

# AN EVALUATION OF THE SPRINGFIELD FIRE DEPARTMENT SPRINGFIELD, MASSACHUSETTS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



**Conducted By:**

**Carroll Buracker & Associates, Inc.**

**Public Safety Consultants**

**1881 College Avenue, Suite 100**

**Harrisonburg, Virginia 22802**

**(540) 564-1500**





**Carroll Buracker & Associates, Inc.**

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October 21, 2005

Mr. Philip Puccia  
Executive Director  
Springfield Finance Control Board  
436 Dwight Street  
Springfield, MA 01103

Dear Mr. Puccia:

I am pleased to forward a copy of the Executive Summary of a Comprehensive Evaluation of the Springfield Fire Department.

The Study Team would like to acknowledge the cooperation that we received from members of the Fire Department and stakeholders.

If you have any questions, please give me a call.

Sincerely,

Carroll Buracker  
President  
cb/pb

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

The Study Team extends genuine appreciation to members of the Springfield Fire Department for their cooperation and assistance in conducting this Evaluation for the City of Springfield.

## **EVALUATION METHODOLOGY**

This Evaluation of the Springfield Fire Department (also called Study and Plan) was developed through a process of interviews, data collection, research, literature review, on-site observations, analysis of data and comparative evaluations with “Best Business” practices and standards in fire protection and emergency medical services. The Study Team’s experiences as fire and EMS executives and fire/EMS consultants in every region of the U.S. were incorporated as appropriate.

## **STRUCTURE OF THE PLAN**

This Plan contains twelve chapters. To assist the reader, the Study Team has included detailed background information on state-of-the-art fire/EMS/dispatch practices and standards to assist in understanding the basis for some conclusions and suggestions.

Chapter Twelve contains a suggested Implementation Plan/Blueprint with specific recommendations from preceding chapters and a suggested timeline for consideration.

## **STUDY TEAM MEMBERS**

This Evaluation of the Springfield Fire Department was conducted by six public safety consultants; each has evaluated fire and emergency medical services departments; four of the consultants have worked as a fire/EMS consultant “team” for more than 15 years. They are hereinafter referred to as the Study Team. Each consultant has served in local government; two have managed large public safety departments.



## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

### **Leslie D. Adams**

Mr. Adams is a former Deputy Fire Chief and second-in-command of the Montgomery County, Maryland Fire and Rescue Department, an agency that served at the time more than 650,000 residents. Mr. Adams was the highest ranking uniform member in that fire department, which had a fire director. With more than 30 years of fire and EMS management experience, Mr. Adams has served as the administration and operations deputy fire chief of a fire and EMS department and was responsible for all duties of fire services, including facilities, apparatus, training, facility placement, administration, dispatch, planning and operations. As a chief officer, he managed 33 stations and 1,600 personnel, 31 engines, 14 trucks, 35 Basic Life Support units, 13 Advanced Life Support units and 120 paramedics.

As a fire consultant with CBI, Mr. Adams has fire, EMS and dispatch consultant experience in more than 40 cities and counties, including Los Angeles, St. Paul, Chicago, Tacoma, Fremont, Port Arthur, Stamford, Greenwich and Hartford.

He holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration from the Columbia Union College, and has completed course work on a Master of Science degree in General Administration.

Mr. Adams has taught at the National Fire Academy on modern techniques in fire services operations and has been on the faculty of Montgomery Community College teaching Fire Science Administration.

During his fire career, he served as the Chairman of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Personnel Management Committee. Mr. Adams **is a certified peer fire department assessor with the Commission on Fire Accreditation International.**

### **Mary Beth Michos**

Mary Beth Michos, a fire chief in a community serving more than 200,000 residents, has 26 years of experience in the fire service. Prior to her appointment as fire chief, Ms. Michos



## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

served as the Assistant Fire Chief of the Montgomery County, Maryland, Fire Department, an agency that served at the time 650,000 residents.

In the capacity of Assistant Chief, she was responsible for the training of 1,400 firefighters.

Chief Michos also supervised four special fire operations units: Hazardous Incidents Response Team, Trench Rescue and Structural Collapse Team, Special Evacuation Tactics Team, and Underwater Rescue Team. In addition, she was the EMS Training Officer. In this position, she directed all EMS training programs, coordinated the promotional examination process and participated in the recruitment and hiring of new EMS and fire-rescue personnel.

Chief Michos has lectured extensively on fire and rescue operations and safety.

She has served as a consultant with Carroll Buracker and Associates, Inc. for more than 18 years for cities and counties, including Hartford, Stamford, Tacoma, Hampton, Chesterfield County, Chandler (AZ) and Los Angeles.

In addition to her work as a fire chief, Ms. Michos has served as:

- Adjunct staff member for the National Fire Academy and Associate Professor for the George Washington University, School of Medicine
- Manager of a private ambulance company
- Chair of the NFPA's Task Group on Response to Hazardous Materials
- Immediate Past Chair of the Emergency Medical Services Section of the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)
- Member of the Board of Directors for the National Registry of EMT
- Member of the Editorial Board of Fire Chiefs Magazine
- Former member of the IAFC, Fire Department Accreditation Commission
- Current Chair of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians
- **Named IAFC Fire Chief of the Year for 2003.**



## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

In being selected by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) as the “2003 Fire Chief of the Year,” she was selected by peer fire chiefs throughout the U.S. and internationally.

Chief Michos holds a Bachelors of Science in Business Administration from Columbia Union College, and a Masters in Organizational Leadership.

### **Dr. Terry Eisenberg**

Dr. Terry Eisenberg, a licensed psychologist, has served as a public safety consultant in more than 150 municipalities. Dr. Eisenberg specializes in benchmarking and human resources management: recruitment, selection, training, evaluation, labor/management relations, labor contracts, lost time, grievances, career development, promotions and other human resource management issues.

When the International City and County Management Association (ICMA) was developing its Golden Anniversary Year Book, Dr. Eisenberg was selected to co-author the chapter on **"Human Resource Management in Public Safety."** In addition, he has published more than 40 articles on labor relations, management and training.

Dr. Eisenberg has worked with Mr. Buracker on police/fire/EMS studies in more than 50 cities over 18 years.

He has evaluated fire department Human Resources Management practices in cities about the same size of Springfield and its service area, smaller cities, and larger cities. Several include Los Angeles (City) Fire Department; St. Paul, Minnesota, Fire Department; Allentown, Pennsylvania, Fire Department; Tacoma, Washington, Fire Department; Hartford, Connecticut, Fire Department; Allentown Police Department; Tacoma Police Department; and Hartford Police Department.



## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

Dr. Eisenberg managed a state-wide fire prevention program in the State of Pennsylvania for the National Governor's Association. He has lectured on public safety in several foreign countries and at universities.

Dr. Eisenberg has served as Expert Witness in U.S. Federal and state courts for major local, state and federal agencies relative to public safety Human Resources Management practices and programs.

He holds a Ph.D., Industrial Psychology, University of Maryland; Master of Arts, General Psychology, University of Toledo; and a Bachelor of Arts, Psychology & Sociology, Ohio University.

### **Mr. Mark Davis**

Mark Davis has 21 years of fire, EMS and special services experience. He has served as a battalion fire/EMS chief, station commander and unit officer. Mr. Davis has been a member of a number of special operations teams, including Hazmat and USAR.

As a Level II Instructor and Fire Officer II, Mr. Davis developed instructor and fire officer training programs, as well as, field operations and special operations training programs.

Mr. Davis has 12 years experience as a fire/EMS consultant conducting fire and EMS department assessments and providing a broad range of related specialized and industrial training and certification programs. He has also conducted fire suppression water supply assessments.

Mr. Davis holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Fire Science Education and a Master of Arts degree in State and Local Government.



## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

### **Kari Foster**

Ms. Kari Foster has public safety consultant experience in more than 40 cities and counties, including Hartford, Stamford, Los Angeles, Chicago, Tacoma, Port Arthur, Baltimore, Seattle, Oakland, San Francisco, Dallas, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Boston, Buffalo and Portsmouth as a member of Carroll Buracker & Associates, Inc.

Ms. Foster, president of a WBE firm, is a graduate of James Madison University with a Bachelor of Arts degree.

### **Carroll Buracker**

Carroll Buracker is President and CEO of Carroll Buracker & Associates, Inc. and the Center for Public Safety, Inc. He has authored more than 250 public safety plans and served as the corporations' project manager for all fire consultant services.

Mr. Buracker has more than 20 years of practical experience in public safety in Fairfax County, Virginia, a community of more than 1,000,000 residents. He served as a chief of police for four of his 20 years, following promotions through eight other ranks. The agency had 1,400 employees at the time. As chief of police, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors awarded him the county's two highest awards for employees and managers: leadership and management excellence.

He implemented the Fairfax County multiple helicopter police/medevac program that also serves the Washington D. C. Metropolitan area.

Mr. Buracker was assigned by the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Council of Governments (COG), representing 16 cities/counties, to co-chair development of the Metropolitan Washington, D.C. Disaster Response Plan, which has been implemented on three occasions.





## **STUDY TEAM (continued)**

He has been certified as an Expert Witness in both state and federal courts on public safety matters. Mr. Buracker holds a Bachelor of Science degree and a Master of Science degree from American University in Washington, D.C.

The City of Los Angeles Fire Department selected his firm to redo a study by another consultant company. The City of Chicago selected CBI to evaluate their emergency communications and dispatch operations for 9-1-1 and all police, fire and emergency medical services. This study required operational review of fire and EMS in Chicago.

During his career, he served as “Affirmative Action Director” for five years and was presented the top award of the United Black Fund of Metropolitan Washington, D.C. for his work in recruiting and promoting women and minorities.



## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **The Setting**

The City of Springfield is an urban industrial center of metropolitan status at the junction of regional routes between Boston and New York City. As the third largest municipality in Massachusetts, Springfield is located approximately 89 miles southwest of Boston in the Pioneer Valley region of western Massachusetts, 25 miles from Hartford, and 134 miles from New York City.

Springfield includes a total area of 32.2 square miles with approximately 497 miles of streets and roadways. The 2000 Census listed a population of 152,082; the racial composition of the City is 56 percent white, 21 percent African American and a total of 23 percent other races (Asian/Pacific Islander, Native American, etc.). Ethnically, the population of the City is 27 percent Hispanic. Between 1990 and 2000, the population declined by 3.1 percent.

### **City Governance**

The legislative body of the City of Springfield is the City Council, which consists of nine members, each of whom is elected for a two-year term. The City Council holds hearings, acts upon ordinances, financial orders and resolutions, oversees city finances, adopts the budget, and may authorize the sale of bonds. The City Council generally meets on the first and third Mondays of the month.

### **Mayor**

The Mayor is the chief executive of the City of Springfield. Elected for a two-year term, the Mayor supervises department heads and appoints boards and commissions, including the Board of Fire Commissioners.

### **Fire Commission**

A Board of Fire Commissioners is established for the City of Springfield by Chapter 2.54 of the City Code. The Board of Fire Commissioners consists of five citizens appointed by the Mayor for four-year terms. No more than three commissioners may be of the same political



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party. They are responsible for the appointment and control of personnel, supervision of Fire Department property, and preparation of the Department budget.

### **Springfield Finance Control Board**

In response to severe fiscal pressures facing the City of Springfield, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts established the Springfield Finance Control Board (SFCB) by enacting Chapter 169 of the Acts of 2004 (July 2004). The SFCB has broad authority, as exemplified by the fact that appropriations and personnel actions require approval of the Board. The SFCB is comprised of three gubernatorial appointees, the mayor of Springfield and the president of the Springfield City Council.

Two of the 11 key points in Section 1 of Chapter 169 of the Acts of 2004 are stated as follows:

1. “The city of Springfield has a projected structural deficit for fiscal year 2005.”
2. “The fiscal crisis poses an imminent danger to the safety of citizens of the city and their property.”

### **Springfield Fire Department**

The Springfield Fire Department (SFD) is staffed with 277 positions (FY05 Approved Budget). The positions include 264 uniformed positions, including one chief, one deputy fire chief, 6 district chiefs, 15 captains, 47 lieutenants and 194 firefighters. The Department’s staffing complement also includes 13 civilian employees. Three civilian positions were transferred from the Fire Department early in FY05 and two civilian emergency management-related positions were transferred to the SFD at the end of FY05, when that function became part of the Springfield Fire Department. All funded positions in the FY05 Approved Budget are reportedly funded by the General Fund.



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### **Fire/EMS Incident Workload**

The Springfield Fire Department incident workload has decreased since 2001. When considering all call types, the number of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) incidents handled by the SFD has decreased 31 percent over the last four calendar years. In 2004, SFD responded to 9,681 fire/rescue-related and 3,678 EMS-related calls.

The SFD responds to emergency medical calls in the City on an EMS first responder (non-transport) basis and provides basic life support (BLS) EMS service. Approximately 38 percent of all Fire Department calls are EMS related. This percentage of workload for EMS first responder level BLS service is consistent with the U.S. trend for fire departments providing EMS first responder services.

### **Fire Budget Trends**

The FY2005 General Fund budget for the Springfield Fire Department is \$16,894,645. The budget in FY2005 is approximately \$3.37 million less than the \$20,180,325 budgeted in FY2001. Various fire prevention inspection-related activities of the Fire Department are projected to generate \$295,431 in FY2005.

### **Fire Department Overtime**

Between FY2001 and FY2005, the Fire Department overtime expended or budgeted amount ranged from a high of \$1,979,493 in FY2002 to a low of \$376,082 in FY 2004. The overtime expended by the SFD was reportedly \$768,902 in FY2005, a 61 percent decrease from FY2002.

### **Grants**

The Springfield Fire Department has received a substantial number of grants to fund various initiatives. The number and amount of the grants obtained by the SFD for FY2000 through 2005 was impressive and contributed to the improvement of the Fire Department in a number of areas. The Emergency Management Office and the SFD should be commended for their



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success in obtaining grants to benefit the SFD and its customers. The loss of the grants officer position within the Fire Department may have an impact on the Department's ability to obtain, manage and report on grants in the future. Current uniformed staff are now responsible to administer grants for the Department with present staffing.

### **Comparative Fire Costs**

The Study Team does not utilize comparative data as a basis for decisions on public safety models. With an estimated population of 152,082 and a budget of \$19,045,158, the 2003 per capita costs for fire services in the City of Springfield was \$125.23.

According to data published by the International City/County Management Association (ICMA) in their 2004 Municipal Year Book, the average per capita costs for fire services in 73 cities with a population range of 100,000 to 250,000 was \$134.38.

### **Comparative Fire Staffing**

As with comparative costs, CBI does not utilize staffing ratios in public safety as a basis for determining a suggested fire staffing model for any municipality. This has been a practice of CBI for more than 19 years of assessing public safety agencies.

With 275 funded positions and an estimated population of 152,082, the number of employees per 1,000 population in the City of Springfield is 1.81. Based on the International City/County Management Association's 2004 Municipal Year Book, 81 cities with a population of 100,000 to 250,000 reporting to the ICMA in 2003 averaged 1.55 full-time employees per 1,000 residents. When considering these comparative data, it is important to note that the City of Springfield is on the low end of the population range. Caution is required in the interpretation of any comparative data.

### **Roles of the Fire Commission, Board of Chiefs and the Fire Chief**

The position of Chief is established by Springfield Code and the stated duties of the position are to report, in writing, to the Building Commissioner and Chief of Police of any violations



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coming to his notice of any provision of any ordinance of the City establishing a fire district and regulating the construction of buildings, and to perform such other duties as the commissioners may prescribe.

It should be noted that the Code does not indicate that the Fire Chief is responsible for the management and direction of the Fire Department. The lack of clarity in the City Code as to the role of the Fire Chief seems to be further degraded by the stated roles of both the Fire Commission and the Board of Chiefs.

The Code states that the Board of Chiefs is responsible for establishing rules and regulations, for the government, discipline and good order of the fire department and for the extinguishment of fires. The establishment of rules and regulations for municipal fire departments is typically the responsibility of the fire chief as the manager of the fire department.

The Code states that the Fire Commission is responsible for the appointment and control of Fire Department personnel, supervision of its property, and preparation of the budget.

The organization structure of the fire protection function in the City of Springfield, as related to oversight and determination of policy, is the most unique and problematic seen by the Study Team.

As to the Board of Chiefs, there seems to be no justification for a fire chief's subordinate senior officers to serve on a board that has the authority to establish rules and regulations that requires compliance by the chief, a most atypical process in public safety management. As a standard practice in the U.S., a paid fire chief is responsible to the municipal chief executive for all aspects of the management of the fire department.

The recommendations are based on what appear to be organizational issues and include:

- A. Assign direct authority over the Springfield Fire Department to the Mayor;
- B. Retain the Fire Commission as an advisory panel to the Mayor on fire protection matters;



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- C. Revise the City Code relative to the role of the Fire Chief;
- D. Remove the position of fire chief from the Civil Service System;
- E. Implement a contract for the position of Fire Chief to include specific performance objectives and expectations, including roles and responsibilities;
- F. Conduct an evaluation of the Fire Chief periodically (e.g., semi-annually or annually); and,
- G. Abolish the Board of Chiefs.

### **SFD Organization and Administration**

The primary operations rank structure of the Springfield Fire Department includes the following positions:

- 1. Fire chief
- 2. Deputy fire chief
- 3. District chief
- 4. Captain
- 5. Lieutenant
- 6. Firefighter

There are other titles for uniformed ranks that seem to differ in terms of uniformed rank and pay level. These positions are as follows:

- 1. Director of Training - fire captain;
- 2. Supervisor of Fire Prevention - district fire chief;
- 3. Assistant Supervisor of Fire Prevention - firefighter;
- 4. Supervisor of Fire Alarm - firefighter; and,
- 5. Assistant Supervisor of Fire Alarm - firefighter.

In the experience of the Study Team, the practice of assigning major fire department responsibilities (e.g., Supervisor of Fire Alarm, Assistant Supervisor of Fire Prevention and Assistant Supervisor of Fire Alarm) to firefighters, even on a temporary, acting temporary commander (ATC), basis, seems unique and highly unusual. Typically, firefighters are not



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trained, educated, experienced or appropriately compensated to handle these major program area responsibilities in their fire department. This is not a criticism of the firefighters filling these positions.

The official SFD organization chart indicates that there are three primary senior Fire Department officers reporting to the Fire Chief: Chief of Administration, Deputy Chief of Operations, and Director of Training. Apparently in 2003, the position of Deputy Chief of Administration was vacated and has not been filled. Since that time, it appears that the individual filling the position of Deputy Chief of Operations has also been responsible for all functions originally handled by the Chief of Administration, as well as those associated with Operations and Repair. The result is an excessive workload and span of control for one deputy chief in a fire department the size of the Springfield Fire Department.

The FY2005 Adopted Budget included three professional program management positions that subsequently have been transferred to other City departments/agencies. At this time, the Fire Department is functioning without any civilian professional non-operational program managers.

The results of inadequate civilian staff include: uniformed personnel are required to perform functions that they are not trained or intended to perform; and, chiefs, captains and other senior uniformed staff must do personnel, budget, automation, contracting, records management, and other related work that would normally be performed by trained civilian staff. Either the uniformed staff performs this work or it does not get done.

The Study Team has never seen a fire department the size of Springfield's with such a limited number of civilian administrative and support personnel; i.e., three full-time and one part-time clerical/administrative assistant staff members.

The organization and administration recommendations include:

- A. Assign the second deputy fire chief the responsibility for oversight of a number of major program areas, including fire prevention, administration and equipment repair;





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- B. Provide three civilian professional staff members to be responsible for administration, facilities and purchasing, personnel and budget programs;
- C. Assign additional clerical/administrative assistant staff, to include a senior clerk typist;
- D. Abolish the practice of filling key SFD program management positions with firefighters on an acting temporary commander basis;
- E. Upgrade the Mission and Values statements; and,
- F. Revise and modernize the City Code relating to the Fire Department.

### **Fire Station Facilities**

The location of the fire stations from which fire service is provided serves as a key element in the level of fire protection. While computerized programs can assist officials in making decisions relative to station location, no magic formula exists for determining the location of fire stations. The final determinations require human-based consideration of many factors.

One key consideration in determining a fire station location for fire-related services is the acceptable maximum total response time. In fires, response time should be kept short enough to ensure that the total average time does not exceed the six-to-nine-minute flashover time. Flashover is the instantaneous eruption into flames, which generates a tremendous amount of heat, smoke, and pressure, with enough force to push beyond the room of origin through doors and windows. The combustion process then accelerates because there is an even greater amount of heat to move to unburned objects.

A second important consideration relates to EMS response times that should be between four and six minutes to avoid brain death in cardiac arrest incidents. The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1710 relating to fire protection resources deployment and CBI (the Study Team) utilize five minutes as the recommended response time goal.

Based on a computerized model, the projected response times for the Springfield fire stations range from 3.21 minutes to 4.12 minutes. These are only projections. In Springfield, based on these projected times, meeting this five-minute response time goal should be attainable



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for a high percentage of total calls, considering the size of the City and the number and location of current fire station facilities.

Currently, the Springfield Fire Department provides fire and EMS first responder services from nine fire stations, as follows:

1. Fire Station 1 - Headquarters Fire Station - 605 Worthington Street
2. Fire Station 3 - Oakland Street Fire Station - 173 Oakland Street
3. Fire Station 5 - Indian Orchard Fire Station - 15 Odessa Street
4. Fire Station 8 - Mason Square Fire Station - 33 Eastern Avenue
5. Fire Station 9 - Raymond M. Sullivan Public Safety Complex - 1212 Carew Street
6. Fire Station 10 - North Main Street Fire Station - 2729 Main Street
7. Fire Station 12 - Parker Street Fire Station - 1265 Parker Street
8. Fire Station 14 - Sumner Avenue Fire Station - 1043 Sumner Avenue
9. Fire Station 16 - Massreco Street Fire Station - 16 Massreco Street

A review of these facilities indicates a need to plan for the reallocation of a number of SFD resources—fire stations and apparatus. Moreover, the current Springfield fire station facilities and the furniture, equipment, and infrastructure in these important public safety facilities are generally in very poor condition. The recommendations include:

- A. Maintain eight fire stations;
- B. Combine Fire Stations 3 and 14 into one state-of-the-art fire station centrally located between their current locations;
- C. Replace or completely renovate Fire Station 16;
- D. Return Fire Station 16 to in-service status with an engine company (a significant enhancement in services);
- E. Maintain staffing at Fire Stations 14 (or the proposed combined fire station) and 16 to provide 24-hour response;
- F. Survey all current Springfield fire station facilities and make needed repairs and upgrades, with an immediate priority on Fire Station 10; and,
- G. Survey all SFD facility equipment and furnishings and make needed replacements and upgrades.



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### Vehicular Apparatus

The current SFD vehicle fleet is comprised of 59 vehicles (excluding boats). These include 13 pumpers, seven ladders trucks, and two heavy rescue units. The vehicular apparatus fleet of the SFD includes the types of fire and rescue units typically operated by fire departments nationally in the delivery of emergency fire and rescue services—pumpers, ladders/towers, rescue units and other support vehicles, including pickups, vans, trucks and cars.

The maintenance and upkeep of fire and rescue apparatus is critical to maintaining a high level of emergency fire/EMS services. A high quality maintenance program may help assure the safe and consistent delivery of fire protection services. The Springfield Fire Department vehicle maintenance program seems to be comprehensive and among the best seen by the Study Team.

The Study Team encourages the City of Springfield and the Fire Department to continue to consider its future apparatus needs carefully. These units are expensive to purchase and maintain. The current vehicular apparatus fleet appears to be in good condition with a priority clearly placed on the provision of fire/EMS services with a quality, well-maintained, fleet of vehicles. The City and Department employees should be commended for this service. The recommendations include:

- A. Consider the reduction in vehicular apparatus fleet from 59 to 53, consistent with service delivery options selected for implementation:
  1. Reduce the number of engines from 13 to 11;
  2. Reduce the number of pickups from 5 to 4;
  3. Reduce the number of trucks from 1 to 0;
  4. Reduce the number of station wagons from 1 to 0; and,
  5. Reduce the number cars/SUVs from 24 to 23;
- B. Continue and enhance the current approach to fire apparatus maintenance;
- C. Continue to provide a high quality apparatus fleet; and,
- D. Approve and appropriately fund a scheduled apparatus replacement program.



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### **Hazardous Materials Response**

Internationally, over the last 25 years, a number of very serious hazardous materials incidents have occurred; e.g., Bopal, India, Chernobyl, USSR. In the United States, these and other disasters, which raise concern for the prevention and mitigation of hazardous materials incidents, has resulted in federal legislation being passed, and regional agencies and fire departments and other public safety first responders developing the means to respond to hazardous materials incidents.

In Massachusetts, the State Department of Fire Services has taken the lead by initiating and upgrading the operations of regional hazardous materials incident response in six regions of the Commonwealth, with regional response teams that seem to be well organized, trained and equipped. Springfield is located in the geographic area served by the District #4 state hazmat team.

The Springfield Fire Department organized a hazardous materials response team in the 1980s. Subsequently, the team was trained, and equipment and apparatus were obtained and placed in service. In 1995, a well-equipped state-of-the-art hazardous materials response unit was placed in service. The 36 members of the SFD Hazmat Team were trained to the Technician level in accordance with OSHA guidelines. At the time this Study was conducted, though apparently well-equipped, there appear to be a number of deficiencies in the organization, staffing and training of the Hazmat Team. The recommendations include:

- A. Appoint a Hazmat Team Coordinator, preferably a district chief, and four assistant team coordinators, one for each shift/group;
- B. Place a priority on staffing Fire Station 9 with additional hazardous materials technicians and implement minimum hazmat technician daily staffing requirements as a component of fire station staffing;
- C. Review and update all hazardous materials-related policies and procedures; and,
- D. Develop and follow an annual hazmat training plan based on NFPA 471 and 472.



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### **Pre-Fire Planning**

One of the primary job responsibilities of firefighting personnel is to conduct pre-fire planning programs for target hazards within their first-due response area. Pre-planning prepares firefighters to adequately meet challenges that may arise.

To remedy this situation, firefighters should visit the target hazards in their area, tour each facility, prepare drawings and lists of hazards, and develop the tactics and strategy for handling incidents at each particular facility. All stations that may respond to an incident should share the drawings and information. Officers should have readily available the information to refer to while en route to the incident. In addition, the officers should conduct regular station refresher drills utilizing this pre-fire planning material.

SFD officials advised the Study Team that fire units may be involved in building familiarization, that may include company survey details for one- or two-family private dwellings and commercial inspections. Apparently, there is no formalized pre-fire planning program utilized by the SFD. There is no written procedure for such a program and the Study Team was not provided with any documentation relating to pre-fire planning accomplished by the SFD.

The pre-fire planning recommendations include:

- A. Implement a comprehensive pre-fire planning program; and,
- B. Provide training on pre-fire plans and command officers' use of this information on significant incidents.

### **Mutual Aid**

There are two types of mutual aid response approaches in fire suppression services. One type is referred to as “special request” mutual aid and involves a request being made either by the incident commander or the dispatch center. The second type of mutual aid is “automatic” that involves a request for mutual aid made by the dispatch center under established protocols



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when the apparatus resources of the requesting municipality reach such a low level that assistance is clearly needed for station fill-in or incident response.

Automatic mutual aid is a progressive practice in the delivery of fire and EMS in the United States and has been a trend in the fire service for three decades. The practices vary by state. It is unrealistic for all local governments, especially those adjoining other municipalities, to be self-sufficient in the delivery of fire and EMS.

The Springfield Fire Department and adjacent municipal fire departments reportedly use mutual aid infrequently and generally only upon "special request" from the officer-in-charge and under a County mutual aid plan. The recommendations include:

- A. Implement automatic mutual aid with appropriate surrounding municipalities and fire departments.

### **Emergency Medical Services**

Currently, ambulance service in the City is provided through a contract with American Medical Response, Inc. (AMR), one of the nation's largest private ambulance services. The contract is a "cost free" contract to the City that requires AMR to provide both Basic Life Support and Advanced Life Support transport services and to staff the City's C-MED (Coordinated Medical Emergency Direction) program. The contract with AMR is a 10-year contract that has been renewed on an annual basis for the last several years. City and AMR officials advised the Study Team that they are unaware of any problems or significant issues with the present contract for ambulance service.

Prior to 2000, the SFD only responded to assist AMR units on rescue calls and on calls where extra manpower was needed to carry heavy patients. However, during that same time period the Springfield Police Department (SPD) was actively involved in providing Emergency First Responder (EFR) service as the City's primary first responder service. The Study Team finds such an arrangement unusual. Most municipalities that have a full-time career fire department that also provides EFR service to its citizens do not have the police department providing similar service.



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In May 2000, the SFD entered into EFR service, which soon thereafter included the use of AEDs (automated external defibrillator). It was unclear to the Study Team exactly what prompted SFD's entry into the delivery of EFR service, but the Department is nonetheless commended for providing the service. SFD's entry into EFR service, however, did not cause the Springfield Police Department (SPD) to cease their delivery of EFR service. In fact, both departments continue to provide AED-equipped EFR service today. As reported earlier, the Study Team finds it unusual that both the SPD and SFD provide AED-equipped EFR service; however, both departments are to be commended for providing such service.

Fire Department staff members respond to EMS calls on fire apparatus (engines, ladders and heavy rescue). EMS training provided to SFD firefighters and officers is EMS First Responder under the auspices of the Commonwealth's Office of Emergency Medical Services.

There are a number of aspects of the SFD EMS service delivery program that could be improved involving the provision of EMS supplies, training, organization of EMS in the SFD and the general view of the future of EMS in the Fire Department. The recommendations include.

- A. Revise and update the EMS first responder training program;
- B. Implement state-of-the-art EMS records management that includes patient and action taken data;
- C. Appoint a fire/EMS officer to serve as the EMS First Responder Program manager (minimum of captain level) on a collateral duty basis;
- D. Re-assign the handling of EMS supplies from the SFD training staff at the Training Center to an appropriate fire station and captain;
- E. Implement an EMS quality assurance program; and,
- F. Upgrade the EMS training/certification program to the EMT-B level as an improvement in EMS service to the public.



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### **Communications and Dispatch**

A fire department's communications and dispatch center is the nerve center of the department as an emergency service delivery agency. In Springfield, each public safety agency (fire, police and EMS/AMR) provides their own dispatch function; each of the three separate dispatch centers is located in different facilities in the City. In terms of general emergency call processing, 911 calls for service are initially answered by the Springfield Police Department's (SPD) calltakers and dispatchers to determine the nature of the service/s needed.

If the call is primarily for law enforcement service, the request is handled internally by the SPD, with any other resources (fire/EMS) being requested as needed during the course of the call. If the 911 call is primarily for emergency medical service, the SPD calltaker transfers the caller to the AMR dispatch center for further processing and dispatch of EMS resources, with either police or fire resources being subsequently requested of the police/fire dispatch centers, if needed. Likewise, if the call is primarily for fire/rescue service, the 911 caller is transferred to the fire dispatch center, referred to as Fire Alarm, for dispatch of appropriate SFD resources.

Fire Alarm is located in a building that is aging and in need of renovation/replacement as a dispatch facility. The dispatch process is supported by a number of systems and subsystems, including a recently implemented new computer aided dispatch (CAD) system. Fire Alarm lacks some of the 911 system functionality that is available to the SPD dispatch staff for the handling of incoming 911 emergency calls. Much of the supporting infrastructure in Fire Alarm duplicates similar systems in the SPD dispatch center, including the CAD, recording, 911, and other related systems.

The Fire Alarm oversight function (Supervisor of Fire Alarm and Assistant Supervisor of Fire Alarm) is provided by uniformed firefighters who are assigned to fulfill those supervisory roles on an acting temporary commander (ATC) basis. Although these individuals seem to be dedicated and committed, the supervisory staff have no dispatch center oversight experience or training and no general management education or experience





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other than that gained through an “on-the-job” process. As currently staffed, firefighters are supervising firefighters, a very unique management model.

The turnover rate among firefighters in Fire Alarm seems quite high. During the interview phase, the Study Team was advised that assignments to Fire Alarm are regarded by most SFD personnel as undesirable and are considered “disciplinary” assignments. Reportedly, firefighters who are sick/injured may also be assigned to Fire Alarm. The recommendations include:

- A. Implement a combined Springfield Emergency Communications Center (SECC) model for police and fire 911 and dispatch;
- B. Establish a communications steering committee;
- C. Establish the SECC as part of the Police or Fire Department;
- D. Appoint a civilian dispatch system-experienced director to the SECC;
- E. Task the civilian SECC director with developing and managing a comprehensive plan to transition to the SECC;
- F. Establish a career track-based position ladder for civilian SECC dispatch staff;
- G. Make necessary facility upgrades;
- H. Establish a comprehensive state-of-the-art dispatcher/supervisor training program.

### **Fire Alarm Boxes - Street, Master and Radio**

The SFD Fire Alarm unit is responsible for the installation and maintenance of approximately 750 street/master/radio fire alarm boxes. Reportedly, the original underground wiring system was installed in the 1800s and has been expanded and maintained since that time. Reportedly, some parts of the system are abandoned when they become inoperable due to age and difficulty of maintenance. Although the staffing assigned to these fire alarm boxes varies, there are generally three to four uniformed firefighters involved in fire alarm box installations and maintenance.

Nationally, the trend for a number years has been for communities such as Springfield to phase out and eliminate municipal involvement in fire alarm box systems. This is essentially



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due to the ready availability of landline and cellular telephones and the implementation of the 911 emergency number systems. As an example, New York City has been phasing out its involvement in the provision of fire box alarms.

Further, due to the available technology, a number of local and national alarm companies provide state-of-the-art alarm systems and related monitoring. There are those in the public who generally consider municipal involvement in the provision of fire alarm boxes as potentially competing with the private sector in alarm services. The recommendations include:

- A. Phase out involvement in the provision of fire alarm boxes, with the objective of reliance on private alarm companies.

### **Training - Fire, EMS and Special Operations**

There are four full-time SFD fire officers (the Training Director and three lieutenants) and a part-time senior clerk typist assigned to the Fire Department's training function. The training staff work out of the SFD Training Center. The Training Center includes a number of training facilities and props (technical and other training aids).

There seems to be significant opportunity for improvement in the various aspects of the SFD training program. The Training Center facility is in need of renovation and improvement. Further, many props (items utilized to train personnel) are in a serious state of disrepair and in some cases totally inoperable, e.g., the hazardous materials/gas training prop and rail car are in a state of disrepair and are over-run with weeds and grass. Further, a majority of the staff are assigned to functions other than training, including, SFD automation initiatives, public fire education, implementing the new five-inch fire hose on all pumping apparatus, and implementing a Department-wide conversion to new self-contained breathing apparatus.

The fire training programs provided to the SFD firefighters and officers, including recruit training, do not appear to be compliant with any national or state fire training standards. Although a "training calendar" is sent out to the fire stations, there does not appear to be an in-service training program. There is no officer development or training provided to



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prospective or existing SFD fire officers at any rank, and there is no consistent fire apparatus driver/operator training program.

There are no training/certification requirements to be met by SFD staff to be assigned to the Fire Department's training function. Although the training staff appear dedicated. However, with the exception of the Training Director, the remaining staff assigned to training have very limited experience and/or training/certification in actually conducting training.

State fire and hazardous materials training programs in Massachusetts are available through the Massachusetts Department of Fire Services (DFS). The Massachusetts Fire Academy (MFA) is located in Stow, and is a full-service training academy offering a wide range of training courses.

The MFA also participates in the Massachusetts Fire Service Certification System by administering the certification exam process for the Massachusetts Fire Training Council. This certification system meets nationally recognized standards for performance and is voluntary in terms of participation.

In addition to offering training courses at its Stow facility, the MFA delivers training courses throughout the Commonwealth. The MFA has divided the state into five training regions and delivers many of their courses at the local fire department level. For example, in the fall of 2004, 23 courses were offered in the western region (which includes Springfield) with all of them being hosted by local fire departments. The recommendations include:

- A. Remove non-training functions and responsibilities from the training staff;
- B. Deliver fire/rescue/EMS training programs (including recruit training) following national and state standards, with SFD personnel receiving related certifications;
- C. Establish a goal that all SFD firefighters will be certified to the National Firefighter II level, as a minimum;
- D. Deliver training programs with certified instructors;
- E. Provide a state-of-the-art in-service training program in a team effort between training staff and operations assigned officers;



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- F. Upgrade the Training Center facilities and props;
- G. Upgrade the technology support of the SFD training programs;
- H. Provide a training-certified fire captain as second in command of SFD training;
- I. Maintain three training-certified fire lieutenants;
- J. Assign a skilled firefighter to assist with training prop development and repair;
- K. Upgrade the clerical position to full-time;
- L. Assign a reserve engine to the Training Center for fire and driver training support;
- M. Institute joint fire training with surrounding mutual aid fire departments;
- N. Develop a long-range training plan;
- O. Implement a state-of-the-art officer training and development program; and,
- P. Consider a partnership with the State Department of Fire Services in the use of the Training Center, both in facility use (combined SFD Training Center and western Massachusetts regional fire training center) and program delivery.

### **Fire Prevention and Public Education**

A fire prevention bureau, as part of a fire department, is an integral part of a municipality's responsibility to provide for the welfare of the city and its citizens. It is through an effective life and fire safety education, investigation, code administration, application and enforcement effort that a municipality will realize the greatest protection from fire and accident. No number of firefighters, fire/rescue stations, apparatus and/or equipment can save the number of lives or the loss of property from fire as well as an educated public. Complement the fire prevention function with an effective suppression force and a municipality has the basis for a pro-active, efficient, cost effective, municipal life and fire safety program.

Conducting fire-related building inspections is a key function of a fire department's fire prevention effort in that fire codes are enforced, and if firefighters are involved in the inspection process, the field firefighters and officers have the opportunity to become more familiar with the buildings in their area during a non-emergency situation.



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The typical fire prevention bureau incorporates a number of functions, including building inspections, plans review, investigations (arson/bomb), and public education. The current official SFD organization chart reflects inspections, investigations and the juvenile firesetters component of public educations in the Fire Prevention Bureau. The arson/bomb and juvenile firesetter program areas apparently do not report on a daily basis to the Fire Prevention Supervisor and the fire and life safety public education program manager is assigned as part of the training function of the Fire Department.

The Assistant Supervisor of Fire Prevention is a firefighter, a highly unusual responsibility for a firefighter. The Fire Prevention staff seem to be very dedicated and working in a team approach to handle a significant workload. The fire prevention recommendations include:

- A. Adopt the title of “Fire Marshal” for the head of the Fire Prevention Bureau;
- B. Realign all fire prevention functions to report on a daily basis to the Fire Marshal;
- C. Upgrade the building fire building inspections program via a three-tier program, including a major component conducted by operations firefighters and officers;
- D. Initiate fire building inspections of commercial and industrial properties;
- E. Assign two firefighter/inspectors to commercial and industrial inspections;
- F. Assign an experienced captain as the Assistant Supervisor of the Fire Prevention Bureau, preferably one experienced in fire prevention;
- G. Provide the necessary technician training for the Arson/Bomb Squad members;
- H. Enhance the fire and life safety education program through delivery of programs with Hispanic instructors;
- I. Orient all SFD personnel to the importance of the fire prevention functions; and,
- J. Support the implementation of the innovative “Hazard House” initiative.

### **Automation and Records Management**

A fire department’s records management program is a key component to a successful community fire prevention effort, as well as to the provision of essential records and the



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planning and management of the department resources. Fire department information systems are generally for storing fire prevention related data on a jurisdiction's buildings, premises and processes. These systems serve to document the ongoing relationship the jurisdiction has with buildings, premises and processes. Additionally, incident reporting systems, such as the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS), play a key role in collecting the data required to document the community's fire related experiences. Further, these records management systems should support training, personnel, public education, safety, pre-fire planning, staff scheduling and other administrative and operational functions of the fire department.

The Fire Department is supported by a computer network that includes personal computers at fire stations and other SFD facilities. The SFD computers are part of a larger City network and utilize T-1 communications lines to provide inter-computer and facility communications. The recommendations include:

- A. Assign automation oversight responsibility to a district chief;
- B. Develop a plan for a state-of-the-art automation program support;
- C. Provide timely automation hardware and software technical support;
- D. Implement the selected records management program;
- E. Upgrade the aging PC systems; and,
- F. Provide inside/outside email access to all SFD staff and Internet access to appropriate personnel.

### **Performance Evaluations**

The Springfield Fire Department has no formalized performance evaluation program. Personnel in the ranks of firefighter through deputy fire chief noted that they have not been formally evaluated on their job performance. A particular responsibility of fire management is to assure that personnel are performing to their maximum. In this regard, employees in all ranks (uniformed and civilian) have a right to know how they are performing and management has a responsibility to tell employees how they are performing. The recommendations include:



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- A. Establish a formal job performance evaluation process for all positions;
- B. Train supervisors on the administration of performance evaluations; and,
- C. Utilize the results of performance evaluations as part of the selection for specialty assignments and promotions.

### **Promotions**

The fire officer promotional procedures and processes are determined by the Massachusetts Human Resources Division (MHRD) for the ranks of lieutenant, captain and district chief. Once the eligibility lists are established, interviews are conducted by members of the Fire Commission, and promotions are made, once approved by the MHRD and State Civil Service. The recommendations include:

- A. Explore options to the current state civil service system, and/or;
- B. Effect an agreement with the Commonwealth to delegate the promotional processes to outside vendors;
- C. Utilize an employee's job evaluations as part of the promotional process;
- D. Abolish the use of acting temporary commander assignments to fill promotional positions;
- E. Assure that there are written, job-related guidelines on the interview component, a standard form with specific dimensions to be measured and training for the interviewers; and,
- F. Encourage minority (i.e., ethnic/racial and gender) participation in all promotional processes.

### **Human Resources Management**

The City and Fire Department are encouraged to upgrade other human resources management (HRM) practices not mentioned in previous sections. The Study Team has detailed more than 20 recommendations to improve Fire Department HRM. The recommendations and options relate to the need for more focus on minority and women applicants, performance evaluations, promotions and injured on duty leave. For example, the City of Springfield Fire Department has only one (1) female firefighter. The recommendations include:



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- A. Determine the reasons why the Fire Department has only one female firefighter and enhance the opportunities for greater diversity;
- B. Develop and implement written procedures and SOPs for all firefighter recruitment and selection activities;
- C. Ensure that background investigations are completed;
- D. Institute a physical fitness/ability examination for all firefighter applicants;
- E. Ensure that firefighter recruits comply with all provisions of training requirements before removal from probationary status;
- F. Increase the percentage of racial/ethnic and gender minorities hired as firefighters; and,
- G. Increase the percentage of racial/ethnic and gender minorities hired for civilian positions.

### **Labor Management Relations**

There are two uniformed labor groups in the Springfield Fire Department: the International Association of Firefighters (IAFF), Local 648, of AFL-CIO-CLC; and, the Fire Chiefs Association of Springfield. There is no current Collective Bargaining Agreement between the City of Springfield and Local 648. The labor agreement with Local 648 expired June 30, 2003. Reportedly, an agreement was reached recently between the City and the Fire Chiefs Association.

The civilian employees of the SFD are represented by the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, Council 93, Local 1596 Unit. The labor agreement with AFSCME expired in June 2003.

Reportedly, over a period of years, the labor management relations climate within the Fire Department has been characterized as being adversarial. This atmosphere has potentially contributed to the absence of up-to-date labor agreements. There is some fingerpointing in the Department about the reasons for current conditions. Some point to the leadership of the Fire Department as the reason for low morale, the poor conditions of facilities, and reduced staffing. Others point to the Department structure. In times of “downsizing” or “rightsizing,” this is not unusual.





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In the judgment of the Study Team, it is time to “turn the page.” With the implementation of the recommendations in this Report, appropriate recognition of the work by Springfield firefighters, and a restructuring of fire leadership reporting requirements in the City government, there is an excellent opportunity for improving relationships between labor and management. The recommendations include:

- A. Maintain up-to-date labor agreements;
- B. Assure fairness, responsiveness and firmness in all disciplinary actions;
- C. Address the “themes” outlined in the Report relative to perceptions of employees; and,
- D. Initiate the actions necessary to restructure the Department and reporting procedures to City government.

### **Safety and Health**

Individuals working in public safety, particularly firefighting personnel, perform one of the most physically demanding, and mentally stressful occupations in the nation. Quite often, fire personnel are subjected to environments that require rapid physical and mental response with a minimum of preparation. Many professionals in the fire service say that safety is an attitude that must be believed in, must be communicated, and most importantly, must be enacted.

The Springfield Fire Department lacks a comprehensive safety and health program and falls short in many areas of compliance with NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program. The recommendations include:

- A. Utilize effectively a joint labor/management Occupational Health and Safety Committee in implementation of comprehensive safety initiatives consistent with NFPA 1500;
- B. Appoint a health and safety officer with full authority in accordance with NFPA 1500 and 1521 (safety officer standard);
- C. Implement a comprehensive safety-related training program;
- D. Implement comprehensive safety-related policies and procedures;
- E. Perform qualitative protective clothing cleaning and maintenance;



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- F. Initiate an automatic “working fire” apparatus assignment dispatch, including a second chief officer, to facilitate safety and command functions;
- G. Develop and implement a “2-in/2-out” policy;
- H. Develop and utilize a state-of-the-art substance abuse policy; and,
- I. Review and consider implementing appropriate National Firefighter Foundation’s Firefighter Life Safety Initiatives.

### **Accountability and Consistency in Actions**

During the interview process involving a broad cross-section of the Springfield Fire Department’s firefighters, officers and chiefs, a consistent “thread” in many discussions of areas for possible improvement of the SFD related to the need (actual or perceived) for accountability throughout the chain of command. Further, there was a consistent “drum beat” regarding the need (actual or perceived) for more consistency in actions taken relating to many decisions and aspects, e.g., discipline, grievances, transfers, assignments, and handling of on-the-job injuries.

There seems to be a pervasive feeling at all levels of the chain of command that many decisions at various levels are made inconsistently and in diverse manners; moreover, there were statements the decisions are based on the individual/s involved, their “reputation” in the SFD, ethnicity, race, rank, and gender.

During interviews with employees, there were a number of themes that related to accountability and consistency. Some were at a more severe level. Two themes relative to defacing a female bathroom wall and the use of the “N” word were particularly repulsive. While these particular themes appear to be related to a small number of personnel, such actions have no place in any workplace, let alone government service. These actions should not be tolerated, and people involved in these alleged actions should be asked to seek other employment. Those supervisory personnel who take no action should also be held accountable.

These types of opinions and perceptions, whether actual or not, may have significant negative impacts on the morale of employees at all ranks; further, the perceptions and opinions may



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reduce the level of team effort in the Department and potentially have an adverse impact on labor/management relations. The recommendations include:

- A. Assure that rules and regulations are enforced consistently;
- B. Take swift and firm action on sustained complaints;
- C. Encourage employees to bring unresolved complaints to the attention of the City government; and,
- D. Assure accountability, fairness, equity and appropriate discipline within the Fire Department.

### **Philosophy of Fire Services Delivery**

Nationally, the model state-of-the-art fire service delivery agency is a multi-faceted organization which recognizes that the delivery of fire protection services in this modern era is more than putting out fires. A model fire department today also provides a level of emergency medical services, as illustrated by the fact that a number of years ago the International Association of Fire Fighters ( IAFF) changed its historic position regarding EMS delivery by fire departments and now strongly supports EMS delivery by fire departments.

The model fire department also provides a broad range of external fire-related services that loosely fall in the category of preventing fires: inspections, plans review, public fire education, fire investigations, juvenile firesetters programs, and hazmat and other special services. Further, the model fire department provides a number of essential internal services that relate to the quality of the provision of fire/EMS services, including comprehensive training.

During interviews with employees, the Study Team noted that the current general philosophy of many of the SFD firefighters and officers is that the Fire Department should not assign staffing to any function other than apparatus. The feeling apparently is that all staffing belongs on the apparatus in order to put fires out. Further, there is an apparent lack of support for providing quality EMS service on a “first responder” basis with the apparatus. It seems



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that many Springfield firefighters and officers believe that they are there to provide only fire suppression and directly related services.

It is clear to the Study Team that a major re-orientation and educational process must be undertaken to change this philosophy on the part of a substantial number of Springfield firefighters and officers. A change in philosophy on the part of SFD staff is an essential part of the process of “re-tooling” and upgrading of the Springfield Fire Department.

### **Fire Department Accreditation**

In 1988, the International City/County Management Association and the International Association of Fire Chiefs executive boards signed a memorandum of understanding that committed both organizations to the development of a voluntary national fire service accreditation system. Over a period of the intervening years, the framework and criteria for a fire department accreditation model was developed, beta test fire department accreditations were conducted and an accreditation model was finalized and implemented under the management of the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). According to the CFAI website, there are currently 98 accredited fire departments in the United States. The recommendation is:

- A. Establish a goal of accrediting the Springfield Fire Department.

### **Potential Obstacles to Change**

There may be differences of opinion and criticism of a number of the recommendations contained in this Study. However, a substantial number of the recommendations are suggestions made to the Study Team by City officials, members of the Springfield Fire Department and/or stakeholders. Although labor issues may surface, open communications and input should assist in “getting beyond” these types of implementation issues.



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### **Proposed Staffing and Organization**

As part of the FY2005 Approved SFD Budget the Fire Department was authorized and funded for 264 uniformed positions and 11 full-time and part-time civilian staff members (not including the two emergency management positions transferred to the SFD on July 1, 2005).

The primary recommendations relative to staffing changes over the next three to five years include:

- A. Establish (re-establish) a deputy chief position in the administration of the SFD;
- B. Establish three civilian positions for the Department-level functions of personnel, budget, facilities management, purchasing and administrative positions;
- C. Eliminate ATC assignments and making related promotions;
- D. Establish an additional senior clerk typist position and converting a second to full-time status;
- E. Increase the number of district chief positions by three in order to meet actual staffing needs;
- F. Reduce apparatus staffing requirements by one captain, two lieutenant and 3.6 firefighter positions related to abolishing one engine company (see Figure 12.1 in Chapter Twelve for calculation details);
- G. Reallocate 14 firefighter positions with the implementation of a combined police/fire emergency dispatch center, and, the creation of an appropriate number of civilian dispatchers to staff the fire dispatch function;
- H. Reallocate four firefighter positions related to the elimination of fire alarm boxes;
- I. Create a captain position for Training;
- J. Create a lieutenant position in Training to replace the public fire education position moved to Fire Prevention;
- K. Reallocate a captain position to provide a captain in Fire Prevention;



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- L. Reallocate two firefighter positions to Fire Prevention to conduct commercial and industrial fire building inspections;
- M. Create a civilian grants/planner position; and,
- N. Transfer to operations the firefighter position that is currently functioning as a Public Information Officer (PIO) and train/assign all chiefs, including the training officer, to perform that function on a collateral duty basis.

Based on the Study Team's best judgment at this time and with the potential of the current delivery system, there is no suggestion to add paid operations staff. With this staffing model, the sworn staff would be 249.4 and civilian staff would be fifteen full-time positions (including the two emergency management positions transferred to the SFD on 7/1/05). Any reduction of positions should be done on an attrition basis.

The City would need to adjust the official organization chart of the SFD based on the staffing model and options approved for implementation.

It seems that since the 1980s the Springfield Fire Department has periodically been experiencing reductions in fire stations, apparatus/companies and staffing. Based on information provided by a number of SFD chief officers, the following summarizes the reductions taken in the past:

- 1980 - 502 personnel, 22 companies and 12 fire stations;
- 1989 - 413 personnel, 20 companies and 10 fire stations;
- 2001 - 393 personnel, 19 companies and 9 fire stations; and,
- 2005 - 264 personnel, 13 companies and 7 fire stations.

During the last 25 years, it appears that the SFD has been reduced by nearly 50 percent in personnel, companies and fire stations. The staffing approach to SFD functional areas also seems to have been degraded, e.g., firefighters and junior officers assigned today to managing major functional areas (firefighters serving as supervisor and assistant supervisor of Fire Alarm, assistant supervisor of Fire Prevention), one deputy chief, insufficient training and fire prevention staff, no civilian professional management staff, and insufficient clerical staff. The question being asked within the ranks of many very dedicated firefighters, officers



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and staff of the Fire Department is “when will the bleeding stop?.” Given the history of the reductions that have been taken, particularly in recent years, this question may be a legitimate question.

The Study Team does not suggest that personnel resource levels should or could be returned to 1980 personnel levels. However, considering the current status of SFD staffing, typical staffing of similar sized fire departments, national standards and accepted principles and practices, and considering this history of reductions taken in the Fire Department, the Study Team has outlined a number of recommendations that involve a number of staff reallocation options that appear to provide improvements in the SFD’s ability to meet current and future fire/EMS demands.

The primary results of this proposed staff reallocation and organizational “retooling” that are considered to have broad organization-wide and Springfield customer impact include:

- A. Reopening a fire station that has been closed, Fire Station 16, with an engine company to serve the center of the City;
- B. Providing command and organizational oversight for effective service delivery;
- C. Providing civilian professional and clerical/administrative staffing to allow uniformed personnel to focus on actual service delivery;
- D. Providing the appropriate number of personnel to staff approved SFD positions and functions;
- E. Filling leadership and functional positions with personnel of an appropriate rank with the requisite background and training to function effectively; and,
- F. Enhancing services provided by the SFD, including conducting commercial and industrial inspections.

With the implementation of this reallocation of SFD staff model and other related recommendations contained in this Report, the Study Team suggests that the Fire Department staffing and resources should not be reduced further for the future. Any further reductions beyond those in this Report could result in undesirable impacts on fire safety to the public and the personnel of the Springfield Fire Department.



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### Fiscal Impacts

The fiscal impacts not related to personnel will depend on which, if any, recommendations are implemented by the City of Springfield. The primary areas related to costs and savings (cost avoidance) include:

- A. Reducing the number of fire station facilities utilized and maintained by the SFD;
- B. Avoiding the possible eventual cost of renovating two current aging fire stations, 3 and 14;
- C. Upgrading the SFD fire station facilities;
- D. Upgrading the furnishings for SFD fire stations facilities;
- E. Providing a replacement fire station for the combined Fire Stations 3 and 14;
- F. Reducing the fire apparatus fleet—estimated 20-year life cycle savings of \$1,486,000;
- G. Reducing the number of emergency communications centers utilized and maintained;
- H. Costs avoiding related to maintaining/replacing the systems and subsystems for one dispatch rather than two;
- I. Providing the facility upgrades related to combining the dispatch centers;
- J. Costs avoiding for installing, maintaining and removing fire alarm boxes;
- K. Reducing revenue for the provision of fire alarm boxes;
- L. Combining Fire Station 3 and 14 into one centrally located facility;
- M. Implementing a state-of-the-art fire department records management system;
- N. Implementing EMS training program upgrades (EMT-B)—estimated cost per year of \$100,000 for six-year implementation;
- O. Implementing fire training program upgrades to National/State certification requirements—estimated cost per year of \$150,000 for ten-year implementation;
- P. Upgrading the facilities, props and technology supporting training programs;
- Q. Implementing a partnership with the State Department of Fire Services in the use of SFD Training Center facilities; and,
- R. Implementing the “Hazard House” public fire education program.





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Once the City decides on a specific course, internal finance personnel should be requested to assess the fiscal impacts of any changes.

### **Potential Benefits**

In upgrading the personnel, operations, management and administration of a fire department, it is not possible to delineate all the positive outcomes. Improving the quality of life in a community and saving lives do not necessarily involve quantitative analysis.

A number of the anticipated returns on investment for the operations and management recommendations in this Study include:

- A. Improved management of the Springfield Fire Department by upgrading the senior uniformed administrative staffing;
- B. Improved management of facility and automation projects by enhancing the administration staff of the SFD;
- C. Increased pride in the organization;
- D. Reduced loss of time on the job through comprehensive firefighter safety programs;
- E. Enhanced management of human resources;
- F. Improved response time through monitoring and evaluating CAD produced fire and EMS response time data;
- G. Improved coordination of police/fire resources;
- H. Improved cost effective service through automatic mutual aid;
- I. Improved firefighter effectiveness through upgraded training;
- J. Improved service to the public through reliable well-maintained fire apparatus;
- K. Increased awareness, planning for major fire incidents, and improved effective use of firefighters through implementation of pre-fire planning by firefighters and officers in the fire stations;
- L. Improved morale;
- M. Improved accountability;
- N. Reduced dispatch processing time;
- O. Reduced staff working out of class;



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- P. More effective use of key senior staff members; and,
- Q. Enhanced status of the City being served by an accredited fire agency.

### **Strengths of the Springfield Fire Department**

This Chapter outlines a Blueprint for the Future in the delivery of fire and EMS in the City of Springfield. In developing this Blueprint, it is important to note that there are a significant number of strengths of the Springfield Fire Department, which are a result of dedication and commitment by members of the Department. Several include:

- Team Approach of the Fire Prevention Staff;
- High Quality of Apparatus Fleet and Maintenance Program;
- Efforts devoted to the Delivery of Aggressive Fire Suppression;
- Juvenile Fire Setters Program;
- Staff Desire to Upgrade Level of EMS Service Delivery;
- Efforts to Obtain Grants;
- Dedication and Flexibility of Civilian Staff;
- Staff desire to improve Fire & EMS Training; and,
- Training Center and Burn Building—Premier Center/Building in Western MA.

### **Timeline for Decisions and Actions**

This comprehensive assessment of the Springfield Fire Department should be considered as a strategic planning tool for the future. Additional issues may need consideration in the future; the plan should be used as a flexible guide for decisions relative to the organization, management and provision of fire/EMS services by the Springfield Fire Department.

### **Updating the Plan**

The City of Springfield is encouraged to update this Plan each year with internal staff. The update should include progress, obstacles, fiscal impacts, workload analysis and anticipated outcomes.



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### **Quality of Springfield Fire Department Personnel**

In the conduct of comprehensive fire department studies, it is not unusual for fire department personnel to resent a study. In the City of Springfield, the Study Team was most impressed with the attitudes and quality of SFD personnel. This positive impression includes members of IAFF Local 648 and the Fire Chiefs Association. Firefighters and officers were very candid and open about their Fire Department. They expressed pride in a number of the very progressive programs and initiatives by the Springfield Fire Department. This pride and accomplishment are well deserved.

In the judgment of the Study Team, the stakeholders in the City of Springfield (residents, business officials, Mayor, City Council, and visitors) can be very proud of the employees of the Springfield Fire Department. It was a pleasure for the Study Team to work with members on the current model programs and those that should be considered for the future.

