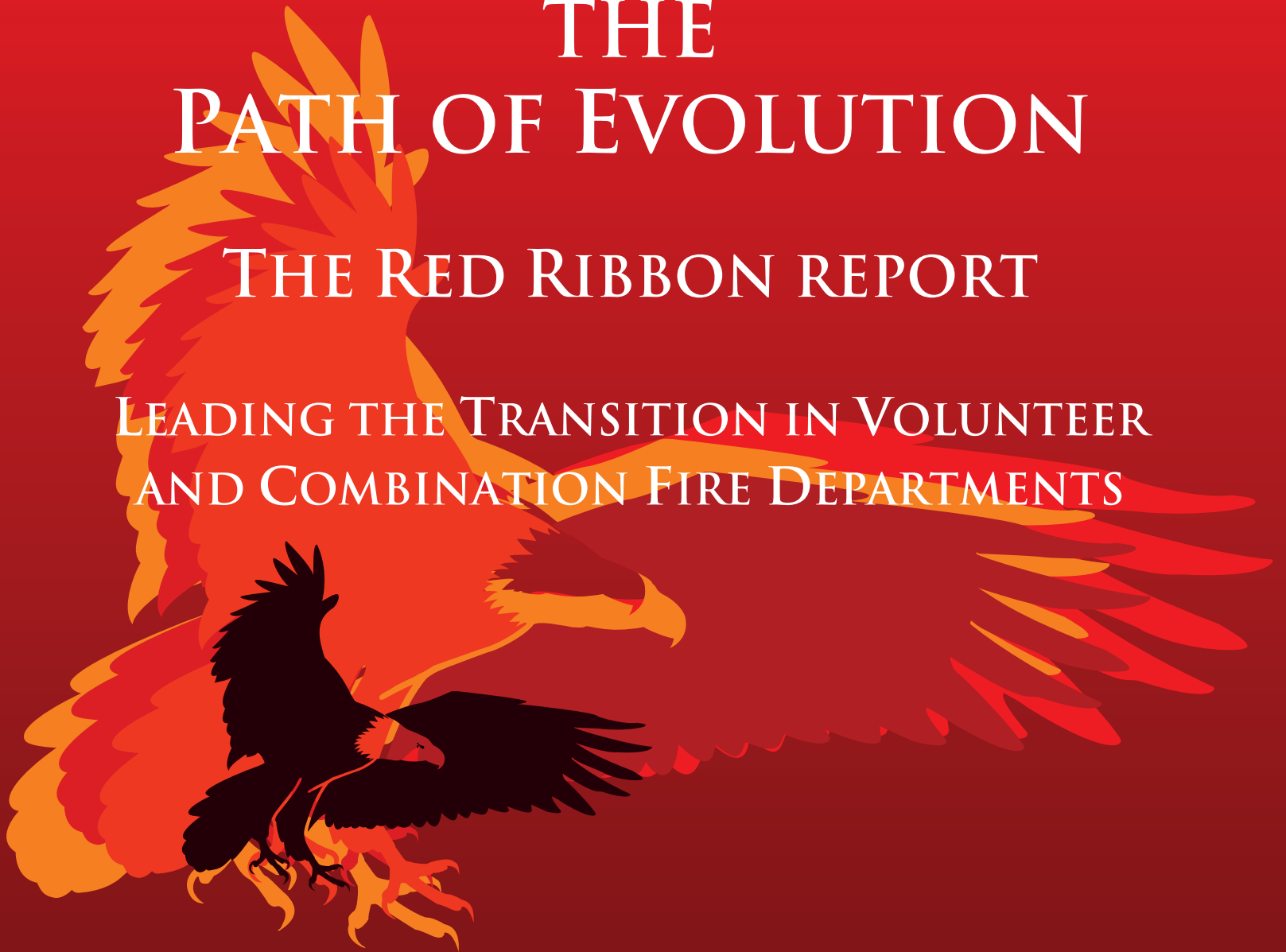# LIGHTING THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

THE RED RIBBON REPORT

LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Volunteer & Combination

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Officers Section

Lighting the Path of Evolution

The Red Ribbon Report

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LIGHTING THE PATH OF EVOLUTION

THE RED RIBBON REPORT

LEADING THE TRANSITION IN VOLUNTEER AND COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS

Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

An evolving and progressive volunteer fire department will encounter a number of service delivery options before actually migrating into the combination fire service arena. This evolution process, if managed, can be systematic and prolonged. There is no cookie-cutter approach to staffing an evolving department, but there are a variety of approaches that have been successful in many communities. This report will share several of those successful models. As the accompanying chart illustrates, there is a progression from a purely volunteer-staffed organization to one that is primarily staffed by paid personnel.
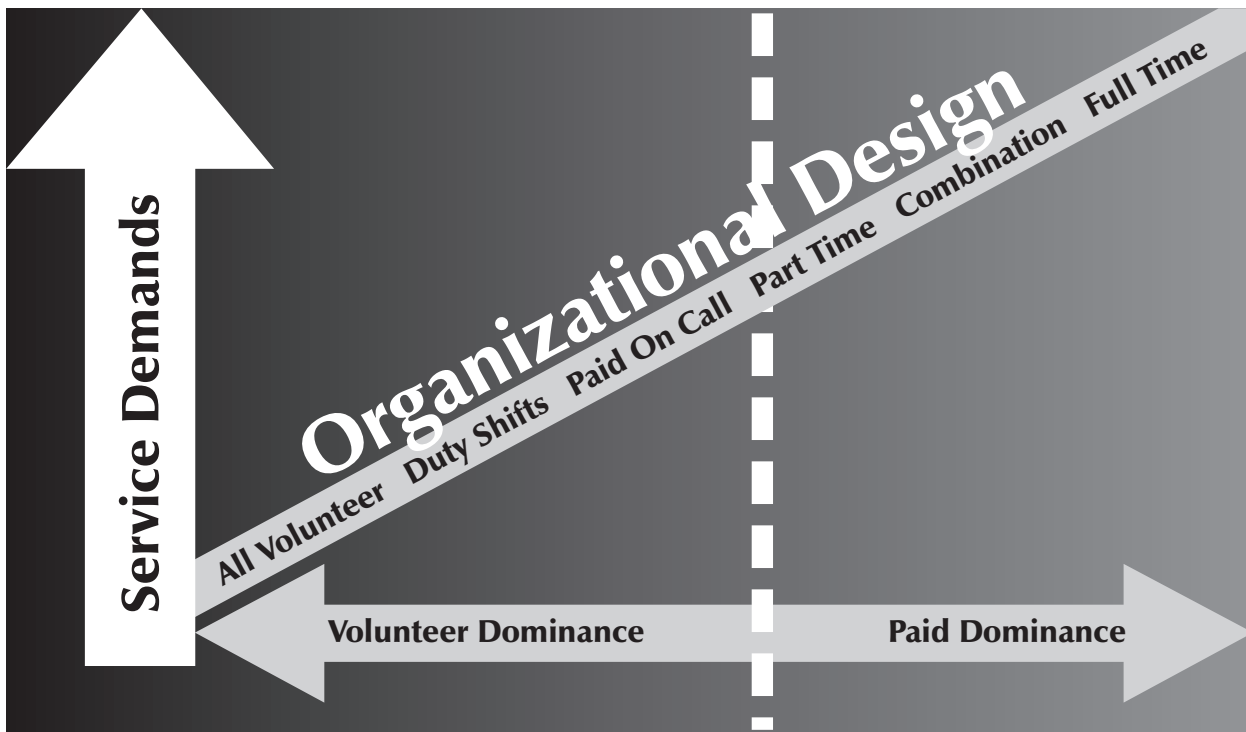
The goal of the fire service is to protect life and property by delivering the highest possible level of service consistent with need at the lowest possible cost consistent with safety. The goal of this report is to call attention to some of the strategies and options available to fire service and community leaders who are looking to do just that.

Signals of Change

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

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

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

Indicators for change

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

When the time for change has come

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Transitioning from the present system—alternative delivery systems

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

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

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

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

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

Transitioning to a combination system

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

Sample performance goals include:

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

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

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

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

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

Strategic Planning

What is a Strategic Plan?

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

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

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

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

The Vision

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

The Mission

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

The Values

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

The Objectives

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

The Strategies

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

The Goals

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

The Programs

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

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

Designing a Combination System

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

Casualties of Transition

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

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

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

Some indicators of a dual system include:

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

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

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

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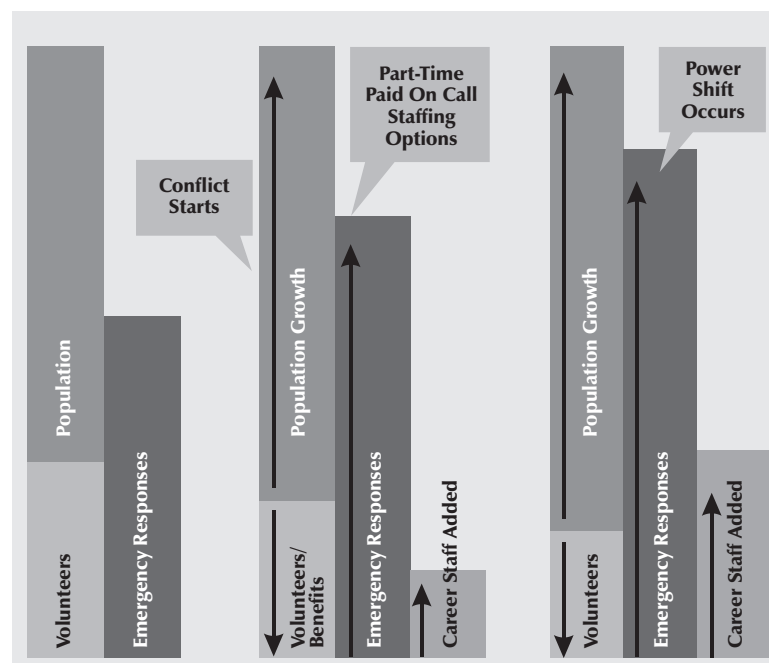
A department should conduct a cost/benefit analysis during system design to determine which model will function most efficiently for its locality. System design needs to recognize that volunteer/paid-on-call personnel are paid only for work performed. Career firefighters are paid for the POTENTIAL to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

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

All-Volunteer System

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

Combination System

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

All-Paid System

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

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

Establishing Authority

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Communication & Policy Development

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

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

Job Descriptions and Expectations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sustaining a Combination System

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

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

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

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

Tactical Equality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Resource Deployment Options

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regional Response and Mutual Aid

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Impact of Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Part-time Staffing as an Alternative

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

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

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

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

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

EXAMPLE:

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

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

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

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

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

Leadership Selection

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Assessment Center – Leadership Selection

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

Assessment Center Exercises

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hiring Practices

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

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

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

Attitudes

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

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

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

The following Web address provides an overview of the do's-and-don'ts of survey design: www.unf.edu/dept/cirt/workshops/survey/polland_handout.pdf.

Personality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Physical Abilities

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

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

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

The manual includes information on these topics:

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

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

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

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

Background Investigations

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

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

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

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

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

Medical Evaluations

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

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

Tobacco/Drug/Alcohol-Free Workplace

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(c) Making it a requirement that each employee to be engaged in the performance of the grant to be given a copy of the statement required by paragraph (a).
(d) Notifying the employee in the statement required by paragraph (a) that, as a condition of employment under the grant, the employee will:

(1) Abide by the terms of the statement and

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

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

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

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

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

Training & Certification

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

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

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

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

Reverse Transitioning: Is it too late to turn back?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Examples Of Model Combination Fire Departments

Department	Chief of Department	Web Address
Garden City FD (NY)	Edward Moran	www.gardencityny.net/fire_dept.
Long Beach FD (NY)	Ralph Tuccillo	www.longbeachny.org
City of West Des Moines FD (IA)	Donald Cox	www.wdm-ia.com
Hanover Co. Fire/EMS (VA)	Fred Crosby	www.co.hanover.va.us/fire-ems
Vashon Island Fire & Rescue (WA)	Jim Wilson	www.vifr.org
Xenia Twp. FD (OH)	William T. Spradlin	www.xeniatownship.org
Jefferson Twp. FD (OH)	Keith Mayes	www.jeffersontownship.org/departments/fire
City of Vandalia FD (OH)	Chad E. Follick	www.ci.vandalia.oh.us/firedepartment.html
Montgomery Co. Fire/Rescue (MD)	Tom Carr	www.mocofiredepartment.com
Prince William Co. FD (MD)	Mary Beth Michos	www.co.prince-william.va.us
Bloomington FD (MN)	Ulysses Seal	www.ci.bloomington.mn.us/cityhall/dept/fire
Campbell County VFD (WY)	Gary Scott	www.ccvfd.com
Troy Fire Dept. (MI)	Bill Nelson	www.ci.troy.mi.us/fire
Clackamas County FD (OR)	Norm Whiteley	www.ccfd1.com
Hillsborough CO Fire/Rescue (FL)	Bill Nesmith	www.hillsboroughcounty.org/firerescue
Volusia County Fire/Rescue (FL)	James G. Tauber	http://volusia.org/fireservices
Marion County FD (FL)	Steward McElhaney	www.marioncountyfl.org
Ponderosa VFD (TX)	Fred C. Windisch	www.ponderosavfd.org
Kitsap County Fire/Rescue (WA)	Wayne Senter	www.kitsapfire7.org
Saginaw Charter Twp. FD (MI)	Richard Powell	www.stfd.com
Farmington Hills FD (MI)	Richard Marinucci	www.ci.farmington-hills.mi.us/services/fire
Evesham Fire/Rescue (NJ)	Ted Lowden	www.eveshamfire.org
Miami Township Div. Fire/EMS (OH)	David B. Fulmer	www.miamitownship.com
Clearcreek FPD (OH)	Bernie Becker	www.clearcreektownship.com/FD/findex.htm
Miami Township FD (OH)	James Witworth	www.miamitwp.org/fireems/fire.htm
German Township VFD (IN)	John M. Buckman	www.germanfiredept.org/
Tinley Park VFD (IL)	Kenneth Dunn	www.tinleyparkfire.org
Bath Twp. FD (OH)	Jim Paulette	www.bathtownship.org/fire/index.htm
City of Roseville FD (MN)	Rich Gassaway	www.ci.roseville.mn.us/fire
York County Fire/Life Safety (VA)	Steve P. Kopczynski	www.yorkcounty.gov/fls/index.html
Village of Savoy FD (IL)	Michael Forrest	www.village.savoy.il.us/index
City of Fitchburg FD (WI)	Randy Pickering	www.fitchburgfire.com

Addendum A

Employee Expectations

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

1. Maintain and promote a winning attitude.

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

2. Practice the Golden Rule.

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

3. Be a team player.

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

4. Seek excellence.

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

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

5. Do that which is right.

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

6. Stay focused.

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

7. Participate.

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

8. Capitalize on adversity.

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

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

_____   _____

    Employee Date   Officer

Addendum B

Officer Evaluation

1. I do not interact with this officer enough to complete the survey. ❏

2. Do you personally get along with this officer? ❏ Yes ❏ No

3. How would you rate his/her ability to take charge of an incident?
   ❏ Excellent ❏ Above average ❏ Average
   ❏ Below average ❏ Needs definite improvement

4. How would you rate his/her ability to deal with personnel issues?
   ❏ Excellent ❏ Above average ❏ Average
   ❏ Below average ❏ Needs definite improvement

5. How would you rate his/her communication skills?
   ❏ Excellent ❏ Above average ❏ Average
   ❏ Below average ❏ Needs definite improvement

6. Do you believe that this officer has the appropriate leadership skills and experience to hold this position?
   ❏ Yes ❏ No ❏ Could, but needs improvement

7. Please rate this officer's abilities in the following areas. Rate on a scale of 1-5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest.
   _____ Ability to adapt to change
   _____ Level of personal motivation
   _____ Ability to motivate others
   _____ Ability to approach problems and issues in a logical fashion

8. Please rate this officer in overall performance with 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest. _____

9. Please rate his/her ability and experience to handle the following situations as a command officer. Rate each item on a scale of 1 to 5, 5 being the highest rating and 1 the lowest.
   _____ Residential structural responses
   _____ Commercial/industrial responses
   _____ Hazardous material incidents
   _____ Rescue operations
   _____ Medical emergencies
   _____ Station operations
   _____ Interaction on mutual aid responses

10. Do you support this individual in his/her current position?
    ❏ Yes ❏ No

Addendum C

Sample Career Employee Evaluation

Interim Performance Appraisal

Employee Name:	Title:
Reason for Review: ❏ Annual Performance Appraisal ❏ Interim Performance Evaluation	

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

Performance will be evaluated on the following rating levels:

5 = Outstanding — Performance consistently and significantly exceeds the requirements of the job and is beyond established standards. Employee achieves objectives at a superior level. The employee demonstrates exceptional skills and innovation in work performance.

4 = Commendable — Performance exceeds job requirements in all major areas. Employee displays leadership and initiative, produces quality work, and sets an example for others to follow.

3 = Effective — The employee consistently performs tasks at acceptable levels, produces the required amount of quality work, and makes effective use of resources (ex: materials, budget, time, guidelines, procedures, etc.)

2 = Needs Improvement — Performance is below job requirements in one or more important area(s) and immediate improvement is required. Employee fulfills some responsibilities; has difficulty completing others. Additional training or development is required to achieve performance expectations.

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

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

Discussion Points

List your contributions to the department during the past year.

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

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

Prioritize your general long-term goals.

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

2. Rate you personal performance as an emergency services provider.
    _____ points (as a volunteer) (for those assigned as emergency responders)

Discussion Points

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

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

Identify your technical strengths.

Identify your technical weaknesses and your plans for improvement.

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

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

Discussion Points

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

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

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

Discussion Points

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

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

5. Rate your overall productivity this past year. _____ points

Discussion Points

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

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

6. Rate your ability to effectively schedule your time. _____ points

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

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

9. Rate your ability to "mentor" other co-workers and volunteers. _____ points

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

General Discussion Topics

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

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

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

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

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

Overall Evaluation Score

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

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

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

_____ / _____ = _____
Total Score   Total Qualifying Questions   Performance Level

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

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

VCOS Position Statements on Fire Service Operational Issues

The following position statements provide basic information to Chief Officers. The full texts are available on the Web at www.vcos.org.

Alcohol Use

Apparatus Driver Training

Chief Fire Officer Designation

Commercial Product Endorsement

Exhaust System Installation and Use

Fair Labor Standards Act

Financial Impact Analysis Accompanying NFPA Standards

Physical Fitness

Rural Community Fire Protection Funding

Service Awards for Volunteers Performing Fire Protection and EMS

Terrorism Response Performance Objective

Training Programs

Volunteer Training Standards

Wellness and Fitness Programs

Volunteer Firefighters

Contract with America 2005

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

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

Volunteer Firefighters' Bill of Rights

Article I

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

Article II

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

Article III

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

Article IV

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

Article V

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

Article VI

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

Article VII

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

Article IX

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

Article X

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

Volunteer Firefighters Strive for Improvement

The American Volunteer Fire Service shall:

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

Authored and presented by Fire Chief John R. Leahy, Jr. to
The VCOS Board of Directors, February 2003, Lynbrook, Long Island, New York.

The Section Mission Statement

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

The Section Vision

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

Volunteer & Combination

ORG 1873

INTERNATIONAL

FIRE CHIEFS

Est. 1994

ASSOCIATION

Officers Section

IAFC Volunteer and Combination Officers Section
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Fairfax, VA 22033