

# **Fire & Rescue Service Planning Report**

**For**

## **The Town of Van Buren, New York**



**RFG Associates**

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## **PROJECT MISSION**

The goal of this project was to evaluate the current fire and rescue service delivery in the Town of Van Buren, determine the current and future needs of the community and the fire and rescue services and to present Strategic and Specific Recommendations to assure and improve the safety of the public and those who provide those emergency services within an efficient and cost effective system.

The driving force behind this project and all recommendations made is to address the primary question: **“What is in the public’s best interest?”**

## **REPORT FORMAT**

This report is prepared in a format designed to ease the readers and decision makers in their review. Every Strategic and Specific Recommendation has been based upon the findings of RFG Associates during our detailed investigation of current fire rescue services in the Town of Van Buren and in Onondaga County NY. Each recommendation reflects current modern government and business best practices for efficiency, effectiveness, and safety of personnel and the community.

Strategic Recommendations are presented to provide policy makers with a broad framework for assuring continued quality fire and rescue services in this community. They provide policy makers with a clear direction for addressing the issues found and noted in this report.

Specific Recommendations outline detailed steps that should be taken on a tactical level by leaders in the fire rescue services to improve on existing conditions.

The report: details the process that was used to gather information; presents generally accepted standards for fire and rescue services, which are important for reviewers and policy makers in understanding the process and the services being reviewed; presents the findings of each phase of our investigation; presents special Consultants' notes of important issues found during our investigation and included in the report; presents Strategic and Specific Recommendations for improvements; and provides Justifications for the recommendations made.

To ease readers and policy makers in their review of this report, each Strategic Recommendation and Specific Recommendation has been summarized and indexed at the front of the report.

The sections containing Justifications for the recommendations, Consultant notes, Supporting charts and figures, and Exhibits are summarized and indexed at the end of the report.

All maps showing fire station locations, travel distances, and response times are presented in an accompanying booklet to ease use of the maps to visualize findings.

RFG Associates is willing to further assist with development and implementation of our recommendations and other actions the community may want to take regarding these matters. Our main objective throughout this process and into the future is to help the community assure and improve the safety of the public and those who provide emergency services, within an efficient and cost effective system.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Thank you to the leaders of the Town of Van Buren, Supervisor Claude Sykes, members of the Town Board and the elected officials for the Village of Baldwinsville for the confidence they have placed in RFG Associates to perform this examination of current fire and rescue services. We deeply appreciate the freedom they have given us in this process to assure an unbiased outcome, by not placing any preconceived outcome restrictions for this report or on our recommendations for the future. As elected representatives of the citizens of this community, they have openly commissioned this report in an effort to assure that the taxpayers in this community are being provided with the most effective, efficient, and safe services possible for their tax dollars. Thank you to the leadership of each of the fire rescue agencies serving the Town for their honest input and assistance. Their dedication to this community and their willingness to serve others at the risk of their own safety and lives is to be highly commended.

Thank you to the Departments of Emergency Management, Fire Bureau, and Dispatch Center of County of Onondaga, the various agencies in the State of New York, and the many other groups who have examined the need to improve governmental efficiency and effectiveness in New York State, and Central New York specifically, who have all provided materials and input for the research that went into this report.

A special thanks to Don Jordan of the Onondaga County Planning GIS department and his staff for their expertise in the development of the travel distance and time distance GIS maps that have provided the visual demonstration of the current response capabilities of the fire rescue agencies in the region.

Thank you for the help and input of my associates on this project:

- J. Ralph Falloon: Review of fire stations, apparatus and station materials: NYS Village Trustee, Volunteer & Career Firefighter, Former President NYS Volunteer Fire Company, NYS Deputy County Fire Coordinator.
- L. D. Rolnick: for meeting assistance and report review.

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## STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

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- Specific Recommendation 17: Foreign Insurance 2% tax funds: The fire rescue agencies budgets need to accurately reflect the 2% foreign fire tax funds both for income and expense. .... 82
- Specific Recommendation 18: Automatic Vehicle Location System: All apparatus should be equipped with automatic vehicle location, AVL, system transponders to provide the unit location to the county dispatch computer aided dispatch system when units are out of their stations and available for response.. 88
- Specific Recommendation 19: Tracking Volunteer Response and pre-scheduling individual availability: Assuring response of the required personnel to every

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- Specific Recommendation 20: Class A foam systems: Engines should be modified with pre-piped systems to supply Class A foam for structural firefighting to conserve water and provide better extinguishment capabilities. ... 90
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- Specific Recommendation 32: Job Description/Duties of JFRDTC Fire Administrator & Subordinates: Stay current with all rules, laws and regulations that pertain to fire and rescue services. Develop, with Division Chiefs, Standard Operating Guidelines, SOGs, for all Operational and Administrative functions. Manage Personnel: assure proper staffing availability; direct recruiting; coordinate training to assure that all personnel are trained to current standards and

SOGs. Develop and manage Standards of Response policy for district. Coordinate and assure proper maintenance and testing of all apparatus, equipment and facilities. Manage Logistics. Develop and manage budgets. Other duties as assigned by Commission..... 97

➤ Specific Recommendation 33: Job Description/Duties of Current Chief Officers: Retain leadership in their stations and districts. Development of Standard Operating Guidelines jointly with all other Operational Chiefs in the Joint District. Assure current training for all personnel in their district. Respond to and manage emergency incidents. Provide input to the Joint District Administrator regarding the operational needs of the stations in their district. Perform daily staffing availability reviews and communicate availability information to all responders. Perform other duties as may be required. .... 97

➤ Specific Recommendation 34 : Job Description of Current Firefighters and Company Officers: Retain their current status as fire fighters in their existing fire stations. Participate in regional training to maintain and develop new knowledge, skills, and abilities. Participate in special regional teams such as Haz Mat, Water and Ice Rescue, etc. Be able to respond to incidents within the total Joint District as needed, based upon their location at the time of the incident rather than proximity to just their assigned fire station. Perform other duties as may be required. .... 97

## INTRODUCTION

The New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness began its report with the following observation: “People are demanding change at all levels of government. They are frustrated by a local tax burden that is the highest in the nation. They value their communities, but want modern, efficient services at an affordable price.”<sup>1</sup>

The Commission report also noted the following: ... New Yorkers are living under a very outdated local government structure... boundaries set during the horse-and-buggy era. .... Substantial savings are available if we choose to modernize. .... Shared services are one way to bring efficiencies... consolidation of services or even governmental entities may be needed.....<sup>2</sup>

The commission also recognized that in some areas both shared services and consolidation face many hurdles because it is human nature that “It is always harder to change than to hold to the status quo.”

Locally, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of fire and rescue services in Onondaga County has been studied at several levels during the past few years. The Town of Camillus commissioned a review of fire and emergency services in 2007 which highlighted many of the same issues found in this study and made some general recommendations on how that town should prepare to address the issues within the town for the benefit of the community.

Most importantly, fire and rescue service was also studied by the County Fire Advisory Board in 2000. The board, which is composed of fire service leaders from every part of the county, established a special Emergency Response Improvement Committee.<sup>3</sup> Following many meetings across the county, the ERIC committee issued its report in July 2003.

RFG Associates had completed several months of investigation and was in the process of conducting meetings in the community when we were given a copy of the 2003 ERIC report by a senior fire services leader in the Town of Van Buren. We later also obtained a copy of the 2007 Camillus fire and emergency services report at approximately the same time. Three of the same fire rescue agencies addressed in the Town of Camillus report also serve the Town of Van Buren. Our own investigation demonstrated that many of the conditions found in 2007 still exist today, with what we consider a continued decline in those agencies’ active membership capabilities. Our review of the 2003 ERIC report demonstrated that the fire services in Onondaga County at that time acknowledged many of the same issues which still exist today in this community. There has been a lack of action to address the issues presented in this fire service report across the region. Based upon our current investigation, it appears that regional failure to address the findings in the report of the Emergency Response Improvement Committee has led to a continued deterioration of the capabilities of the fire and rescue services. Many of the issues

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<sup>1</sup> 21st Century Local Government, Report of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness April 2008

<sup>2</sup> Ibid

<sup>3</sup> Onondaga County Fire Advisory Board E.R.I.C report August 8,2003

addressed by the fire and rescue services as reported to the community in 2003 exist in this jurisdiction today.

- **Strategic Recommendation 1: Camillus fire service report 2007 & County Fire Advisory Board ERIC Committee report 2003:** Policy makers and other community leaders should review both the Town of Camillus fire and rescue services report and the ERIC report in conjunction with this report. Regional failures to address the findings of both reports have created a worsening situation for the citizens of this region that directly effect the residents of this Township.
- **Strategic Recommendation 2 Action is Needed to Assure Public Safety:** The broader community must address the serious public safety and administrative issues acknowledged by leaders of the fire service in 2003, by other experienced public safety consultants, and by RFG Associates' current research for this report.

The elected leaders of the Town of Van Buren and the Village of Baldwinsville, and the leaders of the fire rescue services serving this community, are to be highly commended for their joint efforts to address the safety issues, frustrations and demands of the citizens and the volunteer firefighters of this community. It is evident that the elected leaders of the Town and the Village concur with the findings of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness that "...with the economic challenges New York (and local governments) face, doing nothing is no longer an acceptable answer. We need to find ways to tip the balance in favor of efficiency."<sup>4</sup>

The leaders of this community have demonstrated their commitment to improve government efficiency and effectiveness, and to involve the public in this process. Certainly, the leaders of the fire and rescue services recognize the problems and issues they face, as acknowledged in the 2003 ERIC report. Like the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness, our recommendations in this report are presented with a mix of optimism and concern. With over 40 years of local government service, we certainly have witnessed many past local government studies and reports that were not implemented because of fear and resistance to accepting change. We have also seen the positive results of long term improvements to efficiency, effectiveness and safety, when the broad input of the community was presented in a plan that was implemented by leaders and embraced by those public servants who could see the values of change beyond their comfort zone status quo.

We are hopeful that with the emphasis in this report on locally generated information and input gathered from the general public, their elected representatives, active firefighters/company officers, and the leaders of the fire service, that the recommendations in this report will be addressed. We are confident that with broad community-wide understanding of the findings in this report that there will be adoption of the recommendations, and that those actions will lead to significant improvements in efficiency, effectiveness and safety for the community and for those who have volunteered to serve this community at great personal risk, time and expense.

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<sup>4</sup> 21st Century Local Government, Report of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness April 2008

## COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

The Town of Van Buren is located in Onondaga County, New York. As of the 2000 census, the town had a population of 12,667. The town is named after President Martin van Buren, who was governor of the state when the town was formed in 1829. Rich in history, the town was part of the Central New York Military Tract of 1789 used to pay off Revolutionary war soldiers. Most of the soldiers chose to sell their allotments for cash so that the town was briefly in the hands of land speculators until the actual residents purchased lots. Settlement began around 1791. The Town of Van Buren was formed in 1829 from the Town of Camillus.

The town is a suburb of Syracuse. Suburbs are commonly defined as the residential areas which surround the central area of the urban area of a city. Suburbs have a prevalence of usually detached single-family homes and a lower population density than inner city neighborhoods, which is true of Van Buren.

The Town of Van Buren is located northwest of the City of Syracuse and is in the northwest part of the county. Van Buren is located south of the Seneca River/Erie Canal. The town is also west of Onondaga Lake. Cross Lake is located at the west town line. The Township is adjacent to the Towns of Lysander, Elbridge, Camillus, and Geddes. The New York State Thruway (Interstate 90) crosses the south part of the town. Interstate 690 is a major highway intersecting the Thruway in the eastern part of Van Buren. New York State Route 31 is a north-south highway in the middle of Van Buren, and New York State Route 173 is an east-west highway in the south part of the town. New York State Route 48 follows the course of the Seneca River in the eastern part of Van Buren.

The town has a total area of 36.1 square miles, of which 35.6 square miles is land and 0.6 square miles (1.52%) is water.

According to the United States Census Bureau, as of 2000, there were 12,667 people, 5,288 households, and 3,384 families residing in the town. The population density was 356.2 people per square mile. There were 5,618 housing units at an average density of 158.0/sq mi. The racial makeup of the town was 97.05% White, 0.80% African American, 0.51% Native American, 0.41% Asian, 0.02% Pacific Islander, 0.17% from other races, and 1.06% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 0.75% of the population.

The median income for a household in the town was \$43,003, and the median income for a family was \$50,724. Males had a median income of \$37,230 versus \$26,842 for females. The per capita income for the town was \$20,997. About 4.9% of families and 6.6% of the population were below the poverty line, including 7.6% of those under age 18 and 6.2% of those age 65 or over.

## Population Trends

In any study of local government service delivery it is important to understand the growth/decline of local populations because of the direct link between population and ability to support those services.

According to population estimates provided by the County by over laying the census blocks in the town boundaries within each fire protection district, the population of the Baldwinsville district is 8,475, Lakeside is 2,300, Memphis is 950 and Warners is 975. These estimates are derived from the numbers in the 2000 US census count: 12,667

Since the most recent US Census was taken in 2000, it was decided to look at the student population trends in the Baldwinsville School district for the years 2000 – 2009 as an indicator of more current local population trends.

School populations often are good indicators of population growth/decline trends in a community. The ages, grade levels, of the students in the school system are often good indicators of future trends. When there is an influx of young families, the number of elementary school students often grows more rapidly than the upper levels, while when the upper levels remain stable or grow slightly and lower levels decline, it is often an indication of an aging population reflecting that there is not an increase in the number of younger families in the community.

As shown below, from 2000, when the last US Census was taken, through 2005, there was an increase in school populations. This appears to be consistent with new housing stock constructed during the same period.

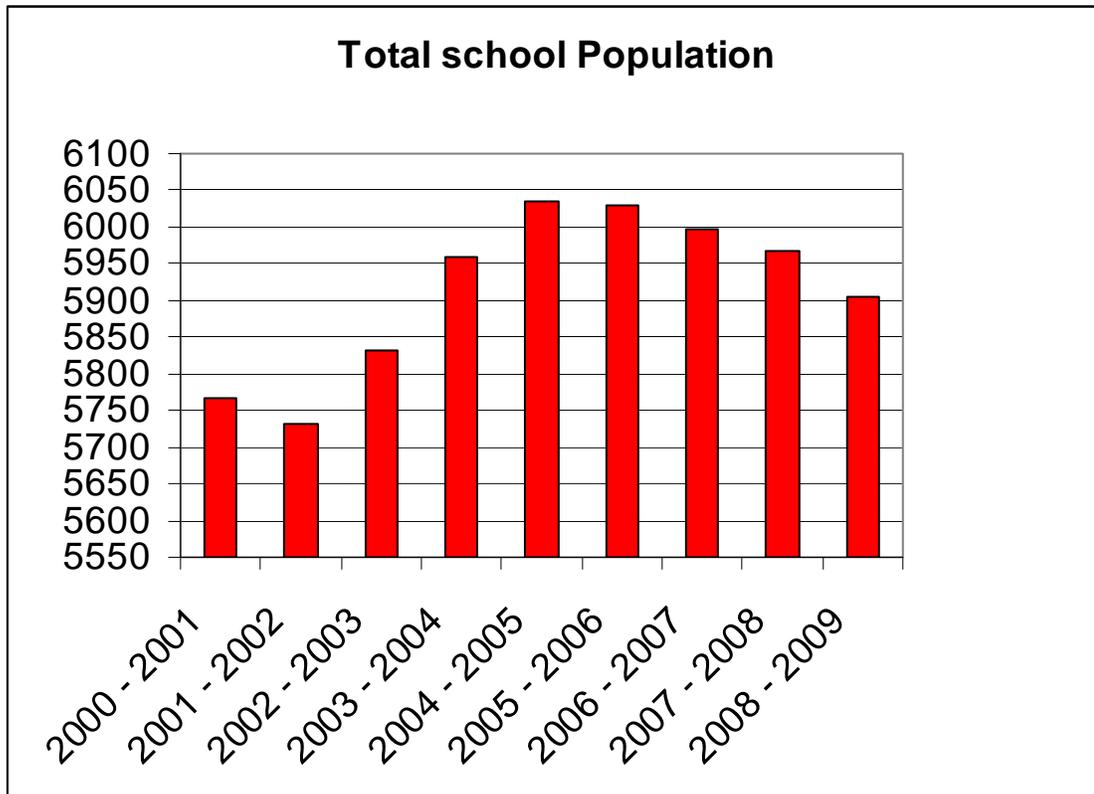
The red flag found when examining school populations, is that for the years 2006 through the current 2008 -2009 school years there has been a steady overall decrease in school populations, with most of the decline in the lower grades. The current school year population is lower than the school population for the 2003 -2004 school year.

- **Consultant note 1: Population Trends:** While the school population study certainly is not itself definitive of community trends, when coupled with observations made in the general community by the RFG Associates team members, as compared to those made by the team in other communities, it would appear that the community population is aging. The aging of a population generally has a direct impact on future service demands, as well as on the pool of people eligible to volunteer their services to the community. It will be important for community leaders to closely monitor these trends in the future as they continue to address the needs of the community.

### School Populations 2000 - 2009

School Years	2000 - 2001	2001 - 2002	2002 - 2003	2003 - 2004	2004 - 2005	2005 - 2006	2006 - 2007	2007 - 2008	2008 - 2009
k - 5	2661	2578	2604	2584	2625	2558	2575	2550	2518
grades 6 - 7	928	988	1001	999	1005	1006	979	936	922
grades 8 & 9	958	912	924	1001	1003	1053	996	1006	992
grades 10 - 13	1219	1253	1303	1376	1373	1413	1448	1476	1473
Total population	5766	5731	5832	5960	6006	6030	5998	5968	5905

**Figure 1 School Population 2000 -2009**



### **Population Projections**

Population projections, prepared by Cornell Institute of Statistical Research, suggest continuing population decline in Onondaga County unless major shifts in economic trends occur. If the trends continue as projected, within a decade there will not be enough people to fill jobs. Census projections indicate that in the next 25 years the population of Onondaga County will decline by 12% <sup>5</sup>

- **Consultant note 2: Population Projections:** The 2005 Cornell Institute study, which predicted a 12% decline in Onondaga County population in the next 25 years, did not predict the closings of major employers in the region that have taken place since the study was completed.
- **Consultant note 3: Population Trend Possibilities:** Based upon interviews with a wide scope of town residents, there appears to be a feeling that population will grow, rather than decline as predicted by the Cornell study. RFG Associates is also aware that several high tech companies in Onondaga County have been expanding, and have been seeking additional engineering staff in nationwide

<sup>5</sup> STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION A REPORT ON STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION FOR ONONDAGA COUNTY ONONDAGA CITIZENS LEAGUE 2005 STUDY

recruiting efforts. If the decline predicted in the Cornell study does not occur, and there is a growth in population due to new industries, it can be predicted that much of that new industry will be high tech and bring more professional families to the community. Decline in population or growth of population of this type will both result in more of the same challenges for the fire and rescue services.

## **GENERALLY ACCEPTED BENCHMARKS, STANDARDS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

In the Fire and Emergency Medical Services industry there are well established benchmarks for successful performance of efforts to mitigate emergencies. These standards and benchmarks have evolved over many years. Understanding these standards and benchmarks and how they affect the efficiency, effectiveness and safety of operations is an important factor in the review of existing services, and in development of policies and operational guidelines for those services.

### **ISO Public Protection Classification Program**

The grandfather in the field of establishing standards for evaluating fire protection capabilities of communities was the insurance industry. For over 100 years, through a division formerly known as ISO, the insurance service organization, the insurance industry examined fire hazards and protection capabilities in every community. ISO based its standards upon reported losses within the categories of classification in those communities.

ISO became a separate corporation in 1971. ISO is a leading source of information about risk. In the United States and around the world, ISO helps customers identify and mitigate risk, provides comprehensive data, leading-edge analytics, and decision-support services to the federal government, municipal leaders, insurance industry regulators, and public- and private-sector customers. With the cooperation and support of many federal, state, and local agencies, ISO delivers mission-critical information to help solve challenging infrastructure problems and aid in disaster readiness and threat assessment for communities.

The ISO standards have been proven general indicators for effective emergency service response. While the ISO classification survey is directed to the insurance industry as a guide for establishing premium rates for residential and smaller commercial properties, and it does not reflect all the factors that must be considered when determining effective force response for each of the services provided by the agency, the ISO survey does assist in verifying those factors that are important considerations in establishing standards of response coverage.

ISO provides information on:

- Communities — fire protection, water systems, emergency reporting capabilities and other critical infrastructure, building codes, and potential for natural and man-made catastrophes.
- Buildings — size, construction, occupancies, hazards, and public and private fire protection.

### **Event Cascade**

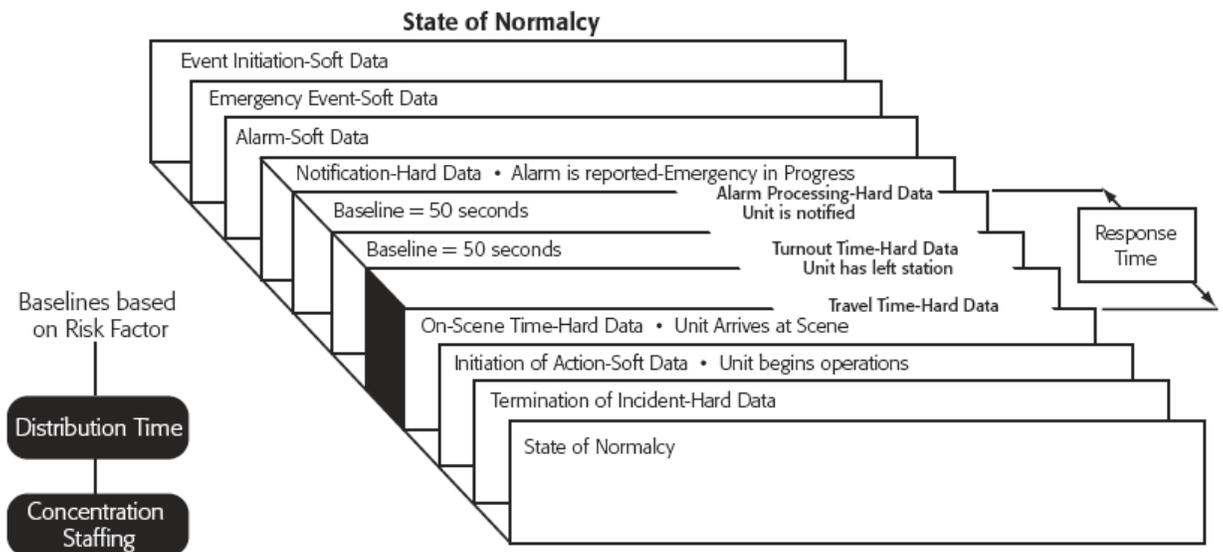
For all emergency incidents there are factors that affect successful outcomes: Station location; number of available and responding units; and the response of the required

staffing to mitigate the emergency incident. The success of each factor is based upon the reaction to and timing of each of the following cascade of events.

1. Event initiation
2. Emergency event
3. Alarm
4. Notification
5. Alarm processing/unit is notified
6. Turnout time/unit leaves station
7. Travel time
8. On-scene time/unit arrives
9. Initiation of action
10. Termination of incident

Figure 2 Cascade of events

### Cascade of Events Associated with Emergency Operations



As can be seen in the chart above, there are several uncontrollable factors in responding to emergency incidents. These factors provide soft data that is not measurable.

- There is no measurement of the time from when an incident actually starts to when it is discovered.
  - This fact hold true even when there are automatic detection devices and automatic extinguishing systems.
- There is no way to accurately determine the time between discovery of the event and notification of the emergency communications system, although that time seems to multiply in the minds of the average person discovering and reporting an emergency incident.

Call processing times, dispatch, turnout time and response time and arrival times can all be readily measured.

- **Specific Recommendation 1 Alarm process and reflex time monitoring:**  
Every emergency agency should carefully monitor call process, dispatch, reflex and arrival times.
- ❖ Justification 1: Monitoring reflex times: The total reflex times for responses are a major part of assuring compliance with established standards of response coverage policies in every emergency response agency.

The event cascade shown above is directly related to every type of emergency incident as will be shown below.

### **Dynamic Effect of Fire Growth**

This section provides an overview of the chemistry of fire growth that determines the efficiency and potential for operational safety and effectiveness of every fire department in their response to emergency incidents involving fires in structures. This section can be directly related to the findings of the ISO survey of fire protection capabilities in the time it takes to travel from fire stations, and the apparatus and staffing required mitigating and controlling the fire.

The dynamics of fire growth is essentially a chemical reaction with easily calculated and predictable elements. The stage of every fire emergency effects staffing and equipment needs to mitigate the emergency. Both staffing and equipment needs can be reasonably predicted for different risk levels and fire stages. The ability to correlate fire and emergency medical staffing and equipment to this cascade and timing of events is the primary basis for establishing an agency's standards of response coverage policy.

The fire suppression tasks that are required at a typical fire scene vary depending upon the stage of the incident fire propagation, and public and responder risk hazard vs. personnel/public safety level. What the personnel on the responding fire companies must do – simultaneously, efficiently and safely, if they are to save lives and limit property damage - is to arrive at the right time, with adequate resources to do the job. Matching the arrival of resources with a specific point of fire growth or number of patients found is one of the greatest challenges to emergency managers.

The answer for controlling the variation in fire dynamics lies in finding a common reference point; something that is common to all fires regardless of the risk level of the structure, the contents of the structure, or the time the fire has burned. The benchmarks for evaluating these factors do exist.

Regardless of the speed of growth or length of burn time, all fires go through the same stages of growth:

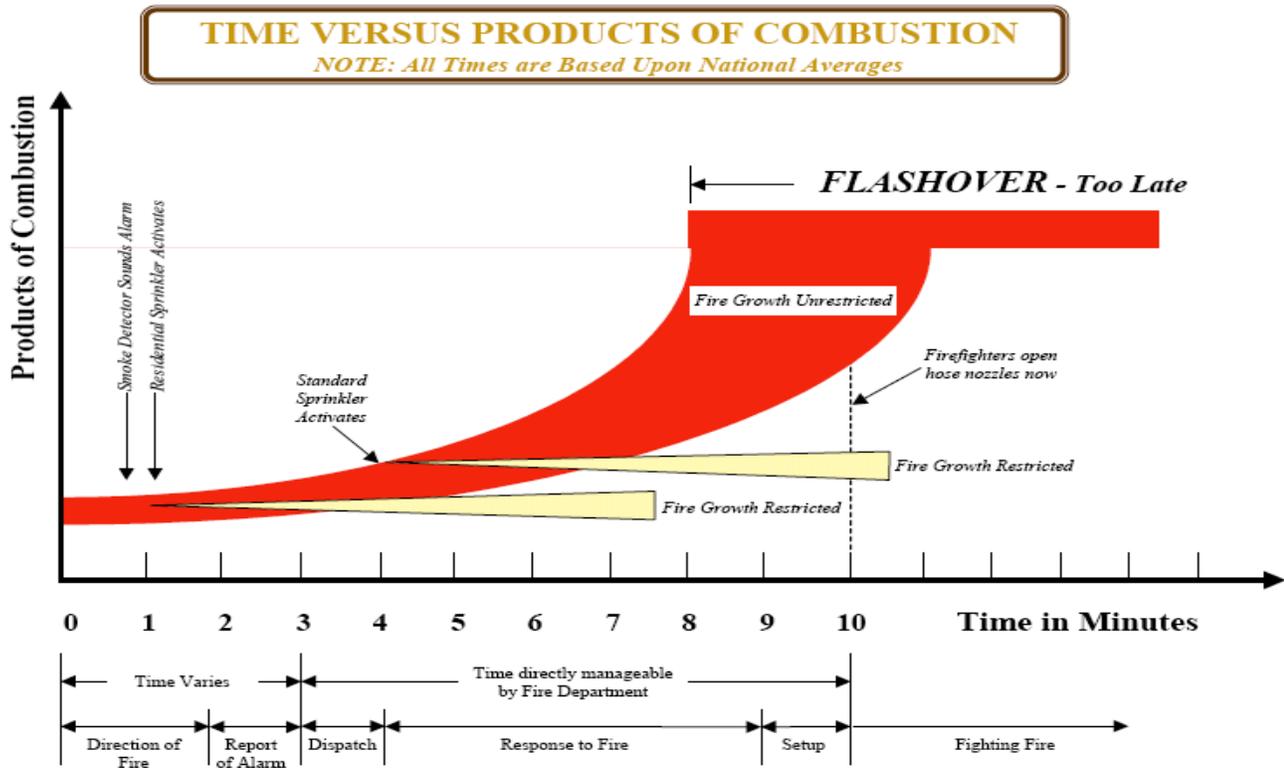
The point of Flashover marks the critical change in hazard conditions for both the structure occupants and the responding personnel. When flashover occurs, all combustibles in the room instantaneously erupt into flame. This eruption into flame generates a tremendous amount of heat, smoke, and pressure, resulting in enough force to extend the fire beyond the room of origin through doors and windows or breaches in walls, ceilings and floors. The combustion process then speeds up geometrically because there is now an even greater amount of heat to transfer to unburned objects through convection, radiation, direct flame contact, and conduction. To save structures and lives, it is vital to have fire suppression efforts, firefighting operations, well underway before Flashover occurs.

Flashover, which normally occurs within ten minutes after free burning begins, is the critical stage of fire growth for two primary reasons:

- When a fire has reached flashover, it is too late to save anyone in the room of origin. No living thing in the room of origin will generally survive flashover. The chances of saving lives after Flashover drop dramatically.
- Flashover creates a quantum jump in the rate of combustion, and significantly greater amounts of water and resources are needed to reduce the temperature of the burning material below its ignition temperature. A post-flashover fire will burn hotter and move significantly faster, compounding the search and rescue problems in the remainder of the structure, at the same time that more firefighters are needed for fire attack and extinguishment.

As shown in the following chart, there is a definite time of growth to the point of flash over that can be predicted. That growth pattern can only be changed by intervention of firefighting personnel or the activation of protection systems such as automatic fire protection sprinklers.

Figure 3 Flashover time chart



It is important to note that while the Fire Department cannot control the duration of time that passes between the inception of a fire and its discovery and reporting to the emergency communications dispatch center, there are ways to reduce this time. Assuring that there are automatic fire and smoke detection systems with direct alarm notification in every structure is the most positive factor in reducing the variables between fire initiation and notification of occupants and emergency responders. Without automatic detection

and notification there are numerous variables that affect the detection and notification time frame. These include time of day and location of the fire, the capabilities of the person discovering the fire to make a report, whether the reporting party uses a “land line” or a wireless telephone, and any other factors.

Once a report of a fire and its location has been received by the emergency communications dispatch center, the fire and rescue agencies can begin to influence the subsequent timeline of events. From the point of notification, direct Fire Department actions, along with outside influences such as additional emergency calls, distance to the incident, traffic and weather patterns, and etc. result in the final response time to any specific event.

### **Standards of response guidelines and bench marks:**

Today’s modern standards of response guidelines and benchmarks as defined by the Center for Public Safety Excellence and the Commission on Fire Accreditation International<sup>6</sup> encourages multiple levels of service within the following categories, combined with appropriate deployment of equipment and personnel. As agencies analyze their response times, those times should include call processing, turnout time, and travel time.

**Metropolitan:** Population over 200,000 people and/or a population density of over 3,000 people per square mile

Bench mark:

- First unit 4 minutes,
- Second unit 8 minutes,
- Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 8 minutes
- Performance 90%

Base line – 70%

- First unit 5 minutes/ 20 seconds,
- Second unit 10 minutes/40 seconds,
- Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 10 minutes/40

Performance 90%

**Urban:** Population of over 30,000 people and/or a population density of over 2,000 people per square mile

Bench mark:

- First unit 4 minutes,
- Second unit 8 minutes,
- Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 8 minutes
- Performance 90%

Base line – 70%

- First unit 5 minutes/ 20 seconds,
- Second unit 10 minutes/40 seconds,
- Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 10 minutes/40

Performance 90%

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<sup>6</sup> Center for Public safety excellence Commission on Fire Accreditation International Fire and Emergency Service Self assessment manual 7<sup>th</sup> edition

**Suburban:** Population of 10,000 to 29,999 people and/or any area with a population density of 1,000 to 2,000 people per square mile: (The Villages and hamlets in the Town of Van Buren are in this category)

Bench mark:

First unit 5 minutes,  
Second unit 8 minutes,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 10 minutes  
Performance 90%

Base line – 70%

First unit 6 minutes/ 50 seconds,  
Second unit 10 minutes/40 seconds,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 13 minutes

Performance 90%

**Rural:** Population of less than 10,000 people and/or any area with a population density of less than 1,000 people per square mile. (Much of the Town of Van Buren is in this category)

Bench mark:

First unit 10 minutes,  
Second unit 14 minutes,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 14 minutes  
Performance 90%

Base line – 70%

First unit 13 minutes  
Second unit 18 minutes/20 seconds,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment 18 minutes/20 seconds

Performance 90%

**Wilderness:** Any rural area not readily accessible by public or private maintained road

Bench mark:

First unit N/A,  
Second unit N/A,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment N/A  
Performance N/A

Base line – 70%

First unit N/A  
Second unit N/A,  
Balance of 1<sup>st</sup> alarm assignment N/A

Performance N/A

The criteria above show the range of performance within each population category from the target benchmark to a lesser base line of 70% of the benchmark. These performance indicators are based upon emergency, priority 1 responses.

- **Strategic Recommendation 3: Effective Firefighting Force:** It is important to continuously evaluate a jurisdiction's potential "worst case" service demand scenarios, based upon structural and life hazard risks, and the ability of the responding agencies to successfully control and extinguish a fire in those properties safely and efficiently with the equipment and staffing available.

## **Emergency Medical Service Generally Accepted Guidelines**

Although the fire and rescue services serving the Town of Van Buren do not provide emergency medical transport services, they do provide important medical first responder services for major medical emergencies. Therefore, it is important to also examine the benchmarks that have been established for the emergency medical services.

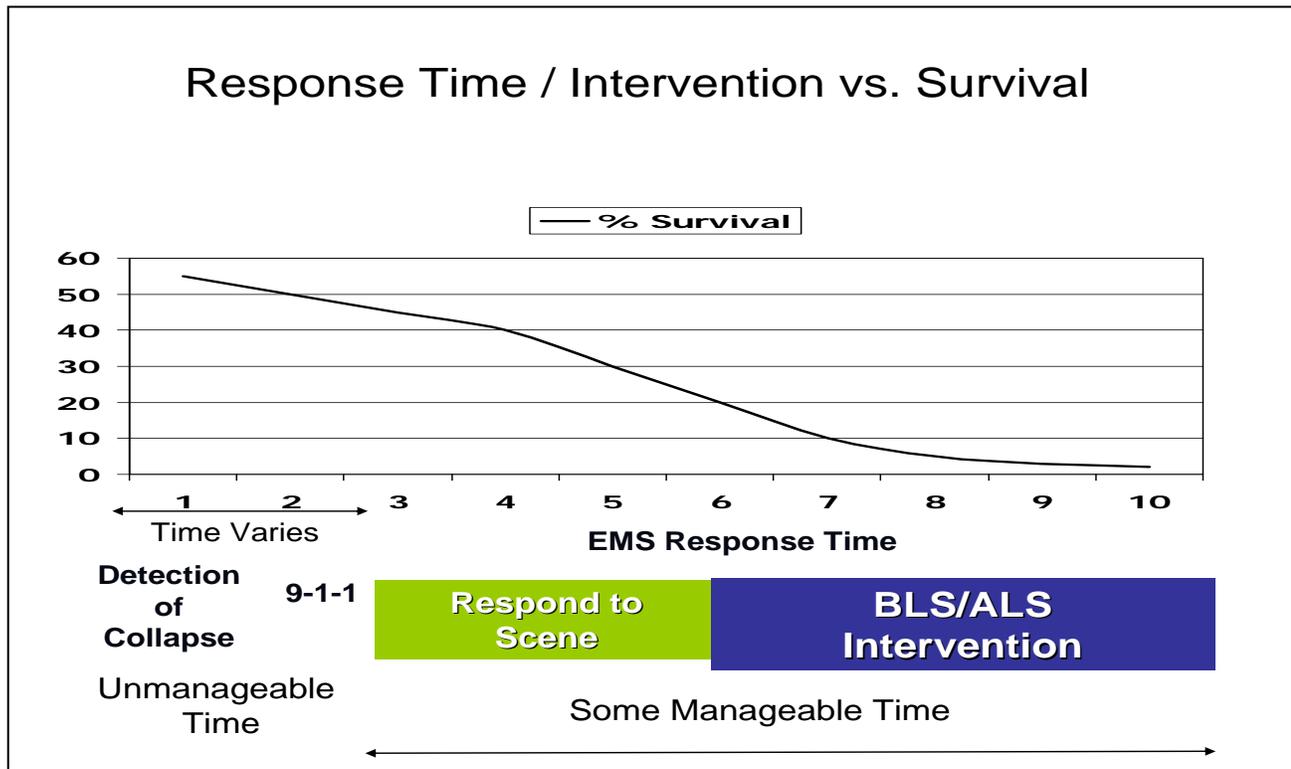
### **Cardiac Arrest Survival: Brain Death**

A patient's survival after cardiac arrest is one of the industry standards that measure emergency medical systems effectiveness. The correlation between cardiac survivability and the treatment received by patients suffering from stroke (CVA), apnea and trauma is well founded. A system that is maintained to ensure survival of the cardiac patient is better able to support the needs of other less severe, but no less critical patients.

- The American Heart Association has indicated that the ability for a patient to survive cardiac arrest diminishes rapidly unless definitive life support (Cardio-pulmonary resuscitation and defibrillation) occurs within four (4) minutes and that Advanced Life Support (ALS) is initiated within eight (8) minutes or less of the event.
- New findings from the Mayo clinic show that lives are saved or lost within six (6) minutes after cardiac arrest. In a study by USA TODAY, "data analysis show that, of the 250,000 Americans who die outside of hospitals from cardiac arrest each year, between 58,000 and 76,000 suffer from a treatable short circuit in the heart and therefore are highly "savable".

While the location of responders is an important factor in rapid response to these events, it is more important that early notification and intervention take place to increase the chances for survival. It is the patient who is in fibrillation who has the greatest chance of survival. A patient has six (6) minutes to live from the beginning of the cardiac event and the first defibrillation shock as indicated on the following chart.

Figure 4 Response time Intervention survival chart



The typical cardiac patient in ventricular fibrillation has six (6) minutes to live.

A number of organizations support early defibrillation of cardiac patients in ventricular fibrillation. The American Heart Association (AHA) endorses the position that, "...all emergency personnel should be trained and permitted to operate an appropriately maintained defibrillator, if their professional activities require that they respond to persons experiencing cardiac arrest."

In a position statement of the American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP), it states that; "the efficacy of early defibrillation with the reliable technology of current automatic external defibrillation (AEDs) is proven and widely accepted within the out-of-hospital provider community. A victim's best chance for survival is when their revival is within 4 minutes."

American Public Health Association (APHA) has taken the position that, "...AEDs need to be available, with people who know how to use them, within four minutes response time to cardiac arrest victims."

The National Association of EMS Physicians has stated in its literature that, "...rapid defibrillation is the most critical of these resuscitation interventions: strategies to enhance survival should focus on reducing the interval from collapse to defibrillation."

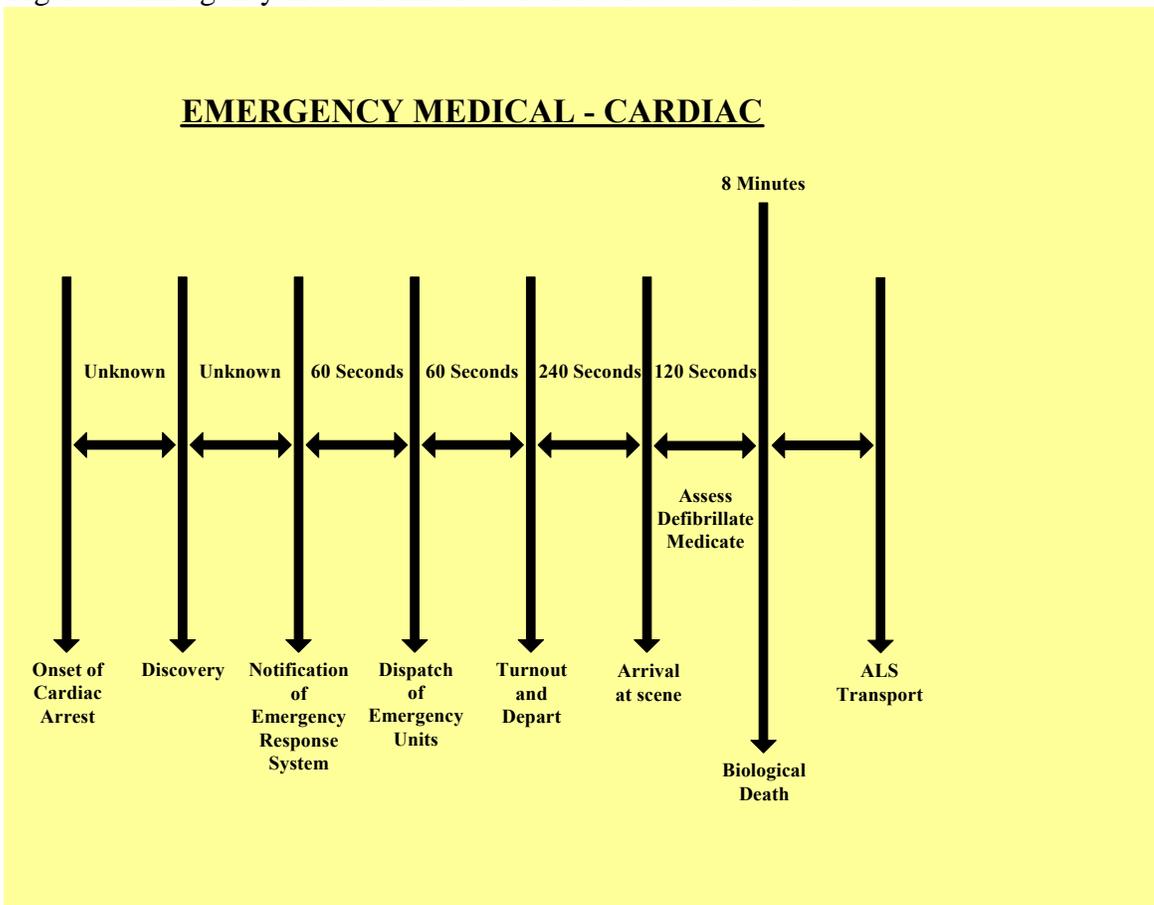
An advisory statement from the International Liaison Committee on Resuscitation stated in a 1997 article that, "Most adults who can be saved from cardiac arrest are in ventricular fibrillation (VF) or pulse less ventricular tachycardia. Electrical defibrillation provides the single most important therapy for the treatment of these patients."

The American College of Occupational and Environmental Medicine has stated that between thirteen (13%) percent and sixteen (16%) percent of workplace related deaths can be attributed to sudden cardiac arrest (SCA). They went on to state, “Factors contributing to out-of-hospital survival following SCA have been described primarily in terms of the time-related “chain of survival” paradigm. The four links of the chain include: early recognition and call for emergency medical services; initiation of basic life support CPR; defibrillation; and advanced cardiac life support (ACLS) drug support.”

Emergency Health Services Federation has stated: “Time is a determining factor in the outcome of a patient suffering from cardiac arrest. For every minute after collapse, without adequate interventions, a person’s chance of survival drops by 10 percent”. They go on to state that survival rates of nearly thirty (30%) percent are not uncommon when defibrillation is applied quickly.

Universally, all groups that study survivability of cardiac arrest victims support early defibrillation by first responders within the first few minutes after discovery of cardiac arrest to insure maximum survivability of the ventricular fibrillation patient.

Figure 5: Emergency medical time factors for cardiac survival



It is for these reasons that NFPA<sup>2</sup> Standard 1710 states that:

- “a fire department shall establish the response time objectives of 8 minutes or less for the arrival of an advanced life support unit at an emergency medical incident,

<sup>2</sup> NFPA National Fire Protection Association

where this service is provided by the fire department;”<sup>8</sup>

- ... that “units that provide ALS transport shall be staffed with a minimum of two members providing patient care that are trained to emergency medical technician-Paramedic (EMT-P) level;”<sup>2</sup>
- ... that ALS emergency response deployments, “shall include a minimum of two members trained at the emergency medical technician- Paramedic (EMT-P) level, and two members trained at the emergency medical technician- basic (EMT-B) level arriving on scene within the established response time.”<sup>10</sup>

As can be seen by comparing the Fire Propagation Curve and the Cardiac Patient Survival Rates charts below, there is a direct correlation between the response and initiation of activities to time required to save a cardiac arrest victim and the time affecting the ability of a fire department to mitigate fire propagation and rescue of fire victims successfully.

Figure 6; Effect of Response Times on Cardiac Patient Survival Rates

<b>Initiation of CPR</b> 	<b>Time to Defibrillation</b> 	<b>Time to Advanced Cardiac Life Support (ACLS)</b> 	<b>Predicted Survival Rate/ All Cardiac Arrest (percentages)</b>	<b>Survival Rate/ All Potential Survivors (percentages)</b>
10 minutes	11 minutes	13 minutes	4.6%	6.9%
5 minutes	11 minutes	12 minutes	18.2%	27.2%
5 minutes	6 minutes	11 minutes	25.8%	38.5%
<b>5 minutes</b>	<b>6 minutes</b>	<b>7 minutes</b>	<b>34.2%</b>	<b>51.0%</b>

The Cardiac Patient Survival Rates chart scenario requires:

- two EMS trained individuals to provide CPR:
  - one to prepare the AED and analyze the results of an electrocardiogram (ECG) report,
  - one to prepare for and initiate advanced cardiac life support measures,

<sup>8</sup> NFPA 1710, Section 4.1.3.1.1(3)

<sup>2</sup> NFPA 1710, Section 5.3.3.3.2.2

<sup>10</sup> NFPA 1710, Section 5.3.3.4.4

such as advanced airway management, I.V. therapy, and the range of pharmacological interventions.

This breakdown of the expected capabilities of a medical alarm assignment requires a minimum contingent of four EMS trained personnel to arrive at the scene of a cardiac arrest.

Most experts agree that four responders (at least two trained in ACLS and two trained in BLS) are the minimum required to provide ACLS to cardiac arrest victims.<sup>11</sup>

- **Strategic Recommendation 4: Automatic Defibrillators:** The town should provide or encourage all public buildings to have an automatic Cardio Defibrillator on-site and encourage local communities to train people in CPR to improve cardiac survival rates.
- **Consultant note 4: Response of Fire Apparatus to EMS incidents:** The general public often question why a fire engine is sent on Emergency Medical Service calls to support the ambulance crews. This common question will be examined in the EMS response section of this report

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<sup>11</sup> The Journal of the American Medical Association, October 28, 1992; p. 2291

## TRAINING STANDARDS

The old adage that “we do things this way because we have always done them that way.” is no longer acceptable in the fire and rescue services. The statement is often based upon information remembered from outdated training by those making such statements.

Today there are current nationally recognized standards, rules and laws regarding safety operations at every type of incident, training, and incident command, just to mention a few areas. Failure of any agency to follow those standards, even when a department or community has not formally adopted them, brings the risk of successful legal action against the department, the governing body and the individuals in charge.

Individuals and their agencies can be assured that if they are involved in a legal action for perceived failures to follow generally accepted standards for performance, their individual training records will be used to establish the foundation for those failures.

Beyond the potential for negative legal actions, the failure to maintain current training in Safety and Incident Management by those who are in, or may be in, command positions also creates a potential for failure of the primary mission of all officers to assure the safety of those in their command as well as assuring the safety of the public they serve.

There is a wide range of mandated training across this nation that applies to fire and rescue services.

- Consultant note 5: Volunteer Training Requirements: In New York State, the authority having justification, i.e., local Government, sets standards for volunteer firefighters. However, the Public Employees Safety and Health Act, Article 27a, New York State Labor Law, requires that all individuals be trained to the task or job they are to perform. Under the PESH Act, volunteer firefighters are considered public employees, (case reference: Harnett v Ballston Spa).<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that even when an agency may have well qualified instructors within the agency, it is vital for the safety of all responders that personnel from every station receive the same level of training and that the training be recorded properly.
- Consultant note 6: Mandated Training: New York State has mandated training for paid firefighters under NYS paid ff §426.7 In-service fire training; permanently appointed firefighters and fire officers normally assigned to command company operations at emergencies shall annually receive a minimum of 100 contact hours of in- service training .... in a wide range of subject areas. While this NY law applies to paid firefighters, the fact remains that career and volunteer firefighters all face the same dangers. Volunteers and career firefighters all make the same life and death decisions in the performance of their duties and must be properly trained to do so for their own safety and the community’s safety. This is the primary reason that The New York State Office of Fire Prevention and

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<sup>12</sup> Per: Thomas Wutz, NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control

Control and NYS Labor Laws and PESH article 27 recognize volunteer firefighters as employees.<sup>13</sup>

Many states today require public safety agencies to adopt the National Incident Management System Incident Command System (NIMS ICS). NIMS ICS is a system that provides a consistent nationwide approach for federal, state and local governments to work effectively together to prepare, respond and recover from domestic incidents, regardless of the cause, size or complexity. Proper training for incident management by all personnel and leaders is a primary safety concern for responders and the community.

- **Strategic Recommendation 5: Regional Training Coordination:** All fire and rescue training should be regionally planned and managed. Training records should be tracked through a central agency, such as the County Fire Bureau County Fire Coordinator, or another regional administrative structure, to properly assure each individual's training and operational proficiency, beyond individual station requirements.

One of the most basic training requirements has long been a part of the ISO fire protection rating program. The following is a summary of the training issues ISO considers when reviewing a community's training for firefighters:

- Facilities and aids: Drill tower, Fire building (including smoke room), Combustible-liquid pit, Library and training manuals, Slide or overhead projectors, Movie projector or VCR, Pump cutaway, Hydrant cutaway
- Use: Half-day (3-hour) drills, 8 per year; Half-day (3-hour) multiple-company drills, 4 per year; Night drills (3-hour), 2 per year
- Company training: Company training at fire stations, 20 hours per member per month for full training credit
- Classes for officers: 2 days (6 hours each) per year for all officers
- Driver and operator training: 4 half-day (3-hour) sessions per year
- New-driver and operator training: Classes for new drivers and operators, 40 hours
- Training on radioactivity or hazardous materials: 1 half-day (3-hour) session per member per year
- Recruit training: 240 hours per recruit

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<sup>13</sup> Exhibit 1: NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control, Fire Service Bureau, reference of manuals, statutes and regulations that will be used to provide the training authorized by subdivision 6 of section 156 of the Executive Law

# **STATE OF NEW YORK LEGAL STRUCTURES FOR GOVERNING FIRE SERVICES**

The State of New York has established a variety of legal structures for governing fire and rescue services within the state.

- *Descriptions of the governing structures of the fire and rescue services being provided to the Town of Van Buren are based upon research provided by the Town Attorney for the Town of Van Buren, at our request.*

## **Fire Districts**

A fire district is a political subdivision located within a town. Fire districts are established for the purpose of providing fire protection and response to emergencies. A fire district has an elected governing body (called a board of fire commissioners), administrative officers, and expenditure limitations. A fire district is dependent on the town as a means to its initial creation, extension and, to a limited extent, dissolution. A fire district has the power both to incur indebtedness and to require the levy of taxes, with such taxes being collected at the same time and in the same manner as town taxes. A fire district does not, however, have the authority to bill for emergency and ambulance services.

- *In the Town of Van Buren there is one fire district, the Warners Fire District, located within the Town and one fire district, the Lakeside Fire District, located outside the Town which contracts with the Town to provide fire protection services.*

## **Fire Protection Districts**

A fire protection district is a geographical area of a town which is provided fire protection pursuant to contract with any city, village, fire district or incorporated fire company. It is an assessment area within which a town can provide limited services and assess the cost back against the taxable properties situated within the district.

A town board can create a fire protection district, consolidate adjoining fire protection districts, alter the boundaries of a fire protection district, or dissolve a fire protection district on its own motion or by citizen petition.

- *There are three fire protection districts located in the Town of Van Buren:*
  - 1) *Northern Fire Protection District*
  - 2) *Memphis Fire Protection District*
  - 3) *Southeastern Fire Protection District.*

## **Fire Departments**

In cities and villages, fire protection is commonly provided by a municipal fire department, composed of career and/or volunteer firefighters. In towns, fire protection is not a municipal function but is provided by a fire district or pursuant to contract in a fire protection district. The fire department of a fire district encompasses all fire companies

organized within the district, with its members appointed by the board of fire commissioners.

*The Town of Van Buren is served by four fire departments:*

- *Baldwinsville Fire Department serving Northern Fire Protection District;*
- *Memphis Fire Department serving Memphis Fire Protection District;*
- *Warners Fire Department serving Warners Fire District;*
- *Lakeside Fire Department serving Southeastern Fire Protection District.*

### **Fire Companies**

Fire companies are subunits of a fire department. They may be a membership group of a fire department or incorporated as a membership corporation under the Not-for-Profit Corporation Law. The board of fire commissioners of a fire district may organize, operate, maintain and equip fire companies, as well as provide for the removal of the members thereof for cause.

### **Not-For-Profit Fire Corporations**

A fire corporation is a special not-for-profit corporation formed to provide fire protection to a fire district, fire protection district, or village, under contract with the governing body (board of fire commissioners, town board, or village board of trustees). Fire corporations are under the control of the city, village, fire district or town authorities having control over fire protection in such areas.

*The Town of Van Buren has two not-for-profit fire corporations serving the Town:*

- *The Baldwinsville Volunteer Fire Company, Inc.*
- *The Memphis Fire Department, Inc.*

### **Joint Fire Districts**

A joint fire district is a political subdivision created by one or more town and village boards. They operate much like fire districts, with one major exception: the municipalities which form a joint fire district are allowed to retain the right to appoint the fire commissioners. Once a joint fire district is established, the participating town and village boards must, by local law, dissolve any existing fire, fire alarm or fire protection districts contained within the new district.

- *Currently, no joint fire districts are located in the Town of Van Buren.*

### **Ambulance Districts**

An ambulance district is a special taxing district – like a sewer district or water district – created to raise revenue to fund emergency medical services. Once a town establishes such a district, a board of ambulance commissioners is responsible for contracting with a qualified emergency services provider to supply ambulance services to the district.

Unlike a fire district, an ambulance district has the benefit of being able to participate in third party (i.e., insurance) billing to defray its costs.

### **Current Initiatives RE Fire Service Governance:**

At this time, there is widespread recognition at every level of government in New York State, and among the general public in the state, that the fragmented governing structures established in the early parts of the twentieth century are no longer effective or relevant to the needs of the citizens of the twenty first century. The current antique governing structures also are no longer relevant to the fire and rescue agencies themselves, due to the greatly expanded service delivery roles and the continuously expanding legal and operational requirements that fire and rescue services must meet today.

At the State level a number of different legislative proposals have been made over recent years to revise current state laws governing fire service management, as well as other areas of government. In many local communities local leaders have been actively seeking and implementing changes in service delivery and governing structures for the benefit of their citizens.

As noted in the introduction to this report, efficiency and effectiveness in the delivery of fire and rescue services in Onondaga County was studied by the County Fire Advisory Board in 2000, when the board established a special Emergency Response Improvement Committee.<sup>14</sup> Fire service leaders in the county issued its ERIC report in July 2003. Page 10 of that report discussed the need to examine networking “for future efficiencies and organizational survival.” The ERIC report highlighted the need to address administrative needs and functional efficiencies, officer training, and many other issues which are part of the findings and detailed Strategic and Specific Recommendations for improving fire service governance efficiency, effectiveness and relevance for the community in this report.

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<sup>14</sup> Onondaga County Fire Advisory Board E.R.I.C report August 8,2003

## **FIRE RESCUE AGENCY MATERIALS REQUESTED**

Each of the agencies providing fire and rescue services to the township were requested to provide a variety of information as part of this study to assure that this review would be based upon factual information. The agencies were informed that the scope of our work included gathering information about current services, and the facilitation of meetings with the community, elected officials and the members and leadership of the fire rescue services, to assist in review of existing conditions and community expectations. They were informed that the combined information gathered would become the basis for our assistance in development of strategic plans for the future.

We are requested specific information about each department and the personnel in it.

- Department Contact Information.
- Department Summary: with a separate page for fire station to give us a broad overview of their department.
- Department Personnel Review.
- Current facility report: The agencies were requested to detail any major facility issues that have been noted or requested.
- Department Budgets: Operating and Capital for the current year and past 3 years. The agencies were advised that if their budget information was not readily available, they could substitute copies of the financial audits that have been completed and filed with the state for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008.
- Fire district voting reports for the years 2006, 2007 and 2008.
- PowerPoint Presentation: We requested that the leaders of all of the departments providing fire and rescue services work together to develop a single short (15 minutes maximum) PowerPoint presentation to highlight the services being provided to the community by their fire and rescue services.

We requested that the following materials be available for review by the consultant team on site when we visited each station as part of our effort to review existing facilities. The agencies were informed that no materials would be removed from their location for this part of the review process.

- Response/Incident Reports for 2008, 2007, 2006.
- Department training records
- Department Personnel records
- Apparatus Maintenance and Testing Records
- Department Standard Operating Guidelines or Practices; SOGs or SOPs
- Water supply location maps or books
- Hydrant inspection records
- Most recent ISO summary report

## **Fire Rescue Agency Materials Received**

Each agency provided us with most of the materials we requested. There was a lack of individual staffing survey responses from all agencies and some other requested items. However, the information that was provided by the departments, when added to materials received from the State and the County gave us a broad view of existing conditions when matched to our onsite visits to each fire station.

## **Staffing Review**

The review of fire and rescue services in the township began with the most important element in service delivery: a review of the personnel providing the services. Each of the agencies was asked to have each of their members complete a survey, which was designed to gather staffing availability and qualifications information while maintaining personal confidentiality of the individual responders. While the number of personnel reported as active members of each agency did not match the number of staff survey reports received, there were sufficient replies to give us an insight on staffing issues.

## **Risk Review**

Each Station was then requested to provide a special risk review to highlight special risks that were unique to their first due response area. The run cards provided by the county dispatch center and team observations provided us with a clear view of current firefighting challenges faced across the town.

## **ISO Classification**

Oral review with department leaders indicated that current ISO ratings range from an excellent ISO 3 to ISO 9. Two departments reported that their ISO rating was 6/9 where the ISO 9 rating accurately reflected ISO valuations and ratings for areas without water supply.

- **Strategic Recommendation 6: ISO Rating Improvement:** An in-depth review of ISO ratings should be conducted and steps taken to improve those classifications to reduce homeowner fire insurance costs.
- **Specific Recommendation 2: Improve ISO ratings in areas where there is no public water supply:** Agencies should work together and with ISO to improve ISO 9 ratings in areas without public fire hydrants. This can be accomplished by demonstration of their ability to provide water for a sustained period of time in the volumes required, by utilizing water shuttles, using tankers, and/or by pump relays from static source water supplies. Doing such demonstrations of ability to provide water from alternative water supplies will require inter-agency planning and cooperation to be successful.
- **Strategic Recommendation 7 ISO Rating review:** The Town(s) and Village(s) should request detailed ISO classification information directly from ISO for each agency serving their jurisdictions, so that this information can be fully reviewed and further utilized in an effort to improve classifications and reduce homeowner fire insurance costs.

## **COUNTY AGENCY MATERIALS REQUESTS**

### **GIS Mapping**

One of the most important aspects of examination of the delivery of fire and rescue services is to carefully review the travel distances and response districts for each fire station that responds in or into the township. We are grateful that the County has the GIS capability to assist in this important aspect of this process.

As a major part of this process, Don Jordan and his staff at the County GIS department provided a great deal of assistance for this project. Maps were produced that show great detail about station locations and the travel distances from each, including:

- Locations of all fire stations for Baldwinsville Fire district, Memphis Fire district, Warners Fire district, Lakeside Fire district in the Town of Van Buren and the location of all fire stations in all towns adjacent to the town of Van Buren
- GIS Maps showing travel distances from each fire station showing
  - 1 mile (green)
  - 2 1/2miles (yellow)
  - Over 2 ½ miles and Under 5 miles (Purple)
  - Over 5 miles (red)
- GIS Maps showing travel times from each fire station estimating travel time of 30 miles per hour showing distance covered in:
  - Under 6 minutes (green)
  - Under 8 minutes (yellow)
  - Over 8 minutes and under 12 minutes (Purple)
  - Greater than 12 minutes (red)
- Maps showing water supply Hydrants, wet & dry and identified static sources within the Township.

These maps are presented in a separate map booklet that accompanies this report. It is important that readers of this report visualize the information on the map pages to easily understand current station locations and response patterns that could be utilized to assure public safety.

## *County Office of Emergency Communications*

To provide an accurate review of response times and patterns for each fire station that responds into the township, we requested the following information from the 9-1-1 office regarding the dispatch records for Baldwinsville Fire district, Memphis Fire district, Warners Fire district, & Lakeside Fire district for 2008, 2007, and 2006:

- Dispatch protocols for all call types that Fire agencies serving the Township respond to.
- Automatic aid dispatch agreements that may be in effect for these agencies.
- Dispatch information for the years 2008, 2007 and 2006: For analysis, we requested that this report show:
  - Date
  - Call receipt time
  - Call Type
  - Incident Number
  - Dispatch Time
  - Agency(s) Dispatched
  - Units Dispatched
  - Station acknowledgement time
  - First Unit arrival time
  - Last unit returned to service time

❖ *The County Emergency Communications center provided the requested dispatch data for 2007 – the present. Prior years materials are in a format that is no longer in use by the center, and based upon a review of the materials provided RFG Associates did not believe that it was vital to our research to require these materials.*

- **Consultant note 7: Call Process Times:** We were informed that the County Dispatch Center does not track call process times: the time from when an emergency call is answered at the center to the time of dispatch of emergency response units.
- **Specific Recommendation 3: Tracking Call Process Times:** The County Emergency Communications Center should be required by user agencies to track call process times and provide a regular report to all user agencies and the community on the length of time it takes to process emergency calls from time of answering the emergency phone call to dispatch of public safety agencies. The report should be broken into Fire, EMS, and Police segments, due to the delays that are often inherent in dispatching police units based upon established call priorities.

## *Department of Emergency Management*

The County Department of Emergency Management was requested to provide the following information as part of this report for each of the departments in the township: County training records for individuals and companies; County SCBA fit testing records for individuals from each agency.

*The County Department of Emergency Management and Fire Bureau did not supply the SCBA fit test information and referred us to the individual departments.*

- **Consultant note 8: County Fire Training Records:** Records provided by the County covered the time period 01/01/1976 to 02/17/2009. These records were reviewed to determine the current County Fire Bureau recorded training activities within each department, with 2004 to the present being considered current.

Each agency also provides in company training that may not be forwarded to the County Fire Bureau. However, the number of individuals who keep current with training provided by or through the County Fire Bureau is generally a good indicator of the depth of regional involvement, and motivation of a department's membership.

### **Records Management**

Having and maintaining accurate records covering all aspects of every fire and rescue agency is important for proper management and personnel safety. There are many excellent records management systems available in today's marketplace. The important factors in selection of a records management system include assuring that it is: compatible with the dispatch system CAD; compatible with national incident reporting systems; easy to use and to extract reporting information from; and, most importantly, technically supported by a corporate structure with the financial strength and technical staff required to assure long term product support.

- **Strategic Recommendation 8: Records Management:** All records for all aspects of the fire and rescue services, including, but not limited to, personnel, apparatus, facilities, and incident reporting, should be recorded in a single well-managed and regionally available records management system.
- Most recent ISO summary report for each department

*The County Department of Emergency Management and Fire Bureau did not supply this information and referred us to the departments.*

- Reports of any interactions between County Fire Coordinators and the departments.

*The County Department of Emergency Management, Fire Bureau provided two (2) customer satisfaction surveys as their response to this request. One was for Warners for a barn fire, date not indicated, the other was for Baldwinville for a FSTR 99 incident on 7/21/07*

- **Consultant note 9: Reports of interactions with County Fire Coordinators Office:** Two reports were received from the county fire bureau. Both reports were unsigned, but I assume they were prepared by responding County Deputy Fire Coordinators. The fact that there is a form that has been developed by the County Department of Emergency Management to record incident-specific information regarding events is encouraging. This form can be a valuable tool in review of incidents and in the development of standard operating guidelines and procedures,

and the training that would be based upon those guidelines, for improvement of safety and efficiency at future incidents.

- **Specific Recommendation 4: Customer Satisfaction Tracking Form:** The agencies should establish or adopt a regional official customer satisfaction survey form, like the one that has been developed by the County Department of Emergency Management, to record incident-specific information regarding events after every incident.
- ❖ **Justification 2: Customer Satisfaction Forms** should be used for the review of incidents, and the information gathered should be used in the development of standard operating guidelines and procedures, and the subsequent training that would be based upon those guidelines, for improvement of safety and efficiency at future incidents.
- Automatic aid dispatch agreements that may be in effect for these agencies
- **Consultant note 10: Automatic Aid:** The County Department of Emergency Management and Fire Bureau provided us with sample runs cards for target hazards in each department, but did not supply us with copies of any current contracts regarding automatic aid agreements. The run cards did provide an overview of how automatic aid is dispatched, but not the reasoning for which units are utilized in those responses.
- **Strategic Recommendation 9: Mutual and Automatic Aid agreements:** Conduct a review of all existing Automatic and Mutual aid agreements to assure validity with current operating practices. Each should assure that the closest unit to every incident is always immediately dispatched.
- ❖ **Justification 3: Contractual Review:** All automatic and mutual aid agreements are legal contracts, and require regular review to assure that agreement documents accurately reflect current operational practices.

## MEETINGS FINDINGS

The following chart indicates the combined responses from meetings of Elected Officials, The General Public, Firefighters/Company Officers, and Chief Officers and Civil Officers of the departments in our efforts to brainstorm Services, Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats, and Goals for the fire services in the Town of Van Buren.

### **Summary List of services that are currently being provided to the public by the fire and rescue services:**

<u>Elected officials</u>	<u>rank</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>rank</u>	<u>Firefighters</u>	<u>rank</u>	<u>Chief officers</u>	<u>rank</u>
Firefighting & EMS	1 & 2	Firefighting & EMS		Fire protection & EMS	1	Firefighting & EMS	1
Fire prevention , Smoke alarm awareness Training for groups schools	3	Accident rescue		Fire prevention Fire inspection codes	2	Fire Prevention	3
Search rescue river and land	4			Water rescue and ice rescue Search and rescue lost persons Dive operations	3	Variety of Search & Rescue SCUBA Ice Cold Water Rescue Confined Space Rescue	
Pumping basements /filling sandbags— community services				Community services outside fire service		Haz-Mat	
Keeping roads open during storms				Auto extrication accidents		Heavy Extrication	
Set insurance rates to make development more attractive				Good intent calls false alarms lift assist etc		Public Service Pumps Status checks residents	
Parades, public relations				Hazmat		Emergency Shelter	
Recruitment, giving people a way to participate/volunteer				Fundraising		Building Inspector	
Opportunity to develop the youth in community-give opportunities				E 91 respond throughout county		Brush Fires	
				Assist police		Assist Police	
				Confined space		CO response	

- **Consultant note 11:** The summary listing of services being provided to the public clearly indicates a failure of the agencies to communicate the full scope of services they are providing to the public and to the elected officials of the community.

**Summary List of Strengths of the current fire and rescue services**

<b><u>Elected officials</u></b>	<b><u>rank</u></b>	<b><u>Community</u></b>	<b><u>rank</u></b>	<b><u>Firefighters</u></b>	<b><u>rank</u></b>	<b><u>Chief officers</u></b>	<b><u>rank</u></b>
<b><u>GREAT VOLUNTEERS</u></b> Experienced Members Proficient providers of both EMS and fire service	1	Positive attitudes of volunteers		Dedication of volunteers!!!	1	Number of Trained FF's	1
Great response times	2	Good response times		All trained to standards quality of training and certified fire instructors Codes training by Town of Lysander	2	Mutual Aid	2
Mutual aid between departments	3	Well trained		Latest updated equipment apparatus	3	Aggressive young FF's	
Good educational opportunities for training (OCC and Upstate)	4	Good insurance rates because of fire dept.		Mutual aid Joint station (helps w/ response times too)	4	Current and continuing weekly training More advanced training through NFA Lysander CODES training	
Equipment & Newer facilities & stations in some districts	5	Best BBQ in town		Convenient placement of stations New facilities		E-91 concept	
Good leadership	5	Like their department		Availability of firefighters during day		ISO rating	
				Incentives to volunteers Service award program Pension program Tax incentive program		Quantity and Quality of FF's	1
				Strong team oriented		Shared Fire Station	
				Box alarms preplanned responses, newest updated computer dispatching CAD Engine 91 program Speedy response		Strategically located Stations	

- **Consultant note 12:** The summary listing of strengths of the fire rescue services indicates the value elected officials, the community, and the fire rescue services at each level have for the volunteers that serve this community, and the value placed on proper training, equipment, and station locations.

**Summary List of Opportunities for the future of the current fire and rescue services**

<b>Elected officials</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Firefighters</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Chief officers</b>	<b>rank</b>
Cost savings through combined purchasing Eliminate duplication of equipment	1	<i>None of the interviewees had any response</i>		Recruitment and retention tools		Cooperation & consolidation	
Even better response times	2			Ability to upgrade equipment/training		Group Purchasing	
Volunteer incentive programs; Improved recruitment/coordination of training	3			Keep growing		Explorer Program	
Better ability to pre-plan operations	4			More volunteers		Population growth	
Redistricting based on growth patterns				Daytime staffing		Opportunity to save , less duplication	
More authority for fire marshals, inspectors				Possibility of consolidation Working together			
Consolidation based on public opinion				Combined resources			
Expand water to outlying portions of town							

- **Consultant note 13:** The summary listing of Opportunities clearly indicates that all parties understand there are opportunities to improve current administrative functions in many areas.

**Summary List of Weaknesses of the current fire and rescue services**

<b>Elected officials</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Firefighters</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Chief officers</b>	<b>rank</b>
Unfunded mandates		Past wars against the community by some people in the fire service		Lack of public knowledge/education of services offered		Rising cost of doing business Rules restricting group purchasing	
Lack of staffing		Departments appear to feel that they don't answer to the public that provides their funds		Lack of staffing especially in certain times Mutual aid not aware of interior/exterior status/needs Inadequate mutual aid at times		Lack of Daytime responders	
Turf wars "If it ain't broke don't fix it" mentality caused by varying organizational structures in fire services and governments.				Politics		Politicians do not understand	
Lack of public awareness of volunteers				Lack of recruitment Scheduling staffing preparedness knowledge		Inability for Fire Service to accept change	
Cutbacks in education training funding and opportunities				Not enough money for training		Grant writing issues	
Radios				Radio system			
Training not all done by certified instructors				Recruitment/retention		Towns that tax moneys raised by fire departments by way of special events	
Lack of younger members due to changing community				Water supply in rural areas			

- Consultant note 14** The summary listing of Weaknesses clearly indicates that there are weaknesses in the current system that are impeding the ability of the fire and rescue services to provide efficient and effective services to the community. The fact that all parties acknowledge so many of the same issues is a positive indicator for future improvements. The lack of understanding between elected officials and fire service leaders can be overcome by addressing these issues. There are also residual negative feelings in the community about the fire services

that do not appear to be relevant any longer, based upon our observations of the dedication of current personnel and leaders to serving this community. This can be overcome in time through joint efforts of the elected officials and the leaders of the services to keep the community aware of current activities and attitudes.

***Summary List of Threats to the current fire and rescue services***

<b>Elected officials</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Firefighters</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Chief officers</b>	<b>rank</b>
Lack of new volunteers		Getting people to volunteer		Money Economy Budget Changing standards, expensive to keep up time and money		<i>Studies and Consultants</i>	
Increasing mandates		Younger volunteers moving away from town		Unfunded mandates		Economy, Increased mandates Time commitment	
Lack of funding		All the time demands for training		Public awareness support		OSHA Mandates	
Public misunderstanding				Elected officials unaware		Lack of Public understanding	
Inability to cooperatively purchase				Paid taking over volunteer services		Lack of Govt understanding	
Lack of standardized equipment				Duplication of apparatus		Equipment cost	
Increasing expenses— equipment, <u>insurance</u> , training				Lack of staffing/new recruits and retention		Increased call volume	
Lack of water to all locations infrastructure				Media			
Increased hours of training required				Fire service members can be their own worst enemies			

- Consultant note 15:** The summary listing of Threats clearly indicates that many of the threats recognized by all parties are based upon funding availabilities, and mandates that every agency in the nation is facing. There is an acknowledgement that staffing by volunteers has been and will continue to be impacted by the economy and changes in the community. Individual meeting attendees expressed frustration that they have little ability to control those factors. The fact that several chief officers see surveys and consultants as a threat to the fire and rescue services reflects their experience that often such studies take valuable time, but the resulting reports often do not provide specific and strategic plans to address the issues found. Alternatively, the reports are not addressed by community leaders to a satisfactory conclusion. This report will lay out a clear plan of action for the community and the fire and rescue services.

**Summary of meeting attendees Goals of/for the future of the fire and rescue services**

<b>Elected officials</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Community</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Firefighters</b>	<b>rank</b>	<b>Chief officers</b>	<b>rank</b>
<u>Best services at lowest possible costs to taxpayers</u>		Want them available to respond with the right tools and training if I have an emergency		Still be around to provide services		Increase membership	
Decrease unfunded mandates and promote reform of state regulations				Still have funding		Survive	
Fully qualified/trained members and increasing membership				Get politicians on our side		More Shared Services	
Less adversarial relationships between departments and elected bodies				Everyone goes home on every alarm		Maintain services while saving costs	
More predictable budgeting				Better cooperation between departments		Better Funding	
Better long term planning				More people involved from community with Knowledge and involvement		Better education of Public and elected officials	
Functional consolidation/sharing				Increasing personnel		Provide better services	
Finish radio purchasing				Daytime staffing		Continue to grow	
Leverage fact that thruway, canal, are in area to somehow secure or enhance funding?				Better cooperation with media and elected officials			
Oil city park/landfill concerns; possible revenue source?				Work harder at providing better services			
				Training			
				Improve public safety			

- **Consultant note 16:** The Summary of Goals and a total review of the Services, Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats, and Goals for the fire services in the Town of Van Buren chart shows a close correlation between thoughts of the several groups. The genuine feelings expressed by all parties demonstrated both an understanding of the positives and the negatives, as well as a general

willingness to address them in a constructive fashion for the betterment of service delivery and for the safety of responders and the public. Review of the findings from each meeting showed that there also appears to be an understanding across the lines of elected officials, fire fighters, company officers, chief officers and civil officers that some form of consolidation would be of benefit to the community and for the fire and rescue services. In conversations, as well as in meetings, there even appeared to be a willingness to accept some form of consolidation if certain conditions were met. The primary concern of each is the need to assure that any consolidation is designed to assure continuation of neighborhood /community services and respect for the volunteers serving each community.

### **General Public Meeting**

On 4/15/09 a meeting was held for the general public in the Town. The plan for that meeting was to form groups to brainstorm their ideas concerning six factors that are needed to produce relevant recommendations for improvements for efficiency, effectiveness and safety.

Unfortunately, the meeting for the general public was only attended by two people. This is not a unique experience in this process because the average citizen in most communities does not have knowledge of or experience with their fire rescue services until they have an emergency.

Because both individuals who attended this meeting had immediate family ties to the fire service, their comments will not be reported in the general public section of the chart below. However, their insight to current conditions is extremely valuable to this study because of their intimate knowledge of the fire rescue services. Their insight is presented here for the benefit of the decision makers in the community, whose goal it is to assure quality services to the public.

Our team met with both of these citizens to listen to their views of the fire services in the township:

Both people were completely aware of the many services being provided to the community services. They listed the Strengths as: Response times (even good in rural areas); Good Mutual aid in region; Training (especially in-house) is good; Familiarity with the people in the area they serve.

The attendees provided their opinions on the Opportunities for the future of the fire rescue services: Cooperative training; More standardized policies and procedures; Better incident command and coordination; and the need to improve district lines that currently make no sense in their opinions.

The two attendees identified what they felt were Weaknesses in current services: Staffing (especially during week days); Double income families that can't commit to volunteering; Loss of auxiliary services, wives and family members unable to support volunteers due to other demands on their time; Loss of community feeling/fun among volunteers and families; Unpredictable response of volunteers; Water not available in many coverage areas; The demands for service from one department to cover for others when the other

agency can't get enough responders, which often causes the covering department's protection area to be uncovered or causes delays in response to the covering district.

Each attendee stated their opinion that the following Threats adversely affect fire and rescue service delivery capabilities: Some fire companies are currently territorial; There is little respect between some departments; Those in charge of some departments appear to be afraid of losing their control; Smaller departments are afraid of losing their identities; The attendees expressed that there appears to be animosity between local governments and the fire rescue services; They observed that the Public is not educated about fire rescue services or supportive of them; They cited a specific case of NOT IN MY BACKYARD attitudes by citizens when a citizen was going to donate money and land for a new station and the community voted it down; They also observed that this is an aging community with increasing service demands being made upon fire and rescue services.

These two participants clearly defined excellent Goals for future of the fire rescue services: Improve volunteer recruitment by re-instilling the fun and sense of community within the fire and rescue services; The need to adjust current district lines that don't make sense (redistrict); Improve camaraderie among volunteers; Bring in some paid firefighters to cover when volunteers are not available to improve response; Possibly one huge department managed together; Unite departments without losing smaller departments; Shared resources.

The two participants also identified key actions that will be required for success of this project: Public support/education will be key for success. The public must be informed about ISO (insurance ratings), taxes, costs, coverage and response times issues. They also were aware of the importance to assure the community that any action taken will save money for the taxpayer and/or improve service delivery. They expressed hope that this town will redistrict, that neighboring towns (Lysander, etc) will also consolidate and improve services.

### ***Additional efforts to gauge public opinions about their fire rescue services:***

RFG Associates fully believes in the importance of including citizen input into this type of report. In an expanded effort to gain that direct citizen input that was not available at the advertised public meeting, RFG Associates went into the community to seek citizen input by conducting street surveys. We conducted sidewalk interviews in front of the P&C market across the street from the new Baldwinsville Station 1. We went to the Village Green Community Center and met with several groups of residents who were attending a luncheon. Those findings will be shown in the second column in the chart below.

We also attended the Warners Fire Department pancake breakfast to interview attendees from that community. At the breakfast we utilized a slightly different survey that we had previously successfully used on other similar projects to gather relevant information.

### **Community Survey questions asked at Warners pancake breakfast of non-fire service attendees:**

**How do you rate the fire department in general?**

People felt the fire departments were doing a great job with no major issues at this time; there was a real community sense of pride in “their” fire department

**Where do you see this Community today in terms of its ability to provide emergency service to the public?**

During the day hours departments are short staffed: Need more members to adequately respond to accidents and fires, especially calls on the Thruway. The departments need more money to supply volunteers with new equipment and apparatus.

**What Regional Issues affect this community & agency?**

There is a growing need for more services. Need more volunteers especially in Memphis. Unemployment in the area will hurt tax revenue. Small businesses need to help.

**Where do you see this Community in 10 years in terms of demographics and emergency service to the public?**

Baldwinsville is booming. More homes will be built. Area is spreading out especially closer to Thruway entrances. Some worry about Dump impacting growth and property values in the future. There will be a greater need for more services. Some feel Memphis is ready to grow in the next 10 years.

**What are your concerns regarding funding for emergency services?**

Town cutting finances impact fire service: “Willing to go along with just about anything that will make the fire & rescue services work”

**What do you think are the biggest risks in the district?**

Water problems - no public water; Getting the funding needed to obtain equipment and equip volunteers; Increased violence potential with “outsiders moving into smaller communities; Need for emergency generators in Fire Stations for when power goes out.

**What are your thoughts regarding Volunteer Staffing?**

Need to reach out to the community to get new recruits; Need for more volunteers especially in Memphis; It’s a big problem getting new people to volunteer; Society is changing; Jobs take people out of the area; Both parents now work and share in the care of small children eliminating time available to volunteer; Fire rescue services viewed as family member to family member tradition and few “outsiders”; Younger interviewees with long term family roots in the community did not join because of time demands and they reported that very few of the people in their age group were serving as volunteers because of job, school and family obligations.

**Have you or a member of your family ever had to use the services of the fire service. What was your opinion of those services?**

Few responded that they had needed fire services. Several had required EMS and response was timely and caring.

In general we can report that of the many citizens we sought out, a great number had very little or no personal knowledge of their fire rescue agencies, other than the belief and expectation that the agencies would respond to help them when there was an emergency.

- **Specific Recommendation 5: Public education campaign:** The fire and rescue services should have an ongoing public relations program to inform the public about their agencies and the services they provide to the community.

## **RISK ASSESSMENT**

Risk assessment in a community provides the method of analyzing the factors that the agency and the community agree upon as representing the community's risk level and the ability/willingness of the community to protect those risks.

As shown in the section on generally accepted benchmarks, there is a wide difference in the benchmarks for time of arrival of apparatus and staffing between a built up metro area and a rural sparsely built up area.

- **Consultant note 17: Response Times:** The factors that do not change in making judgments regarding acceptable response times to the community are the fire propagation curve and the cardiac survivability probability factors shown on the included charts.
- **Consultant note 18: Ability to support services:** The question of affordability of public protection and response will certainly always be a factor in determining location of fire stations and staffing patterns for fire and emergency apparatus.

Each of the charts reliably project loss of structures and loss of life if there is no action taken within the times shown to mitigate those conditions. Leadership of every community must understand and examine each factor in determining its strategic policy for provision of emergency services that will provide a safe, effective, cost effective service to the public.

Generally, the risk assessment process produces four possible relationships between the structures and hazardous conditions and the distribution of emergency equipment and personnel:

- Low probability - Low consequences
- Low probability – High consequences
- High probability – Low consequences
- High probability – High consequences
  - ❖ Distribution is the number and location of resources placed throughout the district.
  - ❖ Concentration is the number of resources needed in the community or area to deal with the risks.

The risk assessment in a community must determine the Distribution and Concentration of the resources required to deal with the identified risks. Fire stations within a district should ideally be located to assure there is a distribution that will allow an initial response to all categories of incidents. Fire station locations and staffing patterns must also be able to provide response to risks that require a higher concentration of resources to enable the responding units to effectively, efficiently and safely manage worst case situations. If this is not done, the leadership of the community must publicly identify

those risks that the agency is unable to adequately protect, to allow property owners the opportunity to develop self help and protection systems.

### **Risk Categories:**

The risk categories are described in professional publications as:

**Maximum/Worst Risk:** Generally found in the largest cities or towns: Those areas of substantial size with a heavy concentration of properties presenting a high risk of loss of life, loss of economic value to the community or large loss damage to property in the event of fire. Normally these structures do not have built-in fire protection systems and/or the occupants are not capable of self-preservation.

**High Hazard Risks:** An area classified as High Risk contains a built up area of substantial size with a high concentration of property that presents a substantial risk of life loss, severe financial impact on the community, or unusual potential damage to property in the event of fire. Examples include strip mall shopping and business areas, concentration of hospital and medical facilities, older multiple story structures with substantial risk of life loss potential, such as apartment buildings that are more than 2 stories high or beyond the reach of pre-connected hose lines, structures with high fire load or hazardous materials, and infrastructure facilities such as schools, government buildings and industrial buildings with high risk occupancies.

**Special Risks:** Those areas, whether a single building or a complex, which require a first due response that is greater than the response appropriate for the surrounding area. These include very large residential properties, hospitals and other facilities where occupants are under 24 hour care or have restricted mobility, isolated high rise structures, major chemical or hazardous materials facilities, or other high risk industrial plants.

**Moderate Risk:** Areas that contain built up areas of average size where the risk of loss of life in a single occupancy is limited to the occupants. This may include small apartment complexes where the risk of death or injury may be relatively high but there is a limited concentration of such property. These areas include developments of single family detached homes, including estates and smaller multi story dwellings, areas of older attached multi family, two story dwellings accessible to pre connected hose lines, suburban terraced, detached multi occupancy structures, mixed low risk industrial and residential areas, and industrial and commercial properties under 10,000 square feet without high hazard or high fire load contents.

**Low Risk:** Small commercial structures that are remote from other buildings, such as residential garages and out buildings.

**Remote/Isolated Rural Risks:** Properties that are isolated from centers of populations and that contain few buildings, such as rural land with no structures and recreational areas.

Due to the size of, and familiarity with, the community, the fire and rescue services generally use map books and map data on lap tops to show preplanned actions for major locations that they respond to, rather than doing formal risk assessments.

- **Specific Recommendation 6: Risk Assessment:** The community should conduct formal community wide risk assessments to properly plan for the long term

effects of loss of those properties. This activity is generally conducted by the local division of homeland security.

### **Structural Risks**

The Town of Van Buren contains structures that include residential homes of many sizes, construction types and occupancy loads, in addition to a wide variety of other structures that house commercial, agricultural, and business enterprises. The locations of these structures vary from built up urban type neighborhoods to remote rural locations. This assessment will identify the types of structures and their risks to occupants and the community, and establish the policy for providing fire/rescue service to those structures.

RFG Associates has adopted the following four risk hazard classification terms: Maximum risk, Significant Risk, Routine Risk, and Remote Risk. These classification terms readily correlate to the above classifications. The fire service agencies adjust dispatch center run cards to reflect what they consider to be required for an effective firefighting force when an incident does occur.

- **Strategic Recommendation 10: Structural Risk Analysis:** A regional Structural Risk Analysis should be conducted on a regular basis as a planning tool to determine requirements for establishing an effective fire fighting force at each location.
- **Specific Recommendation 7: Risk Reduction:** All multiple dwellings and commercial structures in the Town should be modified to provide automatic fire protection systems. The governing bodies should assure this by removing any financial obstacles to this goal.
- ❖ **Justification 4: Risk reduction recommendation:** It was observed that the district contains a number of multiple family residences and other large structures that were built prior to the current building codes and are not protected by automatic sprinklers or other fire control systems. The fire and rescue agencies may not be equipped or staffed to successfully control or contain a major fire in these structures. Financial obstacles such as water line tap fees and increased tax assessments often discourage property owners from installing automatic sprinkler systems.

## ANALYSIS OF OBSERVATIONS & INFORMATION

### Staffing

The agencies providing fire rescue protection to the Town of Van Buren are totally volunteer firefighter staffed.

- **Consultant note 19: Value of Volunteer firefighters:** The value of volunteer firefighters to any community cannot be over stressed. Volunteer firefighters are dedicated to serving their community often at great personal expense in terms of time and money as well as risk of injury or death. We believe there is no other government service where individuals volunteer to serve at this level of personal and family commitment to their community.

Many of these dedicated volunteers have been providing these services for many years. Often many members of the same families have done so for many generations. The demands on each individual volunteer, and their families, have increased each year, as new regulations and requirements have been developed and service demands have increased in the community.

Unlike the old Norman Rockwell painting of the butcher and baker running from their shops to jump on the fire engine, in today's society many volunteers no longer work in the community that they live in. In Central New York as long time industries close or relocate, many volunteers, and potential volunteers, are finding it necessary to commute longer distances to their place of work. It is no longer possible for a fire engine to drive past a local factory and have volunteers leave their work to jump on the engine. Many local companies that saw the need to release volunteers from work to respond to emergencies in the community are re-examining those policies as they struggle to remain competitive in today's market place. Many volunteers are finding it increasingly difficult to attend training classes after full days at work and commuting. Potential volunteers do not understand how anyone can make that commitment to serving their community.

Knowledge and understanding of the realities of staffing is a vital part of evaluating fire and rescue service delivery capabilities. It is vital to know the total number of fire rescue volunteers in the community, their ability to perform the duties required, and their availability to provide those services by time of day and day of week. Staffing is the most important factor in determining the effectiveness of firefighting forces. The required personnel must be available and responding within the time frames required to successfully mitigate the emergency.

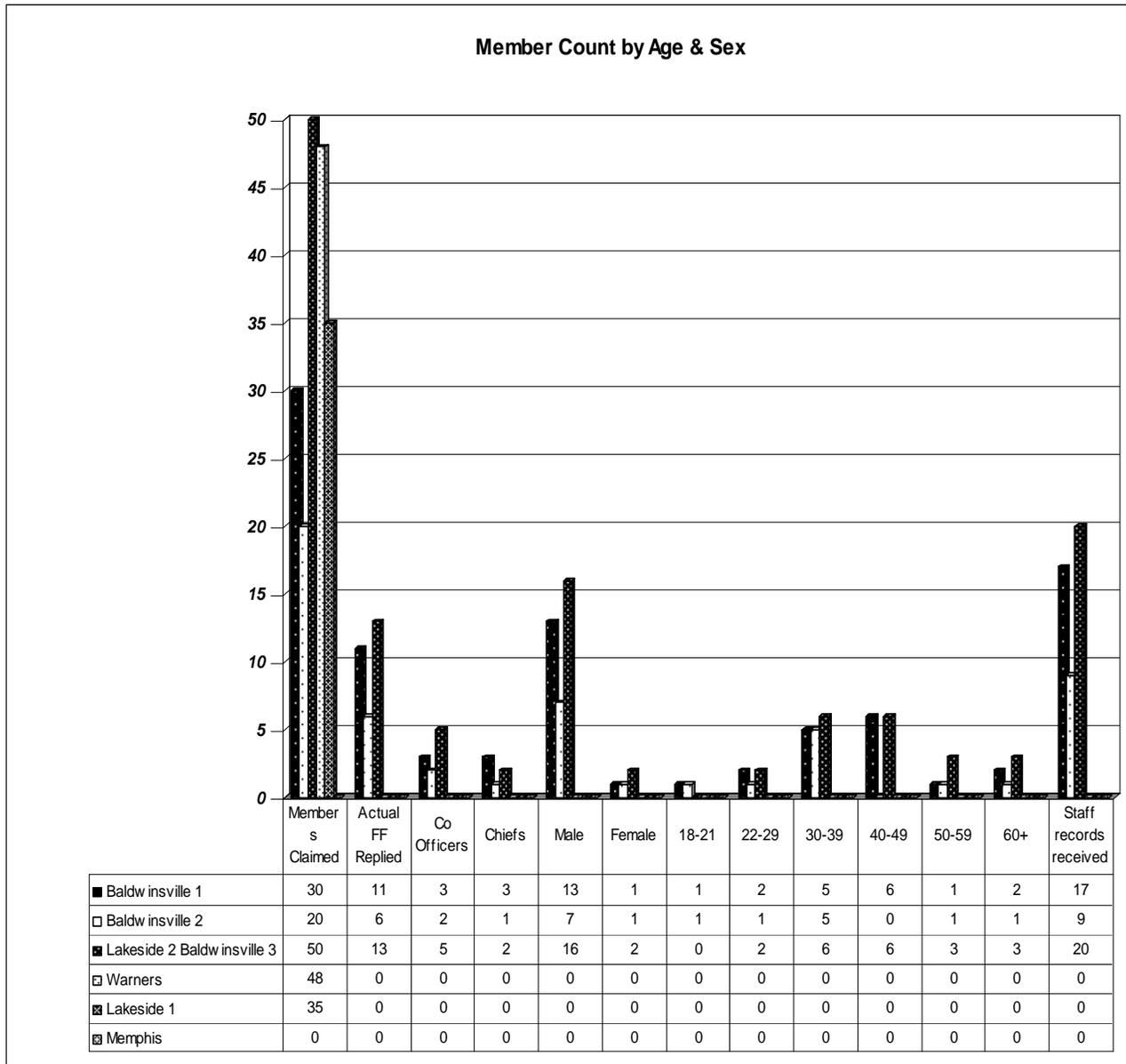
In our effort to gather this information each agency was asked to have every member complete a survey which did not require individual personal identity but still provided the information required to evaluate staffing.

The materials that were returned provided us with a clear insight as to current conditions and an indication of future issues that must be addressed to assure continued services.

It should also be noted that based upon our previous experience, the surveys that were not returned also provide an insight that is an important part of this study. We have observed that the primary reason why individuals or agencies do not return staffing surveys is due to a fear of publicly acknowledging what the agency or the individual consider as negative factors regarding staffing availability that they do not want made public.

The survey examined age and sex of department members to gain an overview of composition and recruitment efforts. In general, volunteer firefighters have joined at a young age and their numbers decrease with age. A department with few younger members is not positioned to continue to provide service as members age. A department with higher numbers of older members may have an increased risk of injury or death due to physical demands of performing these services. Departments with few female members indicate a need for improved agency recruitment to reflect the community.

**Figure 7 Staffing by Rank, Sex and Age**

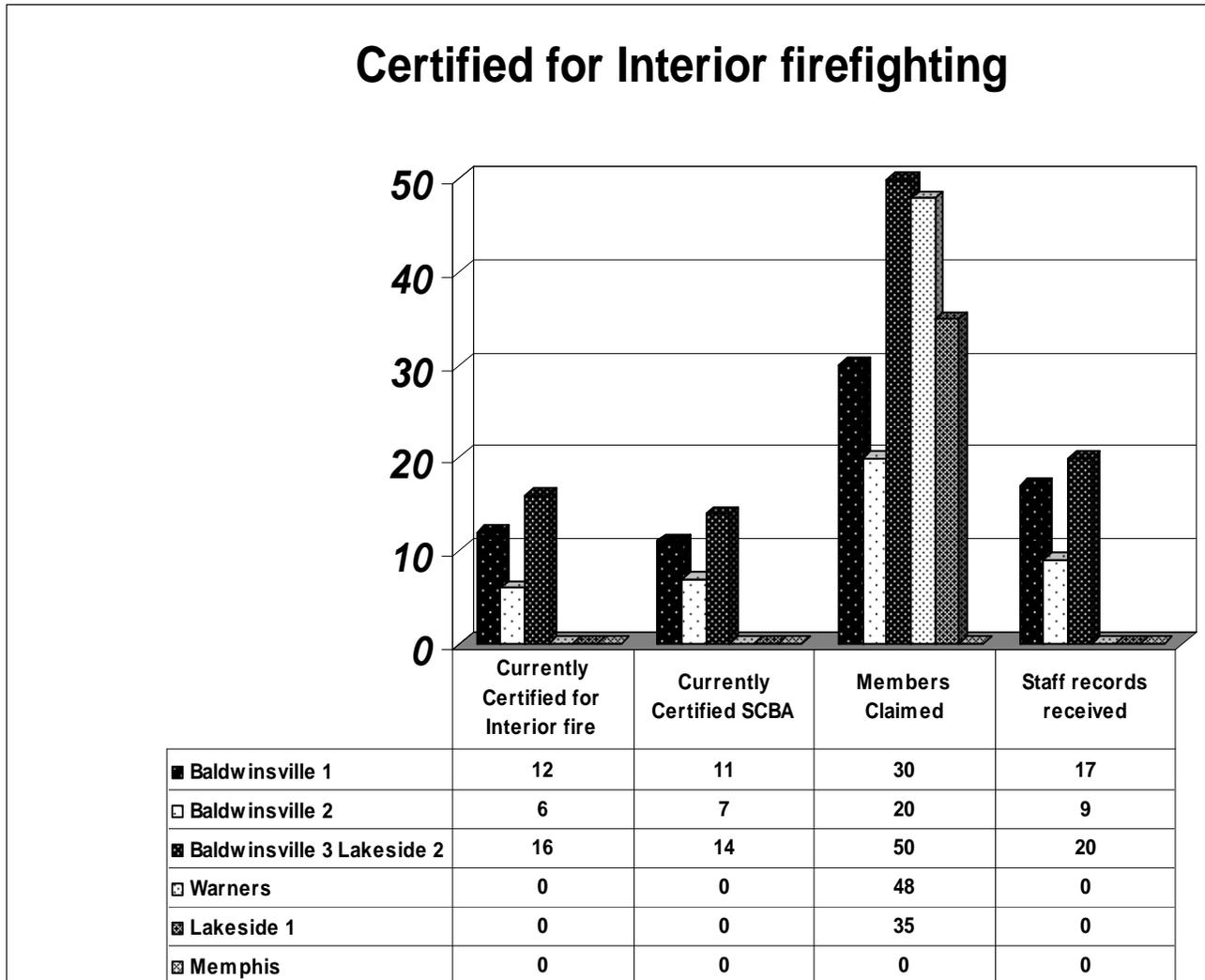


Some agencies did not provide all requested data and show as blank in the above chart. As can be observed in the chart above, and as observed in meetings and at stations, in this Township there is a lack of younger personnel and females.

The survey requested information to help us evaluate members' fitness for duty. I.e.: Have the members had the required medical evaluations that permit interior firefighting

activities, and are they certified medically and through training to wear and use self contained breathing apparatus in the performance of their duties.

**Figure 8 Fitness for duty**



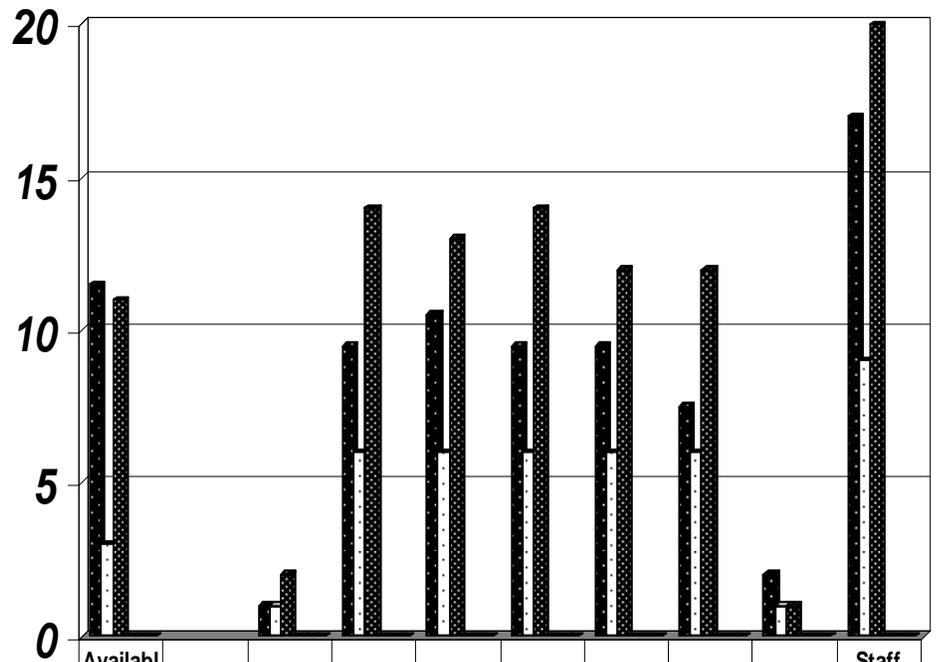
Some agencies did not provide all requested data and show as blank in the above chart. The low number of members that actually responded who are currently certified for interior firefighting is of great concern.

- Consultant note 20: Fitness for duty:** The fire rescue services have established medical standards to help determine members' fitness for duty annually. The standards were established because one of the primary causes of firefighter deaths over the years has been heart attacks. The medical evaluations are required for interior firefighting activities, training activities, and to wear and use self contained breathing apparatus in the performance of their duties.

In addition to knowing the number of members who are part of the agency, it is important to know when those members are available.

**Figure 9 Staffing: Day of week Staff Availability & Staff out of district**

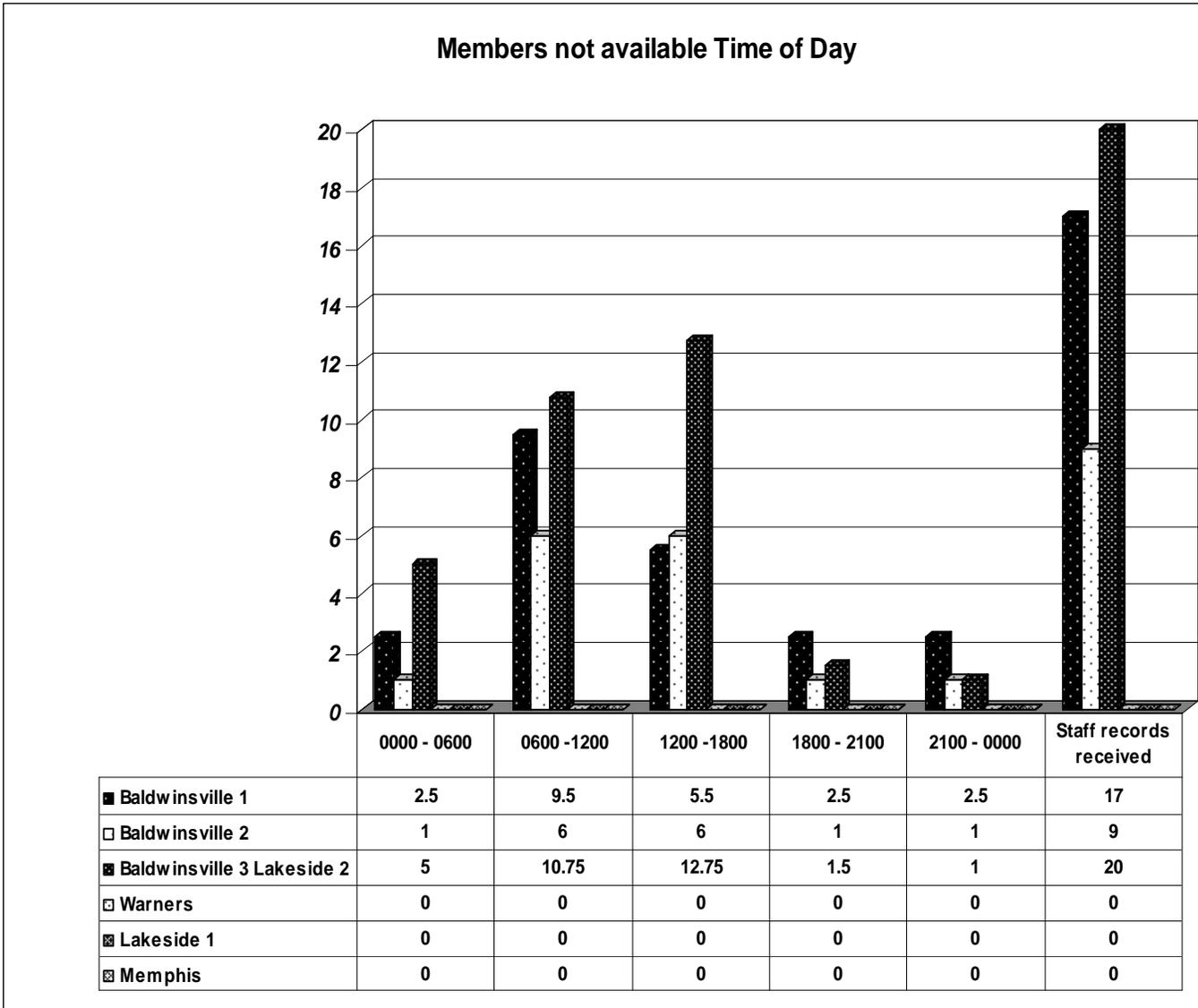
# Members Not Available Day of Week



	Available All calls	Out of District	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thur	Fri	Sat	Staff records
■ Baldwinsville 1	11.5		1	9.5	10.5	9.5	9.5	7.5	2	17
□ Baldwinsville 2	3		1	6	6	6	6	6	1	9
■ Baldwinsville 3 Lakeside 2	11		2	14	13	14	12	12	1	20
□ Warners	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ Lakeside 1	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
■ Memphis	0		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

The above chart showing that Monday - Friday large numbers of members being out of the district is very common in primarily residential communities. Some agencies did not provide all requested data and show as blank in the above chart. Experience by RFG Associates indicates that the trend shown above would be consistent if every member had turned in their staffing survey. The high percentage of members out of the district each week day and as shown in the following time of day chart warrants serious concern.

**Figure 10 Staff out of district Time of Day**



As in the day of week chart, the pattern in the above chart showing the time of day when members are out of the district is very common in primarily residential communities. Some agencies did not provide all requested data and show as blank in the above chart.

- **Specific Recommendation 8: Staffing Issues:** The results of the staffing survey clearly indicate the need to promptly re-examine in-depth the staffing capabilities in the agencies 24/7/365.
- **Consultant note 21: Staffing Issues:** It can be generally assumed that the members who were counted by their agencies, but who failed to submit personal availability data, will fit the same general patterns as shown by those who did provide information. There are evident staffing limitations during normal Monday through Friday work weeks during the day. The staffing survey results are also reflected in the agency training records as obtained from the county. Combined, the training reports and the staffing surveys both demonstrate that the ability to recruit new volunteers appears to have declined to the point that this consultant finds dangerous to future service delivery if not properly addressed.

- **Strategic Recommendation 11: Staffing & Recruitment:** An on-going, centrally coordinated, region-wide, volunteer firefighter recruitment program should be promptly initiated and maintained.
- **Strategic Recommendation 12 Administrative Volunteer Recruitment:** There should be targeted recruiting specifically for administrative volunteers. Many people with administrative skills and desire to serve their community may not realize that their skills would be useful in the fire department. Departments should clarify their staffing needs, including administrative functions, and recruit for needed skills. Advertising on internet sources such as volunteermatch.com might bring more volunteers with administrative skill sets.
- ❖ **Justification 5: Staffing and recruitment:** New volunteers are, and will always be required as the existing volunteer membership ages or leave the service. Recruitment is vital for long term survival of the ability to meet the mission of each agency. The recruiting efforts need to target stay at home workers, male and female, people whose jobs are located in the community even if their residence is located outside of the community, and both college age and of-age high school students.

The ability to retain current volunteer firefighters and recruit new volunteer firefighters in the Town of Van Buren is certainly no different than that of other volunteer agencies around the world.

According to the recent 21<sup>st</sup> century government report<sup>15</sup>, ... in New York State the number of volunteer firefighters has declined by 15,000 in the past 20 years. There is also a decline in availability of volunteer firefighters, particularly in the area of emergency medical services. More and more fire districts are employing paid drivers or station masters to respond to calls during the day... To address the decline in volunteers, the (NY State) Legislature has enacted various incentive programs, such as property tax credits and the firefighter length of service award program (LOSAP) – essentially a pension-like program for volunteers. These incentive programs are offered at local option. Local LOSAPs must be audited annually by an independent certified public accountant, with the results reported to the State Comptroller. The state now offers a \$200 income tax credit for active volunteer firefighters and ambulance corps members.

- **Strategic Recommendation 13: Volunteer Incentive Programs:** Regional volunteer incentive programs, such as property tax credits and the firefighter length of service award program (LOSAP) – essentially a pension-like program for volunteers-and other legally permitted incentives for volunteers should be adopted to assure continued Volunteer firefighter services.

## **Incident Response**

Although the Town currently contracts with four different fire rescue agencies for service, the county GIS office was asked to evaluate all fire stations located within a five (5) mile travel distance from the Town of Van Buren. The base findings of that

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<sup>15</sup> 21st Century Local Government: Report of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness April 2008; Fire Protection in New York State

evaluation indicate that responses to emergency fire and rescue incidents within the Town do not necessarily reflect dispatch of the closest units, which is so important for public safety at every level.

The data analysis for this project was completed using New York's Accident Location Information Street Dataset (ALIS), which uses street speed limits as well as one-way and elevation information for planar connectivity. The travel time analysis for each stations data results in the expected "bulls eye" type pattern.

- **Consultant note 22: GIS mapping of fire stations:** The GIS maps in the map booklet accompanying this report support the findings this report that fire and rescue services would be better served if a regional approach was taken in administration, planning, and, most important, operations. Even casual review of these graphic displays shows the need to modify existing service delivery to assure efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Strategic Recommendation 14: GIS Planning for fire station locations:** The capabilities of the County GIS office should be utilized to determine the optimum number and location of the fire stations regionally needed to meet response standards within each community neighborhood.

Review of the response area maps also shows that the response times from every station would be improved if personnel were on duty in those stations rather than members needing to drive from home locations to the station and then to the incident.

- **Specific Recommendation 9: Staff Facilities:** In every station that has space and facilities for habitation, a system should be established that provides for full or part time live-in staffing by station volunteers.
- ❖ **Justification 6: Staff Facilities:** Recommending living quarters in fire stations absolutely should not be taken as a recommendation for paid staffing in those stations at this time. Many totally volunteer departments have long successful records of providing on duty staffing in their stations. Providing living quarters for volunteers is an important tool for the recruitment effort for younger members, especially for students in a community with many college students who would make excellent volunteers during the school year.

## **Emergency Communications & Dispatch System**

Assuming that a community has the required firefighting apparatus and the personnel to properly staff and operate that apparatus, the most important link in the chain of mitigation of emergency incidents is the emergency communications and dispatch system. The time required to receive notification of an emergency from a member of the public, process that information, and dispatch the proper equipment and personnel to the incident, sets the tone for the ability of the responders to be able to successfully control and mitigate the incident.

The Onondaga County Department of Emergency Communications is a modern center with state of the art equipment and a highly professional staff. The emergency communications center has been accredited by Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement Agencies, Inc, CALEA. The center is one of only 13 CALEA Flagship Agencies. The designation as a Flagship Agency acknowledges the achievement and expertise of some of the most successful CALEA Accredited Agencies, and assists others by providing “flagship examples.” The center has new radio equipment and is in the process of implementation of a new county-wide radio system. The system includes a back-up dispatch center for emergency use. The County is completing the first operational phase of installing mobile radios and distributing portable radios to first responders in Onondaga County, and working with regional emergency agencies to establish a Tactical Interoperable Communications Plan (TICP) for handling emergency communications during joint operations and multi-jurisdictional incidents. The center has connectivity to regional highway cameras operated by the NYS Department of Transportation. Those cameras are accessible to 911 center personnel to enable them to assess highway conditions. This is very important for management of major traffic related incidents where hazardous materials and other life threatening conditions may exist. The center has installed the FCC assigned National Interoperable Communications Channels. These national emergency channels allow for at least one channel interoperation with state, federal or other outside authorities during an emergency operation.

The emergency communications center staff participates in various Disaster Drills & Tabletop Exercises within the County, and introduced the concept of “tactical dispatchers” to support on-scene communications for major incidents. Most importantly for the future success of service delivery, management of the Department of Emergency communications continues to work to identify opportunities for State and Federal grant resources. In today economy this is extremely important for the taxpayers of the county.

Operationally, the center utilizes an Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) system to route all incoming calls to available call-takers. At each call-taking position the call taker display provides the originating telephone number of the caller, and, if it is a 9-1-1 call, the caller's number, name, and location information. If a wireless telephone is phase two compliant, the 911 Center receives an approximate latitude and longitude for the caller, which is then converted to a map location by the system mapping software. After determining location and the type of incident, dispatch of the proper resources and agencies is determined by a modern Computer-Aided Dispatch (CAD) system. The County CAD system has the ability to integrate all aspects of police, fire, and EMS

incident management. The dispatch system is based upon a verified location in the Master Street Address Guide, MSAG, maintained by the County's Planning Department, and the incident type.

When the dispatcher receives the incident waiting on their status monitor, the CAD system makes a unit recommendation based upon the currently active units, their availability, and post assignment. Fire and EMS units are recommended based upon the local firebox alarm information, maintained by each of the 58 fire departments in Onondaga County. The priority of the waiting incidents is pre-determined by the oversight committees that represent each of the public safety disciplines.

- **Consultant note 23: Closest unit response:** It is important to note that **Police** "in-progress" or "just occurred" incidents are dispatched under an "agency neutral" policy, where any unit in the vicinity of the incident is immediately dispatched (the "closest" unit to the call).
- **Consultant note 24: "In Progress" incidents:** Every Fire and EMS incident is an "In Progress" incident, as every fire and emergency medical incident keeps worsening until forces have arrived on scene and are able to begin stabilization and mitigation of the emergency.

When an incident is assigned to a field unit, it is received on a Mobile Status Terminal (MST) for fire/EMS units. These units allow the field units to read the dispatch information, place themselves responding, on scene, and clear of the incident, all without tying up the voice radio network. The fire/EMS dispatchers maintain contact with each field unit, managing the available resources to rapidly respond to changing conditions. The Syracuse Fire Department, county volunteer fire departments, and county EMS services are dispatched at individual positions. The three fire/EMS dispatchers are supported by city and county technical advisor positions. The TA positions provide support and supervisory functions to the primary dispatch positions. Overseeing the shift floor operations are the shift supervisor and assistant supervisor. They are responsible for all aspects of daily operations, from quality control to monitoring of active incidents and personnel, shift staffing, and inquiries from agency command staff. The current authorized staffing levels for the 9-1-1 Center vary based on the time of day and day of the week, with maximum staffing planned for times of peak demand for service.

- **Specific Recommendation 10: Closest unit response:** The closest unit to every emergency should be dispatched immediately.

## **Training**

Training records were reviewed to examine quantity, quality and currency of the training received by the members of each agency serving the community.

- **Consultant note 25: County Training records summary:** For the 4 agencies combined, the recruit level training from 2000 – 2001 totaled 13 people; In 2002 - 2003 the total was 14; for 2004 -2005 the total was 7; for the years 2006 -2007 the total was 7 and for the years 2008 to the present the total number of new recruits trained by the county totaled 2.

- **Consultant note 26: Department Training records summary:** Review of the training records for each department indicated that each department does conduct regular training sessions within their own department, and keeps records of attendance by member.
- **Consultant note 27: Setting an example for dedication:** In review of the County training records we observed in the Baldwinsville training report that the member with the longest seniority in the department also was one of the members who had attended incident safety training within the past year. The agency web site also announced that this same individual also responded to more incidents than any other member in 2008. Those factors of seeking continuing training and active response to incidents set an example for continuing improvement and participation for all members of the agency.
- **Consultant note 28: Training records:** The number of classes shown as taken does not always accurately reflect the fact that many individuals took multiple classes, with one individual in a department attending 31 classes, 12 of which focused on safety and incident command.
- **Consultant note 29: Training Records:** The County training records for many members do not show any recent training. This may indicate lack of participation, or the lack of records may just indicate a failure to properly record such records in a central location. The lack of current records in the County system may also indicate lack of current knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to meet the current challenges in the fire and rescue services.
- **Specific Recommendation 11: Training Records:** All individual and company training records should be maintained in a central location to provide better tracking and planning of training.
- ❖ **Justification 7: Training Records:** The lack of current training records being readily available in a central location inhibits the ability to track individual knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to meet the current challenges in the fire and rescue services as a whole. It also limits the ability to plan for the training classes that are required to meet those objectives across the community, including assurance that all Command Officers have current safety and command training.
- **Consultant note 30: Company only training:** The lack of planned, regular training from sources outside of the home agency sets a tone for acceptance of the status quo within a department that can have long term negative impacts upon the agency.

### **County Training Records overview: Dept. 34031 Memphis**

The county provided summary information for the years 1976 to 2/17/2009 for 35 individuals from county department 34031 Memphis.

There were 116 total records for classes attended. For the years 2004 to the present the county reported a total of 20 classes attended by members of the department and that number represented training for 11 individuals. Of that current training, the reports

indicate 3 classes, taken by one department member, that are relative to Incident Command and firefighter safety.

These records also showed that for the years 2008 to the present 4 people in this department attended 6 County training classes 3 of which can be considered to be related to Incident Command or safety.

- **Consultant note 31: Training, Memphis:** The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 - 2001 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009 no (0) people took entry level training classes.

### **County Training Records overview: Dept. 34024 Lakeside**

The county provided summary information for the years 1976 to 2/17/2009 for 41 individuals from county department 34024, Lakeside.

There were 327 total records for classes attended. For the years 2004 to the present the county reported a total of 61 classes attended by members of the department and that number represented training for 17 individuals. Of that current training, the reports indicate 37 classes taken by 11 department members that are relative to Incident Command and firefighter safety.

These records also showed that for the years 2008 to the present, 4 people in this department attended 4 County training classes, 1 of which can be considered to be related to Incident Command or safety.

- **Consultant note 32: Training, Lakeside:** The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 – 2001, 5 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, 2 people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, 1 person took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009, 2 people took entry level training classes.

### **County Training Records overview: Dept. 34003 Baldwinsville**

The county provided summary information for the years 1976 to 2/17/2009 for 177 individuals from county department 34003, Baldwinsville.

There were 1119 total records for classes attended. For the years 2004 to the present the county reported a total of 199 classes attended by members of the department, and that number represented training for 54 individuals. Of that current training, the reports indicate 80 classes taken by department members that are relative to Incident Command and firefighter safety, while 13 were classes taken for fire police.

These records also showed that for the years 2008 to the present, 16 people in this department attended 44 County training classes, 16 of which can be considered to be related to Incident Command or safety.

- **Consultant note 33: Training, Baldwinsville:** The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 – 2001, 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, 10 people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, 5 people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, 6 people took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009, no (0) people took entry level county training classes.

### **County Training Records overview: Dept. 34065 Warners**

The county did not provide training records for the Warners fire department.

### **Safety**

The danger of death and injury to all firefighters is tracked by the US fire administration. Of all the firefighter deaths in 2004, 70 percent of firefighter deaths were from the volunteer fire service<sup>16</sup>. While injuries to career firefighters tend to occur in midcareer (ages 30 to 45) with the peak between ages 35 and 39, injuries to volunteers are sustained predominately by the younger members of the organization. Firefighters under the age of 25 account for nearly 28 percent of injuries in the volunteer service. These statistics clearly demonstrate the need for every department to assure proper training for every member. It is also extremely important that training be assured in supervision and incident management in every department at every type of incident. It is vital for the life safety of all responders, as well as the public, to assure that the people in charge of every incident, station, responding unit and training session are properly trained for the duties they are carrying out.

Death and injury of firefighters serving the public is always a potential, but certainly not inevitable. In every department it is the primary task of leaders to establish and enforce policies that protect the valued members of the department.

- **Specific Recommendation 12: Safety:** There should be an immediate review of all SOP's, SOG's, and actual practices, to assure that each establishes practices and enforces policies that protect the safety of all valued members of the department.

Based upon review of county fire bureau training records, it appears the agencies are aging as the number of new volunteers is declining.

The continued dedication of the senior members of an agency is currently important to service delivery. However, understanding that while there is certainly a wide range of physical abilities in individuals, the physical demands of emergency response and fire fighting in general place severe stress on all individuals, of all ages, and the ability to deal with those stresses can and does decrease with age.

- **Specific Recommendation 13: Safety:** The risk to the health and safety of all members responding to emergency incidents must be considered in planning for

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<sup>16</sup> *Firefighter Fatalities in the United States in 2004*, U S Department of Homeland Security, Federal Emergency Management Agency, U S Fire Administration, Aug 2005

all operations. Age and physical condition of responders must be part of this planning.

- ❖ **Justification 8: Need for new recruits:** The fact that the most active volunteers in the busiest agency are also the most senior members of the agency is a red flag for the agency's long term ability to meet its mission successfully.
- **Strategic Recommendation 15: Safety IMS:** All emergency response agencies in the region should train on and use the same Incident Management System.
- ❖ **Justification 9: Safety IMS:** Every agency that will respond to or be part of an emergency incident needs to utilize the same incident management system to assure that all are working at the same objectives and each is carrying out its unique role to mitigate the incident successfully. The incident management system should be consistent with and follow the guidelines of NIMS, the National Incident Management System.
- **Specific Recommendation 14: Safety:** All officers must meet basic standards of training for incident management and safety before assuming command of incidents, assuming command of stations, companies' training programs or any other activity of the department. All responders should be trained in the same system to assure region-wide understanding about how every incident will be managed.

## **Fire Stations**

The location of fire stations is an important factor in determining the ability to arrive on scene with an effective firefighting force within accepted time lines. In addition, the travel distance from fire stations to every home can have a direct impact upon the fire insurance rates paid by home owners in the community. Under ISO standards, any property located within five (5) miles from a fire station that responds to first or multiple alarms in a prearranged plan may receive up to 90 points credit in the evaluation of fire companies. The highest credit is available for engine companies within 1 ½ miles and for ladder companies within 2 ½ miles from fire stations to property locations. The actual amount of ISO credit is determined by a formula that examines apparatus and responding personnel in addition to the travel distances.

In review of fire station locations it is also important to determine each station's available assets in terms of staff and community facilities, the type of apparatus stationed in and responding from the facility. The cost of maintaining each station and piece of equipment is also an important factor for future review.

In this review of fire and rescue services for the Town of Van Buren, it was quickly observed that the fire stations in close proximity to the Town included more than those stations of the current four agencies providing services to the township. Therefore, we requested information from the county planning department GIS office on all fire stations located within 5 travel miles of the town.

- **Consultant note 34: Map Book Review of Fire Station Locations:** Readers of this report should also review the accompanying map booklet to gain a visualization of proximity of fire stations to various areas of the Town, travel

distances from those stations to other parts of the Town, and the base travel time from those stations to locations within the Town. The maps provide much of the justification for the major Strategic Recommendations made in this report.

In reviewing the maps in the attached map booklet, it is important to recognize the following facts regarding the production of those maps and the considerations that must be made in their interpretation:

- Travel Distance maps are shown in actual road and street distances.
- Fire stations are shown as "bull's-eye" for each calculation
- Travel Time maps were developed using New York's Accident Location Information Street Dataset (ALIS), which uses street speed limits as well as one-way and elevation information (for planar connectivity).
- Travel time analysis is the average time it will take to cover the road miles, based upon normal conditions from the time driving is started until arrival.
- To determine and understand the impact of the actual arrival times for emergency vehicles to arrive at the scene and begin the operations required to mitigate an emergency, additional times must be added to the times shown on the maps.
  - Call Process Time: The time it takes from when the call taker at emergency communications answers the phone until the dispatch has been completed.
  - Reflex time: The time it takes for firefighters to stop what they are doing, get to the fire station, don their protective gear, mount the apparatus, open the station doors, and start the motor.
  - Drive Time: The actual time it takes to drive from the fire station to the incident location.
  - Operational Initiation Time: The time it takes to place hoses and ladders and begin tactical operations.

### **Fire Company Station Summaries**

The following information was provided by the fire rescue agencies and validated by a team member from RFG Associates during the site visit. During the station visits the Chiefs and other Officers assisted the RFG Associates representative. These Officers were cordial and helpful at every visit.

- **Consultant note 35: Definition of terms used in station reports:** **RIT= Rapid Intervention Teams:** trained personnel and equipment readily available on scene to assist interior fire attack teams in case of an emergency (required by OSHA under the 2 in 2 out rule for firefighter safety). **ICS = Incident Command System.** **PPE = Personal Protective Equipment** (i.e., turnout gear).

**Baldwinsville Station # 1:** 7911 Crego Road Baldwinsville, NY 13027

Chief: Charles Cerio Jr.

Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters: 30  
Station is not normally staffed full or part time

Apparatus room: 1 single deep bay & 4 drive-thru bays  
 Vehicle exhaust system: Yes PPE Gear storage area: No  
 PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment: No Designated Equipment cleaning area: Yes  
 Officers' room: Yes Training room: Yes: Kitchen: Yes: Bunk Room: Yes:  
 Restrooms: Male X Female: X Shower area Males X Females X  
 Recreation areas: LOUNGE

Materials available in station					
Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No
Computer for record keeping	YES	Map books in apparatus	YES	Training records	NO
Current SOP SOG manuals	YES	Posted district map	YES	Training materials	YES
RIT procedures	In SOG	Hydrant records	YES	Apparatus Maintenance records	YES
ICS supplies	N/A	Personnel files	NO	Facility Maint. records	YES

Apparatus assigned to station:

Type	Unit Number	Pump Capacity	Ladder Special
Quint	Ladder 2	1500 gpm	75' stick & compliment of ground ladders 500 tank, BLS equipped
Rescue/engine	Engine 4	1500 gpm	24' ext. 12' roof Hurst extrication. 1000 tank, AED, BLS equipped
EMS	Squad 1	n/a	n/a AED
Utility vehicle	Squad 4	n/a	n/a BLS Equipped
Dive trailer	n/a	n/a	n/a SCUBA
Haz-mat trailer	Squad 243	n/a	n/a Haz-mat

RFG Associates Station visit findings: The Baldwinsville Fire Company completed all the reports requested. The forms were complete and accurate. Station 1 is a brand new facility that is in the process of being completed. Personnel are in the final moving in stage. This building has the potential to be equipped with bunks space. Some of the records of training and personnel files were not readily available, but were produced by the Chief upon request. The records are currently in the Chief's vehicle while the Chief is in the process of moving into the new station and Chief's office.

**Baldwinsville Station # 2:** 7461 State Fair Blvd, Baldwinsville, NY 13027

Chief: Charles Cerio Jr.

Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters: 20

Station is not normally staffed full or part time:  
 Facilities provided for Personnel include: Exercise room. Automatic back up generator  
 Apparatus room: \_2 Single deep bays & 2 drive thru bays  
 Vehicle exhaust system: Yes: PPE Gear storage area Yes:  
 PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment No: Designated Equipment cleaning area: Yes  
 Officers' room: yes: Training room: no: Kitchen: no: Bunk Room: no  
 Restrooms: Male, Yes. Female, Yes. Shower area: Males, Yes, Females, Yes.  
 Recreation areas: LOUNGE, GYM

Materials available in station					
Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No
Computer for record keeping	YES	Map books in apparatus	YES	Training records	YES
Current SOP SOG manuals	YES	Posted district map	NO	Training materials	NO
RIT procedures	In SOG	Hydrant records	NO	Apparatus Maintenance records	YES
ICS supplies	NO	Personnel files	YES	Facility Maint. records	YES

Station responds on AUTOMATIC Aid with the following stations on all calls: Lakeside Fire District

Apparatus assigned to station:

Type	Unit Number	Pump Capacity	Ladder Special	
Engine	Engine 1	1500 gpm	24' & 12'	1000 tank, quick dump, BLS
Heavy rescue	Rescue 6	n/a	n/a	Hurst extrication, BLS, AED
Boats	Water rescue 1 & 2	WR-1 300 gpm	n/a	SCUBA & BLS
EMS suv	Squad 2	n/a	n/a	BLS, AED

Facility issues: *No major facility issues have been noted or reported as requested for funding.*

RFG Associates Station visit findings: Station 2 is a newer building that is shared with the Lakeside Fire Department. This building was neat and organized, with all information presented to us as complete and accurate. The sharing of Station 2 is reported to be working well. This enables both departments to utilize personnel, equipment, training and responses.

**Baldwinsville Station # 3** : 59 Elizabeth St. Baldwinsville, NY 13027

Chief: Charles Cerio Jr.

Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters: 31

Station is not normally staffed full or part time.

Apparatus room: 7 SINGLE DEEP APPARATUS BAYS

Vehicle exhaust system: NO. PPE Gear storage area: NO.  
 PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment: YES. Designated Equipment cleaning area: YES.  
 Officers' room: YES. Training room: NO. Kitchen: NO. Bunk Room: NO.  
 Restrooms: Male : YES, Female: YES. Shower area: Males: NO, Females NO.

Materials available in station					
Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No
Computer for record keeping	YES	Map books in apparatus	YES	Training records	NO
Current SOP SOG manuals	YES	Posted district map	YES	Training materials	NO
RIT procedures	In SOG	Hydrant records	NO	Apparatus Maintenance records	YES
ICS supplies	NO	Personnel files	NO	Facility Maint. records	YES

Apparatus assigned to station:

Type	Unit Number	Pump Capacity	Ladder	Special
Quint	Ladder 3	2000 gpm	75'	500 tank
Engine	Engine 5	1500 gpm	24' & 12'	1000 tank, Hurst combi-tool, BLS, AED
EMS/Brush fires	Squad 3	300 gpm	n/a	250 tank, Pump & roll, 4x4, BLS, AED
boat	WR 3		n/a	25' pontoon, SCUBA, BLS

RFG Associates Station visit findings: Facility issues: Station 3 is an older building which the department is temporarily using under an agreement with the DPW. This building has very few amenities for the Fire Fighters, since the building was designed for a DPW and not a Fire Station. The Fire Company has set up this building as best they can to operate out of this facility.

**Lakeside Fire District Station # 1: Headquarters**

1002 State Fair Blvd Syracuse  
 Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters 35  
 Station is not normally staffed full or part time.  
 Apparatus room: 6 apparatus bays.  
 Vehicle exhaust system: No.  
 PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment: None. PPE Gear stored on wall pegs.  
 Designated Equipment cleaning area: No.  
 Officers' room: Yes. Training room: No. Small Kitchenette. Bunk Room: No.  
 Restrooms: Male, 1, Female, 1. Shower area: Male, 1, Female, 1.

Recreation areas: Small Lounge, weight room & basketball hoops.  
Facilities provided for Personnel include: Lounge, offices, computer access, showers, weight and exercise room.  
Station responds on AUTOMATIC Aid with station 2 on all calls.  
Apparatus assigned to station:  
Squad-1 First Aid, Heavy Rescue-5 Extrication unit; Engine 4, 2,000 GPM:  
Squirt Engine-6, 2,000 GPM with a 55' squirt tower  
Boat WR-1 Water rescue

Currently in the planning stages for addition of a training room, bunk rooms, bigger offices, more records storage and a larger lounge complete with kitchen area and other related items.

RFG Associates Station visit findings: The Lakeside Fire District completed all of the reports requested completely and accurately. There was additional information acquired during the station tour.

RIT Procedures: These procedures are included in their SOG/SOP's.

ICS supplies: These procedures are in the MDT's and also in hard copy in the apparatus.

Hydrant records: The records are prepared and maintained by OCWA, and are kept in the Lakeside Station 1.

Personnel files: Files are locked separately in the Chief's office.

Facility maintenance records: These records are kept only as receipts of work completed by vendors which are maintained by the commissioners.

### **Lakeside Fire District Station # 2: Baldwinsville/Lakeside**

7461 State Fair Blvd., Syracuse NY

Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters: 19.

Station is not normally staffed full or part time.

Apparatus room: 4 bays (2 for Lakeside & 2 for Baldwinsville).

Vehicle exhaust system: Yes.

PPE Gear storage on wall racks.

PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment: none.

Designated Equipment cleaning area: None.

Officers room: Yes. Training room: No. Kitchen: No. Bunk Room: No.

Restrooms: Male, 1, Female, 1. No Shower areas.

Facilities provided for Personnel include: Recreation areas, lounge, outdoor basketball, and exercise equipment.

Station responds on AUTOMATIC Aid with Station #1 on all calls.

Apparatus assigned to station:

Squad Squad-2 First Aid;

Engine 3 1500GPM Equipped for extrication

This is a shared station with Baldwinsville, with shared equipment and personnel. Built in 2004, this station was constructed to allow for easy additions of rooms to both sides in the future. There are not currently any plans for any additions.

RFG Associates Station visit findings: Hydrant Records, Personnel files, Training records, Apparatus Maintenance records and Facility Maintenance records are not present at this station. All of these records are stored in Lakeside Station 1.

The Lakeside stations were neat, clean, and orderly. The Lakeside Station 1 is currently in the planning stages of putting on an addition to add a training room, bunkrooms, larger offices, more records storage and a decent sized lounge complete with kitchen area and other related items. The Workout area and all of the other smaller work areas are small and modest, yet workable.

**Warners Station # 1**

Website: warnersfire.com

Chief: Brian Kiteveles

6444 Newport Rd

PO Box 72 Warners, NY 13164

Number of Active Volunteer Firefighters: 48

Station is not normally staffed.

Station responds on AUTOMATIC Aid with the following stations on all calls: Memphis

Apparatus assigned to station:

Type	Unit Number	Pump Capacity	Ladder	Special
Engine	E 1	2000	55'	
Rescue	R1	Foam pro		
Engine 3	E3	1500		
Squads	S 4 & S5			

Apparatus room: Vehicle exhaust system: No.

PPE Gear storage area: Individual lockers.

PPE Cleaning facilities/equipment Yes

Designated Equipment cleaning area: No

Officers' room: yes

Training room: yes multi purpose room

Kitchen: Yes; Bunk Room: No

Restrooms: Male Female: Shower area Males No Females No

Recreation areas: Yes

Materials available in station

Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No	Item	Yes/No
Computer for record keeping	Yes	Map books in apparatus	yes	Training records	yes
Current SOP SOG manuals	yes	Posted district map	yes	Training materials	yes
RIT procedures	No	Hydrant records	yes	Apparatus Maintenance records	yes
ICS supplies	yes	Personnel files	yes	Facility Maint. records	yes

RFG Associates Station visit findings: The Warners Fire Department had completed the reports requested by RFG Associates. The information provided was complete and

accurate. The Station has no Vehicle exhaust system, and they are in the process of pricing a system.

The current SOP/SOG materials: Only the SOP/SOG's which the Chief feels important are posted at this time.

The department is in the process of upgrading their computer system which will have the complete upgraded SOP/SOG's.

The department does not have RIT procedures. They currently use Mutual Aid for RIT. They are in the process of building their RIT program.

The ICS supplies are in a book in the apparatus.

The district Map books are in the apparatus in the MDT's (Mobile Data Terminals), and in a Book.

Personnel files: The files are in a separate locked filing cabinet in the Chief's office.

Training Records: are located both in a computer and locked in a cabinet in the Chief's office.

Apparatus and Facility Maintenance records: are maintained by the District Commissioners.

The Warners Rescue carries 900 gallons of Foam Concentrate on board. They also have a Foam Trailer that carries 250 gallons of Foam Concentrate. Both Engine 1 and 3 carry 30 gallons of Foam with a Foam Pro delivery system.

The Warners Fire department is in the process of a complete upgrade of its computer system. The system will allow them to better track and generate reports for all of their training, certifications and day to day operations.

The station, the equipment and apparatus were neat, modest and organized.

## **Memphis Fire Station, 1867 Cross Street, Memphis NY.**

### **Chief Dave Evans.**

RFG Associates had not received a Facility Report or Department Summary from the Memphis Fire Station prior to our station tour. During the station Tour by RFG Associate Ralph Falloon, the reports were completed to the best of his ability. There were some notes along with the reports that are listed below.

Current SOP/SOG manuals were in the office but not easily accessible at first.

RIT procedures: The department uses Mutual Aid and has no plans for a RIT program.

ICS supplies: None were available.

Map Books in the apparatus: They use the MDT's only.

Posted district map: They had a map posted that was not easy to read or updated.

Hydrant records: There were none available, OCWA keeps the hydrant records.

Personnel files: Located in the Chief's office locked up.

Training records: They were located in the Radio Room.

Apparatus and Facility maintenance records: The records are maintained by the President.

The Memphis Fire Station is an older building in need of some updates. The Fire station has limited space for offices, training, meeting, cleaning and storage. The department does have 2 storage buildings across the street from the station that house an Ambulance and provide some storage and training space.

## Apparatus

Each of the agencies has apparatus that is well maintained and ready to respond to emergency incidents. While it may appear that there is more equipment in some stations than needed, it was observed on several occasions that responders utilized the appropriate equipment for the type of call, rather than responding each time with the same large apparatus. I.e.: a smaller pickup truck rescue truck was used to respond to EMS calls rather than taking a Class A pumper.

- **Consultant note 36: Apparatus Numbering:** It was observed that each station had units with the same apparatus number as other stations that may respond to the same emergency incidents. This practice has the potential of causing dangerous on-scene confusion in issuing orders and directions to responding units via radio transmissions.

The adoption of any system that assures a unique, easily identifiable number for every unit that is not in conflict with the number on any other apparatus that may respond to any emergency in the county will help to avoid possible confusion during an emergency.

- **Strategic Recommendation 16: Apparatus Numbering:** All apparatus in the County should be officially re-numbered using a unique and consistent numbering pattern that gives each unit a unique identification.
- ❖ **Justification 10: Numbering of Apparatus:** Unique numbering of apparatus prevents any responding units from having the same number at any incident, and provides rapid identification by agency and type.
- **Specific Recommendation 15: Apparatus Numbering:** All apparatus should be numbered using a 4 digit numbering system: First digit identifies the County Coordinators Division Number, Second Digit identifies the Department number, the Third Number identifies that department's station number, and the Fourth Digit identifies the type of apparatus.
- ❖ **Justification 11: Unit Identification numbering scheme:** 0 = Quint; 1 = ladder (stick only, no pump); 2, 3, 4, 5 = Engines; 6 = Brush /grass fire rigs; 7 = Tankers; 8 = Rescue; 9 = ambulance. For example, unit 1322 would designate a unit in the county first division from Baldwinsville station 2, Engine Company.
- **Specific Recommendation 16: Apparatus Alternative Numbering Scheme:** As an alternative to adopting the total numbers only system, all apparatus in the County could be numbered using the same designation as currently used on run cards at the Onondaga Dispatch Center.
- ❖ **Justification 12: Current County Dispatch system numbering system:** 27E3, in which 27 designates the county department number, Lakeside; the letter E designates an Engine, and the 3 represents the number of the apparatus.

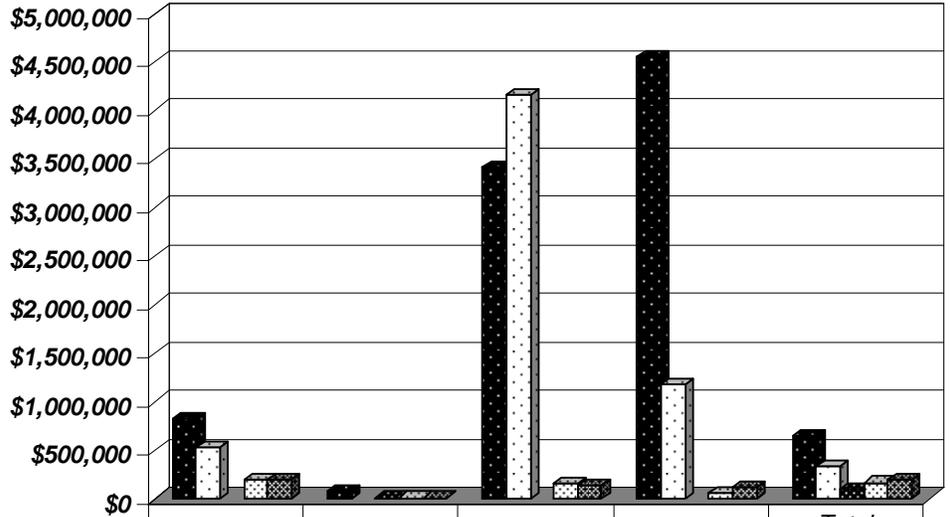
## FINANCES

Finances are certainly a major element for consideration in examining service delivery. However, it is not the intent of this project to do a fiscal audit of the finances of the agencies. Our goal was to be able to obtain an overview of current fiscal issues that impact service delivery. In our efforts to review current fiscal issues, each agency was asked to provide copies of their 2006, 2007, and 2008 budgets. We also requested the same information from the NY State Comptroller's Office, which reviews the audits submitted by fire agencies.

- **Consultant note 37: Request for financial information from NYS:** Pursuant to our request, personnel from the Division of Local Government and School Accountability reported that they did not have audited statements for all of the requested fire districts that serve the Town of Van Buren. The state did provide annual financial reports for 2006 and 2007 for the Warners Fire District and the Lakeside Fire District, and reported that the 2008 reports have not yet been received from those departments.
- **Consultant note 38: Department fiscal information summary:** Review of the department budgets provided by the agencies and the State audits quickly demonstrated that each agency utilizes somewhat different terminology in their system that is difficult to properly correlate in a brief overview. It was observed that there is long term debt for construction of facilities and purchase or lease of apparatus and equipment. The reports in general do not clearly show income from the State 2% foreign insurance pool, nor do they show the budgets for use of those funds within agencies. Each budget did show costs related to audits and management of their funds.

### **Figure 11 Financial summary**

## Financial summary



- **Strategic Recommendation 17: Financial Management:** All fiscal management should be conducted through a centralized administrative service to assure consistency and improve planning and operational activities across the services. This will also reduce the total cost of fiscal management now conducted separately by each agency.

### **Insurance costs**

It was observed in review of department budgets that insurance costs are major expenses for the agencies. Each has unsuccessfully independently examined ways to reduce those growing expenses.

- **Strategic Recommendation 18: Insurance cost reduction:** Insurance costs could be reduced through use of higher deductibles and even through self insurance in an administrative structure that is regional in scope.

## **Review of New York State Fiscal Rules For The Fire Services**

New York State is well aware of the need to properly manage finances within fire departments. Several new laws were enacted in 2006 to strengthen oversight of fire districts and fire companies in New York State<sup>17</sup>. .... Chapter 233 of the Laws of 2006, OSC Audits of Fire Companies, states that Effective January 22, 2007, OSC has express statutory authority to examine the financial affairs of “fire companies.” For this purpose, “fire company” is defined, in part, as a volunteer fire company of a county, city, town, village or fire district fire department, whether or not any such company has been incorporated under any general or special law.

As with many laws and regulations, there is often a misunderstanding about their applicability, and often even a lack of knowledge about the existence of those new rules by the people who are required to follow them. To help with the understanding of the current fiscal reporting requirements as published by NYS, we present the following from the State Manual, Chapter 237 of the Laws of 2006:

*Fire District and Fire Company Audits: Fire districts with annual revenues of \$200,000 or more are required to obtain an independent annual audit. The audit must include, but is not limited to, the district’s financial condition and resources, and such other things as the State Comptroller may designate. A copy of the audit report must be given to the fire commissioners, the town board(s) of municipalities served by the fire district, and OSC within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year audited. Fire districts with annual revenues of less than \$200,000 are authorized to obtain independent audits, but are not required to do so. However, the new law requires these smaller fire districts to report to OSC the district’s financial condition and resources within 180 days after the end of the fiscal year, unless OSC determines that the report is not required. Because all fire districts with annual revenues less than \$200,000 already provide OSC with information on their financial condition and resources through the filing of the Annual Update Document (AUD), OSC has determined no additional reporting is required. Starting with fiscal years ending on or after August 1, 2007, “entities,” such as volunteer fire companies, which contract with municipalities or fire districts to provide fire services and which have revenues of more than \$200,000, must obtain an annual audit of revenues and expenditures in connection with such contract or contracts. Although the statute provides that OSC may designate a lesser revenue amount as an audit threshold for fire companies, OSC has not designated such an amount at this time. The audit must indicate whether the entity has filed IRS form 990, Return of Organization Exempt from Income Tax, and any report required pursuant to Section 30-a of the General Municipal Law (receipts and disbursements of foreign fire insurance tax moneys). If such filings are required, but not made, the audit must examine all revenues, expenditures and resources from any source. Upon completion of the audit, a certified copy must be provided to the fire company and the contracting municipality within 180 days of the end of the fiscal year. 2006 LEGISLATION 5: Fire companies with annual revenues of less than \$200,000 are not required to obtain an independent audit of revenues and expenditures.*

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<sup>17</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller Accounting and Reporting Manual, January 2007

*This threshold does not exempt them from any requirement to file IRS form 990 or the report required by Section 30-a of the General Municipal Law.<sup>18</sup>*

- **Consultant note 39: NYS Law on Financial Reporting:** General Municipal Law § 30. Reports. 1. *Except as hereinafter provided, every municipal corporation and school, fire, improvement and special district shall annually make a report of its financial condition to the comptroller. Such report shall be made by the chief fiscal officer of each municipal corporation, by the chief fiscal officer of a municipal corporation... and by the treasurer of each fire, improvement or special district.....<sup>19</sup>*

### **Foreign Insurance 2% Funds<sup>20</sup>**

The NYS Insurance Department mandates that any foreign or alien insurance company that writes fire insurance in New York State must contribute 2% of the fire premiums written on property located in NYS to be distributed to the fire departments and fire districts statewide. The treasurer or other fiscal officer of the fire department affording fire protection in such city, village, or fire district would be designated to receive the fire tax money. If the department or district does not have its own treasurer, then the fiscal officer of the authorities having the jurisdiction or control of the fire department would be designated. The treasurer of an exempt or benevolent association created by a special act of the Legislature would be designated to receive the fire tax money. The general rule for distribution of fire tax funds for a multi-company fire department is that the foreign fire tax moneys distributed should be allocated between the fire companies in proportion to the number of active members in each fire company. If a department is comprised of both paid and volunteer members, each group would be entitled to fire tax proceeds and moneys should be distributed on a pro rata basis.

As can be seen in the following list of permitted uses for the 2% funds, the larger the number of members in the organization, the more money that will be available in a single pool. This will allow greater flexibility of use to the benefit of the members. Proceeds from the foreign fire tax company are intended to be used for the fire departments and their members. The moneys may be used for any purpose which the members determine to be for the benefit of the fire department or company.

Some examples of use of proceeds are: department social functions - such as installation dinners, picnics, banquets, holiday parties; appliances, furniture, televisions for the firehouse; dress & parade uniforms, hats, boots, jackets, t-shirts, turn out gear, and equipment for members of the department; offset of costs from life or disability insurance (must be group policies); and office equipment such as computers and fax machines. Any expenditure of foreign fire tax funds should be for the benefit of the department and the membership as a whole, and must be voted on by the members of that department. If the fire department or district is recognized as an exempt or benevolent association, (Chapter/Charter granted by

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<sup>18</sup> Office of the New York State Comptroller Accounting and Reporting Manual, January 2007

<sup>19</sup> Section 30-a of the General Municipal Law NYS

<sup>20</sup> NYS Insurance Department website

the New York State Legislature), the foreign fire tax money may only be used for the “care and relief of disabled or indigent firefighters and their families” and some administrative expenses.

The NYS Comptrollers’ Office recommends that foreign fire tax funds be accounted for separately: a separate checking or savings account should be set up for the administration of foreign fire tax funds. Cash receipts and cash disbursements should be recorded, detailing the receipt of money and any expenditure of foreign fire tax funds.

### **Foreign Insurance 2% funds findings**

Although the audit reports received from the State indicated expenditures that are allowed under the 2% use guidelines, neither the audits nor the budget reports from Lakeside fire district showed any line indicating receipt or distribution of the 2% foreign insurance funds. The Baldwinsville report did show the 2% fund income and expenses.

- **Strategic Recommendation 19: Foreign 2% Insurance Funds:** Manage state 2% foreign insurance funds in a central regionally administrated pool, to enable improved effectiveness and enhanced opportunities to develop volunteer incentive programs and other benefits available for volunteers from use of these funds.
- **Specific Recommendation 17: Foreign Insurance 2% tax funds:** The fire rescue agencies budgets need to accurately reflect the 2% foreign fire tax funds both for income and expense.
- ❖ **Justification 13: Tracking of 2% Funds:** State law requires tracking of these funds, both income and expense. These funds should be accounted for with a separate checking or savings account that is set up for the administration of the foreign fire tax funds.

## GOVERNANCE

### *NYS Fire Services Governing Structures Review*

Fire protection in New York State is complex, with many options<sup>21</sup>. Fire protection may be provided directly by a municipality, arranged under contract with a municipality, or provided by an independently governed fire district. Fire departments may have all-paid or “career” members, all-volunteer, or a combination of paid employees and volunteer members. Firefighters may work for a municipal fire department, be appointed as fire department members by fire district commissioners, or be members of a not-for-profit fire corporation.

- **Consultant note 40: Governance factors for Villages:** Villages must provide fire protection. A village may (a) have its own fire department, (b) contract with the fire department of another municipality, (c) contract with a fire district, or (d) form a joint fire district with a town and other villages.

Where villages have fire departments, they may also have career, volunteer, or a mix of both types of firefighters.

- **Consultant note 41: Governance factors for Towns:** State law does not allow Towns to provide their residents with fire protection as a municipal function. Instead, fire protection is provided in Towns either by a fire district or through creation of a fire protection district.

### *Current Governing Structures of Fire agencies in the Town of Van Buren*

- **Consultant note 42: Fire Districts:** In the Town of Van Buren there is one fire district, the Warners Fire District, located within the Town, and one fire district, the Lakeside Fire District, located in the Town of Geddes, which contracts with the Town of Van Buren to provide fire protection services.
- **Consultant note 43: Fire Protection Districts:** There are three fire protection districts located in the Town of Van Buren: Northern Fire Protection District, Memphis Fire Protection District, and Southeastern Fire Protection District.
- **Consultant note 44: Fire Departments:** The Town of Van Buren is served by four fire departments: Baldwinsville Fire Department serving Northern Fire Protection District; Memphis Fire Department serving Memphis Fire Protection District; Warners Fire Department serving Warners Fire District; and Lakeside Fire Department serving Southeastern Fire Protection District.
- **Consultant note 45: Not for Profit corporations:** The Town of Van Buren has two not-for-profit fire corporations serving the Town: The Baldwinsville Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. and the Memphis Fire Department, Inc.

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<sup>21</sup> 21st Century Local Government: Report of the New York State Commission on Local Government Efficiency & Competitiveness April 2008; Fire Protection in New York State.

- **Consultant note 46: Joint Fire Districts:** Currently, no joint fire districts are located in the Town of Van Buren.

### **Economy of Scale for Administration**

Economy of scale is the management principle that when several organizations require the same services, the cost of providing those services decreases as production increases, due to consolidation of the processes within a single structure. In addition to the decreasing costs of providing services, in government economy of scale also provides an enhanced revenue stream for all services, by combining residential, commercial and industrial properties into a single revenue source to improve overall service capabilities across a broader geographical area.

Fire and rescue services are by definition “services” to the public. The importance of assuring efficiency and cost effectiveness in the delivery of any services that are available to everyone equally whenever needed is imperative. The public, i.e., the taxpayers, in any community have the right to expect and demand those assurances. Elected officials have an obligation to assure their taxpayers that those conditions are being met.

Throughout the United States efficient and cost effective fire and rescue services are operated with County Fire Department structures, and, in large cities, with City Fire Departments. In nearby Toronto, Canada, over 270 separate fire departments were successfully merged to form a single Metropolitan fire service. In Great Britain the national government operates a nationwide fire rescue service.

As a Peer Assessor for the Commission on Fire Accreditation International for over ten years, I have been on assessment teams and conducted site visits in many County and large City departments that were all operated successfully, from Palm Beach County Florida to Washington. As a fire chief, I was responsible for the creation of a countywide combination, Volunteer and Career staffed fire department in Georgia, and was Fire Chief of a large metro Atlanta County fire department. In the Rochester suburb of Henrietta, several fire districts disbanded and formed a single district many years ago very successfully. An example of a successful city department, beyond the obvious ones in New York State of Syracuse, Rochester and New York City, is the Houston, Texas fire department. That department protects an area of 617 square miles and a population of over two million people. As the third largest fire department in the United States, Houston has 91 stations staffed by 3908 uniformed personnel and a support staff of 254 civilian employees. The department operates 86 Engines and 37 Trucks in 21 Districts. The agency also operates 57 BLS EMS units and 27 ALS EMS units, 3 Haz Mat units, 3 Rescue trucks and 11 ARFF units at the airport.

The primary point is that size has many positive impacts on the administration of governmental services, and few real negative impacts if a proper administrative structure is established to address the true needs of the broader community. While the area of the Town of Van Buren and its neighboring townships and villages certainly are not of the same size and scope as the City of Houston, Palm Beach County, or any of the other large fire departments cited above, the fact remains that the leadership of each of the current local fire departments is responsible for the same things that these much larger

departments are responsible for in terms of administrative management, cost control, operational effectiveness, and assuring proper training for emergency responders.

The leaders of the departments serving this Township and Village each also have the additional personnel issues of recruitment and retention of Volunteer firefighters, which is an ever-increasing stress upon leaders of the fire services in every part of this nation.

So the question remains: What is the best way to assure that fire rescue services are effective cost efficient, and safe for the community and those providing those services? What governing structure will work best for this community and the citizens being served under existing laws?

The current governing structure for fire protection in New York State was established in the 1930's, when most of New York was rural and fire rescue services in most communities were non-existent. The services provided and expected today were not even thought of. In New York, cities are required to provide fire protection, yet Counties and Towns in New York are not allowed to provide fire protection as part of their governing structure. Many studies in the State have shown that now is the time to reorganize the governing systems for fire and rescue services throughout the state, to assure an economy of scale for administration, while at the same time assuring people in the community and in the fire and rescue services of the comfort of having that neighborhood fire station.

### **Importance of Team Membership Psychology in the fire service**

The importance of understanding the psychology of belonging to Teams and Groups in the fire service can never be underestimated. In sports, members of a team motivate and encourage each other to strive for winning the game. Team members wear the same colors to identify themselves as part of the group that will come together to win the game. Lifelong friendships are often the result of being on the same team. Teams build a feeling of belonging in individuals that meets strong human psychological needs.

In the fire service, the need to feel that you are a member of a team far exceeds the need just to win a game. Firefighters and their officers each understand and trust that their safety and lives depend upon the abilities of the people they respond with at emergency incidents. The bonds that are built within a group in a fire station give each member the confidence and ability to perform even the duties that place them at risk, because they know that the other members of their team will be there to assist if things go wrong. In every career station, on each work shift, every member on each company "knows" that they are the best company and shift in the station. In every volunteer and career station the members of that station "know" that they are in the best station in the department. In every department, no matter what the size, number of stations, or staffing composition, every member "knows" that their department is the best in the region or in the world.

- **Consultant note 47: Station Pride:** It was observed in every agency that members have a very strong sense of pride in their department and their abilities to serve the public. It was also observed that there are strong feelings about any questioning of those abilities by non members in some departments.
  
- **Strategic Recommendation 20: Team Membership:** Leadership must assure individual member's feelings of belonging to teams in any administrative

structure. Those teams must represent each company and fire station as well as the department as a whole.

- ❖ **Justification 14: Team Membership:** The pride each member exhibits as a member of the group they belong to is a reflection of their psychological need to belong to a group that each respects and trusts and who they can enjoy spending time with. Company, Fire Station, Department: Each member in the fire rescue service understands that each other member of their group will be willing and able to support them in an emergency in life and possibly in death situations.

## **Leadership**

Leadership in the fire service begins with company officers, those men and women in charge of each responding unit and activities in each station. As a fire chief, this consultant often has said that the most important officers in the department are the Lieutenants. It is those company officers who deal day to day with the people in their companies, and who issue the important first commands at every incident that set the stage for the final successful outcome of the incident.

In both Volunteer and Career structured fire services, it is the company officer who determines success or failure of every operation and activity. Volunteer or Career officer, it is vital that every officer at every rank has the required training, knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the duties of their position. That training must be current to today's standards. That training must be based upon recognized sources, and be consistent with the operational tactical and strategic planning used within the agency and by the other agencies that will participate in the mitigation of the many types of emergency incidents that the officer may be expected to respond to. No matter what selection method is used to select officers at every rank, there must be well established and recognized standards of training, knowledge, skills and abilities for those who are selected to be leaders and officers at every rank.

- **Consultant note 48: Leadership:** It was observed that the members of the various departments have a great deal of respect for their elected leaders.
- **Strategic Recommendation 21: Leadership:** Establish recognized requirements for training, knowledge, skills, and abilities for those who are selected to be leaders and officers at every rank. Leadership at every level in the fire rescue services cannot and must not be a popularity contest.
- **Consultant note 49: Administrative Leadership:** Leadership at an administrative level in the fire service has become a specialized function clearly removed from the traditional roles of the fire chief of years past, who was often promoted up the ranks from being the best smoke eater, gung ho firefighter in the department. As more and more legal demands have been placed on leaders in the fire service, it has become more and more difficult to find individuals who are both willing and qualified to step into administrative positions, even in career departments. Most fire chiefs today spend 95+ percent of their time on administrative matters, primarily management of finances and personnel issues. The legal reporting requirements of the state for issues like budgets, training, and incident reporting become a major issue in every department.

- **Strategic Recommendation 22: Administrative Leadership:** Identify the specific administrative knowledge, skills, and abilities currently within each agency.

The demands of meeting administrative requirements force every department and chief to devote precious time to administration issues. That is time that could be better spent in the development of strategic and tactical planning and in training for those emergency incidents that their agency will be called on to mitigate.

- **Consultant note 50: administration realities:** Administratively, every size department has basically the same needs and requirements. Multiple agencies each must do the same tasks to meet those requirements and needs. In the current town fire services, for instance, there are at least four individuals designated as the treasures of their departments, and at least four separate groups deciding business policies and operational policies. There is little coordination or interaction between the agencies providing the same services, other than that found in mutual aid and automatic aid agreements or the shared use of a single station by two departments.

### **Inter Agency and Inter Governmental Relations**

During the review process for this project, it was observed that the dedicated members of the fire service have the pride and dedication to serve the members of their local communities to the best of their individual ability and with the funds available from those local neighborhoods. Each appears ready to work with their neighboring districts during emergencies. However, it was also quickly observed that on a governing level, each of the agencies has feelings of apprehension, and perhaps mistrust, for the governing structures of the other agencies and the elected representatives of the residents in the Towns they are physically located in.

While it is often human nature to trust the familiar and to resist change, there is a general acknowledgment that success in achieving the mission of each agency in the future will demand change. Those changes must not be made just for the sake of change. Change must be made to build the base for continued improvement, and to assure the taxpayers that the services they have come to depend upon will be there when needed in the future.

- **Consultant note 51: Service Commitment:** It was encouraging to find that the leaders of the fire rescue services understand, deep down at a core level, that changes will be needed to assure the future ability of the agencies to meet their mission.

It was encouraging to observe the dedication to serving the community that was exhibited by leaders and members of every department during our site visits.

- **Consultant note 52: Commissioners' Statement of service philosophy:** "We must all remember why we are here, and that is to serve the taxpayers we protect first and foremost".

### **Incident Response**

Currently, emergency incident dispatches are made based upon factors including incident type, geographical location, and the fire district (agency) responsible for that geographic

area. The first responding unit is always sent from the district responsible for the geographic area of the emergency. There are responses made from multiple stations and departments based upon run card information for the location and incident type, based solely upon the directives of the fire chief in charge of that fire district. A combination of Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid has been established in a run card system, to assure that the proper types and numbers of units are sent to each location and call type.

Mutual aid is the ability for one district to call for assistance after it has been determined that there is a need for such assistance.

Automatic aid is the immediate dispatch of apparatus and personnel to incidents, based upon the preplanning for that location and/or incident type. This information is provided to the county dispatch center and placed into the 'run card' used by the dispatch system.

There currently is no system used to assure that the closest units are sent to each emergency.

In an all volunteer fire department structure it is also difficult to know who is responding either to drive apparatus or respond to the location of an emergency incident. This has been an issue for many years in the fire service. Modern technology can now satisfactorily address this issue to assure proper staffing will go where needed within the short time frames that determine success or failure at incident mitigation.

It was observed that at this time the agencies serving the Town do not use this technology.

- **Strategic Recommendation 23: Closest Unit Dispatch and Response:** The County dispatch system must be used to assure that the closest units are sent to every emergency, no matter what political or jurisdictional district the incident is in. There is no valid excuse for not sending the closest available help to every emergency. Failure to do so has resulted in successful litigation against the fire services in many areas of the country.
- **Specific Recommendation 18: Automatic Vehicle Location System:** All apparatus should be equipped with automatic vehicle location, AVL, system transponders to provide the unit location to the county dispatch computer aided dispatch system when units are out of their stations and available for response.
- **Specific Recommendation 19: Tracking Volunteer Response and pre-scheduling individual availability:** Assuring response of the required personnel to every emergency is the most important factor for safe incident mitigation success. Fire and rescue agencies should investigate and utilize a cell phone/web based system that allows volunteers to rapidly notify the agency that they are responding to the fire station or the incident location. That system should also allow all volunteers to post their individual schedules of availability and non-availability to respond. Such advanced scheduling knowledge, if shared by all stations and the dispatch center, provides responders with the information needed regarding who will be responding and not responding.
- **Consultant note 53 Tracking Responding Firefighters:** RFG Associates does not market or represent any products other than our services. Nor do we in any way accept referral or promotional payments from any other organization. However, if we are aware of a product that will address issues we discover during our investigations, we will recommend that agencies investigate that product on

their own to see if the agency feels the product will be helpful to them. Availability of volunteers to respond when needed is one of the most important issues we have found. There is a clear need for the agencies to track actual volunteer firefighter response times, and to pre-schedule availability, so that those who are available will be aware in advance of limited responder availability. There are products on the market that do provide a cost effective tool for doing this. Our fire service associate on this project has had excellent success using "Iamresponding.com," which is a product developed by an Onondaga County company, Emergency Services Marketing Corp., Inc. of DeWitt, New York. We do recommend that the agencies examine this product, and others, to determine which product will best assist them in tracking firefighter response to incidents, permit volunteers to post their availability schedules to improve response planning, and generally improve internal agency communications.

IamResponding.com provides a tool that fills many of the staffing related issues we observed at a very modest cost. Iamresponding.com lets members of emergency response agencies know immediately who is available to respond to calls, where they are responding to, station or scene, and to pre-advise other members about when their schedule will not permit them to respond. This saves critical time for fire departments, EMS agencies, SAR and technical rescue teams, and any other incident response teams when responding to emergencies. In the process after dispatch, any Internet connected computer or mobile phone instantly displays who is responding to your incident, their qualifications, and when and where they are responding. Commanders will know immediately if they have a full crew on the way, or if they will need to page additional personnel. They will be able to stop waiting for members who are not on their way, and stop leaving the station just as others are coming around the corner. In short, they will know exactly who is responding to the station, scene or any other location.<sup>22</sup>

### **Water supply**

The ability to have a reliable water source for firefighting is of paramount importance for operational success. Fire hydrants connected to public water mains with sufficient volumes of water are the most frequent water source for firefighting in built up areas. Fire departments must use alternative supplies where there are no hydrants. Those sources generally include Tanker trucks for shuttling water to the scene and/or Drafting operations from flowing and static water sources. Many departments also successfully increase the capabilities of the water carried on responding apparatus by utilizing Class A foam systems and Compressed Air Foam to extend the amount of water needed for extinguishment.

In the Township of Van Buren, large areas do not have public water services and agencies have developed methods to assure adequate water supply when needed. It must be recognized that providing alternative water supplies is an operation that takes time and additional staffing to be successful.

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<sup>22</sup> <http://www.iamresponding.com>

The last map in the booklet shows Fire Hydrant locations within the town and other surface water sources that can be used for fire department water supply where they are readily accessible and not frozen solid.

- **Strategic Recommendation 24: Water Supply:** Conduct an in-depth review of the abilities of all agencies to rapidly and efficiently supply required fire flow water supplies in all response areas by use of public water supplies, tanker shuttle operations and/or water pump relay operations.
- **Specific Recommendation 20: Class A foam systems:** Engines should be modified with pre-piped systems to supply Class A foam for structural firefighting to conserve water and provide better extinguishment capabilities.

### **EMS Response**

Each of the agencies dispatches units to life-threatening medical emergencies as first responders to initiate treatment prior to the arrival of EMS transport units. That prompt arrival has a beneficial impact on patient survival. Many times the general public does not understand why the fire department comes to help when they have a medical emergency and they have called for an ambulance to get the patient to the hospital. When fire units arrive in vans or other vehicles that appear to have the capability to transport patients, family members and bystanders often become upset when they do not transport the patient.

This confusion is often the result when different agencies respond to the same incident. Getting members of the community to understand the reasons for the dispatch of various units to an incident is part of the public education that every agency should do to inform the people they serve of the services they provide. Trying to provide this education during an emergency can be a difficult exercise that takes away from the ability to provide quality patient care. However, delivering the message is an important part of good community relations.

- **Specific Recommendation 21: Customer Education About Agency Services:** Fire rescue agencies and the EMS agency should jointly prepare an information card that can be given to members of the public while at emergency incidents to explain the roles of all agencies in response to their emergency.
- ❖ **Justification 15 Customer understanding information card:** Informing the public about the roles of all responders is an important part of good community relations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS FOR FIRE RESCUE SERVICE GOVERNING & ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

- ***Consultant note 54: Legal advice:*** *This report has been commissioned to examine current fire protection services within the Town of van Buren. It is beyond the scope of this contract for the consultant to provide legal advice to the Town or the agencies involved. However, it is within the scope of this contract for the consultant to make recommendations for the future of the fire rescue services that are based upon our understanding of the laws of the State of New York to the best of our ability as fire service professionals and non-lawyers. Any recommendations that involve legal matters, such as to establish any new or revised legal governing structure, will need to be handled by members of the bar engaged by the Township and all other entities that may participate in the process..*

In every neighborhood, fire stations are the most obvious sign of government services being provided to that neighborhood. Fire stations are always the refuge that people seek in an emergency. Those feelings exist no matter what governing structure those fire stations are in. Governing structure of any fire service is usually transparent to the general public, because each neighborhood has “their own” fire station. Few citizens understand that response to their emergency generally will come from several stations, and hopefully from the unit that is closest to them at the time the emergency occurs.

However, the governing & administrative structure of a fire rescue agency does establish the frame work for the total ability of an agency to respond to community needs in the time of an emergency. The economy of scale with more stations, apparatus and staffing with common direction is an ever-increasing imperative in today’s world of expectations and realities. There are many reasons why economy of scale is beneficial in government service delivery. In the fire rescue service those reasons are magnified due to the factors of assuring that the closest units always respond to every emergency, and that the services will have the capabilities and staffing required to respond, with the equipment and training needed to properly mitigate each type of emergency that the community expects them to handle. The larger the area the organization covers, the more resources that can be allocated to the mission of the agency rather than to repetitive administrative tasks across multiple administrations.

*“Regionalism includes a common sense of place, unity of purpose and goals, and a sense of the common good. Regionalism is recognition of assets and resources belonging to the whole region, and thus, a willingness to address those resources in ways to remedy the problems of the whole community. Regionalism includes a willingness to act cooperatively, collaboratively, or on a consolidated basis to achieve the region’s goals and address its issues. Fragmented local government structures have long fostered parochial and self-interested decision-making contrary to the long-term best interests of the region. For regionalism to succeed, regional bodies of government need to have the power to deal with regional issues. These regional bodies must be representative in*

*composition, but need to encompass a broad enough constituency to require consideration of the good of the entire region in the deliberative process.”<sup>23</sup>*

The strategic potential benefits of bringing all fire services into one regional governing structure include: <sup>24</sup> improving response time with the dispatch of the closest unit to every incident; greater purchasing power; greater availability of members to respond; centralizing fire department management and reducing administrative costs, (time spent by volunteers on administration is a cost); centralizing the fire department support systems; the ability to develop standardizing procedures for operation and training; reducing insurance premiums paid by every home owner based on improvements in the ISO insurance rating; improving fleet management, such as having one central repair and maintenance facility for all vehicles and apparatus. A single governing structure should also bring a savings to taxpayers through the pooling of specialized resources, such as heavy rescue apparatus, hazardous materials teams, and rope rescue teams, as well as in long range planning for efficiency and effectiveness.

It is the above factors about regionalism of the fire and rescue services that will best assure the community of continued services in a cost effective and efficient system, while also assuring each member of the emergency services of their ability to fully participate in the primary activities that drew them to volunteer as firefighters and officers.

➤ **Strategic Recommendation 25: Regional Fire Rescue Services Governing and Administration Structure:** The Town and Village should collaborate with adjoining Towns and Villages to establish a regional approach to fire and rescue services administration.

❖ **Justification 16:** Regional administration of fire and rescue services is the most efficient and effective way to monitor: staffing levels, training, officer selection, dispatch call processing, dispatch and response times, and general operational effectiveness. Regional administration also provides a currently un available consistent broad regional viewing platform for planning future station locations, and for assuring proper staffing at all levels.

**Consultant note 55: Consulting and Development Services available:** RFG Associates remains available beyond this contract to assist the Town, the agencies, and their attorneys, in the development of any new governing structures. We are also available for team development of policies and procedures needed to implement any recommendations made in this report. RFG Associates can also assist other Towns in the region in their efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their Fire and Rescue Services.

**Consultant note 56** It is the understanding of the consultants that according to New York State laws, Town Law § 172, where two or more fire districts adjoin, consolidation is possible. The state has set a formal process to create a consolidation of fire districts. The state also has established a mechanism for

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<sup>23</sup> STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION A REPORT ON STRATEGIC GOVERNMENT CONSOLIDATION FOR ONONDAGA COUNTY ONONDAGA CITIZENS LEAGUE 2005 STUDY

<sup>24</sup> FIRE DISTRICT CONSOLIDATION New York State Department of State 2008

establishing Joint Fire Districts. Joint fire districts are created by the Town Board(s) and the Board(s) of Trustees of a Village. With the establishment of a Joint District, the Town Board(s) and the Village Board(s) of trustees of each participating municipality shall, by local law, dissolve any existing fire, fire alarm or fire protection districts contained within the Joint Fire District.

The state of New York also provides a mechanism for creating agreements for Jurisdictional Consolidation. Jurisdictional consolidation involves the dissolution of existing jurisdictions (i.e. fire districts and fire protection districts) to create a new jurisdiction (i.e. combined fire district, fire protection district, or a joint fire district). This process requires a complete merger or reorganization, in which the governing bodies of each jurisdiction must agree to dissolve the current jurisdictions and form a new single jurisdiction.

The state recognizes that all parties involved in any consolidation or creation of a new governing structure must address, plan, and develop new administrative and operating structures that include, but are not limited to: training standards and programs; standard operating procedures; response standards, including location of facilities, number of fire companies, response time, and staffing; current indebtedness of each jurisdiction; rank structure; employee/member benefits, such as retirement systems and service award programs; union contracts, if applicable; and personnel policies.

New York State laws authorize and provide direction for the following regarding changes in governing structures for assuring cost effective and efficient services in the state.

**Joint Fire Districts in Towns and Villages:**<sup>25</sup>

- The town board(s) and the village board(s) of trustees may establish a joint fire district when it appears to be in the public's best interest, provided that all the territory in the joint fire district is contiguous. The boards shall hold a joint meeting within the territory of the proposed joint fire district for the purpose of proposing the establishment of the joint fire district.

**Dissolving a Fire Protection District into a Fire District:**<sup>26</sup>

- Whenever a fire protection district adjoins a fire district, the town board(s) of the town(s) in which the fire protection district is located may, by majority vote and after a public hearing, dissolve the fire protection district into the adjoining fire district or alter the boundaries of the fire protection district to add a portion of the fire protection district into the fire district; provided that the board of fire commissioners of the fire district have consented to the alteration. The consent must be in writing and notarized....

**Consolidation of Not-for-Profit Corporations:**<sup>27</sup>

- Article 9 of the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law governs the process of consolidation or merger for not-for-profit corporations, including fire corporations. Merger occurs when two or more fire corporations merge into a single pre-existing corporation (one of the participating corporations). In contrast,

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<sup>25</sup> Town Law §§ 185, 189-a, 189-b, 189-c

<sup>26</sup> Town Law § 172-d

<sup>27</sup> Not-for-Profit Corporations Law Article 9

consolidation occurs when two or more fire corporations consolidate into a new single corporation.

The state “not for profit” laws also detail the procedures to be followed and the approvals required for mergers and or consolidations.

- **Consultant note 57: Public demands:** What is not acceptable to the citizens of this community is to maintain the status quo. They demand that their taxes provide a public safety service delivery system that is effective, cost efficient and safe. As stated by Onondaga Citizens League: Some form of governmental modernization is essential for our region’s ability to more effectively attract jobs, retain young people, and compete in the global market place.<sup>28</sup>
- **Strategic Recommendation 26: Creation of a Regional Joint Fire District:** Create a single Joint Fire Rescue District administrative structure for all fire rescue services in the Town and Village within a new legal governing structure that can be expanded regionally to contiguous towns and across the county.
- **Strategic Recommendation 27: Reorganization of existing services:** Dissolve and reorganize all current fire districts, departments and other agencies providing fire and rescue services to the Town(s) into the new single **Joint Fire District** under the laws of the State of New York.
- ❖ **Justification 17: Joint Fire District formation:** The current administrative management demands upon multiple agencies would be more effectively and efficiently managed in a single administrative structure. The governing structure for a Joint Fire District allows the elected officials of Towns and Villages to appoint the Joint District Fire Commissioners. This authority retained by the elected town representatives will provide and assure a wider citizen participation in the administration of the fire rescue services than does the current Fire District system, where commissioners are directly elected. Historically, there has been low turnout for Fire District elections statewide, limiting the citizen diversity of input on those fire district commissions.
- **Strategic Recommendation 28: Financial Structure:** The Joint Fire District will establish a regional fire rescue tax funding mechanism that will assure that each station can be properly funded, due to combining residential, commercial and industrial tax bases to a single revenue source across the broader community.
- ❖ **Justification 18: Financial Structure:** A central, regionally administrated fire and rescue service would establish a fire rescue tax funding mechanism that will assure that each station, whether in a hamlet, suburb or commercial/industrial district will be properly funded due to combining residential, commercial and industrial tax bases to a single revenue source. Spreading the fire and rescue taxes across the wider region should reduce tax costs in smaller, primarily residential areas.
- **Strategic Recommendation 29 Scope of Joint Fire District:** The structure of the Joint Fire District should be established so that additional contiguous Towns and Villages can easily become part of that structure as they recognize the advantages

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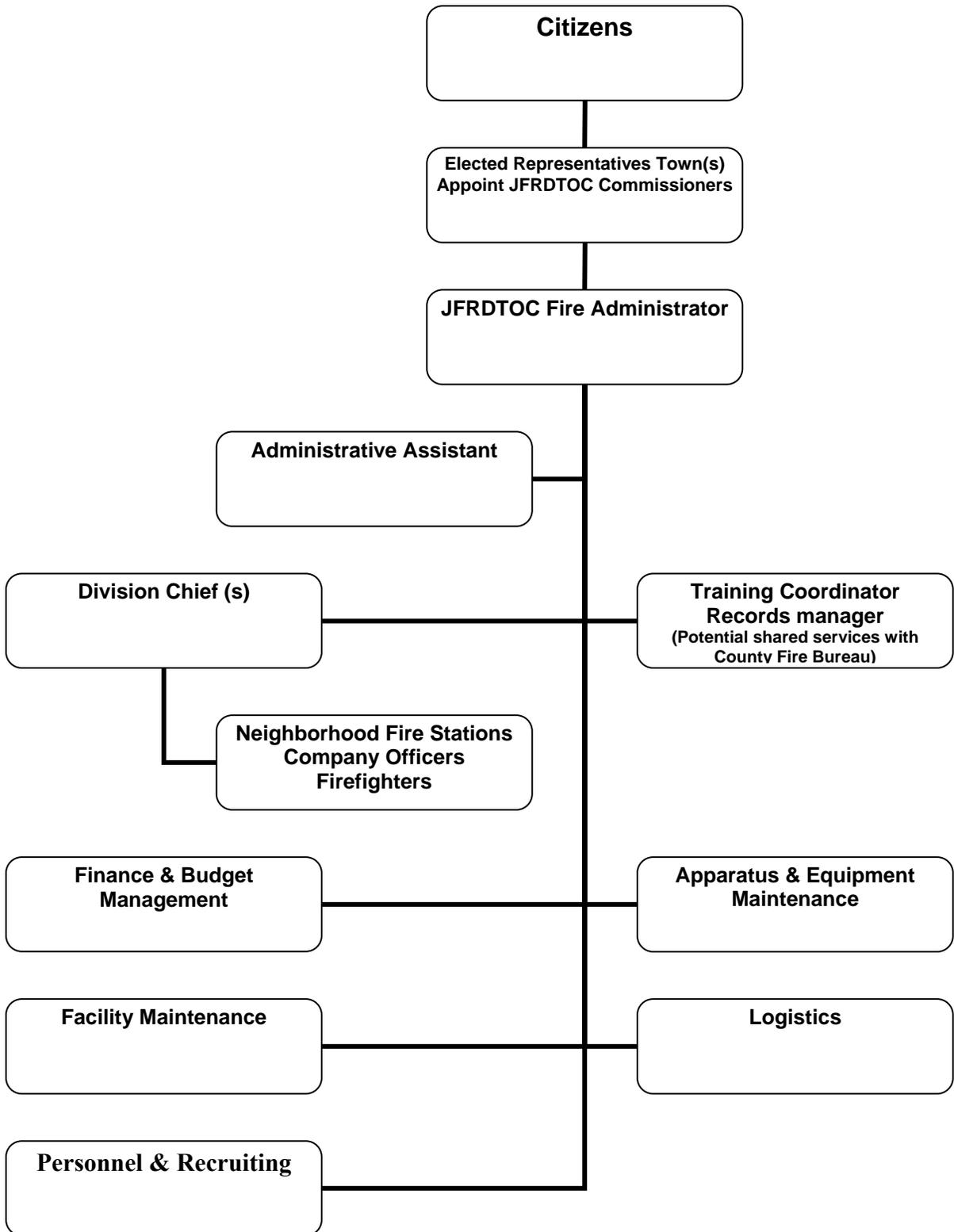
<sup>28</sup> Commission on Local Government Efficiency and Competitiveness

to their fire rescue services and their communities of the Joint Fire District administration.

- **Strategic Recommendation 30 Joint Fire District Commissioners:** The charter for establishing a regional Joint Fire District should assure that each Town joining the Joint district will have a voice in the selection of district commissioners. Representation on the Joint District board should reflect populations being served by each of the member Towns and Villages.
- **Specific Recommendation 22 Contracts for services:** The establishment of a Joint Fire District for administration of the fire and rescue service with its economy of scale structure could be used in a way that the non governing, administrative functions could be provided economically to non member agencies in a fee for services basis to generate revenue to support Joint District activities.
- **Strategic Recommendation 31 Strategic Planning for Recommended Initial Members of the Joint Fire District:** Due to the location of current fire stations surrounding the Town and Village and the location of agencies that are currently providing fire rescue services, the Towns of Lysander, Geddes, Camillus and Elbridge and all Villages in those Townships should be invited to participate in the initial creation of this regional Joint Fire District.
- **Specific Recommendation 23 Citizen input and fire service review requirement:** A comprehensive study of existing services and citizen needs should be conducted as part of the effort to form a Joint Fire District beyond the Town of Van Buren and Village of Baldwinsville areas covered by this consulting contract.
- ❖ Justification 19 Citizen Input: It is important for the success of any reorganization to review current organizational issues and community expectations in each community.
- **Strategic Recommendation 32 Planning for Future Considerations for fire service administration:** The Joint Fire District created by the Town(s) and Village(s) legal documents should contain wording that will allow the Joint District to be disbanded when New York State laws are changed to permit County and/or regional administration of fire rescue services so that the fire and rescue services that are part of the Joint District can easily become part of the new broader regional structure.
- ❖ Justification 20 The State of New York is currently reviewing all governmental structures in the state and may soon enact laws that will improve efficiency and effectiveness by developing regional or countywide approaches to service delivery.
- **Specific Recommendation 24 Existing support personnel:** The Joint fire district should offer employment to support personnel currently working in the existing fire districts.
- **Consultant note 58** It must be noted that each of the tasks shown on the proposed organization chart are currently being performed separately in each agency and there is a cost for these services at each agency in time and funds.

Figure 12 Proposed Organization Chart

**JOINT FIRE RESCUE DISTRICT TOWNS OF ONONDAGA  
COUNTY ORGANIZATION CHART**



## **Job Descriptions/Duties**

- **Specific Recommendation 25: Job Description/Duties of Elected Town Officials:** Select and appoint members of the JFRDTC Commission. Review and approve budgets. Collect and distribute taxes. Receive and distribute regular reports to the community from the JFRDTC Commission.
- **Specific Recommendation 26: Job Description/Duties of JFRDTC Commission:** General Oversight of all Fire and Rescue Services. Review, Modify & Approve Budgets. Approve Policies. Serve as final organizational appeal step for personnel issues.
- **Specific Recommendation 27: Job Description/Duties of JFRDTC Fire Administrator & Subordinates:** Stay current with all rules, laws and regulations that pertain to fire and rescue services. Develop, with Division Chiefs, Standard Operating Guidelines, SOGs, for all Operational and Administrative functions. Manage Personnel: assure proper staffing availability; direct recruiting; coordinate training to assure that all personnel are trained to current standards and SOGs. Develop and manage Standards of Response policy for district. Coordinate and assure proper maintenance and testing of all apparatus, equipment and facilities. Manage Logistics. Develop and manage budgets. Other duties as assigned by Commission.
- **Specific Recommendation 28: Job Description/Duties of Current Chief Officers:** Retain leadership in their stations and districts. Development of Standard Operating Guidelines jointly with all other Operational Chiefs in the Joint District. Assure current training for all personnel in their district. Respond to and manage emergency incidents. Provide input to the Joint District Administrator regarding the operational needs of the stations in their district. Perform daily staffing availability reviews and communicate availability information to all responders. Perform other duties as may be required.
- **Specific Recommendation 29: Job Description of Current Firefighters and Company Officers:** Retain their current status as fire fighters in their existing fire stations. Participate in regional training to maintain and develop new knowledge, skills, and abilities. Participate in special regional teams such as Haz Mat, Water and Ice Rescue, etc. Be able to respond to incidents within the total Joint District as needed, based upon their location at the time of the incident rather than proximity to just their assigned fire station. Perform other duties as may be required.

## SUMMARY

The goal of this project was to evaluate the current fire and rescue service delivery in this community and to help local leaders determine the current and future needs of the community and their fire and rescue services. This review process has highlighted many issues that need to be addressed by community leaders in the near future if this community is to be assured of continued quality fire and rescue services.

In this report we have recommended changes that will assure and improve the safety of the public and those who provide fire and rescue emergency services to the community, all within an efficient and cost effective system.

By definition, strategic planning determines where an organization is going over the next year or more, and how it's going to get there. The Strategic Recommendations made in this report were presented to establish the broad framework for assuring continued quality fire and rescue services in this community.

Once there has been a consensus agreement by the elected officials of the community on the Strategic Recommendations made in this report, the next step in this process should continue to be organization-wide and focused on the major functions of administration of the fire and rescue services at a "Tactical" level of planning.

- Tactical Planning, the process of taking the strategic plans and breaking them down into specific, short term actions and plans, is required to assure success for the goals of this project. The relative length of the tactical planning process will generally cover the period from today through to the end of year three of this type of process.

RFG Associates would welcome the opportunity to continue to work with the community on this project in the development of tactical plans, and for the implementation of the strategic and tactical plans into a successful operational reality.

- **The driving force behind this project and all future actions taken by community leaders from this point forward must continue to address the primary question:**

**"What is in the public's best interest?"**

## **Exhibits 1 NYS Office of Fire Prevention and Control, standards references:**

(d) The following standards, manuals, statutes and regulations will be used to provide the training authorized by subdivision 6 of section 156 of the Executive Law:

- NFPA 472 Standard for Professional Competence of Responders to Hazardous Materials Incidents 2002 Edition.
- NFPA 921 Fire and Explosion Investigations 2004 Edition
- NFPA 1001 Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1002 Standard on Fire Apparatus Driver/Operator Professional Qualifications 2003 Edition
- NFPA 1003 Standard for Airport Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2005 Edition
- NFPA 1006 Standard for Rescue Technician Professional Qualifications 2003 Edition
- NFPA 1021 Standard for Fire Officer Professional Qualifications
- NFPA 1033 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Fire Investigator 2003 Edition
- NFPA 1041 Standard for Fire Service Instructor Professional Qualifications 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1051 Standard for Wildland Fire Fighter Professional Qualifications 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1061 Standard for Professional Qualifications for Public Safety Telecommunicator 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1145 Guide for the Use of Class A Foams in Manual Structural Fire Fighting 2006 Edition
- NFPA 1403 Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1451 Standard for a Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1500 Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1521 Standard for Fire Department Safety Officer 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1561 Standard on Emergency Services Incident Management System 2005 Edition
- NFPA 1670 Standard on Operations and Training for Technical Search and Rescue Incidents 2004 Edition
- NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Career Fire Departments 2004 Edition
- NFPA 1720 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments 2004 Edition
- NFPA 1901 Standard for Automotive Fire Apparatus 2003 Edition
- NFPA 1906 Standard for Wildland Fire Apparatus 2006 Edition
- NFPA 1911 Standard for Service Tests of Fire Pump Systems on Fire Apparatus 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1912 Standard for Fire Apparatus Refurbishing 2006 Edition
- NFPA 1914 Standard for Testing Fire Department Aerial Devices 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1915 Standard for Fire Apparatus Preventive Maintenance Program 2000 Edition
- NFPA 1936 Standard on Powered Rescue Tools 2005 Edition
- NFPA 1981 Standard on Open-Circuit Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus for Fire and Emergency Services 2002 Edition
- NFPA 1982 Standard on Personal Alert Safety Systems (PASS) 1998 Edition

NFPA 1983 Standard on Life Safety Rope and Equipment for Emergency Services 2006 Edition  
NFPA 1989 Standard on Breathing Air Quality for Fire and Emergency Services Respiratory Protection 2003 Edition  
NFPA 1991 Standard on Vapor-Protective Ensembles for Hazardous Materials Emergencies 2005 Edition  
NFPA 1992 Standard on Liquid Splash-Protective Ensembles and Clothing for Hazardous Materials Emergencies 2005 Edition  
NFPA 1994 Standard on Protective Ensembles for Chemical/Biological Terrorism Incidents, 2001 Edition  
NFPA 1971 Standard on Protective Ensemble for Structural Fire Fighting 2000 Edition  
NFPA 471 Recommended Practice for Responding to Hazardous Materials  
NFPA 11 Low, Medium and High Expansion Foam 2005  
NFPA 11a Foam Systems 2005  
NFPA 1932 Standard on Use, Maintenance, and Service Testing of In-Service Fire Department Ground Ladders 2004 Edition  
U.S. Department of Labor Occupational Safety & Health Administration Standards  
US Department of Transportation Uniform Manual of Traffic Control Devices  
New York State Vehicle & Traffic Law  
29 CFR 1910.120 Hazardous waste operations and emergency response.  
29 CFR 1910.134 Respiratory Protection.  
29 CFR 1910.146 Permit-required confined spaces  
29 CFR 1910.156 Fire Brigades.  
29 CFR 1910.1030 Bloodborne pathogens.

## JUSTIFICATIONS SUMMARY

- ❖ Justification 1: Monitoring reflex times: The total reflex times for responses are a major part of assuring compliance with established standards of response coverage policies in every emergency response agency..... 25
- ❖ Justification 2: Customer Satisfaction Forms should be used for the review of incidents, and the information gathered should be used in the development of standard operating guidelines and procedures, and the subsequent training that would be based upon those guidelines, for improvement of safety and efficiency at future incidents..... 44
- ❖ Justification 3: Contractual Review: All automatic and mutual aid agreements are legal contracts, and require regular review to assure that agreement documents accurately reflect current operational practices. .... 44
- ❖ Justification 4: Risk reduction recommendation: It was observed that the district contains a number of multiple family residences and other large structures that were built prior to the current building codes and are not protected by automatic sprinklers or other fire control systems. The fire and rescue agencies may not be equipped or staffed to successfully control or contain a major fire in these structures. Financial obstacles such as water line tap fees and increased tax assessments often discourage property owners from installing automatic sprinkler systems..... 56
- ❖ Justification 5: Staffing and recruitment: New volunteers are, and will always be required as the existing volunteer membership ages or leave the service. Recruitment is vital for long term survival of the ability to meet the mission of each agency. The recruiting efforts need to target stay at home workers, male and female, people whose jobs are located in the community even if their residence is located outside of the community, and both college age and of-age high school students. .... 62
- ❖ Justification 6: Staff Facilities: Recommending living quarters in fire stations absolutely should not be taken as a recommendation for paid staffing in those stations at this time. Many totally volunteer departments have long successful records of providing on duty staffing in their stations. Providing living quarters for volunteers is an important tool for the recruitment effort for younger members, especially for students in a community with many college students who would make excellent volunteers during the school year. .... 63
- ❖ Justification 7: Training Records: The lack of current training records being readily available in a central location inhibits the ability to track individual knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to meet the current challenges in the fire and rescue services as a whole. It also limits the ability to plan for the training classes that are required to meet those objectives across the community, including assurance that all Command Officers have current safety and command training. .... 66

- ❖ Justification 8: Need for new recruits: The fact that the most active volunteers in the busiest agency are also the most senior members of the agency is a red flag for the agency's long term ability to meet its mission successfully. .... 69
- ❖ Justification 9: Safety IMS: Every agency that will respond to or be part of an emergency incident needs to utilize the same incident management system to assure that all are working at the same objectives and each is carrying out its unique role to mitigate the incident successfully. The incident management system should be consistent with and follow the guidelines of NIMS, the National Incident Management System..... 69
- ❖ Justification 10: Numbering of Apparatus: Unique numbering of apparatus prevents any responding units from having the same number at any incident, and provides rapid identification by agency and type. .... 77
- ❖ Justification 11: Unit Identification numbering scheme: 0 = Quint; 1 = ladder (stick only, no pump); 2, 3, 4, 5 = Engines; 6 = Brush /grass fire rigs; 7 = Tankers; 8 = Rescue; 9 = ambulance. For example, unit 1322 would designate a unit in the county first division from Baldwinsville station 2, Engine Company..... 77
- ❖ Justification 12: Current County Dispatch system numbering system: 27E3, in which 27 designates the county department number, Lakeside; the letter E designates an Engine, and the 3 represents the number of the apparatus. .... 77
- ❖ Justification 13: Tracking of 2% Funds: State law requires tracking of these funds, both income and expense. These funds should be accounted for with a separate checking or savings account that is set up for the administration of the foreign fire tax funds..... 82
- ❖ Justification 14: Team Membership: The pride each member exhibits as a member of the group they belong to is a reflection of their psychological need to belong to a group that each respects and trusts and who they can enjoy spending time with. Company, Fire Station, Department: Each member in the fire rescue service understands that each other member of their group will be willing and able to support them in an emergency in life and possibly in death situations. .... 86
- ❖ Justification 15 Customer understanding information card: Informing the public about the roles of all responders is an important part of good community relations. .... 90
- ❖ Justification 16: Regional administration of fire and rescue services is the most efficient and effective way to monitor: staffing levels, training, officer selection, dispatch call processing, dispatch and response times, and general operational effectiveness. Regional administration also provides a currently un available consistent broad regional viewing platform for planning future station locations, and for assuring proper staffing at all levels..... 92
- ❖ Justification 17: Joint Fire District formation: The current administrative management demands upon multiple agencies would be more effectively and efficiently managed in a single administrative structure. The governing structure

for a Joint Fire District allows the elected officials of Towns and Villages to appoint the Joint District Fire Commissioners. This authority retained by the elected town representatives will provide and assure a wider citizen participation in the administration of the fire rescue services than does the current Fire District system, where commissioners are directly elected. Historically, there has been low turnout for Fire District elections statewide, limiting the citizen diversity of input on those fire district commissions. .... 94

- ❖ Justification 18: Financial Structure: A central, regionally administrated fire and rescue service would establish a fire rescue tax funding mechanism that will assure that each station, whether in a hamlet, suburb or commercial/industrial district will be properly funded due to combining residential, commercial and industrial tax bases to a single revenue source. Spreading the fire and rescue taxes across the wider region should reduce tax costs in smaller, primarily residential areas..... 94
- ❖ Justification 19 Citizen Input: It is important for the success of any reorganization to review current organizational issues and community expectations in each community. .... 95
- ❖ Justification 20 The State of New York is currently reviewing all governmental structures in the state and may soon enact laws that will improve efficiency and effectiveness by developing regional or countywide approaches to service delivery. .... 95

## CONSULTANTS' NOTES: SUMMARY

- Consultant note 1: Population Trends: While the school population study certainly is not itself definitive of community trends, when coupled with observations made in the general community by the RFG Associates team members, as compared to those made by the team in other communities, it would appear that the community population is aging. The aging of a population generally has a direct impact on future service demands, as well as on the pool of people eligible to volunteer their services to the community. It will be important for community leaders to closely monitor these trends in the future as they continue to address the needs of the community. .... 20
  
- Consultant note 2: Population Projections: The 2005 Cornell Institute study, which predicted a 12% decline in Onondaga County population in the next 25 years, did not predict the closings of major employers in the region that have taken place since the study was completed..... 21
  
- Consultant note 3: Population Trend Possibilities: Based upon interviews with a wide scope of town residents, there appears to be a feeling that population will grow, rather than decline as predicted by the Cornell study. RFG Associates is also aware that several high tech companies in Onondaga County have been expanding, and have been seeking additional engineering staff in nationwide recruiting efforts. If the decline predicted in the Cornell study does not occur, and there is a growth in population due to new industries, it can be predicted that much of that new industry will be high tech and bring more professional families to the community. Decline in population or growth of population of this type will both result in more of the same challenges for the fire and rescue services. .... 21
  
- Consultant note 4: Response of Fire Apparatus to EMS incidents: The general public often question why a fire engine is sent on Emergency Medical Service calls to support the ambulance crews. This common question will be examined in the EMS response section of this report ..... 33
  
- Consultant note 5: Volunteer Training Requirements: In New York State, the authority having justification, i.e., local Government, sets standards for volunteer firefighters. However, the Public Employees Safety and Health Act, Article 27a, New York State Labor Law, requires that all individuals be trained to the task or job they are to perform. Under the PESH Act, volunteer firefighters are considered public employees, (case reference: Harnett v Ballston Spa). It is important to note that even when an agency may have well qualified instructors within the agency, it is vital for the safety of all responders that personnel from every station receive the same level of training and that the training be recorded properly. .... 34
  
- Consultant note 6: Mandated Training: New York State has mandated training for paid firefighters under NYS paid ff §426.7 In-service fire training; permanently appointed firefighters and fire officers normally assigned to command company operations at emergencies shall annually receive a minimum of 100 contact hours of in- service training .... in a wide range of subject areas.

While this NY law applies to paid firefighters, the fact remains that career and volunteer firefighters all face the same dangers. Volunteers and career firefighters all make the same life and death decisions in the performance of their duties and must be properly trained to do so for their own safety and the community's safety. This is the primary reason that The New York State Office of Fire Prevention and Control and NYS Labor Laws and PESH article 27 recognize volunteer firefighters as employees. .... 34

- Consultant note 7: Call Process Times: We were informed that the County Dispatch Center does not track call process times: the time from when an emergency call is answered at the center to the time of dispatch of emergency response units..... 42
- Consultant note 8: County Fire Training Records: Records provided by the County covered the time period 01/01/1976 to 02/17/2009. These records were reviewed to determine the current County Fire Bureau recorded training activities within each department, with 2004 to the present being considered current..... 43
- Consultant note 9: Reports of interactions with County Fire Coordinators Office: Two reports were received from the county fire bureau. Both reports were unsigned, but I assume they were prepared by responding County Deputy Fire Coordinators. The fact that there is a form that has been developed by the County Department of Emergency Management to record incident-specific information regarding events is encouraging. This form can be a valuable tool in review of incidents and in the development of standard operating guidelines and procedures, and the training that would be based upon those guidelines, for improvement of safety and efficiency at future incidents. .... 43
- Consultant note 10: Automatic Aid: The County Department of Emergency Management and Fire Bureau provided us with sample runs cards for target hazards in each department, but did not supply us with copies of any current contracts regarding automatic aid agreements. The run cards did provide an overview of how automatic aid is dispatched, but not the reasoning for which units are utilized in those responses..... 44
- Consultant note 11: The summary listing of services being provided to the public clearly indicates a failure of the agencies to communicate the full scope of services they are providing to the public and to the elected officials of the community. .... 45
- Consultant note 12: The summary listing of strengths of the fire rescue services indicates the value elected officials, the community, and the fire rescue services at each level have for the volunteers that serve this community, and the value placed on proper training, equipment, and station locations..... 47
- Consultant note 13: The summary listing of Opportunities clearly indicates that all parties understand there are opportunities to improve current administrative functions in many areas. .... 47

- Consultant note 14 The summary listing of Weaknesses clearly indicates that there are weaknesses in the current system that are impeding the ability of the fire and rescue services to provide efficient and effective services to the community. The fact that all parties acknowledge so many of the same issues is a positive indicator for future improvements. The lack of understanding between elected officials and fire service leaders can be overcome by addressing these issues. There are also residual negative feelings in the community about the fire services that do not appear to be relevant any longer, based upon our observations of the dedication of current personnel and leaders to serving this community. This can be overcome in time through joint efforts of the elected officials and the leaders of the services to keep the community aware of current activities and attitudes. .... 48
- Consultant note 15: The summary listing of Threats clearly indicates that many of the threats recognized by all parties are based upon funding availabilities, and mandates that every agency in the nation are facing. There is an acknowledgement that staffing by volunteers has been and will continue to be impacted by the economy and changes in the community. Individual meeting attendees expressed frustration that they have little ability to control those factors. The fact that several chief officers see surveys and consultants as a threat to the fire and rescue services reflects their experience that often such studies take valuable time, but the resulting reports often do not provide specific and strategic plans to address the issues found. Alternatively, the reports are not addressed by community leaders to a satisfactory conclusion. This report will lay out a clear plan of action for the community and the fire and rescue services..... 49
- Consultant note 16: The Summary of Goals and a total review of the Services, Strengths, Opportunities, Weaknesses, Threats, and Goals for the fire services in the Town of Van Buren chart shows a close correlation between thoughts of the several groups. The genuine feelings expressed by all parties demonstrated both an understanding of the positives and the negatives, as well as a general willingness to address them in a constructive fashion for the betterment of service delivery and for the safety of responders and the public. Review of the findings from each meeting showed that there also appears to be an understanding across the lines of elected officials, fire fighters, company officers, chief officers and civil officers that some form of consolidation would be of benefit to the community and for the fire and rescue services. In conversations, as well as in meetings, there even appeared to be a willingness to accept some form of consolidation if certain conditions were met. The primary concern of each is the need to assure that any consolidation is designed to assure continuation of neighborhood /community services and respect for the volunteers serving each community. .... 50
- Consultant note 17: Response Times: The factors that do not change in making judgments regarding acceptable response times to the community are the fire propagation curve and the cardiac survivability probability factors shown on the included charts. .... 54

- Consultant note 18: Ability to support services: The question of affordability of public protection and response will certainly always be a factor in determining location of fire stations and staffing patterns for fire and emergency apparatus.. 54
- Consultant note 19: Value of Volunteer firefighters: The value of volunteer firefighters to any community cannot be over stressed. Volunteer firefighters are dedicated to serving their community often at great personal expense in terms of time and money as well as risk of injury or death. We believe there is no other government service where individuals volunteer to serve at this level of personal and family commitment to their community. .... 57
- Consultant note 20: Fitness for duty: The fire rescue services have established medical standards to help determine members’ fitness for duty annually. The standards were established because one of the primary causes of firefighter deaths over the years has been heart attacks. The medical evaluations are required for interior firefighting activities, training activities, and to wear and use self contained breathing apparatus in the performance of their duties. .... 59
- Consultant note 21: Staffing Issues: It can be generally assumed that the members who were counted by their agencies, but who failed to submit personal availability data, will fit the same general patterns as shown by those who did provide information. There are evident staffing limitations during normal Monday through Friday work weeks during the day. The staffing survey results are also reflected in the agency training records as obtained from the county. Combined, the training reports and the staffing surveys both demonstrate that the ability to recruit new volunteers appears to have declined to the point that this consultant finds dangerous to future service delivery if not properly addressed.. 61
- Consultant note 22: GIS mapping of fire stations: The GIS maps in the map booklet accompanying this report support the findings this report that fire and rescue services would be better served if a regional approach was taken in administration, planning, and, most important, operations. Even casual review of these graphic displays shows the need to modify existing service delivery to assure efficiency and effectiveness. .... 63
- Consultant note 23: Closest unit response: It is important to note that Police "in-progress" or "just occurred" incidents are dispatched under an "agency neutral" policy, where any unit in the vicinity of the incident is immediately dispatched (the "closest" unit to the call). .... 65
- Consultant note 24: “In Progress” incidents: Every Fire and EMS incident is an “In Progress” incident, as every fire and emergency medical incident keeps worsening until forces have arrived on scene and are able to begin stabilization and mitigation of the emergency..... 65
- Consultant note 25: County Training records summary: For the 4 agencies combined, the recruit level training from 2000 – 2001 totaled 13 people; In 2002 - 2003 the total was 14; for 2004 -2005 the total was 7; for the years 2006 -2007 the

total was 7 and for the years 2008 to the present the total number of new recruits trained by the county totaled 2..... 65

- Consultant note 26: Department Training records summary: Review of the training records for each department indicated that each department does conduct regular training sessions within their own department, and keeps records of attendance by member. .... 66
- Consultant note 27: Setting an example for dedication: In review of the County training records we observed in the Baldwinsville training report that the member with the longest seniority in the department also was one of the members who had attended incident safety training within the past year. The agency web site also announced that this same individual also responded to more incidents than any other member in 2008. Those factors of seeking continuing training and active response to incidents set an example for continuing improvement and participation for all members of the agency. .... 66
- Consultant note 28: Training records: The number of classes shown as taken does not always accurately reflect the fact that many individuals took multiple classes, with one individual in a department attending 31 classes, 12 of which focused on safety and incident command..... 66
- Consultant note 29: Training Records: The County training records for many members do not shown any recent training. This may indicate lack of participation, or the lack of records may just indicate a failure to properly record such records in a central location. The lack of current records in the County system may also indicate lack of current knowledge, skills, and abilities that are needed to meet the current challenges in the fire and rescue services..... 66
- Consultant note 30: Company only training: The lack of planned, regular training from sources outside of the home agency sets a tone for acceptance of the status quo within a department that can have long term negative impacts upon the agency. .... 66
- Consultant note 31: Training, Memphis: The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 - 2001 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, no (0) people took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009 no (0) people took entry level training classes..... 67
- Consultant note 32: Training, Lakeside: The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 – 2001, 5 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, 2 people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, 1 person took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009, 2 people took entry level training classes. .... 67

- Consultant note 33: Training, Baldwinsville: The County training records were used to examine new recruit firefighter training in this department from 2000 to 2/17/2009 as a way of examining recruitment efforts of the agency. From 2000 – 2001, 4 people took entry level training classes. From 2002 -2003, 10 people took entry level training classes. From 2004 -2005, 5 people took entry level training classes. From 2006 -2007, 6 people took entry level training classes. From 2008 to 2/17/2009, no (0) people took entry level county training classes. 68
- Consultant note 34: Map Book Review of Fire Station Locations: Readers of this report should also review the accompanying map booklet to gain a visualization of proximity of fire stations to various areas of the Town, travel distances from those stations to other parts of the Town, and the base travel time from those stations to locations within the Town. The maps provide much of the justification for the major Strategic Recommendations made in this report..... 69
- Consultant note 35: Definition of terms used in station reports: RIT= Rapid Intervention Teams: trained personnel and equipment readily available on scene to assist interior fire attack teams in case of an emergency (required by OSHA under the 2 in 2 out rule for firefighter safety). ICS = Incident Command System. PPE = Personal Protective Equipment (i.e., turnout gear)..... 70
- Consultant note 36: Apparatus Numbering: It was observed that each station had units with the same apparatus number as other stations that may respond to the same emergency incidents. This practice has the potential of causing dangerous on-scene confusion in issuing orders and directions to responding units via radio transmissions..... 77
- **Consultant note 37: Request for financial information from NYS:** Pursuant to our request, personnel from the Division of Local Government and School Accountability reported that they did not have audited statements for all of the requested fire districts that serve the Town of Van Buren. The state did provide annual financial reports for 2006 and 2007 for the Warners Fire District and the Lakeside Fire District, and reported that the 2008 reports have not yet been received from those departments. .... 78
- Consultant note 38: Department fiscal information summary: Review of the department budgets provided by the agencies and the State audits quickly demonstrated that each agency utilizes somewhat different terminology in their system that is difficult to properly correlate in a brief overview. It was observed that there is long term debt for construction of facilities and purchase or lease of apparatus and equipment. The reports in general do not clearly show income from the State 2% foreign insurance pool, nor do they show the budgets for use of those funds within agencies. Each budget did show costs related to audits and management of their funds..... 78
- Consultant note 39: NYS Law on Financial Reporting: General Municipal Law § 30. Reports. 1. *Except as hereinafter provided, every municipal corporation and school, fire, improvement and special district shall annually make a report of its financial condition to the comptroller. Such report shall be made by the chief*

*fiscal officer of each municipal corporation, by the chief fiscal officer of a municipal corporation... and by the treasurer of each fire, improvement or special district.....* 81

- Consultant note 40: Governance factors for Villages: Villages must provide fire protection. A village may (a) have its own fire department, (b) contract with the fire department of another municipality, (c) contract with a fire district, or (d) form a joint fire district with a town and other villages..... 83
- Consultant note 41: Governance factors for Towns: State law does not allow Towns to provide their residents with fire protection as a municipal function. Instead, fire protection is provided in Towns either by a fire district or through creation of a fire protection district..... 83
- Consultant note 42: Fire Districts: In the Town of Van Buren there is one fire district, the Warners Fire District, located within the Town, and one fire district, the Lakeside Fire District, located in the Town of Geddes, which contracts with the Town of Van Buren to provide fire protection services..... 83
- Consultant note 43: Fire Protection Districts: There are three fire protection districts located in the Town of Van Buren: Northern Fire Protection District, Memphis Fire Protection District, and Southeastern Fire Protection District. .... 83
- Consultant note 44: Fire Departments: The Town of Van Buren is served by four fire departments: Baldwinsville Fire Department serving Northern Fire Protection District; Memphis Fire Department serving Memphis Fire Protection District; Warners Fire Department serving Warners Fire District; and Lakeside Fire Department serving Southeastern Fire Protection District. .... 83
- Consultant note 45: Not for Profit corporations: The Town of Van Buren has two not-for-profit fire corporations serving the Town: The Baldwinsville Volunteer Fire Company, Inc. and the Memphis Fire Department, Inc. .... 83
- Consultant note 46: Joint Fire Districts: Currently, no joint fire districts are located in the Town of Van Buren..... 84
- Consultant note 47: Station Pride: It was observed in every agency that members have a very strong sense of pride in their department and their abilities to serve the public. It was also observed that there are strong feelings about any questioning of those abilities by non members in some departments..... 85
- Consultant note 48: Leadership: It was observed that the members of the various departments have a great deal of respect for their elected leaders..... 86
- Consultant note 49: Administrative Leadership: Leadership at an administrative level in the fire service has become a specialized function clearly removed from the traditional roles of the fire chief of years past, who was often promoted up the ranks from being the best smoke eater, gung ho firefighter in the department. As more and more legal demands have been placed on leaders in the fire service, it

has become more and more difficult to find individuals who are both willing and qualified to step into administrative positions, even in career departments. Most fire chiefs today spend 95+ percent of their time on administrative matters, primarily management of finances and personnel issues. The legal reporting requirements of the state for issues like budgets, training, and incident reporting become a major issue in every department. .... 86

- Consultant note 50: administration realities: Administratively, every size department has basically the same needs and requirements. Multiple agencies each must do the same tasks to meet those requirements and needs. In the current town fire services, for instance, there are at least four individuals designated as the treasures of their departments, and at least four separate groups deciding business policies and operational policies. There is little coordination or interaction between the agencies providing the same services, other than that found in mutual aid and automatic aid agreements or the shared use of a single station by two departments. .... 87
- Consultant note 51: Service Commitment: It was encouraging to find that the leaders of the fire rescue services understand, deep down at a core level, that changes will be needed to assure the future ability of the agencies to meet their mission. .... 87
- Consultant note 52: Commissioners’ Statement of service philosophy: “We must all remember why we are here, and that is to serve the taxpayers we protect first and foremost”..... 87
- Consultant note 53 Tracking Responding Firefighters: RFG Associates does not market or represent any products other than our services. Nor do we in any way accept referral or promotional payments from any other organization. However, if we are aware of a product that will address issues we discover during our investigations, we will recommend that agencies investigate that product on their own to see if the agency feels the product will be helpful to them. Availability of volunteers to respond when needed is one of the most important issues we have found. There is a clear need for the agencies to track actual volunteer firefighter response times, and to pre-schedule availability, so that those who are available will be aware in advance of limited responder availability. There are products on the market that do provide a cost effective tool for doing this. Our fire service associate on this project has had excellent success using “Iamresponding.com,” which is a product developed by an Onondaga County company, Emergency Services Marketing Corp., Inc. of DeWitt, New York. We do recommend that the agencies examine this product, and others, to determine which product will best assist them in tracking firefighter response to incidents, permit volunteers to post their availability schedules to improve response planning, and generally improve internal agency communications..... 88
- *Consultant note 54: Legal advice: This report has been commissioned to examine current fire protection services within the Town of van Buren. It is beyond the scope of this contract for the consultant to provide legal advice to the Town or the agencies involved. However, it is within the scope of this contract for the*

*consultant to make recommendations for the future of the fire rescue services that are based upon our understanding of the laws of the State of New York to the best of our ability as fire service professionals and non-lawyers. Any recommendations that involve legal matters, such as to establish any new or revised legal governing structure, will need to be handled by members of the bar engaged by the Township and all other entities that may participate in the process.* ..... 91

Consultant note 55: Consulting and Development Services available: RFG Associates remains available beyond this contract to assist the Town, the agencies, and their attorneys, in the development of any new governing structures. We are also available for team development of policies and procedures needed to implement any recommendations made in this report. RFG Associates can also assist other Towns in the region in their efforts to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their Fire and Rescue Services..... 92

Consultant note 56 It is the understanding of the consultants that according to New York State laws, Town Law § 172, where two or more fire districts adjoin, consolidation is possible. The state has set a formal process to create a consolidation of fire districts. The state also has established a mechanism for establishing Joint Fire Districts. Joint fire districts are created by the Town Board(s) and the Board(s) of Trustees of a Village. With the establishment of a Joint District, the Town Board(s) and the Village Board(s) of trustees of each participating municipality shall, by local law, dissolve any existing fire, fire alarm or fire protection districts contained within the Joint Fire District..... 92

- Consultant note 57: Public demands: What is not acceptable to the citizens of this community is to maintain the status quo. They demand that their taxes provide a public safety service delivery system that is effective, cost efficient and safe. As stated by Onondaga Citizens League: Some form of governmental modernization is essential for our region’s ability to more effectively attract jobs, retain young people, and compete in the global market place..... 94
- Consultant note 58 It must be noted that each of the tasks shown on the proposed organization chart are currently being performed separately in each agency and there is a cost for these services at each agency in time and funds. .... 95

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Figure 3 Flashover time chart ..... 26

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