

**REPORT**

**ORGANIZATIONAL RISK**  
**ASSESSMENT**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**AUBURN, NH**

**OCTOBER 2016**

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# *REPORT*



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**REPORT**

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**CHAPTER 1**

**PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Municipal Resources, Inc., of Meredith, New Hampshire, was engaged by the Town of Auburn, New Hampshire, to conduct an operational assessment of the Auburn Fire Department. This assessment included the following key elements:

- A comprehensive risk assessment;
- A standard of cover/response time analysis;
- A review of internal operations staff and management resources;
- An analysis of policies and procedure of the fire department;
- A financial sustainability analysis;
- An analysis of the organizational structure; and
- A review of facilities and equipment.

Assigned to this project were MRI Fire/EMS consultants Brian Duggan, as Project Manager, and Robert Craig. The assessment employed the following methodologies:

- A tour of the community;
- Evaluation of target hazards;
- Review of the fire facilities;
- Review of fire apparatus and equipment;
- Interviews with key town personnel;
- Evaluation of a training program; and
- Interviews with fire department employees.

Some of the municipal personnel interviewed to provide an external perspective of the department included:

- The Town Administrator
- Members of the Board of Selectmen
- Road Agent
- Building inspector
- Elementary School Principal
- Police Chief

In addition, we also conducted a review of relevant statistics, standard operating procedures, and operational data that was furnished by the town.

Each community determines the composition of fire services that residents receive by balancing the level of risk against the cost to provide these critical services. Based on our review of the Auburn Fire Department, it is clear that the community expects the timely response of at least one unit on a 24/7 basis. This report will focus on assessing the department based on the service expectation described above.

In conjunction with the on-site visits, the data collected and observations made were subjected to analysis by the project team, both individually and collectively. All recommendations for improvement are based on various administrative regulations promulgated at the federal and state levels, nationally accepted consensus standards developed by ISO (Insurance Services Office), NFPA (National Fire Protection association), CFAI (Commission on Fire Accreditation International), CAAS (Commission on Accreditation of Ambulance Services), and industry best practices and procedures. However, since every community has unique characteristics, challenges, and resource limitations, our recommendations are specifically designed to address the immediate and long-term needs of the Town of Auburn.

## CHAPTER 2

### DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENT

#### OBSERVATIONS

The Auburn Fire Department provides a full range of fire/rescue services, excluding emergency medical patient transportation, to its 5,158 residents (2014 Town Report). The response area consists of 25.2 square miles of land area and 3.5 square miles of water area that serves as a primary water supply for the City of Manchester. Emergency medical patient transportation and dispatch services are provided by the Derry Fire Department through a long-standing, positive relationship.

The Auburn Fire Department is an active participant in the Capital Region Mutual Aid System and demonstrates this participation through responding to major incidents in other communities, including the City of Concord and the City of Manchester. The frequency that Auburn is requested to provide mutual aid speaks positively of both the relationships that exist with adjacent communities and the overall respect for the capability of the personnel in the organization.

The department has a positive organizational culture. One example of this culture, and a fire service best practice, is the basic principles that the chief has worked with the organization to develop and follow. This document is framed and hung throughout each station. It reflects well on both the level of respect and the high level of teamwork that exists in the department.

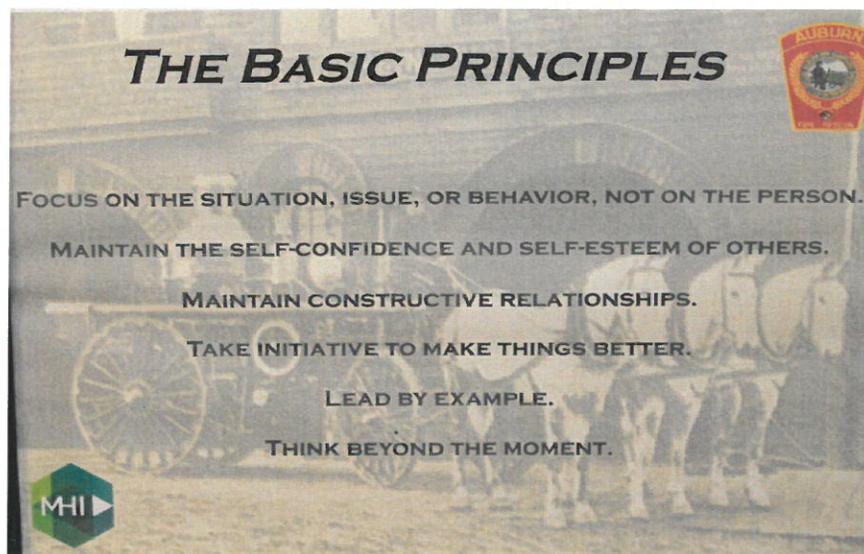


Figure 1 - Basic Principles Posting

The department is primarily an on-call organization that is supplemented by a small full-time, daytime contingent, including the part-time fire chief and two firefighters. The organizational structure of the department is detailed in the chart below:

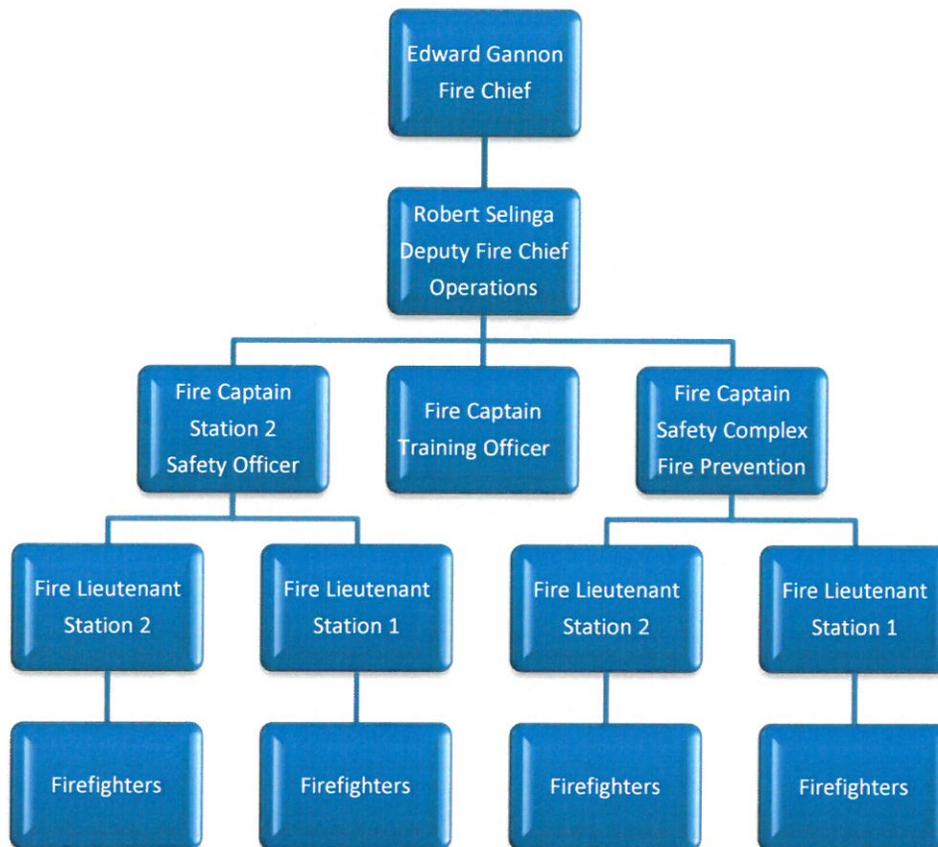


Figure 2 - Auburn Fire Department Organizational Chart

The on-call component of the organization consists of approximately 38 personnel who serve as the sole responders, other than during weekday, daytime, hours when the two-person, full-time staff is on duty. Availability of on-call personnel, including off-duty career staff, to provide a primary response capability, is robust, as the department has not missed a call in recent memory and rarely requires multiple tones to muster personnel. When compared to similar size communities, Auburn has approximately 15 more on-call personnel than the average. This is abnormal and reflects a strong commitment of personnel within a healthy and vibrant organization.

The department is led by Chief Ed Gannon, who is clearly a passionate advocate for the organization and an energetic leader. It is apparent that the organization offers a valuable service to the community. Overall, the department works diligently to meet the needs of the

community and projects a “can do, approachable attitude”. This positive attitude translates into the organization being revered within the community. This high level of community support is complemented by a positive internal culture. It is apparent that the Auburn Fire Department is a well-organized, sufficiently staffed, and well run organization. Our study team has participated in dozens of fire service studies. The Auburn Fire Department is one of only a few organizations that we would like to join.

Looking forward, it is essential that career and on-call staff continue to be integrated, train together, and maintain positive relationships. As the organization is primarily an on-call organization, full-time staff should continue to positively compliment the on-call force. In the long-term, care must be taken to maintain the primary response role of the on-call force. Although clearly not the case in Auburn, strained relationships can lead to organizational conflict that changes the nature of the organization. In the extreme, this can lead to reduced on-call participation. In Auburn, this is a cautionary statement so that all members of the department recognize the need to work as a team, maintain relationships, and continue to welcome and appreciate the importance of on-call participation.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Develop a plan to ensure that on-call and full-time staff are integrated, respond, and train together.**
- 2.2 The organization should remain an on-call agency supported by a two-member weekday, daytime career presence.**
- 2.3 Based on the services provided by the department, additional career staff should not be considered in the near term.**
- 2.4 The Board of Selectmen should consider renewing the chief’s three-year contract at the end of year two as a reflection of positive performance, and to provide the department with long-term stability.**

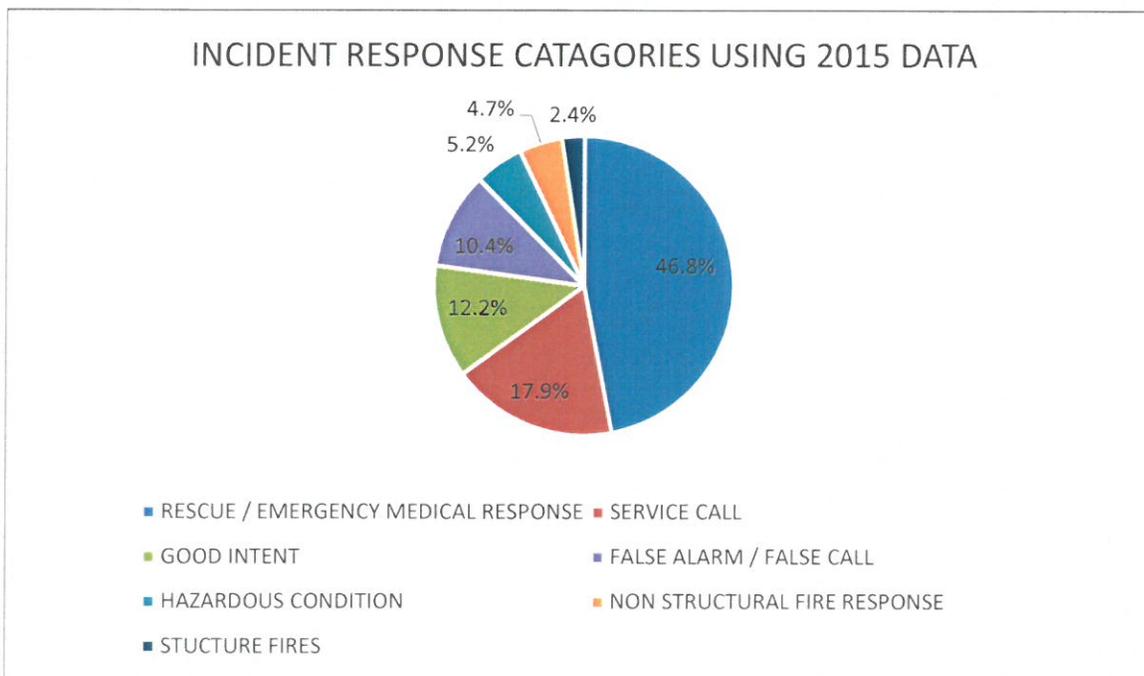
## CHAPTER 3

### OPERATIONS

#### OBSERVATIONS

Based on the data provided, the department responds to approximately 575 calls for service per year. The number of requests for service seems to remain fairly constant from year to year. 58% of these service requests are traditional and community based fire service requests, while 42% of these responses are requests to provide first responder emergency medical care. In 2015, the Department responded to 41 fires (7%) of the overall incident volume. The number of actual fire responses included 17 structure fires.

The workload of most fire service agencies is typically 70% emergency medical and rescue service based. However, in Auburn, the strong community relationship translates into the fire department being visible and performing many nontraditional activities that benefit the community.



**Figure 3 - Incident Response Chart (based on 2015 data)**

Response times in Auburn typically average between six and ten minutes, with the overall average at 08:45. The average response time to major incidents that have occurred in the last 18 months is 8:28. This demonstrates that overall the department is meeting the NFPA 1720 criteria. Most on-call organizations strive to have the first unit on the scene within 10 minutes of the time of the call being received. In general, Auburn more than meets this response parameter. However, it should be noted that four of the fourteen major incident responses resulted in response times above 10 minutes. This should be an area that the department should seek to improve over time. Response times during weekday, daytime hours were notably reduced during this time period as full-time personnel supported by available on-call firefighters immediately respond to incidents.

On average, 18 personnel respond to each structure fire and an average of 4.6 personnel respond to each incident, this level of response is well above average. Compared to other comparable organizations, this reflects well as a target response is typically the rapid deployment of a minimum of four personnel. The OSHA Two-In/Two-Out standard is that a minimum of four personnel are required to be on the scene to initiate offensive interior operations unless the need to rescue a victim visible from the exterior exists. Although most communities struggle to meet this standard, an average response of 18 personnel indicates that Auburn is meeting or exceeding this standard on a regular basis. This should be viewed as a major accomplishment and a tribute to the dedication of the Auburn Fire Department personnel as many communities in central New Hampshire struggle to generate a sufficient on-call response, and some regularly fail to respond to emergency incidents.

The overall health and positive culture of the department reflects in the lower than average fire loss reported by the community. Although reporting fire loss represents reporting an estimate of the value of lost property, Auburn consistently reports a fire loss well below that experienced in peer communities. This exemplary level of loss is a reflection of the overall health and response capability offered by the department.

It was noted that each firefighter is not provided with a self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) mask. Masks should be provided to ensure a proper fit and limit the transmission of disease. Firefighters should be fit tested annually to ensure a proper mask seal.

### **Insurance Service Office (ISO) Rating**

The Insurance Service Office provides a rating for each community on a one to ten scale. One is the best protection, while a rating of 10 means that there is no substantive protection provided. Based on the 2016 evaluation, the department received a class 4/4X rating, which places the organization in the top 21% of fire departments across the country. This is an exceptional rating that reflects the overall quality of the department and the systems that have been put into place.

The Fire Suppression Rating Schedule (FSRS) is a manual containing the criteria ISO uses in reviewing the fire prevention and fire suppression capabilities of individual communities or fire protection areas. The schedule measures the major elements of a community's fire protection system and develops a numerical grading called a Public Protection Classification (PPC™).

The FSRS employs nationally accepted standards developed by such organizations as the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), the American Water Works Association (AWWA), and the Association of Public-Safety Communications Officials (APCO) International. When those organizations update their standards, the ISO evaluation changes as well. The PPC program always provides a useful benchmark that helps fire departments and other public officials measure the effectiveness of their efforts and plan improvements.

### **How the Fire Suppression Rating Schedule Works**

The FSRS lists a large number of items (facilities and practices) that a community should have to fight fires effectively. The schedule is performance based and assigns credit points for each item. Using the credit points and various formulas, ISO calculates a total score on a scale of 0 to 105.5. In 2016, Auburn received 61.05 of the 105.5 potential points.

The FSRS considers three main areas of a community's fire suppression system: emergency communications, fire department (including operational considerations), and water supply. In addition, it includes a Community Risk Reduction section that recognizes community efforts to reduce losses through fire prevention, public fire safety education, and fire investigation.

### **Emergency Communications**

A maximum of 10 points of a community's overall score is based on how well the fire department receives and dispatches fire alarms. Our field representatives evaluate:

- the emergency reporting system
- the communications center, including the number of telecommunicators
- computer-aided dispatch (CAD) facilities
- the dispatch circuits and how the center notifies firefighters about the location of the emergency

In 2016, Auburn received 7.05 of the 10 potential points available for emergency communications. A review of the ISO report indicates that Auburn should work with the Town of Derry to address the requirements of NFPA 1221 relative to alarm processing. This is an area

where no points were awarded and represents a potential risk to the Town of Auburn if alarms are not processed rapidly.

### **Fire Department**

A maximum of 50 points of the overall score is based on the fire department. ISO reviews the distribution of fire companies throughout the area and checks that the fire department tests its pumps regularly and inventories each engine and ladder company's equipment according to NFPA 1901. ISO also reviews the fire company records to determine factors such as:

- type and extent of training provided to fire company personnel
- number of people who participate in training
- firefighter response to emergencies
- maintenance and testing of the fire department's equipment

In 2016, Auburn received 23.00 of the 50 potential points available for fire department capability. A review of the rating indicates that the Auburn Fire Department received little credit for training and deployment analysis. As we believe a quality training program exists, the department should examine how this information is documented. Improved documentation should be provided to ISO. The department should also conduct a deployment analysis to determine if any improvements can be made within this area of concern that the recent ISO grading raised.

### **Water Supply**

A maximum of 40 points of the overall score is based on the community's water supply. This part of the survey focuses on whether the community has sufficient water supply for fire suppression beyond daily maximum consumption. ISO surveys all components of the water supply system. They also review fire hydrant inspections and frequency of flow testing. Finally, they count the number of fire hydrants that are no more than 1,000 feet from the representative locations. In 2016, Auburn received 34.69 of the 40 potential points available for water supply.

### **Community Risk Reduction Strategies**

The Community Risk Reduction section of the FSRS offers a maximum of 5.5 points, resulting in 105.5 total points available in the FSRS. The inclusion of this section for "extra points" allows recognition for those communities that employ effective fire prevention practices, without unduly affecting those who have not yet adopted such measures.

The addition of Community Risk Reduction gives incentives to those communities who strive proactively to reduce fire severity through a structured program of fire prevention activities.

The areas of community risk reduction evaluated in this section include:

- fire prevention
- fire safety education
- fire investigation

In 2016, Auburn received 4.45 of the 5.50 potential points available for risk reduction. This suggests that, as indicated in other areas of this report, Auburn has a well-developed and well-managed public outreach and education program. The chart below provides a graphical representation of the rating distribution across the United States.

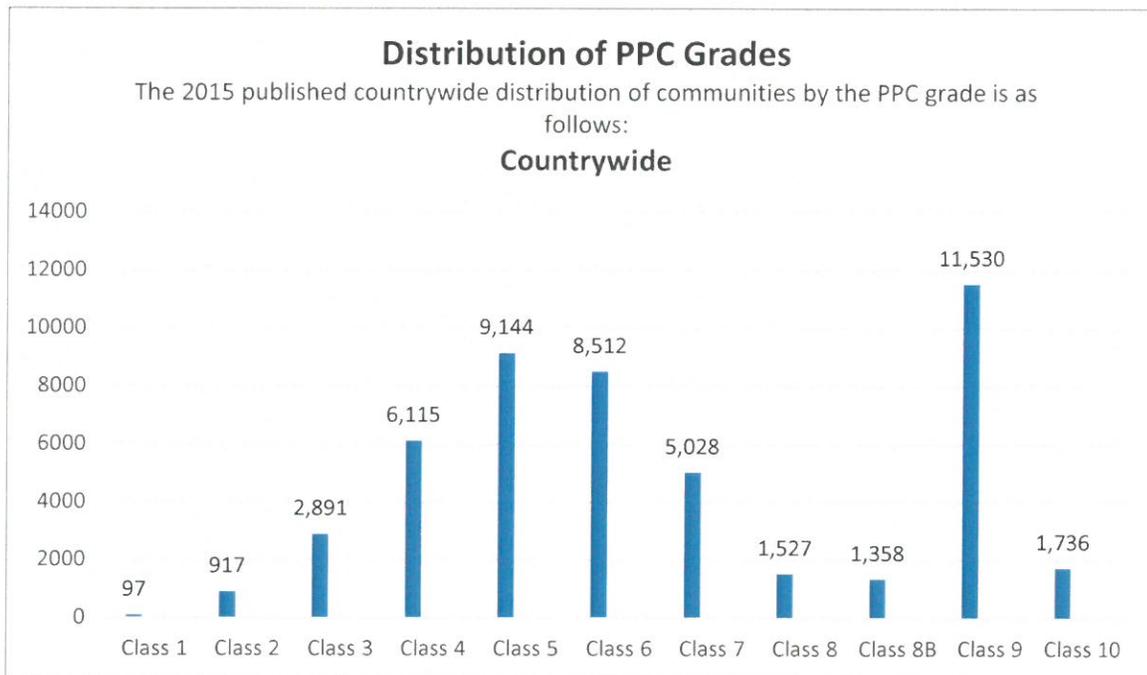


Figure 4 - Insurance Service Office Rating Distribution Chart

## National Standards

Two national standards apply to the operations of the Auburn Fire Department. These standards are listed below:

- **The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) Two-In/Two-Out Rule.** This rule requires four firefighters on the scene of an emergency prior to initiating operations within a structure that is on fire (except to perform an immediate, visible rescue). In Auburn, this standard is met on a regular basis. However, operational guidance should be provided to personnel that arrive on an incident scene with less than four personnel. Operations should be defensive until a crew of four personnel are assembled on the incident scene, unless the need to accomplish a visible rescue exists.
- **National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments.** This standard specifies requirements for effective and efficient organization and deployment of fire suppression operations, emergency medical operations, and special operations to the public by volunteer and combination fire departments to protect citizens and the occupational safety and health of fire department employees. The Auburn Fire Department should review this standard and develop a strategic plan to meet the benchmarks identified within the standard.

The ability to provide sufficient personnel for safe operations, including the ability to meet OSHA Two-in/Two-Out, is rapidly attained in Auburn. This is abnormal and far exceeds the operational capability of most peer communities. NFPA 1720 is a document that can provide guidance relative to how the Auburn Fire Department should operate in the future. The chief, along with the members of the department, should utilize this standard as a foundation to develop a strategic plan.

Response times in Auburn typically average between six and ten minutes. The average response time to major incidents that have occurred in the last 18 months is 8:28. This demonstrates that overall the department is meeting the NFPA 1720 criteria. Most on-call organizations strive to have the first unit on the scene within 10 minutes of the time of the call being received. In general, Auburn more than meets this response parameter. However, it should be noted that four of the four major incident responses resulted in response times above 10 minutes. This should be an area that the department seeks to improve over time. Response times during weekday, daytime hours are typically lower than night/weekend response time as full-time personnel, supported by available on-call firefighters, immediately respond to incidents during normal business hours.

On average, 18 personnel respond to each structure fire, and an average of 4.6 personnel respond to each incident. Compared to other comparable organizations, this reflects well as a target response is typically the rapid deployment of a minimum of four personnel. The OSHA Two-In/Two-Out standard requires a minimum of four personnel to be on the scene to initiate offensive interior operations unless the need to rescue a victim visible from the exterior exists. Although most communities struggle to meet this standard, an average response of 18 personnel indicates that Auburn is meeting or exceeding this standard on a regular basis. This should be viewed as a major accomplishment and a tribute to the dedication of Auburn Fire Department personnel as many communities in central New Hampshire struggle to generate a sufficient on-call response, and some regularly fail to respond to emergency incidents. As inevitably there will be situations where less than four personnel provide the initial response, the chief should provide the department with definitive guidance relative to operating parameters in these situations.

### **Organizational Policy and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)**

Standard Operating Procedures document how operational tasks should be accomplished. In essence, they provide personnel guidance relative to how to accomplish operational activities safely and consistently. To be effective, SOPs should be developed by each department through a participative process. Once developed, personnel need to be trained on the SOPs and periodically refreshed as to their content.

Currently, many policies and procedures are signed by former Chief Phillip. Although an administrative task, changing these policies/procedures to reflect Chief Gannon's signature is important. Failing to do this has organizational implications and produces liability that could impact the town if one of these documents was to be legally challenged.

Currently, the department has a good foundation to continue building on for organizational Standard Operating procedures (SOPs). A few of the core fundamental topics and safety considerations during low frequency, high risk tasks should be further developed. In speaking with Chief Gannon and personnel during the interviews, it was stated that the department will be reviewing their SOPs within the next twelve months. Interviews also revealed that current SOPs are utilized for "show" and not utilized or relied upon at the incident scene. The challenge for Auburn will be to increase "buy in" relative to these procedures by establishing a participative development process and on-going training. In essence, the department will need to adopt a new organizational culture that utilizes this form of operational guidance.

We recommend that the fire chief establish a committee to reformat and review the current SOPs to ensure that they reflect the organization's current operations. A best practice SOP format has been included in Appendix A. Once the current set of SOPs have been reviewed, the committee would work with the chief to develop new SOPs that fit the needs of the organization. Once an SOP has been developed, it should be presented to department

personnel, and then periodically reviewed to ensure that these practices are implemented on the incident scene. In addition, one SOP and one Policy should be reviewed by a randomly selected member at each training meeting. Once personnel get used to this expectation, the knowledge and respect for SOPs will grow within the organization and become an accepted part of the organizations culture.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The Department should work with the Town of Derry to ensure that alarms are being processed in accordance with the criteria established by NFPA 1221. Documentation of any improvements should be shared with ISO.**
- 3.2 The Auburn Fire Department should enhance training documentation to provide ISO with the specific information that they require. ISO should be contacted and questioned relative to the low credit granted for training.**
- 3.3 The Auburn Fire Department should conduct a deployment analysis to determine if there are any areas of potential improvement based on the ISO rating structure.**
- 3.4 The department should review the OSHA Two-in/Two-Out rule and provide personnel with clear guidance on operations when less than four personnel have been assembled on the incident scene**
- 3.5 The department should review NFPA 1720 and utilize this standard as a basis to develop an operational strategic plan that identifies actions to enhance compliance over the next five years.**
- 3.6 All policies and SOPs should be immediately reformatted under Chief Gannon's signature.**
- 3.7 Department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies need to be reformatted, reviewed, and updated regularly. The department training officer should assign a member, selected at random, to review one SOP and one Policy at each training meeting. Ultimately, there should be one document that shows all SOGs and Policies have been reviewed and signed off by all personnel, stating they understand the document.**
- 3.8 All SOPs should be posted on the department's website.**

- 3.9 All department SOGs and Policies need to be available both in electronic format and hard copy, so they are readily available for review and/or reference by all personnel on-duty and off-duty.**
- 3.10 A committee should be established to provide guidance to the fire chief as to updates, revisions, and new SOGs and Policies that need to be developed or addressed.**
- 3.11 Once developed, SOPS should be reviewed every two years.**
- 3.12 Once implemented, these SOPs should be utilized as the basis for operations. Any deviation should be documented in the National Fire Incident Report completed for the emergency.**
- 3.13 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) masks should be provided to each firefighter, this will ensure a proper fit, and limit the potential of transmitting an infection to others.**
- 3.14 Each firefighter should be mask fit tested on an annual basis.**

## CHAPTER 4

### RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ON-CALL PERSONNEL

#### OBSERVATIONS

Despite the success and vitality of on-call response in Auburn, Chief Gannon reported that it is difficult to recruit, and in some cases retain, on-call personnel. Of the 38 on-call members, 11 of these members are relatively inactive, attending less than 5% of incidents. There should be an ongoing effort to recruit new members, retain existing personnel, and enhance the participation of those who have become inactive. The chief reported that he is actively looking to recruit new members.

The department is currently well staffed; however, this should not translate into complacency. Looking to the future, recruitment should be a continuous effort that should receive increased attention within the organization.

Presently, the number of active on-call personnel meets the needs of the Town of Auburn. Over the next five years, a significant effort will need to be put forth regarding the recruitment and retention of on-call personnel to continue this strong record of success. Although Auburn is not alone in dealing with a reduction in on-call or volunteer staff, it is essential that addressing this situation become a primary focus of the fire department and the town. In fact, to attain success will require the development of new strategies and a monetary investment to retain a viable on-call component of the department.

There are various factors that are prevalent to the reduction in the number of volunteer and on-call firefighters in communities such as Auburn. Chief among them is that the current demographics do not support the type of person who is attracted to the fire service in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century; someone with time to dedicate to public service or a young person who wants to make a career of it. We have found that on average, for every five on-call firefighters recruited, two will remain active after a period of 48 months has elapsed. Despite this less than desirable result, it is essential that recruitment efforts expand.

Once an individual becomes interested in becoming an on-call firefighter, they must achieve a level of ever increasing specialized skill that is time consuming. Often exit interviews reveal that the training commitment alone is daunting and one of the primary reasons that on-call personnel resign. To become a certified firefighter takes several hundred hours, and add to that over 200 hours to become a state-certified emergency medical technician. Then there are the dozens of hours of annual training spent maintaining firefighter and EMT skills and certifications. The average citizen does not want to spend a great deal of personal time dedicated to the fire service, especially when family commitments take priority. In addition, many on-call firefighters in departments that have a career force handling the day-to-day

emergencies find it hard to stay motivated if they are not being utilized frequently. Other reasons are:

- An overall reduction in leisure time.
- Employment obligations and the common need to maintain more than one job.
- The virtual elimination of an employer's understanding and flexibility relating to this form of community service.
- Increased family demands.

It is easy to believe that increasing the number of on-call firefighters can cure staffing problems. Unfortunately, in 2016, this is a difficult solution to achieve and many organizations are hiring a small complement of career staff to ensure that the service level expected by the community is delivered. As this has already happened in Auburn, it is unrealistic to expect any reduction in the current level of career staffing. In Auburn, the long-term battle will be to recruit and retain a sufficient cadre of active, on-call firefighters to provide the service level expected within the community.

The federal government has a version of the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) Act that pertains strictly to volunteer and on-call firefighters. It provides competitively awarded funds to municipalities to retain and recruit on-call and volunteer firefighters. The grants provide funds for college curriculum in fire science or other approved majors, for EMT and paramedic training, health insurance, physical fitness, uniforms, and other tax incentives to attract candidates to join fire departments. The bottom line, though, is that if a community's demographics will not support an on-call firefighting force, the federal grant program will be of little assistance. We believe that Auburn can attract and support a more active on-call staff.

We believe that the department should apply for a SAFER grant to recruit and retain on-call members; however, this grant should note the staffing crisis and lack of full response that currently exists, and indicate that the grant would be an attempt to meet the NFPA 1720 fire response standard. The demographic and societal changes driving the reduction in on-call participation needs to be reversed through utilizing innovation and best practices. We believe that the town should endeavor to increase on-call membership to 40 personnel.

As most rural and suburban communities across the United States are dealing with the reduction in volunteer and on-call staff, this has become a common issue. Many communities have come to the conclusion that investing in on-call personnel is the best practice, and to that end, they have pursued some of the following strategies:

- Provide a reduction in property tax for on-call service;
- Provide on-call firefighters with community based benefits such as free dump stickers, beach stickers, etc.;
- Provide community based awards and recognition;
- Ask the fire association to provide a dinner during one training meeting per month;
- Track and post participation to responses and training sessions;
- Provide gift certificates for local restaurants, concerts, or other entertainment as a reward for attaining a high level of response;
- Adjusting the level of compensation to be more attractive to responders;
- Providing an hourly minimum for response during specific hours. In Auburn the current practice of providing compensation for less than one hour is of concern; and
- Implement an incentive for members that attain a level of more than 25% response. An example would be to create a new pay grade for active responders.

In the public sector, many of these benefits can be controversial. After considering these strategies, we have focused on developing innovative strategies for the Town of Auburn. One example of an unconventional and innovative best practice that we feel would work in Auburn is to provide a health insurance package for self-employed year round residents, provided they complete training, certification, and provide the town with a high level of immediate response. As mentioned above, a portion of this cost may be eligible to be incorporated in a SAFER Grant. Typically, this type of program attracts electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and other trades that would be beneficial to the organizations.

Appendix B provides two research papers on best practices relating to the recruitment and retention on volunteer and on-call personnel.

An example of this best practice has worked successfully in the Town of Holliston, Massachusetts, for several years. Viewed as costly and unconventional, this program has retained a high level of active personnel that provide an immediate response on a 24/7 basis. This strategy to invest in the on-call force avoided the need for career personnel, and compared to a smaller neighboring community, produced an overall cost (including health insurance) of 50% of what the neighboring community pays for fire protection. We believe a program of this nature is a good fit for Auburn and should be considered. During our research, a member of

the study team visited Chief Michael Cassidy in Holliston and conducted an interview pertaining to this concept. An overview of that interview has been inserted below:

*Holliston is a community of approximately 14,500 residents. It has a call firefighting force of 50, with an additional call EMS force of approximately 28 persons. Chief Cassidy is the only full-time employee, other than a few hourly workers who provide dispatch services. All of these folks are eligible to participate in the town's health insurance program. Chief Cassidy reports that turnout at all incidents regularly exceeds NFPA 1720 standards. A recent structure fire that occurred midweek, midday, drew a response of 32 call firefighting personnel to the incident.*

*All call firefighters are required to be certified as least to the level of firefighter I/II, the roster is currently full at the authorized strength and Chief Cassidy reports a waiting list of approximately 15 to 20 persons. He stated that the health insurance benefit offered to his call firefighters is most definitely the driving factor in his ability to maintain such a robust and adequately trained call firefighting force. Below is a breakdown of some of the numbers:*

- *Chief Cassidy stated that approximately 55% of the current membership elects to take the health insurance benefit. Additional compensation is provided to the call firefighter should he or she elect not to participate in the benefit group.*
- *Chief Cassidy stated that most all of the members that participated were self-employed tradesmen. Many of those who elect not to participate are young adults who might still be on their parents' health insurance. Since members can become call firefighters at age 18, and the department also has a very active Explorer post, which acts as a feeder pool for the department, a sizable number of the current call force are within the 18 to 26-year-old category, and may still participate in their parents' health insurance program.*
- *All call firefighting personnel must first successfully complete firefighter I/II training, no compensation is provided until after successful completion. If selected for employment, the call firefighter has the option of participating in the town's health insurance program.*
- *Those that elect to enroll in an HMO program have 60% of their expenses covered by the employer (family or individual plan). Members that prefer a PPO style plan have 50% of that cost paid by the employer.*

- *Holliston call firefighters also enjoy a very generous compensation program. Active members receive a base retainer, as well as hourly compensation for time actually spent working at incidents. Recently, the compensation package was expanded to provide a flat fee of \$75 per month for those who regularly attend the bimonthly training sessions.*

*We asked Chief Cassidy if the rising cost of healthcare had caused local government officials any concern in providing these benefits to such a sizable number of part-time employees. He responded in saying that the trade-off was considered minimal in that the community enjoyed a consistent professional response by its call firefighters and EMTs without the cost of a full-time, unionized workgroup.*

Obviously health insurance is expensive and costs seem to escalate on an annual basis. However, self-employed tradesmen are also confronted with this cost. The ability to join the town’s insurance in itself may reduce their cost. Furthermore, the town could develop a sliding scale that would pay a percentage of the health insurance cost equal to the level of response provided by the responding firefighter. We have suggested rate cost sharing as follows:

**Table 1 - Proposed Health Insurance percentages**

<b>Percentage of Training and Incident Response</b>	<b>Proposed Health Care Expense Paid by the town</b>
90% or greater participation	60%
70% - 89% participation	50%
50 – 69% participation	25%
33 – 49% participation	10%
20% - 25%% participation	Eligible to enroll at employees’ cost

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 In 2017, the Auburn Fire Department should apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant for the recruitment and retention of on-call personnel.**
- 4.2 The Auburn Fire Department should seek to develop and support a regional fire/EMS or Public Safety based Explorer program as a means to attract and support future members.**
- 4.3 The Auburn Fire Department should add a sign board at the bottom of the existing Public Safety Complex sign to ensure that all residents are aware that openings exist for on-call personnel and that new personnel will be welcomed and trained.**



**Obviously this computer generated LED signboard offers a variety of benefits and can be utilized as a public safety tool to engage the community.**

- 4.4 The chief should conduct an online survey to determine what recruitment and retention programs and incentives would be of the most value.**
- 4.5 The Auburn Fire Department should expand its social media footprint by establishing a social media presence designed to connect with the community and inform the community of the need for additional on-call personnel.**
- 4.6 On-call personnel should receive a minimum of one hour of compensation for each initial response. If multiple incidents are resolved within the first hour only one hour should be paid.**
- 4.7 The Auburn firefighters should consider adding meals to training meetings as a method to encourage participation and retain personnel.**
- 4.8 Participation statistics of member's attendance at incidents and training should be posted in each station and updated by the chief or his staff on a monthly basis.**

## CHAPTER 5

### FIRE SERVICE FACILITIES

#### OBSERVATIONS

The Auburn Fire Department operates from two stations. Headquarters is located at the Public Safety Complex, at 55 Eaton Hill Road, which was constructed in 2003. The department also operates a substation located at 6 Pingree Hill Road. The substation was built in 1986. The only substantive renovation to the substation since construction was the replacement of the roof in 2014. Currently, both facilities serve the town well and provide the opportunity to accommodate the growth of the department for many years to come. Station 1, which is the substation, is adequate, but is in need of some repair and renovation, including the installation of a diesel exhaust system.



Figure 5 – Auburn Public Safety Complex, 55 Eaton Hill Road



Figure 6 – Station 1, 6 Pingree Hill Road

Overall both stations provide the department with an exceptional platform to provide service to the community. These facilities are well positioned to accommodate any potential growth within the community for at least the next fifteen to twenty years. A review of the station found that turnout gear is openly stored on the apparatus floor and should be protected from both exhaust particulates and UV light.

As turnout gear is stored in exposed areas on the apparatus floor, all gear should be regularly washed in an industrial extractor. A plan should be developed to shield this gear from both Ultraviolet light and diesel particulates. Many fire departments construct a separate turnout gear room, others utilized enclosed lockers, or develop other innovative ways to separate their gear from the source of contamination.

Based on the health and safety implications, the town should move forward to install a diesel exhaust system at Station 1 (substation) as soon as possible. A Fire Act Grant should be pursued to complete this project; however, based on the health concerns associated with this exposure, an appropriation should be brought forward at the annual Auburn Town Meeting. To remain eligible for grant funding, a contract should not be awarded until a determination on the grant application is made. If the grant is successful, the appropriation could be utilized for the required match and excess funds would be returned to the town.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The installation of a diesel exhaust system should be pursued at Station 1 (substation) as a health and safety priority. In the absence of grant funding, this request should be presented at Town Meeting.**
- 5.2 All turnout gear stored on the apparatus floor should be washed, using an industrial extractor, at least three times per year.**
- 5.3 Turnout gear should be separated from exhaust particulates by solid lockers, the development of a turnout gear locker room, or the installation of a means of separation.**
- 5.4 The town should support members' efforts to renovate Station 1 (substation) by providing funding for specialty trades and building materials.**
- 5.5 The Training Room at the Public Safety Complex should be equipped with a smartboard.**
- 5.6 The Training Room at the Public Safety Complex should be developed as a functional Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This would include the installation of phone lines, flat screen monitors and radios.**

## CHAPTER 6

### APPARATUS AND CAPITAL PLANNING

#### OBSERVATIONS

Based on national averages, the town should have the following fire suppression assets:

- 2 Class A Pumpers
- 1 Tanker
- 1 Quint/Aerial Ladder
- 1 Light or Medium Duty First Response/Rescue Vehicle
- 2 Fire Stations (based on square mileage)

In addition to these assets, communities typically acquire ATVs, rescue boats, and brush units based on incident history and the specific needs of the community. In communities the size and configuration of Auburn, tankers are frequently required to provide a sustained water supply at incidents that are not in proximity to hydrants. Auburn has taken a proactive step in utilizing mutual aid tankers in conjunction with the response of two Auburn tankers to meet this need. Upon the report of a structure fire out of the water district, the closest available mutual aid tanker is requested to support the fire suppression efforts of the Auburn Fire Department.

In Auburn, the fleet of apparatus was found to be in good condition. The department's inventory of apparatus meets the needs of the community as one of the two tankers can easily function as a second engine. Therefore, the current fleet is optimal to meet the needs of the community. To provide perspective, an ideal apparatus set for the Town of Auburn is described within the table below.

<b>Apparatus Description</b>	<b>Current Inventory AFD</b>	<b>Recommended Inventory</b>	<b>Deviation/Recommendation</b>
<b>Class A Pumpers (Engine/Tanker)</b>	3	3	Recommended inventory is two engines and one tanker.
<b>Aerial ladder</b>	1	1	
<b>Rescue/First Response Squad</b>	1	1	
<b>Forestry - Utility Units</b>	1	1	
<b>Rescue Boat</b>	1	1	
<b>Command Unit</b>	1	1	

**Table 1 – Optimal Apparatus inventory**

Although apparatus was found to be in good condition, some units were found to lack a sufficient inventory of loose equipment. Other units were found to lack the organization of compartments and permeant equipment signage that we typically observe in on-call departments. We have found that in an on-call environment, it is essential that departments consistently place equipment, have a high level of organization, and signage when mounting equipment. This higher than average level of organization assists firefighters in rapidly obtaining the right equipment for a given task. In Auburn, we believe that the chief should initiate a project where his personnel would inventory, mount, and label all equipment.

An inventory of all apparatus is displayed below:

**Fire Suppression Units**



Engine 2: 2008 Emergency One Pumper



Ladder 1: 2012 Emergency One "Quint"



Tanker 1: 2010 International Tanker/Pumper



Tanker 2: 1997 Freightliner Tanker/Pumper

**Rescue Unit**



Rescue 1: 2004 Ford F550 Rescue

**Command Unit**



Car 1: 2003 Chevy Command Unit

**Forestry Unit**



Forestry 1: 2016 Ford Wildland Response Unit

**Special Operations Units**



Inflatable Rescue Boat



Figure 7 - ATV Trailer



Figure 8 - ATV

## Capital Planning

A capital project usually involves an asset obtained at a cost of at least \$10,000, that has a life span exceeding two years. This definition has been applied to our capital project recommendations. This table provides a capital planning perspective related to the apparatus fleet.

UNIT DESIGNATION	UNIT MAKE	YEAR PURCHASED	ESTIMATED ORIGINAL COST	YEAR OF SCHEDULED REPLACEMENT	CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST
Engine 2	E- ONE	2008	\$410,000	2033	\$600,000
Ladder 1	E-ONE	2012	\$570,000	2042	\$950,000
Tanker 1	E-ONE	2010	\$350,000	2035	\$475,000
Tanker 2	E-ONE	1997	\$250,000	2026	\$385,000
Rescue 1	Ford	2004	\$105,000	2018	\$185,000
Command Unit	Chevy	2003	\$37,000	2019	\$49,000
Forestry 1	Ford	2016	\$48,000	2036	\$69,000

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 The fire department capital plan should be updated annually. This update should adjust the cost of replacement, and adjust the replacement timeline, based on the current needs of the organization and the condition of units.
- 6.2 The acquisition of a lighting trailer should be pursued as a regional asset, in a cost sharing approach with other fire and police departments.
- 6.3 The chief should continue to annually apply for a Fire Act Grant to install a diesel fume extraction system, replace outdated SCBA units, and replace turnout gear over ten years of age.
- 6.4 Within the confines of the existing budget, scene and warning lighting should be update to LED units. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the amount of scene and warning lighting.
- 6.5 Turnout gears should be replaced every ten years. Gear older than ten years of age should be replaced by utilizing a Fire Act Grant.

- 6.6 Tanker 2 should be refurbished to extend its service life for another ten years. This would include repair of the pump, and upgrade of warning, scene, and under mount lights. Side and rear orange/lime chevron striping should also be upgraded to meet current NFPA criteria in 2017.**
- 6.7 The Rescue should be replaced at an anticipated cost of \$185,000 in 2018.**
- 6.8 The Command unit should be replaced at an anticipated cost of \$49,000 in 2019.**
- 6.9 Apparatus should be equipped with tablet based mobile data that has connectivity into the department's preplanning system and records management system.**
- 6.10 The department should consider transitioning the records management system into a cloud based platform that is easily accessible with an Internet connection.**
- 6.11 The loose equipment on apparatus should be consistently organized by vehicle compartment, an inventory should be posted on the compartment door, equipment should be organized, mounted, and signs should be installed to indicate where equipment should be located.**

## CHAPTER 7

### TRAINING

#### OBSERVATIONS

As we understand it, the department has an excellent training program that documents and delivers well over 1,250 hours of training per year. Based on our observations and the interviews that we conducted, a training schedule is posted well in advance, and a quality training program is delivered three times per month. Two of these sessions cover fire service topics, while the third covers emergency medical care. All training sessions and the corresponding attendance of personnel is documented in the department's Records Management System (RMS). Despite this documentation, ISO provided the department with very little credit for training. The reasons behind this lack of credit should be investigated and addressed.

Training is, without question, one of the three most important functions that a fire department should be performing on a regular basis; the others being response to emergency incidents and fire prevention activities. One could even make a credible argument that training is, in some ways, more important than emergency responses because a department that is not well trained, prepared, and operationally ready, will be unable to effectively, efficiently, correctly, and safely fulfill its emergency response obligations and mission. A comprehensive, diverse, and ongoing training program is absolutely critical to the fire department's level of success. In Auburn, we found that the training program was insufficient and in some areas approached nonexistent.

An effective fire department training program must cover all of the essential elements of that specific department's core missions and responsibilities. The program must include an appropriate combination of technical/classroom training and manipulative or hands-on/practical evolutions. Most of the training, but particularly the practical, standardized, hands-on training evolutions, should be developed based upon the department's own operating procedures and operations, while remaining cognizant of widely accepted practices and standards that could be used as a benchmark to judge the department's operations for any number of reasons. Failure to use widely accepted firefighting practices was a significant conclusion in the many investigations that were conducted after the Charleston, South Carolina, Super Sofa Store fire in June 2007, that resulted in the deaths of nine firefighters. As with all other fire department operations, there must be consistency in how the training is being conducted.

Certain Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) regulations dictate that minimum training must be completed on an annual basis, covering various topics including a review of the respiratory protection standard, self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA)

refresher and user competency training, SCBA fit testing (29 CFR 1910.134); Blood borne Pathogens Training (29 CFR 1910.1030); Hazardous Materials Training (29 CFR 1910.120); Confined Space Training (29 CFR 1910.146); and structural firefighting training (29 CFR 1910.156). In addition, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards contain recommendations for training on various topics such as a requirement for a minimum of 24 hours of structural firefighting training annually for each fire department member.

There are a number of ways to evaluate the effectiveness of the fire department's training program. One increasing common way is through the use of annual skills proficiency evaluations where all members of the department are required to successfully perform certain skills, and/or complete standardized evolutions, either individually, or as part of a team. Post-course evaluations, post-incident critiques, and evaluation of incident operations and statistics can also provide important feedback regarding the training program. **It is important that all training, no matter how minor or inconsequential, be documented.** Failure to do so can expose the department and town to significant liability.

Professional development for fire department personnel, especially officers, is also an important part of overall training. There are numerous excellent opportunities for firefighters and officers to attend training on a wide range of topics outside of Auburn, including those offered at the New Hampshire Firefighting Academy, and at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. Beyond the practical benefits to be gained from personnel participating in outside training, encouraging personnel to earn and/or maintain various specialized certifications such as Fire Instructor, or Fire Officer, increases the positive professional perception of the organization and can help to demonstrate a commitment to continued excellence.

The MRI study team looked at the Auburn Fire Department's training program. We found this program to be scheduled in advance and well documented. It is apparent that the members of the department believe in training and it is our observation that the training program is healthy.

It was reported to the study team that a large number of Auburn firefighters had completed Firefighter I/II training, and have been certified by the NPQB (National Professional Qualifications Board). This level of training and certification is far above what many other comparable communities support. As such, the level of firefighter I/II certification should be recognized as an exceptional accomplishment.

It should be noted that the New Hampshire Firefighting Academy provides career and call/volunteer training programs that will result in both Firefighter I and Firefighter II level certifications. Typically, the completion of this six-month, e-blended, adult learning program will result in Firefighter I/II certification.

As previously noted, the department roster lists approximately 42 department members, but only about two-thirds are really active, and this includes attending training sessions. Auburn's internal training program is loosely modeled after the New Hampshire Firefighting Academy's Call/Volunteer Firefighter I/II program and the specialized operational needs of the Auburn Fire Department. The department should aim to provide an average of 60 hours of training per year to each member. Each member should be required to attend at least 24 hours of structural firefighting training per year to remain as an active member of the department.



**Figure 9: Periodic live fire training exercises at a dedicated training facility need to be conducted in order for personnel to maintain their skills proficiency.**



**Figure 10: EMTs conduct patient stabilization and packaging training.**

The department's training resources, such as reference and text books, videos, DVDs, etc. are very limited. Being as the department only has limited computer technology at the present time, access to general fire service and training web sites, and any type of internet based training, safety, and other resources is substandard.

Numerous excellent training opportunities, such as the annual Firehouse Expo in Baltimore, and the Fire Department Instructors Conference in Indianapolis have been ignored, as have the previously mentioned New Hampshire Fire Academy, and the National Fire Academy.

Based on questions that the study team asked, it appears each member has a comprehensive training record that is contained within the department's records management system. The only way to determine if a member attended a particular training session would be a manual, hand search of the training reports. The files do have copies of outside agency certificates of attendance for training, but only if members voluntarily provide these to the department. There is no procedure that mandates they be provided.

If the recommendations contained within this report are enacted, there should be reason for considerable optimism that the training program will be given its appropriate level prominence in the department's operations. There are numerous opportunities for firefighters, even call/volunteer personnel with limited time, to engage in training at least three times per month. The Auburn Fire Department should seek to maximize, support, and encourage these opportunities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The Auburn Fire Department should increase the number of drills that involve mutual aid companies.**
- 7.2 The Auburn Fire Department should increase the number of drills that encompass rural water supply operations.**
- 7.3 The Auburn Fire Department should sponsor and support each member to attend two live fire training sessions per year.**
- 7.4 The Auburn Fire Department should establish a mentoring program to guide and encourage new members as they progress through the initial training process.**
- 7.5 The Auburn Fire Department should develop a basic orientation session for new members. The goal of this program would be to rapidly, but safely, train new members to participate in exterior operations, thus providing new members with a function and motivation to advance.**
- 7.6 The Auburn Fire Department should expand the training resources and training library to include current editions of commonly utilized media.**

- 7.7 The Auburn Fire Department should attempt to deliver a total of 2,500 hours of training per year (averaging 60 hours per member).**
- 7.8 The Auburn Fire Department should require that all personnel receive at least 24 hours of structural firefighting training per year to remain an active member of the organization.**
- 7.9 All external training should be documented in the department's records management system.**
- 7.10 The Auburn Fire Department should investigate why ISO provided little credit for training and address that situation.**

## CHAPTER 8

### COMMUNITY OUTREACH & RISK MANAGEMENT

#### OVERVIEW

Community education, outreach, and public prevention programs continue to be a critical component for communities struggling with limited resources and increasing financial constraints given the funding sources for many of the communities in New Hampshire. Engaging the community with such programs minimizes the potential for emergencies requiring the response of these resources and during any response, the probability of having bystanders assist exponentially increases, thereby improving the chance of a positive outcome for the customers.

There are numerous other community outreach, preventative programs, and initiatives that should be considered to help enhance any emergency response and/or minimize the deployment of limited critical resources and personnel. Many of these need to be prioritized based on a cost/benefit analysis, time constraints, and whether or not some could be completed by on-duty personnel.

#### OBSERVATIONS

The Auburn Fire Department has developed a series of positive relationships within the community. An example of this relationship can be seen in the elementary school where the department regularly serves pizza. Principal Collins indicated that the department is approachable and the first people that she calls when she needs help. During our interviews compliments relative to the positive relationships developed by the fire chief and the department as a whole were numerous. It was reported that there were some community concerns relative to the perceived rigidity of code enforcement activities. Although we reached out to a member of the business community, there was only a minimal conversation that did not substantiate this concern.

The department has implemented and developed some great community education, outreach, and preventative programs over the years. Examples of these include the Student Awareness of Fire Education (SAFE) in the schools, serving pizza at the elementary school, community cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), and automated external defibrillators (AED) training programs. All of these programs take a proactive approach to life safety and education and begin to develop a culture of teamwork, cooperation, and collaboration for public safety throughout the community.

Although these programs are a solid foundation, it is our observation that the department has the opportunity to harness social media and other emerging technologies to develop a more

effective set of community outreach programs. As an example, a department sponsored Facebook page has the potential to provide a direct link to interested residents. We have been surprised how this particular technology has been embraced by the residents of smaller communities. When queried, many residents see a well-run Facebook page as a source of immediate information on the community. As technology expands and citizens expect more immediate information, the list of potential public outreach programs outlined below have been well received in other Massachusetts communities.

Communities will continue to struggle with balancing the need for services and availability of resources. Engaging and enlisting the support and assistance from community bystanders, educating the public on preventative measures to minimize the potential from fire, and increasing the public's safety through community outreach programs will continue to enhance the quality of life of the citizens, while minimizing the ongoing strain of limited resources and personnel within the fire department.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Consideration should be given to developing the following public education and community outreach programs.

- 8.1 Blood pressure clinic: Hypertension continues to be one of the leading risk factors contributing to strokes and heart attacks. Providing the ability for the community and particularly the elderly to come into the station or during another community event and obtain their blood pressure will provide for networking opportunities between community and staff, while at the same time provide valuable medical information critical for the individuals.**
- 8.2 File of Life Program: During medical emergencies, particularly with limited staffing, having a written document readily accessible will expedite and improve patient care and assessment for the patients. Files of Life are used to document pertinent past medical history, allergies, and medications the individual is on, to assist the emergency responders in making an informed decision based on the medical emergency at the time.**
- 8.3 Smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector inspection program: Every 20 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the United States, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The American Red Cross is partnering with fire departments across the state in a planned five-year program to help reduce deaths and injuries due to home fires by 25%. During the visit, homeowners will get smoke detectors installed if no working alarms are present, guidance in the**

development of a Family Disaster Plan, and valuable emergency preparedness tips and information on increasing the safety in your home.

- 8.4 **Pulse Point:** During a cardiac arrest, time is muscle. Specifically, cardiac muscle. The American Heart Association continues to recognize the chain of survival by early recognition, early CPR, early defibrillation, and rapid transport. Pulse Point is an app on an iPhone that can be downloaded from anyone in the community who wants to participate in this program to be notified when someone is having a cardiac arrest in their vicinity. Fifty-seven percent of US adults say they've had CPR training. Utilizing this type of technology, bystander performance, and active citizenship enhances the care provided to the community.
- 8.5 **Swimming pool safety:** In July 2010, twin girls died in Lynnfield, MA, in a swimming pool accident. Opportunities to educate the public, particularly in a seaside community such as Auburn, on the preventative measures to take around the water and pools can be valuable. Topics to reinforce include the use of life jackets, swimming pools with fences, latches on gates and ladders, and never leave children alone by the water.
- 8.6 **Bike helmet program:** More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to biking than any other sport. Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88%; yet only 45% of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet. Providing bike helmets throughout the community will help minimize this potential from happening in Auburn.
- 8.7 **Prom demonstrations:** As a component of the SAFE program, conducting a mock accident for the junior and senior classes at the high school, focusing on the dangers of drinking and driving, texting while driving, and not wearing seat belts will reinforce the dangers associated with this type of behavior. This activity would be enhanced with the cooperation of the police department and local hospital, as well as others who may directly speak on losing a loved one or dealing with a loss related to these types of behaviors.
- 8.8 **Airway obstruction training for staff in restaurants:** An airway obstruction can lead to unconsciousness if not expelled or cleared in a timely manner. Collaboration with staff personnel in restaurants can assist public safety personnel in these types of medical conditions.
- 8.9 **Social Media:** The department needs to have an updated and active department website and Facebook account. This can be used for community engagement, updates with ongoing activities, signing up for programs to minimize any additional administrative time, and engaging the younger generations who are more tech savvy.

Although the local bargaining unit for the Auburn Fire Department has one, the department needs to develop this outreach with a focus on prevention and education.

- 8.10 MASS Alerts:** Enlisting the use of technology for mass notifications, such as the Code Red alert already used and administered by Auburn, MASS Alerts allows public safety agencies to provide emergency notifications and information about critical events and disasters, enabling individuals to better prepare and stay informed on such topics. Utilizing this technology, personnel can get real time information on severe weather, alerts on missing children, evacuation and shelter-in-place information, information about power outages, and tips to stay safe during such disasters.

## CHAPTER 9

### FISCAL COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS

#### OBSERVATIONS

The fire department operates with an annual budget that is closing in on \$500,000 per year. This equates to 11% of the town's annual budget and includes contractual costs paid to the Town of Derry for dispatching. Although a formal study of peer communities was not completed as part of this engagement, a budget of \$500,000 compares favorably to the cost of communities of equal size where we have done organizational evaluations. Overall looking at the line items and expenditure history, we feel that the fiscal resources appropriated by the town are well deployed and well managed by Chief Gannon.

In an effort to inform the town of the needs of the department, a formal capital plan containing vehicles and equipment with a value of more than \$10,000 should be developed and submitted. This plan should be updated annually.

An item brought forward through the nominal group process that Chief Gannon initiated within the organization suggested that personnel should receive a one-hour minimum for each response. Providing a one-hour minimum is an industry best practice and is common throughout on-call departments.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 The Auburn Fire Department should compensate personnel with a one-hour minimum for each initial call.**
- 9.2 The Auburn Fire Department should develop a formal capital plan that informs the town with an inventory of needs and expected replacement costs.**
- 9.3 The capital plan should be adjusted annually.**

## CHAPTER 10

### ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION

#### OBSERVATIONS

Chief Gannon is a vibrant leader who provides his personnel with a high level of communication, highlighted by a weekly update on operations and changes within the organization. Communication, especially with on-call personnel, is always a challenge. However, transitioning all communications to e-mail is an essential first step. Several members reported that they would like to have e-mail accounts supplied by the Town. Members also indicated a reluctance to utilize personal e-mail for Town business based on a perceived fear that their accounts could be access should a legal matter develop. We believe that town supplied e-mail accounts should be reestablished as a critical organizational communications link.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- 10.1 The town should provide e-mail accounts for all fire department personnel.**
- 10.2 The chief should ensure that all department communication is transitioned to e-mail.**
- 10.3 The chief should continue to provide members with his “week in review”.**
- 10.4 The chief should post response and training attendance for all members in each station.**
- 10.5 Flat screen monitors should be setup in both stations and scroll important department information.**

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSIONS

The Auburn Fire Department is an excellent organization that more than meets the needs of the community. The department is led by Chief Ed Gannon who is a passionate advocate and energetic leader that is clearly honored to have an exceptional staff and serve his community. Members of the department work as a team to produce an effective and efficient response that serves the town well. It should also be noted that the department has implemented several best practices. These proactive concepts include the following:

- Visually posting “The basic Principles”;
- Fully utilizing a records management system;
- Weekly communication with members through the chief’s “week in review”; and
- The introduction of a nominal group process as a means to bolster the involvement of personnel and set shared organizational priorities.

This study has identified seven areas of risk that we believe the town should address. These include:

- 1. The lack of a diesel exhaust extraction system in station 1 (substation).**
- 2. The need to strengthen the use of technology and the preplanning system.**
- 3. Tanker 2 is not fully serviceable.**
- 4. The community experiences an abnormally high incidence of wildfire.**
- 5. SOPs need to be further developed.**
- 6. Lack of a fully equipped and functional Emergency Operations Center (EOC) in the Public Safety complex.**
- 7. Complacency relative to recruitment and retention efforts based on the current level of membership and response.**

The recommendations outlined within this document address these risks and other organizational and operational issues.

## CHAPTER 12

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### CHAPTER 2 - DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENT

- 2.1** Develop a plan to ensure that on-call and full-time staff are integrated, respond, and train together.
- 2.2** The organization should remain an on-call agency supported by a two-member weekday, daytime career presence.
- 2.3** Based on the services provided by the department, additional career staff should not be considered in the near term.
- 2.4** The Board of Selectmen should consider renewing the chief's three-year contract at the end of year two as a reflection of positive performance, and to provide the department with long-term stability.

#### CHAPTER 3 – OPERATIONS

- 3.1** The Department should work with the Town of Derry to ensure that alarms are being processed in accordance with the criteria established by NFPA 1221. Documentation of any improvements should be shared with ISO.
- 3.2** The Auburn Fire Department should enhance training documentation to provide ISO with the specific information that they require. ISO should be contacted and questioned relative to the low credit granted for training.
- 3.3** The Auburn Fire Department should conduct a deployment analysis to determine if there are any areas of potential improvement based on the ISO rating structure.
- 3.4** The department should review the OSHA Two-in/Two-Out rule and provide personnel with clear guidance on operations when less than four personnel have been assembled on the incident scene
- 3.5** The department should review NFPA 1720 and utilize this standard as a basis to develop an operational strategic plan that identifies actions to enhance compliance over the next five years.

- 3.6 All policies and SOPs should be immediately reformatted under Chief Gannon's signature.**
- 3.7 Department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies need to be reformatted, reviewed, and updated regularly. The department training officer should assign a member, selected at random, to review one SOP and one Policy at each training meeting. Ultimately, there should be one document that shows all SOGs and Policies have been reviewed and signed off by all personnel, stating they understand the document.**
- 3.8 All SOPs should be posted on the department's website.**
- 3.9 All department SOGs and Policies need to be available both in electronic format and hard copy, so they are readily available for review and/or reference by all personnel on-duty and off-duty.**
- 3.10 A committee should be established to provide guidance to the fire chief as to updates, revisions, and new SOGs and Policies that need to be developed or addressed.**
- 3.11 Once developed, SOPS should be reviewed every two years.**
- 3.12 Once implemented, these SOPs should be utilized as the basis for operations. Any deviation should be documented in the National Fire Incident Report completed for the emergency.**
- 3.13 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) masks should be provided to each firefighter, this will ensure a proper fit, and limit the potential of transmitting an infection to others.**
- 3.14 Each firefighter should be mask fit tested on an annual basis.**

#### **CHAPTER 4 – RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ON-CALL PERSONNEL**

- 4.1 In 2017, the Auburn Fire Department should apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant for the recruitment and retention of on-call personnel.**
- 4.2 The Auburn Fire Department should seek to develop and support a regional fire/EMS or Public Safety based Explorer program as a means to attract and support future members.**

- 4.3 The Auburn Fire Department should add a sign board at the bottom of the existing Public Safety Complex sign to ensure that all residents are aware that openings exist for on-call personnel and that new personnel will be welcomed and trained. Obviously this computer generated LED signboard offers a variety of benefits and can be utilized as a public safety tool to engage the community.
- 4.4 The chief should conduct an online survey to determine what recruitment and retention programs and incentives would be of the most value.
- 4.5 The Auburn Fire Department should expand its social media footprint by establishing a social media presence designed to connect with the community and inform the community of the need for additional on-call personnel.
- 4.6 On-call personnel should receive a minimum of one hour of compensation for each initial response. If multiple incidents are resolved within the first hour only one hour should be paid.
- 4.7 The Auburn firefighters should consider adding meals to training meetings as a method to encourage participation and retain personnel.
- 4.8 Participation statistics of member's attendance at incidents and training should be posted in each station and updated by the chief or his staff on a monthly basis.

## **CHAPTER 5 – FIRE SERVICE FACILITIES**

- 5.1 The installation of a diesel exhaust system should be pursued at Station 1 (substation) as a health and safety priority. In the absence of grant funding, this request should be presented at Town Meeting.
- 5.2 All turnout gear stored on the apparatus floor should be washed, using an industrial extractor, at least three times per year.
- 5.3 Turnout gear should be separated from exhaust particulates by solid lockers, the development of a turnout gear locker room, or the installation of a means of separation.
- 5.4 The town should support members' efforts to renovate Station 1 (substation) by providing funding for specialty trades and building materials.
- 5.5 The Training Room at the Public Safety Complex should be equipped with a smartboard.

- 5.6 The Training Room at the Public Safety Complex should be developed as a functional Emergency Operations Center (EOC). This would include the installation of phone lines, flat screen monitors and radios.

## **CHAPTER 6 – APPARATUS AND CAPITAL PLANNING**

- 6.1 The fire department capital plan should be updated annually. This update should adjust the cost of replacement, and adjust the replacement timeline, based on the current needs of the organization and the condition of units.
- 6.2 The acquisition of a lighting trailer should be pursued as a regional asset, in a cost sharing approach with other fire and police departments.
- 6.3 The chief should continue to annually apply for a Fire Act Grant to install a diesel fume extraction system, replace outdated SCBA units, and replace turnout gear over ten years of age.
- 6.4 Within the confines of the existing budget, scene and warning lighting should be update to LED units. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the amount of scene and warning lighting.
- 6.5 Turnout gears should be replaced every ten years. Gear older than ten years of age should be replaced by utilizing a Fire Act Grant.
- 6.6 Tanker 2 should be refurbished to extend its service life for another ten years. This would include repair of the pump, and upgrade of warning, scene, and under mount lights. Side and rear orange/lime chevron striping should also be upgraded to meet current NFPA criteria in 2017.
- 6.7 The Rescue should be replaced at an anticipated cost of \$185,000 in 2018.
- 6.8 The Command unit should be replaced at an anticipated cost of \$49,000 in 2019.
- 6.9 Apparatus should be equipped with tablet based mobile data that has connectivity into the department's preplanning system and records management system.
- 6.10 The department should consider transitioning the records management system into a cloud based platform that is easily accessible with an Internet connection.

- 6.11** The loose equipment on apparatus should be consistently organized by vehicle compartment, an inventory should be posted on the compartment door, equipment should be organized, mounted, and signs should be installed to indicate where equipment should be located.

## **CHAPTER 7 – TRAINING**

- 7.1** The Auburn Fire Department should increase the number of drills that involve mutual aid companies.
- 7.2** The Auburn Fire Department should increase the number of drills that encompass rural water supply operations.
- 7.3** The Auburn Fire Department should sponsor and support each member to attend two live fire training sessions per year.
- 7.4** The Auburn Fire Department should establish a mentoring program to guide and encourage new members as they progress through the initial training process.
- 7.5** The Auburn Fire Department should develop a basic orientation session for new members. The goal of this program would be to rapidly, but safely, train new members to participate in exterior operations, thus providing new members with a function and motivation to advance.
- 7.6** The Auburn Fire Department should expand the training resources and training library to include current editions of commonly utilized media.
- 7.7** The Auburn Fire Department should attempt to deliver a total of 2,500 hours of training per year (averaging 60 hours per member).
- 7.8** The Auburn Fire Department should require that all personnel receive at least 24 hours of structural firefighting training per year to remain an active member of the organization.
- 7.9** All external training should be documented in the department's records management system.
- 7.10** The Auburn Fire Department should investigate why ISO provided little credit for training and address that situation.

## **CHAPTER 8 – COMMUNITY OUTREACH & RISK MANAGEMENT**

Consideration should be given to developing the following public education and community outreach programs.

- 8.1 Blood pressure clinic:** Hypertension continues to be one of the leading risk factors contributing to strokes and heart attacks. Providing the ability for the community and particularly the elderly to come into the station or during another community event and obtain their blood pressure will provide for networking opportunities between community and staff, while at the same time provide valuable medical information critical for the individuals.
- 8.2 File of Life Program:** During medical emergencies, particularly with limited staffing, having a written document readily accessible will expedite and improve patient care and assessment for the patients. Files of Life are used to document pertinent past medical history, allergies, and medications the individual is on, to assist the emergency responders in making an informed decision based on the medical emergency at the time.
- 8.3 Smoke detector/carbon monoxide detector inspection program:** Every 20 seconds, a fire department responds to a fire somewhere in the United States, according to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). The American Red Cross is partnering with fire departments across the state in a planned five-year program to help reduce deaths and injuries due to home fires by 25%. During the visit, homeowners will get smoke detectors installed if no working alarms are present, guidance in the development of a Family Disaster Plan, and valuable emergency preparedness tips and information on increasing the safety in your home.
- 8.4 Pulse Point:** During a cardiac arrest, time is muscle. Specifically, cardiac muscle. The American Heart Association continues to recognize the chain of survival by early recognition, early CPR, early defibrillation, and rapid transport. Pulse Point is an app on an iPhone that can be downloaded from anyone in the community who wants to participate in this program to be notified when someone is having a cardiac arrest in their vicinity. Fifty-seven percent of US adults say they've had CPR training. Utilizing this type of technology, bystander performance, and active citizenship enhances the care provided to the community.
- 8.5 Swimming pool safety:** In July 2010, twin girls died in Lynnfield, MA, in a swimming pool accident. Opportunities to educate the public, particularly in a seaside community such as Auburn, on the preventative measures to take around the water and pools can be valuable. Topics to reinforce include the use of life jackets,

swimming pools with fences, latches on gates and ladders, and never leave children alone by the water.

- 8.6 Bike helmet program:** More children ages 5 to 14 are seen in emergency rooms for injuries related to biking than any other sport. Helmets can reduce the risk of severe brain injuries by 88%; yet only 45% of children 14 and under usually wear a bike helmet. Providing bike helmets throughout the community will help minimize this potential from happening in Auburn.
- 8.7 Prom demonstrations:** As a component of the SAFE program, conducting a mock accident for the junior and senior classes at the high school, focusing on the dangers of drinking and driving, texting while driving, and not wearing seat belts will reinforce the dangers associated with this type of behavior. This activity would be enhanced with the cooperation of the police department and local hospital, as well as others who may directly speak on losing a loved one or dealing with a loss related to these types of behaviors.
- 8.8 Airway obstruction training for staff in restaurants:** An airway obstruction can lead to unconsciousness if not expelled or cleared in a timely manner. Collaboration with staff personnel in restaurants can assist public safety personnel in these types of medical conditions.
- 8.9 Social Media:** The department needs to have an updated and active department website and Facebook account. This can be used for community engagement, updates with ongoing activities, signing up for programs to minimize any additional administrative time, and engaging the younger generations who are more tech savvy. Although the local bargaining unit for the Auburn Fire Department has one, the department needs to develop this outreach with a focus on prevention and education.
- 8.10 MASS Alerts:** Enlisting the use of technology for mass notifications, such as the Code Red alert already used and administered by Auburn, MASS Alerts allows public safety agencies to provide emergency notifications and information about critical events and disasters, enabling individuals to better prepare and stay informed on such topics. Utilizing this technology, personnel can get real time information on severe weather, alerts on missing children, evacuation and shelter-in-place information, information about power outages, and tips to stay safe during such disasters.

## **CHAPTER 9 – FISCAL COMPARISON AND ANALYSIS**

- 9.1 The Auburn Fire Department should compensate personnel with a one-hour minimum for each initial call.**
- 9.2 The Auburn Fire Department should develop a formal capital plan that informs the town with an inventory of needs and expected replacement costs.**
- 9.3 The capital plan should be adjusted annually.**

## **CHAPTER 10 - ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATION**

- 10.1 The town should provide e-mail accounts for all fire department personnel.**
- 10.2 The chief should ensure that all department communication is transitioned to e-mail.**
- 10.3 The chief should continue to provide members with his “week in review”.**
- 10.4 The chief should post response and training attendance for all members in each station.**
- 10.5 Flat screen monitors should be setup in both stations and scroll important department information.**

## CHAPTER 13

### THE PROJECT TEAM

#### Project Manger

**Brian P. Duggan** recently retired from the Fire Department in Northampton, Massachusetts, where he has instituted substantial changes to modernize and restructure the entire department including equipment, facilities, personnel, and training. In conjunction with his staff, Brian has created a regional Advanced Life Support Program that currently serves eighteen communities within the Northampton Area. He formerly commanded the Northborough, Massachusetts, Fire Department, and has significant experience with the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services where he held several key positions. Mr. Duggan developed and directed the Graduate and Undergraduate Fire Science Programs at Anna Maria College in Paxton Massachusetts from 1995 - 2003. Mr. Duggan has a Business Management/Fire Science degree from Providence College and a Master's Degree of Business Administration (MBA) from Nichols College in Dudley, Massachusetts. He is also a graduate of the National Fire Academy Executive Fire Officer Program and the Senior Executive Program for State and Local Leaders at Harvard University. In December 2012, Mr. Duggan received a Master's Degree in Homeland Security through the Naval Post Graduate School based in Monterey, California, where his thesis entitled "*Enhancing Decision-making during the First Operational Period of Surge Events*" was selected as an outstanding thesis. He is one of only a few fire service professionals to be designated as a Chief Fire Officer by the Commission on Fire Accreditation International. He leads the Massachusetts fire service through his affiliation as Chairman of the Fire Chief Association of Massachusetts Technology Committee and as a Regional Director on the Massachusetts State Fire Mobilization Committee. Mr. Duggan has authored several publications, inclusive of writing Section 7, Chapter 3, Fire Department Information Systems, in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Editions of the National Fire Protection Association's Fire Protection Handbook. Chief Duggan has served as a subject advisor to MRI since 2002.

#### Project Team Members

**Robert C. Craig** most recently served as Interim Director of Fire and Emergency Medical Services for the Town of Acton, Massachusetts. Immediately prior to this he had served the Town of Acton during his entire career of almost 44 years of service as a member of the Acton Fire Department which included his last 22 years as Fire Chief. The Town of Acton Fire Department is staffed by 42 career personnel, housed in three Fire/EMS stations and provides full fire, rescue and emergency services including EMS for approximately 23,000 residents. During his career Bob administered an annual fire department budget of approximately 3 million dollars. Together with the Acton Police Chief, he also managed a joint Public Safety

Dispatch Center. Bob holds an Associate Degree in Fire Science and Technology as well as a Bachelor of Arts Degree and is a graduate of the Executive Fire Officer Program of the National Fire Academy. He is a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs; the New England Association of Fire Chiefs; the Fire Chief's Association of Massachusetts and the National Fire Protection Association. Bob has served for over twenty (20) years as a member of the Massachusetts Fire Training Council as one of the representatives of the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts and now continues to serve as appointed by the Governor to represent the Citizens of the Commonwealth. He has attained professional status and recognition as a credentialed Fire Chief in Massachusetts. Bob has a diverse background and expertise in Firefighting, EMS, Dispatch, Fire Prevention and Investigation, Emergency Planning and Operations, Municipal Finance and Government and Labor/Management relations. During his career he has also participated in the study of and /or implementation of a number of regional programs including Fire Investigation, Dispatch, and EMS to include ALS services. In addition, he has been instrumental with the planning and construction of a public safety facility which included a joint dispatch center and Fire/EMS station construction and renovations. He has also participated in a number of Fire/EMS management studies.

# ***APPENDIX A***

## ***Standard Operating Procedure Best Practice Format***



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## Franklin County Fire Chiefs Standard Operating Guideline

Effective Date: <b>January 1, 2015</b>	SOG Category & Identification Number: <b>Command - 001</b>	Revision:
SOG Title: <b>Assumption Transfer, Designation and the Responsibilities of Command</b>		
Approved by:	Re-evaluation Date: <b>January 1, 2018</b>	Number of Pages: <b>5</b>

### PURPOSE

To specifically identify who will be in charge at the scene of an emergency and to insure that unity of command is maintained at all emergency scenes.

To fix responsibility for command on a certain individual through a standard identification system.

To ensure that a strong, direct and visible command is established as early as possible in fire department operations.

To provide a system for the orderly transfer of command at emergency scenes.

To outline the responsibilities of an Incident Commander.

To comply with the mandated use of the National Incident Management System (NIMS).

### SCOPE

This procedure will apply to all department members and will be used at all emergencies to which Franklin County Fire Departments respond. Specifically, the use of NIMS will be the foundation for operations involving multiple unit and multiple community responses.

In order to clarify terms in this procedure the following definitions have been included:

**COMBATIVE COMMAND** - An option available to the first arriving officer or senior firefighter who is initially in command of the emergency. Officer will take an active role while carrying out required tactical operations. Decision based upon officer's evaluation

of incident needs and resources available. Such officer should be prepared to give synopsis of actions and conditions over portable radio upon arrival of chief officer and the establishment of formal command.

FORMAL COMMAND - An option available to the first arriving officer and required of all officers assuming command after the first arriving officer or senior firefighter. The Officer or senior firefighter takes a command position which is fixed and on the outside of the incident. The Officer or senior firefighter will not involve himself/herself in tactical operations at the scene.

#### COMMAND RESPONSIBILITIES

Take an effective command position

Assess incident priorities

Determine strategic goal(s) and tactical operations to support

Develop or approve and implement the action plan

Develop command structure appropriate for the incident (divisions, groups, branches, etc.)

Assign appropriate divisions, groups, and command staff as required

Assess resource needs

Order, deploy, reinforce, relieve and release resources

Coordinate all emergency activities

Serve as ultimate incident safety officer

Coordinate activities of outside agencies

Authorize information releases to the media

Transfer command when incident is de-escalating

Terminate command

Complete and submit NFIRS fire reports

\*Multi-company response - if first arriving officer sends companies back before arrival of a higher-ranking officer on the assignment, the first arriving officer will be responsible for the report. If command is transferred to the chief officer on the assignment, Chief Officer or senior firefighter will be responsible for the fire report.

**Note: Command is responsible for transitioning from Sim 1 to a regular channel to facilitate appropriate on scene communications and reduce Sim 1 radio traffic.**

## PROCEDURES

### SINGLE COMPANY RESPONSE

Whenever a single company responds to an incident, the crewmember of the responding company will be in command of the incident and will assume full authority and responsibility for all actions conducted at the scene until command is properly transferred.

When operating at the scene the radio designation of the command officer will be the call number of the apparatus. Example: Deerfield Engine 3 to Shelburne Control please contact Western Massachusetts Electric Company (WEMCO) and have them respond to the scene.

If after arrival at the scene, the officer requests additional fire department apparatus and personnel, the procedures for the assumption of command as outlined in multi-company response will be followed.

### MULTI-COMPANY RESPONSE - ASSUMPTION OF COMMAND

Whenever multiple companies are dispatched to an incident the first arriving officer will automatically assume command. The assumption of command will occur in the following way:

Officer will announce arrival on the scene and report information based upon size-up, observed conditions and fireground actions that will be taken.

If the officer is assuming the combative command role no radio communication designating command is required. The officer will use the call numbers of the company in all radio transmissions.

For Example: "Shelburne Control from Deerfield Engine 3 (wait response from Shelburne Control) Deerfield Engine 3 is on the scene at 228 Main Street and I have a two story wood residential dwelling with fire showing from two windows on the first floor. Engine 3 will be stretching a line through the front door. Ladder 2 ventilate on side C of the building". "Engine 3 is assuming combative command".

In this example, Engine 3 officer is in command and taking a combative command role.

If the first arriving officer is assuming a formal command role, the officer will announce this over the radio by designating himself as command and naming command. All formal command will be designated using the street that the incident is on.

For Example: "Shelburne Control from Deerfield Engine 3 (wait response from Shelburne Control) Deerfield Engine 3 is on the scene at 228 Main Street and I have a two story wood residential dwelling with fire showing from two windows on the first floor. Engine 3 is Main Command".

In this example, Engine 3 officer is in command and taking a formal command role.

The first arriving officer at the emergency shall have the authority to terminate the response of any additional responding units if after appropriate assessment the officer determines that the resources on the assignment will not be needed. The chief officer on the initial assignment, at his discretion, shall have the authority to continue on the response. All other units are to follow the instruction of the first arriving officer.

#### TRANSFER OF COMMAND

Command will automatically be transferred from the first arriving officer to the first ~~to the~~ senior-ranking officer assigned to the incident.

Once command is transferred from the first arriving officer, command will be Formal and will be designated by the street that the incident is on.

For Example: Using the incident on Main Street and there is an officer in charge on the assignment: "Deerfield Engine 3 is the "Main Street Command".

Once formal command has been established, all radio communications to or from the incident commander will be made using the term (Street name) Command

Once formal command has been established, all command transfers will be made using **face-to-face** communications.

For Example: As Deerfield C-1 responds to the incident on Main Street. "C-1 will be arriving on Main Street". Command may be transferred to the Chief, after the following procedure is completed:

Officer contacts present Incident Commander using **face-to-face** communications.

Incident Commander being relieved will provide a briefing which includes:

1. Situation Status
2. Deployment and assignment of resources
3. Tactical Needs

The officer assuming command will then assign the relieved officer to a position or function as required.

As command is transferred, the officer who is taking command will announce the transfer over the radio. For Example: Deerfield C-1 assumes command from Engine 3 on Main Street, the Deputy Chief will say " C-1 is now Main Street Command".

Any requests or notifications to Main Street Command will now be answered by the Chief instead of Engine 3.

When the incident is no longer escalating and command officers will be leaving the incident, command will be transferred back to the initial officer on the assignment or the senior officer on the assignment. Command will be transferred by a **face to face** notification and notification of the transfer will be made via the radio.

**When an incident that required a formal command is over, the incident commander will terminate command and return on the appropriate signal.**

For example: The incident on Main Street is over and command will be returning all companies. Shelburne Control from Main Street Command, (wait for a response from Shelburne Control) Main Street Command is terminated, Engine 3 and Engine 4 will be continuing to pick-up, E-5 will remain at the scene.

# ***APPENDIX B***

## ***Research Papers Related to Recruitment and Retention of On-Call Staff***



Municipal  
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# Guide to Best Practices in Volunteer Firefighter Recruitment and Retention

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## Facts

- The ranks of volunteer firefighters have declined from 300,000 in the 1970s to 70,000 in the 1990s and Pennsylvania State Fire Commissioner Edward A. Mann estimates that there are currently about 50,000 volunteers across the state.
- There are 2,400 fire departments spread across the state's 67 counties. Recent state legislation made municipal governments completely responsible for the provision of fire protection and emergency medical services.
- A study conducted by the Pennsylvania Fire and Emergency Services Institute (PFESI) in 2001 found that volunteer fire service companies yielded about \$6 billion in avoided costs to local governments. Figures from Independent Sector, a coalition of non-profit organizations, suggest that the hourly value of a Pennsylvania volunteer firefighter is \$20.51.
- Volunteer fire service programs receive approximately \$150 million a year through the Pennsylvania Volunteer Firefighter Relief Association Program and the Volunteer Ambulance Service Grant Program.

## Myths and Misconceptions

- Many taxpayers believe that the local services tax funds fire departments. While some of the tax revenues are used by municipal governments to fund emergency services, volunteer fire departments do not receive any portion of the tax revenue.
- One common misconception about fire service programs is that stringent state training requirements were largely responsible for the difficulties such companies face in recruiting and retaining firefighters. Pennsylvania does not require any level of training for state firefighters.
- Some speakers stated that elected officials may not realize the dire financial circumstances facing many volunteer fire departments and that municipalities would have to hire career departments if they lost their volunteer companies.

## Complaints and Concerns

- Mann claimed that the two main reasons why volunteer firefighters quit the company were due to firehouse politics and onerous fundraising requirements. Many firefighters stated their dissatisfaction with the time they spent hosting bingo games and chicken

barbecues. Exit surveys in Montgomery County, Pa., revealed that many volunteers were leaving due to frustration with bureaucratic red tape, such as the four-month process to replace a lost glove.

## **Innovative Solutions**

### **Retention**

#### **Can Be Implemented Without Legislation**

- Fire departments can issue exit surveys to determine why people are leaving the volunteer fire service. In Montgomery County, Pa., the department reduced its bureaucratic red tape after surveys demonstrated it was commonly cited as a reason for leaving.

### **Recruitment**

#### **Can Be Implemented Without Legislation**

- Hampden Township shortened their application to one page and personally followed up with prospects via email and phone within two hours of receiving the application. They also granted temporary memberships after a background check through the police department.
- Hampden Township also developed a citizen's fire academy. The program aimed to train eight Firefighter One certified volunteer firefighters by the end of the four-year grant period and create a long-term recruitment program. The academy consisted of four sessions that taught the basics of firefighting and was advertised to the public. The academy had an overall budget of \$3,000 and was financed by a SAFER grant. In 2009, six members enrolled in the academy, yielding four active firefighting members. In 2010, the academy attracted 11 members. Academy enrollees included a township commissioner, a state government employee and a state representative.
- John M. Buckman III, Branch Chief of Indiana Firefighter Training stressed the importance of marketing volunteer departments to the younger millennial generation currently in their twenties. The millennial generation is more diverse and tech-savvy than those of the past. Chief Buckman advised departments to cater to millennials to attract and retain such individuals. He claimed that millennials value recognition for their efforts, limited bureaucracy, and friendly work environments.

#### **Requires Legislation**

- Elected officials can create incentives that benefit volunteers from each age group. They can offer tuition breaks for younger volunteers, student loan forgiveness for middle-aged volunteers, and length-of-service awards or retiree stipends for older firefighters.

- Elected officials could expand the FireVEST Scholarship Program across the state and to other universities. FireVEST was created by Allegheny County Executive Dan Onorato in partnership with the Allegheny County Fire Academy and the Community College of Allegheny County (CCAC) and the program launched in 2009. FireVEST is a scholarship for a 65-credit associate's degree and includes tuition, fees, and books for any volunteer fireman. Firefighters can enroll in any of CCAC's 140 programs. Recipients commit to five years of volunteer fire service. Must meet minimum GPA of 2.00. The Region 13 Task Force is looking to build upon FireVEST and offer education opportunities at state universities to graduates of the FireVEST program. FireVEST scholars represent 60 different companies in Allegheny County and 14 different academic programs at CCAC and 60% of students currently enrolled in the FireVEST program have grade-point-averages above 3.0.

## Retention and Recruitment

### Can Be Implemented Without Legislation

- Departments can implement measures to reduce unnecessary runs such as calls for downed power lines and reduce the number of volunteers who are expected to respond to such calls by utilizing selective paging.
- Departments can improve their recruitment and retention efforts by issuing climate surveys of current volunteers in addition to exit surveys, since tracking down those who left the service is often difficult. Using climate surveys allows departments to be proactive in retaining volunteers.
- Eight volunteer fire departments in the Highlands School District in Allegheny County created the Highlands Emergency Services Alliance to provide EMS and firefighting training to high school students during school hours. The program covers the required essentials of Fire Fighting and Emergency Response certification hours. The program has existed for two years and enrolled 21 students in the first year and currently enrolls 22 students. Many enrollees in the program serve as junior firefighters in their local volunteer fire department.

### Requires Legislation

- Only five or six recommendations outlined in the report issued in accordance with Senate Resolution 60 have been addressed by the state legislature. The implementation of additional recommendations will help volunteer fire departments in their retention and recruitment efforts.
- Elected officials could pass legislation offering tax and insurance incentives to volunteer firefighters. They can offer incentives for local income tax breaks, forgiveness of local fire tax, reinstating state income tax breaks, extending municipal group medical insurance rates to firefighters, increasing state grant programs from \$25 million to \$35 million, and allowing local matches for Length of Service Award Programs.

- Elected officials in Albemarle County in Virginia have funded incentives and cost recovery for volunteers so that they don't have to spend out-of-pocket to volunteer for their community.

## Training

### Can Be Implemented Without Legislation

- Departments can provide online training options to lessen the time and financial costs of training.
- Virginia's Montgomery County developed a county-wide system that featured a regionalized Volunteer basic Orientation Program to teach new firefighters the basics, such as CPR, blood borne pathogens, and how to put on gear in a class ran by a third-party nonprofit.
- Parkview Volunteer Fire Department in O'Hara Township has a points-based incentive system. Volunteers are awarded points for certain tasks, such as training, work detail and EMS shifts and at the end of the year members are given gift cards. The system is allowed by law and has been cost-effective for the department, costing Parkview roughly \$4,500.
- Fire chiefs should take a realistic inventory of the department's capabilities and determine which necessary skills they should focus upon. They should also tailor their training programs to the needs of their department and community.

### Require Legislation

- Legislators could raise the tax on foreign fire insurance by half a percentage point from 2% to provide free training for volunteers. 73% of respondents in a recent poll conducted by PFESI and Penn State University positively responded to such a proposal.
- In Albemarle County, Virginia, the county funds volunteer leadership and management programs that supplement the technical skills required by the National Fire Protection Association.

## Community Relations

### Can Be Implemented Without Legislation

- Departments can do a better job of reaching local elected officials. There is often a lack of effective communication between volunteer fire departments and the government. Local elected officials often dislike funding volunteer fire departments because they feel as if they are blackmailed into paying for them.
- Departments can reach out to community for non-firefighting jobs. They can employ volunteers and third parties to perform tasks such as conducting financial reports and fundraising.

- William Rossey, Tarentum Borough Manager and volunteer firefighter found positive responses to the department after he gave council members a tour of the fire department and information about the apparatus.
- Departments should work towards building the trust of powerful neighborhood groups
- State Senator Solobay gave an example of how a mayor who intended to cut funding to the fire service changed his mind after being invited to ride along with the firefighters and learn about the department.

#### Requires Legislation

- Legislators could create a state-funded regional network of support staff to aid fire departments with information technology, administration, accounting, and other time-consuming projects.
- Legislators could restructure the Volunteer Loan Assistance Program. The numbers are somewhat antiquated in terms of what departments can borrow from the state (about 2 percent). Most volunteer fire departments are good credit risks.



RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION STRATEGIES FOR PAID ON-CALL FIREFIGHTERS

Recruitment and Retentions Strategies for Paid On-Call Firefighters

Troy R. Gudie

Onalaska Fire Department, Onalaska, Wisconsin

**CERTIFICATION STATEMENT**

I hereby certify that this paper constitutes my own product, that where the language of others is set forth, quotation marks so indicate, and that appropriate credit is given where I have used the language, ideas, expressions, or writings of another.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

## Abstract

The problem is the City of Onalaska Fire Department (OFD) is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining its paid on-call firefighters. The purpose of this research was to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in departments comparable to Onalaska's. A descriptive research method was used to answer the following research questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

The procedures for this research included reviewing literature published on the issue of recruitment and retention. The researcher collected data by designing a feedback instrument and distributing it to local departments comparable to OFD. A second feedback instrument was created and distributed to the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) to collect and review data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally.

Results from the research identified implementation of recruitment teams to market departments by using media and other community events to target new recruits. Departments are creating retirement/benefit packages as a retention tool. Other creative methods for retaining volunteers included: property tax breaks, clothing allowances, hourly pay structures, and deferred compensation programs. Recommendations include developing a recruitment and retention team concept, review current time demands for training and education, create a benefit package for paid on-call (POC), and plan fun activities to recognize family members as part of the team.

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## Introduction

According to the United States Fire Administration (USFA, 2007), figures in 2003 revealed the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounts for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. This figure as compared to 897,750 in 1984 supports a growing concern with the issue of recruitment and retention of the nation's volunteer/paid on-call (POC) firefighters.

The problem is the Onalaska Fire Department (OFD) is experiencing challenges with recruiting and retaining its POC firefighters. The purpose of this research is to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in departments comparable to Onalaska's. The author will use the descriptive research method to identify critical strategies for a plan to recruit and retain its POC firefighters. The research approach will include reviewing published literature and collecting data from comparable departments on the subject of recruitment and retention to answer the following research questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

## Background & Significance

OFD was established in 1894 as a volunteer fire company. The first recorded fire calls ranged from one in 1900 to 18 in 1934. The department consisted of a fire chief, three elected fire officials, and 20 members. During that time the volunteer firefighters were paid a wage of \$2.00 per fire call. The firefighters hosted ice cream socials and dances to raise money to help fund their budget. For a short period of time they even owned and operated a public ice skating rink for their community (cityofonalaska.com, 2012).

Today, OFD responds out of one station located just a block east of the original fire station of 1894. The current station was part of a new public safety /city hall remodel that was built in 2000, encompassing all city government entities under one roof. OFD is currently staffed with 33 members and classified as a combination department with full-time (FT) and paid on-call (POC) firefighters. The FT staff consists of a Fire Chief, Assistant Chief, and three shifts, with a Lieutenant / Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) and two Firefighter / EMTs providing coverage 24-hours a day, seven days a week. OFD's POC staff include an administrative assistant (15-hours per week) and 20 POC Firefighter / EMTs. In 2011 OFD responded to 1,113 emergency medical service (EMS) non-transport responses and 408 fire responses. These totals set a new record for OFD: up three percent for EMS and nine percent for fire responses as compared to 2010. From 2002 through 2011 emergency responses increased by 39%. OFD has the second busiest station in LaCrosse County and continues to operate with a minimum staffing of two FT firefighters. The POC staffing is currently at 20 active with five vacancies. In addition to being paged out for 408 fire responses, the POC were also dispatched 115 times in 2011 to cover a second medical call or to back-fill the station when the FT firefighters were out of the service area.

OFD is also very active in a variety of community risk reduction programs. All OFD members are encouraged to participate when they can in this important job performance requirement (JPR). Some of the programs include: quarterly blood pressure and safety programs for senior citizens at independent living complexes, National Fire Prevention Week safety programs for preschool through fourth grade, fire department open house/health and safety expo, safety days at area retail or commercial properties, 5K run/walk fundraiser, MDA Fill The Boot campaign, and other public appearances and fundraisers.

OFD has the challenge of maintaining a balance between its FT and POC firefighters. The level of education and training requirements between the FT and POC are very comparable. OFD takes pride in knowing the firefighters are trained to the same level to ensure they function smoothly and efficiently as one team on an incident. With limited FT staffing OFD cannot afford to have a double standard, especially when it comes to operations and safety on the fire ground. During the first year a new POC firefighter will be required to complete Entry Level Firefighter (ELF) parts one and two, 60-hours, and Entry Level Driver Operator, 30- hours (WTCS, 2010). Additional requirements include: ICS 100, 200, and 700. By the end of the second year the firefighter is required, at a minimum, to have successfully completed the EMT certification course 180-hours (WTC, 2012). In addition to the certification requirements, all firefighters are required to attend monthly meetings and training drills. OFD will invest thousands of dollars into training and educating each new POC firefighter. After the first two-year requirements are met, the new member is classified by OFD as a level one firefighter. He or she may pursue additional education and training to move to level two and eventually level three if that path is chosen. Each new level also includes an increase in the hourly wage paid to the POC member. Currently first year probationary firefighters are paid \$9.00 per hour with the top pay (level 3) at \$12.00 per hour. This hourly wage is paid anytime a firefighter responds for an emergency, training, public education, or other department function approved by the Fire Chief or Assistant Chief.

In 2012 OFD was held to a zero percent increase in its operating expenses and POC wages. With new software contracts and other operating expenses increasing; training and education dollars have been taking the biggest hit. OFD's administration is challenged to work with a shrinking budget that never really received sufficient funding, as the department was transitioning from an all-volunteer to a combination department in the early 1990s. OFD cannot

afford to lose its new members within the first two – five years after investing so much time and money into them. When someone is having their worse day in our community, they always rely on the professional POC firefighters to respond.

Onalaska's "good old boys" of the early 1900s volunteer fire company are long gone and have paved the way for the 21<sup>st</sup> century firefighters. Being an active POC firefighter on OFD's team requires hundreds of hours annually, which presents a difficult challenge in today's society. Recruitment has become difficult in identifying a process of how to target and seek out competent and dependable POC firefighters. Once the commitment is made and the new recruit and city have invested valuable time and money together, what retention system is out there to encourage a long-term relationship between OFD and the new POC firefighter?

This Applied Research Paper (ARP) for the Executive Leadership (EL) course is linked to the enabling objective "Complete planning for an influence attempt" (NFA, 2011, p. SM 11-1). The goal of this research paper is to identify creative strategies to target and influence competent and dependable citizens to join OFD's team of POC firefighters. This planning process must also include a key component or strategy that will insure retention of OFD's most valuable resource, its firefighters.

There is an established relationship with this ARP and the United States Fire Administrations (USFA) operational objective, "To respond appropriately in a timely manner to emerging issues" (NFA, 2008, p. II-2). With the decrease in budget dollars, it will be critical for OFD to implement a plan to recruit and retain its POC firefighters. The cost of training one POC firefighter and then losing him/her within a few years is not an efficient and effective use of tax payer's dollars.

### Literature Review

The literature review for this Applied Research Project (ARP) supports the foundation for OFD's organizational problem. The researcher examined literature published by others on the subject of recruitment and retention of volunteer and POC firefighters.

Gasaway (2004) shares a conversation he had with some fire chiefs at a volunteer and combination fire department symposium on the challenges of recruiting quality firefighter candidates. One of the chiefs said his city manager told him if someone wanted to join the volunteer fire department then nothing should stand in his or her way. Gasaway expressed his concerns that lower standards will bring in the wrong people and jeopardize the talented and motivated professionals that are currently on the department. Consideration of the safety risks to current members and the community they are responsible for protecting must also be considered. He feels that a department would be far better with ten top quality members than having five quality members and 25 misfits. Gasaway offers the following suggestions for attracting quality members:

- Send a strong recruitment message; let them know that you are interested in candidates that are really interested in being a firefighter.
- Standards should be set high and not lowered. Recruiting the wrong people will create endless problems for the fire chief.
- Get rid of dead weight, if someone can't do the work than simply cut him or her and move on.
- Finally Gasaway feels the city manager needs to be educated on the responsibility and trust that is expected of each and every firefighter.

The City of Pierre, South Dakota published a report *Recruitment Program* in February 2010. According to Pierre (2010), an aggressive recruitment campaign was launched to address the tremendous challenges they are facing with recruiting new volunteer firefighters. At full-strength the department is authorized 75 firefighters but only has 68 of those positions filled. Their advertising campaign includes billboard advertisements, public service announcements, radio and television advertisements, along with manning booths at home shows and sporting events. One of their biggest discoveries in recruiting new members is to let them know up-front the required training and education hours along with other fire department requirements. They feel being honest and up-front during the recruitment process is important to flush out the semi-interested, leaving only the most serious candidates. As for the retention of members, 95% of the members stay on the department for five years or more. Pierre (2010) offers a retention program for their members which include:

- Department pays for annual physicals
- \$600.00 per year deferred comp program must have a minimum of five years vested
- Free YMCA and aquatic center memberships
- \$65,000 life insurance policy
- Retail store discounts
- Department pays for all firefighter/EMT training
- Family activities (picnics, fishing, family fun night, awards banquet, sponsored dinners quarterly)

According to Pierre (2010), the listed benefits above have worked for this department, but they are always looking for new ideas to improve this program.

Carter (2009) describes the lack of volunteer firefighters as a crisis, with too few joining, and those that do are not staying. Fire departments need to attack this crisis head-on to find out what we are doing right in our organization, and what needs to be corrected. Carter explains that after conducting years of research, he has come to the conclusion that the concept of volunteerism for a community is a lost tradition. Recruitment and retention are viewed by Carter to be two separate issues that must be attacked together. He recommends that first we fix any problems internally in our department, before we look at recruiting new members. According to Carter (2009), it would be a waste of time to have an excellent recruitment program only to learn that internal problems are driving new recruits away. Carter's research has identified key problem areas he feels must be addressed in order to have a successful fire department.

- Leadership issues; these positions can create a positive or negative experience for the members. Some leaders tend to play favorites with some members and punish others that they do not like to work with. It is critical to recognize these types of leadership issues and create a mentoring program to give future officers the tools to be a qualified leader.
- Economic issues are also a factor with both parents working and sharing responsibilities in the home with raising a family. Affordable housing may also be a contributing factor.
- Time demands of the job may be more than the new recruit can handle. Perhaps the job in itself was not what the new recruit thought it would be like.
- Some departments conduct physical fitness drills which can become a retention issue, especially with aging members who may feel they no longer can do the job.

Probably one of the most important issues is for the chief to identify and establish a balance within the organization that works for his or her department. Carter recommends forming a committee of seven to nine members to study the internal issues within the department and then

look at the external (environmental) issues. This team should work under the direction of a recruitment and retention officer to recommend strategies based on their study of the fire department.

The United States Fire Administration (USFA) published a document titled *Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services*, (USFA, 2007). According to the document, in 2003 the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounted for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. In 1984, the number of volunteer firefighters reached a high of 897,750. Although the trend of declining volunteers in the fire service is alarming, the ideas and practices identified in this document can help departments reverse this trend. To prevent being forced to hire career firefighters, departments have to understand and deal with the challenges that volunteers are facing in today's world. This document identifies the need to focus on what the recruitment and retention problems are so a solution can be created. According to USFA (2007), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) cites the lack of time as the number one reason for not volunteering. Data from a study at St. Joseph's University in 2004 indicated 92.3 percent of volunteers leave the organization because they have no time to volunteer. Completing the top four on the list were: conflicts in the organization (47.8%), organizational leadership created an adverse atmosphere (46.7%), and too much training (45.6%). These problems were found throughout the 50 states and not necessarily in one specific area of the country (P.6).

Retirement plans are identified in this document as being one of the most important and growing incentives for volunteers. With the number of private and public employers reducing pension plans, implementing some type of retirement system is a good benefit to make the job more attractive to the volunteer (P. 103). Some other recruitment and retention strategies

identified were: offering health insurance, tuition assistance, housing assistance, discounts incentives in local businesses, and health club memberships.

Another important factor identified was to implement fun into the organization. Today's volunteer fire service is a professional organization that demands many hours of commitment to training and emergency response. With all the time demands; it is critical for departments to incorporate fun and entertaining activities that involve the entire family. Some of the suggested activities listed include: pizza parties, fundraisers, Toys for Tots, health and wellness presentations, and getting involved in community risk reduction programs. These activities can stimulate a feeling of pride and value into the volunteer and family members (P. 115 – P. 117).

According to Gillespie (2012), as the economy continues to improve more baby boomers will be retiring. This will open up an estimated ten million jobs according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Gillespie feels the values are different between the baby boomers, Generation X (born between 1964 and 1977), and Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1997). The concern is how to groom quality candidates to lead the fire service into the future. Gillespie suggests taking the time to recognize and develop young talented people. It is critical to create opportunities for future leaders so they can develop their skills. He also recommends senior members share their experiences and skills to inspire future leaders, and not focus on the negative aspects of the job.

Fleming (2012) reported departments are having issues with recruiting volunteer firefighters, and once they are hired they are not staying. One contributing factor identified is longer hours being worked with the downsizing of companies. Employers are also less likely to allow their employees to leave work to respond to the local fire department for an emergency. It is also very common to have both parents working; family responsibilities are shared, allowing little if any time for volunteering. Training and education demands have also increased significantly, with

the volunteer force being required to spend approximately 100 hours in fire training and an additional 100 hours or more for medical first responders. The municipality will spend around \$7,000.00 training and equipping their new recruit. One chief stated he has not had to hire a firefighter since January 2009. He feels this success is due to carefully monitoring the moral of the department and make certain the new recruits know what the expectations are before they are hired. Another critical component identified for retention is to get the spouses involved because they are the ones left behind when the pager goes off in an emergency. It is estimated by the National Volunteer Fire Council that communities in the U.S. save over \$128 billion dollars annually from having a volunteer firefighter force. In these economic times this figure clearly quantifies the importance of taking care of one of the country's most valuable resources, our volunteer firefighters.

According to Troy, MI. (2012), volunteer firefighters are not compensated while they are serving on the department. They do however have a unique retention tool in the form of a pension or retirement plan for their members. To qualify for this benefit, the firefighters have to meet the following criteria based on their years of service and age as well as minimum participation standards:

- 10 years of service and age 55
- 25 years of service and age 50
- 30 years of service and any age
- Minimum of 15 hours quarterly totaling 60 hours annually for training
- Must attend 50% of the emergency calls they are available for

The pension is based on an annual amount and multiplied by the member's years of service. An example given is for a 50 year old with 25 years of service. They would be entitled to the base

pay of \$605.00 x 25 years of service, equals \$15,125 per year for life. There are other options available to the retired members to choose from on how they want to receive their benefit. The fire department currently has a 4.5 million dollar budget with a five year average of 12.2 career and 172.6 volunteer members. The fire department reports responding to 1,000 fire responses annually. A private provider is contracted to cover first responder and advanced life support for the 6,000 annual EMS calls. The fire chief feels it would be too much of a burden on the volunteers to try to cover the large volume of medical emergencies. They do, however, assist with EMS and technical rescue as needed, such as extrication for motor vehicle accidents. The current contract for EMS services is \$500,000.00. Combined totals show a five million dollar budget for fire protection and EMS; in comparable cities with all career firefighters and paramedics the estimated budget would be around 15 million dollars annually (Troy MI. 2012).

In 2004 a new program called Fire Corps was launched to attract community volunteers to assist departments with non-emergency functions. According to *Fire Corps Retention and Recruitment Guide* (Fire Corps, 2004), the volunteers are used to help departments by presenting fire and life safety education programs, attend community events, assist with fundraising and other non-emergency functions. This team effort allows the firefighters to spend more time on training and preparing for emergency responses. The guide also offers recommendations for recruiting new and retaining existing volunteers. Making a recruitment plan is the first critical step to ensure you stay on track. It is important to look at the makeup of the community and establish what the needs of your department are. This will help in formulating an appropriate plan of who your target audience will be. Some areas identified for targeting volunteers include: schools (National Honor Society), colleges, senior citizen centers, businesses, and religious organizations. Senior citizens typically age 65 and older are a great resource for departments to

draw from. The majority being retired offer a lifetime of knowledge in teaching, book keeping, fundraising, and many other talents that can be utilized to lessen the workload and time demands placed on volunteer firefighters. According to Fire Corps (2004), disabled people are often overlooked and are considered an untapped resource for volunteers. There are web sites listed in the guide to visit for more information on how to reach these citizens. Some key principles are identified to help the organization insure that the needs of the volunteers are being met. It is critical to be well organized so the volunteers have clear instruction on what is expected of them and what their tasks will be. It is important to make this group feel like they are connected to the organization and that their feedback is welcomed. The organization must provide specific opportunities for the volunteer to learn new skills, and to feel like their work is appreciated and will have a positive impact on the community. It is also recommended that a mentor be assigned to each volunteer. This will create a positive and trusting working relationship, giving the volunteers someone they can feel comfortable talking to with any questions they may have.

In summary, the literature review supported the issue of recruitment and retention of volunteers in the fire service on a national level not necessarily local to one specific region. The authors of the published articles clearly expressed concern with volunteerism today and in the future. The researcher repeatedly found time demands to be one of the primary factors for not volunteering. The days are becoming shorter as both parents are working and sharing the responsibilities of taking care of their home and families. The researcher found a seemingly endless supply of published articles on this issue of volunteerism. The good news is there are many resources and tools available to the fire service to use in hopes of reversing this trend.

### Procedures

The research for this ARP was focused on three questions: a) What processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters?, b) What types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis?, c) What have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members?

For this ARP the researcher conducted a search on the World Wide Web on the subject of recruitment and retention for volunteer / POC firefighters. The researcher discovered many periodicals and publications on this topic. “Fire Engineering”, “Fire Chief”, and “Firehouse” magazines all had current articles on recruitment and retention to review. In addition, the United States Fire Administration (USFA), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) had research published on the topic of recruitment and retention of our volunteer firefighter force.

The researcher designed a feedback instrument (questionnaire) to distribute to area fire departments comparable to OFD. The researcher selected ten departments that have volunteer / POC firefighters. The contact information was acquired through a published list of fire departments from the Wisconsin Department of Commerce Web site. This information is available on an excel spreadsheet and can easily be downloaded. A cover letter was included with the questionnaire explaining the reason for the ARP and purpose of the research (see Appendices A and B). A mailing list was created for the ten departments (see Appendix C).

A second questionnaire was created on a web based data collection tool called Survey Monkey. The researcher is able to create the survey and provided with a hyperlink to send out via e-mail to allow the recipients to efficiently and effectively access and complete the survey.

When the researcher is ready, they can collect the data for analysis and create tables and graphs. This survey link was distributed to the 773 members of the National Society of Executive Fire Officers (NSEFO) e-mail tree. The purpose of selecting this group was to collect data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally. The researcher is also able to examine what programs other departments are implementing to recruit and retain their volunteer / POC firefighters.

Limitations for this ARP were the low number of responses from the ten area departments the questionnaire was distributed to. The researcher felt this group may not be familiar or aware that recruitment and retention is an issue within their organization. Limited time as a volunteer or POC fire chief may also have contributed to the low response. Another consideration may be accepting the “this is the way it’s always been so if it’s not broken, why fix it” mindset. The limited response of 58 out of 773 NSEFO members was expected considering the survey was created to specifically target volunteer / POC firefighters.

Definition of Terms:

Combination Fire Department: fire department that consists of full-time and POC firefighters.

Fulltime firefighter: Career firefighter in the case of Onalaska, this firefighter is assigned to A, B, or C-shift and works a 56 hour work week. A typical schedule is 24-hours on, 24 off, 24 on, 24 off, 24 on, followed by four days off.

Paid on call (POC) firefighter: These members carry a pager and have a set hourly wage based on their level of training. They respond for emergencies when paged out such as fires, motor vehicle accidents, and EMS emergencies when initiated by the on duty crew in the event of multiple calls. They also come in for training, education, and other community events.

Volunteer firefighter: These members do not receive pay when responding to emergencies, training, education, and other community events.

Results

For this ARP the researcher was able to collect a significant amount of data on the topic of recruitment and retention both in the Literature review and through two feedback instruments.

The following tables were created to show in chronological order the data collected from the two feedback instruments. Two tables were created by the researcher to examine the data retrieved on each department to include organization structure, call volume, population, and percentage of annual turnover in personnel. Table one is a collection of data from the questionnaire that was distributed to fire departments comparable to OFD in the Onalaska area. The researcher received four out of the ten questionnaires distributed from the list (see Appendices B and C). Table two was collected from departments on a national level by utilizing the NSEFO e-mail tree. The researcher collected 57 surveys through the Survey Monkey website and one additional survey was mailed to the researcher for a total of 58 responses out of 773. The foundation for this research is centered on the issue of recruitment and retention which is why the researcher felt it would be an important component for this project to quantify using a percentage the turnover rate compared to the size and structure of the department.

Table 1

Sample Survey Results from Comparable Departments

Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department								
Dept.	Fulltime	POC	Volunteer	Fire calls	Medical	Transport	Population	Annual Turnover %
1	0	26	0	23	121	No	2500	8
2	0	26	0	31	208	No	7000	3.8

3	0	36	0	75	200	No	4000	11
4	0	0	32	77	0	No	4500	12.5

Table 2

Survey Monkey Results from NSEFO -N/R = No Response

Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department								
Dept.	Fulltime	POC	Volunteer	Fire calls	Medical	Medical Transport	Population	Annual Turnover %
1	36	0	0	532	868	No	24500	5.5
2	53	2	2	1000	1600	No	33000	3.5
3	9	0	90	666	703	No	18000	10
4	36	0	12	2300	400	No	21000	2
5	35	0	0	51	2273	No	38064	2.9
6	33	0	0	254	4200	Yes	25000	3
7	1351	0	0	N/R	N/R	N/R	50000	1.5
8	8	22	0	650	850	Yes	4500	6.6
9	50	0	20	2100	2900	No	50000	5.7
10	30	14	0	525	1975	No	14000	6.8
11	130	0	0	355	8723	Yes	210000	2.3
12	27	13	2	798	862	No	15000	7.1
13	22	10	0	1000	1200	No	15000	3.1
14	36	24	0	250	2100	Yes	35000	10
15	86	0	0	3000	6000	Yes	119000	2.3
16	1	35	0	100	600	Yes	12000	2.7
17	130	0	0	2300	8200	Yes	122000	0.08
18	5	62	0	2400	2800	Yes	25000	9
19	7	25	0	280	620	Yes	3300	0
20	24	50	0	250	5000	No	50000	34.8
21	34	0	10	1734	548	No	36900	0
22	35	0	50	1000	2600	Yes	25000	2.4
23	23	38	0	500	625	No	19000	3.3
24	23	18	0	964	1334	Yes	34000	7.3
25	31	0	0	800	2500	No	15500	0
26	11	65	0	1000	500	No	47000	6.6
27	61	8	0	1780	5375	Yes	59700	2.8

28	24	12	0	725	1869	No	18000	5.6
29	10	40	0	300	900	Yes	12500	6
30	75	0	30	200	6000	Yes	72000	1.7
31	0	0	175	350	0	No	28000	14
32	326	0	0	8000	33000	Yes	199000	3
33	18	0	30	450	1250	No	15500	4
34	0	0	30	20	80	No	2500	10
35	141	0	0	2000	19000	No	110000	0.07
36	5	85	0	800	0	No	42000	20
37	152	0	0	2200	0	No	68500	3.2
38	38	0	220	1950	3512	Yes	150000	7.8
39	159	0	0	2850	13000	No	124000	0.06
40	880	0	0	13000	52000	No	905000	1.7
41	18	12	0	152	1521	No	11700	3.3
42	8	0	47	500	600	No	12500	5.5
43	12	0	832	1350	872	No	175000	17.8
44	13	8	16	456	143	No	28500	8.1
45	6	23	0	276	600	No	4600	34.5
46	4	0	30	180	0	No	5000	5.9
47	11	0	44	160	240	No	2500	27.3
48	498	0	0	10000	36000	Yes	280000	N/R
49	123	0	0	2303	4219	No	69900	1.6
50	154	225	0	7644	3131	No	262391	0.03
51	26	0	100	660	540	No	34000	7.9
52	20	11	0	500	0	No	10500	9.6
53	3	325	0	800	0	No	26500	3
54	18	0	25	630	100	No	12000	13.9
55	54	5	0	800	2000	No	32000	3.4
56	17	0	7	400	1400	No	13000	8.3
57	75	0	0	1500	4500	No	55000	1.3
58	12	32	0	460	2000	Yes	24000	11.4

Table one is comprised of volunteer / POC firefighters with an average annual turnover rate of 8.82 % for the four area departments. Table two is comprised of FT, POC, and Volunteers with an average turnover rate of 6.95 % for the 58 departments in the NSEFO survey. As compared to table one with no fulltime firefighters, results from table two identify 64 % of the

firefighters are FT. This could be a contributing factor to the 1.87 % difference between the two tables.

Data collected from the local survey conducted with area departments indicated 75 percent felt recruitment and retention was a serious issue facing the fire service. On a national level through NSEFO, data collected indicated an overwhelming majority of 87.7 percent felt this was a serious issue facing the fire service. These results supported the findings of the researcher throughout the literature review and personal communications.

The researcher felt it was important to collect and document what fire chief's and/or chief officers across the country felt were the primary reasons for firefighters leaving their departments. The following data was collected in response to the survey questions:

- Retirement
- Time demands for career and family
- Training requirements and recertification
- Better job or occupation
- Age and physical condition
- Not what they expected
- Moving out of the area

The responses listed identified one common issue that overwhelmingly appeared throughout this process. Citizens want to serve their community and get into the fire service only to find that the professional requirements for volunteers and POC members take up too much of their family time. This fact is especially recognized in families where both parents are working and responsibilities are shared between the husband and wife. According to Fleming (2012), training and education demands have increased significantly with the volunteer force being required to

spend approximately 100 hours in fire training and an additional 100 hours or more on medical first responders. It is also very common to have both parents working; family responsibilities are shared allowing little if any time for volunteering. Gasaway (2004) is concerned with the issue of firefighters leaving the job and urges fire chiefs not to lower the training and education standards just to get warm bodies. He feels cutting back on the hours will only make the problem worse and cause the members that are currently doing the work and loving the job to become frustrated and possibly leave the department.

The first research question asked what processes are currently being implemented to attract and recruit competent and dependable paid on-call firefighters. Data collected from the surveys provided the researcher with some good feedback for recruitment strategies to answer the first research question. The following is data collected from the survey instruments:

- Offering pay for calls and training
- Wrote a safer grant for recruitment and retention officer position. This person will not only benefit the combination department but will also recruit for the 11 surrounding volunteer departments that they depend on for mutual aide.
- Established a Recruitment Team to tell their department's story. This team shall implement programs that develop a quality and diverse work force in both career and POC membership. The newly developed team is currently attending career fairs such as: high school career day, military job fairs, college information days, and hopes to have videos produced to be shown in their local theaters and community television channels.
- Advertise on radio, trade websites and magazines, city website, and attend school career days.

- Junior firefighter program ages 14-17 for early interest before other activities capture that demographic. Open door policy for any other age group with interest in public service.
- Provide certification training that provides the volunteers with the certifications needed to work side by side with the paid firefighters in their state. Volunteers work assigned shifts and are treated the same as the career firefighters. These elements improve their marketability making them a good candidate for area career positions that may come available. They also hire any new positions from within their volunteer ranks.
- Nearly all positions lately are being filled by students from the local technical college. Because of school issues, however, two – three members are rotated out each year.

Raw data was collected from the survey created in Survey Monkey for question seven pertaining to recruiting members (see Appendix D).

The researcher discovered through the literature review and surveys that creating a recruitment team will allow members to focus on promoting the fire department in many elements such as word of mouth, career fairs, utilizing the media to tell their story and educate the public on what the fire department has to offer. This team concept would work well by utilizing volunteer or POC members who understand the difficulties and commitment required to be a successful member and valuable asset to the organization. Gasaway (2004) believes fire department should get rid of dead weight and move on. This recruitment team could send that strong message that Gasaway talks about by seeking out and attracting the right candidates that are really interested in being a firefighter.

The second research questions asks what types of programs have motivated volunteer or paid on-call members to remain active on a long term basis. The results from the survey instruments

gave some very good strategies to motivate members to stay long term. The following is data collected from the survey instruments:

- Minnesota has a Firefighters Relief Association to help retain its members. This is a pension program which rewards longevity. There are various plans, and payouts may be different from one department to the next.
- Insurance plan provided by the city; enrollment in State Volunteer Pension system; enrollment in State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association membership, which also provide additional medical and insurance benefits.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for volunteer persons, portable radios for all members.
- Implemented pay of \$7.00 per hours up to NFPA FFII and \$9.00 per hour for NFPA FFII and above. By doing this, those who reach FFII status are allowed to back-fill a paid position as well as work a normal shift. Created an A, B, and C shift within the department to allow each group opportunities to handle different events. This gives them an important role in the department.
- We participate in a state wide Volunteer Incentive Program, which provides a \$3,000.00 tax credit on state income taxes when the volunteer meets certain criteria for training and incident participation. We believe that firefighters are motivated by relevant, realistic training. Training division prides itself in providing high-impact, high-energy, realistic training.
- We have competitive pay with state retirement and benefits.
- Provide a retirement contribution to collect at age 53; reward with apparel, uniforms, and insurance.

- Banquet, uniforms, tuition, meals at meetings, and as much recognition as possible.
- Deferred comp program where fire district matches what the volunteer puts into the program. Volunteers are reimbursed for expenses; this can total up to \$600.00 per month. State of Washington has a volunteer pension plan that the fire district pay into and after 20-years of service the volunteer gets approximately \$300.00 a month for life. Volunteers receive a \$1,000.00 tax credit for local property or vehicle taxes. For longevity provide a pension plan for volunteers which increases with their years of service.

Raw data was collected from the survey created in Survey Monkey for question eight pertaining to retaining current members (see Appendix E).

The results collected from the surveys identified similarities with what the researcher discovered in the literature review process for this project. Benefits such as pension / retirement, tax credits, recognition awards, competitive hour pay along with different levels of pay for training or years of service are all very good strategies identified to retain firefighters long term.

The final research question three asked what have volunteer or combination departments comparable to OFD done to successfully recruit and retain its members. The first of the two research surveys was sent to area departments that have volunteer and/or POC firefighters.

Results from this survey provided the researcher with the following raw data:

Recruitment:

- Identify interested candidates with the correct motivational fit through reference of current firefighters.
- Recruitment is done now by word of mouth, website, and town newsletter.

Retention:

- Service recognition awards for every five years of service (pin / plaques). Town funded length of service award (retirement) program.
- Pension program through the State of Minnesota which rewards longevity; amount paid out varies.
- Try to hire members that are not in the fire program, because they will be more likely to go to all the trainings and be easier to retain long term.

The second survey (Survey Monkey) was sent to the NSEFO members and designed to allow the researcher to collect data on a national level to compare and contrast with data collected locally.

The following raw data was collected on recruitment and retention from comparable departments:

Recruitment:

- Videos, co-op work with community colleges, and SAFER Grant.
- Conduct an extensive community wide recruitment drive. Many of the new members are friends and family of existing members; this is to be expected in a small town.
- Applications are held so they can hire in groups which make training a team atmosphere among new hires.
- Fire prevention programs throughout the county.
- Offering pay for calls and applying for a grant for a full-time recruitment training officer.

Retention:

- Length of Service Awards Program (LOSAP), \$150,000 life insurance policy, mileage and meal reimbursement for shift. Volunteers before 01/01/11 are on the volunteer pension plan.

- Our paid on-call members receive a base monthly stipend, plus hourly pay. The pay scale has steps through 20 years. Also we pay longevity bonus based on length of service upon separation of service.
- Thru SC Firefighters Association we have a small retirement pension funded using Insurance Company's fund.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for our volunteers and portable radios for all members.

The researcher discovered after reviewing data collected from comparable departments that most of them are using a similar approach as OFD to attract new members. The recruitment officer or team concept that kept appearing during this project would likely be one of the most critical components to look at. Feedback on the retention of members identified some type of a pension or retirement program to retain active members. Life insurance, tax credits, or other benefits such as those collected for this ARP may be the dangling carrot to help retain OFD's POC firefighters.

#### Discussion

The purpose of this ARP was to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in comparable departments to Onalaska's. The research for this ARP provided the author a significant amount of creative ideas and concepts to address its organizational problem. According USFA (2007), in 2003 the nation's volunteer firefighter force accounted for 73 percent or just over 800,050 firefighters. In 1984, the number of volunteer firefighters reached a high of 897,750. To prevent from being forced to hire career firefighters, departments have to understand and deal with the challenges that volunteers are facing in today's world. USFA (2007) provides ideas and practice that can help departments reverse this trend.

According to USFA (2007), the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2003) cites the lack of time as the number one reason for not volunteering. Data from a study at St. Joseph's University in 2004 indicated 92.3 percent of volunteers leave the organization because they have no time to volunteer. Completing the top four on the list were: conflicts in the organization (47.8%), organizational leadership created an adverse atmosphere (46.7%), and too much training (45.6%). These problems were found throughout the 50 states and not necessarily in one specific area of the country (P.6). The results of the survey instruments also indicated lack of time as being the number one reason for volunteer and POC firefighters to leave a fire department.

Carter (2009) describes the lack of volunteer firefighters as a crisis, with too few joining and those who do, are not staying. He feels departments must attack this crisis head on to find out what we are doing right in our organization, and what needs to be corrected. Carter explains that after conducting years of research, he has come to the conclusion that the concept of volunteerism for a community is a lost tradition. Recruitment and retention are viewed by Carter to be two separate issues that must be attacked together. He recommends we fix any problems internally in our department before we look at recruiting new members. According to Carter (2009), it would be a waste of time to have an excellent recruitment program only to learn that internal problems are driving new recruits away. Carter explains it is important for the fire chief to establish a balance within the organization that works for his or her department. The researcher agrees with the importance of establishing balance within the department. No two departments are alike and each is dynamic with its own unique challenges. Carter also recommends forming a committee of members to study the internal issues within the department, and then look at the external (environmental) issues. This team, he feels, should work under the direction of a recruitment and retention officer to recommend strategies based on their study of

the fire department. Throughout the process of applied research the author has become familiar with the concept of developing a recruitment and retention team. The researcher knows the City of Onalaska cannot afford to lose any more of its current active and highly trained POC firefighters. It would be in the best interest of OFD's administration to empower a team of POC firefighters to research and provide feedback on what their vision of a retention program would look like.

If the findings of Gillespie (2012) are correct, the fire service has to retool itself to prepare for the retirement of the baby boomers. This will open up an estimated ten million jobs according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Gillespie feels the values are different between the baby boomers, Generation X (born between 1964 and 1977), and Generation Y (born between 1977 and 1997). Fire chiefs will need to figure out, within their organizations, how to groom quality candidates to lead the fire service into the future. Gillespie suggests taking the time to recognize and develop young talented people. It is critical to create opportunities for future leaders so they can develop their skills. It is important for senior firefighters and officers to share the strong history, traditions, and work ethics that they grew up with.

USFA (2007) recognizes the sacrifices that family members have to make to allow their loved ones to dedicate so much time to the fire department. It is critical for departments to incorporate fun and entertaining activities that involve the entire family. Some of the activities identified were: pizza parties, fundraisers, Toys for Tots, health and wellness presentations, and getting involved in community risk reduction programs; all can stimulate a feeling of pride and value into the volunteer and family members (P. 115 – P. 117). It would appear that the one annual awards banquet is not considered a fun activity for the entire family. These types of formal functions, although important to the organization, do not involve the children in OFD's team.

After conducting the research for this ARP the researcher recognizes that the fun factor is missing and picnics or other activities need to be implemented to bring the entire family together.

In summary, the researcher knows the issue OFD has is shared on a national level. The statistics are printed in black and white, with the problem clearly getting worse. Resources are available through publications such as USFA (2007) to provide critical components to implement into a recruitment and retention strategy. In addition to published literature, the researcher has collected original data from two groups surveyed to look at what comparable departments are doing to recruit and retain their members. The researcher has identified critical strategies to not only attract but also to retain its members for a longer period of time. In both the literature review and collection of data from the surveys, it is clear that the fire service needs to understand and meet the needs of its volunteers. First we must recognize and respect the volunteer or POC member's limited time. With both parents working full time jobs and trying to meet the demands of raising a family, we need to carefully look at how we can make our organization more efficient without sacrificing the training and education of our POC firefighter.

#### Recommendations

The research conducted for this ARP produced results for the researcher to answer the three critical research questions regarding OFD's organizational problem. The literature review process along with the two survey instruments established a foundation to build a creative and effective program for recruiting and retaining its new and existing members. Based on these results the researcher will make the following recommendations:

- The researcher will present a copy and review the findings of this research project with the fire chief. A copy should also be presented to and reviewed with the Mayor of Onalaska.

- It will be the recommendation of the researcher to establish a recruitment team of four POC members to review current strategies and compare them to the findings of the data collected in this ARP. The team will provide input to the Chief and Assistant Chief to create a strategic plan for recruiting new members.
- The researcher will recommend a retention team be established to look at creating some type of pension or retirement program for OFD's POC members. This program may be part of a State pension plan, or a custom plan unique to the City of Onalaska.
- The researcher will recommend the training officer review the annual training calendar and identify the essential training and education requirements. It will be the recommendation of the researcher to limit any non-essential training, to allow POC members to spend more time with their family and taking care of responsibilities at home.
- The researcher will task the firefighters both FT and POC to plan out fun events or activities that will involve the department's entire family. The researcher will recommend the group schedule these events at a minimum of two times per year. The purpose is to show OFD's appreciation for the sacrifices family members make and allow them to feel like they are an important part of the fire service family.

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Appendix A



## City of Onalaska Fire Department

415 Main St. Onalaska, WI 54650 • (608) 781-9546  
[tgudie@cityofonalaska.com](mailto:tgudie@cityofonalaska.com)

March 5, 2012

Dear Chief,

I recently completed my fourth and final year of the National Fire Academy's *Executive Fire Officers Program (EFOP)*. At the end of each two week program, the student is required to complete an Applied Research Paper (ARP) that addresses a key issue or problem within their organization.

The research I am conducting is on recruitment and retention strategies for volunteer / paid-on call (POC) firefighters. The purpose of my research is to identify creative and effective strategies for recruiting and retaining new members in comparable departments to Onalaska's.

I would appreciate if you or one of your officers could take a few moments and complete the attached questionnaire. The information you provide is valuable to my research paper.

The completed questionnaire can be sent by e-mail to [tgudie@cityofonalaska.com](mailto:tgudie@cityofonalaska.com). You can also send it by mail or fax (608) 781-9514. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at (608) 781-9546.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Troy Gudie', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Troy Gudie

Assistant Fire Chief

Appendix B

**Recruitment and Retention Questionnaire**

1. Please provide the following numbers regarding the structure of your department:
  - a) Fulltime / career members \_\_\_\_ Paid on Call members \_\_\_\_ Volunteer members (no pay for training and responses) \_\_\_\_
2. Please provide the number of annual calls for the following:  
Fire \_\_\_\_ Medical \_\_\_\_ (Transport Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_)
3. Please provide the population you serve:: \_\_\_\_\_
4. On average, how many members leave your department annually? \_\_\_\_\_
5. From an exit interview or other feedback, what are the primary reasons given for your firefighters leaving the department? (Check all that apply)
  - a) Time demands for career and family \_\_\_\_\_
  - b) Training requirements and recertification \_\_\_\_\_
  - c) Personnel issues within the organization \_\_\_\_\_
  - d) Other, please briefly explain \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. Do you feel that recruitment and retention of volunteer / paid on call members is a serious issue facing the fire service? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

7. What processes are you currently implementing to attract and recruit competent and dependable volunteer / paid on call firefighters? (please briefly explain and/or forward a copy)\_\_\_\_\_

8. What types of programs or strategies have you implemented to motivate volunteer / paid on call members to remain active on a long term basis? (please briefly explain and/ or forward a copy)\_\_\_\_\_

9. Would you like a copy of the results from this survey? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_

10. Please provide the following contact information for my research:

Department Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_

Website: \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix C

## SAMPLE SURVEY OF AREA DEPARTMENTS

ARCADIA GLENCOE FIRE DEPT  
JEFFREY P HALVOREN  
521 W MAIN ST  
ARCADIA, WI. 54612-1324  
(608) 323-7475  
[hlumber@centurylink.net](mailto:hlumber@centurylink.net)

LA FARGE FIRE DEPT  
PHILIP C STITTLEBURG  
PO BOX 9  
LA FARGE, WI. 54639-0009  
(608) 625-2185  
[lfchief@mwt.net](mailto:lfchief@mwt.net)

BANGOR-BURNS VOL FIRE DEPT  
ROBERT W RUECKHEIM  
PO BOX 379  
BANGOR, WI. 54614  
(608) 486-4168  
[rrueckheimff@gmail.com](mailto:rrueckheimff@gmail.com)

SHELBY FIRE DEPT  
MIKE KEMP  
2800 WARD AVE  
LA CROSSE, WI. 54601-7470  
(608) 788-1032  
[chiefkemp@townofshelby.com](mailto:chiefkemp@townofshelby.com)

CAMPBELL TWP FIRE DEPT  
NATHANIEL J MELBY  
2219 BAINBRIDGE ST  
LA CROSSE, WI. 54603-1356  
(608) 783-0050  
[nate@melby.us](mailto:nate@melby.us)

STODDARD-BERGEN VOL FIRE DEPT  
JOSEPH W PFAFF  
188 N MAIN ST  
STODDARD, WI 54658-9801  
(608) 457-2118  
[sbfd28@mwt.net](mailto:sbfd28@mwt.net)

GALESVILLE AREA FIRE DEPT  
RICHARD A DOCKEN  
PO BOX 55  
GALESVILLE, WI. 54630-0055  
(608) 582-2326  
[gfd1300@centurytel.net](mailto:gfd1300@centurytel.net)

WEST SALEM VOL FIRE DEPT  
DAVID R MUNSON  
100 S MILL ST  
WEST SALEM, WI. 54669  
(608) 786-0111  
[base660@hotmail.com](mailto:base660@hotmail.com)

HOLMEN AREA FIRE DEPT  
DOUG SCHOBER  
BOX 92  
HOLMEN, WI. 54636-0092  
(608) 526-9363  
[dschober@holmenfire.com](mailto:dschober@holmenfire.com)

LACRESCENT FIRE DEPARTMENT  
JOHN MEYER  
315 MAIN ST  
LACRESCENT, MN. 55947  
(507) 895-2083  
[johnearlmeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:johnearlmeyer@yahoo.com)

Appendix D

RAW DATA COLLECTED FROM SURVEY QUESTION SEVEN

- Implemented a Citizen's Fire Academy (10-12 wks.) to train new members up to Firefighter Introductory level for State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association basic volunteer firefighter certification. Also will train volunteer members to meet minimum Reserve Combat training for local department participation.
- Offering pay for calls and training. Applying for a grant for a full time recruitment/training officer
- Fire Prevention Programs throughout our county.
- We have attended the Fire 20/20 recruitment/retention workshop to improve our strategic plan. A RR coordinator has been asked for in the 2011 Safer Grant. This will not only help our combination department, but all 11 volunteer departments that surround our city that we depend on mutual aid. They too are in need of RR efforts. A meeting is being conducted to gain more knowledge and a better plan with those organizations.
- High-school based recruit school, utilizing a blended format of online and traditional learning. We have applied for a SAFER grant to hire a full-time Recruitment & Retention Coordinator.
- Our Department completed a Strategic Plan in 2011. The Fire Service leadership set Goal's and Tasks to enhance our fire service by establishing a Recruitment Team to tell our story. The Recruitment Team shall implement programs that develop a quality and diverse work force in both career and Paid on Call membership. This is a newly developed team and at this time we are attending career fairs such as; high school career

day, military job fairs, collage informational days, and in the future we hope to have videos shown in our movie theaters, and on our community TV channels.

- Advertise on radio, trade websites and magazines, also city website. We also attend and present at local school career days.
- We've learned the best practice is direct, personal contact to find those interested in serving. Our social media, website, and public relations articles do little (dare I say- nothing) to attract volunteers.
- Junior firefighter program ages 14-17 for early interest before other activities capture that demographic. Open door policy for any other age group with interest in public service.
- We offer any type of training volunteers want to attend. We pay them based on a points system at the end of the year to get a check the first pay period. We have a supplemental policy to assist with workman's comp.
- We offer short-term disability coverage to pay above what workman's compensation pays, we contribute to a retirement fund for all personnel, and we offer pay for any calls run with the department regardless of the type for all personnel to encourage participation.
- We are hoping to receive a SAFER Grant and we actively recruit with emphasis on our Explorer Post.
- Centralizing application process, which we hope will make the system more approachable by folks that do not currently have a connection to the FD through friends family, etc. And, hopefully address personality conflict within the organization.

- We do not have any specific program, when openings occur and a application process is initiated, applicants apply and a testing process is completed. There are certain application requirements that are needed for the applicant to be accepted.
- A lot of advertising on the web and in the street. For example shopping centers
- Currently we have not had any problems recruiting new members, thus we have not had to implement any formal recruitment activities.
- Deferred compensation, awards, LOSAP, higher education benefits, wellness benefits,
- We provide certification training in a rapid linear format that provides the volunteers with the certification necessary to work as a paid firefighter in our state. Our volunteers also work assigned shifts and are treated the same as the career firefighters. These elements improve their marketability in the nearby DFW metro area if they wish to pursue a career in the business. We also hire any new positions only from within our volunteer ranks.
- Tried to implement a volunteer incentive/retirement program but funds were not available.
- We have a waiting list and conduct academies twice a year. Many of our career personnel were volunteers with us at one time. Recruits volunteer in hopes of getting hired.
- Very little, we are holding applications so we can hire groups of people, make training easier and promotes a team atmosphere among new hires.
- Paid shifts, potential for advancement, potential for a career position.
- None; we are a great department with a great reputation. Word of mouth due to an opening in the reserve firefighter program will prompt 40-60 applications for 1 or 2 open positions. The existing reserves are offered the full time slots first. Thus no need to train,

process by vetting candidates since reserves are already trained and orientated into the system.

- members getting new members application provided to all who live in district and they must complete FF1 at our regional recruit academy active website previous mailings etc. did not work we have an annual high quality newsletter that goes to 9,300 single family residences
- Albany County has a recruitment and retention committee
- We have moved to looking at personnel outside our community to, collar community. We have not reduced our requirements for certification however.
- We hold an annual open house that we use to recruit personnel. This allows members of our community to meet us and see what we do.
- We don't have to recruit. We have a waiting list to join. We can't supply all the PPE and training due to budget concerns, so some people are put on a waiting list.
- We began recruiting statewide, which brought a lot of new recruits to the organization. However, over a year later, we are finding that most are leaving due to lack of participation. As the newness wears off, so does their commitment.
- Word of mouth, flyers to all the area departments, and current employees passing the word.
- We hold an annual session where people can get into firefighter gear, spray water, and use extrication equipment.
- The local community college has many FF/ EMTs waiting for an opportunity. If you allow them to live outside your boundaries you have hundreds of applicants.

- Our Department is staffed with 100% career personnel. Retention has not been a problem. People usually only leave due to injury or retirement.
- We do an extensive community wide recruitment drive. Many of our new members are friends or family of existing members, but in a small town such as ours that is to be expected.

Appendix E

RAW DATA COLLECTED FROM SURVEY QUESTION EIGHT

- Provide AD & D policy in addition to Workers Comp. Insurance provided by city; Enrollment in State Volunteer Pension system; Enrollment in State Firemen's and Fire Marshal's Association membership which also provided additional medical and life insurance benefits.
- New equipment to include class B uniforms for volunteer persons, portable radios for all members
- Thru S C Firefighter Assoc. we have a small retirement pension program funded using Insurance Company's fund.
- In our department, we implemented a pay of \$7.00 per hr up to NFPA FFII and \$9.00 per hour NFPA FFII and above. by doing this and allowing those who reach FFII status, they are then able to back fill a paid position as well as work a normal shift. We have implemented ABC companies to allow a smaller group to maintain training levels and assign them to that ABC shift. The company will then handle different events and allows the volunteers an important role in the department.
- We have initiated an in-house Volunteer Incentive Programs to reward participation in training. We also participate in a state-wide Volunteer Incentive Program, which provides a \$3,000 tax credit on state income taxes when the volunteer meets certain criteria for training and incident participation. One of the things that I believe motivates firefighters is relevant, realistic training. Our training division prides itself in providing high-impact, high-energy, realistic training.

- As a department retention has not been our staffing issue and our Strategic Plan has a goal to achieve this outline, but at this time the Recruitment Team has not implemented any tasks to tackle this issue yet.
- We have competitive pay scale with state retirement and benefits. We have various committees' for personnel to serve on to have input in how the department operates and functions. We have various specialty groups (swift water rescue, high angle rescue, Haz-Mat etc.) that our members participate in and we encourage certifications where needed and pay for their training. We offer Medical in-service training to keep members certified in their level of medical training.
- Small stipend program based on points for attending in-house and out-of-department training; providing stand-by coverage at events and returning to calls.
- Provide a retirement contribution to collect at age 53, reward with apparel, uniforms and insurance.
- Any suggestions you may find, please let me know as well.
- Retirement contributions and length-of-service awards to include a 20 year ring.
- We currently offer make-up training as well as alternative, incentive pay at Christmas, Accident Policy from AFLAC.
- None at this time
- Retention overall is not a significant process. We recently had 2 paid on call personnel retire with 51 total years of service. Other personnel who leave the service may be because of career employment opportunities or family commitments.
- Banquets, uniforms, tuition, meals at the meetings and as much recognition as possible.

- Deferred compensation (457) plan based upon years of service. FD contributes funds based upon sliding scale, and pays plan administration fee; FF may contribute portion of income.
- The volunteers are assigned to a shift and developed alongside their career counterparts. We have seen this translate into longer retention, even when the volunteer subsequently achieves a career position in another department.
- Reduced personal property tax on one vehicle owned by each volunteer. Free county vehicle license sticker for one vehicle for each volunteer.
- We offer a deferred compensation plan. Our volunteers are not paid though they are reimbursed for expenses. This can total up to \$600 a month. They can choose to participate in the deferred comp plan and the fire district matches the amount the volunteer puts in. In the state of Washington, there is a volunteer pension plan that the fire district pays into on their behalf. After 20 years a volunteer can get about \$300 a month for life.
- Nothing would be interested in your findings. Union activism is the main problem. The union does things to run people off in the thought that they will gain more positions. What they don't understand is that there is no money for more and I can double the number of part time people with the same funding as one full time person.
- We have participation requirements and if they have at least a year of experience and the proper certification they have chance at a career position.
- Reserve program means an eligibility pool of candidates that are constantly trained and called in to fill firefighter vacancies on shift due to vacations, sick, etc. The reserve firefighters know that an opening will prompt the senior members to get ready for the

impending offer. However, the reserves are evaluated each assigned work day, by their assigned company officer. If there is a marginal or unsatisfactory evaluation, the reserves will not be offered the position and if that reserve does not improve, they will be released permanently.

- LOSAP small amount for POC small amount for training hours small amount for bonus points for special projects the above is our Ponderosa Volunteer Incentive Program in place since the late 80's great insurance Houston Rodeo tickets and parking via lottery; 4 tickets per night Inclusiveness Stations 2 and 3 are pure volunteer all programs based on performance criteria that is not overbearing overall cost not counting insurance (some have 24/7 ADD) is ~\$120,000 per year
- We are offering more sleep-in or shift work for our members. Also, we have instituted a training budget for them to attend the same training opportunities as our career members.
- We provide retirement and life insurance to our members.
- Volunteers receive a \$1000 tax credit for local property or vehicle taxes. To increase longevity, we have a pension plan for volunteers which increases with years of service
- The only program in place at the volunteer level right now is a gas stipend for volunteers who reach a certain level of activity each month
- We were paying an escalating call pay starting at \$10 per call, increasing by \$2.50 per year capping out at \$18.75 per call for those here 5 years or more. We also have an "event pay" which provides \$15 for every two-hour block of activity not related to incident response. However, the unintended consequences have been that most will now only work if they get paid, also, some use this as their only source of income. This has

created many issues within the organization, where we have ultimately lost most of our members. We are now converting all of our reserve positions to part-time.

- The only thing we can give our members is pay and training.
- Benefits
- We provide subscriptions to a state firefighter association that provides some life insurance and disability pay. We have also discussed lowering a firefighter's property tax.
- Retirement/ benefit plans
- Retirement incentives both locally and thru the state retirement system
- Recruitment is done through collaboration efforts in the community, the educational system (ROP, Colleges), and Internet postings. Our department is very desirable and recruitment is usually not a problem.
- Our paid-on-call firefighters know that future full-time openings will be filled by current paid-on-call staff.
- Our paid on call members receive a base monthly stipend, plus hourly pay. The pay scale has steps through 20 years. Also we pay a longevity bonus based on length of service upon separation of service.
- LOSAP Program, \$150K Life insurance policy, mileage and meal reimbursements for shift. Volunteers before 1/1/11 are on the volunteer pension plan.
- N/A - phasing these two programs out