

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

THE WHITE RIBBON REPORT MANAGING THE BUSINESS OF THE FIRE DEPT



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THE ONLY NATIONAL SYMPOSIUM FOR LEADERS OF
VOLUNTEER/COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS



Conducted each
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Leading the evolution of volunteer and combination fire departments



THE WHITE RIBBON REPORT

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

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

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

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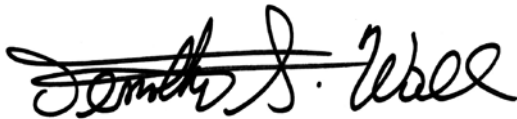
PREFACE

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

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

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

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Timothy S. Wall". The signature is stylized with a large, sweeping initial 'T' and a long horizontal line extending across the middle of the name.

Timothy S. Wall

Chair

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The eagle highlights
important information
throughout this report.

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

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

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

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

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

Expectations

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

The **local government** expects that:

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

The **fire department** expects that:

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

The **volunteers** expect that:

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

The **volunteers' families** expect that:

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



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

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

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

Vision and Planning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Community Value of Volunteers

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

Actual Cost Savings

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



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

Cost Avoidance

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

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

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

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

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

² Independent Sector, *Value of Volunteer Time*, available at www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html, viewed Aug. 4, 2006. Available on this site is a history of hourly rates and specific state rates.

³ The Insurance Service Office assesses a community’s risk under 10 categories. A community’s risk rating determines its premium cost for building insurance. For more information, please visit www.isomitigation.com.

Fire Prevention

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

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

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

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

⁵ For more information on these groups, please visit their Web sites at www.iccsafe.org (ICC) and www.nfpa.org (NFPA).

⁶ For more information on USFA sprinkler data, please visit www.usfa.dhs.gov/safety/sprinklers/.

Becoming a Part of the Community

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

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

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

Human Resource Management: Striving for Membership Longevity

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Recruiting and Hiring Volunteers

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

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

The best recruiting program is a high retention rate.

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

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

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

⁷ Bureau of Labor Statistics, *American Time Use Survey*, Sept. 20, 2005, available at www.bls.gov/tus.

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

Membership Applications

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

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

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

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

Background Checks

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

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

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

Written Exams

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

Oral Interviews

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

Physical Fitness Standards

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

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

“Popularity”

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

Discipline and Termination

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

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

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

Progressive Discipline

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

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



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

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

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

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

Investigations

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

Hostile Work Environment/Sexual Harassment

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

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

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

Poor Performers

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

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

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

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

Termination

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

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

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

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

Managing Medical Records and Related Issues

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

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

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

Retaining Volunteers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Minimize Interpersonal Conflict

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

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

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

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

Show That You Value Your Volunteers' Time

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

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

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

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

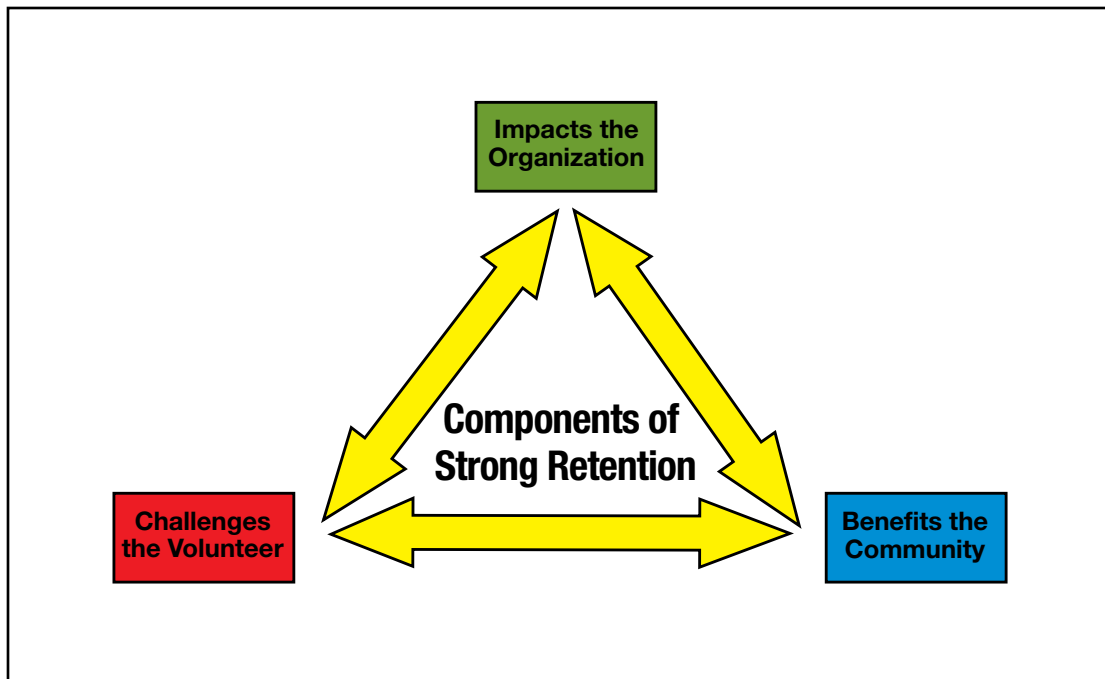
Set an agenda for meetings. For example, if the department has one two-hour meeting each month, you might set aside 15 minutes for briefing or business, 45 minutes for training or work, a 10-minute break, 35 more minutes of training and 15 minutes for conclusion or cleanup. Determine a training and meeting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

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

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



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



Offer Benefits and Incentives

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

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

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

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

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

During monthly business meetings or training:

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

End of the year:

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

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

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

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

Financial Reimbursement and Tax Breaks

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

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

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

Make the Department a Family Organization

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

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

Suggested family activities include:

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



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

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

¹⁰ National Volunteer Fire Council, *State-By-State Comparison: Tax Benefits*, www.nvfc.org/benefits/state-by-state.php?Type=Tax, viewed Aug. 4, 2006.

Avoid Motivational Traps

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

As the chief, you should make sure that:

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



Diversification Strategies

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

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

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

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

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

Tactical Equality

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

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

Finances and Budgets

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

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

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

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

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

Budget Processes

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

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

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

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

Federal Assistance

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

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

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

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

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

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

¹³ For more information on these programs, go to www.firegrantsupport.com

Drafting a Budget

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Training: Leading and Learning

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

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

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

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

Areas of Training

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

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

New Member Orientation

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

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

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

¹⁴ USFA, Statistics: Firefighter Fatalities, Preparedness Directorate, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, www.usfa.dhs.gov/fatalities/statistics/history.shtm, viewed Aug. 5, 2006.

Basic Firefighter Training

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

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

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

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

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

Regular Skills Training

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Officer Training

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



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

Please see Appendix K for a sample officer training schedule.

Mentorship Programs

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

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

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

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

Training as a Recruitment and Retention Tool

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



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

Providing Balance

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

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

Leadership and Management: Leading and Following

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

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

Leaders should:

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



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

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

A Strong Leadership Foundation

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

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

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

You must build strong relationships with your members:

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

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

Continued Learning

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

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

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

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

Conflict Resolution

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

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

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

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

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

¹⁶ For more information on the VIP, contact your state training agency or visit the program Web site at www.usfa.dhs.gov/training/nfa/resident/vip/.

¹⁷ For a sample set of fire department by-laws, please visit the VCOS Web site at www.vcos.org

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

Instead, follow this problem-solving guide:

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



Personal Integrity and Trust

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

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

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

Conclusion

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

Appendix A

Sample Department Conduct Standards

CONDUCT STANDARDS OF THE ANYTOWN VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, USA

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

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

ALL MEMBERS SHALL:

1. Follow operations, policy manuals and written directives of both the ANYTOWN FIRE DEPARTMENT and (YOUR LOCAL GOVERNMENT)
2. Use their training and capabilities to protect the public at all times both on and off duty¹⁸
3. Work competently in their positions to cause all department programs to operate effectively
4. Always conduct themselves to reflect credit on the department
5. Follow instructions in a positive and cooperate manner, and expect that supervisors will manage the department in an effective and considerate manner
6. Always conduct themselves in a manner that creates good order inside the department
7. Keep themselves trained and educated to do their jobs effectively
8. Be concerned and protective of each member's welfare
9. Operate safely and use good judgment
10. Obey the law
11. Maintain personal physical fitness

MEMBERS SHALL NOT:

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

MEMBERS SHALL BE TERMINATED IMMEDIATELY IF THEY:

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

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

Appendix B

Volunteer Fire Service Cost Savings Project

Version 2.1

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

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

Your Fire Department Data

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

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

Step 2 - Go to "Career Costs" tab

Career Cost Spreadsheet

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

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

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

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

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

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

3

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

Number and Cost of Career Personnel Necessary

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

Career Chief Officer Costs \$ 252,000

Career Fire Fighter Costs \$ 1,476,000

Total Career Costs \$ 1,728,000

Step 6 - Go to "Summary" tab.

Cost Savings to Your Community

\$ 72,000 Your Annual Personnel Costs

\$ 1,728,000 Full-time Equivalent Fire Department Personnel Costs

\$ 1,656,000 Annual Personnel Cost Savings

\$ 223.78 Savings per Household

\$ 87.16 Savings per Resident

Calculation tool provided by PivotPartners

Appendix C

Sample Fire Department ISO Rating

Cheatham County (TN) Volunteer Firefighters Association

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

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

* Deductible = \$250

* Construction = Frame

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

* Deductible = \$250

* Construction = Masonry

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

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

Appendix D

Sample Performance Improvement Plan

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

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

Appendix E

Sample Management Guidelines for a Junior Firefighter/Cadet Program

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

Cadets/Explorers/Junior Firefighters

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

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

14- and 15-Year-Olds

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

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

16- and 17-Year-Olds

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

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

*An alternative to standard recruiting is the Fire Corps program.
Visit the program Web site at www.firecorps.org.*

Appendix F

Sample Budget Proposal

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

Table of Contents

General Department Information

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

Budget Overview

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

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

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

Operational Budget Increases

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

Apparatus Replacement

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

Capital Requests and Station Improvements

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

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

Appendix G

Sample Calculation of Minimum Cost to Operate a Fire Department

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

Appendix H
Sample Statewide Firefighter Orientation Program

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

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

Appendix I

Sample Training Drill Calendar

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

Appendix J

Sample Experience Assessment

Experience Assessment

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

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

Appendix K

Sample Officer Training Schedule

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

Appendix L

Fire Chief Checklists

Personnel Considerations

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

Budgets

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

Legal Issues

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

Station Operations

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

Station Security

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

Administration

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

Meetings

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

Library

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

Training

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

Benefits

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

BEYOND HOSES & HELMETS



SEMINAR CONTENTS

TACTICAL MANAGEMENT

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

RETAINING AND RECRUITING STAFF

MANAGING THE TRANSITION

MANAGING CHANGE

TEAM BUILDING

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