

**MOTIVATION OF VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS IN
COMBINATION FIRE DEPARTMENTS**

Executive Leadership

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ABSTRACT

The Meridian Fire Department was in the process of expanding its organization. The problem the Meridian Fire Department needed to resolve was that consideration had not been given to the impact of the organizational growth on its part-time, on-call firefighters. The purpose of this Applied Research Project was to determine how to keep our part-time, on-call firefighters motivated and provide direction for the part-time, on-call firefighter program.

To accomplish this, descriptive research was completed to answer the following research questions about part-time, on-call firefighters:

1. What motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters?
2. What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?
3. What are the long-term staffing needs of the organization?
4. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?

In an attempt to answer these research questions, a literature review was conducted on the topic of part-time, on-call fighters. In addition, interviews of knowledgeable emergency personnel were conducted on the use of part-time, on-call fighters. The content of the material gleaned from these methods follows, as well as discussion of the conclusions drawn and recommendations resulting.

It was the intent of the research project to provide a recommendation on the direction that the part-time, on-call program should take. This did enable the organization to improve the part-time, on-call firefighter program in the City of Meridian.

The research project included a literature review, interviews with subject experts and the review of pertinent web sites and a survey of volunteer and part-time, on-call firefighters in the Northwest. The research project recommended that we increase the minimum training standards for part-time, on-call firefighters, drivers and lieutenants. In addition, the recommendations included increased staffing levels for full-time personnel to handle peak load periods and clarification of roles and responsibilities of part-time staff to reduce intra-organizational conflicts.

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INTRODUCTION

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It is the intent of the research project to provide a recommendation on the direction that the part-time, on-call program should take. This will enable the organization to improve the part-time, on-call firefighter program in the City of Meridian.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

To gain an understanding of the role of part-time, on-call firefighters in the Meridian Fire Department, one must first understand the organization and the history of volunteers associated with the Meridian Fire Department

Departmental Overview

The Meridian City/Rural Fire Department covers a 66 square mile area in Southwestern Idaho. Meridian has a common border with Boise, the State Capital. At the center of the district is the City of Meridian with a population of approximately 36,000. The surrounding rural portion of the district has a population of approximately 15,000 for a total of 51,000. The department services its patrons from one centrally located station that completed construction in March of 2000. Ground was broken in November of 2000 on Station 2, with a scheduled completion date of June 2001.

Meridian is the 14th fastest growing city in the nation for one of its size. Meridian is part of the Ada/Canyon County metropolitan area that is the seventh fastest growing metro area in the United States. It is currently in a rapid transition from primarily an agriculturally based economy to a commercial/light industrial economy. Meridian is located in Southwest Idaho, along the I-84 corridor, 6 miles west of the state capital, Boise. Boise has a population of 171,000 (Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce- General Information, [On-Line], 4/15/01).

The Meridian Fire Department's district exists on the approach path to the Boise airport, which is a national airport. In addition, with our proximity to the state capital we could be adjacent to a target for an incident with the use of weapons of mass destruction.

The Meridian Fire Department has experienced a 15% increase in call volume in a one-year period. The fire department responded to a total of 1,923 calls for service in 1999. The department responded to a total of 2,200 calls for service in the year 2000. The organization is currently staffed by a chief, a deputy chief/training officer, a deputy chief/ fire prevention officer, one part-time assistant chief, six full-time captains, two part-time lieutenants, twelve full-time fighters, twenty-three part-time, on-call fighters and an administrative secretary.

The organization has focused its attention on expanding the number of stations it operates out of to better serve its citizens. The City of Meridian also broke ground on a new police building in October of 2000.

It is recognized that one of the key elements to successful leadership in a rapidly changing organization is the motivation and commitment of all of its employees. It is the intent of this research paper to outline what motivates part-time/volunteer staff and garners their full organizational commitment. This research project will apply the information provided in Unit 6 of *Executive Leadership*, entitled "Succession/Replacement Planning." According to that text, "there is a strong need for bench strength in a public safety organization" (Page SM6-3). Bench strength for the Meridian Fire Department is paramount for meeting its operational demands and planned expansion that the organization will face in the short term. It was recognized through this

course that succession planning is the cornerstone to successful organizational expansion.

A Historical View of Staffing

The Meridian Fire Department was first formed in the early 1900's and staffed entirely by volunteer firefighters. The City of Meridian did not have any full-time firefighters until 1992. The only full-time employee of the fire department was the fire marshal who was hired in 1977. A volunteer fire chief managed the fire department until 1995, at which time the volunteer chief was hired as the full-time fire chief.

However, as the department has evolved into a combination department, much dissatisfaction has arisen within the ranks of the part-time employees. The part-timers sense a rift building between the two factions. The career staff accuses the part-time staff of using the organization only as a part-time job, instead of belonging to the organization for the good of the fire service. The part-timers fear that the department is transitioning into a career staff organization and wonder what role they will play in the future of the Meridian Fire Department.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of current literature was conducted to seek answers to the research questions. The search included published articles, previously written research papers on volunteers available through the Learning Resource Center of the National Fire Academy, Internet sites, and interviews with subject experts who have experience in the use of part-time, on-call firefighters.

For purposes of this research paper the use of the term volunteer, part-time, part-

time, on-call and company members shall be used interchangeably. In the most basic sense, the part-time, on-call program has evolved from the traditional volunteer approach to staffing.

Despite the challenges of today, some volunteer fire departments still maintain strong memberships because they have taken steps to adapt to today's society and hectic schedules. "People are willing to volunteer in the fire and rescue service provided the following are true: the experience is rewarding and worth their time, the training requirements are not excessive, the time demands are manageable, they feel valued, conflict is minimized" (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (Preface). National Volunteer Fire Council).

Sullivan puts the issue in perspective: "in some fire departments, career and volunteer firefighters hate each other. Of course, this is not always the case, but we rarely hear about the departments in which the two groups get along." (Sullivan, 1997, p.10).

Many of the operations carried out on the fireground require careful timing and teamwork to insure safety of the firefighters and the citizens we serve to protect. In some instances, "this conflict (between career and volunteer members) works against the teamwork necessary to perform our duties in a safe and effective manner" (Stern, 1997, p.100).

The Changing Dynamics of the Fire Service

First, one must recognize that even the very best combination and volunteer fire departments across the US "are facing problems of attrition, daytime availability, training

certification requirements, and a tremendous increase in nuisance type calls” (Sullivan, 1997, p.10). Because of a change in our society, today’s volunteer fire service is in stiff competition for precious spare time that our potential volunteer firefighters have available. Many households are “struggling to make ends meet with both parents working, some with two jobs. Most people today struggle with competing interests.... The amount of time available to devote to the fire service is very limited” (p.10). Sullivan goes on to conclude: “instead of denying that this is almost universally true, we should just acknowledge it and be grateful for the time that firefighters are able to give to our organizations” (p.10).

Training has always been important to the fire service, however it has also had a negative affect, in the sense that it has increased the time required to become a firefighter and to maintain certifications. “Higher Training Standards for both volunteer and career firefighters has grown more formal and comprehensive in the past 30 years. National consensus training standards created...under the National Fire Protection Association... increased both classroom and practical requirements” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (Preface). National Volunteer Fire Council).

What motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters?

In researching what motivates people to become volunteer firefighters, one must first understand what motivates people to become firefighters in the first place. Research on this aspect revealed the following results: “In many communities, particularly small towns, the volunteer fire department has been a social center. Volunteer firefighters embody and represent the spirit of the community. They are often the centerpiece in

parades” (p.15).

A change has also occurred in society, as our social interaction is more dependent on technology and the Internet, “less emphasis on has been placed on the social aspects of volunteering” (p. 9).

This has hurt recruitment and retention for those organizations dependent upon volunteers across the nation:

Many volunteer to join fire departments and stay involved not only to serve their community and help others in need, but also to develop social relationships. Some volunteers report that the time demands of volunteering coupled with the time demands of everyday life have left no time to develop social ties or spend time outside of the station with other firefighters. Likewise, many fire departments have closed down their firehouse bars and poolhalls, which historically have been social centers for many volunteers” (p.9)

The following insight was given during a personal interview of Division Chief Scholar (personal communication, January 12, 2001, Appendix A) of the Chico Fire Department, when questioned *what motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters*:

We find that a lot of our firefighters do not do it for the money, but for the camaraderie and the feeling of giving back to their community in the form of civic duty and civic pride, “I just want to give something back to the community.” And some participate in firefighting for the challenges associated with firefighting and the variation from their regular job. On the East Coast, they have much more peer

pressure and you are almost expected to be part of the volunteer fire department as sociallital expectation. Also in a rural area there is a much greater sense of community. On the West Coast it is a critical component on the entry-level firefighters resume. It is a way of getting pre-employment job experience, and used much more as a career stepping-stone. On the West Coast, in most cases they get preferential treatment on career openings”, according to Division Chief Scholar (personal communication, January 12, 2001, Appendix A).

Chief Patrick J. Coughlin had similar findings according to his study on entitled “Normative Behavior and Attitude Change” in fire departments: “People are attracted to become volunteer firefighters because they want to get involved in an important community service” (Coughlin, 1990, p. 20). This was further substantiated in his study for truly altruistic motives, “service to fellow man” (p.23) being another reason why people choose to become volunteer firefighters.

Eanes further substantiated this in his research on motivation of volunteer firefighters in combination fire departments. “As Firefighters search to fulfill their needs for self-esteem and self-satisfaction in Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, this in turn allows the individual to reach his/her highest level in Maslow’s Hierarchy of needs, that being self-actualization” (Hanes, 1991, p.6).

The fire service has to understand that in a lot of situations a person “may have a desire to be a firefighter, while following a different full-time career path. Having the desire to be a firefighter but having a career that they are happy with or can’t afford the pay cut to begin as an entry-level firefighter” which is the situation for Ada County Paramedic Dave

Ockerman (personal communication, January 23, 2001, Appendix B).

In today's fire service a lot of issues can and do cause discord amongst members of combination fire departments. The author next attempted to identify what organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?

Any type of organizational transition will typically cause stress among employees, whether it is in the private or public sector. The fire service is no exception to this problem:

As fire service managers, we are obligated to make a combination department work for the sake of our customers and our personnel. Changing to a combination department, even if the organization remains primarily a volunteer-type department, is a major change. Such a change can be threatening to people's positions within the hierarchy and cause significant stress among those who prefer the status quo (Sullivan, 1997, p.10).

In any combination department comprised of full-time and volunteers "there is friction between members...about the way things should be run, or power struggles over whether a volunteer or paid person will be in charge at an emergency incident. Sometimes, one group may have more training than another group and claim it is more experienced" (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 14). National Volunteer Fire Council).

According to Chief Bill Weston (personal communication, January 6, 2001, Appendix C) of the Bellows Falls Fire Department, Vermont:

In ...dealing with volunteer personnel it depends what the balance is between career

and volunteer staff. This will be a determining factor of how the volunteer firefighters are treated and accepted. If there are more volunteer firefighters on the department than career, the sentiment will be that these volunteer firefighters are valued more because they are needed as primary responders. The career staff understands that they can't function without them. The key is to treat them similar or as close to the same as you can (career vs. volunteer) so there is no perception of a system of double standards. If there is an overwhelming number of career staff, still treat them as equal as possible but assign the volunteer staff specific jobs and or duties, for example safety, rehab, logistics, chief's aid etc.

According to Division Chief Scholar (see Appendix A): “when you use non-union people to do tasks normally assigned to unionized personnel, for example, moving or driving of apparatus it is a direct threat to career staff.”

Part-time, on-call firefighter and paramedic Dave Ockerman (see Appendix C) provided this insight into the problem: “I see it as a fear by the paid staff that volunteers could be used to replace their position or, more likely, that volunteers would work overtime shifts that could be money that they (career staff) would have made. This is probably the biggest complaint I have heard and is referred to as “scab labor” otherwise preventing them from bringing in extra income.”

According to Assistant Chief Wendelsdorf (personal communication, January 22, 2001, Appendix D) conflict can be reduced by:

...not having different standards or requirements for each group they lead to or develop the conflict. Why do I have to do it if they don't... is a very common

expression. Like all emergency operations when things do start to go wrong one of the causes is communications. It is a must to keep the communications lines open, thus preventing conflicts, and addressing each other's needs. For example, full-time personnel must know the POC staff will not take their jobs.

Marinucci agrees with Wendelsdorf about communication being the key to successful relations between career & volunteer staff: "In most cases communications seem to be the key in maintaining the motivation of the volunteer." Marinucci (1990, p. 9) makes it clear, for both career and volunteer personnel, in his statement: "Don't promise them what you can't deliver. Tell them the plan". He goes on as far as to say "Any plan will need political and marketing strategies: You must sell the idea of change to the organization and individual volunteer firefighters" (p. 9). This is especially important, as the part-time staff may feel threatened by the increasing presence of full-time staff.

As in any organization, roles need to be clarified:

the career personnel need to know the responsibilities and duties of the volunteers and the volunteers need to know the same of the career personnel. There needs to be a dependence on each other so that they may co-exist as a team, not at odds with each other. (Eanes, 1991).

As with any other occupation, pay inequities among employees will always cause conflict. "One of the toughest issues to deal with is establishing a fair and equitable method of reimbursement (stipend) for all the volunteers" (Rankin, 1996, p. 17). Chief Rankin of the Issaquah Fire Department took a consensus approach in resolving the dispute over pay:

A Volunteer Program Review Committee comprised of representation

from all factions of the department was formed. Its charge was to make recommendations to revise the volunteer program to resolve the issues identified. What resulted was a major overhaul of the entire program. Under the revision, a tiered stipend reimbursement plan was instituted. It is based on the individual's classification. All classifications are required to schedule three 12-hour on-duty shifts per month. Volunteer program manager positions were created to establish a volunteer organizational structure and provide a support staff for the division chiefs in charge of the volunteer programs (Rankin, 1996).

What are the long-term staffing needs of the organization? The fire service as a whole is an extremely labor intensive occupation. With that thought in mind: "People always have been a critical factor in the operations of ...fire departments" (Campbell, 1980 p. 10).

In many cases like Meridian the fire department is understaffed and "the pressure for change in delivery systems has been most evident in municipalities that are served by fully (primarily) volunteer departments. In some instances volunteer departments have suffered from stagnation or a decline in membership while realizing greater demand for services" (Coleman, 1988, p. 419).

Providing fire and emergency medical services on a cost efficient basis always has and always will be a prime consideration. "The advantages that combination departments represent are that in most areas they are considered to be the most efficient means of providing services, where career personnel provide for the administrative needs...while maintaining an assured minimum availability of emergency responders" (Coleman, 1988).

Two of the factors which have fueled the sociological changes, but have not been mentioned are “less of an interest in serving the community or volunteering by younger persons, in particular (the “me” generation)” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 8). National Volunteer Fire Council).

The demographics of Meridian’s district has a tremendous impact on how the organization needs to be structured. Like many districts, Meridian is a:

Rapidly growing ...suburban area that (that was formally) accustomed to operating a volunteer system and it must identify how best the needs of their community may be met with a dwindling supply of volunteer personnel, not to mention a smaller amount of available time to those dedicated volunteers presently operating in the system (Kite, 1989, p.2).

Meridian, like other departments, is faced with a diminished daytime availability of part-time, on-call personnel, this limits our daytime operational capability Monday through Friday 8AM to 6PM. Like many other departments who are heavily dependent upon on-call staff, Meridian “simply can’t handle the increasing call volume that our community is facing. Members cannot take the time off from work to respond to the many routine calls and emergency incidents that are occurring daily” (Stern, 1997).

Unlike many departments, Meridian is not hurting for members, just members who are available or committed to helping the organization with its daytime call volume. This is compounded by the fact that:

the public has not only grown to expect a wider range of services from the fire

department, but also has grown to rely more heavily on the fire department. A greater reliance translates into more calls. For example, in years past someone broke an arm they would have a relative or neighbor drive them to the hospital. Today, people often call for an ambulance instead. The public is also aware of the greater knowledge and professionalism of firefighters. As a result, they may call the fire department to check an electrical concern instead of calling an electrician. Or they may call an emergency medical technician for advice about how to treat an injury instead of calling a doctor or going to the hospital. This greater reliance on the fire department has contributed to the increase in call volume... (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p.10). National Volunteer Fire Council).

One disturbing trend that is developing which will forever effect the ability of communities to rely heavily on volunteer staff is the “sociological change seen by many small towns.” Meridian has seen an influx of new businesses, which have replaced “main street businesses with large, multipurpose department stores. A single large store has put many small main street stores out of business” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 10). National Volunteer Fire Council).

Many traditional main street businesses in Meridian used to release their employees to respond to emergency calls. The large corporations that are locating in Meridian are not as sensitive to the needs for small combination fire departments who need personnel

available during the workday:

While some employers are quite sympathetic, others see things much differently. In some instances, an employee's unplanned absence can be a real hardship for an employer, perhaps shutting down an assembly line and idling other workers, or causing a deadline to be missed. Other employers worry about the opportunity for less-than-dedicated employees to abuse the privilege of being released from work to respond to a call, especially if they're still on the clock during their absence (Stittleburg, 2000, p.40).

"Today's employers do not cut much slack for missing work hours for calls and training" according to the personal interview with Assistant Chief Mark Wendelsdorf (see Appendix D) of the Caldwell Fire Department. This in turn has seriously affected his agency's ability to recruit volunteer firefighters.

One possible solution to this lack of cooperation is government intervention. "One of the key factors (to successful administration of a combination fire department) is public support, especially from employers" (Stittleburg, 2000).

We have to recognize that if progress is to be made in this area and:

"a legislative solution is sought, it almost certainly would require (broad based political) support of employers' organizations. Significant education will be necessary. Secondly, the fire service must understand that legislation mandating release from work to respond to calls carries a serious responsibility. Great care must be taken to prevent abuse of this opportunity" (Stittleburg, 2000).

In a rapidly growing community much like Meridian, Gerard J. Hoetmer, as far

back as 1988 recognized “the economic need to maintain volunteers in combination departments” and Hoetmer demonstrated the need for career staff to “aid in providing services” (Hoetmer, 1988).

As Meridian has transitioned into a bedroom community:

demographic changes have separated the areas where volunteers work and live; the volunteer who lives in one town (Meridian) but works in another town (Boise) simply cannot respond during the daytime. Therefore, career firefighters or rescue workers are needed to cover times when volunteers are not available (Stern, 1997).

The Meridian Fire Department is in the process of hiring six new career firefighters to bring the staffing to 21 career firefighters in the department. Based on recent staffing guidelines published by the International City/County Management Association (1998), the department needs 35 career firefighters to meet the average minimum staffing levels for populations of our size, compared to our two closest neighbors. This would require a minimum staffing of nine on duty at all times.

According to a report completed in October of 2000 by the Fire Analysis & Research Division of the National Fire Protection Association, Meridian is understaffed and at a transition point as compared to other fire departments surveyed in the U.S. Fire Department Profile through 1999 (Karter, Michael J., 2000). The report contained a note indicating that the rates are based on data reported to the NFPA and do not reflect recommended rates or some defined fire protection standard. Using the regionally adjusted factor for the West, found in Appendix J of the report, Meridian would require a total staff of 51.7 career firefighters. In Appendix K, with a population of 55,000 the department is

typically serviced by an all career staff in 69.7% of the departments profiled. They could also be mostly career in 17% of the departments profiled. Found in Appendix L the number of stations per 1,000 for a population of 55,000 is 4.5 stations staffing 4.73 pumpers and .935 aerial apparatus. On a local comparison, The Nampa Fire Department, with a service population of 68,000 has a minimum on-duty staff of 13. The Caldwell Fire Department, with a population of 34,000, has an on-duty staff of 6 firefighters. In order for the Meridian Fire Department to meet the average staffing ratios of its two neighbors, the department would need 35 full-time emergency operations personnel and would need to ensure that at least nine of those personnel were on-duty at any one time.

The U.S. Census Bureau confirmed what Treasure Valley residents have known for a long time, that the “Treasure Valley was the seventh-fastest growing of the nation’s 280 metropolitan areas during the past decade” (Quintana, 2001, p. A10). This is confirmed by Martinez: “Meridian is now state’s fastest growing city...up 263% from 1990 to 2000” (2001, A6).

Growth projections done by the Meridian Planning and Zoning Department, as outlined in Appendix E, would place the population of the city and & rural area at 65,900 in 2005. This would mean that recommended staffing levels based on localized averages of .19 per 1,000 population would be 12.5 staff. Based on this same criterion, the department would be comprised of .71 personnel per 1,000 population or 46 personnel.

The current response trends for the Meridian Fire Department are identified. Based on the information contained in Appendix F, Responses by *Day of Week*, the department peak load period for *Day Of The Week* is on Tuesdays with 383 of the responses occurring

on Tuesdays. The peak load period by *Hour of the Day* as represented in Appendix G, is at 5:00PM or 1700 hrs.

Given our peak load periods, our poorest turnout period, as identified in Appendix H, is the period from 1200 hours to 1759 hours. This couples our peak load time for activity with our poorest response of part-time personnel, based on historical data gathered from department payroll records.

If the Meridian Fire Department tried to reduce responses by discontinuing the practice of responding to emergency medical requests they would be truly in the minority in the service levels provided by departments of the same size. According to the National Fire Protection Association 1999 Report on U.S. Fire Department Profile compiled in October of 2000 which is contained in Appendix L, 85% of the departments with a population of 55,000 provide either *Basic or Advanced Emergency Medical Services*.

What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of the part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization? The answers can be summed up by the following criteria: “the program must meet the individual needs, the program must provide its membership with reward and recognition, the program must provide adequate supervision and leadership and the program must challenge members” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions*. (p. 10). National Volunteer Fire Council).

One of the keys to successful management of an organization in a rapid transition is good communications. Many departments have utilized new technologies to improve communication among members. Technologies that can help you communicate include:

“utilizing Fax machines that send out Faxograms... maintaining computer bulletin boards... alphanumeric pagers which not only improves communication, but also attendance at meetings and drills” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 8). National Volunteer Fire Council). Alphanumeric pagers are also a good tool for distributing kudos messages to recognize volunteers” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 29). National Volunteer Fire Council). It seems that e-mail has become part of our daily lives and “allows rapid, easy communications to members. To enhance the communication process every officer and board member should have voice mail in this electronic age. A Voice mail system also allows for distribution of a message to groups. Some departments have begun to post their newsletters on the World Wide Web” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 29). National Volunteer Fire Council). It is important in combination departments to have clear roles and responsibilities:

where paid personnel answer a majority of the calls, volunteers may lose motivation if they feel like they are not needed. It is important for chiefs of these departments to set the tone from the top that volunteers are an integral part of the organization, even if they do not respond on a majority of the calls. To ensure volunteers maintain an integral role, a combination department may assign volunteers the responsibility for handling a specific task such as staffing an extrication truck;

performing confined space rescues; or providing support services at incidents...

(Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 43). National Volunteer Fire Council).

The Report on Recruitment and Retention in the Volunteer Fire Service outlined a list of ways to reduce friction and promote teamwork in combination departments:

- Have career and volunteer firefighters train together in order to promote intermixing and friendships, the building of mutual trust, and efficient operations
- Treat career and volunteer as similarly as possible (i.e., with respect to training, fitness, discipline, and promotional standards)
- Share maintenance duties of the firehouse and apparatus
- Require all members to pass the same physical entrance exam
- Involve the spouses of both volunteer and career members in an auxiliary and department activities
- Share station chores
- Expect the same job performance and competence from volunteers as their paid counterparts (within reason)
- Talk out issues of conflict – don't let them fester
- Avoid setting volunteers apart unnecessarily by creating different policies or uniforms
- Establish written roles and responsibilities for volunteer and career members

(e.g. establishing who is in charge of maintenance/cleaning of station /apparatus, getting particular apparatus out the door, command at scene, etc.) (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions. (p. 43). National Volunteer Fire Council).

In order to involve the part-time, on-call staff and “to prevent this feeling of ‘squatters rights’ communication was opened up using a distinct chain of command and to provide room for input from the volunteers. To market the plan and have the volunteers buy in to it are keys that must be addressed early in the formation of the career personnel” according to Marinucci (1988).

Chief John Buckman also echoed these sentiments: “Involving firefighters especially in decisions that affect them is both respectful to them and practical. People who are close to the problem typically have the best insight as to how a situation can be improved. As you involve others, you increase their commitment and ease in implementing any new idea or change” (Buckman, 2000, p. 4).

It is important to grant part-time, on-call staff freedom and respect: “most firefighters, especially your experienced top performers, value being given room to do their job as they best see fit” (Buckman, 2000, p. 4).

The best way of reducing conflict is to establish a clear set of criteria as “problems frequently arise in predominantly volunteer departments when duties, position description, policies, and procedures are not spelled out in writing” (Sullivan, 1997. p. 10).

Furthermore, the organization also needs to promote equality for paid and volunteer

staff:

All members performing the same job should meet the same level of training. All firefighters must know the job equally well – whether receiving compensation or not. Separate standards for firefighters and rescuers drives a wedge between career and volunteer personnel. If a paid firefighter is required to be certified as a Firefighter I or II and a EMT, then a volunteer should be required to be certified to the same level if he or she is going to perform the same job (Stern, 1997).

The issue of equality should also affect the standards for training for the officer ranks. Some “combination departments require their paid and volunteer officers to pass the same promotional tests or to have the same minimum number of years or experience before being eligible for promotion” (Stern, 1997).

In order for volunteer officers to gain the respect of the paid firefighters on the fireground it is important that the volunteer officer went through the same testing procedure as their full-time counterparts “It’s worth it in the long run,” claims Phil Kouwe of the Fishers Fire Department in Indiana. “If two paid firefighters get orders from a volunteer captain, they know he/she earned that position. In addition,” he notes, “the fact that officers’ positions are permanent helps with developing and managing longer-term projects” (Baltic, 1992).

In an extensive organizational study that was conducted on the Anne Arundel County Fire Department in 1994, the issue of fire officer qualifications was debated at length. The findings of this exhaustive study was that the “FDSC (Fire Department Study Committee) recommends that qualification standards for career and volunteer personnel of

equal rank be the same. Further, the FDSC recommends adoption of National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications. Determination of appropriate fire officer level I, II, III, or IV for various ranks in the department should be the exclusive prerogative of the fire administrator” (Report of the Fire Department Study Committee, Anne Arundel County, 1994).

In the discussion and rationale portion of the report dealing with this issue it was concluded:

there is widespread agreement in all communities of the fire service that these changes need to be made. Implementing this recommendation should go a long way in resolving disputes about whether those in authority possess appropriate qualifications. Also, it will enhance the safety of operations. The fire administration has prepared a preliminary study of how this recommendation might be implemented and some problems that might be encountered (Report of the Fire Department Study Committee, Anne Arundel County, 1994).

The fire department study committee for Anne Arundel County fire department recommended “retroactive application of NFPA 1021 standards to all career and volunteer officers, following a grace period, the length of which should be determined in advance by the fire administrator.... and made in consultation with the reconstituted Fire Advisory Board (Report of the Fire Department Study Committee, Anne Arundel County, 1994. p. 77).

The rationale for the decision follows:

The fire department study committee believed that, while grace periods are

appropriate, the practice of grandfathering is not appropriate. Grace periods require eventual compliance and provide reasonable time to do so. Grandfathering forgives the standard for those in place and applies it only to those who come later. The distinction is important. The proactive of grandfathering, in this case, would permit one to hold a position indefinitely for which he or she is no longer qualified.

Essentially, it places the welfare of the grandfathered individual above the welfare of those subordinates and above the importance of the mission. If qualifications are important to a mission, and importance of a mission is paramount, which the fire department study committee believes the qualification standards must apply to all, sooner or later... (Report of the Fire Department Study Committee, Anne Arundel County, 1994).

In the interest of accommodating the scheduling requirements for:

Career and volunteer members should have equal access to training. Varied times for training may need to be provided to accommodate career or volunteer schedules. For example, one course may be taught on a shift schedule one month and then at nights or on weekends another month, thus allowing members to attend training sessions (Stern, 1997).

The organization needs to demonstrate their appreciation and promote mutual respect and understanding for all members of the organization:

For the paid members of the service, the job is their livelihood. This is how they pay for their homes, their cars, and their children's education. Volunteers should respect this and understand that organizational changes and financial decisions,

often directly affect the job and income of the paid members (Stern, 1997).

Likewise, “It is important that career personnel should respect that volunteers are giving of their time for little or no compensation, and at the same risk of injury or death” (Stern, 1997).

The commitment to being a volunteer or part-time, on-call “may take hundreds of hours of training. (Volunteers) give up time with their families and time from work” (Stern, 1997).

It is not the intent of any “volunteer... to take away jobs. Respect and understanding from both sides will go a long way toward reducing tensions between paid and volunteer service providers” (Stern, 1997).

A firefighter can be professional whether or not they get paid for doing their job by “by taking their roles seriously, getting the best training and certification available, and performing in the field. Respect is earned from competence more than from good intentions...” (Stern, 1997).

Many departments have had great success with the implementation of an appreciation day “which includes competitions, a dinner, and awards. The program could be expanded to include appreciation and recognition of the spouses of volunteers... publicize of the event and the competitions could help improve the public image of the volunteers.” Additionally, “Many departments have introduced a service award programs to honor different levels of years of service” (Eanes, 1991).

Giving credit where credit is due is a very important aspect of motivating volunteer firefighters. It is important to provide public recognition for all members:

everyone appreciates a fire chief who gives credit where it's due. The chances to share the successes of firefighters with others are almost limitless. The best fire chief is the one who realizes that it is the firefighters that makes the fire chief the best" (Buckman, 2000).

It is important to provide motivation and mobility for part-time staff.

One approach used by the fire department in Mason, Ohio is "to promote from within whenever possible. Many of the on-call paid personnel move into part-time positions, and many of the part-timers positions, would love to work full-time if the opportunity became available" (Hyre, 2000, p. 46).

Division Chief Scholar (see Appendix A) envisions a program of using volunteers to develop: "prefire plans of facilities and non-traditional support roles like public education programs in schools." He also would like to "let them learn how to operate equipment, however they are currently only ancillary firefighters." I would like to also "expand their role to have the ability to move equipment and provide logistical support."

Chief Weston (see Appendix C) shared this insight on how he keeps his volunteer staff motivated:

"My preference is to integrate volunteer members into the existing career system. This may not always be possible due to their acceptance by the career staff. If the full-time staff is reluctant to recognize the volunteer staff you can do two things. First you can make them recognize by contract language or in general by keeping up overall strong support for

the volunteer staff in all operations. Secondly, you can design a separate but equal call system within the department where the volunteer firefighters are assigned a piece or pieces of equipment that they are responsible for. This makes the volunteer officers and firefighters responsible for their own operational readiness.”

Paramedic and Volunteer Firefighter Ockerman (see Appendix B) says this about the future of volunteerism in the fire service:

the days of volunteer firefighters in combination departments are numbered. With all the requests for medical assistance we go on, it is just not cost effective to pay call back for short periods of time, however call back for fires or other large or extended incidents is essential. The trend now is to only to respond back to the station or the scene on fires, extended incidents (cardiac arrests, extrications) or when both stations are out at the same time. To offset that, we are paid to come in and work 12-48 hours per month as a fourth person, plus we still have the opportunity to cover shifts when asked. This has allowed the new personnel to respond on more calls and see what is actually happening on-calls rather than being ‘truck washers.’ I think that for the most part it has improved the relationship between career and volunteer personnel in a less threatening atmosphere. Two other issues that should be considered are volunteer retirement and disability insurance. Currently we have a retirement program in place; a 20-year volunteer can retire out with a

\$10,000 check. Not many volunteers make it to this milestone anymore.

An injury, which disables a firefighter from his/her full-time job, would devastate an injured volunteer. The combination departments need to start picking up the ball on this issue, I think this is a very important issue that you should consider as a benefit for our volunteers.

As in many organizations, the key to successful relationships is good leadership. Of utmost importance is “a chief who is conscious of the differences (between career and volunteer) and takes the lead in working out the problems between the two groups” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions*. (p. 43). National Volunteer Fire Council).

To have a winning organization you “must have a good coach. The chief must not tolerate the formation of barriers that separate volunteer and career personnel. Unabated, these kinds of attitudes can drive volunteers away and force a department to become fully paid” (Bush, Reade. Schaenman, Philip. Thiel, Katherine (1998). *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service: Problems and Solutions*. (p.43). National Volunteer Fire Council).

The literature review clearly indicated that Meridian Fire Department was not alone when it came to tensions between career and part-time staff.

PROCEDURES

The conclusions of this applied research project were accomplished by the combination of a literature review, interviews and a survey of volunteer and part-time, on-call personnel located in the Northwest. A review of literature available on the

subject of motivation of volunteer firefighters and interviews of several people with extensive experience with volunteers was conducted. The literature reviews were conducted at the Learning Resource Center (LRC) at the National Fire Academy in Emmitsburg, Maryland. A computerized search was completed at the LRC with a focus on motivation of volunteers, conflict management and combination departments. This was augmented by a review of professional journals subscribed to by the Meridian Fire Department with a focus on this same subject matter. A request was also submitted to the LRC at the National Emergency Training Center, and several journal articles and research papers were identified as having relevance. In addition, manual search was done of recent issues of trade journals pertaining to the volunteer fire service.

The books and articles identified through the literature search were reviewed and those that were deemed to be pertinent to the research questions were included in the literature review section of the paper. In addition a search of Internet sites maintained by the International Fire Chiefs Association and the National Volunteer Fire Council was conducted for related information on the research questions.

This information was supplemented by semi-structured interviews with volunteer firefighters and career fire chiefs who have experience with volunteer firefighters. This enabled the author to gain an understanding of the different perspectives of the various stakeholders. A total of four people were interviewed and each interview lasted about 30 minutes (see interview outline, Appendix C). Those selected for interviews were chosen for their insight into the different perspectives that exist within the fire service. The interview instrument was limited by the availability of a convenient representative sample of like-size agencies operating within the state of Idaho. Because Idaho is

comprised primarily of rural and semi-rural areas, volunteers staff the majority of fire departments. The interviews were conducted via e-mail, or phone, or both. All three chief officers are graduates of the Executive Fire Officer Program at the National Fire Academy. All three chief officers are very active within their respective state Fire Chiefs' Associations. The volunteer firefighter/county paramedic is active in the Ada County Fire Chiefs' Association. The interviews were conducted of fire departments inside and outside the state of Idaho. The interviews were conducted to determine the answers to the following three research questions concerning the use of volunteer part-time, on-call firefighters:

1. What motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters?
2. From your perspective, what organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?
3. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?

Descriptive Research

A survey was conducted of the Meridian Fire Department, and fire departments throughout the Northwest, to determine how they handle their volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighter program. Descriptive research was conducted to determine the answer to the following three research questions:

1. What motivates people to become volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighters?
2. What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call/volunteer and full-time staff?
3. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-

time, on-call/volunteer firefighters in the organization?

Definition of Terms

Volunteer- is a firefighter who offers his or her time at no charge to the organization.

Part-time and Part-time, on-call (PTOC)- these firefighters get only a small hourly reimbursement for their response to an emergency page, they serve their department on an intermittent basis and cannot subsist on the money they earn from the part-time, on-call program.

Company members- these firefighters get only a small hourly reimbursement for their response to an emergency page. They serve their department on an intermittent basis and cannot subsist on the money they earn from the part-time, on-call program. However, they get a preference when openings occur among the full-time staff.

Career or Full-time- these two terms are synonymous and are used interchangeably. This group derives their living from being firefighters.

Meridian Fire Department- MFD

Research Methodology

The desired outcome of this research was to determine what information might be useful for improving a part-time, on-call or volunteer firefighter program. The survey took into account population served, size of department, the presence of a volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighter program and the presence of full-time staff (see Appendix O). Two groups of surveys were sent out for feedback.

The first group selected were current members of the Meridian Fire Department on-call firefighter program. It was felt these individuals truly reflected the feelings of the part-time, on-call firefighters.

The second group of thirty departments was comprised of selected northwest cities or districts with populations of greater than 10,000 people in their service area. This cutoff point was selected because it was felt that this was the lowest number that would have at least some career staff. One hundred and fifty surveys were mailed out on January 15, 2001 to the fire chiefs of these organizations. Each Fire Chief received 5 surveys to be shared with his volunteer or part-time, on-call employees. Of the 150 surveys distributed, 90 were returned completed (60%). This group was selected as a target group because they represented the sentiments of volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighters throughout the Northwest. It was thought that measuring the results from organizations that operate with similar staffing levels and political environments would be most valuable. It was also believed that the firefighters in these small organizations would be the most familiar with the problems associated with volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighter programs.

The fire departments selected from the Northwest had a population served of between 25,000 and 75,000. This group was selected because they would be organizations of similar size (50,000). It was felt that they would have the most in common with the Meridian Fire Department. It was also felt that these departments would face the same issues and have about the same level of funding. This sample also gave a perspective from outside the Meridian Fire Department with which to compare results.

The total number of surveys sent out to the two groups, within the Meridian Fire Department and fire departments located in the Northwest, were 172. The total number

of firefighter responses was 112 (65%). A copy of the tabulation sheet can be found in Appendix P.

The purpose of the survey was to determine volunteer and part-time, on-call firefighter motivations and concerns. What motivates volunteer or part-time, on-call staff? What issues cause conflict between full-time and part-time staff? What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighter in the organization?

Assumptions

It was assumed that even though the agency responded to each question, they were only generally familiar with how combination departments operate. It was further assumed that the personnel who responded were volunteers/part-time, on-call firefighters who were assigned the task of responding to the survey.

Limitations

This survey instrument was limited by the availability of a convenient representative sample from within the Meridian Fire Department. Because the Meridian Fire Department is comprised of only 22 volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighters, this provided too small a survey group to draw any conclusive results from. As a result of this inherent limitation, a second survey was distributed to agencies within the Northwest with populations of 25,000 to 75,000 so that there was a larger survey pool from which to draw more conclusive results. The agencies were selected from the states of Idaho, Oregon, Washington and were chosen at random from the directory in the selected states. The survey was further limited by the time constraints of the research project. One hundred and fifty surveys were sent out to fire agencies throughout the Northwest. Of

these 150 surveys, 90 responded to the survey. The agencies were selected based on a service area of between 10,000 and 75,000 people. Even though the service area of Meridian is 50,000, the lower parameter had to be set at 10,000 to get enough of a representative sample from the Northwest. The addresses for the agencies surveyed were obtained from the 1994 Directory of Municipal Fire Departments. (Fire Engineering, 1994).

RESULTS

Tabulation of Surveys

Two weeks was given for the completed surveys to be returned. Of the 150 questionnaires emailed, 67 surveys were returned by the January 31, 2000 deadline. A second request was e-mailed to the fire departments with surveys that had not yet been returned. One more week was allowed for the return of the outstanding surveys, which brought the total of surveys returned from departments other than Meridian to 90. This represented a 60% response. For the complete results of the tabulation of the surveys see Appendix P.

Survey Results

A sample of the cover letter and survey is shown in Appendix O.

A discussion of the survey questions is as follows:

Survey Question 1. What type of fire department does your community have?

To provide a valid comparison, the department responding to the survey had to be a combination department. All other responses were considered statistically invalid and were discarded. Many of the fire departments for the state of Idaho, as well as the departments surveyed from throughout the Northwest, are combination type departments.

This reflects the type of department that the Meridian Fire Department is. This is a consideration for making a comparison because they are similar size organizations with similar department demographics.

Survey Question 2. What is the number of Career Staff and Volunteer or part-time, on-call staff in your department? The Meridian Fire Department has 18 paid staff. The average for the departments responding to the survey was 34 career staff. The number of Part-time on call for Meridian is 22 and for the other departments surveyed it is 58 Part-time on call staff.

Survey Question 3. What is the population of your service area (City, Town, Village, or District)? The population served is an important consideration as it relates directly to the funds available to support emergency services. The average population served for the departments responding to the survey was 45,154 people. This very closely reflects the population of the Meridian Fire Department's service area at 51,000. This proved to be a good comparison for the Meridian Fire Department.

Survey Question 4. What motivates you to want to become a part-time, on-call firefighter?

Response 4a- To give something back to my community. 36% of the Meridian Fire Department PTOC firefighters responded that they serve in order to give something back to their community. A slightly higher percent (41%) of the respondents from throughout the Northwest indicated that they do serve in order to give something back to the community.

Response 4b- The survey indicated that 63% of the volunteer/part-time Firefighters serve for the money vs. 58% for the survey respondents from the Northwest.

Response 4c- The survey indicated that 81% of the Meridian Fire Fighters serve for the excitement. This compares to 82% of the northwest respondents who stated that they serve for the excitement.

Response 4d- The survey indicated that 59% of the Meridian Fire Fighters serve for the challenge. This compares to 62% of the northwest respondents who stated that they serve for the challenge.

Response 4e- The survey indicated that 86% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are involved as a step towards a full-time position. Volunteering provides that very valuable pre-employment experience. This compares to 79% of the northwest respondents who stated that they serve as a step to a full-time position.

Response 4f- The survey indicated that 18% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like to be full-time firefighters but cannot afford the pay reduction to do so. These compares to 19% of the northwest respondents who stated that they couldn't take pay cut.

Response 4g- The survey indicated that 68% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are involved for the social interaction and camaraderie. This compares to 71% of the northwest respondents who stated that they enjoy the camaraderie.

Response 4h- The survey indicated that 45% of the Meridian Fire Fighters serve for the association with the history of the Meridian Fire Department when it was entirely a volunteer organization. This compares to 47% of the northwest respondents who stated that they involved because they have been volunteers for such a long time.

Survey Question 5. What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?

Response 5a- The survey indicated that 27% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are displeased with the differential in pay, between PTOC and full-time employees. This compares to 25% of the northwest respondents who are members of combination departments who had concerns about pay disparity issues.

Response 5b- The survey indicated that 81% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like to receive the same level of training as career firefighters. This compares to 82% of the northwest respondents who would like to see an improvement in their level of training.

Response 5c- The survey indicated that 40% of the Meridian firefighters are displeased with having a different logo on their shirts. This compares to 35% of the northwest respondents who would like to be in a uniform identical to their full-time counterparts.

Response 5d- The survey indicated that 50% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are concerned that their positions will be eliminated if the department goes entirely full-time. This compares to 55% of the northwest respondents who see a trend towards departments going full-time in their area.

Response 5e- The survey indicated that 68% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are concerned that they do not have the same type of turnout equipment as the full-time staff. This compares to 69% of the northwest respondents who are concerned that they do not have the same type of turnout equipment.

Response 5f- The survey indicated that 22% of the full-time staff at Meridian are concerned that the fear that the PTOC are a threat to their positions. 24% of the respondents in the Northwest indicated that this is a problem in their departments.

Response 5g- The survey indicated that 63% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like to see improvements in the communication process. This compares to 65% of the northwest respondents.

Response 5h- The survey indicated that 68% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like to see career and part-time firefighters train together on Tuesday night drills. This compares to 74% of the northwest respondents who would like to have career and part-time firefighters train together on drill night.

Response 5i- The survey indicated that 27% of the Meridian Fire Fighters are aware of complaints that part-timers do not carry their share of the maintenance duties. This compares to 30% of the northwest respondents who are aware of similar concerns in their organizations.

Response 5j- The survey indicated that 54% of the part-time Meridian Fire Fighters are concerned about not being able to fill in for full-time staff during the week when they are available. This compares to 33% of the northwest respondents who had similar concerns about not allowing part-time employees to fill in for full-time staff.

Response 5k- The survey indicated that 22% of the part-time Meridian Fire Fighters are concerned about having different rules and regulations for the full-time staff. This compares to 26% of the northwest respondents who are concerned about having different rules and regulations for the full-time staff.

Survey Question 6. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?

Response 6a- The survey indicated that 59% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like the ability to work shifts with the full-timers on a scheduled basis. This compares to 57% of

the northwest respondents who are concerned about the ability to work shifts with the full-time personnel.

Response 6b- The survey indicated that 90% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like the ability to get more training. This compares to 87% of the northwest respondents who had similar concerns.

Response 6c- The survey indicated that 72% of the Meridian Fire Fighters would like to see standardization of requirements for volunteer drivers and officers. This compares to 68% of the northwest respondents.

Response 6d- The survey indicated that 68% of the Meridian Fire Fighters have real concerns about income protection in the event of a disabling injury. This compares to 72% of the northwest respondents.

Response 6e- The survey indicated that 72% of the part-time Meridian Fire Fighters would like to see some sort of retirement benefit provided to long time employees. This compares to 67% of the northwest respondents who would like to see some progress made in this area.

Response 6f- The survey indicated that 22% of the part-time Meridian Fire Fighters would like to have input on administrative policies and procedures. This compares to 25% of the northwest respondents who would like similar opportunities.

This concludes the results of the survey that was conducted of the Meridian Fire Department and fire departments located in the Northwest.

The results from the research question concerning the issue of staffing were as follows. According to a report completed in October of 2000 by the Fire Analysis & Research Division of the National Fire Protection Association, Meridian is seriously

understaffed as compared to other fire departments surveyed in the U.S. Fire Department Profile through 1999. Using the regionally adjusted factor for the West, MFD would require a total staff of 51.7 career firefighters. It was cited that an all-career staff in 69.7% of the departments profiled typically serves most cities of 55,000 people. In 17% of the departments profiled, they were served by mostly career staff.

The same research project indicated that Meridian should have 4.5 stations, staffing 4.73 pumpers and .935 aerial apparatus. In order for the Meridian Fire Department to meet the average staffing ratios of its two neighbors, the department would need 35 full-time emergency operations personnel and would need to ensure that at least nine of those personnel were on-duty at any one time.

This brings us to the final research question, What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?

The best way of reducing conflict is to have written policies and procedures. This formalizes the organization and clarifies roles and responsibilities within the organization.

The organization also needs to promote equality of training for paid and volunteer staff performing the same job. All firefighters must know the job equally well whether receiving compensation or not. Separate standards for firefighters drives a wedge between career and volunteer personnel. Officers should be held to the same standards of training and promotional testing criteria. Volunteer officers would gain the respect within the organization and with all the firefighters on the fireground if they went through the same testing procedure as their full-time counterparts. It is recognized that the preeminent

standard is the Fire Officers is the National Fire Protection Associations (NFPA) Standard 1021, Fire Officer Professional Qualifications.

It was cited that, while grace periods are appropriate, the practice of grandfathering is not appropriate. Grace periods require eventual compliance and a reasonable timetable should be established to complete the process of officer certification for all ranks.

Career and volunteer members should have equal access to training. Varied times for training may need to be provided to accommodate career or volunteer schedules. In departments that are making the rapid transition from primarily a volunteer organization to an organization of primarily full-time staff to maintain high standards.

The organization needs to provide a method by which respect and understanding is gained and maintained for all members of the organization. For the paid members of the service, this is their livelihood. Volunteers should respect this and understand that organizational changes and financial decisions often directly affect the job and income of the paid members. Career personnel should respect that volunteers are giving of their time for little or no compensation, and at the same risk of injury or death. Respect and understanding from both sides will go a long way toward reducing tensions between paid and volunteer service providers.

One program used by a department is to promote from within whenever possible. Many of the on-call paid personnel move into part-time positions, and many of the part-timers would love to work full-time if the opportunity became available.

One method to promote improved employee relations and teamwork is to have volunteers serve as the fourth person on a crew. This allows new personnel to respond on

more calls and see what is actually happening on-calls as primary responders.

DISCUSSION

The descriptive analysis was conducted in this project through literature review, volunteer or part-time, on-call firefighter surveys and interviews with fire service leaders. Conflict among career and part-time, on-call firefighters was most commonly a problem. The findings of the research project clearly indicated that the Meridian Fire Department is not experiencing anything unique, amongst combination departments across the nation.

In answering the research question, *what motivates people to become volunteer firefighters*, one must understand the underlying reasons for volunteering. The local fire department is part of every neighborhood, village and town. A lot of firefighters serve for the camaraderie associated with firefighting. One of the prime reasons firefighters in many areas volunteer is to get their foot in the door with an organization who has career staff or to gain the much needed experience factor to get a job with another organization.

It is important to note that a lot of firefighters enjoy the challenge of firefighting and variation from their regular jobs. A lot of part-time, on-call firefighters now serve for the money rather than some other altruistic reason. Some firefighters are fulfilling a higher level of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs such as self-esteem, self-satisfaction and self-actualization. This is the case with several of Meridian's long-term part-time firefighters, according to the survey results.

One organizational factor that causes conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff is the transition from primarily a volunteer organization to a career

organization. Combination fire departments that are in a state of transition can cause significant stress among those who prefer the status quo to change.

There is never any question that a full-time person will always be in charge at an incident, as always is the case with the Meridian Fire Department. The full-time members do have more training and experience. So there is a perception of a system of double standards because part-time firefighters cannot maintain the same level of training. The officers in the part-time ranks were promoted as a result of seniority, not by the fact they have passed any type of promotional testing process.

There is a real problem when a part-time firefighter fills in on a shift, because this is a direct threat to the full-time firefighter. Therefore, a part-timer is assigned to menial tasks. This is when the part-time firefighters are perceived as being a form of “scab” labor.

One of the key issues that could help to reduce conflict all around would be improved communications between the full-time and part-time staff. It was clear in the research that good communications are especially important in the case of the volunteer firefighter. This issue is particularly important as the department has an increasing presence of full-time staff.

It is very important that the roles and responsibilities be clarified for all members, full-time and part-time alike. This builds an organization based in interdependence and stresses teamwork on and off the emergency scene.

It will be important for the reimbursement program to be reviewed to insure that there are incentives for part-time, on-call firefighters to progress within the ranks. Volunteer management positions, if created, would help carry the administrative

workload generated by 18 part-time employees. This would assist with such issues as inside and outside training requirements and requests.

Based on the research material that was gathered for the project the long-term staffing needs of the organization will be a very complex issue to sort out. However, given the peak load periods for call volume and the fact that many of the part-time employees are not yet available for response, a very serious deficiency exists. The department needs to be staffed to meet its peak activity periods. Due to the expanded role for the fire service in all communities and given call volume increases, it could make it very difficult for the Meridian Fire Department to remain heavily dependent upon volunteer firefighters.

The type of community that Meridian is also influences this, with Meridian being a rapidly growing suburban area that has a lot of large retail stores who don't let their employees respond to fire calls during working hours. Meridian exemplifies an area in which a significant number of people commute to work (i.e. day population), on the flip side, Meridian is a bedroom community where people work in other areas, but come home to Meridian at night. This is causing a constantly dwindling supply of volunteers from which Meridian Fire Department can recruit for daytime responses.

It is acknowledged that the Meridian Fire Department is seriously understaffed for a district protecting 55,000 people. The International City Managers Association's guidelines suggest an immediate staffing need for 35 career firefighters to provide minimum staffing levels of 9 personnel available at all times. By comparison, the National Fire Protection Association's numbers indicated an immediate need for 51 personnel to provide on-duty minimum strength of 14 per operational period. According

to the National Fire Protection Department Profile, the Meridian Fire Department should be operating out of a minimum of 4 stations. Given the population projections for the year 2005, the city fathers will have employ an aggressive organizational growth plan to bring the fire department staffing up to what it needs to be for the population served.

In answer to the types of programs that would enhance the satisfaction of the part-time, on-call firefighters: The research revealed that a number of programs exist to improve the relations and motivations of part-time, on-call firefighters. One way is improved communications through the expanded use of technology to disseminate information in a timely manner. This includes such technology applications as the use of alphanumeric pagers, e-mail and web pages. This helps cut down on internal rumors and improves communications at all levels. This also helps part-timers feel informed and involved.

As organizations are faced with having to transition to more career staff, it was found through the research that the fire chief must set the tone that volunteers are an integral part of the organization, even if they do not respond to the majority of the calls. It is important that these volunteers be assigned specific roles and responsibilities to ensure the long-term commitment of these part-time employees.

Some ways to reduce friction and promote teamwork in combination departments is to promote equality. This can be accomplished by having all personnel train together, by the same criteria for handling fitness, training and promotional issues. The part-time staff needs to be involved in maintenance duties of the firehouse and apparatus. By maintaining the same level of job performance in volunteers as their paid counterparts the satisfaction is improved on both sides.

As in all organizations, involving employees—in this case firefighters—especially in decisions that affect both volunteer and career, is respectful and practical in order to accomplish buy-in from both employee groups.

Accordingly to the research and personal interviews conducted as part of this project, it is important to promote part-timers into career openings, when it is feasible. Upward mobility ranked high in the surveys conducted and was emphasized in the literature gathered.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Meridian Fire Department has a very limited personnel resources, therefore must make very efficient use of the resources it has at its disposal. It is very important that programs be implemented to reduce tension among staff and enhance the experience of being a part-time, on-call firefighter with the Meridian Fire Department. However, the department must also provide the proper staffing mix to insure the ability to deliver efficient levels of emergency medical services and fire suppression. It was also part of this research project to determine long-term need for the part-time, on-call program.

Based on the literature review and the opinions of experts in the field of volunteer firefighters, the most prudent course of action is to make a series of recommendations to enhance the experience of being a part-time, on-call firefighter and the effectiveness of the program.

It was recognized in the research that many people volunteer or become part-time employees to fulfill a need to help the community, their fellow man or a need of a much higher order, such as found on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. In some instances these

needs may be the need for “self actualization”. It is for this reason that public appreciation should be provided to all members. Many firefighters find the experience challenging and rewarding. Some part-time, on-call firefighters serve on the department for strictly monetary reasons. However, many serve in the department to gain valuable pre-employment job experience.

It is important for the organization to reduce friction and foster teamwork within. Some of the methods by which this can be accomplished are by having joint training sessions for all staff and having clear roles and responsibilities for maintenance duties. It is also important for the department to have one set of standards for fitness and the promotional process. It is important that the officer development program be based on recognized guidelines such as those found in the National Fire Protection Association’s Standard 1021. Training should be scheduled to provide both full-time and part-time employees equal access to basic and advanced training. As with any organization, good communications are extremely important and we must make full use of the technology available to us, such as e-mail and alphanumeric pagers.

It is important the department be staffed to provide minimum levels of fire protection and emergency medical services. It is recommended that the immediate staffing needs, based on the International City Managers Association’s guidelines, be established at 35 personnel with a minimum on-duty staff of 9 personnel available at all times. This recommendation is based on the peak load times for call volume compared to typical availability of part-time, on-call firefighters. The department has been growing very rapidly to catch up with the growth that has taken place in the service area. Despite

these efforts the department is significantly behind in the hiring process from where it needs to be, to serve a population of 55,000 people.

The resulting recommendations culminated in the development of goals to deal with the issues that were identified. This literature review assisted the Meridian Fire Department in identifying areas that were the most critical and needed attention. A lot of the lessons learned by the individuals who were included in the literature review were shared in this research paper, resulting in much improved body of knowledge on the subject of the use of volunteer firefighters in combination departments.

It is clear that managing a small department through a period of rapid growth will offer some real challenges. We must meet those challenges head-on to fulfill our department's mission.

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APPENDIX A- INTERVIEW WITH DIVISION CHIEF GARY SCHOLAR**CHICO FIRE DEPARTMENT**

gscholar@ci.chico.ca.us

On January 10, 2001 a phone interview was conducted with Chief Gary Scholar while he was in his office at the Fire Station in Chico. Chief Scholar holds a Bachelor of Science Degree in Management Sciences. . He holds an Associate of Arts Degree in Fire Science and is a Certified California Fire Service Instructor. He has been in the fire service for thirty years as a career firefighter. He has attended various classes at the National Fire Academy, as well as being a graduate of the EFO program. He has been a Division Chief of a combination department with sixty-one Career and thirty-five part-time, on-call firefighters.

The first question asked of Chief Scholar was what motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters? We find that a lot of our firefighters do not do it for the money, but for the camaraderie and the feeling of giving back to their community. Civic duty and civic pride, I just want to give something back to the community. And some participate in firefighting for the challenges associated with firefighting and the variation from their regular job. On the East Coast, they have a much more peer pressure and you are almost expected to be part of the volunteer fire department as a social expectation. In a rural area there is a much greater sense of community. On the West Coast it is a critical component on the entry-level firefighters resume. It is a way of getting preemployment job experience. And used much more as a career stepping stone. On

the West Coast, in most cases they get preferential treatment on career openings. If they get a passing score, irrespective level of a passing score, they get a chief's oral. You have to be a company member in good standing and served a minimum of six months.

What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff? When you use unionized people to do tasks normally assigned to unionized personnel. For example, they are not part of the minimum staffing or allowed driving apparatus. A Company member (volunteer) can ride as the fourth person on the engine at any time. In our organization, the company members have no rank structure. The only rank granted is the Administrative Lt. his/her role is to act as the Chiefs aide at fires. The Lieutenant functions as an administrative coordinator for company members being assigned firefighting roles. The training responsibility for the company members is assigned to the company officers and the training officer. Company members get a flat amount for showing up to calls, no matter how many calls they show up for. You must attend one of two company drills per month and respond to calls. The protective equipment for all personnel is all the same.

What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization? I would get them involved in the development of prefire plans of facilities. Also I would utilize them in non-traditional support roles, for example, public education programs in schools. I would to let them learn how to operate equipment, however they are currently only ancillary firefighters. I would to expand their role to have the ability to move equipment and provide logistical support. I would also like to get our company member in uniform pants, so all of our personnel look uniform. I don't want the public to have a perception of over staffing.

APPENDIX B- INTERVIEW WITH DAVID OCKERMAN

Volunteer Firefighter

daveockerman@home.com

On January the 23rd, 2001 a phone interview was conducted with David Ockerman, Volunteer Firefighter and Exercise & Training Coordinator for the Ada County Paramedics while he was in his Office. As a Volunteer Firefighter and the Exercise and Training Coordinator for the Ada County Paramedics has exposed him to not only being a volunteer firefighter but also a management perspective in the field of emergency services. He has been a ten-year volunteer firefighter and has been instrumental in the training of volunteer firefighters in such subjects as multiple patient incidents and mass casualty incidents. He worked extensively with Ada County Emergency Management to revamp the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) organization in the Ada County EOC to meet the challenges of Y2K.

He was instrumental in revising the operational portion of the medical service section of the County Emergency Plan. He assisted in the revision of the operational layout of the County Emergency Operations Center. He has received extensive ICS training for Medical Personnel for use in Mass Casualty Incidents.

The first question that was asked of Mr. Ockerman was what motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters?

I think things have changed over the years, I think the original driving force of volunteers and still is in many all volunteer departments is to be a part of the community, giving back something and/or protecting their neighbor.

Another force would be, being involved in the fire department while following a different full-time career path. Having the desire to be a firefighter but having a career that they are happy with or can't afford the pay cut to begin as an entry-level firefighter, which is my situation.

The last and most common driving force today with many combination departments is the ability to use their initial training and affiliation with the department to move to a career position, which I see more of all the time.

The second question asked of Dave Ockerman was from your perspective what organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?

The biggest problem I see is the fear of paid staff that volunteers could be used to replace their position or more likely that volunteers work overtime shifts that could be money that they would have made. This is probably the biggest complaint I have heard is being referred to as, "scab labor", otherwise preventing them from bringing in extra income.

This is a hard choice for management, because when the department is in a budgetary crunch such as neighboring North Ada County Fire & Rescue, volunteers working shift bring down the cost of covering those extra shifts. However neighboring Whitney Fire District, did not allow volunteers to work shifts, this created huge amounts of overtime for their paid staff who eventually start becoming burned out from the overtime. The big problem is providing shift coverage while being fair for both career and volunteer personnel, while not causing conflict between the two groups.

I think that both career and volunteer staff believe that we are all on scene to help the public and work together while looking out for each other. I think on scene that this is what happens and hope that conflicts are never so deep as to compromise safety. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization? I think that the days of volunteer firefighters in combination departments are numbered. With all the requests for medical assistance we go on, it is just not cost effective to pay call back for short periods of time, however call back for fires or other large or extended incidents is essential. The trend now is to only respond back to the station or the scene on fires, extended incidents (cardiac arrests, extrications) or when both stations are out at the same time. To offset that, we are paid to come in and work 12-48 hours per month as a fourth person, plus we still have the opportunity to cover shifts when asked. This has allowed the new personnel to respond on more calls and see what is actually happening on-calls rather than being “truck washers”. I think that for the most part it has improved the relationship between career and volunteer personnel in a less threatening atmosphere.

Two other issues that should be considered are volunteer retirement and disability insurance. Currently we have a retirement program in place; a 20-year volunteer can retire out with a \$10,000 check. Not many volunteers make it to this milestone anymore. The disability insurance, we are currently working on. Work comp would devastate an injured volunteer; the departments need to start picking up the ball on this issue. We should look to see if Provident or Hartford could provide this type of. I think this is a very important issue that you should consider as a benefit for our volunteers.

APPENDIX C- INTERVIEW WITH FIRE CHIEF WILLIAM WESTON

Bellows Falls Fire Department, Vermont

bweston@sover.net

On January 6, 2001 a phone interview was conducted with Chief William Weston while he was in his office at the Fire Station in Bellows Falls. Chief Weston is the past President of the Vermont Career Fire Chiefs Association, past Board Member for Vermont Fire Service Training Council and currently serves as the Vice President for Southwestern New Hampshire Fire Mutual Aid Council. He has been in the fire service for twenty-three years as a volunteer and career firefighter. He has attended various classes at the National Fire Academy, as well as being a graduate of the EFO program. He holds an Associate of Arts Degree in Fire Science and is a Certified Vermont Fire Service Instructor. He has been in the Fire Service for 23 years, 7 years as Chief of all volunteer Department and seven years as chief with of a combination department with five Career and 25 On-Call personnel.

In my experience dealing with volunteer personnel it depends what the balance is between career and volunteer staff. This will be a determining factor of how the volunteer firefighters are treated and accepted. If there are more volunteer firefighters on the department than career the sentiment will be that these volunteer firefighters are valued more because they are needed as primary responders. The career staff understands that they can't function without them. The key is to treat them similar or as close to the same as you can (career vs. volunteer) so there is no perception of a system of double standards. If there is a overwhelming number of career staff, still treat them as

equal as possible but assign the career staff specific jobs and or duties, for example Safety, Rehab, Logistics, Chief's Aid etc.

I encourage using the hold the career and volunteering staff to the same standards. This will lessen perception of incompetence of anyone.

In my experience there are two primary reasons why people want to be volunteer firefighters. The most typical reason is they would like to become a full-time firefighter. The second reason is that they can't or don't want to meet the requirements of a full-time firefighter but still want to be associated with the fire Department and respond on-calls. It is true there are some that want to provide assistance to their communities but this depends on the location.

My preference is to integrate volunteer members into the existing career system. This may not always be possible due to their acceptance by the career staff. If the full-time staff is reluctant to recognize the volunteer staff you can do two things. First you can make them recognize them if necessary by contract language or in general by keep up overall strong support for the volunteer staff in all operations. Secondly, you can design a separate but equal Call system with-in the department where the volunteer firefighters are assigned a piece or pieces of equipment that they are responsible for. This makes the volunteer officers and firefighters responsible for their own operational readiness. I don't like this approach, because I think it forms a split in the dept, it will depend on the attitude of the career staff. You can (and probably do) fill the hire list from the volunteer firefighter roster or at least give them preference in department hiring.

APPENDIX D- INTERVIEW WITH A/C MARK WENDELSDORF**Caldwell Fire Department, Idaho****mwendelsdorf@ci.caldwell.id.us**

To accomplish this, an interview was conducted with Assistant Chief Mark Wendelsdorf to answer the following research questions about part-time, on-call firefighters. On January 22, 2001 a phone interview was conducted with Chief Wendelsdorf while he was in his office at the Fire Station in Caldwell, Idaho. Assistant Chief Wendelsdorf is the President of the Idaho Training Officers Section of the Idaho Fire Chiefs Association. He was one of that instrumental in forming the Treasure Valley Training Officers Cooperative. He has been in the fire service for fifteen years as a volunteer and career firefighter. He has attended various classes at the National Fire Academy, as well as being a graduate of the EFO program. He holds an Associate of Arts Degree in Fire Science and Bachelor's Degree in Public Administration from the State of Illinois. He is a Certified Idaho Fire Service Instructor and is a Team Leader on the Southwest Idaho Hazardous Material Response Team. He is the Assistant Chief/Training Officer of a combination department with 18 career staff and 14 part-time, on-call staff.

The first question asked of Chief Wendelsdorf was what motivates people to become part-time, on-call firefighters? We have found that there are two motivating factors for our volunteers. First, are those who wish to serving their community. These individuals generally only stay a few years, as demands on their life change so does their priorities. Today's employers do not cut much slack for missing work hours for calls and training. This in turn has seriously affected our agencies ability to recruit volunteer firefighters.

The second group is trying to get their foot in the door for full-time employment as Firefighters. These individuals are generally only with the department until a job offer comes along. The day of the 20-year volunteer is rare in today's society.

What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff? I believe by not having a different standards or requirements for each group they lead to or develop the conflict. Why do I have to do it if they don't... is a very common expression.

Like all emergency operations when things do start to go wrong one of the causes is communications. It is a must to keep the communications lines open, thus preventing conflicts, and addressing each other's needs. For example full-time personnel must know the Part-time, on-call staff will not take their jobs.

What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization? At the Caldwell Fire Department we have a program that uses elected representatives from the Part-time, on-call ranks to represent them in as the department sets policy. This group works with the department administration in the development of goals/procedures/directions that directly effect the Part-time, on-call staff. In addition full-time personnel also have the same type of opportunity.

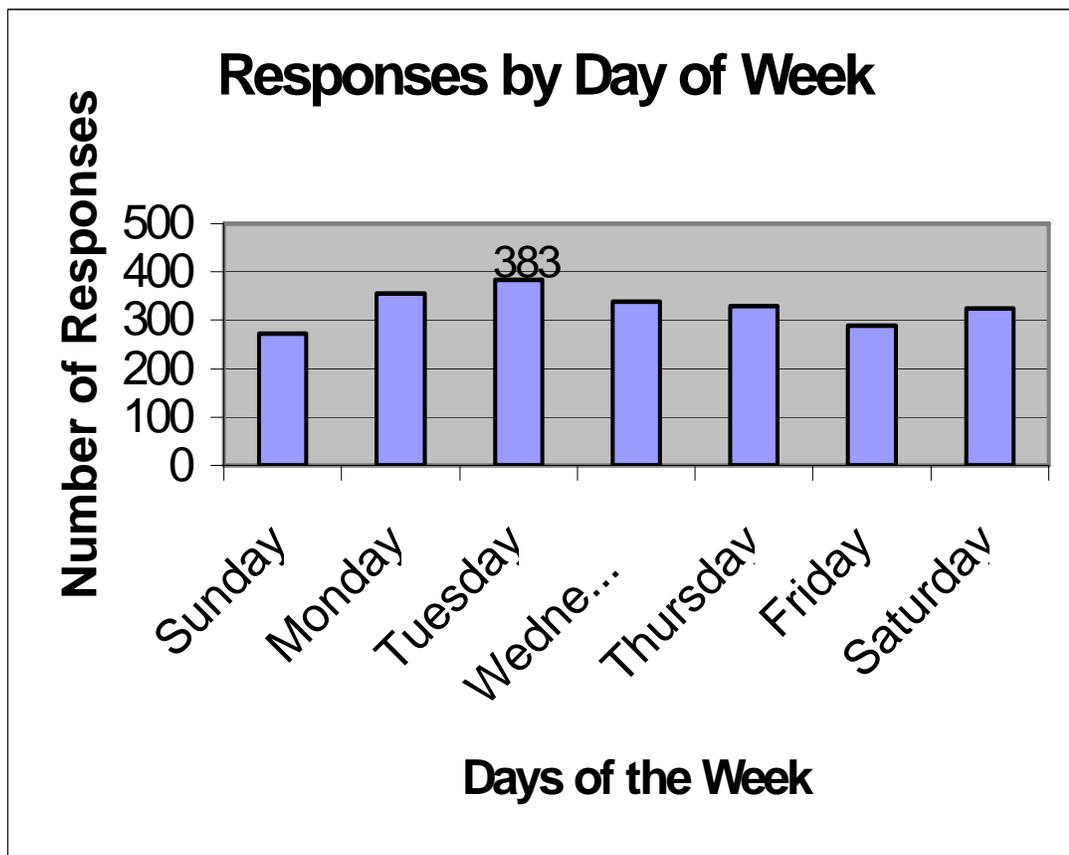
APPENDIX E- POPULATION PROJECTIONS

Population Projections

The current population of the MFD service area is 49,000. Future population growth within the community is expected to be significant. The chart below shows estimated population projections for the city. The district's population is estimated based on the city projections.

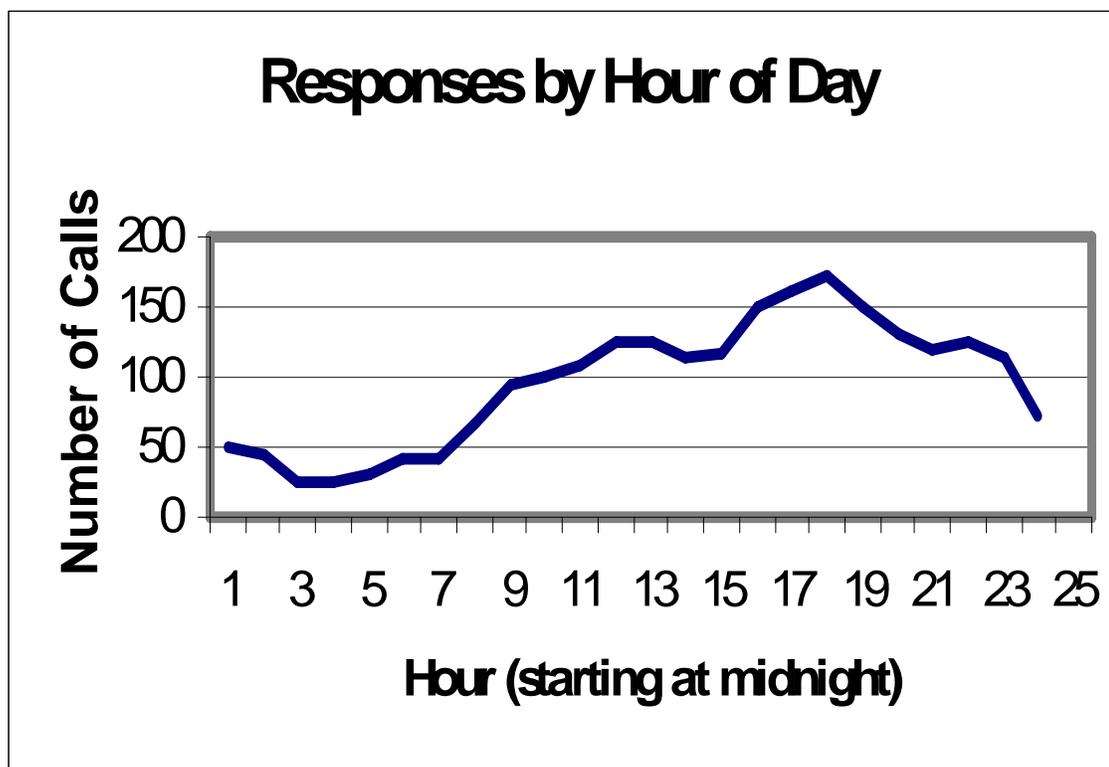
Year	City	District	Total Population
2000	40,000	13,000	53,000
2005	51,600	14,300	65,900
2010	62,000	15,730	77,730
2015	70,000	16,500	86,500
2020	79,200	17,500	96,700

Figures are based on Meridian Planning & Zoning Department's projections for population growth.

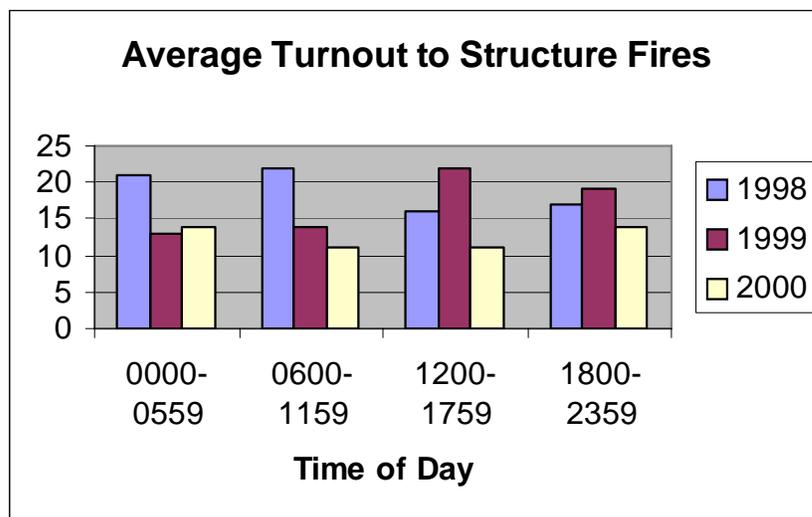
APPENDIX F- RESPONSES BY DAY OF WEEK

Source: Ada County Dispatch Response Records for the Year 2000

APPENDIX G- RESPONSES BY HOUR OF DAY



Source: Ada County Dispatch Response Records for the Year 2000

APPENDIX H- AVERAGE TURNOUT TO STRUCTURE FIRES

Source: Meridian Fire Department Payroll Records

APPENDIX I- PROVIDING EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES

Providing Emergency Medical Service
By Community Size (Percent), 1996-1998

	No		EMS	
Population Protected	EMS	EMS	and ALS	Total
50,000 to 99,999	15	42	43	100%
Total	46	42	12	100%

85% of the departments the size of Meridian provide some form of Emergency Medical Service.

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 1997-99.

ALS refers to fire departments providing advanced life support.

Source: Table 17 U.S. Fire Department Profile 24 NFPA Fire Analysis and Research, Quincy, MA.

APPENDIX J- CAREER FIREFIGHTER RATES BY REGION

Median Rates of Career Firefighters per 1,000 People

By Region and Population Protected, 1999

Population Protected	Northeast	North-central	South	West
50,000 to 99,999	2.07	1.28	1.56	0.94

Meridian's service population of 55,000 X .94 = 51.7 The number of career firefighters on a regionally-adjusted basis.

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 1999.

The rates of a particular size of community may vary widely because departments face great variation in their specific circumstances and policies, including unusual structural conditions, types of service provided to the community, geographic dispersion of the community, and other factors.

Career rates are shown only for communities over 25,000, where departments are comprised mostly of career firefighters.

Source: Table 6 *U.S. Fire Department Profile 9 NFPA Fire Analysis and Research*, Quincy, MA.

APPENDIX K- DEPARTMENT TYPE BY POPULATION PROTECTED

Department Type by Population Protected, 1999

Population Protected	Type of Department (Percent)				Total
	All Career	Mostly Career	Mostly Volunteer	All Volunteer	
50,000 to 99,999	69.7	17.0	8.5	4.8	100.0
All Departments	5.7	5.4	15.6	73.6	100.0

Source: NFPA Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience, 1999.

Type of department is broken into four categories. All career departments are comprised of 100% career firefighters. Mostly career is comprised of 51 to 99% career firefighters, while mostly volunteer is comprised of 1 to 50% career firefighters. All volunteer departments are comprised of 100% volunteer firefighters.

Source: Table 12 U.S. Fire Department Profile 17 NFPA Fire Analysis and Research, Quincy, MA.

APPENDIX L- AVERAGE APPARATUS AND STATION PROTECTION

Average Apparatus and Station Rates per 1,000 People

By Community Size, 1997-99

	Pumpers per	Aerial Apparatus per	Stations per
Population Protected	1,000 People	1,000 People	1,000 People
50,000 to 99,999	.086	.017	.082
National Average	.254	.023	.192

Based on this information, Meridian would have $55,000 \times .086 = 4.73$ pumpers.

Based on this information, Meridian would have $55,000 \times .017 = .935$ aerial apparatus.

Based on this information Meridian would have $55,000 \times .082 = 4.51$ stations.

Source: NFPA Fire Service Survey, 1997-99.

These results reflect average apparatus and station rates per 1,000 people
By population protected reported to the NFPA.

Source: Table 9 U.S. Fire Department Profile 19 NFPA Fire Analysis and Research, Quincy, MA.

APPENDIX M- CAREER FIREFIGHTERS BY LOCAL COMPARISON

National Standard	Source	Meridian	Nampa	Caldwell
National average of on-duty staff per 1,000 population = .48	International City /County Management Association (ICMA)	.04 per 1,000 population	.20 1,000 population	.18 1,000 population
National average total emergency operations personnel per 1,000 population = 1.59	International City /County Management Association (ICMA)	.18 per 1,000 population	.70 per 1,000 population	.72 per 1,000 population

In order for the Meridian Fire Department to meet the average staffing ratios of its two neighbors, the department would need 35 full-time emergency operations personnel and would need to ensure that at least nine of those personnel were on-duty at any one time.

APPENDIX N- PART-TIME FIREFIGHTER SURVEY

January 15, 2001

Dear Fire Service Professional:

Subject: Volunteer Firefighter Survey

I am in the process of writing a research paper for an *Executive Leadership* class at the National Fire Academy. Your agency has been selected for being a like size agency and/or one with a similar population. I am doing research on motivation of volunteer/part-time, on-call firefighters for my organization and I am seeking your help. In order to facilitate the information that I need, I would like you to take a few moments to fill out the attached questionnaire.

I appreciate your time and effort in helping to improve our part-time, on-call firefighter program. Please return the survey by January 31, 2001.

Thank You,

Joseph Silva

Assistant Fire Chief

Meridian Fire Department

Voice (208) 888-1234

Fax (208) 389-1055

E-mail- JosephS195@aol.com

Name: Department:

Position/Rank:

Contact Address:

City: State:

Work Phone: Fax Number:

E-mail Address:

1. What type of fire department does your community have?
Career ____ Volunteer ____ Combination ____ Part-time, on-call____
2. Number of Career staff _____
Number of Volunteer/ Part-time, on-call_____
3. Population served by the City/District_____

Circle the responses that reflect your feelings about the following issues:

4. What motivates you to want to become a part-time, on-call firefighter?
 - a. To give something back to my community
 - b. For the money
 - c. For the excitement
 - d. For the challenge of the job
 - e. As a step towards a full-time position
 - f. Wanting to be a firefighter, but I can't afford the pay cut
 - g. For the camaraderie
 - h. To retain association with the fire department that I have been a part of since it was entirely volunteer

5. What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?
 - a. Difference in pay
 - b. Training to the same level as career firefighters
 - c. Different logo on our shirts (different uniform requirements)
 - d. Fear that the department will go entirely full-time
 - e. Turnout equipment is different
 - f. Fear by the full-time employees, that we could take their job away
 - g. Lack of communications
 - h. Not having career and part-time firefighters train together on Tuesday night drills
 - i. Complaints that part-time do not carry their share of the maintenance duties
 - j. Not allowing part-time employees to fill in for full-time staff during the week when we are available
 - k. Having different rules and regulations than the full-time staff
 - l. Not enough part-time to carry the call volume
6. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?
 - a. The ability to work shifts with the full-time
 - b. More training
 - c. Standardization of requirements for drivers & officers
 - d. Income protection in the event of a disabling injury
 - e. Some sort of retirement benefit
 - f. Input on Administrative policies and procedures

APPENDIX O- PART-TIME FIREFIGHTER SURVEY RESULTS

1. All 91 individuals who responded to the survey were with combination fire departments.
2. Number of career staff? Number of volunteer or part-time, on-call staff?

	Average Number of Career Staff	Average Number of Volunteer/PTOC Staff
Response within Meridian FD	18	22
Responses within the Northwest	34	58

3. What is the population of your service area (city, town, village or district)?

	10,000-25,000	25,000-50,000	50,000 or 75,000	Totals	Average Population Served
Responses within MFD			1	1	51,000
Responses within the Northwest	7	40	43	90	45,154
Total Responses	7	40	44	91	

4. What motivates you to want to become a part-time, on-call firefighter?

	Number of Responses Possible	MFD 22	MFD 100 %	NW 90	NW 100%
a. To give something back to my community	8	36%	36	41%	
b. For the money	14	63%	52	58%	
c. For the excitement	18	81%	73	82%	
d. For the challenge of the job	13	59%	55	62%	
e. As a step towards a full-time position	19	86%	71	79%	
f. Wanting to be a firefighter, but I can't afford the pay cut	4	18%	17	19%	
g. For the camaraderie	15	68%	63	71%	
h. To retain association with the fire department that I have been a part of since it was entirely volunteer	10	45%	42	47%	

5. What organizational factors cause conflict between part-time, on-call and full-time staff?

	Number of Responses Possible	MFD 22	MFD 100%	NW 90	NW 100%
a. Difference in pay	6	27%	22	25%	
b. Training to the same level as career firefighters	18	81%	73	82%	
c. Different logo on our shirts (different uniform requirements)	9	40%	31	35%	
d. Fear that the department will go entirely full-time	11	50%	49	55%	
e. Turnout equipment is different	15	68%	62	69%	
f. Fear by the full-time employees, that we could take their job away	5	22%	21	24%	
g. Lack of communications	14	63%	58	65%	

h. Not having career and part-time firefighters train together on Tuesday night drills	15	68%	66	74%
i. Complaints that part-time do not carry their share of the maintenance duties	6	27%	27	30%
j. Not allowing part-time employees to fill in for full-time staff during the week when we are available	12	54%	30	33%
k. Having different rules and regulations than the full-time staff	5	22%	23	26%

6. What type of programs could be implemented to enhance the satisfaction of part-time, on-call firefighters in the organization?

	Number of Responses Possible	MFD	MFD	NW	NW
		22	100%	90	100%
a. The ability to work shifts with the full-time		13	59%	51	57%
b. More training		20	90%	78	87%
c. Standardization of requirements for drivers & officers		16	72%	61	68%
d. Income protection in the event of a disabling injury		15	68%	64	72%
e. Some sort of retirement benefit		16	72%	60	67%
f. Input on Administrative policies and procedures		5	22%	22	25%