

November 10, 2009

**ANFF (Association of Novi Fire Fighters) - Viewpoint**

Regarding the

**ICMA (International City/County Management Association)**

Report

**Public Safety and Resource Utilization – Fire department**

The ANFF (Association of Novi Fire Fighters) is comprised of fifty-five POC (Paid On-Call) members who strive for continuous improvement and quality control in how it provides fire and emergency services to our community. All ANFF/POC members reside within the City of Novi and have a vested interest in this City's future and the quality of service provided. In this effort, we welcome suggestions and recommendations from experts in the field.

These comments are based on the experiences of Novi Firefighters while serving this community on a daily basis during emergency fire and EMS runs. Although there are some recommendations in the ICMA report that we agree with, there are others that we feel will not serve to improve services and should be carefully reviewed before decisions are made.

**Ref: ICMA Report Section – Executive Summary; Pages 4 – 6**

**Subject: Administrative: Command Structure, Rank and Uniform**

The ICMA recognizes that parity of command structure (officers rank and uniforms), is not equal within the Fire Department between career firefighters and POC firefighters and officers.

The report recommends two main points in this regard:

1. "There cannot be two different types of command; all command should be unified and, if one or the other is not qualified, then steps should be taken to create an equal structure that governs all facets of the organization. Officers can be created from within and from the Paid-On-Call; they should be recognized as equals to the career and such promotions should be based upon merit and skills."
2. That "personnel should be uniformly dressed, with specific pants, shirts, collar brass, name tags and a badge that recognizes rank from firefighter to chief."

The ANFF membership supports these suggestions.

**Ref: ICMA Report - Section C. Equipment Pages 18 - 19**

**Subject: Box Ambulances (squads)**

The ICMA report recommends that Fire Department box ambulances (squads) be replaced with SUV's, primarily to reduce expenditure, citing "a far cheaper cost" and suggesting that only one squad be kept at station 1 for "extraordinary circumstances." The ICMA reasons that "if the city is not going to provide transport which is now delivered by a private company, purchasing and replacing these units is an extreme cost that is not necessary" (ICMA 19).

This recommendation assumes that a Fire Department "box ambulance" is used solely for transporting the sick and injured under "extraordinary circumstances." This is not the case. A squad is a multi-purpose vehicle serving many functions, such as:

1. Multiple personnel carriers in emergency situations
2. Multiple personnel carriers in non-emergency situations
3. Specialized tooling and medical equipment transport and storage
4. Temporary on-scene safe housing of displaced citizens subjected to fire and other extraordinary conditions
5. On scene firefighter rehabilitation
6. Direct hospital radio communications
7. Training operations
8. Freeway and roadside victim and responder on-scene protection
9. Scene illumination
10. Traffic lane control and emergency lighting
11. Ability to respond and operate in adverse road and weather conditions (snow and ice)
12. Large size medical equipment carriers (i.e. backboards, stair chair, large capacity O2 cylinder etc.)
13. Secure storage of emergency drugs (i.e. epinephrine)
14. Transportation and seating of Fire Department personnel for providing EMS services at sports and other community events
15. Transport of sick and injured persons
16. On-scene back up ambulance in case of ALS or other equipment failure
17. First local response units for all medical calls within the City of Novi
18. Water and foam pumper/carrier for car and other smaller fire related incidents (Squad 1 only)

In addition, according to the ICMA report data, the total number of EMS calls that the Novi Fire Department responded to in 2008 was “2819” (ICMA 24). Of these calls, 19 were emergency transports taken by Novi Fire Department. Had the “box ambulances” not been available for emergency patient transport, significant delay may have occurred. Realizing this, it seems apparent that an SUV cannot take the place of a “box ambulance” without the potential for significant consequences.

**Ref: - ICMA Report - Section H. Pages 22 – 23**

**Subject: Equipment and Facilities**

According to the ICMA report, “Station 3 is the oldest facility and may not need replacement,” because calls for service are heavy in the area of EMS, it may be more practical to deploy a mobile unit from headquarters station during peak service times versus building a new building” (ICMA 23). Furthermore, “It is anticipated that station 3 would not be staffed” (ICMA 79).

It would stand to reason that personnel and equipment responding from “headquarters” (only Station 1), particularly during “peak service times,”(ICMA page 23) are not conducive to reducing response times due to the increased drive times that would be required to travel to station 3’s outlying district.

A suggested solution may be to upgrade station 3 (relocate and rebuild in a better economy) and to provide the appropriate levels of staff, resources and equipment required to man all four city stations (instead of two) during the nighttime hours. This allows emergency responders to respond directly from each strategically located station and reduces travel time. The ANFF does not support the recommendation to close Station 3. We believe this recommendation will lead to increased response times in providing citizens with emergency services.

**Ref: - ICMA Report - Section IV - Pages 23 - 69**

**Subject: Data Analysis**

Regarding emergency response times: According to the ICMA, “average response times peaked between 1am and 6am.” The reason: “due to the increase in en-route and travel time” (ICMA 55). This reference is assumed to mean increased travel time from Station 1 or 2, which are the manned nighttime stations, travelling into Station 3’s district.

Per the prior statement, it appears that recommending Station 3’s closure contradicts the ICMA’s own study for improved response times (see ICMA 55). We submit that closing Station

3 will increase daytime response times from station 1 or 2 and ultimately, lead to longer overall response times.

Leaving Station 3 open and functional, and as previously suggested, staffing all four stations with personnel during the nighttime, will better produce improvements towards reduced response times.

In summary: We believe that the ICMA's recommendations to close fire Stations 3 and to eliminate "box ambulances" will ultimately increase response times, reduce equipment availability and degrade rehabilitation options for firefighters. Subsequently, this places those in need of fire and emergency services at a disadvantage. Trying to do more with less will only add additional stress to an already 'lean' system and will ultimately cost Novi taxpayers in terms of emergency services and response times.

We respectfully request that our city's leadership remains conservative and fiscally responsible, but not at the expense of taxpaying Citizens' emergency services and taxpaying Firefighters living within the City of Novi.

Thank you for your continued support.

Sincerely,

The ANFF (Association of Novi Fire Fighters)