CRITICAL QUESTIONS EVERY FIRE/EMS CHIEF & CITY MANAGER NEED TO DISCUSS

Dr. Bruce J. Moeller
Objectives

- Understand the economic and political realities facing the community.
- Define what service levels the community expects from your fire/EMS service.
- Explore what questions to ask of fire/EMS chiefs and city managers/mayors, and how to shape the fire department’s goals to successfully navigate the economic and community expectations.
A Tale of Two Economies

- S&P 500 Up 200%
- NYSE up 165%
- NASDAQ up 260%
- Down Jones Industrial Average up 165%
- Unemployment 6.1%
- Top 1% earnings growth of more than 30%
A Tale of Two Economies

- Since December 2007, bottom 99% had earnings growth of 0.4%
- Population receiving food stamps has doubled in this time frame to $\frac{1}{6}$th of the total population
- Income gap has slowed growth to an estimated 2.5% annual GDP for the coming decade
- 70% of the workforce still has inflation adjusted wages lower than 2007
- Underemployment rate still 12.6%
- Real estate values still 20% lower than pre-recession
- First time home buyers are at 28% - where 40% is considered healthy and is the 30 year average
A Tale of Two Services

Figure 1. U.S. Fire Incident Trends (in Thousands 1977-2013)
Figure 2. Trend in Reported Fire Rates per Thousand Population 1977-2013

14.8

3.9
Growth in Career Firefighters

Figure 1: Number of Career Firefighters and the Rate per 1,000 People. Source: NFPA Annual Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1986-2013).
Decline in Volunteer Firefighters

Figure 2: Number of Volunteer Firefighters and Rates per 1,000 People. Source: NFPA Annual Survey of Fire Departments for U.S. Fire Experience (1986-2013).
Local FD Expenditures

Local fire department expenditures totaled $42.3 billion in 2011.

Local Fire Department Expenditures in 2011 Dollars
1980-2011

Connecticut Fire Chiefs * April 1-2, 2016
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Adjusted for Inflation</td>
<td>Adjusted for Inflation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic loss</td>
<td>+89%</td>
<td>-31%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local fire department expenditures</td>
<td>+641%</td>
<td>+171%</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net fire insurance</td>
<td>+392%</td>
<td>+80%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building construction for fire protection</td>
<td>+193%</td>
<td>+7%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>+283%</td>
<td>+40%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consumer Price Index*</td>
<td>+173%</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
<td>N.A.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Well... Yes... But...?
A Tale of Two Services

Figure 15. Reported Fires and False Alarms: 1980-2013

- False alarms
- Fires

In Millions

Connecticut Fire Chiefs * April 1-2, 2016
### Table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reported To Fire Departments</th>
<th>2013</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>1983</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total calls</td>
<td>31,644,500</td>
<td>Down 1%</td>
<td>Up 41%</td>
<td>Up 107%</td>
<td>Up 189%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fire calls</td>
<td>1,240,000</td>
<td>Down 10%</td>
<td>Down 22%</td>
<td>Down 36%</td>
<td>Down 47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical aid or rescue responses</td>
<td>21,372,000</td>
<td>Down 2%</td>
<td>Up 57%</td>
<td>Up 144%</td>
<td>Up 278%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>False alarms</td>
<td>2,343,000</td>
<td>Down 5%</td>
<td>Up 7%</td>
<td>Up 42%</td>
<td>Up 139%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual aid or assistance calls</td>
<td>1,298,000</td>
<td>Down 2%</td>
<td>Up 32%</td>
<td>Up 139%</td>
<td>Up 268%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hazardous materials responses — spills, leaks, etc.</td>
<td>366,500</td>
<td>Up 2%</td>
<td>Up 5%</td>
<td>Up 50%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other hazard responses (arcing wires, bomb removal, etc.)</td>
<td>678,000</td>
<td>Down 2%</td>
<td>Down 3%</td>
<td>Up 57%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other responses (Smoke scares, lockouts, etc.)</td>
<td>4,347,000</td>
<td>Up 5%</td>
<td>Up 45%</td>
<td>Up 147%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All other plus hazardous material and other hazard responses</td>
<td>5,391,500</td>
<td>Up 4%</td>
<td>Up 34%</td>
<td>Up 122%</td>
<td>Up 234%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Challenges
(there are no surprises here . . . )

- Fire incidents are down dramatically
- Costs are up / Economy remains concerning
- Volunteers, per 1,000 population protected, are down
- Dramatic & increasing demand for EMS services
CRITICAL QUESTIONS - Part 1

- Is our local economy improving, stagnant or declining?

- Do we have sufficient personnel & resources to do the job?
  - Volunteer: are we attracting & retaining
  - Career: can we fund the positions we need?
  - Can we meet our capital demands
So What Is The Path Forward?
Creating the Framework
Community Expectations
Community Expectations

- What are our community’s expectations for service?

- How do you evaluate and/or measure community expectations?

- What is the process?
How We Rate Our Efforts

- ISO Classification
- NFPA 1710 / 1720
- Accreditation / Standards of Cover
- Benchmarking
Risk Tolerance and Public Policy

Total Demand for Engine/Ladder Resources at Call Durations

- BLS
- ALS
- Fire
- Current Resources
## Risk Tolerance and Public Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Stations – 5.5 Minutes</th>
<th>Station Capture</th>
<th>Total Capture</th>
<th>Percent Capture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>41023</td>
<td>41023</td>
<td>38.85%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>26897</td>
<td>67920</td>
<td>64.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>13551</td>
<td>81471</td>
<td>77.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>8667</td>
<td>90138</td>
<td>85.37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5304</td>
<td>95442</td>
<td>90.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>3088</td>
<td>98530</td>
<td>93.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Risk Tolerance and Public Policy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of Stations - 6.5 Min</th>
<th>Station Capture</th>
<th>Total Capture</th>
<th>Percent Capture</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>48788</td>
<td>48788</td>
<td>46.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>31551</td>
<td>80339</td>
<td>76.09%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>10692</td>
<td>91031</td>
<td>86.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>6073</td>
<td>97104</td>
<td>91.97%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>5984</td>
<td>103088</td>
<td>97.63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>593</td>
<td>103681</td>
<td>98.19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workload

Unit Hour Utilizations by Unit

Utilization Rate

Unit Identifiers

IAFF  IAFC
Mortality Risk

Figure 2. Crude risk of mortality by response time, in minutes. CI = confidence interval.
Service Levels

■ Are you willing to adjust service levels?

■ What is the political tenability for reductions in force?

■ Are you willing to explore alternatives to current delivery model?
Borderless Service Delivery

- How much collaboration with adjoining communities do you desire?
- Can we aggressively use automatic aid?
- Are we willing to utilize closest unit dispatching?
- Do we need to go it alone!
Should We Increase Our Risk Tolerance?

■ Would it be acceptable if changes resulted in a “higher” ISO rating (or equivalent)?

■ What is the community’s understanding and expectations regarding our ISO rating?
Employee Conditions

■ What is your position or preference on fire fighter schedules?

■ Shift schedules?

■ Perceived or real challenges to implementation?

■ What workload is too high?

■ Is the City/County willing to incentivize the firefighters for finding new efficiencies?
Sprinkler Ordinance?

- Are you willing to promote or support a residential sprinkler ordinance?
CRITICAL QUESTIONS - Part 2

- Are we providing the services our community needs?

- What services does our community want?

- Are we adapting to the new reality?
Fire Chief & Manager/Mayor Need to Discuss . . .

- What are community expectations & community demands?
- Have we allocated the resources?
- Should we adjust our risk tolerance?
- Are we seeking opportunities to collaborate?
- Are the people we seek the ones we need?
In Conclusion . . .

■ Are you having an ongoing dialog with the City/Town Manager?

■ Are you validating community expectations?
  - *What are they really asking for*

■ Are you finding a ‘better mousetrap’?
  - *Better staffing solutions*
  - *Better collaborations with other agencies*
Questions?

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References


