



Montgomery County Government

VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Montgomery County has been served by volunteer firefighting companies since before the turn of the century. Since 1918, the fire companies and rescue squads have been State chartered corporations. During the first three decades of this century, all fire and rescue organizations in the County were truly community based, totally supported by private donations of funds and materials, and totally operated by volunteer personnel.

Beginning in 1927, the volunteer fire corporations began receiving public funds to help defray operational expenses. The principal use of the public funds was to hire firefighters to respond to calls during the daytime hours when volunteers were at their places of employment. By 1972, almost all fire companies were receiving direct tax support primarily to pay the salaries of corporation firefighters.

In 1987, the Council enacted legislation authorizing paid corporation firefighters to transfer to newly created career merit system positions in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services. The legislation reaffirmed that the corporations would retain operational responsibility for the delivery of fire, rescue and emergency medical services within a combination system that also included the Fire and Rescue Commission to provide policy guidance and the regulatory framework, and the Department of Fire and Rescue Services to provide, in addition to the paid career staff, a variety of support services.

In recognition of the critical importance of volunteers to the Montgomery County combination system and also in their declining numbers, the 1987 legislation authorized a volunteer recruitment and retention program within the Fire and Rescue Commission, under the direction of a volunteer coordinator.

The report examines the current tangible and intangible incentives to volunteering in the fire and rescue services and proposes some additional incentives to promote volunteering and to retain active volunteers. In gathering information on current and potential incentives, a survey was distributed to all 19 fire and rescue corporations for further distribution to individual volunteers, and another survey was sent to fire departments in seven local jurisdictions.

The report provides specific findings and recommendations related to the recruitment and retention of volunteers in the fire and rescue services under the following seven critical areas:

- Technical fire, rescue, and EMS training
- Information distribution and publicity
- Community relations
- Job satisfaction
- Direct financial rewards
- Leadership issues
- Career and volunteer interaction

VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES IN THE FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

I. AUTHORITY, SCOPE, METHODOLOGY AND ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A. Authority

Council Resolution No.12-608, subject: CY 1992 Work Program of the Office of Legislative Oversight, adopted April 7, 1992.

B. Scope and Organization of the Report

This report reviews the history of volunteer fire and rescue services in Montgomery County; examines a variety of current incentives to encourage enlistment and retention of volunteers; and proposes some additional incentives to promote volunteering and to retain active volunteers. Also included in this evaluation is an identification of current and potential disincentives to volunteering. This report is organized as follows:

- Chapter II. Background
- Chapter III. Current Volunteer-Related Activities and Incentives
- Chapter IV. Findings and Recommendations
- Chapter V. Related Matters
- Chapter VI. Summary of Findings
- Chapter VII. Overall Recommendations
- Chapter VIII. Comments on Draft Report

C. Methodology

This project was conducted during July-October, 1992, using an evaluation design that included a variety of fact-finding and research methods, to include:

- Review of current volunteer activities incentives in the fire and rescue services, to include the associated costs of each incentive;
- Examination of applicable County and corporation policies, regulations, and procedures;
- Literature review of periodicals, video productions and articles on volunteerism in general, and volunteering in fire, rescue and emergency medical organizations;
- Distribution of mail-in survey forms to all 19 fire and rescue corporations, for further distribution to current and former volunteer members;
- Distribution of a mail-in survey to fire departments in seven local jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia; and
- A series of focused interviews with current and former volunteers, Corporation Chiefs and officials, Chiefs of fire departments in adjacent jurisdictions, and County officials.

Assisting OLO in this report was Thomas M. Skiba, a Manager in KPMG Peat Marwick's Government Services Consulting practice. Mr. Skiba has over 12 years of experience as a firefighter and Emergency Medical Technician with fire departments in New Jersey and Virginia. He is currently an active volunteer firefighter with the City of Alexandria Fire Department.

D. Acknowledgment

The Office of Legislative Oversight wishes to acknowledge the full cooperation and courteous support from all elements of the fire and rescue services. The volunteer corporations, the Fire and Rescue Commission (FRC), and the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS) provided prompt and detailed responses to all requests for data. OLO is especially appreciative of the hundreds of volunteers who took time to respond to the survey, and to the many career and volunteer employees who were candid and forthright when interviewed by OLO.

Finally, when interviewing public officials, Fire and Rescue Commissioners, paid career personnel, volunteers, corporation presidents and chiefs, union officials, and others involved in the County's fire and rescue services, and receiving hundreds of responses to an OLO volunteer survey, one receives the full spectrum of feelings, opinions, sentiments and natural biases concerning the real and the perceived problems associated with the services. This evaluator received, examined, and considered all viewpoints; however, the report solely represents the analyses, judgments and conclusions of the writer.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Overview

Since 1893 with the organization of a volunteer fire company in Takoma Park, Montgomery County has had a long and proud tradition of volunteer fire and rescue services. Initially, the fire companies were totally self-sufficient, accepting neither public tax funds nor government services. However, beginning in the late 1920's, the volunteer fire and rescue organizations began accepting County grants and, eventually direct public tax funds. Today, all but one of the 19 fire and rescue corporations receive direct tax assistance; and, except for two fire departments, rely on volunteer contributions and personnel.

In July 1980, legislation became effective that specifically stated that the County government was ultimately responsible for public safety through fire, rescue and emergency medical services. Further, the legislation stipulated that these services would be provided through a combination of privately chartered fire/rescue corporation volunteer personnel and County merit system career personnel; that is, a "combination volunteer and career system".

In this chapter of the report the history of the fire and rescue services in Montgomery County is reviewed and current activities and incentives to encourage volunteer recruitment and retention are discussed.

B. Background

Montgomery County has been served by volunteer fire fighting companies since before the turn of the century. Starting in 1918, the fire companies became State chartered corporations--as either fire departments or rescue squads. The first fire corporation to receive a charter from the State was the Silver Spring Volunteer Fire Department (1918), and the most recent was the Germantown Volunteer Fire Department (1989). Today there are a total of 19 fire/rescue corporations in Montgomery County.

During the first three decades of this century, all fire and rescue organizations in the County were truly community based, totally supported by private donations of funds and materials, and totally operated by volunteer personnel. However, beginning in 1927, volunteer fire companies began receiving public funds to help defray the cost of providing fire and rescue services. The primary reason fire and rescue corporations began requesting assistance from the County was the need to hire firefighters/rescuers to respond to daytime calls because of the decreasing availability of volunteers to respond to incidents during the weekday hours.

In 1927, the Maryland General Assembly enacted four laws requested by the Montgomery County Commissioners to provide public funds to the volunteer fire/rescue corporations. One law authorized the County Commissioners to give a grant in the amount \$500 toward the purchase, repair, or maintenance of each piece of fire fighting apparatus, up to a maximum of \$1500. In 1962, this grant was standardized at \$1500 per volunteer corporation regardless of the number of apparatus it operated. The other three laws created special taxing districts in the three County election districts served by the Chevy Chase, Bethesda, and Silver Spring volunteer fire departments. All special fire taxes collected by the County were remitted to the treasurers of the respective volunteer corporations to be used exclusively to maintain and operate those fire departments. The majority of the tax funds was used primarily to hire corporation firefighters and rescuers to respond to incidents during the weekday hours when volunteers were at their normal place of employment.

In 1972, the Council enacted legislation that repealed the annual \$1500 grant to the corporations and established a process to group the various individual fire tax districts into a single Consolidated Fire Tax District when the individual fire tax rate reached a certain amount. (As of this date, all fire departments are in the Consolidated Fire Tax District except one, the Rockville Volunteer Fire Department, which will move into the Consolidated Fire Tax District on July 1, 1993 (FY94)).

In October 1987, the Council enacted legislation "transferring"* all paid firefighters/rescuers from the corporations to the County's merit system (Bill 42-87). The reason for the legislation was not because of any failure

* As clarified in the County Attorney's comments in Chapter VIII, Council legislation technically did not transfer paid firefighters, but simply authorized the corporations' firefighters to transfer to vacant positions in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services.

by the corporation-paid fire/rescue personnel to perform the mission, but because of a court decision that, as corporation employees, the firefighter/rescuers were subject to the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act and entitled to overtime compensation for work in excess of 40 hours a week. Faced with a significant added expense of delivering fire and rescue services with employees of private corporations, the Council enacted legislation to permit paid firefighters to "transfer" to the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS).

However, the transfer of personnel did not remove operational responsibility for fire and rescue services from the volunteer corporations. The legislation specifically reaffirmed that, while the ultimate responsibility for providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services rested with the County government, the County's responsibility would be achieved through a combined system in which the delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services would be through the local volunteer fire/rescue corporations, supported by the County's Department of Fire and Rescue Services. (Note: County legislation (Code Section 21-4E) provides for the Fire and Rescue Commission to establish an integrated emergency command structure. The Commission has published FRC Regulation No. 35-89AM, Integrated Emergency Command Structure.) Finally, Bill 42-87 created a volunteer recruitment and retention program in the Fire and Rescue Commission in recognition of the contribution of the volunteers. That program is discussed in the following chapter.

Presently there are 19 fire and rescue corporations in Montgomery County, 17 are fire corporations and two are rescue corporations. All but two of the 17 fire corporations still use volunteers in varying numbers in combination with County paid firefighters/rescuers to deliver fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. The two exceptions, Bethesda and Chevy Chase fire departments, have volunteer boards of directors, but no volunteer firefighters/rescuers. With one exception, all 19 corporations are funded from the County-levied special fire tax and receive a share of a State 508 funds.* The exception is the Bethesda-Chevy Chase (B-CC) Rescue Squad. The B-CC Rescue Squad receives no direct tax support from the County, but does receive indirect tax support (personnel assistance, radios, alert notification), and a share of the State 508 grant funds.

* In 1985, the General Assembly established the State of Maryland Fire, Rescue and Ambulance Fund to supplement local fire/rescue funding. The grant has taken the short title "State 508 Fund" from the 1985 legislation, Senate Bill 508.

C. Recent Staffing Patterns

At the request of the Office of Legislative Oversight, DFRS prepared a history of unit responses and staffing patterns for the 33 fire/rescue stations for the most recent five calendar years. At Table 1 (next page) is reflected the average yearly unit responses and the career and volunteer staffing for nine major units of apparatus. An analysis of the data indicates that volunteers account for approximately 30 percent of the staffing. Specifically, an analysis of valid "60 cards" data in the DFRS Master Fire Files for major unit responses for calendar years 1987 through 1991 reflects the following:

- Average combined staffing: 3.08 personnel/apparatus.
 - Average career staffing: 2.19 personnel/apparatus.
 - Average volunteer staffing: 0.89 personnel/apparatus.

A further analysis of the 31 fire stations and two rescue squads reveals that:

- At seven of the 33 stations, the average volunteer staffing exceeded the average career staffing:

Station #9 - Hyattstown
Station #13 - Damascus
Station #14 - Upper Montgomery
Station #17 - Laytonsville
Station #18 - Kensington
Station #R1 - Bethesda-Chevy Chase
Station #R2 - Wheaton

- At another four stations, the average volunteer staffing and average career staffing were approximately the same:

Station #3 - Rockville
Station #5 - Kensington
Station #15 - Burtonsville
Station #29 - Germantown

- At the remaining 22 stations, average career staffing significantly exceeded average volunteer staffing.

III. CURRENT VOLUNTEER-RELATED ACTIVITIES AND INCENTIVES

A. Overview

The County has a number of activities and incentives currently in place to encourage volunteering in the fire and rescue services, and to retain volunteers once they have made a commitment. In this chapter of the report, the following volunteer activities and incentives are briefly described and, where appropriate, the relative cost of the activity or incentive is identified:

Table 1

**UNIT RESPONSE AND STAFFING STATISTICS
FOR MAJOR UNITS BY STATION ^{a)}**

STATION/CORPORATION	AVG YRLY RESPONSES	# OF YEARS SURVEYED ^{b)}	AVG # VALID 60 CARDS ^{c)}	SAMPLE SIZE	STAFF ON UNIT		
					AVG # PAID	AVG # VOLS	AVG STAFF ON UNIT
1 - SILVER SPRING VFD	7236	5	5496	76.0%	2.5	0.1	2.6
2 - TAKOMA PARK VFD	3910	5	1806	46.2%	2.4	0.5	2.9
3 - ROCKVILLE VFD	7610	5	5728	75.3%	1.7	1.5	3.2
4 - SANDY SPRING VFD	1536	3 ^{d)}	1564	54.5%	2.3	0.2	2.5
5 - KENSINGTON VFD	2752	5	2064	75.0%	1.6	1.5	3.2
6 - BETHESDA FS	2334	5	2038	87.3%	3.8	0.0	3.8
7 - CHEVY CHASE VFD	1224	5	1052	85.9%	3.8	0.0	3.8
8 - GBURG-WASH GROVE VFD	7512	5	5977	79.6%	2.5	0.3	2.8
9 - HYATTSTOWN VFD	1181	5	793	67.1%	0.7	2.3	3.0
10 - CABIN JOHN VFD	1724	5	1239	71.9%	2.2	1.2	3.4
11 - GLEN ECHO VFD	2122	5	1512	71.3%	2.5	0.6	3.1
12 - HILLANDALE VFD	4240	5	3148	74.3%	2.5	0.5	3.0
13 - DAMASCUS VFD	1649	5	1049	63.6%	1.1	2.0	3.1
14 - UPPER MONT CO VFD	957	5	648	67.7%	0.9	2.0	2.9
15 - BURTONSVILLE VFD	2621	5	1828	69.7%	1.7	1.6	3.3
16 - SILVER SPRING VFD	3300	5	2477	75.1%	2.4	0.4	2.9
17 - LAYTONSVILLE VFD	1563	5	1154	73.8%	1.0	2.0	3.0
18 - KENSINGTON VFD	1945	5	1662	85.4%	1.8	2.2	4.0
19 - SILVER SPRING VFD	1993	5	1677	84.2%	2.9	0.3	3.3
20 - BETHESDA FS	1874	5	1645	87.8%	3.5	0.0	3.5
21 - KENSINGTON VFD	3426	5	2370	69.2%	2.2	0.7	2.9
23 - ROCKVILLE VFD	5111	5	4009	78.5%	2.8	0.2	2.9
24 - HILLANDALE VFD	2770	5	2052	74.1%	2.5	0.4	2.9
25 - KENSINGTON VFD	4057	5	3229	79.6%	2.8	0.1	2.8
26 - BETHESDA FS	3384	5	2698	79.7%	2.9	0.4	3.2
28 - GBURG-WASH GROVE VFD	2549	5	1914	75.1%	2.5	0.1	2.6
29 - GERMANTOWN VFD	3513	5	2501	71.2%	1.7	1.4	3.1
30 - CABIN JOHN VFD	1142	5	920	80.6%	2.7	0.1	2.8
31 - ROCKVILLE VFD	3043	5	2230	73.3%	2.0	1.0	3.0
33 - ROCKVILLE VFD	1577	5	1117	70.8%	2.1	0.8	2.9
40 - SANDY SPRING VFD	1799	5	1369	76.1%	2.4	0.5	3.0
R1 - BCC RESCUE SQUAD	6930	5	3942	56.9%	0.7	2.4	3.1
R2 - WHEATON RESCUE SQUAD	7582	5	5272	69.5%	1.1	1.9	3.0
MONTGOMERY COUNTY AVERAGE UNIT STAFFING					2.19	0.89	3.08

Notes:

- a) Major Units: Engines, Trucks, Aerial Towers, Rescue Squads, Extrication Units, Medic Units, Ambulances, Brush Trucks and Boats
- b) Calendar Years 1987 - 1991, Inclusive.
- c) 60 Cards: Handwritten submission from stations that define the specific activity of a unit (piece of apparatus) and the number of personnel (career and volunteer) on that unit.
- d) Only three years of cards available for Station 4 in the DFRS Master File.

Prepared By: Bonnie J. Bigenho, 08/06/92
Source: DFRS Master Fire Files 1987 - 1991

1. Volunteer Coordinator's Office
2. Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)
3. Training
4. Medical Examinations
5. Background Checks
6. Insurance
7. Tuition Reimbursement Program
8. Volunteer Recruitment Cash Award Program
9. Annual Awards Ceremony
10. Monthly Volunteer Association Dinners
11. Employee Assistance Program
12. High School Fire Service Cadet Program
13. Miscellaneous volunteer-related activities and incentives that are funded in the annual operating budgets of the individual corporations (standby food, uniforms and equipment, corporation banquets, etc.)

B. Volunteer-Related Activities and Incentives

1. Volunteer Coordinator's Office

The same 1987 legislation that enabled corporation-paid firefighters to move to County employment (Bill 42-87), also created a program manager for volunteer recruitment and retention, commonly referred to as the "Volunteer Coordinator". The legislation placed the Volunteer Coordinator under the Fire and Rescue Commission, and provided the Coordinator with staff assistance and a budget.

It is important to note that fire and rescue volunteers are not the County's volunteers, but are members of the individual, independent fire and rescue corporations. Neither the Department of Fire and Rescue Services nor the Fire and Rescue Commission has any volunteer firefighters/rescuers directly involved in the delivery of fire/rescue services. Consequently, the primary responsibility of the Volunteer Coordinator is to assist the 17 corporations that utilize volunteer firefighters/rescuers in recruiting new volunteers and in retaining current volunteers.

In general, the mission of the Volunteer Coordinator is to solicit interest in volunteering through public announcements and advertisements; to initiate, review and revise volunteer recruitment and retention programs; to assist those corporations that have their own volunteer recruitment program; and to serve as a central clearing and referral office for volunteers to the fire/rescue corporations. Once the Volunteer Coordinator refers a potential volunteer to a corporation, it is the corporation's responsibility to actually recruit and process the volunteer. As reported by the Volunteer Coordinator's office, the number of referrals to the corporations from that office for each calendar year since it was established is as follows:

<u>CY 1988</u>	<u>CY 1989</u>	<u>CY 1990</u>	<u>CY 1991</u>	<u>CY 1992 (9 months)</u>
84	133	160	202	134

The Volunteer Coordinator's office currently has a staff of three. The operating costs of the office for the most recent three fiscal years, is as follows:

	<u>FY91 (Actual)</u>	<u>FY92 (Actual)</u>	<u>FY93 (Budget)</u>
Personal Costs	\$144,730	\$125,850	\$155,850
Operating Expenses	34,960	53,930	33,060
Capital Outlay	<u>3,450</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>3,740</u>
Total:	\$183,140	\$179,780	\$192,650

2. Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP)

Established in 1973 (effective July 1975), the LOSAP program provides a monthly benefit to volunteer members of the fire and rescue corporations who complete 25 years of certified service. A volunteer's service is "certified" when a minimum of 50 points is earned in a calendar year from any combination of six fire/rescue related activities: training, drills, sleep-in/stand-by, elected/appointed position, meetings, and responses.

The initial benefit of the program provided a payment of \$100 per month to those volunteers who reached the age of 62 and had completed the required 25 years of certified service, with a maximum benefit of \$150 per month for 35 years of certified service. Also, initially the program provided a \$1000 burial allowance and a 50 percent benefit for surviving spouses.

In 1985, a series of amendments were enacted to improve the program: the minimum age to begin receiving benefits was reduced to 60; the minimum payment was increased to \$200 per month and for those already receiving a benefit, it was increased 50 percent; and the burial benefit allowance was increased to \$1500. In addition, volunteers with less than 25 years of certified service were now entitled to receive a reduced benefit of \$8 per month for each year of service when the volunteer reached a specific age; and volunteers with over 25 years of certified service were entitled to \$10 per month for each year in excess of 25 years, up to a maximum benefit of \$300.

In July 1990, responsibility for administration of LOSAP was transferred from the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS) to the Fire and Rescue Commission (FRC). A review of the LOSAP records by FRC staff revealed a number of problems in the administration of the program. After an extensive records review, legislation (Bill 1-92) was introduced and enacted in May 1992, which clarified the law and authorized retroactive payments of benefits. These payments began in FY93 and will have a three-year pay out period.

At the time Bill 1-92 was being considered, the Volunteer Coordinator's office was developing a number of LOSAP enhancements that included increased LOSAP benefits and changes in the way LOSAP points would be accumulated and credited. These enhancements, which were not included in Bill 1-92, are discussed in chapter IV of this report.

Over the past seven calendar years (1985 through 1991), an average of 651 volunteers have qualified for LOSAP certification. The highest number qualified was in 1991 when 740 volunteers were certified. As of September 1992, a total of 232 volunteers or surviving spouses are receiving LOSAP benefits, under the regular provisions of the LOSAP law and the recently enacted retroactive provisions of the law.

LOSAP expenditures as reported by the Office of Management and Budget in the most recent five fiscal years are as follows:

<u>FY89 (Actual)</u>	<u>(FY90 (Actual)</u>	<u>FY91 (Actual)</u>	<u>FY92 (Actual)</u>	<u>FY93 (Budget)</u>
\$357,530	\$379,770	\$390,000	\$411,040	\$767,550*

* Includes regular annual payments of \$521,510, and retroactive payments of \$246,040.

3. Individual Training

Responses to the OLO-initiated volunteer survey rated training consistently as a major reason for becoming a volunteer, and likewise for remaining a volunteer. Except for a mandatory 30-hour orientation course that is conducted within the corporations, the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS) is responsible for the individual training of all fire/rescue personnel, career and volunteer. With the exception of a minimal number of outreach classes that are presented in a fire or rescue station, training classes are conducted at the Public Service Training Academy (PSTA). Essentially, the courses that are taught at the PSTA are for three purposes: to meet mandatory training requirements as established by the Fire and Rescue Commission (FRC); to qualify personnel for progression in rank and responsibility; and to meet mandatory refresher and State-mandated recertification requirements.

Minimum training requirements and certification standards are established by the FRC and published in FRC Regulation 26-89AMII. This regulation explicitly states that the certification standards establish uniform minimum training requirements that must be met by all active fire, rescue, and emergency medical services personnel, both career and volunteer.

The minimum training requirements in the FRC regulation outline a specific progression of mandatory courses that a volunteer must complete before he/she is eligible:

- 1) to ride the equipment and observe as a volunteer fire/rescue/medical attendant candidate;
- 2) to assist at the incident scene in a supplemental role as a volunteer fire/rescue/medical attendant; and, finally
- 3) to be a fully qualified volunteer fire/rescue/medical attendant and be counted toward minimum staffing.

- Firefighter/Rescuer Candidate. After completing a 30-hour orientation course in the corporation, which must include 6 hours of HAZMAT awareness training, the volunteer is qualified as a Firefighter/Rescuer Candidate, and may ride fire and rescue apparatus as an observer and assist qualified personnel when proper supervision is provided. However, a Candidate cannot enter a burning building or be subject to hazardous environments. (Note: For a volunteer to qualify as a Rescuer Candidate or a Medical Attendant Candidate, the same 30-hour orientation is required.)

- Firefighter/Rescuer. For a volunteer to be certified as a Firefighter/Rescuer, and be eligible to respond to fire incidents and participate in fire ground operations, satisfactory completion of three courses is required: Essentials of Firefighting-135 hours, CPR Level C-12 hours, and Operational Level HAZMAT-18 hours. However, a volunteer Firefighter/Rescuer cannot be counted toward minimum staffing levels. (Note: To qualify as a Rescuer or a Medical Attendant, and be eligible to respond to rescue and emergency medical (EMS) incidents, a 110-hour Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-A) course is required in the place of the Essentials of Firefighting course.)

- Firefighter/Rescuer I. With the completion of two additional required courses, Emergency Medical Technician (EMT-A)-110 hours and Human Relations-6 hours, the volunteer is certified as a qualified Firefighter/Rescuer I, can fully participate in fire ground operations, and be counted toward minimum staffing levels. (Note: to qualify as a Rescuer I or Medical Attendant I, and be counted toward minimum staffing levels, the volunteer need only complete the Human Relations course of 6 hours, since the volunteer would have previously completed the EMT-A course.*)

In addition to the basic certification courses, the PSTA offers a number of other individual courses that volunteers can complete to increase their technical knowledge and/or advance to a higher rank and responsibility. At Exhibit C is a list of fire/rescue courses currently offered at the PSTA.

OLO attempted to determine the cost to the County of training a volunteer at the PSTA. This task has proven to be quite difficult because many of the costs are either not captured or cannot be segregated from the on-going operational expenditures at the PSTA to fulfill its mission of training all fire and rescue personnel, career and volunteer. However, the PSTA has isolated the costs of training volunteers to the level where the volunteer is certified as a fully qualified Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I, or Medical Attendant I. Outlined in Table 2 are the following data provided by DFRS staff assigned to the PSTA:

- The number of volunteers enrolled in CY91. (Training cycles are based on a calendar year, and 1991 is the last complete calendar year.);

* In addition to the minimum training requirements and certification standards established in FRC Regulations 26-89AMII, to qualify as a Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I or Medical Attendant I, volunteers must also complete a 3-hour course on blood borne pathogens.

- The five courses required to qualify a volunteer to be a certified Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I, or Medical Attendant I; and
- The cost to the PSTA per volunteer student based on the average class size for the specific courses offered.

Table 2

Individual Volunteer Training Costs for CY 1991 at the PSTA for the Five Courses Required to be a Certified Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I, or Medical Attendant I

<u>Course</u>	<u>No. Course Offerings</u>	<u>No. Enrolled</u>	<u>Approx. Cost Per Student*</u>	<u>Total Cost for Year</u>
Essentials of Fire Fighting	4	135	\$1,117	\$150,795
EMT-A	5	169	\$800	\$135,200
HAZMAT 1B	9	256	\$402	\$102,912
CPR	(Included in EMT-A)			
Human Relations**	52	470	\$41	\$19,250

* Included in this cost are the following elements: instructor salaries, study material (books, handouts, etc.), SCBA maintenance and replacement, simulator maintenance (propane, repair), equipment operations and maintenance, miscellaneous (lost equipment, retesting), and graduation.

** The data for Human Relations training is for volunteers in the rank of Master Firefighter and below who received 6 hours of training in FY92, the first year the training was initiated. During the same period, 78 volunteers in the rank of Sergeant and above were provided 12 hours of Human Relations training at a cost of \$12,150 (\$156 per student).

Source: Training Division, DFRS.

4. Medical Examinations

Prior to the transfer of career firefighters/rescuers from the corporations to the County, corporations were responsible for obtaining medical examinations for volunteers. Often these examinations were provided free by community physicians. Soon after the transfer, the County required for insurance purposes that preplacement physicals be conducted by the County's Occupational Medical Section (OMS). Since January 1990, all volunteer applicants have been required to successfully complete a medical examination administered by OMS prior to initiating any training.

Presently, OMS provides medical examinations to volunteers on Wednesday evenings and two Saturday mornings each month. Additional Saturday mornings and weekday appointments are also made available if needed to meet demands. The preplacement examination includes: a basic physical examination; vision and hearing tests, pulmonary function test; blood test, urinalysis; EKG exercise treadmill test; chest xray; and a urine drug/alcohol screen. In addition to the preplacement examinations, OMS also administers an annual examination to a volunteer whose primary duty is with hazardous materials. Finally, a series of three Hepatitis B shots are available if requested by the volunteer.

The Occupational Medical Section reports that the number of preplacement examinations, Hepatitis B series, and annual HAZMAT examinations administered since it assumed these responsibilities, and the related costs of these services, are as follows:

<u>Services</u>	<u>FY90</u> (Actual)	<u>FY91</u> (Actual)	<u>FY92</u> (Actual)	<u>FY93</u> (Budget)
Preplacement Exams	237	484	452	570
Hepatitis B Shots	0	64	117	117
Annual HAZMAT Exams	0	7	7	15
<u>Costs</u>	\$92,667	\$195,607	\$186,434	\$236,100

Currently, each physical examination costs the County \$391, and each shot cost \$63. OMS services for the volunteers are funded in the budget of the Risk Management Division of the Department of Finance and charged back to the appropriate fire tax district.

It should be noted that career firefighters/rescuers receive periodic medical examinations: annually for HAZMAT personnel and those over 40 years old; and less frequently for the other career personnel. All career personnel receive annual hearing and pulmonary function tests. Additional medical exams, such as return-to-work medical clearances following injury or illness, special fitness-for-duty evaluations, and "post-rehab" drug screenings are also provided career personnel. Presently, these additional medical exams are not offered to volunteers except when specifically requested.

5. Background Checks

Until recently, all volunteers were given a background check consisting of: fingerprinting by the County Police; processing the fingerprint card by the Maryland State Police for driving and criminal convictions; and checking criminal records by the FBI. The total cost of these services was only a \$5 fee imposed by the State Police for their services. Because of the nominal cost, the corporations absorbed the \$5 fee.

However, the current cost of these services have increased to \$51: fingerprinting by the County Police - \$10; the State Police - \$18; and the FBI records check - \$23. Additionally, the time to complete the whole process has increased from a few weeks to months. Consequently, the Volunteer Coordinator opined that most corporations have ceased performing background checks.

6. Insurance

Fire taxes fund two insurance programs for volunteer corporations and volunteers. The first is a commercial policy that covers professional liability; apparatus, automobile, and portable equipment; accidents; umbrella liability; and other miscellaneous items. The second is a workman's compensation package for volunteers that is part of the County's self-insurance program administered by the Division of Risk Management.

All corporations are covered by the commercial policy; however, since it does not receive direct tax funds, the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad reimburses the County for its portion of the coverage. Likewise, since the Bethesda and Chevy Chase Fire Departments do not have any volunteer firefighter/rescuers, they do not participate in Risk Management's workman's compensation coverage for volunteers.

The costs of these two insurance programs for volunteers for the most recent three fiscal years as reported by Risk Management are as follows:

	<u>FY91 - Actual Claims Incurred</u>	<u>FY92 - Actual Claims Incurred</u>	<u>FY93 Budget</u>
Commercial Policy	\$825,560	\$843,770	\$885,940
Risk Management (Workman's Compensation)	<u>82,520</u>	<u>133,300</u>	(See Note)
Total:	\$908,080	\$977,070	

(Note: Risk Management budgets one amount to cover workman's compensation claims filed by both volunteers and career personnel. OLO estimates that, on the basis of FY91 and FY92 claims, volunteer claims will account for approximately 12 percent of the budget. As the FY93 Workman's Compensation budget is \$1,212,940, the volunteer share should approximate \$145,500).

7. Tuition Reimbursement Program

A program funded by the Maryland State Scholarship Board provides tuition reimbursement for courses successfully completed in the pursuit of a degree or certification in fire or emergency medical technology at Maryland colleges and universities. The amount of the reimbursement is pegged to the resident tuition rate at the University of Maryland; and actual payment is made after the successful completion of each academic year's study, provided the recipient remains a career or active volunteer firefighter/rescuer or medical attendant with an organization serving a Maryland community for an additional year after completion of each year's course work.

Currently, approximately 180 students enrolled in the fire science curriculum at Montgomery College are taking advantage of the tuition reimbursement program. Of this number, over half are participating in the student live-in program, which provides students free lodging in fire houses in exchange for volunteer service with the host corporation.

As this program is funded by the State, the direct costs to the County are only those associated with outfitting, and in some corporations, housing and feeding the students. However, because actual reimbursement by the State does not occur for at least one year after completion of academic studies, some corporations advance the money to student members of their corporation. This cost and other costs are discussed below in miscellaneous volunteer-related activities and initiatives included in corporation budgets.

8. Volunteer Recruitment Cash Award Program

Created in 1989, the purpose of this program is to give a cash award to a current volunteer member of an independent fire and rescue corporation who successfully recruits a new volunteer. Since its inception, only \$500 has been awarded under this program.

9. Annual Awards Ceremony

Beginning in 1989, the Fire and Rescue Commission, through the Volunteer Coordinator's office, has sponsored an Annual Volunteer Fire and Rescue Community Service Award ceremony to honor those fire, rescue, and emergency medical volunteers who performed outstanding service. Originally, the ceremony honored only firefighter/rescuers and medical attendants for responding. However, beginning in 1991, the ceremony honors the top responders and volunteers who provide other important services to the corporation. The 1992 ceremony honored over 65 volunteers. The cost of the ceremony, which is included in the budget in the Volunteer Coordinator's office, was \$2,220 in FY90, \$2,940 in FY91, and approximately \$4,400 in FY92.

10. Monthly Volunteer Association Dinners

The County provides funds to help defray the cost of 10 monthly dinners for the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association. The dinners are held in conjunction with the monthly meetings of the Association, which are hosted by a volunteer corporation on a rotating schedule. The funds for each dinner are included in the operating budget of the specific host corporation (see paragraph 13 below). The County's contribution has varied each year. In FY92 the contribution was \$6,750 (\$750 per dinner); however, for FY93, the Council reduced the contribution to \$3,850 (\$400 per dinner).

11. Employee Assistance Program

Volunteers and family members of the fire and rescue corporations are eligible to take advantage of a County program that provides professional assistance for personal problems. The cost of providing this service to volunteers is included in the overall cost of the contract between the County and the provider. Historically, few volunteers or their families have used this assistance.

12. High School Fire Service Cadet Program

The High School Fire Service Cadet Program provides instruction and hands-on experience in the fire and rescue services through a cooperative arrangement among the Fire and Rescue Commission, the individual fire and rescue corporations, the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS), and the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS).

The program prepares students for volunteer and career fire fighter and emergency medical services positions and provides a foundation for post-secondary training in fire science, medical technology, and related fields. The program has an internship component that permits students to participate in the daily routine of a fire department or rescue squad.

Originated in 1972, the program has grown each school year. In CY 1991-92, a total of 22 students completed the program; and the current school year, CY 1992-93, began with 47 high school cadets. The success of the program can be measured in the high percentage of students that continue as volunteers. Eighty percent of those completing the CY 1991-92 program are volunteers. Also, records indicate that approximately 15 current career employees were former High School Fire Service Cadets.

Administration of the program is guided by a Memorandum of Understanding between the Director, DFRS and the Superintendent, MCPS. The memorandum assigns DFRS responsibility for providing a two-year course of instruction, facilities for classroom instruction and practical training, protective gear (students buy their own in-station work uniform), medical examinations, and workman's compensation coverage. The MCPS is responsible for funding the salary of the instructors, texts and associated printed materials, transportation from the high school to the Public Service Training Academy, and a program coordinator position.

Program costs incurred by DFRS are not separately recorded. However, MCPS reports that the cost of the program for the two most recent school years are as follows:

<u>SY</u>	<u>Instructor Salaries</u>	<u>Texts</u>	<u>MCPS Program Coordinator*</u>	<u>Total</u>
1991-92	\$17,380	\$300	\$25,000	\$42,680
1992-93	\$19,800	\$1,930	\$25,000	\$46,730

* Approximately .5 workyear of the MCPS program coordination.

In addition, MCPS, DFRS, the Fire and Rescue Commission and participating corporations incurred unspecified costs, such as: wear and tear of protective clothing, use of training facilities, administration by the Volunteer Coordinator, and bus transportation.

13. Miscellaneous Activities and Incentives

Each of the fire and rescue corporations (except Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue) prepares an annual budget to cover the operations of the corporation for a fiscal year. The budget is reviewed by the Fire and Rescue Commission, which forwards its recommendations to the County Executive. The Executive's recommended operating budget is forwarded to the County Council, which after a review approves a budget for each corporation. However, the Council appropriates the corporations' budgets by Fire Tax District, which in FY93 there are two: the Consolidated Fire Tax District and the Rockville Fire Tax District. Finally, the Office of Management and Budget apportions the consolidated Fire Tax District appropriation to the corporations in the Consolidated Fire Tax District according to the Council-approved budgets.

Among the approximately 30 line items in the corporations' budgets, the Fire and Rescue Commission has identified ten categories of expenditures as being volunteer-related activities or incentives. Listed below are the ten categories, with the FY92 and FY93 allocations for the 18 corporations that receive direct tax funding.

<u>Activity/Incentive</u>	<u>\$ Allocations</u>	
	<u>FY92</u>	<u>FY93</u>
Annual Corporation Banquets	\$ 77,000	\$58,500
Monthly Volunteer Association Dinners	6,750	3,850
Emergency Food and Coffee Funds	30,960	31,420
Standby Food	122,930	99,270
Tuition Reimbursements	18,115	6,200
Travel & Professional Training	59,045	43,750
Clothing	234,400	179,370
Education & Recreation	23,130	15,800
Prof Membership, Dues & Subscriptions	15,590	14,230
Exhibits and Awards	<u>17,990</u>	<u>14,760</u>
Totals:	\$605,910	\$467,150

A comparison of the FY93 allocation with that of FY92 reflects a reduction in allocations of 23 percent. At Exhibit A and Exhibit B are a detailed breakdown of the allocations to each of the 18 corporations for each of the two fiscal years.

C. Summary: Volunteers Recruited and Associated Costs

General: A review of the current volunteer-related activities and initiatives and their associated costs provides a general picture of the County's volunteer program and its results. However, the picture is neither complete nor exact because of a variety of factors, to include:

- There is no single volunteer program. Each of the 17 corporations who recruit volunteers operate their own individual programs, under individual corporation policies and procedures, and maintain their own volunteer records.
- While some major categories of volunteer-related expenditures can be clearly identified from budget and accounting reports (such as LOSAP disbursements), other volunteer-related expenditures are included in total fire/rescue expenditures, or simply not captured. For example: tuition advancements are included in individual corporation budgets, but the actual student repayments are not captured; the number of volunteers completing physicals are not correlated with those who actually complete training and eventually actually respond to incidents; and the cost of the myriad support activities provided volunteers and volunteer corporations by the County are not separately accounted for.
- Data on volunteers is collected by calendar year (number of referrals, training, LOSAP certifications), fiscal year (LOSAP disbursements, most expenditures, and tax revenues), and school year (High School Cadet Program).
- There is obvious double counting among the various volunteer activities and initiatives. For example: the students counted in the High School Fire Service Cadet program are also included in the total count of those receiving medical examinations; many volunteers counted in the calendar year training totals are also included in the fiscal year totals of medical examinations.

Notwithstanding these limiting factors, a review of the volunteer-related activities and initiatives in this chapter does provide a general indication of both volunteer numbers and costs. Highlighted below is a summary of volunteer numbers and volunteer-related expenditures for 1991:

Volunteer Numbers:

- Referrals from Volunteer Coordinator's office (CY 91): 202
- Volunteers certified for LOSAP (CY91): 740
- Volunteers enrolled in mandatory training courses to be qualified as a certified Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I, or Medical Attendant I (CY91): 1,030
- Volunteers undergoing medical examinations (FY91): 491
- Students completing the High School Fire Service Cadet Program (SY91-92): 22

Volunteer-Related Costs:

- Volunteer Coordinator's office (FY91): \$183,140
- LOSAP disbursements (FY91): \$390,000
- Training - (except human relations) (CY91): \$388,907
- Training - human relations (FY92):* \$19,250
- Medical examinations and shots (FY91): \$195,607
- Insurance costs incurred (FY91): \$908,080
- High School Fire Service Cadet Program (SY91-92): \$42,680
- Miscellaneous volunteer-related activities and incentives included in individual corporation budgets (FY92):* \$605,910

D. Summary: Major Volunteer Incentives in Selected Jurisdictions

OLO distributed a mail-in survey to fire departments in seven local jurisdictions in Maryland and Virginia requesting information on Major volunteer incentives. The results of that survey, together with a comparison with Montgomery County, is at Exhibit D.

IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Overview

This chapter of the report summarizes specific findings related to the recruitment and retention of volunteers in the fire and rescue services and develops detailed recommendations. First will be a discussion of the summary statistics of an OLO survey of volunteer members of the County's fire and rescue corporations. Following that discussion will be the presentation of specific findings and recommendations under the following seven critical areas:

- Technical fire, rescue, and EMS training
- Information distribution and publicity
- Community relations
- Job satisfaction
- Direct financial rewards
- Leadership issues
- Career and volunteer interaction

In each of these areas OLO has documented a brief overview of the issue, its findings and evaluation, and suggested recommendations for improvement.

* FY92 is the first year that human relations training was initiated; and FY92 was the first year that miscellaneous volunteer-related expenditures in corporation budgets was tabulated. Fire and Rescue Commission staff estimate that FY91 data were only slightly less than FY92.

B. Summary of Volunteer Survey Information

The Office of Legislative Oversight prepared and distributed a 15 question survey to each of the County's fire and rescue volunteer corporations for further distribution to all current members. The survey, a copy of which is at Exhibit E, was designed to answer the following broad questions pertinent to the OLO study: First, what is the demographic makeup of the volunteer fire and rescue volunteers in Montgomery County? Second, are current incentives effective motivators to potential recruits or current members? Third, what additional programs and incentives should the County and corporations consider? Finally, what factors cause volunteers to lose interest and leave the corporations? The following discussion summarizes the survey results:

1. Volunteer Demographics

OLO received a total of 324 completed surveys in time for inclusion in the analysis. Based on an approximate volunteer population in Montgomery County of 1,500 as reported by the corporations, this translates into a response rate of 22 percent, which is reasonable and acceptable for this type of survey. Responses received from each of the 19 individual corporations* ranged from 1 to 67 surveys. OLO's initial analysis of the demographic questions yielded a number of interesting pieces of information, including:

- The fire and rescue service remains predominantly male. Appendix E-1 presents a complete distribution of respondents by sex and by corporation. The overall distribution is:

-- Male	82.1%
-- Female	17.9%

- Average age for current members is 34 with the largest age group between 20 and 29. Appendix E-2 presents a complete distribution of respondents by age group.

- Volunteers averaged 12 years of experience in the fire service and 10 years in their current corporation. Appendix E-3 and Appendix E-4 present the distribution of fire service and corporation experience of the respondents.

- 41 volunteers or 12.5 percent reported that they were paid firefighters in Montgomery County or another area jurisdiction with the largest contingents serving at Kensington and Rockville. (For additional information on career personnel who volunteer, see footnote on page 31).

* Although two of the 19 fire corporations, Bethesda and Chevy Chase, have no firefighter/rescuer volunteers, some members of their volunteer boards responded.

- 83.5 percent of respondents indicated that they are actively involved in providing fire, rescue, or EMS services directly to the citizenry.

- Finally, only 57.1 percent of respondents indicated that they resided in their corporation's first due area. Appendix E-5 summarizes data on respondents residing in each corporation first due area.

2. Evaluation of Current Incentives

Analysis of survey responses concerning current incentives (Question 11, Exhibit E) indicated that volunteer awareness of and appreciation for the current set of incentives was varied. Many respondents, particularly newer members, indicated that they were not familiar with some or all of the incentive programs. In addition, importance of individual incentives appeared to be directly affected by the respondent's length of service. Specifically,

- Respondents indicated that technical fire, rescue, and emergency medical services (EMS) training was the number one incentive to both recruitment and retention.

- Availability of some incentives varied across corporations depending on availability of resources. For example:

- live-in opportunities were limited to a small number of members and constrained by the number of bunks available in stations.

- stand-by food was only available in selected corporations due to budget reductions.

- Members may be unaware of the availability of some programs. For example:

- membership recruitment bonuses

- tuition reimbursement

- Awareness and importance of incentives varied depending on how long the individual had been a volunteer. For example, because LOSAP is essentially a deferred compensation/retirement program, not surprisingly, older members consistently rated LOSAP as more important to their volunteering than younger members.

- A substantial number of respondents indicated that their motivation to become a volunteer originated not from material incentives offered by the County or their corporation, but from the more intangible intrinsic desire to serve their communities, to help others, camaraderie, and for personal pride and esteem.

3. Additional Incentives/Current Disincentives

Respondents provided a wide variety of responses when asked to suggest additional volunteer incentives and programs, and to identify specific disincentives to becoming or remaining a volunteer. The views of the respondents in these two areas, additional incentives and current disincentives, are incorporated in OLO's discussion of Specific Findings and Recommendations, beginning in the following section.

C. Specific Findings and Recommendations

The following sections highlight key issues, discuss specific findings, and suggest recommendations in seven critical areas that, in the opinion of OLO, significantly affect recruitment and retention of volunteers in the fire and rescue services. As stated earlier in Chapter I, information presented here was obtained from reports, interviews, and survey responses; however, OLO is solely responsible for the analyses, judgments, and findings.

1. Technical Fire, Rescue, and EMS Training

Issue - Montgomery County requires a significant commitment of time from both new and current volunteers. A new firefighter/rescuer volunteer is required to complete almost 300 hours of training within the first two years of service to be qualified to ride the apparatus and be counted toward minimum staffing requirements.

Findings - The extensive training required to be a volunteer is the single largest hinderence to retaining active members. As noted in our discussion above, volunteers responded in the survey that technical training was one of the most important incentives leading them to become members. Conversely, respondents also cited the minimum training requirements and certification standards required by Fire and Rescue Commission Regulations, and their effect on the individuals' home lives, station time, and work schedules, as being the number one cause for leaving the service. This paradox has a number of related and contributory elements, including:

- Current doctrine calls for career and volunteer staff to be trained to identical levels of expertise. OLO concurs that this is a reasonable basic skill requirement.
- Current training programs rely almost exclusively on traditional lecture and practical application teaching methods.
- Supplemental training programs are applicable to both career and volunteer personnel.
- The length of required training programs can result in individual volunteers not being able to contribute actively to fire suppression or EMS operations for a period in excess of a year.
- Despite DFRS efforts to provide additional classes, limited staff resources at the PSTA often results in volunteers waiting several months to be enrolled in required courses.

- Centralized training at PSTA, especially for technical courses, creates additional time requirements and hardships for volunteers who must travel from distant areas of the County.

- Many respondents commented that Montgomery County training requirements appear to exceed National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) objectives and, in certain areas, the standards for fire and EMS training set by the State of Maryland and the Federal government. (Note: the NFPA does not specify hourly training requirements, but sets training objectives).

- Although there is a procedure to credit volunteers for technical training completed in another jurisdiction, there appears to be no like validation procedure to credit non-technical training (human relations, cultural awareness, continuing education subjects, etc.) presented by other than PSTA staff.

Recommendations - Technical training programs should be restructured to make them more convenient and applicable to volunteers. Restructuring should include reviews of curriculum, teaching methods, classroom location, scheduling, and requirements. Specifically, OLO recommends the following improvements to the fire/rescue training programs:

- Evaluate the use of alternative and expanded training schedules to provide volunteers with more flexible schedule options. Alternatives include:

- Continuous classes with rolling enrollment; that is, structured in modular fashion to enable students to enter the training cycle at times other than the beginning. This may be possible for certain required courses such as Essentials of Firefighting and Emergency Medical Technicians-Ambulance (EMT-A).
- As was done this past summer, conduct a full-time rookie school in the summer for high school and college students on vacation and for others who are available during daytime hours.
- Access to daytime, career classes for volunteers who are available during the day.

- Establish a system of crediting courses that a volunteer has completed previously as a requirement of the volunteer's primary employment or as an academic requirement.

- Revise training program curriculum and teaching methods to incorporate more flexible alternatives such as:

- Video training available from several commercial sources.
- Directed reading; that is, private study followed by an examination administered by the PSTA staff.

- Challenge testing to verify proficiency from previous experience and/or training in another jurisdiction.
- Electronic classrooms via County cable systems.
- Where practical, conduct training courses at sites throughout the County to make travel requirements more equitable.
- Review course materials and requirements to identify opportunities for potential reduction in total training hours required.
- Evaluate training programs to enable new members to become active at the earliest possible time within appropriate safety considerations.
- Expand the limited number of volunteer instructors.
- Review current fire and rescue staffing levels and facilities at the Public Service Training Academy for possible improvements in staffing and technical and non-technical training programs.

2. Information Distribution and Publicity

Issue - The critical element of morale within the fire and rescue services is based on a perception of value and appreciation. Every individual, whether career or volunteer, wants to be recognized and appreciated for a job well done. In addition, the general knowledge and perception by the community of the County's combination fire and rescue services is an integral element in recruiting and retaining volunteers.

Findings - In general, the County and the corporations have not done an effective job of accurately communicating the nature of the unique public-private partnership that provides fire and rescue services to the citizens. In a period where County government and citizens are looking for more efficient and effective ways to perform key services, the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services provides an ideal model of public-private partnership. However, in describing the system and the role of the participants, the County government, Fire and Rescue Commission, DFRS, and corporations frequently fail to address several key elements:

- Career and volunteer professionals alike are an integral and necessary part of the combination system and need and deserve equal recognition and credit; and
- Permitting barriers between career and volunteer personnel adversely affects the level and quality of service provided to citizens. (Examples of such barriers are the color of the work uniform, location and type of shoulder patch, and markings on the apparatus).

OLO believes that the general public has limited knowledge of the nature of fire and rescue services in Montgomery County. Information distributed to the public and press often presents an unbalanced picture, recognizing the role of one element of the combination system and ignoring the

other element. This situation could be improved upon through a concerted effort by leadership at all levels, the County's Public Information Office, the DFRS Media Relations Office, and the corporation spokespersons to actively promote the accomplishments of the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services.

Recommendations - Like other agencies of government, the fire and rescue services has a perception problem, both within the system and in the community. The following recommendations focus on improving the understanding of those within the fire and rescue services and among citizens, and giving credit to all service members. Specifically:

- Develop a series of public service announcements (PSA's) for distribution via County cable franchises describing the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services, and noting both its accomplishments and the opportunities for participation by citizens of various talents. To quote from a response by a Kensington Volunteer firefighter, "Incentives won't attract new volunteers - people do it because they have a strong feeling about helping others. Maybe advertising and making the volunteer system more known to people in the community. Maybe many do not know they can volunteer".

- Produce informational flyers for distribution to a variety of target markets including:

- local businesses;
- public agencies in the County;
- service recipients - individuals receiving fire, rescue or EMS service would receive on-call flyers explaining that they have been provided service by a unique public/private partnership of volunteer professionals from private fire and rescue corporations and DFRS career professionals; and
- the general public.

- Target information specifically to potential volunteers, focusing on community service, excitement, technical training, personal pride, job satisfaction, and self-esteem; and emphasize the cooperative and mutual support roles of career and volunteer staff.

- Volunteer recruitment information should highlight the variety of services volunteers can provide in addition to the direct delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services. Examples are: administrative, bookkeeping and accounting service; vehicle and equipment maintenance; and special community-oriented service projects. Special emphasis should be placed on non-service delivery activities that can be performed by persons with disabilities

3. Community Relations

Issue - Historically, the most successful volunteer organizations, whether in the fire service or in other areas, are active participants in their communities. Participation includes not only providing emergency services, but also providing a personal, social, or organizational outlet for members, their families, and members of the community.

Findings - Many corporations sponsor community relations events, usually in conjunction with Fire Prevention Week. Examples of recent corporation open house events include:

- Burtonsville VFD: 500-700 families.
- Chevy Chase FD: Over 2,000 individuals.
- Gaithersburg-Washington Grove FD: two events each year; Spring attendance, approximately 1,500; fall attendance, approximately 300 individuals.
- Rockville VFD: over 2,000 individuals.

In the opinion of some volunteers, their volunteer corporations appear to have de-emphasized the community element of their existence in recent years, and have not continued to build community awareness of the contribution that the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services give to their communities.

Recommendations - Volunteer corporations should return to being a vital part of their communities, exerting a positive influence well beyond the station doors. Not only will such activities improve the understanding of the community to the mission and importance of the corporation in the community, but will also act as an effective recruiting and retention tool. Specific opportunities to improve community relations include:

- Open stations to neighbors and communities for activities that involve both volunteer and career personnel. Examples:
 - community appreciation days;
 - corporation sponsored forums on local issues;
 - use of corporation meeting rooms by other community organizations;
 - sponsor neighborhood programs oriented on individual and home safety;
 - institute apparatus ride-along programs;

- conduct station tours for local residents and children; and
 - prepare and distribute "welcome neighbor" information packets for new residents of the area.
- Encourage corporations to sponsor and coach athletic teams in local leagues, to include both youth teams and teams of corporation members and their families. Encourage career personnel to participate as sponsors and team members.
 - Expand the number of family activities that the corporation sponsors, and include both volunteer and career members and their families.
Examples:
 - Orioles, Capitals and Bullets games;
 - station dinners and pot-lucks;
 - picnics; and
 - service projects in the community.
 - Encourage local media to publish human interest stories on volunteer and career activities.

4. Job Satisfaction

Issue - The majority of volunteers see their participation as a means of providing help to others, and giving something back to the community. While this altruistic feeling is often enough to encourage an individual to volunteer initially, it is often not enough to ensure that the person becomes fully trained, productive, and a long time volunteer.

Findings - Responses to OLO's survey indicated that, in spite of the physical and time demands of the fire service, individuals were initially motivated and inspired to volunteer by intangible elements that made them feel that they were a part of something important, that they were making a commitment, and that their services were appreciated. However, despite initiating a number of direct reward programs for volunteers, such as LOSAP, re-enforcing these intangible elements have been minimal, limited to the initiative and effort of officers and directors in only some of the corporations.

Recommendations - Volunteer programs must be designed and implemented to be inclusive and not exclusive. Not everyone is destined to become a firefighter or a paramedic, but each individual has skills and capabilities which may benefit the corporation, and by extension, the community. The following recommendations focus on making the working environment more attractive and rewarding to volunteers:

- Develop a formal program to provide preference for volunteers in the County merit system hiring process for fire and rescue positions. Preference should be indexed to the number of years as a volunteer, training qualifications, overall level of participation, etc. An additional benefit to a preference system would be to index female and minority volunteers.

- Publicize the fact that there are a variety of services for volunteers in the fire and rescue services. Examples include:

- direct providers of fire, rescue and EMS;
- support services (equipment maintenance and repair, training, etc.);
- administrative services (secretarial, bookkeeping and accounting, legal, data processing, etc.).

- Develop a mentoring program so new volunteers can receive assistance from experienced volunteers, to make new volunteers feel comfortable and accepted, and to provide assistance in learning required skills and technical requirements. Encourage career personnel to serve as mentors.

- Encourage the local media in their reporting on fire and rescue activities to emphasize the uniqueness of the County's combination volunteer and career service.

- Develop programs within the corporations to reward members with small, tangible and intangible tokens of appreciation for exceptional performance and effort. Corporation rewards should not be limited solely to volunteers, but should also be available to career staff under similar criteria:

- badges/ID cards or other rewards for completing specific training requirements or other achievements;
- certificates and thank you letters for a job well done;
- remembering family anniversaries, births, etc.;
- reading, posting, and forwarding to the County Council, the County Executive, the Fire and Rescue Commission and DFRS, favorable reports, letters, and commendations, especially those from the public and particularly those related to joint volunteer-career activities.

- As currently available for career personnel, the County should provide periodic physicals for all volunteers who are actively involved in direct fire suppression, EMS or rescue activities. Periodic physicals will not only provide an added measure of security to the volunteer, but may reduce the County's overall risk.

Finally, a comment often repeated in responses to the OLO survey and in personal interviews with volunteers and others involved in the County's fire and rescue services: corporation leadership must demand more "discipline" from its volunteers. Not the "spit and polish", military variety of discipline. Rather, the term is used to mean a level of volunteer commitment that is both predictable and reliable.

In describing this type of discipline, respondents most often cited various corporations that have it: the two rescue squads, Gaithersburg-Washington Grove FD, and Burtonsville VFD. These three corporations require volunteers to commit to specific standby or sleep-in periods, to participate in scheduled training and maintenance details, and to complete minimum training requirements in a specific period of time. The benefits resulting from having this discipline were: increased pride and improved morale; a higher sense of commitment and accomplishment; and most significant, a sign of respect from the career staff because the volunteers are "carrying their share of the load".

5. Direct Financial Rewards*

Issue - As noted above, the majority of volunteers elect to dedicate significant portions of their time and talents to the County primarily for intangible personal reasons. Nevertheless, individual performance and effort can be maximized if volunteers perceive that their commitment and services are valued. Direct financial or related rewards are a mechanism that can be used to demonstrate to volunteers that their contributions are appreciated and valued by their government and their communities.

Findings - In general, the County currently provides a variety of tangible rewards and incentives for volunteers. These were discussed earlier in Chapter III. These rewards, however, can be improved and expanded upon to provide increased incentives for potential members to join a volunteer corporation and for existing members to remain active.

Recommendations - The following sections describe incentives most frequently identified as attractive and desirable in the responses to the OLO survey of County fire and rescue volunteers and of fire departments in other jurisdictions. Some of these programs have been implemented in other jurisdictions in the Washington Metropolitan area, while others are still in the planning stage. It is not OLO's intention to encourage the adoption of any one of these programs, but to provide the County leadership with a number of alternatives that can demonstrate the County's appreciation and serve as incentives to continued volunteer participation.

* See the County Attorney's comments on direct financial rewards in Chapter VIII.

- Provide tax credits for volunteers who are most active.

Alternatives for rebates or reductions in tax liability include:

- exemption from or reduction of the fire tax;
- property tax rebate; or
- piggy-back tax credit.

Tax relief should be limited to those individuals most active in the organization. As a minimum, LOSAP qualifications should be one of the standards for qualifications.

- Provide active volunteers with access to reduced cost health and life insurance through the County's self-insurance program or through a group plan sponsored by the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association. Fire and rescue services activities are inherently dangerous. Periodic physicals (discussed earlier) and increased confidence on the part of volunteers that they are protected from injuries, illnesses, and loss of income would be a strong incentive to continue volunteering.

- Provide active volunteers with access to County activities and facilities at reduced or no cost. Examples include:

- pools and recreation centers;
- RIDE-ON buses and other mass-transit; and
- adult education and Recreation Department sponsored classes.

- Revise the current LOSAP program to incorporate improvements previously suggested by the County's Volunteer Coordinator and endorsed by the Fire and Rescue Commission. For example:

- Change the current yearly 50-point pass/fail policy to a policy that permits accruing points across a specified number of years.
- Reduce the number of years required to vest in the program.
- Permit retirement at an earlier age with a corresponding reduced LOSAP payment.

- Over and above a corporation's annual budget for equipment, provide additional funds to corporations to purchase mission-related items of clothing and equipment (protective coat, pants, boots, hood, gloves, pager) to award to volunteers who satisfactorily complete Fire Essentials and EMT-A training. These personal items of clothing and equipment would be an incentive for volunteers to complete minimum training requirements in a timely manner.

- Direct the County Attorney to develop an informational booklet and provide counseling to corporations on tax issues such as deductability of volunteer-related mileage, equipment and other expenses.

- Similar to existing senior citizen discount programs, encourage local businesses and professionals to provide discount cards or coupons to active fire/rescue volunteers.

- Build upon the current State tuition assistance for fire science and EMS education programs and provide County funded tuition assistance for active volunteers completing other fire and rescue services related courses at Montgomery College or the University of Maryland.

- Reimburse volunteers for actual expenses incurred in using their private vehicles upon successful completion of minimum training requirements for Firefighter/Rescuer I, Rescuer I and Medical Attendant I.

6. Leadership Issues

Issue - The management of any large enterprise requires significant effort to provide the necessary vision, leadership, and guidance to ensure success. The diverse and distributed organization that characterizes the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services in Montgomery County places even more severe demands on leaders to excel.

Findings - Responses to OLO's survey of volunteers indicates a general disappointment in the leadership of County government, the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS), the Fire and Rescue Commission (FRC), and some corporations because of their failure to provide the necessary structure, direction, and encouragement to create an effective and efficient working atmosphere within the combination system. The success of Montgomery County's combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services is dependent on effective leadership at all levels of management. In addition, volunteer responses indicate that many corporation and DFRS officers demonstrate little practical experience or formal training in the leadership, management, and group dynamics required of the County's combination system.

Recommendations - Leaders at all levels: County, DFRS, FRC, and corporations, must continue to make a concerted effort to understand the County's combination volunteer and career system so as to better promote, encourage, and support it. To accomplishing that end, OLO specifically recommends the following:

- Notwithstanding a recent increase by elected officials to recognize the contribution by volunteers, the County's political leadership should also increase its visible support of the combination volunteer and career system. This support can be demonstrated by attending corporation meetings and PSTA graduations, talking about the uniqueness of the combination system and the contribution by both career and volunteer personnel, and demonstrating to volunteers, career employees, and citizens their support and appreciation for the contribution each makes in this unique example of public-private partnership.

- Acknowledge that a combination volunteer and career service creates unique management challenges and continued success will be to a large part the result of managements' ability to balance interests, promote teamwork, and reduce interpersonal and organizational tensions.

- Demand a clearer demonstration from corporation and DFRS leadership of their cooperation and mutual support for achieving a more harmonious combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services.

- Develop a structured debriefing program for volunteers leaving the fire service to determine their reasons, motivations, etc. Results of the debriefing process should be compiled and analyzed by the Volunteer Coordinator to identify and isolate systemic comments.

- Initiate management and leadership training programs for corporation officers, staff and line. Training should focus on how to provide volunteers with the personal satisfaction necessary to keep them active and to motivate them to continue serving the County's combination fire and rescue services.

7. Career and Volunteer Interaction

Issue - The delivery of fire and rescue services through a combination system of volunteer and paid career personnel demands that the two groups maintain a relationship characterized by a high level of cooperation, trust and mutual respect. Every level of leadership in the County, FRC, DFRS, and the corporations must contribute to attaining and maintaining a positive working environment.

Findings - In spite of efforts of leaders in the FRC, DFRS and corporations, and unambiguous language in the County law and specific directives in regulations and procedures to the contrary,* there exists in the fire and rescue services an unacceptable level of friction between career and volunteer fire and rescue personnel. From responses to the recent OLO survey, interviews with both career and volunteer personnel, and personal experience

* DFRS Policies and Procedures No. 502, Code of Conduct, January 16, 1988, specifies:

"5.3 Employees will be courteous and discreet toward each other, volunteer personnel and the public, and maintain proper decorum and command of temper. Employees will not use violent, insolent or obscene language in public, or as otherwise restricted, while on duty" (Emphasis added).

Also, FRC Regulation No. 30-89AMII, June 2, 1990, Code of Ethics and Personal Conduct, requires that all fire and rescue personnel, career and volunteer, maintain a courteous and discreet attitude toward each other. Specifically, the Regulation directs that: "All personnel [both career and volunteer] must assure a work environment free of discrimination and harassment".

acquired in eight years of studying the County's fire and rescue services, OLO is convinced that tensions between some career and volunteer personnel, in almost every level of rank, are seriously straining working relations within the service. One of the results from these strained working relations has been an exodus of volunteers from the fire and rescue services. However, a more serious potential result from the strained working relations could be a deterioration in the overall efficiency of the County's fire and rescue system, and a reduction in the effectiveness of fire, rescue and emergency medical services.

County Code Section 21-4A(a) specifically supports "...the continuation and expansion of volunteer participation as a means of providing fire, rescue and emergency medical services...." Equally, explicit is the County Code provision that, "The County Council hereby declares its policy intention that all County officials and employees actively encourage, and not in any way discourage, qualified volunteer participation." (Code Section 21-4A(a)).

It is OLO's unqualified opinion that the continued success and viability of the County's combination volunteer and career system of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services is directly and critically dependent on maintaining working relations between career and volunteer personnel that are positive, professional, and based on mutual respect and trust.

OLO's research has noted the following:

- Direct harassment of members of one group by members of the other and the failure by both the corporation and DFRS chains-of-command to directly address and resolve such issues. The forms of harassment range from "cold shoulder" treatment to overt acts of baiting and badgering.
- Pressure by fellow career employees on those career personnel who maintain their volunteer corporation membership after being hired by the County to sever all relations with their volunteer corporation. The constitution and bylaws of the International Association of Fire Fighters, AFL-CIO, the parent organization of Local 1664, Montgomery County Firefighters Association, has long prohibited its union members from "acquiring" membership in a "rival organization", that is, a volunteer organization.*
- Some corporations exclude career personnel from volunteer functions. In other corporations, career personnel decline to participate in non-operational volunteer activities.
- Reluctance and even refusal by some career personnel to assist in providing volunteers in-station on-the-job training and other technical assistance.

* A recent review of LOSAP submissions indicated that approximately 170 career personnel in all ranks declared a volunteer relationship with one of the County's fire and rescue corporations. This number is approximately 22 percent of the total career complement.

- Survey responses from a number of female volunteers described a lack of acceptance of women in fire, rescue, and EMS activities.*

Recommendations - Previous OLO reports have addressed this issue of career and volunteer interaction and identified specific instances ranging from a simple lack of sensitivity to an actual breach of the intent and letter of the County Code's prohibition on discouraging volunteer participation. Clear, unequivocal action by County government, the Fire and Rescue Commission, DFRS, and corporation leadership is needed to achieve a better working relationship between career and volunteers.

- Career and volunteer leadership must clearly demonstrate, through the chain-of-command, that harassment of any member, career or volunteer, in any manner, will not be tolerated, even to include disciplinary action where the harassing action warrants.

- Career and volunteer interaction and cooperation should be the subject of a public discussion in which representatives of all elements of the fire and rescue services participate and communicate their concerns.

V. RELATED MATTERS

In the course of this evaluation, the following five matters relating to the subject came to the attention of OLO. Although they may not be within the specific scope of this evaluation, they are considered sufficiently important to be presented here for information and, where appropriate, possible action by the appropriate department or agency.

A. Committee on Excellence

In the fall of 1990, the County Council and Executive jointly sponsored a retreat whose participants included representatives of all elements directly or indirectly involved in the administration, support, and delivery of fire and rescue services in the County.

Developed at the retreat was an action agenda of needs that must be addressed to bring and sustain changes in attitudes and improvements in communications, trust, and respect within the combined volunteer and career fire and rescue service. To carry forward the action agenda, an interagency "Committee on Excellence in the Fire Service", was created whose membership was selected from retreat participants, and Judge David L. Cahoon accepted Chairmanship of the Committee.

* An April 1992, applied research project submitted to the National Fire Academy to fulfill an academic requirement, entitled, Women Fire Fighters - Two Years Later, by Assistant Fire/Rescue Chief LeRoy R. Oettinger, reported on the results of a survey of 95 women operational firefighters employed by Montgomery County in which 51 percent responded. Responses to one set of survey questions that addressed the womens' treatment and acceptance disclosed that, like female volunteers, some career female firefighters also experienced a similar lack of acceptance.

In the ensuing two years, the Committee has addressed a number of broad budgetary, operational, and support issues and identified several fire/rescue priorities. A primary goal of the Committee has been to improve communications among the parties making up the County's fire and rescue delivery system. The most recent retreat sponsored by the Committee was held in November 1992 and addressed the issue of working relationships between volunteer and career fire and rescue personnel in the fire and rescue stations. The results of that retreat are to be published early next year.

As this OLO report was being completed, the Montgomery County Career Fire Fighters Association, Union Local 1664, notified the Chief Administrative Officer that it was withdrawing from the Committee on Excellence. This is a serious setback. Hopefully, the Union's leadership will reconsider its decision and rejoin in the efforts of many to keep open communications among the various elements that comprise the County's combined fire and rescue service.

B. Audit of LOSAP Records and Procedures

Recently, responsibility for the administration of the Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP) was transferred from DFRS to the Fire and Rescue Commission. As a part of the transfer, Commission staff conducted an administrative review of LOSAP records. This review led to the identification of a number of volunteers who were owed back payments. Action was initiated to begin making back payments; and LOSAP procedures were revised to preclude recurrence of this problem.

At the corporation level, the Department of Finance's Internal Auditing staff has contracted with a private auditing firm to conduct indepth audits of the internal record procedures in the fire departments. Included in these audits has been a review of the corporations' supporting documentation and procedures for granting LOSAP credits. In every audit, minor irregularities have been found in the individual LOSAP records.

OLO believes that the indepth audits of the corporations' LOSAP supporting documentation and procedures should continue. However, now that the Fire and Rescue Commission has responsibility for administering the LOSAP program, OLO recommends that the Commission should become more involved in the preparation for these audits and in following-up on corrective action taken on LOSAP irregularities. As a first step, the Commission should review the agreed-upon audit procedures that were established before the Commission assumed responsibility to be certain that the auditors are performing the level of audit of LOSAP record-keeping procedures to assure the Commission that adequate internal controls are in place and being followed.

C. The Fair Labor Standards Act

In eight years of evaluating fire and rescue services in Montgomery County, OLO is convinced of the value and importance of the contribution of volunteers. Because of OLO's involvement in volunteer matters, it has been necessary for OLO, with the assistance of the Office of the County Attorney, to develop a familiarity with the Federal Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), and its associated Federal regulations.

Recently, a complaint was filed by the career firefighters union with the Department of Labor's (DOL) Wage Hour Division concerning volunteering by career firefighters. A request was made by the County for a written description of any alleged violation and a report of investigative findings. As of this writing, no written interpretation or report of findings have been received by the County.

However, the complaint and resulting DOL investigation has, in OLO's opinion, highlighted how out-of-step the FLSA is with the times. The FLSA was enacted in an era when the Congress believed it was necessary to protect employees from oppressive and unfair employers. Hence, employees "volunteering" their service to their employers were treated very skeptically. Clearly, the legislators who enacted the FLSA did not envision the future popularity and mutual benefits of volunteerism and community service.

There is little that a local government can do on its own to reverse an apparent "anti-volunteerism" language in the FLSA. However, OLO believes that through the political process changes must be initiated to bring the FLSA into the present and recognize that volunteerism is now very much a way of life in this country.

D. Indirect Costs

Since FY83, an indirect cost has been assessed against all special funds to cover administrative services provided these special funds by the Personnel Department, Office of Management and Budget, Office of the County Attorney, Finance Department, Purchasing Office, etc. which are funded from the General Fund. Until FY93, the indirect cost was assessed as a percentage of the total salaries of these central government offices. Beginning in FY93, the assessment is based on the total salaries plus 50 percent of the fringe costs. In FY94, the assessment will be based on total salaries and 100 percent of the fringe costs.

At its inception ten years ago, a determination was made not to assess an indirect cost on the Special Revenue Fire Tax Funds. OLO can only speculate that the reason for not assessing the Funds was that the typical central government services (personnel, legal, purchasing) were pretty much provided by the individual corporations.

However, over the past decade, many changes have occurred in the fire and rescue services. Today, the corporations and the career personnel receive a broad array of services from the County Government. Accordingly, OLO recommends that the Executive Branch re-evaluate whether the Special Revenue Fire Tax Funds should continue to be exempted from an indirect cost assessment for administrative services provided by County administrative departments.

E. Casino Nights

Presently, State law (Art 27, Sec 255B) permits a nonprofit organization to operate the game of bingo and conduct raffles in Montgomery County for the benefit of charity or in furtherance of the purpose of the nonprofit organization. County Code Section 30-4, provides that volunteer fire departments may conduct benefit performances and award prizes in merchandise, but not in cash.

Some Maryland counties have additional authority from the Maryland General Assembly to permit "casino nights" or other benefit performances at which card games, wheels of fortune or roulette are played and cash prizes are permitted. The volunteer fire and rescue corporations in those counties have used this authority to raise funds to purchase apparatus and generally support their fire/rescue operations.

Montgomery County may wish to explore the desirability and feasibility of seeking local legislation in the Maryland General Assembly permitting fire/rescue corporations to hold "casino nights" or other legal games that award cash payoffs. Should the County seek such legislation, OLO would suggest that the expenditure of any funds generated from "casino nights" be restricted to the purchase and maintenance of apparatus and operational equipment that directly supports the delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services.

VI. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The County currently has a number of incentives and activities in place to encourage volunteering in the fire, rescue and emergency medical services. Overall, with the exception of individual training programs and a Length of Service Award Program (LOSAP), these incentives are directed more at recruiting volunteers, and not at retaining them. This chapter summarizes OLO's major findings relating to the County's current program of incentives and disincentives for fire and rescue volunteers and identifies possible additional incentives.

A. Technical Fire, Rescue, and EMS Training

Responses to an OLO administered survey of County fire and rescue volunteers indicated that individual technical training is one of the most important incentives for volunteering. Conversely, the time required to complete the minimum required technical training is cited as a major reason for not continuing to volunteer.

B. Information Distribution and Publicity

In general, the County and the corporations are not doing an effective job of communicating the nature of the unique public-private partnership of career and volunteer personnel that provides critical fire and rescue services to County citizens.

C. Community Relations

Although many corporations sponsor community relations events, usually in conjunction with Fire Prevention Week, many volunteer corporations in recent years appear to have de-emphasized the community element of their existence, and have not continued to build a community awareness of the contribution of the combination volunteer and career fire and rescue services to their communities.

D. Job Satisfaction

In spite of the physical and time demands of the fire service, individuals are motivated and inspired to volunteer by intangible elements that make them feel they are a part of something important, that they are making a commitment, and that their services are appreciated. These intangible motivators, however, have not been consistently reinforced in the various corporations.

E. Direct Financial Rewards

The County provides a variety of tangible rewards and incentives for volunteers; however, expanding and improving upon these current incentives would probably increase the number of new volunteers and would help to retain those presently volunteering.

F. Leadership Issues

Responses to an OLO administered survey indicates a general disappointment in the leadership of County Government, the Fire and Rescue Commission, the Department of Fire and Rescue Services, and some corporations for their failure to provide the structure, direction, and encouragement necessary to create an effective and efficient working relationship between career and volunteer personnel in the combination fire and rescue services.

G. Career and Volunteer Interaction

There currently exists in the fire and rescue services an unacceptable level of friction between career and volunteer personnel. This situation varies by corporation and in intensity despite specific language in the County Code that volunteer participation is to be encouraged and not discouraged; despite specific prohibitions against such friction and harassment in FRC regulations and DFRS policies and procedures; and despite protestations of such behavior by corporation and DFRS leadership.

VII. OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

A. The County should continue to "...vigorously support the continuation and expansion of volunteer participation as a means of providing fire, rescue and emergency medical services..." and continue to "...actively encourage, and not in any way discourage, qualified volunteer participation".*

B. The County Council and County Executive should direct staff to review the findings and recommendations detailed in Chapter IV of this report to:

- recommend improvements to current volunteer incentives;
- comment on the feasibility and fiscal impact of additional incentives to encourage volunteer participation; and
- continue to develop ways of improving the interaction and working relations between career and volunteer personnel of the combination fire and rescue services.

VIII. COMMENTS ON DRAFT REPORT

OLO circulated a draft of this report to the Chief Administrative Officer and appropriate Executive Branch departments, the Fire and Rescue Commission, the chairman of the Chiefs' Committee and Presidents' Committee, the Presidents of the Volunteer Fire and Rescue Association and the Career Fire Fighters Association, and other interested parties. Technical comments received orally have been incorporated into this final report.

Beginning on the next page are the written comments in their entirety that were submitted by the following agencies:

- Chief Administrative Officer
- County Attorney
- Director of Fire and Rescue Services
- Assistant Chief, District I, Bureau of Operations
- Chairman, Montgomery Fire and Rescue Commission
- Director, Department of Finance
- Director, Office of Management and Budget
- President's Committee
- Gaithersburg-Washington Grove Fire Department
- Rockville Volunteer Fire Department
- Bethesda Fire Department
- Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department
- M.C. Career Fire-Rescue Officer's Association

* Montgomery County Code Section 21-4A(a).



Montgomery County Government
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

MEMORANDUM

December 11, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director, Office of Legislative Oversight
FROM: William H. Hussmann, Chief Administrative Officer *WH*
SUBJECT: DRAFT OLO Report 92-3, Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Draft OLO Report 92-3, Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services. Your in-depth knowledge of the fire and rescue services in Montgomery County and objective, independent evaluation has again provided us with an excellent starting point for discussion and action on these complex and sensitive issues. The comments from the Department of Fire & Rescue Services, the Fire & Rescue Commission, the Department of Finance, the Office of Management & Budget, and the County Attorney are attached.

The Executive Branch looks forward to discussing OLO Report 92-3 upon its release by the County Council. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

WHH/rm

Attachments

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY ATTORNEY
MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND

MEMORANDUM

December 2, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

VIA: Joyce R. Stern *Joyce R. Stern*
County Attorney

FROM: Bruce P. Sherman *Bruce P. Sherman*
Senior Assistant County Attorney
Public Safety Team

RE: Draft OLO Report 92-3 - Volunteer Incentives in the
Fire and Rescue Services (October 1992)

Thank you for the opportunity to review a draft version of your forthcoming report on Volunteer Incentives in Fire and Rescue Services. In reviewing the report, comments are made on significant legal issues raised by the draft language. Comments on legal issues contained in the report should not be construed as either opposition to or support for the report conclusions, but a neutral and detached comment on legal issues raised by the report. Failure to comment on certain issues in the report should likewise not be construed in either an affirmative or a negative manner.

Issue 1, page 3.

"In October 1987, the Council enacted legislation transferring all paid firefighters/rescuers from the corporations to the county's merit system.... [T]he County transferred the corporation's paid firefighters/rescuers to the Department of Fire and Rescue Services (DFRS)."

Comment:

Technically, paid corporation firefighters were not transferred to the County's merit system. Rather, the firefighter/rescuers were authorized, but not required, to request transfer to vacant positions in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services. Prior to January 15, 1988, the firefighter/rescuers could transfer to vacant positions without changing their salary grade. After January 15, 1988, a firefighter/rescuer employed by a fire corporation, could only transfer to a vacant DFRS position with the consent of the fire corporation and Director of DFRS. Montgomery County Code, 1984, §21-4M(i)(1) and (2).

Issue 2, page 4.

"However, the transfer of personnel did not remove operational responsibility for fire and rescue services from the volunteer corporations. The legislation specifically reaffirmed that, while the ultimate responsibility for providing fire, rescue, and emergency medical services rested with the County Government, the County's responsibility would be achieved through a combined system in which the delivery of fire, rescue, and emergency medical services would be through the local volunteer fire/rescue corporation, supported by the County's Department of Fire and Rescue Services."

Comment:

DFRS is responsible for employing, paying, terminating, disciplining, assigning, promoting, transferring and supervising all employees in the firefighter/rescuer occupational series paid with County tax funds. Montgomery County Code, 1984 §2-39A(b). An integrated emergency command structure is created by Montgomery County Code, 1984, §21-4E. Regulations were issued by the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Commission, which provide a chain-of-command for use in the control of emergency incidents which is applicable to all volunteer, corporation and County merit system fire, rescue, and emergency medical services personnel. Montgomery County Council Resolution No. 12-754 adopted July 16, 1992.

Issue 3, page 5.

"The same 1987 legislation that transferred the paid firefighter/rescuers from the corporations to the county (Bill 42-87) ..."

Comment:

The legislation did not transfer paid firefighters from the corporations to the County. It simply authorized the corporation firefighters to transfer to vacant positions in the Department of Fire and Rescue Services. See previous comment on Issue 1.

Issue 4, page 11.

Until recently, all volunteers were given a background check ... most corporations have ceased performing background checks."

Comment:

Under Maryland Code, Article 38A, §7A, volunteer fire companies, rescue squads, and ambulance services are authorized to request criminal record checks for persons being considered as a volunteer or paid firefighter, rescue squad member or paramedic. The corporation is authorized to consider the existence of a criminal conviction in determining whether or not an applicant will be appointed or employed. Financial liability for negligence may arise if a fire corporation fails to discover available criminal history record information and that action is the proximate cause of an injury to third parties. Cramer v. Housing Opportunity Commission of Montgomery County, 304 Md. 705, 501 A.2d 35 (1985) and Henley v. Prince George's County, 305 Md. 320, 503 A.2d 1333 (1986).

Issue 5, page 26.

This section discusses potential direct financial rewards to volunteer firefighters from the fire corporations or the County Government.

Comment:

The payment of direct financial rewards to volunteer firefighters creates the potential for violation of the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) minimum wage and overtime provisions. The United States Supreme Court has held that when members of a religious organization receive room and board in exchange for tithing their services to a church venture, FLSA minimum wage provisions and federal income tax and social security withholding provisions become applicable. In Alamo Foundation v. Secretary of Labor, 471 U.S. 290, 85 L.Ed.2d 278, 105 S.Ct. (1985), the Supreme Court found that minimum wage, overtime, and record-keeping requirements of the FLSA were applicable to workers engaged in commercial activities of a religious foundation. The workers' claimed that they were volunteers and did not want to receive payment of wages. Using an economic reality test, the Court found that non-cash benefits received by the volunteers made the volunteer work subject to the FLSA minimum wage requirements.

Department of Labor regulations allow volunteers to be paid expenses, reasonable benefits, nominal fees, or other similar benefits without losing their status as a volunteer, provided that the individual "performs hours of service for a public agency for civic, charitable, or humanitarian reasons, without promise, expectation or receipt of compensation for services rendered . . ." 29 C.F.R. §553.106. Benefits are considered reasonable when they involve inclusion of individual volunteers in group insurance plans, or length of service pension plans "commonly or traditionally provided to volunteers of state and local government agencies" which meet certain tests. 29 C.F.R. §553.106(d).

When these cash or non-cash payments are paid to a volunteer to an entity which is not a state or local government agency, substantial likelihood exists that the federal government will consider the payments to be wages for employees that bring them within the scope of the minimum wage and overtime provisions of the FLSA, as in the Alamo Foundation case.

Issue 6, page 27.

"Direct the County Attorney to develop an informational booklet and provide counseling to corporations on tax issues, such as deductibility of volunteer-related mileage, equipment and other expenses."

Comment:

Under the Montgomery County Charter, the County Attorney is the attorney for Montgomery County Government and all other departments and instrumentalities of the County Government. The independent fire and rescue corporations have been determined not to be instrumentalities of the County Government in the case of Hardy, et al. v. Montgomery County Government, and Conway v. Takoma Park Volunteer Fire Department, Inc. Accordingly, the County Attorney could not represent or give legal counseling to the corporations or their volunteers on federal, state or local tax liability issues. Charter §213 also provides in part "that the County Attorney and the staff of the office shall engage in no other law practice". It would thus be

improper, under the Charter provisions, for the County Attorney to give legal counseling on tax issues to the volunteers or the volunteer fire corporations. Even if such legal counseling was lawful, given the current budgetary environment, the County Attorney's Office does not have the available resources to add a program such as this to the existing workload.

Issue 7, page 27.

"Explore the desirability and feasibility of seeking local legislation in the Maryland General Assembly to permit corporations to hold 'Casino Nights' or other legal games to raise funds that could only be used to support the delivery of direct fire, rescue and emergency medical services...."

Comment:

The Maryland General Assembly has already authorized bingo or raffles by fire corporations in Montgomery County. Maryland Code, Article 27, §255B. Montgomery County Government has authorized and legalized benefit performances by volunteer fire departments. Montgomery County Code, 1984, §30-4 provides in part that a volunteer fire department may conduct and operate a benefit performance to benefit the fire department and that it is lawful to award prizes in merchandise, conduct games of skill, operate wheels-of-fortune, bingo or other similar methods provided that prizes are not paid or redeemable for money.

This legislation has been in effect in Montgomery County since 1936. Legislative change would only be necessary if the County wanted to authorize games of chance at Casino Nights with cash payoffs.

Issue 8, page 31

"[A] recent interpretation of those [FLSA] regulations by the Department of Labor as they apply to career firefighters who volunteer within the county.... The interpretations of the FLSA regulations concerned a prohibition against career fire and rescue personnel volunteering their off-duty services in their own communities. This ruling has a potential severe and adverse impact on the County's fire and rescue services."

Comment:

This statement is incorrect. Montgomery County Government has not received an FLSA interpretation from the Department of Labor as described in the draft. The career firefighters union did file a complaint with the Wage Hour Division of the United States Department of Labor concerning volunteering by career firefighters. Montgomery County Government requested that the Department of Labor provide the County with a written description of any alleged violation and a written report concerning their investigative findings. The Regional Director of the Wage Hour Division, Department of Labor forwarded the case to the Department of Labor's regional counsel for further review. As of December 2, 1992, no written opinion, interpretation or written decision has been issued by the solicitor's office of the Department of Labor directed to Montgomery County Government on this issue. We are awaiting the outcome of the departmental review.

CONCLUSION

The current mixed system of volunteer and career firefighting in Montgomery County continues to provide the potential for litigation under the FLSA overtime provisions. The provision of direct financial rewards to volunteers of the independent fire corporations creates the potential for FLSA liability for the independent fire corporations. Continued volunteering by County career officers creates the potential for additional liability for the County and the fire corporations for overtime wages. Finally, the intermixed chains of command of the career and volunteer ladder create the potential for a finding of overtime liability under the FLSA as an extension of the Conway v. Takoma Park VFD case.

Given the length of time that it is taking for the Conway case to reach a final judgment, it is difficult to predict the probable outcome of potential FLSA claims in the mixed system. It should be noted, however, that the firefighters in Conway are represented by a prominent labor lawyer who specializes in firefighter overtime litigation across the country. He has been active locally in Montgomery County and in northern Virginia. It is safe to assume that the firefighters are thus well aware of and advised of their rights under federal labor law.

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cc: Neal Potter, County Executive
William Hussmann, Chief Administrative Officer
Ramon F. Granados, Director, DERS
Robert K. Kendal, Director, OMB
George Giebel, Chair, FRC



Montgomery County Government

M E M O R A N D U M

November 27, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Ramon F. Granados, Director *Ramon F. Granados*
Department of Fire and Rescue Services

SUBJECT: Comments on OLO Report 92-3, VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES IN THE
FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

My comments which shall be of a specific, direct text related nature, and of a general nature are as follows:

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

1. Page 4, 1st paragraph, sentence 1 and 2. I believe that both the rescue squads recently changed their charters to include the provision of fire suppression, as well as, rescue services. While the service is still "sorting out" the meaning of these changes, I believe that by charter they are

in fact fire departments even though they possess no apparatus or major equipment with which to actually extinguish or otherwise mitigate fire problems. The change was made to include their command officers fully in the integrated chain of command as it related to fire incidents.

2. Page 4., 2nd paragraph, last sentence. I believe that it would be helpful to point out the nature and cost, which is substantial, of the indirect services provided by the County Government to this organization, as well as, all of the other "independent" fire and rescue corporations.
3. Page 4., last two paragraphs. In these paragraphs you discuss and analyze the staffing patterns of major apparatus. This analysis averages a five (5) calendar year response pattern. I believe it would be helpful to know what the trend was by various stations during this period versus the average and to know whether volunteer staffing has gone up or down. The active LOSAP information does not accurately reflect this information.
4. Page 5., 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence. DFRS does have a few "operational" volunteers serving on various specialty teams and at the Training Academy. We have also used civilian administrative volunteers. We would desire to increase both activities, but meet with extreme opposition from the corporations, particularly in the operational area when we even mention it. Why should we be precluded from this activity?
5. Page 5., last paragraph, page 6., 2nd paragraph. It would be helpful to have the two tables referencing the Volunteer Coordinators Office reflect the same time periods to derive an accurate cost for this part of the recruiting process. The report in general should reflect all the costs of recruiting and retaining a volunteer in one table or in a manner in which a total can be reflected. It may show that it would be more effective to develop a "paid for call" or some other approach to "volunteer" services which may be more effective.

It would also be helpful to track the outcome of these referrals. Also it would be helpful to track how many complete one, two or more years of service.
6. Page 10., 2nd paragraph, last sentence. I believe that these inoculations for Hepatitis B should be specifically offered if they are not already. They are required to be offered free of charge to career personnel. I don't believe that we should offer less protection to the volunteer members.

7. Page 11., 2nd paragraph, last sentence. I believe that background checks are absolutely essential for all fire and rescue personnel regardless of cost. Some standard should also be developed as to what is cause for rejection. Even when they were done, it was then up to the subjective judgement of each corporation at various levels, as well as the DFRS to make a judgement. These judgements have varied greatly in the past. There have been numerous instances of one fire/rescue agency rejecting someone, and another accepting them.
8. Page 13., 5th paragraph, last sentence. I believe that this figure of fifteen (15) is far short. While no specific records have been kept, DFRS believes the correct number to be closer to 100.
9. Page 17., 3rd paragraph, 2nd sentence. Based on the number of LOSAP certifications and all other statistics presented, where does the number "1500" come from?
10. Page 19., 7th (last) paragraph. In most instances these training courses are developed in response to a state or federal law designed to protect employees from hazard such as disease, hazardous substances, sexually, racial or other inappropriately based abuse. Should a volunteer be less protected than someone who is being paid? The reason that the laws are directed toward employment has to do with the freedom allowed in this country during the conduct of private affairs, not because it is not relevant, or does not apply to volunteers. Bloodborne pathogens, hazardous materials and other dangers of providing our service do not distinguish between volunteers or career personnel. Should we allow sexual or other harassment of volunteers because the law mandating it for employees does not apply to volunteers? The inference here is that we are deterring volunteers by forcing them to take training that they do not need. I strongly disagree.
11. Page 20., 2nd paragraph (bullet), 3rd paragraph (bullet). As I am sure you are aware, we cancel many courses now for lack of enrollment. Unfortunately, we cannot time our courses to the convenience of each individual member. The inferences in this entire area gives a reader the impression that we are not responsive or concerned with volunteer training. I believe that this is patently unfair and misleading. It should be noted that we place no burdens upon volunteers with regard to location of training, availability of training, etc. that we do not place upon ourselves. If we thought we could effectively implement individualized, on-sight training, etc. without severely compromising the quality of training we would do it for all career and volunteer personnel. It would allow us to save millions of dollars
12. Page 20, Paragraph (bullet) 1 and 4. The observations regarding length of course and level of training in relationship to the appropriate NFPA standards are probably correct. Any national standard developed in specific areas are to one extent or another arbitrary when applied locally. While we want all of our people to meet this

minimum national training standard, our real objective is to produce firefighters and EMTs that can operate safely and effectively in the actual operating environment we face. There simply are problems that we deal with on a daily basis which are not covered by the national standard. As an example, no elevator training is required. Elevator rescues can be very hazardous and thousands of dollars of unnecessary damage can be done by untrained personnel. Should we not address it even though it exists in our operating environment? Should we leave our citizens trapped in defective elevators? There is no question that our training needs are growing daily due to the increase in technology and other problems faced by our personnel in the field.

Just a few years ago we did not need to train our rescue personnel about vehicle air-bags, now it is a necessity. We have used the specialty team concept to eliminate training all of our personnel to the expert level where it was appropriate.

We also do not give training that is not appropriate to our operating environment. For instance, no training on silo fires or mine fires is conducted, although in some parts of the country these are big problems. Minimal forest fire, brush fire training is given because it is not a frequent or big problem in our County.

Where the need exists for training on silo fires, there probably is not the same need for elevator training. The national standards, appropriately, leave these decisions up to the local jurisdiction.

Again what is most appropriate, is that our personnel, volunteer and career, are able to operate safely and effectively in the operating environment of Montgomery County, MD. While certainly this can be challenging, I believe that it is essential and what our citizens expect.

13. Page 20., 7th paragraph, 1st dash. While the teaching of these courses on a rolling modular basis sounds nice, we do not believe it would be effective or safe, particularly in the "basic" courses mentioned. For instance, how does one enter at the "live firefighting stage of an Essentials Course, when they have not had breathing apparatus training? EMT training, likewise builds knowledge and skills based on previous instruction. EMT also must adhere to outside State and National standards. Teaching modular with rolling entry may be possible on more advanced courses such as Fire Officer Development I, but I believe it would seriously complicate attendance, scheduling and cancellation problems.

14. Page 21., 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, and 5th (bullets) paragraphs. We concur with these recommendations to the extent that they are practical and possible. Most of these items are done now as appropriate. We have been very disappointed at the resistance we have met in the cable TV area, and with the lack of funding support and personnel to do more in these areas. Unfortunately, as previously mentioned, while we constantly review our courses for appropriateness, our training needs, driven by our operating environment continue to increase.
15. Recommendations, all. We generally concur with these recommendations, but would like to emphasize that emphasis on the nature of our system as COMBINATION should be the watch word.
16. Page 23., all. We generally concur with these recommendations. Unfortunately, funding for areas within our stations and other need support has not been valued by the people within our system who must approve this funding. One must keep in mind, however, that in a very urban sophisticated society such as ours, it is doubtful that we can become the center of our communities to the extent that it is possible in more rural areas where the competition of activities is less intense.
17. Page 24., and 25, Findings, and Recommendations, all. WE generally concur with this section. It should be noted, however, that few of the volunteers that we hire continue to volunteer, and we have been criticized for this hiring which we already do consistent with our other needs to satisfy veterans, EEO, and other considerations.
18. Page 25., last two paragraphs. We strongly concur with this observation. Unfortunately the volunteer corporations have been slow to recognize that what may have been appropriate years ago, is no longer appropriate. The volunteers must organize their participation and participate in a reliable, organized fashion or they will continue to experience attrition. We believe that there is a huge difference in opinion between the "old guard", many of whom control today's corporations, and the newer volunteers, who are willing and able to respond if the proper leadership of the volunteer element is supportive. The combination system will only flourish in an atmosphere of mutual career/volunteer respect. Respect from the career people will only be achieved by presenting a well disciplined, well trained and organized force of committed volunteers.
19. Page 26., and 27, Direct Financial Rewards, all. We generally concur that a force of volunteers that serve in the manner referenced above should receive every consideration possible.
20. Page 28., all. There is no question that a combination fire and rescue service presents a very, very challenging environment.

21. Page 28., 29. 30., all. There is no question that this is a challenging area. It should be noted, however, that DFRS has disciplined employees and officers in this area. Many times, however, you are faced with possibly increasing the friction with this approach.
22. Page 31. B., all. While we concur with these observations, this FLSA issue is a "sleeping dog." We would recommend deleting it from the public report.
23. Page 34., VII., last paragraph (bullet). The Committee For Excellence under the leadership of Judge David Cahoon is currently working in this area. These efforts have just begun at the floor level and will take time and challenge us to the fullest. DFRS is an active participant in this effort and strongly supports this effort.

GENERAL

I believe that Mr. Mansinne has done an admirable job of addressing and analyzing a very complex issue. While we do not agree fully with all findings, we generally applaud your efforts. I have attached Chief McGary's comments for your edification as he went to the trouble to do a very thorough review of your draft report. I have also attached your report with our comments indicated by number in the right margin for ease of reference.

Should you have any questions regarding our comments, you may contact Chief Grover or myself. Thank you for your efforts on behalf of our service.

RFG:jcg

Attachment

DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND RESCUE SERVICES

BUREAU OF OPERATIONS

DISTRICT I

November 17, 1992

TO: First Deputy Chief Jon C. Grover

VIA: Leslie D. Adams, Deputy Chief, Bureau of Operations 

FROM: Roger A. McGary, Assistant Chief, District I 

SUBJECT: OLO Report: Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services

Director Granados said at his management staff meeting this past week that we should provide responses to Mr. Mansinne's report to you. I have reviewed that report and would offer the following comments:

Page 4 --In the last two paragraphs he discusses an analysis of actual staffing patterns of major apparatus. He has averaged out a five calendar year response. I believe it would be more helpful to know what the trend in these various stations has been over the five years versus the average. Has staffing by volunteers gone up or down?

Page 5 --In the next to last paragraph he indicates that the department does not have volunteers. In the true sense of riding apparatus yes, but do we not have individuals such as Genie Helbert who assists as volunteers?

Page 6 --At the top of this page there is a list of referrals, by calendar years 1988 through 1992. A question should be asked about the conversion of these referrals to active membership in the various corporations. Along with that an effort should be made to determine how many have remained active after one year, two years and three years of service.

Page 19 --In the last paragraph it is stated, "Supplemental training programs imposed by the County Council and...Commission are principally designed to address career staff needs, but are applied to volunteers as well."

I believe we need to respond to this to the extent that in many cases these are mandated by law. For the most part they are MOSH requirements, although the interpretation recently has been made that volunteers are not employees.

Unfortunately, the incidents themselves do not discriminate between career and volunteer personnel and, therefore, hazardous materials and bloodborne pathogen training should be mandated for all personnel.

Page 20 --In the third bullet a comment is made about the travel time from distant areas. It would be interesting to note in the survey the time in service of those who complained about traveling to the academy.

We need to be extremely careful about placing courses in the field where specific equipment, etc. is required. By simply moving a course to a distant area in the county does not insure that the attendance will be sufficient. In fact, it could place a more significant hardship on people who live in the opposite end of the county who would only have had to travel half way, i.e., to the academy, to obtain that same course.

Mr. Mansinne has made three recommendations. In the first, he discusses the concept of modules for the Essentials of Firefighting.

In theory this sounds great, but from a practical purpose it could be difficult to implement. Obviously you cannot jump into the middle of an Essentials class without the appropriate background information. One of the reasons we combined the old Firefighter I and II into the Essentials class I was related to the amount of refresher training required in the old Firefighter II course.

He further recommends the use of the full time summer recruit school and access to career daytime classes by volunteers. As you are well aware the summer classes have been ongoing for years and we have never restricted volunteers from participating in available daytime classes. In fact, two or three went through our career recruit school several years ago.

Page 21 --In the second bullet he discusses moving training courses to various sites throughout the county. My same comments on travel apply. We should also respond that we have done this on numerous occasions with some of the 30 hour programs such as Pumps and Trucks as well as the Haz Mat 1B.

Page 23 --Mr. Mansinne discusses community relations in this area and notes in his findings that "...volunteer corporations...de-emphasize the community element...not continue to build community awareness..."

Much of this is directly related to the career people no longer being corporate employees. When we were corporate employees many of the community relations projects were assigned to the career personnel. With the changeover in 1988 either one or two things happened: the corporations no longer asked for this assistance and/or career personnel refused to do them because they were no longer corporate employees.

Page 24 --In the next to last bullet Mr. Mansinne comments on preference hiring for volunteers into the county merit system. It would be interesting to note how many volunteers have been hired as fire/rescue employees since 1988 versus non corporate members. It should also be noted that we have been criticized for hiring these individuals, many of whom quit volunteering after being employed.

Some General Thoughts:

How was the survey form distributed? As a volunteer I never saw it. You will note that Silver Spring had only two responses.

In some of his other comments Mr. Mansinne has noted why he believes, from the survey, people have jointed fire and rescue services. I believe a survey should be sent to the career personnel who were or are volunteers in the system to ask why they joined the volunteer fire department. I think you will find, in particular over the last five years, a predominate number of these individuals joining with the intent of getting hired later. The service to community may have been part of their reasoning, but I would lay odds it was not the primary focus.

RAM:jsm



Montgomery County Government

MEMORANDUM

December 8, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: George Giebel, Chairman
Fire and Rescue Commission *George Giebel*

SUBJECT: DRAFT OLO Report 92-3, Volunteer Incentives in
the Fire and Rescue Service

I am pleased to respond to your draft copy of OLO Report 92-3.

You have prepared an exceptionally well researched report on the subject. The report includes a result of a most revealing survey of 324 volunteers.

The Fire and Rescue Commission will present its remarks following a review of the final report. The Commission does note however, the strident tone of the report regarding the "unacceptable level of friction between career and volunteer personnel". The Commission believes that tone imparts a grossly negative image on the successful combination delivery system for fire, rescue and emergency medical services.

The Commission strongly supports the overall recommendations included in the report and, in particular, seeks to move forward the previously suggested enhancements to the volunteer Length of Service Awards Programs (LOSAP) specifically the ability to accelerate the accumulation of points beyond one year, elimination of the 50 point pass/fail annual policy and the ability to 'vest' points on a scheduled basis. Example; for every 250 points accumulated in any time period, the volunteer is 'vested' with 5 years of active service.

On behalf of the members of the Fire and Rescue Commission, we look forward to receiving the final report.

GG:trb:V1552

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Commission

101 Monroe Street, Twelfth Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850-2589
301/217-2461, TDD 217-4625, FAX 217-2443



Montgomery County Government

MEMORANDUM

November 19, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Timothy L. Firestine, Director
Department of Finance *Timothy L. Firestine*

SUBJECT: Draft OLO Report 92-3, Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services

Listed below are comments from Joyce Clair, Nurse Administrator, Occupational Medical Section, and Terry Fleming, Chief, Division of Risk Management, on your draft report.

With respect to section III, B. 4. Medical Examinations, you have listed preplacement examination services offered by the Occupational Medical Section for volunteers. This list should include a blood test that is conducted in conjunction with the preplacement examination.

As to specific findings and recommendations, I offer the following:

1. Technical Fire, Rescue and EMS Training. No comment.
2. Information Distribution and Publicity. No comment.
3. Community Relations. No comment.
4. Job Satisfaction. The recommendation of creating multiple job classifications is an excellent idea in light of the enactment of the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA). Although Risk Management has received conflicting opinions on whether or not the ADA applies to volunteers, having multiple job classifications will make it easier to place disabled volunteers.
5. Direct Financial Rewards. The recommendation for periodic physical examinations is part of an ongoing program established by then County Executive Kramer, in FY89. Preplacement examinations were the first step in the process. Unfortunately, budget constraints have prevented implementation of periodic and surveillance type examinations. Risk Management has requested funds in FY94 to conduct annual pulmonary function tests and hearing tests on volunteers. Funds are also being requested to conduct periodic physical examinations on volunteers tri-annually. This program will be phased in over a three year period.
6. Leadership Issues. No comment.
7. Career and Volunteer Interaction. No Comment.

If you have questions or wish to discuss these comments, call Terry Fleming at 217-7248.

cc: Terry Fleming
Joyce Clair

Office of the Director, Department of Finance

101 Monroe Street, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301/217-2042



Montgomery County Government

MEMORANDUM

November 18, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Robert K. Kendal, Director 
Office of Management and Budget

SUBJECT: DRAFT OLO Report No. 92-3, Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services

Thank you for the opportunity to respond to this report. Your knowledge of and experience in evaluating programs related to the County's fire and rescue services is again demonstrated, to the credit of OLO and the benefit of the County. I understand that OMB staff have individually discussed with you those areas of the report that benefit from technical corrections or clarification. My comments concern more general policy issues.

Many of the potential recommendations put forth for consideration have fiscal impacts, including those related to direct financial rewards for volunteers (Section IV. FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS, C. Specific Findings and Recommendations, 4. Direct Financial Rewards) as well as other types of recommendations. Regardless of the potential merits that increased incentives or publicity related to our mixed volunteer and career fire and rescue service may have, benefits must be weighed against the fiscal impact.

A thorough review of the literature on the role and effectiveness of incentives should precede proposals for new incentives to determine in advance the impact such incentives may have in other similar jurisdictions. Given the County's ongoing fiscal difficulties, the approach to considering additional incentives and other cost intensive recommendations should be strategic in nature, to take into account the potential impact of each potential incentive and to develop an incremental plan for implementation that would not result in competition for scarce resources with other necessary fire and rescue related services. Of course, such proposals would also have to compete with other high priority initiatives, subject to the traditional decision making process by the County's elected officials. Following implementation, formal follow-up evaluation should be required to determine whether the incentive created a tangible, identifiable positive result or merely became a non-incentive inducing benefit, albeit potentially worthwhile, for volunteers. Such an evaluation would distinguish between incentives intended to attract volunteers, incentives intended to retain volunteers, and incentives intended to reward volunteers for their service.

Office of Management and Budget
Director's Office/Interagency Analysis & Review Division/Budgets Division

101 Monroe Street, 14th Floor, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301/217-2789, 2820, 2800



**Presidents Committee
of the
Fire and Rescue Corporations
of
Montgomery County**

December 3, 1992

Mr. Andrew Mansinne, Jr.
Director
Office of Legislative Oversight
100 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

Dear Mr. Mansinne:

The President's Committee appreciates the opportunity to review and comment on the Draft OLO Report 92-3, "Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services". We offer the following comments and suggestions for your consideration.

The report is a fair and equitable presentation of incentives and issues associated with the current status of incentives within the local fire and rescue system. In general, we concur with the findings and recommendations of the draft report.

We suggest that you give due consideration to the various points raised by the responses by several of the individual Corporations. In addition, we have the following observations and comments:

- 1) It would be instructive for the County Council to be aware of how volunteer incentives within Montgomery County compare with those of adjacent or other jurisdictions. Perhaps these data could be extracted from your surveys and interviews with fire and rescue service representatives outside Montgomery County.
- 2) There is a universal need for additional training at satellite facilities as well as training and continuing education in a modular format at satellite facilities.
- 3) Major incentives such as tax exemptions (Fairfax) or health insurance benefits for active volunteers would be significant improvements.
- 4) Despite the logic and subsequent administrative efforts, the 1987 County takeover of operational personnel has seriously diminished community loyalty and involvement as well as Corporation identity. The County government has done little to reverse this trend; the

Executive and Legislative branches have accepted suggestions of the Corporations, the Fire and Rescue Commission, and the Fire Board, but the pervasive "big brother" attitude of middle management County officials continues. The fire and rescue service, as with the school, library, and transportation systems, is viewed as a county- rather than community-based public service. This mindset serves the government well, but is a disincentive to retention of volunteers.

- 5) The report addresses numerous issues related to delivery of fire and rescue services that are essentially operational in nature. There is little mention of the growing complexity and burden of administrative and managerial duties that are required of more senior Corporation officials. The administrative burden on Corporate officials as a consequence of DFRS, FRC, OMB, Office of Personnel, Public Safety Committee, and County Council directives and actions are a major disincentive to the volunteer leadership. This issue should be addressed by the County Council in its consideration of incentives.

If further information is needed, please contact us. Again, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments.

For the President's Committee,



Kenneth D. Fisher
Secretary-Treasurer

KDF:cr

cc: Corporation Presidents



GAITHERSBURG-WASHINGTON GROVE FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

STATION 8
801 Russell Avenue
Gaithersburg, MD 20879
(301) 948-0660
Fax: (301) 948-6836

STATION 28
7272 Muncaster Mill Road
Derwood, MD 20855
(301) 921-9330
Fax: (301) 948-6915

Learn Not To Burn

MEMORANDUM

November 25, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne, Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Kenneth D. Fisher, President *K. Fisher*
James M. Magruder, Sr., Fire Chief *J. M. M.*

SUBJECT: Draft OLO Report 92-3: "Volunteer Incentives in the
Fire and Rescue Services"

Thank you for the opportunity to review the draft report. As usual, you have done the typical thorough and thoughtful analysis that has become the hallmark of OLO. If other components of County Government would emulate your comprehensive approach to issues, the taxpayers would be better served.

We have made no effort to edit the report but offer these general suggestions:

1. On Page 1, you refer to surveys of adjacent jurisdictions and interviews with officials from adjacent jurisdictions. Results of these activities are not adequately reflected in the report discussions. Incorporation of these comments, data, and information in the report would be most helpful for comparative purposes. Indeed, a table comparing existence of incentives (See Table of Contents III B 1-13) and other incentives among the several jurisdictions would be informative in considering how this County compares with other jurisdictions.
2. On Page 4, reference is made to actual staffing patterns but actual data is not provided. We suggest these data by Corporation and by year should be added to the report as an appendix.
3. On Page 25, BCCRS, WRS, and Burtonsville are identified as Corporations requiring specific standby or sleepin periods, etc. While we cannot speak for Corporations other than the GWGFD, similar requirements are in place in the GWGFD and perhaps are more widespread throughout the other 13 Corporations (17 - (3 + GWGFD) = 13; CCFD and Bethesda FD omitted).

4. On Page 30, reference is made to an April 1992 study on women firefighters prepared by Chief Oettinger. It is of interest to note the juxtaposition of discussions on Pages 28-30 and the footnote on Page 30. The title of the report on women in the fire service is misleading and deals only with DFRS experience. The opportunity to incorporate volunteer information (there have been women volunteers in Montgomery County Corporations for over 10-20 years) was missed. Indeed, the title itself reflects a further dimension of the career leadership's narrow focus.
5. Finally, the report omits any mention of the work of the Committee on Excellence chaired by Judge David Cahoon. Since 1990, the Committee has made major impact on the fire and rescue system, albeit primarily on issues outside the scope of volunteer incentives. However, work of the Committee on Excellence has influenced ongoing efforts to address several issues mentioned in Chapter IV, Section C and Chapter V. We suggest the report should reflect the work of the Committee on Excellence and comments of Judge Cahoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft report. We look forward to receipt of the final document.

KDF/smw

December 3, 1992

MEMORANDUM

**TO: Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT**

**FROM: Guy L. Poirier, President
ROCKVILLE VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.**

**SUBJECT: Comments on Draft Report of Volunteer
Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services**

I have reviewed your draft report and have the following comments:

On Page 6 of your report you show that 713 referrals were given to the volunteer corporations from 1988 through September, 1992. We feel your report should have provided us with the number of referrals recruited by the corporations and the retention rate of those individuals. Our feeling is that the retention rate, because of its significance in a combination system, should have been more carefully analyzed.

We agree with your recommendations on "Direct Financial Rewards". However, we feel that a tax credit to those communities using volunteers should be added to your recommendations. Our philosophy is that citizens should benefit from the savings accrued through the use of volunteers to effect minimum staffing. We understand that this may not be an easy task, but should be considered.

Understanding the time and effort invested in this draft report, we thank you for the opportunity to critique its contents. If there is anything we can assist you with in the future, please do not hesitate to contact us.

BETHESDA FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC.

P.O. BOX 30384
BETHESDA, MARYLAND 20824-0384

BUSINESS PHONE
(301) 652-5600

M E M O R A N D U M

December 4, 1992

TO: Andrew Mansinne Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Henry Solomon, President
Bethesda Fire Board *Henry Solomon*

SUBJECT: OLO Report 92-3, "Volunteer Incentives in the Fire
and Rescue Service"

The report is excellent, touching on many sensitive issues.

In my opinion there is one area which was passed over too lightly that deals with leadership and interactions, (Items 6 and 7 under IV C).

My concern has to do with the poor morale being fostered and nurtured by the 12th Floor personnel which is affecting the whole fire and rescue service. As long as the 12th floor personnel continue to move people, like chessmen from station to station and do other things without considering the people or the corporations, resentment will continue and morale will remain unacceptably low. In a service where danger is part of the job, good morale and trust is essential to satisfactory service. As soon as DFRS middle and upper management faces the problems they are creating, the corporations can stop having to fight for their very lives.

HS/peh



Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

SANDY SPRING, MARYLAND 20860

EMERGENCY
911

BUSINESS PHONE
774-7400 CO. 4
774-8266 CO. 40

November 17, 1992

MEMORANDUM TO: Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Thomas C. Rhodes
President

SUBJECT: Comments of Draft Volunteer
Incentives in the Fire/Rescue
Services

Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department would like the following comments and recommendations considered for your final report.

1. Sandy Spring VFD has had (8) volunteers hired by DFRS in recent years. Six of these have been forced to resign from Sandy Spring by pressure from the Union. The remaining (2) hired this Fall are now encountering this same pressure.

We recommend legislation be passed eliminating this activity. *

2. DFRS personnel in all grades constantly remind us that they do not work for the Corporations and the Corporations have no authority or control over them except on the fire grounds.

We recommend limited administrative control of DFRS personnel assigned to the Corporations be returned to the 19 Corporations and Corporations' patches and identification be returned to their uniforms & running gear. Loyalty by all DFRS personnel to the 19 Corporations must be re-established.

3. The increasing paperwork required by the Bureaucracy creates a tremendous burden on some of the Corporations administrative staffs.

We recommend the paperwork be reviewed with the purpose in mind to stream line as much as possible.

cc: Executive Board
cc: Ken Fisher

* See next page for clarification on this statement.



Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.

SANDY SPRING, MARYLAND 20860

EMERGENCY
911

BUSINESS PHONE
774-7400 CO. 4
774-6266 CO. 40

November 20, 1992

MEMORANDUM TO: Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Tom Rhodes, President *TR*

RE: Clarification of Comments of Draft
Volunteer Incentives dated
November 17, 1992

One of our Executive Board Directors has suggested there might be a misinterpretation of our recommendation under item 1 of our memorandum dated November 17, 1992.

To clean up any misunderstanding, "The Sandy Spring Volunteer Fire Department recommends legislation be passed eliminating the activity of the Union or its members pressuring volunteers that are hired by the County to resign as volunteers from the 19 Corporations.

Please attach this memorandum to our memorandum dated November 17, 1992.

cc: Executive Board
cc: Ken Fisher

MONTGOMERY COUNTY CAREER FIRE-RESCUE OFFICER'S ASSOCIATION

November 3, 1992

TO: Mr. Andrew Mansinne Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

FROM: Steering Committee *JA*
Montgomery County Career Fire and Rescue
Officers' Association

SUBJECT: Comments on DRAFT OLO Report 92-3, Volunteer
Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services

We have reviewed the draft copy forwarded to us on the above named subject. The Steering Committee thanks you for the opportunity to be included in the comment period. The following remarks are respectfully submitted for your consideration.

In reviewing this document, the Steering Committee has found what it considers to be several flaws in the data collection and interpretation process. The first concerns the assistance of Mr. Thomas M. Skiba. We believe that Mr. Skiba's active affiliation in a volunteer fire department brings a less than impartial view on the whole subject. As a result, some of the conclusions and findings reached are slanted toward the retention or initiation of volunteer incentive programs that, in our opinion, have not or would not be worth investing in.

On page 2, paragraph 1 of Section II. BACKGROUND, we wish to clear a point of semantics. The one corporation that does not receive direct tax assistance is assumed to be the Bethesda-Chevy Chase Rescue Squad. While it is true that the Squad does not have a County budget, it is incorrect to assume that they do not receive direct tax assistance for their operations. BCCRS is included in the County-wide dispatching system; their personnel are trained at the Public Service Training Academy by DFRS personnel; and two tax-paid career medics are assigned to their first due medic unit Monday through Friday. On several occasions in the last 2 1/2 years, DFRS has also supplied medics on the weekends to fill vacancies created when volunteers did not show up for their assigned stand-bys. The salaries for these medics are charged to other pseudo codes, however, the medics are assigned to the medic unit at BCC. If the public and the government leaders are to have the fullest understanding of how the fire and rescue service operates, it is the opinion of this organization that whole truths must be told.

Page 4 of the report points out some interesting facts that may be overlooked by the reader due to the focus of the report. In paragraph 1, the provisions of the law are paraphrased. It states that service would be delivered by a combined system through the volunteer corporations, supported by DFRS. In paragraphs 3 and 4, it is noted that average career staffing over the period 1987-1991 was 2.19

personnel/apparatus. All career personnel participate at at least the Firefighter/Rescuer II level. This means that they can be counted as minimum staffing. The volunteer staffing averaged .89 personnel/apparatus. Of this .89, how many were actually minimum staffing? This question is not only pertinent, but also captures an even sharper picture of the staffing provided by volunteers. In most corporations, personnel are permitted to ride after completing a 30-hour orientation. This does not mean they count as minimum staffing. However, due a flaw in our incident reporting system, personnel on apparatus show up as staffing. There is no place on the report to delineate who can actually deliver service and who is riding as an observer. The members of our organization can attest to the benefits of having adequately staffed, fully trained personnel versus responding on a call with one other trained firefighter and an observer. We submit that if the reports were more closely scrutinized, one would find that the number of "fully qualified" volunteers/apparatus would be lower than the .89. Paragraph 4 goes on to say that in 22 of the 33 stations career staffing exceeded volunteer staffing; 4 additional stations had career staffing that was almost equal to the average volunteer staffing (meaning that some periods the career staffing exceeded volunteer and others the reverse was true); and in the remaining stations (7) volunteer staffing exceeded career staffing. We interpret this section to say that in 78% of the fire and rescue stations in the County career staffing exceeded volunteer staffing either all of the time or at least 50% of the time.

To carry this point further, we submit the following. The Department of Fire and Rescue Services provides a staffing level of 232 career personnel during the day, and 168 personnel at night and on weekends. These personnel staff critical positions as established by the Corporations to at least the minimum level required by the Fire and Rescue Commission's Apparatus Staffing Executive Regulation (attached). During the day, DFRS essentially provides 100% of the minimum staffing required to deliver fire and rescue service. At night and on the weekends, DFRS fills 72% of the minimum staffing positions. If the day, night and weekend staffing levels are combined, DFRS provides 86% of the entire staffing required. With the volunteers filling the 14% of the staffing requirements, who is supporting whom? Our organization respectfully submits that the law is grossly out of step with the current delivery system. We are also of the opinion that many of the "unwelcome" feelings experienced by volunteers at the hands of the career force are actually a deep seated resentment based on the myth that the career force supplements the volunteers. It is clearly evident that the career force is, in the majority of every aspect of our system, supplemented by the volunteer. We believe that once this issue is resolved, many of the conflicts and friction currently being experienced will be significantly reduced.

Under INDIVIDUAL TRAINING, page 7, paragraph 1, reference is made to the mandatory 30-hour orientation course conducted at the Corporation. It is noted that this training is conducted by Corporation personnel. This is not totally correct. A significant contribution by career personnel is also evident at this level. Many of our members and members of IAFF Local 1664 devote many hours to these programs. It is erroneous and unfair to infer that Corporation personnel are the sole providers for this training.

On page 15 of the report, you make some very astute observations. Many of these points have been raised in the public forum before. The elusiveness of the actual cost and numbers of volunteers is one point that, in these difficult economic times, must be pinned down with the same vigor as other expenditures. We cannot blindly assume that volunteers are saving the county money if we do not know the true cost of training and development versus service provided. We cannot measure the actual impact on service delivery if we do not know how many volunteer personnel are staffing apparatus. The bottom line in this business is delivering service. Of the approximately 1500 volunteers (Page 17) only 740 (Page 16) qualified as active enough to receive certified LOSAP credit. Of the 740, how many were actively engaged in delivering fire and rescue service? We are aware of several corporations whose rolls include: career firefighter/rescuers as associate members; members who have moved out of state; members who have requested to be dropped from the rolls; and personnel who maintain dual membership. All of these factors skew the total picture.

Under the SUMMARY OF VOLUNTEER SURVEY INFORMATION, section (Page 17-18), we find one point that does not correlate with the real world. By printing an average years of experience, one could draw the conclusion that the corporations have a well seasoned work force. The truth is that most of the stations are staffed by personnel in the 0-2 year group with a significant drop in experienced personnel providing staffing after 2 years (Appendices D-3 & D-4 of the report).

Page 19, Specific Findings and Recommendations, offers an interesting insight into the volunteer ranks. The job of a firefighter/rescuer is extremely demanding. In the last 25 years the emphasis on improved training and safety can be directly attributed to the reduction in firefighter injuries and death. In order to continue that trend, this organization takes issue with several of the findings.

Current doctrine calls for career and volunteer personnel to be trained to the same *minimal* levels of expertise, not *identical*. The training required at the officer level in particular is extremely disparate between the two groups. Career fire officers are required to achieve a much higher level of education and training level than volunteers of the same ranks.

The current training programs rely on traditional techniques and practical application methods for a valid reason. It has proven to be the most effective way to process the large numbers of volunteer candidates that are received each year by the PSTA. To implement modular or rolling enrollment programs at the initial training stages would be to invite chaos in the areas of tracking for certification purposes. The staff at the PSTA is overworked and overwhelmed with the record keeping blizzard it now handles. Logistically, we think it would be impossible to implement and successfully use the modular techniques.

While the supplemental training programs mandated by the FRC and County Council may have been designed for career personnel, they were also developed because of certain high ranking volunteers who exhibited socially unacceptable behavior. If there was any burden to bear, it was born by the career work force whose scheduled training and inspection

programs were interrupted in order to complete these mandated classes. The career force should also not be blamed for the Federal Government's common sense mandate that all fire and rescue service personnel be able to operate safely at the scene of hazardous materials incidents.

The listing of the training academy's location as a hardship for volunteers is not valid in our eyes. It is easily accessible from any area of the County in our estimation. The constant complaint against the centralized training concept makes us wonder just what these people are looking for? The demands of the job require discipline and sacrifice. Just because one shows an interest in serving his neighbor, it does not mean that the interest alone satisfies the contribution required.

The standards established by the NFPA, State and Federal Governments are minimum standards. They are designed to provide the basic framework from which all fire and rescue departments can develop training programs. The additional requirements established by Montgomery County (which includes a committee with volunteer representation) are money in the bank. They provide the citizens of this County with an exceptionally well trained individual. Someone who is better prepared to handle more than just the routine emergency. We consider any thought to reducing training hours or standards to be a disservice to the community and the professionalism of the fire and rescue service.

The continuous classes with rolling enrollment would not necessarily be effective for the Essentials or EMT-A. Many of the segments of the two classes build on each other. We think this concept would create a significant obstacle to the tracking and record keeping process at the PSTA. We also believe that the continuity and teamwork ethic that develops during these classes would be grossly undermined by an enrollment system that allows personnel to step in and out at their convenience.

With the exception of directed reading and electronic classrooms, many of the other suggestions for revising the PSTA's way of doing business are already in place. Personnel with previous training/experience routinely challenge the PSTA's tests. Oftentimes, however, the training received in other jurisdictions does not meet the standards Montgomery County has set. Many of the personnel who challenge the tests are woefully poor in the motor skills area. This is one area where Montgomery places a significant amount of emphasis. Firefighting and rescue work are extremely labor intensive. One can only learn so much by watching. For manual skills, repetition is the key to proficiency.

In the Information Distribution and Publicity section of page 21, the finding that the "... County and corporations have not done an effective job of communicating the unique partnership..." could not be more true. It has been the experience of many career personnel to be mistaken for volunteers. With stations and apparatus emblazoned with corporate identity and, in some corporations, an outright refusal to permit the DFRS seal on County owned apparatus, we believe the public doesn't even know we exist. You may wonder what this has to do with volunteer retention and

incentives. The answer is plenty. The crux of the friction issue lies in: how the partnership is played to the public; how the County government treats the career firefighters; and certain actions and activities initiated by the volunteers.

DFRS has since its inception been the footman for the corporations. The transfer of the career firefighters to County employment significantly changed the role of the department in the fire and rescue delivery system. Fearing ouster, the corporations have mounted a very effective campaign to keep DFRS in the background while the volunteers maintain the image of being the service providers. The county government has also shunned the career service in general. With statements like: "I wish we had more volunteers so we wouldn't have to hire any career people.", and career staffing cuts can be offset with volunteers, its no wonder the career force feels slighted, unwanted and unappreciated. The friction and disappointment are felt because of a lack of leadership. This is not a poke at the various leaders we currently have, but an observation based on a basic management principle, one boss.

The many findings and recommendations appearing on pages 28-30 have been circulating through the service since its evolution into a combination system. It is the opinion of the Steering Committee that the resolution to these issues lies in the appointment of a single leader for the total fire and rescue service. Cooperation and harmony will be difficult, if not impossible to achieve unless all elements of the service have to answer to the same person. There is currently no effective tie that binds the corporations and DFRS. Even though the missions are the same, the method of accomplishment is different. We don't fault the various factions of the service as much as we do the government itself. If the County wants to bring peace to the fire/rescue stations, preserve volunteerism in the fire and rescue service and deliver the most effective, cost efficient service possible, it must:

1. Abandon the mentality that the career force supplements the volunteer force.
2. Eliminate the rhetoric that volunteers can readily replace career personnel when staffing cuts are proposed.
3. Require equal regulations regarding conduct across the entire fire and rescue service spectrum.
4. Maintain a rigorous training standard so career firefighters will not look down on volunteers as being less than equal.
5. Establish standardized shift staffing in the fire/rescue stations that places an emphasis on volunteers making up a portion of the complement to improve interest and response.

6. Consider establishing fully volunteer stations and direct volunteers to those stations so that the skills they acquire can be used to the maximum ability. (Note: When career staffing reaches full minimum staffing levels in the stations, it is extremely difficult for the volunteer to feel part of the group or exercise his/her full potential. The question often raised is, "What need is there for a volunteer officer or driver or medic, etc., when career personnel fill those positions around the clock?" In order for the volunteer to feel needed, he/she has to know that not only is there a place to ride, but also that the position is essential to the service delivery system.)

Mr. Mansinne, you have obviously noted a career slant to this response. Please keep in mind that many of the issues and recommendations in the draft report directly impact on the livelihood of 788 career firefighter/rescuers of the Department of Fire and Rescue Services. The members of the Officers' Association are as committed to delivering the best possible service to the public as any element of the system. We hope through this response that you will see volunteer retention as dependent on the willing, not mandated support of the career firefighting force. The Steering Committee believes that this support can be achieved through the elimination of progress impeding elements, the enactment of certain necessary revisions to our current law, and the development of mutual trust through honesty. We would be more than happy to meet with you to discuss this matter further. Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

John B. Tippet, Chairman

Michael T. Love, Secretary

Andrew M. Johnston, Treasurer

Michael R. Suter, Member

Steven E. Lohr, Member

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FY92 VOLUNTEER INCENTIVE ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS BUDGETED IN CORPORATION ACCOUNTS

<u>Corporation^a</u>	<u>Annual Banquet</u>	<u>Vol. Assoc. Dinner^b</u>	<u>Emerg. Food & Coffee Fund</u>	<u>Standby Food</u>	<u>Tuition Reimb.</u>	<u>Travel & Prof. Training^c</u>	<u>Clothing^d</u>	<u>Education/ Recreation</u>	<u>Prof. Membership/ Dues and Subscrip.</u>	<u>Exhibits & Awards</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Bethesda	\$0	\$750	\$1,060	\$0	\$0	\$2,650	\$1,050	\$830	\$840	\$1,100	\$8,280
Burtonsville	\$5,500	\$750	\$3,150	\$17,470	\$0	\$2,650	\$16,490	\$380	\$950	\$660	\$48,000
Cabin John	\$5,500	\$750	\$2,100	\$3,600	\$0	\$4,900	\$10,500	\$2,260	\$900	\$1,230	\$31,740
Chevy Chase	\$0	\$750	\$900	\$0	\$0	\$260	\$0	\$800	\$900	\$450	\$4,060
Damascus	\$5,500	\$750	\$0	\$1,200	\$0	\$2,810	\$15,350	\$320	\$630	\$1,400	\$27,960
Gaithersburg	\$5,500	\$0	\$0	\$7,220	\$900	\$4,780	\$11,060	\$2,230	\$900	\$1,050	\$33,640
Germantown	\$5,500	\$0	\$2,000	\$16,000	\$2,375	\$1,375	\$16,500	\$2,740	\$900	\$630	\$48,020
Glen Echo	\$5,500	\$0	\$1,500	\$3,600	\$0	\$2,700	\$8,020	\$570	\$1,070	\$1,100	\$24,060
Hillandale	\$0	\$0	\$2,500	\$6,200	\$0	\$5,435	\$13,000	\$1,150	\$1,300	\$1,000	\$30,585
Hyattstown	\$5,500	\$0	\$530	\$7,940	\$420	\$2,415	\$20,000	\$550	\$750	\$850	\$38,955
Kensington	\$5,500	\$0	\$3,430	\$20,830	\$3,000	\$5,780	\$20,450	\$1,200	\$900	\$1,130	\$62,220
Laytonsville	\$5,500	\$0	\$0	\$3,950	\$0	\$2,640	\$5,700	\$940	\$900	\$1,060	\$20,690
Rockville	\$5,500	\$750	\$4,250	\$15,000	\$8,110	\$5,145	\$48,650	\$2,910	\$900	\$850	\$92,065
Sandy Spring	\$5,500	\$0	\$3,150	\$9,990	\$0	\$4,805	\$12,600	\$1,850	\$950	\$860	\$39,705
Silver Spring	\$5,500	\$750	\$2,000	\$4,730	\$3,310	\$4,645	\$12,780	\$2,400	\$900	\$1,240	\$38,255
Takoma Park	\$5,500	\$750	\$1,890	\$5,200	\$0	\$2,680	\$11,670	\$1,000	\$1,000	\$830	\$30,520
Upper Mont.	<u>\$5,500</u>	<u>\$750</u>	<u>\$2,500</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$3,375</u>	<u>\$10,580</u>	<u>\$1,000</u>	<u>\$900</u>	<u>\$2,550</u>	<u>\$27,155</u>
	\$77,000	\$6,750	\$30,960	\$122,930	\$18,115	\$59,045	\$234,400	\$23,130	\$15,590	\$17,990	\$605,910

- Notes: ^a Bethesda-Chevy Chase RS receives no direct taxes; Wheaton RS receives only tax support for personnel.
^b Monthly dinner of the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association.
^c Does not include training at the Public Service Training Academy (PSTA).
^d Does not include laundry and drycleaning expenses.

Source: Fire and Rescue Commission

FY93 VOLUNTEER INCENTIVE ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS BUDGETED IN CORPORATION ACCOUNTS

Corporation^a	Annual Banquet	Vol. Assoc. Dinner^b	Emerg. Food & Coffee Fund	Standby Food	Tuition Reimb.	Travel & Prof. Training^c	Clothing^d	Education/ Recreation	Prof. Membership/ Dues and Subscrip.	Exhibits & Awards	TOTAL
Bethesda	\$0	\$0	\$1,060	\$0	\$0	\$400	\$1,700	\$830	\$1,200	\$1,100	\$6,290
Burtonsville	\$5,500	\$0	\$3,150	\$15,720	\$0	\$2,200	\$15,490	\$380	\$850	\$660	\$43,950
Cabin John	\$5,500	\$0	\$1,100	\$0	\$0	\$7,480	\$9,100	\$2,380	\$300	\$0	\$25,860
Chevy Chase	\$0	\$0	\$400	\$0	\$0	\$100	\$0	\$300	\$300	\$0	\$1,100
Damascus	\$2,500	\$0	\$3,320	\$1,190	\$0	\$1,190	\$15,000	\$360	\$700	\$1,600	\$25,860
Gaithersburg	\$2,500	\$0	\$2,650	\$7,350	\$900	\$3,270	\$8,380	\$2,230	\$900	\$1,050	\$29,230
Germantown	\$5,500	\$400	\$100	\$15,300	\$0	\$1,000	\$20,000	\$700	\$1,000	\$750	\$44,750
Glen Echo	\$5,500	\$400	\$1,500	\$3,280	\$0	\$2,680	\$3,700	\$570	\$1,070	\$1,100	\$19,800
Hillandale	\$0	\$400	\$4,600	\$6,840	\$0	\$2,510	\$13,000	\$1,150	\$1,300	\$1,000	\$30,800
Hyattstown	\$5,500	\$250	\$530	\$7,110	\$1,000	\$2,920	\$7,500	\$550	\$770	\$850	\$26,980
Kensington	\$5,500	\$400	\$2,400	\$16,280	\$0	\$3,300	\$15,000	\$1,000	\$500	\$1,000	\$45,380
Laytonsville	\$2,500	\$400	\$2,100	\$3,500	\$0	\$1,780	\$5,700	\$300	\$780	\$1,000	\$18,060
Rockville	\$5,500	\$400	\$200	\$5,500	\$0	\$1,500	\$31,080	\$2,000	\$1,500	\$0	\$47,680
Sandy Spring	\$5,500	\$400	\$3,500	\$8,500	\$0	\$2,500	\$7,300	\$1,000	\$950	\$860	\$30,510
Silver Spring	\$1,500	\$400	\$1,000	\$4,260	\$4,000	\$4,100	\$11,000	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$26,260
Takoma Park	\$0	\$400	\$1,810	\$4,440	\$0	\$2,270	\$7,120	\$950	\$1,010	\$790	\$18,790
Upper Mont.	<u>\$5,500</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$2,000</u>	<u>\$0</u>	<u>\$300</u>	<u>\$4,550</u>	<u>\$8,300</u>	<u>\$1,100</u>	<u>\$1,100</u>	<u>\$3,000</u>	<u>\$25,850</u>
	\$58,500	\$3,850	\$31,420	\$99,270	\$6,200	\$43,750	\$179,370	\$15,800	\$14,230	\$14,760	\$467,150

Notes: ^a Bethesda-Chevy Chase RS receives no direct taxes; Wheaton RS receives only tax support for personnel.

^b Monthly dinner of the Montgomery County Volunteer Fire-Rescue Association.

^c Does not include training at the Public Service Training Academy (PSTA).

^d Does not include laundry and drycleaning expenses.

Source: Fire and Rescue Commission

Firefighter/Rescuer, Rescuer, and Medical Attendent Courses

<u>COURSE</u>	<u>Hours</u>
Essentials of Firefighting	135
(Replaced Firefighter I, 96 hours and Firefighter II, 96 hours)	
EMT-A (Emergency Medical Technician - Ambulance)	110
(Includes CPR-Level C = 12 hours)	
HAZMAT	
Awareness Level (1A)	6
Operations Level (1B)	18
Firefighter III (theory + operations).	60
Emergency Vehicle Operator's Course (EVOC)	36
Practical Rescue	60
Pumps and Hydraulics	30
Truck Company Operations	30
Hazardous Materials	36
Instructor I	30
Fire Officer Development I	69
Fire Officer Development II	72
Incident Command	30
CRT (Cardiac Rescue Technician).	210
EMT (Paramedic)	120
EMT-A Refresher (required every 3 years)	24
Blood Borne Pathogens (Federal requirement)	3
CPR Refresher (annually)	3
Human Relations	
Master Firefighter and below	6
(EEO/AA 3)	
(Cultural Diversity 3)	
Sergeant and Above	12
(EEO/AA 4)	
(Managing Cultural Diversity . 4)	
(Prejudice Reduction 4)	

SUMMARY OF MAJOR VOLUNTEER INCENTIVES IN SELECTIVE JURISDICTIONS¹⁾

	Montgomery County	Baltimore County	Frederick County	Howard County	Prince George's County	Arlington County	Fairfax County	Loudoun County
DEPARTMENT DATA (Approximations)								
Total Career Staff	875	1,085	45 ft-100pt	210	370	270	1,160	60
Total Volunteers	1,500	2,850	3,600	400	3,100	85	500	850
Active Volunteers	1,000	2,000	1,670	160	450	50	250	750
INCENTIVE DATA								
LOSAP/Retirement Program ²⁾	x	x	x	x	x			x
Health/Medical Insurance ³⁾							x	x
Access to Public Rec. Facilities						x	x	
Access to Public Transportation								
Tuition Reimburse/Assistance ⁴⁾	x	x	x	x	x		x ⁶⁾	x
Station Live-In	x						x	x
Meal Reimbursement	x ⁵⁾			x ⁵⁾				
Technical Training	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Management Training	x	x		x	x		x	x
Employment Assistance/Preference							x	x
Recruitment Bonuses	x							
Use of Department Facilities	x	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
Life Insurance ⁷⁾	x	x	x	x	x			
Personal Property Tax Reduction								x
County Vehicle Regis. Reduction								x

- 1) 1992 Data.
- 2) Individual LOSAP programs vary as to eligibility requirements and benefits.
- 3) In excess of Workers Compensation.
- 4) Provided by the State in Maryland jurisdictions.
- 5) Not all volunteer corporations budget for meal reimbursement.
- 6) Only for classes required for promotion and advanced life support courses.
- 7) Section 42A, Article 38A, Annotated Code of Maryland provides for death benefits for firefighters/rescuers who are fatally injured in the line-of-duty.

Source: Responses from jurisdictions to OLO survey.



Montgomery County Government

Dear Volunteer Firefighter/Rescuer:

The Montgomery County Council has directed the Office of Legislative Oversight (OLO) to evaluate volunteer incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services. Specifically, OLO has been asked to analyze the following:

- Current volunteer incentives;
- The feasibility of additional incentives;
- The impact of other programs and policies on volunteerism (such as staffing levels, scheduling, etc.); and
- Any current programs, policies, activities that may be discouraging volunteering.

OLO recognizes that volunteering as a member of one of the fire and rescue Corporations requires a significant dedication on your part. However, OLO would like to know more on the specifics of why you initially volunteered, and continue to volunteer; what incentives attracted you to volunteer and keeps you volunteering; what additional incentives could be offered; and, most important, what current policies, programs or procedures discourage volunteering.

Inside you will find a two-page survey which gives you an opportunity to present your thoughts on how to make volunteering more attractive and rewarding to current and potential volunteers. Please take a few moments to complete the survey and return it to OLO by August 24, 1992. Neither a stamp nor an envelope is required. All you need to do is fold this packet where indicated, staple or tape closed, and mail it directly to OLO.

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Your answers will help OLO and the County Council better understand the volunteer fire/rescue programs and design and structure incentives to make volunteering more attractive.

One last item. OLO is NOT asking for you to identify yourself. If, however, you would like to expand on your responses or offer additional comments and information to OLO, please add additional sheets and/or indicate your name and a phone number where you can be reached and I will contact you.

Sincerely,

Andrew Mansinne, Jr., Director
Office of Legislative Oversight

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE AND COMPLETE THE SURVEY

Office of Legislative Oversight

100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville, Maryland 20850, 301/217-7990

Survey of Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Service

1. What Corporation do you belong to? _____
2. How long have you been a member of this Corporation? _____ (Years)
3. In what capacity do you serve in the Corporation? _____
(Firefighter, Rescuer, Officer, Board Member, etc.)
4. Do you actively participate in fire/rescue/EMS responses? _____ (Yes/No)
5. Do you live in the Corporation's first due area _____ (Yes/No)
6. How long have you been involved in the fire/rescue service? _____ (Years)
7. In which of the emergency services is your primary interest/experience? (Check one) Fire _____ EMS _____ Both _____
8. Are you a paid firefighter/rescuer in Montgomery County or another jurisdiction? _____
What jurisdiction? _____
(Yes/No)
9. Your age? _____
10. Your sex? _____
11. Montgomery County currently offers a number of incentive programs for volunteers. For each of the incentive programs listed below, indicate how important the program was to your joining a volunteer fire and rescue corporation at the time you joined, and how important the program is to you now that you are a member.

Scoring scale

- 0 - Not aware of this program
- 1 - Not important at all, did not affect my decision
- 2 - Important, may have influenced my decision
- 3 - Very important, definitely motivated my decision

<u>Incentive</u>	<u>Important when you joined</u>	<u>Importance to you now</u>
LOSAP Program	_____	_____
Training programs	_____	_____
Station live-in programs	_____	_____
Tuition reimbursement	_____	_____
Standby food	_____	_____
Membership recruitment bonuses	_____	_____
High School Cadet Program	_____	_____
Use to corporation facilities	_____	_____
Others (list each)	_____	_____
	_____	_____

12. What are the three most important reasons you volunteer in the fire and rescue services? (Community service, camaraderie, riding the equipment, etc.).

- a. _____
- b. _____
- c. _____

13. What additional programs or other incentives do you believe would be effective in helping the County and Corporations encourage new members?

14. What additional programs or other incentives should the County and Corporations implement to encourage current volunteers to continue volunteering?

15. Do you believe that there are issues, policies, programs, or concerns that act as disincentives to volunteering? Specifically:

a. What prevents potential volunteers from volunteering?

b. What causes current volunteers to stop volunteering?

Thank you for your time in completing this survey. Your answers will help OLO and the County Council to better understand the fire/rescue volunteer programs, and design and structure incentives to make volunteering more attractive.

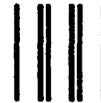
All responses on this form will be considered CONFIDENTIAL. If, however, you would like to elaborate on your responses directly to OLO please indicate your name and a daytime phone number in the spaces below.

Name _____ Phone _____

PLEASE TURN THE PAGE FOR MAILING INSTRUCTIONS

**Please return this survey to OLO by August 24, 1992
by folding and stapling
so that the return address is visible.**

Fold Here



**NO POSTAGE
NECESSARY IF
MAILED IN THE
UNITED STATES**



BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 88 ROCKVILLE, MD.

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**MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT, SUITE 509
100 MARYLAND AVENUE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850**

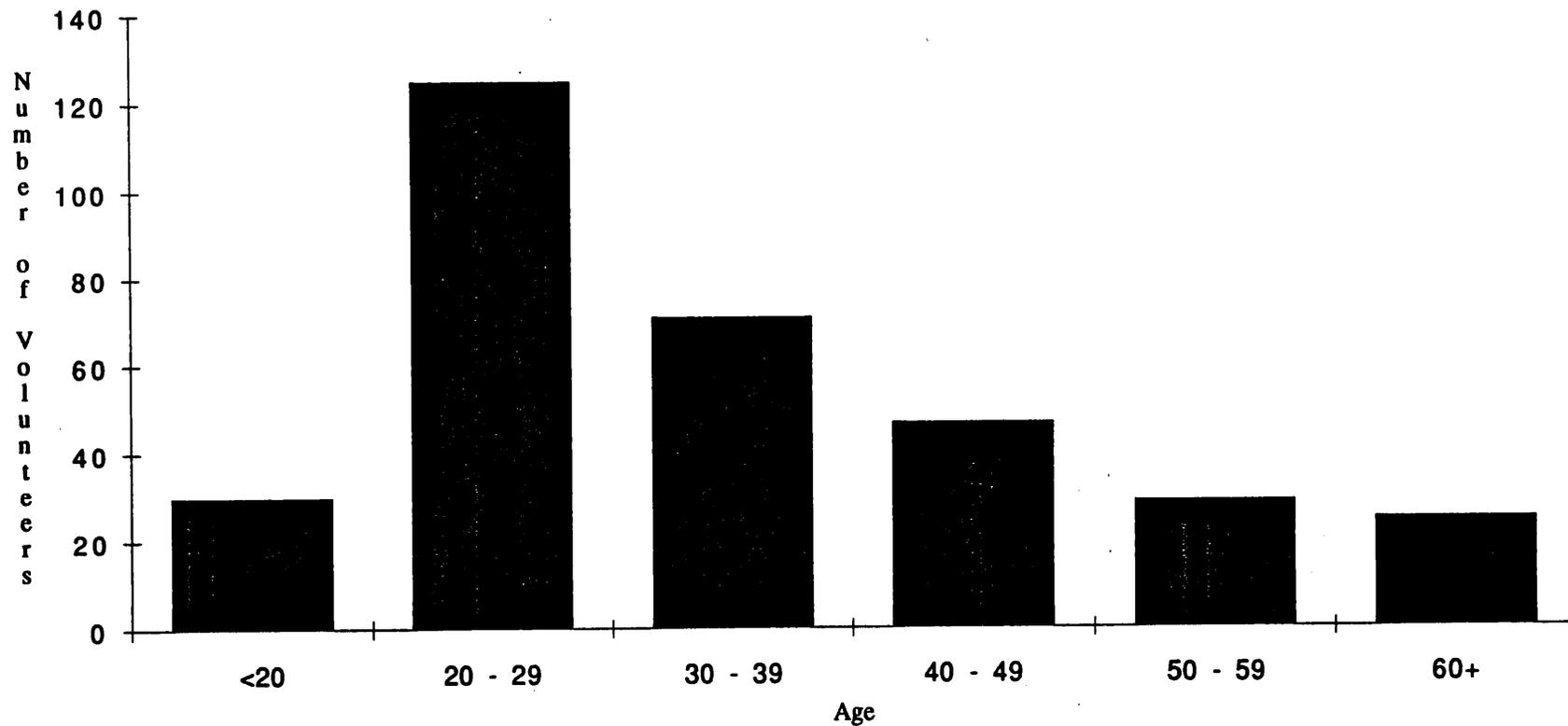
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SURVEY RESPONDENTS BY CORPORATION AND SEX

<u>Corporation</u>	----- Respondents -----		<u>Total</u>
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	
BCC Rescue	38	17	55
Bethesda	4	0	4
Burtonsville	10	1	11
Cabin John	6	1	7
Damascus	9	1	10
Gaithersburg-WG	19	5	24
Germantown	2	1	3
Hillandale	8	0	8
Hyattstown	3	1	4
Kensington	50	17	67
Laytonsville	1	0	1
Rockville	59	7	66
Sandy Spring	1	3	4
Silver Spring	2	0	2
Takoma Park	8	0	8
Upper Montgomery	9	0	9
Wheaton Rescue	37	4	41
TOTAL	266 (82.1%)	58 (17.9%)	324 (100%)

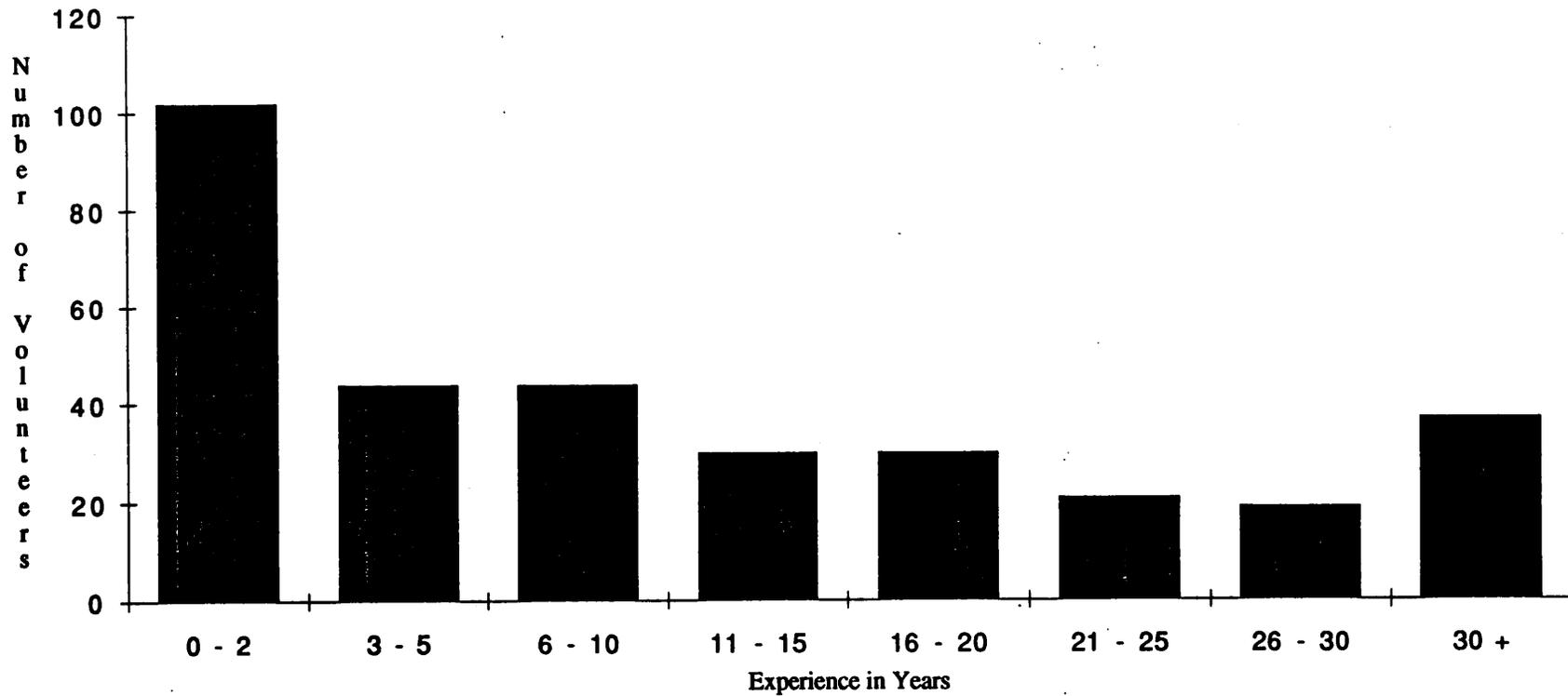
Source: Office of Legislative Oversight Survey of Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services, July 1992.

VOLUNTEER AGE DISTRIBUTION



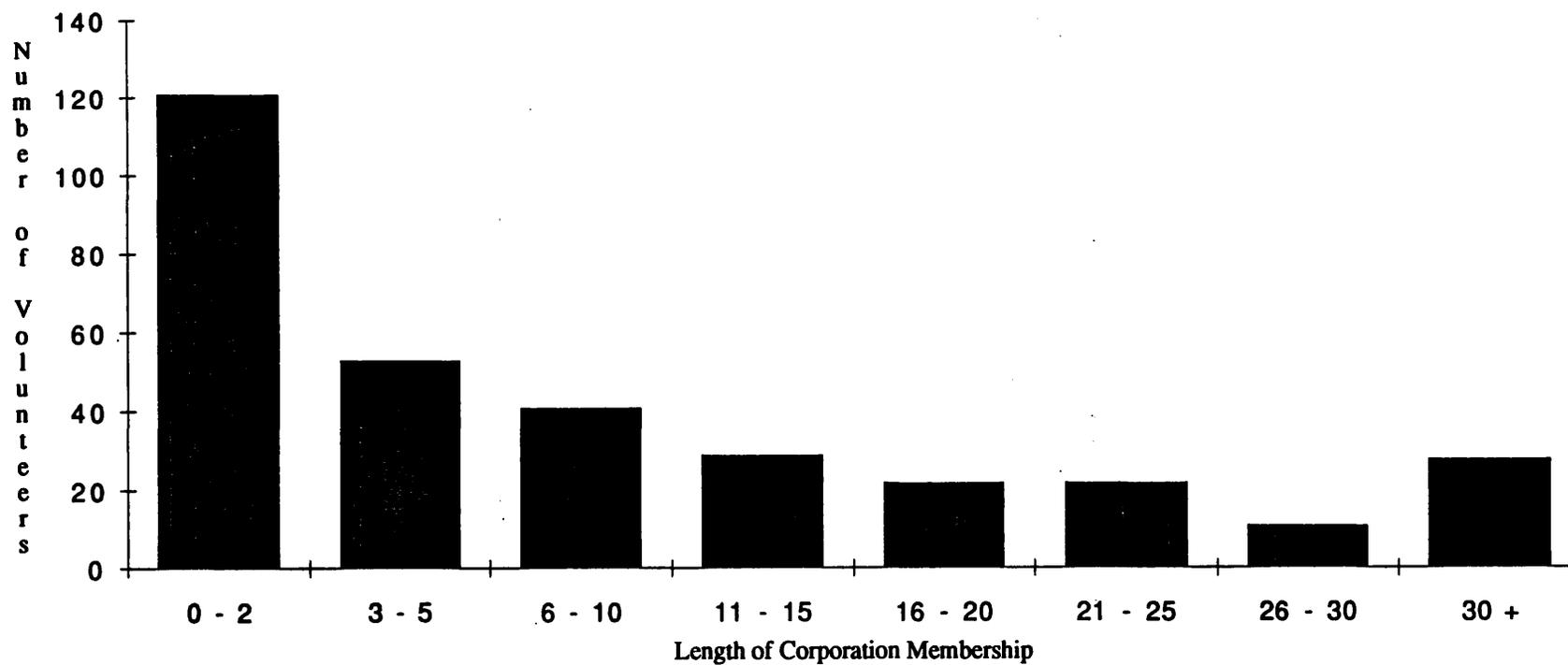
Source: Office of Legislative Oversight Survey of
Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services, July 1992.

FIRE SERVICE EXPERIENCE



Source: Office of Legislative Oversight Survey of
Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services, July 1992.

CORPORATION EXPERIENCE



Source: Office of Legislative Oversight Survey of
Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services, July 1992.

RESPONDENTS LIVING IN CORPORATION FIRST DUE AREA

<u>Corporation</u>	----- Respondents -----		<u>Total</u>
	Yes	No	
BCC Rescue	23	32	55
Bethesda	3	1	4
Burtonsville	5	6	11
Cabin John	3	4	7
Damascus	7	3	10
Gaithersburg- WG	17	7	24
Germantown	2	1	3
Hillandale	5	3	8
Hyattstown	3	1	4
Kensington	39	28	67
Laytonsville	1	0	1
Rockville	43	23	66
Sandy Spring	4	0	4
Silver Spring	1	1	2
Takoma Park	3	5	8
Upper Montgomery	8	1	9
Wheaton Rescue	18	23	41
TOTAL	185 (57.1%)	139 (42.9%)	324 (100%)

Source: Office of Legislative Oversight Survey of Volunteer Incentives in the Fire and Rescue Services, July 1992.