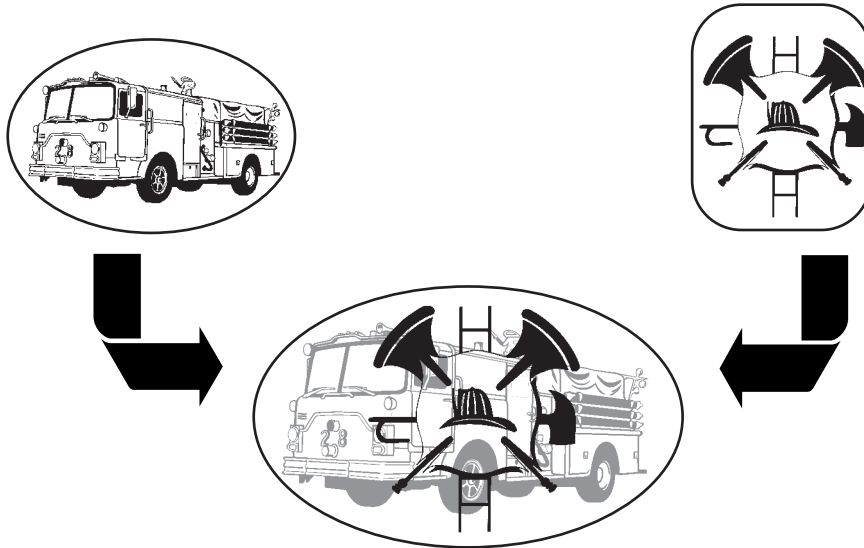


Fire Department Consolidation

Why & How To Do It ... Right



Fire Department Consolidation

Why & How To Do It...Right

a publication from VFIS

prepared by Colin A. Campbell Associates Inc.
Colin A. Campbell, editor
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Management is the astute application of common sense. v

Peter Drucker

Foreword

VFIS (formerly Volunteer Firemen's Insurance Services) was organized in 1969 when Art Glatfelter, then a veteran of more than 20 years experience in the insurance agency business, learned through his long friendship with Chief Robert W. Little, Jr., of the York (Pennsylvania) Fire Department about the serious deficiency in insurance coverage available to emergency service organizations, particularly volunteer fire departments.

During the next 25 years, Art and his dedicated associates, now numbering more than 360, developed more than 40 enhancements to the standard insurance contracts available to fire departments. Today, VFIS continues to work with emergency service organizations to ensure that they have the coverage they need at a fair and competitive cost.

It has been said many times that "imitation is the most sincere form of flattery." We are extremely proud of our quarter-century of leadership in designing these important special insurance coverages for emergency service organizations, and we are flattered that many insurance companies now are copying them. In addition, we are particularly proud of our efforts to help the emergency services become more effective in the area of accident prevention.

Our driver training program has become nationally recognized. Our loss control programs and publications, safety programs, safety posters, junior firefighter awards programs and numerous national educational teleconferences have become an integral part of the risk management efforts of thousands of emergency service organizations. We also are pleased that we were able to contribute to the formation of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus and Institute.

It is our sincere hope that our actions in these areas will encourage other suppliers of equipment and services to these organizations to follow our lead by supporting programs that will help emergency service organizations become even more effective in serving their communities. It is our sincere pleasure to have been able to commission the writing of this publication and then print and distribute it. *Fire Department Consolidation: 'Why and How To Do It... Right* addresses a complex and controversial issue, an issue which, because of present economic conditions, leads many communities to hire consultants to develop plans for possible consolidation. Many of those communities have chosen not to include the fire department leadership in the discussions. This publication is intended to give emergency service leadership a resource tool to assist in the development of a plan of its own or to provide the communities with alternatives in providing the future level of services.

The views and conclusions in this publication do not reflect the opinions, recommendations or requirements of VFIS. It is intended only to give emergency service leadership a resource to assist those considering some form of consolidation.

President VFIS

Acknowledgements

In addition to the printed resources listed at the end of this book, VFIS and Colin A. Campbell Associates, Inc., thank those who provided information about their consolidation experiences, which form the most valuable part of this publication's content, and reviewed the text in draft form.

They are: Chief John Bierling of West Manchester Township (Pennsylvania) Fire and Rescue Services; Chief Mitch Floyd of the Orange County (Florida) Fire Department; Chief Ronald Irwin of the Downey (California) Fire Department; Chief John Mulligan of the Poudre Valley Fire Authority, Fort Collins, Colorado; Chief Steve Paulsell of the Boone County Fire Protection District, Columbia, Missouri; Chief Charles Rule of the Manteca (California) Fire Department (since retired); Chief Tom Siegfried of the Altamonte Springs (Florida) Fire Department; Chief Jack Snook and Assistant Chief Floyd Pittard (retired) of Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue, Aloha, Oregon. Their open and unquestioning assistance, both to those responsible for publishing this guidebook and, in turn, to those who will use it, is gratefully appreciated.

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Preliminary Review

In today's economic climate, with budgets being crunched at all levels of government, resources are being forced to stretch for many things, including crime and drug problems, health and welfare needs, the environment and maintaining the infrastructure, all of which compete with fire protection for limited funds. In some communities, even private organizations that once were funded outside the tax base are now seeking public support. In fire departments, demands for services are increasing at a steady rate, particularly for emergency medical services (which most fire departments provide today). They will continue to do so into the next century as our population continues to age. Meanwhile, taxpayers don't want to pay more, meaning something has to give.

Many fire departments are turning to a variety of joint ventures to provide the level of service their communities need while conserving scarce resources. They are applying a wide variety of approaches, ranging from the informal sharing of individual personnel or equipment to the formal consolidation of departments across jurisdictional lines. The continuum of such cooperation might include:

- Informal mixing and matching in which one jurisdiction borrows a technical specialist from another to help with a short-term project or problem.
- Combining to share such specialized services or equipment, through a contract, as hazardous materials response vehicles, special heavy-rescue vehicles or aerial ladder trucks, apparatus maintenance or information services.
- Creating a process for hiring one another's specialized staff on a consulting basis for special projects or short-term relief, for example, one city, without a fire inspector for three months, arranges with a neighboring community to share the time of its inspection staff during that period.

When shared needs exceed the limits of a single functional area and extend to the entire range of fire protection operations, such tools as mutual aid agreements (on-request or automatic) often are instituted. In addition, increasingly, adjoining fire agencies are moving even further, committing to legal consolidation of their organizations to form a new one. Consolidation itself offers a full range of alternative.¹

- In a functional consolidation, separate fire departments are retained, but one or more duties normally performed by one department are assigned to members of another department, or duties normally performed separately by all departments are assigned to a combined new organization under the control of all participating organizations; an example is a joint training center.
- In a partial consolidation, separate fire departments are retained, and a special agreement is formulated to handle specific challenges; an example is shared staffing of a fire station located where it can serve two or more jurisdictions readily.
- In an operational consolidation, sometimes called a merger, separate fire departments are combined in total into one unified department through a legal process.

¹ Definitions adapted from a set of informal notes on consolidation, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue.

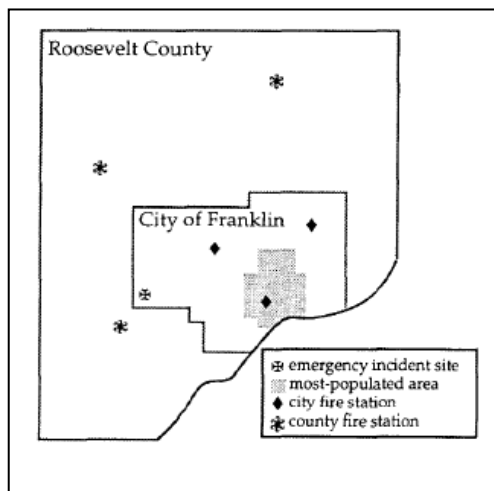
Other types of consolidation exist as well, including combinations of police and fire departments into public safety departments, or comprehensive mergers of entire governments (a city and county combining all functions and services across the board, for example). In many cases, smaller departments simply contract for services with the largest city in the area, as is done in Los Angeles. This publication will concentrate on consolidations that take place between or among fire departments or districts.

Mutual aid agreements provide for reciprocal assistance for emergency management, fire, rescue, emergency medical, hazardous material and other disaster response services. Such an agreement might specify joint response to all alarms in a given geographic area or automatic response by the facility closest to the incident, regardless of jurisdiction.

Whatever the approach taken to interjurisdictional cooperation, the best interest of the public must be the driving motivator.

This publication is designed to serve as a guide to those considering the development of some form of consolidation. While the idea of consolidation among fire departments is not new, no comprehensive how-to document for effectively undertaking

Consolidation can help resolve illogical or problematic response boundaries.



such a venture has been available to the fire service community in many years. While a small number of reports have been produced describing individual local consolidation efforts, no comprehensive guide exists which combines information from around the country. In compiling this guidebook, we have tapped a large number of such sources, combining the advice gleaned from all of them into a cohesive whole. The result might be considered a consultant on consolidation which you can fit into your briefcase.

This book does not address the legal aspects of consolidation. Those seriously considering consolidation or any other cooperative agreement should seek legal counsel early in the development process.

Why consolidate?

Fire officials find themselves considering a consolidation or merger for different reasons. In some instances, the action is directed by elected officials for whom consolidation is a hot topic in the 1990s. In others, fire service managers themselves come upon consolidation as they seek better ways to provide the services their citizens need and deserve. In many instances, state constitutions and laws even encourage local jurisdictions to undertake such efforts to make the most effective and efficient use of their resources.

Consolidation can be a viable option which should be looked upon as a beneficial alternative to enable improved use of scarce resources, flexibility of staff, equipment and dollars, stronger internal programs, and increased opportunities to expand services and/or specialize. It works to overcome political boundary issues, ensuring that the closest unit responds in an emergency and creating more rational protection service areas and faster response times.

Consolidation can provide for an expanded tax base and reduce redundancy in apparatus, personnel and equipment, and the planning process itself can identify areas for savings not foreseen at the outset. It eliminates turf and tax conflicts and, by providing more efficient application of available resources, can enable the closure of stations or other duplicated facilities and services.

Consolidation can lower apparatus replacement requirements, reduce the number of reserve pieces required and eliminate duplication of specialty apparatus. Additional cost reductions can be realized through volume purchasing, as well as through combined equipment planning and maintenance. In Contra Costa County, California, consolidation was said to have resulted in a measurable, almost immediate reduction in the tax burden, including a reported 50% decrease in the training budget. With local growth also contributing to the reduction, the tax rate dropped from \$.872 to \$.725 in the first five years, and a 10% capital improvement program was instituted. Tualatin Valley, Oregon, saw a reduction in its tax rate from more than \$3.00 (per \$1000) to \$1.64 in just four years.

Consolidation can result in a new organization that places more resources on the fireground, a vital interest in a fire protection environment. Improvements in the communities' ratings from the Insurance Services Office can result from consolidation as well. The elements of a plan that might bring such benefits include *of resources*. quicker emergency response times, enhanced training schedules, improved joint communications, improved fireground communications, additional reserve apparatus and enhanced water supply (urban and rural).

*Consolidation
can provide for
better use of
resources.*

Consolidation also makes fire protection master planning easier during periods of tremendous regional growth. Planning for placement of future facilities, hiring and training is supported by the process and eased by the increased resources available. The analysis and revised perspective that grow out of the consolidation planning process can lead to modernized systems. Jurisdictions can become better able to deal with problems that span political boundaries, for example, a chemical recycling operation located in the county. In addition, a common set of fire codes and amendments can make enforcement easier to understand and accomplish both for the

department and for developers.

*It is easy to
customize
consolidation to
meet local needs.*

Internally, consolidation can offer more appealing career enhancement possibilities. Although positions at the top are reduced, the organization as a whole is larger, creating more retirements and other turnover and better chances for advancement for bright young officers. In addition, labor contracts can be standardized, and areas or periods of volunteer shortages can be compensated for.

Consolidation is not always the same. It lends itself to individual customized approaches to meet particular local needs. For example, when city and county fire chiefs in Seminole County, Florida, began looking into consolidation in an effort to help their many separate departments serve their citizens more efficiently, they decided to institute a highly individualized approach. Chief Tom Siegfried of Altamonte Springs explains that something beyond a functional consolidation (combining communication or training functions) was called for, but the kind of consolidation most often considered, in which entire departments combine in total, had little appeal.

"There seemed to be a lot of pain that went along with major consolidations," Siegfried recalls, "and, in some cases, it even worked out that the price tag went up and the level of service went down." In 1975, after a period of intense study and discussion, the fire chiefs of Seminole County entered into a joint venture that is in some ways a partial consolidation and in other ways similar to a broad mutual aid agreement. But it also is more, softening jurisdictional boundaries by instituting automatic first response by the closest company regardless of those boundaries using a countywide dispatch system. An interlocal agreement forms the foundation for the cooperation.

Response zones were established that ensure response by the nearest piece of equipment. Fire stations have been located strategically, with one city and one county facility moved to provide better coverage. Location of specialized apparatus and equipment, such as aerial trucks and rescue rigs, is thoughtfully planned. "We've become much more efficient, protecting more people with fewer people," Siegfried reports. For example, for a multiple company response in the city of Altamonte Springs, the assigned response might consist of an engine from Altamonte Springs, another from the county, an aerial truck from another city and a rescue truck from somewhere else. "That means we don't have to have all of those pieces of equipment available in every jurisdiction," he adds.

In 1993, area departments took the unconventional step of instituting similar cooperative agreements with neighboring Orange County. "Now we're working on linking the two major county communication networks so that a call coming in for part of Orange County that's closer to one of Seminole County's stations automatically will be routed to the Seminole communication center," Siegfried notes. Modern 800-MHz computer-aided dispatch systems enable such flexibility.

The most notable advantage of this approach, he suggests, is that each department maintains its identity and autonomy while becoming more efficient which, in turn, satisfies politicians. "They

let the fire chiefs do their jobs, finding the most effective and efficient way to provide fire protection services," he observes. "At first, they might check numbers constantly, how many of everything they're contributing and how much of everything else they're getting back. But they get over that after awhile and just let it operate. The reality is that, over time, it tends to even out pretty well."

Functional consolidation

Consider a communications center which employs a single person at any one time. During a large-scale incident, after the initial station notifications are transmitted, the dispatcher might be confronted simultaneously with multiple citizen reports of the incident and with handling responding unit transmissions, other notifications such as ambulance responses, and additional alarm assignments for the incident, in addition to reports of other emergencies.

This situation and common logic suggest that multiple personnel are needed to handle communications requirements effectively. Because smaller jurisdictions often cannot afford to have multiple personnel on duty at one time, consolidating resources with neighboring departments can offer an effective solution. In most such instances, all the jurisdictions benefit by receiving communications center backup at all times, without the expense each jurisdiction would face if each expanded its own communications capabilities.

A consolidated central dispatch center makes coordination of a major emergency easier, more efficient, more effective and more reliable. Additionally, in order to qualify for 800-MHz frequency assignments under Federal Communications Commission rules, a department must commit to use a minimum number of radio units. Without multijurisdiction consolidation, many small departments cannot meet this requirement.

Combined communications also can prove highly efficient in terms of resources. The City of Manteca, California, was looking at a \$50,000 annual bill for fire dispatch, with only one dispatcher on duty at a time; since forming a joint communication center with surrounding departments, the city spends just \$25,000 a year, but receives the benefits from having three dispatchers on duty simultaneously. The regional center, located in nearby Stockton, dispatches for eight fire departments and rural districts, plus several private ambulance companies. Similarly, the Net Four Consolidated Communication Center in Anaheim, California, organized to serve the cities of Anaheim, Garden Grove, Orange and Stanton, resulted in a 50% reduction in total dispatching staff.



Stockton's emergency communications center dispatches more than 55,000 fire and emergency medical incidents each year for the city, two other municipal fire departments, two fire districts, four contract fire districts and five private ambulance companies. Contracting agencies pay the city of Stockton just a fraction of what they would *have* to pay to establish their own service, and they still would *have* only a single dispatcher on duty at a time.

Chief Ronald Irwin of Downey, California, views communication consolidation as an effective precursor to a broader consolidation. Joint dispatch, he explains, brings about a need for the involved departments to train together (to reduce conflicting approaches or even terminology). Before long, the departments find themselves operating as one.

Regionalized training also makes a lot of sense, enabling more efficient use of facilities and specialized personnel, with several departments using a joint training program. Colorado's South Metro Fire Training Center, a joint effort among the cities of Littleton and Englewood and three fire protection districts, combines resources and shares costs for training facilities to purchase a wide range of training equipment and materials and to provide an enhanced combined instructor cadre. The resulting training program is substantially more extensive and effective than any of the departments could have managed alone.

Consolidation can produce a leaner, stronger organization.

Another popular form of functional consolidation is formation of a buying-power consortium. The benefits of cooperative purchasing have been proven by the Metropolitan Washington (D.C.) Council of Governments and in Pasco County /Metropolitan Tampa Bay (Florida). In one report to its county commission, the Tampa Bay consortium's five jurisdictions reported that a single purchase agreement, for four Class-A pumpers, saved a half million dollars. A similar agreement among six communities in Hudson County, New Jersey, resulted in a five percent overall budget reduction.

As communities grow larger and closer together, in some cases nearly overlapping their service areas, as modern society's emergency response demands expand, along with demands for all other government services, and as available resources become more difficult to allocate across all needs, consolidation can provide an answer. The organization that results from a consolidation effort is commonly a leaner, stronger organization, providing higher levels of service at lower cost. Participation by involved agencies also can have benefits beyond the project itself, as they experience working cooperatively toward the common goal of optimum citizen service.

Considerations, potential pitfalls and keys to success

Organizational change is a thorny matter, should not be undertaken without careful consideration and most likely will not be achieved easily. Change can be especially difficult in the tradition-bound fire service. It is particularly challenging to attempt a process which often is perceived as reducing each jurisdiction's autonomy and power. Emotions can become so entangled in discussions that progress is stymied before any benefits are seen. Further, combining a larger, more sophisticated department with a smaller, less sophisticated one can bring the level of service enjoyed by the larger jurisdiction down and still cost more than the smaller jurisdiction is accustomed to paying.

Experience in fire organizations across the United States has indicated many ways in which consolidation efforts can fall short of expectations. Reasons for failure can include less-than-ideal timing, the departments involved being too different, or too distant, from one another, lack of support among members of the departments, fear of loss of control by local government officials, and incomplete or ineffective communication; the list is long. Such issues as the name of the new organization, the color of emergency apparatus and selection of an individual to head the organization,

Many possible pitfalls can derail a consolidation effort.

among many others, all can derail consolidation discussions.

Key Personnel Issues

There are certain factors that, if not given adequate attention in the development stages, can sink a fire department consolidation plan.

Those factors include:

- impact bargaining
- differences in compensation and workloads
- consolidation of unions and civil service/personnel systems
- selection of key staff for the new department
- possible loss of job status for some employees
- social, economic, philosophical and cultural differences
- personal problems

A consolidation cannot be a reduction-in-force in disguise; the truth will emerge during the planning process, sabotaging the atmosphere of trust and cooperation which must form the foundation for consolidation. In fact, in some states, laws prohibit communities from laying personnel off under such conditions. Further, such expectations likely will not materialize because savings resulting from a consolidation are more likely to come on the capital side, not the personnel side. Still, such a move eventually might reduce personnel through attrition and, even during the interim; reassignment can put personnel to more-efficient use. In fact, the whole area surrounding the issue of personnel can prove difficult when planning and effecting a consolidation.

Impact bargaining, differences in compensation and workloads, consolidation of unions and civil service/ personnel systems, selecting key staff for the new department, possible loss of job status for some employees, social, economic, philosophical and cultural differences, and personal problems all are factors that, if not afforded adequate attention in the early stages, can sink a plan.

Drawing lines for a new organization, developing universally acceptable rules, policies and procedures, and standardizing equipment present challenges of their own.

In addition, it is important to remember that consolidation is not always appropriate in every circumstance. Until a thorough study of the potential benefits and pitfalls has been made, the decision to merge or consolidate cannot be made. Further, it is possible that the preliminary study will indicate that it is not in the best interests of the parties to do so.

However, none of these potential problems need destroy a sincere effort at consolidation if those behind the plan approach their work with care and forethought, aware and respectful of the potential pitfalls, as well as the potential benefits. There are enough possible reasons to move forward with the idea of consolidation to more than compensate for the complexity of the task. Chief among them is that consolidation can create a more flexible, appropriate and sensible local organization. On balance, the known advantages of consolidation can outweigh the disadvantages. Consolidation activities can form the basis for a win-win situation in which all the players can gain something.

Just as experience has pointed to possible challenges in attempting to form a consolidation, it also has identified a set of factors that will help bring success. Some factors involve the baseline characteristics of the organizations. If the involved organizations have pre-existing cooperative relationships, they are more likely to find the way to consolidation smooth. Officials of all involved jurisdictions and agencies must support the idea and commit their efforts to success. Everyone involved must be open and honest about their interests. Enough time must be available for planning. And communication, with top-level government officials, with members of the departments and their families, and with the media and public, is critical.

Leadership must come from the top, from both local elected and appointed officials and from fire department management. The support of a county or regional fire chiefs' association could be beneficial as well. However, the role of the fire chiefs of the involved departments is the ultimate keystone. A consolidation effort is doomed to failure without the full support of all the involved fire chiefs, and that commitment must be genuine and total. The vision for the future must be clear, and the moral obligation to the community must come first. Self-interests must be set aside.

The question of who will lead the consolidated organization is a vitally important matter and must be considered from the outset. The leader of the new department must meet a wide array of challenges and must be up to the task. Sometimes, the most effective route is to bring in someone new from the outside, someone without ties to the preceding organizations, but this is not always effective. If two (or more) organizations are considering consolidation and one of the involved fire chiefs is scheduled to retire shortly, this can solve the problem of pouring multiple fire chiefs into a single position, but it is no guarantee.

Occasionally, two consolidating chiefs can reach a mutually satisfying arrangement that meets individual interests, perhaps designating one as chief of the department and the other as operational chief.

Selection of the individual who will lead the department is vitally important.

However, selection of the individual to head Selection of the new organization is of immeasurable importance, and no one should assume that the position belongs to him or her. Skills and capabilities should be the sole determining factor applied to selecting leadership for the new organization.

The public also must be considered and sold on the idea of consolidation, both through the media and through appearances by local fire chiefs before civic and neighborhood groups to explain the reasons for and benefits of consolidation. Develop an informational program for the public which provides all the basic facts and which stresses that the fire department isn't going anywhere, simply improving itself. Ensure that involved officials, elected and appointed, are available to the media for interviews and background explanations. Photographs of representatives from the different communities working cooperatively together can be especially effective in bolstering public support.

Convincing the public will not be easy and should be recognized as a long-term process but, if the communication process is planned carefully and conducted properly, support will outweigh resistance. If the public information effort is solid, citizens can prove to be the easiest group to convince of the benefits of fire department consolidation. Keep in mind that, while it might not matter to citizens whether their fire protection comes from a local or multijurisdictional organization, "they do want to know where responsibility lies and who to kick."²

The need for internal communication is equally vital. Labor and other employee groups should be involved from the start. Fears about job security and pensions are natural and should be addressed openly and honestly throughout the process. Stress that the resulting organization will be stronger and offer increased promotional opportunities. Be aware of the need for

² Williams, *Subregional and Extraregional Cooperation in the State of South Australia*

lightning-quick and razor-sharp rumor control because resentments can build rapidly based on a wisp of a rumor.

Inform all of these groups early in the process and then keep information flowing through regular briefings and/or a series of special newsletters or bulletins. Especially, make any groups affected by the consolidation a part of the process through appropriate participation on a working group designing some element of the new system.

Every type of consolidation carries with it its own individual needs that must be met consistently if the operation is to succeed. For example, the cooperative venture that is in place in Seminole County requires each participating chief to be continually aware of what the other jurisdictions are doing that might have an impact on what they are trying to do together. It requires planning and open communication, and chiefs must ensure that competition doesn't lead to duplication of effort and resources. When department A purchases an aerial truck, department B might think it should have one too, even though it's only necessary to have one to share. It takes time to keep tabs on everything and to ward off that kind of competitiveness, particularly in the early stages.

Consolidation can provide the best possible level of service with available resources, but it will need the support and leadership of local officials and fire department members. More than one effort has failed because some key group, for example, firefighters or the political leaders in the community, perceived they would lose something.

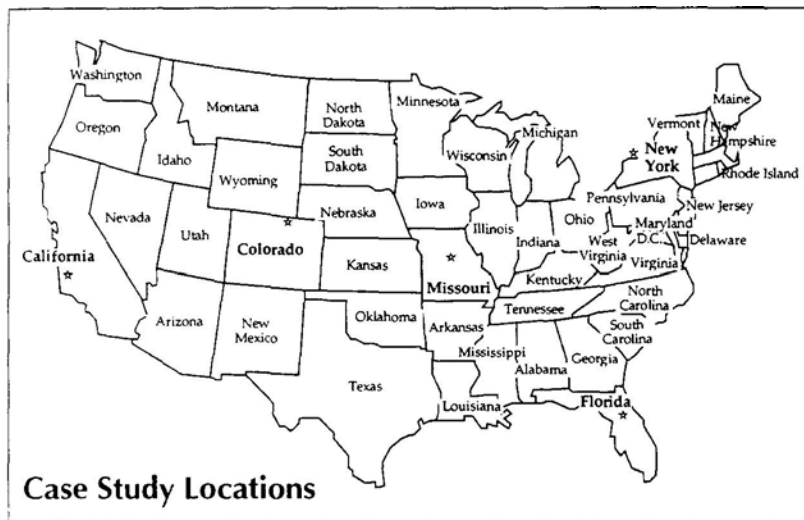
Consolidation and the process for achieving it are not difficult to understand or to do, but they do require diligent staff work, careful communication and top-to-bottom commitment. Certainly the process will place demands on local fire department officials, but we, as managers, should be clever enough to handle the complexity and adjust our approaches to fit the needs of the situation, rather than the reverse.

Case Studies

The following informal case studies are provided so that the reader can share details about the purposes, processes and outcomes of actual consolidation efforts. The consolidations selected for this review and the communities in which they took place are somewhat varied in situation.

Both *Orange County* and the *Poudre Fire Authority* have relatively long experience with their consolidations and are included for that reason. In Orange County, the process was initiated by county government and thrust upon the fire departments in the county, without any preliminary planning. The Poudre Valley consolidation developed among the area fire departments and districts in response to local department needs. It was planned and has been carried out according to the mutual interests of the involved agencies and communities. Both are overall consolidations encompassing all facets of the departments involved.

The *Monroe County* review focuses on a functional consolidation of communications. While it serves to illustrate an effort concentrated on a single function, this case also demonstrates that the process required for a functional consolidation is not effectively different from that required for a comprehensive consolidation.



Finally, we have included a tale of two cities in which local efforts did not lead to consolidation. In one instance, a thorough feasibility study was conducted but was not implemented. In the other, the idea was attacked so vehemently and so early in the process that it never progressed beyond an idea. The lessons learned in these communities can be valuable to others as they prepare to consider consolidation for their departments.

In analyzing these case studies, readers should keep in mind that the consolidation experience is principally an individual one, and we always should be cautious in drawing conclusions from experiential reports. While actions A and B led to result M in one instance, they might lead to result Z in another. Case studies are valuable because they provide information about a complete and rounded situation, but they should not be copied slavishly by others. Rather, they should be used to provide information to be considered in the context of one's own experience in making one's own judgments in one's own situation. Each community and each organization is as unique

as the individuals that form it.

Finally, remember that each state's law relating to consolidation and cooperative agreements might differ and proper legal advice must be obtained to ensure a successful result.

Orange County, Florida

Chief Mitch Floyd

The consolidation process in Orange County began in the mid-1970s with a series of discussions by the county commission. Along with the fire districts in the county, the commission created what might be termed a "super board" composed of representatives of the various fire districts. This group did not establish policy, but worked by means of consensus on consolidating purchasing efforts and insurance purchases and creating a county training academy, among other functional actions. The issue of comprehensive consolidation never gained substance until 1980, when the commission simply decided to do it and, in a single action, eliminated individual districts, creating one.

The original fire departments were principally combination career/volunteer departments; with varying degrees of dependence on volunteers (some had none). The consolidated department is fully career. While it does have a reserve force, it is not what one normally would call a volunteer firefighting force. Members serve principally in such community support programs as providing fire and emergency medical services at community events, rather than providing personnel augmentation for firefighting. (The reserve force does serve as a pool for departmental hiring.) The department has 764 career employees, up from 320 in 1981. The population in unincorporated areas of the county is 460,000. The fire department also provides fire protection for three municipalities. The protected area is 900 square miles.



Because of the manner in which the consolidation took place, there was no real planning and no working group to work out details. The county hired a fire chief from outside the area who came on-board in mid-1981 with instructions from the commission to effect the consolidation. During the rest of that year, the new chief organized a series of working groups to try to make it work. However, regardless of the status of those plans, on October 1, the Orange County Fire Department was established officially.

Orange County has been a dynamic organization, experiencing a lot of change and operating under the leadership of several fire chiefs. The department's officials have learned some valuable lessons.

Possibly the biggest challenge was the lack of any central communication or dispatch facility or organization, with operations taking place at a half-dozen locations throughout the county with a mismatch of communications equipment. Incompatibility among apparatus and appliances was another significant challenge. Some of the original departments used large-diameter hose, while others did not, and there existed a wide range of age and quality of both apparatus and facilities. These circumstances created a tremendous need for capital improvement funds.

A variety of personnel issues needed to be addressed as well. Different pay scales and benefits packages caused problems; one or two of the districts hadn't even kept personnel records before the consolidation. Separate labor agreements were in place, with no plan to unify them or interpret their impact during the transition period.

Training presented its own challenges. Even though there had been a training consortium and a central training academy, it had served primarily as a support facility, with each department managing its own training program in its own way. As a result, there were no unified policies or procedures in place, yet the department needed to be able to function as though there were. Operating effectively while resolving some of these issues proved extremely demanding.



While the Orange County Fire Department has evolved into a highly effective organization, Chief Mitch Floyd believes its goals could have been accomplished better, faster and with less difficulty if it had been planned thoroughly in advance.

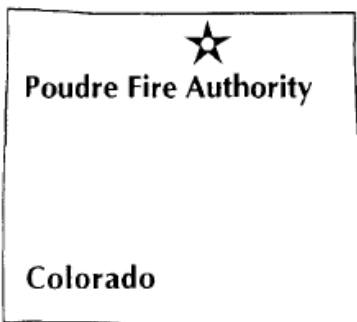
The current fire department leadership believes a well-thought-out and -prepared plan is a critical need for consolidation. It must be committed to writing, Chief Mitch Floyd stresses, so people can see and touch it, so it can be conveyed to members of the department and serve as the foundation for a sense of common mission and values. Sound fiscal projections also are required.

Given those elements, the Orange County fire consolidation could have been easier and more efficient; untold stress and years of time would not have been expended in trying to plan and operate simultaneously, while burdened with conflicting basic elements.

Poudre Fire Authority, Colorado

Chief John Mulligan

The fire department consolidation process began in the Fort Collins area in 1980, although the city of Fort Collins and the Poudre Valley Fire Protection District had begun moving in that direction as far back as 1978. The two fire departments covered an area of approximately 230 square miles and served a population of roughly 85,000, including 60-to 65,000 within the city. Today the protected population totals 114,000.



The city's strongest service demands related to growth occurring toward the southern side of the city. Fort Collins would have found itself building a new fire station almost in the shadow of a district station in order to meet growth demands; on the district's side, a series of city annexations was seriously eroding its tax base. The movement toward comprehensive consolidation began with other forms of joint action. First, an automatic mutual aid agreement was created. That, in turn, led to consolidating tactics and strategy, communications, operations and training. The two departments ultimately began consolidating fire prevention functions, including codes and inspections, as well as public fire

safety education. Now, although some differences remain between the two codes because cities have higher levels of authority for such endeavors than districts (as in most states), both apply

the Uniform Fire Code. Chief John Mulligan believes that the early cooperative ventures were positive and helpful in their own rights. Even if consolidation is not implemented fully, having those joint programs in place was beneficial for all concerned. Once the decision was made to proceed with full consolidation, the parties had to wait a year (until 1981) to effect the change because action was required in the state legislature to allow consolidation among entities representing different jurisdictions and levels of jurisdictions. The delay, too, produced its own benefits, affording participants the opportunity to work on the functional and operational aspects of the consolidation before dealing with the political and administrative elements. They used the time to arrange apparatus so that tools were located in the same places and generally got people working together both in everyday and emergency-response situations.

Once the legal basis was in place, the political aspect proceeded smoothly. The only thorny issues surrounded board representation and funding. Because the city would be providing more resource support than the district, perceptions of unfairness had to be corrected. The city provides a broad range of administrative support under the agreement without special charge to the authority, including personnel oversight, legal services, purchasing, loss prevention and others, services which had been provided to the city's fire department anyway. This was a real cost saving for the authority.

Both sides wanted to look out for the best interests of the citizens they protect. Neither side wanted the agreement to fall apart from a lack of support from political leadership based on perceived turf threats, which fire department leaders knew could kill the plan no matter how good a job the fire chiefs and their groups had done in planning.

The result is an intergovernmental agreement recognized by state statute and managed by a board with members representing both authorities (see Appendix I, pages 59 through 70, for a copy of the agreement). Members include two representatives of the city council, two representatives from the district board and a fifth member selected by those four members. In the initial years, the fifth member was the city manager, a choice made in recognition of the city's greater contributions. The board meets eight times each year and establishes policy, including any necessary adjustments to the funding formula.

Establishing the funding formula took a lot of work at the outset. It is reviewed annually, although it tends to run rather consistently in the 25/75 or 20/ 80 range (with Fort Collins paying the larger share). The entity does not have taxing power, so it must be funded by the two parent jurisdictions through the district's property tax and the city's combination of property tax and a share of sales and use taxes. However, the entity does own assets.

The authority has 125 firefighting personnel, of which 100 are career and the remainder volunteers. The transition was smooth, although there were concerns on both sides, and some issues remain that raise their heads from time to time and must be resolved. Differing salary, benefit and pension programs had to be dealt with appropriately. Both career and volunteer personnel are employees of the authority, which means that employment rules and administrative guidelines apply. The people of the department also have been training and working together through this time. In fact, nearly 70% of the department's members have been hired as authority employees since the consolidation.

Before the consolidation, the volunteer district had two stations, one in the foothills to the north and the other in the rural farming area to the south. Those remain essentially volunteer stations (based on a low volume of runs), although volunteers work within the city as well, especially for major incidents. Seven career-staffed stations operate seven engine companies, a truck company and a squad. Volunteers move throughout the seven paid stations depending on their assignments, which are made on the basis of response time to the station.

The administrative structure consists of an executive chief, an administrative chief, three division chiefs (fire prevention, training and support), a fulltime mechanic, a fire prevention bureau comprising four personnel, and clerical support. After 13 years of consolidation, all first-line apparatus owned by the Poudre Fire Authority were new equipment purchased since the change.

Since consolidation, a master planning program has been instituted that identifies needs and establishes long term goals. This has involved apparatus replacement schedules, fully networked computerization of all fire stations, institution of a joint fire police computer-aided dispatch system and planning for an additional station.



The Poudre Fire Authority's new logo resulted from a design contest within the combining departments. Members of the departments then voted on the submitted designs. This process ensured that all members felt a connection with the new department's symbol.

Chief Mulligan believes it is critical to establish a new, separate identity for the new department that reflects the cultures and characters of both (or all) entering departments. This helps everyone to feel that they really belong to this new organization. This includes creating a new logo and seeing that it is applied to all buildings, apparatus, tools, uniforms, documentation and other appropriate artifacts.

Planning was critical to the consolidation's success. Participants first developed a strategic plan for the upcoming seven years to lay the groundwork and to set direction; it also gave the city council and the fire district board a sense of purpose. The planning process took almost three years, but Chief Mulligan stresses that this stage cannot be rushed, or the final result will suffer. The more separate entities that consider becoming involved, the more likely it is that some will drop out before the process is completed; sometimes, there simply aren't substantial enough reasons for joining.

In order for a consolidation to succeed, there must be advantages to both (or all) entities, those benefits must be recognized by the parties and the advantages must extend over time. In other

words, while current agency and political leaders might favor the action, it also must stand the test of time and remain supported, and supportable, when those people are gone. The foundation of mutual advantage must be firm in order to keep the consolidation viable through political fluctuations.

Monroe County, New York, Communications Center

With a countywide population of 730,000, the city of Rochester and surrounding Monroe County had experienced substantial growth in recent years, placing increased demand on their computer-aided dispatch (CAD) system. Having begun with 144 staff serving 75 public safety agencies (36 centrally dispatched and 39 via caller transfer) and with an annual operating budget of \$4 million, the center by the 1990s had 154 staff and a budget of \$6.2 million.

Originally designed for 2,400 calls a day, it was averaging more like 3,000 a day by 1990. Concern over this trend led to development of a broad-scope communications center providing 911 services and countywide dispatch.

In February 1990, a subcommittee of the local operating board met to consider backup requirements for the communications center as well as the need for a new facility. The county worked with Public Technology, Inc. (PTI), the technology arm of the National League of Cities, National Association of Counties and International City /County Management Association, in determining its needs. The decision was made to build a new communications and dispatch center that would include as much redundancy as possible and an enhanced backup facility.

Forty key decision makers, representing the fire, police and emergency medical services, met in January 1991 for two-and-one-half days to initiate more detailed planning. Many of the participants had not even been aware of the scope of the problem until the situation was described to them at the beginning of the meeting. All agencies from both city and county cooperated in the process which ultimately led to benefits beyond the project itself. Simply learning to work together for the common good of the citizens of the area proved a valuable experience.



Monroe County's new communications center features a supervisor's area surrounded by dispatch units, with ceiling and walls designed for acoustical soundness, and windows designed to eliminate glare.

The project team developed a set of goals and both long-and short-term objectives, including:

- A new CAD system to handle the increasing emergency call load and anticipated growth, and a phone message transfer system to reroute calls that should not be on the emergency line.
- Construction of a new 911 center.
- Installation of mobile data terminals (MDTs) in police vehicles to lessen dispatchers' workloads and improve the efficiency of officers in the field by providing direct access to the National Crime Information Center, state and local databases; this, in turn, required building a radio backbone to

handle the data traffic, installing units in all vehicles and installing a message switch on

the system to allow direct access.

- Development of a backup communication system in case of disruption to the primary system.
- Development of the capability to handle the emergency system of all participating entities.

The county worked with PTI and with communications experts from all over the country. Several subgroups were formed to consider information systems, facility, operations, communications and executive needs. Working groups conducted a series of studies, including an air-time demand study (used to reassign radio channels among the agencies) and a staffing study (used to design the new system and the new facility, as well as in planning equipment purchases). They developed a standardized procedures manual.

Monroe County's new 911 facility was designed by an architectural firm specializing in public safety buildings. Groundbreaking took place in the spring of 1993, construction got underway during the summer, and the center was, at the time of publication, expected to be operational by the summer of 1994. The new facility will incorporate more than 25,000 square feet, up from 9,000 in the former facility. The supervisor's area is in the center, with dispatch and telecommunication units around the perimeter. A specially designed ceiling and a lack of parallel walls will contribute to acoustical effectiveness. Light from exterior windows is limited and directed to prevent glare on computer screens. Security and attractiveness also were planned into the design.

Contracts guide interrelationships among the various agencies. Future goals include installing 450 MDTs without interrupting work schedules and replacement of the present emergency medical service mobile radio system and the fire mutual aid communications system with state-of-the-art trunking systems. Digital paging for volunteer fire and EMS personnel is planned as well.

Two that never got off the ground: Downey/Santa Fe Springs, California and Columbia/Boone County, Missouri

Chief Ronald Irwin, Downey, and Chief Steve Paulsell, Boone County

A few years ago, a city council request triggered discussions between the fire chiefs of Downey and Santa Fe Springs, California, to consider ways to save costs by combining or sharing resources. Chief Ronald Irwin and his colleague, Chief Robert Wilson (since retired) of Santa Fe Springs, first identified a statement of criteria that would guide any eventual change. That statement said the consolidation must fit both departments' existing labor agreements, be reasonably easy to implement, generate enough savings to make it worthwhile and be in the best interests of the citizens of both cities.



Chiefs Irwin and Wilson next analyzed areas that seemed to be duplicated or underused. One of the first and most obvious was upper management, meaning fire chiefs, battalion chiefs and fire marshals. These, the chiefs agreed, were the most costly positions, but were not being used as effectively as possible. Notably, they believed that the respective span of control of most of these positions could be increased, without any detriment to the quality of service.

They then reviewed records to determine how many major incidents in the cities typically required the presence of a battalion chief each year.

What they learned was that the cities averaged roughly 150 incidents combined that might need a battalion chief. Further, they learned that most incidents could be handled by a first-in captain, either in the incident's entirety or at least until a battalion chief arrived.

Given this information, Chiefs Irwin and Wilson developed their proposal. They recommended a two-phase approach, beginning with formation of a joint powers authority to combine all chief officers into a fire management agency, with policy development and oversight from an administrative board. Pay and benefit disparities between the two jurisdictions would mean that chief officers in one city would receive immediate salary increases; additional equalization would follow. Through attrition, all chief officers eventually would come under the new compensation plan.

The plan ensured that equal numbers of chief officers from each city would be used, with one battalion chief on duty per city per shift; the operations chief would work a shift schedule and fill in for battalion chiefs on leave. Two battalion chiefs were assigned staff functions (training and administration) and would follow a normal work schedule. Each city's fire marshal was retained, each administering a separate and independent fire prevention division. In order to avoid confusion, one fire chief would become manager of the joint powers agency, this element of the transition was facilitated because one chief was planning retirement. Phase I was estimated to produce immediate savings, despite salary increases for the one city's battalion chiefs.



The goal of Phase II was to produce personnel savings through attribution and to institute some shifting of responsibilities among management personnel. The estimated optimal level of efficiency in the new management structure would be reached in no more than two years. An assistant chief would take over most staff work previously handled by two staff battalion chiefs, along with their suppression duties; ultimately, one fire marshal would manage both prevention divisions.

Phase II would represent the most savings when fully implemented. But, even without cost savings, Chiefs Wilson and Irwin believed their consolidated management plan represented the best way to manage the departments.

Despite careful and comprehensive planning and a wide range of strong likely benefits, the Downey/ Santa Fe Springs plan was never implemented. Major savings were projected for both communities, and there was real interest on both sides. In fact, one of the cities was in favor of total consolidation as an ultimate goal; the (other was more cautious, seeking to take the process one step at a time. At about the same time, discussions about consolidation arose between the city of Columbia, Missouri, and the surrounding area of Boone County. The two fire departments already share, along with police, emergency medical services and emergency management, a joint communications center, so further cooperative operation did not seem out of the question. Interest stemmed primarily from an ongoing (and not uncommon) debate about annexation. Secondarily, a handful of local leaders recognized the potential for enhancing fire protection

throughout the entire area. The subject was not driven by pure economics because neither organization was under or foresaw any significant financial distress; to a greater degree, there was a practical interest "to do what we do... better."

The idea's ultimate demise in Columbia/Boone County centered around control issues, though not the conventional control issues among fire chiefs. Indeed, the city's fire chief slot was vacant at the time, presenting what appeared to be a fortunate circumstance by eliminating what is often a stumbling block for consolidation.

"We simply wanted to do what we do... better."

But city officials remained noncommittal about the idea, perhaps in part out of concern over losing an indirect form of political power. Historically, the city has used the community's fire safety awareness whenever it has sought funds for some new initiative, such as sewers, streets or parks, by including a fire truck in the ballot question; they almost always win. Further, while county officials recognized the extensive potential benefits of consolidation, some county firefighters and residents simply did not understand why the status quo should be changed at all.

Some people on both sides viewed consolidation as a potential erosion of their services. The city feared dilution of its services, spreading the existing career force throughout the entire county; the county feared it was just an instance of the city trying to take over. The county's suspicion of a city conspiracy to overrun the county's services was especially ironic in the light of the city leadership's own ambivalence. There was also, as always, a fear of the unknown.

However, in both locales, such local interests became subordinated to a different set of interests brought to the fore by employee groups and exacerbated by inadequate support among certain local government officials, shifting the focus of public discussions. In Columbia, when the city's management officials did not step into the leadership void created by the absence of a city fire chief, the union leadership did, in its own way and from its own perspective. Unfortunately, that perspective was based on premature reactions and inadequate information about what was being planned, according to Chief Steve Paulsell of the Boone County Fire Protection District.

As always, there was fear of the unknown.

In the California situation, information about the developing plan was leaked to the outside by a city government official before the chiefs were ready with detailed answers. Their plan had been to talk with affected personnel early on, but they were just beginning the initial discussion and had not yet formed the answers to key questions they knew they would need in order to discuss the matter fully with employees.

A number of labor issues arose in both California and Missouri. The unions viewed consolidation ideas suspiciously as fire officials' schemes to enhance their own circumstances. Career firefighters were leery of volunteers coming into their system, afraid they would be displaced. Based on partial information and an inadequate recognition of the big picture, labor leaders made effective and damaging use of local media. For example, the primary local newspaper serving one of the locales received and printed several letters which raised emotional issues and concerns about public safety; the letters came principally from relatives of city firefighters. It was not a groundswell of public sentiment, but it was perceived that way and had that effect. City leadership, both staff and elected, weakened under the apparent political pressure.

By the time employees realized the benefits, it was too late.

In such an atmosphere, with some participants driving the process to provide detailed answers (for example, where this particular fire truck would be stationed and where that particular station would be located) long before such answers were known, proponents found themselves defending the concept in a vacuum. While some genuine concerns were raised during the course of the debate, people nonetheless lost sight of the mission.

Employee leaders simply did not recognize that consolidation would have meant enhancements for employees at all levels of the departments. In Downey/Santa Fe Springs, labor groups were able to cause quick and serious damage with local political leaders by insisting that only total consolidation be considered. Because one city would not accept that avenue, the plan simply died. By the time employees realized the plan's benefits for all workers, it was too late; the damage was done.

Both chiefs regret the outcomes and the short term thinking that was demonstrated. They still believe in the idea and believe that, at some time in the future, such changes will become more attractive and even necessary. Chief Irwin is confident that the planning process he and his colleague applied was sound, and that the approach offered measurable benefits, both fiscal and administrative, for both jurisdictions. Chief Paulsell worries that proponents of the plan might have failed to make the purpose of the consolidation study clear enough, but the reaction came so quickly and was so loud that the message simply was not heard. Much of the support that had been present at the outset just evaporated. But he also reports that subsequent conversations with other fire chiefs across the country suggest that first efforts at consolidation often merely serve as rehearsals.

A Consolidation Model

Based on the experiences of the organizations referenced in this book, as well as the many others indicated by the list of references beginning on page 71, we have developed what we believe is a useful model for guiding a consolidation process. The reason for providing such a model is twofold: First, it appeared from our research and discussions that some kind of skeletal framework would be useful for those entering into a consolidation review. Second, the majority of the most successful consolidations appeared to have followed similar processes.

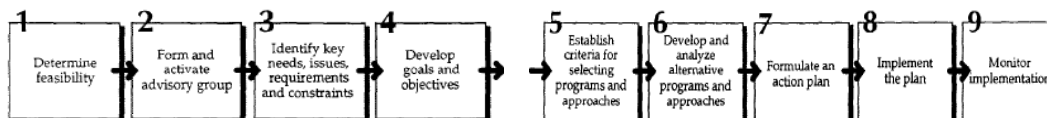
The same cautions apply to learning from process models as apply to learning from case studies. Do not follow the prescribed steps slavishly; it is best to modify the steps slightly where appropriate to local differences. However, while the model can be modified to fit local circumstances and needs, one should be careful not to eliminate details which, if ignored, could create havoc later. Remember the advice of Tualatin Valley fire officials to take all the time the process needs; don't rush it. The result of this effort presumably will be the structure within which the fire protection organization for your community will operate for a long time; **it** deserves your time and consideration now. And, because state law applies to the process of consolidation, advice of qualified legal counsel is strongly urged.

The model process described here is based on a number of classic planning models, some of which have been used widely in fire protection master planning and other fire service initiatives.

This particular model, adapted from these previous versions in response to lessons learned throughout this study, consists of nine steps: determining feasibility; forming and activating an advisory group; identifying key needs, issues, requirements and constraints; developing goals and objectives; establishing criteria for selecting programs and approaches; developing and analyzing alternative programs and approaches; formulating an action plan; implementing the plan; and monitoring implementation.

Throughout the following narrative, we will explain in further detail what kinds of activities should take place at each step and we will provide some examples from real-life consolidation experiences.

Steps to Consolidation



1 /Determine feasibility

An individual and/or a small group become interested in exploring consolidation possibilities. After some research and consideration, they determine that benefits can result. They then approach and obtain the commitments of others within and outside their organizations, still within their own jurisdictions. Next, they approach leaders in other jurisdictions that might be involved. Potential participating organizations mutually learn about possible benefits and commit their staffs to further study.

_____ *By the time employees realized the benefits, it was too late.*

They prepare a feasibility study and planning proposal and present it to decision makers. A general statement of purpose for the consolidation effort is developed at this time.

Now the current situation is defined specifically and clearly. Potential avenues for consolidation, specific benefits and possible challenges are explored, and a recommendation is made whether to proceed with developing an actual

consolidation plan. Commitments to proceed are obtained from all involved jurisdictions and agencies, and decision making authorities approve and authorize resources for development of a plan.

Keep in mind that consolidation actions do not originate always within the fire department. Two such instances are cited as examples in this publication: Orange County, Florida, and Downey/Santa Fe Springs, California. In each of these situations, local government officials directed either the initial consolidation study or the consolidation action itself. In the Tualatin Valley area, property taxes were widely considered too high, and a city manager told his fire department, "You cost too much and we need that money for other things; if you can't cut your costs, we'll do it for you." In Orange County, the consolidation was, in fact, thrust upon the fire departments from the county commission. If such actions might happen in your area, it would be far better to be part of deciding what changes will be made than to permit them to happen to you.

Initial meetings might not prove encouraging, but participants should not lose faith or lose sight of the goal (a more efficient, effective fire protection organization). Early meetings in Tualatin Valley reportedly degenerated into squabbles over what color the fire trucks should be and whose fire chief was better. Nonetheless, once these personal objectives had been acted out, a consensus was reached to begin development of a plan.

Early meetings can have surprising benefits in their own right. Remember that, in Monroe County, New York, the initial feasibility meeting among agency representatives was the first time some of the involved officials had realized their existing communications and dispatch center was dangerously overburdened.

This is the point at which specific potential savings should be researched and articulated. In Tualatin Valley, approximately 25 redundant positions were identified that could be reduced through attrition over the following five years at a savings of \$1.2 million. It also was learned that consolidation would eliminate the need for the three separate departments to purchase two aerial ladder trucks, and the consolidated department could build and staff an 18th fire station without hiring additional personnel. A study completed in North Hudson County, New Jersey, showed that consolidation would enable a reduction in companies from 34 to 23, with five percent cost savings overall and no reduction in the level of service.

Be mindful that the purpose of consolidation of any kind should be to define and recommend the most efficient, effective and reliable balance for optimum fire service to the organization's customers, the taxpaying public.

2/Form and activate advisory group

Both a central executive committee and a number of working groups will be required. The executive committee most likely will consist of the fire chief and city/county manager for each participating jurisdiction; working groups will be charged to develop elements of the plan focusing on specific functional areas. The most workable arrangement is for an overall advisory group to be composed of the executive committee, plus the chairs of all working groups. It might be desirable for political reasons to include all members of all working groups on the advisory body, but this can make for a quite large and rather unwieldy group, depending on the number and size of the working groups.

Suggested Planning Groups³

Executive Committee

(mayors, councils, fire boards)

<p>Implementation Group (administrative, finance officials) <i>Issues...</i> structure, funding mechanisms, taxpayer impact, jurisdictional impact, public relations, transition, indebtedness</p>	<p>Technical Study Group (fire officers) <i>Issues...</i> administration, operations, training, maintenance, communications, support services, fire prevention</p>
Working Groups	
<p>Administration <i>Issues...</i> staffing, structure, policy, organization, budget, employee relations, public relations</p>	<p>Operations <i>Issues...</i> suppression, procedures, policies, medical, hazardous materials</p>
<p>Fire Prevention <i>Issues...</i> code implementation, building inspections, plan reviews, prevention programs, investigation</p>	<p>Training <i>Issues...</i> standards, facilities, equipment, funding, instruction</p>
<p>Communications <i>Issues...</i> dispatch, E-911, protocols, frequencies, telephone, radio maintenance</p>	<p>Support Services <i>Issues...</i> purchasing, finance, risk management, human resources</p>
<p>Maintenance <i>Issues...</i> fleet, e equipment</p>	<p>Fixed Assets <i>Issues...</i> inventory, reimbursement, ownership</p>

³ From a set of informal notes on consolidation, Tualatin Valley Fire and Rescue.

Keep in mind that planning teams work best when consisting of from three to eight individuals, each one having a strong commitment to the result, some experience in planning, and the ability to devote time and energy to the process. A chart illustrating how the groups relate to one another and to the ultimate decision makers would be useful both to participants and others outside the process.

Broad representation from all involved agencies and organizations is vital. Including representatives of the local media, business community and general public is also wise, as long as they are assigned appropriate roles as members of appropriate working groups. Apply both logistical/technical and political considerations in selecting members, seeking the involvement of technical experts in various areas and representatives of allied agencies and groups. Communicate roles clearly to all participants. In some situations, these group assignments might require approval of political bodies.

In formulating both the composition and working guidelines for these groups, the goal is an open, vigorous discussion of proposed changes involving all the key actors (mayors, other elected officials, staffs, unions, governments and citizens) in order to create the environment out of which will emerge a new organization incorporating mutually acceptable trade-offs based on the legitimate concerns of all.

Needs, Issues, Requirements and Constraints

In an SO-day study conducted by three fire chiefs and their staffs for a possible consolidation among Thornton, West Adams and Westminster, Colorado, the following findings were made:

- The action was legally viable in light of state and local law and ordinance.
- Communication/dispatch was a necessary and key component to consolidation.
- One department was fully career, while the other two used a combination of career and volunteer personnel.
- Some overlapping of stations was found. Special regionalized teams, e.g., hazardous materials, and dive and water rescue, were already in place, using cooperative staffing and intergovernmental agreements.
- Two of the communities contracted for ambulance service. A consolidated organization could provide consolidated advanced life support service with engine companies and create a revenue-generating ambulance service.
- The three agencies, for some time, had been conducting certain training activities jointly, including testing, video and reference library purchases, and combined training academies; more savings could be accomplished with total departmental consolidation.
- A goal for fire prevention (public education, inspection, investigation, plans review, fire code adoption and enforcement) was to bring all programs up to the level currently provided by the jurisdiction offering the most programs. This meant a need to adopt common fire codes, with few potentially confusing local amendments, and to develop a single inspection information tracking system.
- Existing resources, both plant/equipment and personnel, could effectively protect the consolidated service area without major additions; some stations even could be closed, combined with others and relocated.
- Two of the departments used computer-aided dispatch with automated fire reporting; the

other was in the process of evaluating bids for such a system. All had remote communications established at each fire station. Decisions would be needed on the location of a consolidated dispatch center.

- Locations would need to be determined for fire administration headquarters, a computer mainframe site, a single recordkeeping system and other administrative offices, including payroll, accounts payable/ receivable, personnel, legal issues, purchasing, building and fleet maintenance, health insurance and workers' compensation. Pensions and information systems would need to be consolidated, each bringing legal issues of their own. The consolidated department would need to decide whether to incorporate stand-alone support services within the consolidated entity or to contract for services with one of the existing municipalities or with a private vendor.

3/Determine key needs, issues, requirements and constraints

This stage involves identifying any needs that must not be overlooked, issues that underlie possible changes, requirements that must guide future plans and constraints that might influence the outcome. This, in turn, will involve identifying data collection needs and a process for finding needed data.

Among such considerations might be whether the new organization risks being burdened by too many employees (proportionally) from one jurisdiction; this would drain personnel resources from the beginning. Planners should watch for seniority conflicts, promotional restrictions, changes in proportions of minority employees, and effects of the blending of career and volunteer firefighters. A group also might seek to ensure that all benefits and obligations that existed prior to consolidation remain the responsibility of the original jurisdiction.

Planning for the assignment of existing individual personnel within the new organizational structure will require careful consideration, and guidelines for those decisions should be stated up front. While, in the private sector, the best people would be placed in the most appropriate jobs, and the rest would be let go, public-sector constraints often prohibit that approach. This might require compromise, but the goal must be getting the best possible people into the most appropriate positions for their skills and experience.

Leftover management staff (excess to the needs of the new organization) can be assigned to staff functions for which there was never enough money before, for example, managing public fire

Carefully and clearly identifying needs, issues, requirements and constraints during the planning process helps ensure they are not overlooked.

safety education, coordinating volunteer / career relations, personnel director, strategic planning, research and development, and others. When forced to choose among several existing personnel for a consolidated position, a specific process should be followed to ensure selection of the best person. The process should state clearly that such and constraints during decisions will not be political and that, once the decision is made, that person is in charge.

Labor contracts already in place must be considered and a plan developed for a smooth transition. When the long-term, gradual consolidation in Sarasota County, Florida, first got underway in the 1980s, the organization was constrained to spend the first year working with separate union contracts and different labor groups. The county needed a

process to ultimately combine employees into a single group, which meant the unions' members had to decide who would represent them. It also meant the consolidated organization had to live out the existing contracts before being able to achieve true parity. It took approximately three years to combine these elements across the board and to tie up loose ends.

In addition to personnel issues, planners must consider operational issues, needs, requirements and constraints. These range from such communications matters as resolving different frequencies and different dispatch systems, to the transition of rules and regulations. Sarasota County worked from three separate sets of rules through the months of committee work required to arrive at an agreeable single set of rules. Standardization of equipment also will require some planning.

Even geographic constraints must be considered, for example, natural barriers that could inhibit response, including mountains, rivers, floodplains and other features. The same is true of major highways subject to serious rush-hour congestion. Neglecting to consider these factors could mean that projected improvements in response times would prove inaccurate and misleading.

Financial and legal issues also exist, including the need to establish a workable, mutually agreeable funding formula, which presumably will require a great deal of negotiation. A policy on ownership and use of existing and new assets will be needed, as well as one regarding the current debts of the existing organizations. General support services, such as legal assistance, finance, payroll, purchasing and personnel services, will be required, and the means for their provision will have to be determined. Another question to ask: Will the organizational change have any impact on state or federal funding?

When some participating departments provide emergency medical transport, while others depend on private ambulance services, a decision must be made concerning how the consolidated department will function in this regard. Expansion of ambulance service into the areas served by private organizations will create sensitive issues that will have to be confronted and resolved.

These issues, needs, requirements and constraints need not be resolved during this phase of the planning process, but they must be identified. This will help ensure that they are not overlooked as the process continues.

4/Develop goals and objectives

Goals and objectives for the consolidated organization will be developed during this stage and then submitted for approval to whatever decision making bodies are in place. Because these are the guidelines that will shape the ultimate nature of the consolidated organization, they must be developed with care and forethought. Remember that goals and objectives must be measurable and achievable in order to be effective.

Goals for a consolidation effort might include:⁴

- providing cost-effective and efficient delivery of services on an expanded basis

⁴ From a seminar by Chief Charles Rule (retired), Manteca, California.

- providing a strong system for performing initial fire attack and an improved organization for effectively managing larger-scale emergencies
- providing the capability to deliver additional special resources that are not cost-effective at the current level
- reducing redundant programs and overhead costs
- streamlining and integrating all systems
- expanding the data base to evaluate service levels
- reducing overhead positions (duplicated administrative positions) and increasing the number of line personnel to enhance labor-intensive operations
- attaining reductions through attrition and reassignment
- minimizing emotional reaction to change by ensuring that the planning process is driven by facts and involves all parties

Deadlines and milestones also should be established at this stage in order to ensure that the process is completed in a timely and efficient manner.

5/Establish criteria for selecting programs and approaches

A myriad of possible ideas will arise during the planning process, probably more than could be achieved reasonably. Therefore, a means must be established for determining which will be enacted and which will not.

At the very least, suggested programs and approaches should be prioritized according to some rational method. In order to ensure the highest possible degree of fairness in considering all suggestions, advance decisions must be made regarding what criteria will be applied in judging recommendations. Cost/benefit, political, legal and other analytical factors might be considered. State clearly what criteria will be used and ensure that the criteria are understood and followed. The importance of ensuring that recommendations and assumptions are evaluated before being adopted can be seen by reviewing one element of the consolidation experience in Salt Lake County, Utah. The planning group made the seemingly reasonable assumption that the consolidation would expand the tax base available to the new organization. Unfortunately, it did not.

*Don't assume
future savings.
Find a way to
project
accurately.*

Administrative costs, expected to be reduced, actually rose after consolidation because, while some of the involved departments had not had active programs in training, prevention and fiscal administration, the new organization had to provide sufficient levels of these services to cover the entire consolidated department. Expected favorable economies of scale for purchasing in bulk did not materialize because each jurisdiction had in place a system of municipal purchasing offices which were part of the inherited organizational structure. The message is, "Find a way to judge projected savings."

6/Develop and analyze alternative programs and approaches

By brainstorming and other methods, the working groups now develop a long list of ideas for specific programs or approaches that might be undertaken to enhance the new organization. A wide range of options should be identified so that eventual choices are not limited. Each option is

described fully and its differences from the current situation explored. Then, each alternative is analyzed according to its projected costs, benefits, political acceptability, legality and other characteristics. Any that do not meet the goals and objectives or the selection criteria identified earlier are rejected. The best programs and approaches ultimately will be selected for implementation.

For example, Monroe County conducted studies on air-time demand and staffing before undertaking its "simple" communications/ dispatch center consolidation. Communications issues to be examined, whether for a functional (communications only) consolidation or for a comprehensive one, might include determining what is being paid for dispatch services (including all costs, obvious as well as hidden); such long-term benefits as hardware and personnel; efficiency, effectiveness and reliability.

Possible areas of general study for any consolidation might include duplicate positions, purchasing, supply and warehousing, training, communications, operational overlap, fire stations (number, location), apparatus (number, type reserves) and organizational structure. When Orange County's 14 previously separate departments consolidated in 1981, they formed a central vehicle maintenance and repair facility to operate 24 hours a day. The facility provides computerized recordkeeping and has enabled cost-effective programs of refurbishment, repowering and preventive maintenance.

In the area of fire investigation, one might study such options as combining investigation activities, minimizing fragmented information ownership, and standardizing training and procedures. In fire prevention (including codes and public fire safety education), one might study what it would take to replace multiple codes with a single code, how to achieve consistent enforcement, and how to provide one-stop permit processing and plans review, as well as the benefits of volume purchasing.

In the area of training, studies might encompass potential savings to be enjoyed by combining physical facilities (bum building, drill tower, flammable liquid pits, specialized training props), standardizing training (all levels and specialties), consolidating instructor positions and time, eliminating training redundancies, and purchasing training materials and aids in greater volumes.

These suggestions are by no means all-inclusive. Whatever areas of interest are expressed by members of the working groups, local leadership or the public during the planning process can and should be considered. Only by considering the full range of possibilities will creative solutions be found. Simply remember that each suggestion must pass muster according to the group's pre-established criteria if it is to be implemented. This probably means it must be (at a minimum) cost-effective, operationally desirable and politically acceptable.

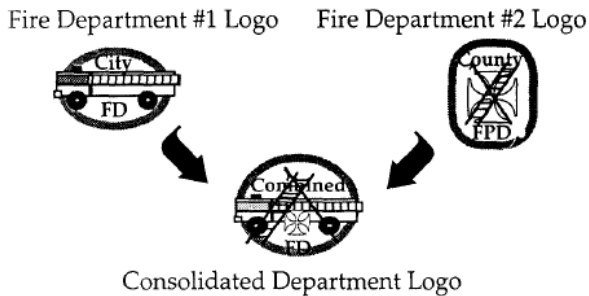
7/Formulate an action plan

This is it, the action plan, the bible if you will, that will describe and guide the future of your organization. It will serve as the manual for implementing the selected programs and the approaches to those programs. It must include the criteria and a plan for evaluating the consolidation after it has been implemented. Once it has been prepared, this plan will be submitted to whatever decision making body(ies) has oversight in order to obtain its commitment

for implementing the plan along with the continued authorization of resources.

The plan will define whether the consolidation will take place through a step-by-step series of incremental actions (as in Sarasota County) or an immediate merger (as in Tualatin Valley). It will identify the name of the new organization and illustrate its new graphic symbols (logos). The organization's name should not favor one of the entering organizations over another but, rather, should be one with which all parties can identify. Individual stations within the combined organization might retain some identity with the local area through special station and apparatus markings.

One way to help members of both or all incoming organizations feel at-home in the new organization is to incorporate elements of previous departmental symbols into the logo of the new one.



The plan also will describe the structure of the new organization, whether a county consolidation responsible to the county executive or board of supervisors, independent fire district (with a separate elected board), consolidation of several cities and districts forming a new organization, merger of several districts, intergovernmental contract for all fire protection and related services, intergovernmental contract for functional services (dispatch, codes enforcement, EMS) or even private-sector contract for services.

It will explain how the agreement relates to existing local charters and ordinances, how budgets will be formulated and revenues obtained along with any revenue restrictions, liability, overhead and asset issues, as well as accountability specifics for maintaining and monitoring the agreement. It will define how specific elements are to be achieved and paid for, for example, in Sarasota County, a bond issue was undertaken to raise funds for a central communications center for all county agencies, plus the city of Sarasota. Officials had a plan in place and now simply are waiting for the money.

It will describe the procedures for implementing such personnel changes as staff cuts and reorganization of personnel, including how to help them adjust to any shifts in responsibilities or status that might accompany the changes. It will describe the fully consolidated organization, as well as any transitional steps that might be required because of such existing conditions as labor contracts. It will explain the training, performance and fitness requirements for all employees and their effective dates for existing employees. For consolidation to work, employees must become interchangeable, which means everyone's procedures and knowledge must match. If new job responsibilities will come with consolidation (through a need for services not previously provided, for example), new position descriptions, as well as appropriate training programs, will be required.

It will define how and when the organization will come into being, in addition to how and for what reasons it can be changed or terminated. It will delineate the administrative and operational rules and procedures that will steer the organization and the status of existing and future facilities

and equipment. It will prescribe the process for bringing all apparatus and equipment into uniformity, including the locations of all tools on apparatus, as well as changing departmental logos on all vehicles. And, lest you fear that coming to agreement on so many details is impossible, those participating in the Monroe County communications consolidation found that, in preparing their standardized procedures manual, 34 of 38 fire chiefs were able to agree on four out of five procedures. In short, the plan will describe every detail of the new organization, and how each one will be accomplished. Nothing, however seemingly minor, will be left to chance or assumption.

Still, the guiding principle should be simplicity. Neither the plan nor the organization should confuse the members of the department, community leaders or citizens. As observed by retired Chief Charles Rule of Manteca, California, "Bigger isn't necessarily better; better is better." But, above all, the plan should create a new organization that is measurably more efficient, more effective and more reliable than the previous separate organizations. If these elements cannot be achieved, then the process has not met its principal purpose.

8/Implement the plan

"Implementation is the key to a successful strategic plan. Without action, the plan is not strategic, nor really a plan; it becomes just another study."⁵ Implementation of the plan must be accomplished in accordance with the approved procedures, budget and schedule contained in the plan. During this phase, all the good ideas that arose during the planning process, that met the criteria for selection and were, therefore, included in the plan will be applied and become realities. Necessary new facilities and equipment will be designed, procured and installed; personnel will be trained on new equipment and procedures.

“Without implementation, a plan is not a plan, but just another study.”

In Tualatin Valley, a series of intergovernmental agreements on the sharing of personnel, apparatus and equipment had been envisioned and planned to guide implementation of the plan. As they went into effect, the three departments began to function as one. Ultimately, and on schedule, the required legal actions were taken to formally create a new department. This included a new name, logo, official stationery and other items. All department managers were moved to a central location; both career and volunteer department members and two Explorer Posts were integrated fully, including 342 career personnel, 110 volunteers, 25 Explorers, 17 stations, 25 engines, five trucks, eight rescues, three brush rigs, three tankers, a hazardous materials squad, heavy rescue vehicle, and assorted reserve engines and trucks.

In Sarasota County, a step-by-step consolidation took place. First, three of the several fire districts in the county were combined. The following year, two more fire districts formed their own consolidation and, shortly thereafter, an additional district joined the earlier consolidation. A year later, the two previously formed consolidated districts combined, including both ambulance and fire districts. Agreements with the area's major airport fire department and

⁵ Montgomery and Shepherd, *A Regional Cooperative Model: Regional Vision '95*.

another fire district are under consideration by the parties. The department covers approximately 365 square miles and employs roughly 260 career and 90 volunteer personnel.

The officials who participated in the Tualatin Valley consolidation recommend that the intended leadership structure be in place when the consolidation takes effect and that, once the consolidation is in place, line employees be transferred to new locations right away. Consolidation is traumatic for employees, no matter how it is accomplished, and moving them around will help them to become accustomed to working together in the newly merged organization. Soon, they will become immersed in their jobs at the new locations.

The basic intergovernmental agreement that governs the consolidation covers the big issues, but challenges remain in the details and the re-education required by change. Still, if the planning process did all it should have done, the implementation process should be smooth and hold few surprises.

9/Monitor and evaluate

Evaluate programs by monitoring their effects to determine whether and how closely they match the intended results. This can be accomplished by performing cost/benefit analyses, watching for changes in response times, losses per incident and overall fire data, and seeking input and appraisal from participants and users, including fire department officials and members, other local officials (elected and appointed) and citizens.

Keep an eye on reports from division and department heads; if goals or objectives are not being met fully, then institute whatever changes might be necessary. Consider whether any perceived problems are the result of unrealistic expectations, inadequate planning or shortcomings in implementation. Revise the plan as needed in accordance with evaluation information by re-entering the planning process at the appropriate point and reworking that element from there.

Officials in Sarasota County suggest that, if they were starting over again, they would eliminate the individual taxing districts and form an independent consolidated district. This would have meant having their own purchasing and other support functions, rather than working under the county political system and bureaucracy. "We were zooming down the road at 60 miles per hour and ran into the county government system moving at about 20 miles per hour," one official remarked. It would have taken longer to establish an independent taxing district because it would require action by the state legislature, but they believe it might have worked better day-to-day. However, such factors cannot be known until the organization is in the midst of their effects. In addition, readers keeping a watchful eye should not assume that this experience would translate to their own. Remember to consider each individual circumstance to learn what will work best for you, and then wait and watch to see if you were right.

Ensuring long-term success demands keeping a watchful eye on the effects of the consolidation... and making changes as needed.

Be aware of the possible impact on the organization of future changes and growth in the community. Orange County's service area grew substantially after the consolidation took effect, necessitating a sharp increase in the number of career firefighters, while mid-to upper-management personnel of battalion chief rank or above decreased by nearly half in the same

period.

Accept that issues will continue to arise from time to time. The fact that the initial planning process is complete doesn't mean that the organization's details have been engraved in granite. The actions of the planning group do not equal the pronouncements of gods. If something needs to be changed, do it. Just be certain that any changes are undertaken as cautiously as the original plan.

Guidelines for Mutual aid agreements

Mutual aid agreements can provide for cooperative functions among adjoining departments in a simpler way, but also with fewer far-reaching benefits, than is involved in consolidation. Nonetheless, such agreements can present similar challenges, especially politically. In addition, local financial officials, who prefer arrangements that fit into neat and well separated financial cubbyholes, can have some trouble with the inherent flexibility of such plans.

Still, mutual aid agreements offer the opportunity for cooperative ventures with achievable economies of scale and no loss of political accountability or additional bureaucracy. Jurisdictions simply contract with one another for the joint or separate provision of services.

Planning for mutual aid agreements, while somewhat simpler than for more extensive consolidations, must be conducted, nonetheless, with equal consideration for broad representation, political and public concerns, legitimate needs, issues, requirements and constraints, and equal consideration for the need to create an organization that is effective, efficient, reliable and serves the best interests of the citizenry. There must be a clear, long-term commitment among the jurisdictions. Mechanisms must be in place for resolving disputes and for rationally dissolving the arrangement if it truly is not working out, all the while disarming petty squabbles before they loom larger-than-life.

A mutual aid agreement for emergency services, or almost anything else for that matter, will (at a minimum):

- define terms
- establish criteria and procedures for requesting assistance
- explain how aid will be carried out
- prescribe the use and deployment of personnel
- describe command and control responsibility and interactions
- establish communication principles and procedures, including appropriate use of radio frequencies
- describe the identification system for functional areas and personnel
- delineate how costs will be distributed
- contain a blanket waiver of liability, one agency against the other
- include an effective date
- establish criteria and procedures for withdrawal of assistance
- prescribe procedures for changes to the plan
- outline termination procedures and guidelines.

Finally, ensure that the governing bodies of all participating agencies are signatories to any such agreement. This is only way to be certain that the document is legal and binding and will not be overruled by officials higher in the local leadership structure than the fire chiefs.

Summary

There has been a great deal of discussion recently about "reinventing" government, and there is no reason why public fire protection cannot be a part of this positive trend. Consolidations, whether formal or informal, comprehensive or functional, phased in or at once, can help progressive fire service managers enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of their agencies. The concept is based on an awareness that when we work together cooperatively and share the resources we each have, we can accomplish more.

Learning from the experiences of others, while not copying their actions entirely, is a valid way to approach change. By doing so, we enjoy the benefits of progress without the need to invent each step anew as we proceed. This publication presents some reasons for consolidation, some caveats and cautions, and a method for analyzing and planning a consolidation. We have used examples from the actual experiences of other fire service managers in illustrating issues, concerns, actions and experiences.

As with any change in the way services are delivered, caution is prescribed. Readers should be mindful that a consolidation program represents a significant change in the way agencies conduct business and thus deserves considerable time and thought. Finally, it is vitally important that the ultimate goal of enhanced fire protection services for our citizens be recognized by all parties involved and ensured by the planning and implementation process.

Appendix I

Intergovernmental Agreement (between the City of Fort Collins, Colorado, and the Poudre Valley Fire Protection District)

This agreement, entered into this 3rd day of November, 1987, pursuant to Section 29-1-201 *et seq.*, C.R.S., by and between The City of Fort Collins, Colorado, a municipal corporation, hereinafter referred to as the "City", and the Poudre Valley Fire Protection District, Larimer County, State of Colorado, hereinafter referred to as the "District".

Witnesseth:

Whereas, the parties to this Agreement have entered into a previous intergovernmental agreement providing for the formation of an independent governmental entity for the purpose of providing fire protection services within the respective territorial limits of the parties hereto, which entity is known as the Poudre Fire Authority; and

Whereas, that previous agreement, as amended, has been mutually beneficial in providing a higher degree of protection to persons and property within the respective territorial limits of the parties hereto; and

Whereas, the parties desire to provide for the continued existence of the Poudre Fire Authority.

Now, therefore, in consideration of the mutual covenants and obligations herein expressed, it is agreed by and between the parties hereto as follows:

Article I

General Provisions

- 1.1 Term of the Agreement. This Agreement shall be in effect from January 1, 1988, until terminated by the parties as herein provided. This Agreement may be terminated by either party hereto, provided written notice of termination is given to the other party. The effective date of termination shall be on December 31 of any calendar year, provided said termination shall be no sooner than twenty-four (24) months after service of the written notice of termination.
- 1.2 Poudre Fire Authority. The existence of the independent governmental entity known as the "Poudre Fire Authority", hereinafter referred to as the "Authority", created by the intergovernmental agreement of the parties dated December 22, 1981, is hereby continued. The Authority is an independent governmental entity separate and distinct from the city and the district.
- 1.3 Governing Board. The Authority shall be administered by a governing board of five (5) members. The city shall appoint two (2) members and the District shall appoint two (2) members. The fifth member shall be appointed by the four other members as appointed by the city and district.
 - A. All appointees and terms of appointment shall be at the discretion of the appointing entity.
 - B. All vacancies on the board shall be filled by the appointing entity.
- 1.4 Meeting of the board.

- A. Regular Meetings. The board shall provide for regular meetings at a time and place fixed by resolution of the board.
 - B. Special Meetings. The board may conduct special meetings for the purpose of taking immediate action for emergency measures, as necessary.
 - C. Open Meetings. All meetings shall be open to the public. The board, by majority vote of members present, may go into Executive Session for the purpose of discussing personnel matters, meeting with attorneys representing the authority to discuss legal matters, and consideration of real property acquisitions by the authority.
- 1.5 Minutes. The secretary shall cause all minutes of the meetings of the board to be kept and shall, prior to the next meeting, provide a copy of the minutes to each member of the board.
- 1.6 Voting, Quorum, Required Votes. Each member of the board shall have one (1) vote. A quorum of the board shall consist of three (3) members, provided that the city and the district are represented and no official action on any matter may be taken by the board unless a quorum is present. The affirmative votes of a majority of the board members present shall be required for the board to take action.
- 1.7 By-laws. The board may adopt such by-laws, rules and regulations as necessary for the conduct of its meetings and affairs.

Article II

Officers and Employees

- 2.1 Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary. The board shall elect a chairman and vice chairman from its members, and shall appoint a secretary who may, but need not, be a member of the board. Said officers shall perform the duties normal for said offices, including the following.
- A. The chairman shall sign all contracts on behalf of the authority, except contracts or agreements that may be signed by the administrative chief or executive chief of the authority, as herein provided, and shall perform such other duties as may be imposed by the board.
 - B. The vice chairman shall perform all the chairman's duties in the absence of the chairman.
 - C. The secretary shall attest to all contracts signed on behalf of the authority and perform such other duties as may be imposed by the board.
- 2.2 Management. The board shall appoint an administrative chief and an executive chief to manage the authority. The executive chief shall perform all the administrative chief's duties in the absence of the administrative chief. The administrative chief shall have the power:
- A. To provide for the planning, design and construction of any buildings, additions or improvements to the facility owned by the authority.
 - B. To execute any contract for partial costs, cost of special services, equipment, materials, supplies, maintenance or repair that involves and expenditure by the authority of less than twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000).

- C. To employ all personnel of the authority required for the provision of services and maintenance and operation of all facilities.
 - D. To employ all personnel required in connection with the planning, design and construction of any buildings, additions or improvements to the facilities owned by the authority.
 - E. To expend funds and enter into contracts, whenever required, for the immediate preservation of the public health, safety and welfare, provided that the amount of funds involved does not exceed one percent (1%) of the annual budget of the authority for the year in which the funds are expended or the contract is made.
 - F. To dispose of by sale of any personal property of the authority with a value of less than ten thousand dollars (\$10,000).
 - G. To approve payroll payments and other demands for payments by the authority, provided an individual payment does not exceed twenty thousand dollars (\$20,000).
 - H. To prepare and submit to the board an annual operating budget for the next fiscal year in accordance with the budget schedules of the city and district.
 - I. To adopt general operating guidelines, including operating policies and inspection policies, as deemed appropriate.
 - J. Generally, to supervise the acquisition, construction, management, maintenance and operation of the authority's facilities and personnel.
 - K. To perform such other duties as directed by the board and report to the board at such times and on such matters as the board may direct.
- 2.3 Legal Advisor. The board shall have the power to appoint a legal advisor of the authority who shall perform such duties as directed by the board.
- 2.4 Other Employees. The board shall have the power to appoint and employ such other persons for the purpose of providing professional, technical or consulting services as may be necessary for the purposes of this agreement.

Article III

Powers of the Authority

- 3.1 General Powers. The authority shall exercise, in the manner herein provided, the powers common to the city and the district, as provided by the laws of the state of Colorado, and all incidental, implied, expressed or necessary powers for the accomplishment of the purposes of this agreement as provided herein. The authority shall not have the power to levy taxes.
- 3.2 Specific Powers. The authority is hereby authorized, in its own name, to do all acts necessary for the exercise of the foregoing powers including, but not limited to, the following:
- A. To make and enter into contracts, including those with the parties hereto, for goods and services.
 - B. To employ all necessary personnel.
 - C. To acquire, construct, manage, maintain or operate any buildings, works, improvements or other facilities.
 - D. To acquire, hold or dispose of property.
 - E. To sue and be sued in its own name.
 - F. To incur debts, liabilities or obligations shall constitute a debt, liability or obligation of either the city or the district.

- G. To apply for, accept, receive and disperse grants, loans and other aid from any governmental entity or political subdivision thereof.
- H. To invest any unexpected funds that are not required for the immediate operation of the authority, as the authority determines is advisable. Om accordance with the laws of the state of Colorado.
- I. To administer and enforce the fire code adopted by the city and district.
- J. To carry out and enforce all provisions of this agreement.

Article IV

Organizational Procedure

- 4.1 Delegation of Powers, Duties and Responsibilities. Each of the parties hereto delegates to the authority the power, duty and responsibility to maintain, operate manage and control all of the fire protection facilities, equipment, resources and property of the authority, including without limitation, all fire stations, land, buildings and firefighting equipment, and to employ the necessary personnel and do any and all other things necessary or desirable to provide continued efficient and economical fire protection services to all persons and property within the respective territorial limits of the parties hereto, which area shall be considered the jurisdiction of the authority.
- 4.2 Personnel.
 - A. The board shall adopt the necessary rules, regulations and procedures which shall govern personnel matters.
 - B. During the term of this agreement, all employees transferred from the city and the district under the original intergovernmental agreement and all employees hired by the authority shall be employees of the authority subject to the terms and conditions of employment in effect as stated in authority personnel rules and regulations, as amended from time to time.
 - C. All thime a transferred employee has spent as a fire department employee of either the city of the district shall be considered as time employed by the authority for the purpose of determining any conditions or benefits of employment with the authority.
 - D. The establishment of the authority as an independent governmental entity shall not affect in any manner the rights of city or district employees, hired prior to January 1, 1982, insofar as they relate to pension benefits provided by the laws of the state of Colorado.
 - E. The city and the district shall be responsible for their respective unfunded pension liabilities incurred prior to January 1, 1982.
 - F. At the termination of this agreement, any unfunded pension liabilities incurred by the authority during the term of this agreement shall be assumed by the city or the district in proportion to the allocation of authority personnel to the city and the district.
 - G. If this agreement is terminated, any employee of the city or the district on January 1, 1982, shall have the right to employment with the employee's original employer or the entity which has need for additional employees. Said employment shall be subject to the terms and conditions of employment then in effect as stated in city or district personnel rules.

- 4.3 Authority Fund. The board shall establish an authority fund to account for all financial transactions of the authority in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles.

Article V

Budget, Maintenance and Operation Costs, other Costs

5.1 Annual Budget.

- A. The board shall adopt a preliminary budget for maintenance and operation costs, capital costs, and costs of special services in accordance with the budget schedules of the city and the district, which budget may be amended from time to time based on changes in revenue projections made by the city and the district. The board shall submit the budget to the respective governing bodies of the parties hereto. The budget shall become the authority budget only after approval of the appropriations by the respective governing bodies and final approval by the board.
- B. The city shall contribute funding for maintenance and operation costs to the authority based on “Revenue Allocation Formula” which shall be set annually based upon a percentage of sales and use tax revenues (excluding sales tax revenue which must be spent on specific projects) and a portion of the operating mill levy of the city’s property taxes. The dollar amount of the city’s contribution, determined through the use of the “Revenue Allocation Formula”, shall be based upon the city’s budgetary process. The district shall adopt a mill levy annually pursuant to state law and a portion of said levy shall be dedicated to the authority for maintenance and operation costs. The authority shall request funds for capital costs pursuant to the procedures set by the city and district.
- C. The board shall present requests for supplemental appropriations to the respective governing bodies of the parties hereto. For the purposes of this agreement, “supplemental appropriations” shall mean any appropriation made above and beyond the annual appropriation made during the budgetary process.
- D. The board shall have the power to reappropriate funds in the fund balance for whatever purpose the board deems appropriate or necessary without approval of the city or district. Such reappropriations shall be made only at meetings of the board held after proper notice has been given, according to the bylaws of the authority.

- 5.2 Records and Accounts. The authority shall provide for the keeping of accurate and correct books of account, showing in detail the capital costs, cost of special services, maintenance and operating costs and all financial transactions for the authority which books of account shall correctly show any receipts and also any costs, expenses or charges paid to or to be paid by each of the parties hereto. Said books and records shall be open to inspection at all times during normal business hours by any representative of either party or by the accountant or other person authorized by either party to inspect said books or records. The board shall provide for the auditing of all books and accounts and other financial records of the authority on an annual basis, with such auditing to be conducted by a certified public accountant. The results of said audit shall be presented to the city and the district no later than thirty (30) days after receipt by the board.

- 5.3 Payment of Costs. Each of the parties agrees to pay to the authority monthly, in advance, its allocated share of the total estimated annual costs and expenses. The board is authorized to approve other arrangements for payment by the city and the district, provided the financial security of the authority is not impaired. In addition to

supplemental appropriation requests, the board is authorized to request amounts in excess of any regular payment for the costs and expenses of the authority, provided the total annual allocation does not exceed the estimated share of costs and expenses for either party to this agreement. The authority shall make available to each of the agencies a final detailed statement of the final costs and expenses for the fiscal year allocated in the same manner as estimated expenses were allocated, as soon as possible after the close of each year.

- 5.4 Sources of Funds. Each party shall provide the funds required to be paid by it to the authority under this agreement from any source of funds legally available to such entity for such purpose.

Article VI

Services

- 6.1 Professional, Administrative and Support Services. The parties may provide the necessary professional, administrative and support services to the authority at no cost on the same basis and to the same extent as such services were historically provided by the parties prior to January 1, 1982, except that the parties may enter into additional agreements for the purpose of securing any necessary professional, administrative and support services.
- 6.2 Additional Services. The city may agree to provide other additional services to the authority, provided the authority complies with the operating procedures of the city.

Article VII

Ownership of Property

- 7.1 Real and Personal Property. The authority shall continue to hold all right, title and interest in any and all real property and personal property transferred to the authority by the city or the district or acquired by the authority since January 1, 1982, for the purpose of providing fire protection services, unless such property is disposed of in compliance with the terms of this agreement.
- 7.2 Asset Inventory Schedules. The authority shall maintain separate asset inventory schedules for any and all property transferred from the city or the district which remains under the ownership of the authority, as well as any and all property acquired by the authority since January 1, 1982.

Article VIII

Termination

- 8.1 Disposition of Assets. Upon termination of this agreement pursuant to paragraph 1.1, above, the assets of the authority shall be disposed of as follows:
- A. All assets acquired by the authority from contributions from the parties shall be returned to the contributing party if said assets are still owned by the authority.
 - B. If assets contributed to the authority are not in existence, the contributing party shall have the option of receiving the fair market value of the asset at the time of disposal by the authority in either cash (if available) or asset of the authority.
 - C. All remaining assets acquired by the authority after January 1, 1982, from funds provided by the parties shall be distributed to the parties on the basis of the

appraised value of said assets at the time of termination and in the same proportion as the respective contributions of funds by the parties for acquisition of the asset.

- D. The parties may agree to dispose of any assets of the authority in any other acceptable manner.
- E. If the parties cannot agree on the disposition of certain assets of the authority, said assets shall be subject to an independent appraisal and shall be sold at public auction with the proceeds allocated to the parties in the same proportion as the respective contributions of funds by the parties for acquisition of the asset.

Article IX

Miscellaneous Provisions

- 9.1 Notices. Any notice required hereunder shall be in writing and shall be sufficient if deposited in the United States mail, postage prepaid to:
City: City Manager District: Chairman
City of Fort Collins Poudre Valley Fire Protection District
PO Box 580 102 Remington Street
Fort Collins, CO 80522 Fort Collins, CO 80524
- 9.2 Consent. Whenever any provision of this agreement requires consent or approval of the parties hereto, the same shall not be reasonably withheld.
- 9.3 Amendments. This agreement may be amended in writing, as required, by the parties hereto in furtherance or purposes of this agreement.
- 9.4 Severability. In the event any provision of this agreement is determined to be illegal or invalid for any reason, all other provisions of this agreement shall remain in full force and effect unless and until otherwise determined. The illegality of any provision of this agreement shall in no way affect the legality and enforceability of any other provision of the agreement.
- 9.5 Successors. This agreement shall be binding upon and shall inure to the benefit of the successors of the parties.
- 9.6 Assignment and Delegation. A party may neither assign any of the rights nor delegate any of the duties created by this agreement without the written consent of the other party. In witness whereof, the parties hereto have caused this agreement to be signed on the date hereinabove written:

City of Fort Collins, Colorado
A Municipal Corporation
Mayor
Attest:
City Clerk
Approved as to Form
City Attorney
Poudre Valley Fire Protection District
President of the Board
Attest:
Secretary
Approved as to Form:
Counsel for District

Appendix II

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