



VFIS[®] news

Bringing important information to emergency service organizations

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EMPLOYMENT PRACTICES UPDATE

Human Resources in Emergency Services

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We welcome comments, suggestions and questions from our readers.

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Implementing Junior Member Programs

By T. Randy Hess, Director of VFIS Risk Control Services

For decades, emergency service organizations have used junior member programs as a way to generate young people's interest in membership or employment in the emergency services once they reach adulthood. Whether through a formal program such as Explorers or any informal junior firefighter or EMS program, when properly organized, these programs can be successful recruiting and training tools.

Since Explorer and junior members are minors, a unique set of circumstances are presented that require specific rules and regulations to be put in place. All states have labor laws protecting persons under the age of 18 by placing restrictions on the types of activities in which minor members may participate.

It is unfortunate that situations have developed where adult advisors violated the trust of their organization and have caused injury or harm to minor member(s). To help protect the organization, adult advisors, individual members/employees and the program participants, it is important to have safeguards in place. Safety policies, ethics, child labor laws, rules of participation, written guidelines and enforcement of those policies are issues for emergency service organizations.

VFIS Risk Control has recently developed the Implementing Junior Member Programs communiqué (available on www.vfis.com) so emergency service organization administrators can use this as a guideline to establish rules and regulations for an effective junior member program. Applying these best practices can help reduce the risk of letting important checks and balances go unaddressed.



By Kurt Latipow
EFO, Fire Services
Coordinator,
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Copywriter

The Volunteer & Combination Officers Section convened more than 130 leaders of volunteer and combination fire departments in the nation's capital to construct a national blueprint for securing and expanding the future of volunteerism in the emergency service community. The ultimate goal of the summit was to examine the critical challenges that are faced by fire departments staffed by volunteer, on-call, combination and/or part-time firefighters and to develop a strategic plan that will be the foundation to carry the fire service into the future and solidify its status. What was initiated by the assembly has evolved into these eight challenges.

Challenge 1: Capabilities & Competencies

The current "teach for all risks" method of training and credentialing is resulting in a burdensome process that can impact the goal of maintaining a thriving volunteer membership. In addition, state reciprocity of credentials is often inconsistent or nonexistent, and creates an additional training burden if volunteer firefighters move across state lines.

Challenge 2: Community Relationships

Emergency Service Organizations (ESOs) may not always be successful in developing an effective partnership with their community. Many do not provide regular information to the community about its needs, abilities and type and levels of service. Without clear and consistent two-way communication between the ESO and the community, misunderstandings can develop. The public may not be fully aware of the needs of the ESO to fully appreciate the limitations of its

Emergency services faced with critical challenges

VCOS identifies eight

service delivery capabilities. Without an understanding of the delivery system, it is difficult for the public to make intelligent choices about cost of service versus benefits received.

Challenge 3: Recruitment

Proven method to recruit members based on best practices, including information, resources and awareness of how to ensure a more diverse and inclusive workforce, are an important tool for ESOs. In addition to the operational skills usually targeted when recruiting, there is also a need to attract new members who bring specialized, non-operational skills to the organization.

Challenge 4: Retention of Organizational Members

It is critical for organizations to retain qualified members and maintain organizational unity. The inability of an organization to maintain experienced staffing could increase risks to the individual member and to the community as a whole. The lack of data necessary to quantify why volunteer members are leaving emergency services organizations makes it difficult to identify the local and national trends that affect volunteer-based staffing.

Challenge 5: Jurisdiction

Fire protection in North America is typically provided by a city or special district and in some cases the township, county, state or tribal government. In some communities it is provided by a private organization. There often are political bodies (authority having jurisdiction) who set the level of service and authorize the expenditure of funds. The current fire service delivery model, by-

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laws and rules could be perceived as outdated. In some parts of the country, ESOs may over-saturate the response area while in others, resources are scarce. Some communities resist cooperation and regionalization, which can place the community at greater risk and could cost more to operate.

Challenge 6: Inconsistent Rules and Regulations

Current law and regulations, both at the state and federal level, may create impediments to the sustainability of volunteer ESOs. In some cases, laws and rules of agencies from the same level of government may conflict, which often creates confusion and risk of violation by ESOs. Additionally, legislative definitions may be vague or absent, which leads to ambiguous interpretation of rules and regulations (i.e. line of duty death, definition of a volunteer, etc.). Also, rules regarding the same matters can vary significantly from state to state.

Challenge 7: Reputation Management

Reputation management is often seen as the foundation of viable ESOs. Members of ESOs are

frequently held to a higher standard, so trust is important to maintain. News media, increased communication technology and sensationalized journalism can all make the emergency service vulnerable where imprudent actions may cause immediate and long-term damage to the reputation of the department and emergency service community overall.

Challenge 8: Fire-Based Emergency Medical Services

EMS has long been a function of ESOs in many parts of the country while in other areas, EMS is only now becoming an ESO service. Issues regarding scope of practice, deployment, response workload and funding are some of the challenges that are important to address in a proactive manner. Not addressing these topics could result in declined volunteer retention rates.

Initiatives that will support the challenges were developed and recently presented to the VCOS board for consideration. Upon approval, it is anticipated that the board will develop and empower teams to implement the initiatives and distribute the final plan in January 2012. ❄

United States Fire Administration's Prevention and Public Education Exchange – **Public Education at your Fingertips**

By Teresa Neal, Fire Program Specialist, United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency

Many articles have been written about the state of the economy and we cannot ignore that America's fire service has definitely felt the pinch. From Maryland to Arizona to California, there have been stories of fire department lay-offs and service cuts. It can be distressing to hear of the elimination of complete sections in some departments, mainly Prevention and Public Education. When times are tough and resources are stretched thin, it's easy to focus on 'putting the fire out' rather than on ways to help communities prevent these fires in the first place. The United States Fire Administration has a resource that can help.

In order to assist fire departments in finding affordable, often times even free, resources to continue their prevention and public education outreach, the U.S. Fire Administration developed the Prevention and Public Education Exchange, available on the web at www.lrc.fema.gov/exchange.html. This online repository features links to both popular and little known Web sites with resources covering a wide range of prevention and life safety topics, such as burns, wildfires, sprinkler systems, juvenile firesetting, etc. The Exchange also offers a unique look at the materials developed by fire departments through the Assistance to Firefighter Grants for Prevention and Safety.



The Exchange is searchable through various fields, such as subject, keywords or popular topics including "home fire safety," "safety education," etc. The materials come in a wide variety of media formats including DVDs, brochures, kits and more. A number of these items are readily accessible via the Web and can be viewed online or downloaded.

To quickly obtain materials that are not available in digital format, each record in the repository contains contact information for the creator of the item(s). In addition, the contact information is available to reach local prevention and safety officials to facilitate discussion about the materials and how well they met prevention and safety needs.

If there is an interest in fire prevention education and public safety, the Exchange is an invaluable tool to help assist in delivering a program that will help local communities and organizations.

For more information, contact Teresa Neal at Teresa.Neal@dhs.gov. ❄

EDUCATION & TRAINING: Associate Profile

VFIS WELCOMES Ryan Pietzsch

VFIS is excited to announce a new Education Specialist and Consultant, Ryan Pietzsch. Ryan was hired to develop and deliver education and training programs and to participate in consulting projects for emergency service organizations across the United States and around the world.

A personal goal for the position, Ryan says he will strive to provide integrated training, education and consulting services to the emergency services marketplace, which will help provide solutions to clients beyond insurance. He hopes to complement and expand the sale of insurance products offered

by VFIS, while working to reduce losses.

For 18 years, Ryan served with the West Des Moines Fire Department in Iowa where he was born and raised. He began as a volunteer firefighter and ended as the "A" shift career fire lieutenant. Since moving to Pennsylvania, he has joined the Silver Springs Volunteer Fire Company in Mechanicsburg, Pa. as a firefighter.

A graduate of Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa, Ryan earned his bachelor's degree in liberal arts and also attended the Des Moines/West Des Moines Fire Academy. He received

his Fire Service Certification in 2001 from Des Moines Area Community College. Ryan is a member of the National Registry of Emergency Medical Technicians (NREMT), National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), International Association of Fire Fighters (Retired) and IAFF Local 3586 (Retired).



Learn more about VFIS Distance Learning by visiting vfis.sju.edu.

VFIS ANNOUNCES New Distance Learning Courses

By Bill Jenaway, Ph.D, Vice President VFIS Education, Training and Consulting

VFIS is pleased to announce the availability of two new Distance Learning programs.

Reputational Risk for Emergency Services is a developing area of real-world problems for emergency service organizations. Whether created by harassment situations, financial mismanagement, substance abuse, media mismanagement, computer security, vehicle accidents, or something else; the areas of personnel management, policy implementation, training, supervision, and discipline become critical business components for departments to implement.

The second new program to Distance Learning is titled, **Highway Safety for Emergency Services**. This program assists departments with best practices

to use at the scene of emergency situations on highways and other busy roads. The program's core concept involves "The Ten Cones of Highway Safety."

The Distance Learning courses are designed to be taken at the student's convenience and location. A certificate of course completion is provided upon passing the online assessment.

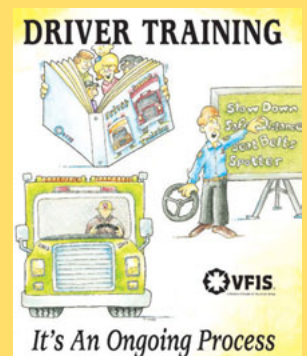
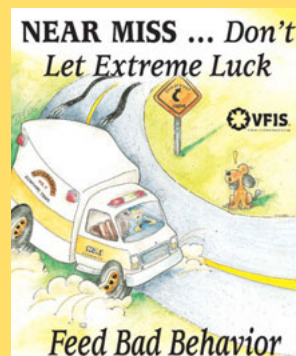
VFIS, in its continuous efforts to improve the safety and operations of the fire service through education, training, risk management and insurance programs, has joined forces with St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia to develop this distance learning program.

For details on this initiative, contact **VFIS Client Services at 800-233-1957, ext. 7964.**

New safety posters available

Two new VFIS safety posters are now available for purchase. The Near Miss poster (item C10:269) and the Driver Training poster (item C10:270) are 16" x 20" and can be placed within your organization to remind everyone about safety.

To order, visit www.vfis.com/onlinestore or call 800-233-1957 ext. 7961.





Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs

CAFC's 2011 Fire Rescue Canada conference

Congratulations to the host committee for the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs' 2011 Fire Rescue Canada conference in Calgary this past September.

While the committee put on a great show – country superstar Paul Brandt, former Toronto Argonauts coach and motivational guru Pinball Clemons and Olympian Catriona Le May Doan, along with solid fire-service presentations – the closed-door happenings were equally as significant.

The pre-conference board meeting could be considered the most productive in years, with several longstanding issues openly discussed and, for the most part, resolved (although not yet public).

More significant, perhaps, was the consensus that the CAFC explore working with the Canadian Governmental Committee (CGC) and FEMA/FEMSA to advocate for federal funding for the fire service.

The CAFC, with the help of Summa Strategies Canada Inc. and consultant Robin MacLachlan, has learned how to “work Ottawa.” And the CGC has partnered with FEMA/FEMSA for guidance following the U.S. organization's success implementing federal fire-service grants from Washington. The combined clout of the CAFC and the CGC/FEMA/FEMSA, plus the presumed pending election of Ottawa Fire Chief John DeHooze as second vice-president of the IAFC, might be what the Canadian fire service needs to make something happen on Parliament Hill.

Laura King is the editor of Fire Fighting in Canada (FFIC) and Canadian Firefighter and EMS Quarterly (CFF) magazines (www.firefightingincanada.com.) Contact her at lking@annexweb.com.

The Ontario First Nations Fire Chiefs Association annual meeting

The Ontario First Nations Fire Chiefs Association annual general meeting was held in November at Six Nations in Ohsweken, Ont., at which the organization set out its mission statement.

Firefighting on Canada's First Nations reserves is funded by the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, a federal government department, but there is not enough funding for adequate training of volunteer firefighters and chiefs are worried about their ability to protect their residents. There were nine fire deaths on First Nations reserve in Ontario alone in 2010.

Funding has been such a concern that Six Nations Fire Chief Michael Seth said fire-service experts believe the likelihood of dying in a fire on a First Nations reserve is five to 10 times higher than in other Canadian communities. New equipment isn't the problem, he said but the issue is having enough properly trained men and women.

“I can have a brand new \$3 million fire truck, but if I don't have people and adequate training to staff it ... there is no point,” Seth told The Hamilton Spectator earlier this year.

In September 2010, Sean Tracey, Canadian director for the National Fire Protection Association, wrote in Fire Fighting in Canada that according to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's report, Fire Prevention in Aboriginal Communities and First Nations communities experience a fire death rate 10.4 times greater than the Canadian average and fire damage is 2.1 times greater than the Canadian average.

The November 10-11 meeting of First Nations chief featured a roundtable discussion for the group to set its direction and offer presentations by the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs and the Canadian Association of Fire Chiefs, a session about liability for chief officers and another on leadership in the fire service.

2011 National Benefits Summit

By Jeffrey A. Moore, LOSAP Sales Specialist

The 2011 National Benefits Summit was held from Sept. 24-28 in Lake George, N.Y. Representatives from 24 states gathered to learn about, discuss, understand, and compare benefits offered to their volunteer emergency service providers. Topics discussed included preferred communication options of young fire fighters, reimbursement of college costs for volunteers and succession planning. Attendees were encouraged to return



home with these fresh ideas and new contacts so they could discuss issues such as generational gaps in broadcasting information, over the next two years.

The next National Benefit Summit takes place in 2013, in College Park, Texas. The summit will again combine with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) fall meeting. All state volunteer

emergency service provider organizations are welcome and encouraged to send representatives to this next benefit in Texas. For information on upcoming National Benefits Summits, contact: Meg Goldberg of the NVFC at meg@nvfc.org , (202)887-5700 ext. 17; or Harrison Breuer of FASNY at Harrison@FASNY.com , (800)232-7692.

SOP's; To Have or Not Have, That is the Question!

By Daniel B.C. Gardiner, CFPS

Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are a set of written instructions that describe how an activity or response should be carried out. The human response to such events often plays an important role in SOPs. They codify best practices to ensure standardization and consistency and also set a standard against which one may identify deficiencies, the need for additional training, and in some instances, discipline. SOP's are intended to ensure the safety and welfare of the responder as well as the safety and welfare of the individual in need of help.

It is surprising to discover when departments do not have SOPs because they provide the fundamental blueprint and operating procedures for these types of organizations.

Some departments re-name their SOPs, to Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs). "Guidelines" imply suggestions rather than compulsory action. Departments using SOGs instead of SOPs want to

believe legal problems are minimized by the use of the term "guidelines." However, this thinking does not appear to be valid. If a best practice is ignored or implemented badly, regardless of whether it is called a "guideline" or "procedure," the organization still has a problem. The public has a certain expectation of consistent and effective response. The name does not diminish the goal to provide it.

The value of SOPs cannot be overstated. Whether newly created or borrowed from another department, it is important for them to be:

- **Developed.**
- **Documented.**
- **Written down.**
- **Accessible.**
- **Readily available.**
- **Communicated.**
- **Understood.**
- **Practiced by all users.**

There must be disciplinary consequences for ignoring or badly executing SOPs.

Seemingly routine tasks are not so routine when they take place during life threatening emergencies. Firefighters and emergency responders should not have to improvise at every emergency they respond to, due to the lack of guidance. Imagine a crew of two or three firefighters performing a primary search for victims in darkness, heavy smoke and extreme heat without any guidance. What tools do you bring with you? Who is responsible for each task? Without direction from SOPs, individual action spawns a recklessness and uncoordinated response. Recklessness leads to injury and ineffective response.

The department that operates without SOPs is working without guidance, direction, coordination and effectiveness. A department without guidance is a department flirting with disaster.

That is a sure way to have problems!

NEWS YOU CAN USE

Prince William County Fire-Rescue Department receives Billy Goldfeder Award

VFIS and the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) Safety, Health and Survival Section (SHSS) recently recognized the Prince William County Fire-Rescue Department in Virginia with the 2011 Billy Goldfeder Fire Service Organizational Safety Award. Sponsored by VFIS, this award is presented to a fire service organization of any size that exhibits organization-wide initiatives to enhance the

department's level of health and safety. After collaboration with the Fire and Rescue Association, the Prince William County Fire-Rescue Department mandated that as part of the new requirement, every Fire and Rescue member, whether career or volunteer, is subjected to an NFPA 1582 medical physical, an OSHA Respiratory Questionnaire and a fit test to receive their issued SCBA mask. All three

From left: Dr. Bill Jenaway, vice president VFIS Education, Training and Consulting; Chief Kevin McGee, Prince William County Department of Fire-Rescue; Chief Billy Goldfeder, IAFC-SHSS past chair and Todd LeDuc IAFC-SHSS award committee chair.



of these components are required annually for members to be permitted to participate in firefighting activities.

The award was presented at the IAFC Fire-Rescue International conference in Atlanta.



First Responder Distinguished Service Medal

William F. Jenaway, Ph.D., CFO, CFOD, executive vice president of VFIS education, training and consulting, was recently named the first recipient of the First Responder Distinguished Service Medal.

Inspired by the congressionally authorized Medal of Valor for First Responders, the First Responder

Institute created complementary awards to honor the service and heroism of First Responders.

With more than 40 years of fire service experience, Jenaway served as chairman of the Pennsylvania Senate Resolution 60 Commission, vice-chair of the Commission on Fire Accreditation, was chairman of the Risk Management Standard (NFPA 1250) and Providing Emergency Services to the Public Standard (NFPA 1201) for the National Fire Protection Association and was a member of countless other committees including the

Presidential/Congressional Advisory Panel to Assess Domestic Response Capabilities for Terrorism Involving Weapons of Mass Destruction, known as the Gilmore Commission since its inception in 1999.

In addition to his position at VFIS, Jenaway is an adjunct professor in the Public Safety graduate school at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia, Pa., in the Legal Studies graduate school at California University of Pennsylvania and with Columbia Southern University.

SOPs and SOGs: Sometimes Less is More

By Nathan Forney, Vice President, Glatfelter Insurance Group GPM Administration

Rules, such as Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) have their place. Determining that proper place requires attention to factors that are easy to overlook. In many cases, drafting fewer rules and leaving decisions to responsible managers or officers provides a better environment for decision-making than one bound by too many rules.

Many factors influence the continuum that stretches from too many rules on one end to a lack of guidance from too few on the other. Three are singled out below for discussion. The first is a limitation on knowledge. A second and related issue is the inherent inability to ever have a complete set of rules. Lastly, every action entails costs, including lost opportunities and cost shifting that needs to be taken into account when considering new rules.

Limits on Knowledge

Knowledge has costs and these costs impose limits on what can be expected or accomplished. If a new procedure is to be implemented, it must be researched, validated and then put into practice. All of this requires time and takes away from the time available for other functions. The natural constraints on time necessitate prioritizing among these and other activities.

The point of practical execution also imposes limits on knowledge. Thomas Sowell wrote that in gathering and evaluating information, “the process may, of course, fail to bring knowledge to bear, when accurate knowledge is available somewhere in the system. What matters then, is the knowledge actually used at the decision-making point, not the knowledge in process of development or authentication, nor even the knowledge clearly apparent to

particular individuals.” In the worst case, this leads to “analysis paralysis” as managers or officers seek additional “knowledge” to evaluate the rules that may bear on the situation, or in the case of competing or conflicting rules, determine which are the most relevant.

General Patton intuitively realized that gathering additional information imposes costs. He said, “A good plan violently executed now is better than a perfect plan executed next week.” By the time additional information is gathered, the situation has changed.

Rule Systems

In the early 1980s, Ford Motor Company unveiled the slogan “Quality is Job One.” While catchy as a marketing slogan, critics quickly pointed out that it fails as an organizational standard. For example, is quality more important than employee safety? This illustrates the inherent conflicts between competing objectives. The same phenomenon occurs with SOPs or SOGs since multiple rules may bear on a given situation. When rule conflicts occur, the first instinct may be to clarify the rules. In the Ford example, a clarification might be, “Quality is Job One, unless someone could get hurt.” But this is also obviously unworkable since eliminating the chance of injury would bring the corporation to a halt.

Another approach might be to write a new rule to address the conflict between the existing rules. But at some point, this rule too will be in a conflict and then a new rule will be needed. The solution may be to trust the judgment and experience of those in leadership positions.

Lost Opportunities and Cost Shifting

Most situations confronting managers are dynamic. Gathering and evaluating information that may bear on a decision

takes time. This imposes costs, including unseen costs in the form of lost opportunities. At an emergency scene, lost opportunities may literally involve life or death.

Even the most well-intentioned rules can have the effect of shifting costs elsewhere, making accurate evaluation difficult or impossible. Walter Williams covered such a situation in an essay titled “Too Much Safety.” The case involved a proposed regulation from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to require fuel tank inerting on commercial airliners. There is little doubt that the measure would have reduced the risk of fuel tank explosions. However, the cost was estimated at \$10 to \$20 billion, with the potential of saving perhaps 13 lives a year.

Proponents of the regulation argued that saving lives was worth the expense. Apart from the tremendous expenditure for each potential life saved, Williams pointed out that with increased ticket prices, some price-sensitive travelers would undoubtedly select other forms of transportation. On his analysis, this shift to other forms of transportation produced an expectation for a greater loss of life. This is an excellent example of how the costs for one rule can be hidden elsewhere.

Conclusion

Families, organizations and societies all need rules to prevent a slide into chaos. But chaos may also reign in a culture of too many rules. Prudence and judgment are needed to decide when rules are needed, and when situations are best left to the intelligence and experience of those at the decision point. Sometimes less is more.

Thomas Sowell, *Knowledge & Decisions*, (New York, New York: Basic Books, 1980), p. 11.

Douglas R. Hofstadter has an excellent discussion of why rule systems cannot be both complete and consistent (free from conflict) in his *Gödel, Escher, Bach* (New York, New York: Vintage Books, 1979). The starting point is with Gödel's Incompleteness Theorem.

Walter E. Williams, in *Liberty versus the Tyranny of Socialism: Controversial Essays*, (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2008).

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Third NFPA needs assessment of the U.S. Fire Service now available

By Bill Jenaway, Ph.D, Vice President VFIS Education, Training and Consulting

The National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) conducted a series of national surveys of the U.S. Fire Service in 2001, 2005 and again in 2010 to identify the needs of the fire service for resources required to safely and effectively carry out their responsibilities. Each study shows an extensive need, country-wide. While it seems that for every step taken forward, there have been two steps taken back, fire service needs have declined in some areas, especially personal protective equipment and firefighting equipment. These needs have been focus areas of the FEMA Assistance to Firefighting Grant (AFG) Program.

Coincidentally, the goal of the latest needs assessment was to identify major gaps and to determine if fire grant programs are continuing to reduce the identified needs. The report indicates that "in all areas emphasized by the AFG and Staffing For Adequate Fire & Emergency Response grants, there is simple evidence of impact from the grants, but also considerable residual still needs to be addressed."

More than 19,000 departments participated in the study with several key findings as follows:

- 46% of all fire department engines/pumpers were at least 15 years old, down from 51% in 2001 and 50% in 2005.
- 51% of all fire departments cannot equip all firefighters on a shift with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA), down from 70% in 2001 and 60% in 2005.
- 39% of fire departments do not have enough Personal Alert Safety Systems devices (PASS) to equip all emergency responders on a shift, down from 62% in 2001 and 48% in 2005.
- 46% of all fire departments that are responsible for structural firefighting have not formally trained all their personnel in structural firefighting, down from 55% in 2001 and 53% in 2005.
- 70% of fire departments have no program for maintaining basic firefighter health and fitness, down from 80% in 2001 and 76% in 2005.

The study found there has been little change in the ability of departments using only local resources to handle certain types of unusually challenging incidents. The study also found mutual aid relationships to be an improvement in the development of written agreements to help in the use of outside resources.