

# **COMEVOL**

Saturday, June 07, 2003

Sponsored by the  
**DUTCHESS COUNTY**  
**DEPARTMENT OF EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Facilitator  
Julie Denny  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

REPORT #	TOPIC	PG
1	Paid per Call	3
2	Fire/EMS Coverage and Daytime Responses	4
3	Recruitment of New, Young, Retention, Incentives	5
4	Training	6
5	Specialized Rescue Services	7
6	Overcoming Traditions	8
7	Shared Services & Combined Departments	9
8	Fire/EMS Community Planning and Emergency Response	10
9	Developing Leadership	11
	Sharing and Learning: Overheard	12
	Reflections at the end of the day	13
	Participants	14

THEME: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 1

Topic: **PAID PER CALL**

Leader: Barry Ward

Participants: Donald Cookingham  
Pete Fiorese  
Greg Becker  
George Walker

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

**Discussion Objective;**

The objective of this group is to provide Jurisdictions Having Authority with options as they attempt to solve problems trying to attract and retain EMS and firematic personnel.

**Problem Statement;**

Today Jurisdictions Having Authority have only two options in New York State. They have employees as either Volunteer or Full time Career.

**Recommendations :**

The recommendation of the group is to have a middle option which is paid per call employee status. This is an option that requires the action of the state to allow for this option

- This option needs the same protections afforded a volunteer in terms of Guard Samaritan Laws, Volunteer Firemen Benefit, Right to take advantage of the Awards program
- Compensation approach could be via a point system that could be tied to the current awards system, an hourly rate, or stipend.
- Provide for compensation flexibility such that Jurisdictions Having Authority have options to address timeframes that have particular response problems as well as compensating those with higher skill levels at a higher rate of pay.
- Compensation would cover Firematic and EMS for example calls as well as drills.
- Compensation should be exempt from NY State Income Tax.

**Benefit of these Changes:**

- This would be an excellent supplement to the awards system
- Compensation addresses immediate financial needs
- Awards system, already in place, addresses Retirements needs.
- This would provide motivation to attract people that may get a second job in the private sector to contribute time to the community they live in
- This motivates current members to be more active and increase their training levels.

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 2

Topic: **FIRE/EMS COVERAGE & DAYTIME RESPONSES (FIRE/EMS)**

Leader: Bob Boyles, Jr.

Participants: Bob Boyles, Jr., Carl Stahovec, John Palcher, Dan Murray, Ed Hoxsie, Davyd Bullock, Tim O'Connor, Barb Cary, Billy Watson, Tom Ackerman, Lenny Morrison, Dave Tetor, Ray Oberly, Peg Conners, Mike Macak, Martha Morgan, William Marshall, John McNair, Brian Kelley, Richard Lewis, Bob Sartori, Loren Spencer, Ray Nichols, Penny Hickman, Margaret Fetters, David Saberman, Dennis Smith, John O'Conner, Bob Olivet, Ed Hauser, Peter Padloski, Lenny Splain, George Walker, George Wadett,

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

Problem in Dutchess County with daytime coverage especially with EMS; 10 years ago recommended county-wide EMS program was vetoed--do we want to try this route again and now? Major problem with EMS is a financial burden with smaller districts--possibly combine fire/EMS personnel; go with a contracting paid service for EMS with volunteers responding; have the departments recognize that there is a problem within the department with response

Fire districts cannot do "paid contract" only town boards-mutual aid plan is in effect but normally dispatched after third call: liability increases when the response time increases--there was "free" service for past 30 plus years and in times today must pay for "medic" service and if medic rides in back of the ambulance, pt billed for service and Medicare and most insurance companies do not reimburse--if EMS went county-wide, county taxes increase; smaller districts might disappear and may have "substations" scattered throughout county like sheriffs office--expenses would be shared by all districts--must go back to state to possibly change some rules and regulations--patient care is the bottom line for EMS--where is this going?

Must start now to act on this either with five or six towns consolidating, going county-wide, go paid within own districts--go back to county legislature with ideas and ask them to start looking into the problem and start acting on a possible solution

Fire coverage also problem at this time--not as bad as EMS--new homes are being built (very expensive) on long narrow dirt roads with little access--suggest fire departments go back to town boards for preplanning.

Qualified manpower covers equipment but sometimes only go driver-only, whereas ambulances go with at least two people--daytime calls consisting of box alarms, afas, etc cut into manpower issues since most business do not let employees go to fires/EMS calls. Training classes are more intense; equipment for firefighters more expensive--some departments have explorer programs in place hoping to retain these younger members--now some departments have fast teams in place which means more training--districts have large areas and maybe possibly change district lines or have mutual aid dispatched for borderline alarms--must take these ideas back to fire departments, town boards, chief and EMS councils as to what direction to take: consolidation of districts, county-wide, just mutual aid service

This discussion group recommends forming a group comprising of fire chiefs, EMS personnel, town boards, and fire commissioners

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 3

Topic: **RECRUITMENT OF NEW, YOUNG/RETENTION/INCENTIVES**

Leader: Dave Tetor

Participants: Tom Ackerman, Margaret Fettes, M. Morgan, Bob Olivet, John T. O'Connor, Peter Fiorese, Peter Podloski, G. Leonard Splain, George Walker., Dennis. Smith, Mike Macak, George Wade III, Carl Stahovac, Loren Spencer, Bob Sartori, Len Morrison, Richard Yeno, B.D. Kelly, Robert Boyles, Jr., William Watson, D.T. Bullock, Peg Conners, William Marshall, Tim O'Connor, Ray Oberly, Daniel Murray, Ed Hoxsie

One on one probably best way to encourage young people

County Programs for:  
Service Awards Program  
100% Property Tax Reduction  
Exempt from Jury Duty

Reduce mandates:  
OSHA  
Driver Requirements

Need for a Strong Junior Program

One time Awards per Call

Degree Program

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 4

Topic: **TRAINING**

Leader: Rich Yeno

Participants: Rich Yeno, Robert Boyles, Jr., Geog. Walker, Laren Spencer, Bob Sartori, Don Cookingham, Brian Kelly, Tom Ackerman, Billy Waston, Dave, Tetor, John Paraskeva

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

Training where does it end and how is it going?

Problems:

- Mandates by state and OSHA.
- Too much time in classroom, not with hands on.
- With insurance company not giving any time for drivers training in their drivers training classes.
- State changing their firefighter class [like from Firefighter 2000 to Firefighter 1 and 2]
- After taking training firefighter really does know about the feel or heat of a fire.
- EMT too long and travel time is a problem.

Possible solutions:

- Have a Safety program at firehouse and document all training we do at drills, in house fire training. As in the state and OSHA the firelight need to stop get hurt.
- When the state reworks the firefighter class they need to put some more hands on in their class and more fires in their classes
- There needs to be more training with each other at the each firehouse.
- For the driving end of the fire/EMS possible CDL or the state need the insurance company to change their training so they're driving in it.
- For the EMT class possible web cam, Internet instead of traveling.

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 5

Topic: **SPECIALIZED RESCUE SERVICES**

Leader: Barry Ward

Participants: Greg Becker, John Palcher, Jack Gensch, Donald Cookingham, Ray Nichols  
Ken Davidson

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

**Problem Statement:**

- Individual Departments are unable to address the skills needed for Low volume High-risk events requiring Technical Rescue Skills, for example;
  - Swift Water
  - Confined Space
  - Ice Rescue
  - High / Low angle rescue
  - Building Collapse
  - Disaster Management
  - Similar core skills

**Recommendation:**

- County should provide coordination leadership and direction
  - Establish skill areas to be addressed
  - Techniques
  - Standards
  - Practices
- Individual departments to provide people resources

**Value:**

- Allows departments to have a resource they can go to and call on for specialized rescue needs.
- Allows those department members that have a desire to develop special rescue skills to do so where in their own department they may never have an opportunity. This can be a recruitment and retention asset.

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 6

Topic: **OVERCOMING TRADITIONS**

Leader: Greg Becker

Participants: Dennis Smith, Ed Hoxsie, Carl Stahovec, William Marshall, John Palach, John Paraskeva

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

Traditions in the fire service have been established over a 200+ year period. Unfortunately, many of these traditions are taken as dogma rather than instructive lessons of the past. These "traditions", when carried by members who refuse to change or improve in favor of "the way we've always done it", tend to stand in the way of moving forward in level of service provision, safety and operations, and relations with the public.

Traditions discussed:

1. Structure - the traditional paramilitary structure of departments, especially the volunteer service, no longer serves well in the new era of a higher level of "business" involvement for departments and chief officers. Operations may need to be more segmented, allowing more business-oriented personnel to perform appropriate tasks.
2. "Mine vs. yours" - Territorial protectionism - my fire is MY FIRE. Given the current manning levels, response times and complexity of incidents, departments and entities need to work together across arbitrary geo-political boundaries in order to provide highest and best level of service to the community.
3. Tactics and equipment - quite simply, tactics and equipment that were viable in years past are no longer appropriate to address and mitigate incidents in today's service. Hazmat, WMD, terrorism, building construction changes, etc. all make it mandatory that the service move forward to develop, promote and accept new and effective tactics and equipment.

Solutions:

1. Attrition - as time takes its toll on our ranks, fewer of the tradition-holdouts are active to have a negative influence.
2. Education of new members - hopefully being trained by officers/members in current policies and procedures, not having their ears bent by the "sticks in the mud."
3. Mandates from funding sources - town boards, commissioners, etc. must set direction and provide appropriate oversight to ensure that progress is being made.
4. Education of the public to improve their understanding of who we really are and what we really do today, and outreach to involve them to whatever extent possible.
  - a. Education of public officials, same reasons and possibly more important to forming team effort in keeping the fire service "modern" and relevant in today's society.

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report # 7

Topic: **SHARED SERVICES & COMBINED DEPARTMENTS**

Leader: Peg Conners, with Ray Oberly assisting

Participants: Barb Cary, Martha Morgan, D.T. Bullock, Ray Oberly, Peg Conners, D. Murray, John Palcher, Leonard J. Splain, Mike Macak, Pete Fiorese, R. Podloski, John T. O'Connor, Carl Stahovec, David Sherman

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

### **Shared Services**

It is possible to save money in purchasing specialized equipment and in the cost of operations by sharing services between departments. As an example, one district has cleaning equipment for cleaning gear and provides service of cleaning to adjoining districts for a fee. The cost is less than commercial services and service is provided at a faster turn around time. End costs are reduced to all participating districts.

Combined purchasing of supplies and equipment could be done to get best price for these items by larger quantity purchasing. A matter of standardization of certain items must be achieved for this to work. An example: sizes of hoses and other common equipment.

Shared training by multiple districts would bring larger groups together for training which would allow the possibility to fund and attract expert outside instructors to give class. An example: instead of having a class of 5, have a group of 10, 15 or more.

Multiple district training (with operating equipment) is an opportunity to see where equipment matches or mismatches and to help identify where problems could occur before working at a mutual aid site. Training together allows manpower to become familiar with other departments' equipment, know where it is on the truck etc., and would improve safety in joint operations.

Pre-planning of mutual aid service for certain facilities or geographic areas in a town should be done to allow for these sites to be responded to by other fire departments (from other districts) at first call in order to have site served at the earliest opportunity.

Another shared service to consider is fuel provision. An example is sharing a fueling station with other municipal operations, such the highway department.

### **Combined Departments**

It was noted that there are provisions in state law that provide a mechanism for combining departments. There must be mutual respect existing between those departments before this can be accomplished.

This issue is more complicated when trying to combine volunteer-only departments with those with paid staff. The duties and responsibilities of the paid staff and their relationship with volunteers need to be defined and spelled out.

A discussion about going to a paid and volunteer combined arrangement is a serious one and needs to be considered very carefully. Once that choice is made, there will be no going back to the prior arrangement.

Theme: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

Report #: 8

Topic: **FIRE/EMS, COMMUNITY PLANNING, EMERGENCY RESPONSE**

Leader: Ed Hoxsie

Participants: John Palcher, John O'Connor, Peter Podloski, Pete Fiorese, Leonard Splain, Dave Tetor, Mike Macak, Carl Stohovec, Dan Murray, Dave Bullock, Tim O'Connor, Dennis Smith, John McNair, Ray Oberly, Ed Hoxsie, John Paraskeva

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

- ◆ Communities are growing and the Fire Departments are having increasing difficulty handling the increased call volumes
- ◆ Planning boards need to work with the local FD
  - access for emergency vehicles
  - "driveway laws"
  - FD review of plans prior to issuing permits
  - Subdivisions
    - Water supplies for firefighting
    - Dry hydrants
    - Rated municipal systems
- ◆ Housing developments zoned for increased density if a percentage of homes are "affordable"
  - helps retain personnel
  - people can afford to stay
  - others can afford to move in
- ◆ Has been done in other areas such as Rockland, Westchester, East Fishkill
- ◆ FD members should be on town, planning, and zoning boards
  - FD's have a more active roll in planning
  - Closer relationship to town officials
- ◆ Year round access to buildings must be planned for and enforced
- ◆ Who is driving the decisions re: Equipment and level of service provided by the FD?
  - FD
  - Community through public hearings
  - Town boards
- ◆ Public is mostly absent from discussions
  - FD is left to make decisions with out much public input
  - Protection must be provided
- ◆ Dutchess County is becoming more of a bedroom community
  - When they dial 911 they want service, they don't care how.
  - No time to volunteer
- ◆ Dry Hydrant easements
  - for servicing, maintenance
  - emergency use
- ◆ Fire Advisory Boards
  - make recommendations on plans for planning board prior to issuing permits

THEME: CHANGING TIMES IN THE FIRE SERVICE

REPORT #: 9

TOPIC: **DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP**

LEADER: Greg Becker

PARTICIPANTS: Greg Becker, John Paraskera, Robert Boyles, Jr., Billy Watxon, Tim O'Connor, Peg Conners, Leonard J. Splain, Ray Oberly, Dave Retor, Dennis Smith, Ken Davidson, Mike Marak, John Palcher, John McNair, Ed Hoxsie, D.T. Bullock, John T. O'Connor, Donald Cookingham, Dewitt Sagendorph

Key Points of Discussion, Recommendations:

Prospective leaders need development, training; they're volunteers so time in training means time away from work, family, etc.

Administration role changes, more paperwork, more meetings  
If you agree to serve, you should commit to learning

Mandates are a problem

While the Fire Officer District manual has it all, can't legislate compliance among volunteers; can't force this kind of training, have to make it attractive somehow

Should be available to all officers: commissioners, chiefs, captains, and lieutenants.

Times are changing; officers must learn administrative skills, need personnel Management  
Training to understand sexual harassment or indeed any kind of harassment, legal  
ramification of not putting policies and procedures in place and not following them, of  
potential unwanted investigations

Balancing act with business and political components as part of the mix

Too many officers are elected on popularity, not on qualifications

County seminar class used to be held at DCC. Nice program, but required time commitment.  
Lesson plans for training  
Included segment on people skills; how to manage and get along with people

Need for Certificate program for accreditation at the state level.

Online training is another option. There is a company in California with which some municipalities are working. Frees time up for hands-on training; allows documentation of training dates for performance evaluations.

Pleasant Valley can help with Sexual Harassment polices. They've got one in place.  
Some insurance companies also help with Sexual Harassment policy. (e.g., St. Paul's)

Other county programs:

Purchasing  
Sexual Harassment through the EEO Department/Personnel  
Public Safety Incident Command complete with role plays

## A SENSE OF SHARING, LEARNING: OVERHEARD COMMENTS

“The ones who didn’t come today have got their heads in the sand.”

“Why don’t I start pulling some of that stuff together and get it to you?”

“You’re putting a band aid on a bigger problem.”

“I think we’re gonna take a quick coffee break and then come back to keep talking.”

“I’d love to get a better appreciation of what the status of that is...”

“Can we form a committee from this group?”

“We gotta sell ourselves to recruit. One on one is probably the best.”

“This gathering here today is a real good opportunity...”

REFLECTIONS AT THE END OF THE DAY: *“What one thing have you learned, what observations have you got about being here today, any other final thoughts?”*

“It is apparent that there is a major need for Career Services to supplement the failing volunteer systems.”

“Thanks for the opportunity!”

“County involvement needs to be implemented in order to get program started.”

“The energy of all participants is very high and movement of several topics needs to be acted upon. Some frustration that things have not happened.”

“Pressure needs to be brought forward to County and State to solve regional EMS problems and eventually for the Fire Service.”

“Bring town officials and fire service together for one common goal.”

“There is a need for continued focus and follow up on County-wide Emergency Services.”

“The Town of \_\_\_\_\_ should have a Fire Advisory Board.”

“We will look into providing our younger non-home owner fire volunteers incentives like a free Recreation Pass and/or Transfer Station sticker.”

“I got some insights into the possible course of the Fire Service.”

“We need community involvement between Fire Service and Town Government.”

“Training is important, but time-consuming.”

“Today was useful to open/refresh lines of communication, both to/from County and among departments.”

“We need city-wide EMS service.”

“Some level of agency needs to address manpower/coverage for Fire Service. Plan for near future ASAP.”

“The chance to discuss the problems with others’ viewpoints was helpful.”

“There should be a County EMS and Fire System in place; all departments are having the same problems.”

“We must have easement to use and maintain dry hydrants on private property.”

“Daytime EMS/Fire Response is a problem that everyone has. Concern by all to find a solution.”

“The County/State Volunteer Emergency Services are in trouble.”

“We must keep in mind that as the times change one thing will not: we are here to protect the community.”

## PARTICIPANTS:

<u>Name</u>	<u>Affiliation / Representing</u>
Tom Ackerman	Wassaic Fire District
Greg Becker	Milan Fire Department
Robert Boyles Jr.	Wassaic Fire Department
Earl Bruno	Dutchess County Executive's Office
Davyd Bullock	LaGrange Career Firefighters
Barbara Cary	Roosevelt EMS
Margaret Conners	Fairview Fire District
Donald Cookingham	West Clinton Fire District
Ken Davidson	Dutchess County Deputy Fire Coordinators
Margaret Fettes	Dutchess County Legislature
Peter Fiorese	Beacon Volunteer Ambulance Corps
Jack Gensch	New York State Emergency Management Office
Ed Hauser	Town of Pawling
Penny Hickman	Town of Pleasant Valley
Ed Hoxie	Town of Stanford
Brian Kelly	Town of Dover
Tony Leo	Town of Union Vale
Mike Macak	Dutchess County Fire Chief's Council
William Marshall	Roosevelt Fire Department
Dennis McGuire	Town of Rhinebeck
John McNair	Town of Pleasant Valley
Martha Morgan	Roosevelt EMS
Len Morrison	Dutchess County Deputy Fire Coordinators
Daniel Murray	Dutchess County Fire Advisory Board
Ray Nichols	Dutchess County Deputy Fire Coordinators
Raymon Oberly	Town of Clinton
John O'Connor	Town of Union Vale
Timothy O'Connor	Fairview Career Firefighters
Bob Olivet	LaGrange Fire District
Peter Podloski	Beacon Volunteer Ambulance Corps
John Palcher	Arlington Career Firefighters
John Paraskeva	East Fishkill Fire District
Bob Sartori	Dutchess County Fire Advisory Board
David Sherman	Town of North East
Dennis Smith	Stanford Fire District
Loren Spencer	J. H. Ketcham Hose Company
Leonard Splain	Town of Poughkeepsie
Carl Stahovac	Town of North East
David Tetor	Town of Stanford
George Wade, III	Town of LaGrange
George Walker	Dutchess County Fire Advisory Board
Barry Ward	LaGrange Fire Department
William Watson	Wassaic Fire Company
Rich Yeno	J. H. Ketcham Hose Company
William R. Steinhaus	Dutchess County Executive's Office
DeWitt Sagendorph	Dutchess County Department of Emergency Response
John Murphy	Dutchess County Department of Emergency Response
Julie Denny	Resolutions