



# Columbus Consolidated Government

*Georgia's First Consolidated Government*

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## **Internal Audit of Fire/EMS Department March 7, 2012**

### AUDIT AUTHORIZATION

The Internal Auditor has performed a departmental audit of the Fire/EMS Department. This audit was authorized by City Council, through Ordinance 390-10 on November 9, 2010, in response to request for audit by former Mayor Jim Wetherington. The audit began on June 15, 2011 during the administration of Mayor Teresa P. Tomlinson.

### BACKGROUND/HISTORY

The Columbus Fire/EMS Department provides fire prevention and suppression services, emergency medical and rescue services and emergency management coordination for the Columbus Consolidated Government and its citizens. The department consists of 386 authorized employees working from 18 locations and has a total Budget of \$ 26.9 million for FY2012, funded primarily from the General Fund (\$24.67M) and supplemented by funding from the LOST2 (\$2.23M), approved by the voters in 2008. In addition to its substantial number of physical facilities, the department utilizes a variety of equipment including fire engines, ladder trucks, ambulances, rescue equipment, transport vehicles and a mobile command center. Each vehicle is supplied with equipment and various supplies needed to accomplish its mission. Each station is equipped with facilities for sleeping, showering, food preparation and storage and individual lockers for storage of uniforms, personal protective gear, and personal items. The department is unique in that its operations staff works 24-hour shifts, then being off for 48 hours. This results in employees not only working together but also living together during their shifts. The department not only serves the citizens of Columbus, but is also the hub of fire/rescue operations for the region, providing support and back-up assistance to neighboring counties through mutual aid agreements.

The Department has a long history of service to Columbus and its citizens. From its early days of serving a small population within the geographically-confined city limits, it grew from one station to its current fourteen following consolidation of the City and County governments and their respective fire departments, to its current 220 square mile county area serving nearly 200,000

citizens and a wide range of commercial enterprises. Approximately 10 years ago, the Emergency Management Department, Fire Department and the Emergency Medical Services merged to form the current Columbus Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services to provide coordinated services in a more efficient manner. The merger presented challenges as employees that had to learn and develop new skills and prepare to address an expanded role. The changes were met with resistance and apprehension from some employees, and some chose to leave the department, rather than adapt to change. A decade later, most of those concerns have faded and the result is a workforce that is better equipped to serve the community.

Today, the City is served by a Department that consists of men and women that are better educated and trained than were their predecessors, and are far better equipped with more sophisticated equipment and technology. Many of the early tenets of fire and rescue services continue and are as applicable today as they were in the past. These include training in the provision of service and how to use available tools and equipment, readiness to locate such materials and respond quickly, without direction and to be physically capable of addressing the challenges and hazards encountered, and able to complete the mission successfully. Fire Prevention efforts and safety initiatives have increased to reduce the incidence of life and property losses within the community.

Improvements in compensation and benefits, a financially strong employer, coupled with job losses and uncertainty in an unstable economy, has afforded the department the opportunity to select from a better applicant pool than has existed in many years. Candidates now seek out employment opportunities with the department, whereas recruiting was the norm only a few years ago.

## LEADERSHIP

Fire/EMS Director (Chief) Jeff Meyer and Assistant Chief Robert Futrell lead the Fire/EMS Department. Deputy Director Riley Land heads Emergency Management. They are augmented by Deputy Chiefs leading various functional areas. Deputy Chief Thomas Streeter, Sr. heads Operations, Deputy Chief David Starling heads Administration, and Deputy Chief Greg Lang heads Fire Prevention/Training. CPT Marie Harrell serves as EMS Coordinator, Division Chief Ricky Shores heads Fire Prevention, Division Chief Tim Smith heads Training, and Division Chief Mike Higgins heads Health, Safety and Information Management. Nine Battalion Chiefs provide oversight and management to the City's fourteen stations organized within three battalions, each containing three squads. The Department Director reports to the Mayor/Public Safety Director.



## AUDIT SCOPE

The audit scope is to address all material aspects of the Fire/EMS Department. Material aspects include, but are not limited to, organizational structure, policies and procedures, internal controls, cash handling process, strategic plan, payroll, equipment, inventories, budgetary control, management continuity plan, whistle-blower complaints, emergency management initiatives, training, physical proficiencies, participation in regional, statewide, national professional organizations, fire prevention, rescue and ambulance operations, coordination with contractual partners and area health care facilities, fire and internal investigations.

## AUDIT PROCESS

The Audit Process began with the authorization for the audit. An audit program was developed to address the material aspects of the departmental audit, followed by an entrance conference with the department head and members of the command staff. During the meeting, those present were presented the preliminary audit program items and invited to suggest any additional areas that warranted inspection. A few additional were suggested and added to the audit program. The audit techniques included reviews of documents and manuals, physical verification of employees and capital assets, tests of internal controls, examination of reports prepared by the department and others from independent sources, tests of transactions, reviews of policies, procedures and controls to determine if they were achieving the desired results, reviews of strategic planning and capital replacement listing, interviews, meeting observations, whistleblower complaints, independent verifications and other techniques as appropriate. During the course of the audit, management was briefed on findings and potential recommendations. Following the audit, a draft report is presented to department management for review and response. A final report including the departmental response is then prepared and distributed to department management, the mayor and council, concurrently. A presentation to council is scheduled to address any questions or concerns they may have and to avail it to the public. The auditor provides follow-up at a later date to insure that agreed-to recommendations have been implemented and are properly functioning.

### A. PAYROLL

#### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

Payroll is a significant budgeted expenditure in the Fire/EMS Department. Due to the multiple departmental locations and the variability in shifts worked, there exists a risk that phantom and/or terminated employees could be paid without them actually being at work or performing any service to the City.

## AUDIT PROCESS

The audit process used to determine whether non-existent employees are being paid is simple, but can be time-consuming. After payroll time has been submitted for all employees of the department, the auditor contacts the Revenue Division of the City's Finance Department and arranges to intercept the payroll checks and remittance advices prior to distribution to the department's paymaster. The auditor notifies the paymaster that the auditor has custody of the payroll checks and that an audit will be performed. The auditor then prepares a roster from the checks and payroll advices with a line for signature by each employee. The auditor obtains a work schedule and location for each employee and physically goes to the various locations and requests the employees to present their employee identification card to prove their existence and then sign for the receipt of their payroll check or remittance advice. The auditor delivers or arranges for a convenient meeting location for employees on sick leave or vacation at the time of the audit. The goal is to locate the employee for each payroll check or advice to ensure their physical existence and that they are a bona fide employee of the Columbus Consolidated Government.

## FINDINGS

1. All employees of the Fire/EMS Department were located and positively identified for the pay period being audited. No discrepancies were noted.
2. The department follows the City's prescribed procedure for collecting and reporting payroll information. There is a separation of duties between the reporting, data entry, payroll processing and distribution of payroll checks and remittance advices that spans multiple departments. Additionally, pay rates are authorized and entered by a department that is unrelated to the aforementioned processes. As such, the internal controls are considered strong and would require multiple parties to collude in order for them to be breached.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

## DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

## B. CAPITAL ASSETS

### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

The Fire/EMS Department has a significant investment in Capital Assets consisting of land, buildings, furniture, fixtures, vehicles, and equipment. Due to its physical dispersion among locations, and its deployment for usage,



periodic inventories must be conducted to ensure that the assets are safeguarded and maintained in working order.

#### AUDIT PROCESS

The auditor obtained Capital Asset Listings by Location for the Fire/EMS Department from the City's Finance Department. The auditor visited each location and verified the existence of the assets and confirmed the assets were in the proper location.

#### FINDINGS

The auditor was able to verify all listed assets and confirm the physical location and custody of the assets. Some assets were out-of-service for repair and those were also verified. Each fire truck and ambulance is stocked with equipment and supplies that are inventoried each day. Annually, the Finance Department requires each department to inventory its capital assets and account for any discrepancies. It is the opinion of the auditor that the Fire/EMS Department maintains excellent control of its assets and ensures that each is in working condition.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

### **C. EMPLOYEE TIME REPORTING; SICK & VACATION LEAVE ACCRUALS**

#### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

A few employees and supervisors have expressed concern in past years regarding the sick and vacation leave accruals. Most of these concerns have arisen at the time employees plan vacation during the holiday season. In previous years, some supervisors maintained a manually prepared card system to track their employees' accrued sick and vacation time. While some supervisors continue to use the manual card system, the City's automated system is the official record of time reporting and accruals.

#### AUDIT PROCESS

The auditor selected a random sample of employees for time reporting review. A Stop and Go Random Interval Sampling approach was used to

minimize sample size while achieving a 95% confidence level. Under such an approach, a small sample size, with a small error rate allows a high confidence level to be achieved. Conversely, if errors are noted in the small sample, the sample size must increase significantly and the new sample be tested before a high confidence level can be achieved. Time reporting for each of the selected employees was reviewed for accuracy and sick and vacation accrual balances were tested to ensure that the accruals were calculated accurately and that the beginning balance, plus accrued time, less time used, equated to the payroll reports as of the each of the pay period under examination. Travel time to conferences, training and other similar events is recorded as time worked.

#### FINDINGS

Slightly over 5% of the employees were included in the initial sample. The hours worked, sick and vacation time reported was found to match the amounts entered into the computerized system that processes payroll and calculates leave accrual balances. The auditor found no discrepancies in payroll time reporting nor in the calculation of accrued leave balances for the period examined. It should be noted, that while the system works well, it is essential that the data transactions entered must be complete and accurate for its reports to be reliable. As such, periodic management review is essential to ensure data completeness and accuracy.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

#### **D. EMPLOYEE TRAINING**

##### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

Due to the emergency nature of many of the services provided by the Fire/EMS Department, the employees must be well trained and ready to perform upon arrival at the scene of the incident. Accordingly, employees of the department spend a significant portion of the worked hours in training. Also, certain training subjects and minimum standards are required by outside agencies that evaluate the department.

## AUDIT PROCESS

The auditor selected a random sample of employees for review of their training records, for accuracy of the records and to make a determination as to whether training requirements were satisfied for each of the selected employees. Again, a Stop and Go Random Interval Sampling process was employed for testing.

## FINDINGS

The training records for the employees sampled were reflective of the registration and class rosters for the courses taken. Each of the employees completed or exceeded the required training for the fiscal year reviewed.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

## DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Columbus Department of Fire & Emergency Medical Services maintains State of Georgia certifications to operate as a fire department and EMS department within the State. Training and subsequent field evaluations are required to maintain the aforementioned State Certifications. In addition to State requirements the Insurance Services Office requires 240 hours of annual training per field employee in specified areas to receive full credit for the training criteria.  
Agreed.

## E. EMPLOYEE RECRUITING

### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

For a number of years, maintaining the departmental workforce was a challenge for the Fire/EMS Department. Retirements, resignations and infrequent terminations sometimes outstripped the supply of qualified candidates available for hiring.

### AUDIT PROCESS

The audit process involved the comparison of employment data for the past five years. The data included number of applicants, number of hires, number of positions created, and number of vacancies due to retirements,



resignations and terminations. While the latter categories influence the number of hires, the more critical comparison is the number of hires versus the number of qualified applicants.

#### AUDIT FINDINGS

Retirements and terminations continue to occur with regularity. Resignations were more frequent when compensation was lower, compared to other area departments, and at times when the economy was more robust and other departments were expanding, thereby affording greater opportunity for employees to pursue perceived advancement opportunities and better pay. With the passage of the 2008 LOST in Columbus, public safety departments were able to grow more rapidly; pay was improved, as were advancement opportunities within the department. Shortly after the passage of the 2008 LOST, the economy suffered considerably and many municipal employers were forced to downsize their departments and some furloughed employees. Jobs available in the marketplace became scarce and resignations became less frequent. Additionally, displaced workers in other municipalities began to seek new jobs from more financially secure employers. As such, the applicant pool has become larger, and many applicants bring training and experience with them. The applicant pool now exceeds the number of open positions. Accordingly, the need for external recruiting has been drastically reduced. It is the auditor's opinion that the department does not need a full-time recruiter in the current employment environment.

#### RECOMMENDATION

The department is better served to transfer the recruiter to another work area where their skills and abilities can be better utilized to support the department's mission. Should the need arise for skills not represented in the applicant pool; management can handle the recruiting for such a position.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

The employee who formally held the position of Recruiter has been transferred to another position.

#### F. BUDGETARY PERFORMANCE

##### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

The Fire/EMS Departmental Budget has one of the largest budgets within the Columbus Consolidated Government at \$24.67 Million from the General



Fund and \$2.23 Million from the 2008 LOST for a total budget of \$26.90 Million. How well has the department performed, financially, in relation to its budget?

### AUDIT PROCESS

The process involved a review of budgets and fiscal year-end, financial results for the department. Fiscal Years 2007-2012 were reviewed.

### AUDIT FINDINGS

In each of the years reviewed from FY2007 thru Y-T-D FY2012, the department has consistently operated within its approved operating budget. With the passage of the 2008 LOST, additional funds have been available to the department, thus, easing the pressure to operate within limited resource-constraints.

Fiscal Year	Budget	Expenditures	Obligated
FY2007	\$22,788,719	\$22,345,987	(General Fund)
FY2008	\$25,642,614	\$25,448,766	(General Fund)
FY2009	\$25,262,377	\$25,262,366	(General Fund)
FY2010	\$24,802,559	\$24,802,558	(General Fund)
FY2010	\$ 1,680,131	\$ 1,576,745	(LOST2 Fund)
FY2011	\$25,037,282	\$25,033,121	(General Fund)
FY2011	\$ 2,560,136	\$ 2,560,136	(LOST2 Fund)
FY2012 Jul-Nov	\$10,298,379	\$10,010,924	(General Fund)
FY2012 Jul-Nov	\$ 954,676	\$ 792,999	(LOST2 Fund)

### AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

None.

### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

## G. STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN

### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

Does the Fire/EMS Department have a Strategic Action Plan that addresses the future service needs of the City and how it intends to meet those needs for the next ten years?

## AUDIT PROCESS

The audit process involved obtaining a copy of the Strategic Action Plan and reviewing it. Of particular interest was the basis for the future needs, i.e., projected growth of the City and the areas most likely to experience growth, assessment of the location and placement of future fire stations and equipment, personnel and training needs. Additionally, how would the department secure the resources necessary to address the needs and is it reasonable to expect the same of improved response times and service outcomes as are experienced today?

## AUDIT FINDINGS

During 2011, the Fire/EMS Department developed a Strategic Action Plan to address the future out through 2028. Much of the projected growth for Columbus is projected for the northern portion of Muscogee County and the panhandle region in the northeastern section of the County. This was influenced by observed growth confirmed by the 2010 census and the availability of land for residential and commercial growth. The other sections of the county are more fully developed and will experience some growth through redevelopment. The South Lumpkin Road area, from Victory Drive to the Ft. Benning boundary, surrounding the new Infantry Museum/Soldier Center is another area targeted for redevelopment during that timeframe. The Department has been proactive in locating new and replacement stations in the outlying areas where future growth is projected. Examples include the location of a Station out River Road, one out Veterans Parkway near Northside High School and one in the panhandle area off Macon Road. Additionally, a new ladder truck has been acquired and located at the Benning Drive station to improve response time in that area. The service area of the Fire/EMS Department includes the entirety of Muscogee County, so the geographic area will not likely expand. Rolling equipment such as ladder trucks, fire engines, ambulances and rescue equipment are strategically positioned to respond to emergencies most likely to occur in those areas. With the development of the Chattahoochee River for white-water rafting, having the water rescue equipment located at the downtown station is indicative of such planning. Fire/EMS equipment will be addressed in the Capital Equipment Replacement Plan for the replacement of aging equipment. The Department replaced and relocated its oldest active station in 2010 from 29<sup>th</sup> Street to a location adjacent to Rose Hill Park off of Hamilton Road. The next station targeted for relocation is the Jay Street station in Edgewood, which is currently the oldest active station. Other long-range considerations are a new, centralized location for training, logistics, and fire headquarters. The 2008 LOST has provided funding for staffing and other operational needs of the department and can assist with more in the future as that source of funding increases.



## AUDIT RECOMMENDATION

None.

## DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Department's Strategic Plan has been recognized as one of the best in the State and is utilized at the Georgia Public Safety Training Center as the example for other State Certified Fire Departments to follow.

Agreed.

## H. FIRE INVESTIGATIONS OF FIREFIGHTER'S PROPERTY

### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

Do Fire Investigators use the same degree of scrutiny when investigating a fellow firefighter's property as they do for those of parties unrelated to the Fire Department?

### AUDIT PROCESS

The audit process reviewed fire investigative reports of fire involving firefighter properties and non-firefighter properties. It also included reports from each of the fire investigators. The review included two fires involving firefighter properties.

### AUDIT FINDINGS

The review of fire investigative reports did not reveal any discernable differences between properties owned by firefighters and non-firefighters. The processes appeared to be similar as were the depth of the investigative efforts. While the sample size was relatively small, it did include all fires associated with the property of firefighters during the past five years.

### AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

Although there was no visible evidence of investigative impropriety, it is recommended that a different approach be taken in cases where the property to be investigated involves the property of a firefighter or that of a close family member. It is recommended that Departmental Staff recuse itself of performing such investigations and that they be investigated by an outside

agency, either the State Fire Marshal's Office or the Fire Marshal's staff from another municipality within the state. An ideal approach would be to form a statewide pool of investigators from the membership of the Georgia Firefighter's Association and allow the State Fire Marshal's Office to randomly select an investigative team to perform the investigation. Such situations are infrequent and should not place an undue burden of any department asked to provide investigators. This approach should remove any doubt that anyone might have regarding the integrity of the Department's Fire Investigator's objectivity.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Department agrees that an outside agency should be requested to conduct cause and origin investigations of fires that occur in property owned and/or occupied by a current or former member of the Department. The Department has contacted several similar sized fire departments in the State regarding best practices in this area. It is the Department's goal to conduct fire cause and origin investigations simultaneously with an outside, certified agency to ensure accuracy and transparency of the findings.

Agreed.

### **I. EMPLOYEE SELECTION PROCESS**

#### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

New hire decisions are tainted by "The Good Ole Boy" syndrome and those hired are connected to someone already a member of the Department. As such, the diversity of the workforce is unlikely to change and nepotism will continue indefinitely. The Chief makes the final decision in hiring matters. Such statements have come from a variety of external sources as well as from whistleblower complaints.

#### AUDIT PROCESS

The approach taken was to interview the Chief and to review the hiring process. Validation of the process would be assessed based on interviews with members of the command and support staff, followed by a review of selection outcomes over a period of time.



## AUDIT FINDINGS

The interview with Chief Meyer confirmed that employee selections were made by some of the Chiefs in prior administrations. He noted that he has witnessed, earlier in his career, authoritative style Chiefs make most departmental decisions, including employee selections. Over time, that has changed incrementally to a selection committee that made recommendations to the Chief, who then selected from the recommended short list of candidates, to the more recent phase, whereby the committee evaluates and scores applicants, who are then recommended for hiring. Replacement hire was made recently, whereby the Chief accepted the recommendation of the committee, rather than making the final decision. He acknowledged that the committee members had invested considerable time in the process and were positioned to make the decision. The number of related employees has declined during the past three years due to turnover and the diversification of the departmental workforce. It will take time to see significant reductions in the number of related employees. Efforts have been made to recruit more females and minorities, and hiring percentages have increased for those groups. Unfortunately, the departure of those group members has diminished the progress to increase the representation of those groups within the department.

A review of the current status of personnel, as compared to four years ago, reflects that women and minorities have made promotional gains in the department. White females holding the rank of Captain have advanced from three to four since 2008 and African-American males at that rank have risen from one to seven. In 2008, there were no African-Americans holding a rank above Battalion Chief, whereas one currently serves as a Deputy Chief.

## AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that hiring decisions be decentralized to the extent possible, to reduce the appearance of favoritism and to ensure that decisions are based on the qualifications and experience of the applicant affording equal opportunity to all candidates. Committees consisting of managers and supervisors now serve on the interview panels and make their hiring recommendations to the Chief. This gives a broader perspective to the hiring process and develops hiring skills for the involved managers and supervisors. This approach can facilitate the advancement of more women and minorities to senior management positions.

## DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The Department has revamped its hiring process over the past five years. Currently, persons interested in employment are required to apply through the City's NEOGOV online application process. Applicants are required to meet initial requirements as listed on the website. Applicants are scheduled to attend a mandatory Candidate Physical Abilities Test (CPAT) Orientation. They are then afforded the opportunity to train/practice for the test over an eight-week period. A background check is performed for the applicants that successfully challenge the CPAT. An interview panel is selected and is instructed in proper interview techniques.

Agreed.

### **J. VEHICLE OPERATORS**

#### **COMPLAINT/ISSUE**

Shortly after the commencement of the audit, the auditor received a whistleblower complaint alleging that an employee of the Fire/EMS department was driving with a suspending license due to the employee having received a DUI while off-duty.

#### **AUDIT PROCESS**

The audit process involved discussion of the allegation with department management and a review of the employee's driver record from the state licensing department as requested and maintained by the Public Services Division that handles driver training and testing.

#### **AUDIT FINDING**

The Chief confirmed that the employee had received a citation for DUI, but the case was pending adjudication and the employee was in possession of his license/receipt and the current driver record did not reflect the pending charge. He also noted that the driver has not driven a City vehicle since the department learned of the pending charge. The auditor ordered a follow-up request that confirmed the Chief's statement. The Chief also noted that the departmental driver policy has been revised to require the prompt notification of the department of any citations received for moving violations that could affect the employee's qualification to drive a city vehicle. The policy was reviewed to confirm the change. At the conclusion of the audit fieldwork, the citation remained unadjudicated. It should be noted that



when an employee that normally drives is unable or disqualified from driving, a lower rank firefighter must assume that duty.

#### AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The auditor concurs with the policy change that was made, however, it would seem reasonable that such matters could be adjudicated within 90 days of the citation being issued. It is recommended that the policy be further modified to require that such matters be resolved within 90 days from the issuance of the citation, after which the driver would be temporarily reduced in rank and pay to that of a firefighter until the matter is resolved. Likewise, the firefighter that assumes the driving responsibility would be awarded a temporary promotion to Sergeant and paid at that level until the matter is resolved. If the matter is not resolved within an additional 90 days, the rank and pay adjustments of both employees should become permanent. Driving City employees convicted of driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs, should be tested at random intervals to ensure that they are not driving City vehicles while in an impaired state.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

There should be time limit placed on employees to adjudicate their case and 90 days appears to be reasonable. The Department recommends developing a City- wide policy to ensure future cases are addressed consistently throughout City government.

Agreed.

#### K. FIRE STATION GUEST POLICY

##### COMPLAINT/ISSUE

During the audit, the auditor received a whistleblower complaint from a woman alleging that her niece was visiting a firefighter at the station and staying there late at night. She was concerned that the niece may have been having sex with the firefighter or possibly using drugs there.

## AUDIT PROCESS

The audit approach was to interview all of the personnel assigned to that station on each of the three squads, including the station officers. The auditor enlisted the service of an outside party to participate in the investigation. The interviews were conducted on a surprise basis with one firefighter at a time. Each was asked to keep the discussions confidential until the investigation was concluded. Fire Department management was informed that an investigation would be performed, but not told where until after it commenced. Following completion, management was informed of the findings.

## AUDIT FINDINGS

The interviews with the firefighters accomplished its goal. While most of the interviewees either were unaware of any late night visitors in the dorm area, or chose to not make it their business, some interviewees provided information that could be pieced together such that conclusions were drawn. No one acknowledged that such activity was currently happening but several stated that unauthorized visitors had frequented the station for a period of time several years ago. Most of the interviewees were able to state the Visitor Policy accurately and several were unsure of the hour that visitation ended each evening. Upon reporting the findings to management, it was learned that the Fire Marshal had conducted a similar investigation after they received a tip of similar allegations. Although the investigative techniques and known information varied, both investigations reached the same conclusion. Based on the Fire Marshal's investigation, management had already prepared a more rigid Visitor Policy that restricted visitors to the common areas of the station, the living area, kitchen, and downstairs restroom, and prohibited visitors from remaining in the station unattended. Also, all visitors were required to leave the station by 9:00pm.

## AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

None, as management had strengthened and implemented the Visitor Policy.

## DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agreed.

## **L. EMPLOYEE FITNESS**

### COMPLAINT/ISSUE



The work of Firefighter/EMTs can be very strenuous and stressful, due to its urgency. The work is also dangerous and life threatening. It is essential that persons working in this occupation are physically fit and have the stamina to rescue, lift and carry persons or property to safety, for extended periods of time. Are the City's employees that work under these conditions physical capable of doing such?

#### AUDIT PROCESS

In order to evaluate the physical condition of the operational staff of the Fire/EMS Department, the auditor reviewed records of employee performance on Department's physical fitness test. Existing employees are required to participate in fitness testing at prescribed intervals.

#### AUDIT FINDINGS

Applicants are tested and results for each event recorded to demonstrate the fitness of the person for the job that each will be performing. Most new employees enter service at an entry-level position that requires a high level of fitness. Existing employees have positions ranging from entry-level to the executive level. Subsequent testing does not currently require that time or other standards be met, only that the employee participates in the fitness exercise. As such, some are in excellent condition while others are not.

#### AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that all employees be required to participate at a level that is appropriate for their age and position. Ideally, this could be incorporated with an employee wellness program that provides incentives for maintaining good health and wellness.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

The department management values the health and well being of all department members. As such, all members of the Department of Fire and EMS undergo a comprehensive annual health screen by a contracted medical provider. The health screen consists of a medical review to includes, complete blood work evaluation, pulmonary function, stress ECG and vision evaluation. Incorporated in this evaluation is a fitness component that includes a 1.5-mile run, sit-ups and pushups. The results of this evaluation are utilized to recommend lifestyle changes to improve the overall health of employees.

A Physician reviews the results of the complete health screen and any problems found by the physician are cause for the employee to be referred

for further evaluation. Previously, potentially life-threatening medical conditions were discovered during health screening, and the employees have been referred to their private physicians for treatment.

The Department has contacted the City HR Department to discuss applying incentives to the Department's Wellness Program.

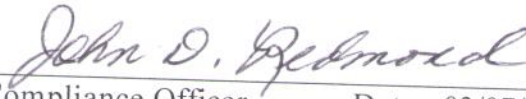
#### SUBSEQUENT EVENTS

Following the completion of the audit fieldwork, the scheduled Battalion Chief Squad rotation occurred. Following such, Battalion Chief Janice Brunner complained that some of the Sick & Vacation Leave Records she received from Battalion Chief Glen Bahde were not accurate and warranted correction. Management responded with efforts to ensure that corrections were made and the records updated. It is the Auditor's understanding that such changes have been made and that Chief Brunner's complaint has been satisfied.

#### DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE

Agree.

John D. Redmond  
Internal Auditor & Compliance Officer



Date: 03/07/2012