

**REPORT**

**ORGANIZATIONAL RISK**  
**ASSESSMENT**

**FIRE DEPARTMENT**

**ALLENSTOWN, NH**

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

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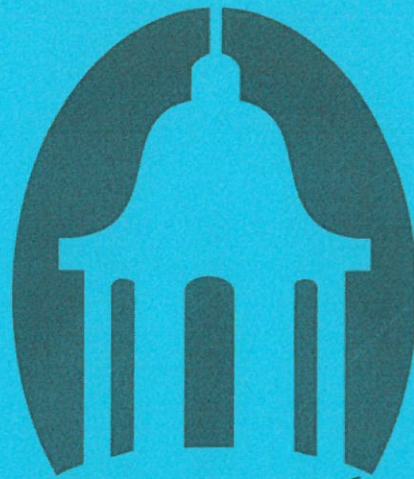
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# *REPORT*



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## **REPORT**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

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### **CHAPTER 1**

#### **PROJECT OVERVIEW**

Municipal Resources, Inc., of Meredith, New Hampshire, was engaged by the Town of Allenstown to conduct an organizational and operational risk assessment of the Allenstown Fire Department. Assigned to this project were MRI Fire/EMS consultants Brian Duggan and George Klauber. Brian Duggan served as Project Manager. The assessment involved an orientation tour of Allenstown, evaluation of target hazards, review of the fire facility, review of fire apparatus and equipment, interviews with key town personnel, evaluation of a training session, and interviews with fire department employees. There was also a review of relevant statistics, standard operating procedures, and operational data that was furnished by the town.

Each community determines the level of fire services that residents receive by balancing the level of risk against the cost to provide fire protection. Based on our review of the Allenstown Fire Department, it is clear that the community expects the 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), and 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 Allenstown.



## CHAPTER 2

### DESCRIPTION OF DEPARTMENT

#### OBSERVATIONS

The Allenstown Fire Department provides a full range of fire/rescue services, excluding emergency medical patient transportation, to its 4,322 residents (2010 Census). The response area consists of 20.42 square miles defined by the municipal boundaries. In addition, through mutual aid, the Allenstown Fire Department is an active participant responding to major incidents in other communities, including the City of Concord and the City of Manchester. The frequency that Allenstown 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 is primarily an on-call organization that is supplemented by a small full-time, daytime contingent, including the full-time fire chief and one firefighter. The organizational structure of the department is detailed in the chart below:

The on-call component of the organization consists of approximately 23 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 becoming more limited. The department provides 24-hour service every day of the year, but has recently struggled to respond to all calls based on a decline in on-call membership and participation. A review of statistics indicated that only twelve members respond to more than 10% of all incidents and nine members responded to fewer than 3% of all incidents. This limited participation translates into the need for additional on-call responders and the need to develop new and innovative retention strategies that will allow existing members to enhance their level of response and participation.

Although this reflects a national trend and a cultural/generational decline in volunteerism, it has resulted in the department having no response to 5.16% of incidents in 2014 and 8.23% of incidents in 2015. The 3% increase in the inability of the department to respond represents an increasing risk to the community. Most of the incidents that received no response were medical calls where the fire department functions as first responders, initiating patient care while the Tri-Town ambulance is responding to the call. However, Chief Pendergast reported that although the inability to respond is focused on medical calls, there have also been a number of mutual aid calls, including assignments to multiple alarm fires in other communities, that could not be answered.

If a call cannot be staffed with personnel from Allenstown, mutual aid is utilized to fill the gap. However, the use of mutual aid to cover routine calls places a disproportionate burden on the responding communities and typically results in elongated response times. The fact that 51 calls were missed in 2015 is symptomatic of an increasing level of risk within the community,



and the need for a stronger recruitment and retention strategy and is a source of risk for the town.

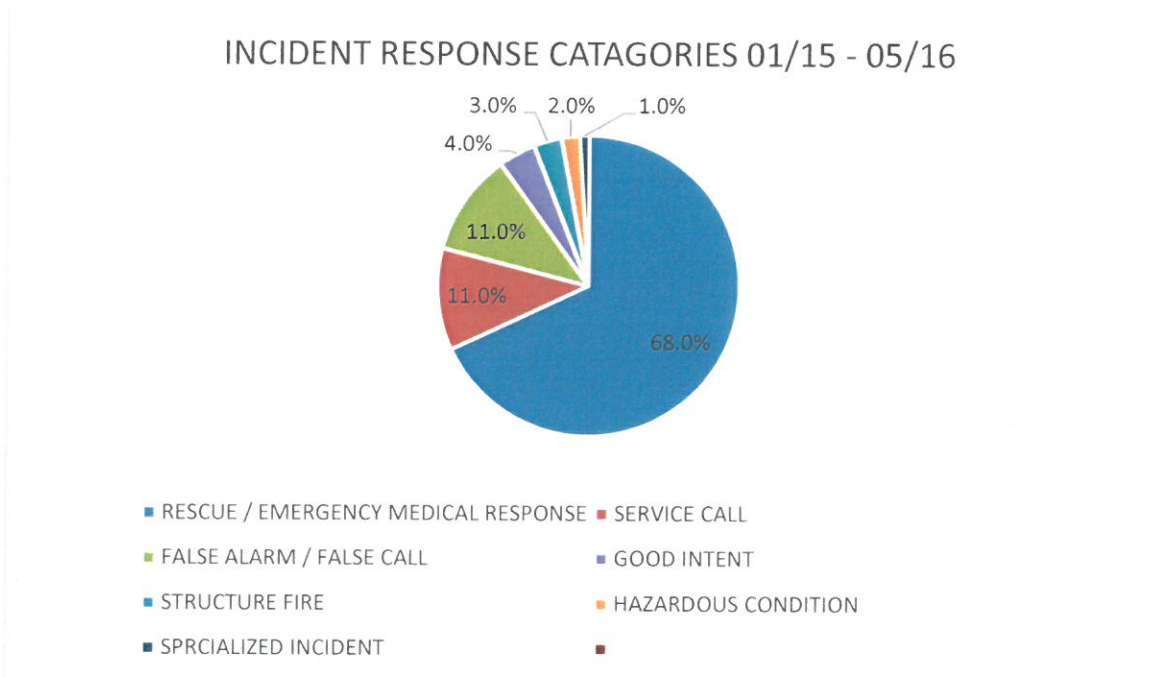
Despite the challenges facing the department, it is apparent that the organization offers a valuable service to the community. Overall, the department is viable, and when personnel are available, they produce a well-trained and effective response.

## CHAPTER 3

### OPERATIONS

#### OBSERVATIONS

Based on the data provided, the department responds to approximately 631 calls for service per year. The number of requests for service increases at a rate of 4% per year. Based on this trend, the department responds to approximately 25 additional calls each year. 32% of these service requests are traditional fire service response requests, while 68% of these responses are requests to provide first responder emergency medical care. Overall, an average of four personnel respond to each emergency incident. However, 8.23% of calls in 2015 resulted in no response from the Allenstown Fire Department. This represents a 3% increase in the number of times a response was not generated when compared to 2014 statistics.



**Figure 1 - Incident Response Chart (based on 2015 data)**

An evaluation of response times indicated that the average response time was between six and nine minutes. Although this discounts the times when no response is available, these responses times are above average for an organization that is comprised of on-call responders. The distribution of calls appears to vary, but the highest call volumes occur on weekdays, between 6AM and 9PM. As peak call volume occurs when the majority of on-call personnel are unavailable, this has resulted in the development of two full-time positions. However, many calls for service occur during commuter hours, when no career staff is on duty. Chief

Pendergast indicates that an increasing issue is a lack of the ability to respond during the “fringe” hours of 6AM – 8AM and 5PM – 9PM. The chief indicated that many of the missed responses occur during these “fringe” hours.

Based on this trend, the department should develop a strategy to enhance response during the hours immediately before and after full-time coverage is scheduled. Some of the strategies that other departments have utilized to address the need for coverage during specific hours include the following:

- Offering personnel a two-hour incentive for members that respond during these hours
- Allowing personnel to sign up, thus guaranteeing coverage in exchange for hourly, on-call compensation (\$2.50 per hour)
- Scheduling an on-call member to work and be compensated during these hours
- Hiring and scheduling per diem personnel from other area departments to provide coverage during these hours
- Hiring an additional full-time staff member and altering the schedule to encompass these hours

### **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 4/4Y 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, Allenstown received 67.09 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, Allenstown received 6.45 of the 10 potential points available for emergency communications.

### **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, Allenstown received 29.46 of the 50 potential points available for fire department capability.

### **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, Allenstown received 33.96 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, Allenstown received 2.42 of the 5.50 potential points available for risk reduction. The chart below provides a graphical representation of the rating distribution across the United States.

## Distribution of PPC Grades

The 2015 published countrywide distribution of communities by the PPC grade is as follows:



Figure 2 - Insurance Service Office Rating Distribution Chart

## National Standards

Two national standards apply to the operations of the Allenstown 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 Allenstown, meeting this standard is difficult based on the current level of staffing and participation. 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 Allenstown 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, has decreased over the past few years. This is driven by a decrease in the availability and viability of the on-call force as several long-term and active members have resigned or relocated.

This reduction of response personnel hampers both the effectiveness of the department and the safety of firefighters. As discussed in other chapters of this report, more emphasis also needs to be placed upon the recruitment and retention of additional on-call personnel. The current on-call compliment stands at 23 personnel, with one third of those members responding to less than 3% of emergency incidents; national averages, based on the size of the community, indicate that 26 active on-call personnel would be necessary to provide a reasonable level of service to the town. However, based on the level of participation observed in Allenstown, we believe that developing a 30 person on-call contingent is a reasonable target that will help the community address many of the response issues detailed above. We feel that this is a time to invest in substantial recruitment and retention in an effort to ensure sufficient resources for the future.

NFPA 1720 is a document that can provide guidance relative to how the Allenstown 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.

### **Standard Operating Procedures**

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, 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 the fire chief 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 Allenstown will be to increase “buy in” relative to these procedures by establishing a participative development process and on-going training relative to these procedures. 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 review the current SOPs to ensure that they reflect the organization's current operations. 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.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Develop a plan to enhance response during the hours immediately before and after the scheduled full-time coverage hours.**
- 3.2 Expand on-call membership to 30 personnel.**
- 3.3 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**
- 3.4 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.**
- 3.5 Department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies need to be reviewed and updated regularly. The department training officer should assign SOGs and policies to be reviewed 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.**
- 3.6 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.**
- 3.7 A committee should be established to provide guidance to the fire chief as to updates, revisions, and new SOGs and/or policies that need to be developed or addressed.**
- 3.8 Once developed, SOPS should be reviewed every two years.**
- 3.9 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.**



## CHAPTER 4

### RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF ON-CALL PERSONNEL

#### OBSERVATIONS

Chief Pendergast reported that it is difficult to recruit, and in some cases retain, on-call personnel. In the recent past, 10 members (one third of the organization) have left the department. This reduction in force included four that resigned, four that relocated for other employment, and two that were released due to inactivity. The chief indicated that internal conflict and a change in leadership led to some of the reduction in personnel. As the chief has integrated into the organization, the reduction in personnel has stabilized, and the chief is actively seeking to recruit new members.

This turnover rate has had a dramatic impact on the operational ability of the department and is manifested in the inability to answer some calls. It is our observation that the chief is often required to function as a firefighter based on a deteriorating level of response. In a community the size of Allentown, the fire chief should be a “working chief” and frequently provide an operational response. However, his present operational role detracts from his ability to provide command oversight and accomplish other administrative tasks.

Recently, the pay scale has been adjusted as a retention strategy designed to enhance the participation of members. A firefighters’ pay increased in July 2015 from \$9.25 to \$12.75 and an officers’ pay increased from \$12.25 to \$15.00 per hour.

The department has an active live in program where two college students live in the station during the school year at no charge. These students participate in response when they are in the station. Consideration should be given to expanding this program and requiring that participants provide the town with a set number of hours of coverage when regular on-call members are least available. The department also supports an Explorer program designed to expose young people to emergency services. This is an essential feeder program that should continue to be vigorously supported.

The increasing reduction of response hampers both the effectiveness of the department and the safety of firefighters. As mentioned in a previous chapter, the Federal OSHA standard of Two-In/Two-Out as it pertains to firefighting, dictates that four personnel be assembled on the scene of a fire or hazardous situation to provide for firefighter safety as emergency operations commence. The one exception to this rule is that if a visible rescue needs to occur, a team can operate with fewer than four personnel to complete the task.

To avoid the transition toward a larger career staff which is beyond the fiscal ability of the town, more emphasis and investment needs to be placed upon enhancing the participation of

existing members and the recruitment and retention of additional on-call personnel. The current on-call compliment stands at 23 personnel; national averages, based on the size of the community, show 30 on-call personnel would be necessary to provide a reasonable level of service to the town. We feel that this is a time to invest in substantial recruitment and retention in an effort to ensure sufficient resources for the future.

Presently, the number of active on-call personnel does not meet the needs of the Town of Allenstown. When we spoke to Chief Pendergast and asked him how he recruits personnel, he said that he has tried multiple recruitment strategies and indicated that it is an uphill battle with a high degree of turnover. Over the next five years, a significant effort will need to be put forth regarding the recruitment and retention of on-call personnel. Although Allenstown 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 Allenstown. 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 training annually 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 Allenstown, it is unrealistic to expect any reduction in the current level of career staffing. In Allenstown, the battle will be to recruit and retain a 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 Allenstown 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 for the first time. The demographic and societal changes driving the reduction in on-call participation need to be reversed through utilizing innovation and best practices. We believe that the town should increase on-call membership to 30 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 a two-hour minimum for response during specific hours;
- 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 Allenstown. One example of an unconventional and innovative best practice that we feel would work in Allenstown 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 to a SAFER Grant. Typically, this type of program attracts electricians, plumbers, mechanics, and other trades that would be beneficial to the organizations.

Appendix A 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 Allenstown 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	40%
33 – 49% participation	20%
20% - 25%% participation	Eligible to enroll at employees’ cost

It should be noted that based on the current level of participation, only three members would be eligible to participate in the town health insurance program at their cost, and one would be eligible to participate with the town paying 20% of the premium.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 In 2017, the Allenstown 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 Allenstown Fire Department should consider ways to expand the current live-in program from two to four students.**
- 4.3 The Allenstown Fire Department should utilize a sign board to ensure that all residents are aware that openings exist for on-call personnel and that new personnel will be welcomed and trained.**
- 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 Allenstown 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.**



## CHAPTER 5

### FIRE SERVICE FACILITY

#### OBSERVATIONS

The Station located at One Ferry Street was constructed in 2000 and occupied in 2001. Currently the station serves the town well, and as the second floor is unfinished, provides the opportunity to accommodate the growth of the department for many years to come.



**Figure 3 - Ferry Street Fire Station – Front Left**



**Figure 4 - Ferry Street Fire Station - Front Right**

Overall the station provides the department with an exceptional platform to provide service to the community. A review of the station found four areas of risk that are listed below:

- The station lacks a diesel exhaust system.
- Turnout gear is stored on the apparatus floor.
- A workout area exists on the apparatus floor mezzanine.
- The station fire alarm connection is precariously connected through a second system to Concord Fire Alarm. Once the alarm is activated, Concord Fire Alarm receives a signal that a fire alarm has gone off, but is unaware that the location of the alarm is the fire station.
- The lack of a voice 911 call box which would allow the public to access the correct emergency assistance when the station is not staffed.

Diesel exhaust emits carcinogenic particulates that collect in the apparatus bays. As turnout gear is openly stored within these bays, turnout gear will also collect these harmful particulates. We recommend that the mezzanine area be enclosed to prevent this exposure. Ideally the mezzanine area should be utilized as an enclosed storage area rather than a place that personnel congregate.



**Figure 5 - Apparatus Bays, this picture demonstrates the lack of a diesel extraction system**

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.



Recently, Chief Pendergast applied for a Federal FireAct Grant to replace aging self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and install a diesel exhaust removal system. Unfortunately, this grant was not approved. The town should continue to pursue a grant to replace aging SCBA, but based on the health and safety implications, move forward to install a diesel exhaust system as soon as possible.

In addition, as the station is unmanned the majority of the time, a 911 call box should be placed at the front of the building to provide a means that a person stopping at the station could request help.

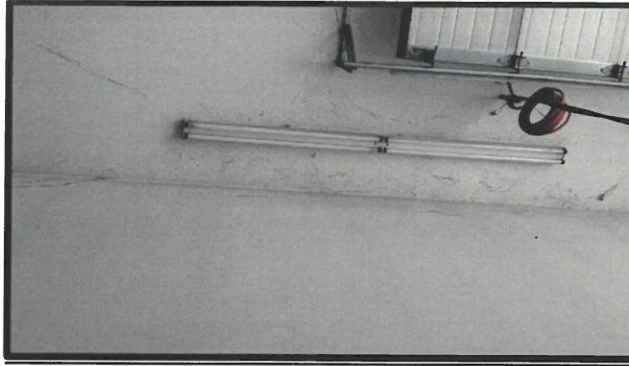
As the station ages it will need attention to address structural and mechanical issues. Some of these issues are starting to present and could be easily addressed. However, if these issues are left unchecked they will likely develop into larger costs for the community. The following three pictures document some of the issues observed. These issues include cracks and a minor roof leak.



**Figure 6 - Exterior Entry Crack**



**Figure 7 - Structural Crack in Foundation**



**Figure 8 - Minor Water Damage**

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The installation of a diesel exhaust system should be pursued 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 mezzanine on the apparatus floor should be fully walled in and if possible, converted to a storage area.**
- 5.5 The fire alarm system should be connected to a central station that would provide a means to notify Concord Fire Alarm that a fire alarm has sounded at the fire station.**
- 5.6 A 911 call box should be mounted at the front entrance to the station. This device would allow a person to obtain the right type of assistance when the station is not staffed.**

## 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 Quint/Aerial Ladder
- 1 Light or Medium Duty First Response/Rescue Vehicle
- 1 Fire Station

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 Allenstown, tankers are frequently required to provide a sustained water supply at incidents that are not in proximity to hydrants. Allenstown has taken a proactive step in utilizing mutual aid 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 Allenstown Fire Department.

In Allenstown, the fleet of apparatus was found to be in good condition. However, the department's inventory of apparatus exceeds both the needs of the community and the capability of the organization. As a result, we have recommended a consolidation strategy that will ultimately reduce two units and replace another unit with a vehicle far more suited for its function. This strategy consists of replacing an engine and the aerial ladder with a "quint". A quint is a vehicle that has a short aerial ladder similar to what Allenstown currently has; however, a unit of this type also has a pump and a small tank. Therefore, this unit can serve multiple roles on the fireground.

The second and more immediate change in apparatus is the replacement of the current ambulance that serves as a rescue, with a light rescue that is more suited to the first response needs of the community. Based on the current condition of the ambulance, this unit should be replaced in the next budget cycle.

The consolidation outlined above and the presentation of an ideal apparatus set for the Town of Allenstown is described within the table on the next page.

Apparatus Description	Current Inventory AFD	Recommended Inventory	Deviation/Recommendation
<b>Class A Pumpers (Engine/Tanker)</b>	3	2	Concurrent with the replacement of Ladder 2, Consolidate 1 unit.
<b>Aerial ladder</b>	1	1	Replace the current Aerial ladder with a used Quint as outlined within the capital plan.
<b>Ambulance/Rescue</b>	1	0	Replace with a new light rescue. The primary purpose of this vehicle would be as a light rescue designed to provide Allenstown with a first response.
<b>First Response Squad</b>	0	1	
<b>Forestry - Utility Units</b>	3	2	When it is eligible for replacement, Consolidate the 1987 brush unit into the 2007 utility vehicle by purchasing a skid mounted tank/pump unit. Retain and repair the 1952 Power Wagon but do not replace this unit.
<b>Rescue Boat</b>	1	1	
<b>Command Unit</b>	1	1	

**Table 1 - Apparatus inventory and consolidation strategy**

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 Allenstown, 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 1: 2013 E-One Typhoon, 2000 GPM/1000 gal tank



Engine 3: 2004 E-One typhoon, 2000 GPM/1500 gal tank



Engine 4: 1990 E-One Protector, 1250 GPM/1000 gal tank



Ladder 2: 1991 E-One Hurricane, 80 ft. Aerial

**Rescue Unit**



Rescue 1: 2001 Ford E450 AEV Rescue

**Command Unit**



Car 1: 2006 Ford Explorer 4WD, Staff Car/Command

Utility Unit



Utility 1: 2007 Ford F350 Pick-up with V- plow



Forestry Units



Forestry 2: 1986 Ford F350 4X4 200 GAL/120 GPM



Forestry 1z; 1952 Dodge Powerwagon, ¾ ton 4X4 275 GAL/100 GPM

**Special Operations Units**



**Boat**  
1993 Avon Inflatable 15hp motor



**Air Trailer**  
1990 12 ft. Car-Mate Trailer - 4 Cylinder 4500 psi/Fill Station Cascade

## 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. As such, smaller projects have been removed for the listing of proposed fire service capital projects. A highlighted section indicates a change when compared to the current capital plan that is in place.

UNIT DESIGNATION	UNIT MAKE	YEAR PURCHASED	ORIGINAL COST	YEAR OF SCHEDULED REPLACEMENT	CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST
50 E 1	E- ONE	2014	\$450,000	2034	\$650,000
50 E 3	E-ONE	2004	\$320,000	2024	\$555,000
50 E 4	E-ONE	1990	\$200,000	2019	Do not replace, consolidate with Ladder 2
50 L 2	E-ONE	1991	\$50,000	2019	Consolidate with Engine 4, purchase a used Quint. Estimated cost \$425,000
50 CAR 1	FORD EXP	2006		2020	\$42,000
50 UTILITY 1	FORD F 350	2007	\$37,000	2021	\$48,000
50 F 1	DODGE	1952		N/A	Retain, but do not replace
50 F 2	FORD F350	1986		2019	Do not replace, purchase a skid in unit for Utility 1
50 R 1	FORD E 450	2001	\$5,000	2017	\$170,000
<b>EQUIPMENT</b>					
<b>GENERATOR BUILDING</b>	CAT	2002		2027	\$60,000
<b>WACKER GENERATOR</b>	WACKER	2011	\$59,181	2031	\$79,708
<b>LIGHT TOWER</b>	T-REX	2008			Consider a regional approach to acquiring this equipment

UNIT DESIGNATION	UNIT MAKE	YEAR PURCHASED	ORIGINAL COST	YEAR OF SCHEDULED REPLACEMENT	CURRENT REPLACEMENT COST
AIR COMPRESSOR	POSEIDON	1998		2020	
AIR PACKS	SCOTT	2006	\$183,605	2017-2022	Should be purchased over a 5 year period (5 packs and spare bottles per year)
CARDIAC MONITOR	PHYSIO CONTROL	2014	\$23,632	2034	\$31,827
RESCUE TOOL	HOLMATRO	2009	\$12,036	2029	\$16,210
BOAT	AVON	1993		2023	\$10,000
PARKING LOT		2001		2022	\$35,000
NEEDS					
BUILDING SECOND FLOOR		2001		2019	\$70,000
APARATUS FLOOR VENT SYSTEM		2001		2017	\$65,000

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- 6.1 Consolidate Engine 4 and Ladder 2 in 2019. This should be accomplished by purchasing a used "Quint" at an estimated cost of \$425,000.
- 6.2 Replace the current ambulance/rescue vehicle with a new light rescue/first response unit in 2017. The estimated cost of this transition is \$170,000.
- 6.3 Consolidate three forestry/utility units into two units. This consolidation should be accomplished by not replacing the 1987 forestry unit and outfitting the current utility unit with a skid tank/pump in 2019.
- 6.4 The current 1952 Power Wagon should be maintained and repaired, but not replaced.
- 6.5 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.

- 6.6 The acquisition of a lighting trailer should be pursued as a regional asset in a cost sharing approach with other fire and police departments.**
- 6.7 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) has reached the end of its useful life span and should be incrementally replaced over the next five years. During this incremental replacement period, five SCBA units and five spare bottles should be purchased each year.**
- 6.8 The chief should continue to annually apply for a Fire Act grant to replace the outdated SCBA units.**
- 6.9 Within the confines of the existing budget, scene and warning lighting, especially on the forestry units, should be update to LED units. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the amount of scene lighting.**
- 6.10 The rescue boat should be repaired so that it is fully inflated and ready for immediate deployment.**

## CHAPTER 7

### TRAINING

#### OBSERVATIONS

As we understand it, based on the internal strife that has become a focus within the organization, the officer that coordinated and organized training has stepped away from that assignment. Recently, the position of training officer has been assigned to firefighter McIntosh who has revived the program. 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).

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 Allenstown 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); Bloodborne

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 Allenstown, 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 Allenstown 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 Manchester 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 25 department members, but only about two-thirds are really active, and this includes attending training sessions. It was reported to the study team that in many cases, few of the officers even show up for training. A random review of the very limited training reports/records available appeared to confirm that officer attendance is limited and sporadic. Allenstown'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 Allenstown Fire 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, and 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 Allenstown Fire Department should seek to maximize, support, and encourage these opportunities.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The Allenstown Fire Department should increase the number of drills that involve mutual aid companies.**
- 7.2 The Allenstown Fire Department should increase the number of drills that encompass rural water supply operations.**
- 7.3 The Allenstown Fire Department should sponsor and support each member to attend two live fire training session per year.**
- 7.4 The Allenstown Fire Department should establish a mentoring program to guide and encourage new members as they progress through the initial training process.**
- 7.5 The Allenstown 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.**

## 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 Allenstown Fire 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, open house at the fire station, participation in a regional Explorer program to actively encourage younger members about public safety in the area, community cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and automated external defibrillators (AED) training programs, and installation and inspection of child safety seats. 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, two twin girls died in Lynnfield, MA, in a swimming pool accident. Opportunities to educate the public, particularly in a seaside community such as Allenstown, 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 Allenstown.
- 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 Allenstown 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 Allenstown, 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

### FIRE ALARM, TECHNOLOGY AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS

#### OBSERVATIONS

The use of technology is limited within the Allenstown Fire Department. This includes:

- Limited utilization of e-mail communication internally within the organization;
- The lack of mobile data;
- The lack of a secondary cell phone based incident notification system; and
- The lack of a cloud based records management system.
- Lack of a voice connected 911 call box at the front of the station.

The town should develop a plan to enhance the level of electronic communication and technology within the organization. Many departments are developing mobile data by utilizing internet connectivity to connect to a cloud based records management system. These systems typically contain essential pre-incident planning data and offer geographic information system (GIS) connectivity. Development of mobile data could be easily accomplished through the use of tablets, such as I-Pads and cloud based applications.

The fire alarm system within the community is also a source of concern. This system is a 100 mil Gamewell system that utilized telegraph technology to transmit a coded number that indicates that an alarm has sounded in a particular business. Although time tested, this is antiquated technology that lacks site specific supervision and is very labor intensive to maintain. Most communities have transitioned away from Gamewell systems and utilize either computer based digital dialers or radio boxes as the method of reporting fire alarms. The chief made a point that there is no cost for an Allenstown business to subscribe to the Gamewell system other than the initial cost of compatible equipment. Most communities charge a fee in the range of \$250.00 per account, per year, for this service and use that revenue to maintain the system.

We believe that the Gamewell system is a liability to the town as a circuit may be compromised and the telegraph system would then need to be traced out to find the problem on that circuit. In the meantime, several businesses would be without a fire alarm connection. Although each system has its strengths and weaknesses, we believe that the current configuration represents a risk to the Town based on the following:

- The inability to easily trace a problem to a specific site;
- The need to retransmit alarms through a secondary system; and
- The lack of transmitted location information to Concord Fire Alarm.

Once an alarm is sounded and transmitted over the Gamewell telegraph system, it then sounds a coded number on the fire whistle and retransmits an alarm of fire to Concord Fire Alarm. The alarm signal notified Concord Fire Alarm that an alarm has gone off in Allenstown but does not indicate the specific location of the alarm within the community. To say that this is a precarious setup would be kind.

Chief Pendergast indicated that Concord Fire Alarm would not accept digital dialers or radio boxes reporting into their facility. In fact, the only apparent viable option that would provide the dispatch center with location specific information would be to discontinue the Gamewell system and transition businesses to private central station service. Steeped in culture and tradition, the Gamewell system should be replaced with an alternative technology that better suits the configuration of fire services in the Town of Allenstown.

We believe that the town administrator and the fire chief should jointly address this concern and inform the Chief of the Concord Fire Department that reporting alarms through a convoluted system, that provides no location information, is a risk to the Town and formally request that either a direct supervised connection that provides location information be established through direct access digital; dialers, mux radio boxes, or private central station service.

In addition, the Gamewell system is utilized as an emergency call box at the front of the station. When the station is not staffed, a member of the public seeking help would need to activate this master box, it would then sound the whistle, and transmit a fire alarm without location information. The first responding firefighter would then determine the nature of the emergency. As the majority of incidents generated by the public seeking aid at a fire station are medical in nature this system delays the response of the appropriate resources.



**Figure 11 - Picture Shows Gamewell Master Box**

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The Allenstown Fire Department should consider a transition to a cloud based records management system such as Emergency Reporting.**
- 9.2 The Allenstown Fire Department should procure three I-Pads and mount one unit in the attack engine, one in the ladder, and one in the command vehicle.**
- 9.3 The Allenstown Fire Department should work with Concord Fire Alarm to receive alarm location information through a supervised system**
- 9.4 In the event an agreement cannot be reached with Concord Fire Alarm to accept fire alarm location information, the Gamewell system should be removed and business owners should transition to private central station service.**
- 9.5 The Allenstown Fire Department should transition to central station alarm reporting, and all central station alarm systems should be tested quarterly. This could easily be accomplished as there would be the elimination of the need to test and maintain the Gamewell system.**
- 9.6 The Gamewell Master Box located at the front of the station should be replaced with a 911 call box. This device would connect the person needing assistance with a 911 dispatcher and allow a person to rapidly obtain the right type of assistance when the station is not staffed.**



## **CHAPTER 10**

### **ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

#### **OBSERVATIONS**

Interviews revealed a consistent desire for increased communication from the department. Many members reported that they felt disconnected and removed from the activities of 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 previously had town supplied e-mail accounts and that these accounts were removed in an effort to reduce cost. Members also indicated a reluctance to utilize personal e-mail for Town business based on a perceived fear that their accounts could be accessed should a legal matter develop. We believe that town supplied e-mail accounts should be reestablished as a critical organizational communications link. In addition, the chief should develop a strategy to increase the level of communication relative to department operations and upcoming activities.

#### **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 develop a strategy to increase communications to all members, this would include information relative to meetings, policies, SOPs, operations, and upcoming events.**
- 10.4 The chief should provide members with a written monthly report relative to operations and future activities of the department.**

## CHAPTER 11

### CONCLUSIONS

The Allenstown Fire Department is in the midst of a significant staffing crisis that has compromised operations through a lack of response. Despite this, when members of the department are available, they produce an effective and efficient response that serves the town well. This study has identified five areas of significant risk that we believe the town should address. These include:

- 1. The increasing lack of response which presently results in 8.23% of all incidents (51 calls in 2015) not receiving a response from the Allenstown Fire Department;**
- 2. A low level of on-call membership and a low level of participation from at least one-third of existing members;**
- 3. A fire alarm system that retransmits a signal to Concord Fire Alarm without site specific supervision and location information;**
- 4. The lack of sufficient organizational policies and SOPS; and**
- 5. An excessive amount of apparatus that is not configured to match the role and or operational capability of the organization.**

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

## CHAPTER 12

### SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

#### CHAPTER 3 – OPERATIONS

- 3.1 Develop a plan to enhance response during the hours immediately before and after the scheduled full-time coverage hours.
- 3.2 Expand on-call membership to 30 personnel.
- 3.3 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
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 Department Standard Operating Guidelines and Policies need to be reviewed and updated regularly. The department training officer should assign SOGs and policies to be reviewed 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.
- 3.6 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.
- 3.7 A committee should be established to provide guidance to the fire chief as to updates, revisions, and new SOGs and/or policies that need to be developed or addressed.
- 3.8 Once developed, SOPS should be reviewed every two years.
- 3.9 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.

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

- 4.1** In 2017, the Allenstown 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 Allenstown Fire Department should consider ways to expand the current live-in program from two to four students.
- 4.3** The Allenstown Fire Department should utilize a sign board to ensure that all residents are aware that openings exist for on-call personnel and that new personnel will be welcomed and trained.
- 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 Allenstown 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.

## **CHAPTER 5 – FIRE SERVICE FACILITY**

- 5.1** The installation of a diesel exhaust system should be pursued 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 mezzanine on the apparatus floor should be fully walled in and if possible, converted to a storage area.
- 5.5** The fire alarm system should be connected to a central station that would provide a means to notify Concord Fire Alarm that a fire alarm has sounded at the fire station.

- 5.6 A 911 call box should be mounted at the front entrance to the station. This device would allow a person to obtain the right type of assistance when the station is not staffed.

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

- 6.1 Consolidate Engine 4 and Ladder 2 in 2019. This should be accomplished by purchasing a used “Quint” at an estimated cost of \$425,000.
- 6.2 Replace the current ambulance/rescue vehicle with a new light rescue/first response unit in 2017. The estimated cost of this transition is \$170,000.
- 6.3 Consolidate three forestry/utility units into two units. This consolidation should be accomplished by not replacing the 1987 forestry unit and outfitting the current utility unit with a skid tank/pump in 2019.
- 6.4 The current 1952 Power Wagon should be maintained and repaired, but not replaced.
- 6.5 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.
- 6.6 The acquisition of a lighting trailer should be pursued as a regional asset in a cost sharing approach with other fire and police departments.
- 6.7 Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBA) has reached the end of its useful life span and should be incrementally replaced over the next five years. During this incremental replacement period, five SCBA units and five spare bottles should be purchased each year.
- 6.8 The chief should continue to annually apply for a Fire Act grant to replace the outdated SCBA units.
- 6.9 Within the confines of the existing budget, scene and warning lighting, especially on the forestry units, should be update to LED units. Emphasis should be placed on increasing the amount of scene lighting.
- 6.10 The rescue boat should be repaired so that it is fully inflated and ready for immediate deployment.

## **CHAPTER 7 – TRAINING**

- 7.1** The Allenstown Fire Department should increase the number of drills that involve mutual aid companies.
- 7.2** The Allenstown Fire Department should increase the number of drills that encompass rural water supply operations.
- 7.3** The Allenstown Fire Department should sponsor and support each member to attend two live fire training session per year.
- 7.4** The Allenstown Fire Department should establish a mentoring program to guide and encourage new members as they progress through the initial training process.
- 7.5** The Allenstown 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.

## **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, two twin girls died in Lynnfield, MA, in a swimming pool accident. Opportunities to educate the public, particularly in a seaside community such as Allenstown, 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 Allenstown.
- 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 Allenstown 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 Allenstown, 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 – FIRE ALARM, TECHNOLOGY, AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS**

- 9.1** The Allenstown Fire Department should consider a transition to a cloud based records management system such as Emergency Reporting.
- 9.2** The Allenstown Fire Department should procure three I-Pads and mount one unit in the attack engine, one in the ladder, and one in the command vehicle.
- 9.3** The Allenstown Fire Department should work with Concord Fire Alarm to receive alarm location information through a supervised system
- 9.4** In the event an agreement cannot be reached with Concord Fire Alarm to accept fire alarm location information, the Gamewell system should be removed and business owners should transition to private central station service.
- 9.5** The Allenstown Fire Department should transition to central station alarm reporting, and all central station alarm systems should be tested quarterly. This could easily be accomplished as there would be the elimination of the need to test and maintain the Gamewell system.
- 9.6** The Gamewell Master Box located at the front of the station should be replaced with a 911 call box. This device would connect the person needing assistance with a 911 dispatcher and allow a person to rapidly obtain the right type of assistance when the station is not staffed.



## **CHAPTER 10 – ORGANIZATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS**

- 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 develop a strategy to increase communications to all members, this would include information relative to meetings, policies, SOPs, operations, and upcoming events.**
- 10.4 The chief should provide members with a written monthly report relative to operations and future activities of the department.**

## 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

**George Klauber** is a Senior Public Safety Consultant with MRI; he graduated from Charter Oaks State College with a BS in Fire Science and Technology, and has taken numerous courses at the National Fire Academy. Chief Klauber retired as the Fire Chief in Derry, New Hampshire, where he served since 2003. His retirement capped a career of almost 40 years in the Fire Service. George began his career in the Waterbury CT Fire Department where he served with distinction and rose through the ranks to become Chief of the Department, a position he held for 3 years before accepting the position of Chief in Derry NH. Chief Klauber is a Certified Fire Officer in accordance with NFPA 1021; a Certified Fire Service Instructor in accordance with NFPA 1501;

and a Certified Safety Officer in accordance with NFPA 1521. Chief Klauber is a member of the International Association of Fire Chiefs; the New England Association of Fire Chiefs, the New Hampshire Fire Chiefs Association; the National Fire Protection Association, and the International Association of Emergency Managers. Chief Klauber has served as a subject expert and consulting advisor to MRI clients since 2001.

**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***



# 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

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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". The signature is fluid and cursive.

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 SCHOBBER  
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  
[johnnearlmeyer@yahoo.com](mailto:johnnearlmeyer@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