

*Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., and
Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, Inc.,
Minnesota*

Opportunities for Collaborative Efforts
Feasibility Study

December 2011



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Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., and Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, Inc., Minnesota

Opportunities for Collaborative Efforts Feasibility Study

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**Emergency Services Consulting
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Table of Contents

Letter of Transmittal	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Executive Summary	1
Evaluation of Current Conditions	5
Survey Table 1: Organization Overview.....	5
Survey Table 2: Management Components.....	13
Survey Table 3: Staffing and Personnel Management.....	25
Survey Table 4: Service Delivery and Performance.....	32
Survey Table 5: Support Programs – Emergency Services Training.....	35
Survey Table 6: Support Programs – Life Safety Services - Fire Prevention	42
Survey Table 7: Support Programs – Emergency Communications.....	47
Survey Table 8: Capital Assets, Capital Improvement, and Replacement Programs	50
Service Distribution, Demand, Concentration, Reliability, and Performance	59
Comparable	77
Loretto VFD and Hamel VFD comparison to National and Regional Benchmarks.....	77
Fiscal Analysis	79
Economic Indicators	79
Hamel VFD Historical Financial Review	84
Hamel VFD Forecast Financial Future	86
Loretto VFD Historical Financial Review	88
Loretto VFD Forecast Financial Future	91
Model Budget	93
Financial Result of HVFD-LVFD Integration.....	95
Processes for Collaboration	99
Partnering Strategies.....	99
Status Quo.....	99
Administrative Consolidation.....	100
Functional Consolidation.....	100
Operational Consolidation.....	101
Full Merger	102
Options for Shared Service Delivery.....	103
Overarching Strategy 1 – Administrative Consolidation.....	109
Overarching Strategy 2 – Functional Consolidation	110
Overarching Strategy 3 – Operational Consolidation	115
Overarching Strategy 4 – Full Merger	118
Strategy A – Enhanced Implementation of Mutual and Automatic Aid.....	122
Strategy B – Develop Joint Support and Logistics Practices	125
Strategy C – Develop Uniform Pre-Incident Plans.....	130
Strategy D – Provide Regional Incident Command and Operations Supervision.....	134
Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines	136
Strategy F – Provide Joint Standards for Service Delivery	138
Strategy G – Shared Public Education/Public Information.....	142
Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs for New Hires ..	143
Strategy I – Combine Administrative Services	145
Strategy J – Implement a Computerized Training Records Management System	147

Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies.....	150
Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan	153
Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program	156
Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards.....	159
Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual	161
Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility	163
Strategy Q – Develop a Single Apparatus Refurbishment/Replacement Plan	166
Strategy R – Develop a Regional Fire Safety Education Coalition	169
Strategy S – Develop a Regional Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Network	171
Strategy T – Establish a Shared Health and Safety Program.....	173
Strategy U – Develop Uniform Fees for Service.....	175
Strategy V – Jointly Develop An Employee Handbook.....	177
Findings and Recommendations	179
Findings	179
Strategic Recommendations.....	184
Moving Forward.....	185
Overarching Recommendation	187
Appendices	189
Appendix A: Table of Figures	189
Appendix B: Summary Table of Organizational Kudos	191
Appendix C: Summary Table of Recommended Actions (Current Conditions).....	192
Appendix D: Summary Table of Stakeholder Interviews	197

Letter of Transmittal

December 15, 2011

Jeff Leuer, Fire Chief
Loretto Volunteer Fire Department
259 Medina ST N
Loretto, MN 55357

H. Brandon Guest, Fire Chief
Hamel Volunteer Fire Department
92 Hamel Road
Hamel, MN 55340

Dear Chiefs:

Enclosed please find the final report in response to your request to conduct an Opportunities for Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study for Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department. The associates of ESCI have appreciated the opportunity to work with the communities, the employees, and the staff of both departments in preparing this study.

We have presented this report in five major sections: Evaluation of Current Conditions; Service Delivery, Demand, Concentration, Reliability, and Performance; Comparison with Similar Agencies and Best Practices; Processes for Collaboration; and Fiscal Analysis. Contained within the Processes for Collaboration section are 22 individual partnering strategies to consider. A number of appendices are also attached that will provide helpful information for the two agencies. Two are particularly noteworthy. Appendix B: Summary Table of Organizational Kudos summarizes the many positive attributes of the departments. Appendix C: Summary Table of Recommended Actions provides items to consider as part of evaluating collaboration opportunities with and between the Loretto and Hamel departments.

It is our intent to meet and exceed your expectations and to be available to you after the project is complete. Should you have questions do not hesitate to contact me at our headquarters office in Wilsonville, Oregon, at (503) 570-7778. It has been our pleasure to work with the professional and dedicated staffs of the Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department.

Sincerely,



Jack W. Snook
President, COO

Acknowledgements

Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) would like to acknowledge that without the assistance and support of the administrative staff and personnel of the Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department this project could not have been completed.

Boards of Fire Directors

Loretto Volunteer Fire Department

Tim Ryan
Rick Altendorf
Andy Boecker
Gregg Johnson
Mark Jordan
Greg VanBuren

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department

Tom Gregor
Ken Williams
Tom Manning
Brookstyn Wallace
Rowdy Dorweiler
Neil Wolfe

Fire Chiefs

Chief Jeff Leuer, Loretto Volunteer Fire Department
Chief Brandon Guest, Hamel Volunteer Fire Department

Executive Summary

Emergency Services Consulting International (ESCI) was engaged by Loretto Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) and the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) to evaluate the feasibility of more efficient cooperation between the two agencies, up to and including strategies of consolidation. This report is the culmination of that evaluation.

ESCI thanks the staff of both LVFD and HVFD for their outstanding cooperation in the preparation of this report. All involved were candid in their comments and provided an enormous amount of information.

The study took into account the issues facing the two fire departments and how such matters affect the effort to construct a model for efficient service. Those issues identified were analyzed and specific recommendations detailed.

Evaluation of Current Conditions

An analysis of current conditions of the two fire districts is catalogued in ten survey tables presented in a side-by-side table for simplicity of comparison. Each of the tables provides the reader with general information about that element as well as specific observations and an analysis of any significant issues or conditions that are pertinent to the topic discussed. Observations are supported by data collected during the information gathering process, through analysis of the collected data, and from the collective emergency services experience of the ESCI project team. This snapshot in time was the basis for developing the collaborative strategies for the two fire departments.

The current conditions presented in the survey tables include an evaluation of each organization's management, governance, staffing and personnel management, service delivery and performance, training programs, fire prevention programs, communications, Emergency Medical Services (EMS), hazardous materials, capital facilities and apparatus, and fiscal health and practices.

Criteria used to evaluate the departments have been developed over many years. These gauges include relevant guidelines from national accreditation criteria, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) standards, federal and state mandates for fire and EMS

systems, recommendations by various organizations such as the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE), and generally accepted best practices within the Fire and EMS industry.

Both fire departments exhibit a customer service ethic and desire to provide effective service delivery. Although the two agencies approach service delivery differently in some respects, they do so with a sharp focus on doing the right thing for their respective constituents. The departments provide services with limited financial and staffing resources. The communities served receive good service at a low cost.

In general, ESCI's review found that the agencies are performing comparably to other fire departments of similar size, population served, and character. Both organizations respond to a similar number of emergency incidents annually and serve similar sized populations. Both also are similar in terms of staffing methodologies and organizational governance and operations approaches. Like levels of services are also delivered to the communities, largely focused on fire suppression, along with rescue and specialized response services.

Throughout the current conditions sections of the report, methodologies are compared between the two organizations. In addition, ESCI has noted strengths in service delivery approaches in the form of kudos listed in the summary tables. No organization is without room for improvement. To that end, ESCI has detailed specific recommendations for enhancement of operational and administrative practices throughout the evaluation portion of the report.

Identified strengths are also summarized in Appendix B: Summary Table of Organizational Kudos, and recommendations are listed in summary form in Appendix C: Summary Table of Recommended Actions (Current Conditions).

Opportunities for Collaboration

This section of the report evaluates the resources, services, proximity, demand, and opportunities for LVFD and HVFD to contain costs, increase efficiency, or enhance service delivery through collaboration.

The report cites 22 separate strategies through increased collaboration to generally build an improved system by more closely aligning the departments. Some of the strategies require strategic investments to implement, but the vast majority do not require an investment beyond soft costs and yield economic or operational efficiencies.

Of the 22 identified strategies, ten are found to be most likely to result in significant improvement to systems and/or programs and should be acted upon regardless of whether action is taken on any of the other feasible opportunities. They are:

- Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines, page 136
- Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs, page 143
- Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies, page 150
- Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan, page 153
- Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program, page 156
- Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards, page 159
- Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual, page 161
- Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility, page 163
- Strategy T – Establish a Shared Health and Safety Program, page 173
- Strategy V – Jointly Develop An Employee Handbook, page 177

Implementation of the feasible cooperative opportunities (as listed above) addresses a number of the administrative, support, and operational challenges identified in the course of this study. Pursuit of the recommended strategies begins the process of collaboration and is an important first step. However, it is not a final solution.

In addition to the above strategies, four overarching strategies are discussed that address organizational structure and governance:

- Administrative Consolidation
- Functional Consolidation
- Operational Consolidation
- Full Merger

ESCI views a full merger of Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments as feasible and recommended as a long-term course of action. However, differences were also recognized between the two organizations with regard to practices and organizational cultural considerations. To move forward with a full merger in one step is viewed to be potentially problematic. Instead, a course of action is detailed that moves the two organizations toward unification incrementally. Once the identified steps have been accomplished, a full integration of the two organizations into one is recommended.

In the Findings and Recommendations section of the report, ESCI recommends that a combination of a Functional Consolidation overarching strategy and portions of an Operational Consolidation strategy be employed as first steps.

Included in the recommendation is that the following areas be addressed:

- Prioritize the development of Standard Operating Guidelines on a cooperative basis between both departments.
- Fully combine training programs.
- Establish a shared health and safety program.
- Consolidate Administrative Services
- Merge the agencies Paid per Call recruiting and training activities
- Develop a Shared Employee Manual

Once the above steps have been completed, Loretto and Hamel will be well positioned to move toward a full unification of the organizations. It is estimated that, due to the complexity of the initiatives, achieving the above will take two years or more to complete. Once completed, the strategies should be in place for two to three years to fully develop. At that time, ESCI recommends full legal integration of the Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Departments.

Evaluation of Current Conditions

Survey Table 1: Organization Overview

The feasibility study involves the Loretto Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) and the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD), located in Minnesota.

Data provided by the participating fire agencies was combined with information collected in the course of ESCI's field work and used to develop an overview of the subject organizations. The purpose of the following organizational overview is two-fold; first, it verifies the accuracy of the baseline information and ESCI's understanding of each agency's composition—the foundation from which the feasibility analysis is developed. Secondly, the overview serves as a reference for the reader who may not be familiar with the details of each agency's operations.

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Responsibilities and Lines of Authority			
A. Governance			
i) head of governing body	Jeff Leuer, President/Fire Chief Loretto Volunteer Fire Department Incorporated	Brandon Guest, President/Fire Chief Hamel Volunteer Fire Department Incorporated	
ii) key employee of governing body	Jeff Leuer, President/Fire Chief	Brandon Guest, President/Fire Chief	
iii) meetings	Monthly Board meetings	Monthly – First Monday of the month	
B. Elected official authority defined	Articles of Incorporation and By Laws – By Laws updated May 2010. Annual review	By Board Corporation in two documents: Constitution and By Laws and Articles of Incorporation	
C. Fire chief position			
i) hired by contract	Elected by membership	Elected by membership	
ii) term of contract	3-year term, no limit. Chief is in second term	3-year term, 19 th year as chief, 7 th term	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) periodic performance evaluation	No	No	Both Agencies: Establish annual goals and objectives for the fire chief against which his/her performance is measured. ¹
D. Fire chief/authority defined	Yes, in the Constitution and By Laws	Yes, in the Constitution and By Laws	
E. Policy and administrative roles defined	Yes, in the Constitution and By Laws	Yes, in the Constitution and By Laws and Articles of Incorporation	
2. Attributes of Successful Organizations			
A. Rules and regulations maintained	Limited. 10 Rules and Regulations are included in the Constitution and By Laws	None	
i) process for revision provided	The Constitution and By Laws are updated annually	Administrative Manual under development. By Laws were adopted in 1974 and have not been revised. Articles of Incorporation were revised in 1990	HVFD: Establish departmental Rules and Regulations. LVFD: Review and expand existing Rules and Regulations. ²
B. Legal counsel maintained	Yes	Yes	
i) consultation available	Contract attorney, as needed	Uses local counsel, as needed and available	
ii) labor counsel	N/A	N/A	
C. Financial controls			
i) financial control system	Informal	Yes, but unwritten	Both Agencies: Formalize and reduce to writing process for expenditure of funds and financial reporting.

¹ A periodic performance appraisal is recommended as a means by which to assure that the fire chief is meeting organizational expectations. Typically ESCI recommends that the governing body of a public fire department conduct an annual review. In the case of a non-profit corporation, when the fire chief also chairs the Board of Directors, an alternative approach is suggested. The chief and the board should set annual goals and objectives. Performance is then measured against the established criteria. Goals should be in concert with organization-wide goals and objectives.

² Rules and Regulations establish a foundation and communicate performance expectations to employees. It is important that the organizations develop comprehensive Rules and Regulations.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) financial review	Monthly report to full department	Annual report to contract cities. Monthly report to full department	
iii) auditor	Yes – audit report completed each time the Treasurer or Fire Chief changes	No annual audit	Both Agencies: Conduct an annual financial audit. ³
iv) frequency of review	Upon change of Chief or Treasurer	As needed	
D. Governing body minutes maintained	Yes	Yes	
i) availability of minutes	Emailed to all members plus in a book in the fire station	Kept in book in the fire station	Both Agencies: Consider posting board minutes in the stations and websites for better transparency to constituency. ⁴
3. Organizational Structure			
A. Structure type	Top-Down Hierarchy	Top-Down Hierarchy	
B. Descriptions of all jobs maintained	Yes, for all positions	Yes, for all positions	
i) job descriptions updated	As needed. All are current	As needed. All are current	
C. Employment agreements	N/A	Fire Chief: Hourly, Part-time employee. All positions are managed as hourly part time personnel	
4. Chain of Command			
A. Unity of command	Yes	Yes	
B. Span of control	4:1 for administration and operations Appropriate given existing staffing levels	3:1 for administration and operations Appropriate given existing staffing levels	
C. Hiring/Firing authority	Final authority is with the board. Chief is a board member	Fire Chief, in consultation with board but not clearly defined	HVFD: Determine hiring and termination authority and codify in writing. ⁵

³ Publicly funded entities are required to undergo an annual financial audit. Although a non-profit corporation is not held to the same requirement, because public funds are involved via contract fees, best practices indicate that a financial review should be performed.

⁴ Posting and uploading board meeting minutes, once approved, provides for greater transparency for interested citizens and leadership of the contract cities.

⁵ It is important that employees clearly understand who carries hiring and termination authority

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
5. Formation and History			
A. Organization formed	Incorporated in 1949	Incorporated in 1928	
B. History maintained	No	Only the document on the web site	
i) Individual or group responsible	N/A	N/A	
6. Fire Department Overview			
A. Agency type	501c3 Non Profit Corporation Loretto Volunteer Fire Department Incorporated	501c3 Non Profit Corporation Hamel Volunteer Fire Department Incorporated ⁶	
B. Area, square miles	30 reported by client; 28.2 by GIS calculation	21.3 by GIS calculation	
C. Headquarters	259 Medina Street, POB 22 Loretto, MN 55357	92 Hamel Road Hamel, MN 55340	
D. Fire stations	1	1	
E. Other facilities	0	0	
F. Emergency vehicles			
i) engine	2	2	
ii) engine, reserve	0	0	
iii) ladder truck	0	0	
iv) ambulance	0	0	
v) ambulance, reserve	0	0	
vi) command	1	0	
vii) boat	0	0	
viii) water tenders	1	2	
ix) brush	1	1	
x) Utility/rescue	1	1	
G. ISO rating	Protection Class 5 in the City of Loretto, 8 outside of the city	Protection Class 7 in hydrant areas, 9 in non-hydrant areas	
i) date of most recent rating	2004	Unknown; data requested from ISO by client, but it was not provided	HVFD: Contact ISO to verify the agency's current rating. ⁷

⁶ Both organizations also have a Volunteer Firemen's Relief Association, a 501c4 Corporation governed by a President, Treasurer, Board members and three ex-officio members, one of whom is the Fire Chief.

⁷ Since an ISO rating was not available, the rating status is unclear. Obtaining confirmation of the rating is recommended. It is unknown when the HVFD was last rated.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) maximum fire department deficiency points possible	50	N/A	
iii) relative classification	5	N/A	
iv) divergent reduction	Not listed	N/A	
v) total deficiency points	27.43	N/A	
H. Total fire department personnel, uniformed and civilian			
i) administrative and support personnel, full-time	None	None	
ii) administrative and support personnel, volunteer	1 Fire Chief @ 20% FTE, 2 PPC Assistant Chief, 1 Administrative Assistant @ 20 hours/week	1 Fire Chief, Paid Per Call (PPC), 1 PPC Assistant Chief, 1 PPC Administrative Chief, 1 part-time Administrative Assistant @ 8 hours/week	
iii) operational personnel, full-time	None	None	
iv) operational personnel, volunteer	31 active volunteers	23 active volunteers	
v) total personnel	34.5	26.2	
7. Finance Overview			
A. Designated fiscal year	Calendar year, January 1 to December 31	Calendar year, January 1 to December 31	
B. Assessed property value, FY 2011	Budget of the fire department is forwarded to the five cities with an allocation for the municipalities	Budget of the fire department is forwarded to the two cities and is allocated by the municipalities	
C. Revised 2011 general operating fund budget, fire department	\$343,440	\$203,364	
D. General fund property tax, District levy FY 2011	N/A	N/A	
i) levy rate (FY 2000 through 2010)	N/A	N/A	
ii) general fund levy collection rate FY 2010	N/A	N/A	
E. Bonds, fire department	No debt	No debt	
i) levy rate	N/A	N/A	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
F. Other tax levy, public safety	N/A	N/A	
i) levy rate	N/A	N/A	
8. Demographics			
A. Population, 2010	3,897 from portions of Medina, Corcoran, Independence, Greenfield, all of Loretto (by GIS calculation)	5,248 from portions of Medina and Corcoran (by GIS calculation)	
i) population history (2000 – 2010)	Not recorded	Not recorded	
ii) percent urban/suburban	0	0	
iii) percent rural	100	100	
B. Total residential units, 2010	Unknown	Unknown	
C. Businesses, 2010	Unknown	Unknown	
9. Alarms, 2010			
A. Fire	20	22	
i) value of property exposed to fire, 2010	Not recorded	Not recorded	Both Agencies: Consider obtaining property value from county assessor on line, add contents estimate for total value of property exposed to fire to NFIRS reports.
ii) value of property lost to fire, 2010	Not recorded	Not recorded	Both Agencies: Establish a practice of documenting the value of property that is exposed to as well as lost to fires in NFIRS reports. ⁸
B. Rupture or explosion	2	0	
C. EMS/rescue	126	81	
D. Number of EMS transports	N/A	0	
E. Hazardous condition	2	7	
F. Service call	16	19	

⁸ Recording the value of property exposed to and lost to fires, incorporated as a component of routine fire incident reporting, provides a measure by which fire prevention effectiveness can be measured. The information can be obtained from insurance company records once a claim is settled.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Organization Overview – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
G. Good intent call	29	10	
H. False call	19	59	
I. Severe weather	1	1	
J. Other	1	0	
K. Total	216	199	

Figure 1: Loretto VFD Organizational Chart

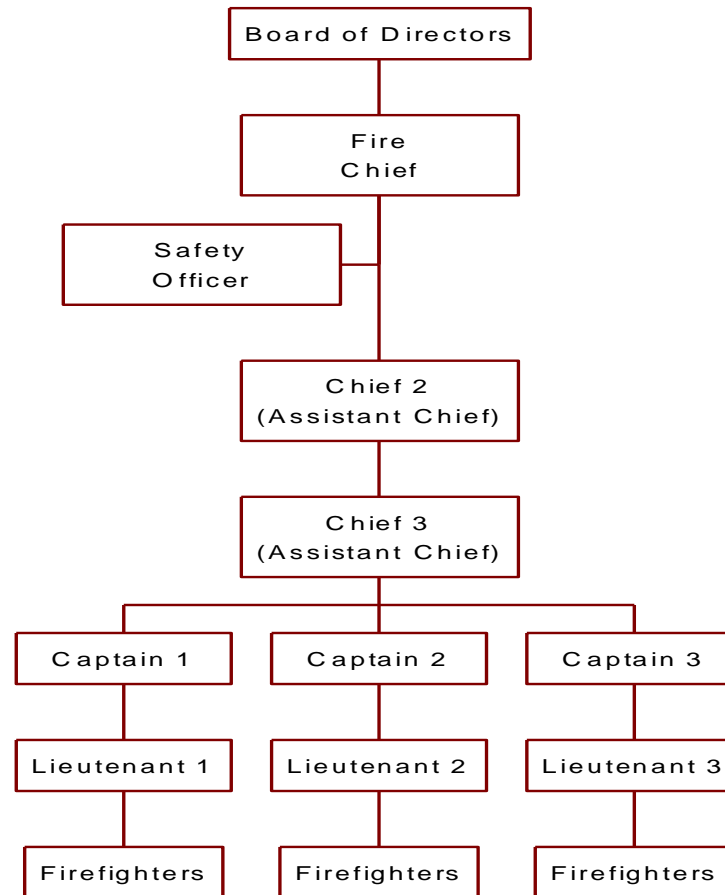
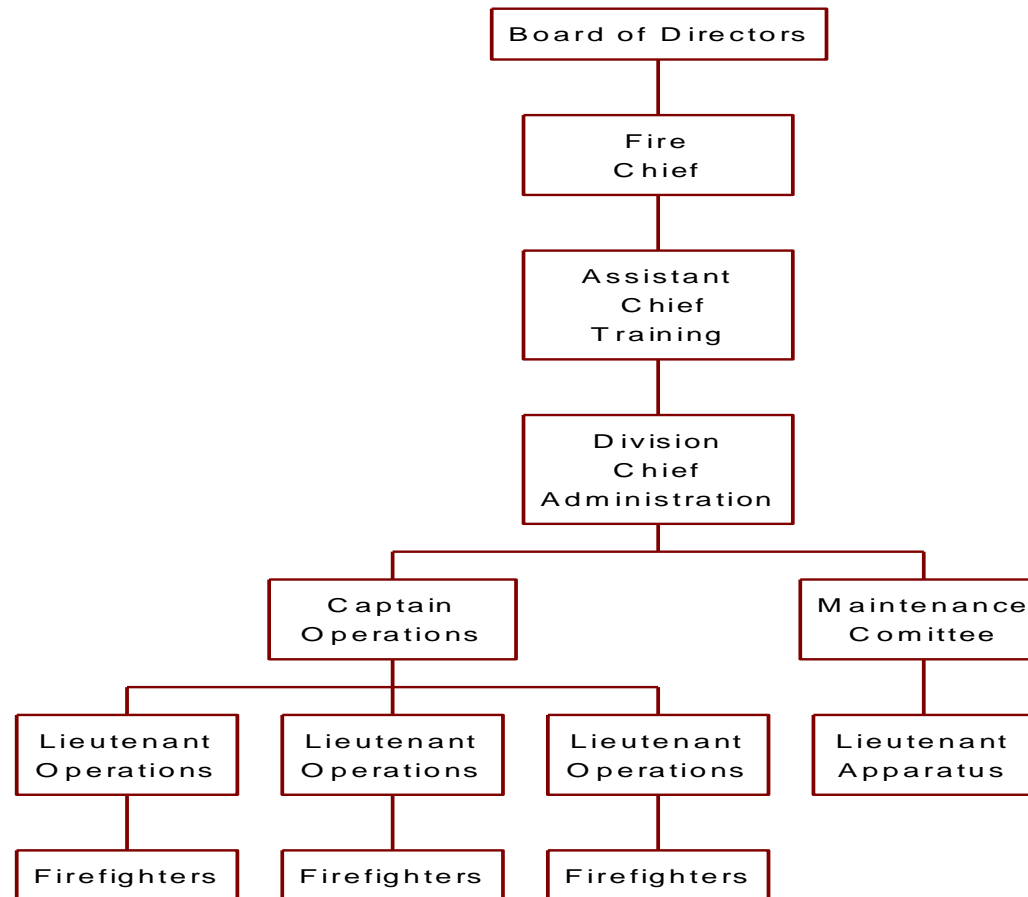


Figure 2: Hamel VFD Organizational Chart



Survey Table 2: Management Components

Fire department management coupled with organizational growth is a common challenge for fire service leaders. LVFD and HVFD are not immune to having the need for adequate management to meet current conditions. The modern fire department must address management complexities in areas that include the consistency and adequacy of response, maintenance of competencies, and recruitment of a qualified and diverse workforce. A forecast of continued population growth and response activity workload will necessitate changes in staffing to meet anticipated service demand. A correlated increase in organizational infrastructure is required to support operational personnel. This section examines each department's efforts to manage the organization and measures that are being taken for the future.

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Mission, Vision, Strategic Planning, Goals and Objectives			
A. Mission statement adopted	Yes	Yes, though not formally adopted	HVFD: Formally develop and institutionalize a mission statement for the organization.
i) displayed	In By Laws only – every member has copy	In the Annual Report but not posted elsewhere	Both Agencies: Display the mission statement prominently as a declaration of the organization's purpose and mission.
ii) periodic review	Annual, as part of annual By Laws review	No	HVFD: Conduct an annual review and update of the mission statement.
<i>Kudos: LVFD has done a good job of establishing and communicating its organization's mission statement.</i>			
B. Vision established and communicated	No	No	Both Agencies: Develop and communicate an organizational vision
C. Values of staff established			
i) organizational focal points	Not defined	Not defined	
D. Strategic or master plan			
i) adopted by elected officials	N/A	N/A	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) published and available	N/A	N/A	
iii) periodic review	N/A	N/A	
E. Agency goals and objectives established			
i) date developed	Annually by the Board and as a part of budget development process, but no published document	None. Spending prioritized with defined levels of importance identified by the chief. Some information is in the annual report	Both Agencies: Establish a practice of annual goal setting and identification of implementation objectives. ⁹
ii) periodic review	Annual	N/A	
iii) tied to division/personnel performance statements/plans	No	N/A	
iv) objectives linked to programs	No	N/A	
v) performance objectives established	No	N/A	
F. Code of ethics established	No	No	Both Agencies: Write and institutionalize a Code of Ethics.
2. Availability of SOGs, Rules and Regulations, Policies			
A. Agency rules and regulations available	No	No	
i) last date reviewed	Currently under development. Only about 10 to 12 in place	None in place, currently under review.	
B. Copies of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs) available	Under development. 12 are written, process is ongoing	29 SOGs are in place. They are not complete or readily available to membership	Both Agencies: Complete development of agency Standard Operating Guidelines. ¹⁰
i) regular update	Not at this time	Only generally	
ii) process for development of new SOGs	Chief is developing as time allows	As needed	

⁹ A formalized annual goal setting practice provides the organization with a defined sense of direction and enables stakeholders to have input on where the organization is going. The process should be open and participatory, resulting in the development of clearly defined goals, objectives and measures of success.

¹⁰ Standard Operating Guidelines are critical to safe and effective fire department performance. Both organizations have made an effort to start developing a manual of SOGs, but neither has completed the process. SOG development should be considered as the highest of priorities.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) SOGs used in training evolutions	Yes	Yes	
C. Policy manual available	No	No	Both Agencies: Develop a policy manual for the agency ¹¹
i) reviewed for consistency	N/A	N/A	
ii) reviewed for legal mandates	N/A	N/A	
iii) training on policies provided	N/A	N/A	
3. Critical Issues			
A. Critical issues are identified	Established process is not in place	Established process is not in place	
i) first critical issue	Budget and development of new contracts with the cities	Recruitment and retention of firefighters	
ii) second critical issue	Retention of volunteers	Funding	
iii) third critical issue	Not identified	Need for staff time to address administrative needs	Both Agencies: As a part of a strategic planning process, annually identify critical issues affecting the organization. ¹²
4. Challenges of the Future			
A. Challenges are identified	Established process is not in place	Established process is not in place	
i) first challenge	Need for a new station	Maintaining service levels with limited resources	
ii) second challenge	Daytime volunteer response	None verbalized	
iii) third challenge	None verbalized	None verbalized	Both Agencies: As a part of a strategic planning process, annually identify current challenges affecting the organization.
5. Internal and External Communications			

¹¹ Policies differ from rules and regulations, SOGs, and By Laws in that they provide guiding principles upon which the other documents are established. Policies typically address matters such as personnel and employment practices, financial administration and administrative procedures.

¹² Strategic planning is recommended in item 11 of this section. Identification of critical issues and future challenges should be included in that process.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
A. Internal communications			
i) regularly scheduled staff meetings	Board meeting monthly Quarterly officers meeting.	Monthly with officers, open attendance. Monthly Board meeting, closed attendance.	
<i>Kudos: Regular staff meetings are critical. Both departments are complimented for adhering to the practice.</i>			
ii) written staff meeting minutes	No	Notes only	Both Agencies: Record and post minutes of all staff meetings. ¹³
iii) memos	Yes	Email and text messaging	
iv) member newsletter	No	No	
v) member forums	No	No	
vi) open door policy	Yes	Yes	
vii) bulletin board	Yes	Yes	
viii) vertical communication path clearly identified	No	Only in job description, not defined	Both Agencies: Define appropriate paths of communication within the organization. ¹⁴
ix) e-mail	Yes and text messaging	Yes and text messaging	
x) employee mail boxes	Yes	Yes	
xi) voice mail	No	No	
xii) issues taskforce	No	No	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations communicate well with their internal stakeholders.</i>			

¹³ It is important that the membership of an organization be fully informed of decisions that are made at the staff level. Recording staff meeting minutes and making them available to all members keeps them aware of what is going on, provides opportunity for input, avoids misinformation, and limits the generation of rumors.

¹⁴ A vertical communication path should to be declared and institutionalized. It is important that personnel understand to whom they should report and that the flow of information should follow a defined structure. This can be identified via an organizational chart combined with a written policy defining the appropriate path of communication.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
B. External communications			
i) community newsletter	No	No	Both Agencies: Increase outreach to the communities served via expanded external communications. ¹⁵
ii) website	No – Active Facebook page maintained	Yes	
iii) advisory committee(s)	No	Fire Advisory Board: Representatives of the Cities of Medina and Corcoran and two from the Hamel VFD. The board sets the annual budget via contract terms	
iv) complaint process	No	No	
vi) email	Yes	Yes	
vii) community survey	No	No	
viii) local community planning organizations	No	No	
ix) focus groups	No	No	
6. Decision Making Process			
A. Preferred management methodology of the fire chief	Participatory, consensus based. Chief takes input	Generally consensus based. Participatory	
B. Management process identified	Informally only	Informally only	
C. Decision making process established	No	No	Both Agencies: Define an organizational decision making process and codify by policy.
7. Document Control			
A. Process for public records access established	Informal only	Informally only	Both Agencies: Define a procedure for the release of public records when requested.
B. Hard copy files protected	In Office. Locked	Yes. Office is always locked	

¹⁵ Communicating with an organization's external stakeholders is important for developing and maintaining support for the fire department by informing them of what the agency is doing for them. Websites, newsletters, and active release of public information to the news media will keep the organization in touch with the community.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
C. Computer files backed up	Yes. Daily	State web based system. Backed up. Internal computer files backed up weekly. Financial files backed up following updates. Copy kept off site.	
8. Security			
A. Building security	Locked	Locked	
B. Office security	Office locked when not occupied	Office locked when not occupied	
C. Computer security	Password protected	Yes- Password protected.	
D. Vehicle security	No	No	
E. Capital inventory maintained	Yes	Yes – Assets list only	
i) asset security system used	No	Yes	
ii) inventory interval	Completed Annually	Not scheduled	
F. Monetary controls used			
i) cash access controls	None kept on hand	Yes	
ii) credit card controls	The fire chief and the assistant fire chief are issued cards	The fire chief, assistant fire chief, and treasurer are issued credit cards	
iii) purchasing controls	Double signature Permission required from a chief officer. No purchase orders are used.	No purchase orders are used except for large expenditures	
9. Reporting and Records			
A. Records kept by computer	Yes	Yes	
i) type of platform	PC	PC	
ii) operating system	Windows	Windows	
B. Periodic reporting to elected officials			
i) financial report	Year-to-date profit and loss for the month itemizing all purchases goes to each member	Monthly report to the Board and membership with year to date and monthly information.	
ii) management report	Monthly	Monthly	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) operational report	Monthly	Monthly	
iv) distributed to others	Board and membership all receive monthly report	No	HVFD: Make copies of all periodic reports available to all members. ¹⁶
C. Annual report produced	Yes	Yes	
i) distributed to others	Yes – To five contract cities	Yes, to contract cities	
ii) analysis of data provided	Yes	Yes	
<i>Kudos: Management of both agencies effectively communicate with their constituents by producing an annual report</i>			
D. Required records maintained			
i) incident reports	Yes	Yes	
ii) patient care reports	Yes	No	
iii) exposure records	Yes – 7 yrs.	Yes	
iv) SCBA testing	Annual	Annual	
v) hose	Annual	Annual	
vi) ladder	Annual	Annual	
vii) pump	Annual	Annual	
viii) breathing air	Annual	Annual	Both Agencies: Review the appropriate frequency of breathing air testing. ¹⁷
ix) gas monitors	Monthly	Monthly	
10. Budgetary Controls			
A. Designated fiscal year	Calendar year, January 1 to December 31	Calendar year, January 1 to December 31	
i) budget cycle	Annual	Annual	
B. Budget officer	Fire chief	Fire chief	
C. Budget development process			
i) governance	The annual budget is approved by the board	The fire chief and assistant fire chief develop and manage the annual budget	
ii) administration	Fire chief	Fire chief	

¹⁶ Transparency is important to any organization. Information that is developed in periodic reports to the board should also be readily available to the membership, with the exception of personnel related matters.

¹⁷ Breathing air testing is completed annually in Loretto and Hamel. Breathing air should be tested on a quarterly basis to assure the health of fire personnel.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) management	Fire chief	Fire chief	
D. Budget adoption process			
i) budget approval	Yes, board of directors	Yes, board of directors	
ii) funding approval	Approval of each city	Contract city approval	
E. Financial control officer	Fire chief	Fire chief	
i) financial report	Monthly	Monthly	
ii) financial review	Yes, monthly by the board and membership	Yes, monthly by the board and membership	HVFD: Submit monthly financial summary to the board for review and approval ¹⁸
F. Basis of accounting	Cash	Cash	
G. Purchasing			
i) purchasing policy	Informal with discussion and officers meeting or association meeting for non-budgeted and larger purchases	Informal with discussion and officers meeting or association meeting for non-budgeted and larger purchases	
ii) credit cards	Yes, fire chief and assistant fire chief	Yes, fire chief, assistant fire chief, and the treasurer	
iii) purchase orders	No	No	
iv) open accounts	No	No	
v) petty cash accounts	No	Yes, \$30 or less	
vi) central supplies/logistics	No	No	
vii) joint agreements/ventures	No	Yes	
viii) JPAs	State purchasing and Hennepin Co. Fire Chiefs JPA	State purchasing and Hennepin Co. Fire Chiefs JPA	
ix) bidding	No	As needed	
x) leases	None	None	
11. Planning			
A. Strategic/Master planning	None	None	
i) plan period	N/A	N/A	
ii) periodic review	N/A	N/A	
iii) goals	N/A	N/A	

¹⁸ Transparency in financial review and reporting is important in any organization. A monthly summary of revenues and expenditures should be provided to the Board of Directors, at a minimum, and readily available to the membership and contract cities upon request.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iv) funding	N/A	N/A	Both Agencies: Upon completion of this project, undertake a strategic planning process. ¹⁹
B. Capital improvement plan (CIP)			
i) plan period	CIP (capital improvement plan) through 2019 is reviewed and updated annually	CIP (capital improvement plan) is reviewed and updated annually	
ii) periodic review	Annually	Annually	
iii) projects	None	Water tender purchase was delayed one year to 2012	
iv) funding	Department will acquire a loan for capital purchases and cities will pay the loan off over several years	Capital reserves repaid by the cities for apparatus purchases to avoid sales taxes	Both Agencies: Recommendations regarding Capital Improvement Planning are discussed in Survey Table 8, later in this report.
12. Budget			
A. Service level defined	No	No	Both Agencies: Service contracts with the cities include “Desirable Performance and Service Measures”. A more clearly stated definition of actual response performance is recommended. ²⁰
B. Operating budgetary funds			
i) organized by program or category	No	No	
ii) sub accounts	Yes	Yes	

¹⁹ A strategic plan establishes goals, objectives and measures of progress for a three to five year period, giving the fire department a sense of direction. Both organizations should complete a strategic plan and review it annually. Should the decision be made to merge the organizations or to implement cooperative service delivery components, a strategic plan should be completed jointly.

²⁰ While “desired” performance is identified in the city contracts, the level of detail is limited and a defined measurement of actual performance is not conducted. A clearly established set of explicit performance standards and measures is recommended both for the edification of the contract cities as well as to enable the fire departments to monitor and improve service delivery.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
C. Reserve funds	Salaries: \$57,250 Building: \$55,718	Capital reserve fund: \$327,415 Fireman's fund: \$28,104 Benefit account: \$12,298 Fidelity account (formerly the capital equipment fund): \$2,011	
D. Revenue funds	No	Yes	
E. Enterprise funds	No	No	
F. Adopted budget FD income accounts, 2011 actual amounts	\$343,440	\$203,364	
i) EMS transport revenue	N/A	N/A	
iii) Plan review & permits	N/A	N/A	
G. Revised budget FD expense accounts, 2011 General Fund			
i) personnel	\$89,535	\$62,603	
li contractual	No	No	
iii) commodities	No	No	
iv) capital outlay	No	No	
H. Overhead			
i) reserve fund contributions	No	Based on the annual budgeted amount	
ii) fleet rental charges	No	No	
iii) fleet maintenance charges	Paid by actual work performed	Paid by actual work performed	
iv) motor fuel charges	Fire department expense	Fire department expense	
v) property/casualty insurance	Fire department expense	Fire department expense	
vi) medical and dental insurance	Fire department expense	Fire department expense	
vii) workers' compensation	RTW Inc.	SFM Risk Solutions	
viii) workers' compensation mod rate	Not provided	Not provided	
ix) volunteer pension plan	Loretto Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association, governed by Minnesota State Statute	Hamel Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association, governed by Minnesota State Statute	
13. Debt			
A. Bonded debt	None	None	
B. Capital lease	None	None	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
C. Unfunded liability			
i) pension fund	Fully funded (98.13%)	Fully funded	
ii) workers' compensation claims	No	No	
14. Revenue			
A. Tax levy	N/A	N/A	
i) limitations	N/A	N/A	
B. Service contracts	City of Corcoran: \$70,808 City of Medina: \$ 77,010 City of Independence: \$73,287 City of Greenfield: \$76,271 City of Loretto: \$28,270 Three Rivers Park \$850	City of Corcoran: \$39,088 City of Medina: \$134,499	
C. Grants			
i) recent awards	2011: \$8,510 training grant from Minnesota Fire Training PEG. \$32,000 Shared Services Study grant from State of Minnesota, Jointly with Hamel.	2010: \$4,000 training grant. Additional \$5,400 grant for training 2011: \$32,000 Shared Services Study grant from State of Minnesota, Jointly with Loretto.	
ii) outstanding applications	None	None	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations have been effective in pursuing grant funding.</i>			
D. Fundraising			
i) Foundation	Loretto Volunteer Fireman's Relief Association	Hamel Fireman's Relief Association: \$25,000 (2010) \$21,010 (Budgeted, 2011)	
ii) Volunteer Association	Loretto Volunteer Fire Department Inc. \$19,000 Donations: \$ 11,000 (2010)	Hamel Volunteer Fire Department Inc. \$35,771 from FD budget to Relief Hamel Rodeo revenue: \$7,500 (2010)	
E. Fees for service	None	None	
i) ambulance transport fee structure	N/A	N/A	
ii) billing for fire response	Yes	No	
iii) inspection fee	No	No	
iv) hazardous materials	No	No	
v) cost recovery -- external	\$500 for burn to learn training	No	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Management Components – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
vi) impact fee(s)	No	No	
vii) school/student fee	No	No	
vii) event stand-by charges	No	Informal agreement with the Lions to refill fire extinguishers for standby at events	
F. Ambulance service collection(s)	N/A	N/A	
i) percentage collected (year 2010)	N/A	N/A	
ii) collection fee(s)	N/A	N/A	

Survey Table 3: Staffing and Personnel Management

Fire and EMS (emergency medical service) organizations must provide adequate staffing in three key areas: emergency services, administration, and support. ESCI surveyed both of the fire departments to assure that a reasonable balance between the three areas is maintained, given the realities of available local resources.

Several standards address staffing issues. Specifically, the *OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard 29 CFR 1910.134*; *NFPA 1710 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, to the Public by Career Fire Departments*; and *NFPA 1720 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer Fire Departments* are frequently cited as authoritative documents. In addition, the Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) publishes benchmarks for the number of personnel required on the emergency scene for various levels of risk.²¹

Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Policies, Rules, Regulations, and Operational Guidelines			
A. Human resource manager	None	None	
B. Personnel policy manual maintained			
i) manual provided at initial hiring	Constitution and By Laws only	Collection of assorted policies and procedures; limited in scope	
ii) training provided	Each person receives a copy	Each person receives a copy	

²¹ CPSE: formerly the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI).

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) periodic review & update	Annual	Under development	Both Agencies: Complete development of an employment handbook that includes policies and rules and regulations. ²²
C. Rules and regulations provided	No	No	
D. Operational guidelines provided	Limited number of SOGs	Limited number of SOGs	Both Agencies: See previous recommendation regarding development of Standard Operating Guidelines.
E. Position Descriptions current/accurate	Yes for all positions	Yes for all positions	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations have developed appropriate job descriptions for all positions.</i>			
E. Desk manuals	Constitution and By Laws only	Constitution and By Laws only	
F. Retention program established	Relief Association. Benefit \$4,200/year	Relief Association. Benefit \$2,300/year	
2. Compensation, Point System, and Benefits			
A. Paid-per-call compensation, hourly	\$10.00 per hour for calls, training, meetings, public relation events, and other fire chief approved projects	Hourly rate for calls, training, meetings, public relation events, and other fire chief approved projects	
i) fire chief	\$10.00 + \$3,000/year	\$10.75	
ii) assistant chief	\$10.00 + \$1,000/year	\$10.75	
iii) captain	\$10.00 + \$250/year	\$10.00	
iv) lieutenant	\$10.00 + \$150/year	\$9.25	
v) firefighter II	\$10.00	\$8.75	
vi) rookie	\$10.00	\$7.75	
vii) administrative assistant	\$14.00	\$10.00	
B. Additional compensation			
i) EMT premium pay	N/A	N/A	
ii) paramedic pay	N/A	N/A	

²² Each new member, whether career, volunteer or paid per call, should be issued a manual that delineates the conditions of their employment; expectations placed upon them; and the rules, regulations, and policies under which they will be operating. Establishing a baseline for participation in the organization, the manual is an essential tool to assure that the new member understands his/her conditions of employment.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
iii) clothing allowance	N/A	N/A	
iv) longevity pay	N/A	N/A	
v) other specialty pay	N/A	N/A	
vi) life insurance	Yes, Volunteer Firefighters' Benefit Association of Minnesota up to \$300,000	No	
vii) survivor income benefit	Yes, via the pension plan	Yes, via the pension plan	
3. Reports and Records			
A. Personnel records maintained			
i) application retained	Yes	Yes	
ii) historical records retained	Yes	Yes	
iii) performance evaluations retained	No	No	
iv) injury and accident records retained	Yes	Yes	
v) health and exposure records maintained	Yes	Yes	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations retain appropriate personnel records</i>			
4. Disciplinary Process			
A. Disciplinary policy established	In By Laws, though limited	No	Both Agencies: Develop a clearly defined disciplinary policy, communicated to all members. ²³
B. Disciplinary process communicated	In By Laws	N/A	
C. Appeal process provided	Yes	N/A	
i) recent litigation	None	None	
ii) pending litigation	None	None	
5. Counseling Services			

²³ The Rules and Regulations section of the LVFD By Laws includes some reference to disciplinary processes; however, it is limited in scope. HVFD has not established a disciplinary policy or procedure. Both organizations should establish a clearly defined progressive disciplinary process.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
A. Critical incident stress debriefing	Yes, routinely based on incident	Yes, as needed	
B. Employee assistance program	No	No	Both Agencies: Establish and Employee Assistance Program. ²⁴
C. Intervention program	No	No	
6. The Application and Recruitment Process			
A. Recruitment program	Word of mouth, newspaper ads, signs	Advertising, signs, word of mouth referrals	
B. Application process			
i) qualification check	Yes	Minimum criteria (5-minute drive time or within service area, 18 years of age)	HVFD: Conduct a review of personal qualifications provided by applicants for new positions.
ii) reference check	Yes	No	HVFD: Conduct a review of personal and professional references provided by applicants for new positions.
iii) background check	Yes	State provided background check, DMV	
iv) physical standards established	Agility test – CPAT	No entry level physical ability	
v) knowledge testing	No	No	
vi) interview	Yes, with Board	Interview with Personnel Committee	
vii) medical exam required	Yes. Not NFPA compliant	Yes, post hire OSHA standard, not NFPA compliant	Both Agencies: Complete an entry level physical examination that meets NFPA 1582 standards.
viii) psychological exam required	No	No	
7. Testing, Measuring and Promotion Process			

²⁴ Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) are a valuable tool to have on hand when a member is experiencing difficulty, whether related to a fire department incident or in his/her personal life. EAP programs are available through insurance carriers and independent sources at minimal cost.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
A. Periodic competence testing	Annual State FFI and FII continuing education of 24 hours annually	Annual State FFI and FII continuing education of 24 hours annually	
B. Periodic physical competence testing	None	None	
C. Periodic performance review	None	None	
D. Promotional testing	The fire chief and assistant chiefs are elected by the membership. For all other promotions, minimum qualifications are identified and reviewed by the hiring committee, followed by an interview process	The fire chief and assistant chief are elected. All other positions are appointed by the chief based on the job description, application process and interviews with chief and assistant chief	
8. Health and Safety			
A. Medical standards established			
i) periodic medical exam	Full physical every other year and partial exam during alternate years	OSHA based physical every two years. Not NFPA compliant. Also FIT testing annually	
B. Safety committee established	No	No, but some components of safety program are in place, including CR2K and blood borne pathogens, respiratory protection	Both Agencies: Establish an OSHA compliant Safety Committee and accompanying safety policy that defines the committee's role, authority and procedures. ²⁵
i) membership	N/A	N/A	
ii) meetings	N/A	N/A	
iii) meeting minutes	N/A	N/A	
9. Administration and Other Support Staff			
A. Fire chief	1	1	
B. Assistant fire chief	2	1	
C. Administrative chief	0	1	
D. Office assistant	20 hours per week; 0.5 FTE	8 hours per week; 0.2 FTE	

²⁵ Establishment of a safety committee should be considered a top-level priority. Doing so not only enhances the safety of fire department members, but also protects the organization from exposure to potential fines and liabilities.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

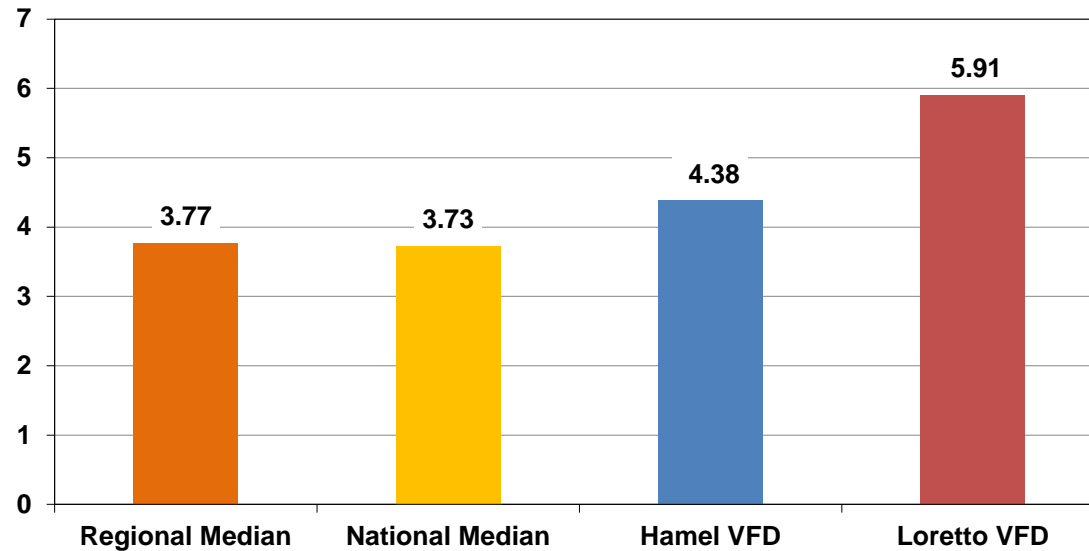
Survey Component	Staffing and Personnel Management – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
E. Total administrative & support staff	3.5	3.2	
F. Percent administrative & support to total personnel	11%	14%	
<i>Kudos: Ratios of administrative support relative to total staffing has been established conservatively and effectively.</i>			
10. Emergency Service Staff			
A. Battalion chief	0	0	
B. Captain	3	1	
C. Lieutenant	3	4	
G. Firefighter	22	18	
I. Total operational staff	28	23	
J. Fire department total	34	26	
K. Percent of operational officers to firefighters	21.4%	21.7%	

Comments:

The number of administrative and support jobs are compared to total department positions to calculate a ratio of the resources committed to this function. A suitable ratio is considered to be 15 to 20 percent. Both organizations fall somewhat below the range, which is not uncommon in smaller, non-career organizations.

Figure 3 compares the number of firefighters in Loretto and Hamel to those of national and regional medians on a per 1,000 population basis.

Figure 3: Volunteer/Paid Per Call Firefighters per 1,000 Residents



Both Loretto and Hamel departments report a slightly higher number of firefighters per 1,000 residents than both regional and national medians as defined by the National Fire Protection Association.²⁶

²⁶ NFPA report *U.S. Fire Department Profile- 2009* (latest available).

Survey Table 4: Service Delivery and Performance

The delivery of fire suppression, rescue, and emergency medical services is no more effective than the sum of its parts. It requires a timely response from well-located facilities, in appropriate apparatus, with sufficient personnel to mitigate the emergency. The service delivery and performance analysis below provides a baseline from which further analysis of response capability can be performed and upon which Loretto and Hamel can base future service delivery decisions.

Survey Component	Service Delivery and Performance – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Demand			
A. Risk analysis			
i) target hazards identified	No	No	
ii) geographical call distribution by type/severity	Box assignments in place	County-wide box alarm system in place – HFD box assignments not included at this time. Automatic aid in place with Loretto, Maple Grove and Plymouth FD.	Both Agencies: Continue to refine and participate in regional mutual and auto aid agreements.
iii) fire flows identified	No	No	Both Agencies: Develop deployment standards based on risk. ²⁷
iv) call distribution by time of day/day of week	Information available in state reporting system	Information available in state reporting system	
2. Distribution			
A. Facilities			
i) effective reach identified	Mapped in report	Mapped in report	
ii) geographical barriers/gaps identified	Existing road network is adequate	Existing road network is adequate	
iii) inefficient overlap of response areas	None identified	None identified	
B. Apparatus			
i) vehicles appropriate to risk	Yes	Yes	

²⁷ Apparatus assignments and deployment are generally the same for fires reported in all structures, regardless of the risk presented. Customizing deployment for significant high risk occupancies provides for additional resources to be dispatched when needed.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Service Delivery and Performance – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) pumping capacity effective for initial attack	Yes	Yes	
iii) ladders appropriate for rescue/elevated operations	N/A	N/A	
C. Staffing			
i) adequate for initial attack of predominant risk	Yes	Yes	
ii) volunteer staffing turnout time	Information not available or tracked at this time	Information not available or tracked at this time	Both Agencies: Implement procedures to document volunteer (Paid per Call) turnout times
<i>Kudos: Both agencies have effective fire station placement.</i>			
3. Concentration			
A. Effective response force			
i) defined by call type	Yes	Yes	
ii) achieved by 10 minutes	Appears to be yes to the extent of available data	Appears to be yes to the extent of available data	Both Agencies: Utilize capability of State RMS to report and track more complete data. ²⁸
4. Reliability			
A. Workload Analysis			
i) unit hour utilization	UHU rate less than 2 percent for all apparatus	UHU rate less than 2 percent for all apparatus	
ii) failure rate by unit identified	N/A	N/A	
iii) concurrent calls/demand shifting quantified	N/A	N/A	
iv) percent of total impact on timely assembly of effective response force	N/A	N/A	

²⁸ Not all of the data needed to fully evaluate the time required to assemble an effective firefighting force is provided in available data. The agencies can more effectively track data in the state RMS system.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Service Delivery and Performance – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
5. Performance			
A. Cascade of Events			
i) alarm time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Both Agencies: Work with Dispatch Center to incorporate electronic time stamps into State RMS and NFIRS reports. ²⁹
ii) notification time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	
iii) call processing time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	
iv) turnout time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	
v) en route time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	
vi) travel time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center	
vii) arrival time	Tracked at Dispatch Center	Tracked at Dispatch Center ³⁰	
<i>Kudos: Available data indicates that both agencies have effective response times and appropriate staffing level performance.</i>			
6. Mutual/Auto Aid			
A. Given/Received balance	Unclear	Yes	LVFD: Review Mutual Aid Given/Received for accuracy. ³¹

²⁹ Although the items listed in the Cascade of Events is recorded by Hennepin County Dispatched, the level of detail is not collected and included in NFIRS reporting. Specifically, response, arrival and leaving the scene times are not recorded by individual unit. Including this detail compromises the ability to adequately measure response performance.

³⁰ Hamel VFD also tracks times internally.

³¹ Data provided by LVFD for Mutual Aid Given/Received indicates that the department received mutual aid assistance for 45 incidents in 2010 and received mutual aid only twice. The discrepancy may be a reporting error. Mutual aid should be generally reciprocal in nature with a balance of aid provided and received. Recommendation: Both agencies utilize shared office assistant position to collect accurate and consistent incident data, which meets state and national reporting requirements; and can also validate and track response performance

Survey Table 5: Support Programs – Emergency Services Training

Firefighters operate in a complex, dangerous, and dynamic environment, as demonstrated by over 100 fatalities and 3,000 serious injuries annually. Firefighter training is the single most important factor that prepares them to meet the challenges of the situations and environments in which they work. The delivery of safe and effective fire and emergency medical services is, therefore, clearly dependent on a well-trained response force. The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA) states:

...regardless of the particular system used, an effective training program will include: (1) the continuous training of all levels of personnel in the organization; (2) a master outline or plan; (3) a system for evaluating the scope, depth, and effectiveness of the program; and (4) revising the program, as required, to include changing state and federal mandates, advances in equipment, products, and operational techniques.

Without a comprehensive training program, emergency outcomes are compromised, response personnel are at risk, and the city may be exposed to liability for the actions of its employees. Training and education of personnel are critical functions for both Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments. Anthony Granito, author of *Fire Service Instructor's Guide*, makes the following statement:

A good training program is undoubtedly the single most important factor producing and maintaining a high proficiency in any fire department. It not only produces high efficiency initially, but also affects future efficiency when we consider that the rawest recruit now being trained may be chief of the department or at least a senior officer in 20 or 30 years.

The function of a training program is not merely imparting personal knowledge and technical skills to an individual, it is developing the self-confidence to perform correctly under stressful if not hostile conditions. A training program must be systematic and must provide positive feedback to the trainee, firefighter, or officer. The goals of training should always focus on performance, never merely on acquiring a certain number of training hours.

Today's industry standards outline certain areas that are considered integral to effective training programs. The program should include the following:

- General training competencies
- Training administration and scheduling

- Training facilities and resources
- Training procedures, manuals, and protocols
- Record keeping (records management system)
- Organizational priority to training
- Training program clerical support services

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. General Training Competency			
A. Incident command system – certification levels defined?	Yes	Yes	
B. Accountability procedures	Yes	Yes	
C. Policy and procedures	Yes	Yes	
D. Safety procedures	Yes	Yes	
E. Recruit academy	Mentor program	External ³²	Both Agencies: Consider a jointly operated recruit training academy in partnership with neighboring fire departments.
F. Special rescue (high angle, confined space, etc.)	Confined Space, Awareness level	Confined Space, Awareness level	
G. Hazardous materials	Hazardous Materials, Operations Level	Hazardous Materials, Operations Level	
H. Wildland firefighting	Yes – Basic only	Yes – Basic only	
I. Vehicle extrication	Yes	Yes	
J. Defensive driving	In-house and outside instructors based on Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC)	Yes - external instructor used, based on Emergency Vehicle Operations Course (EVOC)	

³² Both agencies make use of external classes and instructors to train new recruits in place of conducting independent recruit academies. The approach is adequate and useful given the small number of new recruits that are generally experienced. However, a more effective alternative would be to promote the establishment of a regional recruit academy in partnership with neighboring agencies. Advantages of doing so are those of cost efficiencies and universally standardized entry level training practices regionally.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
K. Use and care of small tools	Yes	Yes	
L. Radio communications & dispatch protocol?	Yes	Yes	
M. EMS skills and protocol?	EMT Basic and First Responder continuing education	EMT Basic and First Responder continuing education	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations have established appropriate training levels for basic emergency functions.</i>			
2. Training Administration			
A. Director of training program	Terry Ryan, Captain and Training Officer	Tom Gregor Assistant Chief and Training Officer	
B. Education or background	15 years with FD	25 + years with HVFD. Certified Fire Instructor I	
C. Goals and objectives identified	Generally to meet continuing education requirement of Firefighter I and II based on state standards	Generally to meet continuing education requirement of Firefighter I and II based on state standards	Both Agencies: Develop clearly defined goals and objectives for training activities, including applicable performance measures. ³³
D. Governing body support and concurrence	Good	Good	
E. Personnel knowledge and understanding	Good	Good	
3. Training Facilities and Resources			
A. Training facilities (tower, props, pits)			
i) live fire prop	Access to training in Edina but it's not used. Live fire training in donated buildings	None. Mobile props available and used. Otherwise use parking lots as available, also use donated structures	
ii) fire and driving grounds	None. Parking lots and streets	None. Parking lots and streets	
B. Classroom facilities	Classroom in Fire Station, shared with City Hall	Adequate meeting room, though the space is limited	

³³ An annual training plan based on identified goals and objectives is recommended. Of critical importance to the process is the periodic review of performance measures relative to the plan, revisited at least quarterly, to accommodate adjustments as needed. If the two organizations continue to blend training programs, goal setting should be conducted jointly.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
C. VCR, projectors, computer simulations	Adequate	Adequate	
D. Books, magazines, instructional materials	Adequate	Adequate	
4. Training Procedures Manual			
A. Manual developed and used	Orientation manual. Training handbook references State Mandated annual training requirements	No	HVFD: Develop a new-hire orientation manual
B. IFSTA, Jones and Bartlett, Delmar manuals used	IFSTA	Jones and Bartlett	
5. Methodology Used for Training			
A. Manipulative	Yes	Yes	
B. Task performances/frequency	Yes, based on state requirements	Yes, based on state requirements	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
C. Annual training hours	State minimum recertification requirement of 24 hours/year plus First Responder Recertification. Members must attend all mandatory training and 30% of non-mandatory training.	A written training program and attendance policy are in place. There are mandatory drills on key subjects. Of remaining training, personnel must attend 2/3 of the drills. Also meet annual state refresher training minimum hours for certification of 24 hours/year.	Both Agencies: Review annual training hours for adequacy at all position levels. ³⁴
D. Use of lesson plans	Yes	Yes	
E. Night drills	Yes	Yes	
F. Multi-agency drills	Yes	Yes	

³⁴ No absolute requirements exist that mandate minimum monthly or annual training hours for firefighters. Instead, training is generally targeted towards maintaining competency in various fundamental skills. The annual recertification requirement of 24 hours/year established by the Minnesota Fire Certification Board establish a minimum only and do not necessarily meet the need for annual skill development. One means of comparison is the Insurance Services Office (ISO). ISO recommends that fire departments conduct ongoing skills maintenance training that consists of a minimum of 20 hours per month for company personnel, to achieve maximum credit. Additional training hours for full credit are further listed as follows: (Source: Insurance Services Office Fire Suppression Rating Schedule, 2010)

- Officer Training:
 - 2 days (6 hours each) per year for all officers
- Driver/Operator Training:
 - 4 half-day (3-hour) sessions per year
- New Driver/Operator Training
 - 40 hour initial training
- Recruit Training
 - 240 Hours initial training

Based on the weekly drill schedules employed by the departments, weekly training alone falls short of this standard, even if each member attends every scheduled drill. Many members attend additional non-required training.

ISO schedules are not viewed as a requirement and are offered only as a reference from which to base training requirements. Training decision must be made by each fire department individually and the amount of training is dictated by each fire department's capacity in terms of both instructional resources and available training time. The task is particularly challenging in a Paid per Call fire department. Both agencies strive to make the best use of available training hours that they can and also provide training outside of the regular training schedule. ESCI recommends a review of total training hours provide to assure adequacy.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
G. Inter-station drills	N/A	N/A	
H. Physical standards or requirements	Physical ability test upon initial hire and medical evaluation bi-annually. NFPA compliant	None	Both Agencies: Adopt minimum standards for physical conditioning of firefighters and test annually. ³⁵
I. Annual performance evaluation conducted	Ongoing as a part of regular training. No annual testing	Some subject areas	Both Agencies: Establish annual performance testing to assure personnel are skilled in performing basic fire ground functions. ³⁶
6. Operations and Performance			
A. Disaster drills conducted	Annual western county drill	Participate in offered emergency management exercises as available	
B. Attention to safety	High	High	
C. Post incident analysis	Yes	As needed	
D. Priority by management toward training	High	High	
7. Recordkeeping			
A. Individual training files maintained	Recorded via drill sheet	Yes	
B. Records and files computerized	Yes	Yes	
C. Daily training records	N/A	N/A	
D. Company training records	N/A	N/A	
E. Training equipment inventoried	No	No	
F. Lesson plans used	Yes	No	
G. Pre-fire planning included in training	Yes	Yes	
H. Check-out system on training materials	No	No	
8. Personnel Trained			

³⁵ Placing physical conditioning standards on paid per call members is not an easy step to take, especially when the practice has not been in place previously. However, physical capacities of responders are directly correlated to firefighter safety as well as operational effectiveness. Assuring that firefighters are in good physical condition is essential.

³⁶ A program of annual testing of firefighters in fundamental skills not only assures that personnel can perform basic functions, but, of equal importance, enables the fire department to identify areas of training need with which to plan and modify training focus.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Services Training – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
A. Training objective (who, level, etc.)	Meet State recertification requirements for FF I and FFII, and provide specialized needs of contract cities (grain bin rescue).	Meet State recertification requirements for FF I and FFII. Supplemented with other identified areas of need.	
B. Employee development program used	Mentor program for new hires. Basic requirements to progress through the ranks identified in the By Laws.	No. Probationary Firefighter training procedure in place.	Both Agencies: Develop a document that provides guidance to members on how they can progress in the organization.
9. Administrative Priority			
A. Budget allocated to training, 2011	\$17,000	\$6,000 (plus \$4,000 grant)	
B. Adequate funding for training	Adequately funded, though over spent for this year	Yes, but marginally to meet minimum requirements. Insufficient to provide for outside training	
C. Using certified instructors	Yes	Yes	
D. Annual training report produced	Each person gets their own quarterly training summary, no annual report	No	HVFD: Prepare individual training summaries and distribute to each member at least annually.
E. Adequate training space/facilities/equipment	Yes	Yes	
F. Maintenance of training facilities	N/A	N/A	
10. Training Program Clerical Support			
A. Support Staff	Part-time Administrative Assistant	Part-time Administrative Assistant	
B. Records computerized software used	Excel	Excel	
C. Adequate office space, equipment, and supplies	Yes	Yes	

Comments:

The agencies have made efforts to combine their training programs by establishing joint training schedules and plans. The approach is commendable but has not developed as effectively as desired. Although members are invited to attend each department's training, participation is limited. A key factor compromising the effort is that the two agencies train on different nights. If the shared training program is to be fully effective, the programs will need to be truly merged in all aspects.

Survey Table 6: Support Programs – Life Safety Services - Fire Prevention

An aggressive municipal risk management program, through active fire and life safety services, is a fire department's best opportunity to minimize the losses and human trauma associated with fires and other community risks.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends a multifaceted, coordinated risk reduction process at the community level to address local risks. This requires engaging all segments of the community, identifying the highest priority risks, and then developing and implementing strategies designed to mitigate the risks.³⁷

A fire department should actively promote fire resistive construction, built-in warning and fire suppression systems, and an educated public trained to minimize their exposure to fire and health issues and to respond effectively when faced with an emergency.

In Loretto and Hamel, fire prevention and life safety practices are not handled directly by the fire departments, as is commonly the case, but are instead provided by third party contractors by agreement with the cities served. The fire departments have limited involvement in the inspection of existing occupancies, review of plans for proposed new construction and related prevention activities. While understandable, given the limited staffing resources in both agencies, a higher degree of involvement is desirable.

Survey Component	Life Safety Service Fire Prevention – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Code Enforcement			
A. Fire codes adopted			
i) code used – year/version	Individually by each city	Individual to each city	
B. Local codes or ordinances adopted, amendments	Medina requires alternative water supply for homes over square footage threshold.	Medina requires alternative water supply for homes over square footage threshold.	
C. Sprinkler ordinance in place	Medina has adopted a sprinkler requirement based on square footage threshold	Medina has adopted a sprinkler requirement based on square footage threshold	
2. New Construction Inspections			

³⁷ Kirtley, Edward, *Fire Protection Handbook*, 20th Edition, 2008, NFPA, Quincy, MA.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Life Safety Service Fire Prevention – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
A. Consulted in proposed new construction	Plans submitted to cities, reviewed by third party contract Inspections. Copies are sent to Fire Department for informational purposes.	FD receives plans and conducts cursory review of access, fire flows, water supply.	
B. Perform fire and life safety plan review	No – (By third party contractor)	No – (By third party contractor)	
C. Sign-off on new construction	No	Review only	Both Agencies: Incorporate sign-off on new construction plan reviews, at a minimum, to assure that the fire department is aware of proposed projects. ³⁸
D. Charges for inspections or reviews	N/A	N/A	
E. Perform existing occupancy inspections	No (Third party contractor)	No (Third party contractor)	Both Agencies: Establish a participating role in the conduct of existing occupancy inspections to assure that they are adequately completed. ³⁹
F. Special risk inspections	No (Third party contractor)	No (Third party contractor)	
G. Storage tank inspections	No (Third party contractor)	No (Third party contractor)	
H. Key-box entry program in place	Knox Box system	Knox Box system	
I. Hydrant flow records maintained	Cities maintain records	Cities maintain records	
J. Pre-incident planning	Yes, limited	Yes, limited	Both Agencies: Conduct regular pre-incident planning for target hazards. ⁴⁰
3. General Inspection Program			
A. Self-inspection program in place	No	No	

³⁸ When a new building is constructed in a fire jurisdiction, the structure becomes the protection responsibility of the fire department for the life of the facility. It is important that the fire department be involved in the design and approval process, at least at an oversight and informational level, so that it is aware of the project and has input on its design from a fire protection standpoint.

³⁹ Although the fire departments are not directly responsible for fire prevention inspections, they can and should make efforts to assure that inspections are conducted appropriately. It is recommended that efforts be made to work with the third party contractors to review their practices and recommend how the work is completed.

⁴⁰ Pre-incident planning familiarizes personnel with target hazard floor plans and special hazards. Given that the agencies do not visit buildings regularly for fire prevention inspections, pre-incident planning is particularly important.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Life Safety Service Fire Prevention – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
B. Frequency of inspections	Varies by city, but not clearly understood.	Medina does limited annual inspection of commercial occupancies. Corcoran does not conduct annual inspections except for certain target hazards.	
C. Inspection program	Contracted to third party	Contracted – limited FD involvement	
D. Citation process in place and formally documented/adopted	N/A	N/A	
i) court cited to	N/A	N/A	
E. Inspections computerized	N/A	N/A	
F. Community feedback system in place	N/A	N/A	
G. Number of personnel devoted to program	N/A	N/A	
H. Fees for specialty inspections	N/A	N/A	
4. Fire Safety and Public Education			
A. Public education/information officer in place	Not defined	Not defined	
B. Feedback instrument used	No	No	
C. Public education in the following areas:	Annual open house. There are no schools in the jurisdiction. No structured public education program in place	Annual open house with a public education focus. Some efforts shared with Loretto. National Night Out and active in community events that Hamel participates in with other agencies. No school programs	
<i>Kudos: Both organizations have identified the need and play an active role in public education in their communities.</i>			
i) calling 9-1-1	Limited	Yes	
ii) EDITH (exit drills in the home)	No	Occasional	
iii) smoke alarm program	No	No	
iv) fire safety (heating equipment, chimney, electrical equipment, kitchen/cooking, etc.)	Limited	Yes	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Life Safety Service Fire Prevention – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
v) injury prevention (falls, burns/scalding, bike helmets, drowning, etc.)	No	No	
vi) fire extinguisher use	For police departments only	Yes	
vii) fire brigade training	No	N/A	
viii) elderly care and safety	No	On request only	
ix) curriculum used in schools	No	Internal	
x) baby-sitting classes offered	No	No	
xi) CPR courses, blood pressure checks offered	No	No	
D. Publications available to public	Yes	Yes	
E. Bilingual information available	N/A	N/A	
F. Annual report distributed to community	No	No	
G. Juvenile fire setter program offered	No, but resources available	No, but resources available	
H. Wildland interface education offered	No	No	
5. Fire Investigation			
A. Fire origin and cause determination	By county-wide FIT Team	By county-wide FIT Team	
B. Arson investigation and prosecution			
i) arson investigation training provided	Yes	Yes	
C. Person responsible for investigations	Fire Chief	Fire Chief	
D. Local FIT membership (fire investigation team)	Hennepin County Fire Chiefs Investigation Team and State Fire Marshal if needed.	Hennepin County Fire Chiefs Investigation Team and State Fire Marshal if needed.	
E. Process for handling juvenile suspects	Juvenile court	Juvenile court	
F. Liaison with law enforcement	Fire Chief	Fire Chief	
G. Scene control practices in place	Yes	Yes	
H. Photographer available	FIT Team	FIT Team	
I. Adequate and appropriate equipment issued/supplied	Yes	Yes	
J. Evidence collection process in place	Yes	Yes	
K. Release required for entry	Yes	Yes	
L. Reports and records of all incidents made	Yes	Yes	
M. File, record, and evidence security	Yes	Yes	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Life Safety Service Fire Prevention – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
6. Statistical Collection and Analysis			
A. Records kept by computer	Yes	Yes	
i) type of operating platform	Windows based	Windows based	
ii) software used	State – Web based	State – Web based	
B. Information collected in the following areas:			
i) fire incidents	Yes	Yes	
ii) time of day and day of week	Yes	Yes	
iii) method of alarm (how received)	Yes	Yes	
iv) dispatch times	Yes	Yes	
v) response times	Yes	Yes	
C. Information analyzed & used for planning	Yes	Yes	
D. Reports made & distributed	Individually submitted to State only	Individually submitted to State and annual report completed	
E. FTEs used in data collection & analysis	N/A	N/A	

Survey Table 7: Support Programs – Emergency Communications

Communication center operations are essential, directly affecting fire/EMS response times, service levels, overall service delivery, and customer satisfaction. Dispatch operations are integral to a successful emergency operation, starting with the initial “alarm” and continuing until units are available for redeployment. ESCI reviewed current emergency communications and dispatch functions and analyzed the impact of various service delivery options including:

- Communications overview
- Management and Staffing
- Facilities
- Training
- Performance Benchmarks

The following matrix outlines the assessment of the Hennepin County 911 Center. Interviews with managers and observations of the day-to-day communication center operations provided information for this section.

Survey Component	Emergency Communications – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Communications Provider			
A. Emergency Dispatch Agency	Hennepin County	Hennepin County	
i) population served	350,000	350,000	
ii) 9-1-1 PSAP – (public safety answering point)	Primary PSAP for the County except Bloomington Eden Prairie, Richfield, Edina, Minnetonka.	Primary PSAP for the County except Bloomington Eden Prairie, Richfield, Edina, Minnetonka.	
iii) surrounding bordering PSAPs	St. Louis Park, Minneapolis, Hopkins and MSP Airport PSAP.	St. Louis Park, Minneapolis, Hopkins and MSP Airport PSAP.	
B. Organizational structure			
i) mission statement, goals, and objectives	Yes	Yes	
i) work schedule	40-hour work week, 10-hour days, 4,3,4,4, rotation	40-hour work week, 10-hour days, 4,3,4,4, rotation	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Communications – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) minimum staffing policy	Supervisor defined, as needed. Typically 10 on duty from 11 AM to 3 AM and 7 from 3 AM to 11 AM	Supervisor defined, as needed. Typically 10 on duty from 11 AM to 3 AM and 7 from 3 AM to 11 AM	
iii) state requirements for public safety dispatchers	None. Typing skills only	None. Typing skills only	
iv) union representation	Yes – Teamsters	Yes – Teamsters	
2. Communications Facility & Equipment			
A. Facility			
i) security	Key pad entry	Key pad entry	
B. Computer aided dispatch (CAD)	IQ CAD	IQ CAD	
i) geo data base	Incorporated in CAD system	Incorporated in CAD system	
C. Emergency power	Yes – 2 External, automatic generators	Yes – 2 External, automatic generators	
D. Telephone equipment	CML	CML	
E. Radio system	Motorola	Motorola	
F. Radio control	Motorola Gold Elite	Motorola Gold Elite	
G. Recording equipment	All lines and frequencies are recorded	All lines and frequencies are recorded	
H. Workstations	17	17	
I. Mobile communications devices	Toughbook MDC system	Toughbook MDC system	
J. Fire/EMS notification system	Tone and voice pager and MDC	Tone and voice pager and MDC	
K. Alarm monitoring/fire systems	Yes	Yes	
K. Back-up plan/center operations	Brooklyn Park Patrol Division had all equipment except 911 trunk lines which transfer to 10-digit lines	Brooklyn Park Patrol Division had all equipment except 911 trunk lines which transfer to 10-digit lines	
L. Emergency notifications	No	No	
M. Other duties	No	No	
3. Communications/Dispatch Operations			
A. Availability of performance standards and/or benchmarks			
i) 9-1-1 time standards	No formal standard. Have set goals based on NFPA standards	No formal standard. Have set goals based on NFPA standards	
ii) call processing/dispatch time standards adopted	No formal standard. Have set goals based on NFPA standards	No formal standard. Have set goals based on NFPA standards	

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Emergency Communications – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
B. Evaluation of dispatch activities			
i) by time/day/month	Yes	Yes	
ii) by incident type	Yes	Yes	
C. Standard operating procedures	SOGs	SOGs	
D. Quality assurance program	Each Dispatcher is evaluated quarterly, review of performance, call handling, etc.	Each Dispatcher is evaluated quarterly, review of performance, call handling, etc.	
E. Training program	2 weeks classroom. Then assigned to various coaches in assorted study areas. 6 to 8 months average completion time.	2 weeks classroom. Then assigned to various coaches in assorted study areas. 6 to 8 months average completion time.	
F. Emergency medical dispatch (EMD)	By EMS dispatch provider	By EMS dispatch provider	
G. Position descriptions	Yes	Yes	
H. Evaluations	Annual evaluations	Annual evaluations	
I. Workload activity			
i) 9-1-1 calls	231,578 (74,073 hard wire +157,498 wireless)	231,578 (74,073 hard wire +157,498 wireless)	
ii) 10 – digit incoming calls	221,468	221,468	
iii) average speed of answer	Unavailable	Unavailable	
iv) average telephone processing times	Unavailable	Unavailable	
v) law enforcement activities	594,000 CAD Entries	594,000 CAD Entries	
vi) fire/EMS calls initiated	17,737 (+23,326 EMS)	17,737 (+23,326 EMS)	
4. Fire Stations			
A. Total area protected			
i) total area protected for fire and EMS	All of Hennepin County except Bloomington Eden Prairie, Richfield, Edina, Minnetonka.	All of Hennepin County except Bloomington Eden Prairie, Richfield, Edina, Minnetonka.	

Survey Table 8: Capital Assets, Capital Improvement, and Replacement Programs

Three basic resources are required to successfully carry out the emergency mission of a fire department — trained personnel, firefighting equipment, and fire stations. Because firefighting is an extremely physical task, the training and capacity of personnel resources is a vital concern. However, no matter how competent or numerous the firefighters, the department will fail to execute its mission if it lacks sufficient fire equipment deployed in an efficient and effective manner.

Fire Stations

Fire stations play an integral role in the delivery of emergency services for a number of reasons. A station's location will dictate, to a large degree, response times to emergencies. A poorly located station can mean the difference between confining a fire to a single room and losing the structure. The location of a station can even make the difference between saving and losing a life.

Fire stations need to be designed to adequately house equipment and apparatus, as well as meet the needs of the organization, its workers, and/or its members. It is essential to research need based on call volume, response time, types of emergencies, and projected growth prior to making a station placement commitment. Locating fire stations is also a matter of the greater community (region) need.

Consideration should be given to a fire station's ability to support the department's mission as it exists today and in the future. The activities that take place within the fire station should be closely examined to ensure the structure is adequate in both size and function. Examples of these functions may include:

- The housing and cleaning of apparatus and equipment
- Residential living space for on-duty crew members (male and female)
- Administrative or management office(s)
- Training, classroom, and library areas
- Firefighter fitness area

While this list may seem elementary, the lack of dedicated space compromises the ability of the facility to support all of these functions and can detract from its primary purpose.

Apparatus

Other than the firefighters assigned to stations, response vehicles are probably the next most important resource of the emergency response system. If emergency personnel cannot arrive quickly due to unreliable transport, or if the equipment does not function properly, then the delivery of emergency service is likely compromised.

Fire apparatus are unique and expensive pieces of equipment, customized to operate efficiently for a narrowly defined mission. An engine may be designed such that the compartments fit specific equipment and tools, with virtually every space on the vehicle designed for function. This same vehicle, with its specialized design, cannot be expected to operate in a completely different capacity, such as a hazardous materials unit or a rescue squad. For this reason, fire apparatus are very expensive and offer little flexibility in use and reassignment. As a result, communities across the country have sought to achieve the longest life span possible for these vehicles.

Unfortunately, no piece of mechanical equipment can be expected to last forever. As a vehicle ages, repairs tend to become more frequent, parts are more difficult to obtain, and downtime for repair increases. Given the emergency mission that is so critical to the community, downtime is one of the most frequently identified reasons for apparatus replacement.

Because of the expense of fire apparatus, most communities develop replacement plans. To enable such planning, communities often turn to the accepted practice of establishing a life cycle for the apparatus that results in an anticipated replacement date for each vehicle.

The reality is that it may be best to establish a life cycle for use in the development of replacement funding for various types of apparatus; yet, apply a different method (such as a maintenance and performance review) for actually determining the replacement

date in real life, thereby achieving greater cost efficiency when possible. Fleet managers of the districts have a concern of the aging of the fleet and the current replacement schedule. As the frontline units are aging, fleet will experience higher costs and more down time associated with necessary repairs and routine maintenance.

Survey Component	Capital Assets, Capital Improvement and Replacement Programs – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
1. Fire Stations/Structures			
A. Replacement plan maintained	No	No	
i) period of plan (from – to)	N/A	N/A	
ii) funding mechanism	N/A	N/A	
B. Construction or improvement plans	No scheduled construction	No scheduled construction	
2. Apparatus			
A. Plan maintained			
i) period of plan (from – to)	2011 – 2019	2005 - 2018	
ii) funding mechanism	The plan is not funded – Department obtains loans for apparatus replacement, paid by the contract cities	The plan is not funded – Department obtains loans for apparatus replacement, paid by the contract cities	Both Agencies: Compose a replacement schedule for fire apparatus, including defined service lives, financial projections and funding plans. ⁴¹
B. Planned purchases	Utility truck to be replaced in 2012	Water Tender replacement scheduled in 2012	
3. Support Equipment			
A. Plan maintained			
i) period of plan (from – to)	None	2005 – 2018 (Some equipment is included in the CIP)	Both Agencies: Establish a replacement schedule for support equipment, including defined service lives, financial projections and funding plans. ⁴²

⁴¹ Emergency vehicles are increasingly expensive but also have predictable service lives. Rather than requesting funding from cities once a vehicle needs to be replaced, a replacement schedule is recommended which can then be reviewed with the cities to address funding methods.

⁴² Support equipment includes radios, breathing apparatus, hose and nozzles and other equipment related to emergency responses. Like vehicles, support equipment is costly and replacement needs are predictable. Support equipment replacement should be scheduled in concert with vehicle replacement planning.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Survey Component	Capital Assets, Capital Improvement and Replacement Programs – Observations		
	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Recommended Action
ii) funding mechanism	Not funded	Not funded	

Figure 4: Loretto VFD Apparatus Table

Apparatus Designation	Type	Year	Make/Model	Condition	Minimum Staffing	Pump Capacity	Tank Capacity
Engine 11	Engine	1996	Pierce	Good	4	1,250 GPM	750 Gallons
Engine 12	Engine/Tanker	2000	Pierce	Good	4	1,250 GPM	2,500 Gallons
Tanker 11	Tanker	2007	Pierce	Excellent	4	500 GPM	3,000 Gallons
Rescue 11	Rescue	1991	International	Fair	4	N/A	N/A
Utility 11	Grass	1990	Ford 350	Fair	4	100 GPM	250 Gallons
Utility 12	Utility	2006	Ford 250	Fair	2	N/A	N/A
Grass 12	Grass	2009	Polaris	Excellent	2	100 GPM	100 Gallons

The average age of Loretto apparatus is 11.14 years. Of the primary engine and two water tankers, one of which is a combination Engine/Tanker, all are in good to excellent condition, although Engine 11 is 15 years of age and approaching the end of its service life. Two pieces of equipment exceed 20 years in age.

Figure 5: Hamel VFD Apparatus Table

Apparatus Designation	Type	Year	Make/Model	Condition	Minimum Staffing	Pump Capacity	Tank Capacity
Engine 11	Engine	2006	Spartan	Excellent	4	2,000 GPM	750 Gallons
Engine 12	Engine	1985	Ford L9000	Good	4	1,250 GPM	750 Gallons
Tanker 11	Tanker	2007	Pierce	Excellent	1	N/A	3,000 Gallons
Tanker 12	Tanker	1980	Ford L8000	Good	1	N/A	3,000 Gallons
Grass 11	Grass	2008	Ford F350	Excellent	2	200 GPM	300 Gallons
Utility 11	Utility	1988	Ford L7000	Good	2	N/A	N/A

The average age of Hamel apparatus is 15.33 years. The department's primary engine and water tanker are relatively new and in excellent condition. Two pieces of equipment exceed 20 years in age, one of which is 26 years old.

Fire departments establish apparatus service lives based on how they deploy vehicles to responses and level of activity. Typically, a fire engine is expected to last 15 years in front line service and five additional years in reserve status. A tanker may be expected to be in service for up to 25 years, five of which are in reserve. However, in departments with lower call volumes, like Loretto and Hamel, lives may be extended.

Figure 6: Loretto Fire Station
Address: 259 Medina Street N



Survey Components	
1. Structure	
A. Construction type	Masonry
B. Date	1980
C. Seismic protection/energy audits	None
D. Auxiliary power	None
E. Condition	Fair
F. Special considerations (ADA, mixed gender appropriate, storage, etc.)	Not ADA compliant. Apparatus bays are crowded and storage space is very limited. There is no room for future expansion as a result community growth.
G. Square Footage	5,000
2. Facilities Available	
A. Exercise/workout	None
B. Kitchen/dormitory	None
C. Lockers/showers	None
D. Training/meetings	A small meeting area is in the rear of the apparatus bays and a good sized training and meeting area is located on the second floor, but in a space shared with the City of Loretto.
E. Washer/dryer	Turnout gear extraction machine is present. There is no dryer
3. Protection Systems	
A. Sprinkler system	No
B. Smoke detection	Yes
C. Security	Keypad door locks throughout
D. Apparatus exhaust system	Yes

Comments:

Storage of flammable liquids in apparatus bays should be in an approved locker.

Figure 7: Hamel Fire Station
Address: 92 Hamel Road



Survey Components	
1. Structure	
A. Construction type	Masonry
B. Date	1964, remodeled and expanded in 1986
C. Seismic protection/energy audits	No
D. Auxiliary power	Manual Start system with Automatic Transfer Switch
E. Condition	Good. Building is aging but structurally sound.
F. Special considerations (ADA, mixed gender appropriate, storage, etc.)	Not ADA Compliant
G. Square Footage	5,000 Square Feet
2. Facilities Available	
A. Exercise/workout	No
B. Kitchen/dormitory	Small kitchen in apparatus bays
C. Lockers/showers	Shower only
D. Training/meetings	Training Room with seating for approximately 30
E. Washer/dryer	Turnout extractor, no dryer
3. Protection Systems	
A. Sprinkler system	No
B. Smoke detection	Yes – alarmed
C. Security	None
D. Apparatus exhaust system	Present but inoperable. A grant was applied for to replace the system but not awarded. Replacement efforts continue.

Both agencies take pride in their capital resources, as is evidenced by their condition. Fire apparatus is clean, well maintained and appropriately equipped. In addition, both fire stations are well cared for.

As listed in the discussion above, both departments have fleets of response vehicles that are of varying ages, the bulk of which are relatively new and modern. Future replacement of these vehicles is an expensive undertaking and, for that reason, ESCI encourages planning for future needs. A model vehicle replacement schedule is included in the financial analysis section of this report for both Loretto and Hamel.

Fire stations present a similar challenge with regard to future needs and replacement. The Loretto station is 31 years old and the Hamel station has seen 47 years of service. Common to both is the fact that their available space has been maximized and there is no room for additional equipment or for needed functions, both current and future. Neither building can accommodate additional fire apparatus storage in the future. Further, both facilities have very limited accommodations for training and meeting space. Kitchen and dining accommodations are inadequate and no living quarters are present.

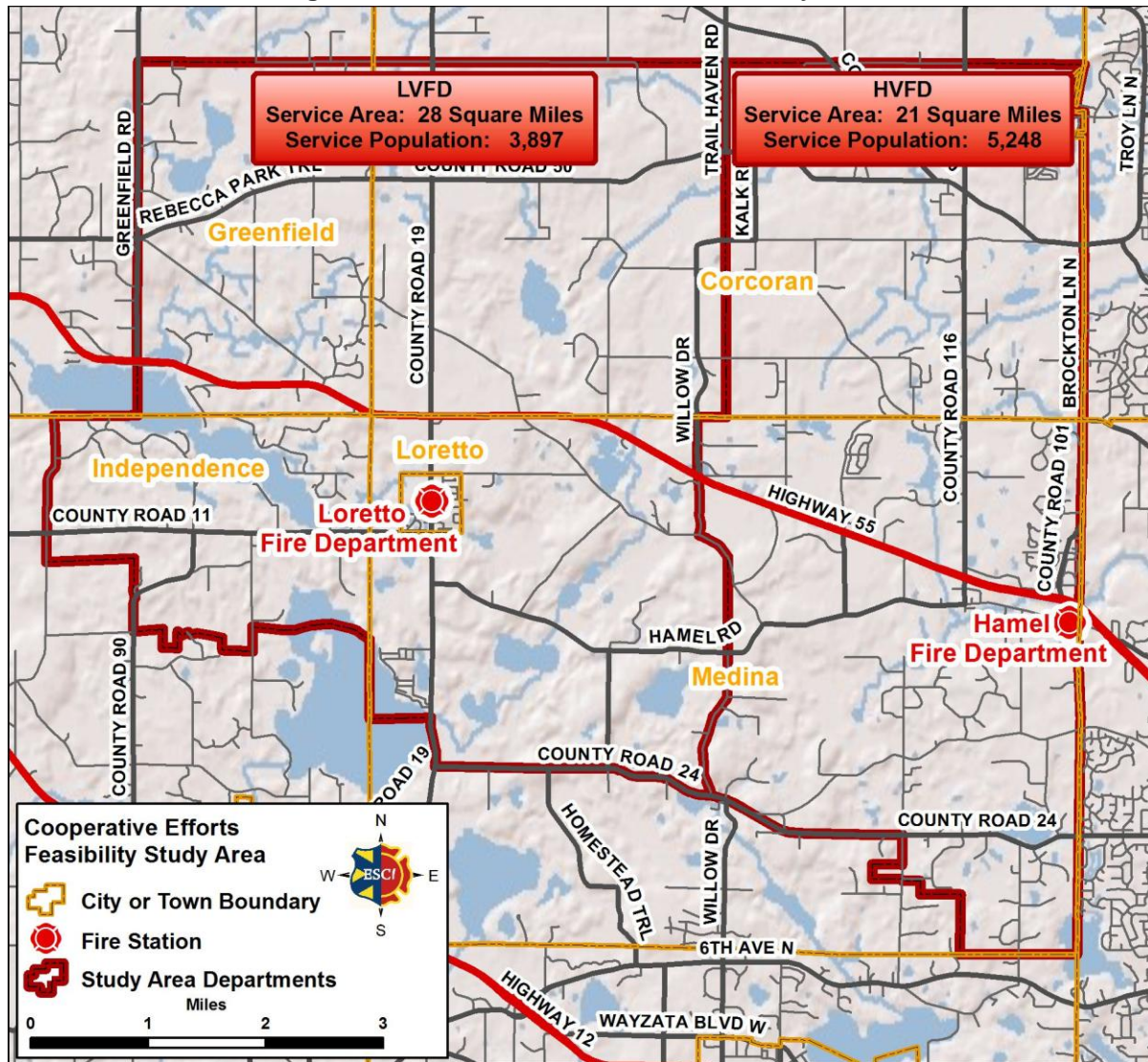
The existing facilities meet current needs, but minimally. It is important that both fire departments recognize and plan for future needs which are likely to include additional vehicle space and residential accommodations.

Service Distribution, Demand, Concentration, Reliability, and Performance

In this section, an analysis is presented of current conditions as they relate to the Loretto Volunteer Fire Department (LVFD) and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department (HVFD) facility distribution, service demand, and performance.

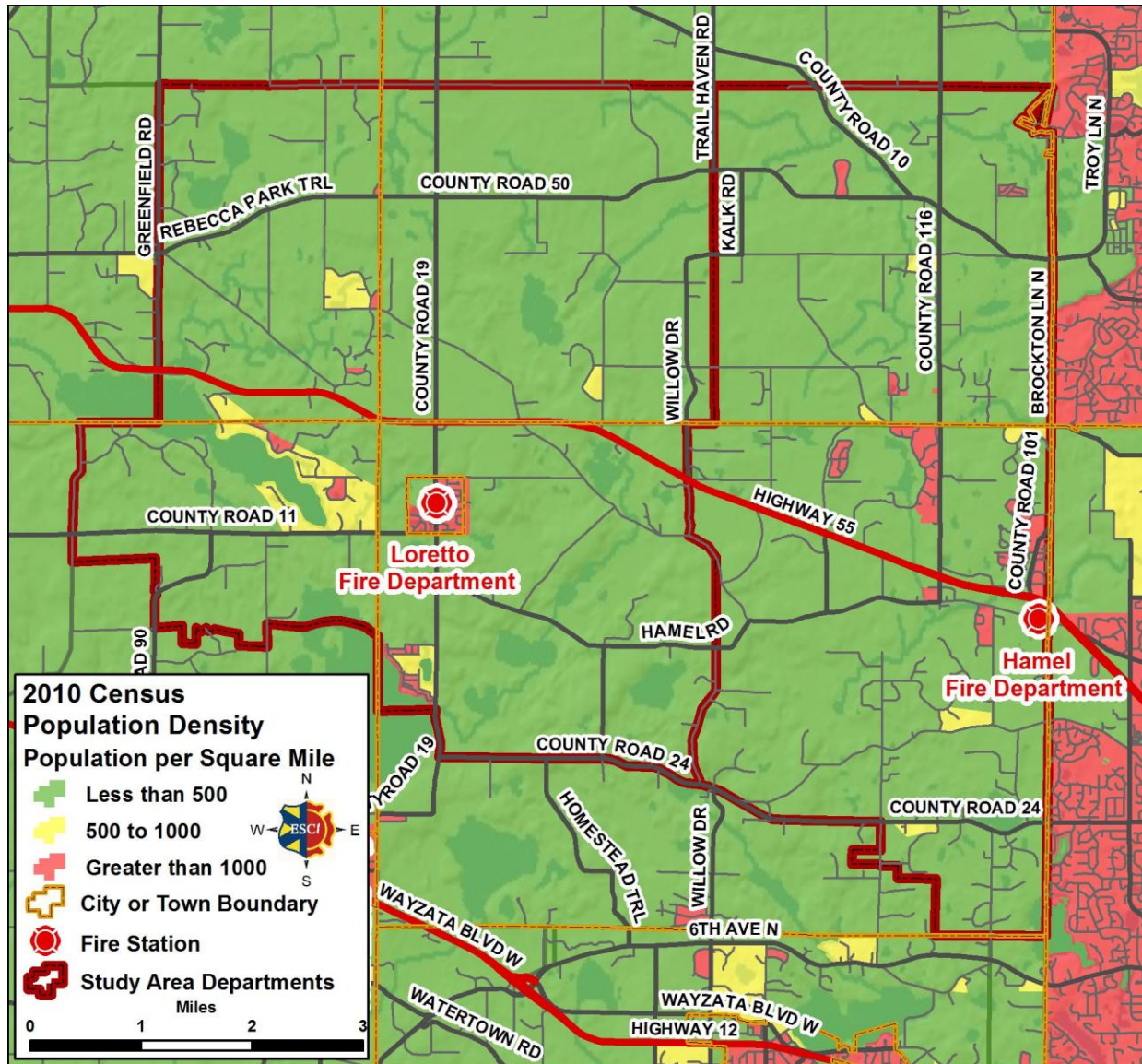
Figure 8 displays the service areas of LVFD and HVFD. The service area is calculated with GIS (Geographic Information System) software, using data provided by the clients. The population estimate is derived from 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data.

Figure 8: Loretto VFD and Hamel VFD Study Area



Using 2010 U.S. Census Bureau data, ESCI calculated the population density for the study area.

Figure 9: 2010 Census Data Study Area Population Density

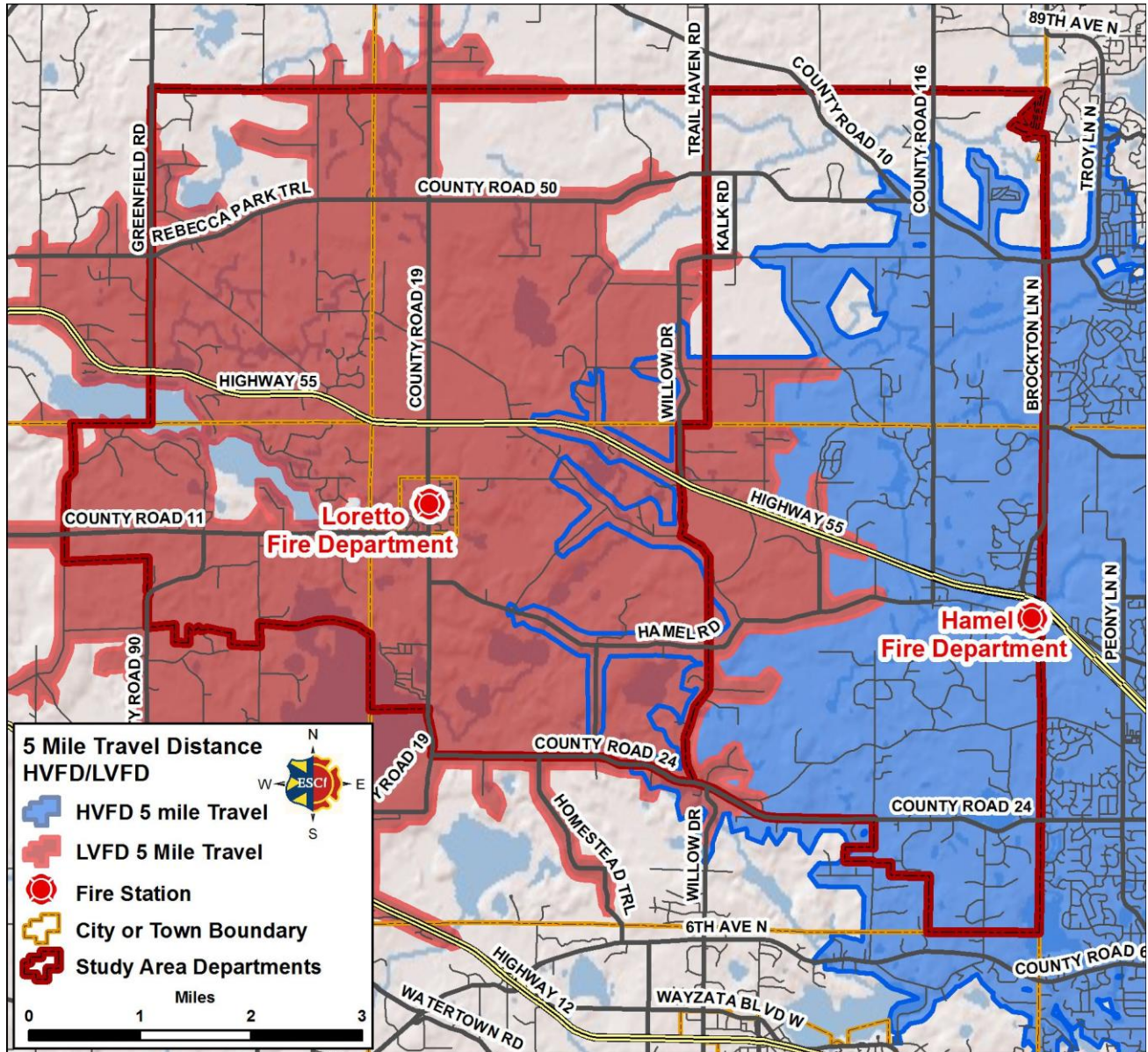


As depicted in Figure 14, there are small areas of higher population density within the HVFD and LVFD service areas, but the two departments have overall population densities of less than 500 persons per square mile (250 per square mile in HVFD and 139 per square mile in LVFD).

insurance rates for residential and commercial fire occupancies. ISO considers structures that are beyond five miles in travel distance from a fire station over the existing road network as unprotected or a protection class 10, which can result in increased cost when obtaining property insurance.

Figure 11 demonstrates the five-mile travel distances from each of the study area fire stations.

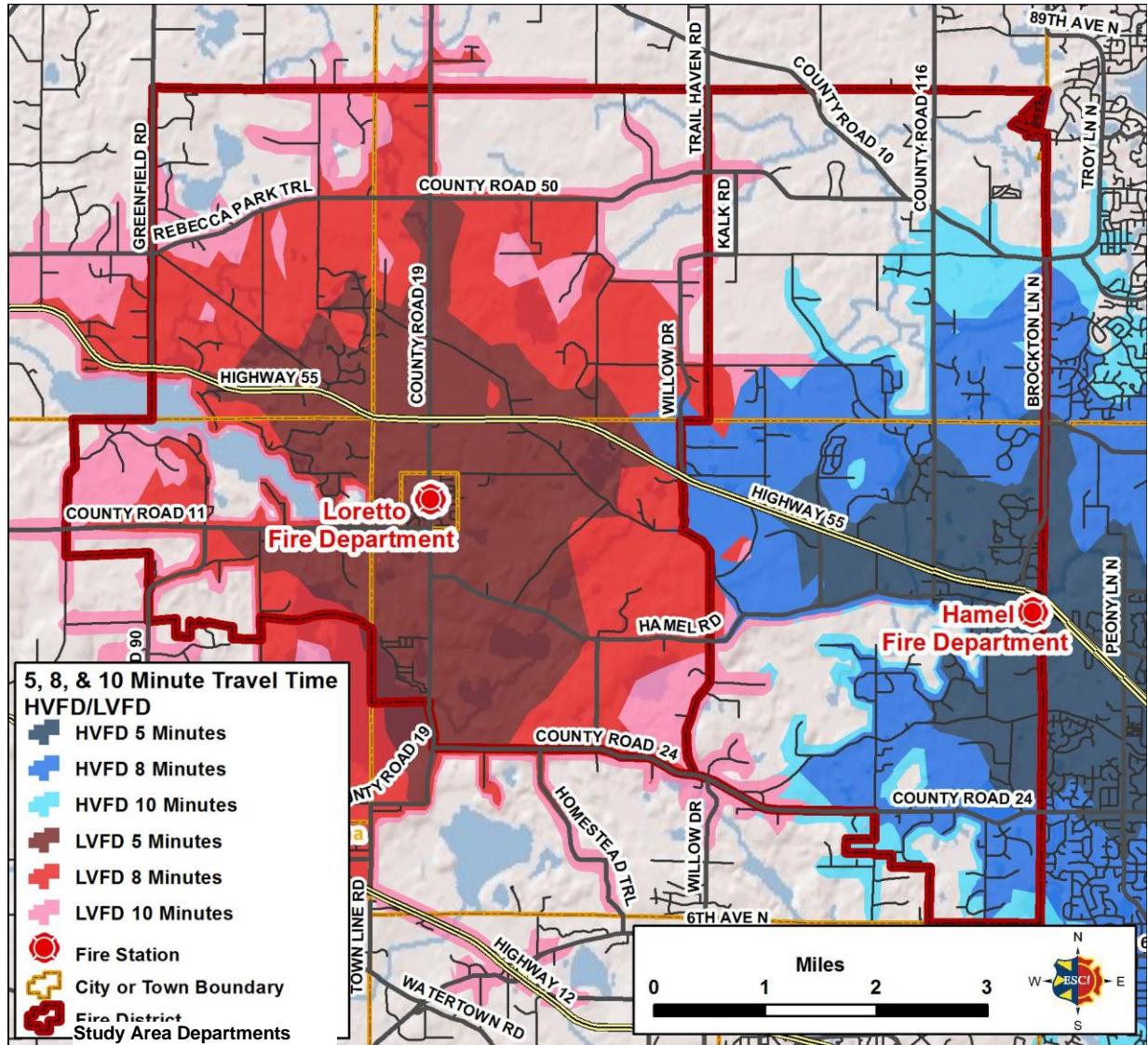
Figure 11: Five-Mile Travel Distances from Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Fire Stations



Approximately 97 percent of the road network in LVFD and 94 percent of the road network in HVFD fall within five miles travel of the departments' fire stations.

Another method of measuring the effectiveness of station distribution is to examine travel time over the current road network. In Figure 12, ESCI displays travel time from the Loretto and Hamel fire stations.

Figure 12: Travel Time Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Fire Stations

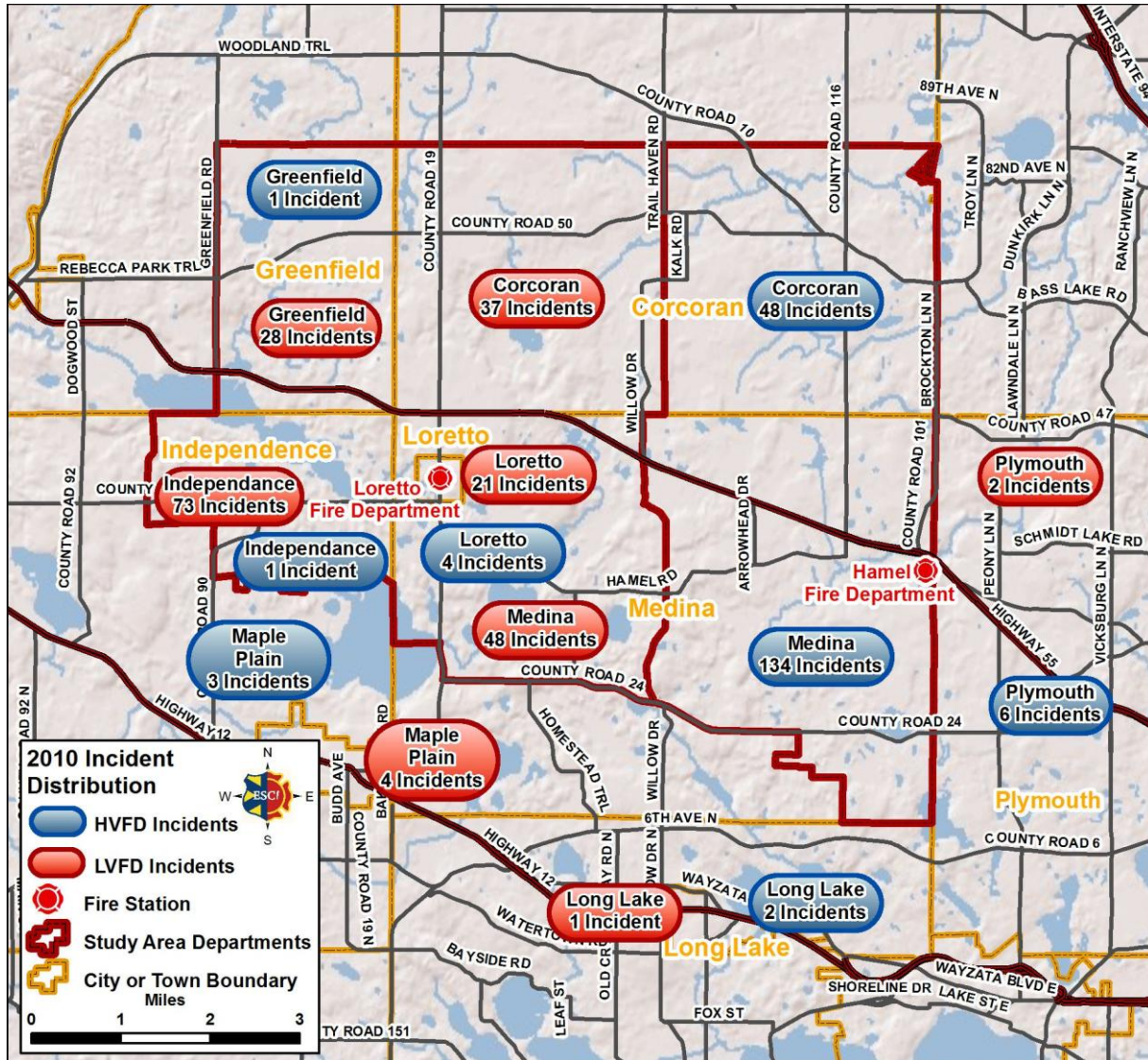


For this analysis, travel time over the road network is adjusted to compensate for reduced speeds for turns and traveling through intersections. GIS software calculations show that approximately 90 percent of HVFD's road network is within ten minutes of the HVFD station. Approximately 94 percent of the LVFD road network is within ten minutes of the LVFD station.

Service Demand

As noted in the preceding distribution analysis, LVFD and HVFD both serve multiple municipalities. In Figure 13, 2010 service demand is summarized by city.

Figure 13: 2010 Service Demand by Municipality



The preceding figure displays all calls for service in 2010, including mutual aid responses into adjacent municipalities.

In the following set of figures, ESCI examines current service demand by incident type and temporal variation. Both HVFD and LVFD provided ESCI with historical incident data from the National Fire Incident Reporting System (NFIRS) that both agencies report to the State Fire Marshal's office.

Figure 14: Hamel VFD Total Service Demand by Incident Type, 2008 – 2010

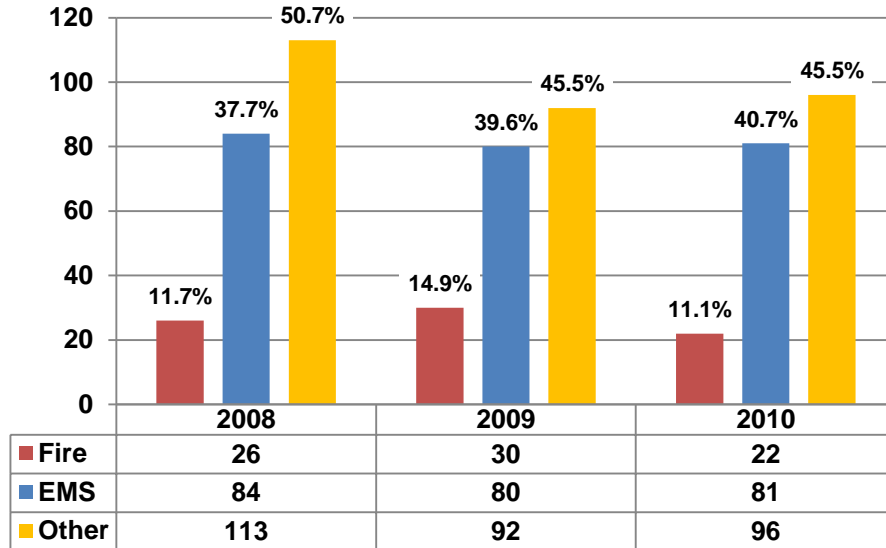
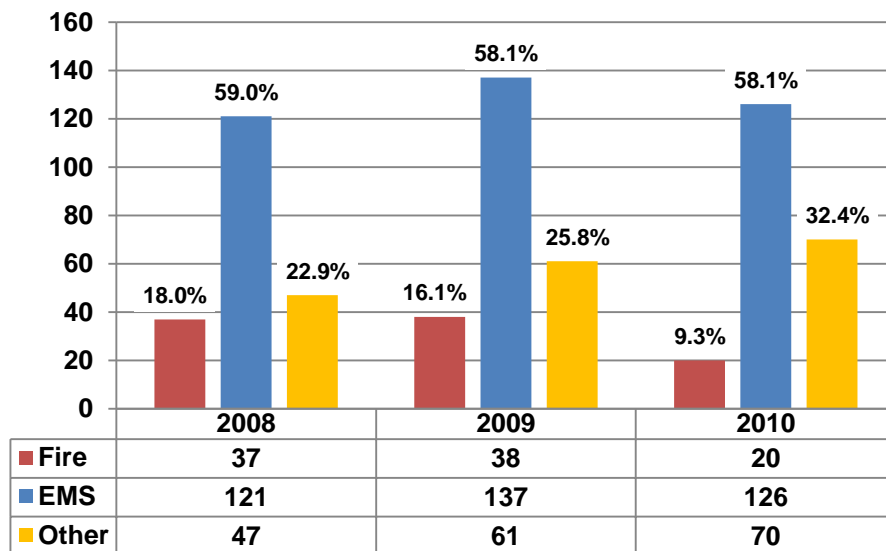


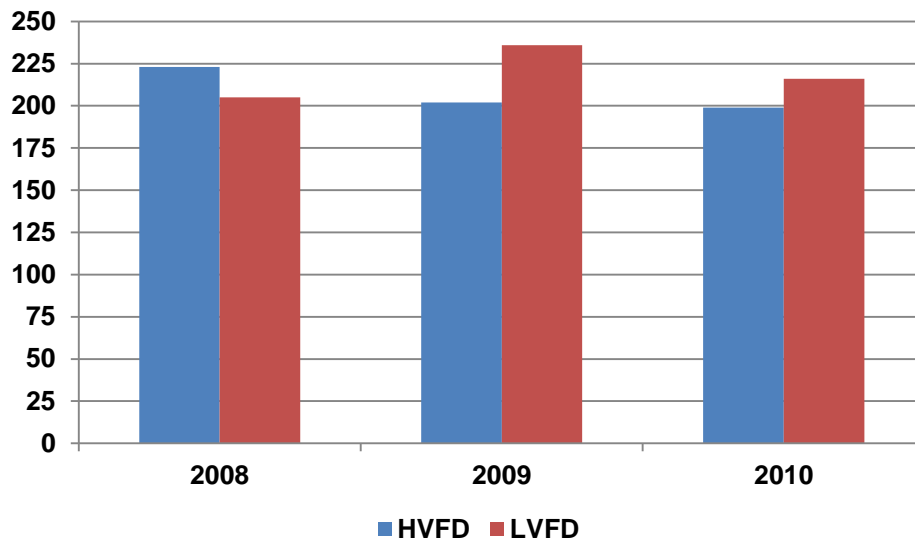
Figure 15: Loretto VFD Total Service Demand by Incident Type, 2008 – 2010



In the preceding charts, service demand within HVFD and LVFD is categorized as Fire, EMS, or Other (any incident not classified as a fire or EMS incident, including hazardous materials, wires down, alarm sounding, etc.) incident types. As with most fire departments, actual fires represent the smallest percentage of service demand. EMS and Other incident types constitute the majority of calls for service.

According to the NFIRS data, service demand in HVFD decreased by 10.8 percent from 2008 through 2010. Service demand in LVFD increased 5.1 percent during the same period.

Figure 16: Annual Service Demand, 2008 – 2010



During the same time period, calls for service fluctuated by month within a range of approximately 6 to 11 percent of total calls in the study area (The median is 8.3 percent). Generally, calls for service are lowest during the winter and early spring and peak during the summer months.

Figure 17: Service Demand by Month, 2008 – 2010

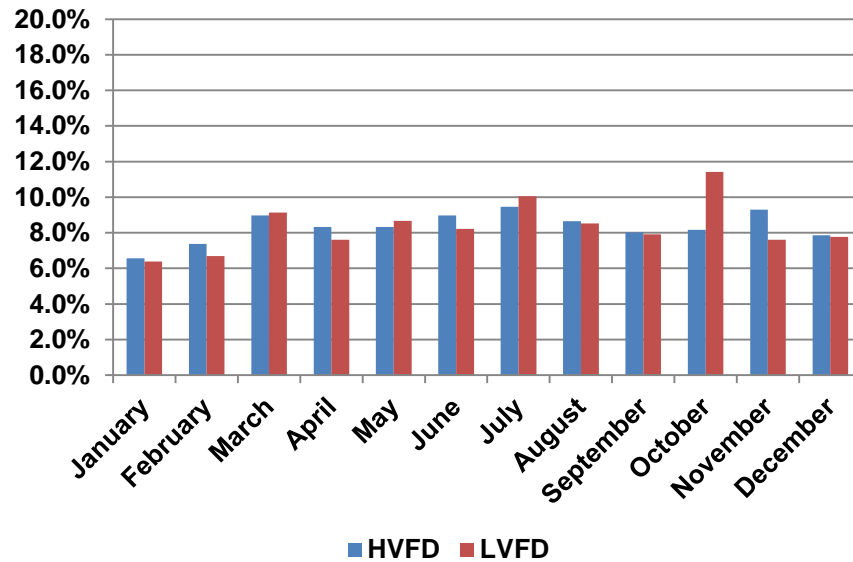
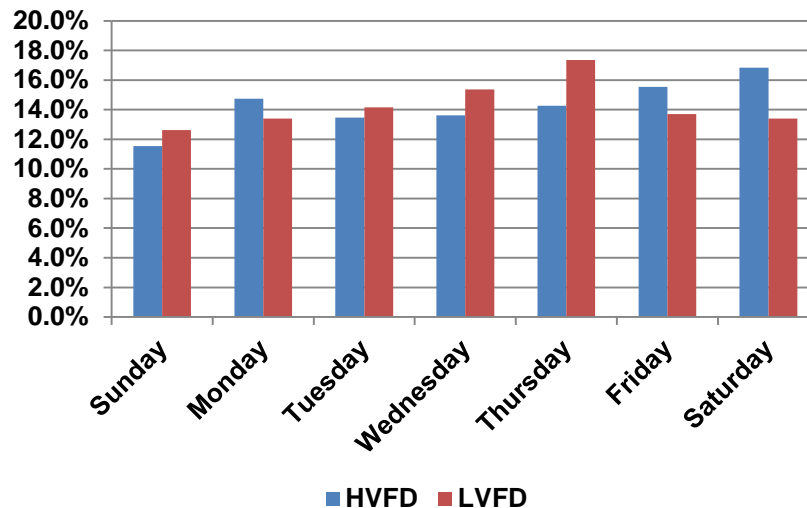


Figure 18 charts service demand by day of week:

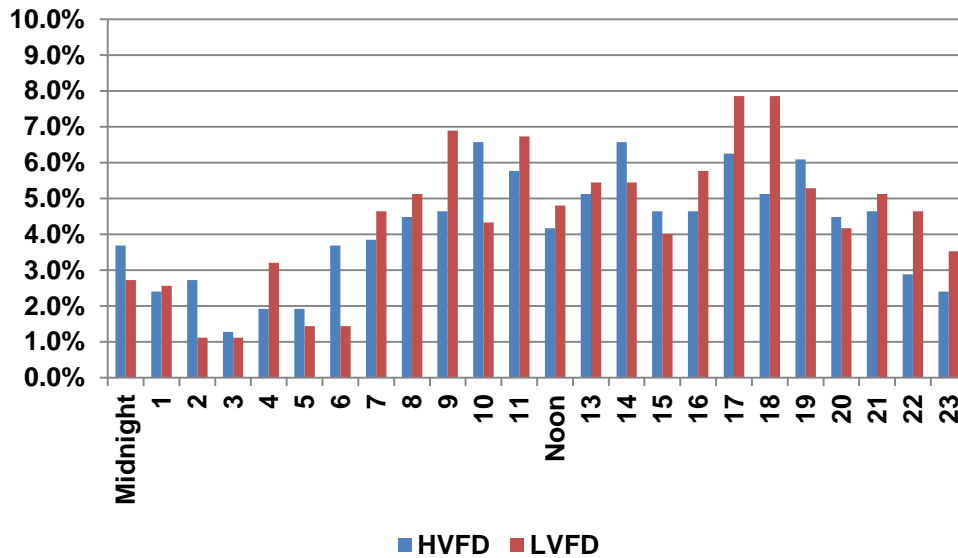
Figure 18: Service Demand by Day of Week, 2008 – 2010



The median for service demand by day of the week is 13.9 percent. Sunday has the least service demand (HVFD at 11.5 percent and LVFD at 12.6 percent). Saturdays have the highest service demand in HVFD (16.8 at percent), and in LVFD Thursdays display the highest service demand (17.4 percent).

Figure 19 demonstrates the effect that daily population activity has on emergency service demand by hour of day.

Figure 19: Service Demand by Hour of Day, 2008 – 2010



In for the period of 2008 through 2010, approximately 60 percent of total calls for service in the study area occurred between 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM. In departments staffed primarily by paid per call and/or volunteer responders, higher service demand during the work day can impact response performance due to reduced availability of personnel to staff apparatus. Response performance will be discussed later in this report.

Reliability and Concentration

The next series of figures examines workload within the Hamel Volunteer Fire Department.

Figure 20: Hamel VFD Responses per Apparatus, 2010

Apparatus	Responses
Engine11	87
Engine 12	7
Grass 11	65
Tanker 11	15
Tanker 12	4
Utility 11	7
POV	63

Figure 21: Hamel VFD Apparatus per Incident, 2010

Number of Apparatus	Incident Count
1	110
2	47
3	12
4	2

In Figure 20, the 2010 NFIRS data is summarized by the number of responses for each fire apparatus. POV signifies responses to an incident by personnel in their private vehicle. E11 (Engine) and G11 (Brush Engine) are the most active apparatus. There were 63 that included POV as part of the response. Figure 21 depicts the same data, summarized by the number of apparatus per incident. As in most communities, the majority of incidents are handled with a single apparatus; two or more apparatus responded to approximately 36 percent of HVFD incidents in 2010. In the following set of figures, ESCI displays the same information for Loretto Volunteer Fire Department.

Figure 22: Loretto VFD Responses per Apparatus, 2010

Apparatus	Responses
Engine 11	9
Engine 12	50
Rescue 11	54
Tanker 11	11
Utility 11	116
Utility 12	5
RTS (Respond to Scene)	69

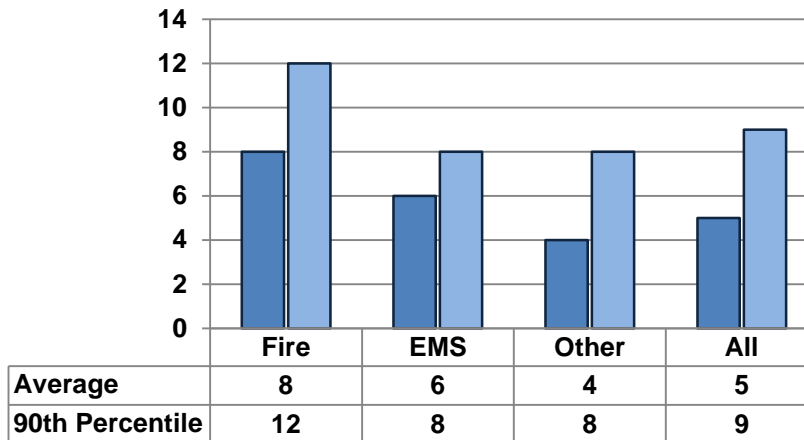
Figure 23: Loretto VFD Apparatus per Incident, 2010

Number of Apparatus	Incident Count
1	107
2	71
3	15
4	5

The data shows that Utility 11 is the busiest apparatus within LVFD. Engine 12 and Rescue 11 have similar workloads, with 50 and 54 responses respectively. RTS in the LVFD data is an abbreviation of “Respond to Scene”, which equates to POV (response to incident scene in private vehicle) in the HVFD data. As in HVFD, a single apparatus responds to the majority of incidents, but two or more apparatus respond to 46 percent of incidents in LVFD. It should be noted that mutual aid apparatus from other agencies are not included in the data sets for either department in this analysis.

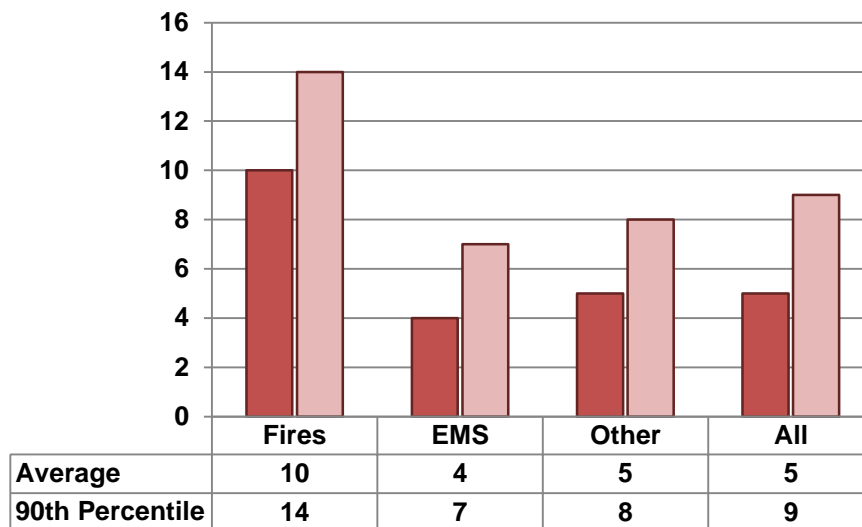
The goal of any emergency service delivery system is to provide sufficient resources (personnel, apparatus, and equipment) to the scene of an emergency in time to take effective action to minimize the impacts of the emergency. In the next analysis, ESCI examines the number of personnel on the scene of emergency incidents within HVFD and LVFD.

Figure 24: Hamel VFD Personnel on Scene, 2010



In the preceding figure, the 2010 NFIRS data is categorized as Fire, EMS, and Other and then used to extract the number of Hamel personnel at the scene of an incident. Once again, mutual aid personnel are not included in the data set. Not surprisingly, fire incidents display the highest concentration of personnel. The Other category displays the lowest concentration of personnel; this category of incidents includes mistaken alarms, smoke detector activations, and other types of incidents that often do not require response of more than one apparatus. The 90th percentile number of personnel is higher for all categories. This number signifies that, for EMS calls as an example, eight personnel or fewer were on scene 90 percent of the time. Figure 25 displays personnel concentration within LVFD in 2010.

Figure 25: Loretto VFD Personnel on Scene, 2010



Personnel concentration within Loretto is similar to that of Hamel. LVFD staffing at fire incidents is higher than HVFD fire staffing, but EMS staffing is slightly lower. When personnel concentration at all call types is considered, the average and 90th percentile number of personnel on scene is the same for both agencies. In the figures above ESCI did not include any personnel that were listed as standing by at the station (SAS or SBS) in the NFIRS data. HVFD averages 5 personnel per incident listed as standing by at station, and an average of 6 personnel per incident are listed as standing by at station within LVFD.

One of the national fire service peer standards, *NFPA 1720 Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments*⁴³ includes performance objectives that vary based on population density. The following figure provides those national standards.

Figure 26: Performance Objectives by Population Density

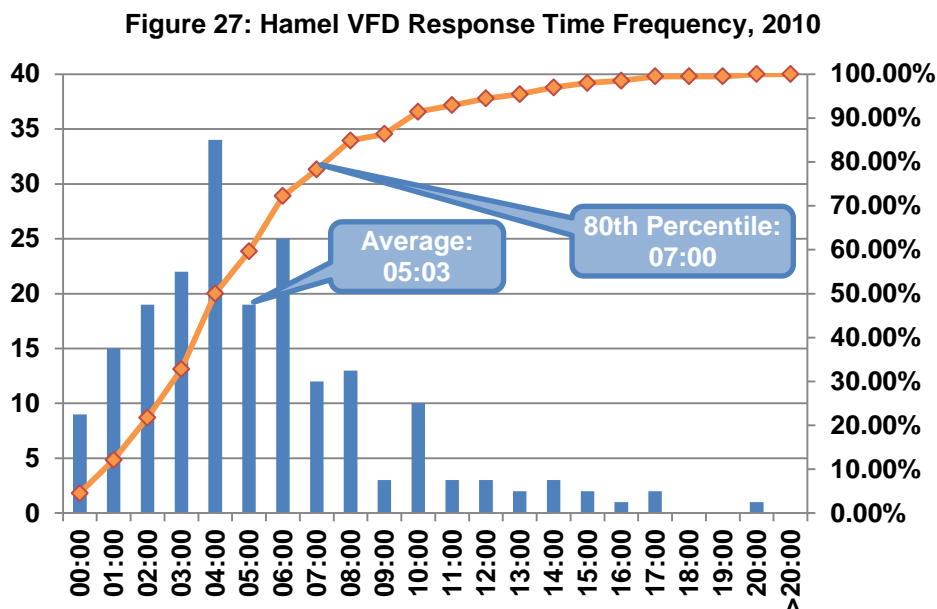
Classification	Population Density Per Square Mile	Response Time Performance Target	Staffing Performance Target	Percentile
Urban	>1,000	9	15	90th
Suburban	500 - 999	10	10	80th
Rural	<500	14	6	80th
Remote	499 or less	0	4	90th

Both HVFD and LVFD are staffed with Paid per Call personnel. Therefore, both agencies are considered volunteer fire departments in this instance and should strive to adhere to the *NFPA 1720* standard to measure staffing and response time performance. Earlier in this report, in Figure 9, ESCI presented population density data that showed that both Hamel and Loretto departments protect a service area that is predominately rural, with some areas of higher population density. The data presented in the reliability and concentration study above; demonstrates that both jurisdictions can meet the *NFPA 1720* standard for staffing performance for fire departments serving areas classified as rural (less than 500 persons per square mile). The last component in the Service Delivery analysis is a look at response time performance within HVFD and LVFD.

⁴³ *NFPA 1720, Standard for the Organization and Deployment of Fire Suppression Operations, Emergency Medical Operations, and Special Operations to the Public by Volunteer and Combination Fire Departments.* (National Fire Protection Association 2010.)

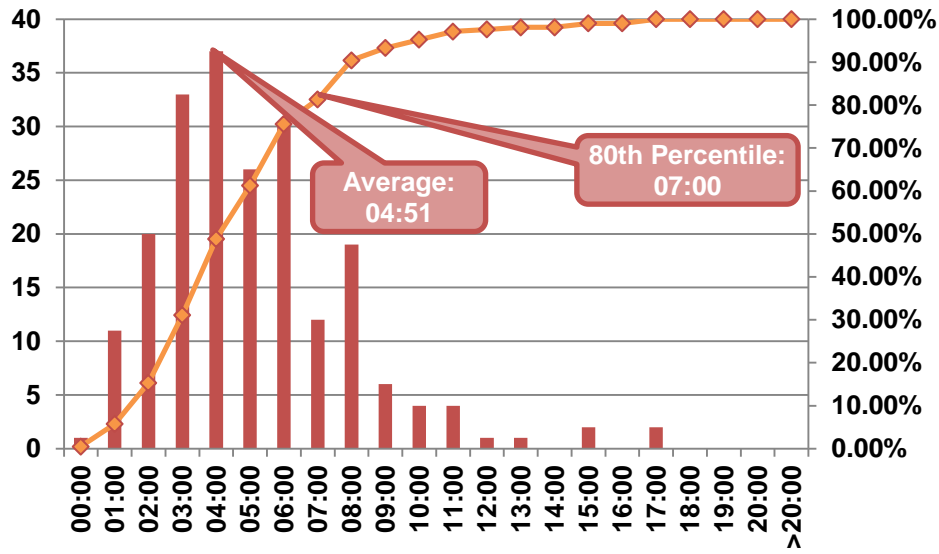
Performance Summary

Figure 27 and Figure 28 present the overall response performance within the Hamel and Loretto VFDs in 2010.



The most frequently recorded response time was within the fourth minute while the average overall response time in 2010 is calculated to be 5 minutes 3 seconds (05:03). *NFPA 1720* recommends that response performance be measured at the 80th percentile in rural areas. The 80th percentile response time within HVFD is 7 minutes (80 percent of incidents are answered in 7 minutes or less). Figure 28 displays response time frequency within LVFD.

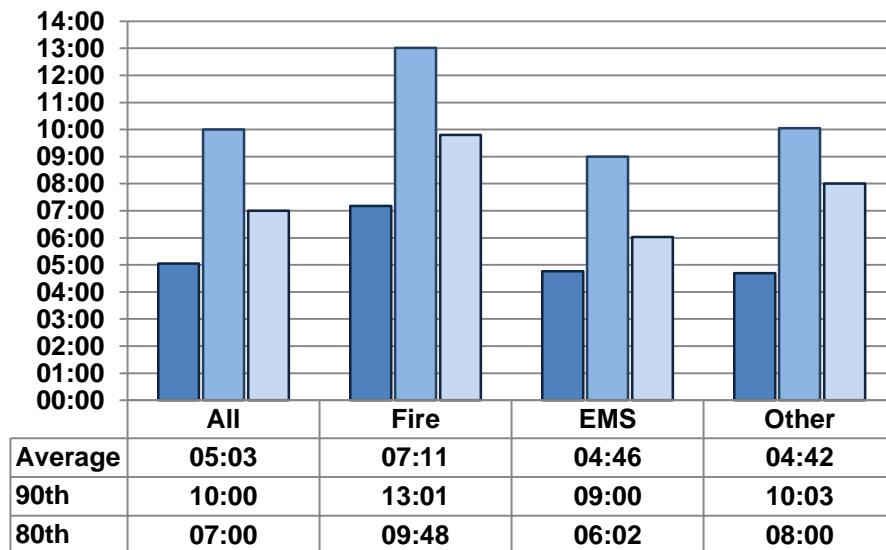
Figure 28: Loretto VFD Response Time Frequency, 2010



The most frequently recorded response time in LVFD is also in the fourth minute, with the overall average calculated at 4 minutes 51 seconds. As in HVFD, the 80th percentile response time is 7 minutes.

Response time performance can be affected by the type of incident response; due to factors such as donning protective gear prior to responding, waiting for sufficient staffing, or waiting for specially certified personnel for certain incident types or apparatus. Figure 29 summarizes 2010 response time performance by incident type in HVFD.

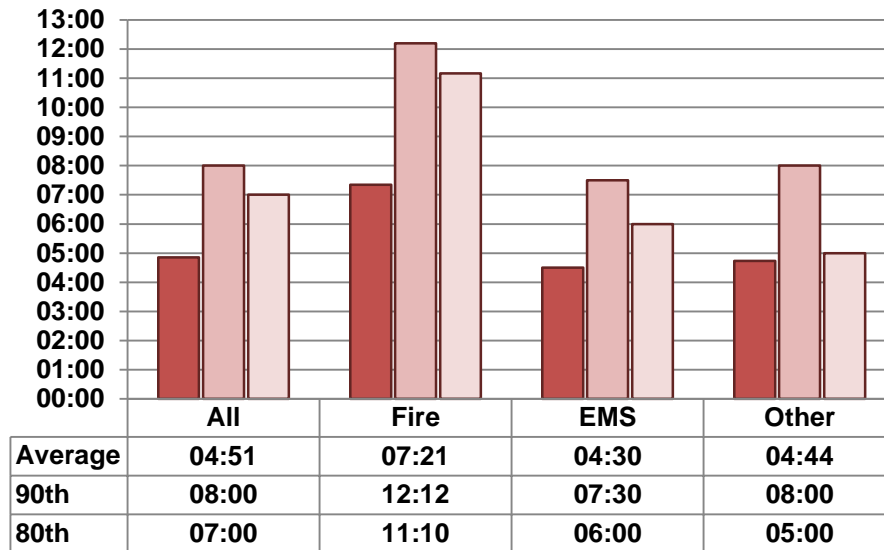
Figure 29: Hamel VFD Response Time by Incident Type, 2010



Fire incidents display the longest response times in the HVFD 2010 data. With an average response time of 7 minutes 11 seconds and the 80th percentile response time calculated at 9 minutes 48 seconds; the HVFD fire response performance is well under the *NFPA 1720* recommendation of 14 minutes for rural areas and 10 minutes for suburban areas.

In Figure 30, the LVFD response performance by incident type is displayed.

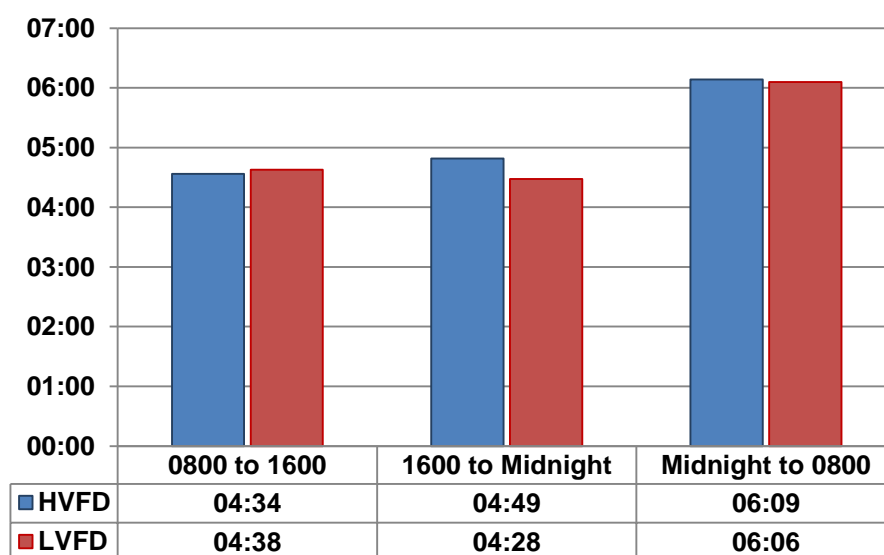
Figure 30: Loretto VFD Response Time by Incident Type, 2010



As with the Hamel data, Loretto fire responses in 2010 display the longest response performance. LVFD 80th percentile response performance meets the *NFPA 1720* recommendation for rural areas.

Response times can vary by time of day in reflection of service demand workload, personnel availability, traffic congestion, and weather, to name a few. The following chart compares how the average response time performance varies by the hour of day within the study area.

Figure 31: Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Response Performance by Time of Day, 2010



Response time performance is similar throughout the day in both the HVFD and LVFD data. The longest response times are in the period from Midnight to 8 AM in the morning. This pattern is common and is most probably related to personnel waking from sleep and responding from home to the fire station. Increased service demand and lack of available personnel during the work day are factors that can affect response performance. These issues do not appear to be negatively affecting response time performance within Hamel or Loretto.

Incident Management and Operations

Both Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Departments use standardized response assignments based on the type of call dispatched. These assignments are intended to provide the quantity and type of apparatus needed for the incident, as well as the correct number of staff to accomplish the critical tasks necessary to mitigate the emergency.

The agencies use the Incident Command System (ICS) for tactical incident management and the National Incident Management System (NIMS) as their standard management protocol. These methodologies for managing emergency incidents are widely accepted industry standards and are incorporated appropriately into the operations of all of the study agencies. A fire ground accountability system is in place for both departments, primarily implemented in alarms involving significant incidents.

Mutual and Automatic Aid Systems

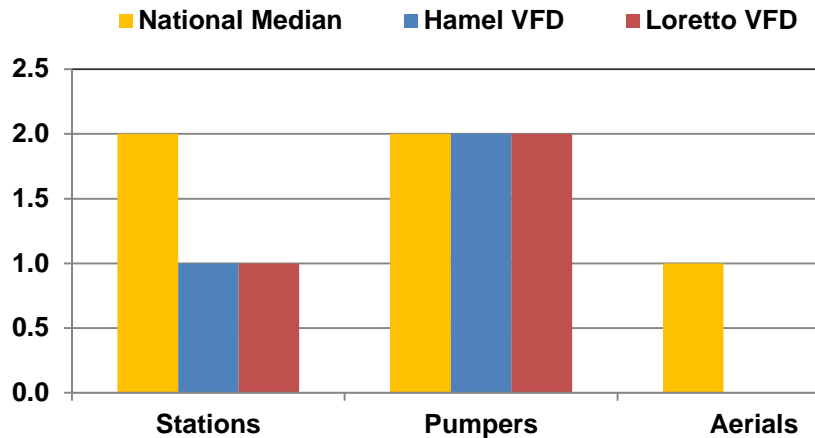
There are numerous mutual aid agreements, both formal and informal, in place between fire, police, and emergency medical agencies in the surrounding areas. Both Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Departments are members of the regional mutual aid associations and participate in these agreements.

Until recently, mutual aid has typically been employed only on an “as needed” basis where units are called for and specified one by one through an Incident Commander. A regional mutual aid box alarm system has been implemented which provides for pre-designated mutual aid responses to be dispatched automatically based on incident type and severity; and is coordinated through the regional communications center.

Comparable

Loretto VFD and Hamel VFD comparison to National and Regional Benchmarks

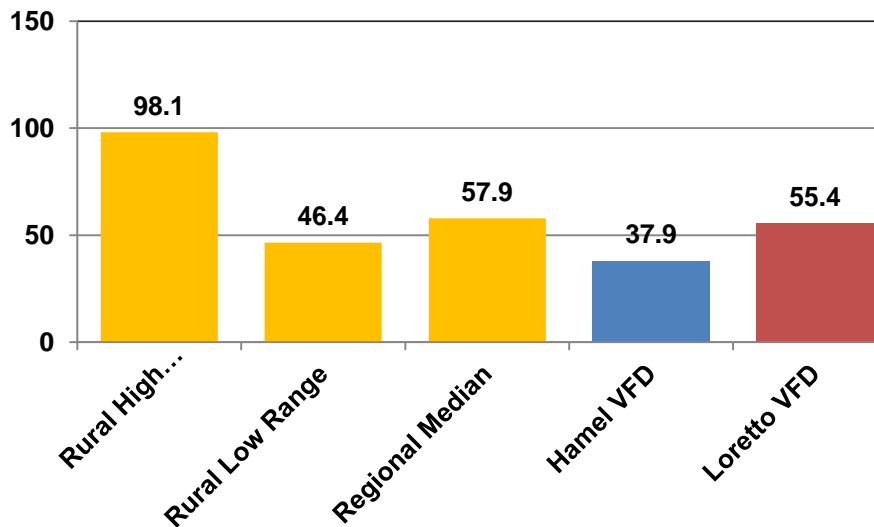
Figure 32: Capital Resources per 1,000 Residents



On a national scale, most fire departments serving a similar population (between 2,500 and 9,999) maintain slightly more fire stations, an equal number of frontline pumpers, and have one ladder truck. Neither LFD nor HFD has an aerial ladder truck, having appropriately chosen to rely on mutual and automatic aid.

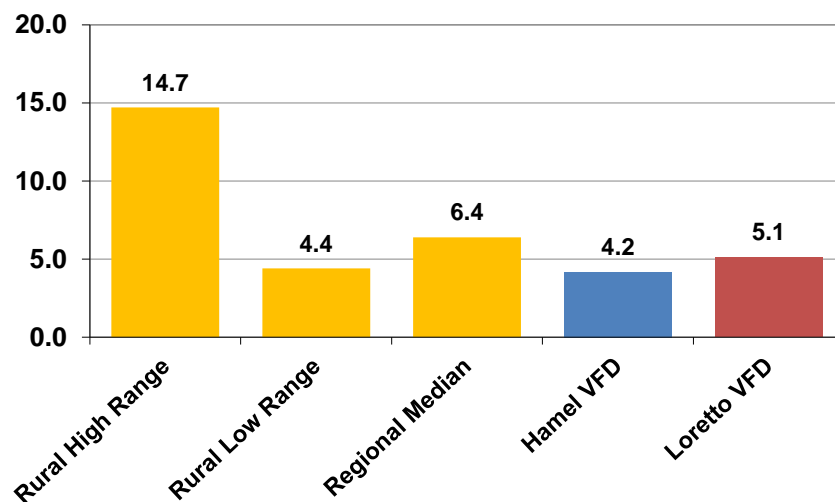
Figures are derived from national median resource rates per thousand population

Figure 33: Emergencies per 1,000 Residents



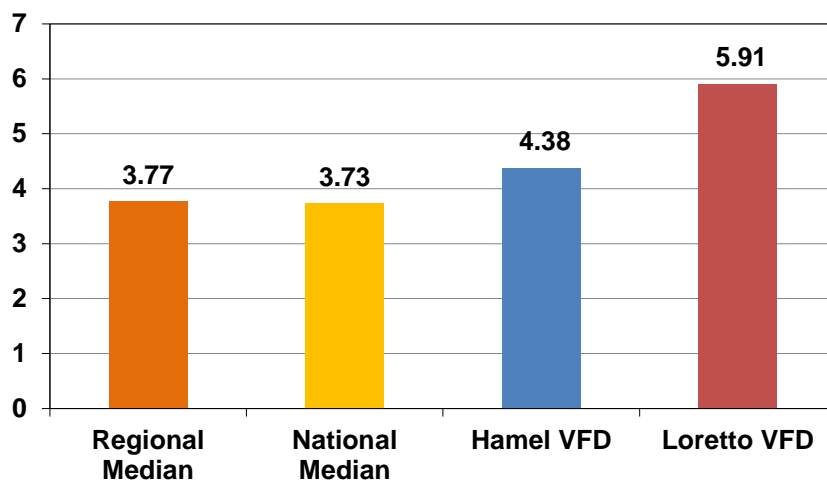
The number of calls experienced by the departments is in the mid-range of that experienced by rural departments. Both agencies fall below the regional median of emergencies for departments serving a similar population base. This is due in large part to the department's limited emergency medical responses

Figure 34: Fires per 1,000 Residents



Both LVFD and HVFD experience fires at a level that is very close to low range of regional medians for communities of equivalent size and population. Hamel VFD reports 22 fires and Loretto VFD recorded 20 fires in 2010, again, resulting in a small data set to be used for comparison to the medians.

Figure 35: Volunteer/Paid Per Call Firefighters per 1,000 Residents



LVFD and HVFD attract a higher number of Paid per Call firefighters per 1,000 residents when compared to national and regional medians for fire departments serving a similar population base (2,500 to 9,999).

Fiscal Analysis

This section of the report will provide a comparative snapshot of historical financial results and provide a projection of what each organization will look like through 2016 assuming that the organization structure and working conditions remain unchanged.

ESCI used a computer-driven model budget for each agency to allow a comparative examination of the actual public costs for each fire agency, and as a tool for analyzing the financial effects of any type of consolidation. Budget modeling is also used to measure the effects of the proposed change(s).

Economic Indicators

Economic indicators specific to Minnesota, Hennepin County, and the local area will provide the historical basis for projecting future costs that impact the operation of each organization. Information in this section is provided to substantiate the forecast and projected increases in taxable assessed value, revenue, and expenditures. This will be accomplished by reviewing historical home retail sales information, the basis for establishing property appraised valuation, historical and a ten-year historical review of CPI-U.

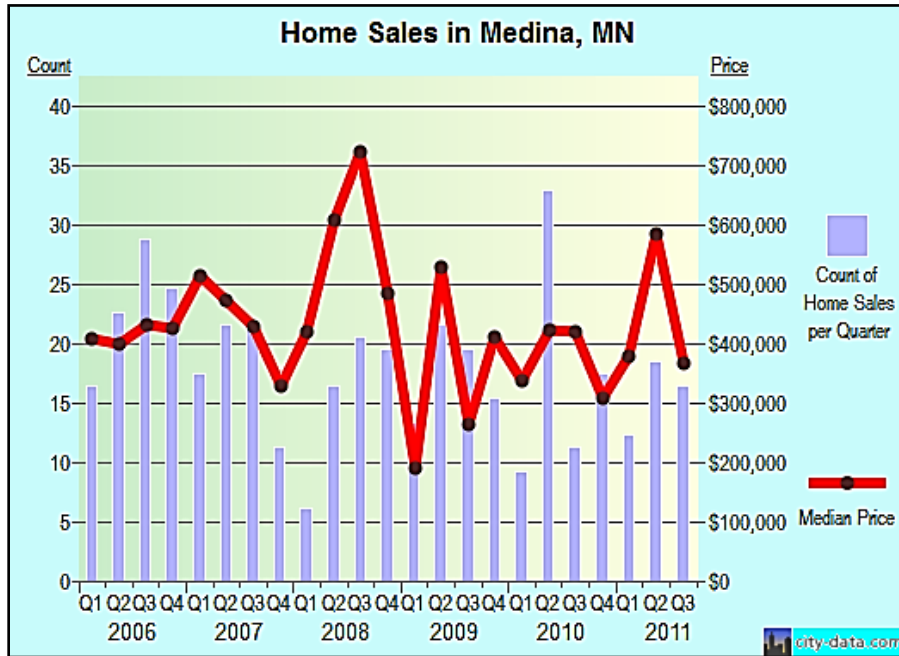
Property Valuation

A component of projecting AV (assessed valuation) growth is the valuation of property in each agency's area of responsibility. In Minnesota, property taxes provide most of the funding for local government services. Hennepin County collects the taxes and distributes the money between the County, cities, townships, school district and special districts. Each property's share of taxes is determined according to its value, use, and the property tax levies. In some Hennepin County municipalities a city assessor is responsible for property assessments, and in other municipalities the Hennepin County Assessor is responsible. Medina has a City Assessor while Loretto uses the services of the Hennepin County Assessor.

In the following figures the number of home sales and the median value by quarter from January 2006 through September 2011 for the cities of Medina and Loretto are shown.

Figure 36⁴⁴ shows that retail home sales in Medina ranged from approximately 6 to 33 homes sold each quarter with a price in the range of \$190,000 to \$720,000. The peak sales prices of \$720,000 were in the third quarter of 2008.

Figure 36: Median Value and Home Sales in Medina, 2006 – 9/30/2011

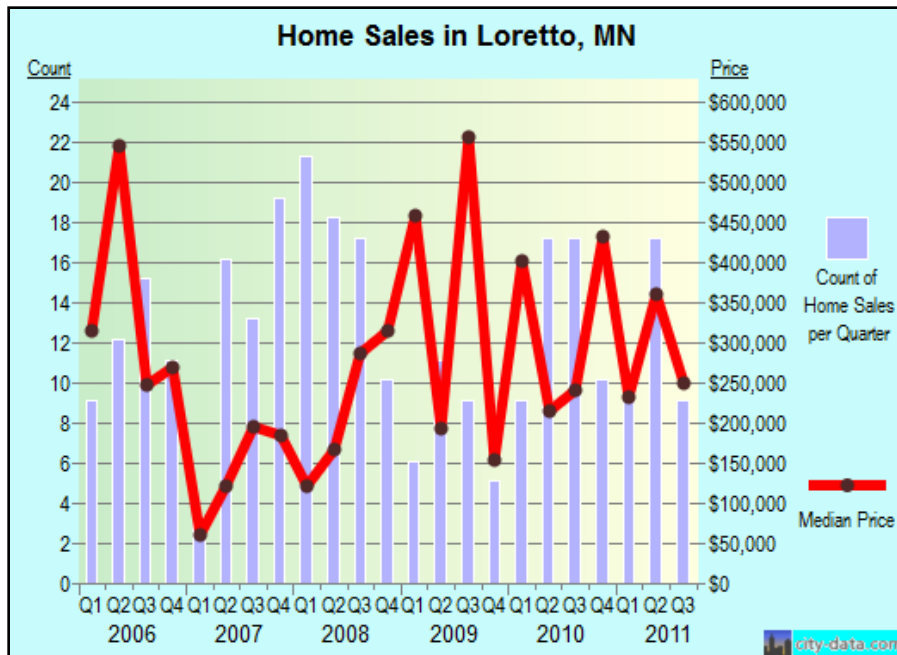


As illustrated in the next figure, Loretto retail home sales ranged from approximately 5 to 21 homes sold each quarter with a price in the range of \$60,000 to over \$550,000.⁴⁵ The peak sales prices of \$550,000 were in the third quarter of 2009.

⁴⁴ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Medina-Minnesota.html>.

⁴⁵ <http://www.city-data.com/city/Loretto-Minnesota.html>.

Figure 37: Median Value and Home Sales in Loretto, 2006 – 9/30/2011



Minnesota state law requires that the value and classification of real estate be established annually as of January 2 of each year.

Figure 38 is a summary table of the levy rate, population, per capita spending and tax rate for the five cities that receive a portion of service from the Hamel and Loretto VFDs.

Figure 38: Levy, Population per Capita Spending and Tax Rate, 2010

City	2010 Net Levy	Population	Per Capita Spending	Tax Rate
Corcoran	2,665,838	5,842	545.28	33.60
Greenfield	1,277,737	2,940	434.60	25.11
Independence	2,437,591	3,739	651.94	32.64
Loretto	332,074	609	545.28	46.78
Medina	2,756,158	5,026	548.38	17.23
Average	1,893,880	3,631	545.10	31.07

Tax rates varied widely between the five cities while the per capita spending was more closely aligned.

Annual Inflation Rate

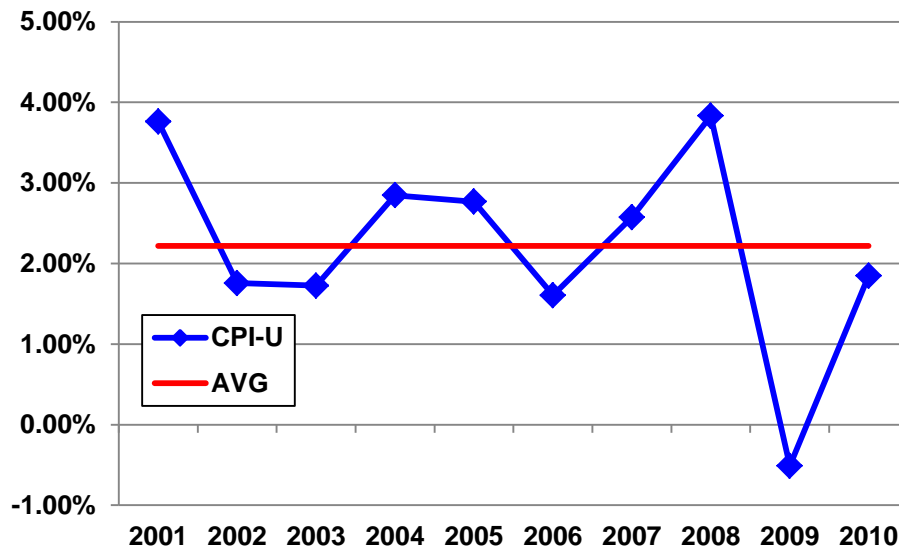
Inflation is also an important consideration when forecasting cost. For the purpose of this analysis, ESCI will use the average Consumer Price Index for all urban consumers (CPI-U) reported for the 2001 through 2010 period for the Minneapolis-St. Paul Statistical Area as

compiled by the U.S. Department of Labor.⁴⁶ The information is displayed in both table and graphical format (below).

Figure 39: Historical and Average CPI-U Table, 2001 – 2010

Year	CPI-U	Average
2001	3.76%	2.22%
2002	1.76%	2.22%
2003	1.73%	2.22%
2004	2.85%	2.22%
2005	2.77%	2.22%
2006	1.61%	2.22%
2007	2.57%	2.22%
2008	3.83%	2.22%
2009	-0.51%	2.22%
2010	1.85%	2.22%

Figure 40: Historical and Average CPI-U Graphic, 2001 – 2010

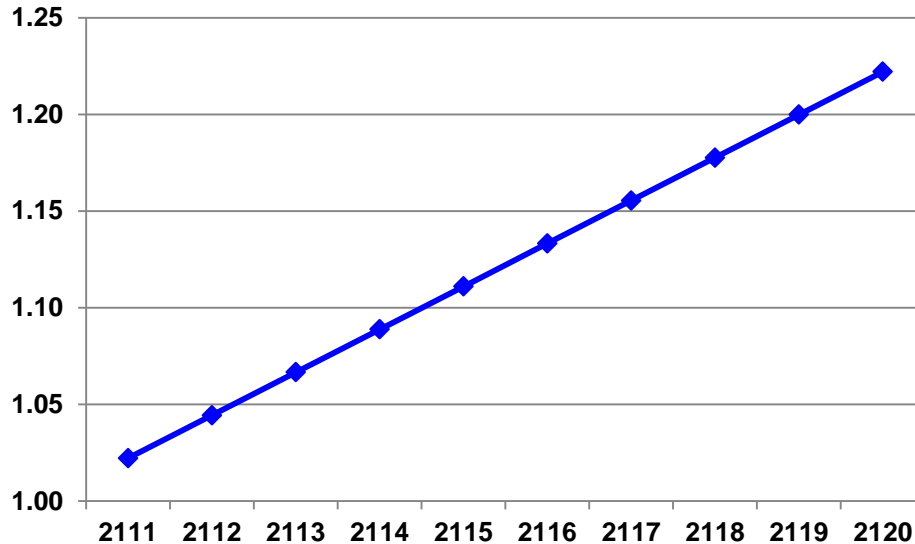


A historical review of the ten-year average Consumer Price Index – Urban (CPI-U) was 2.22 percent per year. This rate is used for analytical purposes during this financial review. The use of this value is an estimate to project potential cost trends in future years. However, the actual CPI-U for a given year could be higher or lower.

⁴⁶ U.S. Department of Labor, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Consumer Price Index—All Urban Consumers, Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN-WI, Series Id: CUURA211SA0, CUUSA211SA0 Not Seasonally Adjusted, Size Class D (under 50,000).

Historical CPI-U data was used to develop an inflation index for the years 2011 through 2020 (Figure 41). The CPI-U average increase will be applied to other revenue and expense categories of the 2011 budget to develop the forecast impact on the organization future financial stability.

Figure 41: CPI-U Forecast Budget Impact Graphic, 2011 – 2020



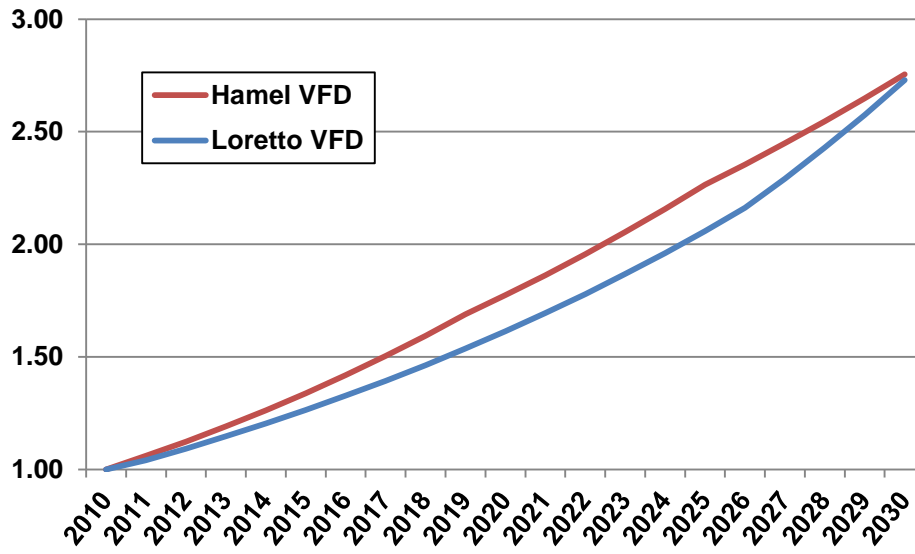
Expenditures in 2020 are projected to be approximately \$1.22 for each of today's dollars.

The Medina Fire Advisory Board provided a financial overview of three future fire service options to the Medina City Council for discussion on October 1, 2008. Options discussed were:

- Option I, maintain existing contracts with Hamel and Loretto to meet Medina's needs.
- Option II, facilitation of a merger of Hamel and Loretto to maximize resources, equipment, and services.
- Option III, construction of a central facility and maintaining contractual agreements with Hamel and Loretto to operate the facility and provide fire services.

In Option I, Hamel is projected to see initial growth and has an inflationary contracted amount of 6 percent through 2020, 5 percent from 2021 through 2025 and 4 percent thereafter. Loretto is projected using a 4 percent inflationary for contracted services until 2011, 5 percent from 2012 through 2025, 6 percent from 2027 through 2030, and 4 percent thereafter. Figure 42 illustrates the impact on contract amounts for Hamel and Loretto.

Figure 42: Forecast Contract Impact Graphic, 2011 – 2030



Hamel contract costs per \$1.00 in 2010 for the City of Medina are forecast to be \$2.76 in 2030 while Loretto is comparable at \$2.73.

Hamel VFD Historical Financial Review

Hamel VFD Historical Revenue

ESCI was analyzed the operational budget for Hamel VFD for six fiscal years. Figure 43 provides a detailed review of actual income for the years 2006 to 2010 and budgeted amounts for 2011.

Figure 43: Hamel VFD Historical Revenue, 2006 – 2011

Income	2006 Actuals	2007 Actuals	2008 Actuals	2009 Actuals	2010 Actuals	2011 Budget
Municipal Contracts						
Corcoran	29,693	31,233	30,925	34,347	39,088	39,328
Medina	118,772	124,728	132,836	137,658	134,499	135,326
Interest	324	2,550	3,059	2,185	2,009	2,000
Donations						
Hamel Fire Relief	30,200	20,000	20,500	20,500	25,000	21,010
Miscellaneous	0	100	38,073	4,000	2,413	500
Other	0	2,750	560	5,000	4,000	5,200
Total Income	178,989	181,361	225,953	203,690	207,009	203,364

Total revenue in 2010 included a training grant of \$4,000 and miscellaneous revenue from the Hamel Lions for the purchase of AEDs (automatic external defibrillator).

Hamel VFD Historical Expenditures

HVFD expenditures from 2010 actuals to the 2011 budget are forecast to decrease for non-capital expenses by 8.71 percent or \$19,374.

The following table (Figure 44) depicts the historical actual spending for Hamel VFD from 2006 to 2010 and budgeted expenditures for 2011.

Figure 44: Hamel VFD Historical Expenditures, 2006 – 2011

Description	2006 Actuals	2007 Actuals	2008 Actuals	2009 Actuals	2010 Actuals	2011 Budget
Administration	5,266	10,003	4,780	7,175	5,591	12,000
Building Fund	7,200	7,749	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,800
Dues and Subscriptions	1,872	1,635	1,417	2,556	1,092	1,838
Equipment	10,141	18,850	39,957	9,895	9,878	11,923
Fire Prevention	804	1,280	1,009	1,492	1,423	1,000
Fuel	1,760	1,596	2,730	1,767	2,077	2,000
Insurance	10,431	13,625	15,445	12,713	15,739	15,000
Payroll	38,588	45,362	43,752	49,756	62,603	48,000
FICA	2,358	2,761	2,652	3,025	3,811	2,847
Radios	19,402	19,285	21,850	23,983	23,262	24,112
Relief	30,000	31,500	33,075	34,729	35,771	36,844
Repair and Maintenance	19,813	14,640	39,712	27,640	28,424	19,000
Training	4,894	2,557	4,155	11,065	14,975	10,000
Utilities	8,500	8,583	9,092	8,839	9,313	11,000
Total Expenditures	163,035	181,433	229,434	204,444	221,759	203,364

Hamel VFD Reserve Funds

Reserve funds are maintained by Hamel VFD for future purchases of capital apparatus and equipment and to meet other financial obligations. Fund accounts and balances reported to ESCI for the budget year ending in 2010 are:

- Capital reserve fund, \$327,415
- Fireman's fund, \$28,104
- Benefit account, \$12,298
- Fidelity account (formerly the capital equipment fund), \$2,011

ESCI recommends that a reserve account be used for the funding of a vehicle replacement plan. ESCI developed a vehicle replacement plan for Hamel VFD projecting the useful life of vehicles and scheduling the replacement date of these vehicles based on the remaining useful life. The replacement date assumes that all vehicles will be placed in reserve status for five years prior to disposal.

Figure 45: Hamel VFD Vehicle Replacement Plan Summary

Vehicle No.	Purchase Date	Make	Useful Life	Years left as of 1/1/12	Purchase Cost	Required Reserve @12/31/11	Annual Reserve Requirement
Engine 11	2006	Spartan	15	6	525,000	210,000	35,000
Engine 12 ⁴⁷	1985	Ford L9000	15	0	525,000	525,000	35,000
Tanker 11	2007	Pierce	20	16	235,000	47,000	11,750
Tanker 12	1980	Ford L8000	20	0	235,000	235,000	11,750
Grass 11	2008	Ford F350	20	0	80,000	80,000	4,000
Utility 11	1988	Ford L7000	15	0	250,000	250,000	16,667
Total Annual Funding Requirement						1,347,000	114,167

Implementation of the above plan would require an initial fund balance of \$1,347,000 and an annual accrual/budget of \$114,167 adjusted for inflation.

Hamel VFD Forecast Financial Future

Using the assumptions outlined in the section Economic Indicators, projections of financial stability were created for HVFD. Future financial forecasts use the 2011 budget as the beginning point for all calculations. Any changes made to the base data are identified in the section under review.

Hamel VFD Forecast Revenue

Revenue for the HVFD is based on the anticipated financial requirement to operate the department. An annual budget is prepared and presented to the city of Medina for funding.

Figure 46: Hamel VFD Revenue Forecast, 2011 – 2016

Income	2011 Budget	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Municipal Contracts						
Corcoran	39,328	34,860	35,617	36,374	37,131	37,888
Medina	135,326	133,537	136,438	139,338	142,239	145,139
Interest	2,000	2,066	2,111	2,156	2,201	2,246
Donations						
Hamel Fire Relief	21,010	23,376	23,884	24,392	24,899	25,407
Miscellaneous	500	7,952	8,124	8,297	8,470	8,642
Other	5,200	2,713	2,772	2,831	2,890	2,948
Total Income	203,364	204,503	208,945	213,387	217,829	222,271

⁴⁷ E-12, owned by the City of Medina, was refurbished in 2006.

Corcoran is forecast to be contributing approximately 21 percent of the municipal contract revenue and Medina 79 percent. Over 82 percent of Hamel VFD's revenue in 2016 is forecast to be from the two cities.

Hamel VFD Forecast Expenditures

All expense categories were inflated at the ten-year average CPI of 2.22 percent. The following modifications have been made to the 2011 budget data:

- No adjustment was made to the building fund. Annual funding was forecast on the 2011 budget year contribution of \$7,800.
- Because of the variable nature of certain line items, increases for the following were based on the two-year average, 2010 and 2011:
 - Payroll
 - FICA
 - Repair and Maintenance
 - Training
 - Utilities

Figure 47: Hamel VFD Expenditure Forecast, 2011 – 2016

Description	2011 Budget	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Administration	12,000	12,266	12,533	12,799	13,066	13,332
Building Fund	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,800	7,800
Dues and Subscriptions	1,838	1,774	1,812	1,851	1,889	1,928
Equipment	11,923	17,146	17,519	17,891	18,264	18,636
Fire Prevention	1,000	1,194	1,220	1,246	1,272	1,298
Fuel	2,000	2,032	2,077	2,121	2,165	2,209
Insurance	15,000	14,132	14,439	14,746	15,053	15,360
Payroll	48,000	56,529	57,757	58,985	60,213	61,441
FICA	2,847	3,403	3,477	3,551	3,625	3,699
Radios	24,112	24,213	24,739	25,265	25,791	26,317
Relief	36,844	34,400	35,148	35,895	36,642	37,389
Repair and Maintenance	19,000	25,424	25,976	26,528	27,080	27,633
Training	10,000	8,117	8,294	8,470	8,646	8,823
Utilities	11,000	10,382	10,608	10,833	11,059	11,284
Total Expenditures	203,364	218,814	223,397	227,981	234,579	237,147

Expenditures are forecast to increase 8.38 percent over the five-year period 2012 to 2016.

Loretto VFD Historical Financial Review

Loretto VFD Historical Revenue

ESCI was provided the operational budget for LVFD for three fiscal years. Figure 48 provides a detailed review of income actuals for 2009 and 2010 and the budgeted amounts for 2011.

Figure 48: Loretto VFD Historical Revenue, 2009 – 2011

Income	2009 Actuals	2010 Actuals	2011 Budget
City Contracts	334,687	333,964	326,500
Donations	3,279	3,081	19,931
Relief Association	22,732	20,586	19,000
Interest	208	456	300
Money Market Interest	664	0	700
Rent	4,800	4,800	6,000
Grants	10,302	1,230	8,510
Refunds	4,800	12,946	6,000
Total	381,472	377,063	386,941

The growth in the budgeted revenue for 2011 is connected to an increase in donations over 2009 and 2010.

Loretto VFD Historical Expenditures

The following table depicts the actual spending for LVFD 2009 and 2010 and the budgeted expenditures for 2011.

Figure 49: Loretto VFD Historical Expenditures, 2009 – 2011

Description	2009 Actuals	2010 Actuals	2011 Budget
Staff Salaries	20,000	20,000	20,000
Officers Pay	6,050	6,050	6,050
Training Drill Pay	22,340	12,250	13,000
Task Reimbursement (Points)	15,370	6,305	2,840
Salaries (Firefighters)	29,750	34,540	28,750
Meeting Salaries	2,540	2,410	2,350
FICA	13,670	17,388	17,000
Workers Compensation Insurance	7,322	8,342	8,500
Office Supplies	1,866	1,732	1,500
Computer Software	727	1,662	1,000
Training Supplies	19,648	15,935	17,000
Equipment Supplies	5,763	14,766	10,000
PPE Supplies	8,155	20,594	17,000
Motor Fuels	2,890	3,673	3,500
Cleaning Supplies	39	0	0
Fire Prevention	4,965	6,659	6,500
Medical Supplies	3,078	4,451	4,000
Safety Supplies	1,036	1,383	1,500
Professional Services	5,015	1,785	2,000
Medical Services	9,548	11,644	5,000
Telephone	3,907	4,105	4,200
Postage	373	150	300
Pagers – Fire Department	6,410	5,138	5,000
Mileage	278	806	750
Printing	182	120	200
General Liability	12,298	13,731	14,500
Electricity	3,099	2,973	3,500
Gas Service	3,272	2,062	4,000
Garbage	0	0	0
Office Rent	0	6,000	6,000
Building Maintenance/Repair	10,951	9,999	10,000
Other Equipment Repair	19,615	21,997	15,000
Radio Rental	11,490	6,745	10,000
Dues and Subscriptions	2,344	2,760	2,000
Conferences & Schools	14,001	13,101	13,000
Donations/Funerals	2,837	1,580	1,500
Capital Outlay	35,265	0	0
Building Sinking Fund	0	0	0
Salaries – Sinking Fund	0	0	0
Pension	60,000	78,000	70,000
Bank	35	0	0
Payroll Expense	10,801	16,534	16,000
Total Expenditures	376,929	377,371	343,440

Excluding capital expenditures, LVFD expenditures from 2009 actuals to the 2011 budget are forecast to decrease approximately 8.9 percent for the three years.

Loretto VFD Reserve Funds

Reserve funds are maintained by LVFD for future purchases of capital apparatus and equipment, pay off debt, and to meet other financial obligations. Fund accounts and balances reported to ESCI were actuals for 2009 and 2010 and budgeted amounts for 2011. Figure 50 shows the ending funds balance by account and cash on hand for the three years.

Figure 50: Loretto VFD Ending Fund Balance, 2009 – 2011

Account	2009 Actuals	2010 Actuals	2011 Budget
Checking Account	174,840	178,092	237,766
Money Market Account	109,294	110,230	110,230
Total	284,134	288,323	347,996
Less Sinking Fund			
Salaries Sinking Fund	57,250	57,250	57,250
Building Sinking Fund	55,718	55,718	55,718
Cash on Hand	171,165	175,354	235,028

Cash on hand is budgeted to increase approximately 37 percent in 2011 over 2009.

ESCI recommends that a reserve account be used for the funding of a vehicle replacement plan. ESCI developed a vehicle replacement plan for LVFD projecting the useful life of vehicles and scheduling the replacement date of these vehicles based on the remaining useful life. The replacement date assumes that all vehicles will be placed in reserve status for five years prior to disposal.

Figure 51: Loretto VFD Vehicle Replacement Plan Summary

Vehicle No.	Purchase Date	Make	Useful Life	Years left as of 1/1/12	Purchase Cost	Required Reserve @12/31/11	Annual Reserve Requirement
Engine 11	1996	Pierce	15	0	525,000	525,000	35,000
Engine 12	2000	Pierce	15	3	525,000	420,000	35,000
Tanker 11	2007	Pierce	20	15	235,000	58,750	11,750
Rescue 11	1991	International	20	0	300,000	300,000	15,000
Utility 11	1990	Ford 350	15	0	45,000	45,000	3,000
Utility 12	2006	Ford 250	15	9	3,000	1,200	200
Grass 12	2009	Polaris	15	12	9,000	1,800	600
Total Annual Funding Requirement					1,642,000	1,351,750	100,550

Implementation of the above plan would require an initial fund balance of \$1,351,750 and an annual accrual/budget of \$100,550, adjusted for inflation.

Loretto VFD Forecast Financial Future

Using the assumptions outlined in the section Economic Indicators, projections of financial stability were created for LVFD. Future financial forecasts use the 2011 budget as the beginning point for all calculations. Any changes made to the base data, are identified in the section under review.

Loretto VFD Forecast Revenue

Revenue for the LVFD is based on the anticipated financial requirement to operate the department. An annual budget is prepared and presented to the cities for funding.

Figure 52: Loretto VFD Revenue Forecast, 2011 – 2016

Income	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
City Contracts	326,500	333,749	340,999	348,248	355,497	362,746
Donations	19,931	20,374	20,816	21,259	21,701	22,144
Relief Association Donation	19,000	19,422	19,844	20,266	20,687	21,109
Interest	300	307	313	320	327	333
Money Market Interest	700	716	731	747	762	778
Rent	6,000	6,133	6,266	6,400	6,533	6,666
Grants	8,510	8,699	8,888	9,077	9,266	9,455
Total	380,941	389,399	397,857	406,315	414,773	423,231

Over 86 percent of Loretto VFD's revenue in 2016 is forecast as generated from providing contract services to cities.

Loretto VFD Forecast Expenditures

Payroll expense was increased by 3.00 percent of the three-year average, 2009 through 2011; all other expense categories were inflated at the ten-year average CPI of 2.22 percent. The following modifications have been made to the 2011 budget data:

- Because of the variable nature of certain line items, increases for the following were based on the three-year average, 2009 through 2011:
 - Medical services
 - Other equipment repair
 - Pension

Figure 53: Loretto VFD Expenditure Forecast, 2011 – 2016

Description	2011 Budget	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Staff Salaries	20,000	20,600	21,200	21,800	22,400	23,000
Officers Pay	6,050	6,184	6,319	6,453	6,587	6,722
Training Drill Pay	13,000	13,289	13,577	13,866	14,155	14,443
Task Reimbursement (Points)	2,840	2,903	2,966	3,029	3,092	3,155
Salaries (Firefighters)	28,750	29,388	30,027	30,665	31,303	31,942
Meeting Salaries	2,350	2,402	2,454	2,507	2,559	2,611
FICA	17,000	17,377	17,755	18,132	18,510	18,887
Workers Comp. Insurance	8,500	8,689	8,877	9,066	9,255	9,444
Office Supplies	1,500	1,533	1,567	1,600	1,633	1,667
Computer Software	1,000	1,022	1,044	1,067	1,089	1,111
Training Supplies	17,000	17,377	17,755	18,132	18,510	18,887
Equipment Supplies	10,000	10,222	10,444	10,666	10,888	11,110
PPE Supplies	17,000	17,377	17,755	18,132	18,510	18,887
Motor Fuels	3,500	3,578	3,655	3,733	3,811	3,889
Cleaning Supplies	0	0	0	0	0	0
Fire Prevention	6,500	6,644	6,789	6,933	7,077	7,222
Medical Supplies	4,000	4,089	4,178	4,266	4,355	4,444
Safety Supplies	1,500	1,533	1,567	1,600	1,633	1,667
Professional Services	2,000	2,044	2,089	2,133	2,178	2,222
Medical Services	5,000	8,924	9,118	9,312	9,506	9,700
Telephone	4,200	4,293	4,387	4,480	4,573	4,666
Postage	300	307	313	320	327	333
Pagers – Fire Department	5,000	5,111	5,222	5,333	5,444	5,555
Mileage	750	767	783	800	817	833
Printing	200	204	209	213	218	222
General Liability	14,500	14,822	15,144	15,466	15,788	16,110
Electricity	3,500	3,578	3,655	3,733	3,811	3,889
Gas Service	4,000	4,089	4,178	4,266	4,355	4,444
Garbage	0	0	0	0	0	0
Office Rent	6,000	6,133	6,266	6,400	6,533	6,666
Building Maintenance/Repair	10,000	10,222	10,444	10,666	10,888	11,110
Other Equipment Repair	15,000	19,290	19,709	20,128	20,547	20,966
Radio Rental	10,000	10,222	10,444	10,666	10,888	11,110
Dues & Subscriptions	2,000	2,044	2,089	2,133	2,178	2,222
Conferences and Schools	13,000	13,289	13,577	13,866	14,155	14,443
Donations/Funerals	1,500	1,533	1,567	1,600	1,633	1,667
Capital Outlay	0	0	0	0	0	0
Building Sinking Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salaries – Sinking Fund	0	0	0	0	0	0
Pension	70,000	70,873	72,412	73,952	75,491	77,030
Bank	0	0	0	0	0	0
Payroll Expense	16,000	16,355	16,710	17,066	17,421	17,776
Total Expenditures	343,440	358,310	366,245	374,180	382,116	390,051

Expenditures are forecast to increase 13.57 percent over the five-year period.

Model Budget

The process to convert the financial records of each agency to a model budget requires certain conventions and assumptions. First, the annual budgets of two agencies are reformatted for easier comparison. We categorize the line item accounts into three major classifications: personal services, materials and services, and capital outlay. The classifications are further sub-divided to permit the tracking of program cost (such as fringe benefits, maintenance, and volunteer firefighters). All positions are identified and indexed to compensation paid during the baseline year (2010 actual). Each position is extrapolated to the model budget based on the costs associated with the job (compensation and benefits) for a full-year.

We identify all revenues and subtract them from agency expenditures to produce the estimated general operating contract revenue requirements of each jurisdiction. We consider that the resultant sum fairly estimates the amount of support that each agency requires to sustain the current level of fire protection, regardless of the source of the jurisdiction's revenues.

Generally, we use a set of standard conventions when combining the modeled budgets of individual agencies for analysis. Depending on local situations, we may apply other special protocols to our calculation of the financial impact of restructuring. Regular and special conventions observed in this study are:

- **Jobs:** To facilitate the analysis, we assume a continuance of the administrative positions now supported by each agency.
- **Staffing:** The model assumes that no career firefighter positions are supported in either fire department going forward.
- **Volunteer Membership:** Volunteer membership generally equals the sum of the rosters of the combining agencies, but is indexed to increase as residential population grows. In our experience it is prudent to budget in this manner, however any change as significant as consolidation usually results in at least a temporary loss of some volunteer positions. We assume that as an outcome of consolidation, one volunteer association is formed to represent the interests of the members of the restructured department. Elected officers such as president, vice president, and secretary/treasurer head the association. The fire chief appoints operational officers (such as assistant chief, captain, and lieutenant) based on qualifications.

- **Compensation:** When merging organizations, we assume that the highest salary paid to similar classifications prevails.⁴⁸ Annual compensation for Loretto officers was applied to the Hamel officer positions.
- **Volunteer Cost:** Costs associated with volunteers are identified for each agency within the model, and a per-member expenditure is calculated. When combining agencies, volunteer cost is estimated based on the highest per-member cost of the involved agencies times the total number of volunteer members in the action.
- **Unusual Expenditures or Revenue Source:** Existing (but reformatted) agency budgets are used as the basis for the estimation of service cost in each community. Some occasional or one-time expenses and revenue sources (such as the award of a grant) are factored out of the model.
- **Merged Model Budget:** We use the Loretto VFD model budget as a template in the process of generating a merged budget. Budgetary modifiers are assigned to line items depending on factors that are likely to change that allocation after a consolidation. Each modifier adjusts the corresponding line item in proportion to the overall impact of merging the agencies. For example, the allocations of certain line items (such as uniforms) are largely dependent on the number of volunteer members; consequently, a modifier for those line items will adjust the corresponding line items of the merged budget in proportion to the change in the number of volunteers. The ESCI budget model includes modifiers for career administrative staff, career operational staff, volunteer members, career operational staff plus volunteer members, career administrative staff plus career operational staff, total personnel, stations, offices, engines, medic units, ladder trucks, vehicles, emergencies, assessed value, and population. Not all of the modifiers are applicable in this case.
- **Capital equipment and facilities:** The model budget calculates the ongoing operational cost of the phased fire protection system. Financial analysis assumes the existing facilities and apparatus are maintained after consolidation but may be altered in accordance with the budget modifiers relating to equipment and facilities. Phase 2 of the merged budget analysis assumes that the agency is served by two fire stations. Cost associated with the purchase of new or replacement equipment and facilities is calculated separately from this analysis.

The baselining process described above provides the ability to provide a “snapshot” of the fiscal effects of consolidation as if the action place during the 2010 budgetary year. The baseline permits a comparison of the existing fiscal policies of the agencies with the budgetary and taxation changes relating to the cooperative model. This methodology yields a comparison of the “what if” of a merger against the baseline of current taxation.

⁴⁸ Specifically, if each agency has the same job classification (i.e. captain) but those positions are paid different salaries, we assume that the compensation of that job in the merged department will be paid at the highest former rate.

ESCI developed a combined budget for providing any consolidated or merged emergency services. Figure 54 is a baseline budget for a consolidated Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Department.⁴⁹

Figure 54: Consolidated Baseline Budget

Operating Budget	Amount
Personal Services	
Administrative	33,290
Operational	101,952
Overtime	0
Benefits	176,951
PS Total	312,194
Materials and Services	
Materials	114,373
Services	101,205
Reserve Services	0
Maintenance	44,000
MS Total	259,578
Total Requirements	571,772

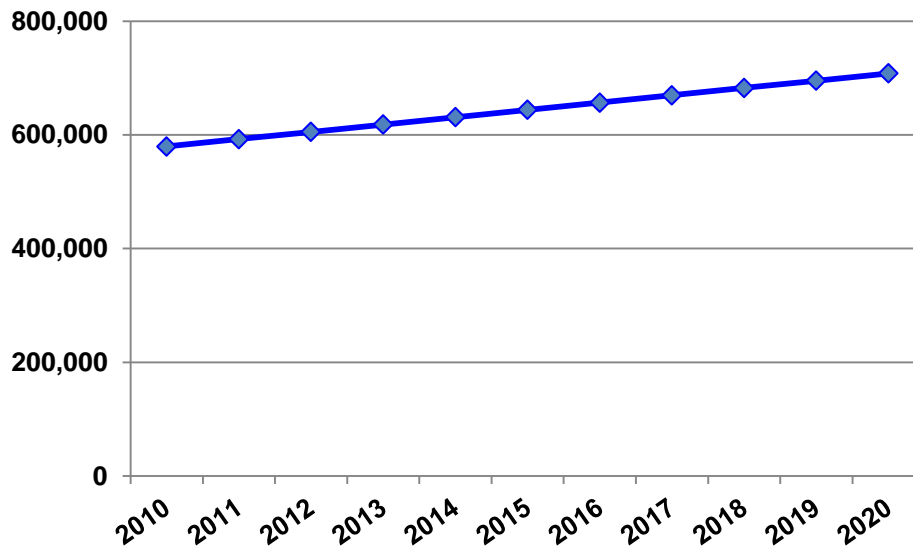
Financial Result of HVFD-LVFD Integration

In addition to calculating the immediate financial outcome of a HVFD and LVFD consolidation, it is also important to understand the probable financial consequence of the action over the long term. To help gain that understanding, we run the consolidation model for each year through 2020. The algorithms of our model adjust the staffing, emergency equipment, and facility parameters in accordance with the aforementioned assumptions for each forecast year.

Modifiers within the model maintain line item allocations for the subject year relative to the allocations during the baseline year. The results are plotted on charts to help give visual insight to the financial effects of the integration.

⁴⁹ The cost of capital apparatus replacement is excluded from the baseline budget. Both VFDs budget for vehicle apparatus replacement outside of their operational budget.

Figure 55: Forecast Consolidated Budget, 2011 – 2020



In 2020 the forecast cost of fire and emergency services for a consolidated HVFD and LVFD is \$708,254, an increase of approximately 22 percent over the ten-year period.

Financial Issues of Consolidation

The same service at reduced cost is always desirable. Increased cost accompanied by better or more service is frequently acceptable; but sometimes, increased cost becomes a political lightning rod if accompanying benefits are perceived as few. Whether that happens or not in this case depends greatly on how the citizens of the area see the change, and how fire department and municipal politics drives the issue. Certainly, one of the most frequently mentioned “killer” issues mentioned during the stakeholder interviews for this work was increased cost.

An issue identified by the membership of both organizations was the disparity in volunteer pension plan benefits. The payout of pension benefits for Loretto VFD are based on \$4,200 per year of service, and Hamel VFD benefits are based on \$2,300 per year of service. If the organizations are to be joined, pension benefits should be established at the LVFD level for parity. The issue is discussed in further detail later in this report.

The consolidation of the two fire departments and the fire district does accrue benefits to the communities. The volunteer membership of HVFD and LVFD is low relative to potential need and melding the two makes it easier to staff emergency apparatus with sufficient numbers of firefighters. Both fire departments currently lack the benefit of full-time administrative services;

a consolidated fire department makes it just possible to provide that important element. A ten-year projection of the operational cost of this model suggests that integration may require slightly less budgetary resources over time than if the agencies do nothing.

Areas of Short and Long-Term Cost Avoidance

Areas of short-term cost avoidance involve:

- The efforts of the fire chiefs of HVFD and LVFD represent unnecessary duplication.
- Unilateral oversight of the fire departments is replicated in both departments by the volunteer associations.
- Both fire departments maintain separate documentation such as mission, vision, rules, and standards. All represent duplicative work that could be used more effectively elsewhere.
- HVFD and LVFD support unilateral firefighter training programs. Training that is more specialized could result from combining and standardizing the programs.

The single area of greatest long-term cost avoidance is in the acquisition of capital apparatus. A consolidated agency would require fewer reserve apparatus.

Figure 56: Consolidated Agency Vehicle Replacement Plan

Vehicle No.	Purchase Date	Make	Useful Life	Years left as of 1/1/12	Purchase Cost	Required Reserve @12/31/11	Annual Reserve Requirement
LVFD Engine 11	1996	Pierce	15	0	525,000	525,000	35,000
LVFD Engine 12	2000	Pierce	15	3	525,000	420,000	35,000
LVFD Tanker 11	2007	Pierce	20	15	235,000	58,750	11,750
LVFD Rescue 11	1991	International	20	0	300,000	300,000	15,000
LVFD Utility 11	1990	Ford 350	15	0	45,000	45,000	3,000
LVFD Utility 12	2006	Ford 250	15	9	3,000	1,200	200
LVFD Grass 12	2009	Polaris	15	12	9,000	1,800	600
HVFD Engine 11	2006	Spartan	15	6	525,000	210,000	35,000
HVFD Tanker 11	2007	Pierce	20	16	235,000	47,000	11,750
HVFD Tanker 12	1980	Ford L8000	20	0	235,000	235,000	11,750
HVFD Grass 11	1988	Ford F350	20	0	80,000	80,000	4,000
HVFD Utility 11	1988	Ford L7000	15	0	250,000	250,000	16,667
Total Annual Funding Requirement					\$2,967,000	\$2,173,750	\$179,717

A consolidated capital vehicle replacement plan with one less fire engine (HVFD Engine 12) would leave a first out engine for each fire station and a single reserve pumper. Reducing the number of pumpers by one results in a net annual cost avoidance of approximately \$35,000 based on a replacement cost of \$525,000 and a useful life expectancy of 15 years; nearly a 23 percent reduction over the current forecast annual cost.

Processes for Collaboration

The possible efficiencies this study identifies can be categorized using an escalating level of cooperation between Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department. The partnering strategies fall in a range, from remaining autonomous to the creation of a new organization encompassing both agencies. These general strategies are further broken down into short, mid and long-term implementation horizons.

Partnering Strategies

A number of policy options exist for integrating the fire and emergency services of Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments. The various partnering strategies are described, beginning with a do-nothing approach and ending with complete consolidation of the agencies into a new emergency service provider. The following alternatives will be evaluated and discussed:

- Maintain status quo
- Administrative consolidation
- Functional consolidation
- Operational consolidation
- Full merger

Status Quo

This is a do-nothing strategy. While typically viewed negatively, in some cases the best action is no action. In this case, maintaining status quo means that essentially nothing changes. LVFD and HVFD are neighboring agencies who occasionally call upon each other for assistance but remain completely independent.

The advantages of this approach are that it's the easiest strategy to implement, creates the least amount of work or stress on the two organizations, and does not necessitate any reorganizing. One additional consideration is that it maintains local control. That is, the currently established boards continue to oversee their individual agencies as their electorate desires, without the complication of considering the views of a different constituency.

The disadvantages of this approach are that the fiscal and operational difficulties that may be facing both organizations are not changed and opportunities for efficiency (either financial or service delivery) through greater collaboration are not realized, and some duplication and

overlap continues. In today's environment, taxpayers typically hold their elected officials accountable for delivering a quality level of service at an affordable rate, and expect creative thinking to solve problems or achieve those ends. Although LVFD and HVFD are not government entities, they are primarily funded with tax dollars through contracts, establishing the same expectations. While "maintaining the status quo" is easy and involves the least amount of impact to the two agencies, it may well be one of the riskier decisions to make politically.

Administrative Consolidation

An administrative consolidation occurs when two or more agencies maintain their separate legal status and separate operational elements, but combine some or all of their administrative functions. Examples include combining the administration under one fire chief, and combining clerical, HR, IT and/or Financial functions while maintaining separate operational activities. An Administrative Consolidation is accomplished legally through a written agreement between the two organizations.

The advantages of such a model include reduced overhead costs by eliminating administrative duplication and increased efficiency; a gradual alignment of otherwise separate operations under a single administrative head; less resistance to change by the rank and file in the operational elements than other consolidation options; and singularity of purpose, focus, and direction at the top of the two organizations. This strategy lends itself well to a gradual move toward a single, consolidated agency where differences in attitude, culture, training and/or operations are otherwise too great to overcome in a single move to combine.

The disadvantages include potential conflicts in policy direction from the two boards; potentially untenable working conditions for the fire chief ("one man, two bosses"); and increased potential for personnel conflict as separate employee groups vie for dominance/supremacy.

Functional Consolidation

Functional consolidation is when the two agencies continue to exist separately, but they combine certain functions into a common resource, such as combining training divisions into one division for both agencies. This strategy requires alignment of standard operating guidelines, policies, procedures and certain operational aspects to make the consolidated function perform properly. A structure of shared decision-making is typically created as they relate to the consolidated function(s). This requires policy-makers and administrators to

voluntarily forfeit their authority to unilaterally change actions, activities or direction in the consolidated function area in favor of a collaborative approach. A Functional Consolidation is accomplished legally through a written cooperative agreement between the two agencies.

The advantages of this strategy are greater opportunities for efficiency; an opportunity to reinvest redundant resources into those areas lacking in resources (e.g., transferring a duplicate training officer back to a line (operations) function, increasing line strength); and a closer working relationship between members of the two agencies in the consolidated function(s) that can spill over to other unrelated activities in the two agencies. This type of consolidation may be a segue to greater levels of cooperation. Barriers can be broken down as members of one agency realize that the members of the other agency “aren’t so bad after all”.

The disadvantages being that functional consolidations require a much greater collaboration between the two agencies than the previously discussed partnering strategies; numerous details must be worked out in advance of such a consolidation, including but not limited to, work rules, employee assignments, compensation, office location, logos, asset allocation, authority and even the name of the consolidated function; and independence and autonomy are lost in the areas of consolidation, even bleeding over into other seemingly unaffected areas.

Operational Consolidation

This strategy takes the next step in the continuum of closer collaboration. In this case, all operations are consolidated under a single organizational that serves both agencies. The two districts remain independent organizations from a legal standpoint, but from a service level perspective, the organizations operate as one agency. An Operational Consolidation, accomplished through a written agreement between the two agencies, requires a significant commitment toward a full consolidation and is usually undertaken as a segue toward complete integration. The level of trust required to implement operational consolidation is very high, since independence and autonomy have been willingly relinquished in favor of the preferred future state of a full consolidation.

The advantages of this form of consolidation are that the greatest opportunity for efficiency is typically in the operational element where the expense is greatest; and the level of trust and cooperation required to make this strategy successful implies a near-readiness to take the next step to full consolidation.

The disadvantage is that administrators and policy-makers must share power and gain consensus where they once had unilateral authority to control and implement.

Full Merger

A merger is a complete combining of the two agencies into one. One is absorbed into and becomes part of the other agency. For two fire departments to merge, one ceases to exist (merging agency) and the other becomes the surviving entity (merger agency). The employees and volunteers of the merging agency are transferred to the merger agency, and the elected positions are either eliminated with the merging district or brought into the merger district through an agreement expanding the number of members on the board of directors. In the case of non-profit corporations like those involved in this discussion, revision of By Laws and articles of incorporation will likely be necessary, forming a new non-profit corporation.

A merger between Hamel Volunteer Fire Department and Loretto Volunteer Fire Department would require a decision as to which agency will be the surviving agency (merger agency) and which agency will dissolve (merging agency) into the surviving agency or, more simply, a new corporation is formed. The merger is subject to approval of the respective boards and Minnesota State law regarding non-profit corporations.

Options for Shared Service Delivery

Strategies for shared service delivery are listed in the next section of this report. They each fall into one of the general partnering strategies listed above, and represent various steps along the continuum of partnering. Some are dependent upon others and some can be implemented independent of other actions. They are categorized into the following major headings:

- Level of cooperation, i.e. Functional Consolidation, Operational Consolidation, Merger
- Timeline for completion
- Affected section, i.e. Administration, Operations, Support Services
- Affected stakeholders
- Objective(s)
- Summary of strategy
- Discussion of strategy
- Guidance
- Fiscal considerations

Timelines are described as short, middle, or long term. Short-term is considered to occur within one year to 18 months; middle term is from three to five years; and long-term is generally thought of as anything beyond five-years. The timelines are flexible because most partnering strategies are interdependent, which necessitates cross-strategy integration of planning and implementation.

It is important to point out that HVFD and LVFD are already working to implement select concepts. Regardless of the existing level of implementation, we provide detailed information on all strategies to provide the reader with a complete picture of the cooperative potential. For example, both organizations have agreed to combine training efforts; however, we include a discussion of the strategy as an element of the report because the effort is not yet fully developed. Additional strategies are discussed that involve areas in which Loretto and Hamel are already working together because not including these discussions within the framework of the report yields an incomplete depiction.

A summary table listing each of the strategies with the objective, level of cooperation, timeline, organization section, and affected agencies precedes the detailed discussion.

Overarching Strategies

The discussion begins with the presentation of four overarching strategies that are broad in scope. The four define varying forms of consolidation of the agencies, each possessing different approaches with individual advantages and challenges. The overarching strategies incorporate some of the general partnering strategies, which are listed in the subsequent discussion. The four overarching strategies are listed in Figure 57.

Figure 57: Summary Table of Overarching Strategies

Overarching Strategy (See page for detail)	Objective(s)	Level of Cooperation	Timeline Short, Mid, Long	Section	Affected Agencies
Overarching Strategy 1 – Administrative Consolidation See page 109	Combine the administrative elements of both agencies into one Administrative Services Division, which promotes improved efficiencies by eliminating duplication in both agencies.	Administrative	Short Term	Administration	Both Agencies
Overarching Strategy 2 – Functional Consolidation See page 110	Combine specific operational and support elements of both agencies into singular functions, to promote improved efficiencies by eliminating some duplication.	Functional	Mid Term	Support Services and Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Overarching Strategy 3 – Operational Consolidation See page 115	Combine all operational elements of both agencies into a singular function to promote improved efficiencies by eliminating some duplication.	Operational	Mid Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Overarching Strategy 4 – Full Merger See page 118	Combine the two organizations into one to improve efficiency by eliminating some duplication.	Organizational	Long Term	All Sections, all Divisions	Both Agencies

Following the detailed discussion of the identified overarching strategies, ESCI lists partnering strategies. These are specific approaches to sharing of key elements of service delivery that have been identified as opportunities for collaboration between the two agencies. The partnering strategies can be implemented individually on a stand-alone basis or they may be incorporated as components of one or more of the identified overarching strategies. Identified partnering strategies are listed in Figure 58:

Figure 58: Summary Table of Partnering Strategies

Partnering Strategy (See page for detail)	Objective(s)	Level of Cooperation	Timeline Short, Mid, Long	Section	Affected Agencies
Strategy A – Enhanced Implementation of Mutual and Automatic Aid	Refine and enhance the application of mutual aid and automatic aid practices to improve response effectiveness	Operational	Short Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Strategy B – Develop Joint Support and Logistics See page 125	Develop shared Support Services practices that promote improved operational readiness and achieve procurement efficiencies by eliminating duplication in the acquisition and distribution of supplies.	Functional	Short Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Strategy C – Develop Uniform Pre-Incident Plans See page 130	Provide a system of shared operational plans for use during emergencies and non-emergent incidents.	Operational	Short Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Strategy D – Provide Regional Incident Command and Operations Supervision See page 134	Provide for IC (Incident Command) supervision of emergency operations	Operational	Mid Term	EMS, Emergency Operations, and Training	Both Agencies
Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines See page 136	Provide guidelines for operation during emergencies and non-emergency incidents and activities.	Functional	Short Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Strategy F – Provide Joint Standards for Service Delivery See page 138	Establish a joint Standards for Service Delivery Policy, defining services, service levels, and response times to the 90th percentile so that adequate system planning can take place.	Functional	Short to Mid Term	EMS and Emergency Operations	Both Agencies
Strategy G – Shared Public Education/Public Information See page 142	Provide Public Education and Public Information services for the combined service area	Functional	Mid Term	Administration and Fire Prevention	Both Agencies
Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs See page 143	Combine existing volunteer cadre into a resource pool for both agencies to utilize	Functional	Mid Term	Emergency Operations and Training	Both Agencies

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Partnering Strategy (See page for detail)	Objective(s)	Level of Cooperation	Timeline Short, Mid, Long	Section	Affected Agencies
Strategy I – Combine Administrative Services See page 145	Consolidate the completion of administrative tasks into a single operation with shared resources and management practices	Functional	Mid Term	Administration	Both Agencies
Strategy J – Implement a Computerized Training Records Management System See page 147	Provide a fully integrated comprehensive training records management system (RMS).	Functional	Mid Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies See page 150	Provide purpose and direction for training program management and delivery by combining strengths and resources to overcome current training obstacles and deficiencies.	Functional	Short to Mid Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan See page 153	Provide standardized and consistent training and a long-term vision and direction for training delivery.	Functional	Short Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program See page 156	Create a single unified training program to Eliminate duplication and increase training efficiency.	Functional	Mid-Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards See page 159	Adopt uniform training guidelines and uniform certification standards.	Functional	Short Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual See page 161	Provide consistent, standardized training procedures.	Functional	Short Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility See page 163	Provide training facilities readily available to LVFD and HVFD	Functional	Mid Term	Training	Both Agencies
Strategy Q – Develop a Single Apparatus Refurbishment/Replacement Plan See page 166	Create a single set of emergency apparatus specifications and replacement plan.	Functional	Long Term	Emergency Operations	Both Agencies

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department – Loretto Volunteer Fire Department, MN
Cooperative Efforts Feasibility Study

Partnering Strategy (See page for detail)	Objective(s)	Level of Cooperation	Timeline Short, Mid, Long	Section	Affected Agencies
Strategy R – Develop a Regional Fire Safety Education Coalition See page 169	Provide for the cost effective, regional dissemination of public fire safety education.	Functional	Mid Term	Fire Prevention	Both Agencies
Strategy S – Develop a Regional Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Network See page 171	Develop an effective means for intervening in juvenile-set/caused fires.	Functional	Short Term	Fire Prevention	Both Agencies
Strategy T – Establish a Shared Health and Safety Program See page 173	Provide a fire-service related health and safety program.	Functional	Mid Term	Administration	Both Agencies
Strategy U – Develop Uniform Fees for Service See page 175	Establish a uniform schedule of fees for service.	Functional	Mid Term	Administration	Both Agencies

Overarching Strategy 1 – Administrative Consolidation

Level of Cooperation

- Administrative

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Administration

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Combine the administrative elements of both agencies which promotes improved efficiencies by eliminating duplication in both agencies.

Summary

An administrative consolidation occurs when two or more agencies maintain their separate legal status and separate operational elements but combine some or all of their administrative functions.

Discussion

ESCI analyzed the application of the concept of an administrative consolidation involving Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments. Based on the size of the agencies, combined with the fact that administrative positions are limited to three personnel, the fire chiefs and an office assistant, all of whom are part-time employees, no substantial advantages are to be gained with this approach. No further discussion of the administrative consolidation approach is provided.

Overarching Strategy 2 – Functional Consolidation

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Support Services, Training and Fire Prevention/Public Education

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Combine specific operational and support elements of both agencies into singular functions, to promote improved efficiencies by eliminating some duplication and standardizing practices.

Summary

Functional consolidation is when two or more agencies continue to exist separately but they combine certain functions into a common resource, such as combining training activities into a single shared division. A functional consolidation is accomplished legally through a written cooperative agreement between the two non-profit corporations. This strategy requires alignment of standard operating guidelines, policies, procedures and certain operational aspects to make the consolidated function perform properly. A structure of shared decision-making is typically created as they relate to consolidated function(s). This requires policy-makers and administrators to suspend their authority to unilaterally change actions, activities, or direction in the consolidated function area(s) in favor of a collaborative approach. This strategy does not generally reduce costs but tends to increase efficiency; moreover, it usually creates a bigger impact on improved service or depth of service to both agencies.

Discussion

HVFD and LVFD are similar in size, scope, and service delivery approaches. Many of the support functions for each agency are interchangeable, except for the fact that they are accomplished using different people working under different practices and policies. The functions that lend themselves most readily to a functional consolidation are targeted in the following discussion and include training programs, support programs, and public education/public information.

A training program functional consolidation would involve unifying training policies, standards, plans, manuals, record keeping, and training facilities. These changes are detailed in the following strategies:

- Strategy J – Implement a Computerized Training Records Management System
- Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies
- Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan
- Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program
- Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards
- Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual
- Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility

Consolidation of support services activities may include centralized purchasing; coordinated specification and purchase of fire apparatus, equipment, and personal protective equipment (PPE); and combined apparatus, equipment, and facilities maintenance functions, as detailed in the following strategy:

- Strategy B – Develop Joint Support and Logistics Practices

Opportunities to consolidate public information/public education functions include community outreach, agency marketing, communication strategies, fire prevention; injury prevention, and emergency preparedness education. The approach is discussed in further detail in the following partnering strategy:

- Strategy G – Shared Public Education/Public Information

Implementation of a shared public education strategy in Loretto and Hamel is viewed as providing greater opportunities for efficiency, increased depth of service, and a closer working relationship between the members of the two agencies. As an additional benefit, improved relationships that will be developed in working on consolidated function(s) can spill over to other unrelated activities in the two agencies and can serve to segue into greater levels of cooperation.

In considering functional consolidation opportunities in Loretto and Hamel, the most significant gains that present themselves involve training. Along with the improved skills and increased safety that will result, barriers can be broken down as members train together, use similar apparatus and equipment, and learn to perform emergency tasks together. When members of the two departments interact with each other on a daily basis, not just during emergencies,

differences begin to diminish and stronger relationships begin to form. In stakeholder interviews conducted during our initial field work, ESCI observed that cultural differences exist between the two departments, including lack of confidence in each other's capabilities. Based on the observation, the development of improved working and personal relationships is viewed as essential and the most effective way to develop the relationships is on the training ground.

The challenge of a functional consolidation is that it requires greater collaboration between the two agencies than other discussed partnering strategies; numerous organizational details must be worked out in advance and are addressed in greater detail in the next section.

Critical Issues

- Policy level
 - A close review of the policies of the two agencies related to training, support services (logistics), and public information/public education must be performed by the Boards of Directors, in close consultation with the two fire chiefs, to address policy issues. There will likely be new policies required for this type of consolidation.
- Staff level
 - Analysis of current staff assigned to these functions to determine best fit and greatest advantages from an efficiency standpoint. Assign the best qualified individuals based on knowledge, skills, and abilities related to the task.
 - Engaging existing staff who will be directly affected by this consolidation from the start is critical. Current training officers, for example. They possess knowledge about the work they do beyond what is typically recognized, even by their supervisors. Ensuring that job nuances are identified is an important step in a successful consolidation. Staff should not, however, be burdened with structuring the new consolidated functions themselves. Recommendations can be solicited, but these decisions must be made by the fire chief's in consultation with their boards. Often staff members cannot separate self-interest from the decisions they would make.

Financial Considerations

- Alignment of Paid per Call member pay rates for similar jobs may need to be considered, since hourly pay scales differ.
- Specific positions affected for the training division consolidation could flow as follows:
 - Assistant chiefs – Training: (both agencies currently have an assistant chief assigned to training)
 - Line Officers and other members would likely have modified roles in training delivery.
 - No financial savings are gained in this configuration, as both agencies use personnel that are paid on an hourly basis for time worked. However, this structure does provide enhanced depth in training beyond what is currently being accomplished separately.

- Reconfiguring the training function short term is mostly an exercise in logistics; namely, which facility provides the office space, classroom space, and field training grounds to implement a consolidation with the least expense and greatest effectiveness.
- Specific position impacts for the support services consolidation are not significant because those tasks are performed by existing Paid per Call personnel on an as-needed basis.
- There are no specific position impacts with regard to public education/public information personnel in a support services consolidation:

Guidance

- Conduct regular joint fire chief meetings for the purpose of establishing the parameters of the training consolidation. This includes workload analysis to ensure greatest effectiveness while maintaining proper balance.
- The two fire chiefs convene an ad hoc training steering committee with a purpose of developing proposed joint training policies, standards, plan, and training manual.
- The training division adopts and implements joint training records software, and advocates for an adequate joint training facility which is currently lacking.
- The two chiefs develop a list of anticipated equipment, apparatus and supply purchased for the upcoming year. Identify expenses that are common to both organizations and develop a plan to write common specifications where applicable and purchase jointly.
- Fire prevention and public education practices are reviewed to identify similarities and opportunities for shared delivery. A sub-committee is appointed to pursue shared prevention and public education activities.

Operational Challenges: Training

The proposed consolidation functions will provide minimal or limited on-going financial savings. However, one-time costs could be required to establish the new structure. Operational challenges are as follows:

- Jointly standardizing training goals, objectives, standards and delivery methodologies
- Developing a shared training manual
- Establishing common training attendance requirements and equal enforcement
- Agreeing to a common weekly training night
 - Note: The above presents a significant challenge

Operational Challenges: Support Services-Purchasing

The creation of this function will not result in increased costs. Cost efficiencies and future cost avoidance may be accomplished. Challenges may include:

- Agreement on standards and specifications for apparatus and equipment purchases.
- Coordination and planning of future purchasing to coordinate between agencies.

Operational Challenges – Support Services – Fire Prevention/Public Education

Minimal, if any, cost will be incurred. Potential challenges could include:

- Agreeing to levels of fire prevention and public education involvement
- Establishing common goals and objectives
- Integrating periodic public outreach events including rodeo, National Night Out and other events
- Coordinating release of information to the press and public to assure a common message is communicated

Overarching Strategy 3 – Operational Consolidation

Level of Cooperation

- Operational

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Combine all operational elements of both agencies into a singular function to promote improved efficiencies by eliminating some duplication.

Summary

Operational consolidation is the combining of two or more agencies at the operational level while the agencies themselves continue to exist separately. In this case, emergency services are provided by the collective emergency resources of the two agencies. An operational consolidation is accomplished legally through a cooperative agreement between the agencies. This strategy requires alignment of virtually all emergency operational elements, including training, standard operating procedures, staffing levels, and apparatus deployment. In effect, the combined emergency resources (staffing, equipment, and facilities) of the two agencies are configured as if there is no boundary between them. This consolidation type is the most advanced step in the continuum of steps toward a full merger of the two agencies. A structure of shared decision-making is typically created as they relate to consolidated function(s). If the previous consolidation approaches have already been implemented, this strategy tends to provide the greatest potential for increased efficiency and service delivery.

Discussion

As neighboring agencies, HVFD and LVFD respond to the same incidents many times a year. Thus, there is a high degree of familiarity between the operational crews on the street. While there are differences in approach to incidents between the field crews, they are each proud and capable service providers.

Partly due to the pride in the service they provide and the culture that follows, changing the way service is delivered at the operational (line) level poses the greatest challenge, as is seen in any

fire department. However, a close examination of possible redeployment models does provide for an improvement in efficient service to both communities. A number of the function strategies are rolled into this overarching strategy. They include:

- Strategy C – Develop Uniform Pre-Incident Plans
- Strategy D – Provide Regional Incident Command and Operations Supervision
- Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines
- Strategy F – Provide Joint Standards for Service Delivery
- Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs

Critical Issues

- Policy level
 - Work rules, employee assignments, compensation, service level standards, and operational practices must be consistent between the jurisdictions. Any policy differences which impact the delivery of service to the public must be invisible to the line personnel. This includes policies and procedures, scope of job descriptions, rules of conduct, and discipline.
 - A close review of all aspects of service delivery must be performed by the two fire chiefs, and unified decisions announced. There will likely be new practices required for this type of consolidation.
- Staff level
 - A new set of rules, regulations, and procedures related to emergency operations must be published and the line personnel trained and oriented to them. This is a shared need currently in both organizations, as identified in the Current Conditions Section and something that should be considered as a high priority by both.
 - Engaging all line personnel who will be directly affected by this consolidation from the start is critical. They possess knowledge about the work environment beyond what is typically recognized, even by most supervisors. Ensuring that job nuances are identified is an important step in a successful consolidation. Rumors can become rampant, and a communication strategy that keeps people informed every step of the way is necessary to maintain calm. Opportunities to debunk rumors should be taken advantage of, and an outlet created to capture and respond to rumors quickly.
- Financial Considerations
 - Alignment of Paid per Call hourly rates and benefits for similar jobs can be an issue. Configuring compensation and benefits is not viewed as being the same as a unilateral increase but rather an exercise in establishing equity.

Guidance

- Conduct regular joint board and fire chief meetings for the purpose of establishing the policy changes as outlined above. This includes a detailed fiscal analysis.

- Conduct regular command staff meetings for the purpose of establishing rules, regulations, and procedures.
- Engage member groups in regular discussions, and field questions regularly. Reassure Paid per Call employees to the extent possible, but always be honest. Don't speculate, but express your collective intentions. There is no such thing as over-communicating in this instance.
- Consider establishing a focus group of external stakeholders, including contract city representatives, to use as a sounding board on the concept of an operational consolidation. Select people of influence and keep them engaged. Listen carefully to their advice and concerns. As with employees, be honest and don't speculate, but express your collective intentions.
- Develop a communication strategy to keep the citizens of the combined service area informed if implementation appears a possible outcome of discussions.

Fiscal Considerations

Implementation of this strategy independent of the previous overarching strategies may make the staffing and procedural changes more complicated. If this strategy is implemented sequentially, after a functional consolidation occurs, the reporting relationships, staffing, and procedural changes are easier to implement.

Because the organizations are small and all operational personnel work on a Paid per Call basis, few opportunities exist to decrease costs by way of redeployment or reduction of staffing. Although costs will not be diminished, what is gained by the strategy is the advantage of increased efficiency, safety, and response effectiveness on the emergency scene.

With operations personnel working closely together, the departments should consider equalizing compensation between the two agencies. The hourly rates for HVFD and LVFD Paid per Call personnel differ slightly. Operations personnel are paid an hourly rate, based on rank, while officers receive an hourly rate plus a monthly stipend based on rank. Figure 59 summarizes the operations personnel pay scales.

Figure 59: Operations Personnel Pay Scales

Operations Position	Loretto VFD Hourly Rate	Hamel VFD Hourly Rate
Captain	\$10.00 + \$250/year	\$10.00 + \$720/year
Lieutenant	\$10.00 + \$150/year	\$9.25 + \$666/year
Firefighter II	\$10.00	\$8.75
Rookie	\$10.00	\$7.75

Operational consolidation with equalized pay will have a minimal impact on overall labor costs.

Overarching Strategy 4 – Full Merger

Level of Cooperation

- Organizational

Timeline for Completion

- Long Term

Section

- All Sections, all Divisions

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Combine the two organizations into one to improve efficiency by eliminating some duplication.

Summary

A full merger would have one department absorb the other, eliminating it as a legal entity. All resources, assets, and liabilities would transfer to the surviving department. The terms of a merger would be worked out in advance of the issue being presented to the contract cities and other stakeholders. The process by which a merger is conducted is described previously in this report. However, the terms of a merger can be the result of negotiation between the two agencies in advance. An organizational structure would be agreed upon; the status of all Paid per Call employees being transferred would be addressed (including rank, assignments, and seniority); and the status of the board of directors of the merging department addressed if there is any room on the merged board.

The previous strategies related to consolidation are somewhat complicated and require careful planning and analysis by and between the two agencies prior to implementation, then a shared interest in managing the resulting consolidation after implementation. In this case, a full merger is simpler, since a merger eliminates one of the agencies and there requires no further negotiation or adjustment.

Discussion

With the consolidation strategies listed previously, coordination, consultation, negotiating and shared decision-making are all processes required to implement and sustain the consolidation. In a full merger, those processes are required to implement the merger but are not required to sustain it. Once the merger occurs, it is a majority-rule board. In the other consolidation

strategies, there is a natural tension between the two equal boards as they discuss and make decisions about the consolidated service component. They are bound together by a contract that can be broken, and care is taken to find acceptable compromises and find creative solutions. Some of this tension is positive and adds to the process. That tension is significantly diminished when it is a single board making majority-rule decisions about a single agency. The merging department negotiates what it can before the fact and turns everything over to the merger department. The merger department's policies, procedures, practices, name, manner of business, and culture becomes the prevailing environment. To say that the merging department doesn't cause changes to the merger department, however, is an overstatement. Combining two agencies of similar size together naturally creates impacts to the culture of the surviving entity. A new culture will emerge from the merger.

The resource pool is larger as a result of a merger but so too is the demand for service.

Critical Issues

- Policy level:
 - The policies, procedures, and legal constructs of the merger (surviving) agency prevail. Some will undoubtedly need to change as a result of the merger, but most are unforeseen until circumstances illuminate the need. It is critical that these events are anticipated and action taken as appropriate.
 - It is prudent to review the merging department's policies and practices, even though they are vacated in the merger, to capture best practices and incorporate them into the merger department as a matter of good business practice.
- Staff level:
 - A full merger will afford the combined agency a unique opportunity to evaluate the entire structure of the department and make necessary adjustments. Performing critical task analyses of all positions and functions is a key first step to the new structure. Maintaining an appropriate span of control for each supervisor, preferably no more than 5:1, with 7:1 being the extreme maximum effective ratio.
 - Engaging the staff of both agencies from the start is critical. Rumors will become rampant, and a communication strategy that keeps people informed every step of the way is necessary to maintain calm. Opportunities to debunk rumors should be taken advantage of, and outlets created to capture and respond to those rumors quickly.

Financial Considerations

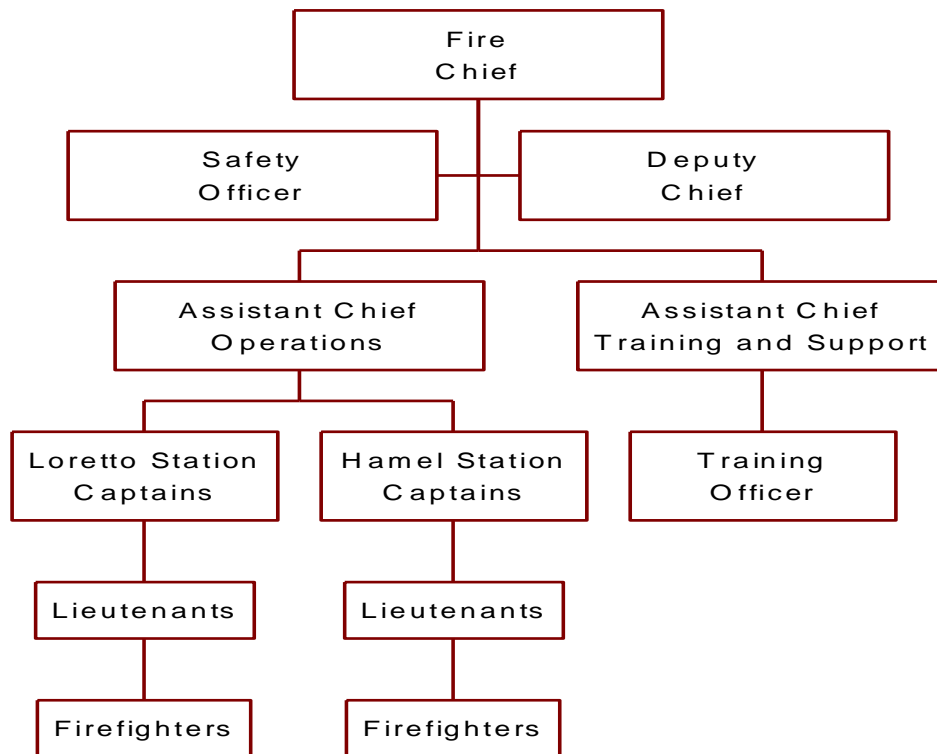
- Alignment of Paid per Call hourly rates and benefits is required for those employees transferring into the consolidated or merged department. Included is equalization of pension benefits which currently differ.
- The contract income of the merger department becomes that of the merged department. Care must be taken to determine whether the revenue coming into the combined agency at least meets the debt and annual expense obligations.

Guidance

- Conduct regular joint board and fire chief meetings for the purpose of conducting merger discussions. This includes a detailed fiscal analysis, staffing and deployment analysis, and a work plan for implementation should the merger be adopted.
- Engage all employee groups in regular discussions, fielding questions frequently and answers repeatedly. Reassure employees to the extent possible, but always be honest. Don't speculate, but express your collective intentions. There is no such thing as over-communicating in this instance.
- Engage a "blue ribbon" committee of external stakeholders, including contract city representatives, to use as a sounding board on the concept of a merger. Select people of influence and keep them engaged. Listen carefully to their advice and concerns. As with employees, be honest and don't speculate, but express your collective intentions.
- Consider publishing a newsletter at a point in time that it becomes clear a merger of some type is likely to occur. It should be informative and informational, with an opportunity for citizens to sound off on the issue. Conduct community public forums in key areas of the community to solicit feedback.

The following figure is one concept of an organizational structure of a merged district.

Figure 60: Full Merger Administrative Organizational Structure (Conceptual)



Staffing of fire stations and fire apparatus is largely unchanged with the example.

Fiscal Considerations

A merger of the two agencies will create some financial benefit, although limited because of the part-time nature of the Loretto and Hamel staffing configuration. In the table below, the merger is depicted with adjustments to administrative and support position titles and headcount.

Figure 61: Administrative and Support Staffing, Conceptual

Description	Loretto VFD	Hamel VFD	Total FTEs	Change	Net FTEs
Fire Chief	1.0	1.0	2.0	(1.0)	1.0
Deputy Chief	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.0	1.0
Assistant Fire Chief	2.0	1.0	3.0	0.0	3.0
Office Assistant	0.5	0.2	0.7	0.0	0.7
Total Administration	3.5	2.2	5.7	0.0	5.7

The above outlined structure does not make any attempt to identify individuals to fill specific positions but provides the structure to handle the tasks currently being performed by each organization.

With the consolidation of the administrative employees into one organization, the following payroll and benefit related items will need to be addressed:

- Establish a standardized hourly wage structure.
- Standardize pension and retirement benefits.

Since all operational response personnel in the two agencies are compensated on a per call basis, no changes are made below the administrative and support level under this strategy.

General Partnering Strategies

The discussion continues with the presentation of General Partnering Strategies that are specific to a variety of identified areas of need. Any number of the approaches may be implemented on a stand-alone basis, or they may be considered as components of the Overarching Strategies discussed above. They are listed in no specific order and should be prioritized by the fire departments as they move forward.

Strategy A – Enhanced Implementation of Mutual and Automatic Aid

Level of Cooperation

- Operational

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Refine and enhance the application of mutual aid and automatic aid practices to improve response effectiveness

Summary

One of the most elemental levels of cooperative service delivery is that of the sharing of valuable resources, both equipment and people. A primary means for sharing resources is by the use of Mutual Aid and Automatic Aid. Mutual Aid involves establishing agreements under which a fire department can request and receive equipment and personnel support for an emergency incident from a neighboring fire department. Automatic Aid is the same, with the exception that it is automated based on dispatch protocols, absent the need for an incident commander to request the assistance.

Discussion

Implementation of mutual and automatic aid practices enhance the speed and effectiveness of response to emergencies. Additionally, future cost avoidance can be gained by maximizing the use of existing resources rather than incurring the expense of adding stations, equipment and/or personnel to meet growing response coverage demands.

Loretto and Hamel have already established mutual aid procedures, including the other fire departments in the county. Recently, the county-wide mutual aid systems have been taken to the Automatic Aid level, a valuable step forward.

At the time of our field work, ESCI found that the automatic aid system, while in place, was not fully implemented. Run cards, the documents that specify to the 911 dispatcher what units are

to be sent to an emergency incident under mutual aid, had not been completed for Hamel resources. It is our understanding that the process is under way and we encourage the department to complete the undertaking.

Having taken the first step, the agencies now have the procedures in place, including dispatching protocols, to continue to develop the use of automatic aid. From this point, the agencies should further review the existing procedures using a boundary-less approach to response planning for the purpose of assuring that the closest available resource is sent to an incident, without regard to which jurisdiction the emergency is located in.

The best use of mutual and automatic aid is dependent on the agencies working well together. To be most effective, the following should be considered:

- Fireground operations must be conducted in a similar manner and should be based on standardized Standard Operating Guidelines.
- Firefighters must know how to work in concert with personnel for another agency, based on common training programs and procedures.
- Dispatch procedures should be in place that clearly define which response areas are to receive automatic aid response.
- Procedures for the request of and provision of mutual aid should be clearly established in the mutual aid agreement.
- Personnel should be fully trained on mutual and automatic aid practices and informed of changes to response plans when they are made.

Mutual and automatic aid provision should be reciprocal in nature with an approximately equivalent balance of responses. That is, an agency receiving aid on a routine basis should be returning similar assistance with about the same frequency. If provision of assistance is unbalanced, the agency providing a disproportionate level of response may wish to seek contractual reimbursement for some or all responses.

Guidance

- Review mutual aid and automatic aid procedures that are currently in place to identify opportunities to increase effectiveness.
- In jurisdictions for which Automatic Aid procedures have not yet been established, complete the implementation process.
- Review response times, including the maps provided in this report, to identify areas in which Automatic Aid can be initiated to enhance response.

- Do not limit consideration to Loretto and Hamel, but include review of station locations and travel times from other neighboring fire departments.

Fiscal Considerations

The cost to each fire department to provide Mutual and Automatic Aid are predicated on:

- Number and frequency of response
- Volume of equipment and personnel sent to incidents outside of the agency's jurisdiction

The cost of implementing these practices is generally offset by the fact that a similar level of assistance is provided by another agency in return. As a result, an organization may be able to avoid costs if Mutual or Automatic Aid resources are made available instead of adding new stations, apparatus and personnel to provide coverage in a response area.

Strategy B – Develop Joint Support and Logistics Practices

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Support Services

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Develop shared Support Services practices that promote improved operational readiness and achieve procurement efficiencies by eliminating duplication in the acquisition and distribution of supplies.
- Create a uniform set of standards for apparatus, small equipment, PPE (personal protective equipment), emergency supplies, and IS/IT services.
- Develop a joint preventative maintenance and repair service program for physical assets, apparatus, small equipment, and IS/IT systems.

Summary

Throughout nearly every public or private emergency organization, the state of readiness and effectiveness is highly dependent upon support services. Support services assure the equipment, materials, and supplies necessary to keep an agency operational and functioning are available. Both departments participating in this study provide some form of support services within its organization. Support services offered under a joint support and logistics division can be modular and may include:

- Standardization of apparatus, equipment, and PPE
- Standardization of fire/EMS/rescue supplies
- Centralized purchasing and distribution
- Centralized fleet and equipment maintenance
- A preventative and safety maintenance program for facilities, apparatus, equipment, and other physical assets

The purchasing program can create joint bids for supplies and equipment offering advantages of economies of scale and can achieve additional benefits such as integrated inventory of supplies that can accommodate lag times in deliveries from manufacturers and suppliers.

Discussion

Support Services Division – At the heart of any fire department are the activities and functions that support the delivery of emergency services. Support Services keeps agency assets in operational readiness and ensures that enough supplies, tools, and equipment are available for emergency workers to mitigate an emergency. Both agencies in this study dedicate a certain level of daily effort in maintaining emergency apparatus and equipment, stations, and supplies.

Although emergency services providers, Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department are also businesses that spend thousands of dollars each year to ensure emergency mission readiness. Like all businesses, fire departments need to be receptive to new practices to maximize the effectiveness of budget dollars. Such practices may take the form of economies of scale, administrative efficiencies, paperwork reduction, technological advances, and innovative cost saving concepts.

Acquiring and maintaining physical assets (facilities and grounds), IS/IT systems, vehicles, and equipment is an expensive and labor intensive process requiring good policies and attention to detail. The procurement and distribution of routine supplies is also an important behind-the-scenes process that needs hands-on work and meticulous record keeping. These support services are currently provided by a variety of members in LVFD and HVFD, based on individual skills and interests. Meeting the demand for support services is a constant necessity in any organization and vital to ensure the operational readiness of the agency. Key elements of establishing joint support and logistics services are:

- Assessment of current assets
- Assessment of current levels of support service activities
- Standardization of apparatus, equipment, and supplies
- Standardization of preventative maintenance programs and recordkeeping
- Centralization of apparatus and equipment repair and maintenance
- Centralization of supply and equipment acquisition and distribution
- Development of a combined facilities and grounds maintenance program
- Standardization of IS/IT services

As noted, a key to realizing the benefits of shared support services is standardization of apparatus, equipment, and supplies. In this exercise alone, standardization assures greater financial and operational efficiency and effectiveness. Fundamentally, this is the most important aspect of implementing a joint support approach.

Standardizing specifications for the purchase, repair, and maintenance of apparatus, SCBA (self-contained breathing apparatus), communication devices, and miscellaneous equipment often equates to less out-of-service time. Support personnel will need to be certified for repairing and maintaining fewer apparatus and equipment types. Fewer parts need to be stocked for repair and maintenance. Such practices are described as “economies of scale.”

NFPA 1911 points out that repairs by qualified technicians may provide longer apparatus life, safer operations, and the early detection of maintenance and repair problems.⁵⁰ The result is often a short and long-term saving on rolling stock and small equipment. A centralized repair and maintenance facility cooperatively organized as a support services division ensures that routine maintenance and repairs of physical assets are completed in a timely manner.

Logistics Services – A multi-agency purchasing program can improve management of the two agencies’ supply chains and lends itself well to expansion to other agencies in the region for even greater efficiency. The program would follow state and organizational purchasing guidelines and make supplies and equipment available to all of the member agencies.

Distribution can be managed internally or through agreements with suppliers to gain the advantages of collective purchasing and supply: 1) a larger, collective bid process for supplies can achieve lower prices and attract additional competitors, 2) the agencies can negotiate terms of the conditions of the sale that might not be available to smaller purchasing centers, and 3) it can conduct collective bidding processes that are applicable to all of the agencies.

Coordination is important to the success of a joint purchasing program. Both Loretto and Hamel currently conduct purchasing of virtually all supplies and equipment independently. As such, a joint effort will reduce the work required by any single agency to purchase these items.

Critical Issues

- Coordination issues.

⁵⁰ National Fire Protection Association, *Standard 1911: Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus*, 2007 Edition.

- A cross-functional committee of department personnel responsible for purchasing can work together to design standardized purchasing rules for each participating agency.
- The committee can provide a standardized equipment list for the agencies. The agencies can share bidding processes so that the bidding procedure used by the purchasing agent can be used by both agencies and, potentially, other participants.
- Fire agencies should have agreements in place to specify inventory and purchasing plans.
- Financial and fiscal considerations:
 - Marginal costs of creating system-wide purchasing infrastructure should be compared against the reduced level of effort of individual agencies.
 - Cost savings can be achieved through reducing inventory carrying costs, reducing transaction costs, and achieving economies of scale through larger volume purchasing.

Guidance

- Develop a cross-functional committee with representation from both Loretto and Hamel to explore a joint purchasing process.
- Work with the Boards of Directors to adopt purchasing requirements that help the agencies meet purchasing goals and guidelines.
- Establish standards for fire and EMS system equipment and supplies.
- Establish inventory standards and methods for distributing equipment and supplies.
- Develop specific standards for apparatus, equipment, PPE, SCBA, communication equipment, and supplies.
- Inventory and evaluate current physical assets, apparatus, equipment, and operational/facility supplies.
- Determine support components necessary to add regional partners, if desired, ensuring that incremental costs are borne by joining agencies and economic benefit is quantified for each participant over the long term.
- Ensure that all aspects of a joint support division are based upon recognized local, state, and national standards as well as manufacturers' recommendations for repair and maintenance.
- Determine the most efficient and effective location for support functions.

Fiscal Considerations

- Any soft costs in the form of hourly wages for PPC personnel generated by cross-functional committee meetings necessary to accomplish objectives of the program.
- Incremental costs of transitioning to standard apparatus, PPE (Personal Protective Equipment), SCBA (Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus), and small equipment.
- Expected cost savings and operational benefits will result from:

- Elimination of duplication of services, administration, supplies, parts, and equipment
- Standardization of equipment, parts and operational/facility supplies
- Effective acquisition, accountability, and distribution of supplies and equipment
- Bulk purchasing
- Preventive maintenance of physical assets, apparatus, and equipment for optimum safety and readiness
- The elimination or reduction of “outside” costs for repair, maintenance, and servicing of physical assets and equipment

Strategy C – Develop Uniform Pre-Incident Plans

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide a system of shared operational plans for use during emergencies and non-emergent incidents.

Summary

Pre-incident plans are an important part of the emergency response system to provide essential information on specific structures and processes. Through timely planning, strategy and tactics can be developed before an emergency occurs. Pre-incident planning involves evaluating protection systems, building construction, contents, and operating procedures that may impact emergency operations.

The development of a pre-incident planning practice is viewed as particularly important in Loretto and Hamel. Since these organizations do not conduct routine fire and life safety inspections like many fire departments do, personnel do not routinely see what buildings look like internally and are not necessarily familiar with special hazards and access considerations.

Both Loretto and Hamel currently conduct some pre-incident planning on specified, high hazard, occupancies. However, the practice is limited in scope and, based on the above consideration, this strategy is offered in the interest of enhancing efforts and standardizing practices between the two fire departments.

Pre-incident plans should be kept up to date. The plans should be used in company training, and should be distributed to all mutual/automatic aid partners. The standards set forth in *NFPA 1620, Standard for Pre-Incident Planning*, should be followed to guide in the development of a regional pre-incident planning system.

Discussion

A firefighter typically works in an alien environment of heat, darkness, confusion, and extreme danger. Often, a firefighter's first visit to a building is when he or she is summoned to an emergency at the facility—the very time that the internal environment of the structure may be at its worst. Contrary to Hollywood's portrayal of the inside of a building on fire, visibility is likely to be nearly zero due to smoke. A lack of familiarity with the layout of a structure can easily cause a firefighter to become disoriented and subsequently suffer injury.

It is important that firefighters and command staff have accurate information readily at hand to identify hazards, direct tactical operations, and understand the proper use of built-in fire resistive features of some structures. This can be accomplished by touring structures, developing pre-incident plans, and conducting tactical exercises — either on-site or tabletop.

An ideal pre-incident planning system uses standardized forms and protocols. Data is collected in a consistent format. Information is presented in a manner that permits commanders and emergency workers to retrieve it quickly and easily. All require the use of consistent methods for collection, verification, storage, presentation, and update of emergency plans.

Programs in larger communities use pre-incident planning software to assemble the data, create plan documents and “quick data” forms, and store the information for easy retrieval. Above all, no program is successful without thorough incorporation of the pre-incident plans in frequent classroom and on-site training exercises.

Goals for the identification and development of target hazard pre-incident plans should be established. The uniform pre-incident planning program should be reviewed at least annually to assure the accomplishment of goals, the improvement of the program, and the appropriate entry of new target hazards. Properties that should have pre-incident plans include those having:

- A potential for large occupant load
- Those housing occupants that are incapable of self-rescue
- Structure size larger than 12,000 feet
- Facilities that process or store hazardous materials and/or equipment
- Buildings with built-in fire protection systems
- Buildings that pose unique hazards to firefighters during an incident

Pre-incident plans should be a quick and easy reference tool for company officers and command staff. The plans should be formatted for easy adaptation to electronic media. At a minimum, a pre-incident plan should include information on but not be limited to:

- Building construction type
- Occupant load
- Fire protection systems
- Water supply
- Exposure hazards
- Firefighter hazards
- Utility location and shutoffs
- Emergency contact information

Completely revised and upgraded from a recommended practice to a standard, the 2010 edition of *NFPA 1620: Standard for Pre-Incident Planning* provides criteria for developing pre-incident plans for use by personnel responding to emergencies. Pre-planning is a key component of first responder effectiveness, and *NFPA 1620* spells out the process and provides excellent information on the development and use of pre-incident plans and should be used as a reference. *NFPA 1620* addresses the protection, construction, and operational features of specific occupancies to develop pre-incident plans. The 2010 edition also contains pre-incident planning case histories and information addressing special or unique characteristics of specific occupancy classifications, as well as sample forms for pre-incident planning.

Personnel should receive regular familiarization training using the completed pre-incident plans. The plans must be made available on all emergency apparatus of both agencies. Routine use of pre-incident plans by all responders will assure that the plans are correctly used at major emergencies.

Guidance

- Inventory current pre-incident planning development in each agency.
- Evaluate commonality between current systems of pre-incident planning.
- Consider the establishment of a committee to develop building criteria and data for inclusion in pre-incident plans.
- Develop a timeline for the implementation, completion, and review of pre-incident plans.

Fiscal Considerations

The cost to each fire department for developing uniform pre-incident plans will be predicated on:

- Current hardware and software assets and cost to upgrade or purchase hardware and software, if desired
- Number of facilities/buildings with existing pre-incident plans versus those yet to be developed
- Pace of new construction requiring pre-incident plans
- Personnel costs to gather and assemble plans
- Unquantifiable potential for prevention of injury or death to emergency responders and the public

The cost of diagramming software programs designed specifically for drawing pre-fire plans starts around \$400. More advance versions with 3-D capability increases the initial software cost to \$700. Versions that integrate with a pocket PC would add an additional \$300. This and other diagramming software programs are made to be added onto existing fire prevention/inspection programs.

Strategy D – Provide Regional Incident Command and Operations Supervision

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide for IC (Incident Command) supervision of emergency operations.
- Provide for supervision of Paid per Call personnel during routine operations.

Summary

The fire chiefs in Loretto and Hamel have authority and responsibility for all aspects of day-to-day operations and personnel management. The chief will also assume command of emergency incidents or the role may be assumed by other trained command level officers in the department.

Discussion

Both Loretto and Hamel have adopted nationally established incident command system methodologies and use the system practices routinely on the emergency scene. Standards have also been adopted on a county-wide basis. This strategy is intended to offer consideration of how the two departments may take a step further by training and practicing common incident command skills as well as sharing incident commanders between the two when needed.

An incident commander (IC) usually responds to emergencies requiring multiple fire department units, hazardous materials incidents, or emergencies involving special circumstances. The incident commander is responsible for all aspects of the response, including the development of incident objectives and management of all incident operations. At a larger incident, the three command staff positions reporting directly to the incident commander are the safety officer, public information officer, and liaison officer, if assigned.

The role of the safety officer is to develop and recommend actions to assure the health and safety of emergency workers. The role of the public information officer is to develop and

release incident information to the media, incident personnel, and appropriate agencies and organizations. The role of the liaison officer is to serve as the point of contact for assisting agencies that may be involved in an incident.

The general staff under the incident commander at a major incident includes operations, planning, logistics, and finance/administration. These responsibilities (as with those of the command staff) remain with the incident commander until such time that they may be assigned to another qualified individual.

Benchmarks

Assembling an effective response force on the scene of an emergency incident in a timely manner will often lead to a successful outcome. To assemble enough personnel to complete the tasks of extinguishing a moderate-risk structural fire may require 15 fire suppression personnel. The specific number will be identified in a critical task analysis, performed as part of a Standard of Cover plan (discussed as a recommendation in this document). One of those tasks is that of command. An officer in the command role is assigned to remain outside of the structure to coordinate the attack, evaluate results and redirect the attack, call for more resources, and monitor conditions that might jeopardize crew safety.

In lieu of complete unification between Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, implementing any additional opportunities that may exist to cross train personnel on incident command practices and share incident command staff across the combined service area could result in efficiencies not possible individually.

Guidance

- Use standards of coverage and deployment planning to determine an appropriate level and number of incident commanders that may be needed at an incident.
- Compare current incident command practices and training activities to determine what is needed to combine them.
- Conduct joint incident command training exercises.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide guidelines for operation during emergencies and non-emergency incidents and activities that are common to both Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments.

Summary

Standard operating guidelines (SOGs) are used at the operations level of the fire department. They are analogous to a playbook, providing direction yet allowing for individualized company officer adjustments to situations. Currently, both departments have developed some SOGs; however, they are few in number and limited in content. Both fire chiefs expressed a desire and need to further develop their SOGs. This is viewed as an opportune time to collaborate and jointly develop SOGs for ease of incident and daily operational synchronicity. It is further viewed as a top priority undertaking for these agencies.

Discussion

Standard operating guidelines will improve on-scene safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of personnel. With personnel from both agencies trained in using the same procedures, they can approach an incident with an understanding that everyone will proceed in a similar fashion. This will greatly reduce or eliminate the confusion that can lead to delays in the delivery of service.

Guidance

- Keep the guidelines in electronic format for ease of updating.
- Give initial and recurring education to personnel in their use.
- Provide for continual use of the Standard Operating Guidelines during routine incidents and at each training session.

- Provide for a periodic appraisal of the guidelines to maintain currency with changes in tactics, strategy, and equipment.
- Consciously keep guidelines non-specific to allow for adaptation to particular incident situations by the supervisor.

Fiscal Considerations

- The elimination of duplicated staff effort in the creation and updating of standard operating guidelines will reduce soft costs.
- Instructional time will be optimized during multi-agency training sessions by excluding time devoted to adapting to differing procedures.

Strategy F – Provide Joint Standards for Service Delivery

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short to Mid Term

Section

- EMS and Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Establish a joint Standards for Service Delivery Policy, defining services, service levels, and response times to the 90th percentile so that adequate system planning can take place.
- Develop a system-wide reporting structure to standardize the collection and reporting of relative compliance with the Standards for Service Delivery Policy.

Summary

Response times are one of the most frequently used methods of measuring system performance. Fire agencies and policymakers require a gauge by which to measure the effectiveness of the system and a method by which to make decisions. Because the economic cost of providing emergency services is highly sensitive to response times, a small change in response time requirements may cause a significant change in cost. Policymakers must therefore carefully consider the balance between the economic cost and community risk.

Discussion

In conducting research for the Commission on Fire Accreditation International, Inc. (now under the larger heading of Center for Public Safety Excellence), members of the initial task force spent considerable effort toward examining the factors that make up the time required to be notified of and respond to a fire emergency. A thorough understanding of the relationship of time and the progression of an emergency was fundamental to defining optimum service levels.

In the process of this work, the task force noted that many fire departments are collecting data on emergency response but are not necessarily using that data to measure performance.⁵¹

Commonly, a problem occurs when fire departments use different timeframes in collecting and reporting response time statistics. For example, if a department does not include alarm processing or turnout time in its definition of response, the department's response statistics may be unfairly weighted because only travel time to the emergency is measured and reported. On the other hand, a department that does include alarm time and processing time in its collection of data may be compared unfavorably to a department that does not.

Hamel Volunteer Fire Department has established “desired” performance criteria as a component of their contracts with the cities served. Therein, it is stated that the departments “shall have a minimum of four (4) fire fighters at each fire call” and continues to state that that they “shall respond to each fire call within ten minutes of dispatch”. Further, HVFD has tracked and reported response times in average, 80th percentile, and 90th percentile categories for 2010 as follows:

Figure 62: HVFD 2010 Performance Measures

Service Area	Average	80 th Percentile	90 th Percentile	Worst Time
Medina	06:46	06:00	08:00	19:00
Corcoran	05:53	09:00	11:00	17:00
Combined	05:03	07:00	10:00	15:00

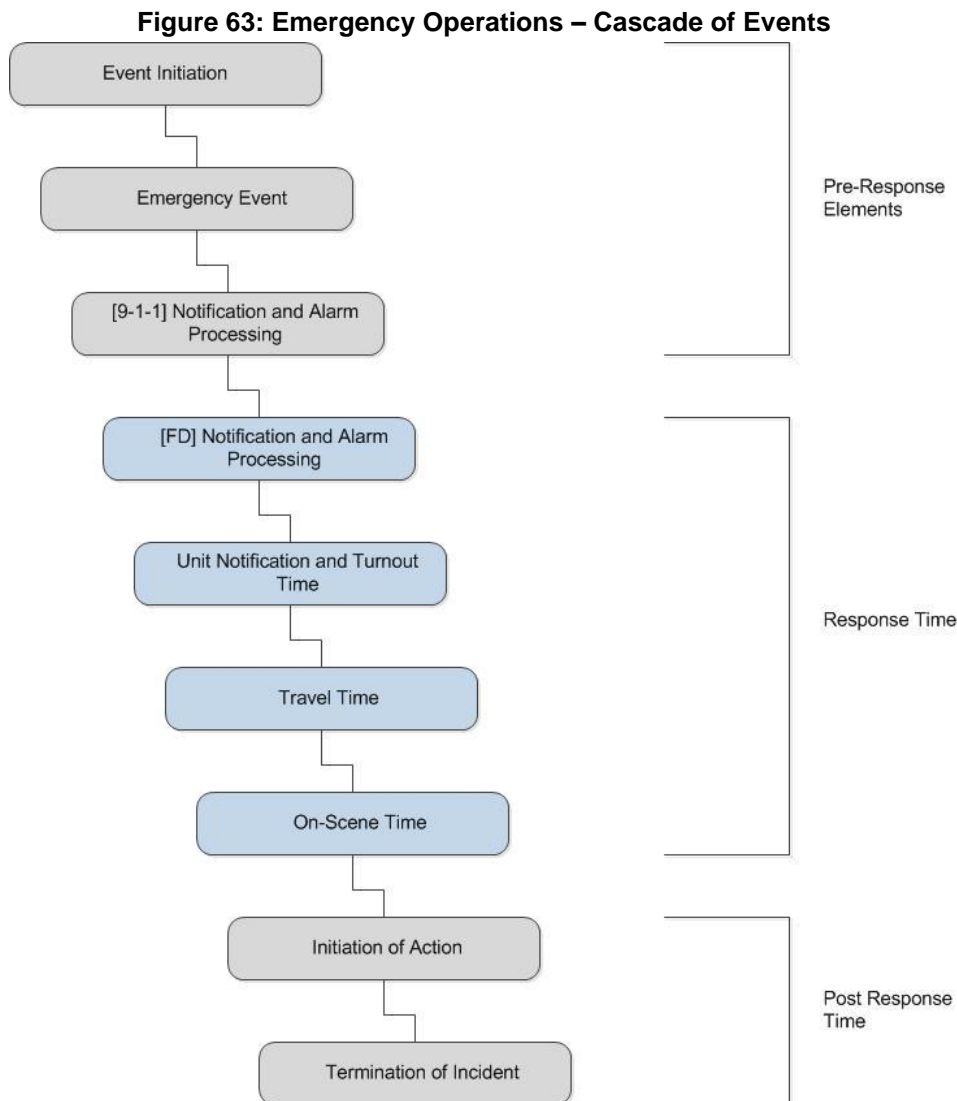
Language in the agreements that are in place between LVFD and its contract cities states that the department “will attempt to furnish not less than five firefighters on each call within the service area”. Beyond this, Loretto has not established defined performance standards.

The departments should convert their statements of desired or targeted response standards to a more explicitly defined set of performance goals, combined with accurate measures by which they can assure that targets are met or to identify the need for adjustments in deployment practices. Further detail and guidance is provided below.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) makes recommendations for response times and has established a “Cascade of Events” to assist responders in understanding response intervals for emergency operations. Irrespective of the standard used, system regulators establish an appropriate response time reporting method for their local communities. While call

⁵¹ *Creating & Evaluating Standards of Response Cover for Fire Departments*, Fourth edition, Chapter 2, page 1, Commission on Fire Accreditation International, Inc, 2003, Chantilly, VA.

processing and dispatch functions are external for both agencies, those dispatch functions should also be measured and monitored by the system and standards for dispatch should be established.



Critical Issues

- Data issues:
 - The departments should collaborate with the Hennepin County Dispatch Center to ensure that the data points can be captured.
 - The dispatch center should develop methods to report on the response performance using industry standard fractal reporting methods.

- Performance considerations
 - Both agencies should establish differential standards for response performance for urban, suburban, and rural deployment areas, as applicable.
 - Both agencies should determine valid and reliable performance reporting methods for response performance.
 - Both agencies should report to the community and cities served annually via an open public meeting on the actual performance as measured against the performance objectives. Contained in this report are:
 - the geographic areas and circumstances in which the requirements are not being met
 - the predictable consequences of any deficiencies
 - the steps that are necessary to achieve compliance
- Financial and fiscal considerations
 - Marginal costs of providing data collection and processing work.
 - Reporting will require additional resources from both agencies and from dispatch.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy G – Shared Public Education/Public Information

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration and Fire Prevention

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide Public Education and Public Information services for the combined service area

Summary

Both LVFD and HVFD make Public Education outreach efforts. Public Education is an important component of fire prevention and cost effectiveness. The incident response is an expensive endeavor, thus, an incident avoided is a significant expense avoided.

Discussion

Both organizations conduct public education activities as time permits and outreach is limited. Combining the two existing programs into one that serves both agencies allows for the strengths of each to be aligned to increase effectiveness.

Guidance

- Evaluate the needs of the combined service area and develop a list of skills required to meet those needs.
- Compare current activities to identified needs.
- Realign the individuals currently performing their tasks for the separate organizations into the tasks that best match their skill sets, consistent with the organizations' needs, while balancing the workload.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs for New Hires

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration, Emergency Operations, and Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Combine existing Paid per Call cadre into a resource pool for both agencies to utilize
- Develop a recruit training program for future hires

Summary

Both agencies are financially unable to hire career fire suppression personnel. Instead they depend heavily on what are generally referred to as volunteers, but are in actuality part-time employees utilized on a Paid per Call basis. As a result, the communities served receive valuable response coverage from dedicated firefighters at a minimal cost.

These groups can be combined and expanded to provide greater benefit to both agencies, while reducing the administrative and training workload currently expended by maintaining separate groups.

Discussion

Loretto Volunteer Department has 28 operational personnel along with the fire chief and two assistant chiefs. Hamel Volunteer Fire Department has 23 operational personnel and three chief officer positions. All are Paid per Call, part-time employees. Recruiting, training, and probationary practices are similar between the two.

Paid per Call programs can be readily joined into a single undertaking. A starting point is the recruitment process, which both Loretto and Hamel currently conduct by a combination of word-of-mouth communication, posting of recruiting signs, and periodic newspaper advertisements.

The same activities can be conducted, but recruiting for both agencies rather than one or the other. Benefits are multiplied and costs are reduced.

Similarly, training of new members can be combined effectively. As discussed in the Current Conditions section, both Hamel and Loretto use external instruction sources for training new personnel. Doing so is necessary to keep precious training hours available for ongoing training of the balance of the department's personnel. However, a shortcoming is that the new recruits are not training with the rest of the department's responders or with the agency's equipment.

ESCI has seen highly successful approaches to recruit training managed as a cooperative effort by multiple agencies. All fire departments share the same challenge in this regard, so it would be advantageous for Loretto and Hamel to develop a recruit academy together and to consider bringing neighboring agencies into the undertaking. Effective use of scarce training time and resources is achieved and personnel receive relevant, department-specific training by this method.

Taking the concept a step farther, Paid per Call personnel can be shared in a joint manpower pool. Members are cross-trained on both departments' equipment and under shared Standard Operating Guidelines, as discussed in Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines. They can then be utilized in either organization; an additional benefit is realized by the fact that when a member is located in the neighboring agency's response area at the time of an alarm, he or she can respond with that fire department, supplementing available staffing resources.

Guidance

- A Paid per Call (volunteer) coordinator should be appointed to serve as a combined recruiter, cheerleader, enforcer, problem solver, and administrator. This position is critical to the success of such an endeavor.
- A joint committee should be appointed to identify opportunities for shared recruiting, training and probationary practices.
- The effort is dependent on the development of common Standard Operating Guidelines.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy I – Combine Administrative Services

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Consolidate the completion of administrative tasks into a single operation with shared resources and management practices

Summary

Loretto and Hamel both share the same part-time office assistant. The employee works 20 hours per week for LVFD and 8 hours per week for HVFD and performs similar tasks for both agencies.

Many administrative functions are performed by the fire chiefs, as is appropriate. Others are completed by the office assistant, but in a different manner in each fire department. If clerical, financial and reporting/record keeping systems and procedures are aligned, the work will be performed more efficiently.

Discussion

The two functions performed by the Office Assistant are virtually identical, which means they are highly duplicative. The activities of the administrative support/business management functions are critical to legal/risk management and fiscal health of the agencies. While there are not positions that could be eliminated by combining efforts, there are certainly efficiencies to be gained.

Currently both departments do things differently with regard to routine administrative tasks, use differing computer programs and systems, and work from separate locations. Opportunities exist to combine administrative functions as assigned to the Office Assistant as follows:

- Billing and accounting activities

- Processing of routine correspondence
- Budgeting and budget monitoring
- Reporting - incident, financial, and others including maintenance of state incident records
- Maintenance and management of department records
- Contract management
- Administrative support to the Boards of Directors
- Human Resources records management

Guidance

- Identify the skills required for the tasks at hand first, then evaluate the capacity of the incumbent to complete those job functions for both agencies.
- In collaboration with the office assistant, identify tasks that are common to both fire departments but performed differently.
- Identify tasks that are performed for one department and not for the other. Determine whether those functions are needed in the other organization.
- List needs, in terms of equipment, software and policy/procedure changes that need to be made to perform common functions.

Fiscal Considerations

- Training costs may increase initially.
- Some costs may be incurred for office equipment or software.

Strategy J – Implement a Computerized Training Records Management System

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide a fully integrated comprehensive training records management system (RMS).

Summary

A computerized records management system (RMS) provides for ease of data entry, retention, and accessibility. RMS is designed to provide comprehensive information regarding an individual, company, station, and department training status. All RMS are designed to query records and generate a variety of user-defined reports.

Both fire departments track training activities individually using paper sign-in sheets and basic spreadsheet software. Practices and systems are similar but do not produce the same results. *NFPA 1401, Recommended Practice for Fire Service Training Reports and Records*, provides standards for record keeping systems. *NFPA 1401* presents a systematic approach to providing essential information for managing the training function of the fire department. It includes the types of records, reports, and forms that can serve as basic information tools for effective training administration. It also provides recommended practices related to computerization of records and reports and the legal aspects of record keeping.

Discussion

Loretto and Hamel have developed internal methods for recording training activities and the methods used are adequate. As small organizations, records can be managed manually, but with time and given the strategies here that recommend integration of training programs, a more robust system will be necessary.

Hamel has, in the past, used the Firehouse Software® RMS suite, a widely used reporting program. However, in 2010, the department migrated from Firehouse Software® to the

Minnesota Fire Bridge system provided by the Minnesota State Fire Marshal's Office. The department subsequently determined the State reporting system to be inadequate for its use and in mid-2010 reverted to the use of a Microsoft Excel® spreadsheet to track training hours.

In many organizations, an assortment of factors, including a lack of staff support, the time to become proficient with the software, and software limitations, frustrate and prevent users from fully using RMS. The use of a standardized RMS would enhance utilization of the data provided by the system.

With a standardized RMS, one administrative staff person could provide instruction and help troubleshoot the system. The ability to use the system to its maximum potential and to retain and generate meaningful reports is improved. An environment is created for system users to share knowledge, experience, and assist one another in problem resolution.

The ability to track and assess training information would foster the development of a unified training manual and an annual training plan. Future enterprises may benefit from a single RMS, including recruit training, career development, in-service, officer, and specialized training programs. An RMS for training will also aid the departments with budget planning, training delivery, and resource and risk management.

Guidance

- Establish a work group that includes at least one training representative from each department.
 - Identify system requirements and needs of each department.
 - Evaluate the recording systems currently used by each department, including justification for their use.
 - Evaluate available RMS systems.
 - Select an RMS that most adequately satisfies mutual requirements, needs, and budget.
- Each department should share in the cost of an individual to administer and manage the training RMS, including:
 - Training RMS management
 - Oversight of hardware and software installation
 - Providing for the initial and on-going RMS training for end users
- Determine server requirements for training RMS.
- Provide for RMS maintenance and troubleshooting services.

Fiscal Considerations

- A reduction in duplicated effort (reduces soft costs).
- Economies of scale in the collective purchase, use, and maintenance of a single RMS.
- Cost to purchase, administer, maintain, or modify existing network.
- Personnel costs associated with RMS committee, training, and implementation.

Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short to Mid Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide purpose and direction for training program management and delivery
- Combine strengths and resources to:
 - Overcome current training obstacles and deficiencies.
 - Provide a comprehensive and integrated training structure.
 - Develop a mutually beneficial training program.
 - Train and certify a cadre of knowledgeable and skilled emergency responders.

Summary

Agreements between public agencies to functionally consolidate certain programs are becoming increasingly common, including in Minnesota. Such cooperative initiatives are a means to mutually increase efficiency through reduction or elimination of duplication; something not usually achievable by a single entity. We believe that mutual training strategies for Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department will accomplish that.

Discussion

Certain individuals are assigned responsibility (through job description or by special assignment) for development and delivery of their department's training program. Loretto and Hamel's training programs are carried out, in large part, independently, with varying levels of program development, content, and quality. All persons responsible for firefighter training appear to work towards providing comprehensive programs; not surprisingly, success is inconsistent. With a mutually established training strategy, LVFD and HVFD can develop consistency and improve training results.

With shared resources, shared expertise, and geographical proximity, Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department are well positioned for training collaboration. Developing a plan for firefighter training in both departments is a crucial first step.

Both departments were able to articulate their training goals in general terms – focusing on meeting the basic requirements for continuing educations for the Firefighter I and Firefighter II certifications as defined by the State of Minnesota. However, neither organization has established a strategic training plan. A strategic training plan evaluates current training levels and determines future training needs, goals and objectives. The process includes identifying the existing type and level of emergency services, followed by an audit of the certification and skills of emergency workers. Strategies are created to develop curriculum, obtain resources, and produce a training schedule. Currently, each agency adopts their training standards and certification levels for the job classifications independently. A combined strategic training plan drives consistency and continuity between the two agencies and within each agency.

As part of the combined training strategy, a system of competency-based training and skills evaluation is recommended for all suppression and EMS personnel. Competency-based training helps firefighters achieve and retain the required skills for specific jobs. The term “skill” is defined in Merriam-Webster as “A learned power of doing something competently: and a developed aptitude or ability.” We recommend that mutual training strategies include the annual, or preferably, semi-annual evaluation of individual and company proficiency. Results of the evaluations may then be used to continuously re-evaluate the training strategy and identify areas of weakness that necessitate additional training focus.

Critical Issues

- The variations between current programs used by the two agencies may initially require personnel to receive additional training.
- Personnel involved in the development of a combined training manual should also be involved with development of mutual training strategies.
- The two agencies should produce a statement attesting to their commitment of developing mutual training strategies.

Guidance

- Establish a work group to evaluate and develop common training strategies:
 - Identify goals and establish objectives.
 - Set benchmarks.

- Evaluate the other related training topics found in this section:
 - Annual training plan
 - Shared training manual
 - Training facilities
 - Training standards
 - Record keeping
- Encourage creativity to apply existing strategies in new and different ways and to develop new strategies.
- Provide for a periodic appraisal of the training strategy, evaluating relevancy, effectiveness, and compatibility with current need.
- Keep strategies in electronic format for ease of updating.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objectives

- Provide standardized and consistent training.
- Provide a well-trained emergency workforce.
- Provide long-term vision and direction for training delivery.

Summary

The 2007 version of *NFPA 1500* states, "The fire department shall provide training and education for all department members commensurate with the duties and functions that they are expected to perform."⁵²

A formalized training plan provides the guidance for meeting training requirements. The plan and subsequent training are used to ensure that firefighters are competent, certified, and possess the ability to safely deal with emergencies. Training priorities are established by evaluating responder competencies to training mandates, requirements, desired training, and with the emergency services being delivered. Contemporary training delivery often revolves around performance or outcome-based training.

An annual training plan should reflect priorities by identifying the training that will occur. Training topics, general subject matter, required resources, responsible party, tentative schedule, and instructors are all covered in the plan. Rationale for why certain topics were chosen (or not chosen) is also included in the plan.

⁵² National Fire Protection Association, *Standard 1500 Standard for Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs*, Training and Education, 2007 Edition.

Discussion

Planning is essential to a successful training program, functioning much like the rudder of a ship. To efficiently plan the direction of a training program, complex factors must be considered, including: training mandates, department type, personnel development, unanticipated need, priorities, and finite training time. Successfully charting a course through such issues can be a daunting and overwhelming task for the lone training officer.

Currently, each agency individually deals with the same or similar fire training responsibilities and issues; inefficiencies exist as a result. A single training plan presents an opportunity to combine intellectual resources to exploit the strengths and assets of each department for mutual benefit.

Efficient training systems are those that identify what they do well and take advantage of the opportunities provided by other systems to supplement their efforts. Inefficient systems are those that try to be all things to all people, and in doing so, squander resources.⁵³

Determining the level of training that will be supported is crucial. Develop the annual training plan accordingly and deliver the training that directly supports those levels. For example, training could be directed at supporting certifications of Firefighter I and Firefighter II, as it is currently in Loretto and Hamel. It may be further directed to include Fire Officer I and Apparatus and Pump Operator certifications. A pool of instructors who are experts in that subject can be developed from those with the interest, qualifications, and expertise.

Developing and following through with a well-conceived and coordinated training plan can improve on-scene safety, efficiency, and effectiveness of personnel. With personnel from both agencies trained from the same plan, an emergency incident may be attacked with an expectation as to the level of training and skill set of the responders. The training plan will also assist in the planning and tracking of employee development and certifications.

Guidance

- Plan regular use of training facilities.
- Schedule regular single agency, single and multi-company manipulative skill drills.
- Schedule regular multi-agency, multi-company manipulative skill drills.
- Establish and maintain a training committee that meets regularly. Include at least one training representative from each department.

⁵³ Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, U.S. Fire Administration, *The Future of Fire Service Training and Education Professional Status: Part Two – Training and Education*, page 1.

- Publish, distribute, and implement the annual training plan.
- Provide an orientation for personnel of each department regarding the plan's purpose and contents.
- Publish monthly training schedules based on the plan.
- Place the annual plan and monthly schedules in electronic format for distribution and ease of updating.
- Provide for periodic reviews and adjustments to the plan.
- Direct all curricula towards risk management.
- Include all hazards in the training plan rather than solely fire-related incidents.

Fiscal Considerations

- An elimination or reduction in duplicated staff effort (reduced soft costs) in the creation and updating of multiple training plans.
- Instructional time is increased during multi-agency training sessions with personnel trained to selected certification levels.
- A reduction in costs through coordination of shared training resources and equipment.
- Potential costs increases if specialized instructors need to be used for advanced level training topics.

Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid-Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objectives

- Eliminate duplication in training emergency responders.
- Create a single unified training division.

Summary

Responsibility for fire department training programs is often assigned to either one person or a group of people. Two classic forms of providing training are: 1) a training division with assigned personnel in a larger organization or 2) a company officer or other Paid per Call individual is assigned training responsibilities, often in combination with other duties.

Historically, the training programs for LVFD and HVFD have been managed and operated independent of one another. Multiple assignments and limited time availability for Paid per Call members tend to underscore the difficulty faced by multiple personnel in trying to meet training responsibilities. An effort has been made to join the two training programs into one and is ongoing, but with limited effectiveness to date.

Discussion

To varying degrees, most fire department training programs display strengths and weaknesses. The weaknesses are commonly a result of two basic problems influencing agency training officers – multiple responsibilities and a lack of time to “do it all”. This is particularly problematic for part-time and Paid per Call personnel.

In 2010, both Loretto and Hamel took a positive step toward shared training delivery by consolidating their training programs. Training schedules are shared and members are invited to attend training provided by the adjacent department. ESCI commends the effort.

However, the integration of the programs has been marginally effective. Participation has been limited and the primary shortcoming with the plan lies in the fact that both departments continue to train on different nights of the week. Training nights are difficult to change in fire departments that have held their training on the same nights for many years, but doing so is essential to truly consolidating programs and gaining the rewards that can be found in establishing a single training system.

Advanced levels of education and training for company officers, and command officers are not adequately addressed. Training leadership in both organizations attempt to deliver this content; at current levels, the number of available training hours is limited. The focus is primarily placed on providing training to meet annual continuing education needs at the Firefighter I and Firefighters II levels, leaving little room for advanced training content. A lack of time to research, plan, develop, and conduct the training may be challenging for each agency. Collaborating on this effort increases efficient use of existing resources, enabling additional capacity to be created, thereby facilitating the development of a more effective program.

Given the resources and expertise within the agencies, there exists an opportunity to eliminate duplication by consolidating the training into a single program. The mission of the training program would be to coordinate the administration, management, and delivery of the training program for the two departments. Combining the existing fiscal, supplies, services, and personnel resources would provide greater efficiency of effort.

Guidance

- Establish a single training program.
 - Provide for the administration of training delivery.
 - Provide opportunities with regular meetings for both agency representatives to coordinate training activities.
 - Provide adequate training facilities and office space for training staff.
- Combine the training staff under a single Training Officer.
 - The Training Officer should report to one supervisor.
 - The Training Officer should have overall training program administration, supervision, and management responsibilities.
- Provide adequate personnel and prioritization of training activities based on common training goals including:
 - A joint recruit academy (see Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs for New Hires).

- Recurrent training for Firefighter I and II, and Fire Officers.
- Officer level training and career development.
- Apparatus operator/engineer skills and engineer development.
- Administration and coordination of the emergency medical services training and recertification program.
- A RMS (records management system) for tracking individual, company, and department training (see Strategy J – Implement a Computerized Training Records Management System).

Fiscal Considerations

- Increased efficiencies can be realized by eliminating duplication of staff effort in managing individual department training programs.
- Potential for increased instructional capacity through pooled instructors.
- Cost may be incurred to develop and or modify existing training facilities.
- Cost of purchasing any additional training aids.
- Maintenance and capital replacement costs.

Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Adopt uniform training standards, practices and guidelines
- Adopt uniform certification standards

Summary

Training standards provide the benchmark for training. They define and specify the quantity and quality of training for achieving levels of competency and certification. Certain standards are mandated by governing or regulating agencies such as the State of Minnesota. Others are considered industry standards developed by organizations like the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA). Occasionally, locally developed standards are adopted to address circumstances unique to that area. Manufacturer's recommendations and certifications are often applicable to the use of specialized equipment. Training records should consist of:

- Daily training records
- Company training records
- Individual training records
- An inventory of equipment assigned to the training department
- A complete reference library

Discussion

By collectively adopting a set of training standards (Jones and Bartlett and IFSTA, for example), both participating departments are foundationally prepared to move forward with a shared program as described in Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training. The adoption of common standards provides unification throughout the training delivery system and improves interagency compatibility. It further simplifies development of a shared training manual, annual training plan, data entry, and data retrieval from computerized training records. Adoption will

provide for uniformly trained and certified responders and will assure increased emergency scene compatibility, efficiency, effectiveness, personnel confidence, and safety.

Guidance

- Establish a work group including at least one training representative from each department.
 - Identify mandated training standards.
 - Assess all other standards currently used by each fire department, including the rationale for their use.
 - Develop a process for the adoption of training standards.
- Educate personnel on the purpose and application of the standards.
- Provide for continual use of training standards throughout the training delivery system.
- Maintain standards in a readily available format.
- Provide for frequent evaluation and updating of training standards.
- Address and resolve personnel certification issues created by new standards and certifications.

Fiscal Considerations

- A reduction in duplicated staff effort (reduces soft costs) to develop similar but separate programs based on the same standards.
- A potential for reduced specialized training costs through a larger pool of personnel.
- Responders trained to the same standard provide a more cohesive workforce, increasing efficiencies.
- Potential costs increases if specialized instructors need to be used for advanced level training topics

Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide consistent, standardized training procedures

Summary

Fire department instructors use manuals based on local, state and national standards as a resource to develop lesson plans for classroom and field training. Training sessions provide students with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to perform in emergency and non-emergency situations. Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department should cooperatively develop a training manual for adoption by both agencies.

Discussion

Until now, both fire departments unilaterally selected training materials from a variety of options. Hamel bases its training on the Jones and Bartlett series of manuals while Loretto uses IFSTA (International Fire Service Training Association) manuals. As a result, training and performance varies.

A standardized training manual goes beyond simply including the coursework content from manuals like those listed above. It also includes practices specific to the partnering departments' training programs, including internal training requirements, scheduling, goals and objectives, attendance standards and instructor qualifications, to list a few. The creation and use of a standard training manual will provide for more consistent training, better on-scene coordination, and improved firefighter safety.

Care should be exercised to prevent the development process from taking too long. To expedite progress, ESCI recommends adopting material from existing model training manuals, hose evolutions, and standard operating guidelines.

Model fire department training material is readily available through the Fire Department Training Network (FDTN), Thomson Delmar, and Oklahoma State University. The International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA, through Oklahoma State University) and Fire Protection Publications (FPP) have been longstanding producers of training manuals, course curricula, and audiovisual aids for fire departments. Finally the Jones and Bartlett resources are widely used in Minnesota. NFPA recommended practices and standards can also assist with the development of the training manual. Relevant standards include:

- *NFPA 1401, Recommended Practice for Fire Service Training Reports and Records*
- *NFPA 1403, Standard on Live Fire Training Evolutions*
- *NFPA 1404, Standard for Fire Service Respiratory Protection Training*
- *NFPA 1410, Standard on Training for Initial Emergency Scene Operations*
- *NFPA 1451, Standard for a Fire Service Vehicle Operations Training Program*

Guidance

- Establish and maintain a user group that meets regularly.
 - Include at least one training representative from each department.
- Develop and adopt a single training manual.
- Place the training manual in electronic format for easier updating and to allow access by firefighters.
- Provide for coordinated training of both agencies.
- Provide for regularly scheduled multi-agency drills.
- Provide for a regular evaluation and review of the training manual for applicability to pertinent laws, industry standards, and regional standard operating guidelines.
- Seek out existing procedures for use in development of the training manual.

Fiscal Considerations

- The elimination of duplicated staff effort (reduces soft costs) in the selection, development, and updating of separate training manuals.
- Instructional time is likely impacted during multi-agency training sessions by reducing or eliminating the time devoted to adaptive or remedial training.
- An emergency workforce trained under a cooperative system is more efficient and effective in reducing property damage and loss during emergency incidents.
- A workforce trained to operate under universal standards will experience fewer emergency scene injuries.

Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Training

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objectives

- Provide training facilities readily available to Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department.
- To develop and maintain the knowledge and skills of emergency services personnel.

Summary

Classroom instruction is an essential component of preparing emergency responders with knowledge and skills. A training facility or drill ground is a second indispensable element. Training facilities provide a controlled and safe environment to use to simulate emergencies, developing and testing the skills of emergency workers. Training involves both individual and group manipulative skills development in the operation of firefighting equipment, and fire apparatus.

NFPA 1402: Guide to Building Fire Service Training Centers, is a standard that addresses the design and construction of facilities for fire training.⁵⁴ The document covers the features that should be considered when planning a fire training facility. Absent the availability of suitable training facilities, some fire departments may forego essential training.

Discussion

Proficient emergency responders have confidence in their own abilities to handle the emergencies they encounter. Best practices suggest that emergency workers have regular access to training grounds for repetitive drills and to develop new skills. An effective and continuous training program results in safer, more efficient, and effective emergency operations.

⁵⁴ National Fire Protection Association, *Standard 1402 Guide to Building Fire Service Training Centers*, 2002 Edition.

Neither of the fire departments subject to this report has been able to establish a dedicated training facility due to cost. Instead, training is conducted in parking lots and city streets and mobile props are used to some extent when available. Live fire training is completed in donated buildings awaiting demolition, but opportunities to use these structures are few.

Maintaining independent training facilities is a very expensive duplication of cost. Constructing a comprehensive modern training facility to comply with industry standards concerning classrooms, practice grounds, training tower, live-fire building, and training props is a significant investment of capital. In addition, the on-going cost of operating and maintaining a training facility further advances the case for joint ownership.

While Loretto and Hamel are unlikely to be able to finance the construction of a training facility, alternatives are available: First, entering into a cooperative project with regional partnership, including multiple neighboring agencies, has proven effective in many instances. Secondly, grants and private funding combined with in-kind denotations often offers a viable alternative.

Examples of recently constructed basic fire training facilities illustrate (in the Figure 64) that these facilities need not be complicated or ornate to be quite functional.

Figure 64: Sample Training Grounds



With in-kind donations and grant funding, these fire departments were able to construct the basic buildings with very limited agency expense.

Critical Issues

- Seek the participation of neighboring regional partners.
- Determine the ideal location of a shared training facility. Any property that is a potential site for a training center should have an environmental assessment performed.
- Conduct a needs assessment before design and construction of a training center.
- Consider community and environmental impact of training grounds and training props when determining locations. Pay particular attention to access and egress routes.
- Select an architect, engineer, and vendor familiar with fire department training centers for oversight of the project. A number of companies have extensive knowledge and expertise in developing complete fire training facilities. Manufacturers of fire training facilities also offer lease packages for financing.

Guidance

- Establish a user group that meets regularly to include at least one training representative from each fire department.
- Consider neighboring jurisdictions as additional funding partners.
- Develop a training facility central to the service area and easily accessible by both agencies and any partnering agencies.
- Provide a borderless plan for maintaining adequate emergency response coverage for crews attending training.
- Secure adequate support for facility and grounds maintenance, and improvements.
- Live fire training is a crucial element when developing plans for a fire training facility.
- In addition to a gas-fired live training prop, the purchase of a flashover training prop should be given strong consideration.
- Establish policies and procedures for safe and effective use of the facilities.
- Consider jointly insuring against accident and liability.
- Visit fire regional training centers for ideas for the training facility.

Fiscal Considerations

- The cost of new construction of the facility.
- Anticipate an increase in fuel consumption and vehicle maintenance caused by travel to and from the training facility.
- The shared costs for the use, support, and maintenance of facilities.

Strategy Q – Develop a Single Apparatus Refurbishment/Replacement Plan

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Long Term

Section

- Emergency Operations

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Create a single set of emergency apparatus specifications.
- Provide single-source uniform emergency apparatus for Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department.

Summary

Both fire departments use and maintain a variety of emergency apparatus types. Among the common types of apparatus, each department uses equipment of different makes, models, and configurations. A standard specification and procurement process for each apparatus type would result in lower cost, faster production, and training efficiencies.

Procurement of uniform fire apparatus can translate into lower purchase prices, reduction in maintenance costs, and less money, time, and effort spent training drivers and maintenance personnel. Other benefits include greater interoperability, a potential for reducing driver training, and greater confidence and skill level among operators.

Discussion

The apparatus fleets of the two departments are diverse. Fire apparatus are categorized by function, including pumpers, tankers, brush units, and staff vehicles. While there is an identifiable need for vehicles from each category in more than one configuration, acquiring and maintaining standard apparatus creates desirable efficiencies

The cash price of a pumper often exceeds \$500,000. The reasons for such prices are due to the specialized nature of fire apparatus and new and evolving emissions standards. However, customization, add-ons, and options tend to make each fire apparatus a “one of a kind” vehicle.

Fire apparatus useful service life varies generally depending on the rate of use, the environment, operating conditions, and the frequency and level of preventive maintenance. A fire pumper with average to heavy use can reasonably be expected to have a 10 to 15-year service life. With light to very light use, as is experienced in Loretto and Hamel, service life can reach 20 years; very heavy use may reduce service life to as few as ten years.

Factors influencing fire apparatus service life include technology and economics. At a given time the cost to operate and maintain a fire apparatus passes the economics of rehabilitation, refurbishment, or replacement.

A trend is developing within the fire apparatus manufacturing industry. Several manufacturers now offer a line of stock fire apparatus built on custom chassis in addition to a more traditional line of fully custom units. The cost savings of purchasing a stock unit is often 20 percent or more when compared to a custom vehicle.

Safety should always be the main consideration when purchasing and operating emergency fire apparatus. When developing emergency fire apparatus specifications and operational procedures, NFPA and other industry standards should be used. Additional guidance on fire apparatus safety devices, response, and training can be found in the *Emergency Vehicle Safety Initiative*.⁵⁵

Guidance

- Assemble data on current department apparatus, including: age, mileage, operating hours, maintenance costs, cumulative down time, and annual test results. Use the information to create a single apparatus refurbishment/replacement plan and schedule.
- Determine the replacement interval and projected life expectancy of each apparatus.
- Examine the merits of extending the useful service life of apparatus through rehabilitation and refurbishment.
- Develop an emergency apparatus prescribed load list (standardized inventory) for use by both agencies.
- Mark apparatus in a standard format with striping, decals, and department name following NFPA standards and recommendations from the *Emergency Vehicle Safety Initiative*.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Department of Homeland Security, FEMA, U.S. Fire Administration, *Emergency Vehicle Safety Initiative*.FA-272, August 2004, pages iii, iv.

⁵⁶ Western Fire Chiefs Association, National Fire Service Library, www.wfca.com.

- Create Standard Operating Guidelines for the operation, maintenance, and recordkeeping of apparatus. A resource for obtaining sample documents may be found at the National Fire Service Library website.
- Outfit reserve apparatus with the same complement of equipment as frontline units.

Fiscal Considerations

- Time and effort savings by preparing fewer bid specifications.
- Effort avoided by conducting fewer bid processes.
- Investigate the letting of apparatus bids for periods longer than one year.
- Cost savings in acquiring emergency fire apparatus.
- Consider the purchase of stock versus custom apparatus.
- Consider leasing versus outright purchase of emergency apparatus.

Strategy R – Develop a Regional Fire Safety Education Coalition

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Fire Prevention

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide for the cost effective, regional dissemination of public fire safety education.

Summary

The prevention of fires is far more desirable than extinguishing them from a life safety standpoint and clearly more cost effective. It is widely recognized that one of the most successful methods of preventing fires is through a multi-faceted public fire safety education program. Cooperative delivery of public education programs is an effective and efficient methodology.

Discussion

LVFD and HVFD have made a commitment to their public education outreach, as detailed in the current conditions section of this report. However, both agencies desire to do more and are limited by financial and staffing capacities. A cooperative approach between the two agencies, or even on a regional level, offers opportunities for enhanced program delivery.

Successful public education programs use a range of communication methods, many of which cannot be limited to a specific geopolitical boundary. Television and radio, for instance, are regional media that over-arch jurisdictional limits delivering information to citizens in a wide variety of communities. For fire safety campaigns to be most effective each must be designed to target a specific audience and each must be crafted for the means of delivery.

Creation of a joint or regional public education coalition will help to standardize fire safety messages across the region and work to reach more of the target audience. This, in turn, will allow for reduced cost to each agency through sharing of resources, while improving the quality of programs. Costs can also be reduced through volume purchasing of handouts and other

public education materials. Increased training can be made available to the public education staff, engine company crews, and others to enhance the quality of the fire prevention effort. Volunteers can also be recruited that would like to assist but are not inclined to server as emergency responders.

Guidance

- Formalize the creation of the coalition through a written agreement.
- Involve others from outside the area and from non-traditional groups (insurance industry, educators, Hennepin County, State Fire Marshal's Office and media).
- Create standardized messages that can be used throughout the service area.
- Learn from others. Model the coalition after other successful regional public fire safety education programs.

Fiscal Considerations

- The elimination of duplicated staff effort in the creation and distribution of public fire safety education messages reduces soft costs.
- Cost savings can be achieved through group purchasing of materials and other media.
- Increased outreach may be accompanied by increased costs.

Strategy S – Develop a Regional Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention Network

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Short Term

Section

- Fire Prevention

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide an effective means for intervening in juvenile-set/caused fires.

Summary

Statistical analysis nationwide clearly demonstrates the growing problem of juvenile fire setting. While fires set by juveniles have always been a problem, fire cause determination and fire data reporting systems have not always been adequate to identify the extent of the phenomenon. Many jurisdictions simply do not realize the extent of juvenile-set fires in their community.

The lack of involvement by the fire departments, law enforcement agencies, mental health professionals, schools, juvenile court, and other affected interests throughout the region limits the effectiveness of the overall fire prevention efforts of the individual departments.

Discussion

Juvenile fire setting is not considered to be a frequent occurrence by the departments. Even so, attention to the problem is important. Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department are currently able to access intervention resources outside of their agencies. Certified intervention personnel are not, however, available in-house. Due to the size of the organizations, development of in-house resources is impractical.

The establishment of an effective, multi-discipline, multi-agency Juvenile Fire Setter Intervention (JFSI) Network will allow shared expertise, services, knowledge, and (most importantly) information to the benefit of both agencies and their communities. A network of trained professionals from all the needed disciplines, working together, allows for more accurate assessment of individual fire setters to determine the nature and depth of intervention required.

A regional program also:

- Allows for sharing the workload between agencies.
- Facilitates appropriate referral to professional services when needed.
- Makes possible effective prosecution on those few occasions when juvenile-set fires are verified as arson.

Guidance

- Develop a regional program modeled on already established and successful JFSI networks.
- Include all the needed professional disciplines.
- Provide important, on-going training.
- Involve only those fire agency personnel who desire to participate.
- Formally organize the structure of the network for long-term sustainability.

Fiscal Considerations

- Reduced fire loss to the community through reduction in juvenile-caused fires.
- Potential increased training requirement and cost.
- Potential overtime for training and for intervention.

Strategy T – Establish a Shared Health and Safety Program

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide a fire-service related health and safety program.

Summary

A single method and source for providing occupational and health services may provide savings through economies of scale and reduced worker's compensation costs. The Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI), provides guidance on the formation and management of health and safety program. Additionally, *NFPA 1500, Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Programs*, provides the minimum requirements for a fire-service related occupational safety and health program.⁵⁷ Along with *NFPA 1500, NFPA 1582, the Standard on Comprehensive Occupational Medicine Programs for Fire Departments*, and related documents, provide guidance for the creation of occupational health programs and for establishing medical requirements for current and future firefighters.

Discussion

State: Minnesota Statutes require the establishment of a Safety Committee for employers with more than 25 employees.⁵⁸ While the subject departments may be considered to be comprised of volunteer staffing, the membership is actually made up of part-time employees, subject to the statutory requirement. Regardless of the statutory application, a Health and Safety Program and Safety Committee are considered to be appropriate in any fire department. Additional

⁵⁷ National Fire Protection Association, *Standard 1500: Standard on Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program*, 2007 Edition.

⁵⁸ Minnesota Statute 182.676 – Safety Committees

requirements exist in federal Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requirements.⁵⁹

Neither of the agencies has a safety program in place. Since both are in need of establishing a program and a practice of holding regular safety committee meetings, it is logical that the undertaking be addressed jointly.

Once established, the safety program should be expanded to include components of an occupation health and safety program. Specifically, physical examinations and periodic physical ability testing should be conducted. Although both Loretto and Hamel currently conduct some physical examinations as detailed in the Current Conditions section, they are not NFPA compliant and are not conducted annually.

The legal requirements for a fire department occupational safety and health program have been established. How a fire department administers and supports the program determines the success and the resultant benefit.

Guidance

- Identify applicable requirements and standards for safety committees as established by Minnesota statute.
- Meet with representatives of both organizations to develop a jointly administered safety program.
- Determine required and desired specifications for an occupational safety and health program.
- Create a single personnel policy for occupational safety and health.
- Conduct baseline testing for firefighters without previous audio and lung function baseline records.

Fiscal Considerations

- Occupational medicine programs are often menu driven. Items selected for inclusion in the program determine the final cost. Additional financial factors involve whether the fire departments elect to exceed mandated requirements, perform some of the occupational medicine functions internally, or consolidate the occupational medicine program with interrelated programs. Interrelating programs that share functions include wellness, infectious disease, FIT testing, EMS, and hazardous materials.

⁵⁹ Federal Statute 29.CFR 1952.204.

Strategy U – Develop Uniform Fees for Service

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Provide participating fire departments with a uniform schedule of fees for service.

Summary

Loretto and Hamel do not generally charge fees for services. The sole exception is a fee charged to building owners for use of a building as a practice burn structure. Loretto VFD charges \$500, and Hamel VFD sets fees similarly.

Fees are not levied for special standby charges or for out-of-district responses. In addition, neither of the agencies levies development related impact fees. It is typical for some departments to charge fees for non-routine services to recover costs due to extraordinary or unusual events. Examples include response to and standby for hazardous materials incidents and recurring false automatic alarms.

Discussion

The departments could charge fees for non-routine services to recover costs due to extraordinary or unusual events. Below is a description of representative fee types:

- Stand-by Charges – A fee charged for cost necessitated by a one-time or on-going need for general public safety. For example, a fire department may charge a stand-by fee to post a first aid crew at a local sports event.
- User Fee – A fee based on actual cost incurred for any service performed by a fire department where these costs require a recall of fire personnel above normal staffing.
- Charge for Service to Non-Tax Supporting Institutions – A fee for the total cost incurred by a fire department for service provided to any non-tax supporting institution.
- Plan Review Fee – A fee charged to review plans for multiple dwellings, commercial, manufacturing, or public assembly units. The fee can be based on a percentage of the

total estimated construction cost per structure. This fee off-sets expenses incurred by a fire department during the planning phase of any development or construction.

- Fire Cause Determination Fee – A fee that recovers the fire department's cost of providing service resulting from a violation of the Fire Code.
- Permit Fee – A charge for a fire department permit for special or short-term events.

Other fees for service include agreements where one emergency service provider either wholly or partially supplies services to another. This can be done under a contract for service or an interlocal agreement.

There are good reasons for developing uniform fees for services; foremost of which is the reduced time, effort, and cost of developing independent fee schedules. Beyond duplicated effort and expense, however, a consistent fee schedule across the region creates a more coherent public service image to the contract cities, businesses and taxpaying communities.

Critical Issues

- Fire agency partners should design a standardized procedure for billing. For example, the process may establish a collection policy for non-payment, billing cycle, recordkeeping, billing service allowance, and oversight rules for the program.
- The agencies should constantly review fees for service for improvements and to capture potential sources of new revenue that may become available.

Guidance

- Evaluate any existing fee for service schedules used by neighboring fire departments. If possible, use one as the basis for developing uniform fees for service.
- Evaluate whether all potential sources of revenue are included in the fees for service schedule.
- Format the fees for service schedule for adoption by each organization as a uniform fee.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Strategy V – Jointly Develop An Employee Handbook

Level of Cooperation

- Functional

Timeline for Completion

- Mid Term

Section

- Administration

Affected Stakeholders

- Both Agencies

Objective

- Develop an informational resource for new hires as well as existing personnel for the purpose of assuring that all members are informed of the conditions under which they serve the fire departments.

Summary

Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department have not developed a compilation of information that is supplied to employees that documents their conditions of employment and the standards under which they serve their agency. Both agencies share the same need, making a cooperative undertaking a logical one given the similarities that exist in both organizations' practices.

Discussion

For a smaller organization, an employee manual can be a combination of a number of key documents. Content of this kind of manual is distinguished from a Standard Operating Guidelines Manual, which should be stand-alone.

LVFD and HVFD are very similar when it comes to employment practices and personnel related rules. As a result, building a manual together will get the job done more efficiently and will carry the benefit of common content as the agencies move toward a higher degree of cooperative efforts.

Following is a list some of the key components of an employee manual:

- Policies and Procedures
- Rules and Regulations (some of which are already in place in Loretto but can be expanded)

- Code of Ethics
- Disciplinary policy (may be included in policies and procedures)

Critical Issues

- As a shared development project, assure that appropriate representation from both organizations is directly involved in the development process.
- The process must be transparent to all members to avoid the perception that the effort is being conducted behind closed doors.

Guidance

- Evaluate existing documents including Loretto Rules and Regulations and both organization's Constitution and By Laws.
- Identify common needs and practices as they relate to personnel.
- Research existing document of similar content to work from.
- List the number and type of documents that need to be included in a manual and prioritize their development.
- Assign sub-committees to generate an initial draft of each document of section.

Fiscal Considerations

- No significant financial considerations.

Findings and Recommendations

Having completed the analysis of current conditions present in the Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Departments and identifying the ways in which the two organizations can work more effectively together, ESCI is now armed with the information necessary to offer specific findings. Following the identified findings, a discussion of recommendations for how the departments should move forward is provided.

Findings

Based on evaluation of current conditions, fiscal analysis, and our experience with other projects of similar character and scope, we draw certain conclusions regarding Loretto Volunteer Fire Department and Hamel Volunteer Fire Department, the region, and the opportunities for collaboration. A summary of those findings follow.

- **HVFD and LVFD are Interdependent** – The fire departments serve portions of the same cities and depend upon each other, along with neighboring departments, for mutual aid and automatic aid assistance during emergency incidents. As stand-alone fire departments, neither would be able to effectively combat a significant fire or other major incident without each other's assistance.
- **HVFD and LVFD Value Customer Service** – During the work leading to this report, both fire departments consistently demonstrated a focus toward serving those who live, work, and play in the area.
- **HVFD and LVFD Strive to Meet the Expectations of the Cities Served** – The departments make considerable efforts to assure that they provide acceptable levels of service to their communities and the cities with which they serve by contract. Stakeholder interviews with the cities served by Loretto VFD indicated that expectations are generally being met. In similar interviews regarding Hamel VFD's service delivery, concerns were expressed about some of the department's practices, questioning confidence at times in the organization's performance.
- **Existing Partnerships Reduce Duplicated Effort But Are Inadequate** – HVFD and LVFD have eliminated some regional duplication through active interagency cooperation. Specifically, include automatic/mutual aid practices are being implemented and a shared training program has been approached. However, the training effort has not been fully developed and is not effective.

Employees from each department are invited to attend training at the other agency, but participation is limited. Further, training is held on separate evenings in each. The effort is commendable, but inadequately implemented. The strategies detailed in this report provide the tools with which the organizations can effectively blend their training programs. (See Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies, page 150, Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan, page 153, Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program, page 156, Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards, page

159, Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual, page 161, Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility, page 163)

- **Paid per Call Responders Play a Critical Role in Fire Protection** – Volunteer and, in this instance, Paid per Call firefighters are an essential part of both fire departments. HVFD and LVFD both maintain a roster of committed Paid per Call firefighters who are the sole source of response manpower. The need for Paid per Call firefighters in the fire departments will not be eliminated by any of the partnership opportunities detailed in this report. Rather, the intent of one option in particular is to administratively support and strengthen the volunteer program (See: Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs, page 143).
- **Both Organizations Share Common Administrative Needs** – Important administrative needs were identified in both organizations. They include the need for an employee manual and a structured definition of organizational policies and procedures. The same needs exist in both fire departments.
- **Other Organizations Should Be Included in Partnership Initiatives** – Organizations outside of HVFD and LVFD should be included when developing a partnership plan. With multiple fire departments serving adjacent boundaries and even serving portions of the same cities, the opportunities for cooperative service delivery and advantages of doing so are many. It was apparent in conducting field interviews with Plymouth, Long Lake, Maple Grove, Rogers and others that there is an open minded attitude in regard to working together in the region. All should be considered as partnering plans are developed.

In addition, all of the Hennepin County fire departments maintain and use some form of mutual and automatic aid protocols among themselves in daily operations. Such practices reduce the reflex time required to react to serious emergencies and maximize the value of available resources. Automatic aid agreements should extend to areas outside of HVFD and LVFD's service areas, whenever possible.

- **Operational Guidelines Are Inadequate In Both Agencies** – Neither fire department has established an adequate set of Standard Operating Guidelines (SOGs). This need is critical because SOGs establish the baseline "play book" upon which emergency responders base their on-scene operational practices.
- **The Hennepin County Region is Politically Diverse** – The varied geography and demography of the Hennepin County area influences where and how people choose to live. Consequently, the cities, and unincorporated communities gain their political identity from the people who live in it and who participate in the governance of those area. It is no surprise therefore, that the culture and politics within individual communities of the area are as different as the topography.
- **Cultural Differences Exist Between HVFD and LVFD** – Organizational culture is one of the most important factors impacting the success or failure of a cooperative effort. It is also, without question, the most difficult aspect to evaluate and it is challenging to predict the affect that differing internal cultures will have on the collaborative strategies.

The staff and line level members in both organizations serve their fire department for similar reasons and, from that standpoint, are much alike. However, differences were perceived by ESCI staff in the course of stakeholder interviews that suggest that the organizational cultures contrast in some respects. For an integration of the two organizations to be successful, the membership will need to develop similar attitudes and

outlooks on not only the delivery of emergency services, but also on how they view each other and each other's organizations. Cultural shifts take time and are best accomplished, based on ESCI's experience, on the training ground. This consideration is a key conclusion that has resulted in the multiple training related strategy recommendations herein.

- **A Consolidation of HVFD and LVFD has Local Political Support** – The governing bodies of HVFD and LVFD appear to be genuinely interested in improving the efficiency and quality of fire protection. Officials are open to virtually any suggestion of interagency collaboration that would maintain or improve service without an increase in the financial burden on the citizens. As stated, concerns exist with some aspects of current service delivery models and increased cooperative efforts will address many, if not all, of those concerns.
- **HVFD and LVFD Policymakers Should Develop a Plan to Implement Partnership Opportunities** – Fire department administrators and staff have created a foundation for partnerships by conducting this study. Without a clear commitment from policymakers, progress on valuable initiatives may eventually falter. HVFD and LVFD decision makers need to adopt a plan to move ahead with aligning the processes, services, and operations of the fire departments wherever possible.
- **Opportunities Exist for Cost Avoidance** – An ability to reduce duplication and/or increase efficiency exists for the two fire departments. Such opportunities include savings as a result of standardized specifications for fire equipment, the creation of a joint fire training division, administrative services, and sharing of other resources and unified programs.
- **Consolidation of HVFD and LVFD is Feasible** – HVFD and LVFD should share management resources. An agreement would result in reduced duplication and increased efficiency at the administrative level. Long-term, extending the agreement to merge all organizational aspects of the fire departments is forecast to reduce the complexity of managing two independent organizations, and enhance the ability of the agencies to plan and manage fire and emergency medical service in the region. Some cost savings will be realized, though limited.
- **Merging HVFD and LVFD Pension Plans** – HVFD and LVFD both provide pension benefits to their Paid per Call membership. Each is administered similarly through the organization's Relief Association. The Associations are similar in function, but the benefits differ substantially. Disbursements to individuals are made in the form of lump-sum service pensions, monthly service pensions, survivor benefits, and long-term disability benefits. Loretto VFD Relief Association vested members qualify for a pension benefit that equals \$4,200 per year of service and the Hamel VFD Relief Association is funded at a \$2,300 benefit level. Both Associations have established a vesting threshold at 20 years of service.

Relief associations are governmental entities that receive and manage public money to provide retirement benefits for individuals providing the governmental services of firefighting and emergency first response. Relief associations are required under various Minnesota statutes to annually report financial, investment, and plan administration

information to the Office of the State Auditor, and the State Auditor is required to provide a detailed report to the Legislature under Minnesota Statutes.⁶⁰

During stakeholder interviews, the dissimilarity in pension payouts was cited with some uneasiness and as a concern or an impediment to Hamel and Loretto VFDs integrating into a single organization. A few individuals said that the pension was not a prime factor or motivation for membership on the fire department. Nearly all of those interviewed identified the desire to help other as the principal motivation for their relationship with the volunteer fire department.

If the VFDs are to be consolidated, the pension benefits will have to be equalized. This can be accomplished by either bringing HVFD personnel to a scale comparable to that of LVFD, or establishing a new benefit level. A financial impact will result if the benefit level is set to match LVFD and would increase cost to the contract cities being served.

Minnesota Statutes allow for Hamel and Loretto VFDs to merge or consolidate the two pension plans. Minnesota Statutes Chapter 317A, applies to all Minnesota nonprofit corporations and contains numerous requirements on the manner of incorporation, general powers, scope of bylaws, function of the board and officers, rights and obligations of members, processes of consolidation, merger, or dissolution, and corporate registration.⁶¹

The two programs are similar in some regards including their organizational configuration, vested service levels and participation policies. A complete analysis of similarities and differences, as well as actuarial calculations of current and future funding liabilities is beyond the scope of this report. However, ESCI has identified the following factors that will need to be evaluated should consolidation of the pension plans is considered:

Funding levels: Both plans are currently funded at acceptable levels. The Loretto program is reportedly funded at 98.13 percent of total liability and the Hamel plan at 127 percent. Data is from the most recent State Auditor summary report for reporting year 2010.

Projection of surplus or deficit as of December 31, 2011, for the two relief associations is shown in the figure below.

Figure 65: Fire Relief Association Surplus or Deficit Projection

	Hamel Relief Association	Loretto Relief Association
Projected Assets	1,365,540	1,423,455
2011 Accrued Liability	1,090,498	1,451,888
Surplus or Deficit	275,042	(28,433)

Estimating the cost to normalize the benefits at the \$4,200 annual benefit would require an actuarial calculation by the department's pension consultants.

Participation Thresholds: State law allows individual agencies to determine minimum pension program requirements of activity (typically emergency response and training attendance), enrollment and ongoing participation. Requirements are specified in Relief Association Bylaws and departmental Standard Operating Procedures. The two would need to be compared and requirements standardized.

⁶⁰ Minnesota Statutes §§ 6.72 and 356.219.

⁶¹ Minnesota Statutes, 317A.601 Merger, consolidation, or transfer.

Reporting Assumptions: The Relief Associations are required to file annual reports to the State of Minnesota Auditor's Office. Agencies may make reporting assumptions for financial considerations, eligibility and participation, and municipal contribution levels and state assistance, to name only a few. It is important that reporting and record keeping practices be compared and standardized.

Funding Levels: The most complex challenge will be the equalization of funding of the programs that result in a similar benefit to members of a consolidated organization. Given the considerable difference between the two benefit levels, ESCI recommends that the programs be equalized incrementally. In the following pages, ESCI outlines an approach to merger of LVFD and HVFD in steps that may take as much as five years to reach full conclusion. A plan to equalize benefits in phases, concurrent with the same timeline is recommended.

- **All Other Cooperative Opportunities are Feasible** – Without exception, all other identified collaborative strategies are feasible.

Strategic Recommendations

It is common for those in the fire service to tout themselves, or their department in terms such as “a pride-driven organization that is at their best every day,” and “the best by test,” or more simply, “the best.” The true mark of quality of the best fire departments however, is those that work continuously for measurable improvement in organizational performance. By undertaking this study of collaborative opportunities, the leadership (directors and administrations) of HVFD and LVFD have begun the task of organizational and system evaluation that is necessary to plan for and reach the goal of truly being the best.

Success is peace of mind, a direct result of self-satisfaction in knowing that you did your best to become the best that you are capable of becoming. — John Wooden

We intend no suggestion that HVFD and LVFD are not already operating at a high level. In fact, they do a good job with limited resources. However, areas of needed improvement have been identified. In keeping with the notion of continuous improvement wherein an unending loop of performance, measurement, and evaluation leads to important system enhancements, we offer recommendations to assist the chiefs and boards to implement the collaborative strategies that will best benefit the citizens served by Loretto and Hamel.

The success of adopting and implementing cooperative opportunities depends on many things. In our experience with dozens of functional, operational, and legal unifications, leadership is the single factor that most frequently determines success. Nearly always, a key staff, councilor, or board member champions the concept garnering the support of the various affected groups (political, member, and community). Additionally, good leadership fosters an organizational culture receptive to planning, calculated risk taking, and flexibility.

The manner in which leaders promote a trusting relationship between all groups and aid two-way communication between them is essential. From these issues, research by Kohm, Piana, and Gowdy identifies five factors that most often seem to contribute to the successful implementation of a partnership or consolidation.⁶² The five factors are:

- A leadership that believes strongly in the partnership and demonstrates this belief, often by acting selflessly to maintain it.

⁶² Amelia Kohm, David La Piana, and Heather Gowdy, “Strategic Restructuring, Findings from a Study of Integrations and Alliances Among Nonprofit Social Service and Cultural Organizations in the United States,” Chapin Hall, June 2000.

- Multiple forms of communication to keep all persons (governing board, staff, members, and community) up to date about plans, problems, and benefits concerning the partnership.
- Face-to-face communications with partner organizations in the forms of meetings, training, and other forums to build trust and understanding among staff.
- Flexibility through an expectation that even in the best-planned partnership unforeseen issues will arise, mistakes will be made, and alternative paths will be identified.
- Early evidence of benefit to assure everyone that they are on the right track, such as better or less expensive employee benefits or improved facilities.

Kohm, Piana, and Gowdy term the establishment of an ongoing relationship between two or more independent organizations as *strategic restructuring*. The relationship is generally created to increase the administrative efficiency and/or further the programmatic mission of one or more of the participating agencies through shared, transferred, or combined services, resources, or programs. Restructuring may be thought of as a continuum that ranges from jointly managed programs (such as automatic aid agreements) to complete organizational merger.

Moving Forward

Loretto and Hamel should promptly and systematically implement as many of the feasible cooperative opportunities as is possible. It is important that the respective boards of directors exercise proper management of the process, but it is also important that decision makers refrain from getting bogged down by bureaucracy. Long-term success of many of the initiatives may depend on short-term evidence of improvement and benefit. Consequently, the use of an oversight board or steering committee is recommended to assure that the process moves forward without delay.

- **Establish an Oversight Board to Plan and Manage the Implementation of Feasible Collaborative Opportunities** – We recommend that the HVFD and LVFD empanel an oversight board comprised of agency representatives and other affected parties, including contract cities. The group should assume responsibility for prioritizing, and determining the sequential order for implementation of all feasible collaborative opportunities. The oversight board should have the authority and accountability to initiate all opportunities within established budgetary and governance limitations.

The following recommendations are judged as being most likely to result in significant improvement to systems and/or programs. These initiatives should be acted on regardless of action on the remaining feasible opportunities.

Strategy E – Develop Common Standard Operating Guidelines, page 136

Strategy H – Combine Paid per Call Recruiting and Training Programs, page 143

Strategy K – Develop Mutual Training Strategies, page 150

Strategy L – Develop an Annual Shared Training Plan, page 153

Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program, page 156

Strategy N – Develop and Adopt Training Standards, page 159

Strategy O – Create a Shared Training Manual, page 161

Strategy P – Develop a Shared Fire and EMS Training Facility, page 163

Strategy T – Establish a Shared Health and Safety Program, page 173

Strategy V – Jointly Develop An Employee Handbook, page 177

Overarching Recommendation

Implementation of the feasible cooperative opportunities (as recommended above), addresses a myriad of the administrative, support and operational challenges identified in the course of this study. Pursuit of the recommended strategies begins the process of collaboration and is an important first step. However, it is not a final solution.

ESCI views a full merger of Loretto and Hamel Volunteer Fire Departments as not only feasible but also desirable. An integration of the two should be considered as a primary goal. Getting to that end, however, will need to be accomplished incrementally if it is going to succeed. The steps outlined below are designed to initiate the process a step at time with the intent of making strides to get the personnel of both Loretto and Hamel working together on a regular basis, primarily on the training ground, to break down organizational and cultural differences and build effective personal and professional relationships. Once accomplished, a full integration of the two organizations into one is recommended.

ESCI recommends that Overarching Strategy 2 – Functional Consolidation, and elements of Overarching Strategy 3 – Operational Consolidation, is the first course of action adopted by the fire department's leadership, as follows:

1. *Prioritize the development of Standard Operating Guidelines on a cooperative basis between both departments:* This is a need that exists in both organizations and is an essential step in the interest of firefighter safety and fire ground effectiveness. Because both organizations have the same need, it is a logical area for collaborative efforts.

The SOG manual details how various fire ground functions are to be performed, assuring that all players on the emergency scene are working from the same play book. SOGs must be incorporated continually into departmental training activities and the ways in which certain tasks are performed, based on the SOGs, should become second nature to on-scene personnel.

2. *Fully combine training programs:* The strategies listed with regard to the merger of training programs should be implemented. Weaknesses identified with regard to the training programs will best be addressed by bringing the two together, adopting shared practices and standards and, perhaps most importantly, getting the members working together on a regular basis.

As stated in ESCI's findings, organizational cultures are somewhat disparate, a factor that is most effectively mitigated on the training ground. Development of a combined training approach is viewed as the single most valuable strategy identified.

3. *Establish a shared health and safety program:* The absence of structured safety programs and a dedicated safety committee in each organization is of critical importance. The need is shared by both fire departments, neither of which has an organized program in place. The strategy should be considered as a high priority.

4. *Consolidate Administrative Services:* Because Loretto and Hamel already share the same Office Assistant, the effort of combining administrative services has already begun. Further opportunities to blend reporting, record keeping and associated administrative tasks will provide added efficiencies.
5. *Merge the agencies Paid per Call recruiting and training activities:* Multiple advantages may be realized by developing a common program via which Loretto and Hamel recruit new members and train them, as discussed in detail in Strategy M – Consolidate Training into a Single Training Program. These undertaking can be combined and the result will be reduced work load and overall efficiency. The need is exactly the same for both organizations.
6. *Develop a Shared Employee Manual:* The need for a single document that provides members with a source for understanding their conditions of employment, operating rules and organizational policies is detailed in Strategy V – Jointly Develop An Employee Handbook. Accomplishing this strategy is considered timely as the agencies look at increased collaboration. Like other initiatives discussed above, this one is a need that is common to both fire departments and the workload necessary to meet the need can be shared between the two to get the job done more quickly.

Once the above steps have been completed, Loretto and Hamel are well on their way to addressing the next initiative. It is estimated that achieving the above will take two years or more to complete. The estimation is based on the considerable complexity of the initiatives involved, combined with the recognition that this work will need to be accomplished by Paid per Call personnel working on a part time basis. Finally, the undertakings listed involve considerable organizational changes which will need to be accomplished over a period of time if full acceptance is to be realized by those affected.

Once accomplished, the above strategies should be in place for two to three years fully develop. At that time, ESCI recommends full legal integration of the Hamel and Loretto Volunteer Fire Departments as detailed in Overarching Strategy 4 – Full Merger.

Appendices

Appendix A: Table of Figures

Figure 1: Loretto VFD Organizational Chart	11
Figure 2: Hamel VFD Organizational Chart	12
Figure 3: Volunteer/Paid Per Call Firefighters per 1,000 Residents	31
Figure 4: Hamel VFD Apparatus Table	54
Figure 5: Loretto VFD Apparatus Table	54
Figure 6: Loretto Fire Station	55
Figure 7: Hamel Fire Station	56
Figure 8: Loretto VFD and Hamel VFD Study Area	59
Figure 9: 2010 Census Data Study Area Population Density	60
Figure 10: Study Area Neighboring Fire Jurisdictions	61
Figure 11: 5-Mile Travel Distances from Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Fire Stations	62
Figure 12: Travel Time Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Fire Stations	63
Figure 13: 2010 Service Demand by Municipality	64
Figure 14: Hamel VFD Total Service Demand by Incident Type, 2008 – 2010	65
Figure 15: Loretto VFD Total Service Demand by Incident Type, 2008 – 2010	65
Figure 16: Annual Service Demand, 2008 – 2010	66
Figure 17: Service Demand by Month, 2008 – 2010	67
Figure 18: Service Demand by Day of Week, 2008 – 2010	67
Figure 19: Service Demand by Hour of Day, 2008 – 2010	68
Figure 20: Hamel VFD Responses per Apparatus, 2010	68
Figure 21: Hamel VFD Apparatus per Incident, 2010	68
Figure 22: Loretto VFD Responses per Apparatus, 2010	69
Figure 23: Loretto VFD Apparatus per Incident, 2010	69
Figure 24: Hamel VFD Personnel on Scene, 2010	70
Figure 25: Loretto VFD Personnel on Scene, 2010	70
Figure 26: Performance Objectives by Population Density	71
Figure 27: Hamel VFD Response Time Frequency, 2010	72
Figure 28: Loretto VFD Response Time Frequency, 2010	73
Figure 29: Hamel VFD Response Time by Incident Type, 2010	73
Figure 30: Loretto VFD Response Time by Incident Type, 2010	74
Figure 31: Hamel VFD and Loretto VFD Response Performance by Time of Day, 2010	75
Figure 32: Capital Resources per 1,000 Residents	77
Figure 33: Emergencies per 1,000 Residents	77
Figure 34: Fires per 1,000 Residents	78
Figure 35: Volunteer/Paid Per Call Firefighters per 1,000 Residents	78
Figure 36: Median Value and Home Sales in Medina, 2006 – 9/30/2011	80
Figure 37: Median Value and Home Sales in Loretto, 2006 – 9/30/2011	81
Figure 38: Levy, Population per Capita Spending and Tax Rate, 2010	81
Figure 39: Historical and Average CPI-U Table, 2001 – 2010	82

Figure 40: Historical and Average CPI-U Graphic, 2001 – 2010	82
Figure 41: CPI-U Forecast Budget Impact Graphic, 2011 – 2020	83
Figure 42: Forecast Contract Impact Graphic, 2011 – 2030	84
Figure 43: Hamel VFD Historical Revenue, 2006 – 2011	84
Figure 44: Hamel VFD Historical Expenditures, 2006 – 2011	85
Figure 45: Hamel VFD Vehicle Replacement Plan Summary	86
Figure 46: Hamel VFD Revenue Forecast, 2011 – 2016	86
Figure 47: Hamel VFD Expenditure Forecast, 2011 – 2016	87
Figure 48: Loretto VFD Historical Revenue, 2009 – 2011	88
Figure 49: Loretto VFD Historical Expenditures, 2009 – 2011	89
Figure 50: Loretto VFD Ending Fund Balance, 2009 – 2011	90
Figure 51: Loretto VFD Vehicle Replacement Plan Summary	90
Figure 52: Loretto VFD Revenue Forecast, 2011 – 2016	91
Figure 53: Loretto VFD Expenditure Forecast, 2011 – 2016	92
Figure 54: Consolidated Baseline Budget	95
Figure 55: Forecast Consolidated Budget, 2011 – 2020	96
Figure 56: Consolidated Agency Vehicle Replacement Plan	97
Figure 57: Summary Table of Overarching Strategies	105
Figure 58: Summary Table of Partnering Strategies	106
Figure 59: Operations Personnel Pay Scales	117
Figure 60: Full Merger Administrative Organizational Structure (Conceptual)	120
Figure 61: Administrative and Support Staffing, Conceptual	121
Figure 62: Hamel Fire Department 2010 Performance Measures	139
Figure 63: Emergency Operations – Cascade of Events	140
Figure 64: Sample Training Grounds	164
Figure 65: Fire Relief Association Surplus or Deficit Projection	182

Appendix B: Summary Table of Organizational Kudos

Kudos: LVFD has done a good job of establishing and communicating its organization's mission statement.	13
Kudos: Regular staff meetings are critical. Both departments are complimented for adhering to the practice.	16
Kudos: Both organizations communicate well with their internal stakeholders.	16
Kudos: Management of both agencies effectively communicate with their constituents by producing an annual report	19
Kudos: Both organizations have been effective in pursuing grant funding.	23
Kudos: Both organizations have developed appropriate job descriptions for all positions.	26
Kudos: Both organizations retain appropriate personnel records	27
Kudos: Ratios of administrative support relative to total staffing has been established conservatively and effectively.	30
Kudos: Both agencies have effective fire station placement.	33
Kudos: Available data indicates that both agencies have effective response times and appropriate staffing level performance.	34
Kudos: Both organizations have established appropriate training levels for basic emergency functions.	37
Kudos: Both organizations have identified the need and play an active role in public education in their communities.	44

Appendix C: Summary Table of Recommended Actions (Current Conditions)

Both Agencies: Establish annual goals and objectives for the fire chief against which his/her performance is measured.....	6
HVFD: Establish departmental Rules and Regulations.....	6
LVFD: Review and expand existing Rules and Regulations.	6
Both Agencies: Formalize and reduce to writing process for expenditure of funds and financial reporting.....	6
Both Agencies: Conduct an annual financial audit.....	7
Both Agencies: Consider posting board minutes in the stations and websites for better transparency to constituency.....	7
HVFD: Determine hiring and termination authority and codify in writing.	7
HVFD: Contact ISO to verify the agency's current rating.....	8
Both Agencies: Consider obtaining property value from county assessor on line, add contents estimate for total value of property exposed to fire to NFIRS reports.....	10
Both Agencies: Establish a practice of documenting the value of property that is exposed to as well as lost to fires in NFIRS reports.	10
HVFD: Formally develop and institutionalize a mission statement for the organization.....	13
Both Agencies: Display the	
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HVFD: Formally develop and institutionalize a mission statement for the organization.....	13
Both Agencies: Display the mission statement prominently as a declaration of the organization's purpose and mission.....	13
HVFD: Conduct an annual review and update of the mission statement.	13
Both Agencies: Develop and communicate an organizational vision	13

Both Agencies: Establish a practice of annual goal setting and identification of implementation objectives.....	14
Both Agencies: Write and institutionalize a Code of Ethics.....	14
Both Agencies: Complete development of agency Standard Operating Guidelines.....	14
Both Agencies: Develop a policy manual for the agency	15
Both Agencies: As a part of a strategic planning process, annually identify critical issues affecting the organization.	15
Both Agencies: As a part of a strategic planning process, annually identify current challenges affecting the organization.	15
Both Agencies: Record and post minutes of all staff meetings.	16
Both Agencies: Define appropriate paths of communication within the organization.	16
Both Agencies: Increase outreach to the communities served via expanded external communications.....	17
Both Agencies: Define an organizational decision making process and codify by policy.	17
Both Agencies: Define a procedure for the release of public records when requested.	17
HVFD: Make copies of all periodic reports available to all members.	19
Both Agencies: Review the appropriate frequency of breathing air testing.	19
HVFD: Submit monthly financial summary to the board for review and approval.....	20
Both Agencies: Upon completion of this project, undertake a strategic planning process.....	21
Both Agencies: Recommendations regarding Capital Improvement Planning are discussed in Survey Table 8, later in this report.....	21
Both Agencies: Service contracts with the cities include “Desirable Performance and Service Measures”. A more clearly stated definition of actual response performance is recommended.....	21
Both Agencies: Complete development of an employment handbook that includes policies and rules and regulations.....	26
Both Agencies: Develop a clearly defined disciplinary policy, communicated to all members....	27
Both Agencies: Establish and Employee Assistance Program.	28
HVFD: Conduct a review of personal qualifications provided by applicants for new positions. ..	28
HVFD: Conduct a review of personal and professional references provided by applicants for new positions.	28
Both Agencies: Complete an entry level physical examination that meets <i>NFPA 1582</i> standards.....	28
Both Agencies: Establish an OSHA compliant Safety Committee and accompanying safety policy that defines the committee’s role, authority and procedures.....	29
Both Agencies: Continue to refine and participate in regional mutual and auto aid agreements.....	32
Both Agencies: Develop deployment standards based on risk.	32
Both Agencies: Implement procedures to document volunteer (Paid per Call) turnout times.....	33
Both Agencies: Utilize capability of State RMS to report and track more complete data.....	33

Both Agencies: Work with Dispatch Center to incorporate electronic time stamps into State RMS and NFIRS reports.	34
Both Agencies: Consider a jointly operated recruit training academy in partnership with neighboring fire departments.....	36
Both Agencies: Develop clearly defined goals and objectives for training activities, including applicable performance measures.	37
HVFD: Develop a new-hire orientation manual.....	38
Both Agencies: Review annual training hours for adequacy at all position levels.	39
Both Agencies: Adopt minimum standards for physical conditioning of firefighters and test annually.	40
Both Agencies: Establish annual performance testing to assure personnel are skilled in performing basic fire ground functions.	40
Both Agencies: Develop a document that provides guidance to members on how they can progress in the organization.	41
HVFD: Prepare individual training summaries and distribute to each member at least annually.	41
Both Agencies: Incorporate sign-off on new construction plan reviews, at a minimum, to assure that the fire department is aware of proposed projects.	43
Both Agencies: Establish a participating role in the conduct of existing occupancy inspections to assure that they are adequately completed.....	43
Both Agencies: Conduct regular pre-incident planning for target hazards.	43
Both Agencies: Compose a replacement schedule for fire apparatus, including defined service lives, financial projections and funding plans.....	52
Both Agencies: Establish a replacement schedule for support equipment, including defined service lives, financial projections and funding plans.....	52
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Both Agencies: Establish a replacement schedule for support equipment, including defined service lives, financial projections and funding plans.	52

Appendix D: Summary Table of Stakeholder Interviews

Stakeholder Interview Log

Person	Date	Affiliation or Group
1. Internal, Loretto VFD		
1. Scott Pivec	8/3/2011	Firefighter
2. Nate Schlosser	8/3/2011	Lieutenant
3. Henry Pepin	8/3/2011	Safety Officer
4. Jeff Leuer	8/3/2011	Fire Chief
5. Rick Altendorf	8/3/2011	Assistant Chief
6. Tim Ryan	8/3/2011	Assistant Chief
7. Gregg Johnson	8/3/2011	Secretary
8. Nicole West	8/3/2011	Firefighter
9. Craig Hertog	8/3/2011	Captain
10. Terry Ryan	8/3/2011	Captain
11. Dave Nalls	8/3/2011	Firefighter
12. Branden Brokema	8/3/2011	Firefighter
13. Scott Wendland	8/3/2011	Lieutenant
14. Andy Boecker	8/5/2011	Firefighter
2. Internal, Hamel VFD		
1. Neil Wolfe	8/4/2011	Lieutenant
2. J. T Casari	8/4/2011	Lieutenant
3. Ryan Davidson	8/4/2011	Firefighter
4. Rowdy Dorweiler	8/4/2011	Division Chief
5. Kevin Wolfe	8/4/2011	Firefighter
6. Brandon Guest	8/4/2011	Fire Chief
7. Brookstyn Wallace	8/4/2011	Firefighter
8. Fidel Theis	8/4/2011	Firefighter
9. Jeff Ruchti	8/4/2011	Lieutenant
10. Tom Manning	8/4/2011	Firefighter
11. Ken Williams	8/4/2011	Captain and Treasurer
12. Tom Gregor	8/4/2011	Assistant Chief
3. External		
1. Ken Koch	8/2/2011	Loretto Mayor
2. Janes Van Eyll	8/3/2011	Fire Chief, Long Lake Fire Department
3. Sean Gormley	8/2/2011	Chief of Police, City of Corcoran
4. Ed J. Belland	8/3/2011	Chief of Police, City of Medina
5. Kathy Larkin	8/2/2011	Loretto Office Mgr and Hamel Fire Admin Asst
6. Thomas M. Crosby, Jr.	8/4/2011	Mayor, City of Medina
7. Douglas S. Reeder	8/4/2011	Acting City Administrator, City of Medina
8. Tom Cossette	8/4/2011	Mayor, City of Corcoran
9. Marvin Johnson	8/4/2011	Mayor, City of Independence
10. Scott Anderson	8/5/2011	Fire Chief, City of Maple Grove
11. Richard C. Kline	8/5/2011	Fire Chief, City of Plymouth
12. Jerry Hertaus	8/5/2011	Mayor, City of Greenfield
13. Curt Meyer	8/5/2011	Sergeant, Hennepin County 911 Center



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