NORTHEAST KINGDOM CONSORTIUM

REGIONAL FIRE SERVICES FEASIBILITY STUDY APPENDICES

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LISTING OF APPENDICES

- ***Appendix A - A Call to Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service***
- ***Appendix B - ICMA Article - Stronger Together Making the Case for Consolidating Regional Fire Services***
- ***Appendix C - NVFC Volunteer Retention Research Report - August 2020***
- ***Appendix D - CAI GIS Mapping***
- ***Appendix E - Example Standard Operating Guidelines Index and Policy***
- ***Appendix F - Example Bylaws***

APPENDIX A

A Call to Action: Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service

Municipal Resources

A Call for Action

The Blue Ribbon Report

Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service

Volunteer & Combination

Est. 1994

International Fire Chiefs Association

Officers Section

A Call for Action

The Blue Ribbon Report

Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service

MARCH 2004

A Call for Action

The Blue Ribbon Report

Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service

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Executive Summary

America's volunteer fire service has faithfully served our nation for more than 300 years. Volunteer firefighters serve their communities with dedication and enthusiasm. Volunteer fire departments save local communities approximately $37 billion per year—money that can be reinvested to improve local infrastructure, social programs and minimize the local tax burden.

Since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, America has learned that local emergency responders are the community's FIRST line of response, regardless of the event. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and tenure of local emergency service providers. The volunteer fire service faces significant challenges in overcoming a basic lack of resources—both financial and in human capital. Only by aggressively confronting both of these issues will we create the necessary atmosphere of stability that will allow volunteer fire and rescue departments to meet the new expectations and challenges of the 21st century.

While volunteer firefighters and emergency workers provide a tremendous contribution to our country, they are often under-funded and ill-equipped. Lacking cohesive national leadership, efforts to correct these problems are often fragmented and ineffective. Additionally, volunteer fire departments have a difficult time retaining volunteers. Ultimately, much of the blame for these problems can be attributed to poor leadership. Unfortunately, there are few programs at the local, state or national level to assist fire chiefs and volunteer managers in acquiring the knowledge and skills necessary for effective management.

Support from the local, state and federal levels is necessary to ensure that the volunteer fire service continues to be a full partner with all facets of homeland security response and effectively functions as the first line of defense within local communities. The International Association of Fire Chiefs believes that by enacting the specific recommendations outlined in the text of this report, we can enhance the role of the volunteer fire service in this critical mission. The most important of those recommendations are outlined below.

At the **local** level, we must:

1. Emphasize the importance of local support for this basic community service
2. Provide appropriate levels of funding for necessary safety gear and training
3. Engage in strategic planning that emphasizes volunteer retention
4. Use mutual aid to offset service and technical deficiencies
5. Use uniform incident management systems
6. Use performance measurement to measure and analyze response times, fire fighting effectiveness, training and retention rates of volunteer fire departments.

At the **state** level, we must:

1. Emphasize the importance of the state government in developing and promoting disaster planning
2. Certify fire and emergency medical services (EMS) personnel to comply with basic training standards
3. Promote regional service delivery where local capabilities and technical expertise are weak
4. Provide statewide volunteer benefit programs to protect both the firefighter and employer from the risks associated with volunteer fire service.

Finally, at the **federal** level, we must:

1. Work to produce a national climate encouraging individuals to volunteer within their local communities

A Call for Action

The Blue Ribbon Report

Preserving and Improving the Future of the Volunteer Fire Service

Introduction

America's volunteer fire service is deeply woven into the basic fabric of our nation. According to the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), there are close to 800,000 volunteer firefighters across the United States, and the majority of this nation's geographical area is protected by volunteer fire departments. Of all the fire departments in America, 73 percent are all-volunteer departments.

Firefighters, both career and volunteer, are extremely dedicated to public service. This trait explains why firefighters often take tremendous risks to save the lives of the citizens they are sworn to protect. Volunteer firefighters, because of their diverse educational and employment backgrounds, bring tremendous depth and diversity to any emergency scene based upon their regular jobs and expertise in their communities. In many cases, volunteer firefighters invest an enormous amount of time and dedication to fire fighting, moving the fire service forward through improved fire fighting techniques and technological innovations.

Volunteer firefighters provide an enormous economic benefit to our nation. It is estimated that volunteer firefighters save the American taxpayers $37 billion per year that can be reinvested in each community's infrastructure, social and other community programs, and/or a general reduction in local taxes.

Unfortunately, despite their tremendous contribution to American society, volunteer fire departments are often underfunded and ill-equipped, putting many in a position where they must raise their own operational funds to provide apparatus and safety equipment. In addition, the number of volunteer firefighters is declining across the country. During the mid-1980s, it was estimated the volunteer fire service was more than 880,000 members strong, but those numbers have dropped to less than 800,000 in recent years. Finally, the volunteer and combination fire service continues to be unorganized across the nation with no clear leadership representing the volunteers. It has no unified position on national legislative initiatives or research issues affecting their services. Volunteer departments and their managers will continue to struggle until local, state and national attention directs a concentrated effort to assist in preserving and improving the management of this long-standing American tradition.

The perception of the role of emergency services changed with the events of Sept. 11, 2001. These attacks against America changed the expectations of local emergency providers who are now clearly each community's first line of response, regardless of the event. As the country and local communities re-evaluate their abilities to respond and

handle new threats, such as weapons of mass destruction and biological incidents, the stability of the American volunteer fire service has become a significant issue. Community protection and well-being depends on the experience, expertise and longevity of local emergency service providers. It becomes imperative that local communities understand that the homeland is secure when the hometown is secure. Local communities and the leadership of those communities will look toward the volunteer fire department for answers to questions of terrorist threats and threat assessment. Enhancing the overall community safety is a new responsibility for local responders. Significant improvements in the volunteer fire service will be necessary to improve retention and create an atmosphere of stability, allowing local, volunteer fire departments to meet the new expectations and challenges of the 21st century.

Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments Across the United States: Examples of Value and Effectiveness

Campbell County, Wyo., is governed by a Joint Powers Fire Board and covers the City of Gillette, the Town of Wright and all of Campbell County, with a total response area of 5,000 square miles and a population of approximately 40,000 residents. One third of the nation's coal supply is mined in this community. The combination fire department is composed of 19 career positions and 175 volunteers. The volunteer firefighters of Campbell County have saved local taxpayers more than $21 million in wages alone since 1996. The department's savings are calculated on the reduced need for full-time career staffing and the actual dollar savings for 226,243 donated hours during the study period. When assigned a value of $16.05 per volunteer hour (used as a national mean), the volunteer contribution of $3,413,244 annually becomes a significant savings for the community.

The Campbell County Fire Department provides all of the normal city emergency services—fire suppression, emergency medical response, rescue, etc. It enjoys an above average working relationship with law enforcement and provides extensive industrial and wildland fire response expertise. The department offers full administrative services including building inspections, plan reviews, investigations, public education, vehicle and building maintenance, and an aggressive industrial fire training and hazardous materials training program to community businesses. All career employees provide both shift coverage and administrative duties. Tactical operations are considered fully integrated and all personnel, regardless of career or volunteer status, meet the same training and experience standards for the rank that they hold. The department retention rate for volunteers is 17 years per person.

The department is family based with yearly activities that support and promote a strong family unit. The department sponsors the Campbell County Cadet Program, which functions as a worksite for juvenile offenders and was chosen as the number one Junior Emergency Services program in the United States in 2000 by Volunteer Fire Insurance Services. Volunteers are active in a number of community events throughout the calendar year, including a community pancake feed serving more than 2,000 people on the Fourth of July and a number of fundraising projects to assist less fortunate families in the community.

The midwest village of ***Tinley Park, Ill.*** is protected by a 120-member paid on-call volunteer fire department. All firefighters are certified and tested under the state of Illinois certification program. Tinley Park provides coverage for hazardous materials incidents, and features a Combined Area Rescue Team (CART) that provides special services for building collapse and major structural incidents, as well as a Rapid Intervention Team (RIT). All department members are trained to the Hazardous Materials Awareness level, and members of CART and RIT are certified by the state of Illinois.

The department also employs two personnel specializing in public education, inspections, preplanning, and investigations, supporting the overall safety mission of the department and relieving these administrative duties from the volunteers. It is the largest volunteer fire department of this type in the state of Illinois, protecting a population of 56,000 residents and an estimated 100,000 daytime work population within the 17-square mile area. Full city services are provided from four fully equipped fire stations, and personnel are trained at a state-of-the-art training center. Tinley Park has an Insurance Services Office (ISO) rating of Class 3. The department averages 800 calls per year with a

turnout rate of 30 firefighters per call.[v] The department also assists the local EMS provider with incidents requiring extrication or reported entrapment. All fire department motorized equipment is secured through fund drives. For example, in 2004, community fund drives will finance and pay for the cost of one Class A pumper and a one combination Quint 95' aerial unit with a total cost $1,500,000.

The department boasts a retention rate of approximately six years per firefighter. Because of the volunteer coverage, the estimated yearly savings to the village exceeds $3,744,000 per year, deducting the direct volunteer expenses. This is one-quarter the cost of a full-time department.

In ***German Township, Ind.***, the predominantly volunteer department (two paid personnel and 70 active volunteers) serves 11,000 residents and provides the community a direct savings in staffing costs of $441,000 per year. German Township Volunteer Fire Department responds with an average of 10 volunteer personnel per call. To replace the volunteers with an all paid staff would cost their residents more than $1.5 million dollars annually.

The community is a suburban bedroom community. Nearly 99 percent of the residents own their residences, and 50 percent of the population has moved into the community within the last 10 years. The fire protection challenges are significantly impacted by the availability of water. A large segment of the population and geographical area has a rural water system that does not provide hydrants every 500 or 1,000 feet. The other portion of the population is protected by a municipal water system that does provide hydrants in the normal configuration. The water or lack of it requires the department purchase apparatus with large water tanks.

The department historically has made a significant commitment to training its members. It has always been its goal that each member is highly trained and competent in all necessary skills. The department's training program is outcome-based and requires a significant investment of time and energy. The instructional staff has identified more than 70 basic skills, and written drills have been developed to allow members to train and measure their competency without attending every regular training session. These basic skills drills have significantly improved the members' competency. They know that when confronted with a dangerous situation, they will be able to perform the fire ground evolution safely and effectively.

Leadership development and certification are encouraged, and in most cases tuition reimbursement is available for course work. The promotional process for leadership positions is based upon a written test, experience, education, seniority and personal performance evaluation. It is not based upon an election or the buddy system. Officers maintain their ranks on a permanent basis provided they continue to receive satisfactory evaluations.

The ***Ponderosa Volunteer Fire Department*** is an ISO Class 3 rated, combination fire department in northern Harris County (Houston), Texas—the third most populous county in the nation. The department, formed in 1972 as population growth in the area exploded, currently serves a population of approximately 45,000 people in 13 square miles and provides the community a direct savings of $439,000 per year based on the hours donated by volunteers. To provide the same coverage with an all-career department would cost the taxpayers an additional $3,315,000 per year in personnel expenses.[vi]

The county lacks the tax base to provide the necessary funding to transition to full-time career positions. The Emergency Services District levies a tax of 6 cents per hundred dollars of evaluation, which equates to $60 per $100,000 of property value that fund all operating and capital expenditures. The 65 volunteers continually demonstrate their commitment to the community by their performance and by maintaining a very effective response system that includes fire, technical rescue, EMS first response, water rescue, hazardous materials response, public education and a host of other services. The cost of the high quality services is only $27 per resident, which compares to full career departments that are above $110 per resident.[vii]

The ***Roseville, Minn. Fire Department*** is staffed by two full-time career firefighters and 70 volunteer firefighters serving a first-ring suburb of Minneapolis and St. Paul. The volunteers represent a vast cross-section of the community, ranging in age from 18 to 55. The chosen full-time career fields of Roseville's volunteers include: police officers, accountants, software engineers, bankers, career firefighters, city employees, teachers and a dentist. More than half of the department's members have college degrees. In addition to their very demanding full-time jobs and family commitments, each volunteer contributes an average of 16 hours every week serving the community. Many say that serving as a volunteer firefighter completes their lives, giving them an opportunity to serve others during difficult times and gives them a reward and sense of fulfillment and teamwork they are unable to achieve in their full-time occupations.

Providing fire and rescue services from three stations, the volunteer department consumes only 3.8 percent of the city's $35 million budget, easily earning it the accolades of best value in town. In addition to an intense commitment to provide high quality service for the department's 700 annual emergency responses, members contribute thousands of hours supporting hundreds of community events each year. Throughout the summer, Roseville firefighters are frequent visitors to the city's 28 parks, giving hundreds of kids of all ages an opportunity to ride a fire engine and learn fire prevention tips. Firefighters will dress-up a parent in firefighter gear, using the opportunity to teach kids about the equipment firefighters use while educating the parents about the cost of a firefighter's ensemble. Kids are quizzed on fire safety and awarded prizes for correct answers. Roseville's firefighters attend more than 100 community block parties each year, regularly visit senior centers and pre-schools, hosts birthday parties in the fire stations and occasionally show up with a fire engine when the candles are lit on the cake during a celebration of a special senior resident's birthday.

Each and every one of these events represents an opportunity to educate, a role the department takes seriously. While some departments focus primarily on the response to emergency calls, in Roseville, the priority is prevention and education. It's no accident that first line of the department's mission statement reads "To continually strive for the prevention of fires, injuries and accidents…" When it comes to emergency responses, the department is well-trained, well-equipped and well-prepared. In 2001, the ISO scored the department with a 79.36 (ISO Rating 3).

Issues Confronting the Volunteer Fire Service

While there are many volunteer fire departments across the country that play a vibrant role in their community—as exemplified by the examples mentioned in the previous section—much of the volunteer fire service across the United States is currently in crisis. While many departments function at a very high level, many other departments struggle for their very existence. Particularly in rural areas, volunteer departments are closing their doors and shuttering their windows for two basic reasons: 1) lack of financial resources and 2) lack of volunteers. But this problem is not only found in rural America. Many volunteer departments in more populated areas are in a state of crisis and face a deep-seated struggle to provide adequate services. In order to ensure that we maintain a vibrant, capable volunteer fire service throughout the United States, we must confront both of these complex problems head on.

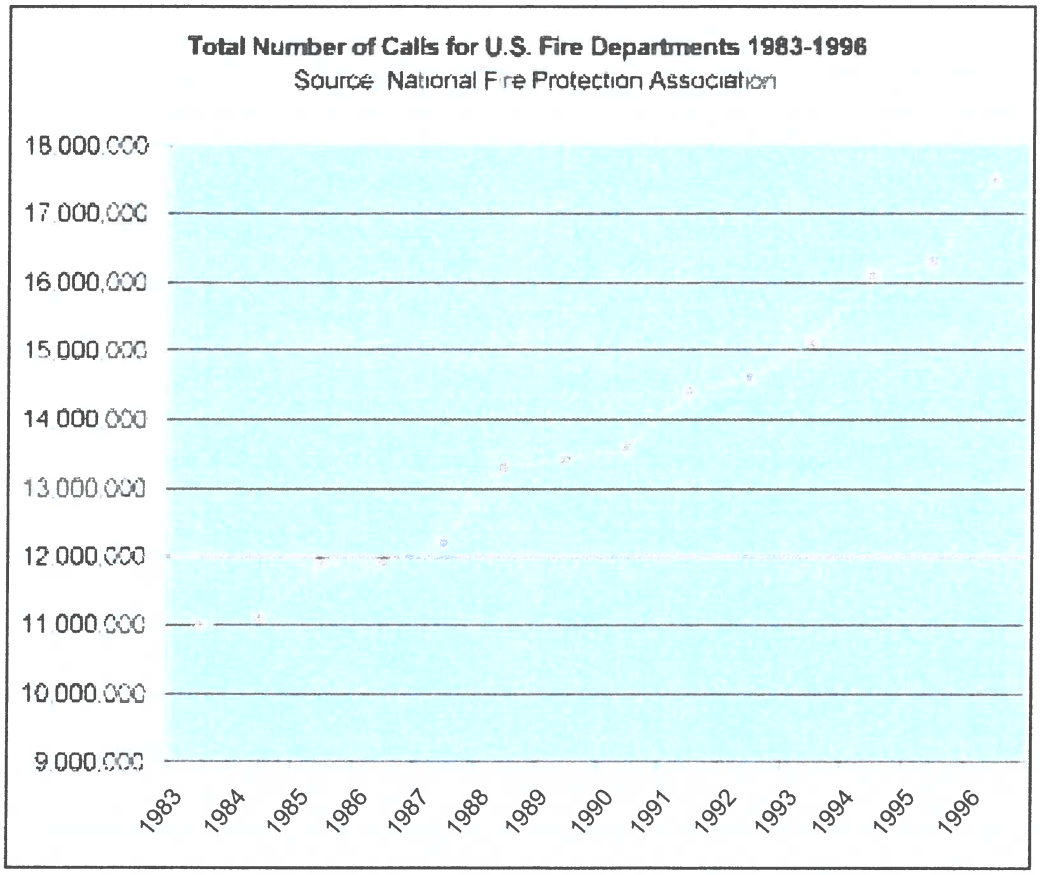
LACK OF RESOURCES

Few local governments understand the true value of their local volunteer fire department—both in financial terms as well as the social capital generated by the department. A number of departments are independent corporations that do not have direct attachment to their local government, yet they are the sole providers of emergency services. In addition, volunteer fire departments often serve as the social and communal hub of their towns. As detailed by the earlier examples, volunteer fire departments save local communities significant expenses. Unfortunately, most volunteer firefighters not only donate their time for this basic community service but also are required to spend a significant amount of time conducting fundraisers to generate revenue. In many communities, local governments take for granted the services provided by the volunteer fire department. They are not willing to assist with even the most basic expenses, such as appropriate safety gear, functional apparatus or station facilities.

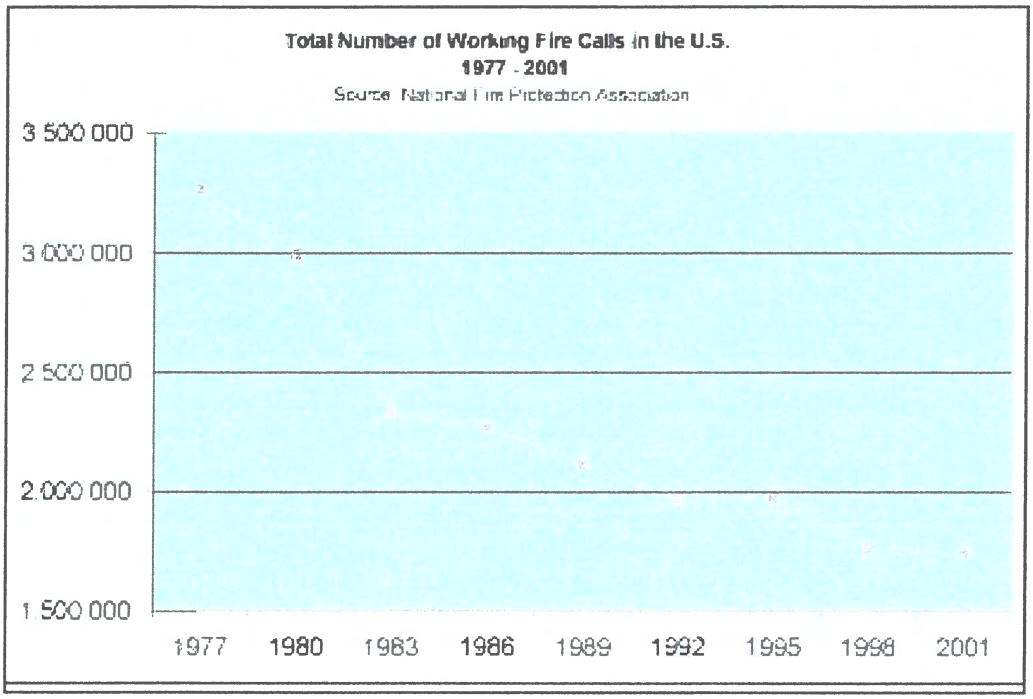
Compounding this problem, the demands on volunteer fire departments have increased significantly over the past 20 years. Today, because of increasing call volumes, departments provide more and more traditional services (firefighting, EMS response, etc.). However, volunteer fire departments also are being asked to expand their role in order to address new problems, the most prominent of which are new duties surrounding homeland security. This increase in responses and responsibility, combined with the lack of resources noted above, means that many departments must make hard choices about the level of service they can provide. This is difficult in a mobile society, where urban dwellers often move to more remote locations and continue to expect the same level of service they were receiving previously. Often, they do not appreciate the funding constraints placed on rural communities.

In addition, the costs associated with new apparatus and equipment have increased exponentially. In 1972, a Class A pumper was about $25,000; today a new pumper can easily approach $350,000. Just a few years ago, a single self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) cost about $1,900; today an SCBA unit costs about $3,500. The cost for this basic equipment has increased over and above the funding levels available to many volunteer fire departments. As a result, many communities have had to reduce their capabilities by not purchasing needed apparatus, equipment and technology. Other communities have reacted by extending the life of their current equipment. Unfortunately, this decision can give rise to numerous safety related issues.

The following charts demonstrate the growth in emergency response calls in the United States. Total emergency calls in the United States have increased by an estimated 61 percent since 1983 to nearly 18,000,000 responses per year.



What is particularly interesting about these statistics is the change in the nature of emergency responses. While total responses have increased, the number of actual working fires has decreased 47 percent since 1977.[8] Residential fires have decreased from a reported 472,000 incidents in 1992 to 396,500 fires in 2001, a 16 percent reduction.[9] Because departments are responding to fewer fires, managers are often concerned about the promotion of engine/command officers who lack sufficient experience actually fighting fires. This problem affects the safety of emergency operations and could lead to increased liability exposure for departments.



Detailing the Lack of Resources

As part of an effort to better understand the needs of the fire service, the Congress directed the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) to conduct a Needs Assessment Study of the U.S. Fire Service for the United States Fire Administration (USFA). The study attempted to define problem areas in the nation's fire service as well as function as a guide for future planning to enhance the fire service and firefighter safety.[10]

The following issues were outlined in the executive summary provided in the NFPA report.[11] While the report surveyed all types of fire departments, items selected for this report have the most impact on volunteer/combination departments. All of the problems documented below are a greater problem in smaller communities.

Concerns with Facilities, Apparatus and Equipment

- Roughly 15,500 fire stations (32 percent) are at least 40 years old and 27,500 fire stations (57 percent) have no backup electrical power.
- It is estimated that 60 to 75 percent of fire departments have too few fire stations to meet maximum response distance guidelines promulgated by the Insurance Services Office.
- Approximately half of all fire engines are at least 15 years old and more than one-third are over 20 years old.
- One-third of firefighters per response are not equipped with self-contained breathing apparatus (SCBA) and nearly half of SCBA units are at least 10 years old.

- Fifty percent of emergency responders per shift are not equipped with personal alert safety system (PASS) devices that assist in locating firefighters trapped in burning buildings.
- An estimated 57,000 firefighters lack even basic personal protective clothing, and an estimated one-third of personal protective clothing is at least 10 years old.

Communications and Communications Equipment

- Fire departments do not have enough portable radios to equip more than half of the emergency responders. This is a particular problem in small communities.
- Only 25 percent of fire departments can communicate on scene with all of their public safety partners at the local, state and federal level.
- Forty percent of all fire departments lack internet access.

Training Concerns

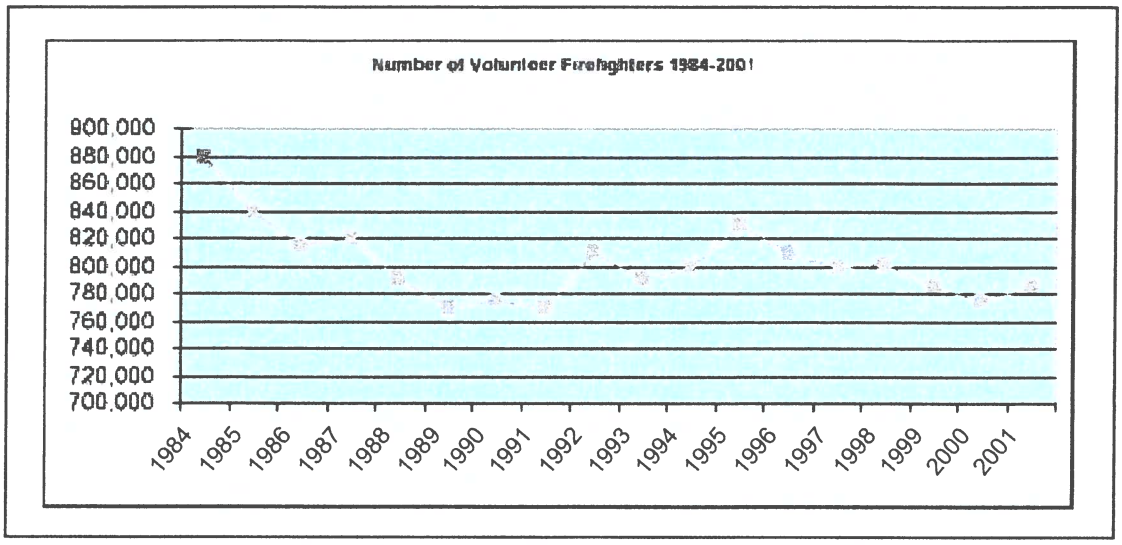
- An estimated 233,000 firefighters, most of whom are volunteers serving in small communities, lack formal training in structural firefighting—the most basic service the volunteer fire service provides. An additional 153,000 firefighters have received some training but lack certification in structural firefighting.
- An estimated 27 percent of fire department personnel involved in delivering EMS lack formal training in those duties. And in the majority of fire departments, EMS personnel are not certified to the level of Basic Life Support.
- An estimated 40 percent of fire department personnel involved in hazardous materials response lack formal training in those duties; the majority of them serve in smaller communities. In 80 percent of fire departments, personnel involved in hazardous materials response are not certified to the operational level.
- An estimated 41 percent of fire department personnel involved in wildland fire fighting lack formal training in those duties; there are substantial training and certification needs in communities of all sizes.

Ability to Handle Unusually Challenging Incidents

- Only 11 percent of fire departments can handle a technical rescue with EMS at a structural collapse of a building involving 50 occupants with local trained personnel. Nearly half of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 13 percent of fire departments can handle a hazmat and EMS incident involving chemical and/or biological agents and 10 injuries with locally trained personnel. Forty percent of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 26 percent of fire departments can handle a wildland-urban interface fire affecting 500 acres with locally trained personnel. One-third of all departments consider such an incident outside their scope.
- Only 12 percent of fire departments can handle mitigation of a developing major flood with locally trained personnel. The majority of departments consider such an incident outside their scope.

LACK OF VOLUNTEERS

Nationally, the number of volunteers has continued to drop since a high of 880,000 in 1984.[6] Today, the total number of volunteer firefighters has declined by about 10 percent, representing a reduction of approximately 90,000 individuals to 790,000.



The decline in the number of volunteers is a two-faceted problem. It stems both from difficulties in retaining current volunteers as well as problems with recruiting new volunteers.

Retention

Retention of volunteer firefighters is a substantial concern for the fire service. It is estimated that the national retention average of volunteer firefighters is approximately four years[7] per person, per department. When recruiting volunteer firefighters, the fire department will spend approximately $4,000 per person in orienting, equipping and training those recruits. While this figure would appear to be conservative in some jurisdictions, the cost to maintain one volunteer for the national retention rate average of four years is approximately $1,000 per year. This may not be an effective investment based on the return by the volunteer.

Retention of volunteer firefighters is a complex issue with a number of variables that can contribute to the lack of longevity. In 1993, the consulting firm Tri-Data, on behalf of the United States Fire Administration (USFA), conducted a national study titled *Retention and Recruitment in the Volunteer Fire Service, Problems and Solutions.* The study was assembled with input from volunteer departments across the country. The following areas were identified as major issues affecting retention of volunteer firefighters:

- Volunteers face increased demands from the fire department stemming from the increase in emergency response calls, the need for ongoing training and the increasing need to undertake specialized training.
- Demands on the volunteer's time are also increasing away from the fire department as families struggle to balance the career and family obligations of today's two-income families.
- Many of those who volunteer for the fire department do so in order to improve their employability. A volunteer fire department will provide training at no cost. This training can then be used to obtain a full-time position within the profession.

- The lack of a comprehensive benefit and incentive program. Benefits are necessary to protect the livelihood of the volunteer and his or her family in the event the volunteer suffers a significant injury or dies while on duty, while incentives are designed to recognize their personal achievements and to motivate them to improve their skills and participation.
- Finally, the lack of quality local leadership within the fire department is cited as the most significant problem to retaining volunteer firefighters. Echoing the sentiment of that finding, it is the opinion of the contributing authors that ineffective leadership will doom an otherwise excellent organization. Sound management practices have the potential to significantly enhance retention rates.

The Value of Good Management

The following passage is taken directly from the Tri-Data report discussed above.

> The ability of a fire department to retain its people is directly related to its ability to manage those people. *It was unanimous among workshop attendees that poor management contributed heavily to people leaving the volunteer fire service.* The leadership issue was considered the most important; in one way or another, nearly all the other causes were either directly or indirectly traced back to the leadership problem. (emphasis added)[xi]

The lack of quality leadership is the most critical issue confronting the volunteer and combination fire service. Few programs at the state or national level have been established to assist and provide fire chiefs and/or managers with the skills necessary for effective management. An example of how poor management can exacerbate a problem, such as an increase in call volume, is illustrated through the example below.

An increase in emergency service calls can significantly affect volunteer retention, so an effective manager will look at ways to minimize this intrusion on the daily life of a volunteer. A department that provides emergency medical services (EMS) will intrude on the life of a volunteer more often than those departments without EMS. EMS is an emergency response that can be reasonably predicted. As a result, staffing for EMS response is generally easier than staffing for activities that occur with a much lower frequency—such as structural fires. In addition, the number of staff required to respond to each call is relatively low. Three emergency care providers can handle the overwhelming majority of EMS calls. When a volunteer fire department providing EMS alerts a volunteer component of 20 members to an EMS call when only three members are needed, it can be damaging to a system. This intrusion into the life of the volunteer sets up a "cry wolf" syndrome where the pager is alerted but the volunteer is not needed. This increases the risk that the volunteer will not respond when actually needed.

The Challenges of Managing a Combination Department

Another difficult management challenge is the management of fire departments staffed with both career and volunteer personnel—combination departments. Combination fire departments are difficult to manage because career and volunteer firefighters often have different institutional interests. Administrative changes such as the transition from an all-volunteer department to a combination system may exacerbate the problem. The individual volunteer's sense of identity is important. Although the financial consequence of resigning a volunteer position is small, the psychological cost to an individual is extremely high because of the firefighter's great personal investment in the organization. The structural distrust the volunteer and career groups have for each other might be more tolerable if each group did not have to work with the other, but they usually do. Efficiency is a desirable goal; however, reaching that goal can be a tortuous path of management anxiety arising from personnel conflict between the two groups. The conflicts within a combination department can lead to unproductive involvement by the local government that sees itself as legally and often politically responsible for resolving the conflict.

A combination system will not work when it is based on prejudice or when either group of firefighters, volunteer or career, functions in a minority role and is perceived as subservient to the other. This situation often creates an atmosphere where the department is unable to tap the knowledge and expertise possessed by the individual. This can be perpetuated when we lose site of our basic mission—serving the public. The real test of a successful combination department is its ability to fully integrate tactical rank structure. The training and performance standards should be the same, regardless of the firefighter or officer status with parallel lines of authority, bringing personnel resources into harmony. The quantitative measure of that success is the retention rate of the minority group.

Nature of Volunteerism in the United States and its Implications for the Volunteer Fire Service

In 2002, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the U.S. Department of Labor released the Volunteer Service Indicator, a new national measurement of volunteer behavior developed by the Census Bureau, the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the USA Freedom Corps. The indicator provides a wealth of information relating to volunteerism in the United States. Those findings indicate that 27.6 percent of individuals (more than 59 million) over the age of 16 volunteered with a volunteer service organization between September 2001 and September 2002. The findings suggest that certain groups are more likely to volunteer, while others are more likely to volunteer more hours. The findings also offer information regarding what types of organizations and activities enjoy support from different segments of the population. Finally, they give information on how much time people are dedicating to volunteer work, including data that more than 34 percent of those who volunteered did so for more than 100 hours during the past year.

Perhaps the most striking statistic from the survey is that volunteers spent a median of 52 hours volunteering during the year. Volunteering for the fire service can be and most often is substantially more demanding. Depending on the call volume, designated shift coverage and the level of training standards mandated by the local community, an average volunteer could easily contribute in excess of 1,000 hours per year in community service. In Campbell County, Wyo., an active average volunteer can expect to donate 750–1,000 hours of service per year,[xiv] German Township, Ind., 500 hours per year[xv] and in Ponderosa, Tex., 360 hours per year.[xvi] In two communities with mandatory 24-hour volunteer shift coverage—Tinley Park, Ill. and Roseville, Minn.—an active volunteer will be required to provide 1,000 hours[xvii] to maintain his or her volunteer membership. Both departments provide volunteers with a monetary stipend as part of the compensation for services provided.

The estimated 800,000 volunteer firefighters account for less than one fifty-ninth of the estimated number of individuals who volunteered, in some fashion, for their communities during the time of this study. The available personnel pool for volunteer firefighters may be more extensive than we realize, and a more detailed review of this study may provide insight into the recruiting strategies and diversification options that must be developed to fill open positions within our departments.

To be competitive, the volunteer fire service may need to refocus recruiting efforts, develop diversification strategies and design other volunteer opportunities within the organization that utilize skills outside of traditional recruitment considerations.

RECOMMENDATIONS – A CALL FOR ACTION

The International Association of Fire Chiefs represents the leaders of America's fire service, both career and volunteer. Through the technical expertise and guidance of its Volunteer & Combination Officers Section (VCOS), the IAFC is well positioned to lead the volunteer fire service forward to confront the difficult issues detailed in this report. The recommendations that follow are broken down by the level of government that should address the solution. While most of these recommendations must be implemented at the local level, the IAFC will be active at the national level to secure the necessary resources and climate to make these important changes in the volunteer fire service.

Federal Responsibilities/Recommendations:

- Advance a Congressional Resolution supporting the American Volunteer Firefighters Bill of Rights.
- Create an Office of Volunteer and Combination Fire Service within the Department of Homeland Security.
- Develop a grading system for evaluating local emergency response capability.
- Create a national definition of allowable compensation for volunteer firefighters.
- Develop and support administrative changes to the Internal Revenue Code to clarify legislative issues related to length of service awards programs and allow "cafeteria style" benefit programs for volunteers.
- Create national job protection for volunteer firefighters.
- Fund the Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program (FIRE Act) at its full authorization, allowing the fire service to build a solid baseline of apparatus and safety equipment within its hometown communities.
- Appropriate funding for the Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response Firefighters Act (SAFER Act).
- Provide tax incentives for the installation of automatic fire suppression and alert systems.
- Provide national tax incentives for certified volunteer firefighters, reducing federal income tax by 3 percent annually.

State-Level Responsibilities/Recommendations:

- Develop community, regional and state disaster plans with specified review dates. Plans should include identified resources and certifiably trained personnel available for regional and statewide deployment.
- Develop methods for certifying fire and EMS personnel to enhance their professional commitment and achieve minimum training standards.
- Develop a benefits plan for all emergency responders to protect and provide for responders who are injured or killed in the line of duty.
- Develop a benefits plan that provides college tuition, including books, to the immediate family members of firefighters killed in the line of duty.
- Develop regional and statewide recruitment campaigns.
- Assure that volunteer liability protection is provided.
- Assure that statewide mutual aid places response liability on the responding agency versus the requesting agency.

Local Responsibilities/Recommendations:

Volunteer firefighters, leadership within the volunteer fire department, community leaders, elected officials and citizens should expect that standards, rules and regulations be used, adopted and enforced at the local level that measure the effectiveness of services provided.

Strategic planning must become institutionalized as an integral part of fire department operations and community resource allocation.

- Plan development should be performed in conjunction with the community to meet community expectations, growth and staffing requirements.
- Planning should be done in conjunction with surrounding communities affected by automatic mutual aid agreements. A multi-jurisdictional approach must be utilized to provide specialized services such as technical rescue, hazardous materials response and water rescue as well as covering training needs for these responses.

- The planning process should be developed with immediate, intermediate and long-range goals and have established review dates.
- An evaluation of the current volunteer response capabilities must be completed as part of the strategic planning process.
- A risk management policy must be instituted that clearly identifies the necessity of performing defensive fire suppression operations under noted conditions.
- A management structure must be developed and maintained. It should address business management operations, training, EMS, member benefits and operational leadership strategies.
- The number of calls significantly increases the business aspect of running a fire department. A department that responds to more than 750 calls per year, which is an average of two calls per day, should consider providing a compensated leadership position for developing and executing an organizational plan.
- If transition to paid personnel is necessary, the emergency service delivery system must prepare for an orderly transition from an all-volunteer to a partial career staff with identifiable funding options. Critical issues such as pay rates, job descriptions, duties, responsibilities, positions and status authority for career and volunteer personnel must be examined. When the overall composition of the department is predominately volunteer, then career personnel serve to support the volunteer system.
- A funding plan for vehicle and equipment maintenance and replacement, as well as a plan to replace personal protective gear and accessory equipment in order to ensure adequate protection of emergency service personnel should be developed.
- Local, county, regional, state, federal and industrial resources that are available within the jurisdiction should be identified as part of a mutual aid agreement.
- The organization must develop a service delivery approach to meet the risks that are presented, consistent with what the community expects and can afford (standard of response cover).

Recruiting and retaining quality personnel continues to be the most important element in the overall success of a volunteer or combination fire department. Therefore, it is important to look at developing the following:

- Programs designed to certify and credential volunteer and career firefighters as well as officer positions at the state minimum level (NFPA Firefighter I/Fire Officer I or equivalent) to improve individual educational levels, emergency scene proficiency and safety.
- A diversification plan that maximizes individual talent and skill in order to enhance the overall efficiency, safety and effectiveness of the department. It should also guide the educational growth of the individual while maximizing his or her potential and enthusiasm in a specific discipline(s) within the organization.
- Ongoing educational opportunities that reinforce minimum training standards, enhance awareness and reinforce safety precautions dealing with local target hazards.
- Training that is measurable and emphasizes safety, command, multi-company drills, multi-agency drills and multi-jurisdictional responses.
- Benefit programs that encourage long-term participation from individual volunteers. Programs could include, but are not limited to, workers compensation; health, accident and life insurance; and coverage that will protect the livelihood of the individual volunteer against lost wages.
- A housing analysis to document housing availability and, if necessary, contingent housing alternatives for retaining reliable and well-trained volunteers within a community. Those options may include, but are not limited to, subsidized housing, dormitories, low or no-interest loans or relief on property taxes.
- Adequate liability coverage to protect an employer from costs associated with injuries that occur while performing duties. This consideration may extend to policies that provide the employer with overtime coverage to fill the position of the injured volunteer.
- A recruitment program that ensures adequate staffing and delivery of emergency services.
- Appropriate recognition and award programs to identify individuals or team members because of their performance or commitment to the department and community.

- A promotional process that ensures fairness for all members within the existing rank structure. Promotional systems should replace the traditional method of electing officer positions. It should be based upon merit with appropriate performance, education, training, skills and experience.
- Partnerships with other community emergency entities working to maximize resources.
- Partnerships with civic organizations and local businesses to integrate the fire department within the local community.
- Training programs that provide all new recruits with basic firefighting skills and First Responder level training before they are allowed to respond to and perform on fire, medical or rescue emergencies.
- A physical assessment program designed to evaluate each member's physical ability to perform the activities and tasks required for every job description within the organization. This assessment should be performed at least annually.
- A written policy prohibiting drug and alcohol use with specific enforcement, discipline and follow-up procedures.
- An "Emergency Vehicle Operational Policy" to qualify each member as a driver/operator of fire and rescue apparatus.
- A process to check the status of each member's driver's license annually.
- Criminal background checks on all prospective members.

Community Support Services are necessary elements to the overall image and success of the department and the well-being of the community. Departments should develop the following:

- Fire prevention and education programs to educate at risk groups as identified by the USFA. Programs should direct educational, awareness, prevention and support groups to assist in reducing concerns.
- Safety and accident prevention programs beyond the normal scope of fire prevention to augment identified needs of the community. Those programs could include, but are not limited to, drowning prevention; bike, rollerblade and car safety; and sponsorship of SAFE KIDS projects.
- Practices that would prevent fire loss, injury or death based upon occupancy, construction, apparatus, water supply, available personnel, communication abilities and response capabilities.
- An annual evaluation of water systems that affect local operations, including county, industrial and/or private delivery. Evaluations should include the capability of the water supply to deliver the required fire flows based upon existing occupancy as well as planned growth. Ensure that appropriate steps and procedures are in place to properly maintain supply.
- Customer service programs that provide community feedback and satisfaction ratings.
- The capability to complete investigations in an efficient and reliable manner involving police agencies where applicable.
- Appropriate preplan documents, including target hazards, to provide timely and accurate information to incident commanders.
- A partnership with the Local Emergency Planning Committee to work for a fire safe community.

The volunteer fire service is at a critical juncture in the United States. On one hand we have a positive can-do spirit, on the other hand we have forces that are creating ever-increasing challenges that attack that spirit. The needs and realities of the volunteer fire service appear to be moving in divergent directions, so when the spirit dies, all that remains is historic fact. It is imperative that local, state and federal government understand the challenges listed in this document, develop a problem solving attitude and be proactive in creating a new pathway that will allow the volunteer fire service to survive and flourish. The IAFC stands read to work with all partners to lead this charge. This great country cannot afford to lose the rich legacy of the volunteer fire service.

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Volunteer & Combination

Est. 1994

Officers Section

IAFC Volunteer and Combination Officers Section
4025 Fair Ridge Drive
Fairfax, VA 22033

APPENDIX B

ICMA Article - Stronger Together Making the Case for Consolidating Regional Fire Services

Municipal Resources

ICMA Article

https://icma.org/articles/pm-magazine/stronger-together-making-case-consolidating-rural-fire-services

Stronger Together: Making the Case for Consolidating Rural Fire Services

With fire service consolidation comes greater consistency in planning and response [PM Magazine, July 2020]

By Jeremy Mitchell | Jul 1, 2020 | ARTICLE

Saturday, 1600 hours

Dispatch: *"Attention Fire Department X, respond to a report of an apartment fire at 1234 Shady Drive, fire seen in a ground-floor apartment."*

1603 hours

Dispatch: *"Second page for Fire Department X, also Fire Department Y and Fire Department Z, respond to 1234 Shady Drive for the working fire in an apartment…getting several calls."*

1605 hours

Dispatch: *"Fire Department X, County Sheriff's is on scene reporting fire through the front window extending up the side of the building."*

1607 hours

Chief Y: " *Dispatch, Chief Y is on the air. I'm en route; is there an engine company responding yet?"*

Dispatch: *"You are currently the only fire unit responding to this call."*

Chief Y: *"I understand. Please call two more departments for personnel."*

A scenario very similar to this recently happened in my area—and situations like this are increasing locally and nationally among volunteer fire departments. In this case, "Chief Y" turned out to be the first unit on scene; he was able to complete a size-up (a quick evaluation of the building, fire conditions, and life safety risk) and verify that there was no civilian life hazard. The actual fire attack began 15 minutes after the initial dispatch when two combination departments, each with a travel distance of over 10 miles, arrived on scene. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that for these rural fire departments, most of their volunteer members were engaged in the fall harvest and unable to respond.

While hindsight is always 20/20, the last item worth considering about this fire is that a full-time fire station staffed by three firefighters is located within two minutes driving time from the fire. This is just one example of why it's time to consider consolidation of rural fire services. In this article, I will conduct a "thought experiment" discussing some of the benefits of consolidation using my county as our example.

Case Study: Champaign County, Illinois

Located in east central Illinois, Champaign County is home to 25 fire departments, made up of fire services of all kinds: career, combination and volunteer, aircraft rescue and firefighting (ARFF), advanced emergency medical services (EMS), hazardous materials response, and special rescue. There are six fire departments in the county, which are either full time or offer some type of combination staffing—larger, generally self-sufficient communities. They are excluded from our study, leaving us with 19 fire departments serving a population of approximately 23,500 people and cumulative budgets of $2.7 million.

On average, each department serves a community of 1,286 people with an average budget of $142,105, although depending on the population and tax rates, county department budgets can deviate as much as $30,000 higher and lower. Champaign County's rural communities are remarkably homogenous, consisting mostly of single family homes, multi-family residential

units, schools, and small businesses devoted to supporting agriculture, the largest sector of the local economy. A 2018 report found that approximately 70 percent of the emergency services call volume involved vehicle rescue or EMS, while the departments experienced a slightly higher than national average incidence of actual fire calls, approximately 15 percent of total responses. Average response time from dispatch to the arrival of the first unit on scene was 10 minutes.

Why Consolidate?

The salient point arguing in favor of fire department consolidation is whether the local fire department can effect a timely response with an appropriate number of competent staff. For a number of county departments, this is not the case. NFPA 1720, *Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Services Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments,* states that for a "typical" response to a 2,000 square-foot single-family home, the fire department shall place six fire suppression personnel on scene within 14 minutes, 80 percent of the time.[1]

Note that I say *fire suppression* personnel; I recall a house fire in an occupied home to which I responded with a driver and an EMT, with only myself to fight the fire. As I read Section 4.3.2 of NFPA 1720, placing six personnel on scene means an incident commander, a driver, and four personnel trained and capable of performing primary search and fire control. Clearly, the standard wasn't met in this case or in our opening scenario.

The fire department's primary responsibility and primary focus is on the prevention and suppression of fire. If the fire department is incapable of assembling an effective response, it must know how to access the necessary resources and integrate them into an effective plan. With fire service consolidation comes greater consistency in planning and response because all of the players will be following the same playbook, so to speak. In fact, developing that playbook (i.e., rules and regulations, standard operating procedures (SOPs), and incident management systems) is much easier if a few people—a consolidated fire department's command staff—only have to do it once.

Conversely, as things currently stand in Champaign County in our study, 19 departments are struggling to develop 19 different plans with 19 differing degrees of success in implementation. The differences in plans, and in effectiveness of service delivery, are rooted in perceived differences among the county's villages. The county's homogeneity works in favor of planning for emergency response; for a house fire in a given village, an incident commander should be able to count on *this* particular resource from his station, followed by *these* and *those* resources from the next closest stations. This will allow him or her to prioritize tasks based on conditions and first arrival, and have a workable incident action plan immediately. The same resource allocation would be dispatched in another community as the consolidated department's standard working fire response.

Another building block of a consistent and effective response is apparatus, of which there is a wide variety in Champaign County, including pumpers, pumper tenders, tenders, light and heavy rescues, and water towers. Apparatus purchasing is reactive, either when another vehicle becomes inoperable or based on what the membership wants instead of actual community need.

However, at a minimum, a pumper, pumper tender, and some type of initial attack/light rescue will see these departments (serving an average of 1,200 people) through the vast majority of their calls for service.

If these departments consolidated they could develop common apparatus, which increases familiarity even when working with companies from another station, and also will save on cost when a larger department orders several apparatus following a vehicle replacement plan versus several smaller departments trying to secure funding and place orders for their own equipment. The *same* SOPs, calling for the *same* equipment and the *same* complement of personnel increases operational effectiveness, which is another way of saying civilians and responding volunteers are safer and fire losses are reduced.

This helps save minutes on scene and mitigates a built-in flaw in the volunteer-service delivery model: firefighters have to travel to their stations and wait for an adequate number of crew to begin response. In Champaign County, that amounts to four to five minutes, and as an incident commander, you have to accept the fact that those are precious minutes you don't get back when thinking about the possibility of flashover or survivability profiling. However, some of the uncertainty is eased if an incident commander knows what specific resources are on the way and expected within 14 minutes of dispatch.

How Would It Work?

A consolidated Champaign County fire service has to start at the top; the new chief would be in charge of 19 fire stations, dozens of apparatus, and hundreds of volunteer firefighters. Even for an accumulation of small, rural departments, it is enough work for a full-time administrative level officer. The chief needs a full-time training officer as well, since teaching new SOPs and ensuring task-level competency will drive consistency and establish the expectations of the new organization.

Operationally, the county would be split into four districts: three districts with five stations assigned, and a "short" district with four. These officers would have considerably more work to do than an average volunteer, but less than a full-time employee; their jobs would be classified as "full time/part time" and be compensated by some kind of stipend. The district chiefs would be responsible for operations, vehicle maintenance, and facilities working with their station captains (the former volunteer chiefs), who supervise the baseline station assignment of pumper, pumper tender, and initial attack/light rescue.

Based on risk assessment and population distribution, other equipment would be assigned to the district stations, such as spare apparatus, rescues, or elevated stream pumpers. This ultimately results in a lower total operating cost since at any one time only a handful of departments need a spare or the use of a specialized resource and nearly all calls for service—medical, MVC, outside fire, and service calls—can be handled by one or two correctly staffed apparatus. The same principle applies to loose equipment, hose, and PPE since most fire departments do not use valuable time and money trying to maintain a full complement of their own equipment.

Personnel Benefits

The benefits of consolidation are apparent when discussing physical assets and emergency response, but they extend to personnel administration as well. Having a paid/combination staff will enable development of job descriptions, training objectives, and objective promotional processes. In this way, volunteers will have a "career ladder" similar to full-time firefighters. If they choose to move residences within the county, there would be no starting over as a probationary firefighter because they could simply be assigned to another station.

The issue of EMS-only personnel or semi-retired members who prefer driving or performing scene-control activities is its own can of worms. If a volunteer fire department is consistently able to place four firefighters trained to the Firefighter I level on a pumper within four minutes of receiving an alarm, then it's less of an issue. But on both operational and administrative levels, it's much easier for managers to not have to think about which personnel can ride which apparatus, or who has what certification. Suppose you were the first due chief in our opening scenario: Would you rather be left wondering how many personnel were on responding vehicles, and what their capabilities were, or would you rather just "know" that nine personnel trained to the Firefighter I standard are responding, being supervised by three officers trained to Fire Officer I?

Obstacles to Consolidation

Consistently effective and safe operations, lower operating costs, better management, and personnel retention—it would seem that rural fire department consolidation in Champaign County is a no-brainer, but the idea faces substantial opposition for several reasons:

Ego: A consolidated fire department requires an act of political suicide by 19 village boards or fire protection district boards. Consolidation also requires 19 people to relinquish the title of fire chief, a goal that many have sacrificed for over a period of years. In Illinois, currently the state with the most subunits of local government, this act of dissolution and reconstitution seems inconceivable when they can enjoy their own fiefdoms.

Pride: "We're better than they are at auto extrication." "Those guys don't like interior firefighting." Champaign County firefighters are no different from their counterparts elsewhere; based on their interests and natural talents, some departments pride themselves on their own unique skills or services over others. But supposing risk analysis reveals that the department on the edge of the county with the heavy rescue needs a tender apparatus—and that its heavy rescue would be of more use if it was moved to a town closer to the highway? Would that fire department's membership acquiesce, or would they refuse to consolidate and continue focusing on an aspect of service that's less necessary for their local community? Would these firefighters put aside pride in "their" fire departments and have faith that they were becoming part of a larger, better whole? The step from many small fire departments to a larger county department seems small to an outsider, but it is fraught with meaning for longtime volunteers, and those relationships will have to be managed delicately if a change takes place.

Past practice: Among these 19 fire departments, some get along very well, some do not, and very few get along with the paid departments in the county. "We don't like them" is an admittedly stupid reason for fire departments not to collaborate on adequate response, but it

happens. The attitude goes both ways, however, as many career firefighters express distaste for working with the volunteers. The abridged fire at the beginning of this article might not have been extinguished by the three-person career-crew located much closer than the volunteers, but if all this crew did was respond and spend their on-board tank in an exterior attack, the fire would have been held in place while the volunteers were en route. There is a substantial body of literature discussing culture change and "blending" when fire departments consolidate, and putting aside old grievances and prejudices is a real concern. The new organization must realize the opportunity to create newer, better relationships within the department (people not used to working together) and without (people used to another service delivery model).

Misperception of need: Related to that pride in unique service is a community—and its fire department—not fully understanding the risks it faces or what resources are needed. While NFPA 1720 states that volunteer fire departments "shall participate" in development of community risk management plans (including evaluation of fire risk), in practice few volunteer fire officers do given time constraints and lack of training. Risk assessment is another important administrative task, regardless of department size, that falls by the wayside along with incident management and SOP development. The village of 500 people with a 15-person department might not understand why it's not advisable or perhaps even feasible to maintain a fleet of five vehicles when instead it would be better served to plan operations around a single resource and four to six firefighters, with neighboring stations filling out a fire response.

Support services: The consolidation of Champaign County fire services as described creates a substantially larger organization needing an administrative framework in order for it to reach its full potential. We previously covered a paid chief and training officer, and compensated district chiefs, but a cadre of additional instructors are needed to deliver the training program; again, perhaps not full-time personnel but they would need to be classified as something other than volunteers.

Something else not discussed to this point is the utter lack of fire code enforcement in rural Champaign County and the variable quality of fire and life safety education in the rural communities. NFPA 1720, in Annex B, recognizes fire prevention and fire and life safety education as "management goals" of the volunteer fire department and acknowledges that staffing and response are only two components of community fire protection; volunteer fire departments also must apply fire and building codes to "limit loss of life and property." A consolidated fire department, in good conscience, must also provide for fire code enforcement and life safety education, which would require additional staff, either full time or in another type of regular capacity.

Past experience in Champaign County shows that when volunteer firefighters attempt to enforce burn ordinances or fireworks bans, or address violations of the Life Safety Code, they are ignored or treated with derision because the public believes a volunteer has no kind of binding enforcement mechanism. Having compensated fire code and life safety professionals provides another career path for members of a consolidated department and hopefully serves to keep them interested and active in their department. Diehards among the rural departments will decry administrative "bloat," but the ultimate goals are reduced incidence of fire, lower property loss

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APPENDIX C

NVFC Volunteer Retention Research Report - August 2020

Municipal Resources

Volunteer Retention Research Report

Prepared for National Volunteer Fire Council

NVFC
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL
FIRE • EMS • RESCUE

August 2020

Marketing for Change

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Research Goals 3
Methodology 4
Executive Summary 5
Quantitative Research Findings 10
Qualitative Research Findings 23
Appendix A: Department Leadership Interview Guide 29
Appendix B: Volunteer Interview Guide 34
Appendix C: Quantitative Survey Questionnaire 40

RESEARCH GOALS

The specific goals of this research included:

- **Understanding the institutional drivers of why volunteers leave the fire service** in order to develop targeted strategies aimed at stabilizing and increasing retention. This entailed building a more robust understanding of:
    - the differences between firefighters who stay and those who leave
    - how those insights can be used to extend length of service in the volunteer sector

- **Developing a stable, repeatable measure of retention rates across the volunteer fire service.**
    - This included the development of a scale that is meaningful to a range of industry stakeholders and can be used to track progress of retention efforts over time. This work will result in a concise series of questions and analysis procedures that NVFC can regularly implement, perhaps in partnership with the NFPA's Fire Department Profile survey.

METHODOLOGY

This research study unfolded over three phases:

The initial phase of research included interviews with current and former volunteer firefighters (N=20) as well as department leadership in the fire service (N=7). Participants were identified by NVFC and through an online recruiting screener that was distributed by the NVFC team and key committee members. The purpose of the leadership interviews was to discuss their perceptions of what's working and what's not as well as how they measured retention. For the volunteer interviews, the purpose was to understand reasons for staying and leaving the service, with an emphasis on developing a hypothesis about programs to improve retention to test further.

The second phase included a synthesis session with the NVFC's SAFER Work Group to share and prioritize findings and implications from the interviews and develop content for the follow-up survey.

The last phase was a quantitative survey of current and former volunteers, as well as current department leadership. The survey was fielded between April 10 and May 11, 2020 and broadly distributed through NVFC's email list, social media, and partners organizations. Respondents included a total of 1,030 volunteers, including current (N=922) and former (N=108) members.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Magnitude of the Retention Issue

Results from the survey of current and former members show that over two thirds of respondents feel their departments have (or had) a problem with volunteer retention. This includes nearly 70% of current department leadership.

Additionally, nearly half of all current volunteers have considered leaving the fire service at some point.

Reasons for Leaving

Former volunteers cited a lack of department cohesion and unsupportive leadership as their main reasons for leaving the service in the survey, which reinforces feedback received in the qualitative phase of research. The specific reasons for leaving most selected by former volunteers in the survey were:

- Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others
- Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members
- Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along
- Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department

Notably, the survey revealed current volunteers have a mostly different list of top reasons for why they think volunteers leave, focusing more on unclear expectations and how volunteering fits in with the rest of an individual's life. The top reasons cited by current volunteers were:

- Lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments
- The realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet the expectations that were set before signing up
- Lack of clear expectations of how much time and effort will be required each week or month for meetings and trainings
- Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others

It's worth noting that on the two most frequently mentioned reasons for leaving among former volunteers – department cliques and leadership that doesn't focus enough on member needs – there are significant differences between how big an issue these are among current volunteers and current leadership; current non-leaders are much more likely to cite them compared to leadership.

On the other hand, department leadership were much more likely to think juggling volunteering responsibilities was a problem than non-leadership and former volunteers.

This could be reflective of a disconnect between both the experiences of current and former members, as well as between leadership and rank-and-file members.

Members who considered leaving but didn't were bothered by leadership, cliques, and training requirements, but ultimately their desire to serve the community and sense of responsibility kept them at their departments.

	What do you think are the three biggest reasons that volunteers have left or would consider leaving your department?			What were the three biggest reasons that you stopped volunteering?
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS			
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership	Former Volunteers
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*	*108*
Lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments	37%	**41%**	**33%**	8%
The realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet the expectations that were set before signing up	30%	31%	29%	4%
Lack of clear expectations of how much time and effort will be required each week or month for meetings and trainings	28%	31%	26%	9%
Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others	25%	**20%**	**30%**	22%
Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department	20%	18%	21%	13%
Lack of flexibility in training requirements and schedules	20%	20%	19%	7%
Lack of social life within the department, where members train and go on calls, but don't spend time together otherwise	19%	19%	18%	8%
Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members	17%	**13%**	**21%**	18%
Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along	16%	15%	17%	14%

Bolded numbers indicate significant differences between current leadership and non-leadership.

Positive Factors Impacting Retention

For all current volunteers combined – both leadership and non-leadership – a mentorship program between new volunteers and more experienced members was the top choice for having a positive impact on retention. This reinforced what we heard in the qualitative responses on why volunteers leave, as new recruits who feel isolated and were not a part of any group were frequently cited as much more likely to leave.

For former volunteers, the top choice for what could have had a positive impact on retention was conducting exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department. The lack of this exit interview could be reinforcing their perception that leadership isn't concerned with the needs of members. Their second highest rated choice was conducting stay interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department.

Which, if any, of these do you think could have (have had) a positive impact on retention at your department (most recent department)?

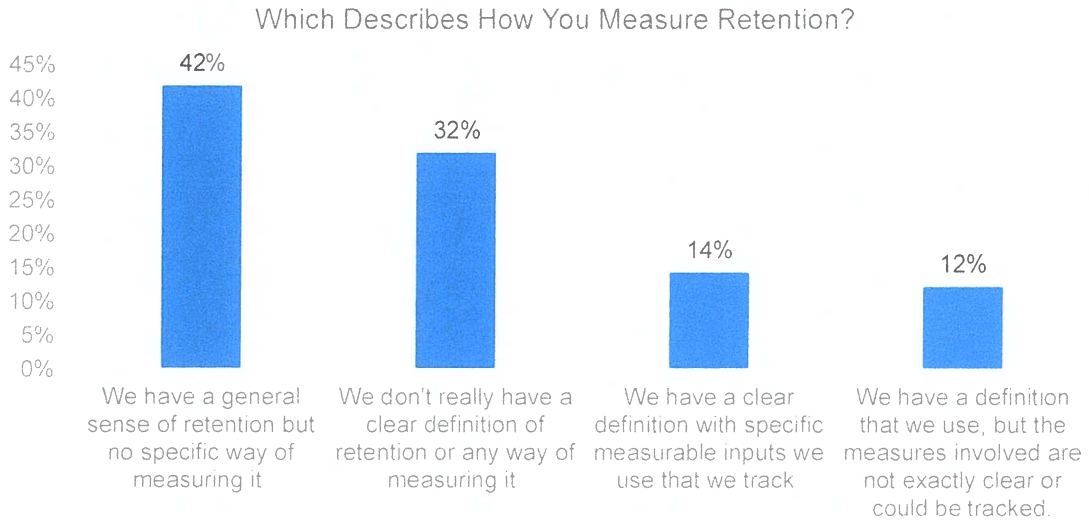
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS			
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership	Former Volunteers
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*	*108*
A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members	61%	**60%**	62%	**42%**
Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year	58%	**61%**	54%	**44%**
Conduct stay interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department	56%	54%	58%	53%
Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department	50%	49%	51%	57%
Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life	52%	**56%**	47%	**29%**

Bolded numbers indicate significant differences between current leadership and former volunteers.

Also, note in the above table the discrepancy on "providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life" between current leadership and former volunteers. In the previous table, leadership had also cited "lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments" as the top reason they think volunteers leave. There seems to be a gap between the importance leadership places on this versus former volunteers.

Measuring Retention

Reflecting what we saw in the qualitative phase of research, the survey showed that a majority of leadership do not have clear definitions of retention or approaches for measuring it.



Having said that, when asked to assess a suite of potential tools aimed specifically at leadership, respondents ranked having a standard definition of recruitment and retention first, so there is a desire for one.

When prompted with an example way of measuring retention – dividing the number of members at the end of the year by the number of members at the beginning – a majority of leaders felt that calculation would be easy to use, but needed to incorporate other dimensions such as whether a member is active and tenure to be more accurate. Some leaders also felt that since every department's situation is unique to the area they're in, it would be challenging to develop a universal definition that would be meaningful to all.

Implications and Recommendations

- While flexibility in training requirements and volunteering schedules remain important factors in retention, these data indicate that department leadership and culture are at least as, if not more, influential when it comes to volunteers choosing to leave the service.

- These findings provide guidance on a number of initiatives NVFC could spearhead, specifically:
    - Mentorship programs
    - Recognition efforts

- Touchpoints/interventions such as the stay and exit interviews
- Volunteer engagement kits
- The development of a foundational – if imperfect – retention measure as a starting point to establish the norm, such as this one suggested by a respondent: *The number of active firefighters at end of year divided by the number of active firefighters at beginning of year, plus new volunteers added during year.*

FINDINGS FROM THE QUANTITATIVE SURVEY WITH CURRENT AND FORMER MEMBERS

Overall, more than 6 out of 10 respondents think their current or former departments have a retention problem, including nearly 7 out of 10 current leadership. [For purposes of the survey, leadership was defined as the following positions: Chief, Assistant Chief, Battalion Chief, Captain, President, or Fire Marshal.]

	In your opinion, do you think your department has a problem with retention?			In your opinion, do you think your most recent department had a problem with retention?
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS			
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership	Former Volunteers
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*	*108*
Yes	64%	68%	61%	63%
No	35%	32%	39%	37%

Almost half [47%] of all current volunteers said they have thought about no longer volunteering at their department.

	Have you ever considered no longer volunteering at the department?		
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS		
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*
Yes	47%	47%	47%
No	53%	53%	53%

Reasons for Considering Leaving

In an open-ended question, it was reported that problems stemming from leadership was one of the most common reasons for volunteers thinking about leaving their department. Many cited the "old school" mindset as an issue with their leadership – an unwillingness to adapt to the times, listen to new ideas, and poor treatment of the volunteers who don't conform to their norm.

> ***"Because the volunteers are treated like second class citizens. The volunteers are treated like they are just disposable assets."***
>
> ***"Don't find that my dept is working towards the future. It's pretty much been stuck in the 1990s for the past 30 years."***
>
> ***"Fire Chief is not trained to state best practices, or to a standard, nor are any chief officers required to have any training."***
>
> ***"Plainly said, the good old boys club is the problem."***

Favoritism in leadership and cliques were also frequently mentioned in regard to poor leadership and were a contributing factor to many volunteers leaving. The favoritism can lead to bitterness – not everyone at the department is held to the same standards. The cliques cause isolation for those not included, which causes new recruits to leave and creates silos that lead to poor collaboration and camaraderie among members.

> ***"Department is very cliquey and only those who conform to the clique survive, the majority of members do not and a typical new member lasts no more than a year or two."***
>
> ***"Lack of respect for the members who do the bulk of the call response, and favoritism towards the boys who grew up local. It's very demoralizing to run rescue calls all week then get bumped from a fire apparatus by a member who runs in just for the fire call. Despite a requirement for members to make 10% of calls, these local boys have not met their 10% for years but there are no consequences for them. It makes those of us doing the bulk of the calls feel disrespected and unsupported."***
>
> ***"A lot of silos built in the department and groups of people who team together to obtain power of the department."***

The time commitment of being a volunteer was cited as another big factor in why volunteers decide to leave as it can be very taxing to a volunteer juggling a full-time job and/or a family. Training was at the top of the list for why the time commitment of being a volunteer is so demanding. While the volunteers recognized the importance of training, many spoke to the inflexibility of training times offered. Others spoke of the

frustration of having to attend more than the "essential" amount of training necessary to do their job as a volunteer. Some believe any training not deemed "essential" should be an option for more engaged volunteers.

Other reasons cited for considering leaving their department were age, emotional burnout, depression, and personal conflicts within the department, sometimes between the paid/career side and volunteer.

What Could Have Kept the Former Volunteers from Leaving

In an open-ended question, former volunteers cited many of the same reasons as things that would have had to have changed in order for them to stay on, namely:

- More appreciative, fair leadership
- More flexible training and staffing requirements
- Less cliques and better department interactions

"Lighten up the government-mandated training requirements."

"Nothing [could have made them stay] the upper management is all about cliques versus what you can bring to the table."

"The Fire Chief needed to be a leader and stop being a politician, internally and externally. We had older FFs and Officers putting down the new generations and crippling our retention efforts. Chief did nothing to fix it, too worried about re-election!"

"Respect, more appreciation, leadership who cares about individuals."

"Wellness contacts. Know your people and be available for them and their families if needed. Leaders should always keep in contact if a member is away for an extended amount of time. More structure so everyone knows their place and can function appropriately when the need arises. More mentorship involvement and leadership development. Assign relevant tasks with clear and timely goals, focusing on mentorship and leadership. By all means reward accomplishment. Create more social activities to include member families."

"Development of an Auxiliary firefighter program that did not require 24/7 response to emergency calls."

"Improved morale within the department. It became more of a popularity contest and members treated it as a social club rather than taking it seriously. Members who pursued further training and improving their skills were ridiculed and voted out of the department."

"Stop the good old boy system. I was tired of having to do everything and then told I was wrong. I went to over 300 hours of training every year. I [was] always told that most of the training was dumb and we won't do that."

"My station required a minimum 12 consecutive hour shift per week. Same night every week. i.e. - Monday crew, etc. Difficult for people with shift work jobs to commit to always working the same duty night each week. In some cases, it makes sense to work with trained committed members to stay on rather than hold to rigid policies."

Reasons for Staying

For current volunteers who considered leaving but did not, their reasons for staying were less diffuse and generally came back to the original reasons they began volunteering – their desire to give back to the community and help people. They spoke of honor, not wanting to leave the community in need, a desire to help mentor younger firefighters, and to try to bring about departmental change from within.

"Well, if the old guys quit there will be no one to respond."

"Will serve the community regardless of bad leaders."

"Love helping people."

"Too many young members that don't know what they are doing."

"I went on a call and remembered why I was here!"

"Still enjoy it, still active, like to teach the young new ones."

"I have to remember that I do this because I love it and I'm here for my community."

"Committed to Community. Didn't volunteer due to leaders."

"I am still volunteering so department won't fail."

Reasons for Leaving

We asked current members what they think the three main reasons are that cause volunteers to leave the force. We also asked former volunteers what their three main reasons were for leaving the department. We saw some notable differences between former and current volunteers, as well as between current leadership and non-leadership.

Current volunteers' top three reasons were:

- Lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments
- The realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet the expectations that were set before signing up
- Lack of clear expectations of how much time and effort will be required each week or month for meetings and trainings

These were relatively lower in the list for former volunteers, who cited their top reasons as:

- Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others
- Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members
- Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along

It is worth noting that current non-leadership also cited two of the top reasons former members left – cliques and leadership that doesn't support members – much higher than current leadership.

	What do you think are the three biggest reasons that volunteers have left or would consider leaving your department?			What were the three biggest reasons that you stopped volunteering?
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS			
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership	Former Volunteers
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*	*108*
Lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments	**37%**	41%	33%	**8%**
The realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet the expectations that were set before signing up	**30%**	31%	29%	**4%**
Lack of clear expectations of how much time and effort will be required each week or month for meetings and trainings	**28%**	31%	26%	**9%**
Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others	25%	20%	30%	22%
Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department	**20%**	18%	21%	**13%**

Lack of flexibility in training requirements and schedules	**20%**	20%	19%	**7%**
Lack of social life within the department, where members train and go on calls, but don't spend time together otherwise	**19%**	19%	18%	**8%**
Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members	17%	13%	21%	18%
Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along	16%	15%	17%	14%
Department culture that doesn't engage members outside of calls or training	16%	14%	17%	12%
Department leadership that is rigid and does not support or allow for new ideas and new leaders	15%	11%	19%	13%
Department culture that isolates new members	10%	7%	14%	6%
Lack of trust and cooperation between volunteer and career sides of the department	8%	5%	10%	9%
Department atmosphere that is too serious and not enough fun	6%	7%	6%	2%
Lack of support and professional development for volunteers who want to move to the career side	4%	3%	5%	5%

Bolded numbers indicate significant differences between current and former volunteers.

Positive Factors Impacting Retention

When asked what initiatives or programs could have a positive impact on retention, current volunteers cited:

- A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members
- Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year
- Conducting stay interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department
- Conducting exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department
- Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life

A mentorship program between new volunteers and more experienced members was the top choice among current volunteers for having a positive impact on retention. This would help address what we heard in the qualitative responses that new recruits who feel isolated and not a part of any group are much more likely to leave. This also could help address any generational tension in a department – which we know can cause issues with retention – by potentially forming bonds between younger and senior members.

	Which, if any, of these do you think could have (have had) a positive impact on retention at you department (most recent department)?			
	CURRENT VOLUNTEERS			
	ALL Current Volunteers	Current Leadership	Current Non-Leadership	Former Volunteers
SAMPLE SIZE	*922*	*445*	*477*	*108*
A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members	61%	60%	62%	42%
Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year	58%	61%	54%	44%
Conduct stay interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department	56%	54%	58%	53%
Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department	50%	49%	51%	57%
Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life	52%	56%	47%	29%
Hold essential training sessions on multiple days	47%	48%	46%	45%
Offer online training for nonessential training	47%	48%	45%	44%
Allow and encourage new and younger members to own specific projects and tasks	47%	52%	42%	32%
Leadership providing a clearer understanding to new volunteers of the monthly time commitment, goals, and responsibilities that are expected so they're on the same page	46%	48%	44%	33%
Having department leadership actively participate in training to lead by example	38%	40%	35%	27%
Have department leadership hold more regular and personal check-ins with new volunteers	37%	39%	35%	30%
Offer micro-volunteer opportunities (1 day or 1 week a month) for those that are unable to commit to traditional volunteer time commitments	36%	35%	36%	29%

Build the essential training calendar around members with less flexibility in their schedule	33%	36%	30%	39%
Set up a comment box for anonymous feedback and/or create dedicated office hours to provide members a clear opportunity to express their opinions	33%	33%	32%	21%
Enrolling rising volunteers in an officer candidate course to gain leadership skills and training	31%	29%	32%	20%
Break up cliques and groups by assigning members to workgroups they wouldn't normally choose	27%	27%	27%	25%
Offer virtual reality training modules	26%	26%	26%	21%
Create a database of former volunteers to stay in touch with them and try and re-engage on future opportunities	25%	22%	29%	19%
Holding cross-generational training to help members and leaders of different ages better understand each other	25%	27%	24%	18%
Following a set of national leadership standards and core competencies	21%	22%	20%	25%
Leadership making it clear up front the minimum length of service they expect of new recruits	21%	22%	20%	12%
Immersive virtual reality/360-degree video of firefighting experiences as part of training modules and morale boosts	21%	20%	21%	10%
Make it easier to compare your department's retention rate and efforts with other departments	18%	17%	20%	16%
Create a Chief People Officer at the department who constantly takes the temperature of members' happiness and satisfaction	14%	12%	17%	15%
Holding joint trainings with career and volunteer staff	14%	13%	15%	16%
Providing department leadership with training focused on managing combination departments	13%	14%	12%	21%
Providing department leadership with sales and marketing training	12%	14%	9%	5%
Mentorships with career members for volunteers who are career-bound	11%	10%	11%	7%

Leadership Tools

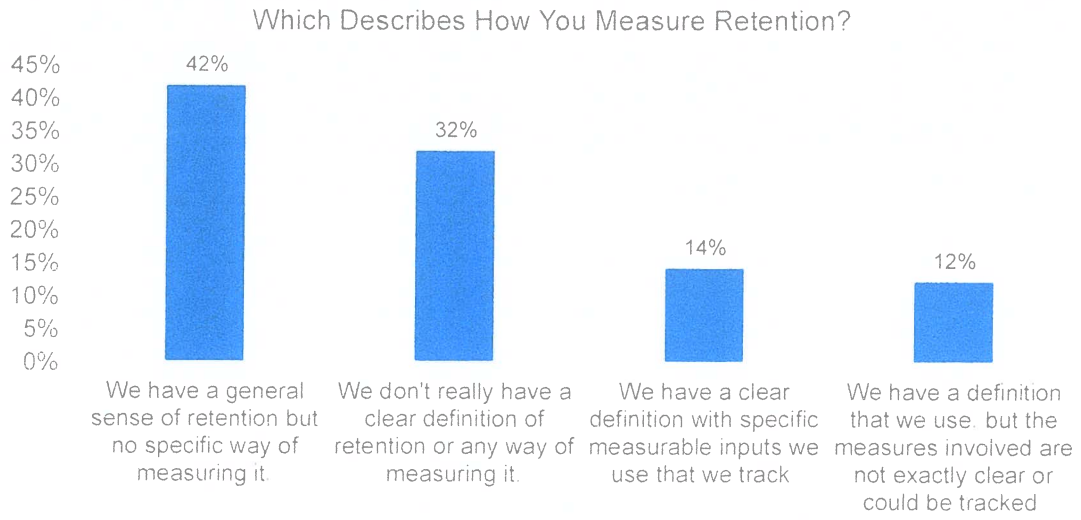
Current leadership were asked to assess a suite of potential tools aimed specifically at leadership. Respondents ranked having a standard definition of recruitment and retention first, followed by an immersive training experience and then volunteer engagement kits.

Potential Leadership Tool (Ranked by Usefulness)	Ranked 1st	Ranked 1st or 2nd
Standard definition of recruitment and retention success that can be shared and compared among departments	31%	44%
An immersive 360-video of firefighting experience (a first-hand point-of-view video that places the viewer in the boots of a volunteer during an emergency) to show as a training module and morale boost	23%	41%
Volunteer engagement kits with guidance and materials, including a webinar series, highlighting and discussing retention strategies and tools	19%	48%
Recruitment and retention video collection of simple, peer-to-peer videos focused on retention challenges and solutions from other department leaders	16%	43%
Online training transition support that offers tools and guidance on how to move in-person training to an online platform.	11%	25%

Measuring Retention

Over 7 out of 10 (74%) of current department leadership reported either having a general sense of retention but no specific way of measuring it or not having a clear definition of retention at all.

Another 12% reported having a firmer retention definition, but that the data involved aren't clear or trackable. Only 14% of leadership said they have a clear definition and trackable data.



For those who have a clear definition, the measures they offered revolved around how they define a volunteer as an active member and that member's length of service. The most common measures given were if a member stays active for 3 or 10 years. Some of the respondents' measures are noted below.

Defining an "active" volunteer

> ***"30% of calls, 36 hours per year of training, up to 12 allowed outside the department, 10 hours of community service through the department, and 1, 3, 5, 10, 15, 20, etc. years of service milestones."***
>
> ***"Active member=attends 50% of all meetings and trainings and attends 25% of all calls."***
>
> ***"Members making 20% of the events."***
>
> ***"Members must make 30% of calls and 50% of training."***
>
> ***"20% calls OR combination of calls, trainings, events, certifications that equal 50 points or more."***
>
> ***"The firefighter must attend 80 percent of all calls practices and 50 percent of all calls."***

Measuring retention

> ***"A member is in good standing for a period of 10+ years."***
>
> ***"Keeping members active for more than 3 years."***

"Does not leave for 10 yrs.; makes VIP points annually."

"Keeping members active members past 3-year mark."

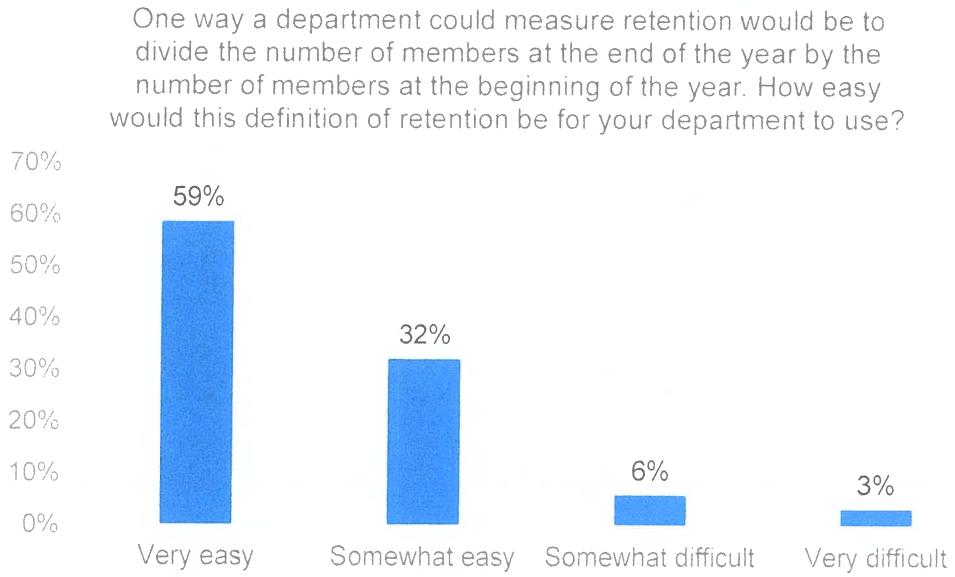
"Member remains on active status for 3 or more years."

"We try to keep them on for at least 10 years."

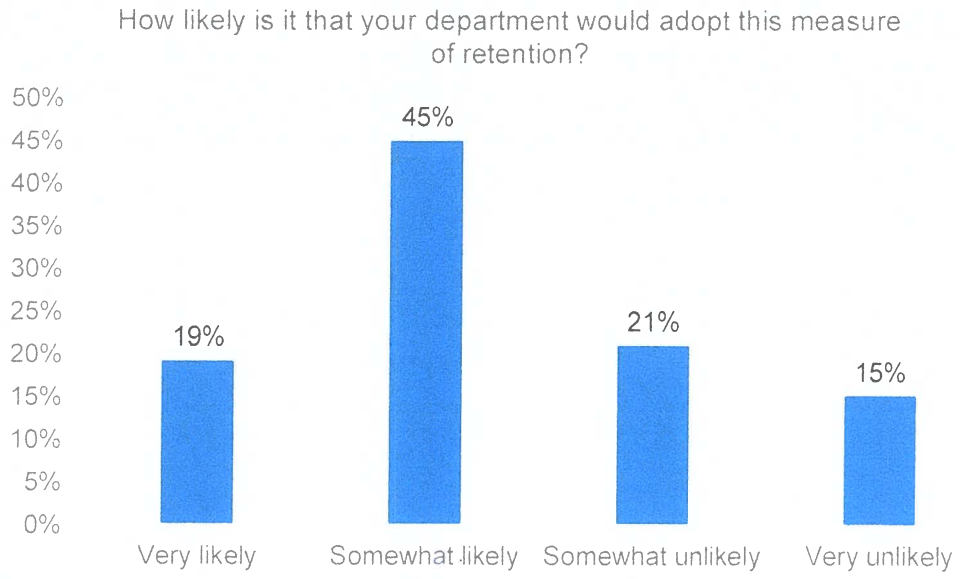
The number of volunteers who join compared to those who leave was mentioned by some respondents as a way of measuring retention.

> ***"The number of members that we take in, compared against the number of members who progress through the length of service. Normally, our first year is the lowest number of retention. Mostly due to new members with training requirements, and even though we explain everything, they still leave because of commitment."***

When prompted with an example way of measuring annual retention – dividing the number of members at the end of the year by the number of members at the beginning – a majority of members felt that calculation would be easy to use.



While almost 1 in 5 leadership respondents said they'd be very likely to adopt this measure, 45% reported softer support, and 36% said they would be unlikely.



In an open-ended follow-up question, many respondents noted that in the definition of retention, the issue of active versus inactive volunteers needs to be addressed. If a department gains one new member who turns out to not be very active, it may not replace the amount of work lost if a veteran volunteer retired. Many felt other data needed to be factored into any definition, such as how much time a volunteer gave versus the amount they had to offer, or their tenure. Otherwise, an overall number could disguise a retention problem in a department.

Multiple respondents also mentioned they understand retention and how to track it, but the issues are going to be unique to every department, so it would be hard to come up with a universal definition for all departments.

> ***"We know what retention is. Our issues are unique to our area."***
>
> ***"Your start of year divided by end of year is impossibly vague. You need much more data to view trends within the department."***
>
> ***"Gaining one recruit is not making up for losing a 20-year veteran."***
>
> ***"Retention should look at individuals' tenure, not at the overall number. Using overall number would disguise a retention problem and not lend itself to analyzing the causes of drop out."***
>
> ***"The number of active firefighters at end of year divided by the number of active firefighters at beginning of year, plus new volunteers added during year."***

"Length of service and qualifications achieved during tenure. If we just measure beginning and end of year membership, we could potentially have a zero-sum. We lose 4 during year, gain 4 during year doesn't define retention. We need longevity."

FINDINGS FROM QUALITATIVE RESEARCH WITH LEADERSHIP AND CURRENT AND FORMER VOLUNTEERS

Prior to conducting the quantitative survey discussed above, we conducted exploratory, qualitative research with current and former volunteers, as well as department leadership. We specifically did the following:

1. **Conducted 7 one-on-one, semi-structured interviews with department leaders**, identified and selected in partnership with the NVFC team and key committee members, to reflect environments with both optimal retention among volunteers, as well as those struggling with retention. The purpose of this design was to discuss leadership perceptions of what's working and what's not. We also discussed how they measure retention, including getting their reactions to potential alternative approaches.
2. **Interviewed 20 current and former volunteers.** The discussions delved into reasons for staying and leaving the service, with an emphasis on using prior findings to have more in-depth conversations, as well as exploring reactions to potential ideas designed to stem attrition. Participants were identified, recruited and selected in two primary ways – 1) having been identified by the NVFC team, key committee members, and leadership interviewees and 2) through an online recruiting screener that was distributed by the NVFC team and key committee members.

The goal of this initial phase of research was to build on prior investigations into volunteer retention to validate hypotheses and develop items to incorporate into the quantitative survey that was to follow.

The main findings from this discovery phase are recapped below.

Current Results Reinforce Existing Research

Findings from the interviews aligned with other retention research as all participants spoke the most about time (a lack of it), training (a lot of it), and interpersonal department tensions as the key obstacles of retention.

Past research conducted by the NVFC in 2015 similarly showed that unmet expectations, isolation within the department, frustration with department leadership, and lack of support from family and employers are factors that can make it difficult for volunteers to continue serving.

Going further back, a 2007 U.S. Fire Administration report[1], developed in partnership with the NVFC, included survey results that revealed lack of time, organizational conflicts, leadership issues, and training requirements were the most frequently cited reasons volunteers left departments.

What Makes Your Members Leave Your Organization?*

No time to volunteer	92.3%
Conflicts in organization	47.8%
Organizational leadership created adverse atmosphere	46.7%
Too much training	45.6%
Attitude of existing personnel to newcomers	39.1%
Criticism received from officers/older members	38.0%
Lack of camaraderie	19.5%

* Many respondents indicated more than one reason for leaving the organization

[1] Retention and Recruitment for the Volunteer Emergency Services Challenges and Solutions FA-310/May 2007

Given the exploratory nature of the interviews, participants were encouraged to reflect and elaborate on the dimensions impacting the volunteer service experience. They touched on far-ranging issues impacting both recruitment and retention, from broad societal trends to detailed dynamics impacting departments today. The most frequently discussed topics are presented below, all of which helped inform specific questions that were incorporated into the survey.

Departments are reflections of their communities.

Participants commented, for example, that more rural areas of the country where volunteers are needed often face a level of malaise within the department leadership that is reflective of their community. They cited that these communities are often struggling with poverty, depression, health complications, and rapidly aging and shrinking populations. Many leaders talked about a loss of culture, community, and history that seems insurmountable and can lead to a particularly uninspired form of leadership.

Continuing with the theme that departments mirror their community, a few of the leaders interviewed characterized NVFC's push for diversity in recruitment as unrealistic, as it is not reflective of their community demographics.

Additionally, for many departments, being continually understaffed has become the norm, so their focus is more on recruitment than retention.

Departments face different challenges, making uniform solutions difficult.

We spoke with volunteers and leadership in a range of different types of departments (all volunteer and combination) and in different geographic areas. The stories we heard varied significantly.

For example, departments in rapidly growing areas (exurbs of growing metropolitan areas) where the population requires (and the tax base supports) a broad presence may be struggling with issues of transitioning to a combination department model. By contrast, in shrinking rural areas, volunteer departments are closing down, forcing fewer departments to service a broader area.

Generational differences are often cited.

Both volunteers and leadership often brought up generational issues as impacting retention.

- Repeatedly, more experienced leaders (including those at departments relatively more effective at retention) talked about how "volunteering just isn't the same today." In discussing this they mentioned things like neighbors not knowing each other, people developing a different sense of community, and a resulting decline in altruism. A universal undercurrent was the *perception* that younger

generations, particularly millennials, were uninterested in volunteering and more focused on self-interests.

- Some department leaders looked at this as a gulf in generational attitudes that could not be overcome (often refusing to adjust their own expectations), whereas other leaders looked at it more as a challenge of what the volunteer experience was and recognized that they needed to adjust their expectations and offer to meet newer, younger recruits with an approach they were looking for.

- Younger volunteers spoke of older leaders who were resistant to change on issues ranging from being willing to modify service schedules, to how they communicated with volunteers (not being willing to text notifications on last minute training schedule changes, for example).

Age and tenure were also said to sometimes be factors contributing to cliques within departments that can alienate new members. As one volunteer put it: *"If you aren't dating someone, related to someone, or not in a clique, you don't matter."*

Lack of clear expectations impacts retention, particularly on length of service.

Leaders from departments reporting more success with retention said they provide clear expectations of what to expect in the first year or so of volunteering. Conversely both rank-and-file volunteers and leaders from departments struggling with retention acknowledged that such expectations were not always shared in their departments.

- Department leaders that balanced setting clear expectations about the amount of training and time required with a clear commitment of their own to help deliver often had better retention results.
- Regardless of leadership effectiveness, however, expected length of service was rarely, if ever, discussed or even considered. Many leaders expressed a desire for lifelong participation and to see volunteers outlast themselves.
- While that's the ideal, when pressed, the leaders tended to have more realistic expectations, simply hoping to get 3-5 years out of a volunteer.
- The non-leadership volunteers, however, seemed to have less defined expectations of their service; rather, they'll do it as long as their home/work schedule allows, and, importantly, they get value out of it.
- Both leadership and non-leadership volunteers held the view that out of the TOTAL volunteers at departments, usually half or less are considered "active."
    - "Active" was typically defined by respondents as showing up consistently at the firehouse, especially for calls and trainings.

Life stage fit is an important consideration.

Leaders recognized the NVFC's focus on younger member recruitment, but at least a few of them noted that life stage was the more important dimension to consider than simply age. By this they meant that sometimes recruiting slightly "older" or "more

established" recruits was preferable (e.g. in their thirties and established / settled in the community, homeowners, etc.), explaining that these recruits are more likely to be long-term members of the community, and as long as they're in the community, they've got a better shot at retaining them or bringing them back into the fold if they leave for family commitments.

- This is contrasted with younger recruits still figuring out life plans who may be more likely to move out of the area for jobs or college.
- All participants noted the clear need for the volunteer force to get younger, so this discussion is one of nuance to a degree, but the notion of life stage is an important factor in retention.

The career/volunteer dynamic can be tricky.

From all participants, we heard several stories of tension between career and volunteer members within combination departments. Often these stories of tension came from departments that were transitioning to a combination model.

We heard that career members often distrust volunteers and can be critical of their approach (on matters big and small). This often comes from a real place of concern, as less active volunteers may not have enough training (there tends to be less tension with active volunteers) and certainly have less familiarity with each other as a team.

On the other hand, we also heard that volunteers often look at career members as both entitled, with little regard for the sacrifices being made by volunteers, and as a threat, feeling their roles and responsibilities within the department slipping away.

- Departments that have had successful transitions tend to have leaders with experience on both the career and volunteer side, and who put systems in place to force more combined trainings and cross-functional experiences.
    - They also spoke of the importance of having both volunteers and career firefighters celebrating the contributions from both sides, and placing trust in their volunteers (at least two department leaders mentioned the importance of letting the crew who first arrived continue to lead at the scene of a fire, especially if the first to arrive is a volunteer crew).

An additional part of this equation is that numerous volunteers we spoke with said that serving as a volunteer was largely to gain experience to get hired on the career side (a stepping-stone approach that was often advised by other career firefighters). Once they get the experience and training, they will try to find a career position. Those who made this transition and had good volunteer experiences, and helpful department leaders who were supportive of their career goals, often continued volunteering even after they attained a paid position.

Retention measures are rare.

Every leader we talked with had given considerable thought to the issue of retention. However, none of them had a clear definition or measurement that they used to judge their department. That realization generally made them recognize they needed a standard way of measuring retention, indicating they're open to suggestions and clear steps to do this.

Having said that, record keeping and data availability vary significantly by department, so any measure which depends on self-reported data will need to recognize this reality.

Department Leadership Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. We really appreciate it and promise not to take up too much of your time. I want to make sure that I get to all our questions within the 45 minutes I have you. Because of that, I may interrupt you at a certain point to ask us to move on to something else, but know that it's not because I'm not interested in what you're saying.

Just to give you a little background, I'm working on a project with the National Volunteer Fire Council (NVFC) to better understand the issues around retention in order to help work on ways to improve it.

We're planning to talk with both longer-serving rank-and-file members as well as former members to compare their experiences and try to understand the similarities and differences. But we first wanted to start with the perspective of department leadership.

The most important part of this process is to hear the truth about what people like yourself think. So really all I'm looking for is your honest perspective, not what you think NVFC wants to hear, what somebody else wants to hear, or even what you may wish was the case. I'm independent, meaning you won't offend me or get me in trouble with any of your feedback. None of your feedback will be connected with you personally. We'll be combining everything we hear to paint a big picture of the issue. You also don't have to worry about your name being connected to any of your feedback. I hope you will be comfortable speaking openly.

Do you have any questions for me before we get started?

Role, Experience, and Department

I'd like to start by getting to know you and your department a bit better.

1. Let's start with you. Can you talk to me a bit about your role at your department?
    a. Day-to-day, what does that look like?
    b. What are the big picture things you focus on?
2. How long have you been in this role? How long have you been in the volunteer service overall?
    a. Are there any other leadership positions you hold?
3. In your role, what do you wish you got to do more of? What do you wish you had to do less of? How come?
4. Tell me about the area you serve.
    a. Rural, suburban, urban?
    b. Socio-economic?

    c. Demographics?
5. Tell me a bit more about your department.
    a. Capabilities and services?
    b. How many members?
    c. What is the call volume like?
    d. Typical call?
6. Tell me about your volunteers.
    a. Backgrounds?
    b. Similar? Diverse?
    c. Demographics?
7. Who is your typical new recruit? What are they looking for?
    a. What are their expectations? How long do they expect and plan to participate?
    b. How long do you expect them to participate? Want them to participate?
    c. Is that time frame ever communicated? How?
8. How would you describe the atmosphere in the department? What's the attitude like? What's the culture like?
    a. How do you think long-term members would answer that question?
    b. What about new recruits?
9. What are the things your volunteers enjoy most about being part of the department? Please try and be specific.
    a. What are some specifics you'd expect them to complain about?
    b. Do those things differ between longer-serving members and newer recruits? How so?
10. I want to ask about a few specific things that could be part of the volunteer experience, but don't have to be and may not always be. In either case, I'd like you to tell me any specific things you do around these issues and what the interest and involvement is like from your team.
    a. Having an active presence in the community, being recognized by the community, giving back
    b. Learning AND teaching new skills that are unique to the service and that could be applied outside the service
    c. Team development, traditions, camaraderie
    d. Fun and excitement

Retention Definitions

As I mentioned at the beginning of the call, this project is about retention. Pretty much the rest of our interview will be about that.

11. First, how does your department define what "retention" is? Do you have a set definition?
    a. Are there other definitions you've heard from other departments? What do you think of those?
12. Thinking about a new recruit, how would you decide if that person had been successfully retained?
    a. Is there a certain point in the process? Some milestone they complete? What about reaching a different rank?
    b. Is there a specific length of service?
    c. At what point do you think you've recouped the cost of training somebody? Is that a fair definition of retention? Why/why not?
13. Thinking about those definitions of successful retention you gave me, does that mean anything less than that is considered a failure at retention?
    a. **IF NO** So what is the bare minimum to meet the definition of retention?
14. Have you ever looked at retention as a measure related to specifics of the department as a whole? **IF YES**, How so?
    a. Let me give you some examples and you can react to each if it makes sense as a measure of retention or not. Tell me what works about it and what doesn't.
        i. Having fewer open positions in the department than the year before.
        ii. The average service tenure for the department as a whole.
        iii. Having more long-term members than new recruits
        iv. Lower percentage of recent recruits who leave
        v. More equal distribution of newer and longer tenured members

Retention Experience

15. Regardless of the definitions that departments could use to define it, how do you think your department does on retaining its volunteers?
    a. How do you think it compares to other departments? Much better, somewhat better, about the same, or worse? What makes you say that?
16. What departments do you think tend to do the best at retention?
    a. Retention aside, how are they different from yours? How are they similar?
17. Which members are the easiest to retain? Which are the hardest? What's the difference?
    a. Thinking specifically about newer recruits (someone in their first year or so, let's say) — who are the ones that tend to stay and who are the ones that tend to leave? Describe them. How are they different?
18. What are the things that make retention hard? What could make it easier?
19. What are the reasons you tend to hear from recruits on why they're leaving?
    a. Do you keep in touch with ex-volunteers? Where do they end up?

20. I want to get your reaction to some reasons we've heard in the past. I'm curious if you've heard the same.
    a. Lack of time to volunteer because of increased work and home-life demands
    b. Health issues and concerns associated with fire service
    c. Poor department leadership
    d. Negative experience on a call
    e. Negative experience in the department
    f. Lack of support or inclusion in the department
    g. Lack of training and resources
    h. Lack of career opportunities nearby, complicating how easily volunteers can meet requirements
    i. Increased training requirements
    j. The financial cost
    k. Lack of financial reward
21. At what point in the journey of becoming and being a volunteer firefighter do you tend to lose the most volunteers? Why do you think that is?
22. What's going well with retention? Have you had success with any specific initiatives or approaches to improve retention? Describe them to me. Why do you think that was so effective?
    a. Have you heard about any initiatives or approaches in other departments that have been successful?
23. What's going poorly with retention? What are some things you've tried or you've heard about other departments trying that haven't been very successful? Why do you think they fell flat?

MMAF UX Interview Recruiting

24. Before I let you go, I have one last question for you. Have you ever heard of the Make Me A Firefighter web tool that NVFC developed to help with recruiting, including tracking of recruits?
    a. IF YES: Have you ever used it?
        i. IF YES: Do you still use it?
            1. IF YES: How often? And what do you find valuable in it?
            2. IF NO: Why'd you stop?
25. As part of this project for retention, we're also helping to update this web tool, and we're looking for department leaders who will share their experience in using the revamped tool later. Would you be willing to help us out with another interview down the line to test this tool?

Wrap Up

26. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. Before I let you go, I always try to give people an opportunity to ask me any questions or provide any final thoughts on what we've discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think would be helpful for us to know or are there any questions you have?

[THANK AND END]

Volunteer Interview Guide

Thank you for agreeing to speak with me today. My name is _____ and I'll be leading our conversation. This is opinion research, which means there are no wrong answers. I am interested in everything you have to say. You are the expert.

I am an independent researcher, so I have no stake in what you say. You will not offend me or get me in any trouble. My only goal is to hear your honest opinions. So please be as open and candid as you can be.

We have a number of questions to get through and I don't want to keep you longer than the hour that we agreed to. So that may mean, at some point, if I ask that we move on, it's just because I want to make sure we get to everything. It has nothing to do with what you're saying or what I think about what you're saying.

I am recording our conversation. This is just so I don't miss anything. The recording is entirely confidential. There may also be people listening to this interview to help me take notes and to understand what was said. Ultimately, this interview will be combined with other interviews we're conducting, and we'll write a report and make some recommendations. Your name won't be used in the report, and none of your feedback will be connected with you personally.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Background and Personal Life

We'll talk more about the purpose of these interviews and this project in a little bit.

For now, I think what would be most useful is to get to know who you are a little bit more.

1. Maybe you could tell me.
    a. Your first name.
    b. A little bit about your family.
    c. What you do for a living or something you do for fun.
2. Where do you live?
    a. What's one thing you love about the area where you live?
    b. What's one thing you wish was different about the area where you live?
    c. Are you originally from there? How long have you lived there?
    d. What are the people like where you live?

This is all helpful background for me. I appreciate it. As you probably know, we're working on this project for the National Volunteer Fire Council. The point of the project is to help them better understand the volunteer experience to see what they can do to improve it.

FORMER VOLUNTEER — Role, Experience, and Department

My notes show that you used to be a volunteer, but that you aren't involved with a department currently. Is that correct? Perfect. We want to make sure to talk to people who have left the service.

3. When did you first sign up?
4. What made you sign up to begin with? What was it that motivated you to take that step?
5. What did you expect volunteering to be like when you first signed up?
    a. What lived up to your expectations? What fell short?
    b. How long did you expect you'd be a volunteer? Did you have any expectations?
6. What was your department like?
    a. Capabilities and services?
    b. How many members?
    c. What was the call volume like?
    d. Typical call?
    e. Modern? Rundown?
7. What were the other volunteers like?
    a. Backgrounds?
    b. Similar? Diverse?
    c. Demographics?
    d. Things in common?
8. What about the leadership?
    a. Active? Passive?
    b. Supportive? Critical?
9. Overall, how would you describe the culture?
10. I want to read you a few statements that may have to do with what a volunteer experience may or may not be like. For each one, I want you to rate your department on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means your department did a terrible job at it and 10 means your department did an excellent job at it. Please explain your rating as we go.
    a. Having an active presence in the community, being recognized by the community, giving back
    b. Learning AND teaching new skills that are unique to the service and that could be applied outside the service

    c. Team development, traditions, camaraderie
    d. Fun and excitement
11. How long did you volunteer before you left?
    a. What was your role there?
    b. What did that look like on a day-to-day basis?
12. When did you first think about leaving? Why?
13. Why did you decide to stop volunteering? [PROBE FOR MULTIPLE REASONS]
    a. Do any of the following sound like reasons why you stopped?
        i. Lack of time to volunteer because of increased work and home-life demands
        ii. Health issues and concerns associated with fire service
        iii. Poor department leadership
        iv. Negative experience on a call
        v. Negative experience in the department
        vi. Lack of support or inclusion in the department
        vii. Lack of training and resources
        viii. Lack of career opportunities nearby, complicating how easily volunteers can meet requirements
        ix. Increased training requirements
        x. The financial cost
        xi. Lack of financial reward
14. What do you think was the most important reason why you left? [REPEAT LIST IF NECESSARY]
15. Were there any triggering events? Things that may have been the last straw?
16. What were the good things or the positives that happened for you when you left?
    a. What were the drawbacks to leaving? What did you lose?
17. What about while volunteering? What were the good things you got from that?
    a. What were the drawbacks to volunteering? What did you lose?
18. What are the things that made volunteering difficult?
    a. How could they be made easier?
19. What do you wish you got to do more of as a volunteer? What do you wish you had to do less of?
20. Is there anything that could have been done differently that would have made you stay?
21. Think about the people at the department who are the lifers? What are they like?
    a. Other than that they still volunteer, how are they different from you? What do you have in common with them?
22. How long do you think is a reasonable expectation for a volunteer to stick with a department? Why that amount?
23. How do you think your department did at retaining its volunteers?

    a. How do you think it compared to other departments? Much better, somewhat better, about the same or worse? What makes you say that?
24. What departments do you think tend to do the best at retention?
    a. Retention aside, how are they different from yours? How are they similar?

CURRENT VOLUNTEER — Role, Experience, and Department

My notes show that you're currently a volunteer. Is that correct? Perfect.

25. When did you first sign up?
26. What made you sign up to begin with? What was it that motivated you to take that step?
27. What did you expect volunteering to be like when you first signed up?
    a. What lived up to your expectations? What fell short?
    b. How long did you expect you'd be a volunteer? Did you have expectations?
28. What is your current role at the department?
    a. What does that look like on a day-to-day basis?
29. What is your department like?
    a. Capabilities and services?
    b. How many members?
    c. What is the call volume like?
    d. Typical call?
    e. Modern? Rundown?
30. What are the other volunteers like?
    a. Backgrounds?
    b. Similar? Diverse?
    c. Demographics?
    d. Things in common?
31. What about the leadership?
    a. Active? Passive?
    b. Supportive? Critical?
32. Overall, how would you describe the culture?
33. I want to read you a few statements that may have to do with what a volunteer experience may or may not be like. For each one, I want you to rate your department on a scale of 1 to 10 where 1 means your department does a terrible job at it and 10 means your department does an excellent job at it. Please explain your rating as we go.
    a. Having an active presence in the community, being recognized by the community, giving back

   b. Learning AND teaching new skills that are unique to the service and that could be applied outside the service
   c. Team development, traditions, camaraderie
   d. Fun and excitement
34. What are the good things, the positives, that you get from volunteering?
   a. What are the drawbacks to volunteering? What do you lose?
35. What are the things that make volunteering difficult?
   a. How could they be made easier?
36. What do you wish you got to do more of as a volunteer? What do you wish you had to do less of?
37. Have you ever thought about stopping? When? In what moments?
   a. What made you decide to stay?
38. Think about the people who've left the department for reasons other than retirement or things outside of their control. What are they like?
   a. Other than that they've left the department, how are they different from you? What do you have in common with them?
39. Do you keep in touch with anybody who has left? What are they up to instead?
40. What are the reasons you've heard why volunteers leave?
41. I want to get your reaction to some reasons we've heard in the past. I'm curious if you've heard the same of if you've heard of other reasons as well.
   a. Lack of time to volunteer because of increased work and home-life demands
   b. Health issues and concerns associated with fire service
   c. Poor department leadership
   d. Negative experience on a call
   e. Negative experience in the department
   f. Lack of support or inclusion in the department
   g. Lack of training and resources
   h. Lack of career opportunities nearby, complicating how easily volunteers can meet requirements
   i. Increased training requirements
   j. The financial cost
   k. Lack of financial reward
42. At what point in the journey of becoming and being a volunteer firefighter do most people leave? Why do you think that is?
43. How long do you think is a reasonable expectation for a volunteer to stick with a department? Why that amount?
44. How do you think your department does on retaining its volunteers?
   a. How do you think it compares to other departments? Much better, somewhat better, about the same or worse? What makes you say that?

45. What departments do you think tend to do the best at retention?
    a. Retention aside, how are they different from yours? How are they similar?

FOR ALL — Wrap Up

46. Before we wrap up, I'm curious, do you know anybody else who has left a volunteer fire department where if they're experience had been different maybe they would have stayed?
    a. Would you mind sharing their contact information or putting me in touch with them? I'm very interested in learning more about their experience. I would only reach out to conduct an interview similar to the one we just did.
47. Thank you so much for taking the time to speak with me today. Before I let you go, I always try to give people an opportunity to ask me any questions or provide any final thoughts on what we've discussed. Is there anything else you'd like to add that you think would be helpful for us to know or are there any questions you have?

[THANK AND END]

Leadership and Volunteer Retention Quantitative Survey Questionnaire

Fire and EMS departments may use different terms to describe similar things. If you don't see the exact term your department uses in these questions, try to pick the closest one that applies.

The first section of the survey is about you, your department, and your experience.

1. Are you currently a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider?
    a. Yes - current volunteer
    b. No - former volunteer
    c. I was never a volunteer **[TERMINATE]**
2. Which of the following describes your position at your current fire department? Please select all that apply.
    a. Chief
    b. Assistant Chief
    c. Battalion Chief
    d. Captain
    e. President
    f. Fire Marshal
    g. Safety Officer
    h. Training Officer
    i. Volunteer Firefighter
    j. Volunteer EMS Provider
    k. Non-operational support
    l. Other (please specify)
3. How long have you been/were you a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider with your **current/last department**?
    a. Less than a year
    b. 1 to 2 years
    c. 3 to 4 years
    d. 5 to 6 years
    e. 7 to 10 years
    f. 11 to 19 years
    g. 20 years or more
4. How long have you been/were you a volunteer firefighter or EMS provider, **overall**?
    a. Less than a year
    b. 1 to 2 years

c. 3 to 4 years
d. 5 to 6 years
e. 7 to 10 years
f. 11 to 19 years
g. 20 years or more

5. How often do you spend time volunteering with your current fire department?
    a. Several times a week
    b. Once a week
    c. A couple times a month
    d. Once a month
    e. Less than once a month
6. Is your current department all volunteer or is it a combination department?
    a. All volunteer
    b. Combination department
        i. **[FOLLOW-UP]** Approximately what percentage of your department is volunteer?
            1. 10% or less
            2. 11-20%
            3. 21-30%
            4. 31-40%
            5. 41-50%
            6. 51-60%
            7. 61-70%
            8. 71-80%
            9. 81-90%
            10. 91-100%
7. Has your current department ever merged or consolidated with another department, either volunteer or career? Please select all that apply.
    a. Yes, with another volunteer department
    b. Yes, with a career department
    c. No **[EXCLUSIVE]**
8. Please enter the zip code where your current department is located. **[FIVE DIGIT OPEN END]**
9. Which of the following best describes the area your current department serves?
    a. All or mostly urban
    b. All or mostly suburban
    c. All or mostly rural
10. Approximately how many calls does your current department handle each month?
    a. 0 to 9
    b. 10 to 24

c. 25 to 50
d. 51 to 74
e. 75 to 99
f. 100 or more

11. Approximately how many total volunteers does your current department have?
    a. 1 to 10
    b. 11 to 20
    c. 21-50
    d. 51-80
    e. 81-99
    f. 100 or more
12. How many members would you consider active?
    a. All
    b. More than half
    c. About half
    d. Less than half
    e. None
13. Do you consider yourself to be an active volunteer?
    a. Yes
    b. No
14. How do you define if a member is active? Please select all that apply.
    a. Attends a certain percentage of calls
        i. **[FOLLOW-UP]** Which of the following is the minimum percentage of calls that an active member attends?
            1. 10%
            2. 20%
            3. 30%
            4. 40%
            5. 50%
            6. 60%
            7. 70%
            8. 80%
            9. 90%
            10. 100%
    b. Attends a certain percentage of trainings
        i. **[FOLLOW-UP]** Which of the following is the minimum percentage of trainings that an active member attends?
            1. 10%
            2. 20%
            3. 30%

4. 40%
5. 50%
6. 60%
7. 70%
8. 80%
9. 90%
10. 100%

c. Attends a certain percentage of department meetings
   i. **[FOLLOW-UP]** Which of the following is the minimum percentage of meetings that an active member attends?
      1. 10%
      2. 20%
      3. 30%
      4. 40%
      5. 50%
      6. 60%
      7. 70%
      8. 80%
      9. 90%
      10. 100%

d. Reports for a majority of their assigned shifts and finds coverage if has to miss a shift

e. Other (please specify)

15. Have you ever considered no longer volunteering at the department?
    a. Yes
    b. No
16. If yes, why did you consider leaving and why did you decide to keep volunteering? **[OPEN END FOR BOTH]**
17. How old are you? **[OPEN TWO-DIGIT NUMERIC]**
18. Which gender do you identify with most?
    a. Male
    b. Female
    c. Non-binary/third gender
    d. Transgender
    e. Prefer not to say
19. Do you consider yourself Hispanic or Latino?
    a. Yes
    b. No
20. Which of the following best describes your race?
    a. American Indian or Alaska Native

b. Asian
c. Black or African American
d. White or Caucasian
e. Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
f. Mixed race
g. Other (please specify)

21. What is the highest level of education you have completed?
    a. Some high school
    b. High school graduate
    c. Some college
    d. College graduate
    e. Post graduate studies or degree

MAIN QUESTIONNAIRE

The second section of the survey is about the issue of retention at volunteer fire departments.

22. In your opinion, do you think your department has a problem with retention?
    a. Yes
    b. No
23. What do you think are the three biggest reasons that volunteers have left or would consider leaving your department? / What were the three biggest reasons that you stopped volunteering? **[RANDOMIZE ITEMS]**
    a. Lack of clear expectations of how much time and effort will be required each week or month for meetings and trainings
    b. The realities of volunteering changed or didn't meet the expectations that were set before signing up
    c. Lack of support and flexibility in juggling volunteer responsibilities with other life commitments
    d. Department leadership that is rigid and does not support or allow for new ideas and new leaders
    e. Department leadership that doesn't focus on or support the needs of members
    f. Department atmosphere full of cliques and groups that exclude others
    g. Department atmosphere where members of different generations don't get along
    h. Department culture that isolates new members
    i. Department atmosphere that is too serious and not enough fun
    j. Department culture that doesn't engage members outside of calls or training
    k. Lack of social life within the department, where members train and go on calls, but don't spend time together otherwise

l. Lack of camaraderie or sense of community among everyone in the department
m. Lack of trust and cooperation between volunteer and career sides of the department
n. Lack of support and professional development for volunteers who want to move to the career side
o. Lack of flexibility in training requirements and schedules
p. Something else (please specify)

24. And what do you think could be done to address these issues and keep the volunteer? / What do you think could have been done to have kept you as a volunteer? **[OPEN]**
25. Please look at this first set of items a department could do to impact retention. Which, if any, of these do you think could have a positive impact on retention at your department? Select all that apply. **[INCLUDE NONE OF THESE OPTION]**

[ONBOARDING PRACTICES]

a. Leadership providing a clearer understanding to new volunteers of the monthly time commitment, goals, and responsibilities that are expected so they're on the same page
b. Leadership making it clear up front the minimum length of service they expect of new recruits
c. Providing new volunteers with advice on how to fit volunteering into the rest of their life
d. A mentorship program that pairs new volunteers with more experienced members

[COMBINATION DEPARTMENT SOLUTIONS, ASKED ONLY OF COMBINATION DEPARTMENTS]

e. Providing department leadership with training focused on managing combination departments
f. Holding joint trainings with career and volunteer staff
g. Mentorships with career members for volunteers who are career-bound

[FINDING NEW LEADERSHIP]

h. Enrolling rising volunteers in an officer candidate course to gain leadership skills and training
i. Following a set of national leadership standards and core competencies
j. Providing department leadership with sales and marketing training
k. Having department leadership actively participate in training to lead by example

[BROADER MEMBER SATISFACTION PRACTICES]

k. Holding cross-generational training to help members and leaders of different ages better understand each other
l. Create a Chief People Officer at the department who constantly takes the temperature of members' happiness and satisfaction

m. Have department leadership hold more regular and personal check-ins with new volunteers
n. Allow and encourage new and younger members to own specific projects and tasks
o. Break up cliques and groups by assigning members to workgroups they wouldn't normally choose

26. For each thing you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention. **[SHOW ITEMS PREVIOUSLY SELECTED IN Q22]**

    Slight impact
    Moderate impact
    Major impact

27. Now, please look at this second set of items a department could do to impact retention. Which, if any, of the following do you think could have a positive impact on retention at your department? Select all that apply. **[INCLUDE NONE OF THESE OPTION]**

[FUN STUFF]

a. Giving out awards or honors when members reach service milestones (1 year, 5 years, 10 years, etc.) and/or superlatives at the end of the year
b. Immersive virtual reality/360-degree video of firefighting experiences as part of training modules and morale boosts

[FEEDBACK OPPORTUNITIES]

c. Conduct exit interviews when a volunteer leaves the department
d. Conduct "stay" interviews with volunteers who have lapsed attendance and may be considering leaving the department
e. Create a database of former volunteers to stay in touch with them and try and re-engage on future opportunities
f. Set up a comment box for anonymous feedback and/or create dedicated "office hours" to provide members a clear opportunity to express their opinions
g. Make it easier to compare your department's retention rate and efforts with other departments'

[FLEXIBILITY]

h. Offer "micro-volunteer" opportunities (1 day or 1 week a month) for those that are unable to commit to traditional volunteer time commitments
i. Build the essential training calendar around members with less flexibility in their schedule
j. Hold essential training sessions on multiple days
k. Offer online training for nonessential training
l. Offer virtual reality training modules

28. For each thing you selected, please tell us how much of a positive impact you think it would have on volunteer retention **[SHOW ITEMS PREVIOUSLY SELECTED IN Q24]**

    Slight impact
    Moderate impact
    Major impact

29. **[TOOLS FOR LEADERSHIP, SHOWN ONLY TO LEADERSHIP]** You've looked at a lot of possible ideas. Now take a look at some developed specifically for department leadership and let us know what you think of them.

    Please rank the below items starting with the one you think could be the most useful for you to the one that you think would be the least useful.

    a. Standard definition of recruitment and retention success that can be shared and compared among departments
    b. Volunteer engagement kits that provide guidance and materials, including a webinar series, highlighting and discussing retention strategies and tools
    c. Recruitment and retention video collection of simple, peer-to-peer videos focused on retention challenges and solutions from other department leaders
    d. An immersive 360-video of firefighting experience (a first-hand point-of-view video that places the viewer in the boots of a volunteer during an emergency) to show as a training module and morale boost
    e. Online training transition support that offers tools and guidance on how to move in-person training to an online platform

30. **[RETENTION MEASURES, SHOWN ONLY TO LEADERSHIP]** Which of the following best describes how your department defines and measures volunteer retention, if at all?

    a. We have a clear definition with specific measurable inputs we use that we track
    b. We have a definition that we use, but the measures involved are not exactly clear or not easy to track
    c. We have a general sense of our retention but no specific way of measuring it
    d. We don't really have a clear definition of retention or any way of measuring it

31. **[ASK IF Q30=A]** Please share the specific definition you use to define retention. **[OPEN]**
32. **[ASK IF Q30=A]** How exactly do you measure it? Please be as specific as possible. **[OPEN]**
33. One way a department could measure retention would be to divide the number of members at the end of the year by the number of members at the beginning of the year.

How easy would this definition of retention be for your department to use?

a. Very easy
b. Somewhat easy
c. Somewhat difficult
d. Very difficult

How likely is it that your department would adopt this measure of retention?

a. Very likely
b. Somewhat likely
c. Somewhat unlikely
d. Very unlikely

34. Thinking about the retention definition we just looked at — number of members at the end of the year divided by the number of members at the beginning of the year — how helpful would it be to be able to look at those numbers in each of the below ways:
    a. The entire membership population
    b. Looking at rank-and-file
    c. Looking at leadership
    d. Looking at new recruits
    e. Looking at different tenure lengths
    f. Looking at active members only
    g. Looking only at cases where the department has influence (for instance, removing cases where members moved out of the area)
        i. Very helpful
        ii. Somewhat helpful
        iii. Somewhat unhelpful
        iv. Very unhelpful

    How easy would it be for your department to look at this retention measure among each of the below dimensions?
    a. The entire membership population
    b. Looking at new recruits
    c. Looking at rank-and-file
    d. Looking at leadership
    e. Looking at different tenure lengths
    f. Looking at active members only
    g. Looking only at cases where the department has influence (for instance, removing cases where members moved out of the area)
        i. Very easy
        ii. Somewhat easy
        iii. Somewhat difficult
        iv. Very difficult

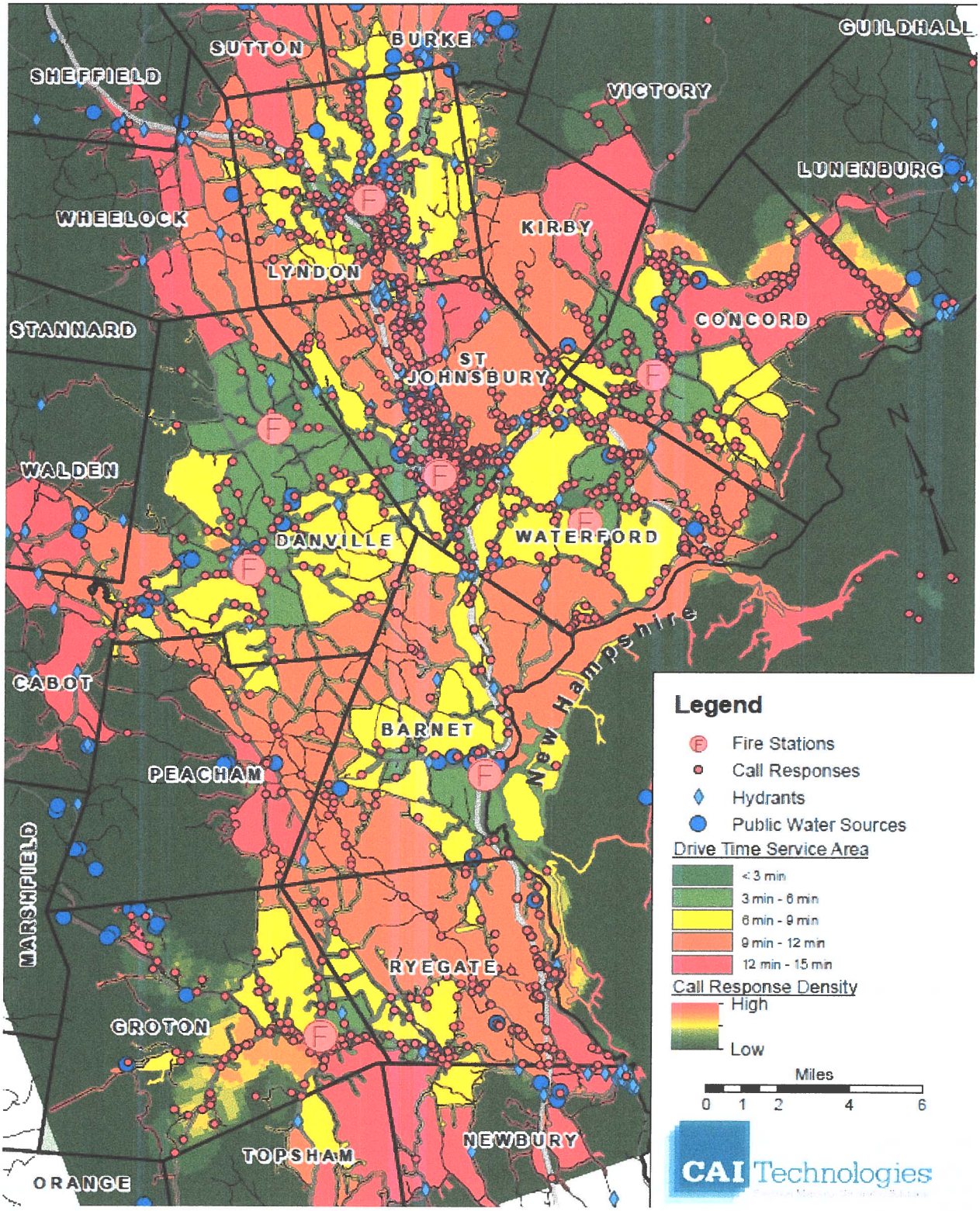
35. What is another definition of retention that departments should consider using? **[OPEN]**
    a. I don't know

APPENDIX D

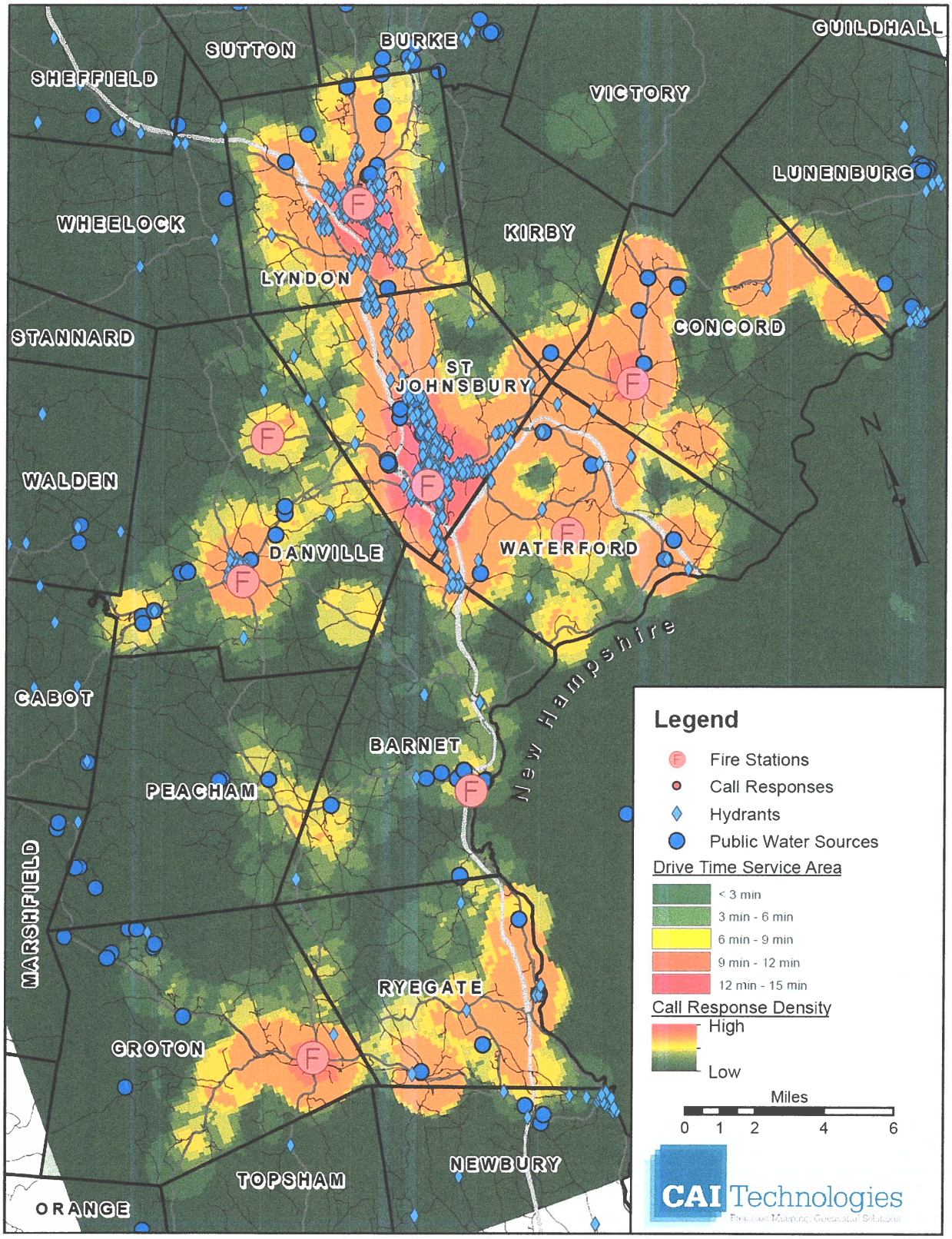
CAI GIS Mapping

Municipal Resources

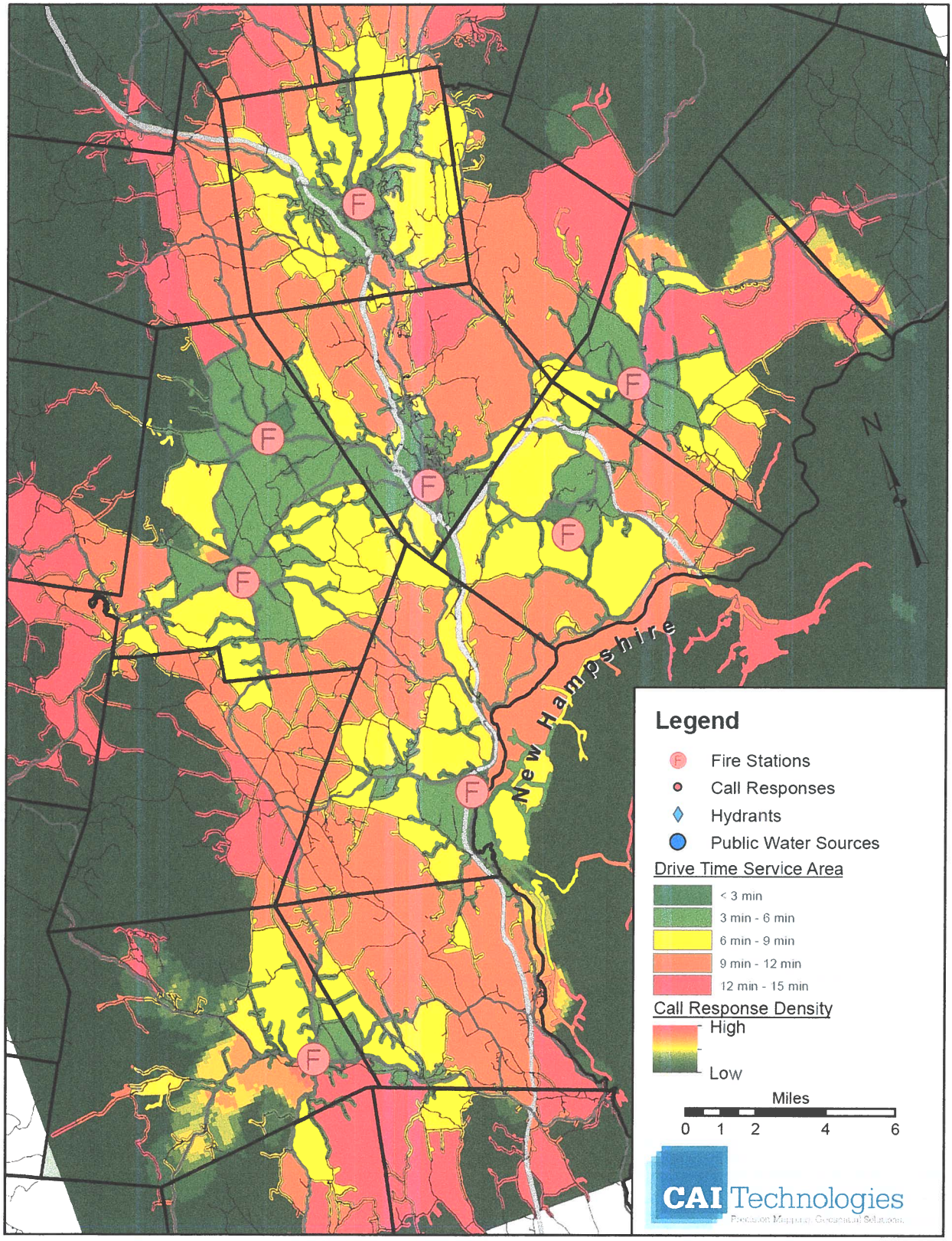
Heat Map of Incident Locations



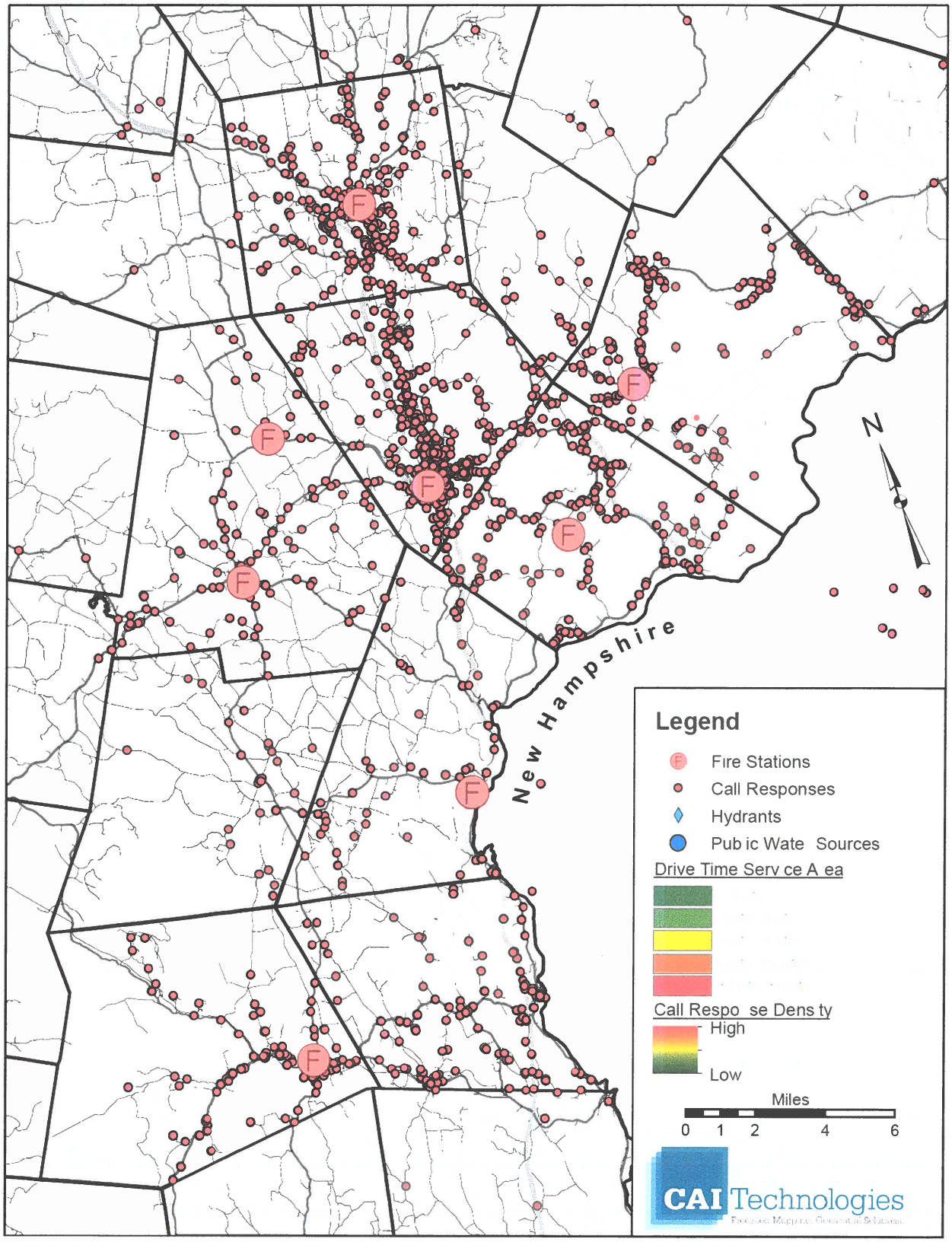
Fire Stations and Water Sources



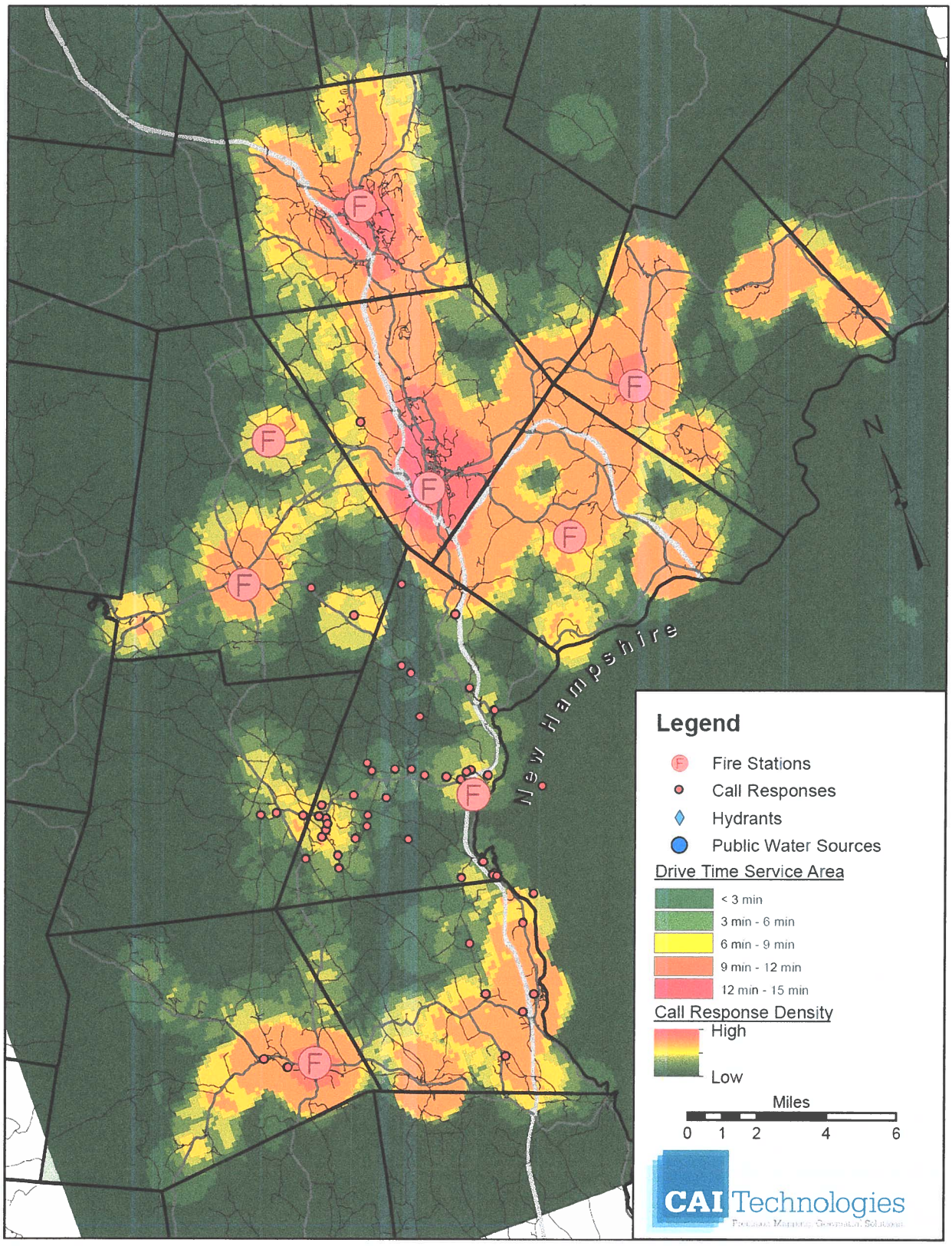
Fire Stations with Travel Times



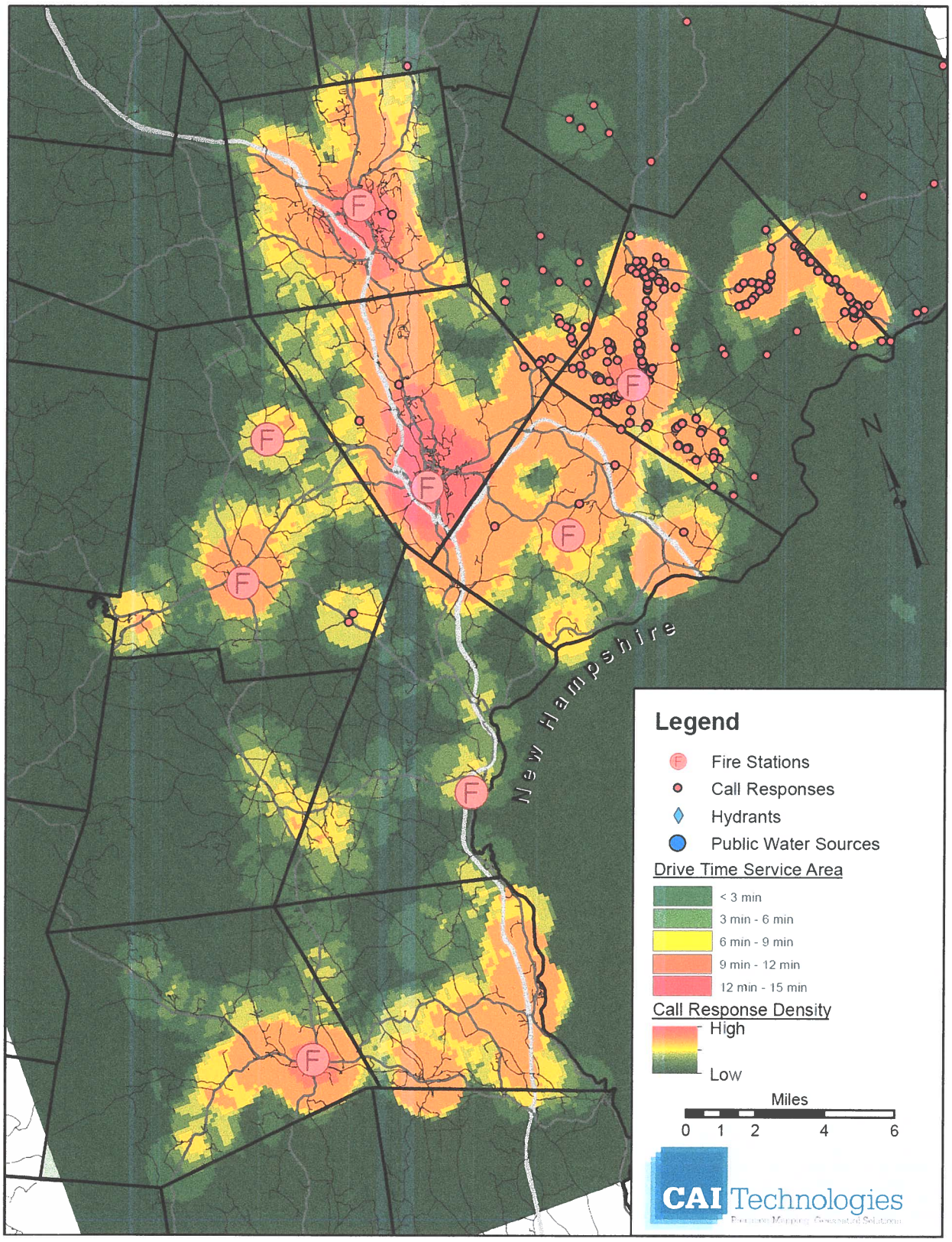
Incident Locations All Towns



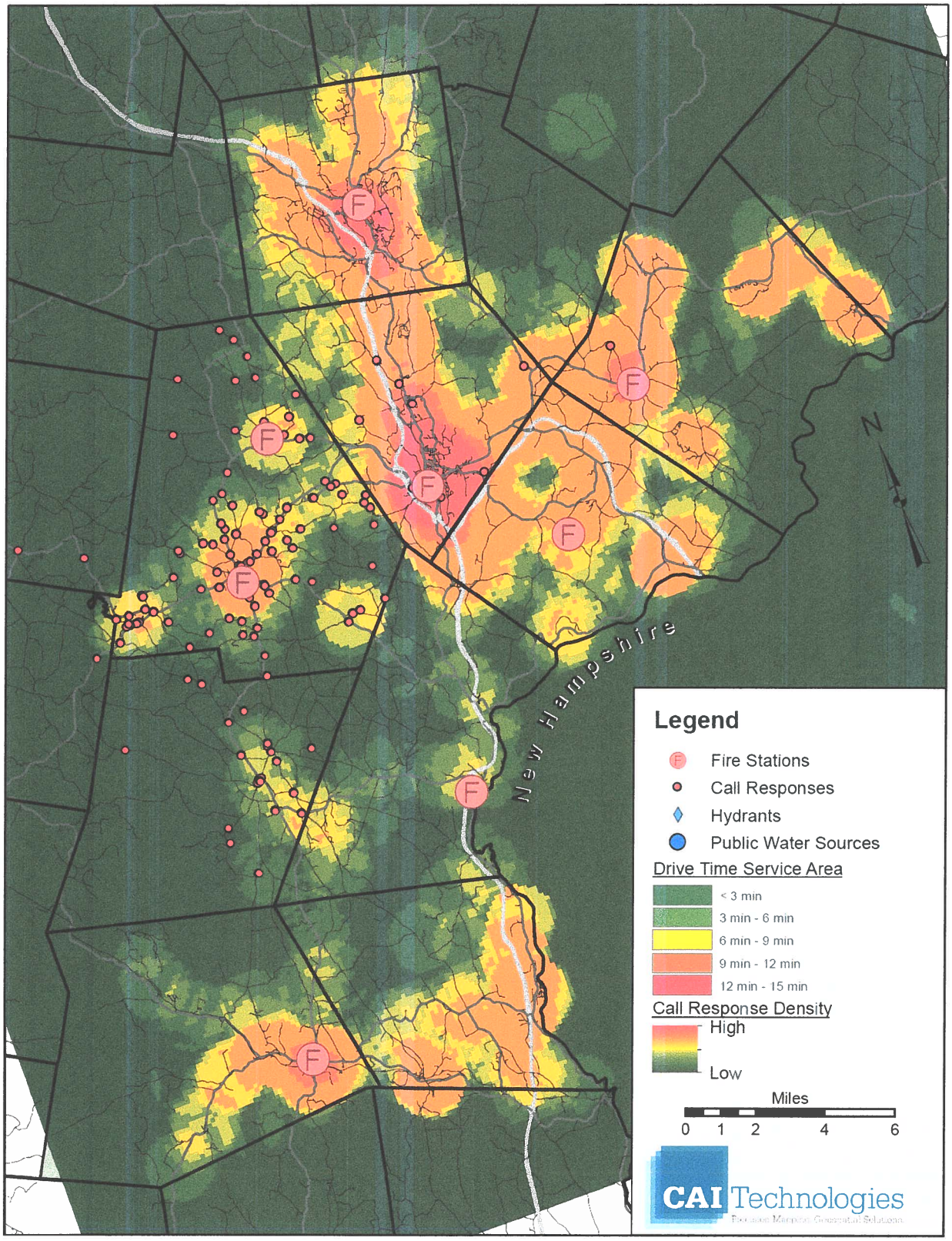
Incident Response from Barnet



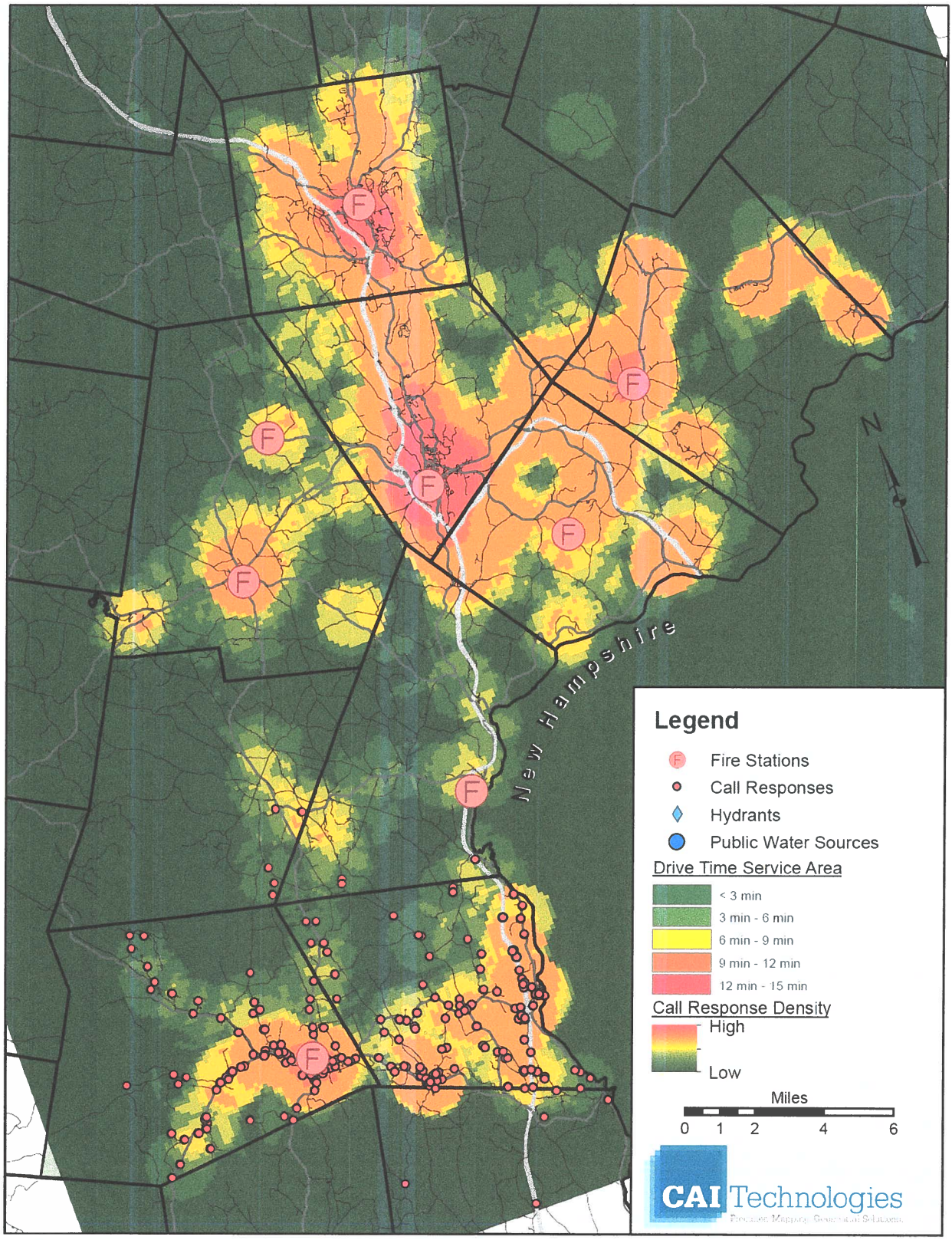
Incident Response from Concord



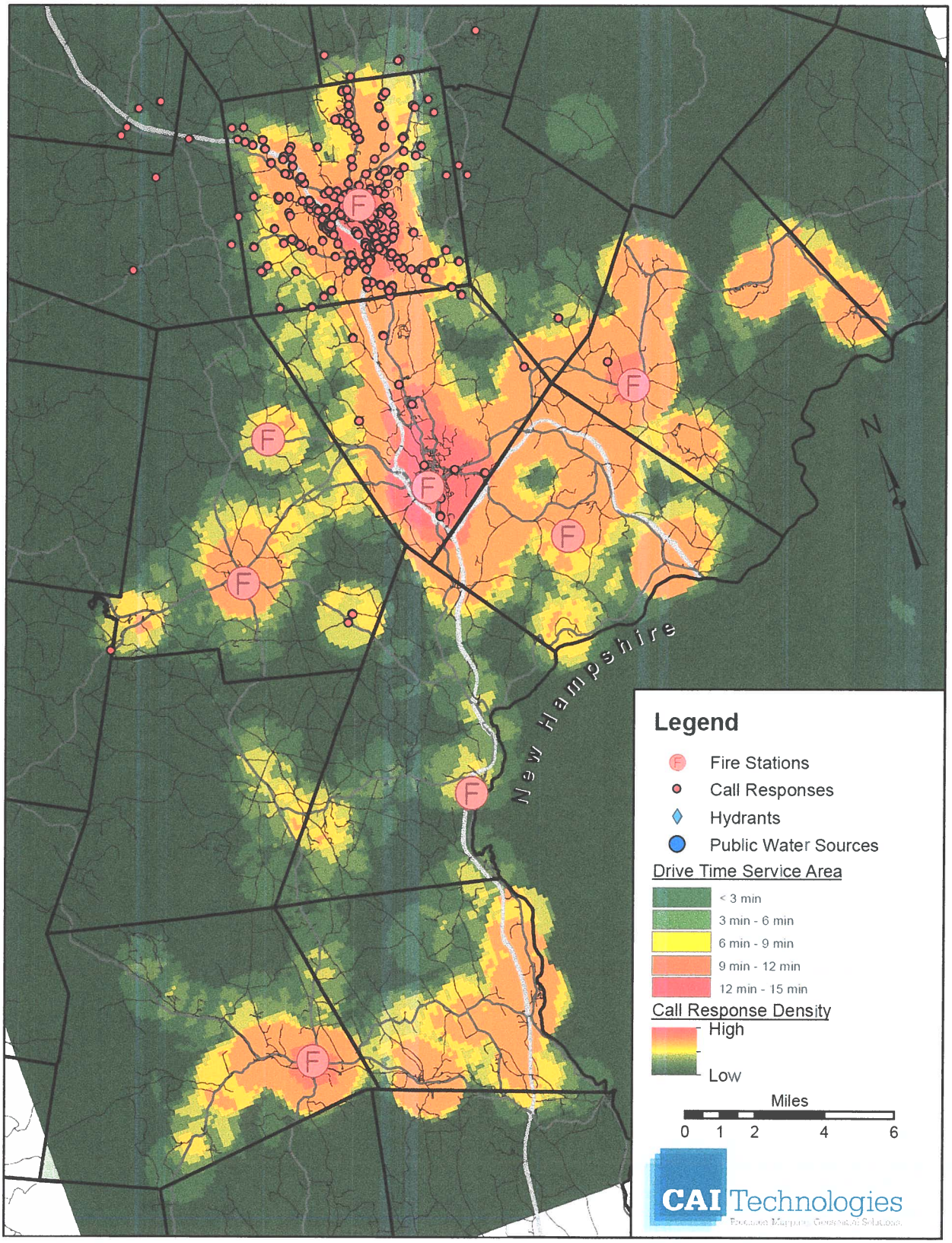
Incident Response from Danville



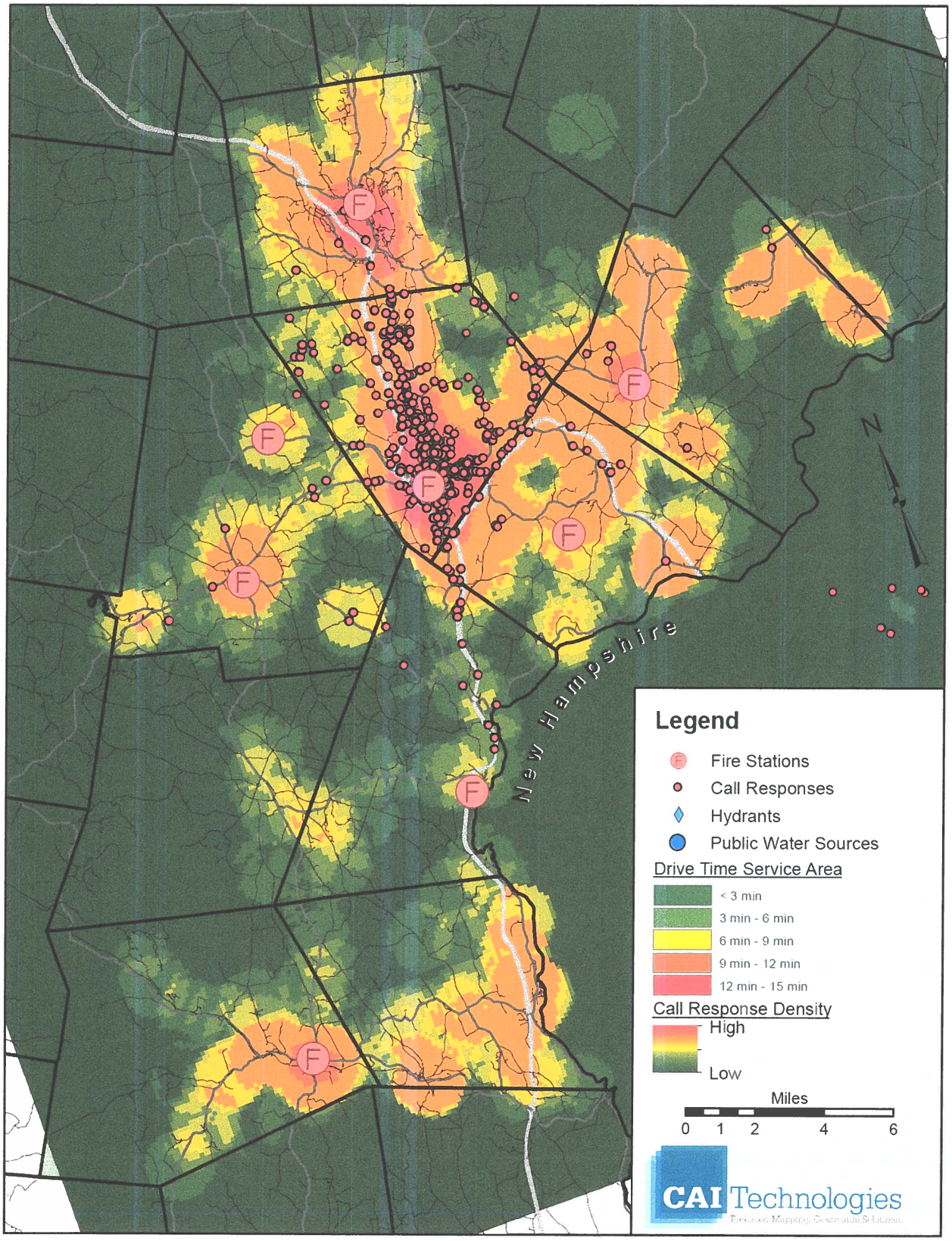
Incident Response from Groton



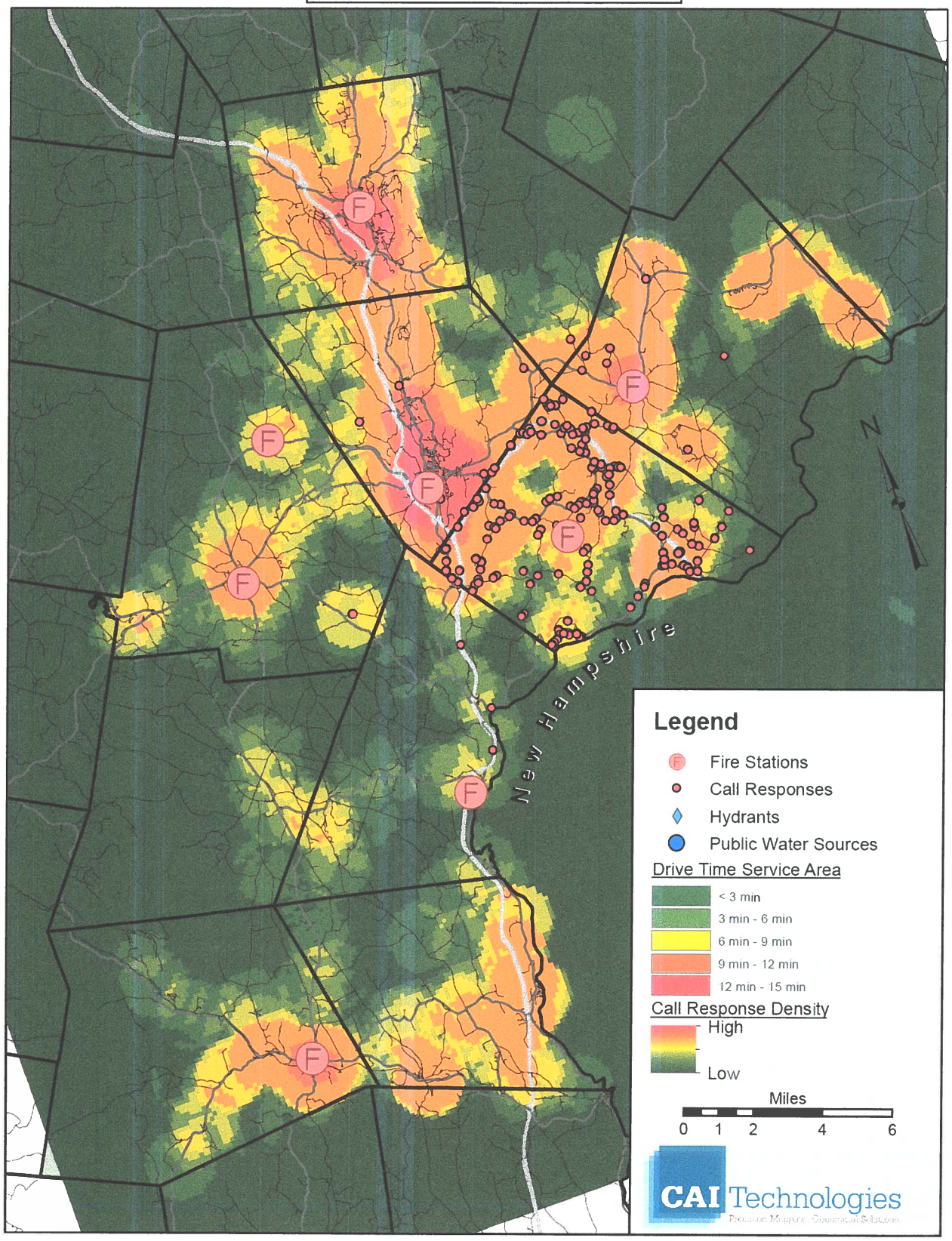
Incident Response from Lyndon



Incident Response from St. Johnsbury



Incident Response from Waterford



APPENDIX E

Example Standard Operating Guidelines Index and Policy

Municipal Resources

Rules and Regulations

100 – Rules and Regulations

Organization and Administration

200 - Conduct and Responsibilities

200.08 Personal Cell Phones and Pagers

200.10 Internet Postings / Social Networking

200.20 Photography and Digital Imaging Policy

200.25 Disciplinary Guidelines

200.30 Customer Service

210 - Uniforms

210.10 Uniform Specifications - Detail

210.20 Uniform Specifications – General Information and Suppliers

210.25 Turnout Gear

210.30 Personal Protective Equipment

210.40 Traffic Vests

220 - General Policies

220.05 New Hire Orientation & Training Procedures

220.08 Call Department - General

220.10 Call Department – Attendance Policy

220.15 General Alarms

220.20 Line of Duty Death or Serious Injury Notification

220.30 Preparedness and Rehabilitation Policy

220.40 Injured on Duty

230 – Vehicle Policies

230.10 Personal Vehicle Operations

230.11 Use of Electronic Devices while driving

230.15 Safety Belt Usage

240 - Station Policies

270 - Public Relations and Communications Policies

270.10 Public Records

280 – Timekeeping

Routine Operations

300 - Station Operations

300.10 Daily Equipment and Apparatus Readiness Check

300.15 Daily Station Duty

300.20 Daily Housekeeping Duties

300.25 Building Lockout Calls

310 - Apparatus Operations

310.02 Accidents Involving Department Vehicles

310.08 Modified Response Procedure

310.10 Emergency Vehicle Safety

310.15 Management of Roadway Incidents

310.48 Utility-Terrain Vehicle (UTV)

320 - Equipment Operations

320.01 Respiratory Protection Program

320.05 Use and Care of Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus

320.10 Use and Care of Protective Clothing

320.20 Equipment Failure

330 - Public Education

330.10 Media Relations / Media Information Release

340 - Fire Prevention

350 - Fire Watch and Blasting Details

370 - Technical Rescue Team – Routine

Emergency Operations – General

400 - Alarms and Response Procedures

400.10 Mutual Aid Practices

400.20

420 - Command Operations

420.10 Incident Operations

420.20 Incident Management

420.25 Electrical Equipment Safety

420.30 Natural Gas and Propane Equipment Safety

420.35 Medical Helicopter Patient Transport

430 – Communications Equipment

440 - Radio Communications – Emergency Operations

440.10 MAYDAY – Emergency Radio Procedures

440.20 URGENT - Emergency Radio Procedures

440.25 BIR – Brief Initial Report

450 – Miscellaneous

450.10 Fire Investigation Guidelines

450.15 Forcible Entry

450.18 Lock Boxes

450.20 Infectious Disease Exposure/Decontamination

450.25 Violent Incident Response

460 – Special Considerations

460.10 Lock-Out / Tag-Out

460.50 Tactical Response Scenario

Emergency Operations – Fire

500 - Fire Ground Operations

500.10 Personnel Accountability System

500.15 Standard Response Procedures

500.20 RIT Procedures

500.30 Evacuation Procedure

500.32 OSHA Two-in – Two-out rule

500.35 Fire Attack - General

500.40 Rules of Engagement / Risk Management

500.45 Initial Fire Ground Operations

570 – Specific Firefighting Situations

Emergency Operations – Medical

600 - Medical Operations – General

600.01 Response Modes

600.04 Medication Restocking

600.05 Drug Security Policy

600.06 Staffing of Ambulances

600.07 Transport/Moving of Dead Bodies

600.08 Parent Rights

600.10 Use of Patient Restraints

600.15 Medical Protective Gear

600.16 Sanitary Practices

600.17 Designated Infection Control Officer

600.18 Bloodborne Pathogen Exposure Control Plan

600.80 Communications

600.90 Certification and Recertification of EMTs

600.91 Orientation Ambulance Service Employees

600.92 Compliance with Statewide Treatment Protocols

610 - Major Medical Incidents

610.10 MCI Operation

620 – Record Keeping and Reporting Responses

620.05 Responsibility to Dispatch, Treat and Transport

620.07 Duties of Transportation, Delivery to Nearest Appropriate Facility

620.10 Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Child Abuse

620.15 Mandatory Reporting of Suspected Elder Abuse & Self Neglect

620.20 Obtaining Signatures for EMS Transports

620.25 Patient Refusal and Examine/Treat and Release

630 - Specific Emergencies

640 – Maintenance and Equipment

640.20 Stocking Supplies

640.40 Mechanical Failures

640.45 Maintenance of Mechanical and Biomedical Equipment

640.80 Inspection Authorities

650 - Emergency Medical Operations – ALS (Advance Life Support)

Emergency Operations – Special

700 - Rescue Operations – General

710 - Water and Ice Rescue Operations

710.10 Water Rescue Operations

720 - Transportation Emergencies

730 - Hazardous Materials Incidents

730.10 Response to Bomb Threats and Suspicious Packages

730.15 Monitoring for Hydrogen Cyanide

740 – Search for Missing Person

740.10

790 – Funeral Protocols and Procedures

790.10 Funeral Protocols and Procedures

Emergency Operations – Major Incident

800 - Major Emergency Operations

Fire Dispatch Operations

900 - Introduction

910 - Routine/Daily Operations

910.10 Using Emergency Reporting Software

910.20 Instructions for using FRS

920 - Emergency Operations - General

920.10

920.15 Emergency Notification of Certain Officials

940 - Emergency Operations – Fire Suppression

940.10 Fire Alarm Systems / Panel

Northern Vermont Fire Department Consortium
STANDARD OPERATING PROCEDURES

Chapter	Organization and Administration
Section:	**200 - Conduct and Responsibilities**
Title:	**Photography and Digital Imaging Policy**
Guide Number:	**200.20**
Date Issued:	**15 September 2020**
Date Effective:	**15 September 2020**
Date Revised:	
Approved by:	***XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX, Chief* of Department**

1 PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of this policy is to manage photographs and electronic images taken by fire department personnel in accordance with state law, in such a way that the privacy rights of department personnel, patients, fire victims, and the public are preserved; that evidentiary concerns related to such images are protected; and the professional image of the department is maintained.

This policy is for internal use only and does not enlarge an employee's civil liability in any way. The policy should not be construed as creating a higher duty of care, in an evidentiary sense, with respect to third-party civil claims against employees. A violation of this policy, if proven, can only form the basis of a complaint by this department for non-judicial administrative action in accordance with the laws governing employee discipline. It is expected that under emergency conditions, personnel may deviate from these requirements when in their experience and judgment

2 POLICY

2.1 It is the policy of the Fire Department to respect the privacy interests of department personnel, patients, fire victims, and the public, and to comply with the state's Public Record Law.

2.1.1 See related social media policy document (e.g., Internet Postings/Social Networking).

3 RESPONSIBILITY

3.1 This policy applies to all members of Littleton Fire Rescue without regard to whether their

social networking activity is conducted in or outside the workplace, while on or off-duty, or anonymously or through the use of pseudonyms.

4 PROCEDURE

4.1 ON-DUTY PHOTOGRAPHY

4.1.1 Fire department personnel are prohibited from using a non-department-owned camera, video recorder, audio recorder, or the camera/video/audio function or a non-department owned cellular phone, PDA, or any other digital imaging device while on-duty outside of the station.

4.1.1.1 The Fire Chief may grant an exception to this rule on an individual basis.

4.1.1.2 Any permission granted by the Fire Chief shall be in writing and shall indicate any conditions or limitations upon the employee.

4.1.2 A basic condition of any employee using a non-department owned camera, video recorder, audio recorder, or the camera/video/audio function of a non-department owned cellular phone, PDA, or any other digital imaging device while on-duty is that the image must be moved from the device to an approved Fire Department location, and the image deleted from the source.

4.1.3 Except as provided in Section above, all images taken by department personnel while on-duty shall be taken using department owned equipment.

4.1.4 Only personnel who have been trained on compliance with this policy and who are approved by the Fire Chief shall be permitted to take images pursuant to this policy.

4.1.5 On-duty personnel shall only take images that are of business-related matters and events for purposes of incident documentation, evidence, training, investigation, and/or public relations.

4.1.6 All images taken shall be preserved on a Department computer within fire or EMS software and shall not be deleted without the written permission of the Fire Chief or his/her designee, except as permitted by the record retention policy.

4.1.7 All images taken by on-duty personnel are the sole property of the department, and are under the control of the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

4.1.7.1 This specifically includes any images taken inadvertently by an on-duty member with a non-department-owned camera, cell phone camera, or any other digital imaging device.

4.1.7.2 Any member who inadvertently takes such an image shall report the fact immediately through the chain of command.

4.1.7.3 Members shall not be disciplined for inadvertent violations that are duly and immediately reported.

4.1.8 Personnel are expressly prohibited from taking any images of another person in any location where a person has a reasonable expectation of privacy, including a bathroom, bedroom, locker room, changing area, or any other location where a reasonable person would believe that he or she could disrobe in privacy, without being concerned that his or her undressing was being photographed, filmed, or videotaped by another; or a place where one would reasonably expect to be safe from hostile intrusion or surveillance.

4.2 RESPONDING TO, OPERATING AT, AND RETURNING FROM INCIDENT SCENES

4.2.1 Fire department personnel are prohibited from using non-department-owned cameras,

video recorder, audio recorder, or the camera/video/audio function of a non-department owned cellular phone, PDA, or any other digital imaging device while responding to, operating at, or returning from, any incident.

4.2.1.1 Any member who inadvertently takes such an image at an incident scene shall report the fact immediately through the chain of command to the incident commander at the earliest possible opportunity.

4.2.1.2 Members shall not be disciplined for inadvertent violations that are duly and immediately reported.

4.2.2 On-scene photography/video taken by on-duty personnel shall be for incident documentation, evidentiary, training, investigation, and/or public relations purposes only, and taken by or with the approval of the incident commander in charge of the scene, using approved department equipment, or as approved by the Fire Chief.

4.2.3 The taking of imagery shall not interfere with nor delay operational activities, except to the extent that imagery of a fire's cause and origin may require overhaul to be momentarily delayed.

4.2.4 All photographs and video containing individually identifiable patient information shall be presumed to be covered by HIPAA and state privacy laws and shall be protected in the same manner as patient care reports and medical documentation.

4.3 HANDLING AND PRESERVATION OF IMAGES

4.3.1 No department owned images may be used, printed, copied, scanned, e-mailed, texted, forwarded, posted, uploaded, shared, reproduced or distributed in any manner, except as provided herein.

4.3.1.1 This prohibition specifically includes the posting of any images on personal Web sites such as, but not limited to: Face Book, My Space, or YouTube; posting to public safety Websites; or e-mailing to friends, relatives, colleagues, or other third parties.

4.3.2 All fire department digital images as described in this policy shall be downloaded from the digital imaging device as soon as possible after they are taken, and will be cataloged and stored in a secure database with controlled access.

4.3.2.1 After being downloaded and verifying that the downloading is successful, the images on the digital imaging device's memory card shall be erased.

4.3.3 Digital imagery that has evidentiary value, including vehicular accidents involving department vehicles, fire scenes showing evidence of cause and origin, incident scenes showing the locations of victims, fire code violations, etc., require that a Chain of Custody form be initiated by the photographer and forwarded with the imagery.

4.3.4 Digital images in the secured database shall not be accessed by any party, or altered via any software product or utility such as Photoshop, unless express permission is granted in writing by the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

4.3.4.1 If permission to alter a photo is granted, the original photo shall not be altered in any way, and any copies that are altered shall be appropriately identified and documented as to being an altered copy.

4.3.4.2 The details of the alteration including what was done (cropped, lightened, darkened, Etc.), the name and rank of the member performing the alteration,

and the time and date of the alteration, shall be noted and preserved.

4.3.5 The use of fire department images shall be subject to approval of the Fire Chief or his/her designee.

4.3.5.1 Prior to the release of any image, the image shall be evaluated by the Fire Chief or his/her designee to ensure that the release will not result in a breach of patient confidentiality or breach of privacy, and that the release will, in all other respects, be lawful.

4.3.6 The use of unauthorized helmet cams and dash cams is strictly prohibited, and shall be considered a serious disciplinary breach for the employee involved and any officer who permits such use.

4.3.7 Use of department cameras to take images for personal purposes is strictly prohibited.

4.3.8 Violation of this policy or failure to permit inspection of any device covered in this policy may result in disciplinary action.

5 DEFINITIONS

5.1 **Images** – photographs, digital photographs, digital images, video recordings, or electronic files containing a graphic image or series of images, as well as any digital reproductions or copies of such photographs, digital photographs, digital images, video recordings, or files.

5.2 **Digital imaging device** – any device capable of producing a digital image, including but not limited to, a digital camera, digital camcorder, cell phones, helmet- or dash-mounted camera, etc.

APPENDIX F

Example Bylaws

Municipal Resources

ARTICLE I - DISTRICT

Article I, Section 1 **NAME**

_____ has been established following Vermont Laws, Acts or regulations in effect at the time of the creation of the District.

Article I, Section 2 **PURPOSE**

The purpose of District shall be:

To provide Fire Services mutual aid assistance in the District area including hazardous materials response and other specialized operations.

- To provide coordination of all Fire Services' mutual aid activities in the area.
- To interface with existing Civil Defense and provide fire mobilization.
- To provide overall planning for coordinated activities in times of emergencies and disasters.
- To provide for other common functions for the good of the Fire Service in the area served, including (but not limited to):

1. Group Purchasing and Standardization;
2. Group Training;
3. Common Maintenance;
4. Facilities Communications:
   a. District radio network,
   b. Ten-Alarm Mutual Aid Resource Guide,
   c. Dispatcher training.
5. Common Insurance

Article I, Section 2 **PURPOSE**

6. Seminars for Exchange of Ideas;
7. Marketing:
   a. Financing,
   b. Grant writing/administration,
   c. Revenue generation,
   d. Donations,
   e. Public relations.
8. EMS Development:
   a. Regional ALS,
   b. Training.
9. Hazardous Materials Coordination and Development;
10. Research and Development
11. Said organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code.

Article I, Section 3 **OFFICE**

An office shall be established within the District where all documents shall be maintained.

Article I, Section 4 **MEMBERSHIP**

The Head of the Fire Department and one member from the community Board of Selectmen from each community listed below shall represent the department and the community as a voting member.

Barnet, Concord, Danville, Groton, Lyndonville, Saint Johnsbury, and Waterford

The Head of the Fire Department may appoint delegates from within his/her department to represent him/her at meetings. Said delegates so appointed will have full authority at such meetings.

Article I, Section 5 **COORDINATOR-SECRETARY**

A Coordinator shall be appointed by the District Chairman with a majority vote of the membership. The Coordinator's duties shall be as directed by the District Chairman and shall include the preparation of the Annual Report which will be presented at the August monthly meeting.

Article I, Section 6 **DISSOLUSION**

Upon the dissolution of the organization, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not disposed of shall be disposed of by a court of competent jurisdiction in the county in which the principal office of the organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes.

ARTICLE II - OFFICERS

Article II, Section 1 **NUMBER**

The officers of the District shall consist of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.

Article II, Section 2 **TERM**

The Officers shall hold office from the fourth Thursday in June for a period of one year or until his/her successors have been duly elected and qualified.

Article II, Section 3 **NOMINATION COMMITTEE**

At least thirty days prior to the June meeting or prior to any meeting called for the purpose of electing officers, the Chairman shall appoint a Nominating Committee of three members, none of whom shall be an officer of District. The Chairman shall advise the membership of his appointments to the Nominating Committee. The members of the Nominating Committee shall elect their own Chairman. It shall be the responsibility of the Nominating Committee to nominate candidates for Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. The report of the Nominating Committee shall be sent to each member of District at least ten days prior to the June meeting or any meeting called for the purpose of electing officers

Article II, Section 4 **ELECTION OF OFFICERS**

The officers of Fire District Fourteen shall be elected by a majority of the members present and voting at the June meeting or at any meeting called for the purpose of electing officers.

Article II, Section 5 **VACANCIES**

If any office shall become vacant for any reason, an election to fill that office shall be held at the next regular or special meeting of District, subject to the procedures of Section 3 of this article. Any officer so elected shall complete the unexpired term of the officer succeeded.

Article II, Section 6 **CHAIRMAN**

The Chairman shall serve as the Chief Officer of District and Chairman of the District Executive Board and shall have the right to vote. He is authorized to appoint members to all committees consistent with the requirements of District. He shall perform such other duties as are incidental to his office or may be required of him by the District. The Chairman shall be a member of all committees of District ex-officio.

Article II, Section 7 **VICE CHAIRMAN**

The Vice Chairman shall serve as an officer of District and be a voting member of the District Executive Board. The Vice Chairman shall preside in the absence from the Chair of the Chairman and shall perform such duties as are incidental to this office and required by District.

Article II, Section 8 **SECRETARY**

The Secretary of District shall also serve as Secretary of the District Executive Board. The Secretary shall keep and preserve all minutes of District and of the District Executive Board and shall keep and preserve all resolutions, transactions, findings, and determinations of District and the District Executive Board. The Secretary shall preside in the absence from the Chair of the Chairman and the Vice Chairman and shall perform such duties as are incidental to this office and required by District.

Article II, Section 9 **TREASURER**

The Treasurer of District shall also serve on the District Executive Board. The Treasurer shall keep and preserve the financial records and shall act as the Chairman of the Finance Committee. He shall present the financial report at each regular meeting and shall be responsible for the performance of an annual audit, the results of which shall be presented at the annual meeting. He shall perform such duties as are incidental to this office and required by District.

ARTICLE III - MEETINGS OF DISTRICT FOURTEEN

Article III, Section 1 **REGULAR MEETINGS**

Regular meetings of Fire District shall be held monthly on the third Thursday of each month, at the direction of the Executive Board, and at such other times as may be required. The annual meeting shall be held in the month of June.

Article III, Section 2 **SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Special meetings may be called at any time by the Chairman or the District Executive Board. Special meetings shall also be called on written request of three or more members of District Fourteen.

Article III, Section 3 **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Each member of District shall be given at least seven days' written notice of the date, time, and place for each meeting.

Article III, Section 4 **QUORUM**

One-third of the total district membership or a minimum of eight members or their representatives shall constitute a quorum at any meeting. In the absence of a quorum, a lesser number can adjourn meetings.

Article III, Section 5 **VOTING**

Each member or delegate present at a meeting shall have one vote. A majority of those present and voting is required for the adoption of any motion or resolution, except for the amendment of these bylaws, which is covered under Article VII.

Article III, Section 6 **CONDUCT OF MEETINGS**

Except as otherwise required by these bylaws, the rules of order of District shall be in accordance with the latest revised edition of ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER.

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICT EXECUTIVE BOARD

Article IV, Section 1 **DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, AND POWERS**

The District Executive Board shall act as the advisory committee for the operation of District and shall assume the duties, responsibilities, and powers of the District Fire Mobilization Advisory Committee authorized by the Massachusetts Civil Defense Agency.

Article IV, Section 2 **ELECTION OF DISTRICT EXECUTIVE BOARD**

The District Executive Board shall be elected from District members by a majority vote of the members present and voting at the June meeting. Executive Board members shall serve a three-year term and may not hold consecutive terms. Three members shall make up the Executive Board with rotating vacancies of 3, 2, 1 members in consecutive years. The officers shall also serve on the Executive Board in accordance with their term of office.

Article IV, Section 3 **VACANCIES**

If any member of the District Executive Board can no longer serve, his replacement shall be elected in the same manner and under the same conditions provided in Section 2 of this article at the next regular meeting of District. Such replacement shall complete the unexpired term of the person succeeded.

Article IV, Section 4 **REGULAR MEETINGS**

The District Executive Board shall meet at the call of the Chairman.

Article IV, Section 5 **SPECIAL MEETINGS**

Special meetings may be called at any time by the Chairman. Special meetings may also be called upon written request therefore by three or more members of the District Executive Board.

ARTICLE IV - DISTRICT EXECUTIVE BOARD

Article IV, Section 6 **NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Each member of the District Executive Board shall be given at least seven days' written notice of the time, place, and date for each meeting except for emergency meetings for which this section may be waived.

Article IV, Section 7 **QUORUM**

The majority of the members of the District Executive Board shall constitute a quorum at any meeting. In the absence of a quorum, a lesser number can adjourn a meeting.

Article IV, Section 8 **VOTING**

Each member present at a meeting shall have one vote. A majority of those present and voting is required for the adoption of any motion or resolution.

Article IV, Section 9 **CONDUCT OF MEETINGS**

Except as otherwise required by these bylaws, the rules of order for the District Executive Board shall be in accordance with the latest revised edition of ROBERTS RULES OF ORDER.

ARTICLE V - FINANCIAL

Article V, Section 1 **FISCAL YEAR**

The fiscal year of District shall be from July 1 to June 30.

Article V, Section 2 **ASSESSMENTS**

Each member of District shall be assessed a sum of money per year for the operation of District. The amount of the annual assessment shall be determined by a vote of the membership at the Annual Meeting in June. The Treasurer shall bill each community during July with payment due by September 30 of each year

ARTICLE V - FINANCIAL

Article V, Section 3 **BUDGET**

The Chairman of each District committee shall prepare a budget of expenditures for his committee for each fiscal year and said budgets shall be submitted for approval by the membership at a regular meeting at least thirty days prior to the beginning of each fiscal year.

Article V, Section 4 **DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS**

Funds of District will be held in a bank chosen by the Treasurer with the approval of the Executive Board. Disbursement of funds will be by voucher approved as follows:

1. **Budget Items** - Signature of the Treasurer or of the Chairman in the absence of the Treasurer.

2. **Non-Budget Items** - Signature of the Treasurer or of the Chairman in the absence of the Treasurer, for sums up to $ 1000. Sums over $300 require the approval of the membership at the next regular meeting, except in cases of purchases of equipment previously approved by the Executive Board and general membership of District.

Article V, Section 5 **ANNUAL REPORT**

An annual report outlining the activities for the year and containing the year-end fiscal report shall be prepared and distributed to District members no later than the August following each year's end.

ARTICLE VI - NEW MEMBER COMMUNITIES

Article VI, Section 1 **NEW MEMBERSHIP**

New communities will be considered for membership. Approval for membership requires a two-thirds vote of the membership of District at a regular meeting.

Article VI, Section 2 **ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP**

Associate members would border existing communities in District, pay half the established dues, and may vote at meetings. Any communities wishing to become associate members of District shall make a request in writing and will then be put on the agenda for approval at the next regular meeting.

ARTICLE VII - AMENDMENTS

Article VII, Section 1 **AMENDMENTS**

These bylaws may be amended at any regular meeting of District or at any special meeting called in accordance with these bylaws for that purpose. The Chairman shall deliver to each member a copy of the proposed amendment(s) or changes to these bylaws at least three (3) days prior to the date of the meeting. Amendments of these bylaws requires a two-thirds vote of the District members present and voting.