

Montgomery County Fire and Rescue
Division of Fire and Rescue Services

Station Management Task Force

Final Report

November 1, 1998



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A New Direction

To guarantee excellence throughout our combination system, the Task Force proposes a work program that will encourage joint planning between the Division of Fire and Rescue Services and the Local Fire Rescue Departments. The combined efforts of Division Employees, Volunteers, and other personnel will be directed towards establishing **task based, goal oriented priorities** designed to meet the demands of our customers in each individual response area.

Work tasks necessary to achieve excellence are driven by a variety of factors beyond the control of station officers. As a result, employees are asked to complete work in an environment where the needs and demands are constantly changing. These changing demands are floating targets that must be shared within a work program that encompasses routine tasks necessary to assure round the clock readiness.

Traditional efforts to manage work have focused on time based, rather than task based parameters. Policies used to manage work, and the tools used to track results do not account for the wide differences in the needs of the various work-sites throughout the county. Therefore, the Station Management Task Force is asking the leadership of our Division to make a leap of faith.

We are forwarding recommendations to design a Station Management program that will focus **on how work is performed rather than when work is performed**. This program strives to achieve true excellence by balancing the quantity and quality of completed work. Our goal is to properly anticipate and react to the needs of the community, wherever and whenever these needs occur.

To assure that this enhanced program is successful, the Task Force suggests **full participatory management with strong controls** designed to maximize the efficiency of a shift based career workforce. These controls should be **goal oriented task-based objectives** - developed, prioritized, and modified to fulfill stated needs.

Our program proposes that the shift based District Chiefs assure that an ambitious work program is in place at each work site within their charge. A **monthly planner** based upon a standard form, (see appendix), will empower station officers to complete most tasks in time blocks that they develop for their individual needs. Other global activities like standardized training will be scheduled in conjunction with the District Chief through the county-wide Bureau of Operations.

This same planning document will be used to track results on a monthly basis.

In addition, we are submitting sample conceptual matrices to track completed tasks in the following broad areas: employee readiness, apparatus readiness, facility readiness, and community education and life safety systems. We believe that these forms will provide a standard and efficient way to maintain management controls while eliminating the burdensome array of forms presently used throughout the MCFRS. These matrices are first-cut attempts that need further revision and development due to the time constraints placed upon this effort.

If accepted by senior staff, the Task Force recommends that a pilot program be established in several stations where the needs are diverse. Utilizing all three shifts and the District Chiefs responsible for those shifts, training should be conducted to set goals, establish parameters, and track performance for a minimum three-month period. Modifications can be developed and initiated that will lead to broader acceptance without the start-up problems normally associated with a change of this type.

Scope

In early September 1998, Deputy Chief Theodore Jarboe appointed a task force to conduct a bottom up review of the factors driving the daily work environment within the Operations Bureau. Recent changes within the Montgomery County Fire and Rescue Service (MCFRS) and a previous attempt to revise Policy #240, dated August 28, 1991, served as the driving forces behind a more comprehensive review of station management practices. A strict deadline of November 1, 1998 was established for a completed position paper.

Chief Jarboe charged the task force to examine an “out of the box, unrestrained work program that was unbound by existing policy and traditions.” He further requested that any changes be framed within the guidelines of “realistic, practical, manageable, and achievable.” It was not the intent of the task force to rewrite the current station management policy.

The task force was to consist of the following: A representative of each of the five Districts within the Operations Bureau, several Lieutenants who were subject to frequent details, Paramedic Officers representing the additional workload associated with advanced life support (ALS) service, a day-work Station Commander, the Basic Life

Support (BLS) Quality Assurance Officer and a representative from the Bureau of Life Safety Services.

Methodology

Employees were appointed to the task force and a series of meetings were held to identify existing challenges, and to propose strategies to improve the station work program. Broad goals were established to develop a highly trained, physically fit workforce, operating with excellent equipment, while maximizing the efficiency of available resources. Additional goals included the elimination of redundant work, the development of standard duties, and the elimination of administrative duties that were of little practical value to the MCFRS or its customers.

Committee members were assigned a variety of tasks and asked to network with as many of their peers as possible. Several officers throughout the MCFRS submitted written suggestions. Meetings were held with Assistant Chief Robert Allwang to discuss labor relations, and Mary Marchone to discuss community education and safety issues.

A list of duties performed at the various work sites was developed. These duties were subsequently classified as “*must do, should do, may do, and shouldn’t do.*” The lists were further revised to establish annual, quarterly, monthly, weekly, daily, and as needed frequency guidelines. Attempts were made to develop a work program based upon the twenty-one day work cycle for shift work employees. Management control duties were explored in an attempt to classify existing duties and roles of the District Chief, Senior Career Officer (SCO), Station Commander, and Shift Officer.

The committee embraced the charges and decided to design a work program after answering five broad-based questions. They were:

1. What work should be completed at the station level?
2. How do we plan work?
3. How do we perform work?
4. Who should perform the work?
5. What management controls do we place upon work?

The answers to these questions are complex. The Task Force addresses these questions throughout the body of this report.

Global Concerns

Early consensus was achieved regarding several important matters. However, the Task Force found it very difficult to focus on station management issues. Factors that are not the focus of this report, such as staffing and apparatus availability, adversely impact station management.

There is an immediate need to move from the conventional Local Fire and Rescue Department based alignment to a shift-based alignment. Task Force members suggest that the alignment between senior staff and field operations needs to be enhanced. The roles of the District Chief, SCO, Station Commander, and Station Officer must be reevaluated as a part of any successful revision of the MCFRS Station Management practices. Task Force members submit that tasks that were previously in the domain of command-level officers and local fire-rescue departments have been pushed down to the station level. A clearly defined work program for all levels of supervision must be developed.

The Task Force agreed that a “go-to” person (facility manager) at each work site is essential. Assigned work should be routed through the Operations Bureau to the shift-based District Chiefs. All programs affecting the stations should be required to be scheduled through the Operations Bureau.

Currently, management controls are inadequate and inconsistent. The policies requiring Weekly Activity Schedules, logbooks and Daily Activity Reports (DARs) are of little value to management personnel. In many instances, they are redundant and inaccurate. Our controls focus on quantity of work, rather than quality. Consequently, we have created a work environment that encourages mediocre performance, and does not meet the needs and expectations of our internal and external customers.

Considerable discussion centered on the different tasks currently required at the various work sites. As an example, daily, weekly, and monthly apparatus checks are not standard. The Task Force agrees that routine tasks should be standardized. However, the methods for scheduling and executing these tasks should remain within the control of the work site. The work focus should be directed towards maximizing the needs of the individual work sites. Some standardization of other global activities such as training, Safety in Our Neighborhood (SION), and other similar activities is desirable.

Core Values

The Station Management Task Force has unanimously agreed on several fundamental needs, or for lack of a better description, departmental "**Core Values.**" These values consist of the basic tenants of a professional Fire and Rescue work force.

First, encompassing all other goals and operational considerations is a "**Pursuit of Excellence**". The MCFRS cannot be satisfied with the mediocre. Montgomery County has an enormous wealth of talented, motivated employees in its fire, rescue, and emergency medical service. Empowering the individual station managers to motivate, train, and innovate to provide the best possible service to the citizens of Montgomery County is essential.

The commitment to excellence involves several facets of station management. The most obvious is **Service Delivery**. Our primary responsibility is to ensure that we respond to calls in the most expedient and effective manner possible at all times. From medical first responder calls to structure fires, every piece of equipment must be present and in working order. We have the skilled work force to get the job done even with inadequate equipment, but excellence demands more.

The MCFRS must commit to its personnel as it asks them to commit to the MCFRS. Fire fighting, rescue and emergency medical services (EMS) demand an employee to be both **Mentally and Physically Fit**. The benefits of a wellness program for physical and mental health cannot be minimized. Injury prevention and stress management should be embraced. Other activities should not be at the expense of health, wellness and physical fitness programs.

The Task Force espouses a **Professional Image**. Firefighters and paramedics will never instill complete confidence in the citizens they serve unless they appear professional. A dirty ambulance, engine company, or chief's car does not exemplify a professional service. A slovenly appearing firefighter or paramedic will never get the immediate trust of a patient. Pride in the uniform and apparatus will carry over to the station, where a clean and organized environment will set the tone for the workday.

Honesty and Integrity are essential at all levels of the department. The men and women of the MCFRS are entrusted with the safety and lives of others. The public demands the trust and protection of their firefighters and paramedics. A stronger rapport with those we serve can only enhance the quality of our service.

Issue – Employee Wellness & Physical Fitness

To guarantee excellent service and ensure the health and well being of fire/rescue personnel, a comprehensive health, wellness, and fitness program must be implemented. Such a program will allow for the optimal performance of personnel and reduce the operational and fiscal impact of injuries that occur on the job. Any program of physical fitness must be positive and non-punitive in design; allow for on-duty time participation; provide for rehabilitation and remedial support for those in need; contain training and educational components; and be reasonable and equitable to all personnel.

The Task Force has identified wellness as a core value of the MCFRS and recommends that wellness be an integral part of the organizational culture. This will require more resources and facilities for participation, a support network, allowances for interruptions, daily work activities, and acceptance of the program by all personnel.

The current physical fitness policy is not successful due to interruptions, competition with other required duties, and lack of proper support. Although well intentioned, the policy does not allow for the diverse physical condition of our workforce. We view that the present goals are unachievable. Additionally, some work-sites lack appropriate facilities to conduct any meaningful fitness activities. We can draw from our experiences with the current program to develop an improved program that will be more effective for all fire/rescue personnel.

The implementation of a wellness program is not free. There may be, however, significant cost benefits to initiating a wellness program. Wellness programs have repeatedly been shown to provide long-term savings through reduced injuries, reduced sick leave usage, and reduction of permanent or partial disability claims.

The Task Force recognizes fiscal limitations. However, the Service must look to the future if we are to be prepared to face new and exciting challenges that lay ahead.

We have heard many times that the MCFRS's greatest asset is not equipment or apparatus, but its personnel. Therefore, placing a high priority on health, wellness and physical fitness makes sense for everyone. Fire service personnel, taxpayers, and the public will be better served.

All component results should be measured against an individual's previous assessments. Age and pre-existing conditions and position should be considered instead of any arbitrary standard. The Task

Force recommends a health, wellness, and fitness program that includes the following:

- Non-punitive in nature
- Confidentiality of fitness evaluations
- Performance testing that promotes progressive wellness
- Individualized program design to accommodate various needs
- Incentives for outstanding personal gains
- An all-inclusive approach that includes:
 - Medical Evaluation
 - Fitness
 - Rehabilitation
 - Behavioral health

Recommendations: *Implement a comprehensive health, wellness and physical fitness program designed to improve the health and performance of the MCFRS members and require that all employees of the Division of Fire and Rescue Services participate. Encourage health, wellness and physical fitness activities throughout the workday, with up to three hours per day for participation in a standardized exercise regimen.*

Issue - Training

Standardized Monthly Training. The current Standardized Training Program (STP) should be replaced with a program where drills are conducted once per month per shift. This assures that each employee will receive a minimum of twelve high quality drills per year. These drills would be staff supported offerings developed to assure that information not normally available to station officers is disseminated through the workforce in a uniform manner.

Currently, STP uses three training activity periods per week. In many locations, this training occurs at the expense of station-specific topics. More importantly, present staffing formulas do not encourage or assure that personnel assigned to a specific station and shift will receive the scheduled training without repeat drills at a later date. Although a desirable goal, the present STP does not guarantee that everyone will receive the same drill on the same day.

Comments from the field suggest that the STP program is very desirable. However, most personnel feel that the current requirement

of four drills per month is not a reasonable expectation. The continuous flux of unplanned activities coupled with excessive detailing of personnel within their charge, places the station officer in a position where it is not practical to track an employees needs or performance.

The Task Force proposes that the format for the drills should be based on standardized topics that can be tailored by the station officers to meet local needs. A representative example that ran this past year was the "Firefighter Safety and Survival Program". This material was well received throughout the service.

Recommendations: *Change the format of the STP to provide high quality, uniform training sessions to the entire workforce, scheduled once per month per shift. Completion of this training should be documented and controlled.*

Driver Training. The task force believes that too much station time is devoted to driver checkout. Present estimates suggest that approximately two hundred firefighters will need to be certified as drivers in the next two years. The department struggled terribly with this problem in the post transition years. We submit that a new approach is past due.

The post probation employee is placed in a difficult position. At a time when they should be developing additional performance skills as firefighters and emergency medical technicians (EMTs), the Division has forced inexperienced employees to push for driver to receive their Firefighter/Rescuer III promotion. Eligibility to compete in future promotional exams is tied to this promotion as well. Consequently, a system exists that is grossly unfair to certain personnel who are excluded from driver training opportunities.

These inconsistencies create a non-uniform starting point for Firefighter/Rescuer IIIs, causing some employees to miss eligibility for the Master Firefighter/Rescuer's Exam. Officers are faced with the dilemma of attempting to grant all employees equal driver training time.

Variables that determine whether an employee becomes certified in a timely manner include the work load at the assigned station, whether or not the employee is a paramedic assigned to a medic unit, previous volunteer qualifications of the employee, specialty team participation, constant details and officer prejudice regarding all of these issues and others. The task force unanimously agrees that this is an unfair and unmanageable situation.

Driver checkout should not be a prerequisite for promotion to Firefighter/Rescuer III. The MCFRS has a system that forces some firefighters who should not drive, and some who do not want to drive to push for driver certification for the sole purpose of promotion.

To solve these problems, the task force recommends that all employees graduate from recruit school as an ambulance driver, with at least a Class B license. Once assigned to a station, these employees would learn their response areas, defect reporting requirements, and other local skills necessary to allow the employee to begin driving after some pre-determined period.

In addition, all Firefighter/Rescuers should return to the Public Service Training Academy for a Fire Apparatus Driver Operator (FADO) course based upon current National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) requirements. Conducting FADO training in this manner will create a uniform FADO starting point. More importantly, this will assure that all candidates receive uniform training in a safe environment free from interruptions and absent of the variables that interfere with quality training.

Recommendations: All recruits should have a Class B drivers license and be qualified to drive an ambulance upon graduation. Remove the requirement to drive a major piece of apparatus from the Firefighter/Rescuer III promotional requirements. Develop a FADO course at the PSTA for Firefighter/Rescuers to attend in order to become engine, truck, tiller and/or rescue squad driver/operators.

Probationary Training. The probationary training program needs to be re-evaluated. Preceptors need not be on a non-detail status to perform their duties. The amount of guidance a rookie receives from most preceptors does not warrant the non-detail status.

Recommendation: No longer support the placement of recruit preceptors on non-detail status.

In-Service Training. Task Force members believe that in-service training is an excellent program that should be expanded to include nights and weekends. Volunteer members could then participate to ensure an excellent, well-trained work force. As station officers, we

recognize the benefits of joint training with volunteer personnel. This is probably the best solution to overcome our operational shortcomings. Until uniform training, education, and experience requirements are in place, station officers should accommodate the needs of volunteer personnel. However, we cannot be accountable for scheduling their training or measuring their performance.

In-Service Training should be conducted in an educational environment, not an evaluation environment. An ideal situation would be to include all of the units from a station and shift, rather than one unit at a time. If performance evaluations are required other than on emergency incidents, then the District Chiefs should be conducting them without notice.

District Chiefs should be more involved in all aspects of operations, including training. There is a need for the District Chiefs to interact with their crews in these training evolutions. This interaction provides a framework of minimum expectations and trust that cannot be earned in any other way.

Presently, paramedics are excluded from training sessions away from the station. This needs immediate attention. The long-term affects of this practice are predictable. By excluding paramedics from this essential training, the Division is failing to fulfill a fundamental requirement for a significant portion of the workforce. The MCFRS must assure that all employees are afforded In-Service training.

To assure the highest quality In-Service training program possible, the Task Force recommends that the PSTA staff and program offerings be expanded. It is unreasonable to assume that one In-Service training officer can properly support a work force as large as MCFRS's. A program to expand In-Service hours would also relieve some of the pressures in combination stations to train volunteer personnel.

Recommendations: Ensure that the format of the In-Service Training Program continues to have an educational-focus, rather than a testing-focus. Consider sending units from the same station and shift to the sessions. Expand the program to involve all District Chief and paramedics. Expand the scope of the PSTA to improve the number, type, timing and quality of programs.

Miscellaneous Training. For all other training and activities, we request better planning and adequate notice. Station officers are often

surprised with new training. We are not provided adequate planning time and activity periods to complete these requirements. Traditional methods of tracking this training have failed miserably.

Additional consideration must be given to the qualifications of those presenting the material. Many times station officers are required to conduct last minute training that many are unfamiliar with. To increase quality, we recommend using the most qualified personnel available to teach these sessions. This is particularly necessary for special topics and or new programs and concepts.

Many of the mandated training requirements have not been scheduled through the Public Service Training Academy (PSTA). All training of this nature should be implemented through the PSTA.

Recommendations: *Provide better planning and adequate notice via the Operations Bureau chain of command for all miscellaneous training programs and have this training scheduled and supported by the PSTA. Provide topic-specific instructor training for station officers to enable them to teach these miscellaneous sessions, or provide a qualified instructor to rotate through the stations to conduct the training.*

Specialty Team Training. The use of personnel participating voluntarily as members of specialty teams creates many challenges for the MCFRS. At least one day per month per team, personnel and apparatus are realigned to accommodate scheduled drills. This training is currently scheduled on the same days as STP training and other required duties. The excess details and movement of apparatus provide significant disruptions to normal work schedules in many locations. For example, schedulers must adjust staffing several times to meet the requirements for team training and to ensure that the stations are staffed with personnel capable of providing any specific station requirements, such as drivers for unique apparatus. Although a valuable resource, the specialty teams have developed to take on lives of their own. Therefore, we recommend that personnel assigned to these teams be transferred to the hub stations and shifts.

Recommendations: *Assign specialty teams to certain hub stations. Personnel and other resources may then be used to their maximum potential while minimizing disruptions throughout the MCFRS.*

Issue – Apparatus & Equipment Readiness

Apparatus and equipment readiness is one of the core values of a Fire Rescue Service striving for excellence. Therefore, considerable energies should be directed towards streamlining the processes required to fulfill this core value.

A separate standardized checkout procedure for Engine, Truck, Rescue Squad and EMS units is essential. This is the only way that reasonable time blocks can be assigned to the various apparatus and equipment tasks. Many other issues need to be addressed. Current practices need to be compared to model standards and guidelines published by the Federal Government, State of Maryland, NFPA, and other agencies. Frequency guidelines such as daily, weekly, and monthly checks should be considered in view of these current models.

Given the time constraints associated with these tasks, we are unable to research and produce standardized forms to create uniform procedures. However, an example of one such form is provided in the Appendix. We recognize the need for a separate committee to develop these forms for adoption. These requirements should be separately considered for primary and reserve apparatus.

Apparatus changeover for any reason causes excessive downtime. We should strive to minimize apparatus changeovers. To do so will require that the MCFRS identify and control a reserve fleet countywide. The reserve fleet should be equipped and maintained from less active stations that are better able to maintain additional units. One authority should be in charge of the reserve fleet, and make all decisions necessary to redistribute apparatus based upon countywide needs.

Standard defect reporting and tracking is necessary to guarantee that non-working apparatus and equipment is properly repaired in a timely fashion. This is particularly important to our personnel who are detailed on a frequent basis and subject to the assortment of forms, procedures, and requirements at the various stations. This authority should also track fundamental items such as repairs made, down time, and expenditures.

Apparatus and equipment standardization has been left under the control of the local fire and rescue departments even though more time is spent on tasks related to apparatus and equipment than any other. For this reason, we believe that it is prudent to recommend that more centralized standardization be directed towards the important job functions associated with apparatus and equipment readiness.

Independent third party testing of ground ladders and aerial devices now occurs in most locations. However, annual pump service tests by certified vendors does not occur. Pumpers remain in service that cannot draft, or pump to their rated capacities. The task force recommends that the department adopt NFPA guidelines for annual service testing for all class-A pumpers.

Standardized hose testing requirements meeting the minimum expectations of NFPA 1962 are overdue. Several injuries have occurred within the department because of improper methods and or defective equipment. This standard recommends hose replacement every ten years. A proposal to fix this problem is currently being reviewed.

Excessive time is spent on small tool repair and replacement. At some work-sites, this job function is performed exclusively by mechanics, while at other work-sites the MCFRS personnel either perform this function as a collateral duty or send the items back to the manufacturer or repair facility. A centralized source for replacement of small tools and equipment would streamline a system begging to become more efficient. This centralized facility should also have the capability of repairing small tools, equipment and biomedical equipment. Essential equipment like portable radios, defibrillators, and batteries must be available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, three hundred sixty five days per year.

Inventory control and accountability for portable equipment is absent in many locations. A standardized system for identifying and labeling small tools is recommended. Small tools are to be included in the weekly or monthly preventive maintenance program.

Recommendations: Establish a committee to develop a standardized checkout procedure for all apparatus. Develop a program for maintaining fully equipped reserve apparatus at less active stations to facilitate apparatus changeover. Standardize the apparatus defect reporting procedure. Provide for third-party service testing of apparatus pumps and ladders. Develop a system of small tool and equipment warehousing to facilitate rapid replacement and repair of defective equipment.

Issue – Community Fire & Injury Prevention

Fire and injury prevention is fundamental to our service to the public. The Operations Bureau is currently managing several programs to some degree. We perform car safety seat checks, home adoption and foster care inspections, public education at schools and day care centers, fire station visits, Safety In Our Neighborhood (SION) program, commercial building inspections, After The Fire Program, and others. Station personnel participate in Local Fire and Rescue Department open houses and the county fair. Additionally there are new programs on the horizon, such as Risk Watch, that we should participate in. These various programs consume a considerable amount of time to plan and manage.

We need to deliver a quality product to the public. Our recommendation is to provide a position at the District level to manage the Fire and Injury Prevention programs, using field operations personnel in supporting roles. This full time person should mentor others with interests in Community Fire and Injury Prevention while identifying and focusing available resources on the needs within that district. Additionally, these personnel would assume the responsibility of managing the Knox Box Program, the establishment of Fire Lanes and the management of Life Safety Building Surveys for the district. These personnel would be available to train others to properly conduct public education programs. They would also be available to deliver programs to large civic or business groups without having to leave because of an emergency incident. The MCFRS would look more professional, while delivering a quality product to the public.

Stations that conduct car seat installations and car seat checks are at the saturation point. The Task Force believes that this program is unmanageable at the station level. The car seat program is a worthwhile program that has become very popular. Saturday afternoons should be set aside for public programs. Car seat installations can be performed at several stations throughout the County. This should alleviate the increasing disruptions to the daily activity by the car seat program and give the public some standard as to where and when they can expect this service.

Recommendations: Redirect fire prevention and public education efforts to an all-inclusive Community Education, Injury Prevention and Life Safety Systems program that would include child passenger safety, health care workshops, fire extinguisher classes, water safety, door-to-door visits, and other special programs. Create one new position per district to coordinate activities with the Bureau of Life Safety Services and the station managers. Saturday afternoons should be dedicated to Public Education and Safety.

Issue – Life Safety & Building Surveys

The current Bureau of Operations inspection program is plagued with problems. Priorities for building inspections have been inconsistent between work-sites, personnel have not been adequately trained to perform inspections, and the time available to perform these inspections has been reduced by the increasing demands placed on our workforce. In 1996 Operations Bureau personnel conducted over 10,000 building inspections. In contrast, less than 2,000 building inspections were completed in 1997. Code enforcement inspections are not presently a priority with the Operations Bureau. For quite some time, we have been sending a poorly trained and ill-equipped workforce out to complete these inspections.

Since the majority of fire deaths and injuries in Montgomery County occur in the home, we have focused our inspection recommendations towards the residential properties.

Other occupancies with the potential for a large loss of life include churches, restaurants, auditoriums, and other places of assembly. These facilities need to be inspected due to the large occupant load and the fact that many have remote exits that are not used on a routine basis and have a tendency to be blocked or locked.

One area of concern to the Task Force members was the condition of occupancies with the potential to harm our members. This concern is addressed, in part, by ensuring that fixed fire protection systems are operating properly. Operations Bureau personnel can be utilized to collect written certification from property owners that all required tests have been performed and their systems are operating properly.

However, an increased emphasis should be placed on ensuring that our members become familiar with the particular hazards of the occupancies in our community. Pre-incident planning and creation of site maps of these structures should continue to be a high priority, concentrating on life-safety hazards and fixed fire protection systems. When a serious code violation is encountered, corrective actions or appropriate referrals can be made. The District Chief should be the next line of authority and could be utilized to a greater extent to ensure compliance.

Recommendations: *Change the focus of Operations Bureau inspections from code enforcement to one of life safety and building surveys, concentrating on multiple-family, assembly, and other target hazard occupancies. Tie-in surveys of single-family and private residences of multiple-family occupancies with the door-to-door phase of the Safety in Our Neighborhood program. Concentrate efforts to create site maps and pre-incident plans of target hazard occupancies, ensuring compliance with key fire and life safety code violations when noticed during the site visit. On an as-needed basis, perform life safety systems surveys to determine if the owner or occupant has tested and inspected the systems according to applicable fire codes.*

Issue – Facilities Maintenance

Housework. The fire stations are our home-away-from-home. The Task Force recommends that it should remain our responsibility to perform regular and routine housekeeping tasks necessary to guarantee a safe and sanitary work environment. Station managers should be allowed the flexibility to schedule these tasks on an as needed basis, subject to routine station inspections.

Recommendations: *Career personnel and volunteer members should share a daily clean-sweep of functional areas. Cleaning of major areas should be standardized throughout the work-sites and performed only on an as-needed basis.*

Grounds Maintenance. We recommend that lawn maintenance should not be the responsibility of members. Some stations have no

lawns to cut while others have four or five hours worth of cutting. Managing a station should be uniform throughout the county. Stations with lawns to cut must use activity periods to accomplish this. The Task Force believes there are more important tasks to be completed. Therefore, Montgomery County Facilities or a private contractor should be hired to maintain the grounds.

Recommendation: *The MCFRS should contract with Montgomery County Facilities or a private landscaping company to maintain the grounds at all work-sites.*

Station Repairs. Whether firefighters complete minor repairs around the station largely depends on the career/volunteer relations at that particular work-site. The Task Force believes that this should be a “give-and-take” process. It should be encouraged as an opportunity to broaden relations with the Local Fire and Rescue Departments.

Most MCFRS personnel have not been adequately trained nor certified to perform major repair and maintenance of station facilities, equipment and apparatus. Personnel who do perform these activities are not available to participate in other activities. Local fire and rescue department budgets contain funds to provide these services. Therefore, the Task Force feels that major station repairs should not be required or requested of firefighters. No activity periods or time should be designated for these types of repairs.

Recommendations: *Station officers should use their discretion to complete other maintenance activities under the guidance of the facility manager. The MCFRS should contract with private contractors to provide major station, equipment and apparatus repairs.*

Station Safety. The Task Force believes that the safety of our members is of paramount concern. The current station safety inspection program should be continued. A process for reporting local fire and rescue department non-compliance of identified safety violations should be established.

Material Safety Data Sheets (MSDS) are required by federal law. Responsibility for MSDS tracking has in some work-sites been the responsibility of the career workforce. The entire MSDS program needs to be standardized and promptly updated and maintained with the responsibility placed upon the owner of the work-site.

Recommendation: Continue to provide a safe work environment to all members by actively participating in the all aspects of the station safety inspection program. The entire MSDS program needs to be standardized and promptly updated and maintained with the responsibility placed upon the owner of the work-site.

Station Supplies. Tasks necessary to maintain station supplies include procurement, ordering, distribution, and work-site inventory control. The Task Force believes that the time has come to visit the idea of a central purchasing system, which would bring accountability and fiscal control to the MCFRS. The Task Force recommends that the in-station responsibility be limited to ordering of supplies using standard forms and restocking of supplies at each work-site. We do not feel that supply bidding, procurement or distribution of supplies should be the responsibility of our firefighter/rescuers.

Recommendations: Develop and implement a standardized supply procurement and distribution system for station supplies.

Office Equipment. Officers and firefighters that do not have proper office tools waste too much valuable station activity time. The Task Force believes that the MCFRS should set minimum office equipment standards. We believe that it is past time to ensure our officers have the equipment to manage their offices. For career employees, we recommend a minimum of a modern computer, access to a fax machine, access to a copy machine, access to an e-mail account, access to the Internet, and sufficient telephone lines to conduct station business at each work-site.

The Task Force realizes that too much time is being spent looking for our many forms, policies, directives, manuals, etc. We strongly recommend that all stations have a standardized filing system. We suggest that all forms should be numbered and kept in a predetermined location in all stations. Firefighters or officers detailed to a station should be familiar with the filing system at that station. We need to be able to request our station forms from one source.

Recommendations: Standardize all work-site offices with the appropriate equipment and supplies to perform required work. The requirements and resources should be available from a central facility.

Collateral Duties

There are many ancillary duties we now conduct at the station level that are holdovers from Local Fire and Rescue Department employment days and could be removed from the station level. The Task Force believes that Ancillary duties such as updating map books and running routes, restocking supplies, input for budget/procurement, PPA's, and responding to the public are all duties which are reasonable to conduct with station firefighters using station activity time. Stations that conduct many of these ancillary duties have in the past been hard pressed to complete other required training and activities. The Task Force recommends that Collateral Duties deserve an activity period of their own.

Recommendations: Schedule activity periods for our personnel to perform these necessary collateral duties.

Key safes, commonly referred to by their trade name of Knox Boxes, have been in existence for decades. When first developed, each Local Fire Rescue Department developed procedures to require, purchase, install, maintain, and control inventories for the safes within their area.

These safes provide a property owner the opportunity to allow firefighter access to keys that prevent the responding units from forcing entry and thereby causing expensive damage to buildings. In order for a property representative to purchase a key safe, they must make application through the MCFRS. A signature of record must be submitted along with the purchase price of the safe to a company representative in California. The safes are then installed at the property owner's expense based upon recommendations by the local fire rescue departments.

Management and control of this program should be centralized to assure that our service to the public is timely and responsive. Presently employees at all levels of the MCFRS have responsibility for this program. There is no standard in place for key coding, apparatus security of keys, identification of buildings with key safes, or maintenance of key inventories. Building managers have become increasingly frustrated with these inconsistencies. In many areas, the

program has fallen by the wayside due to frequent transfers of personnel in and out of the area.

Recommendations: *The key safe program should be standardized and managed by the new positions in each district as part of the Life Safety Systems and Community Education initiatives. Indexing and location of existing key safes should be added to the premise information in the Computer Aided Dispatch database. Standard apparatus key coding should be in place to permit any MCFRS unit access to any building within Montgomery County.*

Fire Lanes are the chosen method established by County Code to provide access to buildings for all fire and emergency apparatus. However, management and control of these fire lanes is next to non-existent.

Fire lanes are normally found in multi-family residential dwellings, shopping centers, and commercial buildings. Recent changes in zoning requirements have forced conditions where Fire Lanes are required to guarantee access to single family developments. This has created a challenging situation and no one has proposed solutions to deal with this problem.

Generation of fire lane orders is complex and time consuming by any standard. Current requirements call for a map of the proposed or existing development curbing and driveway paths, hydrant locations, landscaping obstructions, etc. Recommendations are forwarded to a contact person. A standard fire lane order is prepared including a colored map to identify signage and in some cases painted curbs. A property representative's signature is then required. Twelve copies must be produced and forwarded to the Life Safety Systems Section. After processing, the order must be delivered to the property representative. After the lanes are in place a final inspection must be made to assure that the lanes were installed in accordance with the order. In the best of circumstances, this process requires four on site visits. After installation, maintenance and enforcement becomes the responsibility of forces unknown. These tasks far exceed the reasonable expectations associated with a co-lateral duty.

Recommendations: *The responsibility for Fire Lanes should be transferred to the new position in each district. Standardized criteria for fire lanes should be developed. A streamlined process should be considered. Discussions should be initiated between the MCFRS, Park and Planning, and others to deal with the problems related to Fire Lanes in single family developments.*

Issue – Miscellaneous Issues

Career Enhancement Day. The purpose of the Career Enhancement Day has never been clearly defined. Some suggest that it is a day off from work and personnel should be allowed to sleep or watch television. Others were optimistic for this concept, as they were in need of dedicated activity periods to study for promotional exams, do homework for job-improvement college classes, or train on driving major pieces of apparatus. The Task Force recognizes both the need to give personnel "down-time" and allow extra periods for professional growth. Since the Task Force has promulgated the concept of task-oriented station management instead of time-oriented, we feel that the needs of the employees to grow professional, as well as to take a mental break and improve moral can be easily met.

Recommendations: *Negotiate with Union leaders to discontinue the Career Enhancement day as it is in its current form. Replace this with frequent Professional Development activity periods, based on the needs of the personnel at each work site.*

Station Supervision. The Task Force believes that the MCFRS is in violation of The Fair Labor Standards Act when volunteers are allowed to supervise career personnel. Current policy allows for volunteer officers to amend riding assignments, and change scheduled activities. In some work-sites, this is done with out the knowledge and approval of the on duty career officer, changing many times during the course of a shift. We believe that the ultimate responsibility for career personnel lies with the career supervisor. Nonetheless, we recognize the need to work cooperatively with volunteer personnel. We suggest an evening line-up in concert with on-duty volunteer personnel. Activities including riding assignments can be made at this line-up. Policy should mandate that riding assignments do not change after 2100 hours for other than emergency needs. Therefore, the Task Force recommends that the career station officer should be in charge of the station, unless the following conditions are met: 1) a majority of on-duty minimum staffing is volunteer and 2) an equal or higher-ranking volunteer

station-level officer (i.e., Lieutenant or Captain) is on duty. Station-level officers should be in charge of the station. District Chiefs and above working as command-level officers should not micro-management the station. The Task force suggests that a clearly defined set of roles and responsibilities for all members of the MCFRS is the only way to ensure the safety and accountability of all activities and personnel at the work-site.

Recommendations: Both divisions of the MCFRS need to work together to clearly plan who will be in charge of each work-site and produce a set of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the station officer. The career station officer should be in charge of the station, unless the following conditions are met: 1) a majority of on-duty minimum staffing is volunteer and 2) an equal or higher-ranking volunteer station-level officer (i.e., Lieutenant or Captain) is on duty.

Working Out of Class. The classification and compensation plans and job descriptions clearly define the roles and responsibilities of career firefighter/rescuers. The MCFRS has gone to great lengths to create positions and to staff each work-site with the appropriate level of supervision for its career members. However, the MCFRS has inconsistently scheduled Master Firefighter/Rescuers to replace the work-site officer, forcing these individuals to work and be compensated out of their job classification. This, at times, has lead to work-site daily goals not being achieved. Someone who can be accountable and responsible should always be in charge of the work-site. The formulas used to determine the staffing levels for officers and paramedics are not valid and should be re-calculated.

Recommendations: At no time should a Master Firefighter/Rescuer be placed in a position to be the officer-in-charge of a work-site. A Fire/Rescue Lieutenant should be the lowest ranking member to replace a Fire/Rescue Captain as the officer-in-charge of a work-site.

Advanced Life Support Services. The provision of advanced life support services is a significant part of the MCFRS's service delivery system. Yet, the advanced life support aspects of our emergency medical services lack appropriate field supervision and control. Currently, there is little to no quality assurance and improvement

measures, sporadic EMS sector command on large incidents, paramedic performance appraisals are not being completed and disciplinary measures do not follow the appropriate chain of command. The Task Force recognizes that the one EMS duty officer per shift cannot singly handle these activities, especially when coupled with the extra duties of a Public Information Officer.

Since the EMS duty officer cannot successfully perform these required tasks single-handedly, it falls back on the station officers to manage advanced life support services. However, the Task Force is reluctant to add these responsibilities to the station officers as we believe it would seriously affect the delivery of other work-site activities. It would certainly be prudent to increase the number of EMS duty officers to at most one per district per twenty-four hour shift. The increased staffing would not only remedy the identified problems, but can serve to increase the provision of paramedic service in each district.

Recommendations: Increase the staffing of the EMS duty officer to one per district on a twenty-four hour basis. Provide quality assurance and improvement, to ensure EMS command and control, and to provide for accountability for EMS operations.

Uniforms. Task force members realize that it is inappropriate and unprofessional for personnel to be dressed in sweats in the view of the public. This is particularly a problem in the hospital environment where our employees look particularly unprofessional. The current uniform policy is not consistent, as the class C uniform is not required and is impractical to use after the employees go to bed. The Task Force recommends that the MCFRS issue high-quality jump suits to wear over PT gear. These jumpsuits would provide a suitable alternative to bulky and dirty running gear that would represent our personnel in the best possible manner while encouraging participation in wellness/PT initiatives. In addition, the Task Force believes that new station uniforms should be investigated, but this investigation should be sent to another workgroup.

Recommendations: Provide uniform jump suits for personnel to wear over their PT clothes and at night in order to enhance visibility, safety and public image.

Issue - Future of Station Management

Management information systems need to be more fully integrated into the day-to-day management of the work-site. We currently manage our operations with a pen-and-paper mentality, while all around us, high performance organizations have embraced the "Information Age" and consistently use state-of-the-art computer and software systems to maximize their efficiency.

The following list represents innovative use of information systems that will allow the MCFRS station manager to move away from the excess paper work, and back into the fire/rescue team:

- **DFRSNet.** We envision the DFRSNet to be an Intranet system developed for use by all members of the MCFRS at all work-sites. This system would operate similar to the Internet, but would be designed for internal use only. Each member would have his own email account and would log onto the system when he reports to work. The system would be capable of taking over such functions as payroll, scheduling, training registration, and property, equipment and supply transactions. It would also be capable of tracking apparatus and equipment repairs, readiness checks, equipment testing, MSDS information, fire prevention activities, preplans and street maps. The DFRSNet would also be capable of delivering training directly to the stations in the form of interactive sessions produced by the PSTA, as well as college classes and training from the National Fire Academy. The system would be used as a research tool, warehousing all policies, procedures, directives, memorandums, forms, applications, etc. The DFRSNet would also add easy and fast access to the Internet, and its valuable research resources.
- **Integrated Computer Aided Dispatch / Incident Reporting System.** The current CAD and FIRES systems are outdated and should be replaced with a state-of-the-art system such as Trittech Software Systems' VisiCAD⁹ for Fire/EMS. VisiCAD⁹ is a Windows-based system that can incorporate emergency vehicle routing, high-resolution integrated mapping systems, configurable response plans, graphical reporting, fire and EMS triage systems, and records management. VisiCAD⁹ was designed to be used with both medical priority dispatching and systems status management. This system will collect an enormous amount of data about our day-to-day operations, and will allow remote users, such as the station manager, to query the warehoused data without interrupting critical operations.

Recommendations: *The MCFRS needs to create and staff a team to actively seek out new technology, such as the Intranet and CAD/IRS, and find ways to incorporate them into our fire, rescue, and emergency medical services systems. This research team should not only benchmark other public-sector fire and rescue departments, but also look at private-sector fire and emergency medical services and other public/private organizations not directly involved in the fire, rescue, or emergency medical services.*

Tasks

Based upon the recommendations made by the Station Management Task Force, the following guidelines are offered to assist the station officer when scheduling monthly activities for each shift.

Required Daily Tasks

- Morning Line-Up (approximately ½ hour)
- Evening Line-Up (approximately ½ hour)
- Daily Apparatus & Equipment Readiness Checks (approximately 1 hour)
- Physical Training (up to 3 hours)
- Facilities Maintenance & Wash Apparatus (approximately 1 hour)
- Work-site-specific Activity Periods (approximately 4 ½ hours)
- Three Meals (approximately 2 hours)

Required Monthly Tasks

- Weekly and Monthly Apparatus & Equipment Readiness Checks (3-5 hours/month)
- One drill from the Standardized Training Program
- Work-site-specific Activity Periods

Monthly Work Guidelines

- Work-site-specific and Other Training (10-12 hours/month)
- Fire & Injury Prevention Activities (4-6 hours/month)
- Life Safety & Building Survey Activities (8-10 hours/month)
- Professional Development Activities (3-6 hours/month)
- Ancillary Duty Activities (3-6 hours/month)
- Major Facilities Maintenance (3-5 hours/month)

Summary of Recommendations

- **Wellness & Physical Training**

1. Implement a comprehensive health, wellness and physical fitness program designed to improve the health and performance of the MCFRS members and require that all employees of the Division of Fire and Rescue Services participate.
2. Encourage health, wellness and physical fitness activities throughout the workday, with up to three hours per day for participation in a standardized exercise regimen.

- **Training**

1. Change the format of the STP to provide high quality, uniform training sessions to the entire workforce, scheduled once per month per shift. Completion of this training should be documented and controlled.
2. All recruits should have a Class B drivers license and be qualified to drive an ambulance upon graduation.
3. Remove the requirement to drive a major piece of apparatus from the Firefighter/Rescuer III promotional requirements.
4. Develop a FADO course at the PSTA for F/R to attend in order to become engine, truck, tiller and/or rescue squad driver/operators.
5. No longer support the placement of recruit preceptors on non-detail status.
6. Ensure that the format of the In-Service Training Program continues to have an educational-focus, rather than a testing-focus. Consider sending units from the same station and shift to the sessions. Expand the program to involve all District Chief and paramedics.
7. Expand the scope of the PSTA to improve the number, type, timing and quality of programs.
8. Provide better planning and adequate notice via the Operations Bureau chain of command for all ad-hoc training programs and have this training scheduled and supported by the PSTA. Provide topic-specific instructor training for station officers to enable them to teach these miscellaneous sessions, or provide a qualified instructor to rotate through the stations to conduct the training.
9. Assign specialty teams to certain hub stations. Personnel and other resources may then be used to their maximum potential while minimizing disruptions throughout the MCFRS.

- **Apparatus & Equipment Readiness**

1. Establish a committee to develop a standardized checkout procedure for all apparatus.

2. Develop a program for maintaining fully equipped reserve apparatus at less active stations to facilitate apparatus changeover.
3. Standardize the apparatus defect reporting procedure.
4. Provide for third-party service testing of apparatus pumps and ladders.
5. Develop a system of small tool and equipment warehousing to facilitate rapid replacement and repair of defective equipment.

- **Community Fire & Injury Prevention**

1. Redirect fire prevention and public education efforts to an all-inclusive Community Education, Injury Prevention and Life Safety Systems program that would include child passenger safety, health care workshops, fire extinguisher classes, water safety, door-to-door visits, and other special programs.
2. Create one new position per district to coordinate activities with the Bureau of Life Safety Services and the station managers.
3. Saturday afternoons should be dedicated to Public Education and Safety.

- **Life Safety Systems Inspections**

1. Change the focus of Operations Bureau inspections from code enforcement to one of life safety and building surveys, concentrating on multiple-family, assembly, and other target hazard occupancies.
2. Tie-in surveys of single-family and private residences of multiple-family occupancies with the door-to-door phase of the Safety in Our Neighborhood program.
3. Concentrate efforts to create site maps and pre-incident plans of target hazard occupancies, ensuring compliance with key fire and life safety code violations when noticed during the site visit.
4. On an as-needed basis, perform life safety systems surveys to determine if the owner or occupant has tested and inspected the systems according to applicable fire codes.

- **Facilities Maintenance**

1. Career personnel and volunteer members should perform a daily clean-sweep, concentrating on the private areas of the work-site.
2. Cleaning of major areas should be standardized throughout the work-sites and performed only on an as-needed basis by our members.
3. The MCFRS should contract with Montgomery County Facilities or a private landscaping company to maintain the grounds at all work-sites.
4. Station officers should use their discretion to complete other maintenance activities under the guidance of the facility manager.

5. The MCFRS should contract with private corporations to provide major station, equipment and apparatus repairs.
6. Continue to provide a safe work environment to all members by actively participating in the all aspects of the station safety inspection program.
7. The entire MSDS program needs to be standardized and promptly updated and maintained with the responsibility placed upon the owner of the work-site.
8. Develop and implement a standardized supply procurement and distribution system for station supplies.
9. Standardize all work-site offices with the appropriate equipment and supplies to perform required work. The requirements and resources should be available from a central facility.

- **Collateral Duties**

1. Schedule activity periods for our personnel to perform these necessary collateral duties.
2. The key safe program should be standardized and managed by the new positions in each district as part of the Life Safety Systems and Community Education initiatives. Indexing and location of existing key safes should be added to the premise information in the Computer Aided Dispatch database. Standard apparatus key coding should be in place to permit any MCFRS unit access to any building within Montgomery County.
3. The responsibility for Fire Lanes should be transferred to the new position in each district. Standardized criteria for fire lanes should be developed. A streamlined process should be considered. Discussions should be initiated between the MCFRS, Park and Planning, and others to deal with the problems related to Fire Lanes in single family developments.

- **Miscellaneous**

1. Negotiate with Union leaders to discontinue the Career Enhancement day as it is in its current form. Replace this with frequent Professional Development activity periods, based on the needs of the personnel at each work site.
2. Both divisions of the MCFRS need to work together to clearly plan who will be in charge of each work-site and produce a set of clearly defined roles and responsibilities for the station officer. The career station officer should be in charge of the station, unless the following conditions are met: 1) a majority of on-duty minimum staffing is volunteer and 2) an equal or higher-ranking volunteer station-level officer (i.e., Lieutenant or Captain) is on duty.
3. At no time should a Master Firefighter/Rescuer be placed in a position to be the officer-in-charge of a work-site. A Fire/Rescue Lieutenant should be the lowest ranking member to replace a Fire/Rescue Captain as the officer-in-charge of a work-site.

4. Increase the staffing of the EMS duty officer to one per district on a twenty-four hour basis to provide quality assurance and improvement, to ensure EMS command and control, and to provide for accountability for EMS operations.
5. Provide uniform jump suits for personnel to wear over their PT clothes and at night in order to enhance visibility, safety and public image.

- **Future of Station Management**

1. The MCFRS needs to create and staff a team to actively seek out new technology, such as the Intranet and CAD/IRS, and find ways to incorporate them into our fire, rescue, and emergency medical services systems. This research team should not only benchmark other public-sector fire and rescue departments, but also look at private-sector fire and emergency medical services and other public/private organizations not directly involved in the fire, rescue, or emergency medical services.

Appendix

1. Sample Apparatus Check Sheet, page 1
2. Sample Apparatus Check Sheet, page 2
3. Sample Station/Shift Schedule
4. Sample Training Matrix, page 1
5. Sample Training Matrix, page 2
6. Community Education and Life Safety