



Paid Chief?

August 26, 2009

Why should you care what I think?

- On Lookout then Foothills over 14 years.
- Started on Lookout Board of Directors
- Deputy Chief then Chief for 3 ½ years
 - Lieutenant and Captain for 6 years
- Incident Commander with JeffCo IMT
- VP JeffCo Fire Council
- Entrepreneur, CEO, COO, now consultant
- On Board of Highland Rescue

“Every department is headed by a chief...”

- “..the chief is the primary representative of the department in its relations with the governing body and the community.”
- “...the chief is the manager/leader of the entire department and is responsible for establishing the direction of the operation of each unit and the members of the department.”
- Management in the Fire Service By Harry R. Carter, Erwin Rausch
- NFPA 1021

A Brief History of Chiefs

- My first members' meeting in 1991 the Chief was not reelected, walked out and never came back*
- The next Chief left mad and never came back
- Lookout chief retired when Foothills formed
- First Foothills Chief left mad because the Board wouldn't back him up on a personnel matter*
- I stepped down as Chief because it was a more than full time job – unsustainable with a business and family life
- Since then, several Chiefs have left unhappy and mad, some mid-term

**RIP*

Foothills approach to the Chief position is broken!

- If you care enough to be a good Chief, it's a more than full time job
- Unless you are independently wealthy, if you are running Foothills full-time you are neglecting something else in your life and you will pay for that. *Is that fair?*
- The Chief needs to be the one person in charge. Any other structure just plain does not work!

What have I seen consulting recently?

- Functional, smoothly operating volunteer and combination departments
- Clear chain of command
- Volunteer corps mostly consisting of younger people gaining experience for a career in firefighting or EMS
- Fewer volunteers leaving their businesses to respond
- More in-station volunteer shift systems; volunteers are treated just like career personnel
- All have paid Chief, fire marshal, training officer
- Most want a two or three firefighter paid crew 24x7
- Budgets grew from \$150k in 1995 to 7 to 10 times that 2009

Objectives / Goals

- Per NFPA 1720 (for rural areas structural firefighting)
 - Minimum 6 staff to respond
 - Includes mutual and auto aid
 - Response time no more than 14 min 80% of time
 - Capability to commence an attack within 2 minutes of being on scene 90% of the time
- EMS response
 - Meet/exceed Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment medical response guidelines (Chapter 2)
 - Align locally with Highland
- ISO Rating
 - Goal = 5

Comparative Analysis

Name	Mil Levy	Assessed Valuation	Budget	Square Miles	Paid Chief?	Career FF	Combination	Vol FF	Own EMS?
Arvada Fire Prot	9.558	\$1,301,627,080	\$12,440,952	19	Yes		X		No
Coal Creek Fire	8.000	\$31,498,810	\$251,990		Paid (pt)			X	
Elk Creek Fire Dist	4.924	\$195,755,200	\$963,899	98	Yes			X	Yes
Evergreen Fire Dist.	9.324	\$425,671,560	\$3,968,962	125	Yes		X		Yes
Fairmount Fire P. Dist.	8.430	\$225,255,630	\$1,898,905		Yes			X	No
Foothills Fire Protection	9.196	\$84,720,500	\$779,090	25	No			X	No
Golden Gate	9.016	\$14,322,190	\$129,129		Paid (pt)			X	No
South Metro/Parker					Yes	X			
Eaton	9.000	\$137,561,667	\$1,238,055	64	Yes		X		No
Evans	14.600	\$106,017,945	\$1,547,862	10.5	Yes		X		No
Platte Valley	2.415	\$316,448,033	\$764,222	190.5	Yes			X	No
Genesee Fire Protection	6.100	\$68,354,770	\$416,964		No			X	No
Littleton Fire Dist	7.678	\$284,638,360	\$2,185,453		Yes	X			Yes
North Fork Fire	12.000	\$12,512,650	\$150,152		?			X	Yes
WheatRidge Fire Dist	4.400	\$308,104,920	\$1,355,662		Yes		X		No
West Metro	13.737	\$2,892,438,710	\$39,733,431		Yes	X			Yes

My Advice

- The Chief is in charge
 - Reports to Board
 - All officers and administrative personnel report to him/her (no one but the Chief reports to the Board)
- Chief is a paid full-time job
 - May need a transitional part-time chief recruited internally, but long-term.....
 - Don't be cheap
 - Needs to be qualified
 - The Department and Board will figure out what that means and it will evolve
 - Board and Department need to select
 - Board and Department need to do annual performance review

How to get there

- Make the clear decision
- Hire a part-time or internal Chief for the transition period
- Figure out what we want and need in terms of qualifications and background, style and management philosophy
- Take 6-months to figure that out and find the right person
- Let the new Chief help you figure out the right officer and administrative structure



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