

COMPILATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

**RISK ASSESSMENT STUDY
DRACUT FIRE POLICE DEPARTMENT
DRACUT, MA**

AUGUST 2016

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This compilation of recommendations is provided in order to assist the Town of Dracut in prioritizing and establishing a work plan to implement the recommendations. For ease of reference, the recommendations are numbered consecutively, by chapter, as they appear in the report. A number of recommendations are similar but appear in several chapters so that when referenced, they can be viewed in the appropriate context and relevance within those different chapters.

CHAPTER 2: ADMINISTRATION

2.1 ORGANIZATION

- 2.1-1** The Town of Dracut should consider negotiating with the local bargaining unit for the purpose of establishing a non-union position of assistant fire chief delineating a clear number two position in the fire department and to provide the chief with another confidential management position to assist him with leading the department. This position should be an executive management position that is also exempt from the firefighters' collective bargaining unit.
- 2.1-2** The Town of Dracut should remove the position of fire chief from the confines of the Massachusetts civil service system. This will maximize the ability for the Town to recruit the most qualified internal and external candidates to be the next fire chief when the current chief retires.

- 2.1-3 All officers in the Dracut Fire Department should be assigned additional ancillary duties in addition to their company supervisor responsibilities in order to the assist the chief(s) with the myriad of duties necessary to manage a modern fire department.**
- 2.1-4 The Town of Dracut should make every attempt to separate the department's firefighters and the supervisors/management (lieutenants, captains, and deputy chiefs) into two separate bargaining units. This separation of workers from supervisors and management is very important to maintaining appropriate management, supervision, accountability and discipline within the department.**

2.2 STAFFING AND SCHEDULING

- 2.2-1 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should proactively and aggressively explore other options for providing dispatch services to the department with the goal of transitioning away from self dispatch at the earliest possible date. Eliminating in house dispatching will provide the town and fire department with an additional trained firefighter/EMT on each unit that will be available for emergency response at little, if any, additional cost to the town. More importantly it will assist with alleviating the unsafe practice of staffing fire apparatus with just two personnel caused by chronic staffing shortages.**
- 2.2-2 The Dracut Fire Department, in consultation with the town administration should analyze the short and long term benefits, commitment, and, any potential liabilities for the town of applying for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant. Being awarded a SAFER grant could have a significant positive impact on the fire department's chronic staffing shortage which will result in improved public safety. The key decision the town would need to make is if they could continue to afford the additional personnel after the grant funding ends in several years.**
- 2.2-3 Contingent upon the town's conclusions regarding recommendation #2.2-2, above, the Town of Dracut should apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant for four to eight additional personnel. These personnel should be deployed to the District 2 and District 3 stations, permitting those engines to be staffed with three (3) personnel each and get the department closer to being able to achieve compliance with NFPA 1710.**
- 2.2-4 Regardless of the method utilized to fund the necessary positions, the Town of Dracut should take steps to ensure that all three district stations and their engines are staffed with a minimum of three (3) personnel 24/7. This is not only an important operational consideration, it is also a major safety concern that could impact both**

firefighters and citizens. Minimum on duty staffing should be nine (9) personnel, three (3) at each station.

- 2.2-5 In order to assure that the important position of overall incident commander is filled, and that there is mission critical command continuity and consistency on the emergency scene, at least one of the Dracut's chief officers should respond automatically...and immediately... to any reported structure fire or other incident that could become significant during nights, and, at any other time there is no chief officer working.
- 2.2-6 All Chief officers should be issued staff vehicles and participate in an on-call rotation to ensure that a Chief officer is available to respond to any significant incident during off duty hours.

2.3 POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

- 2.3-1 The Dracut Fire Department should give priority support to the committee that is developing an updated comprehensive rules and regulations document that identifies anticipated, acceptable/permitted, and prohibited behaviors. This document should be approved by the Board of Selectmen and then distributed to and signed for by each member of the department. It will also provide important guidance to new employees.

Some suggested sections for the rules and regulations could include, but are by no means limited to:

- A preamble
- Department vision statement and mission statement
- Purpose of the rules and regulations
- Organization
- Membership requirements
- General rules of conduct and prohibited behaviors
- Officer qualifications and selection (may just reference current department procedure, CBA language and/or civil service language)
- Officer duties and responsibilities
- Chain of command
- Uniforms and grooming
- Discipline
- Other areas that may be agreed upon for inclusion

- 2.3-2** The Dracut Fire Department should make the activities of the SOP/SOG working group a high priority. Utilizing a cross section of department members, they should be tasked with the development of a comprehensive department standard operations procedures or guidelines (SOP/SOG) manual starting with mission critical procedures such as, but not limited to, *basic engine company and truck company operations, dwelling fires, commercial structures, industrial incidents, rapid intervention team operations, personnel accountability, gas leaks, hazardous materials incidents, ice rescue, vehicle extrication operations, thermal imaging camera and automatic external defibrillator use, and mass-casualty incidents*. The addition of numerous other procedures covering additional operational, routine administrative and training procedures should then follow.

The committee should be comprised of members of each rank and include specific representation by a senior officer of the union. Due to the urgency of this task, and its significant importance to the department's future success, the committee should be given whatever support is necessary to complete this task within one year. If necessary, outside professional assistance is available to assist with facilitating this endeavor.

The general set up and organization of the manual is a very important consideration and the department must insure that the manual/system is easy to utilize and cross reference the necessary procedure. If personnel are going to be required to learn and adhere to the department's procedures, then the format, organization, and filing of them must be user friendly, otherwise they will sit on a shelf unused.

The first operational procedure should identify and explain the components of the Written Communications System, including the use and organization of the SOP manual and other components of the system such as standardized forms. This procedure should also contain a provision that the entire SOP Manual will be reviewed on at least an annual basis and that updates and revisions can/will be made at any time, as necessary. All procedures/revisions should be approved and issued after being signed by the fire chief.

- 2.3-3** The Dracut Fire Department should adopt a standardized SOP/SOG form that includes the following information:

- Title of the SOP/SOG
- Number of the SOP/SOG
- Category of the SOP/SOG (EMS Operations, Training, Administration, etc.)
- Page number and total number of pages

- Effective date
- Revision date (if applicable)
- Approval/signature of the fire chief

If a procedure is re-issued with only minor to moderate revisions it can carry the original issue date with the revision date also noted. Revisions from the previous version should be identified by some means within the revised document. Full-scale revisions to a procedure should result in it being reissued with a new issue date.

Each SOP/SOG should, at a minimum, contain the following sections:

- Purpose
- Scope (If necessary and/or appropriate)
- Definitions of terms (If necessary and/or appropriate)
- Procedure(s)/Main body
- References (If necessary and/or appropriate)

2.3-4 Working in close consultation with the town's legal and personnel departments the Dracut Fire Department should ensure that all of their operational procedures meet, and are consistent with, applicable federal and state laws and regulations, and town ordinances and policy. This would include such topics as handling Freedom of Information requests, and human resources related issues such as Family Medical Leave Act, Pregnancy, Sexual Harassment, Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO), Diversity, Privacy, and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA).

2.3-5 The Dracut Fire Department should institute a process for issuing general orders, which are directives and/or special instructions that cover various facets of department operations, but can be quickly issued as needed. They may cover a particular period of time regarding a special situation or may provide a temporary procedure pending development and issue of a full operational procedure.

Also included in the system should be training bulletins that would be issued to serve as reference with regard to tested and approved methods of performing tasks; safety bulletins, that are issued to serve as references with regard to general and specific safety and health issues; and informational bulletins or memorandums that are published for the general knowledge of recipients such as temporary street closures, hydrants out of service, community events, etc. A numbering system should be implemented to keep track of these documents for indexing and future reference purposes.

- 2.3-6** The Dracut Fire Department should develop an effective system for ensuring that any new standard operating procedures, general orders, training bulletins, safety bulletins, and informational bulletins are distributed to all personnel and stations. Electronic communications are highly recommended as the method of choice for distributing departmental communications and documents. All town policies and department procedures should be posted on the department intranet and employees should be required to review this information. All revisions should be e-mailed to each member and then posted on the intranet.
- 2.3-7** Since town policies and personnel regulations apply to all town employees, this material should be made available in each station (or on line), and policy training should be conducted on a regular basis as a component of each training session (review 1-2 policies or SOPs) for all personnel.
- 2.3-8** The Dracut Fire Department should develop and implement a procedure that provides for the documented review of policies, procedures, general orders, training and/or safety bulletins, etc. that includes a provision requiring each member of the department to sign that they received the document, have read it, and understand it.
- 2.3-9** At least one policy or SOP/SOG should be reviewed by the company officer with each crew during every shift. The shift commander should select the material to be reviewed and provide that material to his/her first line supervisors so that all crews review a consistent set of documents.
- 2.3-10** The Town of Dracut should form a committee that includes representatives of town and fire department management, the bargaining agent, and town human resources develop an internal disciplinary policy that is consistent with the town's preexisting progressive disciplinary process. Appropriate training, and more importantly a strong level of support, should be provided to all supervisory and management personnel with regards to the new disciplinary policy and its processes.
- 2.3-11** The Dracut Fire Department should immediately develop a comprehensive respiratory protection plan in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.134, and a blood borne pathogens/exposure control plan in accordance with 29 CFR 1910.1030. Appropriate SOPs that implement various components of these plans should also be developed as part of the ongoing process to update that manual. Annual training as required should be provided to all personnel.

2.4 TRAINING

- 2.4-1** Although it already has a good training program, the Dracut Fire Department should conduct a comprehensive and formal training needs assessment for the purpose of determining training program priorities. Part of this needs assessment should be a formal, initial evaluation of the current basic skills proficiency of all department personnel.
- 2.4-2** In order to provide ongoing evaluation of the effectiveness of the training program, all Dracut Fire Department personnel should also be required to successfully complete an annual basic skills proficiency evaluation.
- 2.4-3** Additional, mandatory, high intensity training on various subjects, including periodic live fire training, should be conducted on a quarterly (preferred), or semi-annual (minimum) basis for all personnel, off-duty, at a formal fire academy where appropriate training facilities, structures, and props are available.
- 2.4-4** All officers should be formally certified at Fire Instructor Level I, and all captains and chief officers should be certified as Fire Instructor Level II. These certifications should be made a job requirement. Fire Instructor I is a 36-hour course and Fire Instructor II is a 35-hour course. Both courses are offered at the Massachusetts Firefighting Academy in Stow. The National Fire Academy also offers an in-residence course entitled "Training Program Management". This 10-day course is designed to provide training officers with the essential tools and skills to lead and manage a training function in a local fire/EMS organization.
- 2.4-5** The department should require its officers to complete rank appropriate fire officer training programs at the Massachusetts State Fire Academy and obtain a certain level of fire officer certification as a job requirement. Recommendations would be: Fire Officer I for lieutenant; Fire Officer II for captain; Fire Officer III for deputy fire chief; and Fire Officer IV for fire chief.
- 2.4-6** The Dracut Fire Department should implement a formal officer training and development program. There are several excellent programs available, including those from the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the Phoenix, Arizona, Fire Department. This program can also include bringing well-known fire service experts and instructors to Dracut to provide training for the officers and firefighters who may aspire to be officers.

- 2.4-7** The fire chief and future chief officers should be required to complete additional chief officer training program and obtain appropriate additional certifications such as Fire Officer III and Fire Officer IV, Massachusetts Fire Chief Management Training Program, and the Massachusetts Fire Chief Credentialing Program and/or the Chief Fire Officer designation.
- 2.4-8** The Dracut Fire Department should make a concerted effort to send as many officers as possible to the National Fire Academy. Any officers who meet the admissions criteria should be encouraged to enroll in the Academy's Executive Fire Officer Program. Training reports should be completed for any NFA training and copies of certificates placed in the personnel and training files.
- 2.4-9** The Dracut Fire Department should encourage personnel to seek additional training on their own, and to the financial and practical extent possible, send personnel to outside training opportunities such as the Firehouse Expo in Baltimore and the FDIC in Indianapolis. Information gained at this training can then be brought back and delivered to other members of the department. Training reports should be completed for all of this training, and copies of any certificates earned should be placed in the member's personnel and training files.
- 2.4-10** A training bulletin board should be placed in each station where upcoming training opportunities can be posted for all personnel to review. Training notices can also be sent electronically to all personnel and be posted in a member's only area of the department's web site.
- 2.4-11** The Dracut Fire Department should include in their training budget upgrades to their training resources such as manuals, DVDs, and subscriptions to other available training resources, including Internet/web based programs.
- 2.4-12** The Town of Dracut should provide the fire department with a reasonable annual training budget including training and travel expenses for department personnel, the utilization of outside training sources, the purchase and maintenance of training resources and props.
- 2.4-13** The Dracut Fire Department should fully utilize the internet and all of the various training resources available on line.
- 2.4-14** In addition to the training already being conducted, additional daily opportunities for training can be found during related activities such as daily/weekly apparatus and equipment inspections, building pre-planning activities, and short duration (10-15 minute) shift change and/or coffee break drills.

- 2.4-15** Since operational level personnel can take defensive actions at hazardous materials incidents (such as diking spilled materials, spreading absorbent, or vapor control), all Dracut Fire Department personnel should be trained to the hazardous materials operational level (24-hour program).

2.5 FIRE PREVENTION

- 2.5-1** Fire prevention should continue to be promoted as a key component of the operations of the Dracut Fire Department and should remain a major aspect of its primary mission. Aggressive fire prevention programs are the most efficient and cost-effective way to reduce fire risks, fire loss, and fire deaths and injuries in the community. Every member of the department should be responsible for fire prevention and involvement by on duty personnel should be increased wherever possible.
- 2.5-2** All officers in the department should be required to complete the four module, on line fire prevention inspector program. Once implemented by the state all lieutenants should be required to obtain certification as a Fire Inspector I and all Captains, and above, should be required to be certified as Fire Inspector II. This training and certification should also be made available to any and all department personnel who wish to receive them.
- 2.5-3** The Dracut Fire Department should continue to support training and professional development activities for the deputy fire chief, and, other officers. Personnel should be encouraged, if not required, to attend fire prevention, fire investigations, and management courses at the National Fire Academy.
- 2.5-4** The department should develop a library of fire prevention reference materials, such as the *NFPA Fire Protection Handbook*, *NFPA National Fire Alarm Code Handbook*, *NFPA Automatic Fire Sprinkler Systems Handbook*, *NFPA Flammable and Combustible Liquids Handbook*, *Brannigan's Building Construction for the Fire Service*, and various fire prevention and inspection training manuals of the International Fire Service Training Association (IFSTA).
- 2.5-5** The department should significantly expand the in-service fire safety inspection program to include all business occupancies in the town. On-duty companies should conduct regular fire safety of inspections of buildings/occupancies within their respective response districts. The purpose of these inspections is to a) identify and mitigate fire hazards and fire code violations; b) enable firefighters to become thoroughly familiar with buildings, including the building design, layout, structural

conditions, building systems, and hazards and challenges to firefighting operations; c) to educate property owners and occupants on good fire safety practices; d) to establish a positive relationship with property owners and occupants. In order to enhance the in-service inspection program, it will be necessary to:

- Provide additional training to personnel on proper inspection procedures
- Develop standard operating guidelines for in-service inspections
- Establish inspection schedules
- Enhance the system for documenting inspections and notifying property owners of fire hazards
- Ensure that an effective follow-up inspection system is in place to ensure that hazards have been mitigated
- Continue the practice of on-duty personnel conducting regular in-service inspections of all building construction sites in the city

2.5-6 The Dracut Fire Department should continue to update its website and social media accounts on a regular basis to provide its customers, and other interested parties, as much information as possible on fire safety, fire prevention, and the department as a whole. The department should also make it a priority, and work actively, to make on-line permitting, inspection scheduling, etc. a reality.

2.5-7 The department should enhance and expand its fire pre-planning program to include all commercial occupancies, business and large residential complexes in town. The purpose of a fire pre-planning program is to develop a fire response plan for buildings in the town. A pre-fire plan includes data such as the occupancy type, floor plans, construction type, hazards to firefighting, special conditions in the building, apparatus placement plan, water supply plan, and forcible entry and ventilation plan. Pre-fire plans should be reviewed regularly and tested by table-top exercises and on-site drills. In addition, the department should develop a plan to make pre-fire plans accessible on mobile data terminals (notebook/laptop computers) on fire apparatus for use enroute to an incident and while on-scene.

2.5-8 The Dracut Fire Department should make it a priority to switch to an electronic fire inspection and records management program in order to more effectively and efficiently facilitate the department's fire prevention functions. The department should also acquire some type of mobile computers (lap tops, tablets, etc.) along with printers, for use by personnel conducting field inspections. In this way once the inspection is completed the inspection report can be completed on the computer, an inspection report and/or other appropriate documentation, certificates, etc. can be printed out and given to the facility/building representative. Once personnel return to the station the inspection reports can be uploaded into the main database. The

inspection system and associated data base(s) should be cloud based systems that integrate with the rest of the department's records management system.

2.6 GOAL SETTING AND STRATEGIC PLANNING

- 2.6-1** Working in conjunction with the town administration, and utilizing the already developed draft master plan as a foundation, the Dracut Fire Department should establish a committee to conduct a long-range/strategic planning process and develop a plan (roadmap) to guide the department's future over the next one to five years. If necessary, the department's mission and vision statements should be revised to properly and accurately reflect the department's overall mission within the community and vision for the future. In addition, the core or organizational values, should be developed by utilizing the input of all four work units. Although this can be a time consuming process, it serves as a foundation and sets a common direction for the organization.

The makeup of the committee should include internal stakeholders; labor, management, and town representatives. External stakeholders can provide considerable insight as well; business and other community leaders should be invited to be members of the committee. The committee should be provided with the support and resources they need to complete their task within a timely manner. Once developed, the plan should be formally approved/adopted by the board of selectmen. As a "living" document, the plan needs to be reviewed, and updated, on an annual (or other reasonable periodic) basis.

- 2.6-2** The Center for Public Safety Excellence (CPSE) offers fire department accreditation through the Commission on Fire Accreditation International (CFAI). It is described as "A self-assessment and evaluation model that enables organizations to examine past, current, and future service levels and internal performance and compare them to industry best practices. This process leads to improved service delivery." This process provides the necessary tools to support what is currently in place, as well as, identify and attempt to mitigate any gaps in service delivery.
- 2.6-3** The town manager should take an active role in setting appropriate goals and a vision for the fire department. Town officials should include residents and the department in an open and honest discussion within the goal setting process.
- 2.6-4** The town manager should establish an annual goal-setting workshop with the fire chief to develop the sense of common vision necessary to improve the department and the quality of fire and EMS services the town receives.

- 2.6-5 The Town of Dracut and the Dracut Fire Department should publicly recognize the achievements of the department in reaching the various established goals as they are accomplished.

2.7 RECORDS MANAGEMENT

- 2.7-1 The Dracut Fire Department should purchase the fire inspection software module, for the current Fire Programs fire department records management system, then take immediate steps to insure that the database is utilized for all aspects of the fire prevention program including, inspections, permitting, and pre-fire/incident planning. To the extent practical, fire prevention permit, fee, and inspection records should be retroactively entered in the management program, including any information that is stored in any other databases.
- 2.7-2 The Dracut Fire Department should acquire mobile computers (lap tops, tablets, etc.) along with printers for use by all personnel conducting field inspections. Once the inspection is completed, the inspection report can be completed on the computer, and an inspection report and/or other appropriate documentation, certificates, etc. can be printed out and given to the facility/building representative. Once personnel return to the station, the inspection reports can be uploaded into the main database.
- 2.7-3 The needs of the fire department are unique and not typically solved with generic, off the shelf products. The Dracut Fire Department should upgrade its current Fire Programs fire department records management system with all needed modules including ones such as staffing and scheduling, equipment, etc. then take immediate steps to insure that the database is utilized for all aspects of the department's management, operations, and recordkeeping. To the extent practical, and as proposed by the chief, as many records as possible should be retroactively entered into the management program modules, including any information that is stored in any other databases.
- 2.7-4 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a plan to install mobile data terminals (MDTs) in all fire apparatus and the command vehicles. In developing the MDT plan, consideration should be given to evaluating the latest technologies and software, including the use of tablets rather than laptop computers. At a minimum, the incident commander at a scene should have access to fire pre-plan data, building permit data (building plans and current data about renovation and construction projects), real-time weather data, and hazardous materials data.

- 2.7-5** The Dracut Fire Department should evaluate the capability of its current records management system to meet the future needs of the department. Consideration should be given to transitioning to a cloud based system with a high level of high connectivity.

2.8 DATA ANALYSIS

- 2.8-1** If Fire Programs is determined to be the best records management option for the Dracut Fire Department, this system should be updated and expanded with all needed modules including ones such as staffing and scheduling, equipment, etc. The department should then take immediate steps to insure that the database is utilized for all aspects of the department's management, operations, and recordkeeping.
- 2.8-2** The Dracut Fire Department should work with the town manager to identify additional relevant statistical data to be extracted from the records management system for regular review, analysis, and reporting. This will provide the catalyst for more reliable and accurate data and information driven decisions and planning.
- 2.8-3** The Dracut Fire Department should continue to send personnel to advanced training on the use of the Fire Programs fire department records management program. They should also seek additional opportunities for officers or other personnel to attend classes on data and information management such as those offered at the National Fire Academy.

CHAPTER 3: FIRE AND RESCUE OPERATIONS

3.1 DEMAND FOR SERVICE

- 3.1-1** The Dracut Fire Department should continue the development of a long range strategic plan that is consistent with the Town's. This process should include other town departments, a review of the Town's economic and community master plans, and, should include a broad cross section of internal stockholders and external stakeholders. It cannot be developed unilaterally, or, in a vacuum.
- 3.1-2** The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should continue to explore the feasibility of the fire department providing EMS transport instead of the current service provided by Patriot Ambulance. Revenue projections versus costs that are incurred with the current model along with increased operating expenses associated with the implementation of fire department based transport services should be

carefully scrutinized. Currently Patriot Ambulance is the private provider utilized for patient transport within the Town of Dracut. Rather than charging the Town of Dracut to provide this service, Patriot pays the Town \$14,000 per year. Given the payer mix and Demographics present within Dracut, ambulance billing must factor in both write offs and adjustments. As we are aware that the fire department would like to enhance its service in the community and possibly expand into transport EMS, any investigation should consider the fiscal equation noted above, produce no sustained fiscal impact that requires the Town of Dracut to subsidize operations on an ongoing basis. Any fire based EMS venture should be transparent to the public and developed through an enterprise account to ensure that any EMS endeavor would be sustainable without additional support from the community.

- 3.1-3 The Dracut Fire Department should work with the town to develop long range capital plans to continue to expand the municipal water supply system to areas of town where it currently is not. Consideration should also be given to making changes in local planning, zoning, and building codes to require expansion of the water system into new major subdivisions.
- 3.1-4 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a compelling public education program that includes discussing the benefits of installing residential fire sprinklers in all new one and two story homes, particularly those located outside of the hydrant district.
- 3.1-5 The Town of Dracut should strongly consider adopting a municipal by-law requiring the installation of a fire water supply cistern in any new development consisting of three or more homes or, for any individual home of larger than a designated square footage, that are outside of the municipal water supply system.
- 3.1-6 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should consider partnering with private property owners to install cisterns on private properties in Dracut that are outside of the hydrant district. The Town might consider a property tax abatement for being allowed to install a cistern on a private property. The fire department could develop a public education program that includes discussing the benefits to residents and property owners of installing cisterns for the storage of fire suppression system water supplies on various properties throughout the town.
- 3.1.7 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should make it a priority to identify additional suitable locations for dry hydrants or standpipes in the areas of town outside of the municipal water supply area, and, in conjunction with the public works department, or through the formation of public/private partnerships, install several of them each year based upon the highest risk areas and/or year round accessibility and usability.

- 3.1.8** The Dracut Fire Department should expand rural water supply operations and develop a response card that initiates the response of at least two tankers when a structure fire is reported in an area beyond the confines of the water district. The department should also increase the amount of rural water supply training and develop an SOP for rural water supply operations.

3.2 NFPA 1710

- 3.2-1** The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should continue to work to improve the department's staffing levels in order to increase operational effectiveness, efficiency and safety. Regardless of the method utilized to fund the necessary positions, the Town of Dracut should take steps to ensure that all three district stations and their engines are staffed with a minimum of three (3) personnel 24/7. This is not only an important operational consideration, it is also a major safety concern that could impact both firefighters and citizens. Minimum on duty staffing should be nine (9) personnel, three (3) at each station.
- 3.2-2** Through the utilization of automatic and mutual aid agreements with neighboring communities, the Dracut Fire Department should attempt to achieve a goal of having a minimum of 16 personnel on the scene of any reported structure fire within eight (8) minutes of dispatch.
- 3.2-3** The Dracut Fire Department, in consultation with the town administration, should analyze the short and long term benefits, commitment and any potential liabilities for the town of applying for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) Grant. Being awarded a SAFER grant could have a significant positive impact on the fire department's chronic staffing shortage which will result in improved public safety. The key decision the town would need to make is if they could continue to afford the additional personnel after the grant funding ends in several years.
- 3.2-4** Contingent upon the town's conclusions regarding recommendation #3.2-3, above, the Town of Dracut should apply for a Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response (SAFER) grant for four to eight additional personnel stating a desire to more fully comply with the requirements of NFPA 1710.
- 3.2-5** The Town of Dracut should give consideration to negotiating with the collective bargaining agent for the purpose of designating the current captains of the Dracut Fire Department as the platoon commanders who respond in the command SUV. The captain should then be relieved of responsibilities as a company officer so that he/she

can focus his/her efforts on supervising the overall on duty group and serving as the incident commander. The captain on should be replaced by a lieutenant as the company commander at Station 1. The captain should be expected to perform all of the duties that are specified in the Massachusetts promotional examination criteria for fire captain. The deputy chiefs and chief should still continue to respond as per current protocol.

3.3 OSHA TWO IN/TWO OUT COMPLIANCE

- 3.3-1** The Dracut Fire Department should establish a Two-In/Two-Out Standard Operating Guideline (SOG) that complies with nationally recognized standards and regulations.
- 3.3-2** The Dracut Fire Department should develop a training program that reinforces the Two-In/Two-Out SOG based on current staffing levels with both two (2) and three (3)-person response crews. This training should be a part of the basic ICS training as well as fire ground operation training that should occur annually. The command level officers (chief and deputy chiefs) should carefully monitor and strictly enforce the Two-In/Two-Out requirements.
- 3.3-3** If a unit arriving on the scene of a fire incident is going to employ the Two-In/Two-Out exception due to imminent rescues, or credible information that there are viable victims, they should be required to announce this on the radio stating their reasons for non-compliance. The company officer should also be required to complete a separate, detailed narrative report regarding the non compliance at the conclusion of the incident.

3.4 RESPONSE TIMES

- 3.4-1** Working in conjunction with the Town of Dracut's IT provider, the Dracut Fire Department should continue to explore options for replacing the current dispatch and fire incident data bases/records management systems with a cloud based high connectivity platform that better serves the needs of the department. Should this occur all fire department operations should be transitioned to use one database system to capture, store, and analyze data currently stored in different systems. Working with the IT provider, they should explore a customizable, software solution that addresses all fire department needs.
- 3.4-2** The Dracut Fire Department should take steps to be able to fully analyze the following response time related data and information:

- Average response time of first firefighting unit to arrive on scene
- Average response time of first ambulance to arrive on scene
- Average ALS response time
- Average response time of first IC/chief officer to arrive on scene
- Average response time for full complement of Dracut firefighters to arrive on scene
- Average response time for full NFPA compliant response
- All of the above actions broken down by minutes to determine NFPA 1720 compliance and 90th percentile response time
- Call processing time (receipt to dispatch)
- Turnout time (dispatch to response)

- 3.4-3 The Dracut Fire Department should work with the provider selected to provide transport EMS within the community to analyze their response times to all incidents within the town to assist with determining compliance with established standards, benchmarks and contracts.
- 3.4-4 The Dracut Fire Department should work with the provider selected to provide transport EMS within the community and Lowell General Hospital to analyze their response times to reported incidents that meet ALS dispatch protocols within the town to assist with determining compliance with established standards, benchmarks and contracts.
- 3.4-5 The Dracut Fire Department should track and analyze the number of simultaneous or overlapping incidents that occur each month in the town. Part of this analysis should include time of day to determine times when incident activity is at its highest or spikes.
- 3.4-6 The Dracut Fire Department should work to comply with the response time requirements for various types of incidents found in NFPA 1710 including first unit on scene, ALS unit on scene, and full first alarm assignment for reported structure fires.
- 3.4-7 The Dracut Fire Department should work with the Town GIS personnel to develop and post incident location and response time projection maps. This information should be posted in each station to provide personnel with a perspective relative to where incidents most frequently occur and expected response times based on travel distance.

3.5 MUTUAL AND AUTOMATIC AID

- 3.5-1 The Dracut Fire Department should review and update their 10 alarm response cards and mutual aid plans and agreements on a regular basis. This should be done at least annually and whenever there is a change in status to resources, or significant change

within the community.

- 3.5-2 The Dracut Fire Department should attempt to re-establish its relationship with Border Area Mutual Aid Association in order to further cultivate mutual and automatic aid agreements with area fire departments that are outside of the formal Fire District 6 response area, especially with those located in New Hampshire.
- 3.5-3 In consultation and cooperation with its neighboring departments, the Dracut Fire Department should enter into automatic aid agreements that specifies the number and types of resources that should be dispatched to various types of reported emergencies. While the numbers/types of resources should be determined based upon a risk management process or pre-fire/incident plan, these processes take time. In the interim, we recommend that, at a minimum, one (1) additional engine and one (1) additional ladder be immediately dispatched to every reported structural fire incident with a goal of achieving NFPA 1710 compliance (assuming Dracut is staffing all their engines with three (3) personnel). This will decrease response times as well as increase resources at incidents in Dracut.
- 3.5.4 Since there are still areas of Dracut that are not covered by the municipal water supply system the Dracut Fire Department should develop automatic aid agreements for the immediate response of two (2) or more water tenders/tankers to any reported structural fire incident. Once the incident is determined to be a working incident additional tenders/tankers should be dispatched. The department should also develop standard operating guidelines (SOGs) for these types of incidents.

3.6 SPECIAL OPERATIONS

- 3.6-1 The Dracut Fire Department should continue partnering with and utilizing the Fire District 6 Hazardous Material Response Team for technician level hazardous material incidents. Since this team supports and benefits the Town of Dracut, the Dracut Fire Department should encourage and support department members to join the team and actively participate in training and responses. Those members once trained will be able to have a positive impact on the level of response for the department for these types of incidents. Further, these members should be required to share their knowledge and skills with the Dracut fire department by conducting training classes for the department.
- 3.6-2 The Dracut Fire Department should continue partnering with and utilizing the Essex County Technical Rescue Team. Since this team supports and benefits the Town of Dracut, the Dracut Fire Department should encourage and support department members to join the team and actively participate in training and responses. Those members once trained will be able to have a positive impact on the level of response for

the department for these types of incidents. Further, these members should be required to share their knowledge and skills with the Dracut fire department by conducting training classes for the department.

- 3.6-3 The Town of Dracut should consider providing additional funding to the fire department to enable increased members' participation with the Fire District 6 Hazardous Material Response Team and the Essex County Technical Rescue Team.
- 3.6-4 The Dracut Fire Department should attempt to increase their capabilities for responding to hazardous materials and specialized technical rescue incidents by increasing members' skill levels through training. The department should conduct periodic, joint training with these regional response teams, mutual aid partners, and private industry.
- 3.6-5 The Dracut Fire Department should attempt to increase their capabilities for responding to hazardous materials and technical rescue incidents by expanding their inventory of equipment such as specialized equipment for confined space entry, trench or building collapse, rope/high angle rescue, and rapid water. In developing a small capital plan for these purchases and investments the department must coordinate budgeting and planned purchases with their training budget and in coordination with the town.
- 3.6-6 The Dracut Fire Department should attempt to form partnerships with local industries and businesses for the purpose of having these stakeholders donate equipment that the department could use at any time for special operations, but would specifically benefit those facilities.
- 3.6-7 Since operational level personnel can take defensive actions at a hazardous materials incident such as diking spilled materials, spreading absorbent, or vapor control, all Dracut Fire Department personnel should be trained to the hazardous materials operational level.
- 3.6-8 In order for them to be able to take initial actions at the scene of a technical rescue incident prior to the arrival of the county team, and support them throughout the incident, the Dracut Fire Department should consider providing operations level technical rescue training in various disciplines.
- 3.6-9 The Dracut Fire Department should develop SOGs regarding their roles, responsibilities, and operations at hazardous materials and technical rescue incidents. These SOGs should be developed in consultation with the appropriate specialized response team.

3.7 COMMUNICATIONS/DISPATCH

- 3.7-1 The Town of Dracut should continue to take whatever administrative and political steps are necessary relative to obtaining funding for the RECC. State 9-1-1 grant funding is

available to underwrite both start-up and ongoing operational costs associated with regionally coordinated efforts such as this that will improve emergency incident communications and operations and do so in a more fiscally efficient manner. As of the writing this report, the funding has been secured to transition to a RECC with the Town of Tewksbury.

- 3.7-2 The combined RECC dispatch center should be staffed by civilian public safety dispatchers who have received thorough training on police, fire, and EMD dispatching procedures and operations. The dispatch center supervisor should also be a civilian who is able to focus on communications center operations, rather than a police officer who has other law enforcement duties. While the day-to-day operations of the center may fall under the management of the director of the RECC, Dracut's fire chief (along with all the other participating entities) should share responsibility for the development and implementation of dispatch and communications policies and procedures, and, evaluating dispatch personnel.
- 3.7-3 Once the new RECC is operational the firefighter on each shift who is assigned to dispatch duties should be reassigned to fire and EMS duties in Dracut, allowing the department's staffing level for emergency response to be increased by one (1) at no direct cost to the town.
- 3.7-4 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a plan to install mobile data terminals (MDTs) in all fire apparatus. In developing the MDT plan, consideration should be given to evaluating the latest technologies and software, including the use of tablets rather than laptop computers. At a minimum, the incident commander at a scene should have access to fire/incident pre-plans, building permit records (building plans and current data about renovation and construction projects), real-time weather data, and hazardous materials information.
- 3.7-5 The Dracut Fire Department should continue replacing its older radio equipment and perform a complete evaluation of its radio communications capabilities. All mobile and portable radios should be digital, narrow-band APCO P-25 compliant and interoperable with other city agencies, mutual aid fire departments, and mutual aid EMS agencies. If the portable radios that were received from the Fire District 6 mutual aid district are available and functional the town should consider the development of a capital plan to replace the portable radios in the future.
- 3.7-6 The Dracut Fire Department should upgrade the base radio stations located at each of the town's fire stations. Base stations connect to external antennas and provide more power than typical portable radios. They are not mobile, so they should only be used in

environments where they can be used from a fixed location. This is a back-up communications system that will allow each station to communicate directly with fire dispatch as well as fire units and mutual companies.

3.7-7 The Dracut Fire Department should take immediate steps to improve the security of the fire dispatch center. At a minimum, we recommend the following:

- The door to the radio room should be closed and secured and no one except the dispatcher, including other on-duty firefighters, should be ‘hanging out’ in the area unless they are required to be in room for department business.
- Installation of an appropriate barrier on the exterior of the building to provide protection from a vehicle crash.
- Installation of appropriate protective material on all exterior windows to protect against entry or projectiles.
- Installation of secure, locked doors (with wire glass or other suitable, protected view windows) to prevent unauthorized entry into the dispatch center and require that all visitors be “buzzed” in.
- Installation of a “panic alarm” to enable the fire dispatcher to quickly notify the police department of an unwanted intrusion; this is especially important during periods when the fire dispatcher (especially the female department members) is the only person in the building.
- Installation of monitored security cameras on the perimeter of the building and in the public access areas of the facility.

3.8 USE OF TECHNOLOGY

3.8-1 The Dracut Fire Department should make it a priority to update, purchase, and/or transition to a new fire records management system. The use of these systems to capture, store, and analyze data currently is extremely important for a fire department to most effectively and efficiently utilize the department’s resources as well as provide critical data for future planning and budgeting.

3.8-2 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a replacement program for all computers in the stations and administrative offices. By replacing one-third of the computers annually it will assist the fire department in leveling the budget and insure that no fire department computer will be older than three to four years old at any time. Monitors do not need to be replaced as often.

3.8-3 The Dracut Fire Department should implement a training program for all personnel in the use of the department’s current computers and the various database, management, and software programs that are being utilized.

- 3.8-4 The Dracut Fire Department should fully utilize the internet and all of the various training resources available on line.
- 3.8-5 The Dracut Fire Department in conjunction with the Town of Dracut should make it a priority to continue the plan for installing mobile data terminals (MDTs) in the fire apparatus. In developing the MDT plan, consideration should be given to evaluating the latest technologies and software, including the use of tablets rather than laptop computers. At a minimum, the incident commander at a scene should have access to fire pre-plan data, building permit data (building plans and current data about renovation and construction projects), real-time weather data, and hazardous materials data.
- 3.8-6 In conjunction with the recommendation for the installation of MDTs the Dracut Fire Department should explore possible uses for GIS technology to enhance the operations of the department.
- 3.8-7 The Dracut Fire Department should continue to place an important emphasis on evaluating new technology for use on emergency incidents particularly when it pertains to firefighter/member safety or patient care.

CHAPTER 4: FISCAL PRACTICES

4.1 FISCAL MANAGEMENT AND CONTROLS

- 4.1-1 The Department should work with the town manager and finance office to create a separate account for overtime and monitor overtime trend analysis.
- 4.1-2 The administrative assistant, as the person responsible for most purchases, should become certified as the organizations procurement officer.
- 4.1-3 The MRI Team recommends that the fire department work with the town manager to regularly update the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the fire department that includes both short and long term (ten to twenty years) planning. The plan should both large capital items as defined by the town's CIP including, but not limited to, apparatus, vehicles, and facilities. Lower cost items that are replaced at more frequent intervals (less than \$10,000 and less than 5-year replacement) are often referred to as small capital items. These can include technology items, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and hose.

- 4.1-4 MRI recommends the department, in concert with the town finance director, develop and deploy an internal process for the department to document requests for the requisition of services and/or supplies. The document and process should reflect town contracting requirements, such as the threshold for purchase orders and list competing bids when required, as well as reflect the appropriate accounting classification for the program function and specific line item within that function. This internal process will assist department administration in exercising greater fiscal control and oversight.

CHAPTER 5: APPARATUS, EQUIPMENT AND FACILITIES

5.1 APPARATUS

- 5.1-1 The Dracut Fire Department should review the recommendations contained in NFPA Standard 1911, Standard for the Inspection, Maintenance, Testing, and Retirement of In-Service Automotive Fire Apparatus (National Fire Protection Association, 2012 Edition) and use it as a guide to revise and update the vehicle fleet maintenance program.
- 5.1-2 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a program to transfer manual record keeping to a suitable electronic system/database for the documentation of inventories, maintenance, and testing programs. A comprehensive fire department management program would be the preferred choice.
- 5.1-3 The Dracut Fire Department should revise their daily apparatus and serviceability inspection procedure to include an electronic report form. This inspection is the equivalent of a daily pre-trip inspection as outlined in commercial driver manuals and should continue to be performed each and every day immediately after shift change. The inspection should include all spare/reserve apparatus. NFPA 1911 also contains a section with suggestions for routine vehicle and component inspection and testing. The daily inspection should also include an inventory and serviceability check of the tools, equipment, and SCBA that is carried on the apparatus.
- 5.1-4 The Dracut Fire Department should update their current SOG for fleet and equipment maintenance and establish a procedure that specifies what safety items that are found to be out of compliance on an apparatus would place it out of service. The procedure should include a process of notification to the appropriate supervisory and management staff that the apparatus is out of service including the specific reason. This procedure would be an initial step in documenting repairs and service requirements, as well as tracking out of service times for equipment.

- 5.1-5 The Dracut Fire Department should continue its current practice of annual pump testing in accordance with NFPA and ISO standards. Pump tests should be performed at intervals no greater than twelve months apart. All tests, deficiencies, and repairs/corrective actions performed should be fully documented.
- 5.1-6 The Dracut Fire Department should continue its current practice of annual hose testing in accordance with NFPA and ISO standards. Hose tests should be performed at intervals no greater than twelve months apart. All tests, deficiencies, and repairs/corrective actions performed should be fully documented.
- 5.1-7 The Dracut Fire Department should continue its current practice of annual ground ladder and aerial apparatus testing in accordance with NFPA standards. Ladder and aerial tests should be performed at intervals no greater than twelve months apart. All tests, deficiencies, and repairs/corrective actions performed should be fully documented.
- 5.1-8 The Dracut Fire Department should develop a procedure that specifies how the above tests shall be performed and documented, including placing equipment out of service, performing repairs, and documenting the entire process.
- 5.1-9 The Town of Dracut and the Dracut Fire Department should continue to evaluate and closely monitor the department's apparatus needs, both current and future. The department should continue to update its long-range vehicle replacement and capital plan for all fire apparatus, other vehicles, and major equipment. Apparatus replacement needs can be projected out as long as necessary. The fire department's capital budget needs should be incorporated into the town's overall plan and prioritized appropriately.
- 5.1-10 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should consider the future consolidation of a pumper and the ladder into a single "quint" that has a 75' aerial ladder and is configured to also fully function as a fire pumper.
- 5.1-11 While the fire chief should set direction/parameters and obviously must retain the right of final approval on all major apparatus and equipment purchases, it is recommended that members of the department be involved in a specifications development committee. The committee should encompass a cross-section of the department's personnel: firefighters, officers, and mechanics.
- 5.1-12 The Town of Dracut should take advantage of the fire apparatus and ambulance group purchasing system that is sponsored by the Fire Chiefs Association of Massachusetts (FCAM). Municipalities may select a specific design and manufacturer from a pre-

determined bid list and are not required to establish their own bid process. It is estimated that this group purchasing system will save approximately five to ten percent of the cost of a fire truck or ambulance

- 5.1-13 The Dracut Fire Department should adopt a policy of purchasing new NFPA 1901 compliant equipment when new apparatus is purchased. This policy will ensure that equipment is the most technologically up-to-date and that it is safe and functional. It will also make it possible to keep reserve apparatus fully equipped for immediate use.
- 5.1-14 The Dracut Fire Department should consider having all existing department vehicles retrofitted with reflective safety striping in accordance with NFPA 1901. All future vehicles should also be appropriately striped including command, staff, and utility vehicles. The Emergency Vehicle Visibility and Conspicuity Study (Federal Emergency Management Agency, FA-323, August 2009) provides valuable information about vehicle marking (see http://www.usfa.fema.gov/downloads/pdf/publications/fa_323.pdf). Consideration should be given to equipping any new apparatus with lighted traffic arrow devices mounted high enough on the vehicle to permit visibility by approaching vehicles, especially during responses on the interstate highway system.
- 5.1-15 The town should support and encourage the key DPW personnel that work on fire apparatus to be emergency vehicle technician (EVT) certified.

5.2 EQUIPMENT

- 5.2-1 The Dracut Fire Department should inventory all equipment, review compliance with NFPA and ISO criteria, and assess the department's own operational and equipment needs. The inventory should be updated at least annually to ensure that it is current.
- 5.2-2 The department should establish a formal replacement plan for equipment. The regular replacement of large cost items such as hose, ladders, and SCBA on an incremental basis will avoid major one-time increases in the operating budget. The life expectancy of these items can be estimated based on usage and manufacturer's recommendations. The fire department should establish a "small cap" Capital Improvement Program (CIP) plan in which equipment such as meters, AEDs, SCBA, and PPE are included in a planned update and replacement program.
- 5.2-3 The department should develop an operational procedure, and an inspection form, and train all officers to conduct annual turnout gear (PPE) inspections as required by NFPA 1851, *Standard on Selection, Care, and Maintenance of Protective Ensemble for Structural Firefighting and Proximity Firefighting*. The procedure should also address repairing, maintaining and cleaning PPE.

- 5.2-4 The Dracut Fire Department continue with the plan to supply each member with two full sets of personal protective equipment (PPE). This replacement program will allow each firefighter to have a spare set of PPE. In the future the department could consider the replacement of PPE through an application for an Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG). The department should maintain a supply of spare turnout gear (coats, pants, gloves, hoods, helmets, etc.) for use when turnout gear is damaged, is being cleaned, or has been placed temporarily out of service for drying/thawing during winter operations.
- 5.2-5 The annual schedule of fit-testing for SCBA masks should be continued in accordance with the requirements of the OSHA Respiratory Protection Standard, 29 CFR 1910.134, and NFPA 1500, Standard Fire Department Occupational Safety and Health Program. The development of a Respiratory Protection Plan should include procedures for completing this mandatory testing.

5.3 FACILITIES

- 5.3-1 The Town of Dracut should seriously consider expediting the CIP plan to make replacement of the Collinsville Station a high priority. The proposed location is appropriate and will meet the needs of the fire department and the Town regarding response patterns in Dracut.
- 5.3-2 The design of the new fire station should, to the extent practical, be a “green” facility, and include, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:
- a. Adequate space for fire apparatus, both current and future;
 - b. Compliance with nationally recognized standards for fire station design and operation;
 - c. Energy efficiency;
 - d. A complete, automatic fire sprinkler system and smoke detection system;
 - e. Modern training capabilities;
 - f. Adequate, secure office space;
 - g. Adequate, secure storage for equipment and records;
 - h. Safe and secure living quarters for duty crew personnel;
 - i. Adequate apparatus exhaust system;
 - j. Handicapped accessibility for all areas;
 - k. Capability for decontamination and cleaning of firefighter protective clothing and equipment;
 - l. Adequate parking for staff vehicles and personal vehicles of duty crew

- personnel and other responding personnel;
 - m. Adequate space for outside training;
 - n. Dedicated physical fitness area;
 - o. Adequate social and meeting spaces;
 - p. Building integrity and capability for continuity of operations during disasters (e.g. emergency power, seismic protection, protection from flood and high winds, food storage, emergency medical supplies, redundant systems for water supply, sewage, and communications, etc.);
 - q. Building "sustainability" which means employing design and construction practices that significantly reduce or eliminate the negative impact of the building on the environment and occupants.
- 5.3-3 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should include a wide range of stakeholders in the process of designing the new fire station to ensure that all of the fire department's needs and interests are appropriately addressed, and included, to the extent feasible.
- 5.3-4 The Dracut Fire Department should increase security at all fire stations through the use of an access control system (key card system for example). Because of the assets that are stored at a fire station and based on recommendations from the Department of Homeland Security these types of facilities should always be in a secure state.
- 5.3-5 The MRI team recommends that the fire department consider installing surveillance camera systems at each fire station that can be monitored by the fire dispatch "radio room" and the Dracut Police Department. When apparatus is out of quarters this would allow a dispatcher to monitor the facility and communicate with visitors to the station that may require assistance.

CHAPTER 6: ORGANIZATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

6.1 COMMUNICATIONS

- 6.1-1 Communications within the Dracut Fire Department must be improved. Efforts to develop a new sense of shared and common vision, maintaining open lines of communication, attempting to address the issues identified in this report and through the on-line survey, delegating responsibility and authority, enhancing training and professional development programs, and instilling a sense of team and esprit de corps will all help to instill an increased sense of pride in the organization.

- 6.1-2 The chief should continue his efforts to adopt a more inclusive management style and should make the department's officers meetings more for an open and honest exchange of information between the participants. While the chief still reserves the right, by virtue of his rank, to make the final decision, being more open to the ideas of his other officers will ultimately make him more successful to the significant benefit of the department as a whole.
- 6.1-3 The Dracut Fire Department should look for various ways to improve the flow and dissemination of information within all levels of the department. Possible ways to accomplish this include, but are certainly not limited to:
- The distribution of important department information via blast e-mails to all personnel. Sub e-mail lists can also be created and utilized for just officers, each unit, etc. allowing information that may be pertinent only to them to be quickly disseminated as well.
 - The use of a department member's only section of the website where personnel can log on the access necessary information and communications.
 - The use of social media platforms such as Facebook and text messaging.
 - The implementation of written communications such as training, safety and informational bulletins which are issued as needed. These documents can be distributed electronically and also posted on a 30 day board in each station before being placed in a binder for future reference.
 - The use of a pass along book or log where members can record information that should be passed along to other personnel particularly at shift change.

Department members can provide input on what they believe may be the most effective mediums.

- 6.1-4 Face to face communications is still the most effective method. The Dracut Fire Department should ensure that a daily unit briefing is conducted by the officer in each station at shift change to review pertinent information. Information that should be covered would include any new communications, anything posted on the 30 day board and/or logged in the pass along book.
- 6.1-5 The fire chief should consider scheduling periodic meetings, perhaps quarterly, with each of the department's four units for the purpose of providing updates, answering questions directly, and soliciting ideas, concerns, and feedback.

6.2 INTERNAL STRIFE

- 6.2-1 One of the Town of Dracut's first, most important, and ongoing, priorities with regard to implementing the recommendation contained within the report should be to attempt to rebuild fractured relationships. An inclusive, team-based approach will be essential to moving the department forward.
- 6.2-2 The MRI study team recommends that the town and the fire union should participate in the Labor-Management Initiative (LMI) that is co-sponsored by the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) and the International Association of Fire Fighters (IAFF). The LMI program is designed to help develop and improve cooperative and collaborative relationships, thereby avoiding critical labor-management issues, disputes, and costly arbitrations.

6.3 EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES

- 6.3-1 The fire chief should develop a formal process that will enable employees to provide input into the department's operations. Once submitted, employees must understand that not every idea will be utilized. When input is received, the employee should receive feedback relative to his/her idea. The fire chief should communicate examples of ideas that have been utilized/implemented as examples of success.
- 6.3-2 Efforts to develop a new sense of shared and common vision, maintaining open lines of communication, attempting to address the issues identified in this report and through the on-line survey, delegating responsibility and authority, enhancing training and professional development programs, and instilling a sense of team and esprit de corps should be utilized to instill an increased sense of pride in the organization.
- 6.3-3 An updated manual of department policies and procedures is one of the keys to achieving a shared vision for department operations. This process should be a team effort that involves input and participation from a wide cross-section of the department's internal stakeholders. Once completed, all personnel must be trained on the contents of the manual, and held accountable to accomplish department goals by established means. Lieutenants must supervise, captains must administer and manage, and the command staff must provide necessary vision, direction, and leadership.

CHAPTER 7: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

7.4 Recommendations

- 7.4-1 The Dracut Fire Department should investigate the possibility of developing a backup basic life support transport EMS capability as a first step in evaluating the feasibility of providing transport EMS to the community. However, Patriot Ambulance is the private provider utilized for patient transport within the Town of Dracut. Rather than charging the Town of Dracut to provide this service, Patriot pays the Town \$14,000 per year. Given the payer mix and Demographics present within Dracut, ambulance billing must factor in both write offs and adjustments. As we are aware that the fire department would like to enhance its service in the community and possibly expand into transport EMS, any investigation should consider the fiscal equation noted above, produce no sustained fiscal impact that requires the Town of Dracut to subsidize operations on an ongoing basis. Any fire based EMS venture should be transparent to the public and developed through an enterprise account to ensure that any EMS endeavor would be sustainable without additional support from the community.
- 7.4-2 The Dracut Fire Department should consider reducing one engine and within the confines of the capital plan acquiring a tanker pumper to serve as a backup engine and provide additional water to those areas beyond the confines of the water district.
- 7.4-3 The Dracut Fire Department should consider providing staff vehicles to the deputy chiefs, developing an on-call rotation and facilitating the rapid off duty response of chief officers to significant incidents.

CHAPTER 8: INTERNAL EMPLOYEE SURVEY

8.3 Recommendations

- 8.3-1 The Town of Dracut and Dracut Fire Department should take the results of this survey very seriously and utilize it as one more important component necessary for successfully developing a roadmap for the department's future direction through the collaborative establishment of benchmarks, and, a long range strategic plan.