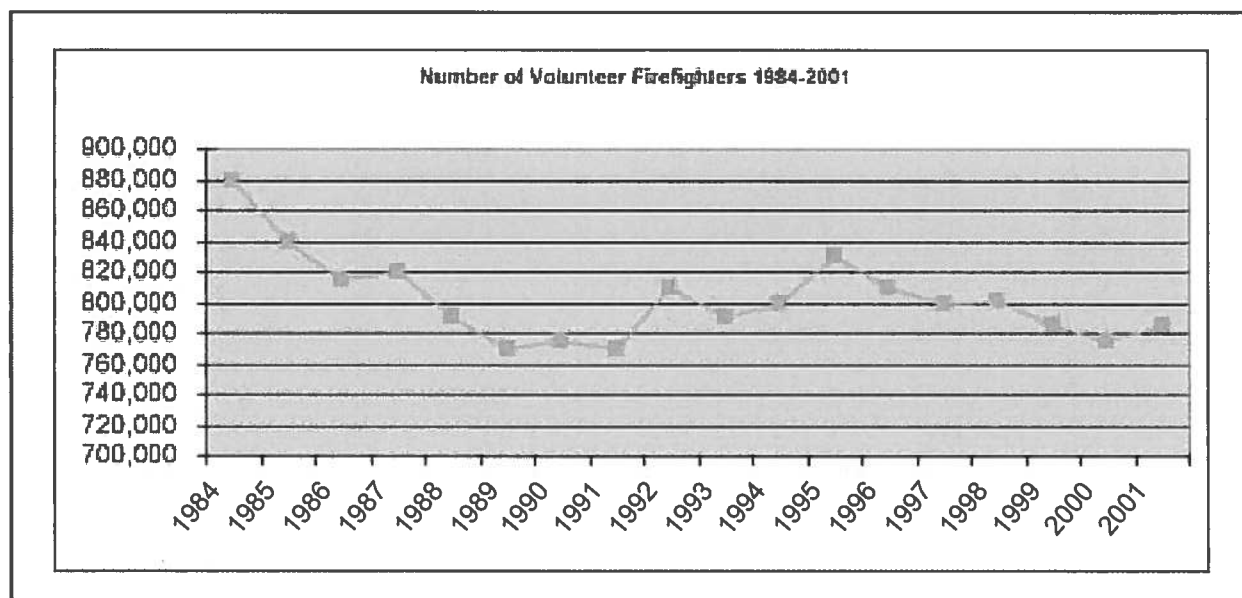
- An estimated 233,000 firefighters, most of whom are volunteers serving in small communities, lack formal training in structural firefighting—the most basic service the volunteer fire service provides. An additional 153,000 firefighters have received some training but lack certification in structural firefighting.
- An estimated 27 percent of fire department personnel involved in delivering EMS lack formal training in those duties. And in the majority of fire departments, EMS personnel are not certified to the level of Basic Life Support.
- An estimated 40 percent of fire department personnel involved in hazardous materials response lack formal training in those duties; the majority of them serve in smaller communities. In 80 percent of fire departments, personnel involved in hazardous materials response are not certified to the operational level.
- An estimated 41 percent of fire department personnel involved in wildland fire fighting lack formal training in those duties; there are substantial training and certification needs in communities of all sizes.

#### ***Ability to Handle Unusually Challenging Incidents***

- Only 11 percent of fire departments can handle a technical rescue with EMS at a structural collapse of a building involving 50 occupants with local trained personnel. Nearly half of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 13 percent of fire departments can handle a hazmat and EMS incident involving chemical and/or biological agents and 10 injuries with locally trained personnel. Forty percent of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 26 percent of fire departments can handle a wildland-urban interface fire affecting 500 acres with locally trained personnel. One-third of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 12 percent of fire departments can handle mitigation of a developing major flood with locally trained personnel. The majority of departments consider such an incident outside their scope.

## LACK OF VOLUNTEERS

Nationally, the number of volunteers has continued to drop since a high of 880,000 in 1984.<sup>xx</sup> Today, the total number of volunteer firefighters has declined by about 10 percent, representing a reduction of approximately 90,000 individuals to 790,000.



The decline in the number of volunteers is a two-faceted problem. It stems both from difficulties in retaining current volunteers as well as problems with recruiting new volunteers.

### Retention

Retention of volunteer firefighters is a substantial concern for the fire service. It is estimated that the national retention average of volunteer firefighters is approximately four years<sup>xx</sup> per person, per department. When recruiting volunteer firefighters, the fire department will spend approximately \$4,000 per person in orienting, equipping and training those recruits. While this figure would appear to be conservative in some jurisdictions, the cost to maintain one volunteer for the national retention rate average of four years is approximately \$1,000 per year. This may not be an effective investment based on the return by the volunteer.

Retention of volunteer firefighters is a complex issue with a number of variables that can contribute to the lack of longevity. In 1993, the consulting firm Tri-Data, on behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA), conducted a national study titled *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service, Problems and Solutions*. The study was assembled with input from volunteer departments across the country. The following areas were identified as major issues affecting retention of volunteer firefighters:

- Volunteers face increased demands from the fire department stemming from the increase in emergency response calls, the need for ongoing training and the increasing need to undertake specialized training.
- Demands on the volunteer's time are also increasing away from the fire department as families struggle to balance the career and family obligations of today's two-income families.
- Many of those who volunteer for the fire department do so in order to improve their employability. A volunteer fire department will provide training at no cost. This training can then be used to obtain a full-time position within the profession.



- The lack of a comprehensive benefit and incentive program. Benefits are necessary to protect the livelihood of the volunteer and his or her family in the event the volunteer suffers a significant injury or dies while on duty, while incentives are designed to recognize their personal achievements and to motivate them to improve their skills and participation.
- Finally, the lack of quality local leadership within the fire department is cited as the most significant problem to retaining volunteer firefighters. Echoing the sentiment of that finding, it is the opinion of the contributing authors that ineffective leadership will doom an otherwise excellent organization. Sound management practices have the potential to significantly enhance retention rates.

### **The Value of Good Management**

The following passage is taken directly from the Tri-Data report discussed above.

*The ability of a fire department to retain its people is directly related to its ability to manage those people. It was unanimous among workshop attendees that poor management contributed heavily to people leaving the volunteer fire service. The leadership issue was considered the most important; in one way or another, nearly all the other causes were either directly or indirectly traced back to the leadership problem. (emphasis added)<sup>vi</sup>*

The lack of quality leadership is the most critical issue confronting the volunteer and combination fire service. Few programs at the state or national level have been established to assist and provide fire chiefs and/or managers with the skills necessary for effective management. An example of how poor management can exacerbate a problem, such as an increase in call volume, is illustrated through the example below.

An increase in emergency service calls can significantly affect volunteer retention, so an effective manager will look at ways to minimize this intrusion on the daily life of a volunteer. A department that provides emergency medical services (EMS) will intrude on the life of a volunteer more often than those departments without EMS. EMS is an emergency response that can be reasonably predicted. As a result, staffing for EMS response is generally easier than staffing for activities that occur with a much lower frequency—such as structural fires. In addition, the number of staff required to respond to each call is relatively low. Three emergency care providers can handle the overwhelming majority of EMS calls. When a volunteer fire department providing EMS alerts a volunteer component of 20 members to an EMS call when only three members are needed, it can be damaging to a system. This intrusion into the life of the volunteer sets up a “cry wolf” syndrome where the pager is alerted but the volunteer is not needed. This increases the risk that the volunteer will not respond when actually needed.

### **The Challenges of Managing a Combination Department**

Another difficult management challenge is the management of fire departments staffed with both career and volunteer personnel—combination departments. Combination fire departments are difficult to manage because career and volunteer firefighters often have different institutional interests. Administrative changes such as the transition from an all-volunteer department to a combination system may exacerbate the problem. The individual volunteer’s sense of identity is important. Although the financial consequence of resigning a volunteer position is small, the psychological cost to an individual is extremely high because of the firefighter’s great personal investment in the organization. The structural distrust the volunteer and career groups have for each other might be more tolerable if each group did not have to work with the other, but they usually do. Efficiency is a desirable goal; however, reaching that goal can be a tortuous path of management anxiety arising from personnel conflict between the two groups. The conflicts within a combination department can lead to unproductive involvement by the local government that sees itself as legally and often politically responsible for resolving the conflict.

A combination system will not work when it is based on prejudice or when either group of firefighters, volunteer or career, functions in a minority role and is perceived as subservient to the other. This situation often creates an atmosphere where the department is unable to tap the knowledge and expertise possessed by the individual. This can be perpetuated when we lose site of our basic mission—serving the public. The real test of a successful combination department is its ability to fully integrate tactical rank structure. The training and performance standards should be the same, regardless of the firefighter or officer status with parallel lines of authority, bringing personnel resources into harmony. The quantitative measure of that success is the retention rate of the minority group.

### **Nature of Volunteerism in the United States and its Implications for the Volunteer Fire Service**

In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor released the Volunteer Service Indicator, a new national measurement of volunteer behavior developed by the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the USA Freedom Corps. The indicator provides a wealth of information relating to volunteerism in the United States. Those findings indicate that 27.6 percent of individuals (more than 59 million) over the age of 16 volunteered with a volunteer service organization between September 2001 and September 2002. The findings suggest that certain groups are more likely to volunteer, while others are more likely to volunteer more hours. The findings also offer information regarding what types of organizations and activities enjoy support from different segments of the population. Finally, they give information on how much time people are dedicating to volunteer work, including data that more than 34 percent of those who volunteered did so for more than 100 hours during the past year.

Perhaps the most striking statistic from the survey is that volunteers spent a median of 52 hours volunteering during the year. Volunteering for the fire service can be and most often is substantially more demanding. Depending on the call volume, designated shift coverage and the level of training standards mandated by the local community, an average volunteer could easily contribute in excess of 1,000 hours per year in community service. In Campbell County, Wyo., an active average volunteer can expect to donate 750–1,000 hours of service per year;<sup>xvii</sup> German Township, Ind., 500 hours per year<sup>xviii</sup> and in Ponderosa, Tex., 360 hours per year.<sup>xix</sup> In two communities with mandatory 24-hour volunteer shift coverage—Tinley Park, Ill. and Roseville, Minn.—an active volunteer will be required to provide 1,000 hours<sup>xx</sup> to maintain his or her volunteer membership. Both departments provide volunteers with a monetary stipend as part of the compensation for services provided.

The estimated 800,000 volunteer firefighters account for less than one fifty-ninth of the estimated number of individuals who volunteered, in some fashion, for their communities during the time of this study. The available personnel pool for volunteer firefighters may be more extensive than we realize, and a more detailed review of this study may provide insight into the recruiting strategies and diversification options that must be developed to fill open positions within our departments.

To be competitive, the volunteer fire service may need to refocus recruiting efforts, develop diversification strategies and design other volunteer opportunities within the organization that utilize skills outside of traditional recruitment considerations.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS – A CALL FOR ACTION**

The International Association of Fire Chiefs represents the leaders of America's fire service, both career and volunteer. Through the technical expertise and guidance of its Volunteer & Combination Officers Section (VCOS), the IAFC is well positioned to lead the volunteer fire service forward to confront the difficult issues detailed in this report. The recommendations that follow are broken down by the level of government that should address the solution. While most of these recommendations must be implemented at the local level, the IAFC will be active at the national level to secure the necessary resources and climate to make these important changes in the volunteer fire service.

### **Federal Responsibilities/Recommendations:**

- Advance a Congressional Resolution supporting the American Volunteer Firefighters Bill of Rights.
- Create an Office of Volunteer and Combination Fire Service within the Department of Homeland Security.
- Develop a grading system for evaluating local emergency response capability.
- Create a national definition of allowable compensation for volunteer firefighters.
- Develop and support administrative changes to the Internal Revenue Code to clarify legislative issues related to length of service awards programs and allow "cafeteria style" benefit programs for volunteers.
- Create national job protection for volunteer firefighters.
- Fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (FIRE Act) at its full authorization, allowing the fire service to build a solid baseline of apparatus and safety equipment within its hometown communities.
- Appropriate funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (SAFER Act).
- Provide tax incentives for the installation of automatic fire suppression and alert systems.
- Provide national tax incentives for certified volunteer firefighters, reducing federal income tax by 3 percent annually.

### **State-Level Responsibilities/Recommendations:**

- Develop community, regional and state disaster plans with specified review dates. Plans should include identified resources and certifiably trained personnel available for regional and statewide deployment.
- Develop methods for certifying fire and EMS personnel to enhance their professional commitment and achieve minimum training standards.
- Develop a benefits plan for all emergency responders to protect and provide for responders who are injured or killed in the line of duty.
- Develop a benefits plan that provides college tuition, including books, to the immediate family members of firefighters killed in the line of duty.
- Develop regional and statewide recruitment campaigns.
- Assure that volunteer liability protection is provided.
- Assure that statewide mutual aid places response liability on the responding agency versus the requesting agency.

### **Local Responsibilities/Recommendations:**

Volunteer firefighters, leadership within the volunteer fire department, community leaders, elected officials and citizens should expect that standards, rules and regulations be used, adopted and enforced at the local level that measure the effectiveness of services provided.

**Strategic planning** must become institutionalized as an integral part of fire department operations and community resource allocation.

- Plan development should be performed in conjunction with the community to meet community expectations, growth and staffing requirements.
- Planning should be done in conjunction with surrounding communities affected by automatic mutual aid agreements. A multi-jurisdictional approach must be utilized to provide specialized services such as technical rescue, hazardous materials response and water rescue as well as covering training needs for these responses.

- The planning process should be developed with immediate, intermediate and long-range goals and have established review dates.
- An evaluation of the current volunteer response capabilities must be completed as part of the strategic planning process.
- A risk management policy must be instituted that clearly identifies the necessity of performing defensive fire suppression operations under noted conditions.
- A management structure must be developed and maintained. It should address business management operations, training, EMS, member benefits and operational leadership strategies.
- The number of calls significantly increases the business aspect of running a fire department. A department that responds to more than 750 calls per year, which is an average of two calls per day, should consider providing a compensated leadership position for developing and executing an organizational plan.
- If transition to paid personnel is necessary, the emergency service delivery system must prepare for an orderly transition from an all-volunteer to a partial career staff with identifiable funding options. Critical issues such as pay rates, job descriptions, duties, responsibilities, positions and status authority for career and volunteer personnel must be examined. When the overall composition of the department is predominately volunteer, then career personnel serve to support the volunteer system.
- A funding plan for vehicle and equipment maintenance and replacement, as well as a plan to replace personal protective gear and accessory equipment in order to ensure adequate protection of emergency service personnel should be developed.
- Local, county, regional, state, federal and industrial resources that are available within the jurisdiction should be identified as part of a mutual aid agreement.
- The organization must develop a service delivery approach to meet the risks that are presented, consistent with what the community expects and can afford (standard of response cover).

**Recruiting and retaining quality personnel** continues to be the most important element in the overall success of a volunteer or combination fire department. Therefore, it is important to look at developing the following:

- Programs designed to certify and credential volunteer and career firefighters as well as officer positions at the state minimum level (NFPA Firefighter I/Fire Officer I or equivalent) to improve individual educational levels, emergency scene proficiency and safety.
- A diversification plan that maximizes individual talent and skill in order to enhance the overall efficiency, safety and effectiveness of the department. It should also guide the educational growth of the individual while maximizing his or her potential and enthusiasm in a specific discipline(s) within the organization.
- Ongoing educational opportunities that reinforce minimum training standards, enhance awareness and reinforce safety precautions dealing with local target hazards.
- Training that is measurable and emphasizes safety, command, multi-company drills, multi-agency drills and multi-jurisdictional responses.
- Benefit programs that encourage long-term participation from individual volunteers. Programs could include, but are not limited to, workers compensation; health, accident and life insurance; and coverage that will protect the livelihood of the individual volunteer against lost wages.
- A housing analysis to document housing availability and, if necessary, contingent housing alternatives for retaining reliable and well-trained volunteers within a community. Those options may include, but are not limited to, subsidized housing, dormitories, low or no-interest loans or relief on property taxes.
- Adequate liability coverage to protect an employer from costs associated with injuries that occur while performing duties. This consideration may extend to policies that provide the employer with overtime coverage to fill the position of the injured volunteer.
- A recruitment program that ensures adequate staffing and delivery of emergency services.
- Appropriate recognition and award programs to identify individuals or team members because of their performance or commitment to the department and community.

- A promotional process that ensures fairness for all members within the existing rank structure. Promotional systems should replace the traditional method of electing officer positions. It should be based upon merit with appropriate performance, education, training, skills and experience.
- Partnerships with other community emergency entities working to maximize resources.
- Partnerships with civic organizations and local businesses to integrate the fire department within the local community.
- Training programs that provide all new recruits with basic firefighting skills and First Responder level training before they are allowed to respond to and perform on fire, medical or rescue emergencies.
- A physical assessment program designed to evaluate each member's physical ability to perform the activities and tasks required for every job description within the organization. This assessment should be performed at least annually.
- A written policy prohibiting drug and alcohol use with specific enforcement, discipline and follow-up procedures.
- An "Emergency Vehicle Operational Policy" to qualify each member as a driver/operator of fire and rescue apparatus.
- A process to check the status of each member's driver's license annually.
- Criminal background checks on all prospective members.

**Community Support Services** are necessary elements to the overall image and success of the department and the well-being of the community. Departments should develop the following:

- Fire prevention and education programs to educate at risk groups as identified by the USFA. Programs should direct educational, awareness, prevention and support groups to assist in reducing concerns.
- Safety and accident prevention programs beyond the normal scope of fire prevention to augment identified needs of the community. Those programs could include, but are not limited to, drowning prevention; bike, roller-blade and car safety; and sponsorship of SAFE KIDS projects.
- Practices that would prevent fire loss, injury or death based upon occupancy, construction, apparatus, water supply, available personnel, communication abilities and response capabilities.
- An annual evaluation of water systems that affect local operations, including county, industrial and/or private delivery. Evaluations should include the capability of the water supply to deliver the required fire flows based upon existing occupancy as well as planned growth. Ensure that appropriate steps and procedures are in place to properly maintain supply.
- Customer service programs that provide community feedback and satisfaction ratings.
- The capability to complete investigations in an efficient and reliable manner involving police agencies where applicable.
- Appropriate preplan documents, including target hazards, to provide timely and accurate information to incident commanders.
- A partnership with the Local Emergency Planning Committee to work for a fire safe community.

The volunteer fire service is at a critical juncture in the United States. On one hand we have a positive can-do spirit, on the other hand we have forces that are creating ever-increasing challenges that attack that spirit. The needs and realities of the volunteer fire service appear to be moving in divergent directions, so when the spirit dies, all that remains is historic fact. It is imperative that local, state and federal government understand the challenges listed in this document, develop a problem solving attitude and be proactive in creating a new pathway that will allow the volunteer fire service to survive and flourish. The IAFC stands ready to work with all partners to lead this charge. This great country cannot afford to lose the rich legacy of the volunteer fire service.

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## END NOTES

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- iii *U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2000*. National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, Massachusetts, December 2001.
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- xiv *U.S. Fire Department Profile Through 2000*. National Fire Protection Association, Quincy, Massachusetts, December 2001.
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- xvii *Coal Bed Methane Exploration, Campbell County Fire Department Partners in Progress*, Impact Study Prepared for the Campbell County Commissioners January 2002, - Addendum Report 2003. Campbell County Fire Department managed by a Joint Powers Fire Board responsible for the City of Gillette, WY, Town of Wright, WY, and unincorporated areas of Campbell County, WY. Volunteers actively participate in numerous wildland campaigns each summer.
- xviii Calculation based on an average of three hours of training and seven hours of emergency response each.
- xix Ponderosa VFD Response and Training Statistics 2002, Ponderosa, TX.
- xx Based on an average of 16 hours of shift coverage and three hours of training per week.



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# ***APPENDIX B***



Municipal  
Resources  
Inc.



# LIGHTING THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

## THE RED RIBBON REPORT

LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER  
AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS



*Officers Section*



LIGHTING  
THE  
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THE RED RIBBON REPORT



*Officers Section*

LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER  
AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

NOVEMBER 2005



# LIGHTING THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

## THE RED RIBBON REPORT

### LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

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# LIGHTING THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

## THE RED RIBBON REPORT

### LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

#### **Introduction**

Nearly 300 million people live in the United States today and the number keeps growing. Many areas of the country that traditionally have relied on citizen volunteers to provide fire protection and emergency medical services are finding fewer people available or willing to carry on the honorable tradition. The demand for service grows and the number of providers declines. How are communities' needs to be met? Finding the answer to that question is one of the most daunting challenges facing local governments and fire service leaders all across the country. What is the appropriate level and menu of emergency services to be offered in the community? How do we assure that those services are delivered reliably? If not by volunteers, then by whom?

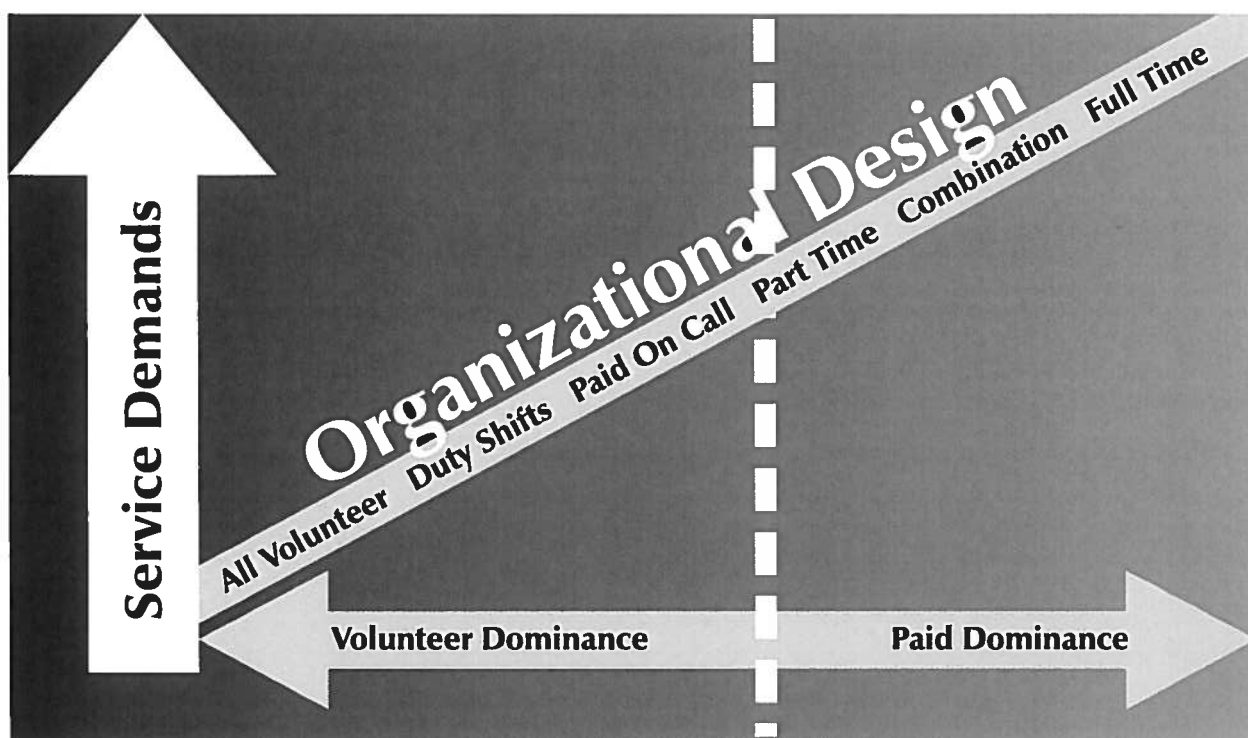
It's an issue of considerable national and local importance. As the March 2004 Blue Ribbon Report by the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs noted, of the 26,354 fire departments in the country, about three-quarters of them that serve 19,224 communities are staffed by volunteers. The balance—and these numbers have been rising as more departments are unable to provide adequate services using only volunteers—includes 4,892 departments that operate with a combination of compensated and volunteer staffing and 2,238 that are fully staffed by paid personnel. The 800,000 volunteer firefighters who today protect large areas of America number ten percent fewer than 20 years ago. Why the decline?

The answer lies in a combination of factors that reflect our society's evolution. The growth in population has meant an increase in the numbers of calls for service just about everywhere in the country, putting added pressure on the volunteer staffing component and systems. There's the matter of rising expectations by citizens in most communities that have led to demands for increasingly sophisticated services. External drivers, such as legislative mandates, legal considerations, and the need to deal with the potential threats of terrorism, have all had an impact on volunteers. So have family considerations: two-job parents, two-earner households, and more competition for personal and family time...they all factor into the decline in the number of volunteers on the front lines. What does this mean for fire service and community leaders?

The fire service is evolving as well; in fact, it always has been. As demand for services outstrips resources, there has been in many areas of the country a natural progression from departments fully staffed by

volunteers, to some form of combination system, to a fully paid service. The pace of that change is different from place to place, as are the problems encountered along the way. It depends largely on how successfully deficiencies, at all levels in organizations, are identified and resolved by the chief officers and the extent to which appropriate services are delivered successfully.

An evolving and progressive volunteer fire department will encounter a number of service delivery options before actually migrating into the combination fire service arena. This evolution process, if managed, can be systematic and prolonged. There is no cookie-cutter approach to staffing an evolving department, but there are a variety of approaches that have been successful in many communities. This report will share several of those successful models. As the accompanying chart illustrates, there is a progression from a purely volunteer-staffed organization to one that is primarily staffed by paid personnel.



The goal of the fire service is to protect life and property by delivering the highest possible level of service consistent with need at the lowest possible cost consistent with safety. The goal of this report is to call attention to some of the strategies and options available to fire service and community leaders who are looking to do just that.

## Signals of Change

Longtime volunteers often look back on the “way it used to be.” They recall a time when training was much less demanding and time consuming and the local fire department had fewer responsibilities. Fires and accidents were pretty much the game. Attendance and training standards were achievable. There were fewer calls but each was an event that required the assistance of neighbors, who took great pride in their membership in the local department. The community appreciated their neighbors’ help, local businesses supported the volunteer fire department, and the call volume was small enough so as not to interfere with the requirements of the members’ jobs. The system was manageable, the emergencies were mitigated, and it was fun to be a member.

The reality today is that in many communities, to be a contributing, effective firefighter, a person has to meet significantly higher standards physically, in terms of training, and in terms of time “on the job” gaining experience. Not everyone has the luxury of time, or in some cases the inclination, to meet those requirements in today’s hectic environment. Anymore, the fire department is not just a group of people trained to suppress fire and render first aid. It has become the premiere provider of choice for different levels of emergency medical services and in many cases transportation, as well as the provider of just about every other service that is not provided by the police department—hazardous materials response, high-rise and below-grade rescue, inspections, prevention and education, and community emergency planning and management, to name a few.

This is not to say that volunteers can’t handle the job, for their abilities and successes are demonstrated daily in many places from coast to coast and border to border. But where they can not, community and fire leaders are challenged to meet their community’s needs. In some cases, they will find ways to reinvigorate the volunteer members of their departments and improve their performance. In others, they will recognize the need for another type of change, moving to some form of partial or fully paid department, and they will set out to make it happen.

### Indicators for change

A natural evolution for a volunteer department is the growth in services and added responsibilities as the demographics of the community change. When the system develops problems, people generally know about them long before they are willing to admit that they need serious attention. For fire department managers and local government leaders, it is critical that they recognize the signs of problems ahead and prepare for change before it is forced on them by external circumstances. It is helpful when they recognize these pointers to change:

*Community Growth.* Emergency services are directly impacted by community growth—more people, more businesses, more emergencies. The larger a community, the higher level of service people expect. In many areas people moving to “suburbs” assume wrongly that emergency services are delivered in the same way they are provided in the more established cities and towns. A history of community growth and projected increases in demand can help managers forecast and plan for changes in the delivery of emergency services. In some cases, population growth projections might even help a department determine to limit its services based on available staffing.

*Community Aging.* A fire department’s ability to recruit new members in part depends on the supply of new, younger people who can be tapped for service. A community’s age profile can be an indicator of problems ahead. The age factor in your community is revealed by data showing who are moving in and moving out. If the younger people are moving away, or if schools are showing or expecting declining enrollment, the fire department may have a difficult time maintaining appropriate levels of service in the future.

*Missed Calls.* When an emergency call goes unanswered—a “scratch” on the East Coast or in other communities a “did not respond”—the fire department has a serious problem, not just because life and

property are at stake, but also because it is a failure highly visible to the public. Equally serious is a department's over-reliance on mutual aid for coverage and the lack of adequate personnel to handle subsequent calls when primary units are on an assignment

*Extended Response Times.* When units regularly fail to get out of the fire station in a timely manner because of inadequate staffing resources, the community is endangered and fire department managers have a reliability problem. Response time is a critical factor for any fire department determined to provide appropriate service to the public. It is especially critical for medical calls when the first-due company fails to respond for whatever reason and an EMS unit responds but fails to meet the response-time standard, a common occurrence even when mutual aid is not involved.

*Reduced Staffing.* Units responding with fewer than the required number of people needed to perform that unit's functions pose a serious problem for the safety of citizens and the responders. This is another indicator of reduced service capability.

All of these situations indicate an inconsistency in a department's ability to provide necessary service, though not all are necessarily caused by a shortage of volunteer members. Staffing deficits can be related to other factors, such as changes in local business and industry policies regarding employees leaving the workplace, the number of volunteers who are employed outside their response areas, a lack of understanding on the part of new corporate managers of the community's needs, a tight labor market driven by rapid community growth, or even members' apathy. Where workforce restrictions are at play in the community, they typically lead to daytime response shortages and a significant challenge for the department.

*Other Considerations.* While employment issues tend to be the major factor in volunteer staffing shortages, other factors also contribute. Decreased interest among members who fail to participate could be the result of unreasonable community expectations, some problem with the fire department's internal requirements, or other organizational issues, such as:

- *Responsibilities outpace capabilities.* Mandated and selected responsibilities and response commitments exceed the department's capability to manage outcomes properly. Mandated responsibilities may have their basis in state statutes or local resolutions, proclamations and ordinances. Selected responsibilities are response categories that result from self-imposed obligations to provide a service.
- *Inability to raise funds.* Growth in the department as it faces new demands outpaces the volunteers' ability to raise capital and operational funds.
- *Waning political support.* A once-supportive political climate begins to falter and less emphasis is placed on the volunteer-staffed fire company. This becomes noticeable when apparatus is not replaced, new purchases are postponed, or local government wants the volunteer company to operate less expensively. The volunteer-staffed fire company needs to be a vital, supportive and healthy part of the local governmental infrastructure.
- *Internal conflict.* A department has internal struggles over its mission in the community and that conflict involves the preservation of the system as a fraternal organization rather than a service-delivery system.
- *Officers filling lower operational positions.* Staffing shortages that result in the fire chief driving the fire truck or fulfilling the responsibilities of other line firefighters is another sign of a serious staffing problem.
- *Mission creep.* When first-responder programs that once managed to provide essential services and also extra staffing for critical events and rescues become subject to all kinds of other assignments: or to policies that dictate that fire units respond every time an ambulance is dispatched, chronic staffing shortages can be a problem.
- *Controversy.* When internal controversy becomes the focal point and public image of the department, its effectiveness is impaired. Controversy can be inflamed by a poorly managed

emergency, an event that exceeds the capabilities of the volunteers, or public criticism that home response is no longer adequate for the number of emergency calls handled by the department. The problems are exacerbated when the volunteers are unable to reorganize and meet the increased demands, or when the news begins to publicly question the effectiveness of the service. Few volunteers join the department to fail or be exposed to a community philosophy that "they tried hard, but they are just volunteers."

- *Too many jobs, too little time.* Another indicator: The department cannot provide fire prevention, public education or inspection responsibilities because of training and response demands occupy the time volunteers have to commit.
- *Kingdoms come first.* Some jurisdictions consider their response areas their "kingdoms." Boundary disputes can occur when department leaders fail to understand that the public does not care what color or name is on the fire truck. The "kingdom" attitude also leads to contentious working environments with neighboring agencies.
- *Lack of budget support.* Failure by elected officials to approve budgets that include capital expenditures for the department is an ominous sign.
- *Missed deadlines.* When critical administrative deadlines, such as daily response reports, training records, and legally required documentation are not completed or budget deadlines are not met, the department's effectiveness is compromised.
- *Catastrophic losses.* Catastrophic events, such as the loss of a firefighter or a civilian fatality, focus great attention on the department, and perhaps its problems and deficits, which can discourage members.
- *Volunteers priced out of the community.* In many communities the price of homes and property taxes makes it difficult for the children of current volunteers or others who have time to volunteer to live in the community, thus reducing the pool of potential members.
- *Demographic Changes.* Shifts in the community that drive decisions by current members to purchase homes outside the fire district are a detriment to member retention.

### **When the time for change has come**

Once a department recognizes there is a need for change, it must examine carefully both the organization and the options available to it. It is essential that all members of the organization identify the department's mission and core values. Whether in the end the change is a revitalized volunteer organization or a move to some type of paid or part-paid organization, a careful articulation of core values is critical to the success of the organization. Those core values must be incorporated and reinforced as employee strategies in new career positions and the core values must be carried throughout the evolution process. If the members expect the organization to be a mirror of what it once was, everyone must believe in and apply its core values. If you expect to maintain big city services with small town pride, the organization must maintain the focus on their core values and reinforce those values at every opportunity.

Once it is clear that change is necessary to preserve the department's ability to engage in its core mission, creating a paid staff is not necessarily the first option to consider. Having the answers to a number of key questions may help resolve a department's staffing issues.

*Does the department have the right leadership?* An initial examination of problems should always include a review of the fire department's leadership. The lack of dynamic, adequately prepared leaders has long been identified as a significant issue for the volunteer fire service. Poor leadership has a significant impact on the retention rate of volunteers, on a department's desire and ability to meet new levels of service demand, and on the quality of the service provided.

*Does the department offer benefits and incentives?* Benefits are safeguards provided by the community or the department to protect firefighters and their families against unexpected financial strain should the



firefighter be injured, disabled or killed while on the job. As demands for service increase, so do the chances that firefighters will be injured or worse at the emergency scene. Departments need to provide protection—such as insurance and retirement or wage supplement plans—to ensure that the health, welfare and financial stability of firefighters and their families are protected. Such benefits are essential to assure that members are treated as valuable assets.

*Incentives* can provide motivation for members to improve personal performance and participation. These are defined by personal or team recognition programs or awards. Young people today, the future lifeblood of all fire departments, are interested in immediate feedback and that includes benefits and incentives. It is more cost-effective to pay for benefits than it is to pay people.

It is imperative that the community be involved in determining the level of support for volunteer or part-time firefighters. How willingly the community provides benefits for them now may help department leaders gauge its willingness to sustain a combination system, if one is needed.

*Are department membership standards appropriate?* Fire department leaders should review membership standards to ensure that they are appropriate for the services provided. Do you need to increase requirements to ensure that volunteers have adequate skills to deal with the dominant types of calls to which the department responds? Does the department really need a requirement that all members have the expertise and the responsibility to respond to all types of calls?

*Can you use diversification strategies?* It is critical for department leaders to understand that not everyone is equal in skills or abilities. Diversification strategies—essentially, not everyone in the department has to be proficient in all the jobs in the department—can be helpful in attracting new members. Diversification strategies are fairly simple. Recruit subject-matter experts for the different disciplines within the department. You can take advantage of that to attract new members and take pressure off of a small group of dedicated responders. For example, you might recruit from a number of professions within the community that deal with hazardous materials. Attract and train those individuals as volunteers and use them when chemical emergencies are dispatched. By implementing diversification strategies, you may actually improve your volunteer base by reducing the demand on all your members and enhancing their subject-matter expertise.

*Trim the non-essentials.* Review your organization's mission and values and identify the essential functions and services it is required to deliver. A review can, in some cases, lead to reducing or eliminating nonessential services. Remember, you can't be all things to all people.

### **Transitioning from the present system—alternative delivery systems**

When it is clear that the present system is not working well, departments can follow a progressive path that leads from a completely volunteer-staffed organization to one that is staffed by some combination of volunteer and paid personnel. A department can stop anywhere along the path when that step leads to a satisfactory resolution of the community's fire department problem. The stop may be transitory or it could be permanent. The incremental approach helps a community achieve the best possible resolution of its issues at the lowest cost. Here are steps along the progressive path:

- Divide volunteer members into on-call duty shifts to ensure adequate coverage.
- Develop a program for volunteers to provide 24 hour coverage. Shift coverage needs to be flexible to accommodate individual commitments of 4, 6, 8 or 24 hours. Allow flexibility of start times and lengths of shifts to accomplish the coverage.
- Convert all-volunteer members to pay-per-call members, financially rewarding their participation.
- Implement regional response coverage and develop station-specific expertise.
- Develop Standard Operating Procedures or Standard Operating Guidelines.

- Establish a paid-on-call system, allowing the chief the flexibility to actually schedule shift coverage with financial compensation, essentially setting up part-time employee contracts with the volunteers.
- Create paid-on-call positions for specific job functions such as training, public education, inspections or administrative duties.
- Consider part-time employees specifically hired to provide coverage for inconsistent and sporadic volunteer coverage.
- Establish full-time career positions for daily shift coverage and completing administrative duties while supporting and maintaining a predominantly volunteer system.
- Convert a predominantly volunteer department to a 50/50 split, or predominantly career department where volunteers assume the supportive role.

Any of these solutions requires a new level of commitment, planning and consideration.

Typically, paid personnel are brought in to take on administrative duties or provide coverage for specialty services such as hazardous materials or technical rescue at a county or regional level, freeing volunteer firefighters to provide core services. (When an organization begins to pay personnel an hourly wage, they are subject to the Fair Labor Standards Act.) Doing so also sets the stage for more cooperative efforts on a regional basis. Regionalization of services clearly has a future in the volunteer fire service, providing economic relief and maximizing, not competing for, available volunteers.

### **Transitioning to a combination system**

Communities need to understand the forces that drive departments to consider transitioning, which may include hiring paid firefighters. Doing so is critical to a successful transition. The community's expectations about services and what they should include must guide how the fire department deploys and seeks additional resources. Such expectations are best identified in the local government by finding the balance between expectations of service and what the available funding is will support. These expectations can be expressed in the form of response goals that provide the fire department a benchmark for success. It is important that goals are not set internally. Sometimes the fire service choose what they "think" is right and move forward with the goal. Community feedback is essential to determining the correct path to the future.

Sample performance goals include:

- Average time from dispatch to response.
- Average time from response to arrival.
- Average time on scene with basic or advanced life support.
- Number of certified/qualified firefighters assembled on scene within a defined time period (NFPA 1720).
- Generation of proper fire flow (as defined by locality / ISO expectations) within a defined time period.

Such data can provide "dashboards" (analogous to the array of gauges in a car) for the fire department and the local government to use in determining how the department's performance measures up to community expectations. Organizational dashboards provide a way to monitor in real time compliance with organizational goals. Translated to the fire service, the department can monitor response goals in real time and adjust response strategies accordingly. The system will be performing efficiently when the organization is in full compliance with the goals and expectations set by the community. When goals and expectations are not being met, the department needs to re-evaluate how it operates.

In volunteer and combination systems other dashboards may be used to monitor performance and progress in other areas besides response. Other benchmarks include:

- Average volunteer retention rate.
- Average annual recruitment and associated demographics.
- Average call per volunteer.
- Various fund-raising data.
- Less government taxing support.
- Controlling the cost of recruiting, hiring and training new personnel.

Such information can be used to monitor the health of the organization based on what is deemed important by the stakeholders, but it isn't determined in a vacuum. It takes a plan.

## Strategic Planning

### What is a Strategic Plan?

The development of a strategic plan is an important aspect of the evolution process. Fire executives who adopt a strategic plan for transition are better able to predict and manage change successfully. Strategic planning for an evolving department requires a commitment from the department's leadership and members and also from elected officials and other leaders in the community. Developing a strategic plan without involving community partners and stakeholders lessens chances for success.

Fire chiefs, presidents, and elected officials are often so preoccupied with immediate issues that they lose sight of their ultimate goals. That's why a preparation of a strategic plan is a necessity. A plan is not a recipe for sure success, but without it a fire department is much more likely to fail. A sound plan should:

- Serve as a framework for decisions or for securing support/approval.
- Provide a basis for more detailed planning.
- Incorporate detailed plans that include timelines, assignments and evaluations.
- Explain the services provided to others in order to inform, motivate and involve.
- Assist bench marking and performance monitoring.
- Stimulate change and become the building block for next plan within established timelines.

Preparing a strategic plan involves a multi-step process addressing vision, mission, objectives, values, strategies, goals and programs. When you develop a strategic plan, you must involve all the stakeholders if you hope to be successful.

### The Vision

Your first step is to develop a realistic **Vision** for the department. Present it as a picture of the community and the department in three or more years' time, stated in terms of the department's likely growth and development.

### The Mission

Describe the nature of a fire department in terms of its **Mission**, which indicates the purpose. Some people confuse mission statements with value statements (see chart on next page)—the former should be very hard-nosed, while the latter can deal with "softer" issues surrounding the business.

### The Values

This element expresses the **Values** governing the operation of the department and its conduct or relationships with society at large, employees, local community and other stakeholders.

## The Objectives

It is essential that you state the fire department's business **Objectives** in terms of the results it needs or wants to achieve in the medium and/or long terms. Objectives should relate to the expectations and requirements of all the major stakeholders, including employees, and should reflect the underlying reasons for operating the department.

## The Strategies

**Strategies** reflect the roles and guidelines by which the mission, objectives and the like may be achieved. They can be developed using a SWOT analysis to identify **strengths**, identify and resolve **weaknesses**, identify and exploit **opportunities**, and identify and avoid **threats**.

## The Goals

**Goals** are specific interim or ultimate time-based measurements to be achieved by implementing strategies in pursuit of the objectives. Goals should be quantifiable, consistent, realistic and achievable.

## The Programs

The final elements are the **Programs** that set out the implementation plans for the key strategies. These should cover resources, objectives, timescales, deadlines, budgets and performance targets.

Hard	Soft
What business is / does Primary products / services Key processes and technologies Main customer groups Primary markets / segments Principal channels / outlets	Reason for existence Competitive advantages Unique / distinctive features Important philosophical / social issues Image, quality, style standards Stakeholder concerns

## Designing a Combination System

The transition from an all-volunteer department to a combination system works best when the system is developing through detailed communication and strategic planning, rather than blind evolution. Many departments have evolved into an awkward conglomerate of resources with little thought given to system design and functionality and the long-term effects such a transition may have on the future of the organization. In many cases the evolution process is made more difficult by a lack of stable leadership. The revolving door process for selecting leaders within the volunteer fire service creates a difficult structure to overcome in developing long-range plans. In addition, the election of officers requires a constant political campaign, creating a significant strain on the organization's ability to evolve. This paper strongly recommends that the officers' selection process eliminates elections and focuses on credentialing with performance factors.

## Casualties of Transition

As departments approach the task of transitioning from an all-volunteer organization to another form of deployment, they need to be aware of a variety of pitfalls. It is common for such transitions to be emotionally charged events for those closely involved, and emotions often lead to serious mistakes. When emotions are allowed to overtake rationality, departments should expect some limited attrition of

volunteers. Casualties could be significant but the vast majority of the volunteer members, even though some may be skeptical and cautious, will be willing to work through the issues and contribute meaningfully to improve the department. The same dangers apply to paid personnel. Those who are unable to integrate effectively with volunteer firefighters will quickly become a liability to the system. They seldom last if the department leadership recognizes and addresses the issues.

Another common casualty of transition results from avoiding sensitive issues and dodging conflict. Some departments may deem themselves “combination” simply because they utilize both career and volunteer personnel, but closer examination may show they are organizations in which paid firefighters are segregated from volunteer firefighters and there is little cooperation and integration between the two. This type of system is best described as “dual” rather than combination. While some dual departments function successfully in the short term, their division makes issues between the two groups stand out even more, and they miss out on many of the advantages a combination system brings. Poorly managed “dual” systems often become “duel” systems that are destined to fail.

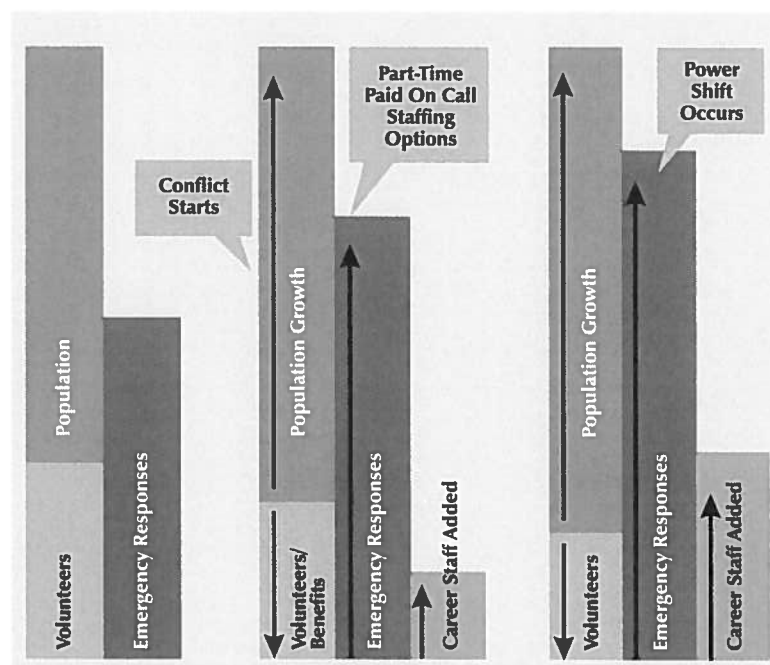
Some indicators of a dual system include:

- Volunteers operating in different quarters than paid staff.
- Volunteers riding on separate apparatus than paid staff.
- Separate rules and regulations used.
- One group receiving better equipment and apparatus than the other.
- Rank structures and supervision not integrated.
- No opportunity for social interaction.

Departments should work to ensure system fairness for all parties. Integrating personnel fosters relationships that help to sustain the system.

An effective indicator of transition casualties is the retention rate of the minority component of the organization. If the paid component of the organization is in the minority and the retention rates are less than two years, it is likely that issues exist that are driving these firefighters away. Likewise, if the volunteers serve as the minority and retention rates are declining, it is likely issues are present that have negative impacts on the organization. The key to avoiding these issues is to ensure that everyone fully understands the core values of the organization and is committed to its mission.

## Basic Design Models



A department should conduct a cost/benefit analysis during system design to determine which model will function most efficiently for its locality. System design needs to recognize that volunteer/paid-on-call personnel are paid only for work performed. Career firefighters are paid for the POTENTIAL to be used. This does not mean that one is better than the other but it implies that department managers need to clearly understand the differences between the two as they relate to cost.

Some of the benefits/risks of the common system designs include:

#### *All-Volunteer System*

- Reduced labor costs.
- High-volume staffing during major emergencies such as natural disasters. Such influxes of manpower may be contingent on employers allowing volunteer employees to leave work during such events.
- Volunteers are willing or able to take off work to assist.
- Salary cost avoidance, which can be diverted to essential equipment and apparatus.
- Unpredictable response from volunteer staff.
- Volunteer systems can be more challenging to coordinate because of intermittent or sporadic participation from various members.
- Can rely on individual response rather than system response to meet call load, thus resulting in unpredictable service levels.

#### *Combination System*

- Can consist of any combination of career, volunteer, paid-on-call and part-time personnel.
- Enhanced staffing deployment as combination systems can capitalize on both the stability of a paid system and the manpower of the volunteer system during a major emergency, providing greater depth for staffing.
- Salary cost avoidance, which can free funds for essential equipment and apparatus.
- True integration of available resources and distribution of talent resulting in greater efficiency.

#### *All-Paid System*

- Consistent staffing providing predictable service level.
- Expensive due to increased salary and benefits requirements.
- Can lack depth during major emergencies because once multiple shifts have been deployed in a major incident, few resources are left to cover other service demands.

Another vital consideration when designing a combination system is identification of the stakeholders in the department. These stakeholders may include volunteers, employees, the fire department's management, local government interests, citizens and even the news media. A group of stakeholders should be convened early in the process to identify the obstacles to change and the processes to be used for overcoming them. The creation of a combination system can be challenging by its very nature and great care should be used to facilitate the change process.

### **Establishing Authority**

One of the most controversial aspects of designing a combination system is establishing a clear line of authority and chain of command. Avoiding this challenge will breed animosity and mistrust over time, so it is critical that the lines be drawn early in the process. No matter if the chief will be paid or volunteer, the local government must empower the chief officer to lead the system as a whole. The local government – the “boss” – should be prepared to stand behind the chief as the transition progresses, even when political battles ensue, as they most likely will. Establishing local ordinances, resolutions or

regulations that clearly define the authority of the fire chief and empower the position holder to effectively lead the organization is vital to success in the combination system.

Selecting a chief to lead a combination system is a delicate task. Leading a combination system should be approached as a specialty, and care should be taken to seek out candidates that have experience in this field. A qualified candidate should possess experience in dealing with both volunteer and paid personnel and have a leadership style that is conducive to conflict resolution and facilitation. Failure to select a candidate for chief with the appropriate experience and background can challenge the ability of the combination system to be successful. There is nothing that requires a chief in a combination system to be paid. The selection process for a chief in a combination system should not include term limits or an election, but should be based on common hiring practices. Equally dangerous is the philosophy that a chief from a fully career department automatically has the ability to motivate and supervise volunteers.

Subordinate officer selection can also be challenging. The selection of Assistant Chiefs and Deputy Chiefs should follow the same model outlined for the selection of the Chief. As captains, engine company officers, and other supervisory positions are created and people selected, the system's success is very much dependant on their enthusiasm and commitment to a combination system. They have to recognize and support the overall philosophy of a combination system and clearly understand their role in making it productive and successful. A promotional process should be in place that takes into account experience, education, service, testing and evaluation. Detrimental to this philosophy would be a career officer's inflated sense of rank based merely on wage compensation. Conversely, a volunteer officer's assumptions that the majority of "mopping up" duties are to be left to paid personnel defeats the cooperative nature essential to the mission of the department.

Substantial benefits can be derived from educating all the department members on the strengths and weaknesses of the system and clearly outlining the expectations of all the firefighters. It is important to ensure that career staff members understand they become informal leaders regardless of their rank because of their frequent exposure to emergency calls and the expertise they develop. Thus, every career firefighter is potentially a mentor who is expected to help others, including volunteers, capitalize on opportunities to improve, excel, and build confidence.

Local officials who believe that a system can always operate more cheaply have affected more than one well-organized and productive combination fire system. Sometimes their lack of knowledge about your department's history, the significant events that have formed it, its struggle for change, and the acceptance of its services by the public seem inconsequential when the time comes to balance budgets. Combination systems have a difficult challenge showing their cost effectiveness because there is no rebate of the monies saved or refund being returned to the funding entities.

It is imperative that local officials understand their obligation in this kind of system. Reducing the need for career positions saves the community substantial amounts of money that can be reinvested in other critical infrastructure. It is their responsibility to ensure that all firefighters have good equipment, apparatus, sufficient funds for overtime pay to allow career and volunteer members to train together, and capital to invest in new technology. Those issues make the system complete and they ensure that all the stakeholders have a vested interest in success.

### **Communication & Policy Development**

Communication is essential in a successful combination system. The fire department leadership should constantly facilitate communication between paid and volunteer personnel and work tirelessly to manage information and dispel rumors. Leadership must constantly maintain open communications with elected officials and government authorities. Including stakeholders in the development of policies and procedures will help to develop ownership in the combination system and create transparency that will help avoid unnecessary conflicts. Both volunteer and paid members of the organization have special considerations that should be taken into account when developing policies. Time is often a major issue



with volunteers who must juggle other jobs and family obligations, while paid members may be more interested in working conditions and wages. Each perspective should be considered valid and accommodations reached that allow both groups to succeed within their own abilities.

### **Job Descriptions and Expectations**

It is imperative that all members of the organization understand their responsibilities and expectations. People often join an organization expecting one thing and then experience something quite different and over time they develop negative attitudes.

The job description must identify the specific roles and responsibilities of each member of the organization. Remember, paid personnel are being compensated for the work they do, but this does not mean that any less is expected from the volunteers.

The expectations of leadership are the same whether career or volunteer members hold top positions. These expectations are the same for firefighters as well. Being trained and competent is not determined by a paycheck but by the level of commitment. Everyone should be expected to be trained and competent; a paycheck or lack of one is not an excuse for incompetence.

Focus is important to any organization. If leaders fail to provide a focus, the members will develop their own, and their focus most likely will be centered on themselves and not the organization. Job descriptions and expectations help keep the members focused.

One specific responsibility of the career firefighter should be to help mentor the volunteers. The mentoring process should be spelled out in the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) manual. This helps the volunteers grow and develop in their abilities and skills. Ultimately the volunteers will be able to function at a much higher level as a result of mentoring.

In addition, the career firefighter should help identify and correct problems within the fire department. It is no longer someone else's responsibility to solve problems.

Well thought out job descriptions and expectations can do much to keep the organization running smoothly. They help all members stay on the same page.

Clearly defined expectations, along with an evaluation system, will provide an excellent tool for managing the transition. The expectation model must include an analysis and evaluation of each individual's ability to function as a team member. Department leaders must enforce the model once it is set, but they should modify it when circumstances invalidate expectations. Maintaining expectations that no longer apply to the organizational structure can lead to conflict. The change model can be learned and implemented as long as management continues to understand that change is inevitable and most likely will produce improved service levels.

### **Sustaining a Combination System**

Ensuring that a combination system stays focused requires constant maintenance and leadership. Local government and fire department leaders must embrace the combination philosophy and be prepared to endure intense scrutiny and political pressure. Leaders within the local government and fire department must regularly recommit to the combination mission and keep both paid and volunteer firefighters focused on service delivery.

The underlying philosophy of a combination system is improved service at a reduced cost. A combination department needs to be recognized for its value as a cost avoidance tool that reduces the need for employing full time career firefighters. Local officials should support the department with adequate funds committed to maintaining modern apparatus, protective gear and other equipment, and investment in improved technology.

Adequate allowance for overtime pay is necessary to ensure that all firefighters can train together, most likely on a schedule that ensures maximum participation by volunteers.

Monitoring the retention rate and/or general treatment of the minority group becomes a good indicator of how the combination system is performing and provides a mechanism for making internal changes.

### **Tactical Equality**

One of the secrets of successful combination fire departments is full integration of career and volunteer firefighters at a tactical level. The concept is simple although it can be challenging to implement if you are already a combination department that is not so integrated. Tactical integration pays big dividends for the department and the community by improving emergency scene operations and increasing volunteer longevity.

Tactical equality recognizes that all positions, from firefighter through senior fire officer, require formal training and education to meet the expected performance level. Members of an evolving system must understand the complex issues facing the department and community and the serious nature of the service.

Officer promotions should be based on certification, tenure, experience and proficiencies in technical skills as well as soft skills, such as interpersonal communication.

Tactical equality is achievable if your department provides performance-based, certifiable training and the opportunity for the volunteer and career firefighters to train at the same time. This establishes a respect for the rank and the achievement to obtain the position and less emphasis on whether it is filled by a volunteer or career member. Position and rank are not affected by time of day or the day of the week. The attitude toward rank for everyone should be, "You earned it, you own it."

The importance of joint training and interaction means that it should be supported by adequate overtime funds to ensure training with the volunteers is a formal expectation of the job for the career employee.

One obstacle to tactical equality can be a requirement that volunteers meet training standards that are common in paid settings. The time commitment required to complete the training is an issue with many volunteers. Fire service professional standards and accreditation organizations should develop ways to incorporate performance-based training concepts into certification courses that allow students to gain qualification based on actual abilities rather than classroom hours.

Implementing this philosophy while the department is still a volunteer-staffed organization can improve the quality of officers available for promotion. Of equal importance, it fosters a cultural change that will dictate the value and respect that are placed on volunteer personnel long after career firefighters are incorporated into the system.

### **Resource Deployment Options**

When looking at resource deployment of your department make sure that you consider all the options, thinking outside the framework of normal deployment systems and keeping all your search avenues open. It is imperative that leadership does not compare and try to create a system emulating large departments. Focus on what your department should be and create a model that is effective and efficient for your community.

Deployment can be a very simple or an extensive and costly process. As we look at the objectives of deployment (NFPA 1710/1720) we need to take into consideration items such as:

- Proper number of personnel.
- Time for response & delivery.
- Apparatus.

Deployment should take into account a means of getting the proper staffing, needed tools, and required resources to a predetermined location to effectively and efficiently mitigate the emergency. There should never be a differential between adequate “hardware” resources and payroll.

Some personnel deployment options include paging by radio, pager, or cell phone. Other items to consider are duty assignments allowing for the best utilization of staff, or working out a system that will provide required staffing without the traditional “everyone respond” or the use of several pieces of apparatus just to gain necessary staffing.

The fire service often utilizes apparatus as “expensive” taxis to bring together numbers of personnel rather than calling the proper apparatus for the performance needed. Departments should identify the required level of apparatus and staffing based on type of call, and then look at alternate means of transporting personnel, such as utility vehicles or command vehicles. It is not always prudent to buy bigger apparatus just to carry personnel. Another option is to manage personal vehicle deployment, but this method requires significant discipline to assure accountability and safety considerations.

Departments should have a method of monitoring the number of personnel responding to incidents so management can determine if sufficient staffing is going to be available to deliver the required service.

Staffing management is key to assuring the proper number of personnel on an incident scene. Assignment of duty hours or days or shifts can ensure proper staffing and help avoid overstaffing. Having each member assigned a time slot and/or a service function can regulate the number of members who respond to a call type so that the result is needed deployment but not overdeployment. This may also provide a more reliable time commitment for the volunteer.

Note: When attempting to define the timing element of your deployment system, you must consider the time for a response and the actual time required for the delivery of the service, which could be vastly different. A good reference for assistance in determining response and delivery times is *NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and the Deployment*, or a copy of the *Fire Service Standards of Cover*.

Looking at some nontraditional means of deployment could help solve overstaffing or understaffing concerns that often burden your department’s service deployment. Reviewing all deployment opportunities will save the embarrassment of lack of proper resource development during the time of need.

### **Regional Response and Mutual Aid**

It may be time to ask, “Can we be all things to all people?” Can two or three departments provide the needed services for the community versus parallel systems for each department?

The concept of regional response can help reduce the service-delivery burden felt by many fire departments today. Using this concept, fire departments can stop duplicating resources and services. This saves both time and money for the local community and addresses gaps in specialized response.

A relevant question is, “Do each of two fire departments that are located three miles from each other need two tankers and an aerial? Isn’t it possible for one department to have two tankers and the other department an aerial?” Look at the possible savings that an agreement like this could mean for both communities. Although ISO ratings may affect these considerations, the fire service leaders must determine the best deal for the dollar and the best way to provide service to the community. Never allow ISO to be the driving factor. If your system is effective, your ISO rating will improve.

During the day two departments have a total of five people on staff. There are two people at one department and three in another. Could we place all five in one station to enhance the staffing? Now the first responding truck has a total of five instead of the possibility of only two. However resources are deployed, a minimum of four people per apparatus dispatched should be assembled on the fire ground.

With the needs of the community as the primary driver, fire department leaders can develop many possible solutions. Never design a system to handle the worst-case scenario. Design it to properly address the vast majority of your responses. It may be that one department will no longer be the expert in all areas. Instead, each department in an area may have a specialty and its services can be offered to the region in exchange for specialized services from other departments. Regionalization of services can reduce the burden on many of the nation's fire departments.

The concept of mutual aid is sometimes abused. Departments that are unable to answer an initial call will rely on mutual aid to cover the alarm. This increases the burden on the other department. True mutual aid should be utilized when back-to-back calls are received, or when an incident is bigger than the resources that are on hand and additional people or equipment is needed.

### **The Impact of Emergency Medical Services (EMS)**

EMS calls have created a strain for many fire/EMS systems as a result of increases in call volume. It is much easier to get people to volunteer for 150 fire calls than it is for 400 calls. The higher the call volume, the more strain that is placed on the personnel.

Even departments that don't provide EMS patient transports but only first response care are feeling the impact of higher run volumes due primarily to national issues related to health care conditions. To compound this, many stand-alone EMS systems are expecting and relying on fire departments to assist them on various EMS calls. In addition, EMS certifications have become a significant burden for volunteer and career members that results in additional costs and time commitments.

The EMS system benefits from this arrangement with the fire department's first responders in several ways. First, they can reduce the number of EMS units needed to cover a specific area. Fire departments are usually strategically located throughout the community. This allows for quick response and timely coverage, so in many cases the fire department will be on-scene before the EMS unit.

Some EMS systems will rely on the first responder to assist with lifting, CPR and other labor-intensive tasks. By doing this the EMS system reduces its cost of doing business, since the fire department is doing what additional EMS personnel would normally do, thus increasing the run volume.

Another aspect to consider is that some fire departments have consolidated fire and EMS operations. Although run volumes are increased substantially, additional revenue can be generated through EMS billing and additional services are provided for the community.

This additional service is good for the public image of the department and the additional revenue can provide money to help support a part-time, paid-on-call or combination system.

EMS can create many challenges for the local fire department. New methods for dealing with the challenges of EMS growth must be identified for the specific community. How the department deals with the EMS issue will ultimately determine its success. People expect to summon an ambulance for any reason at any time and be confident that someone will show up in a short period of time to transport them where they need to go. This public expectation becomes a huge burden when you staff with volunteers via home response. Even in a combination system this can create situations where nonessential EMS calls are taking up so much of the paid staff's time that other duties are not being completed. Most volunteers join for the excitement and the thrill associated with saving lives, but most EMS calls are not full of excitement and thrills. If peoples' expectations for service are to be met, they need to be aware that there are costs associated with it delivery. The cost of providing ambulance service in most cases must include career/part-time paid staffing.

### **Part-time Staffing as an Alternative**

There are alternatives to operating a combination department. One is transitioning from an all-volunteer system to one of all part-time firefighters. The part-time employee program can be

designed around the specific needs of the department. It is dynamic in nature and can grow as the needs of the department change.

Under this system the volunteers are hired as part-time employees. Stations are staffed with part-time members around the clock or during peak call times. This allows for staffing that is comparable to that of the career department at a fraction of the cost to the community.

The administrators of the department can decide, based on run volume, the number of staff members needed on each shift. Shifts can vary in any degree of time blocks. Members can work their normal full-time job and sign up for shifts when they are available. Managers must be capable of making creative shift assignments. If a call requires more personnel than are on duty, members responding from home or work are paid from the time the call comes in until they are placed back in service and all equipment is made ready for the next run.

The pay scale for this system can be flexible. One example would be to pay those who are trained as firefighters in one pay range while paying basic EMTs and paramedics another range. This makes sense especially in those departments with high EMS call volumes.

**EXAMPLE:**

FIREFIGHTER ONLY	\$ 7.00 per hour
FIREFIGHTER/EMT	\$ 10.00 per hour
FIREFIGHTER/PARAMEDIC	\$ 13.00 per hour

Under this system the members are paid more for education. A firefighter wanting to earn more money can return to train for a higher paying position and be paid at the level upon achieving certification. In addition to education, this system pays for performance compensating employees for what they do.

Scheduling must be monitored to prevent overtime and creating Fair Labor Standards issues.

The cost of the part-time system compared to the full-time system is greatly reduced. The need for many benefits is reduced when part-time employees are working full time at another career. For example, a department with 50 part-time members would save nearly \$400,000 by not providing healthcare benefits. (50 employees X \$8,000 per employee = \$400,000)

There are intrinsic benefits to this system as well. The volunteer is now a paid employee. This can increase pride and he or she may feel more valued by the organization.

**Leadership Selection**

To ensure a healthy organization, it is imperative that strong leaders are selected for officer positions. Just because an individual is a good firefighter does not guarantee that he or she will perform well as an officer. Sometimes, technical skills are confused with leadership skills. Both are important but remember you are selecting a leader, not a "head firefighter." This means that special considerations must be taken in selecting those who have the ability to lead.

*Leadership* is a skill that can be learned and developed, but the leader must also have certain characteristics to ensure success. First, *integrity* gives the officer credibility. If the officer compromises his integrity, credibility is lost, and when credibility is lost his effectiveness is lost as well.

Leaders cannot lead where they cannot see. Therefore the officer must have a clear and distinct *vision*. Where does he see the organization moving? What will the organization look like in the future? Even a frontline officer must be able to see where he would like the people under his command to move. Once this vision is created, the officer must communicate it to the people and get them excited about it. People must buy into it if the vision is to become reality.

The officer must maintain integrity even when it hurts. In other words, the officer chooses to do what is best for the people and the organization even when another choice would benefit the officer.

Ask employees what they want from their bosses, and most often the answer is character and fairness. People want to be led by someone they can *trust*. And when trust is high, overall performance will increase.

Next, the officer must have a good attitude, be *optimistic* about the future, and focus on the positive more than the negative without avoiding problems.

An effective officer will also demonstrate a *caring attitude* for the firefighters, the organization and the community in which he serves. To put it bluntly, "If you don't care, then get out of the organization or at a minimum, get out of the position of leadership and influence." The officer sets the tone for the organization. If he is negative and constantly complaining, he creates a negative work environment that acts as a cancer spreading throughout the department. If an officer has a "no" attitude, or a "we cannot do that" attitude, the members will adopt the same philosophy. Eventually this will head into a downward spiral of defeat.

The officer must have self-discipline. *Self-discipline* is defined as "knowing what I need to do, not wanting to do it, but doing it anyway." Self-discipline demonstrates the officer's ability to stay cool under pressure. He tends to do what is right for the organization instead of what is popular.

*Courage* is an important trait for any officer at any level. Courage allows the officer to make tough decisions even when he knows he will be challenged. Courage allows the officer to show a healthy confidence in doing the job.

Another characteristic important to the officer is *humility*. A good officer is not driven by ego but by a value system that recognizes right from wrong. The humble leader will admit when he is wrong instead of pointing the blame elsewhere (self-esteem is managed internally) and will work to correct mistakes. Humble leaders are in their positions for the right reasons. They are transparent with nothing to hide and nothing to prove. They are there to serve the people they lead.

Effective officers *seek excellence* in all that they do. They constantly look for better ways of doing things. They learn from their mistakes and educate themselves on a continual basis. They strive to do the best they can in all situations. At the same time, successful officers understand that decision-making is a constant process of assessing risk versus gain or cost. So they incorporate into their decision process a "reality check" that helps to give their decisions a real world perspective. They recognize that not every decision will be the perfect solution.

*Leadership is a privilege*. To lead and influence people is one of the highest honors an individual can be accorded. A leader must never abuse his or her authority or influence, no matter how tempting it may be. The organization must recognize this and have systems in place to ensure that high performers are rewarded for their successes. This provides an incentive for good people to strive for leadership positions.

When selecting an officer, look for people who are *good communicators*, people who are able to articulate information in a timely and accurate manner. They must believe in "open-book management," which means that information is not guarded but freely distributed within the organization.

Remember, the organization will never progress beyond the abilities of the officer. If the officer's ability to lead is limited, the organization will be limited as well. Strong leaders make strong organizations. Review your current officer selection process and determine how it can be improved.

Feedback from firefighters is often helpful for the command officer. An example of a firefighter evaluation of the command officer is included in *Addendum B*. Feedback from the bottom up is a very

important part of the process of having great officers. Some fire officers fear this type of evaluation, but this method clearly demonstrates commitment and leadership.

### **Assessment Center – Leadership Selection**

An assessment center consists of a standardized evaluation of behavior based on multiple evaluations, including job-related simulations, interviews and/or psychological tests. Job simulations are used to evaluate candidates on behaviors relevant to the most critical aspects (or competencies) of the job.

### **Assessment Center Exercises**

An assessment center can be defined as “a variety of testing techniques designed to allow candidates to demonstrate, under standardized conditions, the skills and abilities that are most essential for success in a given job.” Assessment centers allow candidates to demonstrate more of their skills through a number of job-relevant situations. The term assessment center is really a catchall for an assessment process that can consist of some or all of a variety of exercises. While assessment centers vary in the number and type of exercises included, two of the most common exercises are the in-basket and the oral exercise. Other possibilities include counseling simulations, problem-analysis exercises, interview simulations, role-play exercises, written report/analysis exercises and leaderless group exercises.

*In-basket exercise.* In a traditional in-basket exercise, candidates are given time to review the material and initiate in writing whatever actions they believe to be most appropriate in relation to each in-basket item. When time is called for the exercise, the in-basket materials and any notes, letters, memos or other correspondence written by the candidate are collected for review by one or more assessors. Often the candidates are then interviewed to ensure that the assessor(s) understand actions taken by the candidate and the rationale for the actions. If an interview is not possible, it is also quite common to have the candidate complete a summary sheet (i.e., a questionnaire). A more recent trend over the past 10 years has been the development of selection procedures that are based on the assessment center model, but which can be turned into low-fidelity simulations. Some low-fidelity simulations involve having an applicant read about a work situation. The applicant then responds to the situation by choosing one of five alternative answers. Some procedures have the applicant choose the response he/she would most likely make in a situation and the response that he/she would least likely make. These samples of hypothetical work behavior have been found to be valid predictors of job performance.

Recently, the in-basket has become a focus of interest because of its usefulness in selection across a wide variety of jobs. A variety of techniques have been used to develop in-baskets. Quite often information on an in-basket’s development is not available for review because the reports do not contain the critical information. It is not uncommon for armchair methods to be used or for in-baskets to be taken off the shelf. A recent review indicated that nearly 50 percent of the studies do not describe how the in-basket was constructed. There is also a great deal of variation among the ways in which the in-basket is scored, with some scoring systems utilizing almost entirely subjective judgment, while others utilize a purely objective approach. The in-basket exercise may be thought of as an approach that assesses a candidate’s “practical thinking” ability, by having a candidate engage in implicit problem solving for a job-relevant task.

It is now well recognized that a content-valid approach to constructing an in-basket is one that is professionally accepted as a technique that has passed legal scrutiny. However, despite the acceptance by the courts and practitioners, the reporting basis for content validity is often deficient. Schippmann, Prien and Katz in a 1990 report point out that all the studies they reviewed failed to establish a link between the task portion and the knowledge, skill and ability portion of the job analysis in order to provide a firm foundation for the construction of the in-basket. Often there has been no procedure for translating the job analysis information into development or choice of the test.

*Oral exercises.* Like all assessment center exercises, oral exercises can take many forms depending on the work behaviors or factors of the job being simulated. Common forms of oral exercises include press



conference exercises, formal presentations and informal presentations (briefing exercise). In oral presentation exercises, candidates are given a brief period of time in which to plan/organize their thoughts, make notes, etc., for the presentation/briefing. Traditionally, the audience is played by the assessor(s), who observes the presentation and makes ratings. Assessors may also ask candidates a series of questions following their briefing/presentation. The questions may or may not relate directly to the topic of the presentation.

*Leaderless Group Discussion.* The leaderless group discussion is a type of assessment center exercise where groups of applicants meet together to discuss an actual job-related problem. As the meeting proceeds, the behavior of the candidates is observed to see how they interact and what leadership and communications skills each person displays.

*Role Playing.* Role playing is a type of assessment center exercise in which the candidate assumes the role of the incumbent of the position and must deal with another person in a job-related situation. A trained role player is used and responds “in character” to the actions of the candidate. Performance is assessed by observers.

Several trained observers and techniques are used. Judgments about behavior are made and recorded. The discussion results in evaluations of the performance of the candidates on the dimensions or other variables.

Agencies should not utilize the assessment center as the only Pass/Fail portion of selection. Consider a “piece of the pie” attitude when utilizing assessment centers. Balance is the key objective.

### **Hiring Practices**

Hiring career personnel is not only an important management/leadership decision, it is also a large monetary and professional investment for the organization. Depending on the size of the agency, it is estimated that approximately 70 to 80 percent of an operating budget for a combination department is dedicated to salaries, wages and fringe benefits for staff. Personnel are truly the most valuable resource for any organization, both in a monetary and asset sense.

With that said, organizations should ensure that their recruitment and hiring processes are designed appropriately to facilitate the hiring of qualified staff that meets the organizational needs and that the candidates are screened to appropriately identify strengths and weaknesses so that solid hiring decisions can be made. Once again, it is not only about firefighting and EMS skills—people skills are very important.

There are many models that identify the hiring techniques utilized by different organizations for the recruitment, hiring and appointment of volunteer, paid-on-call, part-time and career personnel. While specific criteria may vary with regard to experience, training, education and certification, several very important aspects should remain constant. Two of the most important aspects that come to mind are attitude and personality.

### **Attitudes**

While hard to measure, attitude can be a driving force that overcomes many obstacles and can be the resolve that carries a person to a higher level of achievement. Southwest Airlines has embraced the motto “Hire for attitude—train for skills.” Attitude is an individual trait that should be measured to ensure that potential candidates possess a level of commitment that will blend with and be accepted within the organizational culture.

The use of Likert scales or Semantic Differential Scales can be useful in developing appropriate evaluation mechanisms unique to the organization and can greatly assist managers in assessing a candidate’s attitude. The following Web address provides an overview of the Likert scale and how to develop an evaluation mechanism: [www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.htm](http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/scallik.htm).

For more information regarding levels of measurement and scaling, visit:  
[www.fao.org/docrep/W3241E/w3241e04.htm](http://www.fao.org/docrep/W3241E/w3241e04.htm).

The following Web address provides an overview of the do's-and-don'ts of survey design:  
[www.unf.edu/dept/cirt/workshops/survey/polland\\_handout.pdf](http://www.unf.edu/dept/cirt/workshops/survey/polland_handout.pdf).

## **Personality**

As important as attitude is personality. The ability of an employee to survive and operate within an organizational culture may very well depend on his ability to fit in. Notwithstanding the fact that measuring a candidate's personality is subjective, it is extremely important to identify whether or not a potential candidate has the necessary interpersonal skills to connect with peers and supervisors in the organization.

A widely utilized mechanism for identifying personality traits is the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® instrument, which provides a useful way of describing people's personalities by looking at their preferences on four scales (extraversion vs. introversion, sensing vs. intuition, thinking vs. feeling, and judging vs. perceiving).

Paladin Associates was formed as a nonprofit organization for the purpose of promoting the benefits of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® instrument. Their Web site is [www.paladinexec.com](http://www.paladinexec.com) and it provides a great deal of information and resources for personal and professional development. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® instrument is available free of charge at [www.paladinexec.com/mtbionlinetest.htm](http://www.paladinexec.com/mtbionlinetest.htm).

The psychological assessment is based on the psychologist's knowledge of the requirements of firefighting duties. These requirements are based on a job analysis with identification of the psychological variables that are relevant to the knowledge, skills and abilities needed to be an effective firefighter. In addition to the variables that are more or less common to all or most fire departments, the psychologist can also customize the focus on those variables that are valued or required by a specific department.

The assessment procedures may include an individual interview with the candidate and a series of paper-and-pencil psychological tests. The comprehensive interview is primarily focused on work and career-related issues. The psychologist may also explore areas such as family history, education, interest in the pursuit of a fire service career, the individual's strengths and developmental needs, mental health history, legal history, exploration of the use of mood-altering drugs and chemicals, and overall adjustment.

The paper-and-pencil psychological tests may include the verbal comprehension, numerical reasoning and verbal reasoning subtests of the Employee Aptitude Survey® series; the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-II®; the California Psychological Inventory®; the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator®; and/or a writing sample.

The three intellectual-based tests (verbal comprehension, numerical reasoning and verbal reasoning) provide an estimate of the individual's vocabulary knowledge and inductive and deductive reasoning capabilities. They identify the candidate's ability to analyze situations as well as deal with matters of a more conceptual nature. They provide an indication of how quickly the individual will learn what he or she needs to know to be successful on the job. The candidate's scores on the aptitude tests are compared to a sample of firefighter candidates' scores.

The Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory-II® is a clinical screening instrument designed primarily to detect the presence of abnormal functioning, and to screen out clinically significant pathology that may impair an individual's ability to perform the duties of a firefighter. The California Psychological Inventory® is a general personality inventory designed primarily to differentiate among essentially normal individuals on a number of dimensions, including dominance, independence, responsibility, self-control, etc. Both of these inventories are used extensively in the selection of firefighters in the United States, and there are numerous research studies attesting to their validity and utility in the selection process.

The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator® provides useful information related to work style, including how people relate to each other, organizational skills and what information is relevant to them in making decisions (e.g., facts versus feelings).

The writing sample consists of having candidates write about a conflict situation. They are evaluated on the basis of the content as well as grammatical accuracy.

The conclusions of the psychologist regarding the candidate are based on all of the information gathered from the assessment processes described above. They represent the overall best judgment of the psychologist, taking into account not only the test results but also impressions gained from the interview. In addition to providing an overall description of the candidate in the report, the psychologist may also make a recommendation about hiring. For example, the candidate may be recommended unconditionally, recommended with reservations, or not recommended for hiring. When the psychologist recommends a candidate with reservations, the reservations may not be significant enough to disqualify the candidate but may cause some difficulty or be problematic. In some cases candidates may not be recommended for hire because the psychologist feels the candidate would not be a solid match or does not possess the characteristics that are particularly valued or required by a specific department. The agency must establish the benchmarks or it most likely will be saddled with a low performing employee (or volunteer).

### **Physical Abilities**

One of the key elements of an organization's assessment of employees is determining their ability to perform the essential functions of the jobs that are detailed in position descriptions. Regardless of whether an employee is volunteer, paid-on-call, part-time or career, it is essential that the organization evaluate his or her physical abilities prior to appointment to the organization and thereafter on a periodic basis, to ensure capability of performing the essential functions of whatever position the employee fills.

A principal concern is the cardiovascular fitness of firefighters. The American fire service continues to see an increase in both injuries and cardiac-related on-duty deaths, which in turn leads to higher insurance premiums and increased workers' compensation costs.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF), through the Joint Labor Management Task Force, developed The Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative. The Guide to Implementing IAFC/IAFF Fire Service Joint Labor Management Wellness/Fitness Initiative is available via electronic format through the IAFC at no charge.

The manual includes information on these topics:

- Fitness evaluation.
- Medical evaluation.
- Rehabilitation.
- Behavioral health.
- Data collection.

In addition to these programs, the Joint Labor Management Task Force developed the Peer Fitness Training Certification Program, which is designed to train personnel to implement fitness programs, improve the wellness of personnel and assist in the physical training of new recruits. More information is available from the IAFF web site, [www.iaff.org/safe/content/wellness/peer.htm](http://www.iaff.org/safe/content/wellness/peer.htm).

The IAFC, in conjunction with the IAFF, developed and adopted the Candidate Physical Agility Test (CPAT), as an entry-level physical ability test for measuring the physical capabilities of a firefighter candidate to perform firefighting functions. The Candidate Physical Agility Tests Manual is available through the IAFC and the IAFF. Additional information can be obtained from the IAFF Web site at [www.iaff.org/safe/wellness/cpat.html](http://www.iaff.org/safe/wellness/cpat.html) and the IAFC Web site [www.iafc.org](http://www.iafc.org) (member only access).

It is essential that organizations utilize evaluation mechanisms that have been approved by their political entities and legal counsel to ensure compliance with local, state and federal legislation, such as Americans with Disabilities (ADA). More information can be obtained by visiting the ADA Web site at [www.ada.gov](http://www.ada.gov).

### **Background Investigations**

Many changes in the way we conduct business have come about as a result of an increased awareness of global terrorism and the new role of the nation's fire service as it relates to homeland security. Prior to September 11, 2001, many organizations were obligated under their state statutes to complete background investigations for health care providers with regard to offenses such as domestic violence, theft and drug abuse.

With the heightened level of security and the integral role that the nation's fire service now has at the local, state and federal level with homeland security, it is imperative that organizations perform a comprehensive background investigation on all candidates.

Some of the more common aspects of formal background investigations include:

- Employment history and verification.
- Reference checks and verification.
- Credit history.
- Criminal case history ([www.howtoinvestigate.com](http://www.howtoinvestigate.com)).
- Certification/training verification.
- Polygraph ([www.polygraph.org](http://www.polygraph.org)).
- Drivers license checks (current, tickets, suspensions, etc.).

There are numerous examples of potential candidates misrepresenting their training, education and previous employment and/or criminal record. By utilizing simple technology and/or services, organizations can quickly verify these areas thus confirming the validity of the information provided by a potential candidate.

### **Medical Evaluations**

According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), data show that in the ten years from 1995 to 2004, 307 of the 440 firefighters who suffered sudden cardiac death were volunteers.

NFPA 1582 Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medical Program for Fire Departments should serve as a guideline for the medical evaluations of fire/EMS personnel. Organizations should be cognizant of specific requirements imposed by their state.

### **Tobacco/Drug/Alcohol-Free Workplace**

A tobacco, drug and alcohol-free workplace should be a requirement of all emergency service organizations, regardless of their composition of volunteer, paid-on-call, part-time and career members.

If your organization is intending to apply for a FIRE ACT grant or is a recipient of the grant in prior years, it is required to be a drug-free workplace. Below is the language from the grant guidelines:

As required by the Drug-Free Workplace Act of 1988, and implemented at 44CFR Part 17, Subpart F, for grantees, as defined at 44 CFR part 17, Sections 17.615 and 17.620:

The applicant certifies that it will continue to provide a drug-free workplace by:

- (a) Publishing a statement notifying employees that the unlawful manufacture, distribution, dispensing, possession, or use of a controlled substance is prohibited in the grantee's workplace and specifying the actions that will be taken against employees for violation of such prohibition.

(b) Establishing an ongoing drug-free awareness program to inform employees about:

- (1) The dangers of drug abuse in the workplace
- (2) The grantee's policy of maintaining a drug-free workplace
- (3) Any available drug counseling, rehabilitation and employee assistance programs
- (4) The penalties that may be imposed upon employees for drug abuse violations occurring in the workplace

(c) Making it a requirement that each employee to be engaged in the performance of the grant to be given a copy of the statement required by paragraph (a).

(d) Notifying the employee in the statement required by paragraph (a) that, as a condition of employment under the grant, the employee will:

(1) Abide by the terms of the statement and

(2) Notify the employer in writing of his or her conviction for a violation of a criminal drug statute occurring in the workplace no later than five calendar days after such conviction.

(e) Notifying the agency, in writing within 10 calendar days after receiving notice under subparagraph (d2) from an employee or otherwise receiving actual notice of such conviction. Employers of convicted employees must provide notice, including position title, to the applicable DHS awarding office, i.e. regional office or DHS office.

(f) Taking one of the following actions against such an employee within 30 calendar days of receiving notice under subparagraph (d2), with respect to any employee who is so convicted:

- (1) Taking appropriate personnel action against such an employee, up to and including termination, consistent with the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended; or
- (2) Requiring such employee to participate satisfactorily in a drug abuse assistance or rehabilitation program approved for such purposes by a federal, state or local health, law enforcement or other appropriate agency.

(g) Making a good faith effort to continue to maintain a drug free workplace through implementation of paragraphs (a), (b), (c), (d), (e), and (f).

### **Training & Certification**

The experience and training level for a particular recruit will most likely vary and is dependant on organizational needs.

It is not uncommon for smaller volunteer and combination departments to recruit personnel and then train them or assist in training them to the desired level. Other organizations recruit those who have obtained a minimum level of training and/or certification. Each organization will have to evaluate its hiring decisions based on:

- Immediate need of trained/certified personnel.
- Training/certification infrastructure of the organization.
- Available funds for training/certification programs.
- Cost versus benefit of training versus certification.

The International Fire Service Accreditation Congress ([www.ifsac.org](http://www.ifsac.org)) and the National Board of Fire Service Professional Qualifications ([www.theuproboard.org](http://www.theuproboard.org)) are two organizations that accredit training and education. Their respective Web sites can provide additional information regarding each organization.

### **Reverse Transitioning: Is it too late to turn back?**

Just as it is appropriate to consider transitioning from an organization staffed completely by volunteers to a combination or fully paid department, there also may be situations in which it is appropriate to look at

reversing the transition—moving from a fully career department to a combination system that incorporates volunteers.

The clues that reverse transitioning may be an option are clearly visible in career systems. Departments in which training opportunities are restricted, worn-out apparatus is not being replaced, building improvements are not made, or building and apparatus maintenance are deferred because of a shortage of funds, or which face staff downsizing and reduced minimum staffing levels, are candidates for reverse transitioning.

When there are serious budgetary shortfalls reverse transitioning from a fully career department to a combination system could, over a period of time, allow for much-needed tax dollars to be reinvested in a physically failing essential service. However, any reallocation of funds must not be at the expense of service to the community. Staffing alternatives of this kind should never diminish the need for qualified, well-trained and experienced emergency service providers.

Introducing volunteers to offset staffing shortages and career staff reduction through attrition is a subject that requires a great deal of department and community coordination before a switch can be made. While the number of communities that may have to consider this option is growing, organized efforts to make this switch will classify your department as a pioneer in rediscovering volunteerism and a trendsetter for others to follow. You will be recognized as an organization that planned and prepared the department and the community for the change with successful results.

While the needs for reverse transitioning may be obvious, a move to a combination system will require a great deal of planning and consensus building within the community. Community surveys may be useful in determining the practicality of such a move with some insight into the supportive population base. Solicited information should include available time commitments, average population age, types of industries and shift schedules, percentage of single-parent families, average income levels, local cost of living trends, and the involvement of local youth programs. All of these will provide clues as to potential availability of local residents. A key element of a successful effort is to include the union component in all discussions.

Other indications of community support may be obtained from a study of the activity levels of other civic groups, which may lend additional clues as to the available population to volunteer. Strong civic organizations with lots of activities and time commitment would most likely indicate an interest of the public to support volunteer functions. The opposite may be true if long-term civic events are cancelled because of a lack of volunteer assistance.

A task force encompassing a broad base of community interests and leaders may be useful in researching and documenting the success and effectiveness of similar-sized communities that operate with successful combination systems. This group may have a substantial impact on the decision to make the switch and provide a check and balance to the emotions that can be associated, real or perceived, with such a major change.

A timeline for this transition will have to include extended and multiple training opportunities for potential volunteers who have to maintain family obligations and full-time jobs. Career personnel must have the appropriate training to be successful mentors and guidelines for conduct to ensure success. Immediate and decisive disciplinary action may be necessary to curb willful attempts to derail the change.

Without proper planning and consensus building, claims of reduced or less than reliable service become a detriment and find their place in destructive rumors.

## Examples Of Model Combination Fire Departments

Department	Chief of Department	Web Address
Garden City FD (NY)	Edward Moran	<a href="http://www.gardencityny.net/fire_dept">www.gardencityny.net/fire_dept</a>
Long Beach FD (NY)	Ralph Tuccillo	<a href="http://www.longbeachny.org">www.longbeachny.org</a>
City of West Des Moines FD (IA)	Donald Cox	<a href="http://www.wdm-ia.com">www.wdm-ia.com</a>
Hanover Co. Fire/EMS (VA)	Fred Crosby	<a href="http://www.co.hanover.va.us/fire-ems">www.co.hanover.va.us/fire-ems</a>
Vashon Island Fire & Rescue (WA)	Jim Wilson	<a href="http://www.vifr.org">www.vifr.org</a>
Xenia Twp. FD (OH)	William T. Spradlin	<a href="http://www.xeniatownship.org">www.xeniatownship.org</a>
Jefferson Twp. FD (OH)	Keith Mayes	<a href="http://www.jeffersontownship.org/departments/fire">www.jeffersontownship.org/departments/fire</a>
City of Vandalia FD (OH)	Chad E. Follick	<a href="http://www.ci.vandalia.oh.us/firedepartment.html">www.ci.vandalia.oh.us/firedepartment.html</a>
Montgomery Co. Fire/Rescue (MD)	Tom Carr	<a href="http://www.mocofiredepartment.com">www.mocofiredepartment.com</a>
Prince William Co. FD (MD)	Mary Beth Michos	<a href="http://www.co.prince-william.va.us">www.co.prince-william.va.us</a>
Bloomington FD (MN)	Ulysses Seal	<a href="http://www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/fire">www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/fire</a>
Campbell County VFD (WY)	Gary Scott	<a href="http://www.ccvfd.com">www.ccvfd.com</a>
Troy Fire Dept. (MI)	Bill Nelson	<a href="http://www.ci.troy.mi.us/fire">www.ci.troy.mi.us/fire</a>
Clackamas County FD (OR)	Norm Whiteley	<a href="http://www.ccf1.com">www.ccf1.com</a>
Hillsborough CO Fire/Rescue (FL)	Bill Nesmith	<a href="http://www.hillsboroughcounty.org/firerescue">www.hillsboroughcounty.org/firerescue</a>
Volusia County Fire/Rescue (FL)	James C. Tauber	<a href="http://volusia.org/fireservices">http://volusia.org/fireservices</a>
Marion County FD (FL)	Steward McElhaney	<a href="http://www.marioncountyfl.org">www.marioncountyfl.org</a>
Ponderosa VFD (TX)	Fred C. Windisch	<a href="http://www.ponderosavfd.org">www.ponderosavfd.org</a>
Kitsap County Fire/Rescue (WA)	Wayne Senter	<a href="http://www.kitsapfire7.org">www.kitsapfire7.org</a>
Saginaw Charter Twp. FD (MI)	Richard Powell	<a href="http://www.stfd.com">www.stfd.com</a>
Farmington Hills FD (MI)	Richard Marinucci	<a href="http://www.ci.farmington-hills.mi.us/services/fire">www.ci.farmington-hills.mi.us/services/fire</a>
Evesham Fire/Rescue (NJ)	Ted Lowden	<a href="http://www.eveshamfire.org">www.eveshamfire.org</a>
Miami Township Div. Fire/EMS (OH)	David B. Fulmer	<a href="http://www.miamitownship.com">www.miamitownship.com</a>
Clearcreek FPD (OH)	Bernie Becker	<a href="http://www.clearcreektownship.com/FD/findex.htm">www.clearcreektownship.com/FD/findex.htm</a>
Miami Township FD (OH)	James Witworth	<a href="http://www.miamitwp.org/fireems/fire.htm">www.miamitwp.org/fireems/fire.htm</a>
German Township VFD (IN)	John M. Buckman	<a href="http://www.germanfiredept.org/">www.germanfiredept.org/</a>
Tinley Park VFD (IL)	Kenneth Dunn	<a href="http://www.tinleyparkfire.org">www.tinleyparkfire.org</a>
Bath Twp. FD (OH)	Jim Paulette	<a href="http://www.bathtownship.org/fire/index.htm">www.bathtownship.org/fire/index.htm</a>
City of Roseville FD (MN)	Rich Cassaway	<a href="http://www.ci.roseville.mn.us/fire">www.ci.roseville.mn.us/fire</a>
York County Fire/Life Safety (VA)	Steve P. Kopczynski	<a href="http://www.yorkcounty.gov/fls/index.html">www.yorkcounty.gov/fls/index.html</a>
Village of Savoy FD (IL)	Michael Forrest	<a href="http://www.village.savoy.il.us/index">www.village.savoy.il.us/index</a>
City of Fitchburg FD (WI)	Randy Pickering	<a href="http://www.fitchburgfire.com">www.fitchburgfire.com</a>



## **Addendum A**

### **Employee Expectations**

The following is a list of expectations that are not included in your job description. We feel it is extremely important for everyone to know what is expected of them. In order for the team to effectively operate all members must buy into these concepts outlined below. Please review the list and clarify any questions you may have. This list is intended to help you make an easy transition to our organization.

#### **1. Maintain and promote a winning attitude.**

- Look at problems as opportunities. How can we improve?
- When you bring a concern to an officer, bring two possible solutions.
- Do not engage in chronic complaining. Be part of the solution, not part of the problem. Complaining does little to improve the organization. Help us work toward positive solutions.
- Don't accept negative attitudes in others. Bring negativity to their attention.
- Avoid negative thinking. Negative thinking is contagious and limits our potential.
- Remember... Attitude is a choice; choose to have a good one.
- Develop a "can do" attitude. You are in control of your potential.
- Focus on making a positive impact on others and the organization.
- Seek out opportunities and ways to implement them.
- Deal in FACTS not assumptions.

#### **2. Practice the Golden Rule.**

- Treat others the way you wish to be treated.
- See value in others. Everyone has value.
- Care about the other members and help them succeed.
- Focus more on the positive attributes of others instead of the negatives. We will not ignore the negative, but we will emphasize the positive.
- Help energize others by being motivated yourself.

#### **3. Be a team player.**

- Participate in meetings and trainings.
- Help your fellow members succeed.
- Remember... We win and we lose as a team, not individuals.
- Keep communications open.
- Always seek win-win solutions.
- Have fun. Enjoy working with the group.
- Make it a safe environment.
- Build relationships to improve trust and understanding.
- Allow mistakes. We will all make mistakes when we try new ideas.
- Learning must take place when we make mistakes.
- Poor performance is not tolerated.
- Recognize fellow members for a job well done.

#### **4. Seek excellence.**

- Increase your education and skill level.
- Focus on helping move the organization forward for today and tomorrow.
- Finish what you start. Get help if you need it.
- Seek to improve everything we do.
- Think why we can, instead of why we can't.

- ☐ Be data driven.
- ☐ Understand our budget is limited. How can we make the biggest impact with what we have?

**5. Do that which is right.**

- ☐ Everything you do must be done in a moral, ethical and legal manner.
- ☐ Contribute to the mission and vision of the organization.
- ☐ Help accomplish our goals.
- ☐ Always consider the internal and external customer.
- ☐ Be trustworthy and show integrity.

**6. Stay focused.**

- ☐ Remember... You're here to help the organization succeed.
- ☐ Stay focused on contributing to the mission, vision and goals.
- ☐ Don't get distracted with personal agendas.
- ☐ You are our most valuable resource... We will support you through education, training, coaching and counseling.
- ☐ Every task that you engage in must be aligned with the mission.

**7. Participate.**

- ☐ Participate in meetings, training, special details and emergency calls.
- ☐ Participate by communicating, asking questions and offering suggestions.
- ☐ Participate by helping the organization be better today than it was yesterday.

**8. Capitalize on adversity.**

- ☐ We are constantly faced with adversity and problems. Don't let the problems pull you down. Our job is to adapt and overcome problems.
- ☐ Seek out opportunity any time you are confronted with adversity.
- ☐ Understand all of the facts when confronted with adversity.
- ☐ Help develop and implement the plan to overcome adversity.

I have reviewed and discussed the above list to clarify my understanding of the expectations. A copy has been provided to me for future reference.

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Employee Date

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Officer

## Addendum B

### Officer Evaluation

1. I do not interact with this officer enough to complete the survey. ☐
2. Do you personally get along with this officer? ☐ Yes ☐ No
3. How would you rate his/her ability to take charge of an incident?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Above average ☐ Average  
☐ Below average ☐ Needs definite improvement
4. How would you rate his/her ability to deal with personnel issues?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Above average ☐ Average  
☐ Below average ☐ Needs definite improvement
5. How would you rate his/her communication skills?  
☐ Excellent ☐ Above average ☐ Average  
☐ Below average ☐ Needs definite improvement
6. Do you believe that this officer has the appropriate leadership skills and experience to hold this position?  
☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Could, but needs improvement
7. Please rate this officer's abilities in the following areas. Rate on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest.  
\_\_\_\_ Ability to adapt to change  
\_\_\_\_ Level of personal motivation  
\_\_\_\_ Ability to motivate others  
\_\_\_\_ Ability to approach problems and issues in a logical fashion
8. Please rate this officer in overall performance with 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest. \_\_\_\_
9. Please rate his/her ability and experience to handle the following situations as a command officer. Rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest.  
\_\_\_\_ Residential structural responses  
\_\_\_\_ Commercial/industrial responses  
\_\_\_\_ Hazardous material incidents  
\_\_\_\_ Rescue operations  
\_\_\_\_ Medical emergencies  
\_\_\_\_ Station operations  
\_\_\_\_ Interaction on mutual aid responses
10. Do you support this individual in his/her current position?  
☐ Yes ☐ No

## Addendum C

### Sample Career Employee Evaluation

#### *Interim Performance Appraisal*

Employee Name:	Title:
Reason for Review: <input type="checkbox"/> Annual Performance Appraisal <input type="checkbox"/> Interim Performance Evaluation	

The purpose of this performance appraisal is to encourage and recognize the level of employee performance and the achievement of organizational objectives and accomplishments. The Interim Performance Evaluation is designed to solicit your opinion of your performance, combined with comments from your immediate supervisor and the Chief, and to develop a progressive plan to improve skills and performance. This form is designed to facilitate a mutual understanding of performance expectations and the performance appraisal process by encouraging the employee and the supervisor to participate in a meaningful dialogue.

Performance will be evaluated on the following rating levels:

- |                       |  |
|-----------------------|--|
| 5 = Outstanding       | Performance consistently and significantly exceeds the requirements of the job and is beyond established standards. Employee achieves objectives at a superior level. The employee demonstrates exceptional skills and innovation in work performance.                       |
| 4 = Commendable       | Performance exceeds job requirements in all major areas. Employee displays leadership and initiative, produces quality work, and sets an example for others to follow.   |
| 3 = Effective         | The employee consistently performs tasks at acceptable levels, produces the required amount of quality work, and makes effective use of resources (ex: materials, budget, time, guidelines, procedures, etc.)  |
| 2 = Needs Improvement | Performance is below job requirements in one or more important area(s) and immediate improvement is required. Employee fulfills some responsibilities; has difficulty completing others. Additional training or development is required to achieve performance expectations. |

Each objective is scored with points assigned from 2-5; a score of 2 represents the lowest rating and 5 is the highest. Total points are divided by the number of scored questions. Employee comments to "Discussion Points" are to be typewritten and italicized in black and the Chief's, and / or supervisor's, comments will need to be italicized in blue.

1. Rate your personal performance regarding your specific administrative job assignments. \_\_\_\_\_ points

#### **Discussion Points**

List your contributions to the department during the past year.

Define your mission with each of the administrative assignments with which you have primary responsibility.

Prioritize your short term (12-24 months) objectives.

Prioritize your general long-term goals.

What "cost saving" measures have you implemented or could be implementing within your area of responsibility?

2. Rate your personal performance as an emergency services provider.  
\_\_\_\_\_ points (as a volunteer) (for those assigned as emergency responders)

**Discussion Points**

What has been your best scene performance this past year and why?

What has been your least productive performance this past year and why?

Identify your technical strengths.

Identify your technical weaknesses and your plans for improvement.

What measures have you personally implemented to improve the safety of department operations?

3. Rate your performance as a team player with your co-workers.  
\_\_\_\_\_ points

**Discussion Points**

In what way have your actions, both as an individual and in the scope of your job responsibilities, contributed to building and enhancing the team effort with your co-workers?

In what way have your actions, both as an individual and in the scope of your job responsibilities, detracted from developing and / or enhancing the team effort with your co-workers?

4. Rate your performance as a team player with the volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_ points

**Discussion Points**

In what way have your actions, both as an individual and in the scope of your job responsibilities, contributed to building and enhancing the team effort within assigned duty shifts?

In what way have your actions, both as an individual and in the scope of your job responsibilities, detracted from developing and / or enhancing the team effort within your assigned duty shifts?

5. Rate your overall productivity this past year. \_\_\_\_\_ points

**Discussion Points**

Identify the critical elements / tasks of your job assignment(s).

Identify the non-critical elements / tasks of your job assignment(s), (those elements / tasks that could be transferred to someone else).

6. Rate your ability to effectively schedule your time. \_\_\_\_\_ points

7. Rate your ability to "self-motivate" and assume work without supervision. \_\_\_\_\_ points

8. Rate your ability to professionally resolve issues with co-workers and volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_ points

9. Rate your ability to “mentor” other co-workers and volunteers. \_\_\_\_\_ points

10. How would you rate your openness and approachability by co-workers? \_\_\_\_\_ points

### **General Discussion Topics**

What single issue would you change / influence to improve the overall administrative operations of the department?

What single issue would you change / influence to improve the overall emergency services operations of the department?

What single item, within the work environment, serves as your most frustrating issue?

Rate how you feel you are compensated (i.e. wages and benefits) for work / duties performed as an employee.

What changes / adjustments would need to occur for you to reasonably perform your duties within your 80 or 86 hour allocation?

### **Overall Evaluation Score**

*Supervisor's Comments* Provide a brief summary statement that characterizes the employee's overall performance and supports your rating. Supervisors should summarize performance strengths and indicate any performance improvement areas needed. Provide additional pages if necessary.



*Employee's Comments* Do you understand how your performance was evaluated? Provide additional pages as necessary.

NOTE: Employee signature does not necessarily signify the employee's agreement with the appraisal; it simply means the appraisal has been discussed with the employee.

\_\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_\_=\_\_\_\_\_  
Total Score                      Total Qualifying Questions                      Performance Level

<b>PERFORMANCE LEVELS 2005 - 2006 Evaluation "Category"</b>
4.0 – Outstanding
3.0 - 3.9 – Commendable
2.0 - 2.9 – Effective
1.0 - 1.9 – Need Improvement

Print	Signature	Date
Employee:		
Supervisor:		
Reviewed by:		
Department Head:		

## **VCOS Position Statements on Fire Service Operational Issues**

The following position statements provide basic information to Chief Officers. The full texts are available on the Web at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org).

Alcohol Use

Apparatus Driver Training

Chief Fire Officer Designation

Commercial Product Endorsement

Exhaust System Installation and Use

Fair Labor Standards Act

Financial Impact Analysis Accompanying NFPA Standards

Physical Fitness

Rural Community Fire Protection Funding

Service Awards for Volunteers Performing Fire Protection and EMS

Terrorism Response Performance Objective

Training Programs

Volunteer Training Standards

Wellness and Fitness Programs



# Volunteer Firefighters

## Contract with America 2005

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This document is offered in a spirit of agreement between the Volunteer Firefighters of America, represented by the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), the federal, state, local governments and the American public.

The purpose of this document is to recognize the significant and cost-effective role that the Volunteer Firefighters of America play in ensuring public safety within our local communities. As part of this cooperative partnership, the agreement outlines the areas that the American volunteer fire service will continue to improve to safeguard our nation's homeland security. This document also identifies national legislative efforts that will add to the stability and longevity of the American Volunteer Fire Service.

### **Volunteer Firefighters' Bill of Rights**

#### **Article I**

Volunteering in the fire service is a benefit to America, and every qualified American should have the right to volunteer. In serving their communities, volunteer firefighters should have their constitutionally protected rights to freedom of speech, equal protection under the law and due process. The U.S. federal, state and local governments shall not pass laws or requirements that abrogate these rights. While we recognize that nongovernmental organizations and private groups have the right to establish rules regarding their governance, these groups should not pass any law or requirement that would restrict the rights of Americans to serve as volunteer firefighters.

#### **Article II**

The federal, state and local governments shall strive to create an environment that encourages citizens to volunteer and recognizes volunteers as a community asset.

#### **Article III**

Professionalism is not a paycheck. It is a way of life based on education, training and practice. As such, professional persons are not necessarily paid persons. It shall be recognized that professional persons' contributions, whether paid or volunteer, are assets to the community. An environment of cooperation and constructive growth shall be encouraged between paid and volunteer professionals.

#### **Article IV**

The federal, state and local governments shall recognize volunteer contributions and shall provide opportunities for volunteers to receive the high-quality training, education and experience necessary to perform expected tasks.

#### **Article V**

The federal, state and local governments, in recognition of the value volunteers provide to their communities, shall provide the necessary tools and equipment for volunteers to perform the expected tasks.

#### **Article VI**

Volunteers shall commit to devoting the time and resources necessary to obtain education, training and experience to reach a level of professional competence to perform the expected tasks.

#### **Article VII**

Volunteers shall expect, and local governments shall commit to, the provision of qualified, certified and competent leaders.

## **Article IX**

Volunteers shall expect, and local governments shall commit to, the provision of healthy and safe work environments for volunteers.

## **Article X**

In the event of a manmade or natural disaster, the federal, state and local governments shall expect, and the volunteers shall commit to, the prevention of loss of life, the reduction of injury and property loss and the minimization of damage to our natural environment. Volunteers shall be recognized as a valued resource and monetarily compensated after the declaration of a state or national disaster in the same method as the personnel from other agencies and organizations.

## **Volunteer Firefighters Strive for Improvement**

The American Volunteer Fire Service shall:

- Continue to provide quality services to our hometown communities, providing America with an annual savings of \$37 billion;
- Strive to certify all volunteer firefighters at the state level to verify their public commitment to be the best service providers for their communities;
- Have a commitment to develop training programs that will improve the management skills of the volunteer fire officers and managers;
- Strive to improve the physical fitness of its members to reduce the tragic loss of human life from heart-related emergencies that are a result of poor personal physical conditioning;
- Strive to eliminate the longstanding tradition of serving alcohol in public fire stations managed by volunteer departments;
- Strive to provide each volunteer firefighter with emergency vehicle operation training to reduce the loss of human life from emergency vehicle accidents; and
- Strive for 100 percent incident reporting through the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS).

## **The Section Mission Statement**

The mission of the IAFC Volunteer & Combination Officers Section is to provide Chief Officers who manage volunteers within the Fire/Rescue/EMS delivery system with information, education, services, and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities.

## **The Section Vision**

Our vision is to be the leading International Organization with a sustained performance in representing the interests of the Professional Volunteer and Combination Fire Service. We will be a dynamic organization, characterized by our integrity, customer focus, membership growth, the value placed on people and superior application of technology. We will be the best at generating and applying new ideas and learning faster than other organizations



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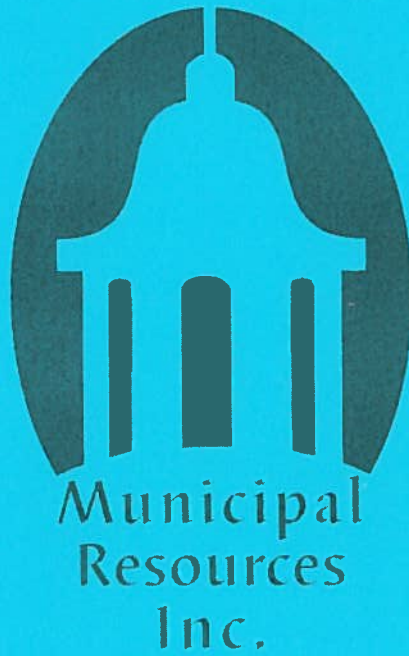
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***Officers Section***

IAFC Volunteer and Combination Officers Section  
4025 Fair Ridge Drive

# ***APPENDIX C***





**Final Report**  
**Solomon Pond Mall Fire Protection Joint Task Force**  
**To the**  
**Board of Selectmen and Board of Fire Engineers**

**April 2011**

**Introduction**

As a result of persistent questions surrounding the provision of fire services to the Solomon Pond Mall, a task force was appointed by the selectmen to review the Berlin Fire Departments fire protection and prevention at the Solomon Pond Mall.

The purpose of this report is to clarify the following points:

- The actions taken by:
  - State legislature
  - town meeting;
  - the board of selectmen;
  - the fire engineers.
- The understanding before the voters when they voted the Mall in 1994.
- The agreements and understandings among the mall operator, the city of Marlborough and the town of Berlin.
- The legal basis and status of the current fire protection and prevention coverage of the Mall.
- The burden and the cost of providing fire protection and prevention services to the mall.

The data in this report was collected by the committee and additional detailed data was requested of the fire department.

There are two releases of this report. The full report contains all reference material in the appendices, whereas the summary report does not. Both are delivered electronically as .pdf files for ease of distribution and viewing.

This report is released electronically, both as email attachment without all the attachments and on a CD which includes the report as well as complete copies of the attachments.

## **Timeline and General Discussion**

We determined to present the actions taken by the various parties by way of a timeline.

### **Phase 1: 12/1993 – 3/26/1994      Negotiation of Mall Mitigation Package.**

The public safety aspects of the Mall mitigation package were negotiated by the then-current board of selectmen which directed the negotiating committee as to the points in the mitigation package related to public safety. In the process of developing mitigation requests and in the run-up to the vote to authorize the Solomon Pond Mall, which took place on March 26, 1994, the selectmen commissioned a MMA Consulting Group Inc, (a service of Massachusetts Municipal Association) study of the impacts of the mall on public safety. They were assisted by the public safety department heads. The MMA study considered the following alternate approaches:

- No action;
- Give up responsibility;
- Provide appropriate services either on our own or in partnership with Marlborough.

The recommendation adopted from this study was that Berlin and Marlborough partner to provide public safety services to the mall. Other relevant findings of the study include:

- Berlin needed to improve its public safety response capability;
- Some reasonable costs should be recoverable from the mall proponent in the form of mitigation payments; and that
- "some of the capability [required by the new mall] must be provided by the Town's improved revenue stream", i.e. the new tax revenues arising from the mall.

A 6 Jan 1994 meeting the board of selectmen defined the partnered response of Marlborough and Berlin as follows:

- Marlborough engine & Ladder,
- Berlin Quint.

As a result of these findings and actions, the board of selectmen instructed the negotiating committee to include the following in the mitigation package for the mall with regard to fire protection and prevention services:

- Communications equipment
- Firefighting equipment
- Rebuilt "Quint" truck.

The Selectmen were also advised prior to the mall vote that the coverage of the Mall in partnership with Marlborough could be accomplished as follows:

- Police considered a matter of jurisdiction resolution
- Fire considered a matter of mutual aid agreements

As a result in March of 1994, the Selectmen's Executive session, the Selectmen set an implementation policy of:

- Joint judicial district for police
- Mutual aid agreements for fire.

The record shows that this was the arrangement put before the voters in march of 1994, when they voted for the mall:

- Marlborough would take the lead in providing public safety services;
- Berlin would provide secondary coverage entailing the dispatch of the “Quint” truck purchased as part of the Mall mitigation;
- We would seek a joint municipal district to take care of issues of jurisdiction, particularly affecting police, but secondarily affecting fire coverage;
- We would implement the shared coverage via mutual aid agreements.

## **Phase 2 (1995-2000): Implementation of the Joint Municipal District**

Once the mall was passed, the tenant proceeded with the implementation of a joint municipal district.

- In June of 1995 the town meeting authorized a home rule petition for a joint municipal district or public safety coverage. This vote authorized selectmen to negotiate mutual aid (inter-municipal) agreements to determine the specific provision of public safety services. This vote focused on police related matters.
- In May of 1996, the selectmen adopted administrative reports as to the two major components of the fire protection and prevention coverage for the mall:
  - Draft of home rule petition requesting the creation of the joint municipal district.
    - Establishes that Marlborough has primary responsibility for fire protection services.
    - Establishes that Berlin shall have concurrent jurisdiction over the joint municipal district.
    - Establishes that each town shall be responsible for fire prevention services within its boundaries, including primarily inspections and licenses.

- Draft interim agreement with Marlborough setting forth the specific response to fire protection calls at the mall.
  - Establishes Berlin response as sending the “Quint” truck, consistent with the assumptions in the Mall mitigation process.
  - Establishes Marlborough response as 2 to 3 times the Berlin commitment.
- In July of 1996, the selectmen approved special home rule act for the inter-municipal public safety district. This proposal requests identical protocols for all three public safety departments.
- In January 1997, the Berlin Fire Chief signed an interim mutual aid agreement drafted by the Marlborough Fire Chief. This establishes commitments consistent with the draft interim agreement approved by the selectmen in May of 1996. This agreement was intended only to provide operational protocols until the passage of the public safety district law. By its terms it expired when that law was passed.
- In August 2000, Chapter 173 of the Acts of 2000 signed by governor. This act establishes the inter-municipal public safety district and codifies authority and responsibilities for all public safety aspects of the district. In particular, it requires each fire chief to develop and issue uniform protocols to their respective departments in connection with incident response. These protocols are in the context of Marlborough having primary responsibility. In addition, each town retains the responsibility for permit and inspection tasks for properties in their respective jurisdictions.

### **Phase 3: Current State**

Fire prevention and protection services in the joint municipal district continue to be performed along the lines described in the Mall mitigation presentations and the interim mutual aid agreement executed between the fire chiefs in January of 1997. As this agreement expired on the passage of the August 2000 public safety district law, this was re-executed by the fire chiefs in April 2011.

The cost and burden of Berlin's commitment is dealt with in the findings section of this report.

Present services include fire prevention (permits, inspections and details), training as well as incident response. The response is minimal unless the incident demands a greater commitment. Marlborough's response is 2 to 3 times that of Berlin's as they are primary.

The fire engineers make the following points with respect to the current state of affairs:

- Prevention consists of permits as required for activities, fire details when required and inspections. The requirements for all these activities are promulgated by the fire marshal's office. In addition, problems are often found or are the cause of incidents to which Berlin responds. Code enforcement follow up on issues found during incidents are completed by the respective fire departments.

- Each incident response in the Town of Berlin must have a report filed with the Fire Marshall's Office.
- Each incident response also serves as training for future responses as well as prevention of future problems and
- The required services are seen as tightly intertwined and provide the appropriate protection for those who live in and transit Berlin at the Solomon Pond Mall.

This task force requested a complete documentation of the present state of fire prevention and protection of the Solomon Pond Mall from the Berlin Board of Fire Engineers. Highlights are shown in Appendix A with the complete document in Appendix B - Attachments. The reader is encouraged to read the complete report (Mall Present State) in attachment B.

### **Findings.**

- **The current arrangements are consistent with the arrangements that served as operating assumptions during the mall mitigation process and that were presented to the town during the original vote to approve the mall in March 1994. It was expected that some measure of the fire protection costs would be covered by tax revenues from the new property.**
- **The character and incidence of alarms at the mall are within normally expected parameters and fire safety personnel have taken reasonable steps on an ongoing basis to minimize unnecessary responses.**
- **The currently operating agreement between Marlborough and Berlin is the most recent protocol signed by the fire chiefs of the respective municipalities. These agreements reflect the arrangements discussed in the first finding.**
- **The legal basis for the current arrangements is as follows:**
  - **Chapter 173 of the Acts of 2000 serves as the basis for the current arrangements. It provides for primary responsibility for fire services to reside with Marlborough and concurrent jurisdiction to reside with Berlin. This law does not establish any particular details as to the allocation of commitment among the towns.**
  - **The particular details of fire service coverage are set out in the agreement between the two fire Chiefs. This agreement relies on language in the public safety district law where Marlborough has primary responsibility, i.e. the lead role, and that each chief shall develop uniform protocols and issue them to his or her own department.**

- Two questions may be asked:
  - Was this intended to empower the Chiefs to enter into the uniform protocols simply between themselves within their concurrent jurisdiction or is further action by the municipalities required?
  - Massachusetts General Laws generally requires that the mayor/counsel or selectmen/town meeting authorize significant contracts binding the municipality. Are the uniform protocols established within the district required to be reflected in an inter-municipal agreement subject to these formalities?

It may be advisable to have town Council review the legal formalities that should attend this agreement.

**4. The cost and burden of providing fire protection services are as follows:**

- The number of calls to the Mall ranged from 60-80 per year over the five year period from 2005 to 2009 (inclusive). This means a mathematical average of from 1.15 to 1.53 calls per week.
- The average wage costs have been \$6446 / year over the 5 year period 2005 to 2009.
- Additional expenses are less than \$1000 per year, for a total costs of \$7446 / year incremental cost to the operation for these services.
- To put the five year district response in perspective, service to the district accounted for:
  - 26 % of the department incidents,
  - 18 % of the wage budget, and
  - 8.5 % of the total fire department budget.
- There are no further mitigation payments being made with respect to the services.
- The mall property is assessed at \$78,141,500 which when taxed at the \$14.84 commercial rate is annual taxes of \$1,159,619.

**5. Any modification of the current arrangement would require active negotiation with Marlborough and a willingness on the part of Marlborough to do without some or all of Berlin's current contribution.**

## Appendices

### Appendix A - Summary of Documents Considered

Document Time Line (for all material considered in the analysis)  
(Complete documents appended to the detailed report as .pdf files)

- 12/20/1993     Selectmen's meeting - Selectmen authorize MMA impact study  
                         Study results published in February, 1994  
                         Lays the ground work for subsequent actions and decisions  
                         The results were used in special act and mitigation agreement generation.
- 3/7/1994        Selectmen's Executive Session  
                         Mitigation funding issues discussed only, no authority or response issues  
                         Expressed that 911 should all go to Marlborough  
                         Sets a course for a joint district for police and mutual aid for fire.
- 6/20/1995       Town Meeting - authorizes selectmen to petition under Home Rule for a Joint  
                         Judicial District for providing police protection and service to the district
- 5/20/1996       Administrative Report on Selectmen's meeting  
                         Draft of interim mutual aid agreement and special act proposal in  
                         selectmen's folder. Fire Chief didn't like primary responsibility for Marl,  
                         rather equal.  
                         Mentions inter-municipal agreements by selectmen approved by a town  
                         meeting.
- 5/28/1996       Administrative Report on selectmen's meeting  
                         "the agreed upon first response from the towns will be 2 trucks from  
                         Marlborough and the quint from Berlin".  
                         Discussion on primary responsibility, first arrival and the need for consistent  
                         protocol for the entire district. Previous meetings were clear on Marlborough  
                         having primary.
- 7/1/1996        Proposal for a special act - content as Acts of 2000 Chapter 173
- 1/9/1997        Marlborough Fire interim joint response agreement signed  
                         The interim mutual aid agreement for fire and ambulance protection.  
                         In the manner agreed upon by selectmen and implemented by Chiefs  
                         Defines: Alarm receipt and notification of Berlin.  
                         Establishment of Command  
                         Duties of first arriving engine  
                         Staging of subsequent units  
                         Establishing of primary responsibility with Marlborough ranking officer  
                         With unified command with Berlin ranking officer  
                         Defines responses – Municipal alarm:

Marlboro 1 engine, 1 ladder  
Berlin – 1 engine (quint)  
Structure Fire:  
Marlboro 2 engines 1 ladder  
Berlin – 1 engine, 1 ladder (quint)

8/4/2000 Chapter 173 of the Acts of 2000 (result of 1996 proposal)  
Provides Berlin and Marlborough with jurisdiction and protocol guidance  
Each must establish uniform protocols for response at Marlborough's lead.

Section 3b

Marlborough shall have primary responsibility for fire services  
Marlborough shall have primary jurisdiction.  
Berlin shall have concurrent jurisdiction.  
Each fire chief shall develop and issue uniform protocols  
Each retains sole permit, inspection and license authority.

Section 3d

Marlborough shall provide public safety answering point service

10/4/2010 Board of Fire Engineers summary of present state  
This document covers all aspect of the present state of Fire Protection Services provided to the District. Important points are:

Added incremental costs are minimal. So the total is less than \$1000 over wages, or on average a total of \$7446 / year incremental cost.

Permit and inspection services are tightly tied to incidents  
Changes and problems are often found during incidents  
Public safety is greatly enhanced by this tight coupling.  
Mandatory reporting to the Fire Marshall on ALL incidents in the town would be impossible without responding.  
Every response is training so when a major incident happens we are prepared.

10/5/2010 Jan 2005 to Dec 2009 (last full 5 year period)  
The engineers provided, at the committee's request, a detailed report on incidents for the last full 5 year period, 2005 - 2009

This data is presented on a series of Excel spreadsheets and is preceded by definitions and a listing of most serious incidents.

The run summary allows you to view the quantity and types of incidents  
There are routine AND serious types of calls as you would expect  
The type distribution is not unlike typical fire service run types  
The quantity declines as inspection and enforcement has increased



(work in 2007 affected 2008 and 2009 totals)

The summary also shows costs for manpower.

Wages are between \$5000, and \$10,000 and average \$6446 / year.

3/2011 Draft of Updated Uniform Response Protocols

Updated to conform to Chapter 173 and include notification updates

4/2011 Updated Uniform Response Protocols issued by Marlborough Chief and signed by Berlin Chief

## **Appendix B**

The following pages, in the order listed, are contained in the .pdf files which are part of this report.

2-1994 MMA Consultants Report 4 Sections

12-20-1993 Selectmen's Meeting

3-7-1994 Selectmen's Executive Session

6-20-1995 Town Meeting

5-20-1996 Admin Report

5-28-1996 Admin Report

7-1-1996 Special Act Proposal

1-9-1997 Marlborough Agreement

8-4-2000 chapter 173 of the Acts of 2000

10-4-2010 Mall Present State

10-5-2010 Runs to Donald Lynch Blvd

10-5-2010 Mall Data

4-2011 Mall Response Protocols

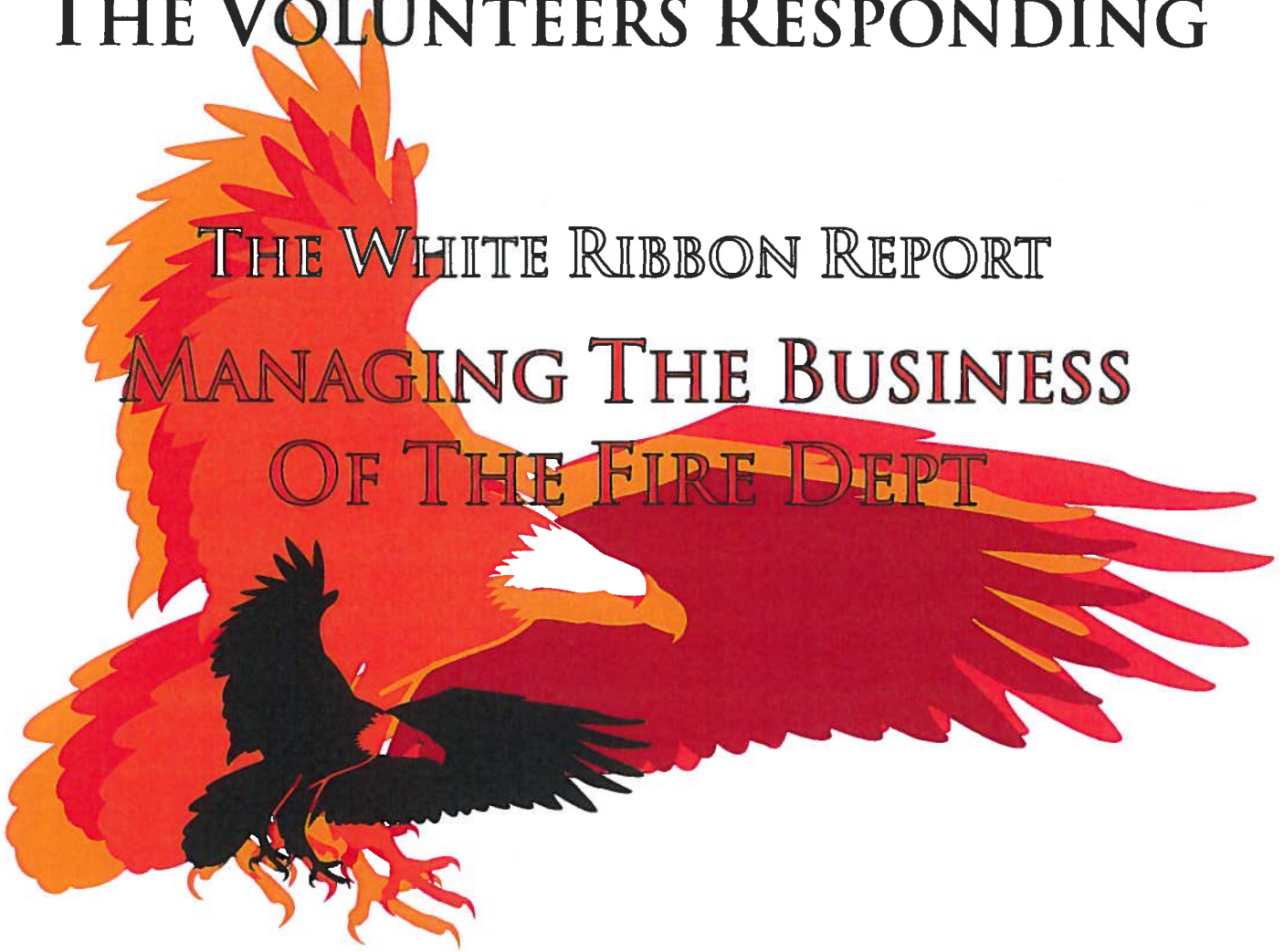
# ***APPENDIX D***



Municipal  
Resources  
Inc.

# KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON, THE TRUCKS RUNNING AND THE VOLUNTEERS RESPONDING

## THE WHITE RIBBON REPORT MANAGING THE BUSINESS OF THE FIRE DEPT



Published  
September  
2006



THE ONLY NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM FOR LEADERS OF  
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# THE WHITE RIBBON REPORT

## MANAGING THE BUSINESS OF THE FIRE DEPARTMENT: KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON, THE TRUCKS RUNNING AND THE VOLUNTEERS RESPONDING

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Texas

**\*Fire Chief Magazine** Volunteer Fire Chief of the Year

**CFO** is the Chief Fire Officer designation  
from the Center for Public Safety Excellence

**EFO** is the Executive Fire Officer designation  
from the United States Fire Administration/National Fire Academy

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# **VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION OFFICERS SECTION**

## **INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE CHIEFS**

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North Farms Volunteer Fire Department  
Connecticut

#### **Vice-Chair**

Deputy Fire Chief Stephen F. Miller  
Cabin John Volunteer Fire Department  
Maryland

#### **Secretary/Treasurer**

Fire Marshal Robert Bettenhausen, CFO  
Tinley Park Volunteer Fire Department  
Illinois

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Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department  
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**Chief Brett Waters**  
Central Valley Fire District  
Montana

#### **Legislative/FLSA Liaison**

Chief Gary Scott  
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#### **Co-Founder**

Chief John M. Buckman III, CFO  
German Township Fire Department  
Indiana



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## ***PREFACE***

Welcome, and thank you for opening **The White Ribbon Report: *Managing The Business of The Fire Department: Keeping The Lights On, The Trucks Running, and the Volunteers Responding.*** This comprehensive report is the third in a series issued by the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC). This report is in response to changes within the American fire and rescue service that have created new needs and challenges. We intend to provide creative solutions and concepts on the management and operation of small- to medium-sized fire departments that are staffed with volunteers.

The VCOS has issued two previous reports that are available for download at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org). They are **The Red Ribbon Report: *Lighting the Path of Evolution: Leading the Transition in Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments,*** November 2005 and **The Blue Ribbon Report: *A Call for Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service,*** March 2004.

The authors and contributors to the Red, White and Blue reports have created a toolbox on the VCOS Web site to help you implement many of the concepts in these documents. I am extremely proud of the VCOS accomplishments through the hard work of our brothers and sisters and I encourage you to stay abreast of changing conditions and opportunities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy S. Wall". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "T" and "S".

Timothy S. Wall

Chair

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The eagle highlights  
important information  
throughout this report.

## Managing the Business of the Fire Department: Keeping the Lights On, the Trucks Running and the Volunteers Responding

A new fire chief usually will pay more attention to the quality of services delivered than the business management of the fire department because that is what is comfortable. However, as the department's leader, you are in charge of the responses, the oversight of the volunteers and the administrative duties. If the system that you inherited does not have the appropriate business practices in place, then you have some work to do.

Because you are the chief, you have the responsibility to set up a management system that takes care of the volunteers and their personal needs. Most fire departments dismiss this responsibility as something for career departments to do. However, volunteer firefighters are considered employees in most states and therefore have the same employer/employee relationship as any paid profession.<sup>1</sup>

*The fire chief is the one usually held accountable and responsible by the public for mistakes, poor performance or slow response time. Leaders must make things happen.*

Mismanagement of volunteers and their personal needs will contribute to a reduced retention rate. Ignoring federal mandates can expose the department to serious legal issues. This is the time to show your ability to delegate and recruit. Ask for help if you need it. Consider appointing a volunteer business manager to help fix your issues and bring credibility to your department. Your goal is to be a good partner in local government.

### Expectations

Your actions and personal conduct during your term as chief will impact your firefighters and the community's expectations of you. When you become a fire chief, it can be difficult to get your hands around your responsibilities. No set of directions accompanies your badge. You will learn most of what you need to know from mentors and from experience.

Here are some of the **personal** values that will be expected of you as a chief officer:

- ☐ Honesty
- ☐ Integrity
- ☐ Dependability
- ☐ Commitment
- ☐ Knowledge and competence
- ☐ Respect for authority, your peers and your employees and volunteers



As the fire chief, you should know that others have expectations and trust in your abilities to manage the fire department. Here are some of their expectations of you and your volunteers.

The services provided by the fire department should reflect what the public desires and the taxpayers are willing to fund. In turn, the **community** should reasonably expect that:

- ☐ The taxpayers' money is spent in the best interests of firefighter and community safety
- ☐ The fire department will provide the services that are needed to keep citizens safe
- ☐ The fire department will respond in a timely manner
- ☐ The firefighters who respond to an emergency are trained and experienced
- ☐ The firefighters are physically fit
- ☐ The firefighters are not impaired by alcohol or drugs
- ☐ Services will change to meet growing demand because of an increase in population

<sup>1</sup> Check with your city or county manager to verify the rules that apply to your department.

The **local government** expects that:

- ☐ You will inform them of what their options are and what the consequences of their decisions will be
- ☐ The fire department is a partnership with local government in community protection
- ☐ You will manage the department in compliance with local, state and federal laws and regulations
- ☐ They will have the right to decide if you will be an all-hazards response agency or respond only to fires, or anything in between
- ☐ The apparatus and equipment purchased will meet the needs of the public and is not extravagant
- ☐ The fire department has negotiated mutual-aid agreements with other agencies and departments for those calls that require greater resources than you have on-hand
- ☐ The fire department is part of a regional response network for infrequent but important response situations such as hazardous materials response or technical rescues
- ☐ You are accountable for the money they give you

The **fire department** expects that:

- ☐ Its members are trained and proficient
- ☐ Its members are physically fit
- ☐ Its members share the response burden
- ☐ Its members will show up for calls
- ☐ You have a strategic plan for growth
- ☐ Personnel rules are in place to make the system stable

The **volunteers** expect that:

- ☐ You will provide a safe and professional working environment
- ☐ You will treat them fairly
- ☐ You will create an environment that encourages personal growth
- ☐ You will reinforce the importance of teamwork
- ☐ You are receptive to their opinions on major decisions
- ☐ You will use their time effectively and efficiently
- ☐ You will appreciate their service
- ☐ Officers will always put the good of the department first

The **volunteers' families** expect that:

- ☐ The department has – and strictly adheres to – a national standard of safety
- ☐ You will use their family members' time wisely
- ☐ You will take care of them if there is an injury or death
- ☐ You support their family bonds and responsibilities
- ☐ The department has a code of conduct regulating station behavior



Finally, as **fire chief** you should expect that:

- ☐ Your volunteers will honor their commitment to train
- ☐ Your volunteers will respond when required to do so
- ☐ Your volunteers will be honest with you about your performance
- ☐ You will have the opportunity to deal with internal issues before they become serious problems
- ☐ The local government will provide you with the resources to successfully run and manage the department

You may consider drafting and circulating a set of department conduct standards to which everyone must adhere. For a sample set of standards, please see Appendix A.

## ***Vision and Planning***

Every fire department needs a strategic plan. The overall objective of a strategic plan is to identify the risks to the community; determine the level of acceptable risk; and develop policy, plans and funding commitments to “buy down” the risk to an acceptable level. If a fire department does not have a strategic plan, it has no vision for the future and provides a high level of uncertainty to the volunteers and the community.

A strategic plan will help you identify your funding needs to the local government. Policymakers have three choices for the type of community safety and service that the fire department will provide: 1) prevention and early suppression; 2) prevention and response; or 3) response only. Ultimately, the level of funding and political support will make that decision for you. You will help shape the outcome, however, by interacting with the policymakers.

Often, the vision for the fire department is solely conceived by one person – the current chief – and changes each time a new chief takes office. Many volunteer fire departments are unstable because of a constant change in leadership. A strategic plan must be able to sustain the changes in leadership and become the guiding document for improved and anticipated changes in services.

Members of the fire department, community representatives and local government officials should work together to identify the immediate and long-range plans of the fire department and develop a strategic plan to meet those objectives. This kind of planning can best be facilitated as a workshop. The resulting plan should address facilities, equipment and apparatus needs, funding allocations based on planned replacement objectives and population milestones that may cause the department to reevaluate volunteer staffing and services. This process can change the working environment and the level of community support, obtain buy-in and understanding from local officials and solidify a financial commitment to accomplish the collectively adopted fire department mission.

Request that a government official be appointed to your department as a liaison to improve the communication between the fire department and the funding entity. This can be of tremendous benefit when it is necessary to gather support for large purchases or important changes. The liaison’s inside experiences and views will help to promote, convey and convince that a need should be funded.

A strategic plan cannot discount the opinions of the volunteers and the services that they are willing to, and want to provide. They are the ones doing the work and donating their time, and therefore will have valuable insights and suggestions that must be balanced with the philosophies of the fireboard or commission and the funding agencies.

Your department board or fire commission should provide direction consistent with your strategic plan, establish overall governance and financial policy and oversee plan implementation. The board or commission should craft an evaluation tool to gauge the department’s progress in meeting established policy planning goals and response objectives. This gives the chief direction—a basis to evaluate his or her performance and the ability of the department to meet the needs of the community. A factual checklist of objectives offers the department some protection from newly elected or appointed governing officials who may not understand the operations of your department or who have a personal agenda in reforming your department. This tool should be modified through official board or commission action.

Fire boards or commissions should not be involved in the daily operations of the department and should avoid active participation in personnel issues, preserving their ability to be the “impartial hearing board” at the conclusion of a disciplinary action by the chief.



## ***Community Value of Volunteers***

Fire departments staffed with volunteers provide a substantial cost savings to local governments across the country. Demonstrating this savings to local government officials is an important way to garner support for funding to keep your facilities, equipment and firefighters in shape to serve the community. The two main ways to demonstrate this benefit to government officials are “actual cost savings” and “cost avoidance.”

### ***Actual Cost Savings***

The actual cost savings of volunteer firefighter departments is reflected in the amount of time that volunteer firefighters contribute to the community. To calculate this amount, you must keep meticulous records of the volunteers’ time commitment, including responses, training, public education efforts, vehicle maintenance, station upkeep and any other contribution that volunteers make to the fire department.



To calculate the actual dollar amount of a volunteer’s time, we suggest that you use the hourly figure determined by the Independent Sector, which calculated a national average for volunteer time. The amount for 2005 is \$18.04 per hour.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Cost Avoidance***

If people do not volunteer, then the community has two options: hire firefighters or provide a minimal-to-nonexistent fire service. “Cost avoidance” refers to the amount of money the community would have to spend on fully career fire services but avoids spending because of the use of volunteers.

The term “cost avoidance” is more accurate than savings because this comparative figure is never budgeted, meaning that the money is never exchanged and no cash carryover results from the payroll and benefit savings. If an exchange of money for the full service price occurred and that amount were rebated at the end of each fiscal period, then the savings would be a tangible amount of cash that would speak for itself.

Determine the amount of cost avoidance by calculating the number of career firefighters the community would have to hire if you did not provide firefighting services with volunteers. This figure should be based on local or state averages for career firefighters, including their benefits and support staff, to make the system functional. The staffing level should be based on communities with a population base similar to yours. For a sample cost avoidance calculation, please see Appendix B.

Also, calculate the amount of money your department saves citizens on their homeowners insurance because of your Insurance Service Office (ISO) rating.<sup>3</sup> Obtain the number of improved residential properties in your jurisdiction from the local tax assessor’s office, the local planning office or the U.S. Census Bureau at [www.census.gov](http://www.census.gov). Then obtain the average home value for the area (a local realtor may be able to assist you). Finally, ask a local insurance agent to provide quotes on a standard homeowners policy on a home in your jurisdiction that is of average value. Ask what that homeowner would pay with a class-10 ISO rating and with whatever class you currently are or seek to be. For a sample calculation of a fire department ISO rating, please see Appendix C.

Asking local realtors and insurance agents for help is a good opportunity to use diversification strategies, as discussed later in this document. These professionals may be willing to donate their time to the fire department out of a sense of civic pride and responsibility.

<sup>2</sup> Independent Sector, *Value of Volunteer Time*, available at [www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer\\_time.html](http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html), viewed Aug. 4, 2006. Available on this site is a history of hourly rates and specific state rates.

<sup>3</sup> The Insurance Service Office assesses a community’s risk under 10 categories. A community’s risk rating determines its premium cost for building insurance. For more information, please visit [www.isomitigation.com](http://www.isomitigation.com).

## Fire Prevention

Fire departments are responsible for fire prevention as well as response. This is another way to partner with local government in public safety. The following suggestions will help you work with the community in this area:

*Implementing residential sprinkler codes is one way to sustain the delivery of emergency services with all volunteer or combination staffing.*

- ❑ Work with your local government to create and enforce a structured fire prevention program.<sup>4</sup>
- ❑ Look for opportunities to educate the public about fire safety. Ask to speak at local schools, civic centers and block parties, and bring your apparatus and gear to provide demonstrations. Consider including information in mailings and on Web sites. Build a relationship with your local media outlets (television, radio and newspapers). Fire chiefs should appoint a public information officer (PIO) to provide relevant information to the public on emergency responses and to coordinate public education opportunities.
- ❑ Work with your local government to develop building and fire codes, including potential requirements for sprinkler installation. Two major fire and building code development organizations exist to help you: the International Code Council (ICC) and the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The ICC and NFPA develop model codes to limit damage from fire and other natural hazards. If your local government has not yet adopted relevant fire codes, you should work with them to do so.<sup>5</sup>
- ❑ Work with your local government to enforce building and fire codes. Codes are of no use if they are not enforced. Help your local government establish a process for enforcing codes so you have an authority to cite when you find a hazardous situation. Pay particular attention to codes that require the installation of sprinklers. The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) encourages the use of sprinklers as a significant way to prevent injury and death.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> The U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) offers several programs to help localities establish such programs. For more information, please visit [www.usfa.dhs.gov/subjects/fireprev/](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/subjects/fireprev/).

<sup>5</sup> For more information on these groups, please visit their Web sites at [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org) (ICC) and [www.nfpa.org](http://www.nfpa.org) (NFPA).

<sup>6</sup> For more information on USFA sprinkler data, please visit [www.usfa.dhs.gov/safety/sprinklers/](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/safety/sprinklers/).

## ***Becoming a Part of the Community***

Fire departments should serve their communities in more ways than traditional response. In order to embed your department more firmly within your community and strengthen your relationships with local policymakers, consider joining the local chamber of commerce and other civic organizations and participating in community events.

Regularly attending local government meetings gives you the opportunity to share information about the fire department and allows you to stay on top of changes within your community. In some cases, fire chiefs find out that new buildings or subdivisions are planned only when construction begins. Since any community development affects the fire department, the chief should know of any changes as soon as possible.

When attending any community meeting, always be as professional as possible and dress appropriately for the occasion. Be prepared with any information that policymakers might need, including concise written statements and other visual materials that are necessary to reinforce or explain your position.

## ***Human Resource Management: Striving for Membership Longevity***

The volunteer fire service is full of tradition that captivates, enchants and entices individuals to join this time-honored civic service. This tradition includes a personal feeling of importance, value and fulfillment of childhood dreams. It allows individuals to make a difference in the well-being of a community, regardless of whether a department is staffed by volunteers or a combination component. How we manage these strong emotions will make the difference in how long a person chooses to volunteer. The feeling of pride and the ambition to succeed is absorbed in the physical surroundings and the management's emphasis on success.

In departments staffed with volunteers, a widely accepted officer election system – minus personal qualifications and controlled with term limits – has created a situation where most of the officers' time and energy are spent on basic fire department functions such as keeping the trucks running, the station clean and training for and responding to calls. The election process requires a chief to be campaigning for re-election and keeping the members happy. Officer term limits in an organization without a strategic operational plan can create an unstable and unproductive environment because the goals and objectives change with the leadership.

*Term limits for officers may create an unstable organizational environment. A strategic plan identifies the action required by the organization to reduce the roller-coaster effect of leadership that is constantly changing.*

Successful volunteer managers understand the importance of fostering enthusiasm and focusing on opportunities to improve personal and team skill levels. Those departments understand the necessity of ensuring that volunteering is "hassle-free" regarding controllable issues. They structure their departments so that good service becomes the focus and mission of the organization.

A direct connection can be made between how we manage our human resources, the longevity of our personnel, the quality of services provided by our department and, ultimately, the safety of our emergency providers while operating at the emergency. That connection is directly related to a manager's ability to minimize conflict within the department, distribute prompt and fair discipline and provide an atmosphere that encourages and rewards substantive and positive improvements. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and tenure of local emergency providers, whether they are volunteer or career.

The commitment to human-resource management provides the basis for the department's success. How we manage, motivate, mentor, design expectations, discipline and record all of these actions provides a basis for future individual and department success. What entices the volunteer is energy channeled toward a positive and productive outcome.

The position of human resource manager is equally important to chief officer positions. Regardless of the size of your department, the human resource functions are equally as important as the chief officer positions. If you do not take care of your firefighters, they will leave. While this role is behind the scenes, it covers all of the human aspects of the department, such as recruiting, hiring and terminating volunteers; dealing with personnel complaints and investigations; discipline; medical issues; managing long-term personnel objectives such as diversification and training plans; and record management. All of these duties are done with specific knowledge of federal laws to protect individual rights.

*Hard work, done well, feels good, particularly when it is hassle-free and appreciated by organizational leadership.*

This responsibility should not necessarily fall on the fire chief's shoulders. If someone in the organization does not have this kind of expertise, then outside assistance and guidance may be needed. Personnel management might be better transferred to individuals in local government who routinely deal with these kinds of job responsibilities.

### ***Recruiting and Hiring Volunteers***

Your challenge is to convince potential volunteers to: a) donate their time, and b) donate that time to your department. Americans spend about a third of their time at work and a third of their time asleep, which leaves only a third of their time for family, household activities and leisure, which includes volunteering. In fact, Americans spend only 5 percent of their time on leisure activities.<sup>7</sup>

Of the 65.4 million people who volunteered their time between September 2004 and September 2005, only 7.4 percent volunteered with fire departments, emergency medical services (EMS) or and related services.<sup>8</sup> A substantial pool of volunteers exists in our communities. We may have to change our recruitment philosophies to attract them to our departments.

*The best recruiting program is a high retention rate.*

For recruiting to be effective, you must understand the dynamics of your community and the reasons why people volunteer. The overriding reason is the self-imposed need to belong to something that makes one's community a better place. Few people join organizations to lower their social standing in the community; rather, a sense of achievement and increased responsibility are strong incentives for people to participate. Most individuals excel in organizations that have realistic and meaningful goals that improve both the department and the individual and allow the volunteer to balance his or her civic time with a personal life. Successful fire departments have found that their individual firefighter retention rate is higher when the department provides activities that include the entire family. Those include organized social events, special occasions and junior firefighter programs.

The best recruitment program that a department can have is a high retention rate of existing volunteers. That assumes that the department has mandates for training and response activity levels and is not merely a closed social club or fraternal organization. Few people want to join stagnant organizations or groups that have very limited opportunities for self-improvement or personal skill development. If volunteers think the department is disorganized, dysfunctional or offers little opportunity for self-improvement, they will most likely leave.

The length of time that a new volunteer will remain with the department will be determined in the first six months of membership. Actions taken by the department to make new members welcome, help them adjust, provide mentorship and minimize their discomfort will dictate how long they will stay.

<sup>7</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics, *American Time Use Survey*, Sept. 20, 2005, available at [www.bls.gov/tus](http://www.bls.gov/tus).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid, Table 5: Volunteer Activities for Main Organization for Which Activities Were Performed and Selected Characteristics, 2005, available at [www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm](http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm), viewed Aug. 23, 2006.

One of the biggest hurdles to overcome is the local government's view of the community cost avoidance created by the volunteer service. These are deferred costs resulting from the actuality of being a volunteer entity. In theory, however, a portion of these savings should be invested in modern equipment, state-of-the-art protective gear and acceptable facilities that encourage volunteer participation.

To create a recruitment campaign, you should understand a number of factors:

- ☐ Traditionally, does your community depend on volunteer workers to provide various services?
- ☐ What is the level of community support for volunteers and how competitive is the volunteer market?
- ☐ What are your community's specific needs based on demographics, population distribution, population age and employer support?
- ☐ Does a significant portion of the populace travel to neighboring communities for employment, creating a challenge for the department in providing daytime coverage?



In order to market your department and attract new members, you will have to be specific about their time commitment, training opportunities and your expectations for their involvement. Successful recruiting departments have a complete marketing division to attract new members. They use attractive brochures that outline the department's features as well as membership benefits and incentives programs. Other departments regularly advertise in local newspapers, on television, via Internet links, at movie theaters and on the radio. Some departments retain marketing firms to manage volunteer recruitment; the expenditure is more than justified by the amount of career salary savings. Other recruitment campaigns may be managed by a regional group of fire departments or by a state fire organization.

Recruitment efforts must be designed to attract individuals who have a solid sense of accomplishment and commitment and who meet the internal and community needs of the department. You must be sensitive that your department does not project an exclusive image that will discourage or exclude particular individuals from volunteering. The connection with the community is that a volunteer organization will use the talents of all who choose to donate their time.

Before recruiting efforts can be effective, you must ensure that the department is going to support the addition of new volunteer members. To do so, you must make sure that your selection process reinforces the values of your department, you have designed effective mentorship programs, and your benefit and incentive packages are attractive.

Your selection process should reflect your expectations of the traits and skills you consider important for the individual to be an asset to your department. The ultimate goal is to match these requirements to what the volunteer applicant can provide.

## ***Membership Applications***

Membership applications for your department should include a description of the job, necessary literacy skills and physical ability demands. This process should clearly outline the expectations for the volunteer position and distinguish between the levels and types of services that the department offers. Each level should have a list of skills, knowledge and abilities inherent to its specific needs. It is fundamentally important that you enumerate the physical attributes necessary to do the job since volunteers fill more than one role in a department. Different physical demands exist for the volunteer who offers to make meals for a significant wildland event and the volunteer assigned to the fire line.

Any questions that you ask should be in compliance with state and federal law. Simply because people choose to participate as volunteers in your department does not mean they waive their civil rights and allow you to act outside the scope of the law.

Applications that you use should be consistent with other governmental agencies in your area. The easiest way to ensure this is to modify an application that other local government agencies use. Most human resource professionals employed within your local government will be happy to help you modify the application to meet your department's specific needs.

*The public expects that the members of your organization will be trustworthy and that they will meet higher standards than the general public.*

## ***Background Checks***

Background checks help screen and eliminate individuals who should not be a part of your department because they do not share the department's values.

If a candidate has a criminal background, check your state laws to determine whether a previous conviction precludes that person from being a career or volunteer firefighter. Probable exclusions would be convictions for theft, narcotics possession or domestic violence. Law enforcement may not be able to reveal what types of convictions an individual has, however, they can compare the background of an applicant to your policy of acceptable conduct and advise you if a candidate is compliant or unacceptable based on that policy. Some law enforcement agencies will fingerprint a potential candidate. This process adds credibility to your staffing selections.

Since driving fire apparatus may be part of the job, the applicant should provide you with a certified copy of his or her driving record, which you should evaluate against the acceptable standards provided by your specific insurance carrier. An individual's past driving record may substantially affect their ability to volunteer and may disqualify them as a poor risk and uninsurable for this type of activity. Semi-annual driver's records evaluation is recommended by insurance companies that insure emergency response agencies.

## ***Written Exams***

You may use written exams to eliminate or advance candidates for membership based on their level of literacy. If the position requires completion of reports, dealing with the media, correspondence or contributing to policies and procedures, the ability to compose narrative beyond a basic level is essential. Also, when you understand how an individual learns, you can implement training opportunities that are more valuable and comfortable to that learning style. Bear in mind that this information is personal. You must guard it to prevent any embarrassment to the volunteer.

## ***Oral Interviews***

Oral interviews allow several established department members to participate in the selection process. Depending on the level of position offered, you may wish to open the panel to representatives from other agencies in your community. This reinforces the importance of good working relations with other emergency agencies and provides the candidate some assurance that the oral board is not biased in any way. Oral board questions must be predetermined and compliant with state and federal law. Even during this process, the questions need to be directed to the job as a volunteer. Questions that address age, race, nationality, religious beliefs or sexual orientation are off-limits. The questions must be consistent for each member who applies. It is perfectly acceptable to rank the candidates based on their responses.

## ***Physical Fitness Standards***

Physical fitness is one of the most pressing issues in the fire service today. Physical fitness standards are a necessary part of being a line firefighter because we ask new members to expose themselves to an immediate onset of strenuous physical activity – for sustained periods of time – with elevated mental and emotional demands. Each department should have some type of physical assessment for potential members to ensure that they are capable of this kind of activity. If this is not practical to do as an independent department, consider coordinating with your local law enforcement agency or as part of a larger fire system in your area.

Following a tentative offer for membership, the department should offer some type of physical exam, including a drug screen. Entry physicals may be expensive, however, they may prevent substantial future costs by identifying physical impairments that would exclude a person from firefighting activities. Ways to defray the costs of these physicals may include special arrangements with local hospitals or recruiting the voluntary services of a physician.

## ***“Popularity”***

You must not validate a new member by membership vote. Few businesses, if any, and no other emergency service agency or organization hires personnel based on popularity. This type of action often leads to group discussions involving information that is protected and beyond the scope of “need-to-know.”

## ***Discipline and Termination***

Discipline is one of the most sensitive jobs performed within a department. The degree of professionalism in dealing with each of these issues will substantially impact the retention rate of your organization and define you as either a quality department or one managed by vigilante justice.

Your goal should always be to provide positive direction to improve behavior and performance. Everyone has the right to expect that the chief will deal with any personnel issues in a fair and professional manner, regardless of whether the individual serves in a career or volunteer capacity. You must draft and circulate a disciplinary policy and you must follow it.

When implementing that policy, all officers need to know their line of responsibility and their maximum level of authority before they are compelled to advance an action. Also, all officers and firefighters should understand that the system protects the rights of the firefighter by providing the right to a hearing before a board of independent and uninvolved members at each stage of the process. Each department should establish its own hearing protocol.

## ***Progressive Discipline***

The most common disciplinary method within volunteer companies is “progressive discipline.” Progressive discipline is meant to address repeat offenses of departmental values that do not rise to the level of criminal behavior. The most common application of progressive discipline may be infractions of safety policies at the emergency scene or around the station, driving infractions or interpersonal disputes between members. This system is not designed to deal with more serious allegations of inappropriate interpersonal behavior or alleged criminal actions.

Progressive discipline involves a three-step process: a verbal warning, a written warning requiring immediate corrective action and finally, significant disciplinary action.



A verbal warning is the first attempt to notify a member that their behavior is not acceptable. This usually includes some direction to correct that behavior. Although this step is verbal, the officer must keep notes documenting the conversation and the corrective action required. Some departments create an employee performance action plan that acts as an official document for all personnel actions. Please find a sample in Appendix D.

A written warning should be a formal document outlining the infraction and clearly noting when the verbal warning was issued, who issued it and the corrective action required. This document includes specific actions, definable action dates and a time period for re-evaluating the situation. This may involve more coaching efforts over a longer period of time and more officers helping to oversee the requested improvement. This phase should clearly outline the immediate disciplinary actions that will follow if any future infractions occur. Actions may include restrictions, suspension or termination.

In the final phase, implement the action(s) you specified in the written warning. Stand by your decision, no questions asked.

The progressive discipline policy must specifically address who has the authority to enforce it and to update it as necessary. As an example, some departments may allow the station officer to issue verbal warnings and written reprimands. After the written reprimand, the issue and the reprimand are advanced to a chief officer for follow-up. The station officer may or may not be involved in the follow-up, depending on the infraction and how close the officer is to the situation.

## ***Investigations***

Other personnel actions can be defined categorically as allegations of improper conduct or inappropriate interpersonal behavior, such as creating a hostile work environment or engaging in sexual harassment. Before engaging in discipline for these allegations, you must assemble investigative facts. These types of events may require a suspension from duty while the investigation is completed. Depending on how close you are to the situation and the individuals involved, you may choose to turn these issues over to an independent third party to ensure that the investigation and following actions are based on fact as opposed to emotion. That third party should have human resources expertise, such as a city or county administrator or human resources official.



## ***Hostile Work Environment/Sexual Harassment***

The chief and governing body must provide a work environment free from individual hostility and sexual harassment. Federal law in these areas applies to all departments regardless of whether they are volunteer, career or combination. Fire departments must implement a hostile work environment and sexual harassment policy with yearly staff training on its requirements. The policy should address the use of foul language, jokes or conversations that make light of ethnic or religious values as well as sexually explicit printed materials and figurines. The policy should apply both to spoken and written words, including electronic mail.

A significant element in any alleged sexual harassment case is the message perceived by the complainant (as opposed to what the accused meant to say or imply). Tell your staff and members that if any possibility exists that a comment or action may be perceived to be harassing or hostile in nature, they should refrain from making that comment or committing that action.

Your members must be assured that any complaint of alleged improper conduct or inappropriate interpersonal behavior will receive immediate attention. Department officers need to understand their responsibility, in compliance with the policy, to immediately advance any complaint and the consequences for failure to act. These policies are easily obtainable from your local governing entity or drafted with assistance from legal counsel.

## ***Poor Performers***

Morale in your department is likely to drop if you retain poor performers for too long. This includes officers. The first step in a departmental review is for officers to be evaluated by their superiors as well as their subordinates. Then the officers should review firefighter performance.

Volunteers will have good days and bad days. You must be somewhat flexible and continue to communicate your expectations of their performance in a fair and impartial manner. Failing to correct poor performance will bring down department morale because members will think that you do not value a job done well.

When assessing a firefighter's performance, you must communicate clearly how you are conducting your evaluation. You should base this evaluation on quantifiable and objective standards for training attendance and response.

Consider setting aside time during each officers' meeting to discuss firefighters who are performing poorly. Company officers should maintain communications with those individuals to help them improve and to keep up their commitment. Try to help your members. Be sensitive to any personal problems they may be having. For example, if members are dealing with personal problems that are keeping them from honoring their commitment to the fire department, offer to place them on a leave of absence or probation rather than dismissing them. If a member's behavior is a problem, consider offering counseling. Be sure to treat each individual firmly and fairly.

## ***Termination***

Termination should be a last resort after you have made a full-fledged effort to improve the individual's behavior. If all else fails, however, you may have to terminate a volunteer.

In most fire departments, termination is the responsibility of the chief. Terminations must be done in the presence of at least one other individual who can verify the context of the conversation (which is a good role for the human resource manager) and should include a written document outlining the reason for the action. You may need to suspend the individual until the investigation and termination documents can be drafted.

As a safeguard, your system should include a written policy allowing volunteers to challenge the action and plead their position if they believe they have been wrongfully terminated. Such challenges should go to the governing board or fire commission rather than department officials to ensure an objective review.

To prepare yourself psychologically to fire a volunteer, you may want to visit the Web site of the National Court Appointed Special Advocate Association, which has a number of good tips:  
[www.casanet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/fire.htm](http://www.casanet.org/program-management/volunteer-manage/fire.htm).

## ***Managing Medical Records and Related Issues***

Federal mandates are specific regarding the confidentiality of a volunteer's medical information. The most recent legislation to impact medical records is the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996 (Public Law 104-191). This federal law is very clear about what medical information may become public knowledge. You may not share volunteer or patient medical information with anyone else.

HIPAA mandates internal controls for record management, including both hardcopy and computerized information. Firefighter medical information may no longer be filed with a standard personnel file but requires a separate filing system. Medical information on patients that is contained in your response reports must be protected. You are responsible for creating security measures to keep these files private and to implement information policies regarding what information can be contained in a response record database.

You must document any on-the-job injuries in the individual's medical (and not personnel) file. When appropriate, you must complete workers' compensation forms. Reporting should always be in compliance with state statutes and administrative regulations. Follow-up is necessary on any treatable injury to ensure that the volunteer is following specified medical instructions and that the individual does not return to duty without medical clearance.

## ***Retaining Volunteers***

Retention of high-performing personnel is necessary to the success of any organization. This holds true particularly for volunteer fire departments where institutional knowledge can mean the difference between life and death for firefighters and the community at large. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and tenure of local emergency providers. Volunteers bring tremendous depth and diversity to any emergency scene based on their regular jobs and their expertise in their communities. Weak retention rates often indicate a problem with an organization and diminish the level and quality of service to the public.

Not all attrition is bad. Many organizations use exit interviews to get honest reasons why people are leaving. You should consider these reasons carefully to determine whether your organization is experiencing positive or negative attrition. If your retention rates are low and the reasons why people leave are not negative (for example, they are being transferred out of state), then the organization probably is performing well. However, if people are leaving because they do not enjoy the work, they have conflicts with other members or they are concerned about safety, you are facing an organizational problem.

You should know the retention rate and average length of service of your department. Calculate your organization's retention rate for a given time period by taking the number of members at the end of the period and dividing it by the number of members at the beginning of the period:

Retention and Attrition Rate Calculation	
1. Total number of members	35
2. Members who have left	5
3. Total adjusted number of members	30
4. Retention rate (#3 / #1)	86%
5. Attrition rate (100% - #4)	14%

To calculate the average length of service (LOS) for your department, divide the total years of service by the total number of members:

Average Length of Service	
1. Total number of members	30
2. Total years of service	300
3. Average LOS	10

If your retention rates are low, consider implementing the following strategies.

### ***Minimize Interpersonal Conflict***

A very important factor in retaining volunteers is the level of conflict within the organization. This reinforces the notion that the single most important issue affecting retention is solid department leadership.<sup>9</sup> Leadership may suffer if popular elections are held with no requirements for promotions and officers are not trained to deal with personnel issues. Constant turmoil, a lack of discipline, improper management of personnel disputes, overly dramatic embellishments and immature conflict resolutions are often to blame for good volunteers leaving fire departments.

*People continue to volunteer when they are liked and respected as people. The connection among members is critical to successful retention.*

As the chief officer, you have the responsibility to minimize conflict and resolve interpersonal disputes in a predetermined, fair manner. Bear in mind that most individuals join community service organizations to provide a service, make new friends, learn new skills and have fun. At some point, you may have to ask difficult people to leave your department before they cause irreversible damage by driving good volunteers out. The health of the organization must prevail over the desires and ambitions of a single individual.

<sup>9</sup> See International Association of Fire Chiefs' Volunteer and Combination Officer's Section, Blue Ribbon Report—*A Call for Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service*, March 2004, available at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org).

## ***Show That You Value Your Volunteers' Time***

The fire chief should create an environment in which people feel they are part of a group yet still are unique. When you task volunteers with specific jobs and give them the responsibility to complete them, you unleash tremendous motivational power and a desire to serve.

The role of a volunteer firefighter in a successful department is twofold. One aspect is emergency response – training and going to calls. The other is non-emergency response, such as finance, maintenance and human resources. A dedicated non-operational support staff – whose motto is, “Our job is to make your job easy” – can make the department hum by reducing the burden on operational volunteers. Non-operational volunteers can assist with training, logistics, administration and communications.

Do not waste your volunteers' time. Schedule non-emergency work far in advance and efficiently execute it. Similarly, make sure that routine tasks are routine. For example, do not take an entire day to replace minor equipment because too many people are involved in the process, or require firefighters to fill out forms in triplicate to obtain a new pair of gloves.

One way to effectively minimize volunteer inconveniences is to use a “one-stop” approach, whereby you deal with each of a volunteer's concerns during one visit to the department. While this takes a little more administrative time and organization, it clearly shows the volunteer that you value their commitment. The department can establish an appointment system so that you are aware of all the issues that need to be addressed when the volunteer arrives at the station.

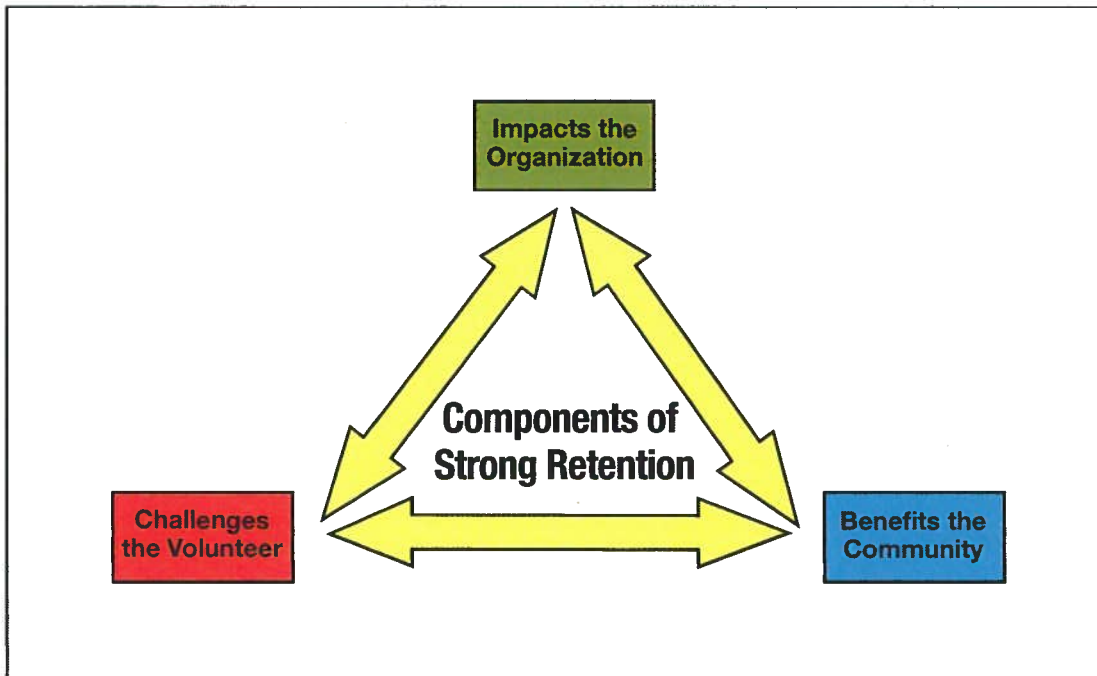
Set an agenda for meetings. For example, if the department has one two-hour meeting each month, you might set aside 15 minutes for briefing or business, 45 minutes for training or work, a 10-minute break, 35 more minutes of training and 15 minutes for conclusion or cleanup. Determine a training and meeting schedule for the entire year and disseminate it at the beginning of the year. This allows members to plan their fire department commitments in advance. A meeting will be more productive if your members have a chance to look over the agenda and any reading materials in advance of the meeting. This is easy to do with e-mail distributions.

Provide daily recognition for the contribution your volunteers make to the department and show your trust in them. For example:

- ☐ Say “thank you”
- ☐ Involve the volunteers in decisions that affect them
- ☐ Treat all volunteers equally
- ☐ Publish an internal newsletter to highlight your volunteers' important personal and professional milestones
- ☐ Show an interest in the volunteers' families
- ☐ Send a note of appreciation to the volunteers' families
- ☐ Allow volunteers to represent the department at community events
- ☐ Recommend deserving volunteers for promotion
- ☐ Remember the volunteers' birthdays
- ☐ Celebrate the volunteers' anniversary dates with the department



The occasional formal praise cannot take the place of daily informal interaction. Show your appreciation frequently, publicly and in a timely manner. You should be consistent and, most importantly, sincere. Finally, recognize the achievement, but praise the person who achieved it.



### ***Offer Benefits and Incentives***

Positive ways exist to retain volunteers. Among these are benefits and incentives. Benefits include the privileges and securities that are provided to you as a result of your membership. Incentives are rewards for improved performance.

Benefit programs should encourage long-term participation from the volunteer, clearly showing the department's commitment to the safety and security of the individual and his or her family. Those benefits should include workers' compensation; health, accident and life insurance; and coverage that will protect the livelihood of the individual in case of injury, such as wage-supplement insurance that adds to workers' compensation payments. Every volunteer has the right to expect adequate financial compensation in the event that they are injured in the line of duty. Every department has the responsibility to ensure that the volunteer and his or her family are financially protected should such an injury or death occur.

Nonmonetary benefits may include using the fire department maintenance facility for personal vehicle repairs, using an empty apparatus bay to clean a personal vehicle and having controlled access to the Internet while providing station coverage. A number of departments are finding substantial value in organizing activities that include the entire family. Picnics, special showcase drills designed to demonstrate the kinds of tasks the volunteers perform or station fun nights are events that allow the families to interact.

Incentive programs should award individuals and team members for their performance and commitment to the department and community. An annual awards banquet provides an excellent opportunity to recognize many achievements. Most of these programs are acceptable expenditures within governmental accounting systems.

Awards should honor individuals as well as team members. They can be spread out over the course of the year and incorporated into other department activities. Here are some examples of awards that can be given during monthly business meetings or training and those that are best suited for the end of the year.

During monthly business meetings or training:

- ☐ Graduation ceremonies for individuals completing the fire academy or obtaining their initial firefighter certification. This is the first big step for most volunteers and, accordingly, should have a prominent ceremony that involves their families, the board of trustee, and chief and station officers.
- ☐ Recognition of individuals who have accomplished a state certification training level
- ☐ "Certificates of Response" that are given when volunteers reach response milestones. The increments should depend on your response volume. These awards promote call participation as well as acknowledge the individual for increased experience.
- ☐ Customer service awards that encourage individuals to go above and beyond the call of duty when dealing with the public and duly serve as a basis for improved community relations
- ☐ "Life Saver" awards for special actions at an emergency scene
- ☐ Team, crew and group recognition for extraordinary work on a firefighter call or rescue, such as a prolonged extrication or water rescue

End of the year:

- ☐ Emergency Provider of the Year
- ☐ Rookie of the Year
- ☐ Medal of Valor
- ☐ Years of Service Awards
- ☐ Recognition of long-term projects such as funding drives and fire prevention activities

Consider recognizing other emergency providers as an effective way to improve interagency relations. These kinds of awards generally include the dispatcher, law enforcement officer and EMS provider of the year and are awarded in conjunction with a significant community event or if the individual has made a special effort to cooperate and improve relations with the fire department.

Invite former patients and representatives of businesses that you have helped to the awards ceremonies to improve community relations. Invite local, state and federal elected officials to solidify your political relationships. Do not invite every elected official to every event; rather, select events that you think your political leaders would be interested in attending. Consider inviting the local media, which has the dual benefit of improving the department's public image and providing increased incentive for public officials to attend.

All awards must be defined in a policy that clearly outlines the criteria for obtaining the recognition and the incentive that is provided for that accomplishment. Those incentives may be in the form of plaques, gift certificates for special events and/or dinners as well as jackets or caps. A department should not feel compelled to present an award simply because a category of recognition exists. Make every effort to ensure that the award is meaningful and maintains the level of prestige for which it is intended.

## ***Financial Reimbursement and Tax Breaks***

Financial reimbursement for volunteer time is becoming a popular method of attracting new members and retaining experienced members. Payment programs include a year-end bonus, monthly stipends, payment per call or hourly compensation for responses and station standby.

Departments that are looking to implement some type of financial reimbursement program are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel and their regional Internal Revenue Service (IRS) office to have the program validated. Departments that have financial payment programs should be prepared to withhold appropriate payroll taxes, Social Security and Medicare payments. Departments that provide hourly payments for services are most likely not volunteer companies and may be in a position to extend payment for overtime hours and appropriate employee benefits.

A number of states offer different types of tax breaks for volunteers.<sup>10</sup> However, please note that the IRS may record any form of compensation to firefighters as taxable income, including tax breaks or other benefits such as free water or reduced utilities.

## ***Make the Department a Family Organization***

Families of volunteer firefighters often experience a great deal of stress when the firefighter dedicates a substantial portion of time to the community, especially when that person misses family events or runs out of the house on a moment's notice.

You can mitigate this stress by making the entire family feel as if they are part of the department. Organize family events at the firehouse and engage family members in tasks that are not necessarily firefighter related. They may want to assist with fundraisers, special event days, daily business operations or junior explorer or cadet programs. (If your department has or plans to have a junior explorer or cadet program, please see Appendix E for appropriate activity guidelines based on the age of the volunteer.)

Suggested family activities include:

- ☐ Potluck dinners
- ☐ Super Bowl parties
- ☐ Family picnics
- ☐ Nursing home visits
- ☐ Junior combat challenges
- ☐ Spouse recognition banquets



Consider offering childcare for duty crews. Doing so would alleviate a significant cost and time burden for member families, as well as create a family atmosphere by allowing the children to bond with each other.

Finally, consider providing financial security for the volunteers' families through a length of service program. The Virginia Volunteer Firefighters' and Rescue Squad Workers' Length of Service Award Program is a good example. Information on this program is available at [www.nvfc.org/leg/leginfo\\_va.html](http://www.nvfc.org/leg/leginfo_va.html).

<sup>10</sup> National Volunteer Fire Council, *State-By-State Comparison: Tax Benefits*, [www.nvfc.org/benefits/state-by-state.php?Type=Tax](http://www.nvfc.org/benefits/state-by-state.php?Type=Tax), viewed Aug. 4, 2006.



## ***Avoid Motivational Traps***

Look at what you may be doing to drive volunteers away. Actions that may discourage them include poor training, improper discipline or not enforcing rules uniformly, yelling and screaming to get your point across, lacking excitement in your job, failing to address problems and not following through on requests for help.

As the chief, you should make sure that:

- ☐ Volunteers have opportunities for promotion
- ☐ Training is interesting as well as educational
- ☐ Training is pertinent to the volunteers' expectations of duty
- ☐ Members share responsibility and accountability for important tasks
- ☐ Routine issues are dealt with quickly and efficiently
- ☐ Meetings serve a purpose and are run effectively
- ☐ Members are not subject to undue risk and they have the opportunity to voice their safety concerns
- ☐ You do not "sweat the small stuff," such as a truck that is not parked straight in the bay
- ☐ You give and earn respect



## ***Diversification Strategies***

The concept of diversification is based on the idea that a single individual cannot be an expert in all department operations. Diversification maximizes the talent and skill of the individual, which enhances the overall efficiency, safety and effectiveness of the department, while reducing the need for a single volunteer to respond to every incident.

The premise of diversification is to expand the number of volunteer positions and match individual talents and skills to a specific task. Restricting involvement to one or two tasks allows volunteers to become true specialists and reduces the amount of general training time. Introducing this principle should improve retention by reducing the dependence on a small group of individuals who must respond to all types of events. It will improve the general expertise of the department by developing service-specific experts, and open recruiting opportunities to fill task-specific functions.

To diversify the department, allow new firefighters to identify individual interests after they have fulfilled their baseline training commitment (which is typically Firefighter I certification). The fire department then should design and monitor training to give the firefighters opportunities to expand their knowledge and experience in several different tactical operations. These may include – but certainly are not limited to – apparatus operations, aerial operations, hazardous materials response, technical rescue and wildland firefighting.

Consider nontraditional roles for volunteers. The challenge is developing department training and participation standards outside of traditional membership requirements. This philosophy means that not every member of the department must be a certified firefighter to maintain membership. As an example, a professional truck driver who wants volunteer may not be physically capable of functioning as a line firefighter but can contribute as a tender operator during wildland fire season. Should this individual meet all of the membership requirements that a line firefighter has to meet? In a number of departments the answer is emphatically yes. Those departments effectively reject individuals from volunteering who could simply reduce the number of hours a line firefighter is expected to contribute by doing routine, noncritical tasks. You should create an environment where these services are valued and firefighters are concentrating on safety, training and response.

This type of program can increase the vitality of any fire department that relies heavily on volunteers. It clearly delineates your understanding of the value of their time and the need to modify traditional systems to accommodate a wider variety of individual skills and distribute the workload more evenly.

## ***Tactical Equality***

One of the best ways to ensure that your system has parity and provides equal opportunities for each of your members is to base training and promotional systems on the process of tactical equality. This requires leadership to devise training programs that lead to some type of state or national certification. Those certifications, combined with specific years of service, are the basis for promotion within the ranks of an engine company and eventually to officer positions. Experienced-based training becomes a critical part of preparing an individual to go from firefighter to engineer or apparatus operator to engine company officer.

By developing standards for volunteers, you encourage them to be more active in training and provide an automatic incentive for personal improvement. This system forces trainers to make the most of the available training time and to expand the number of training opportunities to cover more specialized areas. Requiring firefighters to be certified at the tactical level at which they perform ultimately will force the entire system to select officers based on practical experience and an appropriate level of certification.

## ***Finances and Budgets***

Fire departments need money. Funding is necessary for equipment, training, facilities maintenance and staff payroll.

A fire department can obtain operating funds in three basic ways: fundraising, local budgeting or a combination of the two. The optimal funding situation is to have allocated funding and an agreement to use fundraisers as local matching grants for specialized equipment needs.

Smaller departments generally operate solely through fundraising. They hold annual fundraising events, solicit donations through mailing campaigns and operate community events such as weekly bingo. However, requiring volunteers to train for proficient service delivery, make responses and raise their own operational funds will likely hurt volunteer retention. If your volunteers see that the department is completely on its own for financial support, the value of the organization is already degraded in their minds because they believe that no one else thinks the department is important.

To obtain funding from a local government, a well-prepared budget document is a necessity. The key to budget negotiations is to realize that most elected officials like to see solid justifications for funding requests. The budget process often involves several rounds of meetings, justifications, additional justifications, requests for more information and the evaluation of needs with the remainder of community requests.

You must understand how the budget process works. Two common local budget processes exist: the base budget process and the line-item review. Federal sources of funding and other assistance also are available.

## ***Budget Processes***

The base budget process identifies those line items that are necessary to operate the fire department every year. Examples include fuel costs, insurance, utilities, operating supplies, training and public education. Once these core accounts are identified, they are funded each year at the same level. Budget discussions are confined to those line items that need to be increased, new line items to be added to the budget and those capital items that are designated to be purchased from special sales tax accounts, grants or other special revenue streams.<sup>11</sup>

In some cases, the local government provides limited support in return for a budget input with just a few line items. However, you still must develop a comprehensive internal budget to be effective. Know where the money is coming from and where it is going.

During the line-item review, you must justify each line item in the budget proposal.

The choice of the base budget or the line-item review is a local decision based on the legislature's view of good government and accountability for the taxpayers' money.

## ***Federal Assistance***

To supplement local government and community fundraising dollars, consider applying for federal assistance. The federal government operates a program called Fire Corps that allows community and business experts to assist local fire departments with non-emergency response functions. This may include assistance with budget development, fundraising, developing and maintaining the department's Web site, providing rehabilitation services and doing preplanning.<sup>12</sup>

Another potential source of funding is federal grant money. Through the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program, commonly known as the FIRE Act, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) provides grant money each year to fire departments for equipment and training needs. Departments must provide a portion of the funding, so be sure that you have an adequate amount of money in your budget.

The Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Act, commonly referred to as "SAFER," sets aside federal grant money for staffing. Congress requires the DHS to set aside at least 20 percent of the funding for departments staffed by volunteers, who may use the funding for training, public education or hiring staff to assist the volunteers. Departments must provide an increasing portion of the cost over a four-year period, with the fifth and final year being the full responsibility of the department.<sup>13</sup>

However, do not rely on grants as a part of your base budget. Instead, view them as supplements since they probably will last for a limited time. In fact, the FIRE Act and SAFER require that any grant supplement – and not supplant – local budgets.

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<sup>11</sup> Capital items are generally defined as major purchases that have a specified life cycle and will most likely be carried as an asset in a formal inventory. They can be as large as a fire truck and as small as a nozzle. Local policy sets the dollar value for such purchases, which are generally funded from accounts such as a local sales tax referendum.

<sup>12</sup> For more information on Fire Corps, visit the program's Web site at [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org); call the program's toll-free number, 1-888-FC-INFO1 (1-888-324-6361); or e-mail questions to [info@firecorps.org](mailto:info@firecorps.org).

<sup>13</sup> For more information on these programs, go to [www.firegrantsupport.com](http://www.firegrantsupport.com)

## ***Drafting a Budget***

We cannot stress enough how important a well-planned budget is to obtaining funding. To assist you with this process, we have included a budget template in Appendix F.

Consider including digital pictures with the budget submission. They can be a great visual aid that provides support for your budget justification. For example, they can show the need for facilities improvement better than a narrative description can.

Consider hosting a demonstration for lawmakers on donning personal protective equipment and using fire department apparatus. This will provide a better understanding than a written narrative of what is necessary to run a fire department and how much it costs.

You may want to consult the governing entity's administrator for help in aligning your proposal with other agencies' budgets. In the case of a special protection district, the governing board can provide this information.

Here is a simple way to look at the budget. Take the total amount of funded money and divide it by the number of runs. This gives you a basic cost per call for the services you provide. You can take this same concept for a specific service within the department, add up all the associated costs, and determine the cost per service. You should know the basic cost of a particular fire department service so that you can make informed decisions about its value to the taxpayer.

Smaller departments should take a look at their revenue and determine if they are able to provide adequate services for the community. A basic single engine fire department with 20 members providing basic fire services in a community of about 1,000 people will need a minimum of \$50,000 per year to operate (see Appendix G).

Knowing the cost of the service allows the fire chief to be the chief and to protect the interests of the community. While all communities need basic fire suppression and EMS, specialized services such as heavy rescue and hazardous materials response may best be provided on a regional or shared basis. These services require additional training levels and their success depends on the experience of the firefighters. They require large capital investments for a service that may be of minimal use.

Far too many volunteer fire departments attempt to provide services that the community cannot afford, adequately staff or provide enough training and experience to make their firefighters successful when they handle these kinds of emergencies. Poor performance by volunteers in critical situations will cause them to leave because of personal and public blame for their lack of preparedness. Chiefs and local leaders may need to face the reality that not every department can or should be a "one-stop shop."

Finally, bear in mind that fire trucks and support apparatus are expensive. Two common philosophies apply to buying fire apparatus. The first is to purchase the vehicle and use existing equipment from another piece of apparatus. The second option is to purchase the vehicle with all new equipment and appliances. Several different funding options may exist for new apparatus, including purchasing the vehicle from one account and all the equipment and appliances from another. Lease purchase methods are also becoming popular.

Many fire departments find it difficult to sell older apparatus and equipment. Remember that every piece of rolling stock requires maintenance and insurance. Many smaller departments are asking for these same items.

By balancing each of these considerations, you will be able to create a budget that serves the needs of the department and the community in an efficient and cost-effective manner.

## ***Training: Leading and Learning***

Each year, around 100 firefighters die and tens of thousands are injured in the line of duty.<sup>14</sup> Firefighters must receive the training necessary to do their jobs safely. Training should be considered a privilege to attend because it prepares firefighters to serve the public they protect, and to protect each other from serious injury or death.

The fire service is unique in that little enforceable fire service regulation exists regarding training. Typically, localities establish their own minimum training standards and qualifications. Such responsibility should not be taken lightly. Failure to set adequate standards can make the difference between a successful fire department and a social club that occasionally goes to fires.

Several standards-setting organizations exist at the state and national levels. A standard does not become law until adopted by a legislative body. However, state and national standards can be identified as a common practice. Professional standards can carry weight in civil court. The authors of this document firmly endorse the use of standards for all fire departments.

Training officers should look to their state firefighter training system for help in developing and delivering a regular training program. In addition, your insurance company may be able to provide training materials and other supporting information.

## ***Areas of Training***

The most common areas of training for departments staffed with volunteers include new member orientation, basic firefighter training, regular skills training and officer training. When new volunteers join a department, they should start with orientation and then participate in regular training to hone their skills. If they aspire to be leaders, they should complete officer training.

An important component of any training program is experiential learning. This type of program provides lessons learned from your own department's or other departments' experiences in responding to large-scale events.

## ***New Member Orientation***

A common issue in volunteer organizations is how to make new members active as soon after joining as possible. While they wait for formal training programs to become available, they may lose interest and fade away. This is a valid concern that sometimes prompts volunteer leaders to put new members in dangerous positions for which they are not properly trained. This places personnel at unnecessary risk by putting them in situations where they may not be mentally or physically prepared for the trauma and stress of emergency services.

To combat these risks, develop a training program that gives new members the information and skills they need to operate in a support role, safely allowing them to be on the fireground early on. Tailor the program to the community's needs. Some organizations may recruit enough volunteers to support monthly training sessions. Another option is a one-on-one mentoring program in which new volunteers are assigned to experienced members to work through specific training objectives. The members fill in a worksheet according to the training they have undergone and submit it to the training officer when complete.

Whatever training program you implement, make sure it meets the state's and locality's minimum standards before allowing new members to run their first call. For sample program topics, along with the time commitment for each, please see Appendix H.

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<sup>14</sup> USFA, Statistics: Firefighter Fatalities, Preparedness Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, [www.usfa.dhs.gov/fatalities/statistics/history.shtm](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/fatalities/statistics/history.shtm), viewed Aug. 5, 2006.

## ***Basic Firefighter Training***

Basic firefighter training should target nationally or state-recognized professional development standards directly. All interior structural firefighters must obtain this level of training and should be certified at the minimum level within one year. Some volunteers may have difficulty achieving this level of training because of work and family commitments. In such cases, the organization should recognize those members as “non-entry” and facilitate job functions that let the members give to the fullest potential for which they are qualified. The Fire Corps program works well in this situation.

Fire departments should establish formal training programs. Some states provide certification training while others defer to the localities. If the department must provide its own basic training, you should consider the format you wish to use. The most common method is for members to achieve the certification of Firefighter I on their own by seeking out and completing a class in-house or in the region. Then they may go back to obtain the Firefighter II certification.

Some departments have found it more beneficial to consolidate such training by forming “volunteer academies.” These programs combine all of the basic training components into one program, usually lasting six months or less. By using this method, volunteers can complete all of their training at once. The benefit to this approach is that once the training is done, new members are finished with the basic training component.

*All firefighters should be certified at the minimum level within one year. Officers should be certified at the Fire Officer I (or equivalent) level before promotion.*

Departments should choose the delivery system that works best for them. They should consider the number of firefighters to be trained on a regular basis as well as the free time that each member has to offer. A common schedule for both academy and individual programs is to train two nights per week and every other Saturday. Most academy programs can easily complete the Firefighter I and II certifications in a six-month period using this template.

## ***Regular Skills Training***

Regular skills training, commonly called “drill night,” is a training staple of a department staffed with volunteers. These sessions are usually held on a weeknight and feature a variety of topics that allow volunteers to come together to brush up on skills and/or techniques. More importantly, it gets the volunteers together at one location so they can work together and build the bonds that enhance volunteer retention.

Selecting topics for drill night is a common challenge for training officers. Coming up with a new and exciting topic month after month can be difficult and, as discussed in the recruitment and retention chapter, you should avoid wasting the volunteers’ time.

To help prioritize training topics, break them into two categories: high frequency/low risk and low frequency/high risk. High frequency/low risk events occur on a regular basis and pose little risk to firefighter safety. Such topics include taking blood pressures, activating the fire alarm, responding to EMS calls and communicating over the radio. While local regulations may require occasional refresher training on these topics, they certainly should not dominate a drill night. If you have to do training on these types of topics, comply with the regulation but make the training as quick and painless as possible.

*Good training will motivate volunteers and make them more effective individuals and team members.*

Much more important are events that happen rarely but pose a serious risk to firefighters. These events include fighting structural and vehicle fires, responding to hazardous materials incidents and specific tasks such as cutting vent holes in roofs or forcing doors. Because smaller departments

staffed with volunteers seldom do these tasks on the fireground, they must compensate by practicing on the training ground. Drills on advancing hose lines, operating power equipment and throwing ladders should be in the regular drill schedule. Please see Appendix I for a sample list of a year's worth of drill topics.

Monthly training sessions should reflect the critical skills the firefighters carry out on the local fireground. The department's officers and firefighters should meet to create a list of these skills. Then, they should develop questionnaires to determine which skills need the most work. For example, you should ask how many times a firefighter has started the power saw on the truck, or changed the saw blade. You should ask how many times a firefighter has placed a 24-foot extension ladder, and whether he or she has removed the ladder from the side of the engine to the fireground. For a full list of potential questions, please see Appendix J for a sample experience assessment.

Finally, training should include a periodic review of standard operating procedures (SOPs) and standards of governance (SOGs) as well as any changes to the SOPs and SOGs that occur between scheduled review sessions.

## ***Officer Training***

Officer training is likely to be one of the most difficult areas to create. Often, instructors are in short supply and programs are complex. Also, while state and national standards for firefighter training exist, none exist for leadership training. Professional development standards usually outline requirements for a fire officer, but the standards mainly target management functions. A successful pathway to officer development that includes educational milestones and performance expectations is the IAFC's Professional Development Handbook.



When departments lack the necessary resources to provide quality officer training, consider the idea of regionalizing the training among neighboring departments. If you pool your resources, you are likely to be able to meet local needs. You also will forge and strengthen relationships among neighboring departments.

Please see Appendix K for a sample officer training schedule.

## ***Mentorship Programs***

Mentorship programs recognize that simply donning turnout gear does not make an individual a firefighter. These programs involve a comprehensive effort to ensure that when new members arrive at emergency scenes, someone – usually a station officer – is available to explain to them what is going on and why. Many “micro-training” opportunities are available before, during and after responses to improve levels of understanding, define procedures and help develop skills for future assignments. This is a critical step. New firefighters do not learn anything sitting in the station because they missed a truck. If they miss enough trucks, they will not show up.

New members should receive a copy of their job description, an outline of duties they may be required to perform at the scene and around the station, and a copy of the rules that you expect them to follow, clearly stating any response or training attendance requirements. Mentorship reinforces your commitment to a volunteer's success by evaluating them and providing regular feedback during the probation period. The member needs to know “the good, the bad and the ugly” aspects of their performance, but presented in a constructive – and not destructive – manner. By nature, we want to do the best that we can. When we venture out of our personal comfort zones to volunteer, we expect honest feedback to improve our performance.

A comfortable environment in which to accomplish this is the “debrief session,” which occurs when a response is complete and all the gear is again ready for service. Take the time to go over events in a constructive way, noting the good aspects of the response as well as the areas in need of improvement. Given the opportunity to criticize their own performance, people are often harder on themselves than you as a chief would be. However, the result generally is good feedback from the group and individual improvement the next time out.

Mentors should have a complete understanding of their role, authority and responsibilities. The program must be consistent from station to station, reinforcing the same values. Mentors need to have good people skills, the ability to function on-scene in the dual role of firefighter and mentor, and the ability and willingness to communicate with new members and share information.

### ***Training as a Recruitment and Retention Tool***

In addition to being necessary for safe departmental operations, training can be a solid volunteer retention tool. People like to volunteer for organizations that provide them with new skills and challenges and expand their abilities to learn and perform. However, as volunteers, their time can be limited. Departments with high retention rates have found several secrets to balancing training requirements without demanding more time of the volunteer:



- ☐ Decide on a baseline level of training that all members of your department need to have to provide good basic service.
- ☐ Each volunteer should select one or two areas in which to build expertise. This allows an individual to concentrate on specialty services that are of interest to them.
- ☐ Make sure that every formalized training opportunity that you provide puts a firefighter closer to meeting a training standard or certification. This allows an individual to break down certification requirements into achievable steps.
- ☐ Formalize training times and produce training schedules that allow the member to plan on specific times to commit to the fire department. Scheduling provides you with protected calendar space and promotes training nights as an essential part of the department, becoming a part of the rhythm of the organization.
- ☐ Provide constructive feedback to foster honest and open communication. All of us want to do a good job and feel good when we perform successfully.

### ***Providing Balance***

The job of being a volunteer brings a new level of personal stress that, if not managed, will reduce participation and ultimately cause members to drop out. The new physical demands and required training may resurface learning and physical disabilities that will be judged by an ultimate outcome of life or death.

Balance training with social opportunities to help manage the stress and build confidence and solid relationships with other department members. Recruiting a department chaplain can provide your firefighters and their families with an excellent resource to manage difficulties in their personal lives.



## ***Leadership and Management: Leading and Following***

Fire chiefs are the chief executive officers of their organizations. In the old days, the fire chief was the “best firefighter.” Today, departments must focus on operational integrity and business excellence. “Business” is defined as the financial aspect of running a fire department. Fire chiefs must draft a budget, secure funding and put specific controls in place to ensure that spending is legal and appropriate.

Fire chiefs lead personnel. The strength and quality of an organization’s leadership determines the cohesiveness, effectiveness and motivation of the units within that organization. Ineffective organizational leadership is a problem that multiplies and magnifies smaller problems and generally undermines the effective management of an organization. The organization decays from the inside, the mission does not get accomplished and the system fails.

Leaders should:

- ☐ Constantly observe and learn from their environment
- ☐ Observe the successes and failures of others and analyze the “how and why”
- ☐ Make mistakes, sometimes more often and with more consequences than others, simply because leaders are constantly in the spotlight
- ☐ Learn from their mistakes and use that experience to better themselves
- ☐ Set a positive example
- ☐ Surround themselves with subordinates that will hold themselves to the standard to which that leader adheres
- ☐ Demonstrate willingness to take on personal risk as they ask others to take on personal risk



A leader must be submersed in the organization. Two key ways to do this are to keep informed and to actively communicate with the members. At the forefront of every thought should be the fact that a leader is nothing without the people who work for the organization. If a leader is good to his or her staff, the staff will be good to the community.

“People skills” are key. The fire chief does not have to be the best firefighter but does have to know which firefighters are best for which jobs.

### ***A Strong Leadership Foundation***

Think of building your department as you would build a house. You start with the foundation and then add walls, the roof and drywall. Your challenge as the department leader is to ensure that the foundation is strong and that it is integrated seamlessly with other structural components.

To achieve this goal, chief officers must expect excellence of themselves first, always striving for success. Understand that you are always “on stage” and must set an example for the department. As a leader, you must subordinate yourself to the organization; your ego must be the lowest priority. The leader must be a genuine person who demonstrates openness and caring each day.

You must foster respect within the department. The position of leader demands respect, but the person in the leadership position must earn that respect. Treat others with integrity and respect and they will treat you the same way. Also, hold yourself accountable and responsible for your own actions.

You must build strong relationships with your members:

- ☐ Be sensitive to your members’ personal issues and meet with them regularly to discuss their strengths, weaknesses and goals, both personal and professional
- ☐ Participate in social and family events with the members
- ☐ Delegate tasks as appropriate to show trust in your members’ abilities

A genuine and caring individual must continually put the department and the public good first. A leader must separate personal wants and needs from what the community desires and what the agency can produce.

## ***Continued Learning***

A leader, whether elected or appointed, must never stop learning. This holds true even for four- or five-bugle chiefs. No fire chief school for community-based fire departments exists, so the drive for education and personal growth must come from within. The moment any chief thinks he or she knows all that is needed in this business is the moment that chief lets his or her people down and puts them at risk.

To make sure you continue to learn, subscribe to fire service periodicals that have officer and leadership development articles. Take community college courses in personal and professional development. Read books by fire service publishers and others that describe the traits and personal stories of successful leaders, both within the fire service and in the world at large.<sup>15</sup>

The National Fire Academy (NFA) provides free education for all members of the fire service, including the Volunteer Incentive Program (VIP) with several weeklong courses designed specifically for volunteers.<sup>16</sup>

In some departments, outdated election processes do not always ensure that the chief has the necessary leadership qualities. Most fire chiefs have achieved tactical excellence and can maintain those skills via continuing education. However, some elected chiefs have no formal training in leadership or accounting (to be able to maintain the department's budget). Departments that elect their chiefs should consider transitioning to a modern by-law system, whereby predetermined qualifications can help select a trained and educated chief.<sup>17</sup>

## ***Conflict Resolution***

People have differences of opinion, that is human nature. Those differences can escalate from warm to simmering to boiling. Your job as leader will be to resolve these conflicts, preferably before they reach the boiling point.

“Warm” issues tend to nag a person every day and continue to build unless someone intervenes. A leader should not ignore warm-level events. Instead, he or she must ask questions to find the root cause. Never jump to a conclusion before analyzing the answers to these questions. As with any conflict resolution, less damage will occur if you solve the problem early.

“Simmering” issues are more serious. They appear after warm problems continue without intervention, fueling hostility and resentment. At this level, a leader must actively seek root causes and focus on validating the problem. Is it a real problem or is it a perceived problem that began with a lack of communication? The leader should conduct interviews with the complainant and seek immediate “cooling” to get the issue back to the warm level. At that point, the leader can develop a resolution. Most people will react positively if direct communication demonstrates that you understand the problem and are developing corrective action.

“Boiling” issues are the most dangerous. At this level, people try to exact revenge, and nobody wins. You will need a third-party facilitator – such as the president of the board of directors – to intervene and try to reestablish relationships within the department. That third party should be trustworthy and credible and have no personal stake in the issue at hand. This method is very dynamic and requires that the facilitator be schooled in continuing negotiations. He or she will need to continually evaluate the facts, seek common ground and determine the best course of action.

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<sup>15</sup> Other leadership programs that the authors of this report have found helpful include Ziglar True Performance ([www.zpgtraining.com](http://www.zpgtraining.com)) and *The 360° Leader Comprehensive Assessment* by Character of Excellence, LLC ([www.characterofexcellence.com/index.html](http://www.characterofexcellence.com/index.html)).

<sup>16</sup> For more information on the VIP, contact your state training agency or visit the program Web site at [www.usfa.dhs.gov/training/nfa/resident/vip/](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/training/nfa/resident/vip/).

<sup>17</sup> For a sample set of fire department by-laws, please visit the VCOS Web site at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org)

The key to intervening at each level is to understand the root cause of the problem. This is imperative. Do not allow your emotions to take over or jump to conclusions before identifying the real issue.

Instead, follow this problem-solving guide:

- ☐ Identify each issue separately
- ☐ Ask why the issues have become problems – and continue to ask why until you get to the root cause(s)
- ☐ Identify various actions to address the problem(s)
- ☐ Pick the most effective and efficient resolution(s)
- ☐ Do not create a temporary patch – try to fix the problem(s) completely
- ☐ Evaluate the results and try new approaches until you have solved the problem(s)



### ***Personal Integrity and Trust***

Integrity builds trust. People will trust a leader they can believe in. Always hold yourself to the highest standard of personal integrity.

You must show trust in your members. In short, you must delegate. Too often, leaders try to bear all responsibility and complete every associated task, which results in overload and trouble completing projects. Delegating – with clear guidance – provides ownership in a task that allows for excellence and personal pride.

Delegation can be a powerful tool, but you must define boundaries. As the chief, you will have the full picture of what must be done, while your members will be assigned tasks within the full structure. For example, the standard chain of command is followed easily on the emergency scene, but a multitude of tasks that are not related to emergency response are involved, such as shirts, gate locks and identification badges. A simple list will allow your members to understand who is doing what.

### ***Conclusion***

The VCOS and the IAFC stand ready to help you build a strong department. The authors of this report encourage you to visit the VCOS Web site at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org) for additional tools and advice.

## ***Appendix A***

### ***Sample Department Conduct Standards***

#### **CONDUCT STANDARDS OF THE ANYTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, USA**

The following list of directives represents the conduct standards for members for the ANYTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT. The basis for these regulations is the following policy:

Every member of the ANYTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT is expected to operate in a highly self-disciplined manner and is responsible to regulate his/her own conduct in a positive, productive and mature way. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action ranging from counseling to termination.

#### **ALL MEMBERS SHALL:**

1. Follow operations, policy manuals and written directives of both the ANYTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT and (YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT)
2. Use their training and capabilities to protect the public at all times both on and off duty<sup>18</sup>
3. Work competently in their positions to cause all department programs to operate effectively
4. Always conduct themselves to reflect credit on the department
5. Follow instructions in a positive and cooperate manner, and expect that supervisors will manage the department in an effective and considerate manner
6. Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the department
7. Keep themselves trained and educated to do their jobs effectively
8. Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare
9. Operate safely and use good judgment
10. Obey the law
11. Maintain personal physical fitness

#### **MEMBERS SHALL NOT:**

1. Engage in any activity that is detrimental to the department
2. Engage in a conflict of interest with the department or use their position with the department for personal gain or influence
3. Engage in physical confrontations
4. Abuse their sick leave (career members)

#### **MEMBERS SHALL BE TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY IF THEY:**

1. Steal
2. Use alcoholic beverages, debilitating drugs or any substance that could impair their physical or mental capacities while on duty
3. Engage in any sexual activity while on duty
4. Wear fire department clothing/uniforms and/or equipment (such as radios and pagers) while consuming alcohol off-duty

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<sup>18</sup> For career staff, on-duty is defined as normal duty shift or when responding to an incident after normal work hours. On-duty for volunteer members is defined as time responding to incidents, shift coverage and training.

## Appendix B

### Volunteer Fire Service Cost Savings Project

Version 2.1

Step 1 - Enter your fire department's data in the yellow boxes.

19,000	Population protected
7,400	Number of residences
\$ 72,000	Current personnel expenses

**Your Fire Department Data**

4	Number of Apparatus
0	Engines
1	Aerial Trucks
1	Tankers
0	Rescue Trucks
3	Utility Vehicles
0	Brush Trucks
0	Ambulances

Total Staffing	Minimum Staffing on Apparatus	Company Officer	Driver/Operator	Volunteer Firefighter
3	Engines	1	1	1
0	Aerial Trucks	0	0	0
2	Tankers	1	1	0
3	Rescue Trucks	1	1	1
0	Utility Vehicles	0	0	0
3	Brush Trucks	0	1	2
0	Ambulances	0	0	0

Step 2 - Go to "Career Costs" tab

### Career Cost Spreadsheet

Step 3 - Starting Salary for career personnel in the vicinity (including benefits)

If there are no salaries paid for any position, use a nearby city costs for these entries.

If there are no cities nearby that can be used, use police salaries for this portion.

Chief	\$ 48,000
Deputy Chief	\$ 44,000
Assistant Chief	\$ 40,000
Captain	\$ 37,000
Lieutenants	\$ 33,000
Drivers	\$ 27,000
Medics	\$ 33,000
Fire/ Rescue Personnel	\$ 24,000

Step 4 - Staffing factor (positions needed to staff one full-time position)

For 56 hour week use "3", for 42 hour week use "4"

3

Step 5 - Enter your department staffing for the "Chief" positions only

Number and Cost of Career Personnel Necessary

Chief	1	\$ 48,000
Deputy Chief	1	\$ 44,000
Assistant Chief	4	\$ 160,000
Officers	18	\$ 630,000
Drivers	18	\$ 486,000
Firefighters	15	\$ 360,000
Medics	0	\$ -

Career Chief Officer Costs \$ 252,000

Career Fire Fighter Costs \$ 1,476,000

Total Career Costs \$ 1,728,000

Step 6 - Go to "Summary" tab.

**Cost Savings to Your Community**

\$ 72,000

Your Annual Personnel Costs

\$ 1,728,000

Full-time Equivalent Fire Department Personnel Costs

\$ 1,656,000

Annual Personnel Cost Savings

\$ 223.78

Savings per Household

\$ 87.16

Savings per Resident

*Calculation tool provided by PivotPartners*

## **Appendix C**

### **Sample Fire Department ISO Rating**

#### **Cheatham County (TN) Volunteer Firefighters Association**

The following table was compiled in cooperation with local insurance agents and the property assessor's office. The property assessor's office provided the average home value in the fire district. Several local insurance agents provided a basic homeowners policy and its components.

Policy	
Coverage	Amount of Coverage
• Dwelling	\$100,000
• Other Structures	\$10,000
• Personal Property	\$50,000
* Special Limits & Protection for:	
o Jewelry	\$1,000
o Money	\$200
o Securities	\$1,000
o Silverware	\$2,500
o Guns	\$2,000
• Loss of Use	\$20,000
• Personal Liability	\$300,000
• Medical Payments	\$5,000

\* Deductible = \$250

\* Construction = Frame

Fire Protection Class	Premium
10	\$813
9	\$759
8	\$504
7	\$469
5	\$428

\* Deductible = \$250

\* Construction = Masonry

Fire Protection Class	Premium
10	\$736
9	\$670
8	\$482
7	\$425
5	\$389

- ☐ The protection of the residence with a fire sprinkler system in compliance with National Fire Protection Association Standard 13D may result in an additional savings ranging from 10 percent to 30 percent.
- ☐ Each department should research the actual cost benefit of lowering the community's ISO rating. The rates for insurance premiums may be the same for residential units with a fire department class between three and seven. Commercial and industrial occupancies may realize significant savings in annual premiums if the fire department expends large sums of capital.

## Appendix D

### Sample Performance Improvement Plan

Use a performance improvement plan (PIP) when you are looking for ways to improve a member's performance. The PIP is a tool to monitor and measure the deficient work products, processes and/or behaviors of a particular firefighter in an effort to improve performance or modify behavior. Key items to remember:

1. Define the problem. This is the deficiency statement. Determine if the problem is a performance problem (firefighter has not been able to demonstrate mastery of skills/tasks) or a behavior problem (firefighter may perform the tasks but creates an environment that disrupts the workplace).
2. Define the duties or behaviors where improvement is required.
  - ☐ What are the aspects of performance required to successfully perform these duties?
  - ☐ Which skills need improvement?
  - ☐ What changes need to be made in the application of skills that a firefighter has already demonstrated?
  - ☐ What behaviors need to be modified?
3. Establish the priorities of the duties.
  - ☐ What are the possible consequences of errors associated with these duties?
  - ☐ How frequently are these duties performed?
  - ☐ How do they relate when compared with other duties?
4. Identify the standards upon which performance will be measured for each of the duties identified.
  - ☐ Are they reasonable and attainable?
5. Establish short-range and long-range goals and timetables for accomplishing change in performance/behavior with firefighter.
  - ☐ Are they reasonable and attainable?
6. Develop an action plan.
  - ☐ What will the officer/chief do to help the firefighter accomplish the goals within the desired time frame?
  - ☐ What will the firefighter do to facilitate improvement of the product or process?
  - ☐ Are the items reasonable?
  - ☐ Can the items be accomplished?
  - ☐ Are the items flexible?
7. Establish periodic review dates.
  - ☐ Are the firefighter and the officer/chief aware of what is reviewed at these meetings?
8. Measure actual performance against the standards to determine if expectations were:
  - ☐ not met
  - ☐ met
  - ☐ exceeded
9. Establish a PIP file for the firefighter.
  - ☐ Does the file contain documentation that identifies both improvements and/or continued deficiencies?
  - ☐ Is the firefighter encouraged to review this file periodically?
10. Put the PIP in writing.
  - ☐ Has plain and simple language been used?
  - ☐ Have specific references been used to identify areas of deficiency?
  - ☐ Have specific examples been used in periodic reviews which clearly identify accomplishments or continuing deficiencies?
  - ☐ Have you chosen an easy-to-read format such as a table or a duty-by-duty listing?
  - ☐ Have the Terms of Agreement been included in the PIP?



## ***Appendix E***

### ***Sample Management Guidelines for a Junior Firefighter/Cadet Program***

The following are management guidelines to consider if you are interested in developing cadet or explorer programs. The authors of this report highly encourage you to consult your state's office of occupational safety and health for the rules that apply to your department. You should consult your state's labor laws to determine whether a junior firefighter or cadet must obtain a work permit.

#### **Cadets/Explorers/Junior Firefighters**

The following activities for all firefighter trainees (cadets/explorers/junior firefighters) under the age of eighteen (18) years are prohibited:

1. Driving department vehicles greater than ¾ ton
2. Performing fire suppression involving structures, vehicles or wildland fires, except grass fires that are not in standing timber
3. Responding in a personal vehicle with blue lights
4. Performing firefighting overhaul duties
5. Responding to hazardous materials fires, spills or other events
6. Performing any activity, except training performed by qualified personnel (after medical certification as required by 29 CFR 1910.134), involving the use of self-contained breathing apparatus
7. Performing traffic control duties
8. Using pneumatic/power driven saws, shears, Hurst-type tools or other power tools
9. Entering a confined space as defined in 29 CFR 1910.146
10. Entering a fire ("red") zone
11. Performing any duty that involves the risk of falling a distance of six feet or more, including the use of ladders
12. Filling air bottles
13. Operating pumps of any fire vehicles at the scene of a fire
14. Handling life nets (except in training)
15. Using cutting torches
16. Operating aerial ladders
17. Performing any duties involving the use of lines greater than 2 inches in diameter

#### **14- and 15-Year-Olds**

Cadets/junior firefighters who are 14 or 15 may only perform the following duties. They may perform these duties only between the hours of 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., except from July 1st through Labor Day, when evening hours are extended to 9 p.m.

1. Responding to emergencies on fire department apparatus
2. Clean-up service at the scene of the fire, but only outside of the structure and only after the scene has been declared safe by the on-scene commander
3. Providing coffee/food service
4. Engaging in training that does not involve fire, smoke (except theatrical/latex smoke), toxic or noxious gas, or hazardous materials or substances
5. Receiving instruction
6. Attending meetings no later than 9 p.m. throughout the year
7. Observing firefighting activities while under supervision

### 16- and 17-Year-Olds

Cadets/junior firefighters who are 16 or 17 may perform only the following duties. They may perform these duties between the hours of 6 a.m. and 10 p.m., except when there is no school the next day, when evening hours are extended to 11 p.m.

1. Attending and taking part in supervised training
2. Responding to emergencies on fire department apparatus
3. Participating in fire department functions within the rehabilitation area
4. Picking up hose and cleaning up at the fire scene after the on-scene commander has declared the area to be safe
5. Fighting grass fires not involving standing timber, with proper training
6. Performing search and rescue operations, not including structural firefighting

*An alternative to standard recruiting is the Fire Corps program.  
Visit the program Web site at [www.firecorps.org](http://www.firecorps.org).*

## ***Appendix F***

### ***Sample Budget Proposal***

#### ANYTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, USA Budget Proposal for Fiscal Year 2006-2007

##### Table of Contents

##### General Department Information

- Mission statement
- Department officials, including the fire department governing board and chief officers
- Organizational structure
- The department budget process and how the requests are assembled
- Special event coverage and the impact on the department budget
- Summary of existing federal, state, and local grants
- Summary of lease agreements
- Significant capital and capital facilities expenditures in future budgets (24-month projection)

##### Budget Overview

- Previous budget allocation by line item
- Approved current budget line-item allocations
- Year-to-date budget balance for the current budget line items
- Projected year-end budget per line item
- Proposed line-item budget allocated for the next fiscal period

##### Board Approved Line-Item Transfers (for the current budget)

- Overview of the total line-item transfers with a collective balance
- Narrative justification for the transferred balance

##### Operational Budget Increases

- Overview of the total operational line-item increases and collective balance
- Narrative justification for the increased balance request

##### Apparatus Replacement

- Overview of the total apparatus request with a collective balance
- Narrative justification for the new vehicle
- Finance proposal

##### Capital Requests and Station Improvements

- Overview of the total capital request with a collective balance
- Narrative justification for each capital item

*Note: Some elected officials prefer to see a narrative justification when the account is increased or decreased by 10 percent or more.*

## Appendix G

### Sample Calculation of Minimum Cost to Operate a Fire Department

	Capital Cost	Life Expectancy	Annual Cost	Number		Interest
Engine	250,000	20	12,500	1		750
Operation	2,500	1	2,500	1		
Station	125,000	20	6,250	1		375
Building Maintenance	1,000	1	1,000	1		
Protective Clothing	25,000	8	3,125	10		188
Health Insurance	3,500	1	3,500	1		
Workers' Compensation	1,000	1	1,000	1		varies by state
Utilities	1,600	1	1,600	1		gas, electric, phone
Communications	5,000	3	1,667	1		
Administration	1,000	1	1,000	1		postage
Training	3,000	1	3,000	1		
Fees and Licenses	500	1	500	1		
Physicals - OSHA	2,000	1	2,000	10		
Interest Cost	1,520	1	1,520	1		
Volunteer Benefits	10,000	1	10,000	1		10 per run / average 5 people per run
Board Expenses	250	1	250	1		
Legal Expenses	1,000	1	1,000	1		
Public Education	200	1	200	1		
Equipment	2,500	1	1,000	1		
Rescue Squad	80,000	15	5,333	1		320
Insurance	2,000	1	2,000	1		
Jaws of Life	25,000	10	2,500	1		150
Station Addition	50,000	20	2,500	1		150
Total		Fire and EMS	65,945		1000	homes protected
			65,945			
		Fire Only	53,142			
			53,142			

**Appendix H**  
**Sample Statewide Firefighter Orientation Program**

Module	Topic	Duration
Module 1a	Orientation	1.5 hours
Module 1b	National Incident Management System	1.5 hours
Module 2	Personal Safety/Special Hazards	2.5 hours
Module 3	Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus	2.5 hours
Module 4a	Search and Rescue	2 hours
Module 4b	Extrication	2 hours
Module 5	Hose Loads	4 hours
Module 6	Fire Streams	4 hours
Module 7	Forcible Entry	2 hours
Module 8	Ladders	4 hours
Module 9	Ventilation	3 hours
Module 10a	Apparatus Familiarization	1 hour
Module 10b	Driver Awareness Level	2 hours
Module 11	Hazardous Materials – Awareness	8 hours
Module 12	Hazardous Materials – Operations	16 hours
Module 13	EMS Awareness	2 hours

*Local fire chiefs and leadership should establish rules that require members who respond to emergency medical services events to be certified in accordance with state and national training standards.*

## *Appendix I*

### Sample Training Drill Calendar

<b>January</b>	Protective clothing/Safety
	How to get flawless execution
	Physical assessment/medical history survey -- confidential/basic vitals
	Review two NIOSH LODD reports
<b>February</b>	Incident command
	Simulate - 1 story SFD
	Simulate - 2 story SFD
	Responsibilities of command
	Functions of command
	Command organizational positions
<b>March</b>	Salvage
	Communications
	Lock-out/tag-out
	Bloodborne pathogens
<b>April</b>	Auto extrication
	Removing a door/roof and steering wheel
	Patient packaging
<b>May</b>	Initial fire attack
	Protective clothing/Safety
	Pulling preconnect
	Raising ladder
	Donning and doffing SCBA
<b>June</b>	Search and rescue
	Protective clothing/Safety
	Donning and doffing SCBA
	Primary search
	Secondary search
	RIT
	Self-preservation
<b>July</b>	Ventilation
	Chain/reciprocating saw
<b>August</b>	Pump operations
	Tanker operations/Fold-a-tank
<b>September</b>	Search and rescue
	Protective clothing/Safety
	Donning and doffing SCBA
	Primary and Secondary Search Practices
	RIT and Self-preservation
<b>October</b>	Initial fire attack
	Protective clothing/Safety
	Pulling preconnect
	Raising ladder
	Donning and doffing SCBA
<b>November</b>	Pump operations
	Tanker operations/Fold-a-tank
<b>December</b>	Utility control
	Overhaul
	Basic fire investigation

## Appendix J

### Sample Experience Assessment

#### Experience Assessment

*Unless the question specifically refers to an emergency or training experience, please note your total experience.*

How many years have you been a firefighter?	1+	5+	10+
How many years have you been an officer?	1+	5+	10+
Are you a certified Firefighter I/II?	Yes	No	
Are you a certified Instructor II/III?	Yes	No	
Are you a certified Fire Officer II?	Yes	No	
Are you a certified Safety Officer?	Yes	No	
How many times have you done CPR on a real person?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you driven an emergency vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you pumped an engine on an emergency response?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you dumped water into a fold-a-tank?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you used the "jaws of life" to remove a door from a vehicle while patients were in the vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been inside the vehicle taking care of the patient while the door/roof was removed from the vehicle?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been the nozzle person on a car fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been the backup person on the hose line on a car fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been the nozzle person on a structure fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been the backup person on the hose line on a structure fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been command on an extrication?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been command on a brush fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been command on a house fire?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been assigned a sector role at an emergency event?	1+	5+	10+
How many times in the last year have you visited/trained at another fire station?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you coached a firefighter to improve his or her personal performance in the fire department?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you counseled a firefighter to improve his or her personal performance in the fire department?	1+	5+	10+
How many first alarm structure fires have you attended?	1+	5+	10+
How many multi-department structure fires have you attended as a firefighter?	1+	5+	10+
How many multi-department structure fires have you attended in a command role? 1+	5+	10+	
How many times have you ventilated a roof?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you been assigned a sector responsible for overhaul?	1+	5+	10+
How many times have you dealt with hazardous materials in an incident?	1+	5+	10+

***Appendix K***  
***Sample Officer Training Schedule***

<u>Month</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Duration</u>
January	Creating a Supportive and Positive Atmosphere	2 hours
February	Handling Confrontation	1.5 hours
March	Giving and Receiving Praise	1.5 hours
April	Managing Priorities/Review of Rules and Regulations	1 hour
May	Coaching For Improvement	2 hours
June	Overcoming Procrastination and Piles of Paperwork	1 hour
July	Incident Command	2 hours
August	Strategy and Tactics	2 hours
September	Handling Complaints	1 hour
October	Communications/Review of Standards of Procedure and Standards of Government	2 hour
November	Developing and Improving Our Image	1 hour
December	Leadership	1.5 hours



## ***Appendix L***

### ***Fire Chief Checklists***

#### **Personnel Considerations**

- ☐ Uniforms and acceptable clothing (on and off duty)
- ☐ Selection and appointment, including background checks and interviews
- ☐ Promotions
- ☐ Proper driving behavior, including mandatory seatbelt use
- ☐ Ethics
- ☐ Misconduct (personal and organizational)
- ☐ Diversity, equal opportunity, and nondiscrimination policies
- ☐ Health and safety policies
- ☐ Labor laws and regulations
- ☐ Involvement by spouses and children in department activities, including junior firefighter programs
- ☐ Social functions
- ☐ Friendship and respect
- ☐ Avoiding horseplay and pranks
- ☐ Honor guard policies
- ☐ Disaster operations policies, including sleeping arrangements, ice, food and power
- ☐ Guest policy for response and use of vehicles
- ☐ Criminal behavior by members, including vandalism, theft, arson, substance abuse and sexual abuse

#### **Budgets**

- ☐ Drafting a budget
- ☐ Banking
- ☐ Capital investments and savings
- ☐ Equipment purchasing and leasing
- ☐ Bonds
- ☐ Duties of the treasurer
- ☐ Fundraising
- ☐ Loans
- ☐ Investments
- ☐ Applying for grants

#### **Legal Issues**

- ☐ Workers' compensation
- ☐ Damage to member property
- ☐ Errors and omission insurance
- ☐ Death and injury procedures and liability
- ☐ Filing reports with state and federal agencies
- ☐ Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements
- ☐ Department of Labor requirements

### **Station Operations**

- ☐ General housekeeping
- ☐ Kitchen use, food policy, and coffee and soda machines
- ☐ Sleeping quarters
- ☐ Living at the station
- ☐ Bulletin board use
- ☐ Lounge area
- ☐ Equipment room
- ☐ Power generator
- ☐ Tools
- ☐ Apparatus floor
- ☐ Safety issues
- ☐ Emergency response parking
- ☐ Rental of station meeting room or function area, including any risks involved
- ☐ Social and sports functions
- ☐ Alcohol and gambling policy
- ☐ Guest policy
- ☐ Exercise facilities

### **Station Security**

- ☐ Securing the station, including security systems and distribution/return of keys
- ☐ Controlling vandalism
- ☐ Use of department tools and equipment
- ☐ Plans for natural and man-made disasters
- ☐ Insurance

### **Administration**

- ☐ Computers (purchase, maintenance and use)
- ☐ Office furniture
- ☐ Files and security, including separate filing systems for personnel and medical records
- ☐ Incoming and outgoing mail
- ☐ Staff, both full- and part-time
- ☐ Assignment of pagers, radios, and equipment
- ☐ Licenses and approvals
  - ☐ Fire department registered with state (and information on file is current)
  - ☐ Tax-exempt status with the IRS and State
  - ☐ Nonprofit tax returns filings current
  - ☐ Radios compliant with Federal Communications Commission rules
  - ☐ Ambulances certified with state EMS agency
  - ☐ Apparatus is within Department of Transportation weight guidelines
  - ☐ Members have state training certifications for firefighting and EMS response
  - ☐ Members have relevant law enforcement certifications (for example, to investigate arson)

**Meetings**

- ☐ Location and time
- ☐ Purpose
- ☐ Attendance
- ☐ Application of by-laws
- ☐ Agendas and action items
- ☐ Rules of order
- ☐ Minutes and records

**Library**

- ☐ Types of resources to include
- ☐ Obtaining resources
- ☐ Access to resources by members and the public

**Training**

- ☐ Training officer appointment and training
- ☐ Equipment and supplies, including audio-visuals
- ☐ Drills
- ☐ Safety at training

**Benefits**

- ☐ Workers' compensation
- ☐ Life insurance
- ☐ Errors and omission insurance
- ☐ Death and disability insurance
- ☐ Training
- ☐ Personal protective equipment
- ☐ Use of station facilities
- ☐ Relief fund
- ☐ Length of service programs
- ☐ Tax deductions

# BEYOND HOSES & HELMETS



## SEMINAR CONTENTS

TACTICAL MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

RETAINING AND RECRUITING STAFF

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

MANAGING CHANGE

TEAM BUILDING

THE SEMINAR IS PART OF A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN PIERCE APPARATUS AND THE VCOS



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# ***APPENDIX E***

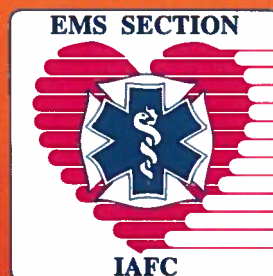
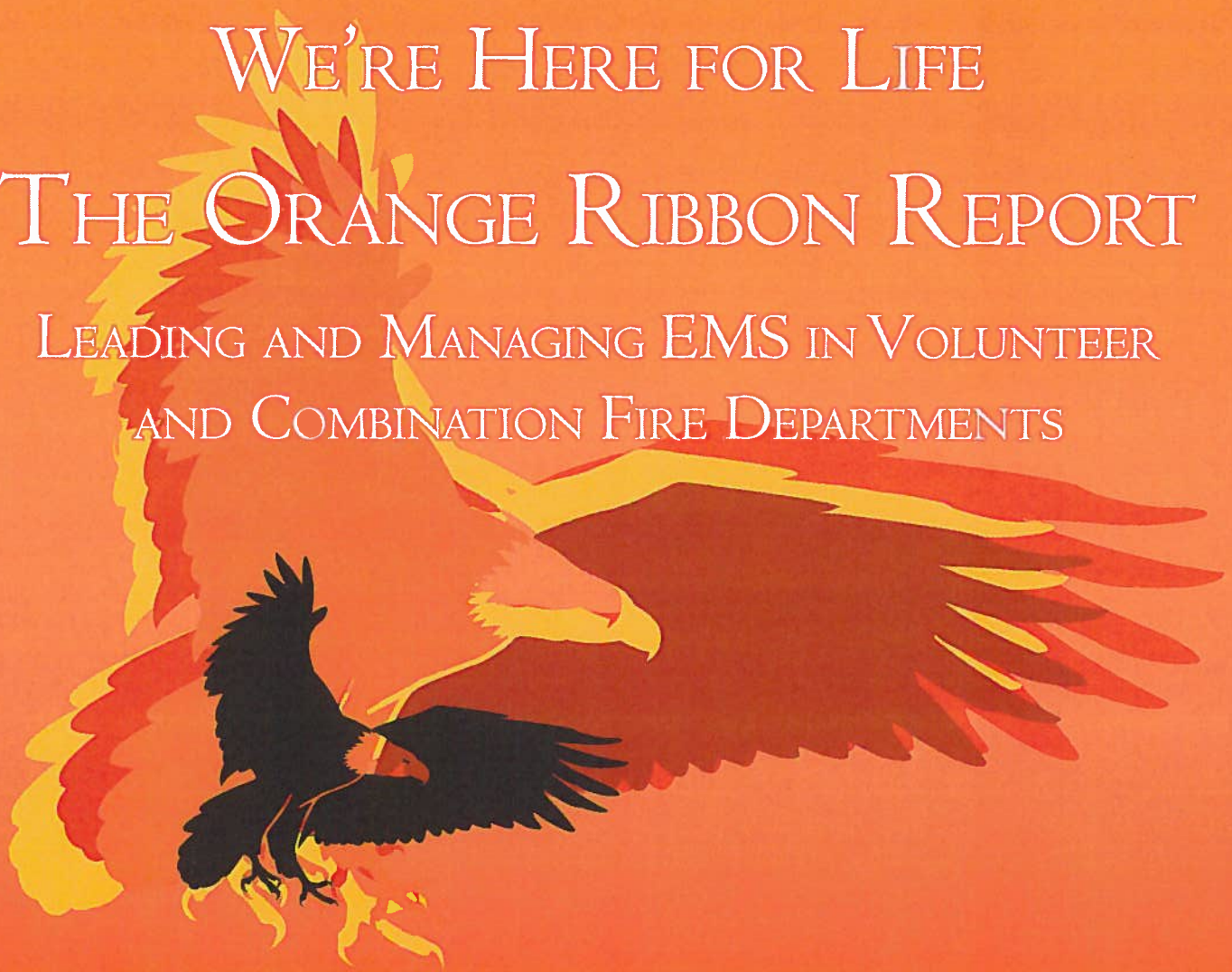


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LEADING AND MANAGING EMS IN VOLUNTEER  
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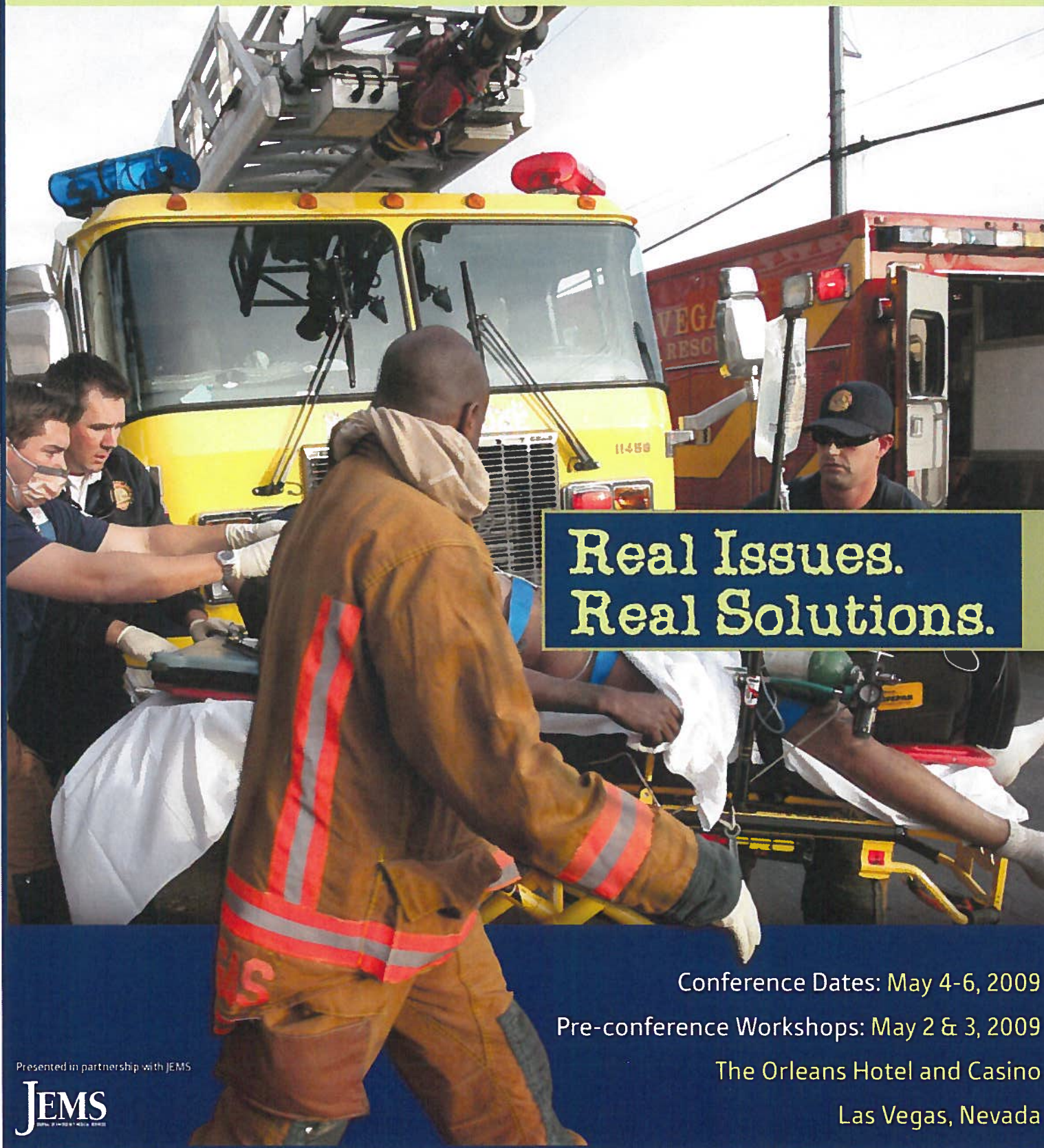


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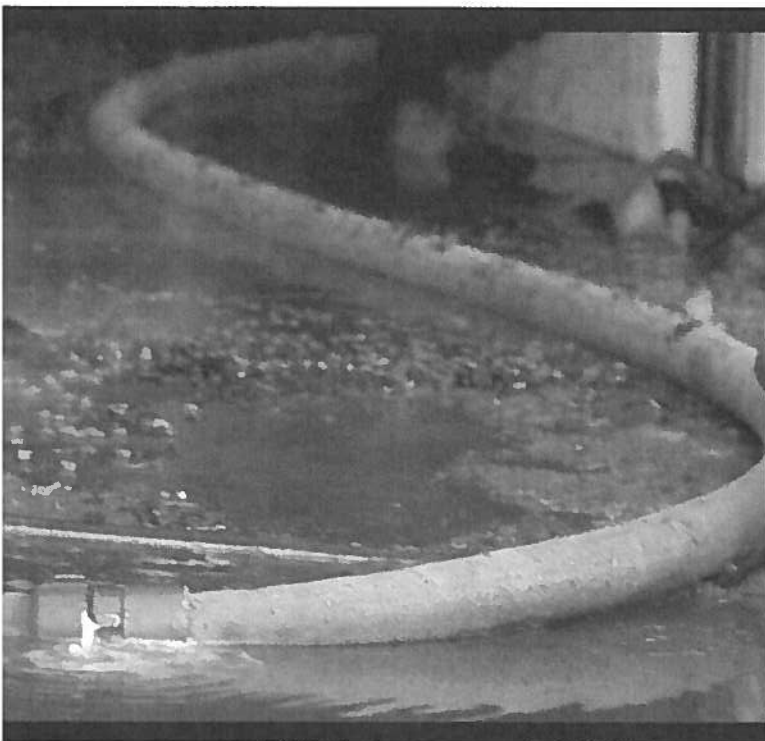
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# THE ORANGE RIBBON REPORT

## LEADING AND MANAGING EMS IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

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## THE ORANGE RIBBON REPORT

### LEADING AND MANAGING EMS IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

#### **Introduction**

Across this United States, the men and women of America's volunteer fire service are deeply woven into the basic fabric of our nation. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), approximately 800,000 volunteer firefighters serve across the country. Of all the fire departments in America, 73 percent are all-volunteer departments, protecting the majority of this nation's geographical area. Volunteer, career and combination fire departments also have a strong history of pre-hospital 9-1-1 emergency medical service response. The NFPA notes that fire and rescue departments provide approximately 68 percent of EMS response across the country.

Providing EMS through a fire department makes sense because fire stations are strategically located throughout the community to provide a rapid response and fire departments are already engaged in the "customer response business." Fire-based EMS requires a great commitment, however. According to the Firehouse.com – 2004 National Run Survey, once a fire department commits to providing EMS, that service will constitute 70 percent or more of all emergency activities.

In August 2007, the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section (VCOS) and the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs came together to address the issue of EMS systems in volunteer and combination departments. That December, a group of fire and EMS chief and company officers met in Memphis, Tenn., to weigh the challenges, solutions and resources that a volunteer or combination department chief would need when considering how best to provide EMS response to the community.

The result of that effort is this tool-kit, which identifies the questions chiefs and local policy makers must answer when considering adding or increasing EMS response in their communities.

In many instances, this question must be answered quickly, as when a fire department must take over the responsibility of providing EMS when the current provider discontinues service. This may happen with little or no notice, especially if a private, for-profit company provides the service. Other times, departments, policy makers and communities have the time to fully review all the issues. This tool-kit seeks to facilitate the transition when deciding to add EMS delivery to a fire department's capabilities – or

in developing a contingency plan if the need arises in the future.

The tool-kit is divided into chapters that illuminate the various considerations departments and local policy makers must review and offer guidance on how to proceed. A number of resources and references are also included for further assistance.

**Chapter 1** focuses on deployment, explaining the role and benefits to patient care in the pre-hospital 9-1-1 EMS response of fire and rescue departments. It explains personnel deployment methods, transportation considerations and EMS certification levels – First Responder, EMT Basic, EMT Intermediate and EMT Paramedic.

**Chapter 2** explores the costs involved in EMS response. These costs include personnel training, personal protective equipment, apparatus, fuel and maintenance, medical supplies, administration, facilities, agency credentialing and billing.

**Chapter 3** considers the challenges of communications and standardized languages. Radio types, spectrum allowances and interoperability are reviewed. The chapter also explains the role and needs of emergency medical dispatch, focusing on triage, pre-arrival and quality assurance in patient care. The role of public education is also highlighted.

**Chapter 4** illuminates the considerations departments must weigh in funding EMS response and explains different types of cost-recovery systems.

**Chapter 5** notes the legal requirements necessary for an EMS system. Here, the role of state EMS licensure is explained, in particular how it can differ among states and what the role of the state EMS director is.

**Chapter 6** looks at human resources considerations and provides guidance on what impacts can be expected in introducing EMS to volunteer and combination departments. This chapter notes the importance of using inclusive approaches with department personnel and the community to ensure success.

**Chapter 7** discusses quality management systems as a way to establish performance objectives, methods of evaluating how well those objectives are being met, and tools to facilitate making changes based on the evaluations.

**The VCOS and EMS Sections of the International Association of Fire Chiefs hope that this tool-kit provides the necessary guidance, explanations and resources to assist any volunteer or combination department considering adopting EMS response.**

# **The Volunteer Firefighters' Bill of Rights**

***As a Volunteer Firefighter, you have the right to:***

1. An environment in which the volunteer is treated as a professional and as a valued asset – not just free labor
2. Receive respect, recognition and reward for attitude and performance
3. Know as much as possible about the organization, policies, people and programs
4. Sound guidance, supervision and direction with a job description clearly defined
5. Suitable assignments according to your abilities, knowledge, location, experience and desires
6. Opportunities for participation, development, advancement and varied experiences
7. Quality training commensurate with agency, local, county, state and national standards and appropriate to your assignment
8. Be heard and participate in planning
9. Receive periodic evaluations and feedback
10. Frequent expressions of appreciation from other volunteers and the community

*—Chief John R. Leahy Jr., 2003*

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## The EMT Oath

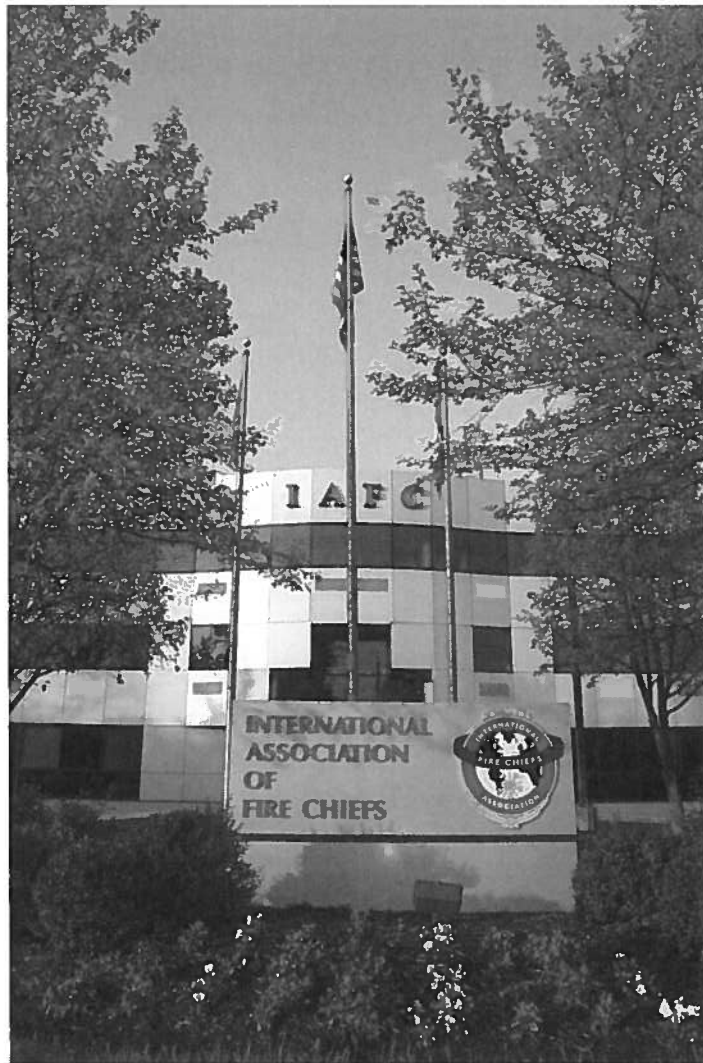
Be it pledged as an Emergency Medical Technician, I will honor the physical and judicial laws of God and man. I will follow that regimen which, according to my ability and judgment, I consider for the benefit of patients and abstain from whatever is deleterious and mischievous, nor shall I suggest any such counsel. Into whatever homes I enter, I will go into them for the benefit of only the sick and injured, never revealing what I see or hear in the lives of men unless required by law.

I shall also share my medical knowledge with those who may benefit from what I have learned. I will serve unselfishly and continuously in order to help make a better world for all mankind.

While I continue to keep this oath unviolated, may it be granted to me to enjoy life, and the practice of the art, respected by all men, in all times. Should I trespass or violate this oath, may the reverse be my lot. So help me God.

*Written by: Charles B. Gillespie, MD*

*Adopted 1978 by the National Association of Emergency Medical Technicians*





## Chapter 1: Deployment

The primary objective of the pre-hospital emergency medical service (EMS) system is to deliver rapid emergency medical treatment to patients that call for help. Fire departments that provide EMS must be prepared to deploy the appropriate resources to meet that objective.

Providing EMS delivery through a fire department makes sense. Fire stations are strategically located throughout the community to provide a rapid response. Fire departments are already engaged in the “customer response business.” In areas of the country that still have limited or no emergency medical services, adding EMS delivery to fire department capabilities seems to be a logical step. The difficulty and level of complexity will depend on:

1. the community’s current level of service, and whether the fire department will be enhancing or replacing a current service provider; and
2. whether the department will provide for the transportation of patients to hospitals or simply provide a first response service.

In areas where the current EMS system has limited capabilities (i.e. basic first-aid), enhancing those services may be the fire department’s first objective. One way to achieve that goal is to provide a faster response than the current provider with the same or a higher level of care.

In many instances, the fire department must take over the responsibility of providing EMS when the current provider discontinues service. This may happen with little or no notice, especially if a private, for-profit company provides the service. Fire departments relying on private or other EMS providers should develop a contingency plan in the event those providers discontinue their services.

When making the decision to provide EMS, keep in mind that once a fire department commits to providing EMS, that service will constitute 70 percent or more of all emergency activities.<sup>1</sup>

### **Determining the Department’s Level of Service**

When deciding to add EMS delivery to a fire department’s capabilities – or in developing a contingency plan – the first step is to determine the level of service to provide. The department’s current financial and personnel resources, as well as the level of other services provided, will help guide that decision. The two key factors are:

- The level of certification for personnel: First Responder through EMT-Paramedic
- The type of deployment: Initial first response, ambulance transportation, or both

The level of service provided is independent of the decision to provide ambulance transportation. Many fire departments provide EMS response at any of the levels identified in this report – First Responder through EMT-Paramedic – without providing ambulance transportation. In many states, ambulance transportation requires at least the EMT-Basic certification.

The following section provides information on the various levels of EMS certification. *The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration* (NHTSA) has determined the scope of practice for each level.<sup>2</sup> These levels will be in effect until the NHTSA implements a new scope of practice model, which will occur in 2010 (or perhaps later). (These changes are explained detail in Appendix A.) States will continue to have the option of adopting or modifying the NHTSA’s scope of practice.

### **First Responder (FR)**

The easiest level to implement is First Responder.<sup>3</sup> This level of training involves a 40-hour course of study outlined by the NHTSA. Implementation of this curriculum is inexpensive and is a simple way to train existing dedicated personnel. In fact, personnel may already have some EMS background through American Red Cross or National Safety Council first-aid training programs.

One of the benefits to this level of service is that First Responders are not usually involved with ambulance transportation. Fire department First Responders are often located closer to an emergency medical incident scene than local ambulance providers. If a fire department is involved in EMS, this closer proximity often results in decreased response times and earlier delivery of patient care.



The Pomona, Kan., “First Responder” emergency medical response unit was founded in 1989 with one state-certified EMT. The unit is now composed of four Kansas-certified EMTs and four first responders. Responses are made in a 2006 Ford 350 four-wheel drive, shown above, which carries equipment to provide basic life support, including an AED unit, until an ambulance arrives on scene.<sup>4</sup>

### **Emergency Medical Technician – Basic (EMT-B)**

The next nationally recognized level of EMS is the Emergency Medical Technician - Basic (EMT-B) level.<sup>5</sup> In many communities, this is the minimum level of service required to provide ambulance transport. The National Scope of Practice for EMT-B allows providers to administer oxygen, splint, bandage, and conduct basic patient assessments. This level of certification is adequate for the majority of EMS calls. As much as 80 percent of all EMS calls do not require higher levels of care.<sup>6</sup>

The EMT-B level of training involves at least 110 hours of training and includes a clinical observation component in a hospital emergency department. Continuing education is required to maintain this level of certification.

The investment in equipment and staffing to provide this level of service is certainly more involved than the First Responder level. EMT-B certification involves more training time and requires additional equipment and supplies. Also, most EMT-B training programs must be approved by an agency responsible for EMS regulation and oversight. This agency may be a state, regional, county, or local governmental EMS department or agency. Most EMS regulatory agencies require independent certification testing—and in some states licensure—in order to provide EMS to the public.

### **Emergency Medical Technician – Intermediate (EMT-I)**

The next level of service is EMT Intermediate (EMT-I).<sup>7</sup> The NHTSA's EMT-I scope of practice allows the provider to offer intravenous therapy, defibrillate patients, administer medication, and use advanced airway management techniques. However, the scope of practice for the EMT-I often varies based on state laws, regional or local regulations, and protocols and policies approved by the system or agency medical director.

Many fire service organizations offer an initial EMT-B service and add EMT-I capabilities as needed on scene. Some services provide a 100 percent EMT-I level of service. Either way, the EMT-I level offers advanced-level care for patients as well as support for additional training, equipment, and resources.

The number of training hours the NHTSA recommends for EMT-I is between 300 and 400 and includes a clinical component as well as a field internship on a responding EMS unit. Continuing education is required to maintain this level of certification.

### **Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic (EMT-P)**

The highest level of EMS pre-hospital care is provided at the Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic (EMT-P) certification level.<sup>8</sup> This level of care is commonly referred to as Advanced Life Support (ALS) care. The ALS provider is the most highly trained and equipped EMS provider, offering defibrillation and cardiac monitoring, intravenous therapy, advanced airway management, and medication administration. As such, the financial and support resources needed to provide ALS response are much more significant.

Many urban, suburban, and close-in rural fire departments are able to provide ALS services as a transport provider, initial first responder, or both. Initial ALS response to EMS emergencies requires the same equipment, training and supplies as required for an ALS transport agency, with the exception of an ambulance for patient transportation.

The requirements to obtain Paramedic certification include at least 1,000 hours of training<sup>9</sup> and, in some states, a two-year associate degree in Para-medicine. Continuing education is required to maintain this level of certification.



**The North Andover Fire Department in Massachusetts is the designated emergency ambulance service provider for the town of North Andover. This department responds to more than 2,500 EMS calls per year. They respond to these calls with two state-certified Class 1 ambulances. Of the department's 55 uniformed personnel, 49 are EMTs.**

### **Transport and Non-Transport EMS Service Delivery**

After determining the level of certification to provide, the next decision is how the EMS providers will be deployed. Fire departments may provide initial first response, patient transportation, or both.

While the decision to provide EMS may be an easy one, the decision to provide ambulance transportation is much more complex. Most fire departments initiate EMS transport for the following reasons:

- The department is located in a new geographic area, where ambulance service does not exist.
- The current ambulance provider offers poor or no service to this area.
- The fire department needs to generate revenue.

Ambulance transportation is highly regulated by local, state and federal EMS agencies, especially with regard to billing for this service. Fire departments that are contemplating ambulance transport services should consult their state or local EMS agency. The American Ambulance Association (AAA) also provides guidelines for implementing ambulance services and their associated operations.<sup>10</sup>



**The Princeton (Ill.) Fire Department utilizes two intermediate life support (ILS) ambulances and one basic life support (BLS) ambulance to provide EMT-I level care. The fire department is staffed by nine full-time firefighter/EMTs on three 24/48 shifts and 15 part-time and volunteer firefighters and EMTs. The chief, deputy chief and EMT/EMT-I each work a 40-hour shift and all off-duty personnel respond on emergency calls when needed.**

Fire departments choosing to move forward with ambulance service must determine how to provide it. The following section discusses the two types of ambulance transport services: tiered response and “hand-off” systems.

### **Tiered Response System**

One way a smaller volunteer or combination fire department can offer EMS is to participate in a tiered response system. Based on the dispatching information, a BLS, Intermediate, or ALS provider may be assigned to respond. If the patient condition changes, the first responder can request a higher level of EMS provider for a specific incident. Since most EMS calls are basic in nature, the tiered system reserves the providers with the highest level of training for cases in which they are most needed. This type of system sends the right level of resource to the right call, BLS for BLS and ALS for ALS.

An example of a tiered response system is for a fire department to offer BLS initial EMS response and partner with another EMS provider (private, hospital-based, or third service) for higher levels of service. This system can work well for all sizes and types of departments, depending on local needs.

### **EMS “Hand-Off” Systems**

Some fire department-based EMS systems transfer – or “hand off” – the patient to a partner provider for transport. This system allows the fire department EMS units to remain in their response area. This frequently occurs when the patient’s destination hospital is some distance from the fire department jurisdiction.

Even when using the hand-off system, fire-based EMS systems should be capable of transporting a patient, or have arrangements in place for an alternate transport provider, in case the partner transport service is delayed and the patient’s condition warrants an immediate transport.

### **Emergency vs. Non-Emergency Ambulance Transportation**

In today’s health care environment, emergency medical services can be expensive to provide with little means of recouping the costs. To help fill the gaps, some fire departments offer emergency or non-emergency transport services for a fee. Such fees can generate significant income for a jurisdiction. Providing ambulance transportation services is a good way for smaller volunteer or combination fire-based EMS systems to improve capabilities yet remain cost-effective, and in many cases generate significant revenue back to the department.

Departments providing non-emergency transportation must make sure adequate ambulance response capabilities are available to respond to emergency incidents.

## Fire Station Locations and EMS Response Times

Providing effective EMS systems relies heavily on the strategic location of fire department facilities. Fire stations typically are placed across geographic regions according to population densities and workload needs. This creates an all-hazard response infrastructure meeting the routine and catastrophic emergency needs of all communities regardless of the nature of the emergency.<sup>11</sup>



Using fire department personnel for EMS is a logical choice since fire station locations are based on population, the need for rapid response, and statistically calculated risks. As with fire response, EMS response better serves citizens when done quickly. Faster response times translate into better patient outcomes.

For example, patients experiencing chest pain have the best outcomes when they enter the EMS system within five minutes and have advanced life support EMS care on scene within eight minutes.<sup>12</sup> Trauma patients also benefit from faster response times. The idea of the “Golden Hour”<sup>13</sup> means that severely injured trauma patients have one hour from the onset of injury until they must receive definitive surgical care to survive. When response times are faster, more of the “Golden Hour” remains for transport to an appropriate facility and treatment.

**The Eureka Fire Protection District outside of St. Louis, Mo., is a “combination” department, utilizing both volunteer (reserve) and career staff. The department has nearly 100 members including paramedics, EMTs, firefighters, a support team, and an explorer post. Three ALS ambulances provide Paramedic-level transport. In the event that all the ambulances are out on calls, four other pieces of fire apparatus are completely equipped to ALS-level initial response, ensuring coverage until a mutual-aid ambulance can arrive at the scene.**

In addition, fire departments have resolved the critical issue of coverage. The fire service has a rich tradition of mutual aid and move-up coverage when a particular fire department is experiencing an overwhelming call volume. Many fire departments that provide ambulance transportation have mutual aid agreements with neighboring ambulance providers to fill in or move up when needed. This helps maintain adequate service during times of system stress.

Fire-based EMS systems that are in urban areas or have high call volumes may choose to institute a program of system status management. This model allows flexible staffing and equipment placement in response to statistically calculated volume periods and robust geographic call loads. These fire departments support their increased requests for service by having alternative scheduled staff and spare equipment in reserve and assigning or “posting” the extra resources in a location that may be outside of the fire department facility. This system is efficient only for high-volume EMS providers. The typical medium- and small-size volunteer or combination departments would generally not find a need for system status management.

## Chapter 2: The Logistics of Providing EMS

Based on the level of emergency medical services a fire department plans to provide, consideration is required for the associated infrastructure, equipment and other EMS-related costs. These costs include:

- Training and continuing education
- Personal protective clothing and equipment
- Transport and non-transport apparatus, including vehicle maintenance and fuel
- Emergency medical equipment and supplies
- Administration and support services
- Facilities
- Agency credentialing, including licensure and/or ambulance service permits

### Training and Continuing Education

Fire departments that do not currently provide EMS delivery services will have to plan for and arrange EMS training for department members who have not yet received it. The cost for EMS training increases based on the level of care the department plans to provide. First Responder training is the least expensive and requires the least amount of time. Training at the EMT-P level is the most expensive and the most time-intensive.

In addition to the initial EMS training, the department will have to plan for continuing education and recertification training programs. All EMS certifications have an expiration date and specific requirements for recertification. Requirements for both the initial training and continuing education are governed by the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency.

### Personal Protective Clothing and Equipment

Infectious diseases, blood-borne pathogens, and weapons of mass destruction pose a real and dangerous threat to EMS care providers. The fire department will need to choose clothing and equipment that protects its members from these threats and provides a level of assurance to the public. The jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency will dictate the specific personal protective equipment (PPE) required to provide EMS.

The baseline document for PPE and clothing is NFPA 1999: *Standard on Protective Clothing for Emergency Medical Operations*, which is the consensus standard developed by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). While designed as a consensus standard – which really means “guideline” – your state or locality may have adopted it as law. Department personnel should check with their legal counsel for guidance.

### Transport and Non-Transport Apparatus

The type of EMS service delivery model selected will dictate the type and quantity of dedicated or shared apparatus a fire department will need. This section discusses the transport and non-transport apparatus needs of all levels of service, from First Responder through EMT-Paramedic.

Federal, state, and local laws and regulations govern the manufacturing, licensure and operation of EMS vehicles and make the distinction between transport and non-transport apparatus. The jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency also may have regulations regarding EMS response apparatus, especially ambulances. If the department's administrative personnel are not familiar with these regulations, they must complete “due diligence” before designing, acquiring or purchasing any new EMS apparatus. Design standards for ambulances may vary from state to state and may depend on guidelines established by the state fire agency or the EMS regulatory agency. Fire department administrators should consult with legal counsel on specific requirements.

### **Resources on Ambulance Design**

- The U.S. General Services Administration's Federal Supply Service has developed vehicle specifications for ambulances purchased through that program. Go to [www.gsa.gov](http://www.gsa.gov), and search for a document titled "Federal Specifications for the Star-of-Life Ambulance KKK-A-1822," which was published on June 1, 2002.
- The Ambulance Manufacturers Division (AMD) of the National Truck Equipment Association provides guidance at [www.ntea.com](http://www.ntea.com).
- The Fire Apparatus Manufacturer's Association provides guidance at [www.fama.org](http://www.fama.org).

Most fire departments that provide EMS – most commonly engine companies - respond on existing apparatus. Some departments use smaller vehicles to respond to EMS incidents. Many departments will respond with more than one apparatus to specific types of EMS incidents, such as motor vehicle crashes or industrial accidents.

### **Personally Owned Vehicles**

In some cases, EMS responders may use personally owned vehicles (POVs) as emergency vehicles. The success of utilizing POVs as first-line response vehicles will depend on the fire department's level of service. POV use is prevalent in rural areas where staffing models or geography delay emergency response. In these instances, POVs serve as first responders to assess and stabilize the patient(s) prior to the arrival of an ambulance or aero-medical service. The level of certification and the equipment required will depend on the delivery model adopted by the department.

State and local laws vary widely on the use of POVs as first-line emergency response vehicles. For example, the state of Ohio authorizes POVs as emergency response vehicles through the state fire marshal's office. Once authorized, POVs may use emergency warning equipment (i.e., red lights and sirens) and have the same rights and privileges as other public safety vehicles. On the other hand, the state of Illinois does not recognize POVs as emergency response vehicles and only allows them to use a blue "courtesy" light. The fire department should consult with the state police, motor vehicle department, and/or department of public safety to determine which laws apply.

Another consideration in using POVs for emergency response is the additional liability to the individual member and the organization. Some insurance carriers will not cover – or may require a rider policy for – POVs used in such a capacity. Depending on applicable laws, the department may need to assume the burden of liability. Also consider that one of the leading causes of line-of-duty deaths for volunteer firefighters and EMS providers is being involved in a motor vehicle accident while responding to and returning from emergency incidents in POVs. The department should conduct a thorough risk-benefit analysis before allowing POVs to be used for emergency responses.

### **Fire Apparatus and Staff Vehicles**

The use of fire engines, aerial apparatus, wildland interface, and staff vehicles as first-line EMS response vehicles is not uncommon. They are most often utilized as part of a tiered response system or when a third party provides the EMS transport service. As previously discussed, this system enables a quick response to medical emergencies and facilitates the quick assessment and stabilization of the patient(s). However, these types of vehicles are not routinely utilized or authorized for use as transport vehicles. The level of certification and the equipment required will depend on the EMS service delivery model and level of care the fire department adopts.

### **Transport Vehicles (Ambulances)**

If ambulance transportation services would best meet the department's requirements, first consider what type and size of ambulance will be needed. Ambulances come in a wide variety of models from a number of different manufacturers. They range from heavy- to light-duty, as they are manufactured on van, truck, and custom chassis. To help determine the required apparatus specifications, use the above-referenced GSA standard as a guideline.

After the ambulance has been purchased and received, state or local regulations enacted by the EMS regulatory or fire agency may require that it be inspected and licensed before use. Check with the state bureau of motor vehicles or state EMS agency to ensure the department meets all applicable regulations and requirements.

Finally, develop a preventative maintenance program as well as a vehicle and equipment replacement schedule.

### **Emergency Medical Equipment and Supplies**

Though the NHTSA has determined the scope of practice for each level of EMS service, not every state, region or local jurisdiction has adopted the NHTSA's full recommendations. In fact, many states limit the use of certain skills within the scope of practice. An approved equipment and supply list for each level of service can be obtained from the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency. Fire department administrators must evaluate what laws and regulations apply to the department before purchasing equipment.

Below are recommendations for the types of equipment necessary for each level of response.

■ **First Responder:** Certified first responders have a very limited scope of practice; therefore the equipment needs are limited and less expensive than the higher levels of certification. Most first responders are equipped with a "first-in" bag that contains simple first-aid supplies (such as Band-Aids, gauze and blood pressure equipment) to stabilize a patient until transport units arrive. First-in bags may also contain automatic external defibrillators (AEDs) as well as equipment to maintain oral airways and administer oxygen.

■ **Emergency Medical Technician – Basic:** The medical equipment required for the EMT-B level of care includes backboards, splints, oxygen delivery devices, an AED, and airway equipment. If the EMT-B is responding in an ambulance, the ambulance would need to have portable and fixed suction devices, a fixed oxygen delivery system, communications equipment, and expendable medical supplies such as Band-Aids, dressings, gauze and oxygen tubing.

■ **Emergency Medical Technician - Intermediate:** The basic equipment for the EMT-I is the same as that of the EMT-B, with the addition of advanced airway devices, intravenous (IV) administration equipment, and, depending on the jurisdiction's allowed scope of practice, limited types of medications and disposable supplies to administer the medication.

■ **Emergency Medical Technician – Paramedic:** EMT-P personnel are required to have the same equipment as EMT-Bs and EMT-Is as well as medications approved by the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency and intubation equipment. They also are required to have cardiac monitoring equipment and manual defibrillators, probably the most expensive piece of equipment.



## **Administration and Support Services**

Once a fire department decides to provide EMS delivery services, responsibility for overseeing the program must be assigned to a staff member. This oversight includes monitoring training and certifications, ordering and restocking medical equipment and supplies, ensuring compliance with laws and regulations, and providing required reports for the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency. Additional support for required EMS issues, such as equipment repair, patient care reports, and liaison with hospitals, the medical director, and others in the medical community are required as well.

## **Facilities**

Adding EMS systems to a fire department will require working through some logistical issues. The extent of those issues will depend on the level of service and the service delivery model the department chooses.

The first issue is space. Consider whether the department's facilities can house EMS response vehicles as well as the related personnel, supplies and equipment. Once a fire department decides to provide EMS systems, it is likely to see a quick increase in call volume. To meet the increased demand for services, the department will have to evaluate the need for in-house staffing and in-house amenities for EMS responders (i.e., sleeping, eating, and shower facilities).

Also required is heightened security, especially for controlled substances on apparatus and/or in the station. Items such as oxygen, IV fluids, and narcotics are subject to the regulations of the jurisdiction's EMS agency; the local pharmacy board, hospital and medical director; and the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). As such, the department will need to track and secure these controlled items, which for many organizations means dedicating a portion of existing or new facilities for this purpose.

EMS systems also raise the need for environmental controls (heating and cooling) for expendable supplies and controlled substances. Seek advice from the EMS regulatory agency or medical oversight entity to determine what requirements need to be in place.

## **Agency Credentialing**

Most states will require a permit or license to provide EMS to the community. If the department has decided to provide ambulance services, the ambulance may need to be inspected on a periodic basis and a permit may be required. Obtaining these licenses and permits may have associated fees. Consult with the EMS regulatory agency for these requirements.

Some departments that provide ambulance services have decided to seek accreditation for their EMS service. Accreditation requires a complete review of all aspects of the EMS delivery components and provides a third-party opinion of the quality of a department's EMS delivery system. The accrediting agencies provide the requirements and guidelines for departments seeking accreditation. The two agencies that provide EMS accreditation are listed below.

### **The following organizations offer accreditation to fire-based emergency medical services:**

- The Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services ([www.caas.org](http://www.caas.org)) specifically accredits the ambulance service industry.
- The Center for Public Safety Excellence ([publicsafetyexcellence.org](http://publicsafetyexcellence.org)) accredits fire and emergency service organizations. They also have accreditation processes for chief fire officers and chief medical officers.

## Chapter 3: Communications

Communication begins with people who speak the same language. Within the fire department and in the EMS community at large, the language used (or the “lingo”) should be standardized to ensure compatibility and full understanding by all members. In most cases, the EMS community has used standard verbiage based on EMS certifications and medical terminology. This chapter discusses various ways to ensure and enhance clear and effective communications.

### The Dispatcher/Call-Taker Link

The need for clear and effective communication starts at dispatch. A call-taker must ask questions based on a standardized protocol designed to get to the root of the problem. Then, the dispatcher must relay accurate information to field personnel. Several software packages are designed to help dispatchers obtain specific patient information and move that information to the EMS responders. For smaller dispatch systems, hard-copy operational querying guides are readily available. The references at the end of this report provide examples.

### Emergency Medical Dispatch (EMD) has three parts:

**1. Triage:** First is triaging the incoming request for medical service to determine the level of response (i.e., no response; emergency vs. non-emergency response; or non-emergency vs. emergency transport). This feature depends heavily on the area’s emergency medical dispatch facilities as well as the availability of alternative, non-emergency transport methods and medical treatment facilities.<sup>15</sup>

**2. Pre-Arrival Instructions:** The second part of EMD is to provide pre-arrival instructions to the caller on how to help the victim immediately. The level of telephone assistance varies from simple advice (for example, “Call your doctor”) to complete instructions for cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR). Pre-arrival instructions are most commonly provided through computer software programs or on flip cards that are arranged so the dispatcher can question the caller and, based on the answers, quickly go to the card that contains the correct instructions. As this component is about saving lives, it is the most visible component of EMD and, if you are the victim, perhaps the most valuable.

**3. Quality Assurance:** The third – and most critical – feature of EMD is quality assurance. Each EMD program must originate with the complete involvement and cooperation of local emergency medical officials. Each aspect of the EMD protocol must be reviewed, revised as needed and approved by the local or regional EMS regulatory agency. This ensures the dispatchers are providing correct information and that the information is appropriate for local conditions. In addition, an ongoing review of the dispatchers’ activity is imperative to ensure they are following protocols correctly and that the protocols have a positive impact on the victims. One way to conduct a review is to look at a random selection of several incidents each month for analysis and grading, and then to provide feedback to the dispatcher and to revise the protocols as necessary.

The public usually is not aware of the importance of this process in that a dispatcher’s questions help get the patient the appropriate care. A public education program would be an effective way to relay that message.

#### For more information on EMD, please visit:

- *Dispatch Monthly Magazine*  
[www.911dispatch.com/info/emd/index.html](http://www.911dispatch.com/info/emd/index.html)
- National Academies of Emergency Dispatch  
[www.emergencydispatch.org/](http://www.emergencydispatch.org/)
- Medical Priority Dispatch  
[www.prioritydispatch.net/](http://www.prioritydispatch.net/)
- Power Phone  
[www.powerphone.com](http://www.powerphone.com)

## Types of Radio and Communications Systems

The Minnesota state EMS radio plan explains how important radio communications are to the EMS community:

*Two-way radio communication is one of the primary means by which the emergency medical services (EMS) system becomes a cohesive, efficiently functioning entity, providing prompt response and an optimum level of care to patients. It allows EMS providers in the field to consult with physicians regarding patient care and to communicate with hospital emergency departments allowing hospital personnel to prepare for the needs of incoming patients. It also provides for communication between EMS units, with dispatch centers, with other public safety providers and from hospital to hospital. While cell phones have become an alternative to two-way radio systems, they can be unreliable, particularly in a large-scale disaster, and should be considered as an adjunct to, rather than replacement of, the radio communications system.<sup>16</sup>*

The most common method of dispatching is the use of wireless radio transmissions. This method ranges from single-channel simplex systems (which use the same frequency to transmit and receive) to full communications “trunking” systems, including data.

A number of public safety radio bands are distributed along the radio spectrum,<sup>17</sup> including:

- Low Band – 30-50 Mega Hertz (MHz)<sup>18</sup>
- High Band – 150-170 MHz
- Ultra High Frequency (UHF) – 450-470 MHz
- 700 & 800 MHz<sup>19</sup>
- Internet-based
- Public safety broadband

This chapter provides a brief overview of the various types of communications systems, to help a fire department choose what will be best.

True to its name, a simplex channel is the simplest form of radio communications and therefore the least expensive. An assigned frequency is used to transmit and receive voice communications. The radio equipment in use today can be programmed to utilize many single channels. A limitation of this type of system is the range, which is the distance the radio frequency will travel. One of the variables is the radio’s transmit power. Another is whether the user is talking to a base antenna mounted on a tower or simply to another mobile or handheld radio.

Radio transmission requires a clear path between antennas known as “radio line of sight.” Depending on the amount of transmit power, the line of sight could be up to five miles. Mobiles with high power output would provide greater distance and a mobile transmitting to a base antenna would have an even greater range.

Simplex systems can be used by multiple agencies that agree to share the same frequency licenses.

A single channel repeater system (or half duplex) enhances the range of mobile and handheld radios by using two different frequencies: one for transmitting and one for receiving. These frequencies are 5 MHz apart. When transmitting on a handheld radio, a repeater station (with a tower-mounted antenna) receives the portable radio transmission and rebroadcasts it at a much higher power over the reception channel of the handheld or mobile radio. This type of system greatly enhances geographic coverage. As with simplex systems, multiple agencies can use this system if they agree to share frequency licenses.

Both of the above systems can be enhanced for better radio coverage by using a “voting system” that utilizes multiple towers with multiple repeaters. The voting device compares the incoming signals and rebroadcasts the strongest one.

One way to increase the capacity of a single channel repeater system – to allow more users at a time – is to “trunk” it. Trunking utilizes up to 20 single channel repeaters. A single channel controller on each repeater ties them together (or, in the case of Motorola systems, a single control channel), sending a calling mobile phone or handheld unit to an available repeater. This method is the most effective use of multiple licensed frequencies. However, it can be costly to construct.

Internet communications – including Voice-Over-Internet Protocol (VOIP) or Radio-Over-Internet Protocol (ROIP) – can link facilities and vehicles to the dispatch center and to each other. Access to wireless Internet depends on the area infrastructure, but cellular broadband is available in most cases.

### **Interoperability**

The previous discussions of simplex, duplex, and trunking systems have been about operability, or making sure departmental communications systems are up and running. Another consideration is interoperability, which ensures that all emergency response agencies are able to communicate with one another. Interoperability is vital to providing effective mutual aid and should be part of any mutual aid plan. Simple agreements can and should be used to ensure that neighboring agencies have permission to utilize each other’s communications channels. Many states have adopted interoperable radio communications plans that address statewide mutual aid frequencies across all bands for various disciplines, including EMS, fire, law enforcement and air operations.<sup>20</sup>

All stakeholders must discuss and adopt radio use protocols. Those protocols should use clear – or plain – text rather than agency-specific terminology such as “10 codes.” Communication among local, state and federal agencies is so important that the federal government requires it through the National Response Framework and National Incident Management System, which all fire departments should read and understand.

An aspect of interoperability that is critical to the EMS community is communications with hospitals while en route with a patient. Depending on the particular area of the country, this can range from no communication to high-tech satellite and video transmissions. However, cellular phone communications are growing at a rapid rate, and many agencies are using mobile satellite and/or Internet broadband systems that send live video and interactive voice communications between the EMS unit and the receiving facility. At a minimum, fire departments should have direct radio communications that can be used to describe the patient’s condition and receive medical intervention instructions.

No matter what the available technology is, stakeholders must develop local radio use protocols to assure “same page” communications that are efficient and effective.

### **Information Technology Solutions**

Web-based systems exist that utilize real-time communications and resource management solutions to enhance preparedness and response to medical emergencies, mass casualty events, and public health incidents. These packages provide emergency department status tracking, patient tracking, mass casualty incident support, diagnostic surveillance, hospital bed tracking, and public health alerting solutions.

They may provide a framework as follows:

#### **EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT**

- Communicate real-time status of all regional emergency resources to support informed patient transport decisions
- Prepare for incoming patients

### **MASS CASUALTY INCIDENT SUPPORT**

- Rapidly query hospitals for capacity by triage category and other available services
- Monitor and track casualties

### **HOSPITAL RESOURCES**

- Communicate bed availability, analyze trends, and manage hospital resources

### **EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT**

- Coordinate emergency response resources

### **PUBLIC HEALTH**

- Disseminate public health alerts and collect real-time surveillance information

The overall importance of communications in the provision of EMS delivery services cannot be overestimated. Departments may need to enhance their existing communications infrastructure, which may include purchasing and implementing new systems, to provide effective EMS delivery.

## Chapter 4: Funding

### Operational Funding

The cost to a fire department providing a new or enhanced EMS delivery service will depend on the level of service provided. Budgeting by a timeframe for adding or enhancing EMS service delivery will allow the department to forecast costs more accurately.

Any department employing career staff must budget for salaries and benefits, both of which should be sufficient to attract trained and qualified personnel. In an all-volunteer system, personnel expenses tend to be minimal. However, volunteer departments nationwide have been offering stipends to their volunteers in exchange for services provided.<sup>21</sup> All departments – volunteer, combination, and career – should factor EMS training, continuing education, and recertification costs into their budgets.

The cost of tools, equipment and supplies necessary for providing EMS increases as the level of service increases. For example, ALS costs will be greater than basic life support service because ALS personnel use more expensive equipment.

A response vehicle can be a major investment. Fire departments that plan to provide EMS response and on-scene treatment, but not patient transportation, would not need to purchase and maintain an ambulance. Instead, that department may opt to purchase a smaller, less expensive vehicle to get EMS first responders to the scene to initiate and provide definitive patient care. Vehicle maintenance and fuel expenses will depend on the vehicle selected to provide EMS delivery.

The EMS response vehicle will need adequate medical supplies. EMS departments typically purchase the initial inventory of medical supplies. Many receiving medical facilities will replenish most EMS supplies used on EMS patients and charge the cost of the supplies to the patient's hospital account. To receive these supplies, the EMS team must comply with the receiving facility's reporting requirements and procedures or work with the receiving medical facilities to develop a procedure for restocking the fire department EMS units.

### Cost Recovery

Once the costs to provide EMS or enhance the current EMS delivery service have been determined, sources of funding must be identified. The fire department will need to determine if the cost of providing EMS delivery services can be financially self-sufficient, will need to be supplemented through current revenues the department receives, or will require additional funding.<sup>22</sup> Options for additional funding include user fees, tax revenues (from property taxes or special service tax districts), donations, grants, or a combination of all of these.

Billing for EMS first response or ambulance services is not likely to cover all of the operational costs, but it may offset them substantially. Departments can implement "user fees" in a few different ways.

Some volunteer or small combination departments bill patients directly for services provided. Most departments that do this assign the invoicing to a department member who understands standardized billing practices as well as the various medical insurance laws and Medicare requirements.

However, keeping abreast of these many legal issues and requirements is often confusing and overwhelming, particularly for an all-volunteer service. As such, some departments hire professional billing personnel. The department provides detailed information about each patient on every call for service; the billing company handles the collection (from sending the initial bill to engaging a collection agency, if necessary) and provides a monthly payment to the EMS agency. Billing companies also can recommend a service fee schedule based on what most insurance companies and Medicare will pay for various types of EMS calls.

When choosing a billing company, select a reputable company that can provide references. Make sure their rate of return (or collection rate – the amount collected versus the amount billed) is acceptable. The amount a department can expect to collect depends on the payer mix for the specific community. Billing companies can help determine the amount of revenue that a department can expect to collect.

Many smaller volunteer EMS departments use an annual subscription service, which generates pre-service funds and ensures that patients will be transported at a substantially reduced rate. The funds generated are rarely enough to cover actual operating expenses; however, subscription services are a good public relations tool because residents feel they are helping to sustain the organization financially as well as making a good investment if they ever need EMS systems.

The authority having jurisdiction (AHJ) for increasing taxes, either at the state or local level, can fund the EMS operation through residential tax revenues (property taxes) or by establishing special tax districts. Raising or adding any tax usually requires public approval through a ballot initiative; however, voters may be reluctant to add or increase taxes, particularly during an economic downturn. Even if a jurisdiction is successful in raising taxes for EMS, the additional revenue is often insufficient to cover all of the operational expenses for the EMS organization. Fire department administrators contemplating tax revenues to fund their EMS delivery program should consult their state and local tax departments to determine if this is a feasible approach and, if so, what the process for doing so should be.

Revenue-generating options to fund EMS delivery also may include donations, grants, or a combination of both. Most volunteer and combination fire departments already receive revenue through these methods for fire-related services.<sup>23</sup>

Much of the volunteer fire service is funded by donations from both citizens and businesses. Donations come from traditional yearly door-to-door fund drives, bake sales, social events, raffle tickets, and more. Donations to volunteers are usually tax-deductible.<sup>24</sup> When soliciting donations, departments should clearly define the activities or equipment the funds will cover, such as training or a new ambulance. Citizens and businesses are more likely to donate when they know their donation will have a direct effect on their department's safety or services.

Many sources of grants exist to help fire departments fund EMS delivery services, including corporations, foundations and the federal government. Private grants tend to be larger than federal grants. The U.S. Fire Administration provides grants to EMS delivery services through the "Assistance to Firefighters Grants" programs. Other federal grants are available specifically for rural areas. For more information on federal grant programs for emergency services, go to [www.fema.gov/emergency/grant](http://www.fema.gov/emergency/grant). Some state and local government agencies have grants departments that can assist with identifying grants for EMS. For additional information on other grant programs, the Internet can be very informative.

Fire department administrators should explore all the options for funding EMS delivery programs. Having only one source of funding or revenue may not be enough to fund a department's EMS program in its entirety, but the combination of tax revenue, donations, and grants may provide enough funds to wholly or substantially pay for EMS delivery programs.

## Chapter 5: Legal Requirements

While the federal government provides basic guidance through the NHTSA's Office of EMS, each state provides its own legal framework for EMS systems through a state EMS regulatory agency. States may regulate EMS systems at the local level by creating EMS regions and systems.

The NHTSA provides a national standard curriculum that defines the minimum objectives and requirements for the initial training of EMS responders. Other federal requirements for pre-hospital care are contained in the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996 (HIPAA). HIPAA requires all medical care providers, including EMS personnel, to treat patient information as confidential and has penalties for non-compliance. Fire department administrators must be familiar with this law and provide HIPAA training programs to ensure the department's personnel understand it as well.

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also regulates EMS care. For example, OSHA governs infection control procedures and medical treatment of exposed EMS personnel. OSHA has many other requirements that apply to EMS employers, which are available at [www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergency-preparedness/responder.html](http://www.osha.gov/SLTC/emergency-preparedness/responder.html).

The new National EMS Scope of Practice Model, developed by the NHTSA in 2007, will change the current EMS levels and practices for EMS personnel. The NHTSA is planning to implement the new scope of practice model sometime in 2010.<sup>25</sup> Most states will then adopt these changes.

While the NHTSA provides guidelines, each state decides how EMS will be structured within its borders. As such, laws and regulations will vary from state to state. For example:

- States determine the scope of practice of state-licensed EMS personnel, meaning they approve the training curriculum and provide for certification, licensure, re-certification and re-licensure.

- States may choose to establish a department of public health and state EMS director. In Illinois, a physician – the EMS medical director – oversees the EMS system. All EMS personnel practice medicine under the medical license of the EMS medical director, who is ultimately responsible for the care delivered under his/her license at all levels. The system provides for credentialing, competency verification, medical direction, quality assurance, continuing education, policies and procedures, and medical protocols.

- States may divide into regions and subdivide into individual systems. EMS delivery may vary from one region to another based on geographic needs or population needs.

- An EMS system may be hospital-based (at the “resource hospital”) or established by the local EMS authority or other EMS regulatory agency. The system may include a diverse group of pre-hospital providers such as First Responder, BLS, ALS, aero-medical, specialty transport care providers and associated hospitals.

At the local level, a medical director (or, in the case of fire-based EMS, the fire chief) oversees the pre-hospital provider agency. The local agency determines the level of care, handles personnel issues, and addresses funding, logistics and deployment of equipment and personnel. The personnel in charge of EMS at the local level must have excellent relationships throughout the system and with local hospitals. The director/chief must understand EMS system requirements, state and federal rules and regulations, and customer needs. Understanding the ever-changing, dynamic environment of EMS is essential. Fire departments that are implementing a new EMS delivery system or enhancing an existing EMS system must understand all the legal requirements that pertain to their service.



## Chapter 6: Human Resources in EMS Systems

One of the most critical considerations in employing EMS systems is the impact on department personnel. Adding or increasing EMS systems directly impacts everyone; the increased activity may impact even those without EMS training. Leaders should avoid statements implying that non-EMS trained members will be unaffected. Instead, leaders must plan to manage these changes in a proactive manner and give due consideration to the service's impact on the organization's most important asset: its people.

As a department discusses adding or increasing EMS systems, plenty of questions are likely to arise. Be sure to allot adequate time for discussion and multiple opportunities for department members to provide input. Failure to appropriately manage such a significant change can jeopardize the success of the EMS program and, possibly, the future of the organization.

Consider how the department will structure EMS within the organization. Adding EMS as a separate component without cross-training personnel may seem easier – and may address opposition from some members – but it opens the door to larger problems. Consider career advancement opportunities for all members, volunteer or career. If EMS is a separate component, EMS providers have limited opportunity for advancement within the department. Providing at least a minimum level of medical training to all personnel lays the groundwork for future opportunities without limiting anyone.

### **The Nature of EMS**

The public has high expectations for emergency medical services. In some cases, those expectations are higher than for other fire department services. If a fire department falls short of expectations (for example, by failing to save a building), insurance policies can provide financial relief. On the other hand, a loved one may live or die based on the performance of the EMS system. Leaders should understand the emotional toll these situations can take on their citizens and their personnel.

EMS is a 24/7 business, and one that can be unforgiving. Departments often find that EMS calls for service dominate their call volume, and that call volume may increase exponentially in correlation to community growth. Leaders must carefully monitor their personnel for signs of fatigue, frustration and burnout and provide them with adequate support.

All personnel within the organization must understand that the call volume will increase, and that there may be staffing changes to meet the demand. In more densely populated localities, the call volume may increase at a faster rate. The traditional volunteer model of responding from home when the pager goes off will likely fall short of the system's needs. The department may need to increase the number of volunteer personnel to meet the demand for EMS and in some cases have volunteers assigned to fire stations ready to respond to EMS incidents.

Some volunteer departments have had to add career or part-time staff to meet this increased demand. The potential revenue opportunities from providing EMS may allow the volunteer department to add paid staff members when volunteers are not available. As an example, the Freeport Fire and Rescue Department in Maine started providing non-emergency ambulance transportation for a fee and has been able to hire some full-time EMS personnel and provide a per diem to other volunteer members responding to EMS incidents.<sup>26</sup>

### **Recruitment and Retention**

Because of the specialized nature of advanced emergency medical procedures, qualified EMS providers are in high demand. They also are likely to advance quickly through the ranks. This is because firefighters who respond to EMS incidents are in a position to make several decisions – in some cases, life or death decisions – daily. Because of the educational requirements and continuous testing to maintain EMS certifications, they tend to do well on standard fire department promotional examinations. While their promotion success within a department is positive, it may exacerbate an already difficult recruitment and retention challenge. Some may view this as a “good” problem to have; however, departments still must address it.

Since qualified EMS providers are in high demand, leaders should analyze the local “market,” meaning the community’s unique training and retention issues. Does the community have enough candidates to support the department’s additional staffing needs? If not, where will the department find candidates? Some departments try to coax providers from other departments by offering increased compensation, additional benefits and other incentives.<sup>27</sup>

Organizations should recruit personnel well before initiating an EMS program. Leaders should create a targeted marketing plan that identifies potential volunteers. Recruitment “hot spots” might include high school EMT training programs, community college health-based programs, public service-oriented community organizations (such as the Red Cross), and health-oriented businesses.<sup>28</sup>

Do not rule out groups that have already been approached to recruit firefighters. Some candidates who will volunteer for EMS systems may have little interest in firefighting.

Once candidates have been identified, decide on an application process. EMS requires specific knowledge, skills and abilities. The “perfect” EMS provider will have – or have the ability to learn – certain competencies, as described in Table 1 below. As with recruiting and retaining firefighters, the department will want to make wise investments in training and resources.

**Table 1**

Sample EMS Provider Knowledge, Skills and Abilities		
Knowledge Anatomy and Physiology Patient Care Protocols Laws and Regulations	Skills Patient Stabilization Patient Assessment Treatment Procedures	Abilities Critical Thinking Problem Solving Incident Documentation

Once EMS personnel are in place, leaders must develop strategies to retain them. The VCOS *White Ribbon Report* offers some guidance on retention strategies for volunteers.<sup>29</sup> Possibilities range from a heartfelt “thank you” to complex incentive programs.

EMS requires rigorous training and continuing education and call volumes may be high. Again, take care to monitor personnel for fatigue and provide them with appropriate support. Cross-training your personnel is an effective way to relieve EMS crews who respond to an extreme number of calls during a tour. If firefighters are trained in EMS (and vice versa), a firefighter can get off an engine and relieve an ambulance provider. The two simply swap positions.

**For additional recruitment and retention resources, please visit:**

- The VCOS website: [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org)
- The U.S. Fire Administration website: [www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov)

## Training for EMS

The three primary training areas for implementing EMS are:

- Certification training
- Continuing education
- Professional development

Each component plays a critical role in ensuring a successful EMS system. Failure to address any of them may derail the system.

### Certification Training

Certification training is designed to meet national standards of care and is typically approved by the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency.<sup>30</sup> The training can be provided through variety of approved EMS training institutions, though some fire departments provide EMS training in-house. Certification training typically falls into the categories of advanced life support (ALS) or basic life support (BLS).

**Table 2**

Certification	BLS	ALS	Approx. Hours
First Responder	X		40 hours
EMT-Basic	X		110-120 hours
EMT-Intermediate		X	200-400 hours
EMT-Paramedic		X	1000 or more

Each program typically has classroom, lab and clinical components. Most start in a classroom and move to a lab for hands-on exercises. The resources available to the department will dictate how elaborate the training facilities may be. Some may have access to formal training labs, while others may simply train on the apparatus floor.

Training in the clinical environment is often the most challenging aspect for department training officers. Most certification levels require students to spend time on an ambulance or working in a hospital emergency department to observe and master certain skills and competencies. The department must document these skills and present this documentation to the certifying agency prior to the certification test. BLS clinical requirements are easily managed, but ALS clinical requirements can be very complex and time-consuming. Third-party services are available to help manage the record keeping for ALS clinical requirements and EMS training records in general.

To help fire department members meet the clinical requirements, the department will need to build relationships with hospitals and other EMS agencies. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is common between hospitals and fire-based EMS departments outlining what is required of students and how hospital staff will document performance. The agreement may also outline which skills students will be allowed to perform in the clinical setting. For example, finding an opportunity for students to intubate patients can be challenging because of the demand for that skill among other health care providers. Nursing students, respiratory specialists, and medical students all need to practice intubation skills. EMS students may find themselves a low priority for the chance to perform these types of high-priority skills. The organization must take the time to develop relationships to make these arrangements and avoid conflicts.

Because of the complex nature of EMS training, fire departments may be required – or may want – to affiliate with an accredited college or university. Such affiliations are fairly common for ALS training programs, particularly for departments with limited resources.

**Resources for student records management:**

- FISDAP: [www.fisdap.com](http://www.fisdap.com)
- EMFOTEC: [www.emfotec.com](http://www.emfotec.com)
- Nortel: [www.nortelgov.com](http://www.nortelgov.com)
- ACS Firehouse: [firehousesoftware.com](http://firehousesoftware.com)

Departments offering only BLS services may be able to manage the training program in-house with a qualified instructor. The lab equipment generally can be found on a standard ambulance. Required clinical time in the hospital will be minimal but can be very beneficial for the BLS student.

**Continuing Education**

Once certification programs are in place, departments must address the need for continuing education (CE). Each certification level has specific requirements, and fire department administrators must determine how providers will meet them. The two general approaches to meeting these goals are to expect providers to complete training on their own, or to offer opportunities to meet all of the requirements in-house. The obvious benefit to in-house training is that the department is managing continuing education proactively, helping make sure everyone meets his or her goals. Either way, the department should appoint a training officer to oversee the department's CE requirements.

Most CE requirements consist of prescribed hours in designated topic areas. The training officer should consult with the certifying agency to determine the required categories and their respective hours.

Advances in technology have given instructors new tools to make CE easier to accomplish. Many certifying agencies offer opportunities to get the required training through distance education platforms. Not all topics will fit into the distance education category, but a good portion of the content can be delivered without having to physically be in the classroom.<sup>31</sup>

**Professional Development**

As in other areas of emergency service, EMS is experiencing a growing trend toward higher education. Many community colleges offer associate degrees for paramedics. For the benefit of the department and the EMS system as a whole, encourage department personnel to take advantage of higher education opportunities. Some departments provide incentives or reimbursement to members who are pursuing college degrees. Some also allow paid time off to attend college classes.

Advanced degrees impact how firefighters and medics are classified, and therefore how salaries are determined. Job positions typically fall into one of three categories: laborer, paraprofessional and professional.

Laborers typically have a high school diploma and perform manual labor as their primary job function. The better-paid workers in the laborer category have mastered a trade and make a reasonable living. Many administrators classify firefighter/medics as laborers because no industry standard or best practice exists that requires a college degree.<sup>32</sup>

**Table 3**

Typical Job Classification Categories		
<b>Laborer</b> High school diploma Lower salary grade Hourly wages Limited benefits Skill/trade	<b>Paraprofessional</b> Associate degree Mid salary grade Hourly wages or salary Improved benefits Skill/technician	<b>Professional</b> Bachelor's degree Higher salary grade Salary Better benefits Management/ leadership

EMS workers are just starting to break into the paraprofessional category with the introduction of associate degrees for paramedics. One reason is that many EMS organizations have acknowledged the need for higher education. The National Association of EMS Educators (NAEMSE) has made this issue one of its primary objectives through a series of position papers on EMS education.<sup>33</sup> To improve the educational and professional status of EMS providers, fire departments should partner with local colleges and universities to build the relationships necessary to enhance the professionalism of EMS.

Finally, departments should support the need for higher education by requiring advanced degrees for promotional opportunities. This process is likely to be long term as it requires multiple steps. To start the process, a department may consider giving extra points in promotional processes to candidates with advanced degrees and then, in a number of years, mandate a degree to be eligible for promotion. Each department must find the best strategy for its needs and implement a realistic timeline.

## Chapter 7: Quality Management

Quality management (QM) is a system of establishing performance objectives, evaluating how well those objectives are being met and making changes based on the evaluations. The ultimate goal of QM in the realm of emergency medical services is to improve pre-hospital care for the citizens in the community. It is a continual process of change.

For volunteer fire departments offering EMS, quality management is important for several reasons. First and most important, most states and/or localities require it by law and it is monitored by the jurisdiction's EMS regulatory agency. This is because a comprehensive QM program will improve patient outcomes.

QM is a gap analysis that will help a fire department:

- Identify compliance or non-compliance with federal, state and local regulations; industry standards and guidelines; and local protocols and standing orders
- Learn how the department is currently performing and whether the system and/or the providers need improvement
- Develop standard operating procedures (SOPs)
- Show citizens the department is attempting to meet their needs and expectations, potentially reducing complaints and costly litigation
- Gather data to justify the department's involvement in EMS, which can be used as evidence for more resources at budget time or during donation drives

QM is a means of improving performance for the department and for the EMS system as a whole. For the provider, it is closely tied to education and training, but not normally used for disciplinary action.

QM is designed to evaluate the department's systems of:<sup>34</sup>

- Communication
- Addressing complaints
- Documentation
- Reduction and prevention of illness and injury
- Patient confidentiality
- Performance objectives
- Physician participation
- Public health outcome parameters
- Participation in studies and research
- Total quality management

The intent is to use the lessons of past performance to improve future performance. To achieve that goal may require additional training or practice. In QM, disciplinary action should only be used as a last resort to improve performance.

A QM program uses quality assessment, quality assurance and quality improvement.

### Quality Assessment

Quality assessment compares the performance of an EMS system's structures, processes and outcomes against an existing standard.<sup>35</sup> Structures are people, places or things. Processes are activities occurring in a system. Outcomes are the results of the structure and activities within a system.

All three are "quality indicators" that are dependent upon one another. Changes in structure may affect the process and the outcome. Likewise, changes in the process may affect the structure and outcome.

A simple equation to measure quality assessment is "structure + process = outcome." For example, more defibrillators per patient (structure) + shorter time to defibrillate (process) = increased cardiac arrest resuscitation rate (outcome).<sup>36</sup>

### **What is Quality Management?**

Quality management (QM) evaluates system and individual performance, identifies areas for improvement, prioritizes development, establishes system controls, monitors performance indicators, and re-evaluates system impact. (National Fire Protection Association Standard 450, 2004 edition, Chap. 8, 8.1).

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) has established the following standards and guidelines for QM of EMS in the volunteer fire service:

- NFPA 1720: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments
- NFPA 1710: Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments
- NFPA 450: Guide for Emergency Medical Services and Systems. Additional informational references can be found in Annex C of NFPA 450, Annex D of NFPA 1720 and Annex B of NFPA 1710.

Other valuable references include:

- A 1997 NHTSA report titled "A Leadership Guide to EMS," available at [www.ems.gov](http://www.ems.gov)
- A 1997 USFA report titled "Implementation of EMS in the Fire Service," available at [www.usfa.dhs.gov](http://www.usfa.dhs.gov).

### **Quality Assurance**

Quality assurance is about establishing confidence that the products or services a department offers maintain the standards of excellence set for those products or services.<sup>37</sup>

Quality assurance can be divided into retrospective, concurrent and prospective. Retrospective quality assurance is used to analyze a call after it has taken place. It helps departments identify proper versus improper patient care as well as compliance with protocols and SOPs. An example would be to review patient care reports (PCRs) to see if the care providers took the required two sets of vital signs. Such analysis is also helpful in identifying patterns in individual members and groups of providers.

Concurrent quality assurance involves observing behavior as it occurs. It involves responding to calls to assess providers' skills and behavior. It also allows the observer to see if equipment and processes work as they should in the field.

Prospective quality assurance attempts to analyze performance expectations and see if the EMS system meets those expectations consistently.<sup>38</sup> Areas to be addressed include but are not limited to: standards for initial training, testing, credentialing, or developing standards for credentialing; continuing education; protocol development; operational policy; and procedure development. The key elements of the system that need to be examined include education, operational policy, medical protocols, standards development, categorization, and disaster management.

Part of quality assurance is determining whether an EMS system meets federal, state, and local government regulations. Adhering to regulations is imperative from a legal standpoint but is also necessary to meet many grant requirements.

### **Resources**

Many resources are available to help with QM. The NFPA provides guidance in this area through its many industry standards. NFPA 1720 deals directly with volunteer fire department EMS operations.<sup>39</sup> NFPA 450 provides guidelines and recommendations for fire-based EMS programs.

Another resource in quality management is to adopt the best practices of other volunteer fire departments, with necessary refinements to adapt to a specific department's unique situation. If you are facing a problem, you are not alone; other departments have addressed it, too. The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC), specifically the Volunteer and Combinations Officers Section (VCOS) and the EMS Section, can be a great resource for best practices. Both of these groups have annual conferences with best practice presentations related to EMS delivery.

### **Benchmarking**

Benchmarking is a process of searching out and studying the best practices that produce superior performance. Benchmarks may be established within the same organization (internal benchmarking), outside of the organization with another organization that produces the same service or product (external benchmarking), or with reference to a similar function or process in another industry (functional benchmarking).<sup>40</sup> Benchmarking with other departments and industry standards can enhance a department's QM program. The NFPA and federal, state and local regulations set the minimum standards, but by benchmarking the department sets higher standards. For example, if the minimum standard for response to an ALS call is two ALS and two BLS providers arriving within eight minutes 90 percent of the time, a benchmark would be to have the providers arrive within four minutes 90 percent of the time.

### **Community Standards**

Also evaluate whether the department is meeting the community's standards and expectations; if it's not, determine what needs to be done to meet them. Surveys, focus groups, and patient evaluations may help the department identify what the community's standards and expectations are.<sup>41</sup> Also, survey the department's personnel to gauge their expectations as well as their satisfaction with the department's ability to meet them. With all of this information, make the appropriate improvements to the department.

### **Individual Performance**

After evaluating the system, the next step is to evaluate individual performance within the system. An example of system performance would be how many times an ambulance has a critical failure responding to emergency calls. An example of individual performance is how many times a provider missed an attempt to insert an IV line or intubation tube.

Department leaders should try to determine the cause of personnel performance deficiencies so they can be corrected through more training or practice. The performance review process should be detailed in an SOP with the medical director.

Sometimes individual deficiencies are the result of problems with the system, which department leaders should also work to correct.

### **The QA Team**

While the ultimate responsibility lies with the fire chief and medical director, QA should be a team effort. The responsibility for the formal QA process can be rotated among department members on a periodic basis. A team approach also provides more input into the QM process and "buy-in" from all department members.



The QA team should include the medical director, an individual appointed to manage a service's QA function, EMS shift supervisors, patient care advocates, hospital emergency department personnel, and other interested parties (as community needs dictate).

Again, however, QA is the responsibility of all who provide emergency medical treatment. In other words, while the formal structures for analysis of patient care is vested in a team (or an individual, if absolutely necessary), all patient care providers must bring to the attention of the QA team any actions of providers or failing of the EMS system that warrant improvement.<sup>42</sup> The department should foster an environment where all team members feel comfortable bringing forward issues where improvement is necessary. This is accomplished by focusing on correcting system problems, providing additional education or training or providing appropriate tools.

To encourage department members to participate in this process, QA should not be used for disciplinary purposes. Similarly, retaliation against providers who express concerns for services by other providers is an unacceptable practice.

### **Quality Improvement**

After assessing your department, focus on improvements. Quality improvement (QI) is about continuously examining and improving your department's products and services.<sup>43</sup> In QI, management measures quality (according to customer standards), improves systems of care and uses data (facts) to make decisions. The role of management is to create an environment and develop the infrastructure to help frontline personnel do their jobs effectively.

QI philosophy identifies anyone who uses specific goods or services as a customer. The emphasis on facts as the basis for decision-making requires semi-scientific study and hard data on specific items that need to be improved.<sup>44</sup> The previously mentioned NHTSA document, "A Leadership Guide to Quality Improvement for Emergency Medical Services Systems," thoroughly covers QI for EMS.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Firehouse.com – 2004 National Run Survey

<sup>2</sup> The federal agency responsible for EMS guidance is the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA), an arm of the U.S. Department of Transportation. EMS is housed at NHTSA because the initial federal legislation regulating EMS systems – the Highway Safety Act of 1966 – required each state to have a highway safety program in accordance with federal standards. EMS was to be a part of that highway safety program. More information is available on the NHTSA website at [www.nhtsa.dot.gov](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov).

<sup>3</sup> NHTSA First Responder, 1995

<sup>4</sup> Pomona, 2007

<sup>5</sup> NHTSA EMT-B, 1994

<sup>6</sup> Eureka Fire Protection District 1996 – 2007 Response Report; Eureka FPD, Eureka, Mo.

<sup>7</sup> NHTSA EMT-I, 1998

<sup>8</sup> NHTSA EMT-P, 1998

<sup>9</sup> [www.iafc.org/emsSection](http://www.iafc.org/emsSection)

<sup>10</sup> Information from the AAA is available at [www.the-aaa.org](http://www.the-aaa.org).

<sup>11</sup> Katz, Pepe, and Pratt, 2007

<sup>12</sup> American College of Cardiology et al, 2004

<sup>13</sup> Dr. R. Adams Cowley, M. D., founder of the University of Maryland Shock Trauma Center, coined the term “Golden Hour.”

<sup>14</sup> The DEA requires each facility storing narcotics to be licensed. For additional information, please visit [www.usdoj.gov/dea](http://www.usdoj.gov/dea).

<sup>15</sup> Many jurisdictions do not implement this feature of EMD because of the time needed to determine the level of response or because of liability concerns. In reality, EMD triaging has been proven to be successful and there may be more liability associated with not providing it since it has become an accepted standard in the EMS arena. EMD triaging is critical to preventing abuse and overcrowding of local emergency medical systems; reducing the number of emergency response incidents, which helps conserve available resources for the fire department, ambulance provider, and emergency rooms; and helping to reduce the number of EMS provider accidents by not responding “lights-and-siren” to every EMS call.

<sup>16</sup> State of Minnesota Emergency Medical Services Regulatory Board – EMS Radio Communications Plan: A Radio Planning Guide for Minnesota EMS & Hospitals – 2007

<sup>17</sup> New spectrum will be available for public safety agencies in 2009. See Appendix C for more information.

<sup>18</sup> The low band frequency is increasingly becoming obsolete for the fire service because it is long-range and therefore has a higher chance of interference and “skip.”

<sup>19</sup> This is generally used as trunking but can be either simplex or duplex.

<sup>20</sup> One example is the Texas Interoperable Channel Plan Memorandum of Understanding available at [tsiec.region49.org/TSIEC+MOU.pdf](http://tsiec.region49.org/TSIEC+MOU.pdf).

<sup>21</sup> The Fair Labor Standards Act governs the remuneration of volunteer personnel. Before offering any monetary benefit to volunteer members, please consult with legal counsel to make sure you are within the legal limits.

<sup>22</sup> Volunteer fire departments providing EMS will have to decide how to bill – or even whether to bill – uninsured patients for emergency medical care and transportation. This is a complex legal and moral issue that deserves careful consideration, after consulting with legal counsel.

<sup>23</sup> Additional information on funding EMS delivery programs is available in the United States Fire Administration’s publication “A Guide to Funding Alternatives for Fire and Emergency Medical Service Departments (FA 141/1993)

<sup>24</sup> Before seeking tax-deductible donations, consult with legal counsel to make sure the department is legally qualified to receive them.

<sup>25</sup> The document is available at: [www.nasemsd.org/documents/FINALEMSSept2006\\_PMS314.pdf](http://www.nasemsd.org/documents/FINALEMSSept2006_PMS314.pdf). Please review Appendix A of this report for more information.

<sup>26</sup> Chief Paul Conley, Freeport (Maine) Fire and Rescue Department. Remember to consult the Fair Labor Standards Act for guidelines regarding remuneration of volunteer personnel.

<sup>27</sup> Departments offering only basic life support services may not find the same competitive recruiting environment, but must still manage the candidate pool appropriately.

<sup>28</sup> When you approach candidates at these locations, be sure to follow any rules the school, organization, or business has regarding solicitation.

<sup>29</sup> The White Ribbon Report is available on the VCOS website at [www.vcos.org](http://www.vcos.org).

<sup>30</sup> For information specific to your region, consult your state and local EMS agencies.

<sup>31</sup> For an example of distance education, please visit [www.targetsafety.com](http://www.targetsafety.com).

<sup>32</sup> Some fire service leaders believe the emergency services should be considered a profession because of the inherent complexity and risk. However, the decision-makers who classify the positions have little experience or understanding of the work. Fire service leaders must be prepared to translate what we do into “administration language” to win the debates on classification in the boardroom. If we truly want to be considered a profession, we must meet the same benchmarks as other recognized professions.

<sup>33</sup> For more information, visit the NAEMSE website at [www.naemse.org](http://www.naemse.org) as well as the NHTSA document “EMS Education Agenda for the Future” located at [www.ems.gov](http://www.ems.gov).

<sup>34</sup> NFPA 450, Index, 2004 Edition, p. 31

<sup>35</sup> NFPA 450, 2004 Edition, 3.3.50

<sup>36</sup> Fairfax County, Va., Quality Management Program

<sup>37</sup> NFPA 450, 2004 Edition, 3.3.51

<sup>38</sup> USFA, Implementation of EMS in the Fire Service, 1/1997, p. 82.

<sup>39</sup> NFPA 1710 applies to paid career departments and includes specific response criteria for fire-based EMS delivery.

<sup>40</sup> U.S. Agency for International Development - Quality Assurance Project (QAP) ([www.qaproject.org](http://www.qaproject.org))

<sup>41</sup> Consider linking a public education program with your survey to educate your community about the services your department provides.

<sup>42</sup> USFA, Implementation of EMS in The Fire Service, 1/1997, p. 80-81

<sup>43</sup> NFPA 450, 2004 Edition, 3.3.52

<sup>44</sup> Principles of EMS Systems, 3rd Edition, 2006, American College of Emergency Physicians

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## Appendix A

### New EMS Education Standards in 2010

Work is underway by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) EMS Division to develop a new set of education standards for emergency medical services (EMS) called the National EMS Education Standards. These new standards will be the basis for First Responder, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), and Paramedic textbooks by various publishers, as well as for educational course development. The new standards are in their third draft and the expected implementation date is sometime in 2010.

The basis for formulating the standards comes from three different documents available through NHTSA's EMS Division. The first, called the "EMS Education Agenda for the Future: A Systems Approach," had its roots in the 1996 document "EMS Agenda for the Future." The EMS Agenda called for a proposed new and improved national EMS educational system that would increase efficiency and produce greater entry-level graduate competencies.

The second document used to draft the new National EMS Education Standards is the National EMS Core Content, also produced by NHTSA's EMS Division. The document lists all that must be learned in EMS education, including conditions, chief complaints, operational issues, and psychomotor skills.

The third NHTSA EMS Division document is the National EMS Scope of Practice Model, written in 2005. This document identifies the four EMS personnel licensure levels and what each level is capable of doing, or their "scope of practice."

Many individuals and organizations have helped develop the new National EMS Education Standards. The individuals are mostly EMS educators who come from a broad background of EMS including urban, rural, and volunteer EMS systems. A large group of EMS stakeholders also provided input. During the open comment period, representatives of the IAFC's Emergency Medical Services and Volunteer and Combination Officers Sections met to review the draft standards, discuss their impact on the fire service, and formulate a written response. (Please see Appendix B for a copy of the comment letter.)

When the new standards are released, the EMS community is likely to see the following changes:

**1. Standardized licensure levels:** One of the major changes will be a change to four different titles and licensure levels. This comes from the National EMS Scope of Practice Model. Most states use EMT-B designations, but some use other designations that are not discussed in this report. Some states only use the designations of EMT-B and Paramedic. The four new licensure levels will be: Emergency Medical Responder (EMR), Emergency Medical Technician (EMT), Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT), and Paramedic. The recommended hours of education for the EMR would increase to 48; to 198 hours for EMT; to 166 hours for AEMT; and to approximately 1,300 hours for Paramedic.

**2. Competency-based standards:** The new standards will require competency-based rather than hours-based education. Under the current standards, a trainee may attend 1,300 hours for a paramedic license yet still not be competent at intubation. Instead of emphasizing the number of hours a student sits in a classroom, the new standard will require the student to prove competency in certain skills.

**3. Ambulance driving:** The new recommended draft standard no longer involves ambulance driving, staging, and scene positioning. The project team that drew up the draft standards felt these operational issues were best left to the employer, who would teach these skills during orientation or on-the-job training.

Shortly after NHTSA's EMS Division implements the new EMS education standards, publishers will begin printing textbooks to reflect these changes.

**Appendix B**  
**Letter to the National Association of EMS Educators**  
**Regarding Proposed Changes to the Scope of Practice**

Dear Project Director Cason:

On behalf of the nearly 13,000 chief fire and emergency officers of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and its IAFC Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Section, I would like to commend your project team's efforts on draft 1.0 of the National EMS Education Standards. In response to your request, this letter contains the comments of the IAFC EMS Section to the draft standards.

In July 2007, the IAFC EMS Section convened a workgroup in Memphis, Tennessee to examine Draft 1.0 of the proposed National EMS Education Standards. The workgroup was comprised of nine fire and training officers from a variety of fire department types, including metropolitan, suburban, career and combination departments. The workgroup reviewed the draft education standards as they may impact the fire service with a focus on the financial impact of the proposed increase in hours as well as the impact on the future labor pool pertaining to recruiting and training. Generally, the IAFC EMS Section supports the concept of a national standard that will improve the portability of licensure (reciprocity) among the states and increases professionalism in EMS through higher education.

The workgroup also express several areas of caution. In response to the increased hours in the EMT curriculum, it agrees that strong EMT level providers are the backbone of the EMS system and strengthen the higher level (AEMT and Paramedic) providers, but raised two concerns. First, it stressed that increased time in the education/training process should correlate to an improved student "product," creating a better provider in the field. Second, it questioned whether the increase in knowledge gained through the draft education standards will have a real effect on the actual field practice of the EMT. In other words, does the current education curriculum leave the EMT unprepared to function in the field and if so, what evidence suggests this? Given that further clarification from the National EMS Education Standards project team authors could answer these concerns, the IAFC EMS Section is cautiously supportive of the draft education standards, realizing that EMS improvements at this level will be realized over a period of time as students are exposed to the new curriculum.

The IAFC EMS Section is encouraged by the draft education standards' view toward the future in crafting an education curriculum that will be flexible in presentation methods, as well as adaptable to improvements gained from evidence-based findings or technology improvements.

Specific areas of IAFC EMS Section support and concern are listed below in bullet form along with specific curriculum recommendations.

**The IAFC EMS Section expresses support for the following points in the draft education standards:**

- Competency-based education and alternatives to traditional classroom education to achieve the mastery of knowledge and skills. The concept of flexibility in instructional media and methods to meet the course objectives/competencies instead of a strict hour-based requirement is highly desirable.
- A national education standard which would be foundational for national reciprocity.
- The concept of increased professionalism through higher education.
- Student evaluations at all levels testing their knowledge, skills and professional behavior
- A modular curriculum design that would allow for the completion of (and demonstrated competence in) various course elements either as course pre-requisites or as course components given that these elements have been completed to a national standard, e.g. – an AHA or ARC CPR course, FEMA NIMS course, etc. These elements include, but are not limited to CPR, Hazardous Materials Awareness, NIMS, and a Basic Emergency Vehicle Operations Course.

The IAFC EMS Section expresses concern regarding the following points in the draft education standards:

- The IAFC EMS Section would like to see substantiation on why there is an increase in training hours and how the new hour level was determined.
- While the IAFC EMS Section supports higher education and the aim of increased professionalism in EMS, it is concerned that the general move toward college-based courses, the increase in hours and resulting financial impact will adversely affect departments' ability (especially volunteer departments) to meet the goals of the standards.
- Will the increase in education standards further impact the pool of people who can complete the requirements? Will potential student populations with impaired socioeconomic status be adversely affected such that

they will be essentially prevented from entering the EMS field?

The IAFC EMS Section feels the following general and specific category recommendations will enhance the draft education standards:

#### General Recommendations

- A nationally recognized emergency vehicle operations course (including traffic management and roadway safety) would be included in the EMT course hours.
- Substantiation: The risks to personnel while responding (driving) or operating in the roadway are well documented. This recommendation is based on the need to formally address this safety risk at the earliest possible stage in a person's career. While this represents an increase in the course time this training is generally delivered to personnel after they are deployed to field assignments, so it does not represent an increase in the overall hours required to properly prepare an individual. Additionally, this approach provides a method to address a known national risk in a standardized manner.
- EMS personnel must achieve EMT state licensure certification before advancing to paramedic training.
- Substantiation: This recommendation is based on the view that strong EMT level skills and knowledge are foundational to all subsequent levels of training.
- With respect to CoAEMSP certification for paramedics under "Educational Infrastructure," the education standards should also include certification via fire service academies accredited at the state level.
- Substantiation: Many states have "Technical/Vocational" schools that are not colleges/universities but provide a great deal of the EMS education. Many fire academies have excellent education and highly qualified training staff but would not qualify if the requirement was held to a college or university setting.

#### Specific Category Recommendations

- "Documentation" – the education standards need to provide for increased competency on incident documentation writing skills at all levels due to the risk (liability) in this area.
- "Medical/Legal" – the standards need to provide for increased competency on the area of patient refusals specifically due to the increased risk (liability) in this area.
- "Scene Size-Up" – EMT's and AEMT's should equally possess a "complex knowledge" of scene size-up (risk assessment) and scene management since all levels face the same level of risk upon initial arrival on the scene.
- "Infectious disease" – the EMR should have simple knowledge of infectious disease since they may have contaminated vehicles and equipment as well.
- "Toxicology" – the Paramedic should have a fundamental knowledge of cyanide exposures. The group recognizes the increasing body of knowledge related to exposure to the by-products of combustion and the need for paramedics to understand their role in cyanide exposure treatment as well as their long understood role in the treatment of carbon monoxide exposures from this same source.

Thank you for taking the time to attend this meeting and present the history and inter-relationship of the proposed Standards with the parent documents – EMS Agenda for the Future, EMS Education Agenda for the Future and the National Scope of Practice – and your outline of the Standards themselves and the associated Instructional Guidelines. Additionally, Chief David Becker, EMS Section Vice-Chair, who represented the IAFC at the initial stakeholders meeting and participated as a content writer, outlined his general view of the Standards as well as his rationale behind the EMS Operations Section of the document which he authored. These two presentations agreed that the major focuses of the draft education standards are: to outline a national education standard that will improve national EMS practice; to be the foundation of national reciprocity; and to provide the framework to continue to professionalize EMS nationwide through higher education.

We thank you for taking the time to review our suggestions and recommendation on draft 1.0 of the National EMS Education Standards. If you have any questions regarding them, please feel free to contact me at (901) 320-5464.

Sincerely,



Chief Gary Ludwig  
Chairman, IAFC EMS Section

## **Appendix C**

### **Increased Communication Capacity for Public Safety Nationwide**

Operability and interoperability would not be possible without the necessary bandwidth. In 1997, Congress responded to calls to increase the amount of bandwidth available to public safety agencies by directing the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to allocate 24 MHz in the upper 700 MHz band for use by public safety. After much delay, this spectrum will finally become available for public safety use in February 2009. It will provide 12 MHz of voice channels and 12 MHz of wideband data channels for individual licensees. Fire and police departments are now in the planning process of building communications systems utilizing this new spectrum.

In addition to allocating 24 MHz of the available spectrum for public safety use, Congress set aside \$5 billion from the auction to create a nationwide roaming and interoperability network for public safety agencies at the federal (e.g., U.S. Coast Guard), state (e.g., highway patrol), and local (e.g., police, fire/EMS) levels. This development will give public safety agencies access to satellite services and provide broadband coverage to rural areas for the first time. The network, governed by the public safety community, will allow for next-generation technology; permit public safety ruggedness specifications to ensure reliability under severely adverse conditions; and ensure priority access for public safety agencies.

On Nov. 19, 2007, the FCC selected the Public Safety Spectrum Trust Corporation (PSST) to be the public safety broadband licensee. PSST will hold a license for 10 MHz of public safety spectrum in the upper 700 MHz band designated for nationwide wireless broadband use. This 10 MHz was to be combined with an adjacent 10 MHz of spectrum to be licensed to the commercial winner of a public auction.

On Jan. 24, 2008, the FCC opened that auction but no bidders came forward. The PSST Corporation will be working with the bidder community, Congress and the FCC to get the right rules in place to encourage a commercial entity to partner with public safety.

For additional information, visit the PSST Corporation's website at [www.psst.org](http://www.psst.org).





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The IAFC Emergency Medical Services Section:

- Is a forum that addresses fire service EMS issues
- Provides guidance and direction to the IAFC Board and membership on fire service EMS issues
- Represents fire-based EMS issues to the federal government and other interest groups



### **The VCOS Section Vision**

The vision of the Volunteer and Combination Officers Section is to represent the interests of all volunteer and combination fire/rescue/EMS agencies. We will be a dynamic organization, characterized by our integrity, customer focus and membership development, with value placed on people and the superior utilization of technology. We will excel by creating educational programs, through unrivaled networking and by helping VCOS members further their success and reach their potential.

### **The VCOS Section Mission Statement**

The mission of the IAFC Volunteer and Combination Officers Section is to provide chief officers who manage volunteers within the fire/rescue/EMS delivery system with information, education, services, and representation to enhance their professionalism and capabilities.



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## National Fallen Fire Fighter Foundation



[www.firehero.org](http://www.firehero.org)

### Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives

The Firefighter Life Safety Summit held in Tampa, Florida, in March 2004, produced 16 major initiatives that will give the fire service a blueprint for making changes.

1. Define and advocate the need for a cultural change within the fire service relating to safety, incorporating leadership, management, supervision, accountability and personal responsibility.
2. Enhance the personal and organizational accountability for health and safety throughout the fire service.
3. Focus greater attention on the integration of risk management with incident management at all levels, including strategic, tactical, and planning responsibilities.
4. Empower all firefighters to stop unsafe practices.
5. Develop and implement national standards for training, qualifications, and certification (including regular recertification) that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
6. Develop and implement national medical and physical fitness standards that are equally applicable to all firefighters, based on the duties they are expected to perform.
7. Create a national research agenda and data collection system that relate to the initiatives.
8. Utilize available technology wherever it can produce higher levels of health and safety.
9. Thoroughly investigate all firefighter fatalities, injuries, and near misses.
10. Ensure grant programs support the implementation of safe practices and/or mandate safe practices as an eligibility requirement.
11. Develop and champion national standards for emergency response policies and procedures.
12. Develop and champion national protocols for response to violent incidents.
13. Provide firefighters and their families access to counseling and psychological support.
14. Provide public education more resources and champion it as a critical fire and life safety program.
15. Strengthen advocacy for the enforcement of codes and the installation of home fire sprinklers.
16. Make safety a primary consideration in the design of apparatus and equipment.

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